Problems in Education

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Abstract:

This chapter focuses on three contemporary social problems in education that have received considerable attention from sociologists and educational researchers: educational inequalities between social classes and between ethnic/racial groups and the social impact of the accountability movement in education. These three themes are concerned with how education reproduces social inequalities in society, often through procedures, structures, and the unintended actions of parents, teachers, school staff, and educational policy makers. The findings show that research on these topics is exceptionally rich in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches and debates. Furthermore, although most of the studies have been conducted in Anglo-Saxon countries, increasingly more research is carried out in different countries. This is a promising development, as theories about educational inequality are necessarily context-specific, because educational systems and their social conditions vary massively across national and regional contexts.

Key terms: educational problems, educational inequality, accountability movement, social class, ethnicity, race.

Introduction

In democratic countries, schools are one of the few institutions through which the state can exercise *legitimized* control in terms of transmission of values, norms, knowledge and skills, and the selection of individuals to different status groups. As a result, schools are scrutinized over their role as socializing agents and how they contribute to social stratification. For researchers, the role of the school in realizing these two social functions should never be taken for granted, as the education system constitutes a key social arena in which different interest groups (e.g. class, racial, religious and/or ethnic groups) compete on unequal terms to decide what "fair selection" means, what norms and values should be taught and what constitutes essential skills and knowledge. It is precisely the authority bestowed upon schools in performing these roles, that makes their potential impact, and hence responsibility in selecting and socializing young people so important. As a result, the educational system [1] is seen as both the solution and the cause to (potential) social problems. And it is exactly within this tension, of the school as the potential generator of both equality and inequality hat most research on social problems in education takes place.

This chapter focuses on three key social problems within the broad field of educational research: (1) differences in educational outcomes and opportunities between different social classes, and (2) between majority and minority ethnic/racial groups, and (3) the increasing influence and consequences of the accountability movement in education. For each of these topics, we present the key debates, research findings, and suggestions for how research can move forward.

Social Class Inequalities in Education

In this section we focus on inequalities in education stemming from social class positioning. Regardless of the definition given to social class (whether Marxian or Weberian) sociological research on educational inequalities (i.e., educational outcomes) has always looked for explanations for hierarchically stratified society and that each stratum is characterized by distinct socio-economic status which includes income, education, wealth and cultural consumption.

Within a neoliberal social environment social class analysis in education frequently appears deferred and misplaced and may not draw the academic attention it attracted in the past.. Yet, Skeggs (2004), Sayer (2004) and Reay (2006) insist that the growing social class inequalities in educational outcomes as a result of neoliberal economic policies in many Western countries make such a focus timely and necessary. According to Reay (2006, p. 293-294), contemporary education systems retain powerful remnants of past elite prejudices which advantage middle-class families over lower-class families. Understanding the influence of the wider social, economic, and cultural contexts within which education functions is paramount for research on inequalities. Moreover, the role of the family and its resources is undeniable.

Education is a major component of social class, and educational inequality in terms of outcomes, leads to social reproduction and is one factor that reproduces the class divide across generations. It is well documented (Shavit & Blossfeld 1993) that upper class individuals are likely to attend more prestigious schools than their lower class counterparts. Because members of the privileged social classes tend to be better educated, they earn higher incomes and o offer greater educational opportunities to their offspring. Not only do they send their children to selective private schools, but those who attend public state-funded schools appear to achieve academically higher. In fact, social class background appears to have a direct

positive effect on school achievement in terms of grades and entrance to prestigious higher education, often in covert ways as we will see below when examining the role of social, cultural, and symbolic capital (see Ball, 2003)..

In countries with an educational market-place system where parents may choose between various types of schooling (public, private and other) such as Britain (Gewirtz et al. 1995; Ball et al. 1995; Ball 1998; Ball and Vincent 1998), families, based on their opportunities, past experiences, and different forms of capital at their disposal (monetary, cultural, symbolic, social, linguistic), employ different strategies in order to maximize their investment in their offspring's educational and occupational future. Their aim is the maximization of any comparative advantage that their children have over others (Whitty, Power and Halpin 1998). By contrast, families in less privileged positions have their 'horizons for action' (Hodkinson, Sparkes & Hodkinson 1996) restricted, not only because some of them lack the means and knowledge to make informed decisions, but also because their *habitus* limits their preferences and actions (Vryonides 2007). The Bourdieuan concept of *habitus*, as will be shown, is an important conceptual tool that helps to uncover the dynamic development of a hidden mechanism, that prompts individuals and families to follow strategies that resonate with their own social class and especially their utilization of their various forms of available capital.

Social mechanisms that explain persistent social class inequalities

Central to the focus on class inequalities in education is the vital role of the family and its resources in educational processes. Family resources consist primarily of financial resources but they may also include social relationships and social contacts that can be of use in providing support, encouragement and access to opportunities.. Other resources include

knowledge of how the educational system works, the ability to cope with the demands of schooling, and the ability use all the potential that the education system has to offer, which eventually produce unequal outcomes at the end an individual's educational trajectory.

One way through which social class differences occur concerns the diverse choices that young people and their parents make at key transition points in young people's educational careers. One such point is when young people and their families make choices as to future destinations when leaving compulsory education. Hatcher (1998, p.7) argues that "these transition points are sites of social selectivity in terms of class, and often in terms of gender and ethnicity". According to him, choices concerning transition to higher levels of education differ by social class, even when there is no difference in the level of school achievement. Individuals' decisions about their future educations and occupations are influenced by 'socialized frames of perception and thought' but also by 'real and changing social structures' (Ball et al, 2000, p. 22). In other words, they make their decisions within what Hodkinson et al (1996) describe as 'horizons for action'. According to them, a 'horizon for action' is defined in part by objective realities of the range of circumstances and options available and in part by subjective narrowing of the how this range is perceived (habitus). The decisions that individuals make are framed within structural constraints in societies where individuals have the ability to be reflective and exercise judgment and develop strategies. Within these 'horizons for action' different individuals coming from different social class backgrounds exercise widely contrasting strategies and develop diverse actions resulting in unequal outcomes i.e. through ability grouping often lower SES kids are more likely to be selected in lower status streams; characterized by lower expectations, greater variety of students' needs, lower study involvement and deviance thus contributing to the reproduction of inequalities (Ball, 1981; Ireson and Hallam, 2001; Stevens and Vermeersch, 2010) . These

strategies and actions are heavily influences by the availability of non-monetary forms of resources or capitals to which we now turn.

Issues regarding conceptualization and measurement of capital

Since the 1970's Bourdieu's concepts of "habitus" and "field," and forms of capital have helped sociologists of education examine class inequalities within cultural and symbolic processes within education. Non-monetary forms of familial capital (especially cultural and social capital) are often linked with social class differences and relate to the possession of cultural and social network resources that influence the life chances of individuals. The importance of studies that use the above conceptual tools in exploring issues of educational processes, are important because they can direct policy makers to consider ways to ameliorate the effects of unequal distributions of resources that are usually the product of unequal social backgrounds. The end result of such efforts, where taken, however, is not always successful.

The concept of cultural capital has been extensively applied in a wide range of educational research where class is used as an important variable. Broadly speaking cultural capital has been applied by looking at students, their cultural practices, skills, attitudes, and knowledge in relation to their schooling experience or outcomes (i.e. Di Maggio and Mohr, 1985; Lamb, 1989; Katsillis and Rubinsons, 1990; Kalmijn and Kraaykamp, 1996; De Graaf et al, 2000), or by looking at parents' education (i.e. Halsey, Heath and Ridge, 1980), cultural practices and skills and ability to engage successfully in processes and institutions influencing children's schooling experieces (i.e., Lamond and Lareau, 1988). Effective cultural capital consists of cognitive and ideological elements (i.e. way with parents interact with teachers) that are the basis and prior knowledge required by schooling. It has been demonstrated that the children of privileged families come to school with cultural knowledge that, even though

it does not consist of the knowledge that has an indirect effect in the learning process. It gives these children a positive predisposition; a 'habitus' toward learning, and is manifested in the process of engaging with school demands and evaluations. This long-term invisible socialization is "naturally" developed in the upper social classes and creates a set of positive attitudes and beliefs towards knowledge, education in general, and schooling as well as a capacity for handling schoolwork. Children from privileged environments face the prospect of university education as something that seems to come naturally while children from socially disadvantaged environments view university education as something that is beyond what they can achieve or is expected of them to achieve.

Connected to the concept of cultural capital is social capital. Generally speaking social capital refers to social networks and the reciprocities that arise from them. Depending on where these networks are located (i.e. with whom one is connected with), they may produce outcomes to individuals. Social capital makes possible the achievement of certain objectives that would not have been possible without its presence, not only for individual and collective action. Social networks often produce positive unintended consequences because it places individuals within privileged networks that rely on mutual support. The literature on social capital reveals at least three theoretical approaches articulated by Bourdieu (1986, 1990), Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000). Social capital with educational implications is mostly associated with the works of Bourdieu (1977, 1986) and Coleman (1988).

Bourdieu defines social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual relationship and understanding' (1986). Coleman (1988, p.S98) defines it by its function. He states that social capital consists of "a variety of different entities with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspects of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors within the structure'. For Coleman the denser and

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closer the relational ties in the social structure, the greater the likelihood that privileged information that provides a basis for successful social action will be communicated. For Coleman (1988, p.S110) social capital in family relations is important for a child's intellectual development because it allows parental human capital to be communicated to the children. The social capital that exists outside the family, between parents and in parents' relations with social institutions (i.e. schools) also influences the educational prospects of children (Coleman, 1988, p.S113).

Social capital, as a source of benefits derived through extra familial networks (i.e. professional networks and associations) (following Bourdieu and Coleman), and as a source of family support (following Coleman), has been applied in several studies. In the study by Gewirtz et al (1995) about school choice in Britain, parents characterized as 'privileged choosers' possessed and mobilized their social capital. This social capital took the form of networks and relationships which allowed them to access sources of information about schools, teachers, etc. As such, they were well informed when making the best possible selection for their children's education. Parents who possessed the 'right' social and cultural capital were able to positively influence their children's future educational outcomes . Green and Vryonides (2005) also demonstrated how social capital can facilitate educational choice making for high status studies in a society where social networks and connections are available. In the US Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch (1995) examined the role of social capital -- defined as 'social relationships with institutional agents', such as teachers and guidance counsellors-- in minority Mexican-origin high school students' grades and educational and occupational expectations. They found that these minority students were able to access various types of institutional resources and support (i.e. advice and counselling) for college admission or job advancement.

Social class and education

Families' social positioning bestows them with diverse social and cultural capital resources. The amount and quality of these non-monetary forms of capital are directly linked with parents' socio-economic status. These resources along with economic capital, which as Bourdieu (1986) argues lies at their core, concomitantly produce tangible educational advantages. As Vryonides and Gouvias (2012) argue, social, cultural and economic resources that parents directly or indirectly invest in materialize their aspirations about the future of their children. These aspirations, as the embodiment of habitus, create an environment where children's high educational attainment becomes a 'normal biography' (Du Bois-Raymond 1998) for upper-class families. By contrast, for children of lower-class families it is an achievement 'against the odds'. Reay et al. (2005) have shown that in Britain, working-class students' decision to attend elite colleges and universities was heavily influenced, not only by material and emotional constrains, but also by 'self-exclusion'. Sociological implications about available educational and occupational opportunities make relevant the inclusion of social class in sociological studies of education . As Vryonides and Gouvias (2012) argue, to draw attention to covert ways of social reproduction that hinder the pursuit of social justice is immensely important in sociological studies of education. Social class advantages give rise to concerns that policies, such as widening participation in higher education, have little impact in reducing inequalities, especially when social class advantage remains hidden and escapes social observation and critique.

Social inequalities make education an important field to study. The covert workings of social class advantage and disadvantage (through the direct or indirect effects of capitals and resources relevant for educational outcomes) make sociological research into these effects timely and important. This is especially true when the term "social class" may not appeal to

the neo-liberal narrative, thus making outmoded sociological research that focuses on social class differences.

Race and Ethnic Inequalities in Education

The academic underachievement of racial and ethnic minorities has been a key concern for sociologists and educational researchers. Research in this area developed at a time when the public and social policy makers became concerned about the integration of minority groups in the educational system. Beginning in the 1970s, in Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK, research focused on the educational position and experiences of ethnic minority groups. At that time, it became clear that many groups and their families from South Europe, North Africa, Turkey, Asia, and the Caribbean immigrated to Northern Europe for economic reasons and reasons of family reunification. They would stay permanently with their families in their host society. In addition, the children of these migrant families were not achieving in education (in terms of, for example, levels of achievement on standardized exams, status of track enrolment and/or progress to and success in Higher Education) as well as their peers from the dominant ethnic group in the host country.

In this line of research, 'race and ethnic inequalities in education' is considered a social problem as it challenges the meritocracy on which Western educational systems are based. In addition, educational inequalities are also considered a cause of unemployment, inadequate healthcare, crime, and lack of social cohesion. Hence, in trying to understand race and ethnic inequalities in education, researchers and social policy makers not only

emphasized the need for a more just educational system, but also noted that schools functioned as generators of social mobility, cultural integration, economic progress, and social cohesion.

In this section, we describe, illustrate and evaluate the key research traditions in this area. The analysis is based on a systematic review of 30 years of research on the relationship between race, ethnicity, and educational inequality conducted in 18 countries (Stevens and Dworkin, 2014). In line with these national reviews, we define a research tradition as 'a set of studies developed over a certain period of time, which explores the relationship between educational inequality and race/ethnicity in a similar way, by focusing on similar research questions, units of analysis, or social processes and use a similar set of research methods to achieve this goal' (Stevens, 2007, p.148). This section focusses on the three largest research traditions in this field: (1) charting racial and ethnic inequalities, (2) racism and discrimination in schools and, (3) family background and educational outcomes.

A first, dominant research tradition aims to *evaluate the problem of race and ethnic inequalities in education*. Studies in this field typically rely on large, quantitative data-sets to describe, first, the *size* of the minority populations enrolled in the educational system, and, second, their demographic characteristics, including their geographical and educational distribution, social class, generational status in terms of immigration, knowledge of the dominant language by the parents, and school exclusion rates (for examples concerning The Netherlands, the UK and the USA, see Dagevos and Gijsberts, 2007, DfES, 2006, Snyder and Dillow, 2011). A key concern is the relative achievement of ethnic minority groups. This means focusing on those groups that are the most underachieving in the host society. These studies rely on a multitude of indicators to assess race and ethnic underachievement, its development over time and past policy initiatives related to this problem, including standardized test scores, drop-out rates, and enrollment in and/or completion of higher

education. The variety of ways that underachievement is measured and the various interpretations of the statistical data, leads to disagreement between researchers over whether minorities actually underachieve in education, the size of the 'achievement gap,' and the development of differences in achievement between ethnic minority groups and the majority group over time [2]. Hence, while research is particularly strong in presenting the problem of racial and ethnic academic underachievement, there is disagreement over how it should be measured. In addition, a simplistic reading of these statistics can create 'moral panics' (Connolly, 2006) in which specific minority groups are reduced to a collective social problem ('they fail in education') or as overachieving 'model minorities' (Gillborn, 2008). Finally, while these analyses give due consideration to gender and social class, they do not adequately explain the underlying causes of educational underachievement.

A second main research tradition focuses on *racism and discrimination in schools*. Here, student's experiences of racism are considered as a social problem and also (often implicitly) as the main cause of racial and ethnic underachievement in schools. Most of the research in this area involves small-scale case studies of schools and focuses on students' experiences of teacher racism and discrimination, the ways in which schools select and evaluate students, the distribution of classroom resources, and the values taught and sanctioned in schools. From the beginning of the twenty-first century, research in this area has broadened its focus considerably, with researchers studying (1) how ethnic minorities are presented in educational policy documents (e.g., Theodorou, 2014), (2) ethnic identities and their intersections with gender and social class in developing responses to racism (Rollock, 2007), (3) the strategies employed by Whites to mask, reproduce and/or legitimize racial and ethnic inequalities in education (Gillborn, 2008), (4) ethnic minorities' definitions of educational success (Van Praag et al., 2015), and (5) variability in students' claims of teacher racism (Stevens, 2008). While this research reveals the complexity of racism and how it

operates in educational systems generally, it fails to test hypotheses using large samples and analysis techniques. In addition, it fails to establish strong links with educational underachievement (for an exception, see van den Bergh et al., 2010).

A third key tradition of research in this field focuses on *the family background of race and ethnic minorities and educational inequality*. Studies before the 1980s often portrayed racial and ethnic minority cultures and families as the key problem to their children's educational success. From this perspective, ethnic minority families simply had to adapt or assimilate to the expectations of the school, in order to be academically successful (for a classic review of this line of research in the UK see Tomlinson, 1983). Racial and ethnic minority families were held responsible for their children's low educational outcomes due to their unwillingness to learn the dominant language, their poor guidance with school work at home, and the lower intelligence of racial and ethnic minority children. Later contributions challenged the view of ethnic minority cultures as backward and pointed to these groups' lower social class status and lack of cultural and social capital and of educational resources (such as knowledge of a minority language) that are not valued (equally) by the educational system. Initially, researchers discussed the relative importance of social class versus ethnic or racial background. This lead to the conclusion that (a) both social statuses are interconnected and cannot be separated in measuring their relative effects and (b) that social class tends to be more important than ethnic background in predicting educational success (for a discussion, see Stevens et al., 2014). Afterwards, following Bourdieu, research focused on the role of particular types of cultural and social capital (e.g., Crul, 2000, Lareau and Horvat McNamara, 1999, Ball et al., 1998) in producing educational success in minority students. More recently, research in this field explores how students construct identities related to their class, race, ethnicity, and gender, and how this influences their educational choices (e.g., Shain, 2000). Further research in this field could benefit from investigating contact between parents and

teachers, reading practices at home and at school, the use of information technologies in developing stronger relationships between caretakers and the school. In addition, researchers must develop indicators of various forms of capital (such as 'reading climate at home', relationships with actors that have relevant knowledge of Higher Education) that are relevant to the educational progress of minority children.

Educational Accountability

Since the early twenty-first century, accountability in education has addressed concerns about the adequacy of academic standards, whether such standards are being met by the schools and whether learning outcomes have been commensurate with the levels of public expenditures on education. Such accountability, even when influenced by Reaganomics in the United States and by Thatcherism in the United Kingdom under Thatcherism, represented a conservative challenge to growing multiculturalism in modern education. Conservatives assumed that an emphasis on diversity and equality would reduce national competitiveness. In the U.S., the business sector, social conservatives, and the middle-class charged that placing a greater emphasis on humanistic and multicultural issues, public schools during the 1960s and 1970s had abandoned educational "basics" and caused a decline in student achievement, with a commensurate decline in US economic competitiveness. In 1978 the U.K., Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher held that British character and institutions might be swamped by the influx of non-European immigrants from the New Commonwealth and that hostilities might erupt . These fears were echoed in 1983 by President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education's report, *A Nation at Risk*. In education, both Thatcher and Reagan imposed controls on curricula and ushered in a movement toward standardized testing.

Neo-liberalism inaugurated the Standards-based School Accountability Movement in both the U.S. and the U.K. In the U.S., subsequent administrations extended the accountability mandate through the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Thus, *American 2000* in the G. H. W. Bush administration (1991), *Goals 2000* in the Clinton administration (1994), *No Child Left Behind* in the G.W. Bush administration (2001), and *Race to the Top* in the Obama administration (2009) were outgrowths of the Standards-based Movement. As concerns about globalization gained greater currency, concerns over the competitiveness of a nation's educational system became paramount.

The principles espoused in the Standards-based Movement correspond to the tenets of Neoliberalism, which stressed the commodification of social life and social institutions (Ball 2003). Educationbeing a commodity, was valued for its capacity to improve a nation's economic growth. Educational institutions can be best assessed in terms of their effectiveness in raising academic achievement based on standardized test scores and their efficiency in reducing costs. Neo-liberals held that the private sector can provide goods and services better than government and that private schools by their very competitiveness will produce the best results in student achievement. The conservative economist and Nobel laureate Milton Friedman advocated making vouchers available to parents to pay for their children's private school education.

The external measure of accountability emphasizes the quality and employability of a nation's future labor force. This is frequently assessed by the use of tests such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study(TIMSS), and Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS). Mean scores for a nation's youth tell how competitive future employees are likely to be. The internal measure of accountability consists of the standardized tests used to determine student

graduation or promotion, to assess the quality of teachers' work, and to compare school districts within a region or a country. Both internal and external accountability represent a major departure from the previous use of standardized testing. Where the test results were once used to assess student needs, to guide remediation, and to indicate how well students were learning, now they assess how well teachers are teaching, how school districts are using taxpayer and governmental funds, and how nations are preparing their youth for a global economy and labor market.

Standardized testing to assess a nation's competitiveness

Globalizationalong with instantaneous world-wide communication afforded by the Internet has meant that people throughout the world share a common knowledge base and sources of information. Moreover, they have the potential to become part of a transnational labor force, either through migration or through telecommuting especially within a knowledge-based economy. Global corporations and developed nations can meet their labor needs by draining the best and brightest from developing nations. It is in the interest of these nations and corporations to determine which types of knowledge are of value and create clones of their own educational models to ensure a ready and homogeneous pool of high-skill labor at their disposal. The result is that most educational systems resemble one another and impart similar cultural values and skills to their students.

Awasom (2009) decried the trend in African nations to abandon tribal and localized pedagogy in favor of the practices of the Europe and the United States. In the past, models of colonial education were imposed by European colonial powers in Africa, effectively diminishing practices and traditions that were central to the cultural life of the people. These models stifled development and fostered f dependency. In the current post-colonial era these

models are being reproduced to make the developing countries more like the West. Changes in education are often a prerequisite for continued economic aid and other forms of assistance from global intergovernmental organizations including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and multinational proprietary organizations (many of whom develop tests, textbooks, and curricular materials to be sold worldwide) further promote educational products that homogenize education, almost always along a Western model.

The homogenization of education is not restricted to developing nations (Ball 2003:31). The OECD and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) developed and promoted standardized tests (e.g., PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS) that have been used cross-nationally. Nations as well as global corporations rely on the test results to evaluate the future labor market in each country and to determine where to target investment. Countries with well-educated populations and high scores on standardized tests are likely to strive, while those without such populations and test results stagnate (Pigozzi 2006). Some have argued that OECD and IEA tests may not be reliable across nations because of ethnic variability, differences in access to education by social class, the selection or exclusion of test items s, and the fact that not all students tested within a country are evaluated on the same test items (Carnoy and Rothstein 2013; Stewart 2013; Loveless 2013).

Standardized testing to evaluate schools, teachers, and students

Numerous recommendations came out of the Standards-based Movement and *A Nation at Risk* (1983), some of which reflected the ulterior motives of conservative groups. Berliner and

Biddle (1995) termed the crisis declared by the Reagan report " *the manufactured crisis*," intended to discredit the public schools in order to pave the way for private school vouchers.

The U.S. Constitution does not provide a federal role in public education and individual states have the mandate to regulate educational systems (see Dworkin and Tobe, 2012; Dworkin and Turley 2014). However, under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and its subsequent reauthorizations by the U.S. Congress, the national government could insist on public school accountability. Both *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and *Race to the Top* mandated that annual standardized tests be administered to all public school students and included a measure of "Adequately Yearly Progress,' or AYP by which schools were to be judged. NCLB mandated that by 2014 schools were to have a 100 percent passing rate (with adjustments for especially challenged populations) on the standardized tests. Schools that consistently failed to reach annual student passing rates disaggregated by such categories as race and ethnicity, poverty level, and special education status were to be subjected to school closings, terminations of teaching and non-teaching staff, and reorganization as a charter school with new employees. States sued the U.S. Department of Education to modify the standards and many states eventually opted out of both NCLB and *Race to the Top*.

Educational reactions to accountability

Central to Neo-liberalism and the Standards-based Movement has been a distrust of the public schools. Thus, externally-based and mandated testing was imposed on public education. The mandates and standardized tests were resented by teachers, school administrators, school districts, and the state education agencies. This resentment resulted in numerous efforts to "game the system" or cheat in numerous ways (Dworkin 2008).

Mandated testing also contributed to the lower morale of school personnel and their burnout (Dworkin 1997, 2009; Dworkin and Tobe 2012, 2014). Other researchers have decried how the accountability system has narrowed curricula and teaching to only topics covered by the test and thereby "dumbed down" education (McNeil, 2000; Haney 2000; Madaus and Michael 2010/11) or driven students to drop out of school even when they were passing courses, but were unable to perform well on a standardized test that was added to the graduation requirements (Haney 2000; McNeil and Valenzuela 2001). [1] However, Toenjes et al (2002) cited one advantage of the accountability system, provided that it disaggregates results by ethnicity and poverty: it prevents schools from ignoring the needs of low-income, minority children. More recently, Wilam (2010) proposed that done correctly standardized testing can have positive effects with substantial effect sizes, but was less useful in assessing school or teacher value-added effects due to greater variance within students than across classrooms or schools.

Generally, cheating and "gaming the system" by teachers and administrators consisted of combinations of the following activities: (1) teachers were urged by their principals to review copies of up-coming standardized tests and modify their instruction to teach to those tests; (2) schools excluded low-performing students from testing by encouraging them to stay home during the tests or by reclassifying them to untested grades during the testing period; (3) teachers created lessons that involved the actual test that was used for accountability; (4) teachers signaled students during the test when they answered a question incorrectly; (5) teachers and administrators erased incorrect answers on the test sheet and replaced them with correct ones; and (6) schools reclassifed the race or poverty status of high scoring students in order to inflate the passing rates of minority students and those in poverty. This latter practice was more common in the U.S. where accountability ratings are disaggregated by race and poverty status and schools are required to meet passing standards for all subgroups of

students. Many of these practices were documented by Booher-Jennings 2005 and Booher-Jennings and Beveridge 2007).

In the United States, state education agencies have engaged in significant "gaming" by selecting less rigorous tests, minimizing the amount of improvement in AYP (under federal NCLB and *Race to the Top*), or manipulating dropout rates or criteria (Carey 2007; Dworkin 2008). Such practices made state educational performances look better and thereby enabled them to attract major corporations to relocate in that state. Once similar high-stakes accountability measures were instituted in Australia teacher cheating and similar evidences of gaming were reported there (Duggan, 2009 and ACARA, 2010). When accountability systems rely on externally-imposed, standardized student achievement tests,such systems proclaim that schools and teachers cannot be trusted to perform competently. Dworkin (2008) and Dworkin and Tobe (2014, 2015) explored the process by which accountability systems generate a sense of distrust among school actors. High-stakes accountability systems violate the system of trust between schools, teachers, and society. In most countries the relationship between teachers and school systems has been characterized by what Bryk and Schneider (2002) called *organic trust* or the unquestioning trust that exists intight-knit communities. Accountability is predicated on a supposition that teachers cannot be trusted to do their jobs competently unless threatened with termination. Trust becomes *contractual*, vested in formally-defined relationships that necessitate the force of law. Prior to accountability systems teachers were able to exchange higher salaries for job security (at least after the granting of tenure) and teaching autonomy.

The Standards-based Movement made it so that teachers could lose their jobs if student test scores did not meet acceptable levels, but a commensurate increase in salary did not accompany the rise in scores (Dworkin and Tobe 2014). The effect of the accountability system's implementation has been a decline in teacher morale, an increase in burnout, and a

heightening of the desire to leave teaching (Dworkin 1997, 2009). The Standards-based School Accountability Movement in the United States and other countries has had many unintended consequences. Where fully implemented, accountability has led to a decline in student and national competitiveness. Schools and educators have been driven to cheat and the level of morale, trust, and commitment of school personnel has diminished. The effects have generally been negative.

Because sociologists focus on the unintended consequences of social policies, they attempt to introduce caution to the claims of many political and business leaders that public schools are unsalvageable and that only the private sector can address educational competitiveness. Sociologists also caution against claims by groups who hold that externally-induced accountability will motivate school administrators, teachers, and students to work harder. Sociological insights recognize that efforts at social change involve a tension-management system view of social structure in which the proposed solutions to any social problem are likely to create new social problems and reinvigorate opposition.

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[1.] There have been numerous sociological works critical of both NCLB and *Race to the Top*, including a book sponsored by the Sociology of Education Section of the American Sociological Association (Sadovnik et al, 2007) and an issue of the journal *Sociology of Education* (Vol. 78 (2) 2005: 165-185), with separate essays by Karen, Dworkin, Ingersoll, and Epstein. Also, particularly relevant is Amrein and Berliner (2002), Nichols and Berliner (2007), and edited works by Heubert and Hauser (1999); Orfield and Kornhaber (2001), Chubb and Loveless (2002) for the Brookings Institution.

Conclusions

This chapter focused on three contemporary social problems in education that have received considerable attention from sociologists and educational researchers: educational inequalities between social classes and between ethnic/racial groups and the social impact of the accountability movement in education. These three themes are concerned with how education reproduces social inequalities in society, often through procedures, structures, and the unintended actions of parents, teachers, school staff, and educational policy makers.

This critical approach to educational institutions in relation with their social environment remains an essential area of research, precisely because education is regarded as a neutral system of upward social mobility based on merit. That this is not (always) the case, particularly in countries that present themselves as beacons of democracy, freedom and equality, is a reminder for social policy makers to improve educational systems so that they can fulfill the promise for which they were designed.

This chapter also illustrates that research on these topics is exceptionally rich in terms of theoretical and methodological approaches and debates. Although most of the studies have been conducted in Anglo-Saxon countries, increasingly more work stems from other countries in the world. This is a promising development, as theories about educational inequality are necessarily context-specific, because educational systems and their social conditions vary massively across national and regional contexts. By testing, for example, the effects of the accountability system for teachers and students, the importance of cultural capital in explaining class inequalities, and the importance of Whiteness in explaining race/ethnic inequalities in contexts outside the USA and the UK, we can further develop the validity and richness of these theories, and more generally, our understanding of the causes and consequences of educational inequality worldwide.

Footnotes

[1] With 'educational systems' we refer to the social organization of education in societies, which relates to a broad range of structural and cultural issues such as the content of the curriculum, the pedagogy or the way in which the curriculum is taught to students, the stratification of students in different educational programs or tracks and (related) selection mechanisms and standards, the allocation of valued educational credentials (i.e. diplomas) and the resourcing of schools.

[2] See for instance the discussion in the UK between advocates of a 'percentage point difference model' versus a 'proportional model' and the different outcomes these models generate in relationship to the measurement of race and ethnic inequality in the British educational system (Stevens, 2007, Stevens and Crozier, 2014)

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