

# The arguments of the class theorists

Psychology, Child Development



Class theorists argue that class provides the basic structure of society and is also the chief cause of the inequality of modern societies. The hierarchy of the Australia class system consists of a "ruling" upper class, a "white-collar" middle class, and a "laboring" working class. There is enormous inequality between the class groups and especially between the upper- and middle-classes and the working-class. What class you belong to plays a determining role in what sort of life you lead. Those at the top of the class structure typically seem to have more power, more wealth, more opportunities, and more control over their lives than those at the bottom. They also have a greater impact on society and use this advantage to manipulate society to serve their values and suit their needs.

This is no where more evident than in the social institution of education. Education is one of the great dividers amongst classes. The school you go to often determines what sort of qualifications you obtain, what job you get and, thus, how much money you earn and what class you move into. Education is a means in which individuals seek social mobility. Parents realized this long ago and some struggle to send their children to private schools to give them a better chance of succeeding in the class hierarchy. Other children, typically from working-class backgrounds, are victims of low expectations, both from their parents and internally, and leave school as soon as they can, moving into low-paid jobs near the bottom of the social ladder. Whereas, many upper-class and middle-class pupils regard tertiary education as the natural way to their future careers.

John Germov states that the education system is a product of a class society and that every society must reproduce itself using its social institutions.

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Schools accomplish this reproduction of the class system through ideological hegemony, where the dominant belief system, that of the upper-class and even middle-class, is the overriding principle underlying the curriculum and agenda of the educational system. The dominant values, those of the upper-class, are therefore, transmitted and spread through education. This overemphasis of the upper-class ethos tends to alienate working-class children giving way to a feeling of intimidation and eventually it yields resistance to and resignation from schooling.

Cultural capital- the knowledge, skills, and beliefs essential for school success- is also an important factor in educational merit. As stated earlier, those at the top of the class hierarchy usually have more wealth and more opportunities. This puts them at a straightaway advantage to those at the lower end of the hierarchy. Cultural capital varies through the classes, as is evident by the greater number of upper- and middle-class children attending tertiary institutions and the high number of working-class dropouts.

The pursuit of a classless society is an important gauge of how much progress we have made in diminishing the adverse impact of class upon our lives. The idea of a classless society is unlikely to ever be achieved, but a serious critique of class may help to create a more equal society, especially in the realm of the social institution of education.