

School function

Sociology



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What is the function of schooling and how does schooling reflect the stratification system? In this paper I will be using two sociological perspectives conflict theory and social exchange theory. Conflict Theory is based upon the view that the fundamental causes of crime are the social and economic forces operating within society. The criminal justice system and criminal law are thought to be operating on behalf of rich and powerful social elites, with resulting policies aimed at controlling the poor. The criminal justice establishment aims at imposing standards of morality and good behavior created by the powerful on the whole of society. Focus is on separating the powerful from the “ have-nots” who would steal from others and protecting themselves from physical attacks; in the process, the legal rights of poor folks might be ignored. The middle class are also co-opted; they side with the elites rather than the poor, thinking they might themselves rise to the top by supporting the status quo. There are several social theories that emphasize social conflict and have roots in the ideas of Karl Marx (1818-1883), the great German theorist and political activist. The Marxist, conflict approach emphasizes a materialist interpretation of history, a dialectical method of analysis, a critical stance toward existing social arrangements, and a political program of revolution or, at least, reform. The materialist view of history starts from the premise that the most important determinant of social life is the work people are doing, especially work that results in provision of the basic necessities of i. e. life, food, clothing and shelter. Marx thought that the way the work is socially organized and the technology used in production will have a strong impact on every other aspect of society. He maintained that everything of value in society results from human labor. Thus, Marx saw working men and women as engaged in

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making society, in creating the conditions for their own existence. Marx summarized the key elements of this materialist view of history as follows: In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. In contrast to functional theory, conflict theory assumes a tension in society and its parts created by the competing interests of individuals and groups. Karl Marx and Max Weber, laid down the foundations for conflict theory based on his outrage over the social conditions of the exploited workers in the class system resulting from capitalism. He contended that society's competing groups, the "haves" and the "have-nots," were in a constant state of tension, which could lead to the possibility of struggle. The "haves" control power, wealth, material goods, privilege including access to the best education, and influence; the "have-nots" present a constant challenge as they seek a larger share of society's wealth. This struggle for power between groups and individuals helps determine the structure and functioning of organizations and the hierarchy that evolves as a result of power relations. The "haves" often use coercive power and manipulation to hold society together to their benefit, but this theory recognizes that change is inevitable and sometimes rapid, as the conflict of interest lead to the overthrow of the existing power structures. Why do we have schools? Why should our youth spend hours upon hours in a building that looks like a factory, but we're calling it "school." On the surface it seems like such an innocent question; such a simple question with an equally simple answer. A question so rudimentary that most individuals currently concerned about our schools seem not to have noticed, or perhaps

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they feel that the answer is so obvious it would be a waste of time discussing it. Most high school graduates can quickly tell us that the purpose of the 1980's educational reforms have been designed to help young people such as themselves get jobs when they grow up. If this young person watches the evening news occasionally, he or she might also add that the function of schools and the recent wave of reform is to help us regain that competitive edge against our old enemies, Germany and Japan. Lets take a moment to suggest that we might benefit from reopening the debate about the purpose of schooling in our society. Instead of advocating for this or that particular reform, I would like to argue that what is really needed during these complex times is for us as a nation, to recast the context within which we debate what should happen in our schools. Since situating this discourse within a purely marketplace context has been the case for the last decade or so, I propose that we began to look at the education we want for our children within the democratic framework. Let me begin by taking us back to the turn of the century, a time when the notion of the public school took on new dimensions. The public schools in the United States gradually increased in numbers throughout the 19th century, they exploded across our country due to the massive surge of immigrants that came to live in this land at that time. People came to toil in our sweat shop factories and the coal mines that produced the energy needed to run an electrified society. With these immigrants came their children, and there was the problem. For several years the prevailing thought was to put these beggars to work alongside their parents. Eventually, the cruelty of this existence led to legal prohibitions against this practice, and schools became the solution to the problem of what to do with these children, more of whom were coming onto

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our shores and being born each day. You may say how does schooling reflect the stratification system, in the occupational mobility table, the distribution of sons' or daughters' occupations measures the occupational structure for a well-defined population at a particular time. Because parents are known only by the offspring who report on them, however, the distribution of parents occupations has no clear time or population reference. The distribution of fathers occupation depends on both a sequence of occupation distributions that existed at a variety of times in the past and on differentials in level and timing of fertility across occupational groups. Thus the family backgrounds of individuals are created by both the socioeconomic levels of the parents and a set of decisions about whom to marry (which establish the distribution of father's and mother's socioeconomic characteristics), how many children to have, and whether to remain married which establish family and household structure. As Blau and Duncan (1967) illustrate in their " Basic Model" of stratification, educational attainment is a pivotal mechanism governing social mobility and socioeconomic " outcome"for a cohort of persons entering adulthood an a key determinant of later success in the labor market. The importance of educational stratification and socioeconomic returns to schooling is twofold. In most societies, variation in educational attainment accounts for a large part of the association between the socioeconomic characteristics of parents and their offspring. Exchange Theory is a social psychological and sociological perspective that explains social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties. Social exchange theory poses that all human relationships are formed by the use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives. For example, when a person perceives the costs of a

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relationship as outweighing the perceived benefits, then the theory predicts that the person will choose to leave the relationship. The theory has roots in economics, psychology and sociology. Exchange Theory is tied to rational choice theory and on the other hand to structuralism, and features many of their main assumptions. Social behavior is an exchange of goods, material goods but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige. Persons that gives much to others try to get much from others under pressure to give much to them. This process of influence tends to work out at equilibrium. The Exchange Theory is based on a central premise that the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction. With roots in earlier theories developed in cultural anthropology, neoclassical economics, and psychology, the school of thought on social exchange developed the focused on how interaction patterns are shaped by power relationships between individuals, and the resulting efforts to achieve balance in exchange relations. For example, in the first of a series of experiments dealing with social power and equity in exchange networks, the researchers studied factors and constraints that affected the use of power in a simulation of negotiated trade agreements. The theory reduces human interaction to a purely rational process that arises from economic theory. The theory favors openness as it was developed in the 70s when ideas of freedom and openness were preferred, but there may be times when openness isn't the best option in a relationship. The theory assumes that the ultimate goal of a relationship is intimacy when this might not always be the case. The theory places relationships in a linear structure, when some relationships might skip steps or go backwards in terms of intimacy. When answering the question, how do the perspectives differ, <https://assignbuster.com/school-function/>

according to the reading and lectures the difference between social exchange and conflict is that negotiations occur among a group of people. That same group of people may not necessarily cause conflict between one another. But, with the conflict theory, an imbalance is struck that cannot be rectified based on an ingrained belief system. The similarities deal with the idea of relationships in that it takes physical human beings to interact within a class system. Their environment, upbringing, education, and social status make the person act or react a certain way during an exchange or conflict.

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