EDUCATIONAL THEORY
Summer 1984, Vol. 34, No. 3

Have We Explained the Relationship between Curriculum and Capitalism? An Analysis of the Selective Tradition*

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Marxist analyses of schooling assert that the public school curriculum is a product of a "selective tradition." In these accounts the knowledge included in and excluded from the curriculum represents a selected body of information and skills that is "connected" to the reproduction of class domination. Those who outline this connection between curricula and capitalism generally assert the presence of a functional relationship. The curriculum is constrained by the requirements of a capitalist society. While several studies have critically examined the schools' curricula, these analyses have not adequately connected the presence or absence of curricular topics to capitalism.[1] The connection to the logic of Capital is asserted but not substantiated. Without an indication of how this functional relationship is maintained, we are left with an interesting thesis but without an adequate appraisal of whether or not this functional nexus actually exists. These assertions must now become the object of disciplined examination. This essay will not attempt to prove that the curricula-capitalism connection exists. It will, however, provide a conceptual and methodological framework whereby these crucial assertions can either be adequately substantiated, qualified, or discarded.

There are two interrelated claims contained within the analyses of the selective tradition. First, there is the assertion that a functional relationship exists between the schools and capitalism. The curriculum is functional for the maintenance and progress of capitalism. However, this functional relationship is of a peculiar type. The second claim is that elements in a curriculum that would obstruct a capitalist mode of production are identified as being dysfunctional to capitalism and therefore excluded from the public school curriculum. The assertion that the curriculum represents a systematic elimination of curricular topics entails a very specific judgment: what is excluded from the curriculum is just as important as, if not more important than, what is included. Any attempt to substantiate these assertions confronts particular difficulties. Conceptual problems are posed by the task of identifying how this selection occurs and how it is connected to the logic of Capital, and methodological dilemmas are encountered by

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* I especially wish to thank Professor Michael Apple, Michael Dale, Michele Seipp, and Professor Erik Olin Wright for their extensive comments on previous drafts of this article. I also benefited from comments made by Mr. Rod Fawn, Professor Michael Olneck, Leslie Rothaus, Yolanda Rohas, Professor Fran Schrag, and the reviewers of this journal.

1. For examples, see Jean Anyon, "Ideology and United States History Textbooks," *Harvard Educational Review* 49, no. 3 (August 1979): 36-86, and "Elementary Schooling and Distinctions of Social Class," *Interchange* 12, nos. 2-3 (1981): 118-32; Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), "Curricular Form and the Logic of Technical Control," in *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education,* ed. Michael Apple (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), and *Education and Power* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Frances Fitzgerald, *America Revised* (Boston: Atlantic-Little Brown Books, 1979); and Joel Taxel, "Justice and Cultural Conflict: Racism, Sexism and Instructional Materials," *Interchange* 9, no. 1 (1978/79): 56-84, and "The Outsiders of the American Revolution: The Selective Tradition in Children's Fiction," *Interchange* 12, nos. 2-3 (1981): 206-29.

efforts to explain what is excluded.[2] Neither the conceptual nor the methodological problems have been confronted within the curriculum literature.

There are areas to which we can look for help in this matter. Bachrach and Baratz[3] have analyzed comparable dilemmas in their studies of community power, and Claus Offe[4] has highlighted similar conceptual and methodological issues in his study of State power. In particular, Offe's analysis identifies a number of conceptual reconstructions and methodological tools that can be used to explain the selection of curricular elements. It will therefore prove helpful to examine Offe's analysis so as to reconstruct the conceptual basis and then construct the methodological strategies conducive to an explanatory account of the selective tradition.

Having outlined the basic focus of this article, the analysis will proceed as follows. First a critique of the existing literature will be offered; my criticism is that assertions are substituted for explanations. Two theses are then offered as a basis for transforming these assertions into a plausible explanatory account. The first thesis states that when claims of a functional relationship are made, it is necessary to identify the probable mechanisms which maintain the functional connection. The mechanisms must point to the linkages between schools and capitalism. The second thesis states that the most useful way to conceptualize and identify these mechanisms is through viewing schools as State institutions. Within this framework, the potential exists for a more adequate identification of the exclusionary mechanisms and therefore of the connection between Capital and the schools.

Finally, with the critique outlined and the theses stated, Offe's analysis will be employed to construct the framework for a functional explanation. His analysis provides the skeletal approach for investigating the claims of selectivity and for remedying the peculiar difficulties of an analysis of negative selection. Through employing Offe's conceptual apparatus and following his methodological prescriptions, a framework will be established whereby the functional claims of the selective tradition can be put to a realistic test.

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2. See Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, *Power and Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), and "Reply to Merelman," *American Political Science Review* 62, no. 4 (1968): 1268-69; R. M. Merelman, "On the Neo-Elitist Critique of Community Power," *American Political Science Review* 62, no. 2 (1968): 451-61; Bob Jessop, *The Capitalist State* (New York: New York University Press, 1982); and Claus Offe, "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State: Class Rule and the Political System. On the Selectiveness of Political Institutions," in *German Political Studies,* vol. 1, ed. Von Beyme (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974).

In the political science debate over community power and decision making and in the theories of the State, the methodological issues surrounding the notion of a nonevent are discussed. Generally speaking, the notion of a nonevent refers to items which have been excluded from a decision-making agenda. Theorists of an empiricist leaning claim that there are insurmountable obstacles to an empirical investigation of nonevents. Bachrach and Baratz, and Offe have attempted to formulate conceptual frameworks and methodological stances to support analyses of nonevents.

The concept of a nonevent can lead one to suppose an ontologically nonexistent entity. This is misleading. In this analysis, the nonevent dilemma (the investigation of curricular topics which are excluded) must be seen in relation to the claims of dysfunctionality in an asserted functional relationship. Curricular topics that are dysfunctional to Capital are said to be excluded due to the functional relationship between schools and Capital. The concept of a nonevent does not indicate curricular topics that don't exist, but rather topics which have been excluded from a curricular "agenda." Here the concern is with constructing a methodological approach which can identify excluded topics and link them to the logic of capitalism. While the Marxist literature contains arguments about both positive and negative selection, the assertions of the selective tradition focus on negative selection. Therefore, I will focus on topics which have been excluded. I think that a methodological and conceptual format similar to the one presented in the following pages could be constructed for claims of positive selection.

3. Bachrach and Baratz, *Power and Poverty.*

4. Offe, "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State."

THE SELECTIVE TRADITION

The analysis of a selective tradition came to the foreground of curriculum scholarship with the publication of Michael Apple's *Ideology and Curriculum.* In the introductory chapter Apple describes the curriculum as a composite social product whose selection and organization are formed from all of the "available social knowledge at a particular time and place."[5] Employing Raymond Williams's notion of a selective tradition, whereby a dominant class creates and recreates the conditions for their privileged position, Apple argues that the crucial task for curriculum scholarship ought to be the identification of how the selective tradition operates in the public school curriculum. For this to be accomplished, Apple states, we need to identify the connection (1) between the organization and selection of curricular knowledge and schools and (2) between schools and other economic and political structures.[6] The identification of the linkages between schools and curricular knowledge and the larger economic and political structures would illustrate how educational institutions "act as powerful agents in the economic and cultural reproduction of class relations."[7]

In curriculum studies the analysis of the selective tradition can be characterized by three distinct but interrelated claims. First, there is a basic working assumption that the curriculum is a body of knowledge which represents a selection from "all possible knowledge." Second, it is asserted that a functional relationship exists between the curriculum and class relations. This second claim entails at least three subsidiary claims: selection is class biased; as such it is functional for a capitalist society; and these selections occur because they are reproductive. The third premise is that the curriculum creates the ideological conditions necessary to reproduce capitalist social relations. The asserted quality of the functional claim and the ideological characterization are highlighted when Apple states:

> The selective tradition . . . is a "natural" outgrowth of the relations between our extant cultural and economic institutions. . . . When a society "requires," at an economic level, the "production" of agents who have internalized norms which stress engaging in often personally meaningless work, . . . then we would expect that the formal and informal curricula, the cultural capital, in schools will become aspects of hegemony. . . . Any other response will seem unnatural, which is exactly the point both Williams and Gramsci have maintained.[8]

Recently Apple has extended his analysis of the general school-captial nexus to include accounts of contradiction, resistance, and struggle.[9] However, the mechanisms through which schools and their curricula are connected to class relations remain unexplored. Without such investigations, any claims for the existence of a selective tradition are seriously undermined.

This inattention to mechanisms is present in recent curricular analyses. Jean Anyon has produced two studies which point to the selective nature of the public curricula.[10] In "Ideology and the United States History Textbooks," she documents well that accounts of economic change, labor history, and social conflict are absent in high school social studies texts. In "Elementary Schooling and Distinctions of Social Class," she points to the selective nature of the elementary school experience and curriculum

5. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum,* 19.
6. Ibid., 17.
7. Ibid., 8.
8. Ibid., 102.
9. Apple, *Education and Power,* and Michael Apple and Lois Weiss, "Ideology and Practice in Schooling: A Political and Conceptual Introduction," in *Ideology and Practice in Schooling,* ed. Michael Apple and Lois Weiss (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).
10. Anyon, "Ideology and U.S. History Textbooks," and "Elementary Schooling and Social Class."

as it is differentiated along lines of class.[11] Joel Taxel has noted the selective nature of children's literature according to race and gender and on the topic of the American Revolution.[12] Frances Fitzgerald, with less theoretical development than the other writers, has identified the historical predominance of inclusionary and exclusionary practices in the production of social studies textbooks.[13] While all of these analyses "point" to examples of the selective nature of curricular materials, they share an identifiable weakness. All of the work (with the obvious exception of Fitzgerald's atheoretical presentation) relies upon the assertion of a functional relation between curriculum and capitalism to explain the absence or presence of curricular topics. The missing accounts of economic change or social conflict in schools' curricula are "explained," automatically, as a result of the functional connections between schools and Capital. What is functional for Capital is included in the curriculum and what is dysfunctional for Capital is excluded from the curriculum. However, before any warranted claims can be made about the curriculum, the functional connection between capitalism and curriculum must be established.

In order to substantiate a functional relation between schools and Capital, it is necessary to reconstruct the conceptual foundations of the selective tradition literature. Two theses are important. First, rather than automatically assuming a functional relationship, operating mechanisms must be identified which link schools to Capital. And second, in order to identify the mechanisms it is advantageous to view schools as State institutions. A brief elaboration of these two theses should sufficiently ground an approach to the curriculum so that Offe's analysis can be employed to create an explanatory framework.

TWO THESES

1. The first thesis criticizes the reliance upon assertions of automatic functional relations and calls for a mode of explanation that identifies a set of plausible mechanisms which can substantiate the functional claim. The assertion of an automatic functional relation between aspects of schools and capitalism must be distinguished from an adequate functional explanation. Generally, assertions of a functional tie take the form of noting a beneficial relationship between two "systems" and then assuming that a functional relationship exists. An adequate functional explanation cannot rely on the supposition of a beneficial tie but rather must identify how it is that this functional relationship is maintained (e.g., through the identification of mechanisms). Recently, G. A. Cohen and Jon Elster have argued over what should serve as criteria for satisfactory functional explanations.[14] Certain distinctions are crucial for the proposal in this paper. Therefore, I will briefly outline the contours of the Cohen-Elster dispute and identify the position that will be taken in this analysis.

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11. In "Elementary Schooling and Social Class," Anyon states that she wants to identify the reproductive effects of schooling along the lines of "social class." However, in her analysis, and in most other curricular analyses in the "critical vein," class remains an obscure and underdeveloped concept. The notion of class lacks not only crucial conceptual substance, but its empirical basis is not adequately addressed. While the debates over class are numerous and complex, a definitive account of class and class structure is crucial for any substantial analysis. This essay will not directly confront these issues due to its specific scope and intent. However, for the prescriptions outlined in the following pages to be honored, the notion of class will have to be constructed more fully.

12. Taxel, "Justice and Cultural Conflict," and "The Outsiders of the American Revolution: The Selective Tradition."

13. Fitzgerald, *America Revised.*

14. See G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), "Functional Explanation: A Reply to Elster," *Political Studies* 28, no. 1 (1980): 129-35, and "Reply to Elster on Marxism, Functionalism and Game Theory," *Theory and Society* 11 (1982): 483-95. See also Jon Elster, "Cohen on Marx's Theory of History," *Political Studies* 28, no. 1 (1980): 121-28, and "Marxism, Functionalism and Game Theory," *Theory and Society* 11 (1982): 453-82.

In his *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence,* Cohen states that mechanisms do not have to be outlined in order for functional explanations to be rationally tenable or open to confirmation or disconfirmation. In his account, the only requirement made of functional explanations is that they be subsumed under a consequence law (for our purposes, a higher-level functional generalization that has the status of an accepted law). Elster disagrees with Cohen and indicates that in order for functional explanations to be rationally tenable and open to adequate testing, suitable mechanisms at the level of individual actors must be posited. There are two parts to this disagreement, both of which focus on the practice of identifying mechanisms. Cohen states that the identification of mechanisms is not necessary for an adequate explanation and adds that if mechanisms are cited, they need not be limited to the level of individual actors. Elster argues that mechanisms are necessary and that they must be posited at the level of individual actors. Elster does not accept mechanisms at the structural level. My position represents a compromise. Generally, I agree with Cohen that the identification of a consequence law is a sufficient basis for establishing that a given functional explanation is both rationally tenable and corroborated. However, I sense that there are intractable difficulties entailed in arriving at an acceptable consequence law without identifying plausible mechanisms. For a consequence generalization to be accepted as a consequence law, it must pass the rigors of empirical testing. The identification of potential functional mechanisms appears to be the most efficacious route to the empirical examination of consequence generalizations. Without such a basis, the risk of automatic functional assertions is great. Cohen does not sufficiently address this problem.[15] Therefore, it seems most practical to identify plausible mechanisms at both the individual and societal levels in an explanation and then to proceed to test the explanation through the confirmation or disconfirmation of the asserted mechanisms.

For an analysis of the selective tradition, this would mean that the asserted functional relation between Capital and schools will find a measure of empirical corroboration or disconfirmation to the degree that the mechanisms can be identified. If the mechanism cannot be found, the claim is seriously weakened. The first thesis, then, calls for a search for operating mechanisms ensuring the maintenance of a functional relationship.

2. The second thesis identifies schools as State institutions. Within the schooling literature, Roger Dale and Martin Carnoy point to the appropriateness of examining schools as part of the State apparatus.[16] There are many institutional levels within the State, and certainly schools must be located accurately therein. Nevertheless, it is difficult to dispute the conceptualization of schools as tax-supported institutions. Viewing the schools as State institutions, the potential exists for a more adequate identification of the exclusionary mechanisms. Dale states that this placement allows for a framework which "can explain patterns, policies and processes of education in capitalist societies

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15. To further substantiate the thesis concerning the identification of mechanisms would require an elaboration well beyond the space allotted this article. My claim, however, is not without sufficient basis. There is a framework in the philosophy of science, a realist view of science, that argues for the necessity of identifying causal mechanisms in the explanation of natural and social phenomena. My insistence on the need for identifying plausible mechanisms is based on this realist view and on an analysis of the scientific criteria for functional explanations: see Daniel P. Liston, "Scientific Criteria for Social Scientific Explanations: An Analysis of Cohen and Boulding's Theories of History" (unpublished mss., 1982). The realist position in the philosophy of science is outlined by Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978); and Rom Harré, *The Principles of Scientific Thinking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). The implications of this position for the social sciences can be found in Ted Benton, *Philosophical Foundations of Three Sociologies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977); Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979); Rom Harré and Paul F. Secord, *The Explanation of Social Behavior* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972); and Russell Keat and John Urry, *Social Theory as Science* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

16. See Roger Dale, "Education and the Capitalist State," in *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education;* and Martin Carnoy, "Education, Economy and the State," in ibid.

more adequately than existing approaches."[17] Such an assertion requires careful inspection, and yet I agree with Dale that an analysis of the State-schooling nexus will provide more satisfactory conceptual tools than either a casual disregard of this apparent context or a conception which places schools within a distinctly different setting.

With these two theses stated, the construction of a conceptual and methodological framework can be initiated. What is needed now is a route by which the ascription of a functional relationship can be verified or disconfirmed. Claus Offe's analysis provides the tools appropriate for an investigation of the exclusionary mechanisms.

OFFE'S ANALYSIS: THE SELECTIVENESS OF THE STATE

Offe's framework can be utilized most effectively by initially presenting the skeletal logic of his argument and then employing the key elements of his paper for an analysis of the absences in curricula. In "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State — Class Rule and Political Systems: On the Selectiveness of Political Institutions," Offe undertakes an analysis of the State in capitalist societies. His paper provides the conceptual tools for the identification of links between Capital and the State in advanced capitalist countries. The framework is elaborate and, for our purposes here, it will be substantially distilled.

Offe's basic claim is that there are structural power linkages between the State and Capital (as a class) such that State institutions selectively exclude anticapitalist interests. Such a claim can be easily misconstrued. So it is important to note that Offe's argument does not assert a tightly knit functionalist thesis between the State and the economy, nor does it claim that all of the State's actions are to be seen as functionally explained by the capitalist economy.[18] It also does not assume a smooth operation in fulfilling the functional requirements. Class conflict and contradictions arise over attempted selections, and the State is not always successful.

The support for this thesis can be outlined by following four basic steps. Initially it must be shown that linkages of structural power between the State and Capital do exist. Without this condition, it would be absurd to contemplate the occurrence of State selection in any way that could be described as functionally related to the capitalist economy. The second step involves two basic formulations: the State is designated as a system of sorting and selecting rules, and the Capitalist State is further specified as involved in a particular type of selection — systematic selection. Only when the selection is tied to the interests of Capital as a whole can it be said to be systematic. Under this requirement, it must be shown that the State selects out those policies and practices which would damage the long-term accumulation of Capital and those divisive strategies or interests which would be dysfunctional to the legitimation of Capital.

The third step in Offe's argument is the identification of a set of "nested filters,"

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17. Dale, "Education and the Capitalist State," 129.

18. The distinction between functional explanations and functionalism is inadvertently glossed over by many analysts. G. A. Cohen clearly separates the claims of functionalism from the criteria for functional explanations. His claim is essentially that while there is an historical connection between functionalism and functional explanation, functionalism entails three interrelated and central theses of which none is shared by functional explanations. The theses are as follows:

> (1) All elements of social life are interconnected. They strongly influence one another and in aggregate form one inseparable whole (Interconnection Thesis).
> (2) All elements of social life support or reinforce one another, and hence too the whole society which in aggregate they constitute (Functional Interconnection Thesis).
> (3) Each element is as it is because of its contribution to the whole as described in (2) (Explanatory Functional Interconnection Thesis). (Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History,* 283-84.)

Cohen notes that (3) entails (2) and (2) entails (1). All three claims are integral to functionalism as a social theory, but a functional explanation does not entail any of these theses.

the mechanisms through which negative selection occurs. At the most general level, selection occurs as a result of the structural connections between the State and Capital. Because of the State's dependence upon capital accumulation for its own revenue, certain selections will be made. If the dysfunctional elements are not excluded by the structural mechanisms, they may be filtered at the level of ideology. That is, due to the assumptions people have about their social world, their relationship to this social world, and the everyday practices which engender these assumptions, a selective perception is generated. A third level of selection occurs at a procedural level. The institutional rules and processes establish an agenda whereby certain interests are given priority and others are excluded. The final level is the repressive mechanism: certain events are excluded as a result of direct force or repression.

With these mechanisms identified, Offe advances to the fourth and final proposition in his analysis. While the claim of operating mechanisms can be theoretically asserted, it must confront the empirical world. Admittedly, the "confrontation of theory and 'fact'" is never a simple task, and within the framework of negative selection particular methodological problems are encountered. Here the crucial dilemma centers on the sociological identification of excluded events: how does one establish the "presence" of nonevents? Offe's position is expressed best in the following statement:

> The historically concrete limits of a system of political power can only be perceived as a political practice and can only be identified in the class conflict engaged in through action and organization in which collective normative options turn into an empirical force. The class character of the State becomes evident analytically only in an ex post perspective, namely when limitations of its functions become apparent in class conflict.[19]

Offe's claim is that the exclusionary character of the State, and for us the curriculum, can only become evident through an identification of class conflict over potential selections. This empirical investigation must be supported by the conceptual framework of filter mechanisms. The selective limitations imposed by the State are revealed in at least two ways. When conflicts erupt between classes, either previously institutionalized State selective mechanisms exclude the dysfunctional element, or a new mechanism is established by the State. This framework does not assume success on the part of the State, but it does presuppose that the State attempts to exclude the dysfunctional elements.

The investigation of the selective tradition's claims will follow a route similar to Offe's analysis. To move from the realm of theoretical assertions to an empirical investigation requires (1) identifying the structural linkages between schools' curricula and a capitalist economy; (2) indicating that in the process of curriculum production those elements which would be dysfunctional for capital legitimation and accumulation are systematically excluded; (3) identifying the possible mechanisms at work; and (4) confronting the conceptual and methodological issues posed by an investigation of nonevents. Within these four areas, a substantive analysis of curriculum production will be suggested.

STRUCTURAL LINKAGES BETWEEN SCHOOL AND CAPITAL IN THE PRODUCTION OF CURRICULA

Since any investigation of the class-bound character of curriculum production depends upon the presence of linkages between schools and the capitalist economy, it will be useful to identify at least three "sites" where such connections occur. The connections between the production of curricular guidelines and materials within the schools and related state institutions (e.g., in the United States, departments of public instruction) *and* the capitalist economy can be located in at least three different types of relationships. The linkages can be seen at the points where business strategies focus on individual teachers; civic and business organizations push for their own class

19. Offe, "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State," 45.

interests in local and state school governance bodies (e.g., in the United States, school boards and state legislatures); and where corporate publishers of texts and curriculum materials interact with the local and state identification of curricular guidelines. All three sites of the connection between schools and a capitalist economy will be considered briefly.

It has been noted that smaller business and larger corporate entities concern themselves with the individual teacher. In his article "Curricular Form and the Logic of Technical Control," Michael Apple begins his discussion by outlining a corporate strategy known as the "Ryerson Plan."[20] The stated goal of this plan is the eradication of a purported antibusiness and anti-free-enterprise bias in American society. Through the "education" of school teachers in summer workshops, corporate representatives attempt to influence the curriculum. Although it is not Apple's purpose to highlight this connection, it is clear that here a linkage exists between the schools and the class-based corporate structure. Another example of this type of connection can be found in the non-educationally based corporate production of low-cost, and at times free, curricular materials. Multiple examples of this type of curriculum production can be found in Shelia Harty's *Hucksters in the Classroom: A Review of Industry Propaganda in the Schools.*[21] Both of these examples highlight one type of linkage between a capitalist economy and the schools: business organizations focus on the individual teacher.

A second type of connection can be seen in the class-backed organizational attempts to exclude particular texts and formulate broad curricular aims. These political strategies are usually focused on the local school boards and the state legislatures. The class character is readily apparent for some of these struggles, but for other initiatives more careful examination is necessary. The history of the successful exclusion of Harold Rugg's extremely popular social studies text from the public schools during the 1930s and 40s is one example where the class connection is apparent. Viewed by the Advertising Federation of America and the National Association of Manufacturers as a highly subversive textbook, the repeated publication of their charges of sedition reduced the use of the text to a point where it was no longer published. School boards did not want to purchase seditious texts. While in the late 1930s the series was used in over half of the public school systems in the United States, it had disappeared from the market by the late 1940s.[22] This example illustrates the connection between class-based organizations and the local and state school governance bodies.

Another link between the curriculum and the capitalist economy can be seen where the corporate production of textbooks and curricular materials connects with the state and local guidelines for curriculum selection. Frances Fitzgerald has noted that the guidelines for textbook adoption have a marked effect on the corporate production of texts.[23] Publishers produce books that meet the perceived guidelines and attempt to copy previously adopted texts. Once a text is adopted by a "super" state (e.g., Texas, Florida, or California), it is frequently adopted by other states.[24] Michael Apple has noted that in this process there are positive economic gains for both the publisher and the local school districts.[25] Publishers benefit from the adoption of their textbooks, and where a state subsidization of approved texts exists, the monetary benefits are shared

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20. Apple, "Curricular Form," 248.

21. See Shelia Harty, *Hucksters in the Classroom: A Review of Industry Propaganda in the Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Responsive Law, 1979).

22. Alexander S. Rippa, "The Textbook Controversy and the Free Enterprise Campaign," *History of Education Journal* 9, no. 3 (1958).

23. Fitzgerald, *America Revised.*

24. For various accounts of textbook publishing, see Hillel Black, *American Schoolbooks* (New York: William, Morrow, 1967); Paul Goldstein, *Changing the American Schoolbooks* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1979); Thomas Lawler, *Seventy Years of Textbook Publishing — A History of Ginn and Company* (Boston: Ginn, 1938); and James Reid, *An Adventure in Textbooks* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1969).

25. Apple, "Curricular Form."

by the local school district. While much of this situation has not been analyzed by curricular theorists, this connection between corporate publishers and state and local guidelines represents a third linkage between schools and a capitalist economy. The identification of these three sets of institutional linkages gives credence to the view that relationships of power exist between the institutions of schooling and Capital.

SYSTEMATIC SELECTION

A primary effect of these various linkages between schooling institutions and the capitalist economy is the "privileged consideration of particular interests and influences."[26] And in order to see how this privileged consideration operates, it is helpful to view educational institutions as State event-generating institutions involved in a selection process. The selective tradition's claim would be that this selection allows the capitalist class to gain a privileged position. An investigation of this claim would have to identify whether, and if so, how, this selection allows a priority to capitalist interests. To undertake this endeavor, it is helpful to distinguish conceptually between three different types of sorting and selecting processes.

In any selection process, there is a universe of possible events which will be excluded. Some exclusions could be connected to capitalist interests, while others could be the outcomes of forces unrelated in any direct or indirect manner to Capital. Due to the range of possible exclusions, it is helpful to differentiate between three different types of selection: sociohistorical, accidental, and systematic. The first two types of exclusion are not connected to specific class interests; systematic selection is.

Curricular topics which are excluded because of the sociohistorical premises of a society and/or the systematization and development of knowledge in a society are topics that are negatively selected but not tied to a capitalist economy. In the United States, an advanced capitalist country, the public schools do not teach incantations for faith healing, the alchemic properties of pewter, or the tribal lineages of its students. This type of exclusion is not an outcome of any particular tie that schools have to Capital. Rather, these curricular topics appear to be excluded due to the premises of what is justifiable knowledge or the result of a particular sociohistorical juncture. The continuing debates over values and sex education and over evolutionary theory in biological studies appear to fall within this realm. It is difficult to construe these debates and conflicts as emanating from a logic of capitalism.

Accidental exclusions are those events that are negatively selected because of the contingent features of curriculum production. These events could have come into existence without violating sociohistorical premises or conflicting with the structure or the procedural rules of the institutions. The recent presence of sand and water tables in United States primary schools was once thought to be the result of the influence of the British infant school movement. Yet these curricular devices could be found in rural Wisconsin schools at the turn of the century. These pedagogical tools were part of the elementary curriculum in the past, were later excluded, and now can again be found in the primary levels of some schools in the United States. Their inclusion has not altered the institutional structure or the procedural rules of the school. It appears that there are a range of curricular topics whose inclusion or exclusion is based on pedagogical considerations. These pedagogically motivated selections can be seen as outcomes of the contingent aspects or the sociohistorical premises of curriculum production.

Whereas neither the sociohistorical nor the accidental selections can be connected to the logic of a capitalist economy, systematically excluded events are generated directly by the schools' structures and processes as political systems and arise out of the linkages of power between schooling institutions and structures of class interests. And yet systematic selection is not defined solely as those selections that arise out of

26. Offe, "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State," 36.

the structural linkages between schools and Capital. If the schools and their curricula are to be identified as aspects of the systematically selective State, the schools must not only be linked to Capital but also be shown to select out those events that are dysfunctional to the creation of the conditions for the reproduction and production of a capitalist system. Two types of dysfunctional selection are important. It must be shown that curriculum topics which would damage or harm the long-term accumulation process of Capital are excluded and that the curriculum topics which are divisive or oppositional to the legitimation of capitalist production are also excluded.[27]

THE MECHANISMS

Systematic selection can be analyzed as operating through a system of four kinds of mechanisms. Offe's claim is that these mechanisms are organized as a nested set of filters in a sorting process. As noted earlier, the mechanisms operate at four different levels: structural, ideological, procedural, and repressive. Through this hierarchical layer of filters the curricular topics that are dysfunctional to Capital could be excluded. To understand how these mechanisms operate, two steps must be taken. In this section I will describe each level of filtration pointing to the possible class connection. I will not adequately substantiate the class connections here. In the next section I will note how these mechanisms are to be connected methodologically to class.

At the structural level, it can be seen that schools are articulated to labor markets and capital accumulation in two significant ways. Labor markets place specific limitations on the schools: curricula should engender knowledgeable and skilled workers. Schools are also structurally dependent upon capital accumulation through the means of public taxation. These two features impose limits on the curriculum. Dependent upon capital accumulation for their revenues, schools are sensitive to the needs of Capital. Business organizations form coalitions with schooling institutions to identify the necessary skills for the labor force. Due to the nexus of schools and the labor market, parents are concerned that the schools' curricula focus on the fundamental working skills of its classed populations. It appears that in the face of capital flight or parental disapproval, the curriculum is structurally predisposed to the interests of Capital.[28]

While the scope of possible curricular topics is limited initially by the structural articulation of schools, labor markets, and capital accumulation, the curriculum is restricted further by a system of ideological norms. At the ideological level, limitations occur through the promotion of a "selective perception and articulation of social problems and conflicts."[29] To borrow from Therborn's analysis of ideology, the schooling population's perception of what exists, what is good, and what is possible, when applied to the selection and creation of curriculum materials, limits the possibilities for a broader scope of curriculum materials and practices.[30] In the literature, the ideological filter has been the major focus. Further refinements are now in order. Some of the pertinent concerns and questions include: What is the definition of ideology and how,

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27. A dual-class analysis is used in this paper for conceptual clarity and simplicity. Surely a discussion of the "middle," "new middle," "professional," or "contradictory" class role in schools is crucial. However, given the assertions of the capitalist nature of public school curricula, any triclass analysis must investigate the role of this third class in maintaining both accumulation and legitimation.

28. Thanks are in order to Professor Erik Olin Wright for pointing out this reading of a structural mechanism.

29. Offe, "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State," 39.

30. See Goran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1980).

exactly, does it operate in a capitalist society?[31] Where are the ideological mechanisms most effective? Is it at the level of teachers' ideological formation, the daily classroom practices, the community's perception of what is appropriate knowledge, or the students' evaluation of worthwhile knowledge? And what are the daily practices that reinforce the selective perception of what is an appropriate curriculum? In order for an analysis of the ideological mechanisms to be convincing and empirically forceful, these questions need to be addressed.

Selection also occurs as a result of institutional procedures. Offe states that "every procedural rule creates conditions of being favored or conversely being excluded for certain issues, groups or interests."[32] This mechanism can be seen in the state adoption procedures of curricular materials. Twenty-one of the fifty states require state approval of curricular materials. This centralized structure allows either highly limited local participation or choice from a list of state-approved materials. California and West Virginia have a dual selection structure between the state and local laws, and the remaining twenty-seven states allow local selection.[33] The states with a centralized structure limit the direct political participation in curriculum formation and thereby enlarge the radius of bureaucratic action. This limit has an effect on those states with local policies. Given the requirements for capital accumulation, the publisher will produce with an eye to the largest and most secure market — the centralized states. The effect is that curriculum materials available for those states with local policies will have been previously selected by publishers producing for the centralized states. In those school districts where teacher participation in the creation of curricula is sanctioned by state and local regulations, teachers are allowed to present curriculum materials for approval through a complex system of committee meetings. Some teachers, overworked in many areas, decline the invitation to sit through review committees and fill out the required forms.[34] Those teacher-initiated materials that have followed the procedures tend to conform to the formats of existing curriculum materials. Teachers know that material which mimics established curricula is given priority and a head start. Other materials are thereby excluded.

The final level of selective filtration is the limitation imposed through suggested or implemented acts of repression or force. Dismissals of politically active teachers have occurred throughout the history of schooling in the United States, and books have been removed from school libraries. In the earlier part of this century, New York City teachers were fired because of the allegedly critical content of their curricula.[35]

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31. Here, as throughout the remainder of this article, I have employed a rather general notion of ideology. As I noted earlier with respect to class (see note 11), the conceptual substance of ideology needs to be examined further. Some of the works which hold some promise for this task are: Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1979); Martin Seliger, *The Marxist Conception of Ideology* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977); and Therborn, *The Power of Ideology and the Ideology of Power*. Larrain's and Therborn's analyses are "sympathetic" to the Marxist project of constructing theories of ideology. Seliger is highly critical of the Marxist conception of ideology.

A rigorous and stimulating argument for restricting the concept of ideology has been constructed by Michael Dale, "Stalking a Conceptual Chameleon," and presented at the Marxism and Education Symposium, University of Wisconsin, March 1984.

32. Offe, "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State," 40.

33. See Meredith Damien Gall, *Handbook for Evaluating and Selecting Curriculum Material* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1981).

34. A principal in the Madison, Wisconsin, Public School System pointed out this trend. As a supervisor of student teachers in the public schools, I have also noted this practice. This example should not be taken as an empirical substantiation of the presence of a procedural filter. It serves to clarify the level of procedural selection.

35. Ken Teitelbaum's forthcoming doctoral dissertation points to some examples of this selective mechanism. See Kenneth Teitelbaum, "Schooling for 'Good Rebels': Socialist Education for Children in the United States 1900-1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, forthcoming).

Throughout this century, school officials and parents have illegally taken materials out of the school libraries. Active or threatened repression excludes curricular options.

METHODOLOGICAL DILEMMAS

These four levels of selection illustrate the possible mechanisms of exclusion, but as noted above, they are not adequately connected to Capital. To assert a claim of systematic selection, these exclusions must be shown to be nonaccidental and dysfunctional for capital accumulation and legitimation. An identification of the mechanisms is, by itself, insufficient to argue the systematic nature of selection. The mechanisms must be shown to select out those curricular topics that are dysfunctional to a capitalist economy. This problem represents one methodological obstacle in the attempt to link curricular exclusions to the interests of Capital as a whole. A second problem involves the previously mentioned methodological dilemma posed by the study of "nonevents." Any attempt to show the nonaccidental, class-related character of the exclusions must employ concepts which point to what is excluded. Offe has a solution. The identification of the class character of curricular exclusions is accomplished through investigating the normatively expressed and observable instances of class conflict. The only way adequately to substantiate the nonaccidental and dysfunctional nature of the exclusions and confront the problems posed by the status of nonevents is to identify the exclusionary mechanisms in operation in "political practice. . . . [for it is] only in class conflict engaged in actions and organizations in which the collective normative options turn into empirical force. The ruling class character of the State becomes evident analytically only in an ex post perspective, namely when the limitations of its functions become apparent in class conflict."[36] Offe's methodological route focuses on the eruption of class conflict, that is, on times of crisis. This does not mean that all investigations of the selective nature of the curriculum must focus on times of crisis. However, through an analysis of expressed class conflict over curricular aims, content, and practices the attempted exclusions become an objective and identifiable focus of struggle, the mechanisms can be identified, and the class character of the selections can be confirmed. The analysis of normal periods can note the continued presence or absence of the mechanisms, but, and this must be stressed, any such analysis needs to rely on studies of overt conflict to link the mechanisms to class. A limited example of how this research agenda could progress can be seen in a historical analysis which highlights the role of class conflict over curricular aims and content. Julia Wrigley's doctoral thesis on the Chicago school system presents some tentative leads as it focuses on class conflict and identifies the creation of procedural selective mechanisms.[37]

A HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

In a study on the politics of the Chicago school system from the turn of the century to the years directly following World War II, Wrigley found that organized labor and business organizations battled over the control of the curriculum. One of the areas of conflict concerned proposals made by Chicago's Commercial Club and other related capitalist interest groups to create a dual system of academic and vocational education. The proposal was visibly resisted by the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Illinois State Federation of Labor. Labor opposed the plan for the reorganization in explicit class terms: such a dual system would confine their children's futures but not the futures of the children of members of the Commercial Club. Another area of contestation between labor and business was the content of the public schools' curricula. Labor supported a "fads and frills" proposal which extended the scope of the curriculum

36. Offe, "Structural Problems of the Capitalist State," 45.

37. Julia Wrigley, "The Politics of Education in Chicago: Social Conflict in the Public Schools" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1977). See also Julia Wrigley, "Class Politics and School Reform in Chicago," in *Classes, Class Conflict and the State*, ed. Maurice Zeitlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1981).

beyond the basic, rudimentary skills. The employers' organizations wanted to limit the curricula of the public schools to the "Three R's." In both of these areas of conflict, labor pressed for an extension of offerings to working-class students, while the business organizations pushed to limit the aims and content of the working-class schools. Workers did not want their children's futures tied to the needs of Capital, and the capitalists did not want an ill-trained and dissatisfied work force.

What is important for our purposes is Wrigley's identification of a selective mechanism which was created to limit the educational programs. The original site of class conflict was the open political arena of the community, and the conflict focused on the decision-making status of the school board. Due to the initial defeat of the employers' proposals, the business groups altered their strategies, and "instead of provoking direct conflict, as the Commercial Club had done, the business groups in most cases attempted to work with middle class civic organizations to secure revision of the structure of the school system. The goal of 'efficient' school administration was common to both and provided justification for many changes that met with business approval."[38] In this account, bureaucratic procedural mechanisms were instituted as a result of the conflict between labor and business organizations. Defeated in the open political arena, business organizations joined forces with the "middle-class civic organizations" to create procedural mechanisms which accomplished their procapitalist goals.

Wrigley's study emphasizes both the class conflict and the creation of a procedural mechanism. The connection between selection and class is accomplished by linking the empirically identifiable class antagonism to the institutionalization of a procedural selective mechanism. The business groups achieved their goals and excluded labor's opposition by instituting a plan of "efficient" school administration. As such, Wrigley's account provides an example of how the curriculum can be viewed as a product of systematic selection. The selection is shown to be functional for Capital as it excludes labor's dysfunctional opposition, and the mechanism is identified and connected to class interest.

SUMMARY

In this article I have attempted to reconstruct the conceptual and methodological framework of the selective tradition. I have formulated a conceptual and methodological approach whereby the claims of a capitalist curriculum can be confirmed, disconfirmed, or reformulated. In general, my presentation, with its use of substantive examples, has given limited credence to the claim that aspects of the public schools' curricula are selected products tied to a capitalist economy. However, the major reason for entering into a reexamination of the claims of a selective tradition has been to provide an explanatory framework more amenable to empirical corroboration or falsification. Sociological argument about curriculum production must begin to pay heed to the empirical rigor of any reputable scientific endeavor. Having elaborated an explanatory framework, the validity of the argument must now rest, to a great degree, upon whether or not these selective mechanisms can be empirically identified and tied to a capitalist economy.[39] If this can be accomplished, serious consideration should then be given by those outside the tradition of neo-Marxist scholarship to the claims of a selective tradition. If this cannot be accomplished, those working within the critical tradition will have seriously to revise their theoretical framework and empirical claims.

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38. Wrigley, "Politics of Education in Chicago," 120.

39. Further analysis would need to address the following questions: If segments of the curricula are tied to Capital, is the Capital-curricula connection the dominant force in determining curricular content? Does this functional relation significantly constrain and limit other forces impinging on the curricula? Are these other influences independent of Capital? In short, and to give it a practical twist, What changes in public school curricula must await an alteration in the capitalist social formation and what changes can occur within a capitalist socioeconomic order?