Ethnic Differences in Achievement – Internal Factors

LO: To understand and evaluate the role of different internal factors on ethnic differences in achievement

Internal factors to be considered:
- Labelling
- Pupil Subcultures
- The Curriculum
- Institutional racism
- Selection and segregation

Starter: Some evidence to consider...

Gillborn and Mirza (2000) – black pupils are the highest achievers on entry to primary school yet when it comes to GCSEs in secondary school they are the worse ethnic group (21 points below average).

Does this support or challenge cultural deprivation? Explain your answers.

Labelling and Teacher Racism

Labelling – attaching a meaning or definition to a person, which may lead to a self fulfilling prophesy. This is where a label or prediction about a person comes true, simply because it has been made.

Asian Pupils

Wright (1992)
Teacher expectations of Asian pupils – they will have a poor grasp of English.
Consequences: These pupils were often left our of class discussions or teachers used simplistic, childish language when speaking to them. Asian pupils were not seen as a threat and were often ignored.

Black Pupils and Discipline

Gillborn (2000)
- Schools are institutionally racist and have racialized expectations
- E.G. Black pupils will offer more behavioural problems, be threatening, challenge authority, get excluded.
- Teachers interpret school policy in a way that disadvantages black pupils e.g. setting (lower sets), G & T (less likely to be black pupils).

Conclusions: Conflict between black pupils and teachers actually arises from racial stereotypes, NOT the pupils’ actual behaviour!

Also linked to the educational triage – black pupils are more likely to be labelled as “no hopers”.
This leads to them being placed in bottom sets – the streaming of black pupils based on negative stereotypes about their behaviour.

Black Pupils and Labelling – The Evidence

Jasper (2002) –
White female teachers are more likely to teach black pupils in a style less conducive to learning. This is based on their expectation of their behaviour e.g. less creative, less group work.

Gillborn (1990)
African-Caribbean pupils are more likely to be given detentions due to the (mis)interpretation that these pupils were challenging their authority with the way they spoke, dress and manner.

The students find it unfair and respond in accordance to their labels!

Pupil Identities, Subcultures and Responses

Pupil identities: Archer (2008)
A teachers dominant discourse (their way of seeing something) defines and constructs three types of ethnic minority pupils’ identities. Match them up!

The ideal pupil identity
An Asian ‘deserving poor’, feminised identity, either asexual or with an oppressed sexuality, this pupil is ‘plodding’ and a conformist, a culture bound ‘over achiever’ who achieves through hard work, not a natural.

The pathologised pupil identity
A black or white pupil, working class, hypersexualised, unintelligent, peer-led, cultural depriver, under achiever.

The demonised pupil identity
A white, middle class, masculine identity with a normal sexuality, this pupil achieves in the “right” way, through natural ability and intuitive.
Ethnic minority groups – Demonised or Pathologised

Fuller (1984) – Pupil Responses
Labelling does NOT always lead to a self fulfilling prophesy!
Read the information on page 43 – Rejecting negative labels. I would like you to consider the following:
1. The sample – age, gender, ethnicity, background.
2. The responses of these students to the negative labels placed on them.
3. The main conclusions to be drawn from Fuller’s research, regarding negative labels in schools.

Mirza: Rejecting Teacher’s Advice
Black girls are anti-school but pro-education.
Mirza (1992) notes how some black girls openly reject the help from teachers at school, which they see as being patronising and misguided e.g. careers advice especially – teachers discouraging them from persuing professional careers.

However, unlike Fuller’s findings – this strategy held these students back academically – they rebelled and rejected the schools value (through dress and attitudes and behaviour).
So, rejecting negative labels does not always lead to educational achievement.

Evaluation of Labelling and Pupil Responses
Modood (2003) “If racism leads to a victim being turned off at school and dropping out, why do Asian men and women have such high staying-on rates and make academic progress?”
Caution needs to be taken when generalising the findings from these studies to ALL teachers/pupils.
Should not adopt a “blame the teachers” approach – rather the educational system as a whole should be assessed.
E.G. Gillborn and Youell – marketization of education = pressure for schools to hit the A-C grades at GCSE = streaming and setting.
Is it really the school’s fault?
Also this is a VERY deterministic view – assuming that students will automatically fail victim to self fulfilling prophesies and automatically fail – Fuller’s research suggests otherwise.

Internal factors: Institutional Racism
To understand the ethnic differences in educational achievement, we need to go beyond teacher racism and start looking at the education system as a whole.
Task: Read the articles on institutional racism in schools. We will be thinking about the following:
Which ethnic groups are most discussed? What are the reasons behind the educational differences?
Who is being “blamed” in these articles – schools, teachers, children – and why? Or is society as a whole being blamed?

Ethnic Differences: Institutional Racism
LO: To understand and evaluate the role of institutional racism in educational achievement
“There is a problem with institutional racism in schools. It’s about low expectations of pupils.”
Beaula McCalla, Erondu Foundation for black Caribbean pupils in Bristol.
“...there is a link between behaviour and academic outcome. It doesn’t mean that’s evidence of institutional racism. It’s evidence that we need to address properly the complex reasons why black Caribbean pupils behave badly. We can’t just say it’s white racist teachers.”
Tony Sewell
STARTER: Both suggestions are valid – which do you agree with more and why?
Institutional Racism

- Critical Race Theory – Society is SO racist that a racist educational system is simply a result of historical discrimination.

The work of Gillborn

- Marketisation and segregation
- The ethnocentric curriculum
- Assessments, access opportunities and ‘IQism’.
- Criticisms of Gillborn’s work
- An interactionist approach – class, ethnicity and gender.

**The Ethnocentric Curriculum:**

Sociologists such as Troy & Williams (1988) & David (1993) argue that the National Curriculum is ‘specifically British’ & focuses only on White culture, ignoring non-European languages, literature & music.

Ball (1994) uses the term ‘Little Englandism’ to describe the way the curriculum focuses on White British culture & tries to recreate ‘a mythical age of empire & past glories while largely ignoring the history of Black & Asian people’.

Coad (1975, 2005) highlights how Black culture & history is taught to be primitive & how White people civilised such groups.

AO3: What about Indian & Chinese pupils?

**The Ethnocentric Curriculum:**

- So what is the problem?
- Why would an ethnocentric curriculum lead to educational achievement being ethnic minority groups?

Coad (1975, 2005) highlights how Black culture & history is taught to be primitive & how White people civilised such groups.

Self Esteem

May lower self esteem and undermine Black pupils – could lead to failure (fatalism?)

Not feeling as though they are good enough so they give up trying.

Assessment, Access and IQism

“...the ‘assessment game’ is rigged to such an extent that if Black children succeed as a group, despite the odds being stacked against them, it is likely that the rules will be changed to re-engineer the failure”

Racism and Education: Coincidence Or Conspiracy? (Gillborn 2008)

Read the story and information on assessments, G & T and access in UK schools. Answer the questions at the end into your books. We can discuss these first.

EXT: Start reading ahead – AO3 for Gillborn.
Criticisms of Gillborn

AO3: Black boys' underachievement

Comparison with EXTERNAL factors.

According to Sewell – although racism has not disappeared from schools, it is not powerful enough to prevent individuals from succeeding.

To deal with Black boys’ underachievement we need to deal with the external factors e.g. anti-school attitudes, peer groups/gangs.

Model Minorities: Indian and Chinese Achievement

Critics point to the fact that as well as ethnic underachievement and institutional racism (e.g. in Black pupils) there is also ethnic overachievement by other “model minorities”.

If these students do well, how can institutional racism be the issue?

Gillborn (2008) suggests that this image of Indian and Chinese pupils being “hardworking, model minorities” performs an ideology function – it actually conceals the fact that schools are institutionally racist by the following…