Year 1 Sociology

**Paper 1: Education with Theory & Methods**



Education

Booklet 4: Differential Educational Achievement of Social Groups: **Ethnicity**

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Class:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Specification Content:

**What you need to know for Education in your Paper 1 exam:**

You will be expected to:

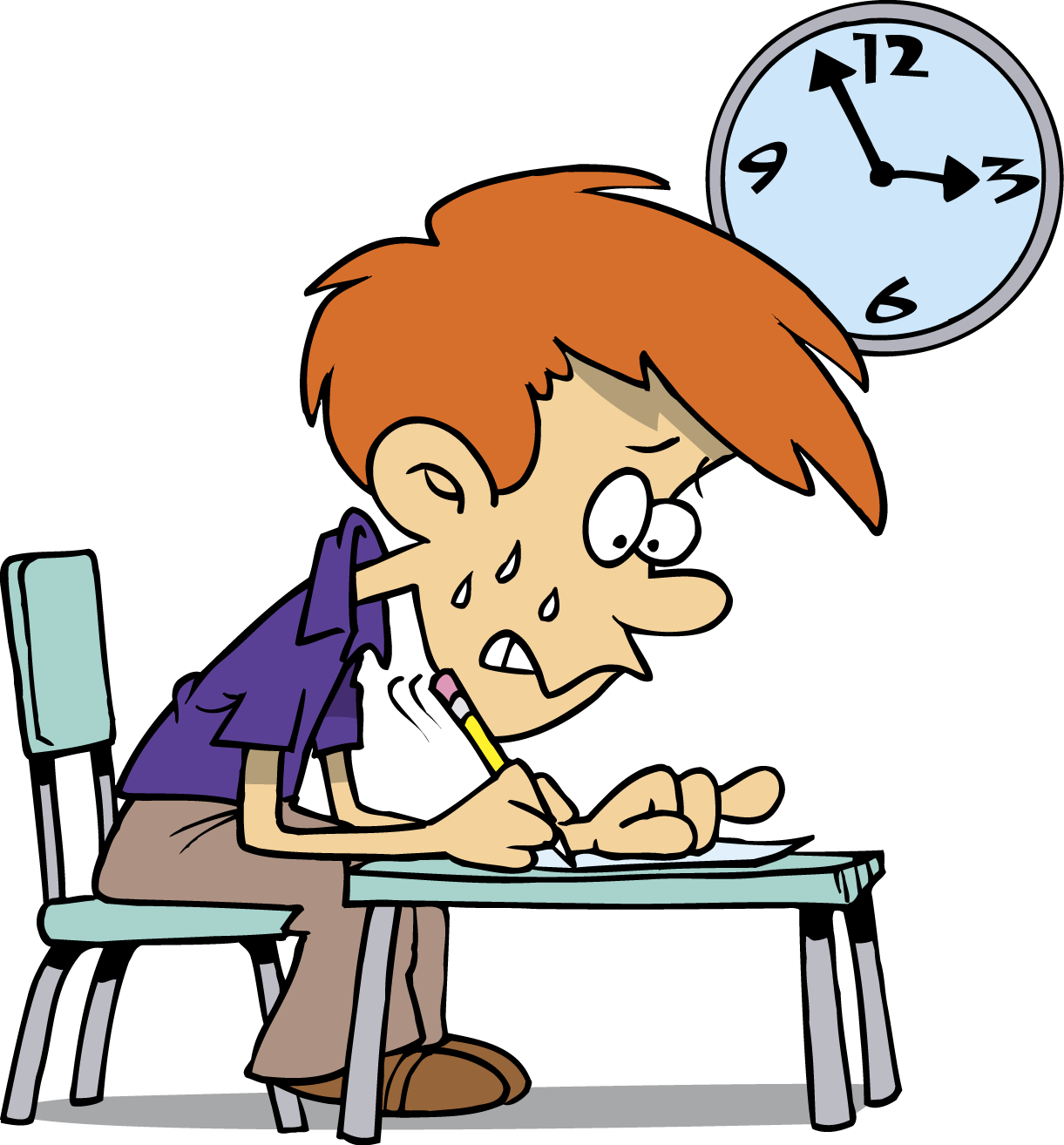
* The role and functions of the education system, including its relationship to the economy and to class structure
* Differential educational achievement of social groups by social class, gender and ethnicity in contemporary society
* Relationships and processes within schools, with particular reference to teacher/pupil relationships, pupil identities and subcultures, the hidden curriculum, and the organisation of teaching and learning
* The significance of educational policies, including policies of selection, Marketisation and privatisation, and policies to achieve greater equality of opportunity or outcome, for an understanding of the structure, role, impact and experience of and access to education; the impact of globalisation on educational policy.

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| **Questions may be based specifically on the following areas:** | | Do I have completed Notes? | Have I made revision Notes? | Have I memorised this info? | Have I practised exam style questions? |
| **Social class differences and achievement** | Patterns and trends in educational achievement by social class e.g. in relation to GCSE results |  |  |  |  |
| External factors: explanations of class differences e.g cultural deprivation, material deprivation and cultural capital; plus evaluation |  |  |  |  |
| Internal factors: teacher labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy, pupil subcultures and pupils’ class identities |  |  |  |  |
| **Gender differences and achievement** | Patterns and trends in educational achievement by gender e.g. in relation to GCSE results |  |  |  |  |
| External factors: changes in the family and labour market affecting women and men; influence of feminism |  |  |  |  |
| Internal factors: curriculum selection and Marketisation, feminism of education, pupil subcultures, gender identities, subject choice |  |  |  |  |
| **Ethnic differences and achievement** | Patterns and trends in educational achievement by ethnicity e.g. in relation to GCSE results |  |  |  |  |
| External factors: cultural deprivation, material deprivation and racism in wider society |  |  |  |  |
| Internal factors: racist labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy, pupil subcultural responses, ethnic identities, institutional racism, ethnocentric curriculum |  |  |  |  |

Exam Structure:

**This topic will appear on Paper 1 at A Level**

The A-level Paper 1 will be 2 hours long, contain 80 marks and be worth a third of your A Level. You will be assessed via short answer and extended writing questions in the following areas:

* [](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiH17rsm6rNAhUMBcAKHYIYCW0QjRwIBw&url=http://firearmsafetycanada.com/?page_id=12&psig=AFQjCNEdDWy4gaTupewTvc6I4kTb1sWMrQ&ust=1466086461052204)**Education**: short answer and extended writing worth 50 marks
* **Methods In Context**: extended writing worth 20 marks
* **Theory and Methods**: extended writing worth 10 marks

**Area 2: Ethnic Differences and Achievement**



By the end of this section, should be able to:

* Describe patterns of ethnic differences in educational achievement
* Describe and evaluate the role of internal factors
* Describe and evaluate the role of external factors
* Provide a summary of the interaction of class, ethnicity and gender in relation to educational achievement

Ethnicity ***'people who share common history, customs and identity, as well as, in most cases, language and religion, and who see themselves as a distinct unit'*.**

Many people confuse ethnicity and race.

**Ethnicity** is defined by culture, national customs, language or beliefs.

**Race** is defined by biology and this can mean physical characteristics that may be related to skin colour or other physiological features.

Patterns and trends in educational achievement by ethnicity

1. Describe the relationship between ethnicity and GCSE performance

2. Suggest reasons for the differences in achievement between different ethnic groups *(think of some of reasons we discussed for class differences)*

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Source: National Pupil Database (3013)

**Facts and Figures**

One way of measuring educational achievement is to look at GCSE grade A\*-C:

* In 2004 - Chinese pupils had the highest proportion achieving this level (79% girls and 70% boys). This was followed by Indian pupils (72% girls and 62% boys). Chinese and Indian pupils are also more likely to get better AS/A level results, stay in education after 16 years, and also go to university.
* In 2004 - Lowest levels of achievement were among black African Caribbean (boys 27% and girls 44%)
* In 2013 - Gypsy/Roma and Traveller-of-Irish-Heritage pupils consistently have lower levels of attainment than all other ethnic groups.

Any other thoughts about these statistics?

Explaining ethnic group differences in educational achievement:

To explain ethnic group differences in achievement, we need to break these reasons down in to internal factors (within school) and external factors (outside of school)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **External factors** | **Internal factors** |
| Cultural Deprivation | Labelling and teacher racism |
| Material Deprivation | Ethnic identities |
| Racism in wider society | Pupil responses and subcultures |
|  | Institutional racism and the ethnocentric curriculum |

**External factors**

**1. Cultural Deprivation**

This explanation sees the underachievement of some ethnic groups as the results of inadequate socialisation in the home. The explanation has three main aspects:

1.Language

Official statistics (2013) have found that 18% of pupils in primary, and 13% of pupils in secondary schools (with much higher proportions in some areas) did not have English as their first language or the main language used in their homes.

How might lack of English Language skills lead to underachievement?

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How might children with English as a second language be unconsciously penalized in the classroom? *(include labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy).*

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Bereiter and Engelmann consider language spoken by low income Black American families as not complicated enough for success in education. The see it as ‘umgrammatical, disjointed and incapable of expressing abstract ideas’.

Link this to what you have learnt in the previous topic

**BUT / HOWEVER / ON THE OTHER HAND**



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There has been the concern that students who don't speak English at home may be held back educationally. However, official statistics (2010) have found that pupils with English as a first language were only 3.2 points ahead of those without English as a first language (55.2% to 52.0%) when gaining 5 GCSE A\*-C.

Similarly, the **Swann Report (1985)** found that while language factors might hold back some children, for the majority it was not a major factor in underachievement, while **David Gillborn and Heidi Safia Mirza (2000)** note that Indian pupils do very well despite often not having English as their home language. Also, evidence from the **Department for Education (2013)** showed that pupils with English as a second language, who speak another language in their homes, outperformed in the EBacc their classmates who had English as their first language.

*What does this tell us about intellectual and linguistic skills as an explanations for ethnic groups differences in achievement?*…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………............................................................................................................

2. Family life and parental support



Sociologists suggest that some minority groups offer more support for education at home than others.

* *African-Caribbean families*

**Moynihan (1965)** argues that many African-Caribbean families are headed by a single mother. So underachievement in boys has been linked to the large number of female-headed, one-parent families in this community. As a result, their children are deprived of adequate care because she has to struggle financially in the absence of a male breadwinner. It is argued that boys are disruptive in the classroom because of the lack of authoritative fathers / role models to control their behaviour. This may be why a large number of African Caribbean children are excluded from schools. This can be a vicious cycle if these children from unstable families go on to fail at school and become inadequate parents themselves.

New Right sociologist **Murray (1989)** argues that black one-parent families are part of an ‘underclass’ that is not committed to mainstream values and does not value education. Cultural deprivation theorists see lack of motivation as a major cause of the failure of many black children. Most children are socialised into the mainstream culture, which instils ambition, competiveness and willingness to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve long-term goals. This makes them ready for success. By contrast, cultural deprivation theorists argue, some black children are socialised into a **subculture** that instils a fatalistic, 'live for today' attitude that does not value education and leaves them unequipped for success.

**Evaluation**: Ken Pryce (1979) is in support of this view. Why? P38 of textbook.

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**Sewell (2009): fathers, gangs and culture**

What does Sewell (2009) say about the causes of underachievement for black boys?

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* *Asian families*

**Asian families** are seen as close knit and more supportive of education and have high aspirations.

**Driver and Ballard (1981**) also argue that Asian family structures bring educational benefits. Asian parents have more positive attitudes towards education, and higher aspirations for their children’s future, and as a result are more supportive.

In a more recent study, **Ruth Lupton (2004)** argues that adult authority in Asian families is similar to the model that operates in schools. She found that respectful behaviour towards adults was expected from children. This has a knock-on effect in school, since parents were more likely to be supportive of school behaviour policies.

* *White working-class families*

**Lupton (2004)** studied 4 mainly working class schools 2 mainly white, one serving a largely Pakistani community and the fourth very mixed. She found the poorest levels of behaviour and discipline in the white working-class schools and blamed this on lower levels of parental support and the negative attitudes that white working-class parents had towards education. These parents had fairly indifferent or negative attitude towards learning and toward school, and low aspirations for their children.

*What does* ***Evans (2006)*** *state is another reason for white working-class underachievement?*

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**An interaction of home and school factors?**

**Bhatti (1999**) found a relationship between home and school for Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian Asian pupils. They found that parents are very supportive and had a high level of interest in their child's education, though they didn't know much about the daily processes and organisation of schools, and their children's experience of schooling. Many didn't know how to approach the school or teachers, so avoided doing so unless it was essential. Many of those who did visit found school unwelcoming. Their own level of education meant they were sometimes unable to help their children with schoolwork as much as they would have liked to. Similarly, **Vincent (2011)** found that black middle-class parents were concerned and actively involved in their children's schooling e.g. enrolling them in extra-curricular activities and extra tutoring. However, they found teachers treated them as if they knew less about their children's education than white middle-class parents, despite having similar qualifications, and expected them to be far less interested in education than their white peers.

Why are these two points important?

**Evaluation: Criticisms of Cultural Deprivation**



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* Keddie says cultural deprivation explanations can sometimes be viewed as a victim blaming approach. Ethnic minority children are culturally *different* not culturally deprived. They underachieve because schools are ethnocentric (biased in favour of white middle-class).
* Geoffrey Driver (1977) says cultural deprivation theory for ignores the positive effects of ethnicity on achievement. He shows that the African Caribbean family, far from being dysfunctional, provides girls with positive role models of strong independent women. Driver argues that this is why black girls tend to be more successful in education than black boys.
* Lawrence (1982) challenges Pryce's view that black pupils fail because their culture is weak and they lack self-esteem. He argues black pupils under-achieve not because of low self-esteem, but because of racism.
* These critics oppose compensatory education because they see this as an attempt to impose the dominant white culture on children who already have a coherent culture of their own. They propose two alternatives:

**Multicultural education**: a policy that recognises and values minority cultures and includes them in the curriculum.

**Anti-racist education:** a policy that challenges the prejudice and discrimination that exists in schools and wider society.

**Check your understanding**

1. In your own words, describe some of the cultural factors, identified by cultural deprivation theorists that are mainly responsible for ethnic differences in attainment.

2. State one criticism of cultural deprivation theory as an explanation of ethnic differences in achievement.

**C:\Program Files\Microsoft Office\MEDIA\CAGCAT10\j0185604.wmf2. Material Deprivation**

*How are material deprivation and ethnicity linked?*

Material deprivation explanations see educational failure as resulting from factors such as substandard housing and low income. Ethnic minorities are more likely to face these problems. For example, according to **Flaherty (2004):**

* Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are over three times more likely than whites to be in the poorest fifth of the population; as well as around a third of Black Caribbean living in poverty compared to one in five White British people.
* Unemployment is three times higher for African and Bangladeshi/ Pakistani people than whites.
* 15% of ethnic minority households live in overcrowded conditions, compared with only 2% of white households.
* Pakistanis are nearly twice as likely to be in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs compared to whites. Ethnic minority workers are more likely to be engaged in shift work.
* Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean people are two to three times more eligible for free school meals (FSM) - an indicator of the poorest social classes.

How does this link to the previous topic?

This means that some ethnic minority groups face problems like poor-quality housing, overcrowding, higher levels of unemployment (partly due to racism) and general material disadvantage, which may affect achievement levels in school.

These inequalities reflect those seen in educational achievement. For example, Indians and whites generally have a higher social class position than Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, who often face high levels of poverty. The material deprivation explanation argues that such class differences explain why Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils tend to do worse than Indian and white pupils. Similarly, the percentage of Indian Asian and Chinese pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below the average for all pupils, and they are more likely to come from business and professional middle-class family backgrounds, thereby gaining all the benefits available in education.

The variation in social class background may mean that the differences in ethnic groups in achievement, may have less to do with ethnicity, and more to do with social and economic disadvantage.

Why is this picture complicated? See p 40 about Indian and Chinese pupils who are materially deprived and still do better than most?

**3. Racism in wider society**

Chine et al (2002) found racism is common in schools and while travelling to and from school. Traveller / Gypsy children faced the worst. This is likely to make their experience of school more stressful.

Choose some examples of racism which surprise you from p41

**Internal Factors**

Gillborn and Mirza (2000) have found that in one local education authority, black children were the highest achievers on entry to primary school (20% above the local average), but by GCSE, they had the worst results of any ethnic group – 21 points *below* the local average.

These findings challenge cultural deprivation theories that some children enter school unprepared. Therefore it is possible that factors internal to school may play a role in producing ethic differences in achievement.

1. **Labelling and teacher racism**

When looking at ethnic differences in achievement, interactionists focus on the different labels teachers give to children from different ethnic backgrounds. Their studies show that teachers often see black and Asian pupils as being far from the ‘ideal pupil’. For example, black pupils are often seen as disruptive and Asians as passive. Negative labels may lead teachers to treat ethnic minority pupils differently. This disadvantages them and may result in their failure.

**Task**: Investigate how this has affected the achievement of black pupils and Asian pupils

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Black Pupils** | **Asian pupils** |
| Black pupils and discipline:  Black pupils and streaming: |  |

1. **Pupil identities**

Teachers may not be consciously racist but the Swann report found that many are unintentionally racist so may favour pupils or give more time to some or give individual praise for example more often to white pupils than to black Caribbean girls and boys.

Wright and Connolly looked at stereotypes in inner-city schools and found these stereotypes – positive impressions of Asian girls and Asians in general. Black Caribbean pupils were seen as having low potential and being disruptive. This means these pupils were reacted to more quickly creating conflict.

Also the media does not help with links to drug culture and crime.

Gillbourn – looks at stereotypes and low expectations showing that black pupils are more likely to go into lower sets. Gillbourn and Youdell (2000) showed that labelling led to self-fulfilling prophecies, resentment and cycles of disruption.

**Archer (2008)** describes that teachers’ *dominant discourse* (way of seeing something) defines ethnic minority pupils’ identities as not being like the ‘ideal pupil’.

Archer describes how the dominant discourse constructs three different pupil identities:

[](http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CAcQjRw&url=http://www.how-to-draw-funny-cartoons.com/cartoon-students.html&ei=9L6SVaOSDcyN7AbrzoPwCw&bvm=bv.96783405,d.ZGU&psig=AFQjCNEVw0yb1mZW941nN2Hpl45Wevt4cw&ust=1435766877335192)

*According to Archer, what pupil identities are ethnic minorities likely to have?*

*How are Chinese pupils viewed and stereotyped by teachers?*

1. **Pupil responses and subcultures**

Pupil responses are to do with how the pupils respond to be negatively labelled. Can you remember from our previous topic how pupils may react?

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**Key Study: Fuller (1984)**

The study of a group of black girls in year 11 of a London comprehensive school. The girls were untypical because they were high achievers in a school where most black girls were placed in lower streams.

Fuller describes how, instead of accepting negative stereotypes of themselves, the girls channelled their anger about being labelled into the pursuit of educational success. However, unlike other successful pupils, they did not seek the approval of teachers, many of whom they regarded as racist. Nor did they limit their choice of friends to other academic achievers. Instead, they were friends with other black girls from lower streams.

*What does this research show?*

**Key study: Mirza (1992)** C:\Users\norria.ST-AIDANS.003\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\1EV7FBN9\MC900150929[1].wmfStudied ambitious black girls who faced teacher racism. In contrast to the study above however, these girls failed to achieve their ambitions and consequently underachieved. This was because their coping strategies restricted their opportunities. Also teachers discouraged them from being ambitious.

*Mirza identified three types of teacher racism, what were they?*

*Sewell: the variety of boys’ responses:*

Sewell studied underachievement of black boys, and found that pupils’ responses to schooling, including racist stereotyping by teachers, can affect their achievement. He identifies four such responses:

**The rebels:**

**The conformists:**

**The retreatists:**

**The innovators:**

**BUT / HOWEVER / ON THE OTHERHAND**



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**Evaluation of teacher labelling and pupil responses**

1. Labelling theory is good because it avoids blaming home background and looks at impact of teachers.
2. BUT we should be careful not just to look at individuals’ prejudices and we should consider racism in general and more specifically racism in the education system.
3. There is a danger that we assume that once labelled, pupils automatically fall victim to a self-fulfilling prophecy and fail.
4. **Institutional racism and the ethnocentric curriculum:**

Institutional racism is defined as:

**“discrimination that is built into the everyday workings of institutions such as schools and colleges. This discrimination may be unconscious rather than deliberate, but is a deeply ingrained, taken-for-granted part of the institution’s culture”.**

This assumption goes beyond simply looking at how teacher labelling and racism can affect achievement, but how schools and colleges routinely and unconsciously discriminate against ethnic minorities.

For example 0.8% of headteachers are black

Impact of this on pupils?........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

*What does Critical Race Theory say? (p45)*

Critical Race Theorists see the educational system as institutionally racist in several ways:

* **Marketisation and segregation**:

**Key study: Moore and Davenport (1990)**

Moore and Davenport show how selection procedures lead to ethnic segregation, with minority pupils failing to get into better secondary schools due to discrimination. For example, they found that primary school reports were used to screen out pupils with language difficulties, while the application process was difficult for non-English speaking parents to understand. These procedures favoured white pupils and disadvantaged those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Moore and Davenport therefore concluded that selection leads to an ethnically stratified system.

*How does this research explain why some ethnic groups underachieve at school?*

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* **The ethnocentric curriculum (p46):**

*Define the term ‘ethnocentric curriculum’?*

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*Identify and explain two examples of the ethnocentric curriculum and how this could lead to underachievement?*

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**Coard (1971)** explains that the ethnocentric curriculum may produce underachievement. For example, in History the British are presented as bringing civilisation to the ‘primitive’ people they colonised. He argues this image of black people as inferior undermines black children’s self-esteem and leads to their failure. He also claimed that teachers have low expectations of black pupils, have a curriculum which ignores black history and culture, and tolerates casual racism in the playground.

**Evaluation (AO3):** However, it is not clear what impact the ethnocentric curriculum has. For example, while it may ignore Asian culture, Indian and Chinese pupils’ achievement is above the national average. Also some steps have been put in place to tackle this, for instance we now celebrate a **multicultural curriculum** (RS for instance, we learn about different religions)

* **Assessment; Access to opportunities; the ‘new IQism’**

Gillborn (2008) identifies further internal factors which might explain why some ethnic groups underachieve. Summarise these into the table below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Factor** | **Summary of this factor** | **How does this affect achievement of different ethnic groups?** |
| **Assessment** |  |  |
| **Access to opportunities** |  |  |
| **The ‘new IQism’** |  |  |

**But / However / on the other hand Evaluation: Institutional racism**



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There are two main criticisms of Gillborn’s view and ‘Critical Race Theory’ of institutional racism leading to

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Criticism** | **Create a PEAEL point:** |
| Gillborn (2008) claims that the main cause of ethnic group underachievement is due to institutional racism. They argue that internal factors, such as assessment and setting, systematically produce the failure of large numbers of ethnic minority pupils, especially black boys.  However, Sewell rejects this view and claims that institutional racism is not powerful enough to prevent pupils from succeeding. Rather, he claims we need to focus of the external factors such as boys’ anti-school attitudes, the peer group and the nurturing role of the father leading to underachievement. |  |
| Institutional racism could explain the underachievement of black boys; but it is also important to consider that some ethnic groups (Indian and Chinese pupils) do ‘overachieve’ in education, compared to the white majority. If these groups do so well, then how then can there be institutional racism in education?  However, Gillborn responds by arguing that the image of Indians and Chinese as hardworking ‘model minorities’ performs an ideological function to conceal that the education system ***is*** in fact institutionally racist, e.g. by Chinese and Indians pupils going well it makes the system appear fair and meritocratic, and justifies that black students do badly as a result of not putting effort in; when this is not the case. |  |

**Conclusion**

*What can we conclude from our topic about differential education achievement? (Class, gender and ethnicity)*

To understand the relationship between ethnicity and achievement, we need to look at how it interacts with class and gender as these will also have a powerful effect on achievement. We cannot consider any of these factors in isolation. As Connolly (2006) suggests there may be an interactions effect so that certain combinations of gender, class and ethnicity have more effects than others. For example, being female raises performance more when combined with being black Caribbean than it does when combined with being white, whereas class differences have more impact in producing differences among white pupils than among black.

As well as considering the relationship of a child's gender, class and ethnicity influencing their achievement, it is also important we also consider an interaction of both internal and external factors rather than look at these in isolation.



**Eye on the exam…**

**Item A:**

There are marked ethnic differences in educational achievement. Some minority ethnic groups do much better than others. For example, Indian pupils on average achieve more highly than Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. These differences may be down to factors outside the school. For example, some sociologists suggest that cultural differences have an important influence on achievement. Others claim that it is more to do with the material circumstances of different ethnic groups.

* 1. Define the term ‘model minorities’ (2 marks)
  2. Outline three ways in which the ethnocentric curriculum may operate in education (6 marks)
  3. Outline and explain two forms of pupil response to teachers’ racism and negative labelling (10 marks)
  4. Applying material from Item A and your knowledge, evaluate the view that ethnic differences in educational achievement are primarily the result of factors outside of the school (30 marks)

Examiners Advice:

**Q4** - Aim to spend 45 minutes on this question. Avoid lumping all ethnic minority groups together – describe the achievement patterns of specific named groups. Explain a range of factors outside schools that affect achievement, e.g. linguistic skills, material deprivation etc. Explain how each may affect achievement. You need to evaluate these factors – do this as you go rather than evaluate them all at the end. For example, discuss whether factors inside school, e.g. institutional racism, are more important than external factors in explaining black boys’ underachievement.

**Item B:**

There are important differences in the experiences of different ethnic groups in the education system, for example in terms of examination entries and allocation to sets of streams. Similarily, studies show that teachers may be quicker to discipline pupils from certain ethnic groups for apparent misbehaviour. These differences can lead to educational failure for some groups.

* 1. Applying material from Item B, analyse two factors inside schools that lead to ethnic differences in educational achievement (10 marks)

Examiner’s Advice:

Aim to spend 15 mintutes on this question.Divide your time equally between each factor. You don’t need an introduction, just start with your first factor. It is essential to take information from the Item and develop your points with your own knowledge. You could use exam entries, allocations to lower sets or streams for example. Include studies such as Gillborn and Youdell, Sewell etc. Include some brief evaluation.

**Poor white children fall further behind: Benefits culture is blamed for failures at school**

By [Steve Doughty for the Daily Mail](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=&authornamef=Steve+Doughty+for+the+Daily+Mail) Published: 00:37, 3 September 2013

Pupils from poor white families are falling further behind boys and girls from ethnic minorities in their schooling, a think tank claimed yesterday.

It said the performance of white British boys from the poorest families – already the lowest achievers – has slipped further over the past five years.

They are now half as likely as boys from impoverished Chinese or Indian families to get good qualifications and far less likely to succeed than boys from the worst-off black Caribbean or African families.

Educational underclass: White working class boys' grades have slipped even further behind their peers'

White girls from worse-off families are also far adrift of their contemporaries in ethnic and cultural minorities, the analysis by the  Centre for Social Justice said.

The CSJ blamed the low aspirations of poor white families, benefit dependency and the failure of schools to encourage white  children in the same way they have tried to help minority children.

The report, from the pressure group founded by Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith, called for further and faster education reform to reverse the educational decline among poor white British children.

Alongside the downward spiral among white pupils, the paper said four-year-old children are arriving at schools still in nappies and unable to speak and that at the age of five nearly one in eight children cannot write their own names.

Christian Guy, director of the CSJ, said: ‘These figures are sobering. They suggest that despite much money and effort white working-class boys are in danger of becoming an educational underclass.

‘We need to take a close look at the reasons behind this growing inequality and re-assess the measures we are taking to close the performance gap.’



Performance discrepancy: Girls from poor white British families are doing marginally better than their male counterparts but they are both falling behind

The deepening failure of white boys in school was first noticed a decade ago and the widening gap is set out in figures for those on free school meals and who gain five A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and maths.

Only 26 per cent of white boys on free school meals reached the benchmark last year, compared to 40 per cent of black boys.

Skills minister Matthew Hancock said: ‘This report highlights the shameful legacy of an education system that has failed too many children for too long.

'Our radical reforms to drive up standards, in schools and on technical courses, are motivated by the need to help every child reach their potential. This evidence shows just how important those reforms are.’

Among all pupils who have free school meals, 36 per cent achieve good GCSE grades. More than two thirds of Chinese pupils from poor families hit the target mark and more than half of those from Indian or Bangladeshi families.

Non-British whites from poor families, including boys whose parents come from Eastern Europe, have similar levels of achievement to black boys. Despite efforts under two governments to improve the performance, the gap has widened rather than narrowed.



Widening gap: The underachievement of poor white children has become even more pronounced

White boys are 0.5 per cent down on their 2007 levels, while black boys are up by 3.9 per cent.  
Girls from poor white British families are doing marginally better, with 35 per cent hitting the GCSE target, compared to 41 per cent of all girls from poor backgrounds.

Only Roma gypsy and Irish traveller children do worse than poor white British children.

The report said that traditionally white working class families put a low value on education because high qualifications were not necessary to get jobs in industry.

Their attitudes have lagged behind as the economy has been transformed.

Worklessness in regions that were once heartlands of heavy industry has also taken its toll.

The CSJ quoted a Midlands headteacher saying: ‘Families where generations of parents have been on benefits have created dependency and a lack of aspiration and ambition.’

The report also pointed to Ofsted findings that some schools had effective programmes for helping minority children but little for white British pupils in trouble.

The report was drawn up by a group headed by Sir Robin Bosher, a former primary school head who now leads the Harris Federation of academy schools.

He said: ‘Educational failure is too common in our current system. It affects disadvantaged children and makes reform urgent’,