

ACTIVITY: ETHNICITY AND DEA – FINDING PATTERNS

ITEM A

Educational achievement and ethnic origin in six LEAs, 1981–2 (per cent)

	West Indian	Asian	All others
CSE 1 or GCE O-level grades A-C:			
English language	15	21	29
Mathematics	8	21	21
In 5 subjects	6	17	19
GCE 'A-level pass in at least one subject	5	13	13
University degree	1	4	4
Other degree	1	5	5

(Source: DES (1985), *Education for All* (Swann Report) London: HMSO.)

ITEM B

Average performance of ethnic groups, O level and CSE results, 1985

Ethnic group	Average performance scores of children ²	Number
African	16.9	426
African Asian	22.7	162
Arab	14.0	91
Bangladeshi	8.7	333
Caribbean	13.6	2981
ESWI ¹	15.2	10685
Greek	17.6	243
Indian	24.5	398
Pakistani	21.3	231
S.E. Asian	19.1	300
Turkish	11.9	268
Other	21.3	940
All	15.6	17058

1. English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish.

2. The performance score is obtained by allocating points for each grade, from 7 for an O level to 1 for a CSE 5.

(Source: Adapted from F. Kysel, 'Ethnic Background and Examination Results', *Educational Research*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1988.)

QUESTIONS

1. Study Item A. Which ethnic group seems to perform least well in the education system?
2. Using Item A, calculate the percentage difference between the number of West Indians and the Number of Asians obtaining at least one A-Level
3. Give one reason why the information contained in Item B is more satisfactory than the information contained in Item A
4. Describe the patterns of differential educational achievement shown in Item B.

Finding Patterns

Interest in educational differences is surprisingly only a recent development. It really took off during the 1980s, when an increasing number of sociologists began to be critical of **ethnocentric** research, in which the educational experiences of all children were analysed from a mainly white viewpoint.

It is clear that ethnicity seems to play as strong a role in determining educational achievement as social class. Some significant research includes

- **The Swann Report (1985)**, which found important differences in the attainment between ethnic minority groups. It showed that whilst some Asian children in Britain do as well as (or better than) white children, Bangladeshi and African Caribbean children do considerably worse – only **5% passed an A Level and only 1% went to university**.
- **Desmond Nuttall** studied 30,000 pupils in inner London and found that children of Indian Origin did better than other groups at O-Level and CSE (now GCSE) – ahead of Irish, English, Scottish, Welsh, Afro-Caribbean and Bangladeshi children.
- **Drew (1995)** also examined the relative impact of ethnicity on educational achievement, finding that Indian, Chinese and African-Asian children tend to do very well. West-Indian males, some Pakistani and Bangladeshi children do relatively badly in schools. In particular, West-Indian males tend to...
 - Get fewer GCSEs and poorer grades
 - Are over-represented in special schools for children with behavioural or learning difficulties
 - Tend to get expelled or suspended up to four times more often than their white counterparts.
- This is even more complicated if we also take into account gender – whilst the group with the highest levels of underachievement is Afro-Caribbean (or West Indian) boys, girls from the same background are the group with the most improvement in attainment.



Note: This isn't as simple as saying "ethnic minorities underachieve in education" – there are important **variations** between groups, with some underachieving but others doing as well as white children.



To get these variations straight in your head, make a list of the different ethnic groups mentioned above, and indicate their relative attainment.

Problems of Categorisation

- ✖ Grouping certain people as falling within a particular "ethnic minority" is problematic. **Gillborn and Gipps (1996)** argue that terms such as "white", "black", "Asian" and "other" assume that these groups are homogenous. In fact there might be a great deal of diversity within a particular "ethnic group" – for instance, the first language spoken at home may vary.
- ✖ For example, many early studies use the "catch all" category of "Asian". However, critics have pointed out that this encompasses a wide-range of different heritages – and this produces the misleading picture that Asian pupils roughly attain the same levels as White students. If we break down the categories further, we find that some "Asian" students do better than their white counterparts (particularly, Indian- and East-African Asian-heritage students) whilst others significantly underachieve (e.g. Bangladeshi-heritage students).
- ✖ Furthermore, focusing exclusively on ethnicity ignores the influence of class and gender on attainment.
- ✖ **Postmodernists** go further and argue that society is so diverse that it is impossible to explain differential achievement (and anything else) in terms of broad categories such as class or ethnicity. They suggest that the generalisations made from such studies actually do more harm than good. They suggest that sociology needs to place more focus on understanding the cultural complexity of modern society, and how identities are formed within this complexity.



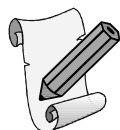
Based on your previous study of the causes of differential achievement, draw a mind-map outlining at least four different explanations for the underachievement of some ethnic minorities.

Genetic Explanations

As in the case of social class, certain **psychologists** have explained differences in educational attainment in terms of biological differences in intelligence. In particular...

- **Jenson (1969)** claims to have shown that African Americans consistently attain lower-level scores on IQ tests than whites, thus demonstrating their lower innate intelligence.
- **Hernstein & Murray (1994)** also conclude that Black-Americans are genetically less intelligent than whites. They also suggest that not only does this explain their relative underachievement in education, but also their higher rates of criminality.

Both of these studies have suggested that any attempts to address inequality in achievement through **compensatory education** are, in the long-term, doomed to failure.



Complete the IQ test on the next page

1. Why did you struggle?
2. Make a list of the criticisms of IQ testing

- ✖ The **Swann Report (1985)** suggests that genetic influences on attainment within ethnic-minority groups is overstated. When social and economic factors are taken into account, there were no significant differences in the IQ of different ethnicities.
- ✖ Hernstein and Murray have been particularly criticised for legitimising racism. Critics argue that their conclusions are ideological and not scientific – they are reassuring the rich (and white) that their success is justified because they are more intelligent than the poor (and black).

Cultural Capital in IQ Tests

As we have previously noted, a major problem with IQ tests is that they tend to be biased; using language and concepts which are more familiar to white, middle-class children. In order to score highly on an IQ test, children must be in possession of the valuable white, middle-class **cultural capital**.

- In order to dramatise this problem, **Adrian Dove** – a black sociologist – designed the alternative IQ test that you have just completed (known as the Chitling Test). It consists of questions that draw on language and knowledge that would be familiar to black, working-class children but not their white, working class counterparts (although this is now a little dated, as the test was devised in the late 1960s).
- Professor **Robert Williams** has devised a similar (but better known) test, called the Black Intelligence Test of Cultural Homogeneity (enigmatically abbreviated as the **B.I.T.C.H.** test).

The design of these tests is only partly serious. However, they effectively illustrate a significant problem with IQ testing – as when white children are asked to complete them, they are shown to be genetically “less intelligent”. In fact, the tests are really measuring the degree of familiarity with the cultural capital on which the tests draw.

Social Class & Material Deprivation

One line of argument concerning outside school explanations is that the differential educational performance of some ethnic groups reflects the social class background of those groups – i.e. **that some ethnic minorities also tend to come from low social class backgrounds**. Consequently, the argument is that the DEA and ethnicity debate is really just the social-class debate “in disguise”.

- ✓ The **Swann Report** claims that, amongst Afro-Caribbean students, at least 50% (and possibly more) of underachievement can be accounted for by poverty. These groups, together with children of Bangladeshi heritage underperform because they are largely working class – and hence have more problems with **material deprivation**.
- ✓ In contrast, those children from backgrounds with a similar level of achievement to white students (e.g. Indian and African Asian) tend to have the economic advantages of being middle class.
- ✖ However, there is a problem with this explanation as it is **paradoxical**. We cannot tell if these groups underachieve within education because they are working class, or if they end up being working class because other factors lead them to fail within education. This kind of circular argument is called a **tautology**.

Other sociologists have suggested that the family structure of some ethnic groups could also lead to material deprivation. For instance,

- ✓ Within the Afro-Caribbean community, there is a high rate of one-parent households – the limited income of these families could create difficulties in attempting to support children’s educational needs.
- ✓ **Dawson (1988)** argues that some South Asian families are very large – which means that money is spread thinly.

Activity: Culture-Free IQ Testing?

1. A "handkerchief head" is:

- A cool cat,
- A porter,
- An Uncle Tom,
- A hoddi,
- A preacher.

2. Which word is most out of place here?

- Splib,
- Blood,
- Gray,
- Spook,
- Black.

3. A "gas head" is a person who has a:

- Fast-moving car,
- Stable of "lace,"
- "Process,"
- Habit of stealing cars,
- Long jail record for arson.

4. "Bo Diddley" is a:

- Game for children,
- Down-home cheap wine,
- Down-home singer,
- New dance,
- Moejoe call.

5. "Hully Gully" came from:

- East Oakland,
- Fillmore,
- Watts,
- Harlem,
- Motor City.

6. Cheap chitlings (not the kind you purchase at a frozen food counter) will taste rubbery unless they are cooked long enough. How soon can you quit cooking them to eat and enjoy them?

- 45 minutes,
- 2 hours,
- 24 hours,
- 1 week (on a low flame),
- 1 hour.

7. What are the "Dixie Hummingbirds?"

- Part of the KKK,
- A swamp disease,
- A modern gospel group,
- A Mississippi Negro paramilitary group,
- Deacons.

8. If you throw the dice and 7 is showing on the top, what is facing down?

- 7,
- Snake eyes,
- Boxcars,
- Little Joes,
- 11.

9. "Jet" is:

- An East Oakland motorcycle club,
- One of the gangs in "West Side Story,"
- A news and gossip magazine,
- A way of life for the very rich.

10. T-Bone Walker got famous for playing what?

- Trombone,
- Piano,
- "T-flute,"
- Guitar,
- "Hambone."

11. "Bird" or "Yardbird" was the "jacket" that jazz lovers from coast to coast hung on:

- Lester Young,
- Peggy Lee,
- Benny Goodman,
- Charlie Parker,
- "Birdman of Alcatraz."

12. Hattie Mae Johnson is on the County. She has four children and her husband is now in jail for non-support, as he was unemployed and was not able to give her any money. Her welfare check is now \$286 per month. Last night she went out with the highest player in town. If she got pregnant, then nine months from now how much more will her welfare check be?

- \$80,
- \$2,
- \$35,
- \$150,
- \$100.

13. "Money don't get everything it's true ."

- But I don't have none and I'm so blue,
- But what it don't get I can't use,
- So make do with what you've got,
- But I don't know that and neither do you.

14. How much does a short dog cost?

- \$0.15,
- \$2.00,
- \$0.35,
- \$0.05,
- \$0.86 plus tax.

11. Many people say that "Juneteenth" should be made a legal holiday because this was the day when:

- The slaves were freed in the USA,
- The slaves were freed in Texas,
- The slaves were freed in Jamaica,
- The slaves were freed in California,
- Martin Luther King was born,
- Booker T. Washington died.

Dove, A (1971). The "Chitling" Test of Intelligence.

Cultural Deprivation

As with social class and DEA, these explanations adopt the **deficit approach** towards ethnic minorities and, blame underachievement in the poor socialisation of children in some groups.

Socialisation/Family Structure

- ✓ Many Asian parents are seen as having very high aspirations and being more supportive of their children's efforts in education – this could explain why children from these backgrounds do not have the same degree of underachievement.
- ✓ **Pryce** conducted a participant observation in which he lived within a West-Indian community in Bristol over a long period of time. He made many conclusions about the lives of these people, some of which had relevance to education. In particular, he noted that Afro-Caribbean families tended to be more turbulent and less close knit, with high rates of one-parent families led by women.
- ✓ From a **New Right** perspective, a lack of a father figure might explain why many boys from this background attend special behavioural schools – they lack discipline. Girls, on the other hand, are provided with good role models, in the form of strong, independent single mothers. This is a motivating influence, which helps to explain their relative success in education.
- ✗ However, **Pryce** also found that *“The majority of West-Indian parents have great academic aspirations for their children”* and Banks obtained similar findings about Black-Americans. This would suggest that cultural deprivation explanations of DEA are somewhat simplistic.



Can you think of any points of evaluation of Pryce's study (think about his methodology)

Language

The language of used by some ethnic minority students could disadvantage them in education. At the most basic level, some students will experience difficulties in learning because English is not their first language. This presents issues not only in understanding teachers, but also in reading and examination papers.

Afro-Caribbean students also encounter education because they speak Creoles or Patois (very specific dialects of English), which do not fit the Standard English taught in schools (for example, words might have different meanings in dialect, which might cause misunderstandings). Like the restricted code identified by Bernstein, minority dialects of English are sometimes seen as less effective in communicating the kinds of information necessary in education – for example, expressing analytical sentences.

Beyond difficulties in understanding, there is also evidence to suggest that teachers will label students as “less able” because of the language they use.

- ✗ However, **Bollard & Driver** argue that language problems cease to exist by the time the student researchers 16, claiming that students of this age are as fluent as their classmates
- ✗ Cultural difference theorists such as **Labov** argue that minority languages are not “deficient” but “different” and undervalued by the education system.

Minority Youth Responses

O'Donnell (1992) argues that the different responses of different ethnic groups to the racism of the wider society can account for some of the DEA. For example,

- Afro-Caribbean males often react with anger and oppose white institutions – including education (counter-school cultures)
- In contrast, groups such as those of Indian heritage – although still resentful of discrimination – perform well because they “keep their heads down” and use the education system to their advantage.

Cultural Difference/Capital

Cultural difference theorists argue that rather than being deficient, the culture of ethnic-minority groups is different, but undervalued by the education system. This is particularly apparent in the case of language...

- ✓ **Labov** studied a number of Black children living in Harlem, and concluded that – although their language was indeed different to the Standard English used in education – it was an equally rich and useful method of communication.
- ✓ **Coard** argues that West Indian children are taught that black culture and ways of speaking are “inferior” to “normal” school procedures. A consequence is that students may well feel discriminated against and actually use their language to “resist” schooling (Counter School Culture)
- ✓ **Thompson** points out that teachers assume that they share the same language as their pupils, but they actually usually operate with a dominant form of language, to which all students do not have equal access. Language can, therefore, operate as part of “**cultural capital**”. By showing an inflexible attitude to language, schools are effectively excluding certain groups.

This theme will also be examined when we look at the “curriculum” section of inside-school explanations of DEA and Ethnicity.

Evaluation of Home Factors

The influence of home-background on educational achievement – particularly cultural factors – has not been a major topic in sociology over the past ten years. This is because...

- ✗ It is difficult to discover the degree to which ethnic-minority cultures are homogenous, how they differ from other value systems and exactly how they affect educational attainment.
- ✗ The descriptions of minority-cultures tend to be less about the actual backgrounds of children, and more about popular stereotypes. **Troyna & Carrington (1990)** argue that descriptions of some cultures are little more than “racist depictions”.
- ✗ Cultural research can be distorted and used against some sections of society – providing ammunition, for example, for some right wing groups. **Sivanandan** argues that sociological descriptions of Afro-Caribbean culture are used by some people to justify the view of such families as “problems” for society.

Activity: Labov and "Minority" Language

Item A Harlem, New York



Item C Three interviews

Interview 1 An eight year old black boy from Harlem is interviewed by a 'friendly' white interviewer who presents him with a toy jet plane and asks him to describe it. The setting is formal. There are long silences followed by short two or three word answers, which hardly provide an adequate description of the plane.

Interview 2 Another black boy from Harlem is interviewed. Again the setting is formal but this time the interviewer is black and raised in Harlem. The boy responds in much the same way as the boy in the first interview.

Interview 3 The boy and the interviewer are the same as in the second interview. This time the interviewer sits on the floor, the boy is provided with a supply of potato crisps and his best friend is invited along. The change is dramatic. The boy's conversation is articulate and enthusiastic, and, in linguistic terms, rich and diverse.

Items B and C adapted from W. Labov 'The Logic of Nonstandard English', 1973, pp26-33

Item B It depends on the translation

This is part of a statement made by Larry, a black American boy from a low income neighbourhood in Harlem. He is arguing that heaven does not exist.

'Cause, you see, doesn't nobody really know that it's a God, y'know, 'cause I mean I have seen black gods, pink gods, white gods, all colour gods, and don't nobody know it's really a God. An' when they be sayin' if you good, you goin' t'heaven, tha's bullshit, 'cause you ain't goin' to no heaven, 'cause it ain't no heaven for you to go to.'

William Labov translates this into standard English as follows.

- 1 Everyone has a different idea of what God is like.
- 2 Therefore nobody really knows that God exists.
- 3 If there is a heaven, it was made by God.
- 4 If God doesn't exist he couldn't have made heaven.
- 5 Therefore heaven does not exist.
- 6 You can't go to somewhere that doesn't exist.

Questions

- 1 a) Using information from Item B suggest why it has been claimed that black nonstandard English is inferior to standard English.
b) Is it? Give reasons for your answer.
c) Assuming no difference between the two forms of English, why is one seen as superior?
- 2 Read Item C. Explain the differences in the boys' behaviour.
- 3 How can Items B and C be used to explain class differences in educational attainment?

NOTE: EXTENSION READING IS AVAILABLE ON LABOV ON THE WEBSITE

Activity: Racism in Schools**Item A** *Racist graffiti***Item B** *Case studies***Case 1**

The parents of a nine year old Afro-Caribbean boy at a school in the West Country reported that he was continually being called racial names by other pupils, and that he was even called 'Nig-nog' by his teacher. The matter was investigated by the education committee, and at a meeting with the headteacher and local authority officers the parents were offered profound apologies.

Case 2

At a school in the Northeast a black girl was subjected to regular racial abuse and physically attacked once by an older girl. When she brought this to the headteacher's attention, he took no action, despite his instruction to her that she should report such incidents to him. It was only after she left the school that she brought the matter to the attention of her parents, saying that she had preferred to suffer in silence rather than get them involved.

Case 3

A young Sikh published his own account of the regular verbal and physical harassment that he had experienced in the seven years he had spent at schools in the South.

Much of that harassment was directed at his hair and turban, both regarded as sacred symbols. Sometimes teachers would join in or even initiate the jokes. The main effect, he said, was to erode his self-confidence and capacity to concentrate on learning.

Case 4

On a garage in a secondary school in the West Country, used daily by teachers, there were threatening and offensive racist graffiti: 'B.M. N.F. Coons out of school' and a Nazi swastika. They were allowed to remain there untouched for two years.

From Commission for Racial Equality *Learning in Terror*, 1988, p11

Questions

- 1 Read through the cases. Briefly comment on the teachers' responses.
- 2 What effect might such cases have on the children's educational progress?
- 3 Why might the results of questionnaires to teachers and parents significantly underestimate the extent of racism in schools?

Inside School Factors

The explanations of the underachievement of some ethnic minority groups explored so far all focus on out-of-school factors. For many sociologists, this is the root-cause of inequality in attainment – a view particularly prevalent amongst **New Right** theorists, for example,

- **Scruton (1986)** argues that the solution for underachievement is for ethnic minorities to embrace British culture (the “when in Rome...” explanation), whilst using voluntary associations to preserve their own culture.

For others, such as **Massey (1991)**, this view is uncomfortably like victimology. They argue that schools are not receptive to minority cultures – and in some cases overtly discriminate against them. In this section of notes, we will examine how processes within the school might lead to the underachievement of some minority-groups.

The Effect of Schools

In *The School Effect*, **Smith and Tomlinson (1989)** found that different secondary schools produced very different results with children of similar background and ability. They administered tests in English, Maths and Verbal Reasoning during the first two years of secondary school. The results indicated that “*the school a child goes to makes far more difference than which ethnic group he or she belongs to*”.

Gillborn and Drew argue that this study “*reminds us that individual schools possess the power to influence the educational experiences, achievements and future life chances of their pupils*”. However, they do raise concerns about the study

- ✗ It’s sample was small and unrepresentative
- ✗ It seemed to deny the existence of racism within schools. The study relied on questionnaires completed by teachers and parents, which indicated that prejudice was not an issue within the schools – which is contradicted by large amounts of **ethnographic studies** on the topic (see below)

In the next sections, we will examine the way in which the institutional racism and ethnocentrism of education might lead to underachievement by some minority groups.

The Curriculum

Some sociologists suggest that what is taught in schools – the official curriculum – disadvantages ethnic minority students. The curriculum is ethnocentric and the knowledge some students encounter does not connect with their own cultural experiences.

- ✓ **Coard (1971)** showed that the content of education almost completely ignores people of minority-heritages. The “important” people are, according to the formal curriculum, almost exclusively white – whilst minority culture, music and art are largely ignored. Coard argues that this produces low self-esteem amongst some minority groups – most notably Afro-Caribbean students
- ✓ **Cole (1992)** shows how history and geography textbooks in particular put forward imperialistic and racist views of non-white people (think about the image of “the savage” who is “civilised” by the white colonialists)

Furthermore, elements of the “hidden curriculum” are also biased towards white cultural capital.

- ✓ The language associated with ethnicity within society (and consequently, education) is negatively loaded. For instance “Black” (e.g. “blacklisted”).
- ✓ Research by **The Commission for Racial Equality (1988)** has shown that teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds are significantly under-represented in schools. Where non-white staff are present, they tend to be confined to certain subjects or as language support for classroom teachers. This means that there is a lack of positive role models within teaching for some groups.
- ✗ **HOWEVER**, this argument was refuted by the **Swann Report (1985)** and by **Stone (1981)** who noted that, despite feeling discriminated against by some teachers, West Indian children had been able to maintain extremely positive self-images.

Institutional Racism

It is argued by a number of sociologists that schools are **institutionally racist**, and that many teachers harbour stereotypes that negatively affect the attainment of some groups. As with working-class underachievement, the process is one of **labelling**, negative **teacher expectations**, poor **pupil self-image** and, ultimately, a **self-fulfilling prophecy**.

Primary Schools – Wright (1992)

Cecile Wright (1992) conducted detailed observations of four inner-city primary schools. She found that teachers often interacted with ethnic-minority students differently than with white students.

Asian children, especially younger ones, were often seen as a problem – but as a problem that could be largely ignored. They received the least attention (particularly girls), and were not involved in discussion. When teachers did speak to Asian students, they used simplistic language and assumed that their command of English was insufficient for full participation. Teachers also lacked sensitivity towards aspects of their culture and, in some cases, displayed open disapproval of their customs and traditions.

This had the effect of making these students feel less positive towards the school, and also attracted hostility from other students – who picked up on the teachers’ comments and attitudes towards the Asian students. **However**, Wright also found that – despite this – teachers did have high expectations of Asian students with regards to academic success – and saw them as well disciplined and highly motivated.

Wright argues that the same was not true of **Afro-Caribbean** students. These children, especially boys, were often expected to be “unruly”, “disrespectful” and “difficult to control”. Consequently, teachers interpreted their behaviour in terms of these labels, and they received considerable attention – nearly all of it negative. Students of West Indian heritage were more likely to be punished – even for actions that might be ignored in other students.

Wright also noted that teachers made little effort to ensure that they pronounced names correctly, causing embarrassment and unnecessary ridicule. Finally, both Asian and Afro-Caribbean students were victims of racism from white students.

Secondary Schools – Gillborn (1990)

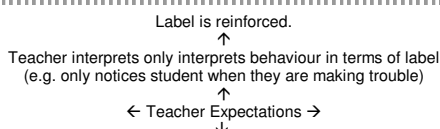
Research by David Gillborn (1990) into classroom interaction in secondary schools largely supports Wright’s findings. He

spent two years gathering a range of qualitative data from classroom interaction, interviews with teachers and students and analysis of school documents (e.g. reports).

Gillborn found that teachers genuinely attempted to treat all students fairly and actively rejected racism. However, in practice, teachers perceived students differently (based on their preconceptions) and consequently treated them differently.

Once again, Afro-Caribbean students were only perceived in negative terms. The teachers interpreted (or misinterpreted) the dress and manner of speech of Afro-Caribbean students as representing a challenge to their authority. However, when Gillborn interviewed the students in question – he found that no threat or challenge was intended.

The teacher's expectations had very real consequences. For instance, Gillborn found that Afro-Caribbean students were over represented in school discipline procedures – such as detentions. Furthermore, these students were placed in academic bands and entered for exams that underestimated their ability. The students were treated differently and penalised because of teachers' preconceptions, both in terms of punishment and in terms of the subject knowledge that they were permitted access to.



1. Copy and complete the mind map above, showing the consequences of the teacher expectations in these studies.
2. Both of these studies are qualitative and ethnographic (attempting to fully understand the "world view" of social actors). What are the strengths of the methods that the two researchers used? Can you spot the main problems?

It should be noted that the views of Wright and Gillborn have been challenged. Some sociologists claim that their conclusions are based on unrepresentative samples, and that racism amongst teachers is overstated. For example,

- **Jeffcoate (1984)** argues that evidence of teacher racism is "flimsy, at best". He argues that, while there is evidence to suggest racist sentiments in staffroom discussions, there is little evidence to show that it "spills over" into the classroom.



- a. The approach attempts to see things from the social actors' point of view and therefore gain valuable insight
 - b. Some research evidence demonstrates that not all teachers are racist.
 - c. The explanations have helped us to understand the nature of prejudice in schools – and suggest ways of changing education for the better.
 - d. Some sociologists argue that racism in schools cannot be a complete explanation of DEA, as some groups who experience racism (e.g. Indian and African Asian students) still succeed.
 - e. Most of the findings are obtained using qualitative, ethnographic methods – which are high in validity.
 - f. The explanations ignore the impact of multicultural and/or anti-racist approaches to reduce the level of racism in schools.
1. *Make a table of strengths and weaknesses of in-school explanations of DEA and Ethnicity. Work out which of the above statements is a strength and which is a weakness*
 2. *Based on your previous study of in-school factors, identify **two** other strengths and two weaknesses of these explanations*

Pupil Adaptations

- ✱ One problem with the type of crude labelling theory outlined above is that it is overly **deterministic** - it ignores the freewill and consciousness of the individual student. According to these types of explanations, a negative label will always have a negative outcome – regardless to the meanings attached to that label by students.

In response to this problem, **Woods** formulated a typology of **student adaptations** – ways in students respond to the meanings presented to them by the education system. Presented with a negative label, there are a number of ways that a student could react, for instance they could...

- Live out the label (self-fulfilling prophecy).
- Abandon the label together with other values of the education system (a counter school culture)
- Attempt to prove teachers wrong.

Fuller (1983) argues that the last of these responses is common. In particular, this could be an explanation of why the attainment of Afro-Caribbean girls is so different to boys of the same ethnicity. Fuller observes that, faced with negative labelling, many such girls "gang together" and put extra effort into their school work in order to succeed and "prove teachers wrong".

Pupil Subcultures

Fuller outlines one way in which students might respond to the negative meanings presented to them within education. Another is the formation of student subcultures or counter school cultures.



1. Write a definition of what is meant by the terms **subculture** and **counter school subculture**
2. Explain why students form counter school subcultures.
3. Why do counter school subcultures tend to lead to educational underachievement?
4. Look back over the notes so far – identify **five** factors which might lead ethnic-minority students to form subcultures