

Activity answers

Unit 1: The role of the education system

Activity 1 (page 161)

How can Items A and B be used to illustrate the view that education helps to unite members of society?

Although Durkheim argued that social solidarity ('social unity') is necessary for the survival of any society, solidarity doesn't 'just happen'; it has to be encouraged. One function of education is to help children develop a sense of the 'essential similarities' that bind them together as a society. Education performs this function in a number of ways. Item A shows school children pledging loyalty to their country, something that helps them develop a common national identity. The children are being socialised into a shared set of 'American' values. Item B shows how a sense of shared history helps to bind people together. Stories told in school, such as that of Davy Crockett, embody American values such as equal opportunity (the idea that someone from a poor background can attain high political office) and freedom (a willingness to 'fight for freedom'). This helps to make people feel that they belong a wider social group (American society).

Activity 2 (page 162)

How can the type of formal examinations pictured here:

a) encourage individual achievement?

For Parsons, individual achievement is a major value in modern industrial society and formal examinations reflect this value. Success is down to the individual; the student succeeds or fails on his or her merits – the amount of work they've done before the exam, their preparation and readiness for the test, their performance in the exam itself.

b) form part of the process of role allocation?

Formal examinations play an important part in the process of role allocation because they are a way of measuring the talents and abilities by which students can be sifted, sorted, assessed and evaluated. This allows young people to be allocated appropriate roles in wider society based on their talents and abilities.

Activity 3 (pages 163–164)

1 How does the ideologically sound young woman in Item A illustrate Bowles and Gintis's theory of the role of education in society?

Bowles and Gintis argue that there is a close correspondence between the social relationships found in the school and those in the workplace. They identify various ways this correspondence contributes to social reproduction. Item

A illustrates some of these: **1 Obedience:** the kinds of behaviours schools reward, such as obedience to authority, conformity to rules and hard work, are those valued by employers. This is reflected in the cartoon with the young worker's emphasis on the value of 'hard work'. **2 Motivation:** the lack of satisfaction experienced in school is mirrored in the workplace. People must, therefore, be motivated by external rewards, such as those in the item – qualifications from school and pay in the workplace that can be used to buy the 'satisfying things' in life (a nice car, designer clothes, and so on). **3 Legitimising inequality:** for Bowles and Gintis, education legitimises social inequality through the myth that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed – both 'in school' and 'at work' – an idea reflected in the cartoon by the phrase 'Hard work brings rewards'. This suggests that educational and workplace success is based on individual merit rather than social background. Finally, social reproduction is ensured, Bowles and Gintis argue, because 'Education reproduces inequality by justifying privilege and attributing poverty to personal failure'. As the cartoon suggests, the young woman deserves her designer clothes because her hard work and educational success led to a well-paid job.

2. Using Item B, briefly compare functionalist and Marxist views of role allocation.

The functionalist view of role allocation is illustrated by the 'educational allocator' on the left. People from different classes enter the school. They are sifted and sorted and allocated to different jobs on the basis of their talents and abilities. Their class position does not affect this process. This can be seen from the funnels to top-, middle- and low- status jobs. For example, a person from the upper class (yellow) can be seen going down the funnel to the middle status jobs (green).

The Marxist view of role allocation is illustrated by the 'educational allocator' on the right. Here, class is the primary method of role allocation. For example, middle-class students are funnelled through the educational system into middle-status jobs. They are not allocated to jobs on the basis of merit. However, the educational system is important because it legitimates inequality by giving the impression that job status is based on merit – on ability and talent.

Methods 1 (page 165)

Willis's method is an example of methodological pluralism. Suggest possible advantages of this approach to his research.

Methodological pluralism has possible advantages for Willis' research. Firstly, by combining research methods, Willis may achieve a fuller and more rounded picture of school life and behaviour – from both his own perspective (using observational methods) and that of his respondents (through diaries, for example). Secondly, methodological

pluralism may have helped Willis generate new insights and directions for his research – through group discussions, for example, he could discover the things the boys in his study saw as significant and re-focus his observational research accordingly.

Activity 4 (page 165)

How does this cartoon illustrate Willis's view of how lads adapt to low-skill, boring jobs?

The lads believed they were destined for low-skill, boring, jobs so working hard at school wasn't important to them. They rejected school and created their own counter-school culture, central to which was 'having a laugh' (as the cartoon illustrates) as a way of dealing with 'monotony, boredom and authority'. Although lack of success at school meant they were destined for low-skill, boring, jobs the techniques for 'having a laugh' learned at school could be applied to their new (workplace) situation – where it was equally important to be able to cope with monotony, boredom and authority.

Methods 2 (page 167)

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of content analysis in studying the effect of reading schemes on gender socialisation.

The strengths of formal content analysis (as used in the item) centre on the opportunity to study data in an objective way (such as quantifying the activities performed by children in reading schemes) using a quick, cheap and simple pre-set list of categories ('boys-only activities', and so on). Data recording and interpretation are also relatively simple and straightforward because they involve things like counting which toys were played with and by whom. Quantitative data also allow comparisons to be made (such as identifying which activities were 'girls only', 'boys only', and so on).

Although the method gives a simple, straightforward, way of measuring how reading schemes may influence gender socialisation, a key weakness is that it tells us little or nothing about the meaning of these documents to their audience. Although Lobban could 'suggest' that 'distinctive gender activities and roles' may influence gender socialisation, the method itself doesn't tell us if children are actually influenced by these schemes. However, having identified gender-specific activities in reading schemes, it might be possible to uncover their meaning using a qualitative research method.

Activity 5 (page 168)

1 How might a feminist sociologist analyse Items A and B?

Feminist analysis would probably focus on gender roles and female inequality in education. Learning to launder is pictured as a gendered task – as part of a woman's role both at home and work. Item B presents aspects of gender stereotyping. Boys are pictured as more adventurous and

active – Peter climbs a tree and unwraps a racing car. Jane is pictured in a caring and domestic role, looking lovingly at her doll, and in a secondary and supportive role – she watches admiringly as Peter climbs a tree. Feminists would see Items A and B as examples of schools socialising girls and boys for their future unequal gender roles.

2 Use Item C to support the view that there is discrimination against girls in the classroom.

Stanworth's (1983) research suggests a variety of ways girls are discriminated against in the classroom. Teachers, for example, took more interest in, showed greater concern about, and gave more help to male pupils. Male teachers were ten times more likely to remember the names of boys and both male and female teachers said they were more 'attached' to boys. Teachers also tended to underestimate girls' ambitions and even the careers of the brightest girls were seen in terms of supporting men (as a 'personal assistant') rather than being capable of reaching the heights in their chosen career. The evidence suggests that girls are discriminated against in the classroom.

Activity 6 (page 169)

How does this cartoon illustrate the social democratic view of education?

The cartoon suggests that education leads to economic growth. It implies that the more education people receive, the greater their contribution to the economy and the greater economic growth will be.

Activity 7 (page 170)

How does this cartoon illustrate neoliberal/New Right views of education?

The cartoon illustrates these views by showing the marketisation of education – the argument that there should be competition and choice in the 'educational marketplace'. For example, in the cartoon private educational providers compete against 'bog standard state comprehensives'. In this competitive environment, so the argument goes, the best schools attract more students and the worst will eventually close because few, if any, students will choose to attend them. As schools compete to attract students, they are forced to offer a wider range of choices – some schools (such as 'Whiplash High') specialise in a highly academic education, while others (such as 'Arty Community') specialise in a more creative curriculum (drama, music, and so on). Schools must provide high standards or they will go out of business. Schools are encouraged to innovate, by offering wider educational choices and a specialised curriculum, in order to offer their customers greater levels of personal choice.

Unit 2 Social class and educational attainment

Methods 3 (page 171)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using official statistics to compare class differences in educational attainment over time?

The Youth Cohort Study demonstrates a number of advantages. Official statistics are often collected and published regularly, which allows sociologists to both compare the relationship between social class and educational attainment and also monitor changes to this relationship over time. The Youth Cohort Study provides large, representative, samples and the statistical data produced makes it possible to quantify the relationship between class and attainment. These statistics are readily available and cost researchers nothing to use.

The Youth Cohort Study also illustrates two possible disadvantages. 1 Definitions and measurements change over time. For example, social class has been defined in different ways, making direct comparisons between class and attainment difficult. 2 Official statistics don't necessarily provide valid measures of the relationship between class and attainment. For example, there are different ways of defining and measuring 'educational attainment'.

Methods 4 (page 171)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using longitudinal surveys and postal questionnaires to study social class and educational attainment?

One advantage of a longitudinal survey is its ability to examine changes over time (to track, for example, the relationship between class and educational attainment). This is possible because the same group is studied at different times and, by keeping the same sample, it's likely that any changes in the relationship between class and attainment do not result from differences in the makeup of the sample.

However, maintaining the same sample is not easy, The Youth Cohort Study highlights the problem of sample attrition. As the item notes, less than a quarter (23%) of the original sample responded to the research in its final year. Longitudinal studies are costly and time-consuming. Few organisations have the resources to conduct large, representative, surveys over an extended length of time.

Postal questionnaires, often used in longitudinal surveys, are relatively inexpensive, can be used with large samples (which can be geographically dispersed) and are fast and efficient to analyse. They lend themselves to longitudinal surveys. A further advantage is that there is no interviewer to influence respondents' answers. Closed questions – when the objective is to quantify relationships (such as those between class and attainment – can also be an advantage of this method.

However, a major disadvantage – apparent in the Youth Cohort Study – is the relatively low response rate that may make a sample unrepresentative. Without an interviewer, there is also the possibility that some answers may be incomplete, illegible or incomprehensible. Finally, although postal questionnaires may tell us a great deal about the quantitative relationship between class and attainment they are not as useful for collecting qualitative data, such as the meaning of the relationship between class and attainment.

Activity 8 (page 172)

1 What does Item A suggest about the relationship between social class and educational attainment?

The item suggests a strong correlation between social class and educational attainment – the higher the social class, the higher the level of attainment at GCSE.

2 No matter what definition of social class is used, there are significant class differences in educational attainment. Comment on this statement using Items A and B, which use different definitions of class.

Items A and B suggest that however social class is measured, the correlation between class and educational attainment remains much the same – the higher the class, the higher the attainment.

3 What changes does Item B indicate between 1989 and 2000?

Item B indicates a general improvement in educational attainment right across the class structure – more young people from all social classes achieved five or more GCSE passes in 2000 than in 1989. However, in terms of class differences in educational attainment very little change is apparent (in 1989 the gap between the highest and lowest class attainment was 40 percentage points, in 2000 it was 39).

4 Summarise the trends shown in Item C.

Firstly, more students are attending university, regardless of their class of origin and this increase has been generally consistent each year for ten years. Secondly, however, the overall trend is that the higher the social class, the greater the percentage point increase in participation rates in higher education.

Activity 9 (page 173)

How might growing up in poverty disadvantage children at school?

Poverty may disadvantage children at school in a number of ways: 1 Living conditions: cramped, cold and draughty home conditions not only make it difficult for children to study at home but also, as Item B suggests, leave them 'tired, listless and unable to concentrate' in school. In addition, a lack of basic amenities (tables and chairs) and privacy may make it difficult for children to do things like complete homework. 2 Financial problems mean that the children of the poor often have to work evenings, weekends and

even mornings – in addition to tiredness, this also makes study outside school difficult. Money problems also make it much more likely that poor children will leave school at the minimum leaving age. 3 Ill health is a related problem of poverty (Item B, for example, relates it to poor diet and stress from permanent insecurity) and can lead to absences from school and lack of attentiveness and irritability when in school. 4 Motivation: there may be few jobs available in low-income areas, which may lower the motivation of the poor to do well in school.

Activity 10 (page 175)

How do the examples in Item A illustrate some of the features of the restricted and elaborated codes?

Compared to the restricted code, the elaborated code makes meanings explicit, spells out details and provides explanations. These differences can be seen in the descriptions of the pictures. In the restricted code we are told that 'they' are playing football; in the elaborated code we learn that 'they' are 'two boys'. The restricted code takes for granted that we know what 'it' is that 'he' kicks; the elaborated code tells us that 'it' is a 'ball' and that 'one boy' kicks it. The elaborated code makes clear the link between the lady, the broken window and the boys. We are told explicitly that it is 'her window', that she 'looks out of her window'. This makes it clear who she is and why she tells the boys off. All we are told by the restricted code is 'she looks out and she tells them off'.

Methods 5 (page 176)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of interviews in the study of class and young people's speech patterns?

The evidence in this activity reveals the main disadvantage of interviews: it shows clearly that variations in the setting and the people involved can have a significant effect on the results. As noted on page 176, much of Bernstein's evidence on class and speech patterns comes from interviews given by middle-class adults to five-year-old working-class boys. As the three interviews in this activity indicate, such interviews may reveal little about the linguistic ability of the respondents.

Despite these problems, interviews can be a valuable research tool. By varying the setting and those involved, as in this activity, interviews can be used to show that behaviour is always to some extent shaped by such factors. In terms of the relationship between class and language, interviews can help to identify factors that influence linguistic performance.

Methods 6 (page 178)

1 Judging from the institutions from which the sample was drawn, would you say it was representative? Give reasons for your answer.

For a sample to be representative, it should have the same characteristics as the population to which it relates (in this

instance, potential university applicants). There are good reasons for considering this sample to be representative:

- 1 It covered a range of age groups (from 11–18-year-olds to those, probably older, students studying on higher education access courses).
- 2 It covered a range of class groupings – from students in comprehensive schools with a large working-class and mixed-social-class intake, to private schools likely to be attended by middle/upper class students.
- 3 The sample was designed to reflect a representative gender mix.

It is, however, possible to question the sample's representativeness in three ways. 1 It was drawn from London schools and colleges and these may not be representative of such institutions outside London. 2 The number of institutions in the sample was relatively small (only six). 3 The sample didn't reflect all types of schools/colleges in Britain. There were, for example, no grammar/secondary modern schools or city technology colleges in the sample.

2 Why did the authors aim to produce a representative sample?

The authors wanted to be able to generalise the findings from their sample to everyone in their research population and, for this reason, they aimed to produce a sample that was representative of age groups, genders and social classes.

Activity 11 (page 179)

1 Using Item A, suggest how cultural capital might give middle-class children an advantage.

For Bourdieu (1977) cultural capital involves those aspects of culture that can be converted into material rewards (such as high educational qualifications) – something illustrated in Item A by the behaviour of the middle-class mother. Liz was able to support both her sons in ways that Josie, the working-class mother was not. She was, for example, able to support one son by reading to and with him, helping with homework, and so on. With her other son, she 'fought for extra support' with the school and when he failed to make 'enough progress' in school, Liz hired a private tutor. Where Liz had sufficient confidence and self-assurance to make demands on teachers (a further aspect of cultural capital), Josie did not. These examples show how cultural capital gives middle-class children an advantage in two ways: 1 by providing them with material and cultural support and 2 by ensuring that teachers realise they are accountable to (middle-class) parents if their children fail to make the progress the parents believe they should be making.

2 Using Item B, suggest how social capital might give middle-class children an advantage.

Social capital relates to the support and information provided by contacts and social networks that can be converted into material rewards. Higher levels of social capital among the middle classes gives them distinct advantages in terms of things like choice of school. When considering where to send their children, for example, the parents demonstrate their ability to talk to other parents with

children at the school, speak to teachers and canvass the opinions of friends over a large geographic area about their experience of different schools. As Mrs Cornwell suggests, choice of secondary school is an important influence on later life, so parents needed to invest as much social capital as possible into ensuring they make the right choice.

3 How does the cartoon in Item C illustrate the school/parent alliance?

The 'school/parent alliance' is based on the idea that middle-class parents want to send their children to schools with a large middle-class intake and the latter are only too willing to welcome such children. The reasons for this are illustrated in the cartoon. Middle-class children bring a range of social and cultural capital with them into the school that makes them both easy to teach and likely to perform well in public exams (something that increases the school's position in league tables and its status in the education market – making it easier to attract middle-class children). For middle-class parents, the attraction is the league table position and the high levels of educational attainment of the school.

Methods 7 (page 180)

What are the strengths and weaknesses of participant observation for conducting research in the classroom?

There are a number of strengths of participant observation that may apply to this research. Validity is potentially higher when the researcher can 'see for themselves' how people behave in the classroom. Participant observation doesn't rely on prior knowledge of the behaviour being studied; this means that the researcher can discover information for which they might not have originally looked. This can give a fresh and unique insight into classroom behaviour. The ability to 'watch and listen' (as Hargreaves did) provides opportunities to discover qualitative aspects of behaviour, such as teachers' and pupils' priorities and concerns, as well as the meanings and definitions they bring to the classroom. Finally, participant observation may be the only method with any chance of producing data with the required depth and detail. In terms of classroom dynamics and interaction, for example, it may be the only way to capture a sense of people behaving as they would in their normal environment.

Participant observation does, however, have potential weaknesses. As Hargreaves discovered, an observer's presence may change the behaviour being observed (although, as Hargreaves argued, once the observer is accepted into the group, 'normal behaviour' may resume). In addition, participant observation can be a lengthy, time-consuming and costly research method. It can also make heavy demands on the observer – not only for things like recording information and building relationships but also in terms of the ability to separate the roles of 'observer' and 'participant'. In addition, the small sample, personal involvement and intensity of participant observation in a classroom (Hargreaves only studied one school) means the

study can neither be replicated nor generalised. Finally, participant observation may involve a range of ethical considerations (such as whether or not it is permissible to record and write about personal conversations observed in the classroom).

Unit 3 Gender and educational attainment

Activity 12 (page 181)

Briefly summarise the trends shown in Items A, B and C.

There are three main trends to note in Items A and B. 1 There is a general increase in both male and female attainment at GCSE and A-level. 2 Girls have outperformed boys at both levels over the past 15 or so years. 3 While the percentage gap between male and female attainment at GCSE has remained fairly constant over the past 17 years, at A-level the gap widened considerably between 1990 and 1997, since when it has remained roughly constant. In Item C, the trend has been for a consistent increase in the number of females in higher education over the past 30 or so years, coupled with a slow down in the rate of increase for males (females now outnumber males in higher education).

Activity 13 (page 183)

How might Items A and B help to explain girls' rising educational attainment?

There are three main ways the items can be used to explain the rising attainment of girls. 1 Lara Croft (Item A) epitomises the idea that female attitudes have changed – they are now more confident, assertive, ambitious and committed to gender equality than in the past. 2 This attitude change (reflected in the idea of 'girl power') means that women are more likely to see education as an important step towards a career and are consequently less likely to see their adult futures simply in terms of marriage, home and family. 3 Item B suggests a social change in that women are now more independent (of men) and more individualistic in terms of thinking about what's best for them, their life and lifestyle. The text in Item B refers to this 'ethos' when it talks about 'good times ... with good friends ... living life to the full', but the reference to 'life not always being a bowl of cherries' also suggests a certain amount of risk – which is where education enters the equation. In order to get a secure, well-paid, job, women need appropriate educational qualifications.

Methods 8 (page 184)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews in a study of laddish behaviour?

Semi-structured interviews have a number of advantages in this context. For example, they have a high response rate (which is important in terms of sample representativeness)

and the interviewer is present to explain things like the reasons for the research, why the respondents' participation and views are important, to clarify questions and probe for further details – by jogging respondents' memories, asking them to expand or illustrate their answers, and so on. This approach is also inclusive in the sense that respondents who cannot read and write – or who have difficulty explaining their actions and meanings, which may be the case with laddish behaviour, as Jackson discovered – can be surveyed. Finally, this method provides depth and detail. (Jackson, for example, found that the interviews provided 'rich information'.)

This method does, however, have disadvantages. **1** Data will not be strictly comparable as respondents may be answering different questions – the 'probes' that are an important part of gaining in-depth data are not standardised (they will differ from interview to interview). **2** Various forms of interviewer bias may intrude into the research; Jackson, for example, 'found it difficult to get students to spell out the motives for their behaviour' – this can be a problem with a method that requires the respondent to do more than simply answer pre-defined questions – and she found herself having to avoid the temptation to use leading questions or direct her respondents (consciously or unconsciously) to give the answers she expected.

Activity 14 (page 185)

Use Items A to C to provide an explanation for the educational failure of some working-class boys.

The Items provide explanations for educational failure in two main ways. **1** There were changes in the job market and the decline in manufacturing industry (Item A) that was a traditional source of employment for many working-class boys (with or without educational qualifications) and the rise of service industries (Item B). The qualities these require ('warmth, empathy, sensitivity to unspoken needs, and high levels of interpersonal skills') do not sit easily with traditional working-class masculine identities and such jobs were likely to be rejected by these boys – and with such rejection comes a similar rejection of the need for educational qualifications. This links to **2** – 'laddish behaviour'.

Where the 'traditional route to status, pride and security is closed', some boys turn to an aggressive masculinity as a means of status and pride. This can contribute to an anti-school culture, which rejects the value of educational achievement.

Unit 4 Ethnicity and educational attainment

Activity 15 (page 186)

Summarise the relationship between ethnicity and educational attainment indicated by the table.

The table shows that the performance of all ethnic groups at GCSE has improved since 1992. However, Bangladeshi students have made the largest – and White students the smallest – improvement, while Indian students have the highest and Black students the lowest percentage of A*–C grades.

Activity 16 (page 187)

What relationships between ethnicity, gender and educational attainment are indicated by the bar chart?

The chart shows that within each ethnic group girls achieve more than boys. It also shows important differences between ethnic groups. Chinese girls have the highest level of attainment, but Chinese boys outperform boys and girls of every other ethnic group apart from Indian girls. In terms of gender, the highest gap is between Black Caribbean girls and boys while the lowest is between Chinese girls and boys. The chart suggests, therefore, that neither gender nor ethnicity operates in isolation in terms of educational attainment

Activity 17 (page 187)

What relationships between ethnicity, income inequality and educational attainment are indicated by the bar chart?

The chart demonstrates that while income inequality affects all ethnic groups, its influence varies between groups. For example, the low-income background of White British pupils appears to have a greater impact on their attainment than for other ethnic groups. Although ethnic background generally appears to be less significant than income inequality in educational attainment, there are significant exceptions. The educational attainment of low-income Chinese pupils is higher than that of any other ethnic group members, no matter what their income group. The bar chart suggests that although income inequality is an important factor in educational attainment, it doesn't operate in isolation from ethnicity.

Methods 9 (page 189)

1 Why might a questionnaire fail to reveal racism in schools?

Many people are unlikely to admit to racist behaviour. Some might be unaware that their behaviour might be seen as racist. Members of staff might conceal their own or others' racism in order to protect the image of the school. For these reasons, a questionnaire might fail to reveal racism in schools.

2 Why might parents and teachers be the wrong people to ask about racism in schools?

Teachers might be unwilling or unable to report racism for the reasons given above. To do so might threaten their jobs and their school's reputation. Assuming racism exists in the school/college, parents may know little or nothing about it. Students may be unwilling to tell them about their own or their teachers' racism, or their experience as victims of racism, for fear of possible consequences.

Activity 18 (page 190)

In view of Items A and B, do you think that racial discrimination played a part in the setting of students? Explain your answer.

Item A provides evidence of racial discrimination. Third-year exam results show systematic discrimination in set placement against African-Caribbean students. For example, despite having higher English marks than seven out of eight of their White and Asian counterparts who were placed in high sets, the four African-Caribbean students were placed in low sets.

Whether or not this discrimination was intentional, Item B suggests the association between ethnicity and behaviour is one reason for African-Caribbean pupils being placed in sets lower than their exam results merited and Asian/White pupils being placed in sets higher than their results merited. The pupils were judged on the basis of stereotypical associations between 'race' and behaviour – African-Caribbean pupils being stereotyped as 'disruptive' and 'less cooperative'. Placing them in low sets on this basis can be seen as racist.

Activity 19 (page 191)

Make out a case that the teacher's treatment of Marcus is a) racist

The teacher's behaviour towards Marcus could be considered racist because he was treated differently to the other children: he was ignored by the teacher, singled-out for criticism, accused of doing something he didn't do ('Don't shout out Marcus'), not praised when he got an answer right (the praise was given to another pupil) and told off for behaviour that others got away with. When a girl shouted out an answer she was not told off; when Marcus put up his hand he was ignored, but when he gave a correct answer without raising his hand he was told to raise his hand first. Although other children were directly praised when they gave a right answer, Marcus was not. Neither was he directly asked a question – unlike some of the other children.

b) non-racist

Marcus was treated differently and in a negative way by the teacher. This may not be racist if Marcus's behaviour in general was worse than that of the other children. He may be a regular offender, ignoring the teacher's attempt to impose rules and standards of behaviour.

Methods 10 (page 192)

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using the ethnographic method for studying racism in schools?

Ethnographic research attempts to study people in their normal, everyday settings. Using methods such as overt (open) and covert (hidden) participant observation, ethnography has a number of advantages for studying racism in schools. Teachers and pupils are likely to conceal racist

behaviour when responding to a questionnaire or interview. Sometimes they may be unaware of behaving in a racist manner, or being a victim of racism. Directly observing their behaviour may be the only way of obtaining valid data. It may also provide fresh insights. The ability to blend into the background, to 'watch and listen', provides opportunities to discover qualitative aspects of racist behaviour, such as the meanings perpetrators and victims give to such behaviour, as well as possible reasons for its occurrence.

Ethnographic research can have the following disadvantages however. The observer's presence can change people's behaviour – they may not act 'normally'. The research may be costly, time-consuming and place demands on the observer, especially if he or she is attempting to disguise the purpose of their presence. Because the researcher is often heavily involved with the group and relies on their personal qualities and observational skills, the data is low in reliability. As a result it is difficult to replicate the research or generalise from the findings. It is also difficult to generalise because of the small-scale nature of ethnographic research – there are usually only a few research participants.

Finally, ethnography involves ethical considerations, especially when the study concerns negative behaviour such as racism. Should the researcher stand back and simply observe racist behaviour, especially if violence occurs? Should the researcher participate in racist behaviour in order to blend in? Should the researcher disguise their identity and purpose?

Unit 5 Relationships and processes within schools

Activity 20 (page 193)

What messages are being transmitted by Items A, B and C?

The following messages are being transmitted. **1 Gender relationships:** in Item A the gender messages state that women can expect to spend their working life in the lower ranks and be restricted to particular subject areas (the reverse, by implication, is true for men). They also state that female responsibilities are restricted to certain gender stereotyped areas – such as caring for students and dealing with their problems. **2 Power in organisations:** Item C demonstrates where formal power lies within the school. Pupils are 'marched to the hall' by their teachers and the senior staff take responsibility for ensuring that pupils stand up straight and quietly until the headmaster arrives. Fewer senior staff are placed around the edges of the hall and given no responsibility for maintaining pupil discipline. In Item B a further message relates to power and control in that teachers have the ability to exclude troublesome pupils. **3 Inequality in the wider society:** in Item B one message being transmitted is racial discrimination and social inequality – African-Caribbean pupils are more likely to be excluded than White pupils. And those in power have legitimate methods to control behaviour they object to.

Activity 21 (page 194)

1 How can Item A be used to support a functionalist view of the hidden curriculum?

Functionalists see the hidden curriculum as one of means to transmit society's core values to children. For example, a major value in our society is individual achievement. Children sit exams as individuals and are rewarded as individuals. These rewards encourage them to believe in the value of individual achievement. Item A illustrates aspects of this reward system – recognition, praise, certificates and prizes for individual achievement.

2 How can Item B be used to support a Marxist view of the hidden curriculum?

Marxists, such as Bowles and Gintis (1976), see the main role of schools as social reproduction through the hidden curriculum. The objective here is for schools to produce well-disciplined workers and this is achieved by rewarding conformity, obedience, hard work and punctuality and penalising creativity, originality and independence. Item B illustrates this by showing how high academic grades correlated with pupils who displayed qualities of 'perseverance, obedience, consistency, dependability and punctuality' but were 'below average' when measured in terms of 'creativity, originality and independence of judgement'.

Activity 22 (page 196)

Provide a brief explanation for the attitudes expressed above.

The attitudes expressed are the result, Mac an Ghail (1994) argues, of the anti-school subculture developed by some working-class male students. The 'Macho Lads' developed a subculture through their shared experience of being placed in the bottom sets and treated as academic failures. This led to the situation Darren described as 'either them or us' – the Lads felt teachers both made the rules and put the Lads in situations where they had to defend themselves. The Lads, in other words, were reacting to what they saw as their unfair treatment. In a situation where 'Teachers are always suspicious of us ... Just like the cops, trying to set you up' the Lads developed strategies to 'get back' at their teachers.

Methods 11 (page 197)

How effective do you think Mac an Ghail's research methods were? Give reasons for your answer.

Mac an Ghail's research was based around a methodological pluralism that combined both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (participant observation, interviews and diaries) research methods in a way that allowed him to build up a rounded picture of school life. In addition, Mac an Ghail tried to break down barriers between researcher and respondent as a way of gaining their cooperation. For example, he developed a rapport with his respondents by sharing personal information (his life history) and involving

them in the construction of the research questionnaire.

This approach may well have increased the validity of the data. The questionnaire probably made more sense to the respondents because they had helped to construct it. It probably meant more because it reflected their concerns. And the rapport developed may have led to research participants being more truthful and conscientious in keeping their diaries.

Activity 23 (page 198)

1 It is important not to see the anti-school subculture as the typical response of African-Caribbean young men. Discuss with some reference to Items A and B.

While 'anti-school' subcultures are one response to what happens in schools, it isn't the only – or even the main – response displayed by young African-Caribbean males. Sewell (1997), for example, found that only 18% of these students could be classified as 'anti school' – the majority (41%) were conformists (such as Kelvin in Item B) who accepted the value of education, behaved well and worked hard. A further substantial group (35%) were innovators who, although they wanted academic success, found it difficult to achieve within the school – and so developed new (innovative) ways of achieving, like Calvin in Item A, by starting their own business. A third group (5%) were retreatists – 'loners who made themselves inconspicuous'.

2 Briefly explain why African-Caribbean girls often do well at school and college.

One reason is that African-Caribbean girls are pro-education. They are ambitious, determined to succeed, and aim for high-status, well-paid occupations – for which educational qualifications are required. Secondly, African-Caribbean girls usually keep a low profile in school and avoid confrontation – they do not, in this respect, attract the negative stereotypes associated with their male counterparts.

Methods 12 (page 199)

Using Rosenthal and Jacobson's study as an example, suggest why it is important to replicate studies.

Replication is an important test of reliability – if we repeat a piece of research under the same conditions and get the same results, then data is seen to be reliable. The importance of reliability is that it gives sociologists one way to assess the findings. If an experiment, such as Rosenthal and Jacobson's, is repeated a number of times with consistent results, we can be fairly sure that the methods used to obtain the data are reliable. In Rosenthal and Jacobson's case, attempts to replicate their study have neither completely confirmed nor completely falsified their research findings. However, the fact that some attempts at replication found little or no evidence to support the significance of labelling in the classroom means that, at the very least, we should treat their findings with caution.

Activity 24 (page 199)

How does this cartoon illustrate:

a) the ideas of labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy?

The cartoon illustrates the ideas of labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy in the following ways. The teacher has a mental picture of an 'ideal pupil'. She or he will tend to use this picture to label pupils – the 'ideal pupil' provides a yardstick against which pupils are judged. The teacher transmits this judgement to the pupil. This is like holding up a mirror to the pupil – the mirror reflects the teacher's judgement and the pupil sees this picture. The pupil is labelled as a certain kind of person – for example, as intelligent and hardworking. There is a tendency for pupils to see themselves in terms of the label (their 'looking-glass self' in the cartoon) and to act accordingly. This can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The pupil acts in terms of the prediction or prophecy contained in the label – there is a tendency for the prophecy to fulfil itself. In the cartoon there is a tendency for the girl to see herself as an ideal pupil and to act in terms of this label.

b) teachers' expectations of and relationships with pupils?

A label contains expectations of how pupils will behave. It also influences how teachers relate to pupils. For example, an 'ideal pupil' is expected to work hard and attain high grades. And teachers tend to have positive relationships with 'ideal pupils'. The cartoon shows a teacher smiling affectionately at the 'ideal pupil' standing before her.

Activity 25 (page 202)

1 What does Item A suggest about teachers' perceptions of middle- and working-class pupils?

Becker (1971) argues that a teacher's assessment is affected by their perception of their pupils' social class. He found that middle-class pupils were closer to the teachers' 'ideal pupil'. Item A demonstrates this in terms of the positive association between intelligence, motivation and being 'middle class'. Becker also found that working-class pupils were furthest from the teachers' perception of an 'ideal pupil', which led to these pupils being labelled as 'less able, lacking motivation and difficult to control'. This is again reflected in the item when the Head of Faculty connects a poor 'league table' position with the fact the school teaches largely working-class pupils.

2 Read Item B. Samuel may deserve everything he gets or he may not. Briefly discuss.

The argument Samuel 'deserves everything he gets' is based on the idea that he is stereotyping his teachers (Black teachers positively and White teachers negatively). Sewell's (1997) research suggests that this may be unfair. He found that the majority of teachers were not antagonistic towards Black pupils; rather, he found a minority (10%) to be supportive and a majority (60%) who, though supportive at times, identified 'Black street culture' as being responsible for a school's problems and tried to instil firm discipline in their pupils. It is possible that what Samuel disliked in White

teachers was discipline rather than racism.

On the other hand, Sewell found that a significant minority of teachers (30%) were either 'openly racist or objected to African-Caribbean street culture' – Samuel, for example, reports 'always getting done' and 'being picked on' by his teachers while White pupils were, in his eyes, treated differently by White teachers. Gillborn and Youdell (2001) suggest that White teachers had a tendency to see African-Caribbean pupils as less able and more disruptive – something perhaps reflected in Samuel's complaints about his treatment by White teachers.

3 In what ways do Alison's comments in Item C reflect the findings of research?

Research findings broadly support Alison's comments – they suggest that boys are treated 'more favourably' in the classroom; receive more teacher time and attention, are asked more questions. However, researchers differ in their explanations for this behaviour.

The majority argue this difference is the result of teacher perceptions. Abraham (1995) found that boys were seen as having 'behaviour problems' and as needing more classroom control. Spender (1983) found that teachers gave boys more their time and that girls were 'invisible' – they tended to blend into the background. Stanworth (1983) showed that teachers were more likely to know boys' names and expressed more concern and interest in them.

French (1986), however, offers a different interpretation. She argues that boys and girls bring different behaviour patterns to the classroom – boys were more active, disruptive and demanded more attention. Girls, on the other hand, were more likely to obey classroom rules. French suggests, therefore, that different treatment in the classroom results from teachers trying to cope with the louder, less well-behaved, boys; they got more attention, not because teachers were sexist (as Alison's comments imply) but because boys' behaviour was more problematic and required more control and attention.

Activity 26 (page 204)

1 Write a letter of no more than 100 words to Tony Blair about his views in Item A.

Answers will vary here, but you might want to consider the following:

a. 'Different children ... have differing abilities'.

Ability is not fixed – it changes over time. This also ignores the social benefits of mixed-ability groups.

b. 'All pupils are encouraged to progress as far ... as they are able.'

Setting affects attainment – all pupils should have an equal chance to achieve.

c. 'Grouping children according to ability is an important way of making that happen.'

Setting discriminates against pupils from working-class or minority ethnic backgrounds because they are often the ones placed in lower sets/streams. Ability groups discriminate in favour of the White middle-class. There is evidence that African-Caribbean pupils are placed in lower-ability groups on the basis of their behaviour rather than their measured ability.

2 Using the information in Item B, state why setting for examinations can make a real difference to pupils' attainment.

Ability grouping by sets prevents those in the lower sets from having any chance of attaining higher grades (as Item B demonstrates). Because the lowest sets contain disproportionately working-class and African-Caribbean pupils, setting discriminates against these pupils, thereby making a real difference to pupils' attainment.

3 How might the teachers' views in Item C affect pupils' attainment?

The teacher's views affect pupils' attainment in two main ways: 1 The judgements made about pupils (and their behaviour) has a significant impact on the ability groups to which they are allocated. The attainment of a pupil allocated to the lowest set is restricted by the exams for which they are entered (those entered for foundation-level GCSE, for example, can gain a maximum of a 'C' grade). Both teachers in the item had very clear ideas about which pupils were 'high attaining' and which were not. 2 The teacher's views relate to both labelling and self-fulfilling prophecies. Both teachers clearly preferred teaching the top sets, mainly because they didn't encounter discipline problems. Both teachers equated intelligence with good behaviour (Teacher A does this explicitly while this is implicit in Teacher B's observation that 'If you get a top set you tend to think that their behaviour will be better'). Labelling pupils in this way may result in a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teacher B, for example, looks forward 'to teaching my top-set third year but dread my bottom-set third year' and these (different) expectations are transmitted to pupils – those who teachers label as 'low ability' often fail to achieve (thereby confirming the teacher's prophecy) while those labelled as 'high ability' tend to confirm their teacher's prophecy by reaching higher levels of attainment.

Unit 6 Social policy and education

Activity 27 (page 205)

1 Answer the test questions.

Office: people do not live in an office.

MALESO: (the composers are: Mozart, Strauss and Verdi)

Ball: this is both a dance and a sphere.

The circle: all the other figures have straight edges.

There should be five circles on the bottom layer, four on the next layer up, and so on.

2 What are the problems of forecasting children's academic ability on the basis of intelligence tests?

Two related problems are that intelligence tests are not always good predictors of academic ability and that using such tests to forecast academic attainment assumes that 'intelligence' is something fixed and unchanging. These criticisms are evidenced by the fact that some secondary modern pupils (who had failed the 11 plus) were getting better results than their grammar school peers when finally allowed to take GCE O-levels.

Activity 28 (page 207)

1 Why did Gerald Steinberg feel a failure?

He felt a failure because he had not passed the 11 plus exam.

2 What does the cartoon suggest about the tripartite system?

The cartoon questions the idea that children can be neatly pigeon-holed (as 'academic' or 'non-academic') at 11 years old. It suggests that the selection process was unfair and based around class distinctions rather than 'intelligence differences' (the well-dressed child goes to the grammar school, the scruffy child to the secondary modern). There is clearly no 'parity of esteem' between the two types of school – grammar schools are pictured as bright and clean whereas secondary moderns are depicted as dark and dirty. Finally, the cartoon suggests a labelling process at work, with one child being labelled as a 'success' at 11 while another carries the label of 'failure'. The 'grammar school' boy is smiling – he has a bright future. The 'secondary modern' boy is scowling – he has a dismal future.

Activity 29 (page 208)

What problems of comprehensive schools are illustrated by this cartoon?

The cartoon illustrates what some researchers see as the results of streaming. Stream 1, the top stream is pictured as academic and well-behaved. Stream 2, the bottom stream is pictured as badly behaved with no interest in education. Although the school is labelled an 'All-class comprehensive', there is a tendency for middle-class pupils to be in the top stream and working-class pupils to be in the bottom stream.

Activity 30 (page 209)

The quality of youth training depends on who's providing the training. Briefly discuss with reference to Items A and B.

The items broadly support this statement. Item B, for example, supports Cohen's (1984) argument that few youth trainees received any real occupational training and that the majority were simply a source of cheap labour. As the respondent argues, once 'the training period was over, they got rid of him and started a new one'.

Item A, on the other hand, demonstrates that some schemes

do offer relevant training, experience and the opportunity for further study. The respondent was working towards an NVQ qualification and, as he states, 'I've worked in four different offices and gained a variety of experience. It's great working here.'

Activity 31 (page 211)

How does this cartoon illustrate the aims of the Education Reform Act?

The cartoon illustrates both a general aim – the marketisation of education – and some specific aims of the Act. These include: **1** Competition and choice: different types of school (such as grant maintained and city technology colleges) were introduced with the aim of both giving parents a choice of school (as illustrated by the cartoon) and, by extension, forcing schools to compete for pupils. **2** League Tables: the Act aimed to give parents information about the performance of schools to allow them to make an informed choice for their children. A further aim was to encourage competition between schools and to improve attainment levels as schools tried to improve their position in the league. **3** Expansion and closure: a third aim, illustrated by the cartoon, was to allow 'high performing schools' (those with high levels of academic attainment and popular choices for parents) to expand their intake while 'poorly performing schools' would eventually be forced to close (as parents rejected these schools for their children).

Activity 32 (page 212)

Why is a league table based on value-added scores important?

Value-added league tables are important because, unlike league tables based simply on exam results, they measure the effectiveness of schools in improving the attainment levels of their pupils. In this respect they are a fairer way of measuring the contribution made by a school to their pupils' levels of achievement over the course of their secondary education. This is because they take into account the academic attainment levels of pupils when they enter the school and compare this with their attainment as they leave the school. A school taking pupils with low attainment levels may, for example, 'add more value' to their pupils than schools with a high attainment intake. It is important to measure and recognise the progress made by pupils and schools.

Activity 33 (page 213)

1 How does the cartoon illustrate Labour's policy of diversity and choice?

The cartoon illustrates the idea of diversity and choice by rejecting the 'one-size-fits-all' idea of comprehensive education. The main idea here is that different types of specialist schools and colleges reflect the diversity of young people – the different 'abilities, aptitudes and ambitions' of individual students.

2 With some reference to Item B, discuss how diversity can lead to inequality of educational opportunity.

Item B highlights three ways that diversity can lead to inequality of educational opportunity: **1** Where specialisms are unequal, they become ranked in a hierarchy of status (such as schools specialising in academic subjects being more highly regarded than those specialising in vocational subjects). **2** A diverse, hierarchical, school system means that the powerful in our society are better placed to take advantage of educational opportunities and choices than the less powerful. **3** One consequence of this hierarchy is that many children find themselves in schools that have a comparatively low status – something Chitty likens to the pre-comprehensive tripartite system of grammar schools having higher status than secondary modern schools.

Methods 13 (page 214)

Why is it difficult to measure the effects of education policy? Refer to Sure Start and academies in your answer.

Measuring the effects of social policy is not easy. Often there is no agreement about what should be measured, how it should be measured and when it should be measured.

Academies were created to raise achievement in deprived areas. How should 'achievement' be measured? If we use GCSE results or value-added measures, academies are doing well – they have improved at a faster rate than other secondary schools and, in terms of value-added measures, they are above average for all secondary schools. However, their performance in 16–19 education is well below the national average. Critics argue that the 'success' at GCSE is partly due to academies taking fewer children with behavioural problems and special needs. If this is the case, then academies are not as 'successful' as their GCSE results suggest.

Measurements of social policy are sometimes one-off snapshots, sometimes covering a relatively short time period. This can cause problems. For example, is it fair to make judgements about academies when they have only been in existence for a relatively short time?

Measuring the effect of programmes such as Sure Start present further problems. The aim of Sure Start is to improve the health, education and job prospects of pre-school children in deprived areas. Only short-term results are presently available. 'Success' can only be properly measured by long-term effects – developments that may only become apparent in adulthood. In addition, each local Sure Start programme is different, which makes it extremely difficult to measure the effect of Sure Start in general. Finally, there are so many factors that could affect child development that it is difficult to isolate the effect of Sure Start programmes.

Activity 34 (page 215)

Would you support this demonstration? Refer to the conclusion on page 216 in your answer.

Whether you would support this demonstration is ultimately a matter of personal judgement. However, some points you might want to consider here include:

- Callender & Jackson (2004) found fear of debt was greatest among students from low-income backgrounds. And students who were afraid of debt were four times less likely to go on to higher education.
- Many young people with working-class backgrounds feel that they cannot afford to go on to higher education.
- Machin (2003) found that though grants are available for students from low-income families, many are still put off by the costs of higher education.
- Ferri et al. (2003) have shown that the chances of a young middle-class person gaining a degree have grown at a higher rate than those of a young working-class person.
- A reduction in inequality in the wider society is necessary to reduce inequality of educational opportunity and close the class attainment gap.

Methods 14 (page 216)

Why are longitudinal studies important for studying the effects of government education policy?

The Sure Start programme provides a good illustration of why longitudinal studies are important in this context. It aims to improve the health, education and job prospects of disadvantaged pre-school children – the effects of this policy, therefore, will not be known until these children reach adulthood. Anning (2006), for example, suggests that it's currently too early to assess Sure Start's effect on children's education in the school system. Where social policies are designed to make long-term changes it is necessary to use longitudinal studies that allow the researcher to compare possible changes in behaviour over lengthy time periods.