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TEACHER PROFILES, SCHOOL ORGANIZATION, AND TEACHING STYLES IN CONTRASTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXTS

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Teachers (N:153) in 6 predominantly middle-class and 15 predominantly working-class primary schools in Cork city were contrasted in terms of socio-demographic, career, professional, and extra-curricular profiles, school and classroom organization, and teaching style. Few significant differences were recorded. The implications of the findings are considered in relation to equality of educational provision between schools, the differential socialization of middle and working-class pupils, and the socializing forces and structural constraints impinging on the teacher's classroom behaviour.

Data on the characteristics of schools attended by contrasting social, racial, and religious groups are available for a number of countries and have a particular significance in educational systems in which students are segregated on the basis of race, religion, or social background (e.g., 9, 14, 41). The quality of educational inputs has long been regarded as an important factor in the context of equality of educational opportunity and it has been argued that differences between schools in their resources may be taken as an index of lack of equality (cf. 8, 12, 36, 39). Most recently, a variety of conflict perspectives (5, 6, 11, 13) has stressed the role of the differential socialization of middle and working-class pupils in terms of control, disposition, and aspirations in the reproduction of unequal occupational, status, and power structures in society, a hypothesis considered on the one hand as having been 'documented many times' (6) and on the other as awaiting 'empirical test' (23).

In the study reported in this paper a number of aspects of school inputs in predominantly middle-class and predominantly working-class primary schools is compared. Teacher profiles, based on socio-demographic, career, professional, and extra-curricular data are contrasted. So too are patterns of school and classroom organization and teaching style – factors which have been considered elsewhere in relation to the occupational socialization of teachers (27, 33). The study was carried out in Cork city in June 1978.

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METHOD

Schools

Twenty one primary schools m Cork city were identified as predominantly middle-class (N 6) or working-class (N 15) in terms of pupil population and area served The selection was made initially on the basis of data on the social composition of Cork city primary schools (10, 30) which identified school populations with more than a 50% representation from either professional and non manual or semi and unskilled manual worker back grounds While these data did not indicate the social composition of individual schools, they showed that as a group the predominantly middle class schools had a 70% representation from professional and non manual backgrounds and the predominantly working-class schools a 90% representation from manual worker backgrounds Further selection from these two groups was made by reference to the area served by the schools Private schools, schools in middle-class areas which were known to attract pupils from neighbouring working-class areas, and, less frequently, schools in working-class areas which, usually because of family tradition, attracted middle-class pupils, were all excluded from the study In all cases, schools identified as middle-class were located in suburban private housing estates Of the 15 working-class schools, nine were situated in public housing estates m the suburbs and six were in older traditional working class areas nearer the city centre The middle-class schools were uniformly large with a two or three stream entry The working-class schools varied more, involving two/three stream entry, single stream entry, as well as new schools which had yet to provide senior classes

Instrument

As part of a larger questionnaire, a set of closed questions was used to elicit information on teacher profiles and school organization

Socio-demographic items requested information on the teacher's age (five year interval categories), marital status (single, married, widow/widower, religious), geographical background (city, town, village, rural) and socio economic background Father's occupation was used as an indicator of socio-economic background and the classification scheme, adapted from the Irish Census (21), distinguished between farmers, professional and non-manual workers, skilled, semi skilled, and unskilled workers

Career items required the teacher to indicate the length of his or her teaching experience both overall and in the teacher's present school (2 years or less, 3-5 years, and thereafter at five-year intervals to a maximum of 21 years or more), and if he or she expected to be teaching in the same type

of area for the forseeable future ('yes', 'no', 'doubtful').

The professional items elicited information on the teacher's qualifications (basic qualification only, B.A. degree, B.A. degree + Higher Diploma in Education), involvement in the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and in the local teachers' centre ('very involved', 'involved', 'little or no involvement'), the frequency of the teacher's reading on educational topics ('very frequently', 'frequently', 'occasionally', 'hardly ever') and attendance at educational conferences or meetings during the previous school year (none, 1-5, 6-9, 10 or more).

Extra-curricular items asked the teacher to indicate his or her degree of involvement in extra-curricular activities ('very involved', 'involved', 'little or no involvement') and the frequency of social contact with parents outside of school hours ('very frequently', 'frequently', 'occasionally', 'little or no contact').

On school organization, teachers were asked to give the size of their class (30 pupils or less, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50) and the number of years they had spent with their present group of pupils.

In the case of classroom organization and teaching style, teachers were asked to locate their practice on a seven-point scale between two behavioural poles, e.g.,

'Learning is predominantly by discovery techniques'	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	There is little use of discovery techniques'

The behavioural poles were derived from a number of sources (1, 3, 4) including the official teachers' handbook of the Irish Department of Education (22).

For classroom organization, the following contrasting poles were presented to teachers: 'integrated subject matter, projects, topics, themes, etc. incorporating a range of school subjects'/'subjects taught separately'; 'pupils help to decide what is covered on the curriculum'/'teacher decides what topics are covered'; 'pupils spend a lot of time working in groups'/'pupils spend little time working in groups'; 'pupils spend a lot of time working individually'/'pupils spend little time working individually'.

The teachers were asked to indicate their teaching style in terms of the following extremes: 'learning is predominantly by discovery techniques'/ 'there is little use of discovery techniques'; 'teacher facilitates learning,

suggests sources, makes facilities available'/'teacher transmits knowledge and develops skills', 'there is little concern for conventional educational standard'/ 'very concerned with conventional educational standards', 'external rewards and punishments unnecessary, the pupils are motivated by what they are doing'/'external rewards and punishments, grades, sweets, stars, etc used', 'accent on co operative work'/'little accent on co operative work','accent on creativity'/'little accent on creativity'

Procedure and Response

Teachers in grades 1 through 6 in the selected schools were asked to respond to the instrument From the 185 teachers approached, there were 153 usable returns, 60 in middle-class and 93 in working class contexts, representing an overall response rate of 83 percent A number of the respondents, however, failed to answer the items on classroom organization and teaching style in full, the numbers who responded are given separately for each item in Tables 1 and 2

Those responding in middle and working-class contexts were similar with regard to the gender of the teacher and the gender and grade level of the pupils taught Thirty five percent of the teachers responding in middle class contexts were male and 65% female, in the working class contexts the male and female teacher representation was 40% and 60% respectively In middle class contexts 47% of the teachers were teaching boys and 53% were teaching girls, in working-class contexts 53% were teaching boys and 47% girls Each grade level was represented by a minimum of 15% and a maximum of 20% of teachers in the sample

Analysis

Responses on the teacher profile and school organization items were cross tabulated with the socio-economic context of the school, and chi square tests of significance were carried out For the classroom organization and teaching style items, the teachers' ratings in each case were treated as scores (1 to 7) and item means and standard deviations for middle and working class contexts were calculated A t test was used to determine the significance of the difference between school contexts for each item For both chi square and t tests, the 5% level of significance was adopted

RESULTS

Teacher Profiles

Socio-demographic profile The relationships between school socio economic context and age (χ^2 = 4 44, df 4), marital status (χ^2 = 2 10, df 2), and geographical background (χ^2 = 4 55, df 3) were not statistically significant

Fifty-eight percent of the teachers in middle-class contexts and 64% in working-class contexts were aged 30 years or less; four-fifths in both contexts were less than 40 years old. Five percent of the teachers in middle-class contexts and 12% in working-class contexts were religious. In both contexts, the predominantly lay teaching force was almost equally divided among those who were single and married. About half of the teachers in working-class contexts and 35% in middle-class contexts described themselves as coming from a rural background. On the other hand, a third in middle-class and a fifth in working-class contexts described their background as a city one.

The teacher's socio-economic background was the only socio-demographic item to relate significantly to school context ($\chi^2 = 5.99$; *df:* 3). While teachers from professional and non-manual backgrounds were the largest group in both contexts, their representation in middle-class contexts was 68% and in working-class contexts 48 percent. In middle-class contexts, 23% came from a farming background and 9% from a manual-worker background; in working-class contexts, the farming representation was 33% and the manual-worker representation was 19 percent.

Career profile. Neither overall teaching experience ($\chi^2 = 5.37$; *df:* 5), service in the teacher's present school ($\chi^2 = 6.18$; *df:* 5), nor mobility expectations ($\chi^2 = 0.41$ *df:* 2) related significantly to the school's context. Twenty-eight percent in middle-class contexts and 37% in working-class contexts had five years' or less teaching experience. About three-quarters in each context had 16 years or less teaching experience. In both contexts, about a half had five years or less teaching service in their present school and the vast majority (85%) expected to be teaching in a similar area for the immediate future.

Professional profile. The relationships between school context and teacher's qualifications ($\chi^2 = 2.82$; *df:* 2), involvement in the INTO ($\chi^2 = 1.79$; *df:* 2), involvement in teachers' centres ($\chi^2 = 1.95$; *df:* 2), and attendance at educational conferences or meetings during the previous school year ($\chi^2 = 0.17$; *df:* 3) failed to reach the required level of significance. Fifty-nine percent in middle-class contexts and 71% in working-class contexts had a basic teaching qualification only; the remainder in both contexts had at least a BA degree. The patterns of involvement in the INTO and teachers' centre were similar. In both cases, 3% of teachers in middle-class and 1% in working-class contexts described themselves as very involved. Those with little or no involvement in the INTO and teachers' centres represent respectively 73% and 66% in middle-class contexts and 81% and 75% in working-class contexts. Twenty-one percent of teachers in middle-class

contexts and 23% in working class contexts reported attending no educational conference or meeting during the previous school year and a further 62% in both contexts reported attending between one and five conferences or meetings

Reading on educational topics was the only item in the professional profile which related significantly to school context ($\chi^2 = 6\ 16$, *df* 2) Forty nine percent in middle-class contexts and 29% in working-class contexts claimed that they read books on educational topics frequently or very frequently About a tenth in both contexts reported that they hardly ever read on educational topics while those describing themselves as occasional readers in this regard represent 42% in middle class contexts and 61% in working class contexts

Extra curricular profile Neither the teacher's involvement in extra curricular activities ($\chi^2 = 1\ 35$, *df* 2) nor social contact with parents outside of school hours ($\chi^2 = 4\ 38$, *df* 2) was found to relate significantly to school context The majority in both contexts, 60% in middle class contexts and 56% in working-class contexts, rated themselves as having little or no involvement in extra-curricular activities Those who rated themselves as very involved represented 17% and 13% in middle and working class contexts respectively Two fifths in both contexts described themselves as having occasional contact with parents outside of school hours, 42% in middle-class and 52% in working-class contexts rated themselves as having little or no contact and 18% in middle-class and 8% in working class contexts described themselves as meeting parents socially frequently or very frequently

Organization

School organization Class size was found to be significantly related to school context ($\chi^2 = 9\ 54$, *df* 3) While the largest percentage of teachers in both contexts was teaching in classes of 41-45 pupils, the representation of this class size in middle-class contexts was 58% and in working class contexts 38 percent Only 3% and 1% in middle and working-class contexts respectively were teaching classes of 46 50 pupils At the other extreme of class size, 8% of teachers in middle-class contexts and 16% of those in working class contexts were teaching classes of 30 pupils or less

Twenty two percent of those in middle-class contexts, as opposed to 34% in working-class contexts, had been teaching their present group of pupils for two years or more This practice, however, was not found to be significantly related to school context ($\chi^2 = 2\ 55$, *df* 2)

Classroom organization In Table 1 means and standard deviations for

middle and working-class contexts on classroom-organization items are recorded. It can be seen that a *t*-test failed to indicate a significant difference between the school contexts for curriculum integration, degree of pupil/teacher control over curriculum content, and extent of group work and individual work.

TABLE 1

SCORES ON CLASSROOM-ORGANIZATION ITEMS FOR MIDDLE AND WORKING-CLASS CONTEXTS

Classroom organization†	Middle Class			Working Class			
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	*t*
Integrated/subject-based curriculum	3.76	1.69	55	4.03	1.89	85	0.86
Pupil/teacher control over curriculum content	5.41	1.70	56	5.37	1.77	89	0.12
A lot of/little group work	4.29	1.82	56	3.97	1.81	89	1.03
A lot of/little individual work	3.51	1.71	55	3.71	1.78	89	1.08

† The lower the score the greater the inclination toward the first-named pole.

Teaching Style

Means and standard deviations for middle-class and working-class contexts on teaching-style items are recorded in Table 2. Of the six dimensions of teaching style considered, the reported use of discovery techniques was the only item for which a significant difference between the school contexts was found. Teachers in working-class contexts claimed to be more inclined towards the use of discovery techniques in their teaching than did teachers in middle-class contexts.

TABLE 2

SCORES ON TEACHING STYLE ITEMS FOR MIDDLE AND WORKING-CLASS CONTEXTS

Teaching style†	Middle Class			Working Class			
	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	*t*
Predominant/little use of discovery techniques	4 29	1 64	55	3 71	1 75	89	1 99*
Teacher facilitates learning/ transmits knowledge	4 44	1 70	54	4 29	1 98	87	0 48
Little concern/very concerned for conventional educational standards	5 12	1 54	56	4 76	1 79	88	1 25
Intrinsic/extrinsic rewards	4 40	1 92	57	4 37	2 04	88	0 08
Accent/little accent on cooperative work	3 53	1 89	57	3 48	1 88	89	0 13
Accent/little accent on creativity	3 65	1 81	57	3 33	1 72	89	1 08

† The lower the score the greater the inclination toward the first named pole

* $p < 05$

DISCUSSION

Most of the contrasts drawn in this paper between middle and working-class school contexts can be considered in relation to equality of societal input, the extent to which society equally endows, be it in terms of finance, personnel or facilities, schools attended by contrasting socio-economic groups Most noteworthy in this regard are the differences that fail to emerge, particularly given the findings of research elsewhere Many studies at various levels of the educational system have found teachers in working class areas to be younger, less experienced, and more mobile than in middle class areas (2, 12, 18, 20, 36) The former have also been reported to be more likely to come from a blue-collar background (20, 36), to have less contact with parents (25), to be less open to innovation (20), to be

less individualized or child-centered in their teaching (28), and to place more emphasis on teacher control in the regulation of pupil behaviour (7). All that can be found to reflect this pattern in the present study are the over-representation in working-class contexts of teachers from a farming and manual-worker background and the under-representation of those who claim to read books on educational topics frequently or very frequently. It does not follow from this, of course, that equality of educational provision exists in our schools, much less equality of opportunity. We cannot, for example, say anything about the quality of teaching, the nature of teacher-pupil interaction, the range of the curriculum, or the effects of schooling in different socio-economic contexts. Indeed, the apparently favourable showing of working-class schools on class size and the reported use of discovery techniques need to be viewed in relation to research on the effects of these aspects of schooling on pupil attainment; research in Ireland (32) and elsewhere (15, 40) has raised considerable doubts about the contribution of small classes (within the range of class size in this study) to pupil attainment, and Bennett's (3) much publicized study *Teaching styles and pupil progress* has similarly questioned the educational merit of progressive teaching styles.

To what extent can the over-representation of teachers from a manual-worker background in working-class schools be regarded as evidence of an erosion of what has been frequently seen as cultural conflict between home and school in such areas? Can such teachers be expected to experience a greater empathy with working-class pupils or to hold more favourable expectations or to make greater demands (19) of them? These certainly suggest themselves as fruitful topics for research (29).

Of the variety of writers who argue that the differential socialization of middle and working-class pupils in schools is a crucial mechanism in the reproduction of unequal social structures, the work of Bowles and Gintis (6) is probably the most relevant to the variables considered in this paper. Deriving their interpretation of school-based socialization from a deterministic version of Marx's correspondence principle, they consider the social relations of the educational system to reflect those of the work place. 'The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the work place, but develops the type of personal demeanor, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social-class identifications which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy' (6, p.131). But since the occupational structure is a hierarchical one demanding various degrees of rule-following, independence, initiative, and internalization of norms, so also do predominantly middle and working-class schools vary in the demands they make on pupils: 'predominantly working-class schools tend to

emphasize behavioral control and rule-following, while schools in well to-do suburbs employ relatively open systems that favor greater student partici pation, less direct supervision, more student electives, and, in general a value system stressing internalized standards of control' (6, p 132)

There is little in the findings on school and classroom organization and teaching style in my study to support this view of differential socialization Most relevant to the Bowles and Gintis thesis is the failure to discover a significant relationship between the socio-economic composition of a school and the appeal to external rewards, degree of teacher/pupil control over curriculum topics, extent of individual work, or the facilitation of learning as opposed to the transmission of knowledge I found the use of discovery techniques to be more pronounced in working-class schools, while the smaller class size and, though not statistically significant, the greater incidence of teachers who remain with their classes for longer than two years in working-class schools might well facilitate a more personalized teacher pupil relationship

As presented, the Bowles and Gintis theory of differential socialization is unduly crude both in terms of dichotomized social classes and in the aspects of socialization considered (11) A more fundamental weakness of the correspondence principle as applied to education is its failure to elaborate on the processes by which the social relations of industry might influence those of the school (26, 34) Any such elaboration must in the final analysis suggest how teachers themselves come to vary their approaches to socialization according to the socio-economic background of the pupils Yet in this study the similarities in classroom organization and teaching style between teachers in contrasting socio-economic contexts suggest the influence of a universalistic pedagogic ideology (38), rather than the adaptive socialization, occasioned by a situational adjustment to what are perceived as the peculiar demands and needs of particular educational contexts, noted by Becker (2) in his classic study of the Chicago public schoolteacher

The greater utilization of discovery approaches reported in working class schools contradicts the research mentioned earlier in this discussion but is consistent with a finding of Halsey, in his reports on three experi mental Educational Priority Areas in England, that teachers in these areas were more permissive in their approach to the child and more tolerant of classroom noise than primary teachers in general (18) Perhaps these findings represent the result of the greater concern within education for 'disadvantaged' children and a non-evaluative accepting approach to those who are other than mainstream in their life style and aspirations, which

have been developing, particularly since the 1960s (24, 35). Moreover, given an openness to innovation, the teacher in a working-class area might well experience less parental overseeing and restriction than in a middle-class area. In the case of the present study the more favourable class size in working-class schools is also relevant. A more comprehensive analysis, however, of the influences on teaching style would demand an examination of the variety of sources of occupational socialization and structural constraints to which a teacher is exposed in his or her work. Among the influences likely to be worthy of attention are the teacher's formation during professional training (31), the expectations of inspectors, head-masters, fellow teachers, and parents (33, 38), the teacher's perceptions of pupil needs and classroom demands (37), the prevailing pedagogic wisdoms (16), and the school's architecture, organization, and mode of evaluation (17). It is hoped that future papers on personal and organizational correlates of teaching style and on teachers' definitions of perceived and desired pupil behaviour and needs will contribute to such an analysis.

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