CHAPTER ONE

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION: AN INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

Education currently assumes a central role in the politics and policies of many countries across the world. Indeed, despite the recent global economic crisis, it is significant that the latest Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) annual report indicates that, of 31 industrialised countries with comparable data, only seven reduced spending on education as a response to the onset of recession (OECD, 2012). Moreover, in all but one of these seven countries, the actual share of national income spent on education grew – as a result of Gross Domestic Product falling faster than educational spending (ibid.). In part, this can be explained by the assumptions made by policymakers – within governments of various different political persuasions – that education plays a critical role in preparing citizens for participation in the ‘knowledge economy’ and thus investment in education is essential for ensuring national competitiveness within an increasingly globalized market. The sociology of education offers an important critical lens through which to view such developments, allowing scholars to relate them to wider processes of social change beyond a narrow politics of economics. The aim of *Contemporary Debates in the Sociology of Education* is to bring together contributions from researchers across the world to demonstrate

how such a critical lens can be applied to different stages of education; from compulsory schooling through to higher education and learning within the workplace, and to various cross-cutting themes – such as the use of new technologies within education and the role of international organisations in policymaking. Consonant with current scholarship, it emphasizes the differential impact of educational policies and practices on specific social groups, paying attention, in particular, to differences by ethnicity, social class, gender and disability.

Although this book focuses very much on *contemporary* debates in the sociology of education, this introductory chapter considers the history of the sub-discipline since the middle of the twentieth century. In doing so, we argue that the focus and orientation of the sociology of education has been influenced by a variety of inter-related factors including: theoretical developments within the social sciences more generally; the political relationship between policymakers and sociologists of education; and the institutional context in which much sociology of education has been produced. In the three sections that follow, we discuss each of these in turn. After exploring this broad context, we then introduce the twelve further chapters that constitute *Contemporary Debates in the Sociology of Education*. We outline the main arguments that are made, and their importance in advancing sociological understanding.

Theoretical context

The nature and focus of the sociology of education has been profoundly influenced by the theoretical assumptions that have underpinned it; assumptions which have, themselves, changed significantly since the middle of the twentieth century. In what he calls his ‘disputational account’ of the sociology of education, Ball (2004) identifies three key ‘turning

points' or 'disputational moments' which have reoriented scholarship in the sub-discipline: the rise of interpretivism in the 1970s; the emergence of feminism and anti-essentialism in the 1980s; and the increasing dominance of post-modernism in the 1980s and 90s. Drawing on this typology, we briefly discuss each of these three turning points and explore their significance for the place of sociology of education within society.

Prior to the 1970s, naturalism provided the theoretical underpinning for most sociology of education. This approach views the social world as broadly equivalent to the natural world, and aims to apply the same methods of enquiry. In the UK, naturalism characterized what is often called the 'political arithmetic' tradition and, in the US, its counterpart, 'educational sociology' – both of which focus(ed) primarily on the 'inputs' to education (such as social class) and the 'outputs' which result (such as qualifications and employment) (Ball, 2004; Lauder et al., 2009). As will be discussed in more detail below, those working within the political arithmetic tradition (such as A.H. Halsey and his colleagues (1980)) enjoyed a particularly close relationship with politicians and policymakers – particularly in relation to their work on education and social mobility, and the structure of the school system. Both groups – scholars and policymakers – shared common assumptions, based on naturalist premises, that 'research-driven adjustments would produce desirable outcomes in terms of overall performance and social justice' (Shain and Ozga, 2001, p.113) and that the primary purpose of research was to change practice within the nation state.

In the 1970s, this approach came under attack from three directions, all of which focussed sociologists' attention on social processes within classrooms, rather than merely the inputs and outputs of educational systems (Yates, 2009). Firstly, neo-Marxists argued that through the actions of teachers (as well as the structure of the education system), class relations were

being reproduced within schools (e.g. Anyon, 1981; Willis, 1977). Secondly, social interactionists focussed on the ways in which pupils' and teachers' identities were constructed through processes of social control and social selection within classrooms (e.g. Pollard, 1990). And finally, Michael Young (1971), Michael Apple (1979) and other contributors to what became known as the 'New Sociology of Education' emphasized the socially constructed nature of the curriculum and pedagogic practice, arguing that school knowledge should be seen primarily as the product of power relations (Bourdieu, 1971; Bernstein, 1971). (See Ball, 2004 and Lauder et al., 2009 for a fuller discussion of these influences.)

Taken together, these new theoretical approaches had the effect of undermining the positivist framework that had underpinned sociology of education until this point (Hartley, 2007). Moreover, they suggested that quantitative analysis, which had been used extensively within sociology of education and, notably, within the political arithmetic tradition, was problematic, and had the effect of reifying social phenomena 'by treating them as more clearly defined and distinct than they are, and by neglecting the processes by which they develop and change' (Ball, 2004, p.5). In contrast, and in an attempt to understand what was going on in classrooms more fully, anti-naturalism researchers shifted away from quantitative analysis and towards qualitative methods of enquiry. This shift was characterized by 'a dual commitment to realism (the discovery and representation of respondents' meanings) and constructivism (the idea that social actors are active interpreters of the social world)' (ibid.). This new theoretical orientation had implications for researchers' relationships with both policymakers and teachers, as Shain and Ozga (2001) note:

The emergent new sociology of education carried with it, along with a commitment to social change, a degree of pessimism about its possibility through education. That theoretical turn produced a degree of alienation between sociologists of education and educational practitioners. (p.114)

This alienation was exacerbated by concurrent political developments in the UK and other Anglophone nations of the Global North, which are discussed in more detail below.

By the 1980s, however, various assumptions made by those working within the New Sociology of Education were themselves coming to be questioned by feminist scholars and other researchers who adopted an anti-essentialist theoretical position. In this second ‘disputational moment’, the ‘academic mode of production’ was subjected to significant critique for adopting a fundamentally competitive and masculinist stance, and simple gender binaries were problematized by black and lesbian feminists (Ball, 2004). As a result of this particular turning point, increased emphasis came to be placed by many sociologists of education on diversity and, in particular, the complex interplay between different inequalities and oppressions, thus articulating ‘the gendered, sexualised, racialised and biographical contexts of teaching and learning’ (Coffey, 2001, p.4). Qualitative research methods (such as in-depth interviews) were thought by many working within this perspective to be of particular value in giving voice to previously marginalised groups, and for exploring the different experiences of specific groups of pupils, students and teachers.

The third and final turning point identified by Ball (2004) is that of the shift brought about by the ascendancy of post-modernism, most evident in sociology of education from the late 1980s and early 1990s. Central to the sub-discipline until this point had been an assumption

(sometimes explicit, at other times implicit) about the essentially redemptive purpose of education. Indeed, Dale (2001) maintains that education has frequently been understood by sociologists of education (as well as teachers and policymakers) as ‘both the dominant symbol and the dominant strategy for [the] mastery of nature and of society through rationality that has characterized the project of modernity from its origins in the Enlightenment’ (p.8). Post-modernism raised fundamental questions about such redemptive assumptions. Indeed, as part of their challenge to the ‘deployment of totalising grand narratives’ (Ball, 2004, p.8), post-modern scholars argue that all ontologies and epistemologies should be seen as historically contingent and, moreover, that educational processes should be researched as if they are a text or series of signs (ibid.).

Methodologically, emphasis came to be placed by such scholars on analysing discourse and narratives, based on the assumption that language brings objects into being which have no prior essence. While some sociologists of education have argued that this particular theoretical shift has brought about an unhelpful relativism that further distances researchers from those for whom their work should have relevance (Shain and Ozga, 2001), others have welcomed the new possibilities it offers for both academic critique and political struggle (Griffiths, 1995; Kenway, 1997).

It is important to recognise that these theoretical shifts have not been linear: although post-modern approaches are now common within the sociology of education, positivist approaches continue to inform some research, and interpretivism remains popular with many scholars. Indeed, it could be argued that we are now in a fourth stage of pluralism (or perhaps even segmentation). A vivid illustration of this is provided in Luke’s (2012) account of current debates within sociology of education. He argues that two eminent sociologists (Michael Young and Raewyn Connell) present very different perspectives on the direction they believe

the sub-discipline should take. While Young (2008) provides a strong critique of constructivist and standpoint epistemology, and argues that the sociology of education needs to return to epistemological realism, Connell (2007) (who has been influential across the globe, but particularly among sociologists of education in Australia) highlights the limits of traditional Eurocentric theory and the epistemological challenges that are raised by the knowledge of indigenous groups. Similarly, while some high profile educational journals that publish sociological research take a broadly post-structural approach (such as *Gender and Education*), others include a relatively small number of articles that adopt this theoretical perspective (for example, *Sociology of Education*). This diversity in epistemological positioning is reflected in the contributions to this book. The twelve chapters that follow draw on a variety of different theoretical approaches and methodologies. This selection is not intended to be representative of the approaches that are currently dominant but, instead, to give a flavour of the theoretical and empirical richness of the sub-discipline. We thus acknowledge that, as ‘the sociology of education is made up of a set of dynamic and located constructions....any attempt to sum it up in a single framework is fraught with difficulties’ (Ball, 2004, p.1).

Political context

In addition to changing theoretical paradigms, sociology of education has been strongly influenced by the political context within which it has been conducted (although here there are important interrelationships with the various theoretical orientations outlined above). The first part of our discussion below is informed by Dale’s (2001) work, which has identified three distinct political periods that have led to profound shifts within the sociology of

education. We then consider the political environment in the first decade of the 21st century and its impact on the intellectual agenda of the sub-discipline in this period.

During the 1950s and 60s, within the UK, sociology of education assumed an important place both within academic institutions and public life more generally. In part, this is explained by the close political alignment of the Fabian reformers of the 1950s and prominent sociologists of education (for example, Halsey et al. (1980), Goldthorpe et al. (1980) and others associated with the political arithmetic tradition). Both groups were concerned to address the social inequalities of the pre-war period through the developing welfare state, and education was assumed to play a key role in facilitating social mobility (Dale, 2001; Lauder et al., 2009). Both sociologists of education and policymakers were engaged in a common endeavour to map social inequalities within education – often placing emphasis on the selective nature of the school system (Whitty, 2012). Assumptions were made that research-driven changes to education policy would produce desirable outcomes in terms of both overall academic attainment and social justice (Shain and Ozga, 2001). Moreover, in this period, politicians and policymakers made significant changes to the way in which teachers were trained, and here too sociologists of education played an important role. In the 1960s, the number of teacher training courses grew considerably, and links between teacher training colleges and universities were strengthened with the aim of moving towards a graduate profession. The academic focus and rigour of teacher training were both increased – and the sociology of education assumed an important place within this new curriculum (Hammersley, 1996).

The rise of the New Right in many Anglophone countries in the 1980s and 90s had a profound influence on the position of sociology of education, and brought to an end the close

relationship between academics and policymakers that had characterized the preceding years. Radical reforms were made to the way teachers were trained, and optimism about education's ability to bring about societal change declined significantly. Within the UK, specifically, the Conservative government of this period reversed many of the changes made to teacher training in previous decades, on the grounds that the curriculum was too theoretical and some of the content was too progressive (Hammersley, 1996). Moreover, severing the link between teachers and sociology of education became a specific political aim of education ministers (Lauder et al., 2009). As a result, sociology of education was squeezed out of teacher training programmes and much greater emphasis came to be placed, instead, on practice within schools (Deem, 2004). Indeed, Shain and Ozga (2001) argue that the national curriculum for teacher education that was introduced at this time represented a 'regime of surveillance and discipline that is not experienced elsewhere in higher education' (p.110). The theoretical developments within sociology of education during this period, which are discussed above, also contributed to the weakening of links between researchers and policymakers in the 1980s. Within the New Sociology of Education, educational institutions came to be understood as vehicles for the reproduction of structural inequalities, rather than means of achieving social justice – and this more determinist emphasis, and its pessimism about the possibility of achieving social change through education – contributed to the growing disconnection between scholars and policymakers (Shain and Ozga, 2001). In response to this shifting political context, sociology of education found a new home within other courses such as taught doctorates and master's degrees and, increasingly, broader-based 'educational studies' courses which do not lead directly to a teaching qualification (Deem, 2004). However, the political attack on it in the 1980s and 90s was significant, in severing the previously close ties between policymakers and scholars, and no longer requiring those

teaching within schools to have any knowledge or understanding of sociological analyses of educational processes.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the political context had changed again, with further implications for the sociology of education. This related, however, more to the substantive focus of educational research, rather than its contribution to teacher training (which was the primary casualty of change in the previous two decades). In the US, UK, Australia and other Anglophone nations of the Global North, politicians embraced ‘evidence-based policy’ within education as well as other areas of social policy. As Luke (2010) notes, this had the effect of constructing a binary distinction:

Between qualitative ‘critical work’ which has been portrayed as scientifically ‘soft’, politically correct and ideological by the press, politicians and educational bureaucrats – and empirical, quantitative scientific research, which is presented as unbiased, truthful and the sole grounds for rational policy formation. (p.178)

In the US, this distinction was brought into sharp relief by debates over the educational reform programme ‘No Child Left Behind’, and the shift towards a positivist ‘scientifically proven’ curriculum (Luke, 2012). Politicians and educationalists became involved in heated debates about what counts as evidence. On the one hand, academics criticised policymakers for insisting on an evidence base that draws on only narrow measures of educational achievement, while, on the other hand, two leading government officials were widely reported as having said that they would ‘burn down faculties of education’ because of the nature of educational research with which they were engaged (Luke, 2010). Luke (2010) is highly critical of the lack of engagement, on the part of politicians and policymakers, with

actual classroom practices, claiming that any properly governed process of reform must play close attention to what happens in classrooms; moreover, he suggests that the qualitative data often scorned by government officials can provide important evidence of such classroom practices.

Similar shifts in the use of evidence have been seen in the UK and Australia. Within the UK, government funding for educational research increasingly focussed on the evaluation – rather than the interpretation – of national initiatives (Coffey, 2001). Furthermore, the broad political consensus that has been evident over the past couple of decades with respect to neo-liberal inflected policies such as ‘educational choice’ and ‘institutional diversity’ has, Coffey (2001) argues, contributed to the ‘de-theorizing’ of much educational research. This has been played out quite clearly in the ‘school effectiveness’ movement – which became dominant in Anglophone nations of the Global North in the late 1990s. School effectiveness researchers argued that the effect of schools *per se* upon pupil performance had been neglected and attempted to show that, even when social and other factors were taken into account, there remained differences among schools which could be ascribed to the quality of schooling itself. As Goldstein and Woodhouse (2000) contend, this approach appealed to governments of various political persuasions ‘at least partly because it implied that changing schools could affect performance and hence that educational policy was relevant to educational “standards”’ (p.353). This new focus of educational research served to obscure or deny many of the key concerns of sociology of education (Shain and Ozga, 2001). In common with the No Child Left Behind programme of educational reform in the US, it focussed primarily on the analysis of quantitative indicators and, it is argued, failed to engage with more critical and sociological approaches to classroom practices and policy formation (Shain and Ozga, 2001; Slee et al., 1999; Thrupp, 1999). Yates (2009) contends that this policy emphasis had

important repercussions within universities (within Australia and elsewhere), and further marginalised those who adopted a sociological approach to the study of education:

‘School effectiveness’ has become the issue of the day. Driven by politicians and policy-makers and their endless critiques of teacher education, faculties of education did not want to employ people who seemed only to have something critical to say, or who wanted to raise bigger questions about what schools were doing. They wanted to leave debates about what particular constructions of curriculum represented out of the discussion, and instead to see schooling and teaching as a technical activity with straightforward aims, and as an activity that could be improved if only it were studied more carefully (that is, in more systematic and controlled ways). (p.18)

While such policy imperatives have, as Yates suggests, had the effect of excluding sociologists of education from many education departments, policy itself has become an important focus of enquiry of those who have been able to sustain a sociological focus – whether in departments of education or sociology. Indeed, despite the dominance of the school effectiveness movement within educational research, the sociology of education policy has grown significantly. Across the Global North, sociologists of education have developed sophisticated critiques of the neo-liberal orientation of education policy (e.g. Apple, 2004; Levine-Rasky, 2009; Marginson, 1997). Within the UK, this policy sociology has also focussed on understanding why education policy, whatever its claims, has ended up favouring middle class children (Whitty, 2012).

The first decade of the twentieth century has also seen a growth in two other areas of sociological enquiry, which can be seen as closely related to the wider political context.

Firstly, the sociology of *higher* education has gained increasing prominence. Although, for much of the 20th century, sociologists had tended to ignore the university sector as a site of enquiry (Naidoo, 2003), this had changed by the early 21st century. Indeed, David (2007) notes that about half the articles published in the *British Journal of Sociology of Education* in the first six months of 2007 (the period she reviewed) focussed on higher education compared with a much smaller proportion only a few years earlier. Naidoo (2003) contends that this shifting focus within the sociology of education is closely related to the increased political importance that has been placed on higher education, and the significant change that has been wrought in the sector, as a result of changing political imperatives. These include: the new funding and regulatory frameworks that have been introduced in many countries worldwide, which are underpinned by neo-liberal and market mechanisms; an emphasis on widening participation to higher education – often seen as a means of ensuring national competitiveness within the ‘knowledge economy’; increasing state and market control over what is taught in universities; and the commodification of knowledge production (Naidoo, 2003). While Deem (2004) argues that the sociology of higher education is still at an early stage of development – ‘a fretful toddler rather than a mature adult’ (p.33) – it has provided a new point of contact for those who define themselves primarily as sociologists of education and their colleagues in other areas of sociology who have become interested in the conditions of their own work within higher education (for example, John Urry and Steve Fuller).

Secondly, sociologists of education have become increasingly interested in processes of globalization. Although education is still often seen as the preserve of the nation-state, and empirical research usually takes the form of local or national case studies or cross-national comparisons, a growing body of work is now exploring transnational education spaces – at both regional and international levels (Engel, 2012; Keating, 2006, Waters and Brooks,

2011). Over recent years, researchers have examined: the way in which education policy is increasingly formulated at a supranational level (Robertson, 2007); the nature of transnational mobility in pursuit of a higher education (Brooks and Waters, 2009); and the growth of international markets for both compulsory schooling and lifelong learning (e.g. Hayden, 2011; Hall and Appleyard, 2011). These broad trends in the evolving focus of the sociology of education can be seen across many parts of the world. Nevertheless, some geographical disparities do remain: within North America, Australia and New Zealand there is a strong emphasis on the educational experiences and outcomes of indigenous populations (e.g. Connell, 2007; Kidman et al., 2011), while a focus on social class is more pronounced in the UK than in other nations (Whitty, 2012). And, despite the discussion above with respect to the methodology of researching the ‘No Child Left Behind’ policy in the US, American sociology of education is typically more quantitative in nature than that emanating from other Anglophone nations in the Global North.

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, sociology of education rarely exerts the direct influence on policymakers that was evident in the middle of the previous century. Nevertheless, it continues to offer a valuable perspective on the political process and a constructive contribution to public debate: for example, Whitty (2012) has argued that it serves a useful function in helping to ‘inoculate’ the public mind against inappropriate policies. Moreover, as education has come to assume an increasingly important place in the political programmes of many administrations worldwide – enjoying ‘a resurrection as a vital agent of social change and cultural reproduction (or interruption)’ (Coffey, 2001, p.4) – sociology of education provides a useful lens through which to view contemporary educational transformations, and link them to wider processes of social change (Coffey, 2001). It has also been argued that, through its engagement with current policy and practice,

sociology of education offers the wider discipline of sociology a means of re-articulating with current political debate (Deem, 2004).

Institutional context

The nature of debates within the sociology of education has also been influenced by the institutional context in which much of research in this area has been conducted. In the UK, and in many other countries across the world, sociologists of education have more commonly been employed within departments of education than those of sociology. Although sociology of education has also been taught on undergraduate programmes within sociology departments, its place on such courses is often quite marginal and, some scholars have argued, has suffered as a result of changes to the discipline of sociology, as a whole, over recent decades. Shain and Ozga (2001), for example, suggest that the shift in focus within sociology – away from the study of institutions and policy and towards increasingly specialized sub-fields and a more cultural approach – has been particularly disadvantageous for sociology of education with its historical emphasis on institutions and social structures. Moreover, the marginal status of sociology of education within sociology departments can also be linked, Delamont (2000) contends, to its construction as a low status area of academic enquiry – as a result of its emphasis on the experiences of women and children, and its strong empirical (rather than theoretical) focus.

The location of the majority of research within the sociology of education within departments of education rather than sociology has affected the sub-discipline in a number of ways. Firstly, this institutional location has had a bearing on the nature of the sociology of education that has been produced. Dale (2001) has argued convincingly that the strongly

‘redemptive’ emphasis of much sociology of education has affected the type of analyses that have been pursued. By this, he means that assumptions about the emancipatory purpose of education, linked closely to the modernist project of the Enlightenment, have effectively foreclosed particular areas of enquiry and treated education as an essentially unproblematic concept. Indeed, he argues that, ‘The failure to question the fundamental nature and claims of the education system [has led] to an almost total neglect of any alternative to the official conception of what education systems are for’ (p.9). This particular institutional context, Dale suggests, also made it difficult for sociologists of education to critique the work of classroom teachers (as they were often their colleagues, working side-by-side within departments of education), and isolated sociologists of education from scholars pursuing other lines of sociological enquiry. This has had the effect that ideas from the sociology of education have not entered into the mainstream (Delamont, 2000), and that sociologists of education have not always kept abreast of key contemporary sociological debates and leading-edge theoretical developments (Deem, 2004). Indeed, Deem (2004) argues – with respect to research in the sociology of higher education in particular – that ‘much of what passes for sociology of higher education...does not engage with core aspects of the discipline’ (p.22). This has been articulated most explicitly in relation to the use and development of theory. She contends that the tendency to apply theory, rather than develop it, may constitute ‘the crucial aspect of differentiating sociology of education (and other areas of sociology which were once core to the discipline, such as the sociology of families or health and illness) from contemporary mainstream sociology’ (p.29). Nevertheless, Deem suggests that this more practical focus offers an important opportunity for re-engagement, particularly in times when sociologists are frequently being asked to demonstrate the relevance of their work and its application beyond academia.

Secondly, the institutional location of sociology of education (within departments of education rather than sociology) has also increased the vulnerability of the sub-discipline to political criticism. Delamont (2000) provides a detailed account of the ways in which the sociology of education within the UK has come under attack – for example, when it was removed from the teacher training curriculum, as discussed above, and when it bore the brunt of the criticisms about the quality of educational research that were made in the second half of the 1990s (the reports by Hargreaves (1996) and Tooley and Darby (1998) ridiculed a number of the technical terms used by sociologists of education). She goes on to argue that the British Sociological Association (BSA) remained silent in the face of these attacks, and did nothing to defend the sub-discipline or the individual sociologists of education, whose work was criticised. Moreover, she suggests that the political vulnerability of the sub-discipline was exacerbated by the BSA's failure to provide a public platform for sociology of education. This analysis seems less relevant, however, in the second decade of the 21st century: the BSA now runs a vibrant Sociology of Education 'Study Group' and, over recent years, has dedicated one stream of its large annual conference to papers focussing on different aspects of the sociology of education. Education-focused networks also constitute important parts of the International Sociological Association, the European Sociological Association, the American Sociological Association and the Australian Sociological Association, amongst others.

Despite the largely pessimistic accounts about the institutional location of the sociology of education, outlined above, some scholars have contended that the influence of the sub-discipline has spread much more widely – well beyond departments of education and of sociology. Indeed, Hammersley (1996) has argued that if a broad definition of sociology is adopted, then more sociology of education was being conducted at the end of the twentieth

century than ever before – for example, in departments of management, social work and youth studies, as well as education and sociology. A similar argument is pursued by Lauder et al. (2009) who maintain that key questions that have, historically, underpinned sociology of education (such as those relating to young people's origins and destinations and the nature and determinants of school outcomes) are now of interest to a wider range of scholars, including those within the disciplines of social policy and economics.

An introduction to the chapters

Despite the varying political backdrops of the past century, and notwithstanding the changing fashions of theoretical frameworks, the sociology of education has remained concentrated on issues of inequality and social justice. *Contemporary Debates in the Sociology of Education* remains faithful to this rationale, but ensures a diverse range of topics are included for consideration. So while the reproduction of class inequalities remains a key focus, as does social policy analysis, chapters also debate issues that have received academic scrutiny more recently, including the significance of gender nonconformity and the role of education technology.

In Chapter 2, Bob Lingard and Sam Sellar explore the influence of globalization on education policy. Long recognised as a significant issue in the sociology of education, they draw on an extensive case study of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment to argue that schooling has become truly transnational in the way that student assessment is measured between nation states. Adopting a Bourdieuan perspective to understand these developments, Lingard and Sellar conceptualize the globe as a field in which a global educational policy is created and they examine the effects this has on policy making for

education at the national level. In so doing, they cause us to question how these macro level changes influence individual school cultures.

Also focussing on the effects of education policy in Chapter 3, Audrey Osler examines the rise of citizenship education within British schools and calls for an understanding of universal human rights to be threaded through this subject in both practice and policy documents. Providing a genealogy of citizenship education, Osler highlights that while the particular rationales for citizenship education in its various forms have evolved in relation to the social and historical context of the time, the subject has always been about promoting a particular version of nationhood and national identity. Critiquing particular policy initiatives in the UK context, Osler demonstrates various exclusions that have occurred as a result of citizenship education, and she argues that in order to promote social cohesion within the UK, there must be a broader, more cosmopolitan conception of the citizen which respects the differences and contexts of contemporary society.

In Chapter 4, Rita Nikolai and Anne West continue the focus on secondary schooling, but provide a comparative analysis of the institutional contexts of schooling in the UK and Germany to examine the ways in which inequalities are reproduced in the two countries. These countries offer an interesting comparison because of the different school selection procedures: in Germany, selection is according to academic ability (called *explicit tracking*) while this is not the case in the UK. Drawing on large-scale quantitative data also from the Programme for International Student Assessment, Nikolai and West demonstrate that while the differences in academic selection between the two countries mean that there are differences in the reproduction of class-based inequality, these are not as substantial as might be assumed. By focussing on *implicit tracking* in the UK, where students are selected by

other factors (such as local area and parental preferences), Nikolai and West demonstrate that in both countries, the ways in which students are assigned to secondary school lead to the reproduction of class-based inequalities.

Also adopting a class lens in his analysis of lifelong learning in Chapter 5, Steven Roberts offers a qualitative empirical study of the professional learning opportunities available to young ‘moderately qualified’ retail workers in the UK. After providing a critical review of the term ‘lifelong learning’, Roberts shows how low paid, service sector employees are failed by the forms of lifelong learning currently available to them. He shows how these forms of learning have little value for his participants, and the related qualifications are consequently held in low esteem by them. Roberts highlights the challenge for policy makers in that his participants are the very people who should most benefit from lifelong learning schemes, yet they find them both frustrating and of little utility. Indeed, Roberts argues that lifelong learning in its current form serves a neoliberal agenda of shifting responsibility of improving one’s education from the state to the individual.

The focus on class continues into Chapter 6, where Wolfgang Lehmann examines working class students’ experiences of university in Canada. The chapter takes as its starting point the fact that despite various Widening Participation programmes across Anglophone countries, the gap between working class and middle class students in higher education remains. Highlighting the significance of the Canadian context, Lehman analyses the experiences of 36 working class undergraduates at a research-intensive university in Ontario, describing different pathways of experience for their time at university. Importantly, he shows that working-class students who have carefully planned their time at university and have been supported by the administration can be extremely successful. However, others were less able

to cope with the language of the university because of their class background, and many suffered accordingly. Lehman also highlights, though, the students who succeeded despite not having the vocabulary to immediately fit in the university setting. By developing a typology of these diverse experiences, this chapter offers new ways of understanding working class students' experiences.

Remaining in the Canadian context, Chapter 7 examines body image issues for adolescent boys. Michael Kehler and Michael Atkinson explore the intersection of body image, masculinity and education for adolescent boys. Focussing on the experiences of 'reluctant' participants in compulsory physical education lessons, Kehler and Atkinson demonstrate the emotional trauma that is experienced by boys as they navigate their perceptions of their bodies and the expectations of masculinity in the locker room context. Centring on these 'voices from the margins', Kehler and Atkinson call for a more enlightened debate about masculinity and health in schools in order to improve the body image of future generations of adolescent males.

In Chapter 8, Kagendo Mutua and Sandra Cooley Nichols provide a sociological account of the educational experiences of young people with intellectual disabilities in the United States. Examining how their gendered and sexual identities are circumscribed by a range of influences outside their control, Mutua and Nichols document that these youth are essentially denied entry into adulthood because of people's conceptions about their gender and sexuality. Yet Mutua and Nichols also show the ways in which these disabled adolescents contest this; although they also highlight that because of their disabilities, they are not always successful in demonstrating their rejection of their characterization.

Chapter 9 maintains the focus on the regulation of identities of young people in the United States. Elisabeth Thompson, Katerina Sinclair, Riki Wilchins and Stephen Russell examine the regulation of gender in schools and how this is related to student adjustment. Drawing on a quantitative study of Californian students, the authors focus on peers' motivations for gender harassment. By doing this, they highlight the centrality of appearance and social interests in harassment and the effects this has on school adjustment. Nonetheless, they demonstrate the persistence of negative effects for gender non-conforming and sexual minority youth in their study. Thompson et al. argue that gender regulation is a structural issue in schools, and that teachers and administrators need to implement policies and procedures that recognise this in order to protect all students from harassment in school settings.

In Chapter 10, Zeus Leonardo and Hoang Tran explore the history of race relations and education in the United States by providing a critical analysis of the role of the law in reproducing racism and race inequalities in the American education system. Situating the chapter in the context of sociologists of education who saw education as key a mechanism by which the state reproduced racism, Leonardo and Tran use case law and supreme court decisions to argue that the neoliberal nature of educational reforms regarding race have resulted in new structures of racism under the language of 'colour blindness'. Significantly, the authors argue that the colour blind legal rationale was in fact a precursor to and prerequisite for economic neoliberalism and the recent economic crisis. Doubting the effect of anti-racist initiatives under the colour blind regime, Leonardo and Tran call for new Supreme Court legislation to effect change in the education system in the future.

Returning to more traditional forms of the sociology of education in Chapter 11, Carolyn Jackson argues that there needs to be much greater attention paid to the role that fear and anxiety play in school settings. Drawing on a large, qualitative data set of over 180 interviews with students in British secondary schools, Jackson first provides a history of fear as a concept and how it has been applied to other contexts, before demonstrating the damaging operations of fear both within and about education. Highlighting the political nature of education, Jackson argues that there have been great fears about education in the UK, particularly from the powerful who fear inequalities may be overturned. Yet Jackson focuses on how fear operates *within* schools, arguing that both academic and social fears may have worrying effects on student well-being. She also uses the concept to question the focus on grades and ability, where (fear of) failure is often conflated with lack of ability.

In Chapter 12, Heather Mendick examines different sociological approaches to understanding young women's subject choices. Demonstrating the breadth and diversity of sociology of education, a number of sociological theoretical frameworks have been applied in this book, yet Mendick argues for a post-structural approach to understanding gendered differences in subject choice at schools. Offering a personal account of her route to studying this subject, Mendick argues that we problematically associate women doing 'masculine' subjects through the perspective of how they do them *as* women. Delving into the fine grain of one female student's experiences, she argues that we need new spaces to understand these issues, and that masculinity should not be the terrain solely of men.

The final chapter of *Contemporary Debates in the Sociology of Education* serves as a call to extend the sub-discipline to understand new developments within the educational sphere.

Keri Facer and Neil Selwyn powerfully argue that there is a vital need for sociology to

address the rise of technology in educational institutions. They stress that technology use is inevitably political not only because of its cost but also for the democratic potential it has to contest dominant power regimes. They also highlight that the inconsistencies between the rhetoric and reality of how education technology is used in schools demands critical sociological attention. In recognising the speed of technological innovation, Facer and Selwyn also caution about the dangers of sociologists not engaging with contemporary issues, and argue for the need to look toward the near future and not just the recent past. They highlight that technological developments will likely be one of the key drivers of the 21st century and sociologists of education need to recognise this and engage with these issues.

In arguing for a sociology of education that engages with contemporary issues as they arise, and even attempt to anticipate certain trends, Facer and Selwyn's call for a sociology of education technology mirrors, we hope, what has been achieved by this book. Chapters have included social policy analysis and critical argumentation to qualitative and quantitative empirical studies of particular social issues. Theoretical approaches have ranged from social constructionist and other similar frameworks to post-structural theories of knowledge. Yet the chapters have remained focussed on social justice, educational opportunities and the role that sociology has to play in understanding these complex and important social issues. With this book, we hope to have advanced both debates within the sociology of education but also raised its importance as a sub-discipline of sociology.

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