

Have We Explained the Relationship between Curriculum and Capitalism? An Analysis of the Selective Tradition*

By Daniel P. Liston

Marxist analyses of schooling assert that the public school curriculum is a product of a "selective tradition." In these accounts the knowledge included in and excluded from

THE SELECTIVE TRADITION

The analysis of a selective tradition comes to the foreground of curriculum scholarship

as it is differentiated along lines of class. It is not, as I have noted, the selective nature

In his *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Cohen states that mechanisms do not have to be outlined in order for functional explanations to be rationally tenable, as

more adequately than existing approaches"17. Such an assertion requires careful

the mechanisms through which negative selection occurs. At the most general level, selection occurs as a result of the structural connections between the State and Capital. Because of the State's dependence upon capital accumulation for its own survival

interests in local and state school governance bodies (e.g., in the United States, school

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As structural linkages between schools and Capital. If the schools and their curricula

are to be identified as aspects of the systematically selective State, the schools must not only be linked to Capital but also be shown to select out those events that are dysfunctional to the creation of the conditions for the reproduction and production of

exactly, does it operate in a capitalist society? Where are the ideological mechanisms

Throughout this century, school officials and parents have illegally taken materials out of the school libraries. Active or threatened repression excludes curricular options.

METHODOLOGICAL DILEMMAS

These four levels of selection illustrate the possible mechanisms of exclusion, but

beyond the basic rudimentary skills. The employers' organizations wanted to limit the