**Paul Willis: Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs**

Paul Willis is a NEO Marxist

1. Marxists

* Concerned with the way that the economy and class position cause and shape behaviour
* For Bowles & Gintis, working class children are made to fail by the school

1. Neo Marxists

* Also concerned with what individuals think and how they make up their minds to behave in particular ways
* For Willis, working class children resist the school
* Uses interpretivist / ethnographic methods

**What Does Willis Mean By Ethnographic Research?**

Willis identifies the ethnographic approach with the researcher gaining direct human contact.

They gain access to a group and engage in dialogue and interaction over an extended period of time

* **Ethno = culture**
* **Graphy = study of**

**How Did Willis Select the Lads as his Sample?**

He served in the coffee bar in the youth wing of the school. He identified the non-conformist lads through interaction / observation. He chose them because he felt they could help answer his research questions. This is known as a **purposive sample**.

**What Methods / Strategy Does he Use**

* Participant observation
* Non- participant observation
* Individual interviews
* Unstructured group interviews
* Asking students to keep diaries

**Validity / Reliability**

Reliability = the ability to re-do the study and to check results

* He argues it is impossible to establish the reliability of an ethnographic study.

Validity = “a mirror image of reality” – true to life

* He regards the research as valid since it involves direct human contact and interaction (‘picking up their meaning system’)

**Going Native**

He argues the sociologist MUST get closely involved with the group. ‘Going native’ is a risk but he argues the research task and your theories keep you grounded

**Why Is He Dismissive Of the ‘Hawthorne Effect’?**

The Hawthorne Effect is the way in which sociologists, by conducting research actually alter the behaviour of those studied.

* He says it is a necessary risk of the method.
* If the lads were acting up – it was behaviour natural to their culture.

**The Imposition Problem**

* This refers to the issue that whatever method the researcher uses they will always be imposing their own views of what is important into the research.
* Willis could be accused of reading more into the lads’ behaviour than warranted.
* Rikowski sees the lads not as engaged in revolutionary resistance but rather redundant acts – they are worse off with no benefit to anyone.

**Other criticisms**

* The study is dated – 1977
* The study relates to a very small sample – 12 working class lads
* The study neglects the dynamics of gender and ethnicity

BUT The study has been the model for many later case studies which have tackled wider issues.

**In the home**

* Willis’ Lads
* Tend to come from an unskilled working class background
* Parents often have no educational qualifications and do not value school
* May rely on family or friends to find work
* Willis’ Ear’oles
* Tend to come from skilled working class background
* Parents may have necessary qualifications to engage in skilled work – apprenticeships, etc

**In the school**

Willis’ Lads

* Resist the school and see it as a waste of time
* Want to leave and earn money – autonomy
* Redefine the “rules” of the school – hanging around with your mates and “Havin’ a laff”

Willis’ Ear’oles

* Try to get what they can from school lessons as they have to be there
* Want to leave school to get jobs requiring qualifications / references
* Want to get the best start they can for the world of work

**In the workplace**

Willis’ Lads

* Find ways of coping with boring work and oppressive authority
* Work for the wage, not for career progression
* Redefine the “rules” of the workplace – hanging around with your mates and “Havin’ a laff”

Willis’ Ear’oles

* Try to establish careers rather than just settle for jobs
* Want to “get on” perhaps through qualifications and/or promotion
* Focused on apprenticeships, etc

**Bowles and Gintis vs Willis**

Bowles and Gintis

* The school cools out the working class and only values conformity
* Lower classes fail to benefit and the Hidden Curriculum creates a docile workforce
* Social reproduction

Willis

* It is the child who resists the school not the school that rejects the child.
* Lads leave school because they do not value it, resist it, focus on collective
* Cultural reproduction