

1986

Review of *Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools*, by Peter W. Cookson, Jr., and Caroline Hodges Persell

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Karen, David. Review of *Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools*, by Peter W. Cookson, Jr., and Caroline Hodges Persell. *American Journal of Sociology* 92, no. 2 (1986): 478-481.

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right. Unfortunately, despite its defects this volume will almost surely become the standard reference on class identification for years to come. It is, as William J. Wilson is quoted on the inside of the dust jacket, "the most important study of class identification since the publication in 1949 of Richard Center's *The Psychology of Social Class*." For my part, I learned more about social class (and also had a much better time) reading Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*.

Preparing for Power: America's Elite Boarding Schools. By Peter W. Cookson, Jr., and Caroline Hodges Persell. New York: Basic Books, 1985. Pp. x+260. \$19.95.

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Appeals for sociologists to enter the "black box" of schooling have been a mainstay of articles that address the relationships between the social origins of students (inputs) and their social destinations (outputs). To the extent that schools mediate between origins and destinations, how do they do so? Paul Willis, in *Learning to Labour* (1977), an ethnographic study of a British school, showed, in the words of the book's subtitle, *How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. At the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum, Peter W. Cookson, Jr., and Caroline Hodges Persell, in *Preparing for Power*, focus on elite preparatory boarding schools, institutions that are an important part of the process by which upper-class kids get upper-class jobs. Characterized by C. Wright Mills and E. Digby Baltzell as critical in the socialization of upper-class children, prep schools have largely escaped the attention of sociologists of education. The authors provide us with the most detailed, comprehensive, and sophisticated analysis of the structure and function of prep schools to date.

A beautifully written, sensitive, and critical work, *Preparing for Power* explores the role that elite boarding schools play in the maintenance of upper-class cohesion and privilege in the contemporary United States. After locating boarding schools within the larger context of secondary school education, they move from an analysis of who attends them to a consideration of life within these institutions and, finally, to a discussion of the likely outcomes for their students. Cookson and Persell use data obtained by a number of methods to address the questions they pose. Their study is based on information collected on visits to 55 American boarding schools (plus 13 non-U.S. schools), on questionnaires administered to 2,475 freshmen and senior students at 20 of the schools (including an open-ended essay on their perceived futures), on additional academic information supplied by the schools for the seniors, on public data on boarding schools, and on interviews with more than 100 boarding school alumni.

What do they find? Focusing on prep schools as critical to the upper class's project of exclusionary social closure, the authors argue that, historically, the number of prep schools has increased in the periods following rising tides of immigration. On the input side, they find that students at these institutions are from the highest reaches of the class structure. Approximately two-thirds of the fathers of prep school students have annual incomes greater than \$75,000 and have graduate educations, while 90% have either professional or managerial jobs. Although not as exclusive as they once were—Asians, Jews, and blacks are admitted (black representation in prep schools, however, is only about one-fifth of black representation in public schools)—the prep schools select from an applicant pool based on whether “the raw material [is] suitable to the treatment” (p. 57). Pierre Bourdieu's assessment of school selection policies is apropos: in order to benefit from what the prep school has to offer, one must have the instruments of appropriation, the cultural capital.

The socialization process at the prep schools is complex. The rigorously structured days, the extracurricular activities, the small classes, and the emphasis on writing combine to produce an environment that is academically exciting but where the pressure to excel is intense. The impression conveyed is that this is an all-encompassing institution, from which you can run but you cannot hide. The competitive atmosphere produces a dark side to student life, sympathetically described in the book, that includes alcohol and drugs. Privacy is at a premium, driving students to work together to express themselves in the cracks of the institutions, as Goffman has put it. Surviving this crucible, Cookson and Persell argue, generates feelings of legitimacy for the exercise of power that these inmates (i.e., students) will ultimately wield; after all, they will have paid their dues. In one stroke, then, the prep school experience facilitates class cohesion and class legitimation.

This is not to say, however, that prep schools simply function (constantly and successfully) in the interests of the upper class, either for individuals or for the class as a whole. The stress by parents on success, combined with the school's emphasis on moral learning and the student culture of gratification, produces prep success and prep failure. For the unsuccessful, the authors indicate, there is a “loss of innocence; the recognition that goodness unadorned by power is impotent in the struggle for privilege” (p. 162). For the successful, aristocratic arrogance is the outcome. Yet, even for them the double-sided nature of the prep school experience is evident, in that “the cycle of socialization recreates generations of individuals whose potentials are often crippled, not freed, by privilege” (p. 164).

The most immediate outcome of prep school life involves the college admissions competition. With preparation for SAT's and Advanced Placement tests a regular part of the curriculum, with college counselors' interviewing every faculty member to get data for students' letters of recommendation, and with students who are already socially elite, aca-

demically prepared, and extracurricularly experienced being supported for admission, it is no wonder that prep schools are more successful in placing their students in Ivy League and other highly selective colleges than even the most selective public schools, such as the Bronx High School of Science. Long-standing ties between institutions are strengthened by long-standing ties between college advisers and elite colleges' admissions officers (even deans of admission). With social networks undergirding cultural affinities among the students, the prep school administrators, and the Ivy League colleges, the links between elite prep schools and elite colleges, while not as close as they once were, are nevertheless secure.

There are some omissions in *Preparing for Power*, which, since they already have the needed data, I hope that the authors will correct soon. First, despite elaborating a map that distinguishes among prep schools, Cookson and Persell focus on similarities rather than on differences. Their strategy was to paint a collective portrait, and, in so doing, some critical individual differences may have been lost. For instance, though they distinguished academies, Episcopal schools, and entrepreneurial schools, the authors usually refer to some of them collectively as members of the "Select 16," the most socially prestigious boarding schools. How these differ in terms of the social backgrounds of their students, the socialization processes that they provide, and the advantages that accrue to their charges in the college admissions game would be of particular interest in understanding the recruitment and reproduction processes of different parts of the elite.

Second, although the authors were on ethnographically uncharted territory and thus did not attempt to test hypotheses, they might have been more explicit in their consideration of specific hypotheses about the effects of the black box. While the story they tell is very consistent with and explicitly linked to a Weberian theory that suggests that these schools reinforce status-group cohesiveness and socialization, the data might also have been read with an eye toward testing Bowles and Gintis's correspondence theory of the relationship between school and work. Cookson and Persell do at one point suggest that student government experience prefigures the leadership positions that these students will ultimately hold in law, finance, and so forth. But the fact that prep schools reward individuals for service to the community—for example, by being a dorm monitor one gets a private room—underlines how, even in the total institution, there is room for individual mobility. The authors might have discussed similarities between this situation and the corporate environments that these students will most likely inhabit, where there will be the possibility for individual advancement even as they behave as consummate company men.

These criticisms aside, *Preparing for Power* is a masterfully written, richly chronicled, engaging book that will not only be a source for researchers interested in its authors' conclusions but will also provide data for scholars with different questions from the ones that the book ad-

dresses. In paperback, this book will be widely used for courses in the sociology of education and social stratification.

Jobs and Gender: A Study of Occupational Prestige. By Christine E. Bose. New York: Praeger. Pp. xiv + 207. \$33.95.

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Since much of the detailed analysis of occupational prestige scales is accessible only in dissertations, users and potential users of Christine Bose's occupational index will be pleased at the publication of the evidence and rationale behind these scores. In *Jobs and Gender*, Bose reports the results of her 1972 surveys of 197 Baltimore residents and 195 Baltimore-area college students, surveys that were designed to test whether respondents accord different levels of prestige to men and women in the same occupations. She asked both samples to rate the prestige of 110 occupational titles, chosen to represent the gender composition of occupations in the labor force. Respondents were assigned to one of four treatments: some were asked to rate both occupational titles with no incumbent specified and the prestige of female incumbents, another group rated occupational titles and male incumbents, a third group rated male and female incumbents, and a fourth group rated occupational titles only.

Bose finds that socioeconomic factors are more important in the evaluation of prestige than is gender. The prestige of an occupation with no incumbent specified is the best predictor of the prestige of male and female incumbents. Gender factors add between 1% and 2.5% to the variance in male and female incumbent scores. Thus, gender is a small (but statistically significant) factor in the determination of the prestige of men and women in occupations.

Following Duncan's strategy, Bose estimates occupational status scores for all occupations from an equation that predicts prestige from income and education. Her approach differs from Duncan's in that she creates two separate scales, one for women and another for men. The scores for women are based on an equation predicting the prestige that respondents accorded to women, and the scores for men are based on an equation that predicts the prestige accorded to men. A further departure is a second set of scales for part-time workers. Bose's index will be familiar to researchers who have used the data of the National Longitudinal Surveys.

This book goes beyond Bose and Peter Rossi's article, "Gender and Jobs: Prestige Standings of Occupations as Affected by Gender" (*American Sociological Review* 48 (1983): 316-30), in the discussion of the level of consensus among raters and in the presentation of scores for the 1960, 1970, and 1980 detailed census occupational categories. Another interesting feature of the book is a discussion of the prestige of housewives,