

# Faith and Evidence: Examining Marxist Explanations of Schools

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framework of the explanation (Garfinkel 1981). That is, in order to examine Marxist explanations, we must understand clearly what is being explained (the object of explanation) how it is being explained

The empiricism that stands in jeopardy today is simply a regard for evidence—a disposition to consult ascertainable facts when

analyze distinct types of functional analysis. This exercise in conceptual clarification should resolve some of the ambiguity and ambivalence

In *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, G. A. Cohen (1978, pp. 283–84) characterizes functionalism as a strongly committed set of

must meet both the accumulation and legitimation requirements.

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because such grouping minimizes crises in capitalist societies." 147



capitalist formation where the economic base = the Super-structure



economic transformations, not political action, are required for programmatic change. Such claims, Apple says, are inaccurate.

The base-superstructure account is also mistaken when it portrays

the cultural, and the political. The spheres are constituted by distinct practices, but their distinguishing characteristics are not presented.



... we cannot assume that educational institutions will always be  
for the sake of their functions of accumulation

egalitarian democratic state. The opposing pulls, the tensions created  
by this dialectic analysis

system expanded rapidly to incorporate the demands on the part of the parents for greater access to public secondary schooling for their children. By the 1920s and the 1930s secondary education was considered a right by most American families. As the curriculum and tracking system were being shaped to accommodate a segmented labor-market system, educators were pressured

quences, then it must be shown that educational practices persist because of the consequences they produce. It needs to be empirically ascertained that certain educational practices are selected and retained due to their positive effects for capitalism. Carnoy and Levin assert that this is the case but they have not shown how it occurs. Furthermore, if we

of their explanations. Once an explanation's accuracy is considered,

something like this: schools "educate" students to maintain capitalism,  
in this fashion because such effects are beneficial

[REDACTED]

Because of the complex nature of functional claims, a number of  
[REDACTED] all surface. For example if

In contrast to the Soviet Union, the recent revolutions in Cuba and  
Nicaragua have had dis

...must begin to assess the accuracy of their ex-

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form." *Interchange* 19 (1981): 2-3. (a)