Asclepius or Hippocrates? Differing interpretations of postcompulsory initial teacher training mentoring.

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This article discusses qualitative research findings on mentoring within PCET ITT (Post-Compulsory Education and Training Initial Teacher Training). The article complements the findings of Tedder and Lawy (2009). The article develops Downie and Randall's (1999) consideration of the merits or otherwise of mirroring either 'Asclepius' or 'Hippocrates'. Asclepius, the Greek god of healing is interpreted as being representative of 'reflective practice'. Hippocrates, the Greek physician is regarded as personifying a rational audit-driven culture within PCET ITT. The article argues that this latter characteristic has become part of PCET ITT mentoring. This article seeks to raise awareness of PCET ITT mentoring through relating primary research data to the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. The research findings are based on questionnaire data that has been gathered from 80 PCET ITT students and their mentors alongside focus-group data from eight mentors.

Keywords: mentoring; discourse; power; standards-driven education.

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Introduction

The implications of standards-driven education on mentoring within PCET ITT in England are outlined by Tedder and Lawy (2009). Both authors (2009, 427) argue that mentorship has been shaped from a developmental into a judgemental function. This argument links to the work of Coffield (2004), Hale (2008), Lieberman (2009), Lucas (2007), and Wenger (1998). These texts are used to introduce this article's wider theoretical theme. All of the above authors discuss the impact of standards-driven education on the operations of communities of professional practice (the social processes influencing professional behaviour (Bryan and Carpenter, (2008, 47)). This means that the purpose of education is questioned. In other words, is education an aspect of bureaucracy or is its purpose to develop personal, intellectual, emotional and social skills? The article considers the implications of bureaucratic (or standardsdriven) education as well as acknowledging that education is characterised by change and creativity. The work of Coffield (2004), Lucas (2007) and Wenger (1998) links to this theme. The research also relates to work published by authors such as Fejas (2008) and Kelly (2009) who write about the presence or otherwise of fluidity and creativity within educational contexts. The article applies the ideas of Bourdieu and Foucault to PCET ITT mentoring. The article's research findings appear to indicate that mentors within this educational context choose to adopt different patterns of discourse when they are talking about teaching and learning. This finding links to the work of Foucault (1971, 1977), through the implication that to understand PCET ITT mentoring, the discourse or conversations about this aspect of educational practice need to be considered. The subsequent attempt to achieve 'collaboration' and the potential 'contestation' that may be experienced links to the work of Bourdieu (1993). In other words, it appears that PCET ITT mentoring is not as yet accepted as being

part of the educational cultural capital that shapes our understanding of this particular educational field. The article concludes that the current nature of PCET ITT mentoring is an interesting development of the standards-driven PCET ITT educational agenda.

Theoretical background

The poem 'The Road Not Taken', by Robert Frost (2001) contains sentiments that link to an interpretation of education that focuses on a literal translation of the word. The Latin verb 'educere' (with its implication that individuals and groups can be enabled to see the world differently) acknowledges the role that education can have in helping to realise potential. The standards-driven nature of PCET ITT mentoring can mean, however, that this form of mentoring experience is shaped by bureaucratic factors as outlined by Tedder and Lawy (2009). These authors have reported that PCET ITT mentoring is uncertain due to its target-driven and judgemental nature. Moreover, the lack of surety surrounding mentoring leads to tensions between managers, tutors and trainees. This research is complemented by Ingleby and Hunt (2008). The main findings of the research reveal that PCET mentor training is inadequate. This is exacerbated by the tension that can exist over the professional boundaries between mentors and mentees. The uncertainty about professional boundaries is exemplified by the discovery that some mentors and mentees do not understand the purpose of mentoring. The research reveals that this situation is a consequence of an educational environment that is standards-driven. In other words, PCET ITT mentoring has become part of the Hippocratic, rational world that Downie and Randall (1999) argue to be typical within UK educational contexts. In contrast, the developmental Asclepian focus is all too often rejected in favour of quantifiable measurements. This medical analogy has become

increasingly relevant to PCET ITT since 1997 with the collapsing together of health, education and social care into what is referred to colloquially as 'educare'. It can be argued that an indirect consequence of this New Labour policy has led to an increasing emphasis being placed on Hippocratic rational thought. Urban (2008, 147) summarises this development by arguing that professionals working within 'educare' are perceived as rational 'solvers of problems'. Tedder and Lawy (2009, 414) equate this paradigm shift with the rise in surveillance by regimes of inspection and review.

The irony appears to be that despite the attention that has been given to PCET ITT mentoring, the standards-driven nature of the role can produce an educational context that lacks surety. Tedder and Lawy (2009, 414) argue that since 2003, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) have encouraged the development of a PCET ITT mentoring system that is judgemental about the teaching ability of trainees. This development has occurred despite uncertainty about whether or not this is the best model of mentoring for PCET ITT. Tedder and Lawy (2009, 417) outline that the trainees, tutors and managers in their research sample appeared to be more interested in the developmental nature of mentoring as opposed to interpreting the process in a judgemental way. This may be because the PCET ITT experience appears to be a particularly challenging few months of learning, assessment and teaching practice in meeting programme targets. This can mean that the intense nature of the process makes the journey to qualified professional status a less positive experience than it could be. This point is supported by authors such as Brookes (2005, 45) who cites Foster (2002) to argue that there is no 'systematic monitoring of the training process'. It could be argued that if the mentor arrangements within PCET ITT were developmental in emphasis, it might help in engendering a more complete educational

experience. This would provide trainees with more opportunity to reflect on their practice as they develop from 'trainee teacher' to 'competent professional'.

Tedder and Lawy (2009) draw attention to the considerable discussion that exists about mentoring within PCET ITT. A main theme of Universities for the Education of Teachers (UCET) conference in November 2008 was the debate over the effectiveness or otherwise of mentoring within teacher training. This interest in mentoring may appear to suggest that mentoring is a recent development when in reality the notion of 'apprenticeship' has considerable history. This argument is supported by Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 62) and Brookes (2005, 43). As far back as 1805, Bell and Lancaster recommended that teachers who were new to the profession needed to be inducted into teaching by 'taking a share in the office of tuition' as opposed to having theoretical training in pedagogy (Brookes, 2005, 44). This indicates that the concept of mentoring was present in 1805 and that the key notion was that trainees needed to be inducted into the profession by practical instruction from a 'master craftsman'.

The work of Barone (2006), Brooks (2006), and Byrne (2006) has helped to inform the theoretical framework that is used for discussing this article's research findings. This work is characterised by the theme of education and cultural reproduction. This means that it is related to the influential ideas of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. It can be argued that Bourdieu and Foucault have different emphases on the nature and role of discourse and of power structures in society. Whereas Bourdieu (1992) considers that discourse derives from and reflects the field within which it is formed, Foucault (1971) regards discourse as being more formative. Despite this difference of interpretation Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 64) propose that these two

theorists help to put into context the debate existing between 'education for enlightenment' and 'standards-driven education'.

Bourdieu's (1986) work can be developed to argue that education is part of the process of 'cultural reproduction'. In other words, the role of the education system is to replicate the values of the dominant social classes. This means that the conversations about education will either perpetuate the existing educational order or conversely promote new understandings of the meaning of teaching and learning. This argument is explained by Bourdieu (1986, 62) when he says:

Every linguistic situation functions as a market on which the speaker places his products, and the product he produces for this market depends on his anticipation of the price his products will receive. We enter the educational market with an expectation of the profits and sanctions we shall receive.

Bourdieu is arguing that discourse is at the centre of cultural reproduction. The argument runs that shared understandings of teaching and learning perpetuate the educational field. In exemplifying this point, the current debate over the purpose of education reveals that the educational context is open to interpretation. This links to Tedder and Lawy's (2009) finding that the trainees, managers and tutors in their research sample have differing interpretations of the purpose of mentoring. In other words, mentoring can be interpreted as meaning either 'induction into an organisation', 'induction into becoming a subject specialist' (Tedder and Lawy (2009, 425)), or 'induction into a profession' (Tedder and Lawy (2009, 426)).

It can be argued that this is because mentoring is not accepted as a sound part of the educational context because it is not currently understood as constituting accepted educational cultural capital. To paraphrase Bourdieu, it is viewed more like an ill-fitting product in the current educational market.

Foucault's (1977) work develops the argument that 'discourse' or 'conversations' within society in general and within particular aspects of society such as the teaching profession are linked to changes in power regimes. This argument is made in the following (1977, 304) reflection:

The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the social worker-judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based and each individual wherever he may find himself, subjects it to his body.

Foucault means that power relationships depend upon current interpretations of social space. This means that the conversations that teachers and learners have about education are a reflection of changing power dynamics within social space. In other words, the shared understandings about the educational context change in relation to different expressions of social power. An example of this point can be seen upon considering standards-driven education once again. In other words, although standards-driven education is a current expression of educational power, this aspect of education may have been less prevalent in the past because previous power relations within education have been expressed differently. In support of this point, Tedder and Lawy (2009) reveal that prior to 2003; Ofsted's lack of attention to PCET ITT mentoring meant that the judgemental model of mentoring was not part of the expression of power relationships within this educational context.

Methodology

All the research participants are based in the UK PCET sector teaching on a variety of PCET programmes. This means that they are educating students aged 14 years and above. Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 64) describe the learners who are educated in this sector as being characterised by diversity. There are school pupils studying vocational

subjects such as 'health and social care' alongside adults studying foundation degree programmes. The diversity of this area of education means that it is difficult to give the sector a precise definition. Traditionally it is referred to as 'post-compulsory education' (or PCET) as it is not 'school based'.

The research findings in this article have emerged as a product of three data collection methods. Questionnaires have been issued to 80 ITT students and 80 mentors. These questionnaires focus upon identifying the nature of PCET mentoring. The mentors and ITT students come from a range of backgrounds and teaching contexts in the northeast of England. The methodology adapts Brookes's (2005, 52) model of research with mentors engaged in the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) in England in terms of number of respondents, but whereas Brookes develops his questionnaire data with a series of one-to-one informal interviews with six experienced mentors, this methodology has used a focus-group approach to discuss mentoring experiences with eight participants. The methodology also adapts the findings of Ingleby and Hunt (2008) by expanding the research to 80 ITT students and 80 ITT mentors. The researcher was keen to generate a discussion forum about PCET mentor needs so this is why a focus-group was facilitated. The process again develops the work of Ingleby and Hunt (2009) by following the recommendations of Kreuger (1994) and Munday (2006). Kreuger and Munday (2006) propose that focus-groups can help the researcher to gather rich qualitative data as long as a non-threatening forum is created. This approach was applied in the researcher's data gathering. The voluntary membership of the focus-group by mentors who had received training from Teesside University helped in enabling this permissive and non-threatening forum. Alongside the questionnaire and focus group data, the methodology has used

findings from three OFSTED inspections of PCET ITT provision in the northeast of England from 2004-2009.

Research findings

The research has generated the following main findings:

- 1. PCET ITT mentors are unsure of their role in relation to PCET ITT programmes.
- 2. Mentor training needs within PCET ITT are not currently being met due to the inconsistency of the current available training.
- 3. Professional boundaries within the PCET ITT mentor/mentee relationship can lack clarity.

The reflections that follow in this section of the article represent the general views of all the research participants. There is acknowledgement of the contribution that mentoring can make to developing reflective practice, but the research participants appear to be unsure of the mentor's role. This point is acknowledged in the subsequent reflection:

If you think about it, teaching hasn't changed significantly over time. The basics are still the same. We may have new technology and we also may see some challenges to our authority but the basics are still the same. With mentoring it's a different matter altogether. I find it hard to see where mentoring has come from and who is initiating the mentoring role. It might be a good way of reflecting on professional practice but it is shrouded in uncertainty. (Colin, an experienced mentor).

This view on PCET ITT mentoring is similar to the findings of Tedder and Lawy (2009). It is reinforced by the views of another participant who is also unsure about the PCET ITT mentor role.

I find it difficult to see where mentoring has come from. It's a bit like 'Individual Learning Plans' as the notion of mentoring appears to have been introduced without

having been fully thought through. If all we do (as mentors) is support colleagues, why does this have to be formalised? Informal mentoring has probably been part of teaching for many years. At times, the teaching profession appears to be capable of introducing all sorts of 'tick the box' initiatives that can mushroom into policies overnight. (Marie, a new mentor)

This uncertainty over the mentoring role appears to be a characteristic of mentoring in general. Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 67) argue that the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) in England acknowledged the uncertainty of the mentoring role in 2006. The participants in this research have consistently referred to the lack of guidance for PCET ITT mentors. Tedder and Lawy (2009) also acknowledge the differing interpretations of mentoring between different groups of individuals within PCET. This point is developed by an experienced mentor who refers to the lack of leadership within PCET ITT mentoring:

Teaching is a demanding profession. It requires all sorts of skills and this is part of the appeal of teaching. The challenges of teaching mean that we need as much help as possible. With PCET ITT mentoring I feel as if I'm 'in the dark' struggling to find guidance. I just wish someone would take the lead to let me know what I'm supposed to be doing. (Anne, an experienced mentor)

The research participants also draw attention to the uncertainty that appears to surround the learning objectives of PCET ITT programmes. Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 67) argue that this links to Hobson's (2002, 6) notion of changing views about pedagogy. The research participants reveal confusion about many aspects of current PCET ITT training programmes.

I think that many of the challenges within wider society present themselves to teachers. In general, society seems to be less accepting of authority. I imagine that this 'new social order' is considered within teacher education programmes. They probably suggest that we have to adapt teaching strategies to meet the needs of the learners. This wasn't a

theme present in my own teacher training programme so I find it hard to identify with the new programmes. (Bridie, an experienced mentor)

'Bridie's reflection is related to pedagogical themes that are commented on by authors such as Ecclestone (2002), Petty (2004) and Race (2002). All three authors write about the change in emphasis from 'teaching' to 'learning' that has occurred within PCET. The argument runs that the facilitation of learning has become a key component within PCET ITT programmes. This focus on 'facilitation' can appear to have replaced an emphasis that was previously placed on teaching skills such as 'expertise of subject area' and 'controlling the class'. Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 67) claim that this change of pedagogical focus is an indirect consequence of the OFSTED emphasis on 'learning' 'retention' and 'attainment'. The argument proposes that 'observing the learners' is now a central OFSTED strategy as opposed to 'observing what the teacher is doing'. It can also be argued that this has resulted in experienced mentors struggling to understand the discourse within current PGCE programmes. This argument is supported by the following student reflection on her experience of the PCET mentoring process:

I have a very different understanding of education to my mentor. I would describe her as 'old fashioned'. When I have observed her teaching, she goes for a 'chalk and talk' strategy that is not particularly 'learner-focused'. I don't think the students really like this either. I try to be much more supportive of the students by getting them involved in the learning process and applying newer ideas like 'emotional intelligence' and 'multiple intelligences'. I don't think my mentor is too keen on these ideas. (Mary, an ITT trainee)

This reflection shows that there can be an inherent tension existing between past and present interpretations of pedagogy (Hobson, 2002, 6). The research findings in this article reveal that mentors may talk about teaching in a different way to their mentees. The research has also identified that this issue is exacerbated by the inconsistency of mentor training.

I haven't been impressed with my mentor training. I'm not aware of a training programme that all mentors are expected to go on. It seems to vary from place to place. I also wonder if we really do need training if our role is just to be supportive colleagues?

(Bridie, an experienced mentor)

This reflection is shared by other mentors. A key theme appears to be the lack of consistency with mentor training.

I haven't been on any useful training. I would be interested in getting some guidance on the mentor teaching observations as I'm not sure if I'm doing a peer-review observation or something else. Am I there to be supportive? Am I there to be critical? I don't really know. I get the impression that these questions haven't been thought through as much as they should be. (Sophia, a new mentor)

This reflection reveals the need for clarity over PCET ITT mentoring roles and responsibilities. The uncertainty surrounding the mentoring role appears to coincide with inconsistent mentor training. This theme is reinforced in the following reflection:

We are a bit uncertain over who is supposed to take the lead on mentor training. Some of us have had training at the university and some of the rest of us have had training at local colleges. I suppose you could say that this makes the training vague and 'ad hoc'. This seems ironic when so much else of what we do appears to indicate we are not trusted. We are not left to write our own session plans but we can do mentor training how we wish! (Colin, an experienced mentor)

Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 68) have previously drawn attention to the inconsistency of PCET ITT mentor training. Moreover, all of the participants in this research project have also acknowledged this point. It can be argued that the inconsistency within mentor training is a consequence of the PCET ITT mentoring field lacking a clear identity. This theme also links to the quality assurance issues about PCET ITT mentoring that have been commented on by OFSTED from 2005 and by Tedder and Lawy (2009). It also appears to be the case that the number of mentors receiving training is also an issue of concern.

Part of the difficulty with mentor training is that we are mentors on a voluntary basis. It's difficult to make mentors do rigorous training when we volunteer for the role. This essentially makes the relationship an extension of our teaching duties. Many of us feel really overworked as teachers so volunteering for mentor training is yet another burden. (Anne, an experienced mentor).

The participants also reinforce Ingleby and Hunt's (2008, 68) argument about the underdeveloped nature of professional boundaries within the mentor/mentee relationship. This finding pertains to the 'uneasiness' that can exist between mentors and mentees due to the perceived lack of clarity over 'professional boundaries'.

I find that I get on very well with my teaching colleagues. I really admire the teachers who are very good at what they do. I suppose I want to be like them and this is why I like being with them. It's a bit different with my mentor. I find it difficult to see my mentor as anything other than a teacher. I'm less bothered about my relationship with my mentor but really keen to get on well with the other teachers. (Paul, an ITT trainee)

The uncertainty that appears to be present over the PCET ITT mentor/mentee relationship may be explained by the existence of differing interpretations of mentoring. Moran and Dallat (1995, 21) refer to three distinctive mentoring styles that are identified by Maynard and Furlong (1993) as the 'apprenticeship model; the competence model; and the reflective practitioner model'. The lack of clarity that appears to be present in respect of which type of mentoring model is being followed appears to contribute to this lack of certainty over mentoring professional boundaries. This is acknowledged by another participant:

Mentoring seems to be one of these processes that has come into the teaching landscape. As a result of this it's something of an 'outside the box concept'. I've usually found that these new ideas take time to become accepted. There is an inevitable 'teething process'. I think we're at this stage now where we are uncertain about a new innovation. (Colin, an experienced mentor)

This reference to the ambiguous nature of PCET ITT mentoring is reinforced by other research in this area. The work of Tedder and Lawy (2009) appears to support the Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 69) notion of equating PCET ITT mentoring with the Geertzian (1995) analogy of 'the lady sawed in half' that is 'done but never really done at all' (1988, 2,).

Theoretical discussion

The research participants reveal that the professional boundary between PCET ITT mentors and mentees is uncertain. This finding makes the research link to the work of Bourdieu and Foucault and their ideas about discourse, power and professions. The standards-driven nature of PCET ITT mentoring also reinforces the Downie and Randall (1999) notion of education being interpreted as a rational product.

The research has identified that there appears to be uncertainty surrounding mentoring in PCET ITT. This uncertainty appears to be exacerbated by a lack of consistency within mentor training. This is commented on by all of the research participants.

'Colin' refers to mentoring as being 'a new innovation' that is 'uncertain'. This finding links the research to Bourdieu's notion of 'cultural capital'. Bourdieu (1993) has popularised the notion of 'cultural capital' by arguing that a main purpose of the education system is to enable 'cultural reproduction'. According to Bourdieu (1986, 34):

In every epoch there is a constant struggle over the rate of exchange between the different kinds of capital, a struggle among the different fractions of the dominant class, whose overall capital is composed in differing proportions of the various kinds of capital.

In other words, the education system is regarded by Bourdieu as reinforcing the values of the dominant classes. 'Mary' elaborates on the tensions that can occur between new and experienced teachers when there is an expectation that accepted

values ought to be reinforced. 'Chalk and talk' pedagogy is contrasted by Mary to a 'learner-focused' approach. This tension is exacerbated by the uncertainty that appears to exist over the PCET ITT mentoring role. The consequence is that PCET ITT mentoring is considered to be an ill-fitting component of the PCET ITT educational context. 'Colin' refers to mentoring as an 'outside the box concept'. In other words, mentoring is not part of the process of 'cultural reproduction'. It is instead opposed to what is accepted as the purpose of teaching and learning. It can be argued that if the mentoring role remains unclearly defined it is not likely to become an accepted part of professional activity. It can be proposed that mentoring needs to become an element of PCET ITT educational 'cultural capital' if it is to become an accepted component of this educational context. Paul' says that he finds it difficult to see his mentor in any other role other than being a teacher'.

This reflection is reinforced by the uncertainty surrounding the professional boundaries within the mentor/mentee relationship. The research participants have commented on the uneasiness that appears to characterise a number of PCET ITT mentor/mentee relationships. It appears that some mentors may think about teacher-training in a different way to their ITT trainees. This point is made earlier by 'Mary'. It seems that it is the interpretation that mentors and ITT trainees have of 'pedagogy' that is a critical factor. This links the research to the work of Michel Foucault (1977) and his examination of the changing nature of power relations within social space. Foucault (1986, 99) has commented on the changing nature of power within Western societies. This means that power is not understood in isolation from time and space. Conversely, expressions of power depend on time and space.

There is no statement in general, no free neutral, independent statement; but a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements,

deriving support from and distinguishing itself from them: it is always part of a network of statements, in which it has a role, however minimal it may be, to play.

The argument runs that in societies like the UK there has been a move away from 'public executions' to more complex manifestations of power in the form of 'observation' and 'surveillance'. This suggests that expressions of power change according to time and place. These ideas link to the emphases that may be placed on either Asclepius or Hippocrates. This is because the shared understanding of what constitutes acceptable pedagogy has changed. As opposed to emphasising the role of the teacher, the needs of the learner are now regarded as being all important. If mentors are unable to identify with these current pedagogical models, this can mean that they struggle to identify with the pedagogical values of their mentees. This point is commented on by 'Bridie' when she reflects on 'adapting teaching strategies to meet the needs of the learners'. Moreover, as well as competing interpretations of pedagogy, there are also competing interpretations of mentoring from managers, tutors and trainees, as previously cited in the work of Tedder and Lawy (2009).

Conclusion

A number of interesting themes can be considered within PCET ITT mentoring. The article began by reflecting on the PCET ITT educational context and the implications of standards-driven education. The research participants do not appear to consider that PCET ITT mentoring is a clear educational initiative. In order to improve the situation the article supports findings of Tedder and Lawy (2009) and the recommendations of Ingleby and Hunt (2008, 71). These recommendations are complemented by the research findings within this article to propose the following conclusions:

- 1. PCET ITT mentoring needs to be established as a professional role if it is to contribute to a community of practice (the social processes influencing professional behaviour (Bryan and Carpenter, (2008, 47)).
- 2. PCET ITT mentor training needs to be planned thoroughly so that mentors and mentees develop a shared understanding of the objectives of PCET ITT programmes. This mentor training ought to develop educational communities of practice as opposed to being 'standards-driven'.

A wider theme that runs through this article is the interpretation of education and its purpose. In other words, is education there to draw the individual to a new understanding of the world or is its purpose to meet standards and targets? This broader theme is considered by Downie and Randall (1999) with the argument that societies like the UK are dominated by a Hippocratic understanding of problems. In other words it is assumed that scientific solutions can be applied to many social problems. Downie and Randall criticise this interpretation of social problems by arguing that the emphasis ought not to be placed on 'curing' but 'healing'. This characteristic is associated with Asclepius and is opposed to a Hippocratic notion of professionals as 'problem solvers'. The argument runs that this enables a more profound understanding of the complexity of social problems. It can be suggested that if this change of emphasis occurs within PCET ITT, the many interesting issues within mentoring may be addressed more effectively in the future. The existence of a number of interpretations of the educational context has been linked to the work of Bourdieu and Foucault. These two theorists discuss the interplay between power and discourse. Despite their different interpretations of discourse, both theorists explore the differing manifestations of power in space and time. This fascinating characteristic of PCET education is revealed in particular in the reflections of 'Colin' who

represents a tutor who is attempting to come to terms with the mercurial nature of PCET ITT mentoring by colloquially reinforcing the arguments of Bourdieu and Foucault.

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