

C.C.C.S.

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RECONCEPTUALISING THE MEDIA AUDIENCE

by

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What I am going to deal with in this paper are some of the implications of the realisation, within mass media research, that one cannot approach the problem of the 'effects' of the media on the audience as if the contents of the media impinged directly on to passive minds. The realisation that people in fact assimilate, select from and reject 'communications' from the media has led to the development of the 'uses and gratifications' model of the media, Halloran advising us that "we must get away from the habit of thinking in terms of what the media do to people and substitute for it the idea of what people do with the media." This approach highlights the important fact that different members of the media audience may 'use' and interpret any particular programme in a quite different way from how the communicator intended it, and in quite different ways from other members of the audience.

As Stuart Hall argues in "Encoding and decoding the TV Message" this entails a recognition of the fundamentally polysemic nature of the message - by the sheer fact that the message can be interpreted in a number of different ways, by 'mapping it into' different connotative configurations or maps of meaning. But, as he goes on to argue: "Polysemy must not be confused with pluralism. Connotative codes are not equal among themselves. Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its segmentations, its classifications of the social and cultural and political world, upon its members. There remains a dominant cultural order, though it is neither univocal or uncontested." (p.13). These 'closures' of the message are the means by which the audience is 'directed towards' a reading of the message in terms of the preferred or dominant meanings - for example, the way in which the spoken commentary in a news broadcast directs us towards a particular interpretation of the visual images on the screen: "although there can be no law to ensure that the receiver will take the preferred or dominant meaning of an episode in precisely the way in which it has been encoded by the producer" (SH op.cit.)

We need to break fundamentally with the 'uses and gratifications' approach, with its psychologistic problematic and its emphasis on individual differences of interpretation. Of course, there will always be individual 'private' readings; but we need to see the way in which these readings are patterned into cultural structures and clusters. What is needed here is an approach which links differential interpretations back to the socio-economic structure of society - showing how members of different groups and classes, sharing different 'cultural codes' will interpret a given message differently, not just at the level of idiosyncratic personal differences of interpretation, but in a way systematically related to their socio-economic position. In short we need to see how the different sub-cultural structures and formations within the audience, and the sharing of different cultural codes and competencies amongst different groups and classes, determines the decoding of the message for different sections of the audience.

We can usefully begin an analysis of the situation of the media audience in relation to the message by looking at the role of the education system, since the education system is a key determinant of the levels and kinds of cultural codes and competencies acquired by the audience. No other ideological apparatus of the state has the obligatory audience of the totality of the children in a capitalist social formation 7 hours a day for 5 days a week, during the most vulnerable years of their development. As Baudelot and Establet² argue in their book, 'L'école Capitaliste en France' (trans. John Downing): "The other ideological

apparatuses (bourgeois parties, TV, advertising, the church, etc.) which operate either simultaneously or later on, are only enabled to fulfill their function of ideological domination on the basis of the primary conditioning realised by the educational apparatus. The educational apparatus therefore occupies a privileged position in the superstructure of the capitalist mode of production, since it is the only one out of all the ideological apparatuses to inculcate the dominant ideology on the basis of the formation of labour power".

The education system structures the audiences of the different sections of the media. There is a close correlation between degrees of education and choices of media material: the audience of the 'quality press' and their TV equivalents (in the form of documentaries, etc.) is largely coextensive with that group of people who have been educated beyond the minimum age. Thus, the media reflect and reinforce the levels of public discussion institutionalised by the education system.

The fact that only an educated minority possess the cultural competencies necessary to appropriate the products of those sections of the media which provide more detailed and explanatory accounts of developments in society has a clear parallel with the aspect of the situation pointed to by Pierre Bourdieu³ in his essay on 'Cultural Reproduction & Social Reproduction': "The inheritance of cultural wealth which has been accumulated and bequeathed by previous generations only really belongs (though it is theoretically offered to everyone) to those endowed with the means of appropriating it for themselves ... the apprehension and possession of cultural goods as symbolic goods are only possible for those who hold the code making it possible to decipher them ..." (p.73)

Indeed, Bourdieu points to the existence of "an extremely pronounced relationship" (p.76) between the level of education and participation in all forms of prestigious cultural activities. Thus he sees the education system as the prime agent of distribution of the cultural competencies necessary for these activities. However, he goes on to argue that the determination of educational achievement lies in the prior process of primary socialisation in the family - he argues that what is necessary for educational success is "linguistic and cultural competency and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture." (p.80).

This argument is obviously similar to that of Basil Bernstein, and it will now be necessary for us to attempt to come to grips with his approach to education and the transmission of culture.

Bernstein's concern is with the distribution of cultural competencies throughout society; he distinguishes between two basic forms of competency: restricted code and elaborated code ("these codes can be seen as different kinds of communicative competence..." - Class, Codes & Control, Paladin, 1973, p.168), which he says are characteristic, in the main, of the working class and middle class respectively, and he locates the origin of these different codes in the different family styles of socialisation of these classes. Bernstein's basic thesis can be represented schematically thus:

CLASS	FAMILY TYPE	STYLE OF SOCIALISATION	CODE	MODE OF UNDERSTANDING
working class	positional role system	closed mode of communication and control	restricted	rigid particularistic context-bound implicit
middle class	personal role system	open mode of communication and control	elaborated	flexible universalistic context-free explicit

Bernstein himself offers a summary of (one variant of) his thesis in "A sociolinguistic approach to socialisation ..." (Bernstein op.cit. p.188/9): "We started with the view that the social organisation and sub-culture of the lower working class would be likely to generate a distinctive form of communication through which the genes of social class would be transmitted. Secondly, two general types of linguistic codes were postulated and their social origins and regulative consequences were analysed. Thirdly, it was suggested that the sub-culture of the lower working class would be transmitted through a restricted code while that of the middle class would realise both elaborated and restricted codes. This causal link was considered to be very imprecise and omitted the dynamics of the process .. (So) .. the fourth step entailed the construction of two types of family role systems, positional and personal, their causally related 'open' and 'closed' communications systems and their procedures of social control. The fifth step made the causal link between restricted and elaborated codes and their two modes with positional- and person-oriented family role systems ..."

Thus Bernstein introduces family type as the crucial intermediary variable between class and code. He says, (op.cit. p.176): "I shall now look at the relationships between role systems and linguistic codes, as the connection between social class and linguistic codes is too imprecise. Such a relationship omits the dynamics of the causal relationship. In order to examine these dynamics it is necessary to look at the nature of the role system and its procedures of social control."

However, the link between class and code is at times almost qualified out of existence, as the link between class and family type is qualified (see p.186 and 270) so that positional and personal family types may be found in both middle class and working class, while the link between family type and mode of control is qualified so that "in any one family, or even in any one context of control, all 3 modes of control may be used." Thus, at most, the working class tends to be characterised by a positional type of family which tends to use a closed mode of communication and control. Further, of course, the restricted code is to be found among the middle class too, so the codes are not exclusive to the two classes, although it is exceptional, in this schema, to find the elaborated code among the working class.

As against the emphasis of Bernstein's argument, I would claim that if we notice that working class Children have a set of negative predispositions towards the school - such as self-depreciation, devaluation of the school and its sanctions, a resigned attitude to failure - and that they are the carriers of certain cultural traditions which make them hostile to the school and result in their virtual self-elimination from the education system - then the problem is to determine out of what past and present experience these

cultural traditions and predispositions arise and maintain themselves. "Cultural values do not descend from heaven to influence the course of history. They are abstractions by an observer, based on the observation of certain similarities in the way groups of people behave, either in different situations or over time or both. Even though one can often make accurate predictions about the way groups and individuals will behave over short periods of time on the basis of such abstractions, as such they do not explain the behaviour. To explain behaviour in terms of cultural values is to engage in circular reasoning.." (Barrington Moore - Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, p.486)

Thus, the negative predispositions of working class children towards the school must be understood, as Bourdieu says (op.cit. p.83):

"as an anticipation, based upon the unconscious estimation of the objective probabilities of success possessed by the whole category, of the sanctions objectively reserved by the school for those classes... deprived of cultural capital.... (Thus) the functionalist sociologists who announce the brave new world when, at the conclusion of a longitudinal survey of academic and social careers, they discover that, as though by a pre-established harmony individuals had hoped for nothing that they had not achieved, and obtained nothing that they have not hoped for, are simply the least forgivable victims of the ideological effect which is produced by the school when it cuts off from their social conditions of production all words and ideas regarding the school such as 'expectations' 'aspirations'... and thus tends to cover up the fact that objective conditions - and in the individual case, the laws of the academic market - determine aspirations by determining the extent to which they can be satisfied."

John Downing, in his paper 'Recent Marxist theories of Ideology' remarks that Baudelot and Establet, in their study of 'The Capitalist School in France', conclude in a familiar vein that there is a virtual segregation in the French school apparatus between the 25% of achievers and the 75% of non-achievers. But, he goes on "so far from arguing in the usual circular fashion of many educational sociologists... that the reason for this segregation of achievement is that bourgeois and petit-bourgeois families have a cultural inheritance mechanism in their style of primary socialisation, they insist that the primary origin of this schism in the growing generation is the division in the capitalist labour market."

Thus the structure of the education system is seen as being determined by the structure of the division of labour in society; the educational apparatus is seen as being geared to the reproduction of the conditions of production, which includes the need for manual workers, together with professionals and administrators, and the need for the right orientation to one's place in production. The structure of the education system is thus organised in such a way as to reproduce the entire range of categories of workers, and this takes place via the definition and demarcation of 'types of child'; but the fact that there is an inheritance factor is derived from the primary reality of the schism in the capitalist labour market, and not the other way round.

Baudelot and Establet point to the fact that at the top end of the educational apparatus, in those sections that cater for the future holders of authority positions in bourgeois society, the curricula encourage pupils to 'think bourgeois' for themselves, to be able independently to articulate and if necessary justify bourgeois perspectives, procedures and problematics. In the lower sections of the apparatus, catering for the majority destined to be ordinary workers, the curricula tend rather to teach 'bourgeois ideas' as a given set, without encouraging pupils to arrive at any independent understanding of the principles on which the ideas are based. Now the difference pointed to here is obviously close to an important dimension of Bernstein's distinction between 'elaborated code' (in which principles are made explicit and individuals are thus given access to the grounds of their experience)

experience - grounds which they can then develop and change) and 'restricted code' (in which principles are never made explicit and therefore are not made available to inspection and change). But the crucial difference here is that Baudelot and Establiet locate the origin of this difference in different styles of teaching in the school, not in primary styles of family socialisation, and propose that the origin of the different styles of teaching lies in the structure of the capitalist labour market.

Hegemony and Educability:

As Althusser⁷ has pointed out "It is in the forms and under the forms of ideological subjection that provision is made for the reproduction of the skills of labour power." This is a dimension of analysis which Bernstein simply does not fit into his system; indeed, the concept of hegemony nowhere figures in his analysis. Rosen remarks (Language and Class, p.6):

"... strangest of all in this system, the ruling class do not figure at all. When Bernstein talks of social control he is not talking about the ways in which one class controls or is controlled by another, but only of the ways in which members of the same class control each other."

In his 1973 Postscript to Vol. 1 of Class, Codes and Control, Bernstein says that he has been "trying to do research into .. education as an agency of social control" (p.257). In his introduction to that volume he has lamented the fact that, in the end: "The left wing ... saw the work as .. an attempt at the ideological level at reducing the value of 'natural' forms of communication, and aimed at breaking these in order to impose middle class values and meaning more successfully in the schools." (p.37)

His argument is that:

"The school is necessarily concerned with the transmission and development of universalistic orders of meaning." (p.221)

and against some interpretations of his thesis he claims that:

"The introduction of the child to the universalistic meanings of public forms of thought is not compensatory education - it is education. It is not in itself making children middle class .. (Though) .. The implicit values underlying the form and contents of the educational environment might." (p.225) Of course, as he concedes:

"It is also the case that the school is implicitly and explicitly transmitting values and their attendant morality ... Further, these values and morals affect the content of educational knowledge ... Thus the working class child may be placed at a considerable disadvantage in relation to the total culture of the school." (p.222)

For:

"Many of the contexts of our schools are unwittingly drawn from aspects of the symbolic world of the middle class" (p.225)

Yet, he maintains, crucially:

"Elaborated codes are not necessarily middle class communication procedures; they are not necessarily instruments for the alienation of the working class; neither does it follow that they function as reproducers of a particular class structure ..." (p.262)

Thus Bernstein holds that:

"Educational institutions are faced with the problem of encouraging children to change and extend the way they naturally use language ... (In terms of this paper) .. this becomes a switch from restricted to elaborated codes." (p.189)

The question is, what kind of a problem this is: whether it is a technical problem, to be situated in the problematic of 'educability', or a political

problem to be situated in the problematic of 'hegemony'. I would suggest that there is a clear parallel with the situation pointed to by Stuart Hall (SH Encoding/Decoding op.cit. pp. 18-19):

"When dealing with social communications it is extremely difficult to identify as a neutral, educational goal, the task of 'improving communications' or of 'making communications more effective', at any rate once one has passed beyond the strictly denotative level of the message ... Denotative mistakes (in decoding -DM) are not structurally significant. But connotative and contextual 'misunderstandings' are, or can be, of the highest significance. To interpret what are in fact essential elements in the systematic distortions of a socio-communications system as if they were technical faults in transmission is to misread a deep-structure process for a surface phenomenon. The decision to intervene in order to make the hegemonic codes of dominant elites more effective and transparent for the majority audience is not a technically neutral, but a political one."

Similarly, Eco remarks,⁹ in his notes on the possibilities of a 'semiotic guerilla warfare', that:

"The gap between the transmitted and the received messages is not only an aberration, which needs to be reduced - it can also be developed so as to broaden the receivers' freedom. In political activity, it is not indispensable to change a given message: it would be enough (or perhaps better) to change the attitude of the audience so as to introduce a different decoding of the message - or in order to isolate the intentions of the transmitter and thus to criticise them." (Eco in WPCS No.3, p.121).

I would propose that Bernstein's position is not tenable when he claims that "An elaborated code does not entail any specific value system" (p.212) - that, in short, the elaborated code is simply a superior cognitive technique. He does qualify this by saying that "The value system of the middle class does penetrate the texture of the very learning context itself" (p.212) - but this is seen as a contingent, and therefore in principle, separable 'contamination'. While I would not want to 'collapse' the notion of education into that of ideological indoctrination, and while I would align myself with Rosen's proviso that "there are many aspects of language usually acquired through education which, given favourable conditions, give access to more powerful ways of thinking" (Language & Class p.19), I would yet maintain that it is in the conceptual forms of the dominant ideology that the elaborated code is transmitted in the education system and that its ideological aspect is neither contingent, nor readily separable.

Bernstein's attempted disavowal (in "A Critique of the concept of compensatory education") of some interpretations of his work in terms of the cultural/linguistic deprivation of working class children is, as Rosen argues, less than convincing - for Bernstein's theory claims that there is something lacking in working class language - elaborated code. Moreover, Rosen goes on, the 'respect' Bernstein accords to the restricted code has a hollow ring to it when 'rationality' is excluded from it: "restricted codes draw upon metaphor, whereas elaborated codes draw upon rationality" (Language and Class p.14). Bernstein's claim (op.cit., p.211) that despite the difficulties involved, he is attempting "to avoid implicit value judgements about the relative worth of speech systems and the cultures which they symbolise" is indicative of his failure to grasp the fact that questions of the 'relative worth' of cultures are inevitably political questions that must be related to the structure of power in society.

Thus Parkin notes (Class Inequality and Political Order, p.83):¹⁰

"Those groups in society which occupy positions of the greatest power and privilege will also tend to have the greatest access to the means of legitimation ... the social/political definitions of those in dominant positions tend to become objectified and enshrined in the major institutional orders, so providing the moral framework of the entire social system ... dominant values tend to set the standards for what is considered to be objectively 'right' ... In the sphere of culture ... the tastes of the dominant classes are accorded positive evaluation, while the typical cultural

tastes and pursuits of the subordinate classes are negatively evaluated .. the characteristic speech patterns and linguistic usages of the dominant class are generally regarded as 'correct', or what counts as the grammar of the language .. and the usages of the subordinate class are often said to be incorrect or ungrammatical where they differ from the former, even though such usages represent the statistical norm".

As Nell Keddie argues in her introduction to "The Myth of Cultural Deprivation", our very notions of 'rationality', 'intelligence' and 'educability' are themselves socially constructed: "Logics are socially constructed and socially situated among the group to whom they are the logical (or rational) way of thinking and doing. "She argues that the formal logic of western culture, far from being absolute, is no different in this respect from the logic of any other social group. This dominant culture provides us with our primary definitions of 'rationality', etc. and it is in terms of these definitions that other cultures are then evaluated. Thus in our society, children from class and ethnic sub-cultures are defined as being 'culturally deprived' - in the sense of not being participants in the dominant culture - and as such are assumed to lack the linguistic and cognitive means to carry out abstract thought.

It can at least be argued that all cultures - class and ethnic - may have their own logics which are capable of grappling with abstract thought. Indeed Labov has shown that black non-standard English is perfectly capable of sophisticated argument, logic and conceptualisation. Keddie therefore argues that "we in Britain should reconsider the notion that working class speech is unable to cope with what are felt to be high level abstractions and consider whether, like black non-standard English, it is better seen as a dialectical variation of standard English rather than a different kind of speech from that required for formal and logical thinking." (Keddie p.13) While, as Rosen says, it would be extremely foolhardy to claim that working class language was "as fine a tool as could be devised for communications and thinking", it does have its own strengths, in terms of which middle class language can be said to be lacking, and does, as Bernstein himself points out "give access to a vast potential of meanings", which have not been explored by researchers.

The structure of the Audiences:

Bernstein concludes his paper on 'Social Class, Language and Socialisation' with the claim that he has

"Tried to show how the class system acts upon the deep structure of communication in the process of socialisation."

Rosen remarks:

"Whatever else he has done, he has not done that - for the simple reason that he never examines the class system. By implication only, we are provided with a system consisting of two classes, called the working class and the middle class. No further attempt is made at differentiation, whether in terms of history, traditions, job experience, ethnic origins, residential patterns, level of organisation and class consciousness." (L & C p.6)

He asks:

"How does the writer know about these features of working class life? Do his ideas derive from a study of workers in industry? Which industry? Where? Or are we being offered a stereotype of the unskilled worker assembled from the descriptive literature of sociology?" (L & C, p.8)

Rosen points out that Bernstein's theory makes no differentiations for the different sectors of the working class - ignoring the fact that although all members of this class share a 'common occupational function and social status - in the sense of having to sell their labour power - the different sections of this class differ in very important secondary characteristics, which will in turn affect how they use language.

Thus he suggests that the kind of question we need to ask is:

"What distinguishes the language of Liverpool dockers from that of Durham miners or Clydeside shipbuilders or London railwaymen or Coventry car-workers? Or for that matter, what distinguishes the language of Liverpool dockers from that of London dockers? If questions of this kind are not asked, then we take away from people their history, be they working class or middle class ... We have no right to assume a linguistic uniformity based on general 'occupational function and status' .. " (L & C p.9)

He goes on to suggest that:

".. The most articulate workers are those who have actively participated in the creation and maintenance of their own organisations, and amongst these the most articulate will be those who in that process have encountered and helped to formulate theories about society and how to change it." (L&C p.9)

As he has earlier pointed out (p7), in Bernstein's theory:

"No attention is paid to that vast area of critical working class experience, the encounter with exploitation at the place of work and the response to it .. "

Nor is attention paid to the socialising influence of:

" .. the organisations created by and maintained by the working class themselves .. everything from political parties, Trade Unions and non-conformist chapels to brass bands and pigeon-racing clubs."

The crucial relevance and influence of working class organisation can be seen most clearly in the strike situation (cf. Benyon: 'Working for Ford' p.277 & pp. 302-6) - where for employers hoping to influence workers' decisions on a pay deal the hope must be that the decision will be taken by each worker in isolation. Thus, during the 1969 strike at Ford's Halewood, the employers sent a letter to the homes of all employees, saying that "it seems a sensible idea to set out for you once again - so that you can read it in the calm of your own home - what the company regards as the really crucial issues affecting all of us at this time." (my emphasis). Following this a secret ballot produced acceptance of the pay offer, but the result of the ballot was overturned at a series of mass meetings. The media 'explained' this by pointing to the 'emotional' nature of mass meetings, and claimed that the men were afraid to oppose their leadership in such a situation, and were intimidated. As Benyon remarks:

"In finishing a strike, workers have decided to go back into a plant and work on an assembly line on a vast shop floor, alongside hundreds of other men. Their survival in that situation is tied up with relationship with those other men." On the basis of this real interdependence, these workers will tend towards the development of a 'collectivist' mode of thought, in terms of which the secret ballot is divisive - for it denies them access in the decision-making situation to the collectivity and thereby to themselves."

The above kind of example could be fitted into a generalised model of the media audience where 'group affiliation' is seen as filtering or mediating the message to the individual and influencing his understanding of and response to it. But what is actually needed is a much more highly differentiated model of the audience which distinguishes A. Between the different dimensions of 'group affiliation' which may be relevant to an individual and on the basis of which he will be a participant in different codes and cultures, and also B. Between the specific contents of the shared codes and sub-cultures: primarily between situations where 'group affiliation' does act as a 'filter' between the message and the individual, in the sense that the shared culture of the group is dissonant with that of the media, and situations where 'group affiliation' reinforces the message - where the group's culture is in line with that of the media.

We must not see the audience as an undifferentiated mass but as a complex structure, made up of a number of overlapping subgroups, each with its own history and cultural traditions. While we must steer clear of the dangers of a 'substantialist' mode of analysis which would see 'culture' as automatically determined or generated by social position, we must investigate the sociological

basis of socio-linguistic codes, sub cultures and ideologies. In this connection, the primary factors we need to analyse are:

Position in the class structure

- + Occupational differentes (As Labov says, our knowledge of the relationship between language and work is meagre.)

Regional situation (Dialects)

- + Differential residential patterns: urban/rural, etc.

Ethnic origin (Ethnic sub-cultures)

Age (Notions of 'youth culture' etc.)

Sex: How is the relationship of sex and class - the relationships of power between men and women, and those between ruling class and working class - reflected in language? Are the linguistic differences between men and women more significant than those between classes or regions? ...

Then we need to look at the way in which the influence of all these factors is refracted through their influence on the level of education 'achieved' by individuals, and then in turn, the specific influence of education in 'distributing' cultural codes and competencies throughout the society.

Beyond this we need to analyse the autonomous influence of historical, cultural and religious traditions, and the influence of an individual's membership of different groups and organisations which are the institutional bases of these traditions.

These factors, I would suggest, will be relevant to the analysis (in terms of Saussure's distinction) at the level of language. Giglioli points out that: "The relation between languages (and, by implication, socio-linguistic codes, sub-cultures and ideologies) and social groups cannot be taken for granted, but is a problem which must be ethnographically investigated".

As we move from this level of analysis to an 'ethnography of speaking' - i.e. a comparative analysis of speech events, of their elements and of the functions fulfilled by speech in particular settings - we begin to deal with the complications of the influence of specific social contexts on the 'realisation' in speech of basic language codes. Here the problems become enormously complicated, in terms for instance, of the existence of a plurality of codes or code varieties within the same linguistic community, and the existence of rules by means of which a speaker selects one or another code as suitable for a particular social context, and the ongoing negotiations of these rules by participants in a social situation.

But what is crucial is that we should map all these complications into a notion of a dominant cultural order. The plurality of cultural and sociolinguistic codes must not blind us to the fact that these codes are structured in dominance within the hegemony of the map of social reality drawn by the dominant/preferred meaning system.

As Parkin argues: "The major problem raised by the class differentiated view of the normative order is that of social control. If the subordinate class were to subscribe to a value system sharply distinguished from that of the dominant class, then the latter's normative control over the former would be seriously diminished. In this situation the dominant class would have to rely on physical coercion as a substitute for moral suasion. Thus, in societies where the use or threatened use of force does not appear to be the prevailing strategy of social control, we are bound to have reservations about the validity of a class differential model of the moral order."

It is here that Parkin's formulation of the problem¹³ provides us with a useful framework, although his formulation of the maps of meaning in our society - in terms of a dominant value system, a subordinate or negotiated value system, and a radical or oppositional value system - constitutes a logical, rather than a

audience, his schema provides us with the notion that a given section of the audience either shares, partly shares, or does not share the dominant code in which the message has been transmitted. Obviously, empirical work is needed to establish which sections of the audience actually do share which codes and meaning systems - but this work can most usefully be developed within the framework Parkin has set out.

The structuration of access to different codes and meaning systems:

Parkin's notion of the 'negotiated' code can be seen to illuminate both Baudelot & Estabiet's work on the position of working class children in school and Michael Mann's work on the position of industrial workers, in relation to the dominant ideology.

In both cases, the objective position of members of these groups in the social structure, which Baudelot & Estabiet phrase in terms of 'class instinct', is seen as inclining them away from an 'acceptance' of the dominant meaning system and towards a spontaneous, but anarchistically expressed and fragmented, sense of exploitation and opposition to this meaning system. It is in this context, Baudelot & Estabiet suggest, that we should understand the 'truancy problem' and the 'discipline problem' in schools - as expressions of resentment and opposition towards education as such - as instinctive forms of resistance to the dominant ideology transmitted by the education system.

Michael Mann points out that:¹⁵

"working class compliance is based on pragmatic acceptance of specific roles (because the individual concerned sees no realistic alternative) rather than on any positive normative commitment to society whereby the working class might internalise the moral expectations of the ruling class and view their inferior position as 'legitimate' .."

And he goes on to argue that: "there is little truth in the claims of some Marxists that the working class is systematically and successfully indoctrinated with ruling class values ... It is not value consensus which keeps the working class compliant, but rather a lack of consensus in the crucial area where concrete experiences (of conflict & exploitation) and vague populism (widespread notions of 'us' & 'them') might be translated into radical politics .."

Thus as Stuart Hall argues:¹⁶

"Decoding within the negotiated meaning system contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations, while, at a more restricted, situational level, it makes its own ground rules, and operates with 'exceptions' to the rule. It accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events, whilst reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions', to its own more corporate positions."

This is well illustrated in Parkin's examples of industrial workers who may be willing, in the abstract, to endorse middle class criticisms of Trade Unions as having too much power, etc. - but who are perfectly willing to use what power they have as organized Trade Unionists in furtherance of their own particular demands. Likewise, Mann points out that while an industrial worker is likely to be cynical about his chances for 'getting on', he is likely to be much more optimistic about the possibilities for working class people to 'get on' in Capitalist society in general.

The question is why the 'syndrome of grumbling dissent' among the working class only produces oppositional views on concrete issues, and is not translated into a systematic sense of opposition to the established social order. The answer would seem to be best given in terms of (a) the restricted mode of understanding of society that the working class is able to gain from the dominant meaning system made available through the education system and the media and (b) the lack of access to any radical ideology which might enable the different sections of the working class to generalise their specific demands and grievances into a distinct form of class consciousness.

With reference to (a) Mueller argues that:¹⁷ "Adequate concepts and paradigms that are necessary for the understanding of politics are excluded from the public language" which is made available through the education and media systems and that "on the class level the language used results in an incapacity to locate oneself in history and society". Thus, he argues, the subordinate class is unable "to generate from its own bases symbols and ideas contrary to the dominant ones" and that while "they may or may not agree with a given message ... they have no alternative interpretation at their disposal, if they have no code representing their own interests."

In the education system, for the majority of kids, the transmission of the dominant ideology takes place by not referring to anything with which they are familiar - the school apparatus officially puts working class feelings, experience and ideology off the map. In this way workers' children are presented with a vacuum at precisely the point at which they ought to be able to learn to interpret and understand their own class experience: in school the social order is presented generally as benevolent; politics is presented as a set of technical processes, rather than as a class struggle over power and resources - no means is provided of understanding the real conflicts in society.

Thus the dominant meaning system does not provide the concepts that might enable the working class to interpret the reality it actually experiences. Society is presented in a reified way, and no sense is given of any overall alternative possible set of social arrangements. This can be seen clearly in the media's dehistoricised presentation of the news as a series of 'events' - which are not related to underlying structural processes.¹⁸ (b) can best be reformulated as the question of 'which groups have access to which codes?'

MacIntyre argues, in Causality and Social Science, that: "The limits of what I can do intentionally are set by the limits of the descriptions available to me; and the descriptions available to me are those current in the social group to which I belong ... If the limits of action are the limits of description, then to analyse the ideas current in a society (or subgroup of that society), is also to discern the limits within which rational, intended action necessarily moves in that society."

A person's conception of what he should do, whether as a matter of explicit choice, or more commonly as a pattern of habitual action, will be largely determined by his self-conception or identity, which will be largely provided by the meaning system to which the individual in question adheres. (Although one need not assume that members of a social group only have access to one code - they may have access to several codes or meaning-systems which they can choose to 'operate' in different situations, and indeed, members of different groups may have access to the same code.

Berger and Luckman¹⁹ speak of the emergence in our society of the 'individualist' as a social type, who "has at least the possibility of migration between a number of available worlds and who has deliberately and awarably constructed a 'self' cut of the material provided by a number of available identities. "For such a person," they argue, "alternative realities and identities (as offered by different meaning systems) appear as subjective options."

However, for most members of our society, the options available are severely limited by their social context - Parkin argues that:²⁰

"Clearly, values are not imposed on men in some mechanistic way. Men also impose their will by selecting, as it were, from the range of values that any complex society generates. At the same time individuals do not construct their social worlds in terms of a wholly personal vision and without drawing heavily on the organised concepts which are part of a public meaning system.. Variations in the structure of attitudes of groups or individuals .. are thus to some extent dependent on differences in access to these meaning systems."

The question of the extent to which a different or wider range of meaning systems is available to different social groups or classes can perhaps fruitfully be seen as a reformulation of the problem investigated by Mannheim of the extent to which social groups differ in their capacity to transcend the limitations imposed on their viewpoints by their social position - for most members of the subordinate classes the meaning systems publicly available to them are probably all within a fairly narrow range.

The question also relates to Parsons (sic) concern with 'badly socialised' individuals - i.e. those who for some reason or another do not act in accordance with the tenets of the dominant meaning system - who Parsons sees as a possible source of social change. For Parsons these persons are likely to be distributed randomly throughout the social order, but Marcuse attempts a more systematic explanation of how persons in certain defined social positions (in his explanation those marginal to the process of production) are more likely both to come into contact with radical alternative meaning systems and to provide a social base from which an oppositional counter ideology might begin to be generated.

MacIntyre points out that:²¹

"Becoming class conscious is like learning a foreign language: learning a whole new way of conceptualising one's social situation and giving entirely different meanings to one's actions."

In this connection Parkin states:²²

"Political deviance is manifested in electoral support for socialism on the part of members of any social stratum ... Socialist voting can be regarded as a symbolic act of deviance from the dominant values of British Capitalist society, whilst Conservative voting may be thought of as a symbolic re-affirmation of such values." Moreover he argues that "electoral support for socialism will occur predominantly where individuals are involved in normative sub-systems which serve as 'barriers' to the dominant values of society The political and social values of Conservatism are more successfully resisted by those who have access to an alternative normative system such as is typically created in working class communities" - Political deviance is then, "not a function simply of class position, but of the availability of normative sub-systems which deviate from the overall value system in politically significant ways."

CONCLUSION

Placing the problem of the situation of the audience in relation to the message in the context of the problem of hegemony, I would argue that what is needed is the development of a 'cultural map' of the audience so that we can begin to see which classes, sections of classes and subgroups share which cultural codes and meaning systems, to what extent - so that we can then see: how these codes determine the decoding of the messages of the media, what degree of 'distance' different sections of the audience have from the dominant meanings encoded in the messages, and moreover which sections of the audience have access to any alternative or oppositional codes or meaning-systems.

NOTES

1. Stencilled Occasional paper, C.C.C.S., University of Birmingham.
2. Pub. Francois Maspero - partial translation by John Downing of Thames Poly.
3. In R. Brown (ed) Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change.
4. All references to Bernstein are to this edition, abbreviated as "CCC".
5. Pub. Allen Lane, 1967.
6. It must be noted that Bernstein himself remarks that: (CCC,p.199) "The class system has affected the distribution of knowledge .. only a tiny % of the population have been socialised into knowledge at the level of the meta-languages of control and innovation, whereas the mass of the population has been socialised into knowledge at the level of context-tied operations ... A tiny % of the population have been given access to the principles of intellectual change, whereas the rest have been denied such access.

Indeed, in his essay on the "Classification and Framing of Educational Knowledge" Bernstein develops these remarks in a way that fits well with the emphasis given by Baudelot & Establet. Bernstein remarks on the relative 'openness' of higher education (on the clear assumption that the pupils of the higher reaches of the education system will be predominantly drawn from the ranks of the middle class): "The ultimate mystery of the subject .. not coherence, but incoherence: not order, but disorder, not the known but the unknown .. is revealed very late in the educational life - and then only to a select few who have shown the signs of successful socialisation - only the few experience in their bones the notion that knowledge is permeable, that the dialectic of knowledge is closure and openness. For the many, socialisation into knowledge is socialisation into order, the existing order, into the experience that the world's educational knowledge is impermeable ... Do we have here another version of alienation? ..."
7. In Ideology and the State.
8. Falling Wall Press, 1972. Abbreviated as "L & C".
9. Umberto Eco: "Towards a Semiotic Enquiry into the TV Message"
10. Paladin, 1971. Abbreviated as "CI & PO".
11. Bernstein himself persistently claims that his analysis is not dealing with the level of Competence (language) but specifically with that of speech (performance). Thus (CCC,p.263):
"At no time did I ever consider that I was concerned with differences between social groups at the level of competency; that is differences between social groups which had their origin in their basic tacit understanding of the linguistic rule system. I was fundamentally concerned with performance .. I was interested in the sociological controls on the use to which this common understanding was put. In the same way I never believed that there was any difference between social groups in their tacit understanding of logical rules. The difference that concerned me was the usage to which this common understanding was put."
I would argue that sociological determinations operate at the level of competency too - that it is not at all a question only of sociological controls on the 'uses' to which a 'common understanding' is put but that, indeed there is no such 'common understanding' shared by all the members of a society except at the most basic level of linguistic ability. As soon as

one introduces the notion of cultural or communicative competency rather than linguistic competency (see Hymes "On Communicative Competence" in Pride & Holmes (eds) Sociolinguistics, esp. p.277) then one must allow that these competencies are themselves differentially shared among members of different subcultures and groups. As Hymes argues (p.274) "Social life has affected not merely outward performance, but inner competence itself. Thus, sociocultural factors play a constitutive and not just a regulative role, and are relevant at the level of language as well as that of speech."

12. Giglioli: introduction to "Language & Social Context".
13. The 'meaning systems' chapter of 'CI & PO'
14. cf. Chanie Rosenberg "Education & Society" (Rank & File pamphlet) p.17:
"The status symbol was failure... The teachers drummed it into our heads that we were too thick to learn. We decided to get even by proving they couldn't teach. So some of us tried to get nought for exams. When the marks were read out we waited in excitement as they got lower and lower, and when the teacher reached the noughts we beamed proudly at all our friends, and all our friends beamed back their congratulations. We'd won! We'd proved they couldn't teach!" (Frank, a London building worker).
15. In "The Social Cohesion of Liberal Democracy".
16. In "Encoding/Decoding", op.cit.
17. Mueller: "Notes on the repression of communicative behaviour" in Dreitzel (ed) Recent Sociology 2.
18. If it can be argued that some explanatory frameworks for understanding society are provided in other sections of the media than news - e.g. documentaries, the 'quality press', etc. - it must be remembered that the audience for these sections of the media is largely exclusive of the working class - because, as Bordieu argues, they have not in general been able to acquire the cultural competencies necessary to decode these messages.
19. In The Social Construction of Reality.
20. CI & PO
21. In Causality & Social Science.
22. In his article on working class Conservatives.