THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE
IN RADICAL THEORIES OF
EDUCATION

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by

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This thesis is my own work and all sources have been properly acknowledged.

John Hodgens
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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to consider the application of the concept of culture in educational studies which take a 'radical' stance. Such studies assert that inequality of educational achievement in complex modern societies has a more or less direct and significant relationship to social class and that the phenomenon of achievement is to be explained by strictly social causes. Radical accounts of education thus challenge the assumption that educational achievement is to be explained by a natural or pre-social distribution of individual 'aptitude', 'mental ability' or 'intelligence' in the population at large.

The outcome of this 'radical' position is that if unequal achievement in education can be explained by social causes related to class, such causes can be changed through the processes of schooling and broader social action.

While the idea of culture has been linked explicitly to education since the mid-19th century, a particular version of this concept has been emphasised in sociological theories of education since the mid-1950s. This version has foregrounded the idea of a distinctive culture relative to social class. The purpose of this formulation of the concept of class-culture in such theories has been to assert the inherent 'rationality' of
I intend to examine closely the use and application of the concept of culture in two radical theories of education which have been very influential in educational research and theory in recent times. The works to be examined in close detail are Basil Bernstein's theories of language and codes from 1958 to the present, and the work of Paul Willis in 1977 and 1983, mainly Learning to Labour (1977). Both analyses emphasise the concept of culture as a coherent scheme of 'meaning' which expresses and reflects the principles of cohesion of an underlying 'social structure.' While there are variations between Bernstein's and Willis' analyses in the significance of the key concepts of culture and social structure, the basic frameworks which both theorists employ are essentially Durkheimian. This common emphasis reflects the general influence of Durkheim upon the practice of sociology in Britain (Demaine 1981:29).

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1 Main attention will be given to Bernstein's publications between 1958 and 1971 which focused upon the idea of language forms and, later, linguistic codes. After 1971, Bernstein's attention shifted towards a social account of the construction of formal knowledge after M F D Young (1971).
I intend to show the limitations of both bodies of work in giving a causal account of the unequal distribution of educational achievement. I will also point to the limitations of both theories in suggesting courses of intervention in schooling to improve the situation for working class students. Finally, I will be arguing that these limitations emerge from the lack of resolution in both theories of Durkheimian and Marxist elements reflected in the concepts of culture and class respectively.

There is an important reason for investigating these accounts of education from an anthropological perspective. In studies of education the concept of culture is assumed to be unproblematic - it is what anthropologists have discovered through their discipline. At the same time, with the application to education of a concept of culture relative to class, many of the classical problems of anthropological enquiry have been transferred to educational studies without being recognized for what they are. A classic problem within anthropology is accounting for the apparently irrational nature of beliefs and attitudes of members of other societies. The response of Durkheimian anthropology has been to propose a relativistic culture whereby societies are guided by schemes of meaning particular to themselves. Cultures have thus been treated as spatio-temporal isolates (Wolf, 1982:387). Sperber observes that the Social-Darwinist vision of 19th century ethnology has been replaced by 'a kind of cognitive apartheid. If we cannot be superior in the same world, let each

\[2\] It is noted that the emphasis upon 'culture' is an interpretation of Durkheim, emerging through a British tradition of sociology.
people live in its own world' (1982:179/80). Wolf indicates that the vision of self-contained societies operating within their own particular cultures has been based upon a view of social interaction 'causative in its own terms' (1982:387). This perspective has made difficult a consideration of the impact of economic and political forces upon societies.

Central problems which emerge from the idea of cultures as bounded systems of meaning are the questions of accounting for power and change within such bounds. I intend to show that these general problems of sociological and anthropological theory are of particular relevance to the analyses of education and class proposed by Bernstein and Willis and that related to these emerging concerns is a question of the status of theory itself.

Ortner (1984) and Marcus and Fischer (1986) observe a fragmentation of authoritative paradigms and an emerging eclecticism in the fields of sociological and anthropological theory since the 1960s. Within this movement Ortner observes a general trend of social analysis away from a primary pre-occupation with macro systems and towards an actor-oriented perspective within 'the system' (1984:127). She also observes that these emerging actor-oriented perspectives 'were elaborated in opposition to the dominant, essentially Parsonian/Durkheimian view of the world as ordered by rules and norms' (1984:146) [original emphasis].
Marcus and Fischer state that:

The authority of "grand theory" styles seems suspended for the moment in favour of a close consideration of such issues as contextuality, the meaning of social life to those who enact it, and the explanation of exceptions and indeterminants rather than the regularities in phenomena observed (1986:8).

The shift of focus from the 'regularities' of systems towards 'exceptions' within them reflects a generally recognized need for social analysis to account for change. Marcus and Fischer suggest that this need to account for change has led to a disaffection with 'grand theory' (1986:15). They observe further that:

the problem of the moment is less one of explaining changes within broad encompassing frameworks of theory from a concern to preserve the purpose and legitimacy of such theorizing, than of exploring innovative ways of describing at a microscopic level the process of change itself (1986:15).

A comparison of the analytical methods of Bernstein and Willis confirms these observations. A period of nineteen years separates Bernstein's initial publications (1958) and Learning to Labour (1977). Bernstein's theory, as will be shown, follows Durkheim and Parsons in its emphasis upon an over-arching system and attempts to give macro causes of student behaviour. Willis explicitly places primary emphasis upon 'ethnography' as a means of registering 'human agency' at work (1977:3-4). There is, however, an antagonism, not always concealed, towards 'formal'
theory which accompanies Willis' emphasis upon ethnographic
description and the need to focus upon 'the real':

It is necessary above all to approach the real now in
one way or another - one-sidedly, elliptically or not. The
ethnographic account, for all its faults, records a
crucial level of human agency which is persistently
overlooked or denied...It must nevertheless be
specifically registered somewhere in theory if theory
pretends to any relevance at all. Theories must be
judged ultimately for the adequacy they display to the
understanding of the phenomenon they purport to explain
- not to themselves (1977:194).

What I intend to show, however, is that a properly articulated
theory is necessary in order to recognize the limitations of
observations of 'reality'. In my analysis I want to affirm that
there is a need for theory to engage 'reality' and to be
constantly modified by practical applications.

Bernstein's impersonal formalism contrasts with Willis'
committed engagement with 'the real'. For all its shortcomings,
which I intend to show, Bernstein remains consistent, in Marcus
and Fischer's terms, in a concern to preserve the purpose and
legitimacy of such theorizing. My observation is that a
comparison of the analyses of Bernstein and Willis indicates a
diminishing concern for a comprehensive, rigorous theory - that
is a conceptual framework which attempts to register all
significant factors in the social phenomenon being studied and
to postulate further causes and explanations from the framework
which is developed.
I intend to show that the basic problems with Willis’ analysis are due to a lack of consistent theory. For all his protestations about agency the analysis is unable to register any adequate account of it. The concept of culture which is the primary concept that he employs subsumes entirely the behaviour of agents. With few exceptions (Connell 1983, Marcus 1986) this contradiction has gone largely unnoticed by commentators. Anthony Giddens offers a notable example of the lack of such an adequate critique, and close attention will be given to his account of Learning to Labour. I can only assume that the reason for this relatively uncritical acceptance of Willis’ mode of analysis has been an inattention to the precise detail of the basic conceptual articulations in the writing. My mode of analysis accordingly will be to give a close reading of the account of the basic concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘rationality’ as they appear in the work. A similarly close reading will also be given of these concepts as they appear in Bernstein’s writing in order to indicate the commonality between the two theories and their resulting limitations.

In the first chapter I will briefly outline the problem of unequal educational achievement and the traditional explanation of its cause by individual ‘aptitude’. I will also describe the development of a sociology of education, particularly in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, which indicates a growing concern to document social causes of educational achievement relative to class. The concept of ‘class’, however, emerges from the

Bernstein’s later analysis (1982) recognized the need to account for change. The analysis is equally unable to register and adequate account of change because the idea of code also completely subsumes agency.
demographic tradition of 'political arithmetic' and the associated social theory reflects a conceptual framework derived from Durkheim. I will also indicate how the sociology of education has since Parsons been heavily influenced by structural-functional sociology. While some commentators have registered this influence (Demaine, 1981; Purvis and Hale, 1983; Whitty, 1985) they have not indicated its pervasiveness in current 'radical' theories.

In the second chapter I will isolate the quite profound influence of Parsons upon Bernstein. This influence can be seen in the way Bernstein articulates the basic concepts of culture and social structure through the idea of 'code'. The break which Bernstein makes with structural-functionalist theories occurs through his emphasis upon the concept of class. This break, I will argue, is theoretically incomplete.

Chapter 3 will address Willis' basic theoretical presumptions and attempt to relate these concerns to the general developments in social theory noted earlier. While Willis' concerns emerge as a response to 'reproduction theory' from French and American sources, I will argue that this analysis also exhibits key concerns which are part of a continuum of the practice of sociology within the British tradition.

In Chapter 4 I will contrast the key theoretical elements of Bernstein and Willis to indicate the essentially Durkheimian
framework and the corresponding 'functionalist' perspective which they share. A comparison will be made between the two theories focusing on the concept of culture and how it is related to class.
CHAPTER 1

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE AS A SOCIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE CONCEPT OF NATURAL APTITUDE

Unequal Educational Achievement and the Concept of Aptitude

Mass education is a phenomenon of the last hundred years in most Western countries. From the mid-19th century it took the form of a basic compulsory primary education in most of these societies. Since the Second World War some degree of compulsory secondary education has also been widely instituted.

Systems of formal education now vary widely from highly selective systems (West Germany) to comprehensive systems (USA, UK). The broader picture, however, remains fairly constant. That is, formal educational success is achieved by a relatively small proportion of the relevant age group. In West Germany some 9% of students graduate from senior secondary schooling (Husen, 1983:456). In Australia a survey undertaken by Radford in 1959-60 established that only 2% of the sons of semi-skilled and unskilled workers went on to university. By comparison some 30% of the sons of professionals and managers successfully entered university (Connell, 1977:161 - cited in Austin, 1984:6).
The common traditional explanation for the inequitable distribution of educational achievement has been based on the notion of 'aptitude' or individual ability. This notion when offered as an explanation for large-scale social differences presumes a spontaneous distribution of capacities according to a natural and ultimately biological order. In her analysis of the history of the notion of 'aptitude' Bisseret (1979) indicates its growing popularity in the second half of the 19th century as a 'strictly biological causal process' - emphasis being given to its biological aspect by the increasing influence of the work of Darwin.

Social disparities were no longer relative to a man-made social order but belonged to a new transcendental order of an irreducible and determinant biological nature. Men were categorized by the same criteria of differentiation as those applied to animal breeding and agriculture (Bisseret, 1979:14).

Teese observes that the assumption behind this pre-social distribution of 'aptitude' in education was a '...concentration of rationality within the middle class home and its diminished appearance and subordination to the development of impulses of nature in the working class home...' (1980:16-17). This is in essence a contrast between reason and nature.

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1The notion of a pre-social distribution of aptitude in complex societies which finds expression in analyses of education clearly parallels the Social-Darwinist concerns of 19th century ethnology with the evolutionary stages of primitive races and the 'irrationality' of 'savages'. The 'savage' in contrast with the civilized individual is described by Spencer (according to Stocking) as 'improvident, impulsive, incapable of abstraction, governed by fixity of habit, merging imperceptibly over time with racial instinct' (Stocking, 1968:202)
The concept of 'aptitude' as a cause of inequality of educational achievement derived not only from public sources but also became established as a primary concept within educational research itself. Connell et al (1982) indicate that in Australia the first of the social sciences to have an impact on the shaping of the question of educational inequality was the growing field of educational psychology and in particular the work undertaken in the research and guidance branches of the State Education Departments and the Australian Council for Educational Research in the 1930s (1982:24). The basic premise which guided and shaped this research was that of the normal distribution of intelligence which claimed to show that each individual was endowed with a more or less fixed mental capacity, usually called 'intelligence', and that this was distributed in more or less fixed proportions, with a few very bright, many in the middle, and a few subnormal (1982:24). Keddie (1973) observes that a further basic assumption underlying this mode of research was the perception of the individual child as an object that could be measured 'objectively'. This research, she argues, neglected crucial social elements such as the effects of institutional contexts and teachers' ways of assessing and typifying students (1973:7).

In addition to psychological studies of educational attainment, a second body of research which emerged in Britain in the 1920s focused on socio-economic rather than individual factors in the distribution of educational achievement. Such factors included such key aspects of family background as the father's
professional status and income. This tradition, termed
'political arithmetic', aimed to provide a quantitative picture
of British society within a political framework which advocated
reforms of the education system directed at bringing about
greater equality of educational achievement between children of
different social classes. In particular political
arithmeticians tackled questions related to the 'social waste'
of able children by focusing upon the unjust distribution of
opportunities for educational advancement granted to children
from different social classes (Purvis and Hale, 1983:1)2.

The introduction of class into educational analysis was a
significant development in statistical studies of this kind.
The concept of class in these studies, however, took the form of
a hierarchical continuum of status. In Britain these studies
relied simply on the categories employed by the Registrar­
General (Demaine 1981:30). In practice, class differences were
documented in relation to the numerical contribution which each
class made to the composition of the highest ability groups so
that the degree of 'social waste' could be quantified (Teese,
1980:1). This methodology involved slotting individuals into
status categories, assessing by I.Q. tests and comparing the
relative 'ability levels' of categories. In addition to its
inert conception of class, there were two further limitations of
this 'sociology'. Firstly, it held to the idea of an
objectively quantifiable a-social aptitude, and secondly, while
registering that there were social factors which had effects on
educational achievement, it offered no sustained theoretical
explanation of why this was so.

2This methodology was also used within a conservative political framework
to indicate the validity of social differentiation through education.
This kind of research was conducted in Australia from the 1940s. Studies conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research estimated that some 10% of the school population could go into university, while studies by La Nauze indicated that only 1% of state school students did in fact go (Connell et al, 1982:25).

In the years after World War II there was a massive expansion of secondary education in Australia, Britain and elsewhere. In Australia the enrolments of secondary students rose from approximately 181,000 in 1945, to 771,000 in 1965, to 1,100,000 in 1975 (Connell et al, 1982:19). Such a move may be seen as part of the more general move into the 'welfare state' and the influence of Keynesian economics on accepted roles of government (Austin, 1984:150). Key events in the educational setting include the 1944 Education Act in Britain involving the expansion of the number of grammar school places and the abolition of fees, and the 1946 amendment to the Australian Constitution which within the general expansion of welfare benefits enabled the Commonwealth Government to provide 'benefits to students' (Clause xiii, Section 51) (Austin, 1984:150). However, despite expansion of educational opportunity to the general population, the problem of unequal educational achievement remained. As explanations were sought the issue of culture became a focal point in the sociology of education.
In 1959 Talcott Parsons published an article on *The School Class as a Social System* which applied a structural-functional theory to schooling and ultimately proved influential in providing certain basic concepts in British sociology of education. In contrast to the empiricist approach of the political arithmeticians, structural-functionalism offered a systematic analysis within an elaborate theory of socialization. In addition, it fashioned a particular concept of culture which offered a causal explanation of the unequal distribution of educational attainment for the various strata of society. The process of socialization offered by structural-functionalist theory attempts to explain the construction of the human subject through the internalization of a culture which is held in common by members of a society (Demaine, 1981:15).

Parsons' analysis of education was essentially conservative, stressing how the education system allocates status and distributes individuals into differential adult roles and related value orientations (Demaine, 1981:27). Within the Parsonian framework educational selection was seen to be, to use Parsons' term, 'genuinely assortive' (1961:436) in relation to both socio-economic status of the child's family and 'individual ability' (Parsons, 1961:436). Far from challenging the idea that 'ability' operated as a significant cause of unequal education attainment, the theory of Parsons and his followers actually confirmed this view.
Parsons indeed goes to some pains to document the relationship between educational levels achieved by occupational groups and their 'ability (as measured by I.Q.)' (1961:438). The appeal to I.Q. however is not of central importance. Parsons is essentially concerned to explain the idea of 'ability' in social terms. Unequal outcomes of education are explained by reference to a 'differentiation of levels of capacity to act in accord with [common] values' (1961:440) embodied in the culture. Within structural-functional theory, then, the attainment of educational levels is not merely dependent upon a level of natural 'ability' which is reflected in 'cognitive' capacity. The notion of 'ability' is extended to account for the 'capacity to act' in accord with common values dictated by society.

I will consider Parsons' conceptualization of culture in greater detail in the analysis of Bernstein. At this point, however, it should be noted that this formulation of culture involves both cognitive and affective aspects - their combined effects generating the 'moral' values on which social cohesion rests. The particular 'moral' value created by socialization within the school is the 'common valuation of achievement' which is shared by 'units with different statuses in the system' (1961:446). According to Parsons, this common valuation enables individuals to accept the status accorded to them through educational selection. It also provides the principal mechanism by which a system of distribution sorts individuals according to a capacity to act in accord with what is socially required of them. As indicated this capacity is both effective and cognitive.
Structural-functional sociology in Britain confirmed the use of basic concepts of culture/socialization/internalization in the social analysis of education (Demaine, 1981:16). Among the factors which became significant in this sociology were the material and 'cultural' resources of the family, the school, and the 'community' (Demaine, 1981:31). Most importantly, however, structural-functional sociology gives currency to the concept of culture as constituting a pervasive system of meaning.3

This, in turn, issues in an extremely conservative overall picture of education as a socialization process following from a common culture which assumes that 'what persons are can only be understood in terms of a set of beliefs and values which define what they ought to be' (Parsons, 1982:134) (original emphasis).

Radical Theories of Education

What I will be arguing is that reformist sociological theories of education have assumed the primacy of the concept of culture, with its emphasis upon 'meaning', derived from structural-functionalist theory in explaining unequal education attainment. Thus, the fundamental stance of reformist sociological accounts of education needs to be seen not only as a reaction to the conservative a-social and individualistic analyses of psychological practice, but also as a modification of existing theory. According to this modification, the system of educational selection through schooling is seen to be

3Parsons' general definition of culture is 'a system of generalized symbols and their meanings' (1982:141).
inherently inequitable in the chances of success that it offers the respective classes from the outset. This move contrasts with structural-functionalist accounts that view the system of selection as a 'genuine' sorting mechanism functioning to distribute individuals to a continuum of status roles according to their 'capacity to act' in accord with those roles.\(^4\)

It is necessary to view reformist sociological analyses of education as a modified extension of structural-functionalism because their limitations both in accounting for the social causes of working class student failure, and in proposing programs of reform, relate to how the basic analytical concepts of 'culture', 'rationality' and 'meaning' are construed and deployed. What needs to be questioned is why these concepts become the particular focus of sociological analyses which take a reformist stance in relation to the problem of unequal distribution of educational attainment between classes.

The fundamental move of Bernstein is to posit a relativistic view of culture that is relative to class. This contrasts with the Parsonian theory which held the idea of a culture common to the whole society. Willis makes a more radical move, largely by implication, to suggest that the working class is the bearer of culture while the dominant class is culture-less. The outcome of both theories is to place emphasis upon the notion of a culture specific to the working class. The primary emphasis

\(^4\)Parsons states that the elementary school class '...is an embodiment of the fundamental American value of equality of opportunity in that it places value both on initial equality and differential achievement' (1961:445)
upon culture as a 'system of meaning' is maintained. Failure is to be explained by the fact that the processes of schooling do not recognize the different cultural system of coherent meaning, and attendant modes of behaviour, of working class students or what causes them.

Bernstein and Willis, in attempting to explain the 'resistance' of the behaviours and attitudes of working class students to formal education, have posited a concept of culture which requires a level of reality underlying the surface behaviour of individuals. This underlying level of reality which guides surface behaviour is seen as collective in nature, forming and constraining individual action to varying degrees. In Bernstein this notion takes the form of codes. In Willis the underlying 'rational' principles of student behaviour are construed as 'cultural logic'.

For Bernstein, rationality is given to individual subjects through processes of social interaction whereby an ordered universe of significance is generated in relation to the environment and handed on. Rationality is construed as the significance which objects and persons are given within a scheme or 'code' prior to the interactions of subjects. The logic of codes relative to class is envisaged primarily as one of difference rather than domination and opposition.

In setting up the notion of 'cultural logic', which is set against class structure, Willis, in Learning to Labour,
construes all action as 'rational' in the sense that it contains at some level an intention and a purpose expressing a critique of dominant forms. It is the relentless logic of class structure expressed through oppressive forms which at key points gives structure to and produces the oppositional logic of the working class. The system of 'cultural logic' is also prior to the interactions of 'agents'.

In both analyses the idea of culture realizes a collective logic whose basic imperative is to enforce social cohesion among members of the working class.

The radical analyses of Bernstein and Willis have a fundamental concern with the role of education as a significant causal factor in social class. What I will be arguing is that the sociological apparatus which they deploy is premised on a relatively harmonious 'functioning' society. It is therefore necessary to examine if and how their basic conceptual categories can be wedded to a concern to account for factors operating through schooling and causing the relegation of individuals to a specific class position. This kind of enquiry is given further relevance by the fact that there are current appeals from influential radical theorists of education, particularly in America, for a renewed emphasis upon 'cultural' analysis (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985; Apple, 1982, 1987; Kickbush and Everhart, 1985; Giroux and McLaren, 1986). (See Appendix) A central problem to emerge from this 'cultural'
analysis is that it immediately places emphasis on the meaningfulness of behaviour in class-based groupings and contexts and a corresponding de-emphasis upon the limitations of that behaviour and its retrograde elements in relation to concerns of race, ethnicity and gender. The basic problem is that if all behaviour is guided by culture then all behaviour is by definition 'rational' in reference to this scheme. These theorists also recognize the need for a radical critique of the retrograde elements of working class practice.

What emerges from their writing, however, is a cultural relativism which is not reconciled in theoretical terms with a recognized need for critique based upon a more general 'objective' specification of human needs and values.

5 The Durkheimian emphasis of these theories may be contrasted with an alternative Weberian approach in which the concept of rationality takes a much less pervasive role in social life. 'Rationality' in this sense is limited to purposive action of individuals and constitutes but one element of social action (Weber, 1968:21). Something of this perspective is required in radical theories of education if an account is to be given of the operation of power in class through the persistence of activities and practices which reinforce the subordination of the working class subjects because they have no awareness of the consequences of such practices.
CHAPTER 2

BASIL BERNSTEIN: THE THEORY OF LANGUAGE FORMS AND LINGUISTIC CODES

The Theory of Language Forms

Some brief general observations should be made about the educational analysis of Basil Bernstein between 1958 and 1982. This sociological analysis took as its initial concern the 'problem of educability as this is conceived in industrial societies' (1971:123). There is an underlying concern in Bernstein’s analysis for the need for an equitable provision of education based upon rationalist principles. This concern is constant throughout the long period of his theorizing and reflects Durkheim’s similar commitment to a rationalist education necessary to meet the requirements of modern complex society (Durkheim, 1972:217).

It should also be noted that Bernstein’s theories of language forms and, later, of linguistic codes, involve a large number of publications over a considerable period of time (1958 to the present). These statements have reflected a number of shifts of emphasis and have also been the subject of important
controversies in educational, sociological and linguistic theory (Demaine, 1981; Bisseret, 1979; Labov, 1969). The aim of the analysis provided here is not to give an overview of these interpretations but to indicate that Bernstein's basic concerns reflect certain long-term pre-occupations of British sociology of a Durkheimian nature. The novel aspect of Bernstein's analysis is the primary emphasis placed upon language and more particularly forms of language use. This reflects a pre-occupation with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, i.e. that language, perceived as 'patterns', determines the shaping of perception and the logical operations of speakers. Wedded to this perspective from the start is a Durkheimian vision of society. Thus language is considered as:

...one of the most important means of initiating, synthesizing and REINFORCING ways of thinking, feeling and behaviour which are functionally related to the social group (1971:43) [emphasis added].

As the theory of language forms develops into the theory of linguistic-codes, the underlying Durkheimian framework becomes refracted through Parsons' reading of Durkheim. In other words, Bernstein is drawn towards the Durkheimian elements in Parsons' theory of social systems. Parsons' theory of social systems gives primary emphasis to the ideas of communication and meaning within a coded system of language (Parsons, 1982:225). Parsons' influence leads Bernstein to emphasize the language patterns of
classes as distinctive forms of communication involving specific sets of meanings generated through codes.

In two early articles, Some sociological determinants of perception (1958) and A Public Language: Some sociological implications of linguistic form (1959), Bernstein's basic concern was to suggest social causes for the 'resistance of the working class to certain educational processes':

It is suggested that the lower the social strata the greater the resistance to formal education and learning, and this is a function of the social structure of that strata. This resistance is expressed in many different ways and levels, e.g. critical problems of discipline, non-acceptance of values of the teacher, the failure to develop and feel the need for an extensive vocabulary, a preference for descriptive rather than analytical cognitive process. (1971:24.)

The term 'resistance' has become the focal concept of cultural accounts of education after Willis.

In attempting to delineate the social causes of this problem, Bernstein suggested the working class had 'a specific mode of perceiving and feeling' (1971:24) which was different from that of the middle class and this mode of perception was caused by the different principles of social cohesion on which working class solidarity was based. Bernstein's primary move involves a reworking of Durkheim's concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity to suggest that both forms exist in the
differentiated structures of modern complex societies thus concurring with Parsons.¹

Bernstein suggested that modes of language, and more particularly, modes of speech in modern, complex class societies exhibited two major 'ideal' forms (1971:51). These forms he labelled as 'public' and 'formal' language. Public language-use realizes and reinforces an orientation to socially common experience of the social group. Formal language-use, in contrast, realizes in speakers a relative emphasis on the elements of 'separateness and difference' in the experience of individual speakers (1971:47).²

Bernstein suggested that the differences between public and formal language induce and reinforce in speakers different patterns of perception (1971:36), orientations to causality (1971:50), levels of 'conceptualization' (1971:50) and orders of symbolism (1971:42). These orientations to specific logical procedures and patterns of perception are causal elements in the types of social cohesion which are realized. He described the basic differences between the inferred effects of speech forms in perceptual terms, as a sensitivity to the content of objects (public language) versus a sensitivity to the structure of objects (formal language) (1971:24-5). This issued in a distinction between language-use that emphasizes the givenness

¹Parsons notes that Durkheim left open the question of the existence of mechanical solidarity in complex modern society. He observes that Durkheim associated this concept with primitive simpler societies (Parsons, 1982:208). Durkheim suggests an inverse relationship between mechanical solidarity and the emergence of moral individualism (1972:144). Durkheim’s account does not suggest that two modes of solidarity are directly related to class.

²At this stage Bernstein suggested that language forms reflected patterns of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft respectively (1971:54).
of experience, and results in descriptive cognitive processes about objects (1971:33) and language-use that induces analytical cognitive processes through which objects are perceived to be linked in a conceptual structure.

Formal language-use was seen to promote curiosity in that 'objects in the present are not taken as given, but become centres for enquiry and starting points for relationships' (1971:24). This orientation to relationships induces in the child an awareness of structure, 'an awareness of the formal ordering of the environment, notions of its extensions in time and space, and so the beginning of primitive interpretive concepts' (1971:29). The middle class world is thus very 'rational' (1971:29). The middle class child grows up in a 'finely and extensively controlled environment' (1971:29) which is organized with reference to the distant future. This organization is 'rational' in that connections are constantly made between means and distant ends.

The working class world, in contrast, is not oriented towards distant ends, nor are connections constantly made between means and ends. The speech patterns of the working class emphasize 'expressive symbolism': gesture, tone, change of volume and physical set and point to emotive rather than 'rational' content.

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1This formulation mirrors very clearly Durkheim's view of an evolving rationalism. He comments: 'Thought has as its aim not the reproduction of a given reality, but the construction of a future reality. It follows that the value of ideas can no longer be assessed by reference to objects, but must be determined by their degree of utility, their more or less "advantageous" character' (Durkheim, 1972:251) [original emphasis].
The stress is on the present; the future is not particularly relevant.

Necessarily, the child lives in the here-and-now experience of his world, in which the time-span of anticipation or expectancy is very brief, and this is reinforced by the lack of a rigorous working out of connections between means and distant ends. Sustained curiosity is not fostered or rewarded, as the answers to questions rarely lead beyond the object or further than a simple statement about the object. The social structure continues to reinforce the early patterning of perception.

The working class family environment induces a tendency towards immediate gratification of sensual appetites: 'Relative to the middle classes the postponement of present pleasure for future gratifications will be found difficult' (1971:32).

More generally, working class language use is public in the sense that it is a mode of language seen to reinforce compliance to group solidarity. The ensuing conservatism and resistance to change in the public language of the working class contrasts with the 'interest in novelty' characteristic of middle class speech forms. The public language, then, induces 'a tendency to accept and respond to authority which inheres in the form of a social relationship rather than in reasoned or logical principles' (1971:50). The 'function' of public language is to generate group solidarity and sameness rather than to promote a 'reasoning' individuated consciousness.

While Bernstein offers a social account of the working class characteristics of impulse gratification, lack of curiosity, and
inability to handle analytical thought, he accepts and even reinforces the view that these are actually characteristics of the working class. Instead of accounting for these characteristics as naturally occurring phenomena like earlier analyses, Bernstein implies that they are to be explained by differential modes of social organization. They have, therefore, social causes. However, if Bernstein's concern is to expose the 'rational' aspects of working class behaviour this kind of account remains extremely restricted in the terms in which it does so. The stance taken by Bernstein differs from conservative accounts in only one aspect - that there is a social cause of the 'resistant' practices of working class children in education. It is significant that the characteristics of working class mentality are construed as absences or a lack of certain objective traits (which the middle class have).

The explanation of working class 'resistance' to the processes of education is explained through a 'communicative dissonance' (Teese, 1980:22) with reference to the 'formal' processes of logical reasoning. The everyday speech of the two classes is seen to exhibit either an interest in such processes or a relative lack of interest depending on its underlying mode of social cohesion. The middle class, through predominantly formal language-use, realizes the unique relationship of the speaker to the social and physical environment and so focuses in a relatively explicit way the causes of, and reasons for, events. In the case of the working class the focus of speech events is
primarily upon the status-authority of its members so that a pre-occupation with reasons and causes is not a pre-dominant feature of this mode of language use. Reasons and causes which are given have a tendency to reflect the authority of structure of social units within the class, in particular the family (1971:32). These differences, then, become crucial in an education whose practices are perceived to be built upon analytical principles generated by formal language use.

Underlying these initial distinctions is a basic contrast between an enquiring and 'analytical' mentality and a 'descriptive' mentality which has a tendency to accept rather than challenge and enquire into 'what is' (1971:47). This distinction reflects Bernstein's reading of Durkheim. Bernstein suggests a basic contrast is made between the relative emphasis upon 'affect' and 'logic' in differing forms of social solidarity (Bernstein 1971:46).4

The Theory of Linguistic Codes

In 1962 Bernstein introduced the notion of 'code' - meaning an underlying 'regulative principle' (1971:12) embodied in language use and generated by the social structure.

4This contrast derives from a reading of Durkheim's evolutionary perspective on forms of society - from primitive society bound by a uniform conscience collective to complex societies characterized by a division of labour with greater emphasis on individual characteristics of its members. There is a need for complex society to generate patterns of co-operation, based upon reasoned principles when compared with primitive societies. It is noted, however, that Durkheim himself made no such simple distinction between affect and logic.
The introduction of the concept of code into his analysis makes a significant shift in emphasis from Bernstein’s original propositions about language forms per se. The concept of code has two specific effects on the theory. Firstly, it links in a more explicit causal manner social structure and language forms and explains differences in surface features of language forms by referring to the underlying ‘regulative principles’ which generate and shape those forms. Secondly, it stresses the systematic nature of working class practice within a coherent ‘coded’ scheme. The concept of code gives primary emphasis to social structure. (This emphasis reflects the Durkheimian influence on British sociology generally). In all of Bernstein’s subsequent writings the concept of a given social structure is the primary concept. It is the social structure which generates speech forms and attendant ‘modes of rationality’ (1971:120). The concept of code also situates the cognitive processes outlined above within a scheme of ‘structured meanings’. This move reflects the concurrence of Bernstein with Parsons regarding the basic elements of their respective theories. Code, then, is both a realization and an instrument of ‘cultural’ rationality. In essence, the concept of code is cultural rationality which finds objectified form in systems of language-use which function to:

initiate, generalize and reinforce special types of relationship with the environment and thus create for the individual particular dimensions of significance... From this point of view the social structure transforms language possibility into a specific code which elicits, generalizes and reinforces those relationships necessary for its continuance (1971:76).
As indicated, Bernstein differs from Parsons in one principal respect. For Bernstein, systems of meaning or 'forms of rationality' become relative to class divisions: 'Complex societies involve various forms of rationality which may be differentially distributed among their members' (Bernstein: 1971:120).

While acknowledging that the working class and middle class have differing propensities to adopt the conventions of formal logical processes, he views this difference as essentially caused by social factors. The working class then, far from being 'irrational', has its own form of 'rationality', that is, a logical ordering of the environment through particular socially generated systems of meanings and 'intellectual procedures' (1971:135). There is a basic unresolved problem, however, in Bernstein's account of 'rationality'. On the one hand 'rationality' is relative to a particular socially generated scheme. At the same time schemes exist on a hierarchical continuum of rationality. Education is perceived to be, in its very nature, dedicated to the creation of an analytical mentality over a relatively inert, 'descriptive' mentality which merely accepts what is given. The theory, therefore, endorses the idea of the 'progress of reason itself' (Teese, 1980:25). Similarly, the concept of code, while stressing the systematic and coherent nature of working class practice, maintains the earlier polarity of 'affect' and 'logic' (1971:46) and in so doing holds to the

5While Bernstein employed the notion of 'intelligence' in his early empirical investigations, the purpose was to demonstrate that classes had relatively equal levels of I.Q. measured by non-verbal factors (1971:62-3).
idea of an objective hierarchy of logic. In attempting to refute the notion of an objective 'aptitude' Bernstein maintains the idea of objective reason. I intend to show, later, how this notion of an objective hierarchy is highly significant.

In the developing theory of linguistic codes Bernstein linked the Whorfian emphasis on 'language patterns' with the sociological concept of 'collective representations' derived from Durkheim. Bernstein comments:

...in *Primitive Classifications* and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* Durkheim attempted to derive the basic categories of thought from the structuring of social relation. It is beside the point as to his success. He raised the whole question of the relation between the classifications and frames of the symbolic order and the structuring of experience. In his study he pointed to the implicit, condensed, symbolic structure of mechanical solidarity and the more explicit and differentiated symbolic structures of organic solidarity (1971:171).

Bernstein's dual emphasis upon language patterns and collective representations is not concerned principally with 'categories of thought' or discrete concepts expressed in words, nor with beliefs. The principle concern is with 'language patterns' or 'fashions of speaking' (1971:122) or 'speech systems' (1971:136). These very patterns of language-use, however, become 'collective representations' in that they symbolize the particular mode of social solidarity of the class in question in that they express 'the intellectual and social procedures [of particular classes] by which individuals relate themselves to their environment' (1971:135). There is, however, an ambiguity
about the concept of code from this reformulation. On the one hand 'codes' are viewed as a basic and limited set of 'regulative principles' (1971:12) which reflect the organizing modes of solidarity through 'intellectual or social procedures' which correspond to them. On the other hand, language itself may be viewed as a coded 'pattern' or pattern of meanings (after Parsons). In this sense, language is a total coded system of meanings. Both senses of code occur in Bernstein's theorizing and are not resolved. This ambiguity may also be seen to reflect Durkheim's own ambivalence on the precise nature of collective representations which refer to both 'the mode of thinking, conceiving or perceiving and to that which is thought, conceived or perceived' (Lukes 1972:7).

In the historical development of his theory, Bernstein is drawn towards the Parsonian concepts of meaning and culture. As a result he tends to emphasize the notion of code as a system of specific meanings and to downplay the notion of code as principles which generate procedures. In 1963 Parsons described language as: 'a generalized medium of communication through the use of given meaning within a code' (Parsons, 1982:225) [emphasis added].

For Parsons the function of language is to provide stability to the system of social relations. This definition contains the key elements of Parsons' work which were influential in Bernstein's theory. Primary emphasis is given to the idea of
language as a system of communication through meanings which emerge in a structured code. These meanings are in turn regarded as functions of the interaction of participants in the system of social relations (Parsons 1982:134). This account suggests that objects (including other persons) in the environment are given significance by the way in which they enter into an existing system of social relations. This 'meaning' is thus stabilized by the cultural system and 'internalized' by the individual. The emphasis given to meaning and communication by Bernstein may also be seen in the context of 'learning theory' in education and the influence of developmental psychology in educational studies. This emphasis is reflected in Bernstein's explicit concern to see that the practices of schooling 'are refracted through an understanding of the culture the children bring to the school' (1971:152).

A brief account will be given of Parsons' account of culture in order to demonstrate the further common features in the works of Parsons and Bernstein. 'Culture' in Parsons' theory is a 'system of generalized symbols and their meanings' (1982:141). This system of symbols is a social phenomenon and exists 'externally' from individuals.

The process of socialization depends upon individuals 'internalizing' the system through the process of interaction with others. Parsons indicates that a 'stable, mutually oriented system of interaction' is dependent on a common culture whose basic function is to give particular 'significance' to
objects and other persons within the society. Thus a system of meaning existing prior to the interactions of individuals is the primary postulate of this theory. Parsons draws upon Durkheim's account of sentiments and stresses the importance of affect and motivation in the process of ascribing significance or meaning to the social and physical environment.

In the interactions of persons common cultural 'significance' is generated and assigned to other persons and objects in the environment. The role of affect is to ascribe 'what the object means in an emotional sense' (1982:132). Affect is actualized through a process of 'cathexis' of other persons and objects. Through this process emotional 'meaning' is given to persons and objects in terms of attachment or aversion to them (1982:132). Through this process a cognitive reference system is built up:

The conditions of socialization of a person are such that the gratifications which derive from cathexis of objects cannot be secured unless, along with generalizations of emotional meanings and their communication, he also develops a cognitive categorization of objects, including himself, and a system of moral norms which regulate the relations between himself and the object (a superego) (Parsons, 1982:141).

The development of norms takes place through the individual's integration of cognitive and cathectic meanings into a system (1982:132), with the result that:

all the components of the common culture are internalized as part of the personality structure.
Moral standards, indeed, cannot in this respect be dissociated from the content of the orientation patterns which they regulate; the content of both catechetical-attitudes and cognitive-status definitions have cultural hence, normative significance. The content is cultural and learned (1982:134) [original emphasis].

In describing the cultural shaping of personality and perception, Parsons stresses the role of language as 'a generalized medium of communication through the use of symbols given meaning within a code' (1982:226). Bernstein shares this emphasis on language and its function. In 1965 in an article entitled *A socio-linguistic approach to social learning* Bernstein gave an account of 'code' which strongly reflects the Parsonian framework outlined above.

Bernstein's account of codes implies an underlying prior 'culture' or system of meanings which is transmitted to individuals initially through family interactions in the form of roles (1971:122/3). This culture provides particular socially structured ways of 'relating to objects and persons' (1971:123). Bernstein, however, relativizes the basic elements of Parsons' system of meaning by suggesting that the elaborated code gives emphasis to the cognitive over affective components of the system (and vice-versa for the restricted code).  

Bernstein's framework of analysis shares with Parsons' theory the notion of a 'general' and, one might add, 'total', system of meanings with dual aspects of cognitive reference and affect; this general system of meanings is 'realized through different

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6 This maintains the basic distinction between affect and logic proposed in the earlier account of language forms.
role relations' (Bernstein, 1971:150) and so is generated by, and inseparable from, the concept of social structure. Through specific speech interactions within the family the child 'learns specific codes which regulate his verbal acts' (1971:144):

From this point of view, every time the child speaks or listens, the social structure is reinforced in him and his social identity shaped. The social structure becomes the child's psychological reality through the shaping of his acts of speech (1971:144).

The sociological assumption underlying this formulation is that of Parsonian 'role' which in Bernstein's terms is a:

...constellation of shared learned meanings through which individuals are able to enter stable, consistent and publically recognized forms of interaction with others. A social role can then be considered as a complex coding activity controlling both the creation and organization of specific meanings and the conditions for their transmission and reception (1971:144/5) [original emphasis].

These roles are 'learnt' through 'a process of communication' (1971:144).

The rationality implied by the concept of code is dependent upon a system of 'meanings' which 'inhere in linguistic codes' (1971:164) and which shape, constrain and give form to specific 'intellectual and social procedures' by which individuals relate themselves to their environment' (1971:135). At this stage Bernstein attempts to weld both conceptualizations of code - as a set of system of meanings and a set of procedures into the theory. Bernstein, however, recognizes an ambivalence within
the theory about 'meanings' and their significance. At a later stage he is forced to assert that the 'organizing concepts' of a culture take precedence over 'any one set of meanings' (1971:164). Codes then become 'the deep structure of communication' (1971:181). Both notions of 'code', however, carry the same vision of a conceptual or cognitive hierarchy suggested by the earlier concept of language forms. When construed as 'the principle which regulates the selection and organization of speech events' restricted and elaborated codes realize 'different social and intellectual orientations and procedures' (1971:145). When construed as specific systems of communication involving 'coded meanings' restricted and elaborated codes are seen to realize orientations to particularistic and universalistic meanings respectively (1971:175). These terms are derived directly from Parsons (Bernstein, 1971:2).

Elaborated Code as Transcendent Rationality

As a general aspect of functional theory Parsons sees societies as evolving towards forms based upon universalistic norms which genuinely recognize and extract the potential of individual abilities as part of a process of fulfilling social needs (1967:326). Class societies are seen to be a stage of this evolution and the differentiation of roles which they require parallels an 'attendant reduction of ascription' (1967:519) by which he means 'primitive kinship ascription' (1967:579). The

*The notion of 'deep structure' is a derivative of Chomsky's generative grammar. It is significant that this line of linguistics stresses grammar as a limited set of principles of logic which shape speech events.*
move toward universalistically oriented value systems is seen to be a functional requirement of modern societies that 'counteract[s] the spread of hierarchical patterns with respect to power beyond the range felt to be functionally necessary for effectiveness' (1967:326). This 'evolutionary' perspective in Parsons is also carried by the shared basic theoretical concepts of Bernstein's account of linguistic codes - with their emphasis upon communication within a given social structure. The outcome is that the concept of elaborated code expresses the idea of a transcendent 'rationality' (Bisseret 1979:96).

While codes are seen to be generated in particular types of family contexts, the elaborated code as an 'organizing theme' can be detached from the context of its generation:

Although an elaborated code does not entail any specific value system, the value system of the middle class penetrates the very texture of the learning context itself (1971:186) [emphasis added].

It is worth comparing this formulation with the earlier one in which formal language was seen to induce in users a 'theoretical attitude' towards the structural possibilities of sentence organization (1971:61). There formal speech was seen to facilitate the 'verbal elaboration of subjective intent, sensitivity to the implications of separateness and difference' and to point to 'possibilities inherent in a complex conceptual hierarchy for the organization of experience' (1971:61). The elaborated code, unlike the restricted code, is
'context-independent' in that elements of context are made verbally explicit. Nothing is taken for granted by the speaker. In this sense it is 'universalistic' in its orientation to meaning:

Elaborated codes are less tied to a given or local structure and thus contain the potentiality of change in principles. In the case of elaborated codes the speech may be freed from its evoking social structure and it can take on an autonomy...where codes are elaborated, the socialized has more access to the grounds of his own socialization, and so can enter into a reflexive relationship to the order he has taken over. Where codes are restricted, the socialized has less access to the grounds of his socialization, and thus reflexiveness may be limited in range. One of the effects of the class system is to limit access to elaborated codes (1971:176) [original emphasis].

In the same passage, Bernstein explicitly contrasts elaborated and restricted codes as focusing rationality and metaphor respectively (1971:176). It is important to note that the move towards rationality through the elaborated code is an absolute move. It involves, in Mary Douglas' terms, 'the idea of the self...progressively detached from the social structure' (Douglas, 1978:57).

On the one hand, Bernstein suggests that while the working class has the same inherent potential as the middle class, its socializing practices and the social values on which they rest are inherently different from those of the middle class. This can be seen in the distinction between potential and developed intelligence in Bernstein's research (1971:66). Nevertheless, the type of social order which is constructed by the working
class takes a lower place than the middle class order, on the continuum of 'objective' reason. The problem here is that this idea of an absolute 'objective' reason carries with it the idea of an absolute individualism. Durkheim's account of organic solidarity was intended to counteract this notion of free-floating individualism implied by Spencer and Tonnies. (Lukes, 1972:143) Organic solidarity was construed as truly social in essence (Durkheim, 1972:147). Bernstein's account of organic solidarity corresponds to middle class social cohesion (1971:147). The way in which Bernstein contrasts organic solidarity with working class mechanical solidarity involves an absolute corresponding contrast of rationality with authority (1971:165). This, in turn, involves a contrast between 'persons' and 'objects' (1971:165). These contrasts heavily imply an idealized concept of 'person' and 'individual' in the very conceptual terms in which they are made. While Bernstein does attempt to describe middle class practices in social terms, a notion of idealized individualism is what emerges.8

Bernstein's Account of Class

A major limitation of Bernstein's analysis is his formal and essentially structuralist account of class. While the idea of a class-divided social structure is central to Bernstein's analysis, the theory does not contain an explicit account of the concept of class. Bernstein's mode of social theorizing in

8Durkheim's insistence on the need for rationalism in complex societies is not accompanied by a lessening of the need for a moral order or a lessening of 'sentiment'. The type of moral order and attendant sentiments will, however, be very different from earlier forms (1971:217). Bernstein's conceptual contrasts imply the absolute contrast of logic and affect (Bernstein, 1971:46).
general tends to focus upon dualisms - working class/middle class; mechanical solidarity/organic solidarity; restricted code/elaborated code; particularistic meanings/universalistic meanings, etc. The important feature of this type of theorizing is that the analysis sets up dualisms as formal entities and works from that point. The dualisms outlined in the theory may be construed as 'oppositions' in that the internal logical order which each part of the dualism expresses, reflects a form which can be logically opposed to the other. (It is worth noting in this context that having outlined the features of formal social language, Bernstein notes that the characteristics specified are 'relative to those of a public language' (1971:56)). Social solidarity exists therefore in mechanical and organic forms and the internal structure of mechanical forms is presented in formal contrast to the internal structure of organic forms.

Bernstein's analysis is premised on the inherent internal 'rationality' of the working class vouchsafed by the principles of social organization on which it rests and which it practises. However, while these principles are different from the principles of social organization of the middle class, the theory sets up an absolute contrast on a scale of objective reason.

This mode of analysis construes classes as formally dichotomous oppositions. They are in essence different 'forms' of society

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9This mode of theorizing from formal dualisms is also a characteristic of Durkheim (Lukes, 1972:20-21) and it would seem that Bernstein's analytical approach is highly derivative of it. This reflects the lack of analytical sophistication in relation to class in educational sociology (Demaine, 1981:31).
expressing different forms of social solidarity. This is the cause of a major gap in Bernstein's theory. The concept of 'social structure' in the theory refers to modes of solidarity of separate and discrete classes (Bisseret, 1979:109). Bernstein explicitly states that the two codes 'are likely to be a realization of different social structures' (1971:146) [emphasis added].

This static account of class has no relation to Marxist accounts which see the constitution of class in terms of relations of production and the alteration of class relations through the dynamic of struggle. Bernstein admits the limitations to his theory in accounting for change (1971:172) and proposes a solution to this problem by harnessing to his account a Marxist perspective on social structure. This problem of accounting for change in social systems is widely recognized in sociological and anthropological theory. Asad (1979) (following Bloch) states that:

the concept of social structure in anthropology refers to an integrated totality of social classifications and meanings, a system of social rules and roles. Now, if this concept of social structure is linked to the doctrine of the social origin of concepts (the social determination of cognition) it becomes impossible to specify how social change can occur (1979:611).

Bernstein attempts to address this problem by suggesting that the concept of social structure is to be perceived as embodying power relations:

The key is given in terms of the social significance of a society's productive system and the power
As his theory develops, Bernstein's voice takes on a strengthening Marxist tone by stressing the nature of codes as 'positioning devices' by which the ideology of domination is constituted (1982:305). While the theory moves towards an explicit articulation of language as discourse - as a realm of contestation and of codes as sites of regulation of legitimate meanings (1982:307) and of dominant and dominated forms of communication (1982:305) - the formal nature of the ideal oppositions within the theory prevails.

The social structure conceived as already embodying power relations, in the first instance, generates and determines the linguistic forms. In essence, this move expands the concept of social structure from the structure of discrete classes to a structure which contains discrete classes. While Bernstein emphasizes the notion of change in the social structure giving rise to changes in 'a given culture', no account is offered of how changes in the social structure emerge - or what causes them. The picture presented, then, is one of a closed formal system constituted by structural oppositions in an 'objective' and stratified social structure. It is this reference to a formal social structure having an existence independent of the interactions of individuals, and which subsequently structures relationships to which the productive system gives rise. Further access to, control over, orientation of and change in critical symbolic systems, according to the theory, is governed by power relationships as these are embodied in the class structure (Bernstein, 1971:172).
and shapes subjective identity, which limits the theory's capacity for explanation. The problem is one of attempting to link sociologies of a very different basis - Marxist theory with its focus on social action and power and a basically Durkheimian sociology with its focus upon social cohesion through 'collective representation' in language.

This suggested reformulation and expansion of the concept of social structure to open up the theory - so that it can now take into account the asymmetrical nature of class relations - is superficial. My argument is that the key concepts of the theory rest upon the notion of communication contained within a singular system. The emphasis in the later theory of codes is concerned with ideology as 'distinctive forms of communication' (1982:304) relative to class. This formulation stresses the structuring of meaning within systems based upon class. Comparisons can be made between such systems but an adequate account of how one system dominates another cannot be given.

In the analysis above I have attempted to show the limitations of Bernstein's theory in accounting for class factors. These limitations can be traced to its essentially Parsonian framework and it is significant that Parsons' later formulations refer to 'the social system' (1982:129) rather than 'social structure'.

Communication and Power

As already indicated, Bernstein's account of the unequal educational achievement of different classes embodies a number
of basic concerns of British sociology of education. The central ideas are those of social structure, 'culture' as a unifying system of meaning which gives stability to social structure, and rationality. Within this ordering, emphasis is given to language as a socially learned system of communication whose use both expresses and, in turn, reinforces the underlying social structure.

The analysis offers a partial break from structural-functionalist accounts of education in that it does not stress the unified functioning whole of the system. But the break which it offers is theoretically incomplete.

As I have shown the emphasis throughout Bernstein's theory is upon the notions of forms of communication and their regulative functions. Where the analysis starts to deal explicitly with the question of power it is in the form of structural relations and procedures of control set up as 'distinctive modes of communication' (1982:304). So the starting point for the theory is still 'social structure' which embodies an already existing distribution of power and culture as a realm which generates distinctive classificatory principles. The concept of culture also retains the notion of differential modes of rationality embodied in different 'modalities of culture' generated 'by the specific form of social division of labour' (1982:319).
The innovations which Bernstein makes in his later work retain the basic idea of differential 'rationalities' expressed in cultural forms:

Every culture specializes principles [sic] for the creation of a specific reality through its distinctive classificatory principles and in doing so, necessarily constructs a set of procedures, practices and relations from a range of such sets. As a consequence each modality can be regarded as an arbitrary angling of a potential reality. There may well be features in common to the modalities of culture which have their source in the general features of the cultural subject (1982:319).

This is merely a superficial reworking of the idea of distinctive cultures associated with classes and the real problem which Bernstein raised much earlier is left open, that is, the question of power through unequal access to a common culture, and 'whether there are features of the common culture which all members of the society share which are determined by the specific nature of the general code...' (1971:123) [original emphasis].

The problem which is not resolved by Bernstein's analysis is the problem of power and its relationship to class. In Bernstein's analysis the notions of class, social organization and culture remain locked together. The idea of class culture, and specifically working class culture, envisaged as a distinctive and autonomous rationality, or 'angling of potential reality', has been a major impediment in the sociology of education. The notion of 'cultural logic' specific to classes has come to
bedevil later analyses such as the work of Paul Willis, whose explicit concerns are to give an account of change through an analysis of working class culture.

Bernstein's analysis has, however, maintained a focus on a key aspect of education that has been neglected by many later analyses. The processes of education in complex societies require socialization into certain specific - though not immutable - sets of discourse and modes of action; that education by its very nature requires a directing and shaping of experience in particular ways. As indicated already, this formulation reflects a Durkheimian commitment to 'rationalist education' based upon the academic disciplines (Durkheim, 1972:217).

In attempting to solve the problems of educational failure of working class students, Bernstein invokes a conservative sociology that stresses the functional interrelation of social structure and speech forms which through a process of communication organize specific meanings and so shape social identity. The notion of power that the theory offers lies in the conception of different, autonomous and independent strata which have different codes of communication, different orientations to meaning and different realizations of social identity. The school is the place where these differences meet up - and the inferior one is selected out.
The theory, with its underlying conservative sociology, emphasizes the shaping of 'psychological reality' and social identity. 'Speech is envisaged as a process of communication not only between individuals but also in reference to the social structure which becomes the individual's "psychological reality" (1971:144). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) make a number of significant criticisms of Bernstein's account of language. They indicate that, in the account of the differences between formal and public language, Bernstein reduces:

to intrinsic characteristics of the language such as degree of syntactic complexity differences whose unifying generative principle lies in different types of relation to language themselves embedded in different systems of attitudes towards the world and other people (1977:133 n.16).

Now Bernstein does suggest that the characteristics of language are generated in different attitudes towards the world and other people and that these 'attitudes' are latently expressed in the modes of solidarity of respective classes. However, even with the link to social structure through code the basic idea of language determining cognition is maintained.

There is a crucial difference in the respective views of class reality of Bourdieu and Passeron on the one hand and Bernstein on the other. Bourdieu and Passeron do not deny the structuration of language along class divisions.10 What they suggest, however, is that such structured forms are generated in a relation of power between classes. The language of the

10As a specific example Bourdieu and Passeron suggest that the language of the lower middle classes exhibits hyper-correctness and proliferation of signs of grammatical control which are indications of an attitude 'characterized by anxious reference to the legitimate norm of academic correctness' (1977:133/4 n.16).
working class is not an autonomous form reflecting an out-moded form of social organization given by a pre-existing social structure. It is a 'dominated' form. The basic failure of Bernstein's account of language, they suggest, lies in seeking in the language itself the determining principle of speakers' attitudes 'in short, in taking the linguistic product for the production of the attitudes that produce it' (1977:133 n.16). This is a criticism of the Whorfian element of Bernstein's theory which overlays the Durkheimian and Parsonian sociology, i.e. the consistent Whorfian preoccupation in Bernstein's analysis precludes a proper sociological analysis of language and class and reduces language use to questions of perception, cognition and communication.

Bourdieu (1977) offers a general critique of the assumptions underlying sociolinguistic analysis and suggests that:

The structure of the linguistic production relation depends on the symbolic power relation between the two speakers, i.e. on the size of their respective capitals of authority (which is not reducible to specifically linguistic capital) (1977:648).

Bourdieu indicates that a proper sociological critique displaces the key concepts of politically neutral linguistic analysis. Bourdieu's criticisms are relevant to Bernstein's analysis which places considerable weight on the 'formal' or socially legitimate aspects of formal language.

Bourdieu suggests that the notion of legitimate language must replace the linguistic notion of 'correctness'; that relations
of symbolic power must replace the notion of relations of communication (or symbolic interaction) and that the question of meaning of speech should be replaced by the question of the value and power of speech (1977:646). In contrast with the formal account of language use given by Bernstein, Bourdieu argues that:

Language is a praxis: it is made for saying i.e. for use in strategies which are invested with all possible functions and not only communication functions. It is made to be spoken appropriately (1977:646) [original emphasis].

Now the notion of 'appropriateness', of saying the right thing in the right place, is not a matter of recognizing an invariable meaning 'but of grasping the singularity of form which only exists in a particular context' (Bourdieu, 1977:647).

The fact that singularity of form only exists in a particular context is due to an exercise of power through which certain forms are legitimated (in reference to an authorized language). Bourdieu then regards speech interaction as embodying and realizing relations of power. They do not simply realize 'communication':11 He comments:

...the linguist regards the conditions for the establishment of communication as already secured, whereas, in real situations, that is the essential question. He takes for granted the crucial point that people talk and talk to each other, are "on speaking terms", that those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen and those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak (Bourdieu 1977:648) [original emphasis].

11Bernstein has had a continuing dialogue with Bourdieu on such issues and his later theory reflects a partial acknowledgement of Bourdieu's criticisms. This can be seen in the emphasis in the later theory (1982) upon codes as 'dominated and dominating forms of communication' (1982:305).
In contrast to this view of language as praxis, Bernstein's view of language emphasizes the process of shaping of identity whereby the child is ultimately conducting a dialogue with the given social structure (of its class).

The perspective of power only comes with the placing of the child in the context of education. In envisaging socialization into 'meaning' the theory neglects the role of power within class formations. The picture is of parents benevolently shaping and constraining, and thus giving form to the child's emerging social identity. Thus Bernstein's account of language is extremely structuralist and does not contain any significant notion of praxis - of language as an element of social action employed by agents for specific purposes in historical contexts of social action. In Bourdieu's terms, the theory reduces the questions of value, power and authorization of language to matters of meaning and communication.

Bourdieu's account gives weight to the intractability of historically created structures but it is important to note that there is nothing 'essential' about such structures. Their intractability emerges from the fact that they are not, as a matter of course, challenged by agents.  

In Bernstein's analysis class reproduction through education, then, is a matter of communicative dissonance rather than actualization of power. Bernstein does not give a detailed

\[12\text{One glaring omission is the construction of gender within the family which is a relation of power largely realized in speech interaction.}\]
account of what happens in interactions between teachers and students. The analysis, with the primary focus on differential codes, posits the formation of classes as the formation of particular social identities within discrete and closed systems.

Bernstein's theory of codes attempts to offer a systematic explanation of the shaping of the reality of subjects through a prevailing system. In assuming a Parsonian framework, his account of the workings of culture issues in a realization of 'the social system' and a formation of a particular social identity through the interactions of individual subjects. The idea of code - focused as it is upon meaning - contains the notion of a compulsory mode of rationality which all participants in a culture come to acquire. The interactions of individuals are in no way free but must develop in certain directions dictated by the underlying principle of social cohesion and ordering of the social structure.

**Summary**

The main limitations of Bernstein's sociology consist in:

- the idealized notion of communication which is generated (through codes) by an underlying social logic of discrete classes;

- the inert conceptualization of roles as 'given' social meanings external to individuals which are learnt by them;
the preclusion of an account of power through interactions between and within classes;

the formal and structuralist account of class itself;

the idea of an emerging and transcendent 'rationality' which corresponds to an emerging universal 'social structure';

the generality of the account of 'language patterns' as collective representations.

Further limitations of the analysis are created by inconsistencies within the theory itself, namely, the ambiguities in the following concepts:

rationality which occurs in both an 'objective' sense as an evolutionary ideal and as a scheme of meanings and procedures specific to a social structure;

the suggestions of an a-social individualism which accompanies the account of organic solidarity and elaborated code;

'code' - which is both a system of meanings and a set of logical procedures.

Overall, there are two general limitations which apply to Bernstein's analysis. Firstly, the functionalist emphasis upon
meaning (whether construed as logical procedures or systems of meanings) cannot be adequately linked to any dialectical notion of class and its orientation in education. The theory cannot account for change and is left with the relatively inert idea of communicative dissonance between the school and working class students. Secondly, the terms of Bernstein's analysis are open to the criticism that they imply an idealized view of 'the rational individual', free from social constraint.

Bernstein's theory suggests not only an evolving 'rationality' but also an emerging universal social structure. This suggestion is not explicit, but is reflected in the general absence of a critique of middle class practice and the idealized account of schooling and education. In his own terms, 'schools are predicated upon elaborated code and its system of social relationships' (1971:186). It may be that the Durkheimian ideal of equitable education based upon rationalist principles has led Bernstein to idealize the existing practices of education. The 'forms of thought' on which education is based are seen to embody in ideal forms 'universalistic meanings':

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 the child middle class (1971:199) [original emphasis].

In its basic stance, Bernstein's sociology of education maintains a very unromantic view of working class 'culture'. The working class, in Bernstein's view, must be given access to
forms of thought which will open up possibilities for it. In this Bernstein's analysis stands in contrast to later analyses which suggest that working class culture contains in itself the potential for liberation.

Overall, Bernstein's basic conceptual framework remains structural-functionalist.

What I will be arguing in the next chapter is that similar basic elements of structural-functionalist social theory occur in the later analysis of education conducted by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. And that these analyses exhibit limitations very similar to those which occur in Bernstein's social theory.
The second major body of work to be considered in this thesis is the 'cultural studies' movement associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. The primary focus in this body of material is the work of Paul Willis (1977) and (1983) who focused attention upon the idea of 'counter school culture' in the field of education.

Introduction

At first glance, the mode of analysis which Willis embarks on is very different from that of Bernstein. However, the similarities in the basic elements of the conceptual framework, and the ensuing problems which both analyses share, far outweigh the differences.

Willis, in contrast with Bernstein, gives an 'applied' theory. The concepts used are couched in the terminology of Marxist discourse. These include the concept of ideology and each of the following terms which, in turn, become paired with 'class': structure, opposition, struggle, resistance, consciousness and
culture. This Marxist terminology, however, is merely a surface and I intend to show that the theory proposed by Willis reflects a traditional sociological framework whose basic concept is culture, which functions in relation to an underlying social structure, and whose primary social function is to enforce social cohesion in the group. Central to this formulation is the idea of culture as a system of 'meanings' and 'principles' which expresses group values and communicates them to members of the group. Culture is thus a creator of social identity. This framework, however, is masked by the terms of Marxist discourse in which it is expressed.

An initial comparison of the two bodies of work indicates an apparent movement in studies of education away from the formal systematic and impersonal account provided by Bernstein and towards an emphasis on change agency, volition and intent with the purpose of depicting change (Willis, 1977:1-2). As indicated, this reflects a current general trend of social theory.1 Willis' study draws upon the American tradition of interpretive ethnographic enquiry (Marcus, 1986:178). However, I intend to show the explicit conceptual apparatus informing the work shows strong Durkheimian elements which are more directly attributable to the traditions of educational sociology practised in Britain. The basic premise contained in Willis' analysis is that the collectivity is greater than the sum of its individual parts. I intend to show that the outcome of this  

1A specific example of this trend is the current dissatisfaction with the concept of 'role'. Connell (1987) states: '...role theory is not a social theory at all. It comes 'right' up to the problem where social theory logically begins, the relationship between personal agency and social structure; but evades it by dissolving structure into agency' (1987:50).
premise is that the concept of 'cultural logic' in Willis' study is no less compulsory and determining for working class students than Bernstein's concept of 'code'. The basic questions, therefore, are: does Willis give a convincing description of how agents transform structures, and what structures do they transform? My analysis will focus the answer which Willis gives to these questions.

A general comparison of the key concepts of Bernstein and Willis indicates a shift from an emphasis upon language to an emphasis upon social practices described as 'behavioural, visual and stylistic forms of expression' (Willis, 1977: 124). This very shift, however, maintains the basic proposition contained in Bernstein's analysis - that working class subjects 'resist' the formal conventions of language authorized by the processes of schooling. The terms of this resistance, however, are quite different in the two analyses. Bernstein views the authorized language as in itself resistant to the social processes of the working class. Formal language resists working class subjects like a wall. Willis suggests that the very resistance to authorized language contains an active intentional component:

Part of the reaction to the school institution is...a rejection of words and considered language as the expression of mental life (1977:124) [emphasis added].

Resistance to authorized language is thus perceived as an active and 'antagonistic...expression' towards given conventions (1977:124). Its outcome is an active turning away on the part
of working class subjects from language itself to broader 'behavioural...forms of expression' (1977:124).

Cultural Studies in Education

A brief overview will now be given of the assumptions and methodology of the 'cultural studies' approach. Here I will also outline the sociological context of 'reproduction theory' in which it arose.

Learning to Labour (Willis: 1977) has become something of a 'set piece' not only within studies of education but within sociology and anthropology more generally. Marcus (1986) notes that the work has particular relevance to anthropological method and theory because of its attempt to work from micro-ethnography to broader analytical theory. He offers an account of its construction of text and questions the way in which it invokes Marxist theory to link micro observations to macro perspectives. He indicates its importance as an ethnography conducted within complex industrial society and suggests that the principal aim of the analysis is to redefine capitalist structure 'in human terms' (1986:178). The process which Willis employs is a close probing of the experiences of agents who respond to 'institutionally enacted capitalist principles...in their everyday life and experience' (Marcus, 1986:178).

This study which emerged as part of a more general movement of 'cultural studies' emanating from the Centre for Contemporary
Cultural Studies. Other influential CCCS works include *Resistance through Rituals* (1976), *Women Take Issue* (1978) and *Working Class Culture* (1979) and the other work of Paul Willis *Profane Culture* (1978). In all these analyses the focus is on sub-cultures, that is, distinctive 'ways of life' of distinct groups (Hall and Jefferson 1976:10).

CCCS method of a social analysis has had a powerful impact on studies of education and ways of tackling the problem of the consistent failure of working class students in studies in Britain, the United States and Australia. Calls for similar approaches (with certain modifications) have come from major figures within education studies, particularly in the United States (Apple, 1982, Aronwitz and Giroux, 1985). These analysts call for the development of a 'radical pedagogy' which recognizes and utilizes key aspects of student experience, seen to take the form of collective opposition or resistance to dominant cultural forms.

The 'cultural studies' approach employed in these works attempted to change the traditional arguments about culture and working class education. Instead of being portrayed as purveyors of 'good culture', schools came to be viewed as sites of 'cultural' struggle between various groups - all of whom possessed a distinctive 'culture' (Connell, 1983:223).

Learning to Labour marks the first major introduction of the notion of sub-culture into education studies. In using
'participant observation' of a particular small-scale group as its basis for analytical description the work draws upon an American tradition of social analysis first employed in the 1920s. This tradition emerged from the study of street gangs in Chicago in the 1920s by criminologists (Hebdige, 1979:76). Hebdige notes that this tradition of description, while it provided interesting and evocative accounts of subculture was marked by an absence of satisfactory analytical frameworks, and so had marginal status in the tradition of mainstream sociology (1979:76-7). He also indicates that the lack of such analytical frameworks in these studies meant they neglected class and power relations within them:

In such accounts, the subculture tends to be presented as an independent organism functioning outside the larger social, political and economic contexts (Hebdige 1979:76).

The CCCS movement has attempted to fill this analytical gap in the study of subcultures by linking structural neo-Marxist theories of class to ethnographic description (Connell, 1983:224). Subcultures are seen to exist in a relationship to 'wider class-cultural networks of which they are a distinctive part' (Hall and Jefferson, 1976:13). CCCS studies, then, diverge from traditional anthropological accounts of culture in that cultural forms are seen to be forged in class conflict. Cultural forms as presented in CCCS studies appear not to be sui generis (Marcus, 1986:178). I intend to show that this is

\[\text{\footnotesize \textsuperscript{2}Willis in fact contradicts this account by calling for a theory of class culture sui generis (1977:139, n.4).}\]
superficial and that the concept of culture contained in these analyses cannot be anything but culture sui generis. What I intend to show is that CCCS methodology starts from a view of social structure which cannot be distinguished in any significant way from that which occurs in Bernstein's later formulations, namely a concept of a social structure which embraces opposed classes and which, in the first instance, embodies a distribution of power relations. Using Willis as a specific example, I will indicate that this methodology contains serious unresolved problems in the way in which the concepts of culture and class are linked.

Cultural studies as a response to theories of social reproduction

Willis' analysis stands, along with other CCCS studies, as a partial reaction to theories of 'social reproduction' which stemmed initially from the structuralist neo-Marxist theory of Louis Althusser in the 1970s. Major examples of this approach include Lefebvre's The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production (1976) in France, and Bowles and Gintis' Schooling in Capitalist America (1976). (It is noted that a primary concern with the concept of reproduction is found within social theories of both structuralist and 'praxis' persuasions. Bourdieu and Passeron's Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture (1977) is an example of the latter.) Recurrent criticisms of reproduction theory emerging from the
analyses of Connell (1980, 1983), Apple (1982), Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) and Willis (1977, 1983) concern its excessively 'structuralist' and a-historical nature and its consequent neglect of individual agency. These writers also object to the emphasis upon abstract theory at the expense of a grounding in specific instances. In Connell's terms these theories of social reproduction have shown a 'persistent lack of realism' (1980:46) and have consequently presented the concept of reproduction as a 'black box' (1980:44) - an implied theoretical mechanism required by the theory to explain how certain specific effects are achieved. Furthermore, such theories had a strong 'functional' flavour - the purpose of schools being seen as the reproduction of social class (through reproduction of relations of production).

The problem of accounting for change

It is important to note that these criticisms, as they appear in educational analysis are not made simply on the basis of the need for pure theory. Education, being an 'applied field' requires practical outcomes. Calls for a 'radical pedagogy' or 'liberating practice' are therefore highly significant. Such a practice is perceived to require accounts of agency or praxis which theories of social reproduction lack. That is, human beings must be seen to be able to change at least in small ways the circumstances which confront them. Willis is acutely aware of this issue and presents his analysis as a practical inquiry.
directed towards an outline of 'What to do on Monday morning',
the theme of the final chapter of Learning to Labour. That is, analysis must have a practical application in classrooms.

Connell's criticisms of reproduction theory also reflect the more general dissatisfaction in sociological analysis (referred to above) with the comprehensive, abstract and impersonal vision provided by structuralist theories which elide the significance of agents doing things in favour of depicting structured regularities of system.

At their most basic level theories of reproduction are concerned with 'characteristics of classes and the patterns of relations between them' (Connell, 1980:39). While analysing reproduction these theories have, according to Connell, 'taken the nature and the pattern of these relations for granted' (1980:39). Connell objects to the 'givenness' of class which reproduction theory requires and insists that it is necessary to break with this account:

The "reproduction of social relations" is a chimera: in all structures it never occurs; it cannot occur. We cannot treat social structure as something persisting in its identity behind the backs of mortal people, who are inserted into their places by a cosmic cannery called Reproduction (1980:42).

He sees social structure as the result of 'real practices,' as '...things done by knowing people as they respond to situations that arise from them in a world of power' (1980:42). In brief,
Connell perceives the need to challenge the idea of 'the ontological structure of reproduced identity' (1980:42) [original emphasis] germane to reproduction theory.

Willis also reacts to the determinism of reproduction theory (1977:2). By focusing upon these elements of agency Willis suggests that it becomes possible to see transformations of structure which people are constantly making, and furthermore how they are 'bringing the whole system into crisis' (1977:1). However, rather than validating the supposed transformations and challenges posed to 'dominant culture' by 'working class culture', Willis' study, overall, presents a picture of incorporation of the focal group into the dominated structure of manual labour, or, to use Willis' term, their 'entrapment' (1977:120). This element of functionalism will be considered shortly in close detail.4 Willis thus maintains, albeit unintentionally, a 'reproductive' stance. He indicates that 'class identity'

...is not truly reproduced until it has properly passed through the individual and the group, until it has been recreated in the context of what appears to be personal and collective volition (1977:2).

The notion of 'class identity' and its recreation through social processes is a key concept in Willis' analysis. My argument will be that this basic concept cannot be distinguished in any significant way from the idea of social identity formed by processes in relation to a pre-given social structure of

4It is noted that 'entrapment' is not a chance outcome but an unavoidable conclusion emanating from the terms of the analysis which is thus strongly 'functional' in its principal elements.
traditional conservative sociology. I will argue further that the CCCS emphasis upon agency is a superficial modification of reproduction theory and that consequently the studies unwittingly set up volition (of agents) and determination (by structures) as polarities which cannot be reconciled.

The Althusserian legacy in cultural studies is not merely reflected in the structuralist account of class - but, perhaps more importantly, in the idea of class culture. This emerges in the doctrine of the coherence of a particular body of 'knowledge' held by particular classes (West, 1984:261). Connell also notes that this tendency to posit a total conception of culture (for the group in question) is compounded by the 'ethnographic tradition' (1983:224) which assumes that groups are built upon coherent and specific structures of meaning.

These issues are noted generally at this stage and I will consider them in relation to the specific linkages which Willis makes between class and culture.

The reliance on ethnography

An account will now be given of the principal methodological steps employed by Willis. It is important to note that Willis’ very methodology carries key presumptions about the concept of culture and my intention here is to delineate these.
In *Learning to Labour* the primary mode of analysis is ethnographic. The first half of the work is entitled *Ethnography* and the second half *Analysis*. The micro-sociological observations of the first half are situated within a broader, more explicit theory of culture and class in the second half.

Willis explains his emphasis on 'ethnography' in the following terms:

The qualitative methods, and Participation Observation used in the research and the ethnographic format of the presentation were dictated by the nature of my interest in 'the cultural.' These techniques are suited to record this level and have a sensitivity to meanings and values as well as an ability to represent and interpret symbolic articulations, practices and forms of cultural production. In particular the ethnographic account, *without always knowing how*, can allow a degree of the activity, creativity and human agency within the object of the study to come through into the analysis and reader's experience. This is vital to my purposes where I view the cultural, not simply as a set of transferred internal structures (as in the usual notions of socialization) nor as the passive result of the action of dominant ideology downwards (as in certain kinds of Marxism) but at least in part as the product of collective human praxis (1977:3-4) [emphasis added].

The emphasis on 'qualitative method' is accompanied by a theoretical looseness - even carelessness - here reflected in Willis' terms 'without always knowing how'. The important feature to emerge from this emphasis upon ethnography relates to a principal aim of *Learning to Labour*, indicated in the passage above, which is the representation of human agency in social analysis. My observation is that Willis assigns the task of the
portrayal of agency to description deriving from the ethnographic method. As indicated at the start I intend to show that a fundamental problem emerges from this emphasis of ethnography over theory. Willis does not explicitly recognize the theoretical presumptions of his method. As a consequence his observations merely confirm those presumptions; thus the observations are not held as provisional and open to further enquiry in relation to a background of systematic theory. I intend to show that the result is that Willis is unable to distinguish between his own view of reality from that of his subjects. What emerges is a severely flawed ethnographic description.

The identification of the 'informal group'

A key move in Willis' study is the act of circumscribing the focal group. This is a group of twelve working class, 'non-conformist' boys, 'the lads', who are seen to construct and collectively hold a specific set of cultural beliefs and practices which are created as 'oppositional forms' in relation to 'dominant ideology' (1977:4). Willis says that 'the lads' have a 'male white working class counter school culture' (1977:2). This group of twelve was selected 'on the basis of friendship links and membership of some kind of oppositional culture in a working class school' (Willis, 1977:4). This very strategy of circumscribing a particular set of individuals poses serious problems. This group is simply named and an assertion
made that they have something in common - a culture. This very act involves the omission of gender and ethnicity, features of social life which are necessary for any conception of culture, yet this is the guiding concept of the analysis.

For the sake of clarity and incision, and in no way implying their lack of importance, other ethnic and gender variants are not examined (1977:2).

In fact I argue that the elision of a consideration of ethnicity and gender is a necessary pre-condition for the general conception of culture which Willis employs.\(^5\) The study does not hold to a single, 'incisive' definition of culture as an informing concept, and, while several descriptions of the term are given, they refer generally to an autonomous and authentic set of practices and beliefs held by 'informal groups' (1977:23). The informal group is the primary focus of the study and the major assumption (contained in the idea of group culture) is that the practices and beliefs of the group are inherently meaningful to it. The 'class identity' (1977:2) of 'the lads', then, depends on their whiteness and masculinity as primary defining features of the group, and this is taken for granted. If they are a group they share a culture, and they are a group because they share a culture.

'The lads' as a circumscribed group of non-conformist boys stand in the analysis in contrast to 'the ear 'oles', the term 'the lads' give to conformist boys outside the group. Scant attention is paid to the conformist boys. The process by which

\(^5\) This elision has proved to be a major focus of criticism on the limitations of the analysis (see Appendix).
only some boys become non-conformist while others remain conformist is not addressed. Joining the group is a matter of 'need for friendship' or 'accidental causality' 'sitting by so and so in class, meeting "the lads" at night by chance or being "called for" unexpectedly' (1977:61). The absence of the conformist boys is not 'by the way'; it is part of the conceit involved in the emphasis on ethnography. Willis is concerned to emphasize that the group itself is the construct of agents. The analyst is merely an observer of 'what is'. The outcome is that 'culture' is reified from the outset. It is not a provisional analytical construct set up to describe social processes. It is, rather, a directly observable fact. The group in question is a 'given' and this indicates a major shortcoming. The question of what causes some boys to join it in the first place rests on the simple accounts that the boys give themselves. It is to be noted, however, that Willis focuses upon this group because it is already showing signs of overt rebelliousness. It is significant that he does not register this reason as the basis for his selection. Marcus (1986) notes that:

the most devastating flaw in Learning to Labour is the self-fulfilling and circular manner in which Willis selected his sample and makes broader claims from it (1986:176, n.7).

There is a basic problem to emerge from this primary methodological move. In making a sub-culture of circumscribed groups the focus of analysis and situating the sub-culture within a general context of class the question of the
representativeness of the group is foreclosed. For the older tradition of survey research representativeness was the primary issue (Connell, 1983:224).

The circumscribed group does not in any way 'represent' the conformist boys who are acknowledged to be working class. The conformists have not formed a sub-culture. Their 'cultureless' state, however, is highly significant, and will be considered later in relation to Willis' account of ideology.

In a later reflection on Learning to Labour, Willis indicates the focal point of the 'cultural studies' approach is the idea of a 'symbolic community' having at hand certain and specific 'received symbolic, ideological and cultural resources' which agents actively use to 'explore, make sense of, and positively respond to 'inherited' structural and material conditions of existence' (1983:112). The focus of the analysis, according to Willis, is the 'cultural moment', 'the specifically human and collective activity of meaning making - the making sense, if you will, of a structural location' (1983:112) [original emphasis]. The basic assumption underlying this formulation is of the coherence of knowledge and practices 'produced' and held by 'the lads' within their 'group'. This 'meaning' at the heart of cultural processes becomes the focus of ethnographic enquiry:

...the uncovering of these repressed informal forms becomes the especial province of a qualitative, ethnographic, commensurate 'living' method... (1983:114).
Willis' emphasis on ethnographic method is in his terms vindicated by the need to uncover the inherent meanings of cultural forms. This move carries a double assertion. Firstly, it asserts that specific groups have specific cultures and secondly that ethnographic analysis takes precedence over explicit theoretical articulation. Marcus validly observes that this precedence of ethnography over theoretical explication is the central and constructive move of Willis' text (1986:184) and should be read as a manifesto for the value of ethnography in research on political economy (1986:175).

**Culture and Rationality**

I will now outline the elements of culture which Willis describes explicitly. I note here that Willis is concerned to give an explicit account of the 'rationality' of working class students, and that what emerges is a set of basic concepts that parallel in their basic social effects Bernstein's concept of 'code'. A direct comparison with Bernstein's view of culture will be made in the final chapter.

'...The lads' rejection of school and opposition to teachers can be seen in the light of a penetration of the teaching paradigm...Their culture denies that knowledge is in any sense a meaningful 'equivalent' for the generality of working class kids. It 'sees through' the tautologies and manipulative modifications of the basic paradigm - whether dignified with 'relevant'/'progressive'...theories or not. It 'knows' better than the new vocational guidance what is the real state of the job market.

The counter-school culture thus provides an eye to the glint of steel beneath the usual institutional
It might be observed from this passage that Willis depicts the culture as the true agent, not the individual participant in it. While Willis explicitly aims to portray the active processes of agents engaged in producing 'class identity' (1977:2), this activity is taken out of their hands and subsumed by 'culture.' 'The lads' are merely bearers of a culture which itself does the 'seeing,' 'knowing,' and 'penetrating' and critical exposing of contradictions within schools. (And it is the culture itself which ultimately does the 'resisting' and 'transforming' of the dominant culture, which is expressed in education through the teaching paradigm.) This presentation is all the more startling in view of Willis' objections to the deterministic nature of previous 'reproduction' theories, including that of Althusser, and his own call for: 'an explanatory account which avoids this formalism and rationalism' (1983:115).

Why then is there this reification of culture when Willis' express concern is to portray the active, volitional and creative aspects of agents in social processes? And how does this view of culture tally with the notion of 'praxis' in

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6This account of culture as agent clearly indicates a profound Althusserian influence and reflects the metaphor of subjects being 'spoken' by discourse. While there is a point to the metaphor in opposing the notion of the autonomous subject as the self-possessed centre of social agency, the metaphor carries the further implication that structures are themselves agents (Turner, 1983:197). The framework set up by Willis implies an extremely literal interpretation of this metaphor.
Willis' writing as the active and collective use of received cultural resources to respond to inherited conditions of existence? In order to answer these questions it is first necessary to consider Willis' account of 'rationality' and 'logic'. A further issue which is part of this formulation is the way in which these concepts ultimately become construed as 'choice' and 'decision' (1977:1).

Cultural and individual levels of reality

According to Willis the conceptual distinction which has to be made in order to see the rationality of working class student behaviour is the distinction between 'the level of the cultural and the level of practical consciousness in our specification of creativity and rationality' (1977:122). The purpose of this distinction, according to Willis, is to locate the proper focus of analysis. Practical consciousness, according to Willis, is 'most open to distraction and momentary influence' (1977:122). The culture is not. Accordingly 'direct and explicit consciousness may in some senses be our poorest and least rational guide' (1977:122).

Willis locates the analysis in 'the cultural' in order to depict a true picture of the 'rational impulse' of groups expressed through culture. These impulses are not 'basically centred on the acting individual and his consciousness' (1977:122).
The central assertion in Willis' concept of culture is that '...the logic of class or group interests is different from the logic of individual interests' (1977:128). This formulation reflects an underlying Durkheimian sociology whereby the group is 'more than the sum of the individual parts' (1977:123) and, furthermore, 'can be considered as a subject in its own right' (1977:124). The 'creativity' contained in praxis, then, is entirely dependent upon collective logic:

Creativity is in no individual act, no one particular head, and is not the result of conscious intention. Its logic could only occur, as I argue later, at the group level (1977:120).

The failure of working class students in education and their subsequent 'entrapment' in manual labour is represented as a 'choice' (1977:1) which can only be construed as 'rational' in relation to the structure of the collective logic.

Praxis, for Willis, is collective action, of some description completely dependent upon the prior notion of collective logic. The individual 'agent' is then entirely dependent upon group logic and true praxis is the '...impulse of the group to find an objective specific to its own level in a way not limited by the previous knowledge experience or ideology of its individual members' (1977:124). The outcome of this formulation is that change or transformation can only occur through collective activity built upon prior collective logic. The question then

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7The 'alternative knowledge' (1983:108) which is generated through collective logic must also be held by the group but not by any particular individual in it.
arises of how change or transformation is construed in the analysis and the significance of the notion of 'cultural logic' in the way transformation is seen to take place.

Anthony Giddens gives the following commentary on Learning to Labour:

...a given set of social activities (the occupational behaviour of 'the lads') is interpreted as purposeful action. In other words those activities are shown to be carried out in the intentional way, for certain reasons, within conditions of knowledgeability. Specification of those bounds allows the analyst to show how unintended consequences of the activities in question derive from what the agents did intentionally. The interpretation involves an attribution of rationality and of motivation to the agents concerned. The actors have reasons for what they do, and what they do has certain specifiable consequences which they do not intend (1984:294) [emphasis added].

My observation is that this description is not an adequate account of Learning to Labour and that Giddens does not give any critical attention to the concept of culture which Willis employs, nor the way it is linked with 'class'. This concept of class-culture is critical in the way rationality is attributed to 'the lads' through the 'motivations' and intentions which their behaviours are seen to carry.

It should be remarked that in this ethnographic analysis Willis gives ample evidence of active defiance of 'the lads' to the processes of schooling through individual and collective obstruction of classrooms, and institutional forms of schooling
generally. The primary question, however, is the way in which volitional defiance is construed as 'opposition'. The basic problem of Willis' description lies in the way it 'attributes rationality' (to use Giddens' terms) to 'the lads' behaviour, given that he proceeds to attribute ends and reasons and hence levels of 'rationality' which are far beyond that suggested by the evidence presented.

'The lads' opposition takes defiant forms such as drinking alcohol at lunchtime (1977:21) 'wagging', 'dossing' - or going to sleep in classes (1977:27) and fighting those outside the group (1977:35). 'The lads' are also inveterate players of practical jokes on staff, other students and the community outside the school. In their terms this is 'having a laff' (1977:29). The element which Willis emphasizes in these descriptions is the active defiance contained in activities and the annoyance they present to staff and conformist students in the wasting of 'valuable time' (1977:28). The account is quite persuasive in the description of the actively defiant purposes of 'the lads' behaviour.

Willis also offers instances of discourse where these activities become the focus of group discussion.

Willis documents the conscious defiance quite precisely:

PW: "What's the last time you've done some writing?"

Will: "When we done some writing?"
Fuzz: "Oh, are, last time was in careers, 'cos I writ 'yes' on a piece of paper, that broke me heart."

PW: "Why did it break your heart?"

Fuzz: "I mean to write, 'cos I was going to try to go through the term without writing anything. 'Cos since we've come back I ain't dun nothing" [it was half way through term] (1977:27).

These activities are seen as crucial elements in the active construction and maintenance of group identity and solidarity in opposition to given forms. Willis suggests that these activities express core 'themes' or values:

...being free out of class, being in class and doing no work, being in the wrong class, roaming the corridors looking for excitement, being asleep in private. The core skill which articulates these possibilities is being able to get out of any given class: the preservation of personal mobility (1977:27).

That these activities contain elements of volitional defiance is not in question. They can be seen to contain conscious motives - 'I was going to try to go through the term without writing anything.' Willis, however, is not satisfied with this level of 'rational' explanation and sets the activities into a much larger scheme related to class. Following the CCCS approach, the informal group is 'the basic unit of the culture' (1977:23) and these cultures are seen to be created by agencies 'concretely in determinate conditions' (1977:59). These sub-cultures are 'particular manifestations' of working class culture. They all share 'similar basic structural properties' which are the properties of class society (1977:59).
The 'culture' which 'the lads' construct is a 'particular manifestation' of the larger structure of working class culture. The concept of working class culture then is an analytical category derived from the distillation of numerous particular manifestations. It is therefore necessary to set the activities of 'the lads' counter school culture against this larger structural pattern in order to see the 'true nature and significance' (1977:52) of those activities, that is the real ends towards which they are seen to be directed.

The 'particular ends' towards which the cultural activities of 'the lads' are applied take on a much larger significance when situated in the larger framework of class culture because of the kind of 'significance' which is then given to micro oppositional forms. The opposition of 'the lads' to the formal practices of the school becomes a particular manifestation of general working class alienation and struggle (1977:59). The types of oppositions in which 'the lads' indulge in the immediate and particular environment of the school come to be seen as manifestations of class 'opposition'. These activities are rational not merely in the sense that they have volitional content, or that they relate to the purposeful creation and maintenance of the group. Rather they 'expose at some level the consequences of belonging to a class for its members' (1977:129). At one and the same time they expose 'the false individualistic promises of dominant ideology as they operate in the school' (1977:129) and express opposition to them. They
therefore become the latent element of class struggle. 'The lads', however, have little or no consciousness of class or the historical dynamics of struggle. What they have is an 'experience' of oppression against which they revolt. It is important to note, however, that this 'experience' is itself shaped and given the form that it has by 'culture'.

Willis' Basic Concepts - Inconsistencies

A number of inconsistencies in the basic terms of Willis' theory will now be considered.

Sub-culture as a manifestation of working class culture

There are two major theoretical problems in the way the counter-school culture is set in the 'larger pattern of working class culture' (1977:52). Firstly, there is the idea of manifestation of class forms. Willis suggests that it is wrong to see working class culture as 'standard clonal class modules spontaneously reproducing themselves in an inevitable pattern' (1977:59); yet the very term 'manifestation' carries something of this idea. There is a major unresolved theoretical problem in the setting of manifestations of culture against the assertion that they are 'created specifically, concretely in determinate conditions' (1977:59). This lack of resolution is expressed in the following statements:

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8This is the primary point of contention between Hall, Johnson and others who assert that all experience is culturally determined (Johnson, 1981:392) and E P Thompson, who stresses that a distinction must be made between social being and that which impinges upon it (Thompson, 1981:405).
'Social forms...have simultaneously both a local or institutional logic, and a larger class logic could not develop and be articulated without these regional instances of struggle, nor could, however, these instances be differentiated internally and structured systematically in relation to other instances and the reproduction of the whole without the larger logic (1977:60).'

The creative actions (of agents) is set against manifestation (of class structure) and is an example of the unresolved polarities of agency/structure and volition/determination which pervade the analysis. Connell observes that Willis' analysis and OCCS analyses in general are bound to a reproduction of the notion of an homogenous inner core of class structure, and consequently cannot give a true account of the dynamics of this process (1983:225)9 This observation is clearly validated.

**Class culture and authenticity**

The very fact that the activities focused upon by the analysis are those of a particular group (which is, in turn, a sub-group of a class) becomes highly significant in the analysis. The analysis sets up a contrast between the group logic of the sub-culture with the amorphous 'individualism' of the ideology of the school. The conformist boys are part of this amorphous individualism. They lack culture and therefore identity. They are victims of the 'false individualistic promises of dominant ideology' (1977:129). They have given up 'all possibilities of independence and creation for nothing but an illusory ideal of classlessness' (1977:128). Willis states that:

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9Connell himself maintains an emphasis upon reproduction but has attempted to shift the focus of analysis to a concern with historical process (following E P Thompson) (Connell & Irving, 1980:1).
The counter school culture and other working class cultural forms contain elements towards a profound critique of the dominant ideology of individualism in our society (1977:128/9).

Here there is a direct opposition of the 'cultural forms' of the sub-culture to 'ideology'. This is in essence an opposition of a pure cultural 'reality' against contaminated ideology.

Indeed, Willis, at certain points, explicitly asserts the 'purity' of the rational activity of the working class. This amounts to an inversion of the humanist conception of culture. The working class, by virtue of its position, is open to humane 'rational principles'. The dominant class is driven by base 'natural' impulses such as greed:

The working class view would be the rational one were it not located in class society (1977:57).

And again:

...the working class is the only class not inherently structured from within by the ideological intricacy of capitalist organization. It does not take nor, therefore, need to hold the cultural and social "initiative" and is thus potentially freer from its logic (1977:123).

The very notion of culture employed by Willis is linked inextricably to class through the notions of opposition to and 'penetration of' dominant forms. The 'ends' to which it is directed, are, in essence, those of critique of dominant forms.

Marcus observes that Willis sees working class culture as embodying a latent and authentic critical theory (1986:180).
The most basic flaw in Willis' analysis is in setting up the activities of 'the lads' as cultural forms which are not only inherently meaningful to the group but also inherently critical of the falseness of larger ideological structures. In this the level of significance attributed to the volitional component of micro events becomes massively over-generalized. The concept of culture as it is employed by Willis has therefore a dual function. In Marcus' terms:

Willis defines an autonomous culture concept that facilitates the authentic depiction of human diversity and difference against the bias to elide it...[and] the staging of the cultural for the purpose of ethnographic representation is primarily a means to the end of elucidation of an embedded critique of capitalist society in working class life (1986:180) [emphasis added].

Penetrations, limitations

Specifically, the culture of 'the lads' exposes for its members the false promises of upward social mobility through the gaining of qualifications (1977:129). The activities of the group are seen to 'penetrate' the conventions, structures and ideology of the school and to 'oppose' them. The precise details of the processes of penetration and exposure are not given. The oppositional culture then not only opposes, but penetrates and exposes. It is seen as inherently and essentially meaningful behaviour to the group and directed towards egalitarian ends.

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10 A classical anthropological problem manifests itself constantly in Willis' theory: that is ascribing a systematic philosophy to institutional practices. Douglas (1969) suggests that 'The anthropologist who draws out the whole scheme of the cosmos which is implied in these practices does the primitive culture great violence if he seems to present the cosmology as a systematic philosophy subscribed to consciously by individuals (1969:96).
Limitations: the inability of culture to translate itself into political theory

Willis admits that there is a limit to working class 'cultural penetrations' by virtue of the fact that they are dominated and show internal divisions and inconsistencies. He indicates that cultural penetrations and associated practices fall short of transformative political activity because of the partiality of the penetrations (1977:145). The 'partiality' of the penetrations also rests on the way they are construed in the analysis. They are, in essence, 'cultural' and therefore 'symbolic'. They do not take the form of a conscious explicit theory. They are also clearly 'limited' by the boundaries of the micro-environment in which they are generated. They perceive only those oppressive structures of capitalism which present themselves through school practices structured by capitalist ideology. They contain merely a latent critique which is not actualized.

Willis, in response to criticisms made of Learning to Labour, states that the notion of cultural production suggests the possibility of transformation of structures through the active participation of social agents who 'not only think like theorists but act like activists' (1983:114). This assertion stands in stark contrast to an earlier statement that 'working class distrust and rejection of theory comes partly from a kind of recognition...of the hollowness of theory in its social

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The collective and symbolic nature of penetrations indicates, again, a Durkheimian framework in Willis' analysis. There is, however, a problem in exactly how a critique is to be given of the retrograde elements within these practices. If these 'penetrations' symbolize an ultimate reality they must be adequate to representing it - otherwise they would not be there.
It seems clear, however, that 'theory' is not likely to be a regular item of working class discourse, and there is more than a hint of projection of the analyst's own distrust of theory in this statement.

Radical insight, resistance and liberation

As indicated, the central problem in Willis' analysis is in the way meaning is attributed to 'the lads' anti-school practices. Willis implies that all practices become significant by reference to a cultural meaning or group logic. Working class culture generally (and 'the lads' culture as a subset of it) is open to 'radical insight' (1977:125) because of its not being 'inherently structured from within by the ideological intricacy of capitalist organization' (1977:123). The working class culture is seen to stand opposed to middle class culture which is contaminated by 'disqualification and self-mystification' of capitalist ideology (1977:125).

Working class culture is, then, constructed upon a series of pervading radical insights which find expression in cultural form. Cultural forms are, in turn, examples of 'lived demonstration' (1977:125) shaped by prior radical insights. Everything that 'the lads' do has behind it a precision, a purpose and direction by which the oppression and contradictions of capitalist forms are recognized, questioned, exposed and resisted - with the qualification that this is done 'at the group level' (Willis 1977:120).
This radical insight - not expressed at the level of consciousness but in oppositional cultural forms - leads to a liberation:

By penetrating the contradiction at the heart of the working class school the counter school culture helps to liberate its members from the burden of conformism and conventional achievement. It allows their capacities and potential to take root elsewhere (1977:130).

So among working class participants lack of success has a functional outcome in that they turn away or are 'deflected' into their own 'autonomous' and 'authentic' forms of expression and social being. This is the way which Willis envisages the 'transformation' of forms through counter culture. Rather than actually transforming 'the system' the defiant behaviour of 'the lads' is aimed at the group itself, and expresses important cultural values of the group, to the group. The values expressed in fighting are given particular attention:

Many important cultural values are expressed through fighting. Masculine hubris, dramatic display, the solidarity of the group, the importance of quick, clear and not over-moral thought...(1977:34).

Violence is thus construed as essentially rational behaviour because of its reference to group meaning (1977:35). Willis explicitly admits, however, that violence and other 'antisocial' behaviour does not point to an 'overthrow of the social order' but to 'social meaning within "the lads" own culture' (1977:35).
Liberation or entrapment?

More importantly, perhaps, the 'radical insight' of the counter culture inevitably leads to its own educational suppression through 'unintended consequences' (1977:60). This metaphor of irony which is constantly raised in Willis' writing, not only in *Learning to Labour* but also in later accounts (Willis 1983), indicates a major inadequacy in the mode of analysis. It attributes to actions intentionality and purpose which agents do not actually have (on the evidence presented). It is because defiance is construed as a precisely defined purpose with a critical end that there is no other possible outcome than 'self-damnation'.

The 'resolution' of the concepts of volition and determination through 'irony' and 'paradox' (Willis 1977:12; 1983:107) is the only possible outcome of the analysis because of its inability to resolve these concepts in an articulated theory. Irony and paradox may be interesting descriptive strategies but are not theoretical constructs. They are not adequate outcomes of an analysis which aims to provide a social account of the causes of working class educational failure and a program of intervention in education. The result is that nothing is transformed and the description and analysis become locked in a series of irreconciliable sets of 'antinomies' to use Willis' own term. This issue will be considered further in relation to Willis' overall mode of theorizing.
It should be noted that the lack of co-operative participation on the part of 'the lads' is construed as a refusal to compete, which because of this intentional content then becomes a 'radical' act: 'it refuses to collude in its own educational suppression' (1977:128).

The type of radicalism which 'the lads' portray is very inert, if it is radicalism at all, and it is only assumed that the only structures which are transformed are those of the working class itself. Willis does not suggest that the system as a whole feels any real pressure from the acts of 'resistance', even though staff register some annoyance at the activities and attitudes of 'the lads'. This emphasis upon cultural autonomy reflects the traditional problem noted by Hebdige (1979:76) associated with accounts of sub-culture - 'functioning outside the larger political and economic context.' In this case 'indifferent to that context' is perhaps a more accurate description.

Broadly speaking, the analysis is unsatisfactorily vague on the precise relationship between the concepts of 'insight' or 'penetration' and cultural 'autonomy'. It is assumed that insight creates autonomy, in the first instance, and autonomy leads to an openness to insight. There is no theoretical precision in the setting up and linking of these terms in the analysis. What this suggests is that the kind of conceptual theorizing in which Willis indulges is a post-hoc
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rationalization and justification of 'practical' ethnography. As indicated this amounts to a need to privilege ethnographic method over theoretical articulation (Marcus, 1986:180).

Resistance and liberating educational practice

As indicated, Willis' account rests on the fundamental assumption that the behaviour and attitudes of the group are 'rational' because they reflect some degree of prior penetration of oppressive conventions and ideology, and consequently express dissatisfaction with and opposition to those conventions. They therefore represent an authentic and rational response to contradictions evident to those not contaminated by dominant ideology.

Within Willis' analysis 'resistance' is a 'cultural' phenomenon. Oppression is already registered by the sub-culture in its cultural forms and its participants are open to the possibilities of liberating change. The assumption contained in this formulation of 'cultural production' is that there is always an active, basically humane and egalitarian response to the experience of domination on the part of class-based sub-cultures, even though some responses to domination are misdirected. The process of cultural production is seen as the continuous impulse at the level of culture for the transformation of states of being of participants through a search for 'meaning'. A 'liberating practice' then has merely
to engage the culture at significant points where 'recognition' of principal oppressive forms has already taken place.

Getting the participants in the sub-culture consciously to recognize oppression, however, is the principal issue in education. It is the practical problem of generating a liberating practice. And Willis' analysis must be questioned seriously on at least three basic matters. Firstly, does the behaviour of 'the lads' reflect an actual recognition of the precise way in which the conventions of the school are oppressive of their class and are they in any sense open to the moves of a practitioner who is concerned with their 'liberation'? Secondly, is it in fact a 'paradox' that the theory suggests that the processes of recognition of oppressive forms beyond the group result in a momentum towards extreme internal closure? Or is this again the result of bad theorizing which traps itself in a paradox? Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, how does a liberating practitioner approach the working class students who are not part of a sub-culture, who have not formed the 'cultural' recognition of oppression which is to be the basis for liberation?

**Functionalism**

Counter school culture and the shop floor

Willis is concerned specifically with the problem of explaining the paradox contained in 'the lads' affirmation of the value of
manual labour over mental labour. He focuses upon the conscious association by 'the lads' of manual labour with maleness and its perceived superiority over mental labour which is associated with femaleness (1977:148). This affirmation of manual labour is thus a core 'theme' which shapes the very identities of white working class males.

The way in which Willis explains the 'rationality' of this affirmation relies on 'the lads' prior recognition of the falseness of the capitalist division of labour. Firstly, this affirmation is perceived as recognizing the divisive nature of certification (1977:152) which results in the 'elitist exclusion of the mass through spurious recourse to merit' (1977:128). Secondly, and at a more profound level, the sub-culture recognizes the falseness of 'abstract labour' in that it alienates the worker and 'empties work of its significance' (1977:152).12 The first recognition is to 'the lads'' refusal to compete' (1977:125) which expresses the spontaneous tendency of the sub-culture in asserting the need for an egalitarian 'community'. The second recognition however is explained by a much more complex 'cultural' account focused upon patriarchy:

We might say that where the principle of general abstract labour has emptied work of its significance from the inside a transformed patriarchy has filled it with significance from the outside (1977:150).

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12It is to be noted that Willis' methodology continually construes the analyst's theoretical insights as belonging to the reality of the group under study. There is simply no way in which the behaviour of 'the lads' contains these sorts of theoretical positions. My observation is that Willis simply does not know the limitations of ethnography and that the 'insights' which he attributes to his subjects are at best irresponsible and at worst dangerous.
In short, nature abhors a vacuum, and the natural tendency of groups to infuse things with 'significance' is irrepressible. The following sentence indeed carries great significance for the whole of Willis' enterprise:

Discontent with work is hinged away from a political discontent and confused in its proper logic by a huge detour into the symbolic sexual realm (1977:150).

Willis adds:

The brutality of the working situation is partially reinterpreted into a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with the task (1977:150).

The end result is a surprising 'affirmation of labour power' (1977:149). The 'paradox' whereby insight is totally contained within 'the system' becomes complete. For the group concerned the 'stigma' of manual work becomes 'positively expressive' (1977:152). For 'the lads' then, the opting out of mental labour and the celebration of 'manly' manual labour is seen as a process of systematic 'self-preparation' for manual labour (1977:97).

The outcome of this analysis is that the counter school culture and the shop floor culture become functionally linked.

Functionalism

As already suggested the functionalism of Learning to Labour is not incidental. It is an outcome of the mode of theoretical
analysis which is employed, and the extreme idealizations contained in the very concept of culture which Willis sets up. A consideration of Giddens' comments on *Learning to Labour* may help to highlight the functionalism of the theoretical presumptions underlying Willis' deployment of the ethnographic method. Within Giddens' analysis the positions offered by Willis are seen as being in accord, generally, with his own theory of 'structuration', stressing social activity, purposive action and the unintended consequences of such action (Giddens, 1984:294). Using this framework, Giddens interprets *Learning to Labour* as a type of analysis which stands in contrast to functional analyses (1984:293). Giddens' criticism of functionalist accounts is that:

> usually...attention is concentrated upon attributing rationality to a social system, not to individuals. The identification of a functional need of the system is presumed to have explanatory value, calling into play consequences which in some way meet that need (1984:294).

Giddens' account is highly selective in the elements of Willis' social theory on which it focuses. He pays no detailed attention to the concept of culture offered by Willis.

As indicated earlier in Willis' theoretical expose of *Learning to Labour*, the behaviour of 'the lads' requires interpretation against a higher level of 'cultural logic' in order to be seen as purposive and 'rational'. And, in fact, *Learning to Labour* exhibits the principal deficiency to which Giddens points in
functionalist social theories - that is, it attributes 'rationality to a social system, not to individuals' (1984:294).

Giddens furthermore gives his assent to Willis' explanation of the role of 'culture' in the reproduction of social forms through the 'unintended consequences' of purposive action on the part of 'the lads':

The aggressive, joking culture which they have developed within the school milieu actually quite strongly resembles that of the shop-floor culture of work situations into which they tend to move. Hence they find the adjustment to work relatively easy, and they are able to tolerate the demands of doing dull, repetitive labour in circumstances which they recognize to be incongenial. The unintended and ironical consequence of their 'partial penetration' of the limited life chances open to them is actively to perpetuate the conditions which limit those very life chances (Giddens, 1984:293).

Giddens seems to be quite unaware of the strongly 'functional' flavour of this account. In effect it does not differ from Parsons' account of education functioning to create in students differentiated 'commitments and capacities for successful performance of their future adult roles' which are, in turn, differentiated according to status (Parsons 1961:434). The operative word in this passage is 'commitment' which may be set beside Giddens' 'tolerate the demands of doing dull, repetitive labour...'. Giddens' commentary is a pertinent example of the lack of a sustained critique which has been characteristic of 'cultural studies' and its role in sociological and educational theory.
Willis' Revisions

In a later reflection on *Learning to Labour* Willis puts forward a series of significant revisions. His express concerns in the revisions are a 'de-emphasis of the "left functionalist" side of ...previous work' expressed in textual terms as an 'over-developed symmetry and irony' (1983:107). In his revisions Willis further emphasizes the 'isomorphism of culture', by which he means a tendency of sub-cultures towards self-closure (1983:132). The fundamental decisions of subordinate groups are 'votes' for a certain kind of 'cultural solidarity' - not 'votes for the social order' (1983:133).

The basic form of the revision is the assertion that the resources of this sub-culture are not pure but carry the values of pre-existing social relationships:

...there is no pure struggle of the oppressed, no pure resistance, no utopianism, which does not work through the contradiction and contrary effects of its own production (1983:133).

Willis, therefore, suggests a major revision of the earlier theory in which the working class was seen to generate its own autonomous existence and not to be 'inherently structured from within by the ideological intricacy of capitalist organization' (1977:123). Rather, the structure of capital is not 'external and separate from the everyday life of society' (1983:133). So what then is working class culture?
In many respects, Willis' modification of his theory is interesting but ambiguous. He further emphasizes the closure of culture and the pervasive nature of capitalist ideology in elements of working class life at the same time. This move undermines the ideas of 'insight' and 'penetration' that informed Learning to Labour, and were a necessary element in his formulation of the activities of the group as counter-culture or resistance. Willis indicates that the basic analytical mechanism of penetration/limitation was misleading and led to a mechanistic separation of what is 'all of a piece in cultural production' (1983:128). This is nothing short of a complete undermining of his basic theoretical structure. My observation, however, is that Willis either does not recognize this outcome or he does not care; either way the problem is due to a lack of proper recognition of the need for a degree of objectivity and theoretical integrity.

Moreover, the revisions outlined by Willis do nothing to extract the analysis from the polarities of agency/structure in which it is locked. The revision downplays the significance of the notion of 'penetration', in favour of that of transformation, but the basic concepts of culture and action as based upon collective logic are not challenged.

Of greatest interest in the later work is the way in which, ironically, the functionalist element achieves greater prominence. By transformation Willis means 'the rendering of
certain specific kinds of, perhaps future, oppression and exploitation into the different terms of immediate, local and sensuous culture' (1983:132) (emphasis added). The renewed emphasis on transformation means, in essence, that working class groups are seen more than ever to turn into their own 'cultural' worlds and create practices which are meaningful to themselves alone. They do not, therefore, confront oppression directly. The cultural forms generated in this fashion are 'functional' to the group in that they help the group to lessen the direct force of oppression by deflecting it through the creation and celebration of their own concerns. It is highly significant that those concerns of the sub-culture are described as immediacy and sensuality. These of course are the traditional characteristics ascribed by conservative accounts to the working class in accounting for its failure. They are also the ascribed characteristics which are focused and confirmed in Bernstein's account of public language-use and restricted code (1971: 34). Secondly, this account mirrors very closely Parsons' account of youth culture which has the function of 'mitigating the strain' caused by the selective education process (1961:447).

By lessening the emphasis on the concept of 'penetration' Willis is necessarily downplaying the idea of a latent critique embedded in the cultural forms of the sub-culture. The other major revision takes the form of an increased emphasis on the notion of cultural production as caused by a pervasive class struggle. A pivotal assertion made in the revision is that 'the
lads' culture is a form of 'class struggle' (1983:124) and that, furthermore, cultural production takes place through 'struggle and resistance to structures in domination' (1983:135). Cultural production is a process of formation of subjects through 'struggle'. In fact, 'the key link and common ground between the two terms "subjects" and "structure" is struggle' (1983:135).

This formulation of the relation between subjects and structure as struggle retains a problematic elision prominent in the original. For it is fair enough to suggest that the experiences and practices of 'the lads' reflect class oppression - but that does not mean that such experiences and practices are in themselves an embryonic form of class struggle. 'The lads' clearly experience oppression and, at certain points, achieve degrees of conscious understanding of their class position, that is, of their limited prospects for future employment and of the limited and oppressive nature of whatever employment they are likely to achieve. They are not able, however, translate these 'limited' insights into purposive and constructive class action to improve their position, nor can they develop a critical discourse. In fact, in retaining in his revisions the idea of culture emerging as active opposition to the realm of language, Willis actively downplays the need for an historically formed theory of political contestation, expressed in critical discourse, which in Marxist theory is a practical prerequisite for positive action and genuine 'struggle'.
The idea that practices, dispositions and attitudes are given the forms which they have through the action of class is coherent and interesting enough. But there is a vast difference between that account and one which construes such forms as expressing not only the action of class but an immanent 'struggle' which pervades everything. The general picture presented by Willis, then, is of cultural struggle informing the vast part of social life for members of oppositional sub-cultures formed 'in resistance to domination' (1983:135). In Willis' view, while there may be little conscious awareness of struggle and resistance on the part of individual participants of the subordinate culture in question, the structures of the group are formed through struggle, and as responses to dominant forms. The forms themselves express at some deep level the dynamics of class struggle.

Summary

Willis' analysis, despite its location in Marxist discourse reflects a classical Durkheimian sociology. Its limitations in point form are as follows:

- the basic premise is that the whole is definitive and that the collectivity is greater than the sum of its component parts;
its basic framework employs traditional concepts of social structure (in disguised form) and culture which are functionally linked and the primary function is social cohesion of the group, through the creation of social identity;

it thus precludes any real account of practice, change through practice, or power;

the emphasis upon 'engagement' with 'the real' accompanies a theoretical carelessness and the outcome is that the limiting conditions of observation are not recognized.

These limitations will be focused in more precise detail in the following chapter.
The two main bodies of work considered in this thesis are the theory of language forms and codes proposed by Basil Bernstein and the theory of working class sub-culture proposed by Paul Willis. Both analyses seek to offer an explanation of the educational trajectories of working class children in relation to the social/cultural characteristics that are themselves a specific product of class position. While these analyses are separated in time, the general problem which they both share is the lack of a coherent theoretical articulation between the concepts of class and culture.

Class and Cultural Production

The concept of class in both cases is objectivist (taken as a 'given' fact) and there is no substantial account of what it consists in and how it is constituted. Willis refers to its constitution through relations of production and focuses on the idea of 'cultural production' (Willis 1977:3). And that is as far as the account of class goes. Beyond this characterisation, his analysis focuses on the cultural dimension/aspect of class.
Neither account gives specific attention to economic factors in the formation of class.

Bernstein's later analysis similarly evokes the idea of cultural production through 'textual production' (1982:307-8), but states that there is only an 'indirect' relationship of culture to the material base (1982:309). Similarly, Willis emphasises the partial autonomy of cultural forms and indicates that they are not 'produced by simple outside determination' (1977:120). This perspective leads Willis to call for 'a theory of advanced capitalist working class consciousness and culture sui generis' (1977:139,n.4) [original emphasis].

**Working Class as 'Community'**

The principal differences between the two accounts lie in the way the concept of class is focused and in the exposition of basic causes of the formation of class. Both analysts posit the idea of working class culture as expressing and symbolizing an underlying sense of 'community' which is shared by its members. Working class culture in both accounts stands in contrast to the ideology of individualism of the dominant class.

In both analyses the notion of 'community' or 'group' is realized by the practices of participants who enforce solidarity through a compulsory group logic. Willis focuses upon the 'informal' group whose practices are particular manifestations
of the larger class culture. Bernstein assumes the notion of community pertaining to the working class in a more general sense which envisages the family as the principal element of 'community' handing on 'roles' which are of a 'mechanical' nature. The working class as a whole is not envisaged as one grand community but its 'roles' relative to the middle class are less individualistic and more 'communal' in nature.

Social Identity and Cultural Rationality

Both analyses are concerned to address the question of unequal educational attainment and in doing so offer a cultural account of class. In both cases the individual identities of agents (or subjects) are determined by forms of collective and compulsory systems of cognition. These are called 'codes' for Bernstein and 'cultural logic' for Willis. In Willis 'collective cultural processes' (dependent upon 'cultural logic') lead to 'identity formation' (1983:113). In Bernstein 'codes...are the creators of social identity' (1971:164). Willis is more concerned to emphasize the active and volitional elements of the cultural productions of agents. Bernstein is concerned to account for 'agency' in some degree through the interactions of subjects (who realize codes). Both accounts, however, emphasize the social determination of action because the idea of code or collective logic is the prevailing concept. As a result in each case a strongly functionalist conception of culture emerges from a view of class constrained within its autonomous forms of meaning.
Meaning as Collective Representation

Both accounts share a remarkable similarity in the way cultural rationality is construed. While both theorists make explicit reference to 'meanings' they are both concerned ultimately with the idea of unifying 'themes' and cultural processes. Bernstein's proposition is that:

...embedded in the culture of sub-culture may be a basic organizing concept, concepts or themes, whose ramifications may be diffused throughout the culture or sub-culture (1971:164).

Similarly, Willis emphasizes 'central themes' which are the product of 'class processes' (1977:59; 1977:27). In both accounts 'meaning' held by agents is seen to express the conditions of social structure. In Bernstein, social structure is a formally divided structure which imparts specific sets of 'meanings' through codes. In Willis 'meaning' is located in structures, in the implicit and lived meanings of 'cultural forms' (1983:137,n.7). Regardless of the specific circumstances of sub-cultural production the constraints of the underlying class structure are realized through the workings of group logic. In both cases, then, the true 'meaning' of people's activities lies in the fact that an underlying structure is both realizing and symbolizing itself to its members.

1 This is a modern recapitulation of Durkheim's central claim in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.
Resistance

The principal difference between the two theories lies in the significance of the concept of resistance. In Bernstein's analysis the selecting out of working class students occurs through the clash of already fully formed 'cultures' or systems of meaning:

The working class child is concerned mainly with the present, and his social structure, unlike that of the middle class child, provides little incentive or purposeful support to make the methods and ends of the school purposefully meaningful. The problems of discipline and classroom control result not from the isolated points of resistance or conflict, but from the attempt to reorient a whole pattern of perception with its emotional counterpart (1971:36).

Unlike Willis, the notion of 'resistance' in Bernstein's early writing is not a process of active meaning-making in opposition to dominant 'culture' and an act of self-assertion on the part of the working class students. It is viewed by Bernstein as a dysfunctional outcome of the school's attempt to reorient the students' 'cultural' reality, consisting of perceptual and emotional elements. The behaviour that results is not envisaged as being particularly meaningful in itself. It is merely a residue of the clash of structural orders where one order, the school's, prevails.

For Willis, on the other hand, 'resistance' is eminently meaningful behaviour and implies a prior recognition 'at the cultural level' of the oppressive nature of the conventions of
schooling and their falseness in relation to later possibilities in life. The 'clash' envisaged by Willis is not a clash of fully formed cultures - at least Willis wishes to avoid this formulation. Working class cultural production is described as a positive response in opposition to the structures of capitalism. However, as previously indicated, there is an extremely strong and unresolved contradiction evident in the analysis. The explanation of how all working class sub-cultures develop along the same pattern and express the same underlying principles of opposition rests on the assertion that they are all conceived in the same 'determinate conditions'. Class culture is envisaged as being developed through the processes of schooling but the account insists that it must develop along certain lines. There is thus an inevitability, a 'determinism' which is impossible to escape.

This variation in the degree of 'cultural clash' reflects a variation in focus. A related contrast occurs between Bernstein and Willis on the precise nature of cause. Bernstein is concerned to present a causal explanation of working class student behaviour which accounts for that failure from the first day of schooling. Willis, on the other hand, describes how groups who are already failing actively reinforce failure. The group which is selected for ethnographic analysis is not selected primarily because it has something in common but primarily because it is already expressing defiance. Generalizations about class are made from that point.
Dualisms

There are more general similarities in the basic modes of theorizing which Bernstein and Willis use. Bernstein, as already indicated, posits logically opposed dualisms as formal entities and conducts the ensuing analysis from those entities. Willis reacts to Bernstein's 'abstractly multiplying formalism' (1983:123) but also depends on formalisms of a different nature such as paradox, which becomes a key metaphor in Willis' work. This paradox is set up in the opening words of Learning to Labour:

The difficult thing to explain about how middle class kids get middle class jobs is why others let them. The difficult thing to explain about how working class kids get working class jobs is why they let themselves (1977:1).

Even the idea of resistance as it is conceived in Willis' analysis contains this metaphor of paradox:

It is the apparent cultural ascension of the working class which brings the hell of its own real present (1977:122).

It is their very resistance through cultural forms which commits working class agents to 'self-damnation' (1977:3).

In reacting to the determinism of structural accounts of schooling, Willis emphasizes the notion of 'agency'. Agency and structures become antinomies. Willis indicates that he hopes to
work through 'some of the endless antinomies between structure/agency, pessimism/optimism, resistance/accommodation' (1983:108) but becomes trapped in them. They are in a real sense 'endless'. This kind of informing metaphor of paradox carries in a general way the same, in fact logically opposed, dualisms as does Bernstein’s theory. Willis’ theorizing carries quite strong Calvinistic overtones so that the notion of agency becomes completely subsumed within relentless cultural logic. The culture is the agent. While Willis reacts to the 'pessimism' and 'closure' of reproduction perspectives, the invocation of agency as he construes it seems to deepen that pessimism. The major paradox of Willis’ theorizing, however, may be in that while he clearly distrusts 'theory' and places great emphasis upon practical analysis, the result of his analysis is to ascribe a systematic theoretical and critical outlook to the subjects of his study. On the evidence presented there are simply no grounds for his assertion that working class agents 'think like theorists' (1983:114).

The Concept of Culture and Closure of Class

If the purpose of formal education in complex societies is to change the dispositions of students and to open up the possibilities of equitable social participation, any social account of education with these aims must explain the apparent intractability of members of the working class to change. Bernstein’s early works suggest that the working class does not change because, firstly, its thought-world is different from
that of the middle class and sufficient in its own terms; and, secondly, the processes of schooling are directed against its changing. Willis seems to suggest that the working class does not want to change if that involves conforming to conventions which are inherently oppressive.

The concept of culture in both theories suggests a tendency to closure and self-sufficiency of the group. In Bernstein this closure is perceived as a negative attribute in Willis as positive. While Willis does not begin by treating class culture as a spatio-temporal isolate, the informing concept of collective logic leads inevitably to depicting the working class as an autonomous entity with its own 'ontology' (1983:115).

Bernstein's early theory is a structuralist theory in the tradition of structural-functionalism (after Parsons). Willis' theory, while attempting to break from structuralism (after Althusser), remains locked within this perspective. The terms of the analysis lock it into a series of polarities involving structure and agency.

In contrast with Bernstein's early work, Willis attempts to articulate a causal relation between classes. However, the closure of the working class is due to the activities of the working class itself because the forms which they are seen to construct are in basic ways oppositional to dominant forms. The closure then takes the form of a logically articulated system which expresses principles or values of social cohesion which
are the logical (and human) opposite of dominant forms. The closure is finally dependent upon a logical scheme of meanings built as oppositions at key points to dominant forms. While Bernstein's early analyses are not as explicit about the formal nature of oppositions, that they are such is strongly implied. There is, on this matter, a fundamental similarity between the two theories.

The determinism which Willis wishes to avoid is unavoidable because the theoretical framework set up implies in his terms an 'ontology' of class through the workings of a total system of collective logic. The analysis rests upon the idea of a compulsory system of logic which provides meaning.

The Limitations of the Concept of Cultural Rationality

The major limitations of both Bernstein's and Willis' analyses lies in a closed and total system of meaning dictated to subjects through either code or group logic. This system is in a real sense independent of the activities, intentions and purposes of its subjects.

Willis adopts this analytical framework to refute the idea that working class subjects can readily adopt the false conventions of the dominant class. However, by giving this base of compulsory logic to a theory of agency which is not properly linked to it he ensures that the outcome is not only an inadequate theory but a potentially dangerous one. Given his
emphasis on choice and intention, Willis is left with no option but to assert that the working class wills its damnation in the very act of collective resistance. In the setting of education this assertion is open to extremely conservative interpretations.

**Humanist and Anthropological Culture**

In the work of Bernstein the concept of culture applied to classes is treated as a spatio-temporal isolate. Class cultures are inherently different. In Willis' account the traditional applications of the term culture in education are turned around. Little reference is made to middle class culture. It is more often described as dominant culture or dominant ideology. Culture is portrayed as a scheme relative to a group. In this formulation in *Learning to Labour* the working class are the true bearers of culture while the dominant class are, in a sense, culture-less. They are an array of nameless individuals whose interests are expressed through the false ideology of individualism. They have no collective identity and no group attachments. These kinds of assumptions about the respective classes are related in general to other CCCS analyses similarly predicated on the idea of an egalitarian impulse among oppressed groups. The contrast provided in CCCS studies is between the formless impersonality of the dominant class which is given to the disintegrating processes of individualism, and the humane identity of groups formed through the innate urge to
resist oppression and create forms of collective life which are not oppressive.

The concept of culture in Willis' study, on the one hand, suggests an extremely relativistic application to groups perceived essentially as communities. On the other hand, the use of the term reflects an inversion of the traditional humanist conception of culture so that the working class are the true possessors of a potentially integrated spiritual totality and 'reason'. They stand in opposition to the dominant class whose practices are informed by the 'natural' impulses of selfishness and greed. Thus the operation of class in modern complex societies is the impediment to full social integration. Willis' view of salvation corresponds to the vision of a universal class (namely the working class) of the early Marx.²

Bernstein also makes the same basic contrast between community and individualism in the theory of codes. However, there is almost no idealization of the working class in his formulations. Rather, in order to progress towards true rationality, the working class must break away from its isolation and closure enforced by mechanical bonds, and become individuated. The possibility of critique depends upon the development of individuation by which the 'irrational' adherence

²A class must be framed which has RADICAL CHAINS, a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal. There must be formed a sphere of society which claims no traditional status only a human status (Marx 1963:190) [original emphasis].
to conventions can be challenged. Bernstein's view of salvation thus corresponds to Durkheim's rationalist ideal.

The concept of culture in Bernstein's early works maintains a similar ambivalence to Willis between the traditional humanist and anthropological conceptions of culture. Working class culture while rational in its own way, is a distinct entity but its forms and structures are not adequate in themselves to meet the functional and human needs of social diversity in complex modern societies. In no way do its forms imply a critique of middle class principles of cohesion towards which it is evolving.

In its fundamental elements Willis' theory may be read as an inversion of the idea of cultural deprivation which was prominent in educational analysis in the 1950s and 60s. This idea held that 'culture', as the true expression of human potential, existed in an indivisible form and that the working class had extremely limited access to it.

In both theories the concept of class culture implies an imperfect 'rationality' within a more universal frame of human potential.
CONCLUSION

The general comparison between the respective analyses of Bernstein and Willis indicates an increasing emphasis upon practice and a corresponding de-emphasis upon the constraints of social structure. Both theories, however, imply a sharp separation between practice and an underlying structure built upon 'logic' - that is a scheme associated with a notion of culture which is both a static system of logical categories and/or a set of systematic processes. These underlying structures based upon 'logical' categories and principles ensure that whatever 'transformation' of structure takes place does so in a particular way. The outcome of this theoretical stance is that an underlying structure is given as prior to any practice and therefore limits absolutely the possibilities of practice. At a basic level there is, therefore, no difference between Bernstein's codes and attendant roles and Willis' description of culture as agent.

In moving away from the idea of a 'natural' distribution of logic, Bernstein has followed a line of sociology dating back to Durkheim, which proposes that the idea of 'logic' has to be framed within the functional needs of society, and that the primary need is social cohesion. Willis unintentionally adopts this stance. There are, therefore, socially generated logical imperatives to which practice or social action must conform. When linked to a concept of class, this functional logic limits
the possibilities of 'struggle' to a defined set of 'oppositional' outcomes. In Willis these outcomes again conform to a functional logic in that they merely serve the prime function of social cohesion of the working class. Failure becomes 'positively expressive'. The theory, in short, leads to a circularity which cannot be escaped.

Both theories are unable to give adequate causal accounts of unequal educational outcomes between classes, or to provide plans of action which can lead to a genuine transformation of the structures of power within schooling. Despite Willis' protestations about agency, production and 'transformation' his theory precludes any truly historical treatment of causes. The 'cultural moment' (1983:112) which he refers to is not a moment of, to use his term, 'meaning making' (1983:112). It is a moment of class subjects receiving a pre-given meaning. The outcome is that the 'meaning' which is received is not only the outcome of a prior 'logic' but the oppressed practice which ensues from it is itself 'symbolic'. An ethnography built upon these closed theoretical presumptions can only confirm them.

If there is to be a positive move towards an adequate causal account of social factors operating through schooling then the basic presumptions of this theory must be challenged. What is required is an account of structures (i.e. that which gives conventional form to social life) emerging from practice or social action itself, not from essential meanings, formed by
a-priori schemes of logic. Such an account would not reduce the limitations imposed on practice by material conditions to a question of 'meaning'.

The unrecognized nature of essential meanings and logics of class-culture is not the starting point for an adequate analysis of the phenomenon of unequal outcomes in education, or the basis for programs of intervention. A reformist program must identify class-based practices of students. A second step is to identify the limitations imposed by conventions established outside the school in relation to educational aims based upon principles of equity. A third step is to establish educational practices which challenge limiting conventions. This requires at its base a theory of social action in which the primary concept is social action itself.

More broadly, the works of Bernstein and Willis show in a concrete form the problems inherent in any theory that views practice as an execution of culture. The differences between Bernstein and Willis, and more importantly, their similarities, show that these problems are not resolved by the simple addition of the concept of agency to traditional conceptions of structure to form the structure/agency couple.
APPENDIX

REVISIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF RESISTANCE

The prominent American educational theorists, Aronwitz and Giroux (1985) make a number of important criticisms of 'resistance theory' as proposed by Willis and other analyses (emerging from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies). In brief these are as follows.

. While resistance theories point to schools as social 'sites' in which 'dominant culture is encountered and challenged by subordinate groups, they do not adequately conceptualize the historical development of the conditions that promote and reinforce contradictory modes of resistance and struggle' (1985:99).

. Not all 'oppositional' behaviour is a clear cut response to domination, i.e. dominant forms transmitted by the school, and proper analysis must distinguish between those behaviours which have a 'radical significance' and those which do not (1985:99). In some cases students may be
totally indifferent to the ideology of the school with its respective rewards and demands (1985:101). Furthermore, behaviour may be the result of compliance to larger ideological forces - such as racism and sexism - and have nothing to do with 'resistance'. That is domination is not singularly informed or exhausted by the logic of class oppression (1985:102).

Analyses of resistance have therefore tended to romanticize or idealize certain reactionary views especially in relation to race and gender.

Resistance theories have tended to focus on overt acts of rebellious student behaviour - misconstruing the significance of overt rebelliousness and ignoring less obvious forms of resistance. Less obvious forms of resistance such as humour used by students to disrupt class routines may be a more positive focus for future analyses in that such practices allow students to continue to participate while 'resisting'. Such forms do not render students powerless in the long term.

While some students are able to 'see through' the lies and contradictions of dominant school ideology, they do not necessarily decide to translate such insights into extreme and debilitating forms of rebelliousness.
This is a rather different view of resistance than that proposed by Willis, who sees the idea of 'counter-school culture' as producing, at best, only semi-conscious awareness and therefore leading to obligatory behaviours which are then termed 'resistance'. Aronowitz and Giroux see the knowledge transmitted by the school as at least partially valuable, and not totally wrought by dominant ideology. Most importantly, they see current theories of resistance neglecting the issue of how resistance theory can be used to develop a 'critical pedagogy', 'which takes the notion of emancipation as its guiding interest' (1985:105).

That is, the nature and meaning of an act of resistance must be defined by the degree to which it contains possibilities to develop what Herbert Marcuse termed 'a commitment to emancipation of sensibility, imagination and reason in all spheres of subjectivity and objectivity' (1985:105).

That is, the significance of practices must be judged in reference to the 'emancipatory' capacity which they hold.

Having made such criticisms Aronowitz and Giroux suggest the following outline of a 'cultural studies' approach.

In the concept of cultural production we find the basis for a theory of human agency, one which is constructed through the active, ongoing, collective medium of oppressed groups' experiences....As Willis suggests, theories of resistance point to new ways of constructing a radical pedagogy by developing analyses of the ways in which class and culture combine to offer the outlines of 'cultural politics'. At the core of such a politics is a semiotic reading of the style, rituals, language and cultural terrains of subordinate groups. Through
this process it becomes possible to analyze what counterhegemonic elements such cultural fields contain, and how they tend to become incorporated into the dominant culture and subsequently stripped of their political possibilities. Implicit in such an analysis is the need to develop strategies in schools in which oppositional cultures might be rescued from the processes of incorporation to provide the basis for a viable political force (1985:98-99).

The basic premise in this account is the idea of a counter culture, that is, a spontaneously occurring class identity which rests on collective experience formed in class opposition and which is 'significant' and 'meaningful' to its members.

Nevertheless, some of the basic problem associated with Willis' theory of cultural studies remains - the potential over-ascription of significance and meaning to the social practices and beliefs of oppressed groups by construing these practices as oppositional manifestations of a larger class structure.
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