

Chapter 2

Analysing Knowledge Claims and Practices: Languages of Legitimation

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The medium is also a message.

Introduction

My principal purpose is to illustrate the significance of the structuring of knowledge for an understanding of intellectual and educational fields. At the same time I introduce a conceptual framework that both offers a social realist approach to education (see Chapter 1, this volume) and bridges a divide between what Basil Bernstein describes as analyses of ‘relations to’ and ‘relations within’ education (1990, pp. 165–80). According to Bernstein, the sociology of education has been overwhelmingly preoccupied with analyses of *relations to* education, such as the relations of class, race and gender to curricula and pedagogy. However, it has

rarely turned its attention to the analysis of the intrinsic features constituting and distinguishing the specialized form of communication realized by the pedagogic discourse of education. (1990, p. 165)

This blindspot became increasingly salient after the ‘new’ sociology of education of the early 1970s. Previous research was dominated by a philosophy of education tradition which analysed academic subjects in terms of their development into ‘indisputably logically cohesive disciplines’ (Hirst 1967, p. 44). The new sociology of education critiqued this asocial and ahistorical approach as objectifying the internal structuring of educational knowledge and proposed a rejuvenated sociology of knowledge (Young 1971). However, as Bernstein argues, ‘this programme, whatever else it produced, did not produce what it called for’ (1990, p. 166). From

phenomenological studies of classroom interaction in the 1970s to preoccupations with post-structuralism and ‘voice’ discourse in the 1990s, the emphasis has tended towards the study of how knowledge works to reproduce external social relations of power rather than of the structure of knowledge itself. While highlighting the coupling of power/knowledge, such approaches have tended to reduce knowledge to power (see this volume, Chapter 1).

Knowledge has, in other words, been taken for granted and treated as if it were ‘no more than a relay for power relations external to itself; a relay whose form has no consequences for what is relayed’ (Bernstein 1990, p. 166). A proposed sociology of knowledge became realized as a sociology without a theory of knowledge; in effect, the focus has been on the message at the expense of the medium. My premise here is that, as Alexander puts it, ‘the sociology of knowledge can never substitute for the analysis of knowledge’ (1995, p. 129). My argument is that the medium of intellectual production and educational reproduction – the structuring of knowledge – is itself also a message. This raises questions of how one analyses and the significance of these relations within knowledge; that is, what messages this medium might tell us and how we can register them. This chapter illustrates one answer to these questions through an analysis of the development of British cultural studies within higher education.

Integration through ‘legitimation’

The form taken by this answer itself requires explanation. Analyses of the sociology of education have described a schismatic development of oppositional and incommensurable approaches (Moore 1996a). One example is a perceived tension within the field between the approaches of Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu. Despite both arguing for a cumulative and scientific sociology of education, the tendency is to compare and contrast their work with a view to declaring a winner (e.g. Harker & May 1993). Ironically, given Bourdieu’s analysis of struggles for distinction (1984), they have been largely kept distinct at least since the 1970s. In contrast, I aim to overcome this false dichotomy, not at the philosophical level of a meta-discourse on their relative merits, but by illustrating one dimension of a conceptual framework that integrates insights from both their approaches.

The frameworks of Bourdieu and Bernstein offer a sociology of knowledge and a theory of knowledge, respectively. Bourdieu’s ‘field’ theory provides a means of describing intellectual and educational fields in terms

of relationally positioned struggles over status and resources; Bernstein's 'code' theory offers a means of conceptualizing the structuring of knowledge. Bourdieu's approach embraces questions of 'who', 'where', 'when' and 'how'; Bernstein's framework additionally captures the hitherto neglected issue of 'what' (1996, pp. 169–81). In short, Bourdieu highlights how intellectual and educational fields of practice structure knowledge, while Bernstein highlights the structuring significance of knowledge for those fields. Between them, their approaches conceive of knowledge as a structured and structuring structure.

Here I outline a potential means of embracing these insights by analysing knowledge-related practices as embodying claims made by actors on behalf of those practices. When actors make knowledge claims or engage in practices they are at the same time making a claim of legitimacy for those practices. Knowledge claims and practices can thus be understood as *languages of legitimation*: claims made by actors for carving out and maintaining intellectual and institutional spaces within education. These claims propose a ruler for participation within the field and proclaim criteria by which achievement within this field should be measured (cf. Bernstein 1990). Languages of legitimation thereby represent the basis for competing claims to limited status and material resources within education; they are strategic stances aimed at maximizing actors' positions within a relationally structured field of struggles (cf. Bourdieu 1988). At the same time, from a social realist perspective (see Chapter 1, this volume) the knowledge comprising these claims may be legitimate. That is, knowledge is not merely a reflection of power relations but also comprises more or less epistemologically powerful claims to truth. Social power and knowledge are intertwined but irreducible to one another; knowledge comprises both sociological and epistemological forms of power. Thus by conceiving of knowledge in terms of 'legitimation', an awareness of the structured and positioned nature of strategic position-takings within a field can be brought together with an emphasis upon the structuring and non-arbitrary nature of potentially legitimate knowledge claims; that is, embracing 'relations to' and 'relations within' analyses of knowledge, the knower and the known.

The chapter begins by briefly sketching the development of British cultural studies. By analysing the structuring principles underlying its language of legitimation, I outline a generative conceptualization of *legitimation codes*. This framework is then employed in analyses of relations to and relations within cultural studies. First, I analyse the relations of the social and institutional positions occupied by cultural studies to its legitimation code. Secondly, I outline the intrinsic dynamic generated by relations

within the legitimation code, focusing on its ramifications for the field's trajectory. The latter analysis thus aims to show how an understanding of relations within knowledge sheds light on its location within social relations of power. Lastly, I briefly consider implications for the future direction of the sociology of knowledge and education.

British Cultural Studies in British Higher Education¹

Institutional trajectory

For research into the institutionalization of cultural studies, I constructed a database of every course, option and module in cultural, media and communication studies offered in post-war British institutions of higher education, collected archival sources detailing the development of courses and collated information on the social profile of its student population. Analysis of this data reveals general patterns of institutionalization, two of which I shall focus on here: the sustained marginality and relative invisibility of cultural studies as a distinct, named area of study within British higher education.

Drawing on typologies of post-war British higher education institutions (e.g. King 1970; Tight 1996), cultural studies can be characterized as having occupied positions of relatively lower status within the institutional field throughout its emergence and development. Indeed, the first stirrings of interest in commercial or 'mass' culture as an educational issue arose outside universities. The earliest professional associations (such as the Society of Film Teachers 1950), journals (*The Film Teacher* 1952), conferences (National Union of Teachers 1960) and courses (Mains 1965) in Britain were based in primary and secondary level education. Within this nascent educational formation the universities were considered solely in terms of the need for training schoolteachers and research on schooling (Harcourt 1964). When courses in cultural studies did emerge within higher education during the late 1950s, they were on the margins of the field, in extra-mural departments of adult education (Steele 1997), technical colleges (Hall 1964), colleges of art (Burton 1964) and teacher training colleges (Knight 1962). Similarly, the 'founding texts' of cultural studies (typically listed as Hoggart 1957; Williams 1958, 1961; Thompson 1963) were written by tutors of English in adult education.

During the 1960s several research centres in cultural studies emerged on the margins of existing university departments. The best-known example is the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University

(CCCS), founded in 1964. Although the CCCS is now viewed as having been a site of intellectual pioneering, University of Birmingham (1964–74, 1975–89) and CCCS (1964–81) annual reports and my own interviews with participants show that its institutional standing was less impressive. The CCCS comprised limited staff (two and a half full-time equivalent staff supervised well over 220 postgraduate students in the period 1964–80) and endured low status in the eyes of actors within established disciplines (CCCS 1964–81; Hall 1990). The Centre survived financially through outside funding from the publishing company Penguin and sporadic projects commissioned by external bodies, such as UNESCO. At first Birmingham University offered only furniture and accommodation, the minimal nature of which is illustrated by directions given to prospective students in the late 1960s:

The new Centre hut may be found by taking the main entrance to the Administration building; left along the corridor, first stairs down on the right; left at the bottom and left again into the back courtyard. The hut is at the far end of the outer courtyard, overlooking the parapet. (CCCS 1968, p. 4)

The main expansion of cultural studies as a taught academic subject occurred after the late 1970s, when it established a foothold within degree courses in colleges, the Open University (part-time distance learning) and former polytechnics, with a comparatively small presence in the longer established and higher status pre-1992 ‘older’ universities. This institutional clustering has borne the brunt of educational expansion over the past 30 years and the social profile of the student body with which cultural studies is typically associated reflects this position. Bolstered by arguments that the less educated the pupil, the more susceptible they are to media influence (Newsom Report 1963), the study of mass culture often first entered curricula for the purposes of either cultivating critical discrimination among pupils deemed of lower ability or providing a liberal education enticing to non-traditional students thought to be unattracted by established disciplines (Hall & Whannel 1964). In addition, the status of the central intellectual figures of the field as social outsiders in higher education are oft-noted within the subject area (Turner 1990). Cultural studies has, in short, been associated with dominated social groups and low status institutions.

At the same time, cultural studies is often considered to have been a growth area within higher education since the 1980s (Milner 1994) and

new journals, textbooks, conferences and courses which claim cultural studies among their central concerns have proliferated. However, in terms of numbers of departments, degree courses and students, cultural studies as a *named* area of study remains a relatively small-scale phenomenon. If it has found a place in the sun, this has largely been within other academic subjects, rather than in its own right. The institutional history of cultural studies is one of origins in the interstices of the curriculum and infiltration via existing subject areas. Its emergence within British higher education was within courses of 'liberal studies', 'social studies', 'general studies' and 'complementary studies' (Kitses 1964); the CCCS was established within an English department; and today much of what is commonly referred to as 'cultural studies' teaching and research is conducted within departments and courses and by actors with professional titles displaying a variety of nomenclature. Cultural studies is often visible more as an adjunct or adjective to more established disciplines (e.g. 'English and cultural studies', 'cultural geography') than as a distinct entity within higher education.

Even where it has found institutional spaces of its own, its position has been anything but certain. The first full degree course offered in Cultural Studies (at Portsmouth University, 1975) was closed down in 1999 and its teaching staff retired or dispersed despite a healthy student intake. Even the renowned CCCS was seriously threatened with closure at least twice and saved after a concerted campaign by international scholars proclaiming its *intellectual* significance (CCCS 1964–81).² Such institutional vulnerability has been reinforced by the scattered nature of the field. Courses and departments of cultural studies have typically been established as the result of individual initiatives (Mainds 1965) and professional subject associations have been until recently ad hoc, limited or short-lived; the first national organization embracing intellectual and institutional responsibilities (the Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association) had its first annual conference in 2000.

This marginal institutional presence has been reflected in the status of the subject area. Cultural studies has long been the subject of attacks from both within and without higher education. From inception, it has been depicted as unacademic, politically pernicious and undermining academic standards (Watson 1977), a famous example being the eagerness with which the 'Sokal Hoax', perpetrated in the American journal *Social Text*, was taken up in Britain (Osborne 1997). In summary, cultural studies as a specialized academic subject has generally emerged and developed within the dominated pole of the field of British higher education institutions.

Language of legitimation: the voice of cultural studies

As outlined above, I shall explore how British cultural studies has been legitimated by its proponents rather than describing specific instances of enacted curricula or recounting its intellectual history. Focusing on its main period of institutionalization, since the late 1970s, two key themes of this language of legitimation coalesce around questions of disciplinarity and notions of 'giving voice to'.

The vexed question of discipline

Proponents of cultural studies have often legitimated the subject area as 'multi-', 'cross-', 'inter-', 'post-', 'trans' or even 'anti-disciplinary' (Brantlinger 1990). Perceived signs of impending disciplinary status, such as the establishing of named degree courses, have evoked warnings that the defining oppositional status of the subject area is endangered (Hall 1992; Johnson 1983). Cultural studies has thus remained committed to breaking down academic boundaries, such as between: established disciplines; 'official' educational knowledge and everyday experience; 'high' and 'low' culture; inside and outside higher education; and the teacher and the taught. Such images of blurring, crossing and transgressing established borders or boundaries (intellectual, social, physical and so forth) feature regularly within its legitimating discourse. As 'undisciplined', cultural studies is also characterized by its advocates as free from disciplinary notions of a delimited object of study and specialized procedures of enquiry (Turner 1990). Although the subject area is nominally cultural studies, the definition of 'culture' and how it should be studied are often either explicitly eschewed or held open (Milner 1994). When defined, its object of study is typically boundless in scope – typified by such influential definitions as the study of 'a whole way of life' (following Williams 1961) – and specialized procedures are eschewed in favour of celebrating diversity in theories, methodologies and methods (McGuigan 1997). Indeed, that there is no defining 'cultural studies' approach is conventionally the opening remark of accounts of the subject area (Turner 1990). As a whole, its proclaimed objects of study and procedures of enquiry are thus *hypothetically* uncircumscribed.

Another central characteristic of cultural studies, related to this non-disciplinarity, is a proclaimed anti-canonical stance. Practitioners of cultural studies regularly announce its rebirth and their own originality and freshness, decentring its intellectual tradition (Wright 1998). The conventional account of its development is characterized by: a theoretical landscape of

recurrent rupture and renewal (Hall 1971), illustrated by its enthusiasm for ‘post-’ theories, such as post-structuralism and postmodernism (McRobbie 1994); interventions on behalf of silenced voices declaring new beginnings (see below); and a rapid turnover of substantive areas of enquiry, related to the subject’s preoccupation with the contemporary and new (Pickering 1997). Cultural studies is thus typically defined as developing by way of radical disjunctures, where progress is measured by the addition of new voices or ‘theories of the break’ rather than in terms of a cumulatively developing canon.

‘Giving voice to’

Practitioners often identify cultural studies with a radical educational project committed to offering an oppositional pedagogy capable of empowering dominated social groups (Canaan & Epstein 1997). It has become associated with student-centred forms of teaching, more participatory forms of evaluation and social organization in education, and more open curricular structures, as well as pioneering innovative intellectual practices such as collaborative group work, collective authorship and publishing unfinished student research (McNeil 1997). The unifying thrust of these initiatives is the intention to ‘give voice to’ the knowledge and experience of those said to be silenced within official educational knowledge. This notion of ‘giving voice to’ members of marginalized social groups has become a central theme in the legitimation of cultural studies, associating its *raison d’être* with the dominated social positions of those whose interests it claims to be serving (Gray 1997). Correspondingly, the curricular history of cultural studies is conventionally schematized as centred upon the successive study of social class, race, gender and sexuality (Brantlinger 1990). In such accounts, key texts first focus upon giving voice to the experiences of working-class men (e.g. Willis 1977), turn to address the silenced voice of women (Women’s Studies Group, CCCS 1978) and then of ethnic minorities (CCCS 1982), before more recently highlighting marginalized voices of sexuality (McRobbie 1997).

Cultural studies has thus been a key site within higher education for various interventions by feminism, race studies, queer theory and so forth. Common to these has been a critique of the ability of existing voices to represent a new voice, underpinned by (often implicit) notions of standpoint epistemology (Carby 1982); that is, an epistemological privileging of claims to specialized and unique insight based upon one’s subjective experiences as a member of a specific, usually dominated, social category. Cultural studies is also legitimated as having been central to the development

of anti-positivist and anti-foundationalist ideas, employing contextualist and perspectival epistemologies to celebrate difference and emphasize the multiplicity of truths and narratives against notions of objective truth and 'grand narratives'. These various theories share the contention that knowledge claims are reducible to the social characteristics of the group voicing them and a critique of notions of the possibility of a neutral voice expressing objective scientific truth. Cultural studies has thus tended to valorize the subjective over the objective, and primary experience over the detached viewpoint (Gray 1997). Studies of youth subcultures (Thornton & Gelder 1996) and of audiences (Morley 1992), for example, typically argue against an 'elitist' privileging of the detached observer and for beginning with participants' experiences, highlight the active construction of meanings 'from below', and explore subjectivity and identity. Similarly, the self-labelling of qualitative audience reception studies as 'ethnographic' – despite often involving limited contact time with the subjects of study, unnatural settings for this contact, and a focus upon only one aspect of their lives – highlights the guiding principle of giving voice to the viewpoint 'from below' (Murdock 1997).

Legitimation Codes

It is easy enough to proclaim one should view knowledge as 'a structured and structuring structure', but unless one can state what this structure comprises and how it differs from other possible structurings, then such a view remains limited to the metaphysical sphere. Thus before illustrating the structuring significance for the field of cultural studies of its language of legitimation, I shall first analyse the underlying principles structuring this language, necessitating an excursion into more theoretical discourse than hitherto. In accordance with my intention of embracing both approaches, I shall conceptualize languages of legitimation in terms of both relations within and relations to this knowledge formation. This distinction may be clarified by conceiving of knowledge as having two co-existing but analytically distinct sets of relations, highlighting that knowledge claims and practices are simultaneously claims to knowledge of the world and by authors, or oriented towards or about something and by somebody. These I shall term:

- the *epistemic relation*: between knowledge and its proclaimed object (that part of the world of which knowledge is claimed or towards which practices are oriented); and

- the *social relation*: between knowledge and its subject, author or actor (who is making the claim to knowledge or action).

In terms of languages of legitimation, this equates respectively to the questions of *what* can be legitimately described as, for example, ‘cultural studies’ and of *who* can legitimately claim to be producing legitimate ‘cultural studies’ knowledge. To analyse the answers cultural studies has given to these questions, I shall draw upon Bernstein’s concepts of classification and framing (1975). The strength of *classification* (+/-C) refers to the relative strength of boundaries *between* categories or contexts (such as academic subjects in a curriculum); and the strength of *framing* (+/-F) refers to the locus of control *within* a category or context (stronger framing indicating stronger control from above, such as by a teacher).

The epistemic relation (ER) between cultural studies and its object of study is defined in its language of legitimation in terms of an espoused opposition to notions of disciplinarity, a relatively uncircumscribed object of study, open procedures of enquiry and teaching, and a commitment to problematizing categories, boundaries and hierarchies between and within forms of knowledge and objects of study. In other words, cultural studies can be described as attempting to *weaken* both classification and framing of the epistemic relation (-C, -F of ER, or simply ER-). In contrast, the social relation (SR) of this language of legitimation exhibits relatively *stronger* classification and framing (+C, +F of SR, or SR+). Here the emphasis is on ‘giving voice to’ the primary experience of specific knowers, where legitimate knowledge or ‘truth’ is defined by and restricted to the specific ‘voice’ said to have unique and privileged insight by virtue of who the speaker is. In other words, this language of legitimation places different strengths of boundaries around and control over the definitions of, on the one hand, what can be claimed knowledge of and how (ER-), and, on the other hand, who can claim knowledge (SR+).

Developing this distinction, one can outline a generative means of conceptualizing one dimension of *legitimation codes* or the structuring principles underlying knowledge claims and practices. Here I focus on ‘specialization’ or what makes someone or something different, special and worthy of distinction.³ Varying independently the relative strengths of (classification and framing for) the epistemic and social relations generates four potential legitimation codes of specialization, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Here I shall focus on two legitimation codes: the *knowledge code* and the *knower code*. These refer to a distinction between legitimating knowledge by reference to procedures specialized to an object of study (knowledge code)

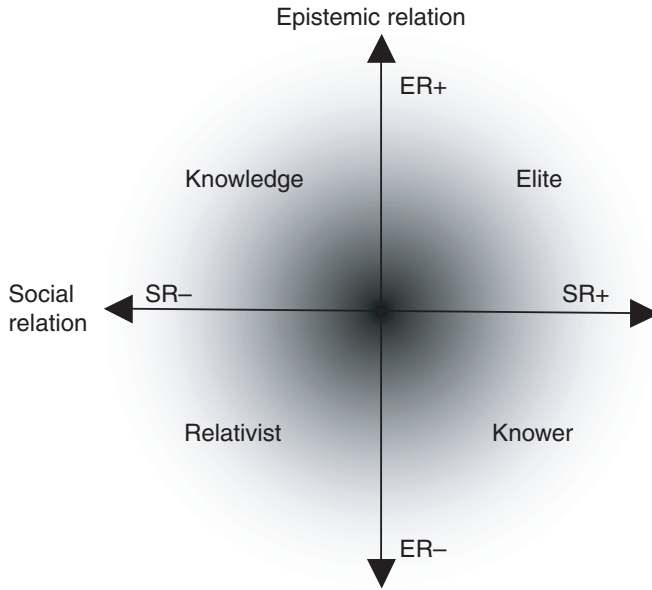


FIGURE 2.1 Legitimation codes of specialization

or personal characteristics of the author, actor or subject (knower code); that is, whether knowledge is specialized by its epistemic relation or its social relation. (The *elite code* refers to where legitimacy is based on both possessing specialist knowledge and being the right kind of knower; and the *relativist code* to where legitimate insight is ostensibly determined by neither specialist knowledge nor specific dispositions.) Table 2.1 presents the relative strengths of classifications and framings of the epistemic and social relations for knowledge and knower codes. I begin by defining a knowledge code, the opposing form of legitimation to that exhibited by cultural studies.

TABLE 2.1 Classification and framing of two legitimation codes

	Epistemic relation	Social relation
Knowledge code	(1) +C, +F	(2) -C, -F
Knower code	(3) -C, -F	(4) +C, +F

Note:

C = classification; F = framing. Plus (+)/minus (-) signs refer to stronger/weaker, respectively. Cell numbers refer to the order of discussion in the chapter.

In Figure 2.1 the above readings of C/F are condensed; e.g. cell number 1, ER(+C, +F) becomes ER+, and cell 2, SR(-C, -F) become SR-.

Knowledge codes

- (1) Intellectual fields exhibiting knowledge codes are legitimated by reference to specialized procedures which are claimed to provide insight into a specified, discrete object of study (an explicitly realist epistemology).⁴ This code thus emphasizes the difference between the field's constructed object of study and other objects, and between the knowledge its procedures are claimed to provide of this object and that provided by other intellectual fields – thereby exhibiting relatively *strong classification* of the epistemic relation. Its domain of study is thus not endless, and strong controls exist to ensure that the field's procedures are not 'misapplied' to inappropriate objects of study and its object of study is not 'misappropriated' by other fields using different procedures. There is thus relatively little personal discretion in the choice of objects of study, procedures and criteria – relatively *strong framing* – an adequate grasp of which serves as the basis of professional identity within the field.
- (2) These disembodied sets of more or less consensual, relatively formal and explicit procedures and criteria are said to transcend differences among social categories of actors. In terms of their subjective characteristics, actors are neither strongly differentiated nor strongly controlled in their relation to legitimate knowledge claims. Everyone is said to be equally positioned in relation to the knowledge and practices of the field, and (it is claimed) anyone can produce knowledge provided they comply with these defining extra-personal practices. Knowledge codes thus exhibit relatively *weak classification* and *weak framing* of the social relation.

Knower codes

- (3) Where knowledge codes legitimate intellectual fields according to specialized procedures for generating knowledge of a distinct object of study, knower codes base claims for fields on a privileged *subject* of study, the 'knower'. This specialized knower may claim unique knowledge of more than a delimited object of study; the knower's focus for truth claims may be hypothetically boundless, difficult to define, or encompass a host of disparate and seemingly unconnected objects of study. In other words, knower codes display relatively *weak classification* of the epistemic relation. The procedures of enquiry and criteria of validation prevalent within the field are thereby not deemed

appropriate/inappropriate according to a defined object of study, (hypothetically) enabling more personal discretion in the choice of topics, methods and criteria. The procedures are thus relatively tacit, and adjudication of competing knowledge claims on strictly 'intellectual' grounds is deemed problematic, if not directly renounced. In short, knower codes display relatively *weak framing* of the epistemic relation.

- (4) Based on the unique insight of the knower, claims to knowledge by actors within the intellectual field are legitimated by reference to the knower's subjective or inter-subjective attributes and personal experiences (which serve as the basis for professional identity within the field). The aim is to 'give voice to' this experiential knowledge, with 'truth' being defined by the 'voice'. This unique knowledge is specialized to the privileged knower such that actors with different subjective characteristics are unable to make claims about this knowledge, and attempts to do so risk evoking censure from the field. The knower code thus exhibits relatively *strong classification* and *strong framing* of its social relation.

Summary

The knowledge code refers to languages of legitimation with relatively strong classification and framing of the epistemic relation and relatively weak classification and framing of the social relation (ER+, SR-); and the knower code refers to those languages of legitimation where these relative strengths are reversed (ER-, SR+; see Table 2.1). The key distinction between these two codes lies in which of the two relations specializes legitimacy within the field, that is, which is emphasized when actors claim a special status for the knowledge and practices of the field and thereby define its boundaries and limits. In the knowledge code such claims are validated, and the limits of the field defined, by specialized procedures claimed as exclusive to the field (the epistemic relation), and in the knower code by the privileged insight of the author (the social relation). In both cases it is the relation which is *strongly* classified and framed that provides the epistemological basis of truth claims, and the relation which is *weakly* classified and framed that comprises the (intellectual/social) resources drawn upon to make this truth claim. Those categories which are epistemological in the knowledge code are sociological in the knower code and a movement within an intellectual field from one code to the other effectively replaces epistemology with sociology.

Empirical realizations of legitimation codes

These two codes are not dichotomous ideal types. Rather, the two relations represent an analytical distinction between empirically co-existing and articulating dimensions of knowledge and practices. The strengths for the two relations are relative and represent continua. The four legitimation codes of Figure 2.1 are thus akin to naming directions created by points on a compass to help orientate oneself within a terrain. The lack of empirical examples given above is intentional, for their realizations as *languages* of legitimation are a function of the context – what lies North or South (or ER+/-) is relative to where one is standing. The structuring relations of power and control inhering within specific empirical contexts will condition which features of these codes are enabled and realized. The conceptualization does not, therefore, negate empirical analysis of the knowledge and practices of specific intellectual fields. Indeed, such conceptual development itself results from, highlights the necessity of, and (by defining the phenomena to be investigated) enables empirical investigation of specific realizations of knowledge in determinate conditions.

One must also distinguish between modelling academic practices and conceptualizing the principles underlying academic rhetoric regarding those practices. The above conceptualizations are inadequate as accounts of social practices in intellectual fields only inasmuch as self-characterizations are inadequate as descriptions of what practitioners actually do. That knowledge and knower codes may misrepresent the ongoing practices of actors does not prevent the very same actors from propagating these codes on their behalf. The inadequacy of these accounts as descriptions of intellectual and educational practice is thus not at issue here. My concern is with the underlying structuring principles of these accounts. Moreover, as I shall illustrate, understanding these principles of legitimation shows how the form taken by such strategic claims helps to shape the development of intellectual fields.

Analysing Relations to and Relations within Knower Codes

Using these concepts, the language of legitimation of British cultural studies since the late 1970s can be redescribed as one kind of knower code. This begins to address how relations within knowledge may be analysed; the questions remain, however, of the significance and value of such analyses and of whether this conceptualization is applicable in both ‘relations to’ and ‘relations within’ analyses. To address these issues, I shall briefly

outline two illustrative analyses of the development of this knower code in terms of: (i) *relations to* its institutional positionings; and (ii) *relations within* this knowledge, focusing upon the ramifications of the knower code’s intrinsic dynamic for the intellectual field’s institutional trajectory within higher education. The aim is to illustrate how knowledge is both structured by and in turn structures intellectual fields. (I should highlight the crucial distinction between the *content* and purposes of a language of legitimation, such as advancing the claims of marginalized social groups, and its *structure*. What follows is *not* intended as a critique of the political and educational project of cultural studies; if anything, it may highlight that its means might not always serve its ends).

Analysing relations to knower codes

To analyse relations to knowledge requires focusing on its social and institutional positionings. Drawing upon Bourdieu (1984), one can characterize society (or ‘social space’) as structured according to, first, dominant (+) and dominated (–) poles or classes, and then, within each class, according to dominant and dominated class fractions (see Figure 2.2). For Bourdieu

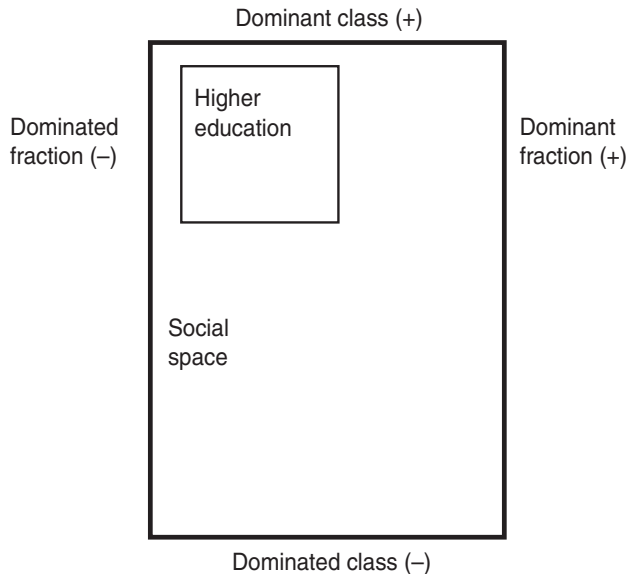


FIGURE 2.2 Social position of the field of higher education

(1988), higher education is located in the *dominated* fraction of the dominant class, its dominant social position being based upon cultural capital (knowledge and know-how) which is subordinate relative to economic capital. As outlined earlier, cultural studies emerged and developed within relatively low-status institutions associated with the teaching of socially and educationally marginalized social groups. It has thus occupied subordinate positions within the dominated fraction of the dominant class (higher education). According to Bourdieu's approach, intellectuals are prone to perceiving their dominated class fraction position as homologous to that of the dominated class in society as a whole: in Figure 2.2, the homologous relation of '+' and '-' between the axes of top-bottom and right-left. Cultural studies has occupied positions of multiple domination within higher education, making it a very plausible candidate for this kind of thinking, that is, regarding the hierarchical relations of the internal structure of the higher education field as applicable beyond this field to wider social relations, generating a perception of shared interests.

One finds this process reflected in the language of legitimation of cultural studies. Due to the sponsored mobility of a small number of scholarship boys (Hoggart 1957; Turner 1971), cultural studies began primarily with the working class as a dominant focus of enquiry. It also emerged out of attempts, via the involvement of its 'founding fathers' in the New Left and adult education, to forge alliances with the working class (Kenny 1995). The feminist intervention in cultural studies during the mid-1970s argued that the working class had served not only as a privileged empirical object of study but also as the epistemological basis of knowledge claims within the field; that is, that working-class membership operated as the specific social category upon which claims to privileged insight were made – a knower code of legitimation.⁵ Social mobility through prolonged education, however, makes claims to membership of or shared interests with the working class increasingly hard to sustain. Thus one finds attempts within cultural studies to construct a theoretical basis for overcoming the distance between past social class origins and current social class position such as notions, drawing on Gramsci, of the 'organic intellectual' during the late 1970s. However, despite educational expansion, the proportion of working-class students within higher education remains relatively small, restricting the supply of potential organic intellectuals. In cases where actors are from other social class backgrounds, one then finds attempts to develop various theories of structural homology, such as the academic as 'intellectual

proletarian'. This becomes the basis of what can be termed an *imaginary alliance* (between the 'intellectual' and 'proletarian'). Richard Johnson, for example, writes,

My best practices, I imagine, seek out and ally with marginal positions, their agenda of study, and critical intellectual projects . . . I see the history of Cultural Studies . . . as a story of such alliances. (1997, p. 48)

Paradoxically for cultural studies, where this imaginary alliance is based on perceived similarities of social position it risks downplaying the role of *cultural capital*, the principal difference between the social positions of intellectuals and dominated classes. Conversely, social class tends to be suppressed as a marker of difference (between academic and non-academic members of the knower group) when membership or representation claims are based upon non-class characteristics, such as race, gender and sexuality. It is thus perhaps not entirely unrelated that social class has come to be eclipsed within cultural studies during the rise to prominence of these 'interventions'.

The idea of an imaginary alliance, however (like Bourdieu's notion of field on which it builds), is rather static. To address the development of academic subjects over time, it must be set in motion. In the case of cultural studies, the history of its knowledge structure comprises a *procession of the excluded*: the working class, women, ethnic minorities and so on. In other words, the field takes on the characteristics of a queue: once one group enters (usually within legitimating discourse rather than higher education institutions as staff or students), then another group appears to take its place outside the door demanding (or having demands made on its behalf for) entry. Until everyone and/or their experiences are included within higher education and/or knowledge, there is always scope for a new excluded group to emerge. This may explain the restless search for a new 'proletariat' (based on class, race, gender, sexuality) which characterizes cultural studies (Harris 1992).

In Bourdieu's approach, the relational practices ('position-takings' or 'stances') of actors within a specific field are viewed as being determined by their relational positions within that field. Positions and stances are 'methodologically inseparable' and 'must be analyzed together', but '*the space of positions tends to command the space of position-takings*' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, p. 105, original emphasis). Basically, actors are held to be inclined towards conservative/subversive strategies, depending upon

whether they occupy dominant / dominated positions, respectively, within the field. The discursive practices of cultural studies can thus be explained in terms of actors' strategies reflecting their institutional and social positions. In short, actors from dominated social positions (the working class, women, etc.) tend to occupy dominated institutional positions within higher education (colleges, polytechnics, etc.). By virtue of these positions of multiple domination, they are inclined to adopt subversive 'position-takings' in an attempt to maximize their position: against dominant notions of disciplinary specialization, cultural studies celebrates non-disciplinarity; against traditional pedagogy is set a radical educational project; against positivism, subjective experience is privileged and so forth. Thus, given the perceived dominance of knowledge codes within higher education during the development of cultural studies, a knower code provided the oppositional means for actors occupying dominated positions to attempt to subvert the hierarchy of the field. A form of this explanation can indeed be found within cultural studies itself; Epstein (1997), for example, emphasizes the subversive potential of marginal academic positions.

The whole story?

To conclude at this point, accounting for the legitimation code of cultural studies as reflecting its social positions within higher education, would be to have undertaken an (albeit simplistic) analysis of 'relations to': the relations of a language of legitimation to its social and institutional positions. As briefly illustrated above, such an analysis provides insights into questions of who, where, when, how and why. However, in this approach the form taken by knowledge is constructed as arbitrary and historically contingent and an analysis of its structural history viewed as irrelevant for an understanding of its development. Actors tend to adopt (subversive) practices which reflect their (dominated) relational position, regardless of the form taken by these practices. From this perspective it is perfectly feasible that if relativism had been dominant, cultural studies would now be associated with positivism. In other words, the *function* of languages of legitimation, as strategic 'position-takings', is abstracted from their *form*, which is described only in terms of being oppositionally defined to other possible position-takings. The point is to analyse actors' relational positions within the field, from which their practices can be 'read off'. The knowledge of intellectual fields is thereby viewed as a reflective epiphenomenon

of the play of positions within the field. Such analyses thus have a blindspot: the question of 'what'.

This approach, then, provides only part of the story. I shall now illustrate how analysis of the intrinsic dynamic generated by this form of knower code offers a means of explaining the development of cultural studies without reducing its knowledge to an arbitrary reflection of external power relations. This highlights how relations *within* knowledge are significant both to the way knowledge itself develops and its institutional trajectory. Additionally, by using the same concepts of legitimation codes to consider the structuring of these position-takings, the aim will be to complement rather than displace the above approach.

Analysing relations within knower codes

The legitimation code represented by cultural studies is a particular kind of knower code, one based on a social category.⁶ This social knower code comprises actors claiming to represent the interests of a social group outside academia, as in the notion of 'giving voice to'. Such knower codes base their legitimation upon the privileged insight of a *knower*, and work at maintaining strong boundaries around their definition of this knower – they celebrate difference where 'truth' is defined by the 'knower' or 'voice' – that is, they exhibit strong classification and framing of the social relation. Such discourses are legitimated on the basis of the inability of existing knowledge to articulate the voice of this previously silenced knower. However, once a knower code has succeeded in carving out an institutional or intellectual position within higher education, it is likely to become the most prone to the same legitimating strategy; it is difficult to deny new voices what one has claimed was denied to one's own. Such a strategy thus tends to evoke its own disrupter, a new voice – 'interruptions interrupted' as Brunsdon (1996, p. 179) characterizes feminist work in cultural studies – enabling a procession of the excluded.

If such developments are considered over time, then as each new voice is brought into the academic choir, the category of the new privileged knower becomes ever smaller, each being strongly bounded from one another, for each voice claims its own privileged and specialized knowledge inaccessible to other knowers. The range of knowers within the intellectual field as a whole thus proliferates and fragments, each client knower group having its own representative. For example, this may begin with 'the working class'; then, as the category of the working class fragments under the

impact of the procession of the excluded (as the knower's ability to speak for other voices is critiqued), it may develop as follows:

- class* – the working class
- gender* – working-class men
- race* – white, working-class men
- sexuality* – white, heterosexual, working-class men
- Oxbridge-educated, white heterosexual men of working-class origin in their late twenties currently living in Leicester
- and so on, until you reach . . . me (in 1998).

Thus, while carving out a discursive space for itself, the knower critique of existing voices enables the possibility of its being critiqued in turn using the same legitimation code. Cultural studies itself has often illustrated the multiplicities of subjectivity and identity – the potential categories of new knowers are hypothetically endless. The procession of the excluded thus becomes, in terms of the privileged knower, an accretion of adjectives or 'hyphenation' effect. Thus, while the knower code can be understood as a Bourdieuan strategy of capital maximization, the dynamic of its *intrinsic* structure enables in turn the successive creation of new positions, leading to proliferation and fragmentation within the field.

With this proliferation of knowers, where new knowledge is defined according to the criteria of articulating each knower's specialized voice, and truth is defined as whatever may be said by this voice, then it is not *what* has been said before that matters, it is *who* has said it. It is thus likely that, with each addition of a new adjective or hyphen, existing work within the field will be overhauled – old songs will be sung by new voices in their own distinctive register. Rather than building upon previous knowledge, there is a tendency for new knowers to declare new beginnings, re-definitions and even complete ruptures with the past – an anti-canonical, iconoclastic and parricidal stance generating recurrent schismatic episodes. The intellectual field then gives the appearance of undergoing permanent cultural revolution, of perennially being at year zero. However, although the names and faces featured regularly change, the underlying form of the recurrent radical 'breaks' characterizing the field is the same: they are empirical realizations of knower code legitimation.

This process of proliferation and fragmentation also reduces the social bases for collective political action – the knower code emphasises *difference from* rather than *similarity with*, leading to ever smaller categories of knower. It is then perhaps unsurprising that professional associations within British

cultural studies have often been precarious.⁷ Furthermore, lacking an explicit and strongly defined notion of a specialized object of study and appropriate procedures opens up the intellectual field's knowledge and actors to being poached by other fields. Rather than design and develop a specialized and distinct course in and/or department of 'cultural studies', one can bolt an option or module in cultural studies on to existing courses or add a lecturer to an established department. Similarly, in research one can annex the field's name to use as an adjective: cultural geography, cultural history, cultural economics, even perhaps cultural physics. Thus, proliferation and fragmentation results in the paradoxical situation of an intellectual field appearing to be both blossoming and in decline, both everywhere and nowhere to be seen.

The social knower code also leaves intellectual fields vulnerable to criticism from outside higher education; after all, if it is only the specific knower who can know, then professional academics are dispensable (unless they research only themselves). Such an argument may seem facile, but is a realistic possibility. For example, telephone callers to a British radio programme on the issue of a referendum on European monetary union repeatedly asked the question: 'Why should we bother voting for and paying the salaries of politicians if they are only going to ask us to make decisions, that is *their* job, not ours.' That such attitudes have worrying political implications does not detract from the point that such knower codes are vulnerable to similar criticism. I would suggest that academics are currently less well positioned institutionally to rebuff such criticisms. The tendency of social knower codes to insist upon the multiplicity of truths and proclaim against the adjudication of competing knowledge claims renders them particularly vulnerable within the current educational environment, where policy-linked research funding and the market of student demand (characterized by credential inflation and, in Britain, rising student debts) are likely to induce increasingly utilitarian demands of subject areas.

One possible response to such calls to legitimate one's intellectual field (and thus oneself) is to highlight the significance of its object of study. As an instance of this strategy in reverse, one could relate Margaret Thatcher's declaration that 'society' does not exist to the targeting of the social sciences for funding cutbacks in Britain during the 1980s. Social knower codes, however, are not primarily based upon claims to provide specialized and theorized insight into a discrete foundational object. Instead they tend to emphasize the significance of their *subject* of study. While the marginalized position of a specific group of knowers may be highlighted, such a strategy tends to evoke its own disrupter and the vitality of this

strategy varies inversely with its success – once a voice begins to be heard, claims to marginality begin to lose their force. In addition, with the proliferation and fragmentation of knowers, the question of whom the intellectual field is giving voice to becomes increasingly problematic. Knower codes may, therefore, problematize attempts to carve out spaces within high-status institutional positions by giving rise to a process of ‘divide and be conquered’.

In summary, the intrinsic dynamic of social knower codes tends to proliferation and fragmentation. The resultant tendency towards a segmented and schismatic knowledge structure problematizes the ability of actors to establish or maintain discrete institutional spaces: they are vulnerable to utilitarian criticism from without, and to poaching of actors and knowledge from within the higher education field. In other words, relations within knowledge, through the dynamic they enable, may themselves contribute to the institutional and intellectual trajectories of an intellectual field. In practice, these tendencies may be unexercised (because of a lack of enabling conditions), exercised unrealized (due to countervailing pressures), or realized unperceived (see Bhaskar 1975); to reiterate, their status is a matter for empirical research.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by referring to Bernstein’s argument that the sociology of education has tended to focus on ‘relations to’ rather than ‘relations within’ education. Studies of intellectual fields tend to treat knowledge as a neutral relay for external power relations and focus on the message relayed by this medium. By showing how relations within knowledge impact upon the basis of its positions within higher education, I demonstrated the significance of analyses of ‘relations within’ for a fuller understanding of the changing structuring of knowledge and education. In other words, this medium is *also* a message. My emphasis is deliberate – I am not claiming the medium is *the* message. I argue not that analyses of relations to knowledge should be displaced but rather complemented and the insights they afford retained. To this end I proposed conceiving knowledge in terms of legitimation and briefly illustrated how a conceptualization of the principles underlying languages of legitimation may be utilized within analyses of both relations to and relations within knowledge. By offering a means of integrating and building upon the insights of both approaches,

I also hope to contribute to breaking the habit of radical ‘breaks’ and reinvention characterizing the sociology of education (see Chapter 3, this volume).

My focus on legitimation has been related to the insights and blindspots of past studies of intellectual fields. Where the philosophy of education tended to construct knowledge as asocial, the sociology of knowledge has tended to neglect questions of epistemology – they have obscured the social relation and the epistemic relation of knowledge, respectively. In addition to showing the socially and historically located nature of knowledge – the role knowledge plays in legitimating social relations of power – one needs to hold out the possibility of the legitimate status of truth claims. The notion of legitimation offers a social realist approach that highlights both the sociological nature of knowledge, as comprising strategies by actors socially positioned within a field of struggle over forms of capital, and its epistemological nature as potentially legitimate knowledge claims. The development of intellectual fields comprises more than the will to power; there is also the will to truth. Both dimensions of knowledge must be accounted for by a realist sociology of knowledge which is to avoid the Scylla and Charybdis of reductionist relativism (the sociological fallacy) and asocial objectivism (the epistemological fallacy). To do so is to acknowledge that while the truth is no guarantee of belief, belief is no guarantee of the truth.

I focused on an explicit language of legitimation, but the framework elaborated above can obviously be applied to the study of educational knowledge and practices more generally.⁸ All practices and knowledge claims are forms of legitimation. Conceiving of educational knowledge in terms of legitimation codes also enables one to see where debates which appear to differ at the level of ideas, actors and intellectual positions are recurrent forms of the same underlying principles (e.g. phenomenology, post-structuralism, postmodernism as anti-knowledge codes). This may facilitate a means of engaging with the underlying issues structuring such debates rather than their surface features, and so enable social science to move beyond such cyclical recurrences. In addition, the sociology of education often tends towards static synchrony, flattening out periods of time and neglecting the analysis of change. By focusing on how knower codes evolve highlights not only change over time but more importantly the dynamic underlying the development of intellectual fields.

Lastly, analysing the development of a social knower code indicates several issues of significance to the future direction of the sociology of

education. The description of a segmented and schismatic intellectual field which appears to regularly begin from scratch, is resonant with the intellectual history of British sociology of education over the past 30 years. This is a pressing issue, which requires careful consideration (see Chapters 3 and 6, this volume). I would suggest, however, that an analysis of relations within the sociology of education may indicate that its marginal institutional and intellectual position is related to a tendency (similar to that outlined above) to substitute sociology for epistemology (Moore & Maton 2001). Knowledge, in this case, is studied indirectly, so to speak, out of the corner of one's eye. If so, there exists a need to establish knowledge as an *independent* object of study with its own specialized procedures in order to provide an adequate epistemological basis for the sociology of education. It is this end that the conceptualization of languages of legitimation aims to advance.

Endnotes

- ¹ This brief sketch is of *British cultural studies* within *British* higher education. The term 'British cultural studies' is commonly used to distinguish this tradition from those emanating from other national contexts. Subject areas related to cultural studies, such as media and communication studies, have divergent emphases, and institutional trajectories in other national contexts have differed (e.g. Blundell et al. 1993).
- ² This chapter was written in the late 1990s; the CCCS was finally closed down in 2002 (see further below).
- ³ Other dimensions include Autonomy (Maton 2005) and Semantics (Maton 2009a).
- ⁴ All languages of legitimation are realist about something, whether subjects or objects of study, or knowledge claims. For example, post-modernists tend to adopt an (albeit tacit) realist position on the status of their truth claims regarding the unavailability of 'truth'. The difference being drawn here is whether the realist epistemological basis is relatively explicit (knowledge code) or tacit (knower code).
- ⁵ This knower code was retrospectively attributed to previous work in cultural studies during the mid-1970s. This period marked a decisive shift in the field's language of legitimation (see Chapter 8, this volume).
- ⁶ Knower codes with a different basis may have a different intrinsic dynamic. On different kinds of knower codes, see Maton (2009b) and Chapter 8 of this volume.
- ⁷ While threats to the CCCS prior to the mid-1970s were countered by international action, the Centre was closed down by the University of Birmingham in

2002, two years after the original publication of this chapter hypothesized the difficulty of maintaining an institutional presence.

⁸ For examples of how the framework has subsequently developed, see Maton (2007, 2009c), Moore & Maton (2001), and Chapter 8 of this volume. For examples of research using the concepts, see Carvalho et al. (2009), Doherty (2008), Lamont & Maton (2008) and Shay (2008).