

# Cultural Production is Different from Cultural Reproduction is Different from Social Reproduction is Different from Reproduction

Paul Willis/Centre for the Study of Contemporary Studies,  
University of Birmingham

Cultural patterns and activities and attitudes are developed in precise conjunction with real exigencies, and are produced and reproduced in each generation for its own good reasons. Patterns of the development of labour power for a specific kind of application to industry must in every generation be achieved, developed, and worked for in struggle and contestation. If certain obvious features of this continuous reproduction and ever freshly struck settlement show a degree of visible continuity over time this should not lead us to construct iron laws and dynamics of socialization from this mere succession of like things. *Learning to Labour* (p. 183)

## Introduction and Outline of Main Terms

*Learning to Labour* has either been taken as a simple empirical book or as an example of a Neo-Marxist education approach explaining the stability and extension of capitalist societies through a general notion of Reproduction. Both views are, in important respects, mistaken. This paper is an attempt to recover the intellectual project of the book — the recognition of forms of *Cultural Production* — and to frame its specific contribution to educational theory, perhaps more adequately now, through a critical review of supposedly similar notions of Reproduction.<sup>1</sup>

One of the problems with the general notion of “Reproduction” is the manner in which wholly different things are conflated: from the daily reproduction of labour power, to biological reproduction and the production of gendered persons, to the generational replacement of labour power; often, incomprehensibly, through the apparent mediation of these things, from the simple reproduction of the circuit of capital to the reproduction of the social relations which are a condition for continued capitalist accumulation.

Clearly the much expanded category of Reproduction designates very important problems in understanding the social totality and is why it is asked to do so much work of which it is incapable. But the indiscriminate lumping of many problematics and their proper objects under Reproduction serves to confuse their particular nature and allows all to be condemned under a critique of any. At the least, I hope to argue that distinctions should be made between *Cultural Production*, *Cultural Reproduction*, and *Social Reproduction* and that this will allow us to make real qualitative distinctions between a series of positions derived from Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu, Bernstein, and finally, of course, Willis.

First of all, however, in order to specify more exactly why these differentiated categories are necessary, it may be helpful to firmly distinguish between two basic problematics which do indeed (though, as we shall see, at quite different levels of abstraction) cover many of the same items but which should

be considered separately. This is the difference between what we may call the biological and generational reproduction of gendered persons in the family — let us call this simply *Reproduction* — and *Social Reproduction*. *Social Reproduction* I take to refer to the replacement of that *relationship* between the classes (i.e. not the classes themselves) which is necessary for the continuance of the capitalist mode of production.

Unfortunately, the proximity of the problematics suggests a damaging homology in the second. The physical replacement of bodies — we may say the same or very similar bodies — in *Reproduction* becomes the replacement of whole classes in *Social Re-Production* as the explanation for how a *relationship* between classes is replaced. There is an implied simple transmission not only of the relationship but also of the detailed nature of the classes themselves. But, of course, these are very different things indeed, and the elision takes no account of the whole continent of history, struggle and contestation, and, importantly for me, the field of a creative collective self-making in the subordinate class, some of whose processes I designate in my category *Cultural Production*. Now it may well be — in fact it is the central thesis of my paper — that it is impossible to argue for the isometric extension of a *relationship* without implying something of the nature of the groups whose material presences constitute the relationship. This is why the concept of *Social Reproduction* is actually at a very high level of abstraction and specifies concretely very little. But the omission of this vastly important qualification in easy “total” theories of *Social Reproduction* actually makes them, by default, a thin and crippled theory of the simple passive formation of both classes but especially of the dominated groups — the working class. A social relationship is reconstituted, it seems, because both groups remain *the same* through time and generation. Enter very emasculated functionalist theories of ideological formation, undialectical transmission, and successful domination linked to very abstractly conceived notions of “structure” to account for this.

Introducing the basis of the other categories I will be using in this paper, I want to argue that, in order to constitute a reproduced social relationship as a *dynamic* and *contested* one, we must explicitly recognise the somewhat independent logics of what I am calling *Cultural Production*, the different meanings they play across the social relationship, and the ideological and limiting processes which produce *Cultural Reproduction* from *Production* and link, thereby, with *Social Reproduction*.

Though I will expand this more fully later (with, I hope, the greater precision arising from a critique of other theories of *Reproduction*), the point here is to suggest that for a properly dialectical notion of *Social Reproduction*, our starting point should be in the cultural milieu, in material practices and productions, in lives in their historical context in the everyday span of existence and practical consciousness. We should investigate the form of living collective cultural productions that occur on the determinate and contradictory grounds of what is inherited and what is currently suffered through imposition, but in a way which is nevertheless creative and active. Such cultural productions are experienced as new by each generation, group and person. This then is, broadly, what I want to call *Cultural Production*. *Cultural Reproduction* designates how, from here, through complex ideological and cultural processes, we may perceive certain essential features to be continuous with, and tend to reproduce, limiting forms (racism, sexism, manualism, the private, authority) which predated them but which are now so subjectively inhabited as to provide a sufficient basis for actual decisions and attitudes which allow the maintenance of capitalist production.

For our purposes here, I want to emphasise the clear distinction between Cultural Production and Social Reproduction. The latter is merely a portion of the results of the former and does not, in reverse, specify the nature of the former which, in certain essentials, remains free, wide in range and scope, and includes much not imagined in the dreams of Social Reproduction. Social Reproduction directs us only toward general features of relationship and not to the internal features of a class or a tight specificity of “conditions” — and all the dangers of functionalism that therewith arise. A range of possibilities within Cultural Production and Reproduction, with quite different specifications of social groups, their qualities, and their nature, could satisfy this general abstract social relation — though some, clearly, would not.

It is absurd in my view to think that something called capital could coherently think out its list of tight social conditions — these and no other; still less could it imprint them on a malleable class. This is not to say that the capitalist mode of production does not set certain limits for *Cultural Production* or that its historic forms of settlement with real cultural processes do not currently supply powerful formative influences. Furthermore, ideological processes undoubtedly help to produce *Cultural Reproduction* from *Cultural Production*, and certain elemental features of the logic of the capitalistic labour process do materially imprint themselves on living experiences and meanings. But *it is* to say that all of this is not of the order of a specification or direct determination. Capital cannot really “know” what are the fundamental social and cultural conditions of its dominance, partly because these are always changing — with the help of categories, meanings, and substances supplied, often through struggle, from below. Capital will ever accept new arrangements that allow it to work, and we may well say that now, for instance, schools with other sites are “blindly” and “profanely” forging new arrangements that another generation of reproduction theorists will take as the rigid conditions for the functioning of the capitalist labour process. In an awesome reverse of the Medusan myth, Reproduction theorists look back to *Cultural Production* and turn it, not themselves, to stone. *Social Reproduction* should direct us to the limited, basic, truly open, “teeth-gritting” elements of the conjunction between *Cultural Production* and the minimal maintenance of the capitalist social relation — not to a wholesale theory of social generation which is always much much more than this. And if *Cultural Production*, in the school for instance, directs us toward some of the ways in which *Social Reproduction* is finally achieved, under the heading *Social Reproduction* we must also include several other processes and other sites: the condition of wage labour itself, the labour process, the state and its organs, the police, the media, and leisure institutions.

Having thus separated the notion of *Cultural Production* from *Social Reproduction*, it may be useful to distinguish the former from what I called earlier simply *Reproduction* — the biological and generational reproduction of gendered persons in the family. *Cultural Production* is gender specific, locked into, but not the same as *Reproduction*. This is mainly because the latter is properly located in the family — governed by patriarchal relations and distinctions and focussed on collective processes of physically adult relations in peer groups.

How *Cultural Reproduction* contributes to what we’ve defined as *Social Reproduction* — the main grounds of the analysis here — is mainly a question of class relations, though *Cultural Production* could equally well relate to *Reproduction* as, say, a “condition” of recruitment to, and maintenance of, the family. Though our three categories here — *Cultural Production*, *Social Reproduction*, and *Reproduction* — certainly share many things, we do not solve the problems by collapsing the three things or by picking out from such a

melange only what suits our purpose: now to deal with labour power, now with gendered persons, now with how either of these accept wage labour or the patriarchal family. What my categories of *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* provide is not the further generation of formalist categories (though they run this risk) but an indication (properly bodied out only by ethnography and, in the first case, generated from it) or real collective, creative processes at particular sites and at particular human stages. These processes involve agency and collective activity, including perhaps as their most specific activity not passive positioning in discrete kinds of Reproduction (i.e. class or gender), but profane combinations and inversions of resources taken from these things; not helpless inhabitation of contradictions but active work on them.

*Cultural Production* should neither be collapsed forward into *Social Reproduction* — though *Social Reproduction* partly finds a footing here — nor be collapsed backward into *Reproduction*, though the terms of *Cultural Production* undoubtedly arise partly from the family/patriarchal relations of the reproduction of gendered persons, just as they arise from immediate class relations and from the mental/manual relations of the school. The stale formalism of mapping separate Patriarchies and Capitalisms and the points of their intersection must give way to a dynamic sense of how both are taken up in the creative practice of the production and reproduction of material and social life in determinate sites, and how *this* — not their own formalisms — helps to reproduce both.

I hope some of these points will become clearer in relation to a critical review of some of the main theories of Reproduction in the education sector.

### **Theories of Reproduction**

Of course the main site that theories of Reproduction focus on is the school. In many ways, the unremarkable insight founding the whole messy conglomerate of perspectives is that there are extra-productive general conditions for the maintenance of capital. Factories work not with abstract labour but with concrete, sexed, aged, gendered, raced (slept, fed, mooded), warm bodies. The realms which produce these concrete necessary features are more or less separate from Production but must, if we are Marxists, be “interrogated” for their connection: how do they supply the conditions for capital and within what limits? The Reproduction perspective, with its borrowings from the patriarchal realm, sharpens these questions by posing an almost timeless, ahistorical question, as if the generations were stopped: how is the *new* generation placed in relationship to capital? Clearly education becomes the important site for this, if only because this is where the kids are. Also it becomes a privileged site because, as the conventional sociology of education recognises, there are clear class inequalities in educational outcomes even, or perhaps especially, where (as in the “liberal hope” outlined by Bowles and Gintis) schooling promises the opposite — namely, equality and humanistic self-advance. The real social relation of dominance is achieved under the rubric of an ideal social relation. This offers fertile ground for the Reproductive interest.

It is, of course, Althusser (in the celebrated *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus* 1972) essay who develops this case in the clearest and most sophisticated manner. His arguments are too well-known to outline in detail. Basically, he claims for education *the* privileged role in Reproduction. Education provides the necessary skills for production, the necessary graded ideologies for the social division of labour, and the necessary milieu for the actual formation of subjectivities through the celebrated “imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence.”

Now, as a limited statement at a certain level of abstraction, this will do nicely for some purposes and is a very major advance on liberal positions. It indicates that, despite confusing ambitions to the contrary in the educational sphere, a social relationship is continuously being achieved for the purpose of the continuance of capital formation. *But*, in a certain way, this is tautologous — we know from the evidence of our eyes that capitalism continues and that most kids go to school. Ergo, schools are implicated in the formation of the social relationship which is a condition for the functioning of capitalism. For an explanatory account which avoids this formalism and rationalism, we need a notion of the actual formation of classes — in relationship to each other to be sure but in which, nevertheless, each has its own profane material existence and, if you like, ontology. We need an account of what I am calling *Cultural Production and Reproduction*. What gives to Althusser his specious fullness is, in fact, an implicit or highly simplistic theory of these things. The implicit account of what is “doing” the relationship from the working class “side” pictures the working class as totally dominated and, indeed, fully “interpellated” by capital. It is formed by Althusser, in a word, without a word about its own *Cultural Production*. Of course this provides a huge contradiction for his own theory since the lauded “autonomy” of the educational structure, once it comes to the concreteness of the parties *forming* the relationship, reduces human agents to bearers of structural relationships. The relative autonomy of the educational has been achieved only by giving abstract autonomy to a social relationship and no autonomy at all to the constitutive agents in, and through whom, the relationship can only be formed. This is the illusion of “relative” in the formulation.

It might be suggested that what lies at the core of the problem here is the structuralist conceit of the economy being comprised of pre-given “empty” places which are then simply “filled” by agents kitted out with the right ideologies and subjectivities. Far from being the result of contestation and struggle over meaning and definition — one of whose sources, from the “side” of the working class, is what I’m calling, *Cultural Production* — structure is an hypostasised given in a quite unsocial world. The absolute given contours of “places” are to be filled by agents who share no collective principles of variation or continuity of their own. We have a theory of the social/cultural formation of the working class which works through passivity and through its agents “bearing” structure. With no sense of structure being a contested medium as well as an outcome of social process, Reproduction becomes a mechanised sleight of hand in an oh so serious theoretical vaudeville! A *pre-given* and *pre-empting* structure of class relations and production is simply replaced — now you see it, now you don’t, now you see it. Agency, struggle, change — those things which at least partly, one may say, help to produce “structure” to “start with” — are banished in the ever pre-giveness of “empty places.” Certainly Althusser directs us toward the important balance of the famous formulation “but they do not make it (history) just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past” (Marx, 1972). But where is the main clause of the argument? Where is “Men make their own history”? This omission is to take ashes not fire from history.

From a somewhat different “structuralist” perspective, Bowles and Gintis (1976) operate from within a similar paradigm of the reproduction of the social relations as a necessary condition for capital accumulation. Here we are faced not with the ideological operation of the ISA but with the structural principle of the “correspondence.” Even the appearance and rhetoric of autonomy in the

educational realm is given up. His Majesty the Economy reigns supreme — and in his own clothes! The “habituation” of the educational process is *the same* as habituation to production — the one relationship directly prepares for the succeeding one. Certification adds legitimation to this socialisation for inequality. We have a prone class in its deepest ontology, cultural forms, and material experiences called up and founded in the directly manipulative categories of capital. One wonders from where the individuals, classes, or groups are to come even to listen to, never mind understand, the fine call to a socialist pedagogic practice with which Bowles and Gintis conclude their book. They certainly cannot come from the world of “correspondence;” the two halves of the analysis do not fit.

Of course the work of Bowles and Gintis is hugely important and highly impressive in its empirical scope, range and, seriousness, and it is concrete in a way which Althusser’s contribution is not. It has also arisen from activism to which it has helped give a focus, and has supplied the most basic, materialist framework, allowing much critical work to follow.

Nevertheless the criticisms are now well-known. They constitute, (to use my terms) the general charge of the lack of any notion of *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* in the dominated class.

The notion of “correspondence” omits the possibility of resistance. By doing so, it ignores the constitution of working-class identities separate from their ideal expression in the bourgeois imagination. In other words, it takes no account of the working class’s independent effect on the final continuation of the resulting social relationship. “Correspondence” omits consciousness and culture as constitutive moments of social process and treats human action, apparently, as the consequence of quite inhuman and separate “structures.” Thus the analysis is unable to comprehend the massive and currently evident “misfits” between the economy and education and finds it unnecessary to commit itself to a real analysis of what happens in schools in the variety of forms in which educational messages are decoded in particular student groups.

The analysis can conveniently take over much straight statistical work and bourgeois apologetics in this area because the analysis is, in a certain sense, confirming what the powerful believe: that they are powerful; that they do correctly identify social requirements and can effectively control them. Against this must be placed the obvious facts that segments of the dominant group disagree anyway over industrially instrumental or humanistically developmental objectives for society and that the “autonomy,” the “professionalism,” the university base, and intelligentsia in the “educational interest” can provide alternative bases for assessment which do not simply mirror current oppressive practices. Furthermore, the “needs” of capital are likely to be contradictory anyway — with currently, some upskilling, more de-skilling, and some socialization for unemployment, even amongst the same cohorts of students.

I would argue that *Cultural Production* amongst dominated groups of various kinds ensures that, in schools, a straightforward imprint of social requirements on students — even if they were consistently defined — is anyway impossible. What is often only a *minimum* habituation to work is actually achieved by the combination of many processes in many sites — not least the family and the experience of production itself. Specifically, the school is just one site in a chain of other sites implicated in many other kinds of *Reproduction* struggles — not least gender and generation formation. We must be cautious in concluding that the school is the pivotal site for the preparation of those warm, gendered, concrete bodies that actually enter production — still less read back this accomplished transition as the main class logic of what goes on in schools.

Bourdieu and Passeron's analysis (1977) marks a serious advance upon this perspective. We are introduced to a cultural level — at least for the dominating class — which really is shown to be different in form and to have some autonomy from the economic. Indeed, what we can think of finally as a spurious autonomy is installed as the central feature of the education system. A coherent field of rules and sets of relationships proclaiming itself as separate and objective dignifies, and makes “official,” a culture which is actually the property of the dominant classes. The higher one goes up the educational system, therefore, the more this culture is “pre-supposed.” It is required for success. This same culture is further proclaimed as the legitimate and objective one. Working-class students are “cooled out” not because they are working class but because they do not have the “objective” skills and language necessary for success. Real capital has become cultural capital; lack of capital (the possession only of labour power) becomes lack of *cultural* capital. Where production relations show the social exclusion, inequality, and heritability of real capital, education guarantees the apparent equivalence, independence, and free-born equality of symbolic capital. Education mystifies itself, as well as others, in concealing its own basis in, and its reproduction of, the power relationships in society. His Majesty the Economy is willing to stand quite aside so long as education performs this service.

We do have more satisfactory elements here for a properly autonomous notion of how certification and legitimation might work. The lingering doubt in Bowles and Gintis's framework — that the middle class might do better in exams because they really are more intelligent — is replaced by a genuine social theory of how bourgeois cultural production and constitution are implicated in the form which the *social relationship* with the proletariat takes. We are also given a detailed and plausible account of how certain crucial ideological inversions and mystifications are achieved without recourse to a theory of false consciousness and the ox-like stupidity of the dominated class.

The educational theory rests, of course, upon the foundations of the larger Bourdieun system. The powerful group (apparently in any society) exerts its power to impose meanings through a “cultural arbitrariness” enforced by “symbolic violence” in such a way as to hide the power relation of class stratification which is its basis. This constitutes a double violence: both the imposition of one cultural standard over another without epistemic justification and the masking of its true divisiveness of class structure. This dual aspect of cultural and class production is one of the important bases for the production of “the habitus,” “the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations” (Bourdieu, 1977) which provides “dispositions” toward actions that finally “reproduce” the original structures and power relations which are the basis for the original symbolic violence.

But it is in consideration of this general theory that we can see some of the faults which limit the value of the regional educational theory. Oddly, we see a ghost of the problem behind Althusser's and Bowles and Gintis's analysis — because of the almost total separation granted to culture, and education's complicit role in its maintenance, the economy appears (though off stage) as the basic fixed universe to which culture is added. And the economy makes its appearance not as a specific mode of production full of contradictions but as an abstract set of power relations which, it appears, apply equally to *any* kind of society. Power is taken as a given to which culture is then very persuasively added in order to demonstrate its reproduction. But that original production of power is mythical and, finally, an assumption which allows the hall of mirrors of culture to stand and reflect the theory of *Reproduction*. We have a pre-given

asserted structure of power which is then reproduced culturally. What of the *formation* of that power structure, so to speak, “to start with?” What of agency in this theory of Reproduction when the question of power has been settled before we start?

It is only, I argue, in a material notion of *Cultural Production and Reproduction* amongst “the powerful” working through the contradictions of a mode of production in a struggle with the *Cultural Production and Reproduction* of the “powerless” that we can reach the notion of structured and durable social relations of power at all. For all the richness of the Bourdieun system, once again, agency, struggle, and variety have been banished from history. Capital, even for the powerful, becomes an inert possession — so much formal power, money, and symbolic wealth — rather than a whole contested social relation worked through a whole mode of production.

The essence of the Bourdieun educational theory concerns, of course, bourgeois culture, and there are, as I’ve said, real advances here. But even here, at its strongest point, the system suffers from a lack of any notion of *Cultural Production* in my sense. The problem of variety and resistances amongst bourgeois children cannot be handled under the massive weight of homogenous symbolic violence and cultural arbitrariness. Nor are stages of “acculturation,” their characteristic motives, and subjective and inner contradictions handled in the general notion of “habitus.” For all the important advances here over a simple notion of ideology, we are left finally with a traditional socialisation model — the bourgeoisie transmit, quite unproblematically, their culture to their offspring.

These difficulties and inadequacies become much clearer when we look at the Bourdieun scheme not for dominant transmission and reproduction but for subordinate reproduction and transmission. The arguments about the cultural *legitimation* of dominant culture are perhaps clear enough. But even if the dominated accept that they have no right to cultural privilege, this is not a full argument for their acceptance of *social* underprivilege and exploitation. Why should they accept the domination of real capital? One might as well say that they have no real capital either; or that there is an available ideology concerning free capacity to accumulate real capital as well as symbolic capital that can be enjoyed by all. But this does not prevent the dominated from resisting cultural capital. Of course there is a partial explanation perhaps in that cultural capital legitimates itself through certification also as the right of educational segments of the bourgeoisie to manage for the benefit of all a technocratic justification — but this sits ill with the overwhelming literary/artistic/humanities definition of culture in Bourdieu. We are still in need of some account of why the “powerless” accept, for the most part, their unequal fates. Crudely, though it might be one of the conditions, the dominated’s acceptance of their cultural inferiority could never be an adequate basis for their general submission to exploitation. Perhaps no mass revolutionary group has felt itself *culturally* superior to the dominating group — especially in the terms of the dominating group. What would that mean? But how *do* the “powerless” understand and accept their position? What is their role in *Reproduction*?

Unfortunately, Bourdieu’s realm of the cultural does not function in the same explanatory fashion for the dominated. They become indeed the dispossessed. Apparently “culture” really does mean Bourgeois culture. The dominated have no culture. Their “culture,” apparently, is only the medium of the transmission *backwards* of their “objective” chances in life. They disqualify themselves because they have never had a chance. What of autonomy here? It was no impediment to the autonomy of bourgeois cultural production — at its



own level — that the bourgeois had *every* chance in life! His Majesty the Economy has entered here again with a vengeance, and the culture of the oppressed *is* the same as their structured location in society. Because *neither* dominant nor subordinate cultural production and transmission have been rooted in a mode of production, class struggle, and contestation, and since there are no handy common-sense items around which proclaim themselves through aesthetics as culture for the dominated class, then the dominated have no relatively independent culture and consciousness. They just recognise their chances. It might be theatre for the bourgeoisie, but it's betting on rigged horse racing for the proletariat — and, moreover, they're the horses! Economic life has to play all the parts in proletarian culture. With this lack of a specifically cultural and relatively independent cultural production in relation to material life and labour for the proletariat, it comes as no surprise that the Bourdieun system has nothing to say about a radical politics of education. It presents, finally, a gloomy, enclosed, Weberian world of no-escape. There is no theoretical basis for a politics of change, for the production of alternative or radical consciousness. This Reproduction theory neither explains itself nor supports a praxis.

I am suggesting generally that whilst Bourdieu offers a very important set of arguments concerning dominant culture, its relative independence, mode of transmission, constitution of the nature of a class, and how all this helps to constitute the nature of a social relationship necessary to capital, gives us no real help toward understanding what may be *similar* processes in the culture of the dominated.

It may be helpful to emphasize within our previous general notion of *Social Reproduction* (which, remember, included many kinds of other and non culturally specific processes) a distinction between dominant *Cultural Production and Reproduction* and subordinate *Cultural Production and Reproduction*. Whereas Bourdieu's argument and evidence are by far the best we have for understanding dominant *Cultural Reproduction and Reproduction* and its role in *Social Reproduction*, we are still left with precious little concerning the actual form and state of the dominated and their *Cultural Production and Reproduction* and this role in the dialectical and struggled form of the social relations necessary to capital.

For the moment (and leaving aside the rest of his works), there are some clear hints about this in Bernstein's formulations around educational codes and their relation to production. In his essay "Aspects of the relations between Education and Production" (1977), where in fact he deals only with aspects of correspondence rather than with legitimation (to say nothing of what I'm calling *Cultural Production*), despite the formalism and schematic outlines of the "collection code" and "integrated code," we are presented with the possibility for the first time of radical breaks between the education and the production system. The educational code (with its tendency toward the combination of weak "classification" and "framing," and tending therefore toward the "integrated code") feeds into an industrial system which tends toward (especially we might say now under Thatcherism and Reaganism) strong "classification" and "framing" — that is, toward the "collection code." This dysjunction is — contrary to what we might have expected from "correspondence theory" — most marked at the "lower" educational levels (most prone to developments toward the "integrated code") and at the "lower" industrial levels (traditionally, and still, marked by strong "boundaries" and "framing"): in a word, for the working class in its lower reaches — the *crucial* site for correspondence theories.

Now Bernstein does not develop this, but clearly, if aspects of education are dysfunctional for the production system (i.e. do *not* produce themselves the social relation necessary to capitalism) but yet the “transition from school to work” is achieved (and, by all accounts, achieved *most* unproblematically by this target group), then there are other processes occurring, (partly at least on the site of the school) which do achieve such outcomes. Somewhat lopsidedly, but nonetheless in a very clear manner, we see here the scope for an analysis of *informal* forms of the school, for contradictory processes of *Cultural Production and Reproduction* that interest me, where as in our previous theories there was simply no space for such concerns. Bernstein has introduced the possibility of the school not functioning unproblematically as whatever variety of an ISA but as a *site* of contradictions and larger processes, with cultures and differences which are no part of its official purposes. In fact, the school may work, for some social groups, not through its homologies with other parts of the social system but through its *differences*. In some ways it may function, with respect to *Social Reproduction*, not through its own categories and intentions, spinning on the axis of its own integrity, but profanely and eccentrically as the only partially determining site of quite other processes of *Cultural Production and Reproduction*. The school may be implicated in different ways in both dominant and subordinate *Cultural Production and Reproduction*. This suggests that some dominant interests and ideologies may be transmitted not directly but through social and cultural dialectics, mediations, and struggle. The powerful do not always impose meanings without those meanings being taken into account by the dominated — or at least by an important section of them, which provides oppositional themes as a cultural resource for the rest. This dominated response takes in meanings other than those coded in the dominant transmission. Furthermore, we see that this imposition itself must, in its turn, take into account oppositional or alternative responses. Even if we are interested only in what is meant by the powerful, we can say that what is meant by the response to what is meant changes what is meant.

Despite the promise of Bernstein’s contribution, it shows many of the same weaknesses and one-sidedness of other theorists considered. The economy, and its implicitly empty places, stands silently waiting for the gift of whatever educational process. They — the “empty” places developed in Bernstein’s case through his version of an abstractly multiplying formalism — are not themselves the product of the struggle of constituted, acting classes. We are also presented with only the pristine simplicity of one form of domination — namely, class — with no mention of patriarchal and race domination and how aspects of their ideological forms may intersect with class.

All the theorists also deal basically with power rather than with a mode of production in relation to material interests, experiences, and culture. Power is somehow idealistically seen as, in itself, *bad* — as synonymous with domination. Without a fully inward notion of struggles through power and without notions of countervailing power and of working-class resources constituting “their side” of the class struggle, we are left with untheorised or asserted notions of mechanical ideologies imposing themselves in the place of what I have been arguing for — more dynamic notions of *Cultural Production and Reproduction*. Pessimism, in different forms, reigns supreme.

#### **“Learning to Labour” and Reply to Critics**

I would like to suggest that my book, *Learning to Labour*, can be seen as adding to, and bodying out, the possibility located schematically by Bernstein. This, in part, is because it does not aspire to constitute a general theory of education, still less of *Social Reproduction*. The book is basically about the

grain and context of culture — subordinate *Cultural Production and Reproduction* — and only partially, about theories of *Social Reproduction*. In a way, its ethnographic method and presentation inoculate it from the reductions and elisions I have been indicating earlier. It takes as *starting points* what are either absent or gestural in the previous theories: resistance; lived cultural production of the working class; and culture as work in and on, formed by, and helping to form contradictions in the mode of production (social relations of production as formed by the multi-faceted struggle of constituted classes. Inclusion of these elements constitutes minimal methodological imperatives for an adequate account of social class formation and includes the primary contact with social agents and people required to validate, not merely speculate about, social theory. This is not to claim vision or special insight. Indeed, many of these things — precisely as starting points rather than as logically produced and analysed concepts — formed perhaps unconscious and unintended resources providing “accidental” links and solutions, as well as many lacunae and inconsistencies which still other perspectives can illuminate according to their own configuration of interests. We are dealing rather with the resources of another set of concepts and approaches as their potential crosscuts another problematic. Perhaps we are dealing ultimately with the importance of a “dirty” ethnographic method and the “thick” description it can produce. In many ways, the strength of *Learning to Labour* is simply that it did not start and proceed with an integrated notion of a coherent thing called “education” as a discrete entity and with its relation to other discrete entities such as production. Not as a theoretical leap but as a base-line methodological provision, the very eclecticism of a general notion of “culture” spread automatically to cover many sites (principally, education and production) and many activities as the grounds for systematic material and symbolic practices.

Still, whether in a certain sense “accidental” or belonging rather to a larger “geological formation” of knowledge than to intentioned practice, it should now be possible to trace what is specifically offered by a “cultural studies” route (or at least my own ethnographic version of this) into the problematic of what is known as Reproduction theories and to locate its strengths in relation to other approaches. More personally, this is an attempt to substantiate my earlier protestations that I should not (a) be tarred with the same brush as the Reproduction theorists when I know the nature of the tar so well and (b) be seen in a contrary way as a “mere” empirical researcher. Again, to start with some definitions of terms, here I posit “culture” as a relatively coherent system of material practices and interlocking symbolic systems having, according to the region, their own practices and objectives which constitute the ordinary milieu of social life through which, amongst other things, social agents come to a collective, mediated, lived awareness of their condition of existence and relationship to other classes. This is, in part, the basis for systematic actions which constitute the necessary basis for the maintenance of capital accumulation and of deeply entrenched structural aspects of the social order.

Characteristic features of this milieu include: “lived collective awareness” as concrete forms of resistance; relatively rational collective responses to current dilemmas and possibilities; material cultures and material forms of production of cultural forms; the immanence of unconscious and collective cultural meanings which nonetheless help to direct action and which constitute subjectivity; collective penetrations of regulating ideologies and enclosing technologies of control and domination; contradictory and complexly articulated discourses and inherited symbolic forms and practices; domination and social reproduction (i.e., production of what we call structure) partly in the

dynamics of the self-formation of the dominated; and complex ideological effects which regulate the epistemology of meanings both as inputs and outputs of cultural forms.

Starting from this limited attempt at definition (which will have to do for our purposes here), I want to consider the implications and the distinctiveness of this approach for theories of Reproduction, make one or two comments about some persistent, albeit sympathetic, criticisms of the project in *Learning to Labour*, and conclude with a consideration of the differing practical implications of my position and Reproduction positions.

To begin with, in relation to theories of Reproduction, this notion of culture helps to underline the importance of considering the constitution of classes (in relation to each other, of course) before rushing into a schematic account of how an abstract social relationship supplies pre-set conditions for capital accumulation. It gives some materials a real content of “relative independence” in subordinate *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* — both to place in the vacuum left by Bourdieu, and to give some content to the spurious “relative” of Althusser’s “relative autonomy.”

In my view, the essence of the matter is that *Learning to Labour* starts not with *Social Reproduction* but with *Cultural Production*. The problem with Reproduction theories of various sorts we have looked at is that by articulating the analysis on *Social Reproduction* or even Reproduction in general, they have collapsed notions of, or implied highly mechanistic notions of, *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction*. But in *Learning to Labour*, *Social Reproduction* (or more precisely, one version of it) proceeds through *Cultural Reproduction*, proceeds through *Cultural Production*. This route “downward” is only one of many socially reproductive routes through the totality, and here, as elsewhere, logically *concludes* with socially contested reproduction of the conditions for capital accumulation — not begins with this point and therefore writes out the space for a dynamic analysis.

We can provisionally say that *Cultural Production* designates, at least in part, the creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices, and group processes to explore, understand, and creatively occupy particular positions in sets of general material possibilities. For oppressed groups, this is likely to include oppositional forms and cultural penetrations at particular concrete sites or regions. As an aside, we may note that the uncovering of these secret, repressed, informal, half betraying forms becomes the special province of a qualitative, ethnographic, commensurate, “living” method — such processes do not leave their Public Records in the Bourgeois Office of Account.

*Cultural Reproduction* designates the manner in which this set of processes, both in its internal operations (its very transience and informality) and through complex ideological effects which epochally help to structure the elements toward what it is possible to be thought (as well as to regulate, suppress, or fragment — often through institutional processes — the concrete production out of those elements), operates finally and in effect to give new life to and reinforce general ideological and social beliefs. These beliefs are thus made further available to other sites of *Cultural Production* (i.e., ideology not abstractly beamed downward). *Cultural Production* is larger than *Cultural Reproduction* and contains much to which *Cultural Reproduction* is relatively indifferent. The latter, however, helps to produce an overall pattern of social attitudes and suppression of cultural penetration as a basis for decision and action which are just commensurate with the functioning of the capitalist mode of production. It is this last effect *only* which should be designated *Social Reproduction*. *Cultural Reproduction*, in its turn, should be seen as much

larger, but less inclusive, than *Social Reproduction*. *Social Reproduction* can also designate quite different processes and other sites — not least, for instance, the state, state apparatuses, the police, the family, and the media.

The distinctiveness of *Learning to Labour*, then, is not in its provision of another version of how *general* processes continually remake themselves in specific situations with particular content. Its emphasis is on the moment of *production* in a specific example — the *Cultural Production* with which this process is initiated, even if it becomes *Cultural Reproduction* becomes *Social Reproduction*. *Cultural Reproduction's* contribution to *Social Reproduction* is an ever-repeated *creative* process which each time carries no more guarantee than the last, and which, in *different* material or political circumstances, can produce *different* outcomes. This absolutely splits off theories of *Cultural Reproduction* from iron laws of transmissions — as in socialisation and as, increasingly, in theories of *Reproduction*.

The chain of distinctions I am arguing for also guards against a creeping functionalism. In the first case, of course, rather than functional harmony, the motives and intentions of *Cultural Production* concern the specifics of its own level and of opposition and penetration, for instance, amongst the oppressed. More formally, however, in the case before us of male counter-school culture, it is so that subordinate *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* help to provide some of the social conditions toward the overall capital relation. But it is, actually, a highly inefficient and hardly intended method of “achieving” these aims — even when considered at its abstract “pure” best, quite apart from the social dislocation and unease it produces. The space, the school, in which it occurs is paid for by taxes, some of which are from the proletarian wage. This payment is supposed to be for something to happen — yet manifestly often nothing happens. This can lead, as we are tragically seeing, to *all* classes being suspicious and resentful of education: what is being returned, in the public apology of these things, for all that money? More technically we can say that the massive amount of “extra” schooling supplied mainly so that a good proportion of the class can do nothing (i.e., beyond the point where basic numerical and literary skills are acquired) is in fact a “gift” (insofar as the taxes are not from the wage) to the working class. Of course, the technical argument runs that such “extra” schooling contributes to an increased value of labour power. But since the content of this “value” is ambiguous (from the point of view of valorisation) to say the least and since by the latest Manpower Services Commission figures in the UK, for instance, capital is unlikely to be able to realise this value (never mind expect a contribution to surplus value) for up to 50 per cent of these lads (at least in the years following their school leaving), this extra value given to labour power has been poured down the drain. Individual capitals may have historically trusted the state to do what competition prevented them from doing for themselves — cf. the length of the working day, training for skills, etc. — but they still expect to be able, eventually, to realise charges made on them through exploitation of higher value labour power. The costly forms of *Social Reproduction* I’m indicating here are undoubtedly partly responsible for the crises in accumulation, the fiscal crisis of the state, and for the current strategy to shift many state expenses back on to the family, on to domestic production of the value of labour power there, and to move the exploitation of workers in employment up a whole gear in intensity. This form of contested *Social Reproduction*, therefore, far from being functional for the state and capital accumulation, is, actually, currently one of its problems. If capital could “warehouse” or “freeze” young people between 13-20 years, it would undoubtedly attempt to do so rather than allow the

continuance of cultural and social processes it barely understands anyway.

In a related way, this emphasis on *Cultural Production* helps to meet the criticism that *Learning to Labour* treats education as a monolith and suggests that schools make no difference and are therefore irrelevant. Now whilst I am attempting to describe processes only partly based on the school, and which will, in general, given the general structure of a capitalist class society, continue to have roughly similar outcomes, I am also describing processes which have their *root* in production not reproduction. Insofar as the school is one of the material sites and inputs of this, schools do then make a difference. They are productive as well as reproductive, have specific effects, and cannot be reduced to anything else — and moreover, as we have seen, they work as much through their differences from other regions as through their similarities. Different school organisations can well have different effects — especially in their degrees of repression, separation of subordinate from dominant *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction*, and isolation of cultural forms. But what we see partly on the site of the school (and certainly partly constituted by it variably in different forms) is nevertheless a larger production of cultural forms and ideology and forms of division between gender and mental and manual activity, which are more basic and virulent than anything the school could hope to mold or produce — namely, a remaking of every generation. There must, therefore, be some very important caveats in our agreement that “schools make a difference.” The *Cultural Production* we are concerned with is a process of whose sites only one is the school, and this production may not work in that way that the state or educators conceive of it. Thus its repression, or partial diversion by whatever effectiveness the school does enjoy, can have unintended consequences and may not be in the best interests of the class as a whole — even where this is the main purpose of educational reformers. Nor is *Cultural Production* innocent for every “new” generation. It is not only closely related to processes of *Cultural Reproduction* but also formed, remember, from inherited class resources and existing discourses. It cannot entirely invent itself. These are forms and continuities which place precise limits on its “arbitrariness.” Furthermore, aspects of this *Cultural Production* taking place on the site of the school are not necessarily “educational” or “maturational” in any received sense, and the real forming of people and their culture is going on elsewhere in complex and difficult ways. All of this needs to be borne in mind before we do, too happily, our social engineering overalls.

The general emphasis on *Cultural Production* as the starting point in *Learning to Labour* is also making, I would argue, a theoretical point in general. Although the book did not focus on the conformists, ethnic groups, or girls, it seems hard that the whole approach should be accused of assuming the passivity or invisibility of these groups when it turns so much analytically precisely on general qualities of *activity*. The case for the chain I’ve outlined applies to all groups and their culture and, through an example, points to a general feature of the *contested* nature of *Cultural* and *Social Reproduction* across the board and to the importance of knowing what constitutes social groups before specifying the nature of their abstract relationship to capital. It seems hard to assume that I would forget in one instance what I’d been at pains to emphasise in another. Far from being the pretext for loudly berating these omissions in my book, its publication should have been the occasion to instigate further detailed ethnographic studies of other groups. It’s clear, for instance, that what I’ve called *Cultural Production* is very important in different ways to working-class blacks and to girls in their response to school — in particular, the working-up of their own cultural sense of labour power to be applied to production, non-

production or the family, as the case may be. Though I didn't supply the data, the *approach* I've outlined does not block but *enables* such study.

The case of the "ear'oles" (working-class male conformists in the Hammertown case study) is admittedly somewhat more complex, and they became — more as a stylistic device than as a theoretical necessity — somewhat of a foil for "the lads" in the write-up of the book. But again it is not a question of the *approach* being invalidated. What is clearly required is the outlining of a somewhat different balance between dominant and subordinate *Cultural Production* and, within the latter, between *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction*, with a somewhat different role of ideology in the mediation of these things.

Furthermore, the approach in *Learning to Labour* was focussed on class domination, but it is equally applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to other forms of domination: gender and race. One chooses a main focus. This is quite different from excluding fundamental concerns from any particular main focus. In fact — a supremely ethnographic point — all of the major forms of domination are squeezed into the life space of the individuals and groups concerned, so that systems of oppression and their ideological forms articulate one with another in apparently united, if contradictory, systems. Furthermore, part of the case of *Learning to Labour* — and, as we saw in the Introduction, part of the argument about *Cultural Production* — is that these systems, compressed in a life space, provide resources toward each other's penetration in the profane world of lived relations. *Cultural Production* signifies not the contours of formal categories outlined by the theorists' — "sex, race, class" and their dry, one might say, separate vegetative propagations — but the profane, living, properly fertile, often uncontrollable combinations of these elements in actual collective life projects, decisions, and changes. A characteristic of this may be that "submission" to one domination may reveal or resist another, or that dominant placement in one kind of discourse may reveal other kinds of submission. This is the actual stuff of the creation and recreation of material and social life which can only then be re-classified out by the theorists: "sex, race and class." I showed one form of an articulation, penetration, development, and final reproduction in the use by working class males of patriarchal categories both to resist and expose the school and its meritocratic ideology and to frame the experiential and material form of their passage into manual labour — precisely the "dirty," historical and contingent nature of male forms. And yet I am accused of uncritically accepting patriarchy and the dominance of the males concerned and for not exposing their "sexism," when it is precisely this I analysed in relation to the school, labour power, and the division between mental/manual labour. Again, *mutatis mutandis*, this analysis, far from proclaiming and repeating the absolute law of male dominance, suggests a model for the ways other complex articulations might exist in other sites using class categories — for instance, to expose and resist patriarchy, and in, perhaps, the middle-class women's demand for equal pay and status and in the increasing demands of female workers for adequate Union representation and equality in the home. *Cultural Production* means precisely recognising the profane challenges and productivity of the reworking and resisting of received ideologies, discourses, and non-productive patterns of determination and perspective. And yet I am accused of uncritically assuming an inert patriarchy in my pursuit of class. In somewhat changed terms, this is again to take *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* in my analysis as face-value *Social Reproduction*. This is remove the efficacy of *Cultural Production* as a notion for exploring other sites and oppressions as well as to ignore what is actually specific and challenging and non-reproductive about its own nature.<sup>2</sup>

## Theory and Practice

It has become conventional now to separate analyses of education into those that deal with Reproduction (theory) and those that deal with radical possibilities in the classroom (practice). The former are held to be pessimistic and to *close* the possibility of praxis; the latter are held to deal with change and the possibility of liberation. I want to argue that the positions we've been considering lie between these concerns and not wholly within the former.

The comments I want to make flow from two things: (a) the distinction I make between dominant and subordinate forms of *Cultural Reproduction*; and (b) the insistence that *Learning to Labour* starts not with the reproduction but with the production of culture, and that this implies not closure but openness.

The distinction between dominant and subordinate forms of *Cultural Reproduction* is important because it allows us to isolate different strategies which might flow from each. From the point of view of the dominant processes, the interests of oppressed groups are clearly to take at face value, and to try to realize, the promises of meritocracy — equality for all. It is possible to argue in the terms of bourgeois democracy for greater provision for working-class, black, and female students. If reading scores are to exist, then the authorities should be continuously attacked and asked why scores are lower for working-class and inner-city schools. If there is to be graduate certification, then open entry can be demanded to help equalise class, gender, and ethnic inequality of access. The recent claims for equality for women, as a central and accepted feature of society, can be pursued to their logical conclusions and against the contradictions of other policies. Positive discrimination can be pursued until we have quite uneven financial provision. Of course this is not to claim that such policies will work in the way intended — subordinate *Cultural Production* will see to that. Furthermore, such policies will not increase the “fit” between education and industry. Indeed, one may say that this is the essence of the strategy here: to increase those mismatches and to give greater value to labour than capital can realise. Of course there are powerful resistances, especially during the fiscal crisis of the state (which these demands are likely to deepen), but our analysis still allows a political course to be plotted.

Furthermore, the disabling aspects of cultural capital within dominant *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* can be exposed and attempts made to neutralise it. What Bourdieu calls “explicit” pedagogy could be encouraged for the working class so that the nature of what they are being asked to give in tests is made clear beforehand, and the *general* power of cultural capital could be limited by giving greater resources and time to the “disadvantaged,” by demystifying the hidden basis of symbolic violence, by delaying certification, by real destreaming, by allowing educational re-entry by equals into higher education and where the state has power, by quotas in “privileged” employment itself, etc. I am not saying that any or all of this is possible. The simple point is to indicate what *kinds* of reforms flow from an understanding of dominant *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* and to suggest that the contradictions in dominant ideology and self proclaimed aims of provision can be exploited. There is still much to be done in terms of promoting the “revolution” of capitalist equality against transmitted privilege. The capitalist state may have to provide and maintain some conditions for capital, but it also has to provide legitimation for the system. For all the new-fangledness of Bourdieu's theory, it actually designates reproduced residues of a feudal order. There are many social forces and alliances to be organised against this.

Indeed, the attack on educational “autonomy” from the right may have real possibilities for being claimed by the left because it raises the whole



question of dependency. If it can be popularly shown that education was *never* independent from class and cultural capital, then the critique could be diverted on to the head of cultural capital, and the liberal technicist notion of releasing the maximum talent from the “hidden pool” of the working class could be directed to the real benefit of the working class. Dependency on productive relations and productive forces, as a move from dependency on inherited class, is no bad thing for the working class.

Of course, it will be objected that no amount of “success” here will liberate the working class. At the very best, we might achieve a perfectly mobile capitalist system. Quite. This strategy flows from the dominant *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* perspective and the contradictions within that and the promises of bourgeois equality. It is unlikely to work in the long term, but it would meanwhile protect or increase state resources flowing to the working class and also heighten recalcitrant features and problems of the capitalist system which it cannot control for itself. Insofar as state socialist systems also exhibit cultural capital, such a set of demands could have perhaps even greater relevance there.

In terms of a specifically working-class perspective, its own development as a fundamental class, and hopes to change fundamentally the social relationship it faces, we must turn to subordinate *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* and to the vital point of my paper: that this reproduction works through open moments of production. Aspects of liberation are already there, and we do not need to proceed totally through the invention of utopian solutions (necessary though they are).

What *Cultural Production* perspectives add to *Reproduction* theories is the sense of activity and practice, especially through crises and difficulties and what feel like (and are, to the participant) circumstances creatively met — whether a child recognizing that “school is not for me” but “it does not matter anyway,” or young people realising, despite the hostility and impoverishment of the adult world facing them, the interest of a new public world, going out, friends, the opposite sex in early adulthood. These things can be, in their own way, minor liberations as well as daily events. It is the non-intended results of these strategies — the ways in which “existential” or cultural solutions at their own “levels” and the creative resolutions of life trajectories as they are experienced act to stabilise and produce the system as whole — which connect that liberation to entrapment as daily events too. The question is less one of bringing in liberation from outside than attempting to drive a wedge between *Cultural Production* and *Cultural Reproduction* — to preserve the creativity of the articulation of discourses and their radical contents without reproducing the discourses themselves, to gauge the necessity and extent of mastery of dominant forms in order to pursue this. Of course we are still on the grounds of the capitalist social formation, and the knowledge of oppressed groups is never pure, always ambiguous, and likely to be half betraying of itself. Furthermore, groups like “the lads” do not enjoy a culture which is in any sense intrinsically socialist, and it must not be romanticised. There are elements here leading to fascism, certainly to racism and sexism — never mind liberation. These forms need work and collective effort on them — this is in no sense a plea for spontaneity. But “the lads” culture suggests only one form of subordinate *Cultural Production*, and all forms, in their ethnic and gender variety and with their different specification of opposition, need to be analysed and thought through and educational strategies adopted for preserving and extending their moments of *Cultural Production* from *Cultural Reproduction*, and determining what the links and possible alliances may be.

The emphasis of this pedagogic strategy flowing from subordinate *Cultural Production and Reproduction* is not intended to *increase* the mismatch between education and production but to *increase* the match *from the subordinate point of view*. No socialist strategy can afford not to link education with production, and there are all kinds of places and spaces in the current rearticulation of education and production, under the impulse of “reforms” flowing, perhaps, from the dominant *Cultural Production and Reproduction* perspective, which nevertheless could be claimed for subordinate *Cultural Production*.

It must also not be assumed that there are no claimable resources within processes of subordinate *Cultural Reproduction*. The dominated themselves can see the irony of resistance as incorporation and work from this basis, perhaps, to locate where production becomes reproduction.

Of course this is a very general and not a detailed program. What is specifically missing and should be our positive task is some notion of the “counter-hegemonic” cultural principle that might link forms of *Cultural Production* into their own connected ideology against forms of oppression — and so to know more exactly what are, and how to hold and develop, the counter-hegemonic moments and practices which occasionally just flood over and are gone. It is that hegemonic principle, or principles of the articulation of differences of opposition and cultural forms, which is vital to develop if resistance is to be finally more than a formal moment in the dialectical domination of capital and other structures. This is difficult to know and must be the areas where theory really meets practice in the courage to experiment and make mistakes. Some things might, however, be noted from the perspective of subordinate *Cultural Production and Reproduction*. The action of dominant *Cultural Production and Reproduction* is often to break up and fragment subordinate *Cultural Production*. The dominant group claims for its own discourse the provenance of the public, the long term, the legitimate, the explicit and the rationally logical — we may say history itself. Subordinate *Cultural Production* is profoundly private, informal and articulated in the immediate, the practical, the demonstrated, and the narrative — implicit logic which hardly survive even beyond their transient embodiments, never mind for history. The counter-hegemonic principle must therefore concern itself with the formation and varied identity of the class itself and of what is the commonality of oppressed groups before concerning itself with struggle directly — maintaining the unity and scope of *Cultural Production* that dominant forms seek to break up. It must also work on the notion of subordinate *Cultural Production* so that it dares the public, dares history, dares to state its logic in opposition to domination and its own subversion into *Cultural Reproduction*. Without this, only guilty social secrets weigh in the balance against *Social Reproduction* and the massive condescension from theory and politics that there was only ever dominant *Cultural Production and Reproduction*.

For teachers, there are clear indications, if not proposals, here for curricular teaching style and possible texts for classroom discussion and development: where gender identity seems to solve short-term problem and uncertainties but settles long-term entrapment; anti-mentalism, which solves the problem of schooling but not of long-term class destiny; resistance and violence, which satisfy short-term rage and dignity but not long-term oppression — the mode, scope and rationality of all these things. But teachers should also inspect what they bear of dominant *Cultural Reproduction*, which may be breaking what they are trying to repair: their own class style and accent; the impatience of their own very public logic; the very confidence perhaps of their own plan for what is good for. . . . Difficulties and contradictions abound — not least be-

tween some of the implications of a simultaneous pursuit of strategies flowing from the dominant and subordinate *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction* perspectives. Furthermore, a marked tendency of counter-school culture is likely to be rejection of staff in general. But there is no reason why teachers should escape contradiction! Their sensitivity to this and to some of the general approaches discussed should anyway sensitise them to the variety of possible situations they might face and to the importance of alliances in particular schools which do not individually show the massive immovable set-piece cultures. Even the anti-mentalism of resistance groups might be overcome where cuts threaten, for instance, practical classes, games, and clubs in which their own cultures thrive more happily than in stricter academic classes. The question is one of linking general principles to a flexible practice.

In particular though, teachers should look at ways in which their own labour process and changes in it might be implicated in dominant or subordinate *Cultural Production* and *Reproduction*. Certainly the development of hierarchies and managerial systems turns subordinate *Cultural Production* into "social problems," problems of "control" and "pathology." Even these definitions are often suppressed higher up the hierarchy so that "student resistance" and "disorder" only ever happen in someone else's district: "Think of the publicity!" "If ever this got out!" Teachers need to investigate collectively locally-based, direct forms of short-circuiting managerial hierarchies to deal with the continuities of school, community, and work place forms of subordinate *Cultural Production* in order to come at a proper politics of education concerned with working-class development rather than its regulation.

A clearer sense of subordinate *Cultural Production* might also allow some understanding of how it is related to dominant *Cultural Production*, and of how the current hegemony operates in the different sites at the moment. This seems to be partly through a willing acceptance of some of the real material and symbolic production of subordinate *Cultural Production* and also through the less willing incorporation of aspects of popular common sense (and with it some "good sense") into a stable pattern of consent and settlement. Those incorporated elements in the "enemy" camp, valorised at the moment to the benefit of the dominant block of interest, could be, so to speak, detonated and the exploded items revalorised by organisation and action based on a properly synchronised counter-hegemonic understanding of subordinate *Cultural Production*.

So are "tigers" both real and paper. That the strength behind the claw is not all the tiger's does not make the wound less deep. But we cannot detach the power just by wishing and hating — nor even by fighting in the vulnerable flesh.

This becomes pretentious. The point is actually a formal one and is the main point of this paper. A notion of *Social Reproduction* which works through *Cultural Production* is quite open — not closed and pessimistic as other theories of *Reproduction* are (correctly) held to be. It has elements of challenge, change, and liberation built into it — not hermetically sealed out. The problem is not how to ditch theory but how to reach for this theoretical possibility in practice. And if theory should note practice, so should practice note theory. The view of liberation at stake should perhaps be less external, free, and ideal: more conditional, historic, and hedged with potential ironies. If we are to aim true in the endless ricochet between freedom and constraint, voluntarism and structure, then practice bears a responsibility too.

#### Notes

1. I am drawn into "theory" and "theoretical clarification" with some misgiving. Part of this arises from the fact that the theoretical category, *Cultural Production*, I have

just introduced in the first paragraph here is not a dry, formal abstraction but processes of *activity* and *creativity*. This is precisely the unspecifiability in advance of material and cultural life that seems anathema to “theory.”

Columbia University Press is bringing out an American paperback in the Fall, and I would very much like to encourage certain kinds of interpretations and “readings” of the text.

2. I accept a lot of the criticisms made in Angela McRobbie’s extensive and well-argued feminist critique of *Learning to Labour*, and I have benefitted from discussion with Angela. I did not specify clearly enough the oppression of girls in the male counter-school culture. Nor did I focus sufficiently on the family or note the possibility that *shared* structures of masculinity (i.e. between myself and “the lads”) may have made the research possible and that such structures underlying the ethnography could make reading the book an oppressive experience for some women.

On the other hand, I think that Angela McRobbie’s written critique ignores the positive of what I was attempting; for instance, her point that Joey’s final words in the Appendix — “The only thing I’m interested in is fucking as many women as I can if you really want to know” (after my “gentle probing about his future”) — demonstrated the brutality of the culture to women may be correct, but this is to pass over the nature of the actual exchange, and the reasons why it was included. I had not been gently “probing” but, as the text shows, asking Joey why he did not think of turning his thoughts toward university, toward mental work, and this was just after we had been exploring masculinity in its manulist mode as a form of class resistance. The comment is actually expressing his attitude toward mental work in relation to masculinity — though of course (as is the case throughout the book), this expression is contextualised and compounded with many others that make its reduction to simple explanation problematic.

Furthermore, if I failed properly to recognise and condemn the sexism of the lads, Angela McRobbie exaggerates the evidence. She refers to “the lads” substituting “jam rag for (sanitary) towel at every opportunity” when it is mentioned only once in the text. She also erroneously interprets one phrase — “a good maul on her” — to mean sexual intercourse, whereas in the local argot it actually means petting. This does not, of course, lessen the relevance of her basic points — see Angela McRobbie, “Settling Accounts with Sub-cultures,” *Screen Education*, No. 34, Spring 1980, London.

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