



Languages of Legitimation: the structuring significance for intellectual fields of strategic knowledge claims

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ABSTRACT *Beginning from the argument that the sociology of educational knowledge remains a sociology without a theory of knowledge, this paper illustrates the significance of the structuring of knowledge for the development of intellectual fields through a study of cultural studies in British higher education. The paper presents a means of bridging the divide between analyses of 'relations to' and 'relations within' education (Basil Bernstein) by conceiving educational knowledge as legitimation, i.e. as both positioned strategies within a field of struggles and potentially legitimate truth claims. First, the institutional trajectory of and claims made for cultural studies by its proponents are outlined. Analysis of the underlying principles of this language of legitimation is developed into a generative conceptualisation of modes of legitimation, and cultural studies is defined as a knower mode, where knowledge is reduced to the knower and epistemology replaced by sociology. Using this framework, cultural studies is then analysed in terms of: (i) relations to its institutional trajectory (developing Pierre Bourdieu's 'field' approach); and (ii) relations within its mode of legitimation, focusing on their ramifications for the field's structure. It is argued that legitimation embraces the insights of both approaches, thereby contributing to a cumulative and epistemological sociology of educational knowledge.*

The medium is also a message

Introduction

The principal purpose of this article is to illustrate the significance of the structuring of educational knowledge for an understanding of the formation and development of intellectual fields [1]. At the same time, I shall introduce a conceptual framework as a contribution to bridging a divide within the sociology of education, between what Basil Bernstein defines as analyses of 'relations to' education and 'relations within' education (1990, pp. 165–180). According to Bernstein, British sociology of education, particularly since the early 1970s, 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. (Bernstein, 1990, p. 165)

In terms of the study of intellectual fields, this emphasis can be identified as becoming increasingly salient in the wake of the ‘new’ sociology of education of the early 1970s. Previous research had been dominated by a philosophy of education tradition (for example, Peters, 1967) 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 educational knowledge works to reproduce external social relations of power, rather than of the structure of knowledge itself (Moore & Muller, 1999). While highlighting the coupling of power/knowledge, such approaches have tended to reduce knowledge to power.

Educational 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 thus became realised 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 in this article 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 education—the structuring of educational knowledge—is itself also a message. This raises the questions of how one analyses, and the significance of, these relations within educational knowledge; in other words, what messages this medium might tell us, and how we can register them. This article offers an answer to these questions through an illustrative analysis of the development of British cultural studies within higher education.

The Positive Contribution of ‘Legitimation’

The form taken by this answer itself requires explanation. Analyses of British sociology of education have described a schismatic development of oppositional and incommensurable approaches (Bernstein, 1975, pp. 146–162; Moore, 1996). Bachelard’s remark that, ‘in a general manner, obstacles to scientific culture always present themselves in the form of couples’ (1938, p. 20) holds, I would argue, for British sociology of education. The pertinent example here is a perceived tension within the field between the approaches of Basil Bernstein and Pierre Bourdieu. Despite both figures arguing the need for developing a cumulative and scientific sociology of education, the tendency is to compare and contrast their work with a view to declaring one or other the winner (for example, Harker & May, 1993). In contrast, I aim to contribute to overcoming this dichotomy, not at the philosophical level of a meta-discourse on their relative merits and limitations, but by outlining and briefly illustrating the beginnings of a conceptual framework that aims to embrace the insights of both their approaches [2].

In earlier articles, I have argued that the approaches of Bourdieu and Bernstein offer the analysis of intellectual fields, *inter alia*, a sociology of knowledge and a theory of knowledge. Bourdieu’s ‘field’ approach offers a means of describing intellectual fields in terms of relationally positioned struggles over status and resources (Maton, 1999);

Bernstein's framework offers a sophisticated means of conceptualising the structuring of educational knowledge (Maton, 1998). Bourdieu's approach embraces questions of 'who', 'where', 'when', 'how' and 'why'; Bernstein's framework additionally emphasises the hitherto neglected issue of 'what' (1996, pp. 169–181). In short, Bourdieu highlights how intellectual fields structure educational knowledge, while Bernstein highlights the structuring significance of educational knowledge for intellectual fields. Between them, their approaches conceive educational knowledge as a structured and structuring structure.

In this article, I outline a potential means of embracing these insights by analysing educational knowledge in terms of the claims made on behalf of intellectual fields by their members. Such 'languages of legitimation' represent the claims made by actors for carving out and maintaining intellectual and institutional spaces within education, i.e. the proclaimed *raison d'être* that provides the conditions of existence for intellectual fields. When actors make claims on behalf of their field (or specific position within it), they are also proposing a ruler for participation within the field and proclaiming criteria by which achievement within this field should be measured (cf. Bernstein, 1990). Rather than being merely marketing rhetoric, languages of legitimation thereby represent the basis for competing claims to limited status and material resources within higher education; they are strategic stances aimed at maximising actors' positions within a relationally structured field of struggles (cf. Bourdieu, 1988). At the same time, the knowledge comprising these claims may be legitimate. That is, educational knowledge is not merely a reflection of power relations, but 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 educational knowledge as legitimation, an awareness of the structured and positioned nature of strategic position-takings within a field may be brought together with an emphasis upon the structuring and non-arbitrary nature of potentially legitimate knowledge claims, i.e. embracing 'relations to' and 'relations within' analyses of knowledge, the knower and the known.

This article begins by briefly sketching the development of British cultural studies in terms of its institutional trajectory within higher education and dominant language of legitimation. By analysing the structuring principles of this language of legitimation, a generative conceptualisation of modes of legitimation is then outlined. The remainder of the article uses this conceptual framework to illustrate dynamic analyses of relations to and relations within the educational knowledge of cultural studies. First, I analyse the relations of the social and institutional positions occupied by cultural studies to its mode of legitimation. Second, I outline the intrinsic dynamic generated by relations within the mode of legitimation itself, focusing on its ramifications for the intellectual field's institutional trajectory. The latter analysis thus effectively reverses the direction of the former in order to demonstrate how an understanding of relations within educational knowledge sheds light on its location within social relations of power. Finally, I briefly consider the implications of the article's main arguments for the future direction of the sociology of educational knowledge.

British Cultural Studies in British Higher Education [3]

Institutional Trajectory

In the course of ongoing research into the institutionalisation of cultural studies within higher education, I have constructed a database of every course, option and module in

cultural, media and communication studies (and variants thereof) that has been offered in British institutions of higher education since the early 1960s, as well as collecting unpublished archival sources detailing the development of courses and compiling detailed data on the social profile of the student body that has taken courses in cultural studies. Analysis of this data reveals general patterns of institutionalisation, exhibiting two principal features that I shall expand on here: the sustained marginality and relative invisibility of cultural studies as a named and distinct area of study within British higher education.

Drawing on typologies of post-war British higher education institutions (for example, King, 1970; Tight, 1996), cultural studies can be characterised as having occupied positions of relatively low 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 were far outside the universities, in lower levels of the educational system. The earliest professional associations (such as the Society of Film Teachers, founded 1950), journals (*The Film Teacher* in 1952), conferences (National Union of Teachers, 1960) and courses (Mainds, 1965) in Britain addressing these areas were all 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 for research on schooling (Harcourt, 1964). When courses in cultural studies did emerge within higher education during the late 1950s, they were firmly 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, a small number of research centres in cultural studies emerged on the margins of existing university departments. The best-known example is the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University, founded in 1964. Although the CCCS is now viewed as having been a site of intellectual pioneering within the humanities and social sciences, both University of Birmingham (1964–74, 1975–89) and CCCS (1964–81) annual reports and my own interviews with participants indicate that its institutional status was less impressive. The CCCS comprised extremely 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 more 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. Birmingham University offered only furniture and accommodation, the minimal nature of which is illustrated by the 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 has occurred since the late 1970s, when it began to establish 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 entered curricula for the purposes of either cultivating critical discrimination among pupils deemed of lower ability or of providing a liberal education enticing and readily understandable to non-traditional students thought to be unattracted by more established disciplines (Hall & Whannel, 1964). In addition, the status of the founding fathers and central intellectual figures of the field as social outsiders in higher education is often 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 over at least the past decade (Milner, 1994), and new journals, textbooks, conferences and courses that claim cultural studies among their central concerns currently proliferate throughout British higher education. 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 through absorption by 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, its founding research centre, 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 thus 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, the position of departments and courses of cultural studies has been anything but certain. The first full degree course offered in Cultural Studies (at Portsmouth University in 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 was partially saved only by a concerted campaign by international scholars proclaiming its intellectual significance (CCCS, 1964–81). 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 disparate individual initiatives (Mains, 1965) and professional subject associations have, until recently, been *ad hoc*, limited and short-lived; the first national organisation 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 regular attacks from both within and without higher education. From inception, it has been depicted as unacademic, politically pernicious and undermining academic standards (Watson, 1977), perhaps the most recent example of this 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 specialised academic subject has generally emerged and developed within what can be termed the dominated pole of the field of British higher education institutions.

Language of Legitimation: The Voice of Cultural Studies

As outlined in the Introduction, I shall focus on how cultural studies has been legitimated by its proponents, rather than describing specific instances of enacted curricula or recounting its intellectual history. There are, of course, different forms of self-characterisation and self-validation—how one describes and justifies one’s practices may depend on the context—and so I shall, first, analytically distinguish different legitimating languages along two axes according to their primary intended audience (Fig. 1):

- ‘Internal’, facing inwards to fellow actors within the specific intellectual field; and ‘external’, addressing actors outside the field [4]
- ‘Discursive’, addressed to the field of knowledge production within higher education; and ‘social’, aimed at the institutional field of reproduction

In discussing cultural studies, I shall primarily examine its internal–discursive language of legitimation. This comprises self-definitions and characterisations; it is the ‘voice’ of the intellectual field, wherein it constructs, maintains and changes its political cosmology and nosology. If the external language of legitimation is its profane dimension, this language constitutes its sacred element; it provides the ‘ruler’ whereby those locating themselves within the field may be measured. The choice of focus here is determined by my intention to highlight the significance of analysing relations *within* educational knowledge: the internal–discursive language of legitimation is relatively less influenced by external social, economic, political and institutional factors than other languages.

The literature within British cultural studies concerned with legitimating the field is voluminous. Focusing here on its internal–discursive language of legitimation since the late 1970s (its main period of institutionalisation)—including scholarly articles, texts, position papers and conference presentations (of which I shall cite but illustrative examples)—my ongoing analysis reveals this language to have exhibited dominant and recurring themes which coalesce around questions of disciplinarity and notions of ‘giving voice to’.

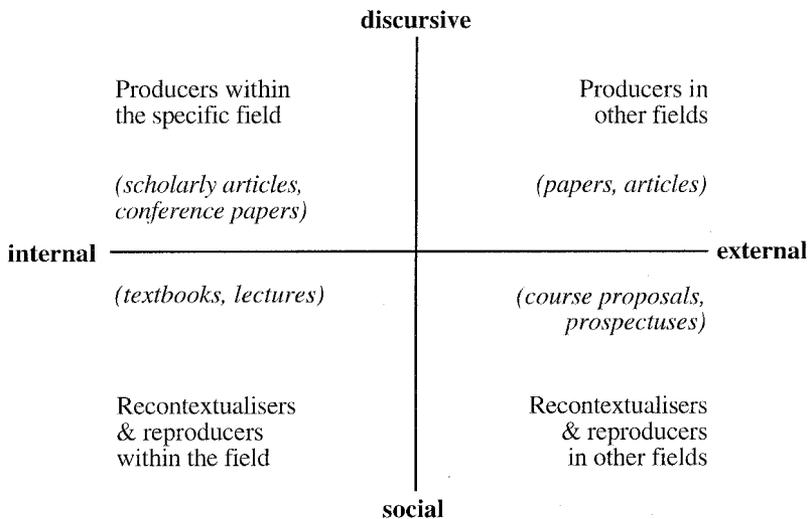


FIG. 1. Languages of legitimation. Axes refer to the primary intended audience. Examples are given in parentheses of contexts where the language may typically find expression.

The Vexed Question of Discipline. Proponents of cultural studies have often legitimated the subject area as being ‘multi-’, ‘cross-’, ‘inter-’, ‘post-’, ‘trans-’ or even ‘anti-disciplinary’ (Brantlinger, 1990), and 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 in ‘profound danger’ (Johnson, 1983; Hall, 1992). 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, etc.) feature regularly within its legitimating discourse.

As ‘undisciplined’, cultural studies is also characterised by its advocates as free from disciplinary notions of a delimited object of study and appropriate procedures of enquiry (Turner, 1990). Although the subject area is nominally the study of culture, 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 usually boundless in scope—typified by such influential self-definitions as the study of ‘a whole way of life’ (following Williams, 1961)—and specialised 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 (Turner, 1990). As a whole, its proclaimed objects of study and procedures of enquiry are thus hypothetically uncircumscribed.

Another of the central self-defining characteristics 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, 1996). The conventional account of its development is one of a series of critical ‘breaks’ and characterised by: a theoretical landscape of recurrent proclamations of rupture and renewal (Hall, 1971), illustrated by its enthusiasm for various ‘post-’ theories, such as post-structuralism and post-modernism (McRobbie, 1994); interventions on behalf of silenced voices declaring new beginnings (see later); and an inbuilt obsolescence and 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 less didactic forms of teaching, more participatory forms of evaluation and social organisation 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 marginalised social groups has become a central theme in the legitimation of cultural studies, associating its *raison d’être* with the dominated social position of those whose interests it claims to be serving (Gray, 1997). Correspondingly, the curricular history of cultural studies is conventionally schematised as centred upon the successive

study of class, race, gender and sexuality (Brantlinger, 1990). In such accounts, cultural studies first focuses upon giving voice to the experiences of working-class men (Willis, 1977), turns to address the silenced voice of women (Women's Studies Group, CCCS, 1978) and then of ethnic minorities (CCCS, 1982), before more recently highlighting marginalised 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, etc. 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), i.e. an epistemological privileging of claims to specialised 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 emphasise 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 valorise 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).

Modes of Legitimation

It is simple enough (if a little alliterative) to state that one views educational knowledge as 'a structured and structuring structure', but unless one can state unambiguously what this structure comprises and how it differs from other possible structurings, then such a view remains limited to the metaphysical sphere (Maton, 1999). Thus, before illustrating the structuring significance of its language of legitimation for the intellectual field of cultural studies, I shall first analyse the underlying principles structuring this language, necessitating an excursion into a more abstract and theoretical discourse than hitherto. In accordance with my intention of embracing both approaches, I shall conceptualise languages of legitimation in terms of both relations within and relations to this educational knowledge formation. This distinction may be clarified by conceiving of educational knowledge as having two (co-existing but analytically distinct) sets of relations, highlighting that knowledge claims are simultaneously claims to knowledge *of the world* and *by authors* (Fig. 2). These I shall term the:

- (i) 'Epistemic relation': between educational knowledge and its proclaimed object of study (that part of the world of which knowledge is claimed)
- (ii) 'Social relation': between educational knowledge and its author or subject (who is making the claim to knowledge)

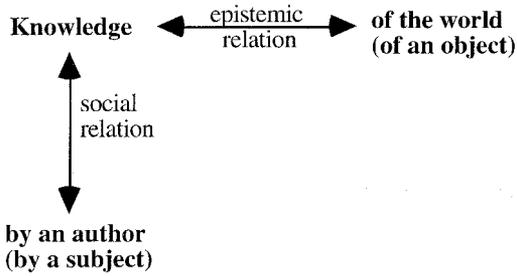


FIG. 2. The epistemic relation and the social relation of knowledge.

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 that cultural studies has given to these questions, I shall draw upon Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing (1975), where the strength of 'classification' refers to the relative strength of the boundaries between categories or contexts (such as academic subjects in a curriculum); and the strength of 'framing' refers to the locus of control within a category or context (strong framing indicating strong control 'from above', such as by a teacher).

The epistemic relation 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 ('a whole way of life'), open procedures of enquiry and teaching, and a commitment to problematising categories, boundaries and hierarchies between and within forms of knowledge and objects of study. In other words, cultural studies can be defined as an attempt to *weaken* both classification and framing of the epistemic relation. In contrast, the social relation of this language of legitimation exhibits relatively strong classification and strong framing. 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, the language of legitimation of cultural studies places different strengths of boundaries around and control over the definitions of, on the one hand, what can be claimed knowledge of and how, and, on the other, who can claim knowledge.

Developing this distinction, I have previously outlined a generative means of conceptualising the structuring principles underlying languages of legitimation (Maton, 1998). In this paper, I shall define two such modes of legitimation: the 'knowledge mode' and the 'knower mode'. These refer to a distinction between legitimating educational knowledge by reference to procedures appropriate to a discrete object of study (the knowledge mode), or personal characteristics of the author or subject (the knower mode), i.e. whether educational knowledge is specialised by its epistemic relation or its social relation. Table I presents the relative strengths of classifications and framings for the two relations (epistemic and social) pertaining to these two modes of legitimation. I begin by defining the knowledge mode, the opposing form of legitimation to that exhibited by cultural studies.

TABLE I. Classifications and framings of modes of legitimation

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

C, Classification; F, framing. Plus/minus signs refer to strong/weak, respectively. Cell numbers refer to the order of discussion in the main body of the text.

Knowledge Modes

1. Intellectual fields exhibiting knowledge modes are legitimated by reference to specialised procedures that are claimed to provide unique knowledge of a specified, discrete ontological object of study (an explicitly realist epistemology) [5]. This mode thus emphasises 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. There is thus 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 relations to legitimate knowledge claims. Everyone is said to be equally positioned in relation to the educational knowledge and practices of the field, and (it is claimed) anyone can produce knowledge provided they comply with these defining extra-personal practices. Knowledge modes thus exhibit relatively weak classification and weak framing of the social relation.

Knower Modes

3. Where knowledge modes legitimate intellectual fields according to specialised procedures for generating knowledge of a distinct object of study, knower modes of legitimation base claims for fields on a privileged subject of study, the 'knower'. This specialised knower may claim unique knowledge of more than an academically 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 modes 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 considerable 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 modes 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 specialised 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 and even expulsion from the field. The knower mode thus exhibits strong classification and strong framing of its social relation.

Summary

The knowledge mode 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; and the knower mode refers to those languages of legitimation where these relative strengths are reversed (see Table I). The key distinction between these two modes lies in which of the two relations specialises the intellectual field; i.e. which is emphasised when actors claim a special status for the knowledge and practices of the field, and thereby define its boundaries and limits. In the knowledge mode, such claims are validated, and the limits of the field defined, by specialised procedures claimed as exclusive to the field (the epistemic relation); and in the knower mode, they are validated 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 these truth claims (see Table I). One can thus make the apparently paradoxical assertion that those categories which are epistemological in the knowledge mode are sociological in the knower mode. A movement within an intellectual field from a knowledge mode to a knower mode of legitimation would thus effectively replace epistemology with sociology.

Empirical Realisations of Modes of Legitimation. These concepts do not represent ideal typical models of educational knowledge, but highlight an *analytical* distinction between two modes of legitimation that are always and everywhere coexisting and articulating within educational knowledge, i.e. they are ever-present and competing *principles* of legitimation. As such, they represent a repertoire. The lack of empirical examples given in these definitions is thus intentional, for their realisations as *languages* of legitimation are a function of the context. The structuring relations of power and control inhering within specific empirical contexts will condition which features of these modes are enabled and realised—which parts of the repertoire become voiced. Thus, although the internal-discursive language of legitimation of cultural studies exhibits a knower mode, one would not necessarily expect to find the same structuring of self-characterisations in the different enabling contexts of other languages of legitimation, such as prospectuses, lectures, course proposals, etc. (see Fig. 1). Similarly, its realisation within specific institutions is contingent upon such conditions as the market status of cultural studies (in terms of the supply and demand of students), the degree of institutional autonomy afforded by this, and the resultant space for proclaiming its internal discourse. The conceptualisation of languages of legitimation presented here does not, therefore, negate empirical analysis of the educational knowledge of specific intellectual fields. Indeed, such conceptual clarification itself results from, highlights the necessity of, and (by defining the

phenomena to be investigated) enables empirical investigation of specific realisations of educational knowledge in determinate conditions.

One must also distinguish between modelling academic practices and conceptualising the principles underlying academic rhetoric regarding those practices. The presented conceptualisations of modes of legitimation are inadequate as accounts of the social practices of intellectual fields only inasmuch as self-characterisations are inadequate as descriptions of what practitioners actually do. That knowledge and knower modes of legitimation may misrepresent the ongoing practices of actors does not prevent the very same actors from propagating these modes on their behalf. (In this sense, examples of knowledge and knower modes include positivist and subjectivist philosophies of science, respectively.) 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, understood as principles of legitimation, in order to show how the form taken by such strategic claims helps to shape the development of intellectual fields.

Analysing Relations To and Relations Within Knower Modes

Using these concepts, the internal–discursive language of legitimation of cultural studies can be rewritten as approximating to a knower mode. This begins to address how relations within educational knowledge may be analysed; the questions remain, however, of the significance and value of such analyses, and of whether this conceptualisation 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 knower modes of legitimation in terms of: (i) relations to its institutional positionings; and (ii) relations within this educational knowledge, focusing upon the ramifications of the knower mode’s intrinsic dynamic for the intellectual field’s institutional trajectory within higher education. The aim is to illustrate how educational knowledge is both structured by and, in turn, itself 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 marginalised 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 best serve its ends.)

Analysing Relations to Knower Modes

Analysing relations to educational knowledge involves focusing on its social and institutional positionings. Drawing upon Bourdieu (1984), one can characterise 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 Fig. 3). For Bourdieu (1988), higher education is located in the dominated fraction of the dominant class, its dominant social position being based upon cultural capital, which is subordinate relative to economic capital. As described earlier, cultural studies emerged and developed within relatively low-status institutions associated with the teaching of socially and educationally marginalised 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 Fig. 3, the homologous relation of ‘+’ and ‘–’ between the axes of

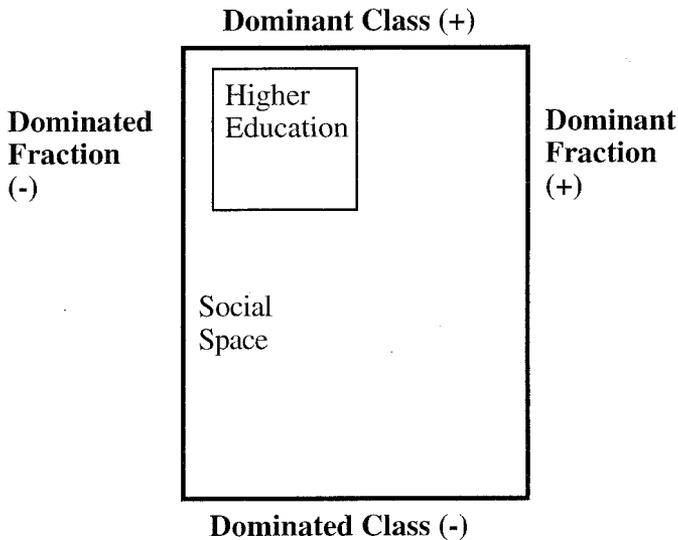


FIG. 3. The social position of higher education.

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 explanation, i.e. as having regarded 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 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, i.e. that working-class membership operated as the specific social category upon which claims to privileged insight were made—a knower mode of legitimation [6]. 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 (e.g. notions 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 higher education and dominated classes). Conversely, social class tends to be suppressed as a marker of difference (between academic and non-academic members of the knower category) 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 (Maton, 2000). In the case of cultural studies, the history of its educational knowledge forms a procession of the excluded: the working class, women, ethnic minorities, etc. 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 educational 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) that characterises cultural studies (Harris, 1992).

In Bourdieu’s approach, the relational practices of actors within a specific field are viewed as being determined by their relational positions within that field: *‘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 educational knowledge 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 maximise 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; etc. Thus, given the perceived dominance of knowledge modes within higher education during the development of cultural studies, knower modes 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, emphasises the subversive potential of marginal academic positions.

The Whole Story? To conclude at this point, accounting for the mode of legitimation 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 already illustrated, such an analysis provides insights into questions of who, where, when, how and why. However, in this approach, the form taken by educational knowledge is constructed as arbitrary and historically contingent, and an analysis of its structural history is viewed as irrelevant for an understanding of its development. Actors tend to adopt (subversive) practices that 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 educational knowledge of intellectual fields is thereby viewed as a reflective epiphenomenon of the play of positions within the field. In terms of my earlier distinction, such analyses can be understood as an exclusive analysis of the social relation; their blindspot is the epistemic relation of knowledge—the question of ‘what’ (Maton 1999).

This approach, then, provides only part of the story. I shall now illustrate how analysis of the intrinsic dynamic generated by the knower mode offers a means of explaining the development of cultural studies which does not reduce its educational knowledge to an arbitrary reflection of external power relations, thereby highlighting how relations *within* educational knowledge are significant both to the way educational knowledge itself develops and to its institutional trajectory. Specifically, by using the same concepts of modes of legitimation to consider the structuring of these strategic position-takings, the aim will be to complement rather than displace the above approach.

Analysing Relations Within Knower Modes

The mode of legitimation represented by cultural studies is the knower mode, comprising actors claiming to represent the interests of a social group outside academia, as in the notion of ‘giving voice to’. Knower modes 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’—i.e. they exhibit strong classification and strong framing of the social relation. Such discourses are legitimated on the basis of the inability of existing educational knowledge to articulate the voice of this previously silenced knower. However, once a knower mode 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 Brunson (1996, p. 179) characterises 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 specialised 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

London-bred, Oxbridge-educated, white heterosexual men of working-class origin in their late twenties currently living in Leicester and so on, until you reach ... me.

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 mode of legitimation. 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 mode can be understood as a Bourdieuan strategy of capital maximisation, 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 specialised voice, and truth is defined as whatever may be said by this voice, then it is not what has been said before that matters, but 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, redefinitions 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’ characterising the field is the same: they are empirical realisations of knower mode legitimation.

This process of proliferation and fragmentation also reduces the social bases for collective political action—the knower mode 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. Furthermore, lacking an explicit and strongly defined notion of a specialised object of study and appropriate procedures opens up the intellectual field’s educational knowledge and actors to being poached by other, more established fields. Rather than design and develop a specialised 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 disarray, both everywhere and nowhere to be seen.

The knower mode 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 recent British radio programme on the issue of a referendum on European monetary union repeatedly asked: ‘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 knower modes are vulnerable to similar criticism. I would suggest that academics are currently less well positioned institutionally to rebuff such criticisms. The tendency of knower modes 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 (characterised 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. Knower modes, however, are not based upon claims to provide specialised and theorised insight into a discrete foundational object. Instead, they tend to focus upon the significance of their subject of study. While the marginalised 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 to whom the intellectual field is giving voice becomes increasingly problematic. Knower modes of legitimation may, therefore, problematise 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 knower modes tends towards proliferation and fragmentation. The resultant tendency towards a segmented and schismatic knowledge structure problematises the ability of actors to establish or maintain discrete institutional spaces for their educational knowledge: they are vulnerable to utilitarian criticism from without, and to poaching of actors and educational knowledge from within, the higher education field. In other words, relations within educational knowledge, through the dynamic they enable, may themselves contribute to the structuring of the institutional and intellectual trajectories of an intellectual field. In practice, these tendencies may be unexercised (because of a lack of enabling conditions), exercised unrealised (due to countervailing pressures), or realised unperceived (see Bhaskar, 1975); to reiterate, their status is a matter for empirical research.

Conclusion

I began this article by referring to Basil 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 educational knowledge as a neutral relay for external power relations and focus on the message relayed by this medium. By showing how relations within educational 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, I illustrated that this medium is *also* a message. The emphasis here is deliberate, as I am not claiming that the medium is *the* message. I argue not that analyses of relations to educational knowledge should be displaced, but that they should be complemented and the insights they afford retained. To this end, I proposed conceiving educational knowledge as legitimation and briefly illustrated how a conceptualisation of the principles underlying languages of legitimation may be utilised within analyses of both relations to and relations within educational 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 which has been said to characterise the sociology of education.

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. For, as Pascal argued, it is not certain that everything is uncertain. The notion of legitimation is intended to highlight both the sociological nature of educational 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 educational knowledge must be accounted for by a 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.

Conceiving of educational knowledge in terms of modes of legitimation also enables one to see where social scientific debates that 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 and post-modernism as anti-knowledge modes). This may facilitate a means of engaging with the underlying issues structuring such debates, rather than with their surface features, and so enable social science to move beyond such cyclical recurrences. In addition, social science often tends towards static synchrony, flattening out periods of time and neglecting the analysis of change. By focusing on how knower modes evolve, I have highlighted not only change over time, but more importantly the issue of momentum, the underlying dynamic which structures the development of intellectual fields.

Finally, the analysis of the development of knower modes indicates several issues of significance to the future direction of the sociology of education. The description of a segmented and schismatic intellectual field that regularly appears to begin from scratch is, I believe, at least resonant with the intellectual history of British sociology of education over the past 30 years. This is a pressing issue, which requires careful consideration. 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 already outlined) to substitute sociology for epistemology (Moore & Maton, 2000). Education, 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 educational knowledge as an independent object of study with its own specialised procedures in order to provide an adequate epistemological basis for the sociology of education. It is this end that my conceptualisation of languages of legitimation aims to advance.

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NOTES

- [1] This article revises, develops and extends ideas first set out in a conference paper (Maton, 1998), to be included in a special issue of *Linguistics and Education* based upon selected proceedings.
- [2] It cannot be overemphasised that this article should not be conflated with a secondary commentary on the work of Bourdieu and/or Bernstein or an empirical history of cultural studies; exposition of the ideas of Bernstein and Bourdieu are kept to a minimum, and references to the development of British cultural studies are illustrative examples only. It is worth noting that attempts to integrate the insights of two approaches run the risk of evoking hostility not only from actors opposed to both, but also those actors whose claims to status are based on the distinctiveness of either approach. Contributing to a cumulative sociology of education may seriously damage your academic health!
- [3] I should emphasise that this brief sketch is of 'British cultural studies' within *British* higher education, i.e. a specific intellectual field rather than comparative analysis. The term 'British cultural studies' is now commonly used within cultural studies to distinguish this tradition from those emanating from other national contexts, and is thus not a geographical distinction or content judgement drawn by the author. Subject areas typically regarded as related to cultural studies, such as media and communication studies, have divergent emphases, and institutional trajectories in other national contexts have differed (see, for example, Blundell *et al.*, 1993).
- [4] 'Internal' and 'external' languages of legitimation do not refer to characterisations of a specific intellectual field by practitioners and by actors located in other subject areas; both languages of legitimation originate from within the specific intellectual field and both refer to self-characterisations. The distinction is between their intended audiences.
- [5] 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 regarding the status of their truth claims regarding the unavailability of 'truth'. The difference being drawn here is whether their realist epistemological basis is relatively explicit (knowledge mode) or tacit (knower mode).
- [6] I am grateful to Chas Critcher for highlighting that this knower mode 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 from a knowledge mode (previously, much emphasis had been placed on constructing a rigorous theoretical and methodological basis for the field) to a knower mode.

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