and values are taught to different school populations, again often by class (and sex and race). In effect, for this more critical tradition, schools latently recreate cultural and economic disparities, though this is certainly not what most school people intend at all.

Let me pause here to clarify one thing: this is not to maintain that either culture or consciousness is mechanistically determined (in the strong sense of that term) by economic structure. Rather, it seeks to bring to a level of awareness and make historically and empirically problematic the dialectical relationship between cultural control and distribution and economic and political stratification. Our ordinary perceptions — ones taken from the achievement and socialization models — hence, are bracketed. The ‘cognitive interest’ underlying the research program is to look relationally, if you will, to think about school knowledge as being generated out of ideological and economic conflicts ‘outside’ as well as ‘inside’ education. These conflicts and forces set limits on (not mechanistically determine) cultural responses. This requires subtlety, not appraisals which argue for a one-to-one correspondence between institutional life and cultural forms. Neither all curricula nor all culture are ‘mere products’ of simple economic forces.

In fact, I want to note a critical caveat at this point. There is an obvious danger here, one that should not go unrecognized. To make the actual ‘stuff’ of curriculum problematic, to hold what currently counts as legitimate knowledge up to ideological scrutiny, can lead to a rather vulgar brand of relativism. That is, to see overt and hidden curricular knowledge as social and historical products ultimately tends to raise questions about the criteria of validity and truth we employ. The epistemological issues that might be raised here are not interesting, to say the least. However, the point behind these investigations is not to totally relativize either our knowledge or our criteria for warranting its truth or falsity (though the Marxist tradition has a long history of just this debate as the controversy between, say, Adorno and Popper documents. We have much to learn from the epistemological and political issues raised by this debate, by the way). Rather, as I just mentioned, the methodological dictum is to think relationally or structurally. In clearer terms, one should look for the subtle connections between educational phenomena, such as curriculum, and the latent social and economic outcomes of the institution.

These points are obviously similar to those often associated with the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School who have argued that the context in which we perceive social facts, the general way we conceptually organize our world, may hide the fact that these seemingly commonsensical appearances serve particular interests. But these interests cannot merely be assumed; they need to be documented. In order to lay some of the foundation of this documentation, we shall need to turn to some of the hypotheses that I mentioned earlier I would suggest. We shall need to explore how cultural distribution and economic power are intimately intertwined, not just in the teaching of ‘moral knowledge’ as in some of the reproduction theorists, but in the formal corpus of school knowledge itself.

On the problem of high status knowledge

The discussion in the previous sections of this chapter centered on deepening our understanding of the general political, economic, and conceptual arguments that those people interested in the problem of ideology and curriculum have focused upon. It compared this critical tradition to the current achievement and socialization models predominant in the field. I should now like to take one aspect of the relationship between cultural distribution and economic power and explore it further. I want to employ this critical framework to engage in some speculations about how certain knowledge — particularly that knowledge which is considered to be most prestigious in schools — may in fact be linked to economic reproduction. In essence, I want to begin to think through some of the issues associated with the distribution of knowledge and the creation of inequality that people like Bourdieu, Bernstein, Young, and others have sought to raise. At the forefront of our minds, I think, should be Bourdieu’s point that I noted in the last section. If you want to understand how cultural and economic-political forms work in tandem, then think of both as aspects of capital.

In order to delve into the connections between these forms, I shall be using the language of cultural ‘transmissions’, in effect treating cultural artifacts and knowledge as if they were things. However, the notion of ‘as if’ must be understood as exactly that, as a metaphor for dealing with a much more complex process in which, say, students do not merely take in information, cultural attributes, etc., but rather they also transform (and sometimes reject) these expected dispositions, propensities, skills, and facts into biographically significant meanings. Thus, while the act of treating knowledge as a thing makes for ease of discussion, a methodological simplification if you will, it needs to be understood as just such a simplifying act. (The fact that it is usually considered a thing in our society does of course point to its reification as a commodity in advanced industrial societies).

Once again, one of Michael F. D. Young’s arguments is helpful as a beginning here. He states that ‘those in positions of power will attempt to define what is taken as knowledge, how accessible to different groups any knowledge is, and what are accepted relationships between
different knowledge areas and between those who have access to them and make them available.\textsuperscript{35} Though this is undoubtedly more related to how hegemony acts to saturate our consciousness and is not always or even necessarily a conscious process of manipulation and control, and hence may be a bit overstated, it does raise the issue of the relative status of knowledge and its accessibility. For within this statement is a proposition that might entail something like the following. The possession of high status knowledge, knowledge that is considered of exceptional import and is connected to the structure of corporate economies, is related to and in fact seems to entail the non-possession by others. In essence, high status knowledge is by definition scarce, and its scarcity is inextricably linked to its instrumentality.\textsuperscript{36}

This is an exceptionally critical point and needs to be gone into a bit further. I have argued that schools do not merely 'process' people but that they 'process' knowledge as well. They enhance and give legitimacy to particular types of cultural resources which are related to unequal economic forms. In order to understand this, we want to think about the kinds of knowledge that schools take as the most important, that they want to maximize. I shall define this as technical knowledge, not to denigrate it, but to differentiate it from, say, aesthetics, physical grace, and so on. The conception of the maximization of technical knowledge is a useful principle, I think, to begin to unpack some of the linkages between cultural capital and economic capital.\textsuperscript{37}

Our kind of economic system is organized in such a way that it can create only a certain amount of jobs and still maintain high profit levels for corporations. In essence, the economic apparatus is at its most efficient when there is a (measured) unemployment rate of approximately 4-6 per cent (though we know that this is a notoriously inaccurate measure to which must also be added both the issues of much higher rates for blacks, high levels of underemployment and the unpaid work of many women in the home). To provide useful work for these individuals would require cutting into acceptable rates of return, and would probably require at least the partial reorganization of so-called 'market mechanisms' which apportion jobs and resources. Because of this it would not be a misplaced metaphor to describe our economic system as naturally generating specifiable levels of under and unemployment.\textsuperscript{38} We can think of this model as one which is primarily concerned with the maximization of the production of profit and only secondarily concerned with the distribution of resources and employment.

Now a similar model seems to hold true when we think about knowledge in its relationship to such an economy. A corporate economy requires the production of high levels of technical knowledge to keep the economic apparatus running effectively and to become more sophisticated in the maximization of opportunities for economic expansion. Within certain limits, what is actually required is not the widespread distribution of technical knowledge to the populace in general. What is needed more is to maximize its production. As long as the knowledge form is continually and efficiently produced, the school itself, at least in this major aspect of its function, is efficient. Thus, certain low levels of achievement on the part of 'minority' group students, children of the poor and so on, can be tolerated. It is less consequential to the economy than is the generation of the knowledge itself. Once again, production of a particular 'commodity' (here high status knowledge) is of more concern than the distribution of that particular commodity. To the extent that it does not interfere with the production of technical knowledge, then concerns about distributing it more equitably can be tolerated as well.

Thus, just as in the 'economic market place' where it is more efficient to have a relatively constant level of unemployment, to actually generate it really, so do cultural institutions 'naturally' generate levels of poor achievement. The distribution of scarcity of certain forms of cultural capital is of less moment than this calculus of values than the maximization of the production of the particular knowledge itself.

This, I think, goes a long way in partially explaining the economic role of the debate on standards and open enrollment at universities. It also clarifies some of the reasons schools and curricula seem to be organized toward university life in terms of the dominance of subject centered curricula and the relative prestige given to differing curricula areas. This relationship between economic structure and high status knowledge might also explain some of the large disparities we see in levels of funding for curricular innovations in technical areas and, say, the arts.

The structure of discipline movement provides an interesting example of a number of these points about power and culture. The discipline centered approach was not a serious challenge to the traditional view of curriculum. Rather it was an argument that a particular commodity -- here academic knowledge -- by a particular community was not being effectively 'marketed' in schools.\textsuperscript{39} Even when it was accepted by most school people as the most important curricular knowledge and was given large doses of federal support to assist its adoption in schools, competing power claims were evident about what was to be high status knowledge.

For instance, substantial funding was given to mathematics and science curriculum development while less was given to the arts and humanities. This occurred then and still occurs now for two possible reasons. First is the question of economic utility. The benefits of
maximizing the production of scientific and technical knowledge are easily visible and, at least at the time, seemed relatively non-controversial. Second, high-status knowledge appears to be discrete knowledge. It has a (supposedly) identifiable content and (again, supposedly) stable structure that are teachable and, what is critically important, testable. The arts and humanities have obviously been seen to be less amenable to such criteria, supposedly because of the very nature of their subject matter. Thus, one has a twofold, nearly circular proposition working here. High status knowledge is seen as macro-economically beneficial in terms of long run benefits to the most powerful classes in society; and the socially accepted definitions of high status knowledge preclude consideration of non-technical knowledge.

It is important to note the stress on macro-economic considerations. Obviously, television repair is a subject which, if learned well, may provide economic benefits to its user. However, the economy itself will not be unduly impaired if this is not accorded prestige status. In fact, if Braverman’s analysis is correct — that our economic structure requires the continual division and breaking down of complex skills into less complex and more standardized skills — economic control may be helped by the lack of prestige given to such craftsmanship. The same does not seem to hold true for technical knowledge.

We have two levels working here again. The constitutive or underlying social and economic rules make it essential that subject-centered curricula be taught, that high status be given to technical knowledge. This is in large part due to the selection function of schooling. Though this is more complex than it can go into here, it is easier to stratify individuals according to ‘academic criteria’ when technical knowledge is used. This stratification or grouping is important in large part because not all individuals are seen as having the ability to contribute to the generation of the required knowledge form. Thus, the cultural content (legitimate or high status knowledge) is used as a device or filter for economic stratification, thereby enhancing the continued expansion of technical knowledge in an economy like ours, as well. At the same time, however, one might expect that within this constitutive framework, educators would be relatively free to respond (or not to respond) to more immediate economic pressures such as career education and so forth.

In short, one major reason that subject-centered curricula dominate most schools, that integrated curricula are found in relatively few schools, is at least partly the result of the place of the school in maximizing the production of high status knowledge. This is closely interrelated with the school’s role in the selection of agents to fill economic and social positions in a relatively stratified society that the analysts of the political economy of education have sought to portray.

With Young, I have suggested here that some of the relations among who controls rewards and power in a society, the patterns of dominant values, and the organization of cultural capital can best be uncovered by focusing on the stratification of knowledge. It would not be illogical to claim that, based on what I have argued here, generally, any attempt to make substantive alterations in the relationship between high status and low status knowledge, by, say, making different knowledge areas equal, will tend to be resisted. This would also probably mean that attempts to use different criteria to judge the relative value of different curricular areas will be looked at as illegitimate incursions, as threats to that particular ‘order’.43

Examples of this are not difficult to find in the area of evaluation. For instance, the usual way one evaluates the success of curricula is by employing a technical procedure, by comparing input with output. Were test scores raised? Did the students master the material? This is, of course, the achievement model I described earlier. When educators or policy analysts want to evaluate in another, less technical way, by looking at the ‘quality’ of that curricular experience or by raising questions about the ethical nature of the relationships involved in the interaction, they can be rather easily dismissed. Scientific and technical talk in advanced industrial societies has more legitimacy (high status) than ethical talk. Ethical talk cannot be easily operationalized within an input-output perspective. And, finally, ‘scientific’ criteria of evaluation give “knowledge”, while ethical criteria lead to purely ‘subjective’ considerations. This has important implications for our view of ourselves as neutral and will become of increasing significance when we analyze how ‘science’ functions in education later on.

A current example might be helpful here. After massive reanalysis of studies relating schooling to mobility, Jencks, in Inequality, concluded that it was quite difficult to generalize about the roles schools play in increasing one’s chances at a better future. Thus, he notes that it might be wiser to focus less on mobility and achievement and more on the quality of a student’s actual experience in classrooms, something with strangely (though pleasantly) Deweyan overtones. However, Jencks’s argument that we must pay greater attention to the quality of life within our educational institutions had its roots in ethical and political considerations and was dismissed rather readily. His criteria for making that statement were perceived as being illegitimate. They had little validity within the particular set of language games of which evaluation partakes, and, hence, are accorded little status.44

Notice something else about what this insistence on technical criteria does. It makes both the kinds of questions raised, and the answers given to them, the province of experts, those individuals who possess the knowledge already. In this way, the relative status of the knowledge is
linked to the kinds of questions deemed acceptable, which in turn seems to be linked to its non-possession by other individuals. The form of the questions becomes an aspect of cultural reproduction since these questions can only be answered by experts who already have had the technical knowledge distributed to them. The stratification of knowledge in this case again involves the stratification of people, though less on an economic level here.

Hegemony and reproduction

All of this is quite involved, obviously, and rather difficult to untangle, I know. While our understanding of these knotty-relationships is still tentative, it does raise anew one of the questions I referred to before. Given the subtle connections in this process of the generation of cultural as well as economic reproduction, how and why do people accept it? Hence, the question of hegemony, of ideological stability, that is raised by the reproduction theorists emerges once more. For it is here that the research of Bowles and Gintis, Bernstein, Bourdieu and others on the social reproduction of the values, norms, and dispositions transmitted by the cultural apparatus of a society offers part of an explanation. One form of reproduction (through 'socialization' and what has been called the hidden curriculum) which we shall examine in the next three chapters, complements another (the formal corpus of school knowledge), each of which seems to have ties to economic inequality. It is in the interplay between curricular knowledge — the stuff we teach, the 'legitimate culture'— and the social relations of classroom life that the reproduction theorists describe, that we can begin to see some of the real relations schools have to an unequal economic structure.

Again notice what I am saying, for it constitutes part of an argument against the conspiracy theories so popular in some revisionist critiques of schooling. This process of reproduction is not caused (in the strong sense of that concept) by an elite group of managers who sit or now sit around tables plotting ways to 'do in' their workers at both the workplace and the school. While as we shall see in Chapter 4, such an account may accurately describe some aspects of why schools do what they do, it is not a sufficient explanation of the nexus of forces that actually seem to exist. I am arguing, instead, that given the extant economic and political forms which now provide the principles upon which so much of our everyday lives are organized, this reproductive process is a 'logical necessity' for the continued maintenance of an unequal social order. The economic and cultural unbalance follows 'naturally'.

This may make it hard for educators such as ourselves to deal with the problem. We may, in fact, have to take seriously the political and economic commitments that guide the reproduction theorists. Serious educational analysis may require a more coherent theory of the social and economic policy of which we are a part. While I have explored cultural mechanisms here, it is just as essential to remember Raymond Williams's point that neither culture, nor education are free-floating. To forget that is to neglect a primary arena for collective actions and commitment.

Some of this economic concern is summarized by Henry Levin. In a review of the effects of large-scale educational interventions by the government to try to reduce economic inequality through reforms in curriculum and teaching, he concludes that:

Educational policies that are aimed at resolving social dilemmas that arise out of the basic malfunctioning of the economic, social and political institutions of the society are not amenable to solutions through educational policy and reform. The leverage available to the most benevolent educational reformer and policy specialist is limited by the lack of a constituency for change and the overwhelming momentum of the educational process in the direction of social reproduction of the existing policy. And, there is a deleterious result in our efforts if educational attempts to change society tend to direct attention away from the focus of the problem by creating and legitimating the ideology that schools can be used to solve problems which did not originate in the educational sector.

Yet once again, we must be cautious of this kind of approach, for it can lead us back to viewing schools as little black boxes once more. And that is what we rejected at the outset.

Some concluding questions

I want to stop here, knowing full well that much more could be and needs to be said about the topics I have raised. For example, in order to go further with the relationship between high status knowledge and an 'external' social order, one would have to inquire into the history of the concomitant rise of new classes of social personnel and the growth of new types of 'legitimate' knowledge. These issues obviously require much more thought to be given to the conceptual problem of the dialectical relationship between cultural control and social and economic structure. How does each affect the other? What role does an educational system itself play in defining particular forms of knowledge as high status? What role does it play in helping to create a credentializing
process based on the possession (and non-possession) of this cultural capital, a credentialing system that provides numbers of agents roughly equivalent to the needs of the division of labor in society? These questions imply something important I think, for this relationship is not a one-way street. Education is both a 'cause' and an 'effect' here. The school is not a passive mirror, but an active force, one that also serves to give legitimacy to economic and social forms and ideologies so intimately connected to it. And it is just this action which needs to be unpacked.

Questions of this type are not usually asked in curriculum of course. However, we need to remember that these concerns are not something totally new to the discourse surrounding American education. In fact, we must not see this kind of sociologically and economically inclined curriculum scholarship as being an attempt to carry on any 'reconceptualization' of the curriculum field, though that name has been applied to some recent analysts of power and school knowledge. Rather, the questions which guide this work need to be seen as having rather deep roots in the curriculum field, roots we may have unfortunately forgotten given the ahistorical nature of education.

We need only recall what stimulated the early social reconstructionists in education (Counts, Smith-Stanley-Shores, and others) to begin to realize that one of the guiding themes in past curriculum work has been the role schools fulfill in the reproduction of an unequal society. While these individuals may have been much too optimistic in viewing schools as powerful agencies in redressing this imbalance, and while a number of them ultimately backed away from large-scale structural alterations in our polity, the principle of examining the linkages between cultural and economic institutions is a valued part of our past. It is time to make it our present and future, as well.

Chapter 3
Economics and control in everyday school life
(with Nancy King)

As we saw in the last chapter, schools seem to contribute to inequality in that they are tacitly organized to differentially distribute specific kinds of knowledge. This is in large part related both to the role of the school in maximizing the production of technical cultural 'commodities' and to the sorting or selecting function of schools in allocating people to the positions 'required' by the economic sector of society. As we are beginning to understand more fully, though, schools also play a rather large part in distributing the kinds of normative and dispositional elements required to make this inequality seem natural. They teach a hidden curriculum that seems uniquely suited to maintain the ideological hegemony of the most powerful classes in this society. As the reproduction theorists argued in Chapter 2, ideological and social stability rests in part on the internalization, at the very bottom of our brains, of the principles and commonsense rules which govern the existing social order. This ideological saturation will undoubtedly be more effective if it is done early in one's life. In schools this means the earlier the better, in essence from day one in kindergarten. The principles and rules that are taught will give meaning to students' situations (schools are, in fact, organized in such a way as to maintain these definitions) and at the same time will also serve economic interests. Both elements of an effective ideology will be present.

Let us begin to look at this more carefully by first laying to rest some of the arguments made by the more romantic critics of schooling that these ideological configurations are taught in schools because teachers do not care enough. Then we can see what economically rooted norms and dispositions are actually taught in institutions of cultural preservation and distribution like schools.