

The Contribution of Bazil Bernstein's Concept of Symbolic Control to the Understanding of Social Control and the Role of Social Sciences in Contemporary Societies

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Abstract

Processes of social control that maintain patterns of regular thinking and behavior have long been integral to sociological explanations of the formation of social reality. However, Bernstein's concept of symbolic control highlights a specific dimension of social control by linking sociolinguistic codes in pedagogical communication with power relations and the formation of consciousness. The roles of education and science are pivotal in the division of labor and the mechanisms of symbolic control. Social sciences contribute to the construction of social reality and simultaneously constitute themselves as part of this reality by shaping categories of people who become their subjects of study. Exploring the organic connections among sciences, education, and the social regulation of thoughts and emotions can reveal the potential usefulness of each body of knowledge beyond the conditions of domination that obscure certain aspects of human existence while emphasizing others.

Keywords: symbolic control, Bernstein, education, domination.

1. Introduction

Despite, or perhaps because of, deviations from rules, social control ensures that a pattern of regular thinking and acting can be maintained. Whether social rules are being followed or contested, consolidated or changed, people usually have a sense of what is considered normal or natural in any given social context. Normality is produced by communication, language and knowledge, in part, by specialized discourses produced by sciences, especially social sciences. Understanding the contribution of symbolic systems connected to sciences to this objectively observable yet subjectively experienced regularity poses a significant sociological question.

Central to this discussion is Bernstein's concept of symbolic control (2003b) linking sociolinguistic codes of pedagogical communication with power relations and the formation of consciousness defined as part of his analysis of a social division of labor in which a field of professions that regulate the mind, body, and social relations was developed. Starting from Durkheim's classical concept of social control (1984), we are unfolding a pathway coming through theories explaining the normative function of knowledge, science and education. This pathway leads to a reconsideration of Bernstein's concept of symbolic control, especially with respect to Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination (1991).

- Normality is produced by communication, language and knowledge, in part, by specialized discourses produced by sciences, especially social sciences.
- Bernstein's concept of symbolic control is linking sociolinguistic codes of pedagogical communication with power relations and the formation of consciousness.
- Symbolic control refers to socialization as self-restraint achieved through the manipulation of symbols.

Symbolic control refers to socialization as self-restraint achieved through the manipulation of symbols, especially in the form of knowledge, rather than other disciplinary mechanisms of social control. The roles of education and science are pivotal for the division of labor and the processes of symbolic control. While symbolic control focuses on appropriate forms of communication for different social groups, symbolic domination focuses on the power that creates and reinforces boundaries between social categories, groups, and discourses. The legitimizing functions of the field of symbolic control are discussed, along with consequences of current structural transformations. This theoretical framework offers a perspective on how sciences, especially social sciences, contribute to the constitution of social reality by shaping categories of people who become their subjects of study and, at the same time, constitute themselves as part of this reality.

Of course, the sciences are merely one of the sources of mental frameworks that constitute reality at a given moment in the development of the division of labor. On the other hand, in each historical period, both the social sciences and the others with which they communicate possess a reservoir of knowledge that is not exhausted by the needs of population management. Ultimately, we would say that the social sciences and the social reality they study develop through a dialectical relationship of dependence. The knowledge of the social sciences about behavior contributes to the categorization of thought both for social reality and for themselves, while policies solidify the categorizations that delineate social reality into institutions, thus resulting in a new social reality in which new behaviors emerge, which also become objects of scientific explanations, categorizations, institutionalizations, and so on.

2. Social control, discipline and social order

Classical sociological and philosophical theories on modern societies provide numerous insights into the structural conditions that have led to transformations of social control established within the broader context of historical processes such as capitalism, bureaucracy, and urbanization. Karl Marx highlighted the disciplinary impacts of factory labor and the commodification of labor itself. Georg Simmel examined how personalities adjusted to the demands of an urban capitalist environment, emphasizing traits like punctuality, calculability, and exactness. Max Weber discussed the changes in subjectivity linked to ascetic Protestantism, which played a crucial role in the development of Western capitalism (Van Krieken, 1990). All these perspectives can be seen as expressions of the disciplinary aspect present in the organizational settings of living and working in modern societies producing normality.

Foucault (1982) has analyzed the normativity of knowledge through a conceptual conjunction of power, knowledge, and subjectivity. Power, as defined by Foucault (1982), constitutes a set of actions upon possible actions. It does not have holders and non-holders but exists as a chain between subject-object positions embedded within social relations, delineating the boundaries of individual freedom of thought and action. Power is not imposed from above by a central authority, but is synthesised within the multiplicity of social relations, crystallizing into various codifications within institutions and the state. Knowledge is intertwined with the ability

to form subjects who act upon others and is connected to the moral legitimacy provided by its “truth” (Foucault, 1979).

Derivative concepts include biopower and biopolitics, which Foucault connects to the application of science aimed at producing subjectivities. These concepts describe “governmentality,” which refers to the principles governing power relations, policies, disciplinary and regulatory programs implemented in governance. The goal is to shape and sustain not only economic subjectivities (classes) but also subjects of rights and social subjects within the population. The sciences play a crucial role in mediating the public sphere, public opinion, and the “human species” (or social categories) generated by these policies. They aid in normalizing behavior through two forms of social control: discipline, which establishes rules and prohibitions to limit behavior, and security, which encourages behaviors while allowing for differential management of norms and associated risks (Foucault, 2007).

In Foucault’s view, ideas dominate institutions, shaping a social reality that those who feel oppressed by it can only reject. Even then, however, the same subjects would be confronted with a new disciplinary regime, a new web of knowledge-power relations beyond their control, hoping only that it would be better than the previous one. Better, however, for whom? What are the criteria? These questions remain unanswered when every intervention in social reality is categorized under the same label as “power relations” without differentiation based on the interests, needs, and purposes of each intervention, without reference to the action of social groups formed by the division of social labor.

On the other hand, conceptions of power and knowledge in the form of dominant ideology do connect discipline with the interests of specific social groups, as exemplified by Althusser in his famous elaboration of the Marxian thesis. According to Althusser, the capitalist class’s domination, both mental and material, is reproduced by the “Repressive State Apparatus” (e.g. government, courts, police, and armed forces, etc.), primarily, but not exclusively, relying on force, and the “Ideological State Apparatuses” (e.g. religious, educational, familial, legal, political, and cultural institutions, etc.), primarily relying on persuasion. These two forms of power feed each other in social reality, which is both material and mental (Althusser, 1971). However, from this perspective, all practices and institutions of social control are categorized as instruments of class domination without differentiation regarding their specific function and impact on the balance of power between social groups. This approach leaves the matter of purposeful intervention in favor of the dominated classes to an unspecified future total subversion of social order.

While providing a comprehensive view of the interplay between external and internal restraint and motivation, both Foucault’s and Althusser’s theories of discipline do not fully support an analysis of the specific contexts. The thesis of the “dominant ideology” or the “knowledge-power web of relations” fails to consider the various ways in which different types of institutions, such as educational versus judicial, or even institutions of the same type, contribute to the power dynamics between social groups. Such an analysis would necessitate an exploration of the implications of the increasing importance of knowledge production and transmission in the division of social labor in modern societies for processes of social control.

3. Social control: Socialization achieved through self-restrain

The concept of social control refers to the means, processes, and agents through which people are conditioned by social values and norms. This can include being incited, encouraged, impelled, or forced, depending on the case, to adjust their thoughts and behaviors accordingly. Social control covers the same ground as the concept of “socialization,” which was widely used in the past but is somewhat marginalized today (Guhnin et al., 2021). However, social control refers

to a narrower field of definition. If we can distinguish between the transmission of societal or social group culture to the individual, resulting in behavioral adjustment or maladjustment, and the intentional set of practices (such as child-rearing practices, formal education, work organization, penal system mechanisms, etc.), then socialization refers to the former while social control refers to the latter. In a sense, socialization is the outcome of social control. However, in addition to various aspects of how social coexistence shapes the ways we think and act, the concept of social control also delineates the structural power relations that characterize the social world and exist beyond any individual or intra-individual experience.

In Durkheim's work (1984), we can find an anthropological foundation for the importance of social control in relation to socialization. He considered self-restraint to be a necessary condition for the existence of social life. According to Durkheim, an individual's self-restraint towards others and things is a prerequisite for recognizing the freedoms and boundaries of others' actions. However, this self-restraint is only activated when there are bonds and interdependencies between individuals or groups. Different forms of regulating social relations correspond to the two types of collective consciousness defined by Durkheim: mechanical and organic solidarity. In mechanical solidarity, moral rules arise from common feelings and beliefs that regulate behavior without being questioned by society or the group. In organic solidarity, social relations are regulated by law and contract, connecting the individual directly with the total society through the state and political power, and subsequently with other individuals. This simultaneously protects and liberates individuals from the power of the group. In modern societies, while mechanical solidarity still exists, a new form of collective consciousness is needed to ensure solidarity and social cohesion. This requires a new common belief and sentiment. Durkheim sees individualism, the "cult of the individual," as playing this crucial role. However, this is a moral individualism that does not focus on individuality but rather views the human being as a totality with needs and potentialities that depend on social relations for satisfaction and realization.

A prerequisite for achieving self-restraint as an individual is the social organization of emotions. This ensures that emotions like shame, guilt, fear (or conversely pride, etc.) play a role in regulating behavior within society. Socialization involves processes of formation that, according to Durkheim's theory (2005: 35-45), focus on the "dual nature" of humans. These processes connect the individual's physical presence and sensory experiences with the collective's impersonal concepts and moral norms. The outcome is the transition from a biological being to a unique cultural existence, achieved through social control of behavior.

Thus, self-restraint is an outcome of social constraints that form a specific "instinctual economy" in Elias's terminology (1978: 238), who coincides with Durkheim when he stresses that: "...it is the structure of society that requires and fosters a specific standard of affect-control" In his account of the "civilizing process" that took place in Western Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries, a shift to a new system of control is depicted. In societies lacking central authority to enforce restraint, instincts and emotions were expressed more openly and impulsively, leading to immediate action. However, contrasting societies began to emerge where the state monopolized physical violence, and a social hierarchy provided incentives such as status, career opportunities, power, or income to individuals who could restrain their immediate impulses in favor of long-term objectives. According to Elias, the "civilizing spurt" is related to this growth of state control and changes in the mode of control, such as the change from direct command and constraint to indirect methods of control, as well as the increasing, lengthening, differentiation, and stability of interdependence-chains binding individuals to each other (1978: 239). How knowledge, education and science contribute to the specific "instinctual economy" of our times, are questions that can be answered sociologically within the theoretical framework outlined below.

4. The production of knowledge: Science and the scientific establishments

Knowledge can be seen as a source of power, representing an imposition of force from an impersonal authority that exceeds individual and collective goals. It can also be understood as a relationship between cause and effect that can be intentionally regulated, creating numerous possibilities. As Elias (1991) describes it, knowledge is a network of human-made symbols that serve as tools for both orientation and communication. The production of knowledge is primarily driven by scientists, who are specialists providing their societies with the necessary tools for realistic and informed social practices. Elias argues that every member of society relies on the available means of orientation, and those who control the production, verification, and transmission of knowledge hold power. In his analysis on the formation of scientific establishments (Elias, 1982), he demonstrates that the professionalization of scientific work in the 19th and 20th centuries created new monopolies on means of orientation, alongside existing ones such as churches. European universities traditionally served dual roles as educational institutions and centers for research, advancing and passing on knowledge, both new and old, to future generations.

The establishments in the sciences, which produce and control distinct bodies of knowledge, developed depending on the cognitive value of the knowledge they produced. This development required autonomy in their relationships with other powerful groups. Specific types of science became the authoritative model for all other sciences by demonstrating their success and usefulness in terms of the goals of non-scientific establishments, political, and economic. The social organization of scientific-academic work is characterized by a trend towards increasing specialization, power and status differentials between the various specialized disciplines, and the tendency of scientific establishments to develop “professional ideologies” – beliefs about the special value of their work which sometimes cannot be separated from their products. Thus, the knowledge they produce serves simultaneously as a means of achieving power and status not only in the hierarchy of the scientific field but also in the larger state-society. This struggle for the achievement of power and status, or what Bourdieu has termed “symbolic domination” (1991) does not concern only groups of scientist. The way it represents a diffused reflection of struggles for power between social classes and it is imprinted in the production and transmission of knowledge, as well as social control processes, will be discussed later.

5. The transmission of knowledge: social control, division of labor and education

Of course, other educational institutions are essential for the creation of new knowledge by science. It is through these institutions that younger generations acquire the symbolic capacity that has been historically conquered and accumulated in society. In return, scientific knowledge produces specialized discourses that inform the processes, organization, and contents of cultural transmission that occur within educational institutions. Education can be seen as a process of cultural transmission, where symbolic capacity (or the sum of means of orientation and communication) is passed down from older to younger generations. This capacity is then divided and expressed in various social activities. In cognition, which encompasses knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics, corresponding to the sciences, law, and fine arts. In the economy, where symbolic accumulation is physically transformed through the technical division of labor, ensuring the material foundations of society. In politics, where rules are established, the terms of modern society formation are defined, and its democratic function is carried out based on foundational values such as equality, freedom, and fraternity (Georgoulas, 2017).

Durkheim emphasized the importance of educational systems for social control and socialization of younger generations in modern societies with highly differentiated division of labor. Socialization and social control connect the groups formed in the division of labor with the

institutions that make social cohesion possible, despite their differences and conflicts. Durkheim considers the existence of common beliefs and feelings among different professional groups as a prerequisite for social cohesion. In modern societies, this is primarily achieved through educational institutions. Education contributes to a minimal uniformity of thought through the transmission of common values and norms, while also promoting the differentiation and specialization required by the division of social labor. According to Durkheim, education is defined as the influence exerted by generations of adults on younger individuals who are not yet ready for social life. Additionally, educational institutions, from kindergarten to university, are officially and exclusively tasked with the reproduction and certification of knowledge, as well as the upbringing of its holders. Educational institutions played a decisive role in the development of urban industrial societies, as they contributed to the adaptation of individuals to the new demands and conditions of work, political participation, and daily life (Durkheim, 1956).

This transfer occurs within a class-structured society, where there is a hierarchically organized division of labor among social classes and professional groups. Material inequality in the economic sphere is morally compensated and legitimized to some extent by public institutions, which, under the auspices of the state, express or protect civil, political, social, and cultural rights - what has historically been known as citizenship. Education is the cornerstone of these rights, as it equips everyone with the basic cognitive and moral prerequisites needed to exercise and claim them. It is also expected that symbolic accumulation will be distributed among individuals based on acquired abilities rather than inherited characteristics. Therefore, the right to education and the position of individuals and groups within educational institutions become subjects of competition for symbolic dominance. This competition serves as a strong legitimizing principle regarding equality among citizens, which is one of the fundamental components of modern ideology (Durkheim, 1984, 1956; Georgoulas 2017).

6. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination

How, then, are the content and form of education determined in relation to the division of labor? Is there a consensus around the symbols and representations that constitute concepts and rules, therefore, taken for granted? As Pierre Bourdieu (1991) showed, there is competition among social groups for symbolic domination, which is the power through which the sense of the obvious, the self-evident nature of things is established, confirming or transforming perceptions of the world. Symbols, such as those representing the mental categories of time, space, and causation, enable consensus around the meaning of various aspects of the world and contribute to the reproduction of a common perception of reality. This common perception combines knowledge and moral rules, leading to judgments about the correctness or legality of a given arrangement of social relations. Therefore, symbolic systems have a political dimension. Among these is ideology, a set of representations that reflect the partial interests of a class while appearing to represent universal interests.

The dominant culture conceals the function of division beneath the function of communication. It serves as the medium of communication and distinction simultaneously, compelling all other cultures (referred to as sub-cultures) to define themselves in relation to the dominant culture. Different classes and class fractions engage in a symbolic struggle over the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence to impose their preferred definition of the social world. This can be done directly or indirectly, often through specialists in symbolic production in various fields (such as scientific, political, artistic, etc.). Specialized discourses derive their effectiveness from the homology between these fields and the field of social classes. However, ideologies do not only reflect the interests of classes or class fractions, but also the specific interests of those who produce them and the unique logic of the production field. Symbolic power, ultimately, which can be as mobilizing as economic or physical power, stems from the belief in the legitimacy of words.

However, words alone cannot create this belief. It is a transformed, unrecognizable form of other types of power.

The individual's compliance with symbolic domination is neither passive submission to external constraints nor free adherence to values. It is the result of habits and dispositions (*habitus*) that are shaped not only through language and consciousness, but also through gestures, gaze, silence, and tone of voice. This complicity is inscribed in practical states, in the dispositions created by sanctions and chances of material or symbolic profit in various linguistic markets. The symbolic violence through which symbolic domination is achieved is felt like unstated intimidation coming from the threat of “falling from grace” in the eyes of a person who holds the dominant position in a power relation, exerted on those who are predisposed by their *habitus* to feel it. On the other hand, symbolic profit is achieved when one appropriates the highest expressive style in the hierarchy of styles, which corresponds to the hierarchy of social groups and possesses the competence to speak the legitimate language. This offers a profit of distinction to individuals, as chances of access to means of production of legitimate competence and to places of expression of the legitimate language are distributed unevenly between social groups. To use another of Bourdieu's terms (1991: 1-90), this offers “symbolic capital,” the recognition of a value from a social group, a value which can be transferred to other forms of capital.

7. Symbolic control vis-à-vis symbolic domination

Symbolic control refers to the consolidation of symbolic dominance in specific thought patterns that are used to control behavior. Bernstein highlights the difference between symbolic dominance, which produces power, and symbolic control, which focuses on appropriate forms of communication for different social groups. According to Bernstein, power creates and reinforces boundaries between social categories, groups, and discourses, while control pertains to the socialization of group members within those boundaries. Power deals with relations between categories, whereas control deals with relations within categories (Bernstein, 1996: 19-21).

Both Bourdieu and Bernstein place pedagogy, in its broader sense as a process of transmitting schemes of thought, in official (such as educational systems) or unofficial (such as family) settings at the core of their theories on symbolic power and symbolic control, respectively. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic domination focuses on the structural preconditions, specifically power relations between social groups, that create a “cultural arbitrary” – a system of signs without intrinsic validity. In this system, the content of pedagogic communication imposes meanings that reflect the objective (material and symbolic) interests of dominant groups onto the dominated. However, the imposition of meaning is not solely based on power, as it also involves universal principles, logic, or biology. Authority also plays a role in pedagogic communication, even in cases of the most universal meanings (such as science or technology) (Bourdieu, 1991: 1-10). For Bourdieu, symbolic power is not just a mechanical reflection of power relations; it adds an additional dimension where new power relations and antagonisms, with their unique logic, emerge. In essence, his approach aims to reveal the transformations through which power, while concealing its origins, generates new forms of power.

On the other hand, Bernstein's focus on pedagogy as the realization of symbolic control and thus of cultural production and reproduction is centered on “pedagogic discourses,” such as: *“the rules or principles for selecting and organising what is to be taught, how it is to be taught, and how it is deemed to have been acquired”* (Bernstein & Solomon, 1999: 269). His concept of symbolic control shifts the focus of the analysis of communication relations from the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources among social groups to communication itself and the possibilities of producing new meanings that transcend existing codifications. The means by which consciousness is formed, as various forms of communication transmit the existing distribution of power and prevailing cultural categories, constitute instruments of symbolic

control. Basil Bernstein emphasizes that speech is not a simple voice that conveys ideology; it is not a conveyor belt that operates without affecting what it carries. The various forms of communication differ not only in terms of the power relations between different social groups but also in terms of the process of production, transmission, and acquisition of the various messages of communication by the individual. Symbolic control is defined as the control of behavior through communication, resulting in the formation of consciousness and the transmission of power relations, classifications, and evaluation criteria of dominant groups. However, since human communication and symbolic abilities transcend pre-existing thought patterns, symbolic control, although it imposes the established order, contains the potential for its modification, altering the terms of the struggle for dominance (Bernstein, 2003a: 135; Bernstein, 2003b: 114-182).

Overall, Bernstein's concept of symbolic control and Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power converge to reveal power relations in cultural transmissions, albeit from different perspectives. Interestingly, the former had to defend his approach from the rather undeserved accusation of essentialism made by the latter when he stated that Bernstein's description of the "elaborated code" is "fetishizing the official language... as it is constituted as the absolute norm of all linguistic practices to which can only be conceived in terms of the logic of deprivation..., without reflecting on the social conditions of its production" (Bourdieu, 1991: 53).

Since there is no room here to adequately expand on the "elaborated-restrictive" linguistic code distinction in Bernstein's theory, to which Bourdieu is referring, let's keep in mind that it involves different forms of speech systems arising from different social relations to which individuals are being socialized to shared meanings. In brief, two general types of code can be distinguished: elaborated and restricted. They can be defined, on a linguistic level, in terms of the probability of predicting for any one speaker which syntactic elements are to be used to organize meaning across a representative range of speech. The codes themselves are functions of a particular form of social relationship, or more generally, of qualities of social structures. A restricted code would define the form of social relationship by restricting the verbal signaling of individual differences, while an elaborated code facilitates the verbal construction and exchange of individualized or personal symbols.

In the restricted code, meanings are likely to be concrete, descriptive, or narrative rather than analytical or abstract. Middle-class children socialized can be expected to possess both an elaborated and a restricted code, while working-class children can be expected to be limited to a restricted code. The school, by privileging the elaborated code, reinforces this cultural backwardness (Bernstein, 1966). Bernstein holds that analyzing the internal logic of the elaborated code as a symbolic system does not equal considering this symbolic system as a universal invariant. Furthermore, he stresses that Bourdieu disregards the significance of the internal structure of a symbolic system and the way it interacts with the structure of the field in which it operates, considering only the latter as a legitimate sociological subject.

Despite Bourdieu's concern not to level all symbolic systems, stressing, as noted above, that meanings differ in their relation to universal principles of logic or biology, his theory of symbolic power does not offer criteria of differentiation. In addition, when examining art, science, or education, power relations are highlighted without an account of where that power leads to, whether it is the reproduction of power relations or the potential for individual and collective autonomy. However, Bourdieu is not indifferent to the symbolic content of a field in each of his works. For instance, in "The Inheritors," he suggests a didactic approach that could moderate the effects of unequal distribution of cultural capital between university students by making knowledge acquisition processes less obscure. Yet, his concept of symbolic power focuses on the qualities of a field of positions rather than the qualities of the symbolic system involved.

8. The field of symbolic control

In any case, while Bourdieu offered a theory of symbolic power, Bernstein has not elaborated a theory of symbolic control covering the entire range of empirical objects to which it applies, or its similarities and differences with similar concepts. The concept of symbolic control is defined as a part of an analytical framework designed to understand the social division of labor in which a field of professions regulates the mind, body, and social relations. His innovative study of pedagogic communication called for an updated framework for the theoretical categories of social stratification to accurately capture the relationship between knowledge, power, and consciousness (Bernstein, 2001b., 2001c). Thus, the conceptual content of the term “symbolic control” can only be understood within the framework of specialized discourses, agents, and agencies of the division of labor to which it belongs.

This division of labor is defined by two main categories: the economic field, where dominant agents and agencies control physical resources, and the field of symbolic control, where dominant agents and agencies specialize in discursive codes provided by higher education. These codes shape legitimate patterns of thought and emotion, as well as distribute forms of consciousness, disposition, and desire. Additionally, Bernstein excludes from the field of symbolic control agents from the economic field who perform symbolic control functions, such as theatres, private galleries, films, television, publishing houses, fashion and cosmetic firms. Bourdieu places these in the cultural field. The definition of the field of symbolic control is narrowed down to include only agents with an explicit normalizing function in education, administration, social services directly or indirectly regulated by the State (excluding churches) and closely subject to its policies.

He does so because, firstly, professionals in the private sector, such as doctors, lawyers, and psychotherapists, have different interests, motivations, and ways of relating compared to similar professionals in the public sector. Secondly, employees in the cultural field who serve as agents of symbolic control do not provide a service; they create a text but do not have power over it. For example, in film, media, fashion, art, etc. By bringing together professionals from different fields, one holding economic power and the other holding control over the text, agencies that market texts (theatre, films, publishing, media, private galleries, television, fashion, etc.) may vary in their orientation due to tensions between different interests and the formation of the two specialized fields.

Bernstein also developed a categorization of agents in the field of symbolic control according to their special function. These agents include religious and legal figures who define, monitor, maintain, and change the limits of behavior, as well as police and prison officials who oversee modes of interrogation and containment. Additionally, medical, psychiatric, and social services professionals diagnose, prevent, and repair disorders in the body, mind, and social relationships. The school system plays a role in reproducing dominant discourses, while mass and specialized media diffuse and recontextualize them. Civil services hold an administrative function, agents in the arts, crafts, sciences, and humanities create symbolic forms. In short, the field of symbolic control involves normalizing and legitimizing functions related to the body, social relations, social order, morals, mental health, national collective consciousness, and delinquency.

9. The Division of Legitimatization Labor: Consolidations and modifications of symbolic control

We can better understand the division of labor in the legitimization process by examining the example of how official discourse works. An official discourse serves three functions. First, it provides a diagnostic, an act of knowledge that defines what a person, thing, or category of persons is and assigns an identity. Second, administrative discourse issues directives,

orders, prescriptions, etc., about what people must do based on their identities. Third, it reports on what people have done in authorized accounts, such as police records. In each case, official discourse imposes a point of view that is established as legitimate, meaning everyone must recognize it (Bourdieu, 1989: 22).

Furthermore, R. Lenoir pointed out that social relations in modern societies are mediated by the state and its bureaucratic mechanisms, while the sciences are part of a social policy mechanism. They formulate and promote demands, produce representations that the sciences legitimize in the name of rationality, and ultimately establish them by law. Scientific concepts contribute to the normalization of behavior, meaning the acceptance of a behavior as “normal” or “natural,” as well as the acceptance of the authority of institutions over specific social categories. Through the legitimizing function of sciences, various social categories are linked to specific privileges and rights regarding their treatment by institutions. Scientific concepts also form the basis of the specialized knowledge applied by professional groups to address each social problem (Lenoir, 2004).

While these agents legitimize and normalize consciousness, identities, dispositions, and desires, they may also disturb this normalizing function through criticism and by developing new knowledge. Educational institutions that produce and transfer knowledge are integral to the formation of identity, consciousness, and the disposition of agents of symbolic control. These agencies are all involved in border disputes over discursive monopolies, not only for the symbolic property rights over different aspects of the clients but for the economic base that the monopoly creates.

Social sciences have played an active role in the process of forming what Abbot (1988) has called a “system of professions,” which developed with symbolic control as its central axis of activities. The term “system of professions” refers to a system of interdependent activities, where various professional groups possessing abstract knowledge claim jurisdiction or authority over problem-solving through the practical application of this knowledge. The jurisdiction of each profession is determined in relation to the others. A professional group may completely control a jurisdictional area and the professional groups under it or share it with other professional groups. Abstract knowledge allows for the redefinition of issues falling within its jurisdiction, its defense against claims, as well as the inclusion of new problems within it. Therefore, changes in one profession entail shifts in positions within the others of the same system of interdependence.

The application of specialists’ knowledge consists of a process of diagnosis and treatment where objects falling within their jurisdiction are classified and matched with appropriate solutions, or a process of reasoning to find solutions when the diagnosis-treatment connection is not clear. The capabilities of professional groups to maintain their domain depend partly on the symbolic dominance of the corresponding scientific group. The value of abstract knowledge does not guarantee the success of practical applications. Scientific knowledge contributes to the legitimization of professional work more for symbolic than practical reasons. Academic work legitimizes professional work by clarifying the foundations of applied knowledge, linking it with ideas and values that are constitutive of modern thought, science, and rationality. In this context, scientific research opens new fields of professional action, and university teaching allows for the control of knowledge reproduction terms.

With the claim of jurisdiction, each professional group articulates a request for recognition of its cognitive base, which entails some exclusive rights (e.g., monopoly in a specific practice, public subsidies, control of professional education, licensing procedures, etc.) depending on the audience addressed: the state, public opinion, or an institutionalized workplace. The connection of a profession with jurisdiction is achieved through engagement with an object, legitimized by official knowledge based on fundamental values. It is also achieved through the promotion of claims for rights in the competitive fields of public institutions and the legal system.

Changes in a system can be due to external and internal sources of differentiation. The former include the entry of new groups into the system, differentiation of clients or their enclosure, new technologies, changes in institutions, while the latter include the development of new knowledge and the increase in the level of professional organization (Abbot, 1988: 17-28, 65-74, 101-102, 141).

Furthermore, the clients of these services may also contribute to change. The concept of symbolic control does not imply passive consolidation of individuals and groups to symbolic dominance or mechanistic reproduction of thought patterns based on which behavior is controlled. This can also be deduced by P. Willis's (1981: 57) argument that: *"...the powerful do not always impose meanings without those meanings being taken into account by the dominated or at least by an important section of them."* This dominated response takes in meanings other than those coded in the dominant transmission, and this imposition itself must consider oppositional or alternative responses. His ethnographic work in school offers the empirical foundation of this point, and his conceptual demarcation of cultural production from cultural and social reproduction highlights the processes through which identities are created by the interpenetration of formal categories. As a domination to a form of power may reveal or resist another.

The unique functions that agents in the field of symbolic control serve in regulating and shaping the consciousness of other social groups place them in a distinct position compared to the dominant and subordinate classes in the economic field. The consciousness of individuals within social groups is shaped by their relationship to material production ownership, which determines their interests, orientation, and relationships. In contrast, their connection to education only influences their style of expression. Conversely, the consciousness of agents in symbolic control is influenced by both their education and their style of expression (Bernstein, 2001b: 119).

This could mean that for agents of symbolic control, there is a strong connection between the material conditions of existence and their ability to manipulate discursive codes. It follows that within the division of labor in the field of symbolic control, hierarchy is mostly the result of symbolic domination, with state resources and status credentials being the prices to pay. However, Bourdieu offers a more detailed analysis of the relationship between consciousness derived from objective interests and the style of expression that reflects subjective tastes and dispositions.

Agents, as defined by Bourdieu, are the holders of symbolic capital, which gives them a sense of distinction resulting from the internalization of social structures. These differences are perceived through categories adapted to the structure of the social world. Since these structures are presented as self-evident, objective structures, they coincide with embodied structures. In the symbolic struggle for the legitimate vision of the social world, agents utilize the symbolic capital they have acquired from previous struggles, as well as the power they hold over established taxonomies. These taxonomies are inscribed in minds or in objectivity, such as official qualifications and educational credentials. In the intermediate positions that agents of symbolic control occupy in the social space, where the uncertainty of relations between practices and positions is at its peak, symbolic strategies intensify (Bourdieu, 1985).

10. The historical perspective of the field of symbolic control

The historical perspective of Bernstein's theory of symbolic control captures the changing relations of education to the division of social labor, and subsequently, of education to symbolic control, and of symbolic control to the division of labor and social stratification. The new technologies of management and production prevailing as capitalism advanced made the links between education and the economy stronger. At the same time, the ideology of social mobility

contributed to maintaining structural relations between groups while changing them for individuals, legitimizing success or failure selectively.

The proliferation of specialized discourses made available by higher education coincided with the expansion and differentiation of agents of symbolic control. However, from the 1970s onwards, the state field of symbolic control lost autonomy as the state ideology and regulation of social control and education were dominated by the conservatism of the market. In the 21st century, in “reorganized” capitalism, the division of labor is simpler as production consists of a narrow range of executive-technological specialized functions. Symbolic control increases in complexity and extension, although the expansion of the cultural field could signify a blurring of its limits with symbolic control.

In fact, Bernstein speaks of a “totally pedagogized society” (Bernstein, 2001c: 31), in which social relations (family, health, work) are increasingly governed by pedagogic means: “The State’s withdrawal from the economic field is matched by its increased centralized management of the differentiated agencies of symbolic control, leading to the second totally pedagogized society; the first being that of the Medieval period, initiated and managed by religion. Bernstein insists that despite the growing automatization in the production of goods and services, the normalizing function of the field of symbolic control remains crucial as it ensures that the results of the division of labor will continue to be human: *“Only human agents operating through specialized discourses made available by education can transmit and transform the language of feeling and desire, which is the essence of symbolic control”* (Bernstein, 2001b: 136).

11. Conclusion

A sociological analysis of science’s contribution to the symbolically constituted normality reveals the organic connections between sciences, education, and the social regulation of thoughts and emotions. Thus, the empirical tracking of mutual determinations takes place in three levels of analysis: (a) The development of the division of labor, the creation of new professions, and the fluctuation of power relations between social classes and class fractions as consolidated in the state. (b) The accompanying and supplementary processes of cognitive differentiation and institutional consolidations with a focus on symbolic control. (c) The increasing role of sciences, especially social sciences, in shaping social categories through conceptual delineations and institutional regulations of behavior.

Recently, Bernstein’s concept of the field of symbolic control has been utilized to illustrate how the institutional consolidation of social sciences in the USA was intertwined with the development of adolescence as a social category, within the historical backdrop of larger changes in labor, family, education, and associated policies, social science theories became ingrained in institutions, thought processes, and behaviors pertaining to adolescents (Spyridakis, 2024). However, the theoretical perspective outlined above can be applied to any study focusing on either the conceptual content of knowledge or the institutional consolidations and policies that shape the fields in which knowledge is activated. Insights on how dominant discourses sustain power relations in the field of positions between agents of symbolic control should be combined with consideration of how the structure of these discourses reflects contradictions between social groups and, accordingly, how changes observed in power relations between groups as social division of labor develop, are reflected on the level of discourses. The benefit of such analysis could be twofold. Firstly, it helps determine the potential usefulness of each piece of knowledge beyond the current conditions of domination. Secondly, it allows for consideration of how these existing conditions may obscure certain aspects of human existence while emphasizing others, thereby limiting the scope of knowledge.

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