

A CRITICAL INQUIRY INTO THE GROUNDING OF THE
CONCEPT OF DISTORTED COMMUNICATION IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE MASS MEDIA

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts

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Montreal, Quebec

© August 1983

ABSTRACT

The present study addresses the problem of grounding a pragmatic concept of distorted communication in the context of the mass media. The first part of the study examines the formative theoretical grounding of the concept of distorted communication in the work of Jürgen Habermas. The concept of distorted communication is here seen as designating a deformation of the consensual basis of intersubjective understanding between speaking subjects engaged in ordinary language communication. The second part of the study examines a project which aims to delineate the structural discontinuities of the mass communication process on the basis of Habermas' concept of distorted communication. This project is seen as problematic in that the concept of distorted communication is grounded in representational rather than communicational terms. It is suggested, finally, that a comprehensive grounding of the concept of distorted communication would need to be informed by a problematic of public rationality.

RÉSUMÉ

La présente étude traite de la question de la translation du concept pragmatique de distorsion, du contexte de l'interaction symbolique au domaine de la communication de masse. La première partie de l'étude examine le fondement théorique formatif du concept de distorsion de la communication tel que présenté dans les travaux de Jürgen Habermas. Le concept de distorsion signifie, dans le cas d'espèce, l'altération du fondement consensuel de la compréhension intersubjective entre sujets parlants engagés dans une communication de langage courant. La deuxième partie porte sur un projet visant à tracer le profil des discontinuités structurelles du processus de communication de masse en se fondant sur le concept de distorsion tel qu'articulé par Habermas. La problématique du projet réside, en soi, dans le fait que le concept de distorsion est perçu plus en termes de représentation qu'en termes de communication propre. C'est dire, en définitive, que le concept de distorsion de la communication se doit, dans son articulation, de tenir compte de la problématique de la rationalité du public.

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INTRODUCTION

The field of mass communication research has, throughout the past decade, been increasingly marked by interpretative and cognitive approaches to the analysis of message production and message reception. While these approaches have not, strictly speaking, constituted a new, unified "paradigm" in mass communication research,¹ they have nevertheless served to pinpoint one major deficiency in much traditional research, namely the abstraction of the mass communication process from social structure and process in its historicity. It has generally been axiomatic to these approaches that meanings are socially produced, and that media messages are shaped both by the social-institutional contexts of their production and the social-institutional contexts of their reception. The mass communication process has, accordingly, come to be conceptualized not so much as a process of transmission but as a process of mediation between society as "source" and society as "receiver."

The present study examines a project which has as its aim a delineation of the structural discontinuities intrinsic to the mass communication process understood as a process of mediation. This project is seen as addressing issues fundamental not only to the domain of "media studies," but to the theoretical study of communications in general.

A distinguishing feature of the project is the fact that it draws upon a pragmatic theory of communication, and specifically, upon a concept of distorted communication particular to this theory of communication.² The project is, under the aegis of the present study, examined for its instrumental value towards an elucidation of the problem of grounding a pragmatic concept of distorted communication in the context of the mass media. This problem is in turn seen as tied to the question, fundamental to the theoretical study of communications, of whether a pragmatic concept of distorted communication can be grounded in terms of the representational problematic advanced by the project.

The present study is conducted in two parts: part one examines the formative grounding of the concept of distorted communication in the work of Jürgen Habermas; part two examines the attempted grounding, by Stuart Hall, of this concept of distorted communication in the context of the mass communication process. This grounding is critically assessed, and the case for a more adequate grounding of the concept of distorted communication is advanced.

The first part of the study commences with an exposition, in summary form, of Habermas' metatheoretical analysis of the constitutive connection between knowledge and interest. This analysis assumes a programmatic status within the work of Habermas in that it propounds, on the

one hand, to clarify the epistemological foundations of a "critical theory of society," and on the other hand, to ground the case for a comprehensive concept of reason. Habermas' metatheoretical case for a comprehensive concept of reason informs, in turn, his communications-theoretical project of establishing the fundamental norms of rational speech communication. It is in the context of this project that the concept of distorted communication receives its definitive grounding.

Habermas' grounding of the concept of distorted communication is examined in terms of the two consecutive stages of its development. The first stage takes the form of an analysis of the structural model developed by Freud in the context of the metapsychology. This structural model is ascertained by Habermas as drawing upon an implicit theory of "systematically distorted communication,"³ one which can only be validated on the basis of a theory of communicative competence capable of delineating the fundamental norms of rational speech. It is the task of Habermas' "universal-pragmatic analysis" to delineate these norms, and to validate the theoretical status of the concept of distorted communication. It is at this latter stage of its grounding that the concept of distorted communication comes to be explicitly seen as designating a deformation of the consensual basis of intersubjective understanding between speaking subjects engaged in ordinary language communication.

The second part of this study addresses the problem of grounding Habermas' concept of distorted communication in the context of the mass media.

This part of the study commences with an examination of Stuart Hall's project of grounding a representational concept of distorted communication. Hall's delineation of a representational model of differential decoding is subsequently examined, for this model presupposes the grounding of a representational concept of distorted communication. The pertinence of this model for the empirical analysis of differential decoding practices is, in turn, problematized on the basis of an examination of a study carried out by David Morley. Finally, a problematic of public rationality is advanced, for it is suggested that a comprehensive grounding of the concept of distorted communication presupposes a systematic delineation of this problematic.

FOONOTES - INTRODUCTION

¹These approaches cannot be considered as adhering to a single "paradigm" due to the diversity of methods and theories used. For example, studies which have analyzed mass communication in cognitive terms, as an "agenda-setting" process whereby issues are defined and delimited, have not, by definition, been in a position to analyze micro-processes of "making sense" characteristic of ethnomethodological studies. Similarly, ethnomethodological research has not been in a position to analyze broadscale processes of "media-mediation" as in the case of research coming out of the British Cultural Studies tradition.

²This concept of distorted communication distinguishes itself from concepts of distorted communication generally advanced in the domain of "media studies" in that it is a theoretical construct developed, not in the context of mass communication, but in the context of symbolic interaction. It is, in short, distinct both from the concept of "distortion-as-bias," and from the concept of "distortion-as-information loss," concepts which have been generic to studies of the media.

³The term "systematically distorted communication" will, throughout the present study, be used interchangeably with the term "distorted communication."

PART I

THE CONTEXT OF THE CRITICAL THEORY OF JURGEN HABERMAS

1.1 Knowledge and Interests: A Summary of Jürgen Habermas' Metatheoretical Case for a Comprehensive Concept of Reason

A salient prerogative in the work of the so-called Frankfurt School of critical theory during the nineteen thirties and forties was a sustained critique of a form of reason termed instrumental reason. This "critique of instrumental reason" sought to address the modern historical process of the growing interdependency between science and technology and the consequent expansion of the productive forces of society through the institutionalization of scientific-technological progress. The institutionalization of scientific-technological progress was understood by the Frankfurt School scholars as having had the effect of legitimating the particular validity claims of instrumental

reason, at the expense of other possible modalities of reason. Instrumental reason, as a form of reason oriented toward the co-ordination of means with pre-established ends via criteria of efficiency and economy was, according to the Frankfurt scholars, inherently incapable of producing reasoned value judgments about the rationality of ends themselves. They maintained that this obfuscation of the rationality pertaining to ends could only be overcome if the sociohistorical and philosophical groundings of instrumental reason were subjected to rigorous critique.

The recent work of Jürgen Habermas has sought to incorporate the early Frankfurt School's argument for the validity of a horizon of reason that is not reducible to the technocratic horizon of instrumental reason into a treatise about the constitutive connection between knowledge and interests. However, in contradistinction to the early Frankfurt School, Habermas advances the case, not for a critique of instrumental reason per se, but for the theorization of a comprehensive concept of reason of which the latter is only a limited, albeit irreducible dimension.

Habermas' case for a comprehensive concept of reason is grounded in a theory of knowledge which seeks to establish the constitutive connection between knowledge and interest, that is to say, a theory of knowledge capable of accommodating the different interests which knowledge can serve. His foundational thesis is that empirical reality is always apprehended through specific view points, or cognitive frames of reference; "facts" about the world are, accordingly, not so much given as they are constituted via specific cognitive frames of reference. Modes of inquiry which systematically deny the constitution of facts are seen by Habermas as necessarily adhering to an "objectivist illusion", an illusion which fosters a notion of the world as a universe of facts essentially independent of the knower, whose purpose it is to describe these facts as they are in themselves.

In the specific case of scientific inquiry, these frames of reference take the form of generalized cognitive strategies or "interests." These interests are not in any sense reducible to particular interests which may preclude the objectivity of the sciences. Rather, "the conditions of possibility of the very objectivity that [the sciences] seek to preserve include fundamental cognitive interests,"¹

These cognitive interests are of significance neither for the psychology nor for the sociology of knowledge, nor for the critique of ideology in any narrower sense; for they are invariant.... [They are not] influences on

cognition that have to be eliminated for the sake of the objectivity of knowledge; rather they themselves determine the aspect under which reality can be objectified and thus made accessible to experience in the first place. They are, for all subjects capable of speech and action, the necessary conditions of the possibility of experience that can claim to be objective.²

Habermas establishes three specific viewpoints from which reality can be apprehended, namely the interest in technical control (characteristic of instrumental reason), the practical interest in mutual understanding in the conduct of life, and the interest toward emancipation from seemingly "natural" constraint. This thematization of cognitive interests allows Habermas to classify processes of inquiry in terms of their respective groundings in the forementioned interest-structures. He terms empirical-analytic sciences those sciences which aim at producing nomological knowledge, that is to say, knowledge about law-like regularities in the empirical world. These sciences adhere to the technical interest in the prediction and control of objectified and objectifiable processes. He terms historical-hermeneutic sciences those sciences which harbor the practical interest in the interpretation of symbolic configurations as well as in their mediation by cultural tradition. Finally, he terms critically oriented sciences those sciences which adhere to the emancipatory interest in uncovering institutionalized power relations in society as manifestations of distorted communication. These manifestations of distorted

communication are moreover only analytically discernible if posited in relation to the (at least) hypothetical possibility of "an organization of social relations according to the principle that the validity of every norm of political consequence be made dependent on a consensus arrived at in communication free from domination."³

Empirical-analytic sciences Habermas understands as being rooted in a behavioural system of instrumental action, that is to say, a mode of action governed by technical rules which are based on empirical knowledge and which imply predictions about observable events.⁴ This mode of action in turn manifests itself as a cumulative learning process, according to Habermas. Scientific inquiry of the empirical-analytic kind is the particular case in point where this learning process attains its most systematized and reflected form. Habermas substantiates this latter case as follows:

- 1) It [the process of inquiry] isolates the learning process from the life process. Therefore the performance of operations is reduced to selective feedback controls.
- 2) It guarantees precision and intersubjective reliability. Therefore action assumes the abstract form of experiment mediated by measurement procedures.
- 3) It systematizes the progression of knowledge. Therefore as many universal assumptions as possible are integrated into theoretical connections that are as simple as possible.⁵

These conditions are at once also the methodological imperatives which sustain the technical interest of empirical-analytic inquiry and which guide a research process which

has as its aim the production of technically utilizable information. Such imperatives imply, moreover, that certain fundamental commitments are constitutive of this type of scientific inquiry (i.e. commitments to the testability of hypotheses and the predictive accuracy of laws and theories) even though particular commitments may change over time,

If such [fundamental] commitments are constitutive for scientific inquiry, it is clear that the prognostic and technical virtues of the information it produces are not merely an accidental consequence. The very nature of the procedures for constructing and testing scientific theories ensures that successful theories will have predictive and technical potential.⁶

In contradistinction to empirical-analytic inquiry, the case of historical-hermeneutic inquiry points to a fundamentally different logic of inquiry as a consequence of the interest structure specific to it. Habermas distinguishes its methodological framework from that of empirical-analytic inquiry in the following way:

the meaning of the validity of propositions is not constituted in the frame of reference of technical control. The levels of formalized language and objectified experience have not yet been divorced. For theories are not constructed deductively and experience is not organized with regard to the success of operations. Access to the facts is provided by the understanding of meaning, not observation. The verification of law-like hypotheses in the empirical-analytic sciences has its counterpart here in the interpretation of texts.⁷

Habermas contends, however, that the distinction between these two modes of inquiry cannot solely be established

via reflection upon the "transcendental" status of their respective logics of inquiry. Rather, this distinction must also be grounded in an anthropology of knowledge which is capable of conferring an "empirical" status to the specific interests underlying these modes of inquiry. Habermas' case for the empirical status of the respective cognitive interests rests on the global hypothesis that the historical reproduction of the sociocultural form of life is mediated by the historically invariant dimensions of work (instrumental action in the broad sense) and symbolic interaction (communicative action).⁸ In other words, "only on the basis of a distinction between work according to technical rules and interaction according to valid norms can we reconstruct the development of the human species as a historical process of technological and - interdependently - institutional and cultural development."⁹ Moreover, as both work and symbolic interaction are tied to different forms of reason (technical and practical reason, respectively), the social evolutionary process is likewise tied to different forms of rationalization with different practical consequences.

For Habermas, rationality in the dimension of social interaction is tied to the deep-seated sociocultural imperative of securing an intersubjectivity of mutual understanding amongst societal individuals in the medium of ordinary language communication. It is this imperative which grounds the practical cognitive interest of the

cultural (historical-hermeneutic) sciences and which distinguishes this form of rationality from that of the empirical-analytic sciences:

The rationality of discourse about the appropriateness of conventions or the meaning of concepts is not the rationality of operations on objectified processes; it involves the interpretation of intentions and meanings, goals, values, and reasons. Thus the objective knowledge produced by empirical-analytic inquiry is not possible without knowledge in the form of intersubjective understanding.¹⁰

Since the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding between speaking subjects is rooted in a structure of symbolic interaction (communicative action), hermeneutic inquiry draws upon three classes of "life expressions", namely linguistic expressions, actions, and non-verbal experiential expressions (gestures, intonations, etc.). These classes of expressions mutually interpret one another in a reciprocal fashion and are thus thoroughly integrated into the context of symbolic interaction,

This singular integration of language and practice makes comprehensible the function of understanding in the conduct of life. A breakdown in communication threatens the 'action-orienting self-understanding' of individuals and groups, as well as reciprocal understanding between individuals and groups. The communication flow can be reestablished only by successfully interpreting those life expressions that cannot be understood and that block the reciprocity of behavioural expectations.¹¹

Habermas notes that the central problematic of hermeneutic inquiry issues from the "self-reflexivity" of ordinary

language, that is to say, from its ability to interpret itself. Ordinary language can, in other words, "incorporate into its own dimension even the non-verbal life expressions through which it itself is interpreted.... It can interpret itself linguistically through the detour of substituted non-verbal forms."¹² The central task of hermeneutics is therefore the analysis of this self-interpretation.

The examples of both empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic inquiry are however seen by Habermas to provide only partial accounts of the constitutive connection between knowledge and human interests. It is only by way of establishing the emancipatory interest underlying critical reflective inquiry that this constitutive connection can be adequately grasped in terms of a unity between reason and the interested employment of reason, a unity that cannot be ascertained on the basis of the technical and practical interests alone.

In contradistinction to the technical and practical interests, the emancipatory interest does not issue, a priori, from the invariant framework (constituted through the interdependent processes of work and interaction) of the historical reproduction of the sociocultural form of life. It occupies, rather, a derivative status with respect to these invariant objectifications of reality:

Compared with the technical and practical interests in knowledge, which are both grounded in deeply rooted (invariant) structures of action and experience, that is, in the constituent elements of social systems, the emancipatory interest in knowledge has a derivative status. It guarantees the connection between theoretical knowledge and an "object domain" of practical life which comes into existence as a result of systematically distorted communication and thinly legitimated repression. The type of action and experience corresponding to this object domain is, therefore, also derivative.¹³

This implies, according to Habermas, that the emancipatory interest can "only develop to the degree to which repressive force, in the form of the normative exercise of power, presents itself permanently in structures of distorted communication - that is, to the extent that domination is institutionalized."¹⁴

The methodological framework of a critically oriented mode of inquiry grounded in the emancipatory interest is established through the concept of self-reflection. That is to say, the methodical form of self-reflection determines the meaning of the validity of theoretical propositions in critically oriented inquiry. Self-reflection, once tied to the emancipatory interest of knowledge ensures, moreover, that the dogmatism, both of a world view and of a habitual form of life is overcome; it is through self-reflection that the inquiring subject apprehends a dogmatic attitude while proceeding, by way of determinate negation, to a more reflected

attitude which incorporates a drive toward liberation from (what Habermas terms) a "dependence on hypostasized powers."

For Habermas, the seminal connection between self-reflection and emancipation from dependence on hypostasized powers (paradigmatic of critically oriented inquiry) necessarily confers upon reason a degree of autonomy that cannot, strictly speaking, be inferred on the basis of the technical and practical interests alone,

The dependence of the natural and cultural sciences on technical and practical interests, their embeddedness in objective structures of human life, might seem to imply the heteronomy of knowledge. It might seem that reason, in itself disinterested, is thereby placed in the service of interests that are themselves irrational, interests linked to the self-preservation of the species.¹⁵

This autonomy of reason is substantiated on the grounds that if the emancipatory interest underlying critical reflective inquiry is tied neither to the exigencies of a world view nor of a form of life, then the cognitive process can itself be said to coincide with the self-formative process - "knowing and acting are fused in a single act."¹⁶ The criterion of the autonomy of reason points, in other words, to an interest of reason that is constitutive of knowledge as such, one that can only be ascertained on the basis of a clarification of the category of critical reflective inquiry:

Given materialist presuppositions, the interest of reason...can no longer be conceived as an autarchic self-explication of reason. The proposition that interest inheres in reason has an adequate meaning only within idealism, that is only as long as we are convinced that reason can become transparent to itself by providing its own foundation. But if we comprehend the cognitive capacity and critical power of reason as deriving from the self-constitution of the human species under contingent natural conditions, then it is reason that inheres in interest.¹⁷

The case of the emancipatory interest of knowledge shows, according to Habermas, that reason inheres in the two "lower" interests as well (these interests are also "knowledge - constitutive"). It would, in short, be an error "to regard knowledge guided by the interests in technical control or mutual understanding as if an autonomous reason, free of presuppositions, through which reality was first grasped theoretically, were only subsequently taken into the service of interests alien to it." However, it would equally be an error to regard reason as merely tied to the exigencies of self-preservation. The theorization of the constitutive connection between knowledge and interest supports, rather, the view that the cognitive interests "derive both from nature and from the cultural break with nature".¹⁸

The cognitive processes to which social life is indissolubly linked function not only as means to the reproduction of life; for in equal measure they themselves determine the definitions of this life. What may appear as naked survival is always in its roots a

historical phenomenon. For it is subject
to the criterion of what a society intends
for itself as the good life.¹⁹.

Definitions of the good life are, in other words, always
embedded in a specific cultural and historical context.
These contextually embedded definitions equally inform the
manner in which the technological and institutional infra-
structures of society develop at a given point in time, even
though the cognitive interests themselves remain invariant
over time.

1.2 The Psychoanalytic Decoding of Systematically Distorted Communication

The concept of systematically distorted communication refers, in the work of Jürgen Habermas, to the deformation of intersubjective understanding between speaking subjects engaged in ordinary language communication. Habermas' programmatic use of the concept of systematically distorted communication as pathological communication issues from his interpretation of Freud's metapsychology, and specifically, from his interpretation of the analytical procedure developed by Freud in order to arrive at a form of understanding called "scenic understanding." Scenic understanding denotes, in Freud's metapsychology, the successful deciphering of incomprehensible acts and utterances. This form of understanding is generated through a dialogue situation between analyst and analysand.

Freud posits the analytical procedure for attaining scenic understanding as a structural model which in turn serves as the categorical frame of his metapsychology. For Habermas, this structural model can be ascertained as conforming to the essential requirements of a theory of deviant communicative competence, that is to say, of a theory of systematically distorted communication.

Habermas' interpretation of the Freudian analytical procedure focuses upon the fact that this procedure is based both upon hermeneutic understanding of the kind developed in the framework of historical-hermeneutic inquiry and causal explanation of the kind developed in the framework of empirical-analytic inquiry. The methodology of the analytical procedure is, in other words, dependent upon psychoanalysis being both a form of linguistic analysis (i.e. a procedure of hermeneutic translation) as well as a form of causal - historical analysis (i.e. it establishes a causal connection between an 'original scene' and a later, 'symptomatic scene').

Habermas' examination of psychoanalysis as a form of linguistic analysis is based upon three criteria for defining the scope of specific incomprehensible acts and utterances, these latter being understood as manifestations of systematically distorted communication. On the level of language, "distorted communication becomes noticeable because of the use of rules which deviate from the recognized system of linguistic rules"²⁰ (Freud analyzed the particular cases of condensation, displacement, ungrammaticalness, and the use of words with opposite meaning). On the behavioural level, distorted communication manifests itself as rigidity and compulsory repetition. Finally, as concerns the overall context of "distorted communication, there exists a discrepancy between the two levels of communication:

the usual congruency between linguistic symbols, actions, and accompanying gestures has disintegrated.... No matter on which level of communication the symptoms appear, whether in linguistic expression, in behavioural compulsion, or in the realm of gestures, one always finds on isolated content therein which has been excommunicated from the public language-performance. This content expresses an intention which is incomprehensible according to the rules of public communication, and which as such has become private, although in such a way that it remains inaccessible even to the author to whom it must, nevertheless, be ascribed.²¹

Habermas refers to the work of Alfred Lorenzer as a case in point where the analytical procedure is examined from the standpoint of psychoanalysis as analysis of language: for Lorenzer, the aim of analytical interpretation is to explain incomprehensible meanings of symptomatic manifestations. These incomprehensible meanings are linked by analogy to so-called 'symptomatic scenes' (Freud). Symptomatic manifestations are understood as being "part of a deformed language-game in which the patient 'acts': that is, he plays an incomprehensible scene by violating role-expectations in a strikingly stereotyped manner. The analyst tries to make the symptomatic scene understandable by associating it with analogous scenes in the situation of transference. The latter holds the key to the coded relation between the symptomatic scene, which the adult plays outside the doctor's office, and an original scene experienced in early childhood."²² Transference here refers to the process whereby the analysand comes to attribute

to the analyst the role of the conflict-defined primary reference person. The analyst in turn interprets the transference situation as a transposition of an original scene onto the scene of the therapeutic encounter. 'Scenic understanding' is thus based on the presupposition that "the patient behaves in the same way in his symptomatic scenes as he does in certain transference situations... (it) aims at the reconstruction, confirmed by the patient in an act of self-reflection, of the original scene."²³

The transposition, on the part of the analysand, of an original scene onto a symptomatic scene involves a desymbolization of the meaning of the primary reference person and a subsequent resymbolization of this meaning in the context of a substitute reference person. However, this resymbolization occurs in such a way that the original symbolic content becomes privatized, thus no longer conforming to the rules of public communication. The privatization of the original symbolic content in turn manifests itself as a symptom in the context of the transference situation. The aim of scenic understanding is therefore to establish "meaning equivalences between the elements of three patterns - the everyday scene, the transference scene, and the original scene - and (to solve) the specific incomprehensibility of the symptom; thus it assists in achieving resymbolization, that is, the re-entry of isolated symbolic contents into public communication."²⁴

The case of scenic understanding points, according to Habermas, to a fundamental difference vis-à-vis ordinary hermeneutic understanding of incomprehensible utterances. He accords this difference to the type of explanatory power which characterizes the former. In scenic understanding,

The What, the semantic content of a systematically distorted manifestation, cannot be 'understood' if it is not possible at the same time to 'explain' the Why, the origin of the symptomatic scene with reference to the initial circumstances which led to the systematic distortion itself. However, understanding can only assume an explanatory function, in the strict meaning of the word, if the semantic analysis does not depend solely on the trained application of the communicative competence of a native speaker, as is the case with simple semantic analysis, but is instead guided by theoretical propositions.²⁵

These theoretical propositions can be elicited from three standpoints, according to Habermas. First, "the psychoanalyst has a preconception of the structure of non-distorted ordinary communication";²⁶ second, "he attributes the systematic distortion of communication to the confusion of two developmentally following phases of prelinguistic and linguistic symbol-organization";²⁷ and third, "to explain the origin of the deformation he employs a theory of deviant socialization which includes the connection between patterns of interaction in early childhood and the formation of personality structures."²⁸

The first set of theoretical propositions addresses the structural conditions which must necessarily obtain

in normal communication. These are summarily stated as follows:

a) In the case of a non-deformed language - game there is a congruency on all three levels of communication. Linguistic expressions, expressions represented in actions, and those embodied in gestures do not contradict one another, but rather supplement one another by meta-communication. Intended contradictions which have some informational content, are normal in this sense. Furthermore, ordinary communication implies that a particular portion of extraverbal meanings must be convertible into verbal communication.

b) Normal communication conforms to intersubjectively recognized rules; it is public. The communicated meanings are identical to all members of the language-community. Verbal utterances are constructed according to the valid system of grammatical rules and are conventionally applied to specific situations. For extraverbal expressions, which are not grammatically organized, there is likewise a lexicon which varies socioculturally within certain limits.

c) In the case of normal speech the speakers are aware of the categorical difference between subject and object. They differentiate between outer and inner speech and separate the private from the public world. The differentiation between being and appearances depends, moreover, on the distinction between the language-sign, its significative content (significatum), and the object which the symbol denotes (referent, denotatum). Only on this basis is it possible to apply situationally non-dependent language symbols (de-contextualization). The speaking subject will master the distinction between reality and appearance to the same extent as speech attains a distinct reality for him, distinct, that is, from the denoted objects and their meanings as well as from private experiences.

d) In normal communication, an intersubjectivity of mutual understanding, guaranteeing ego-identity, develops and is maintained in

the relation between individuals who acknowledge one another. On the one hand, the analytic use of language allows the identification of objects (thus the categorization of particular items, the subordination of elements under classes, and the inclusion of sets). On the other hand, the reflexive use of language assures a relationship between the speaking subject and the language community which cannot be sufficiently presented by the analytic operations mentioned. For a world on the level of which subjects maintain mutual existence and understanding, solely by virtue of their ordinary communication, intersubjectivity is not a universal according to which the individuals could be classified in the same way as elements are subordinated to their classes.

e) Finally, normal speech is distinguished by the fact that the sense of substance and causality, of space and time, is differentiated according to whether these categories are applied to the objects within a world or to the linguistically constituted world itself, which allows for the mutuality of speaking subjects... In the first case the categories serve as a system of coordinates for observation controlled by the success of instrumental action; in the latter case the categories serve as a frame of reference for the experience of social space and historical time from a subjective point of view.²⁹

The second set of propositions addresses the distinction between two genetically successive phases of human symbol-organization.

Habermas identifies two genetically successive phases of human symbol-organization, namely the archaic symbol-organization called the palaeosymbolic, and ordinary speech. The distinguishing feature of palaeosymbols is their lack of adherence to the grammatical rules underlying ordinary speech; they are not discrete, digitally coded units

subject to grammatical transformations. They form, rather, the "prelinguistic basis for the intersubjectivity of mutual existence and shared action, (even though) they do not allow public communication in the strict sense of the word."³⁰ That is to say, private meaning-associations still prevail over intersubjectively established meanings. Habermas clarifies the status of this archaic phase of symbol-organization as follows:

The privatism of pre-linguistic symbol-organization...originates in the fact that the usual distance between sender and addressee, as well as the differentiation between symbolic signs, semantic content, and items of reference has not yet been developed. The distinction between reality and appearance, between the public and the private sphere cannot yet be clearly differentiated with the help of palaeosymbols (adualism).... Finally, prelinguistic symbol-organization does not allow an analytically satisfying categorization of the objects experienced.³¹

For Habermas, the analytical procedure for decoding systematically distorted communication supports the theoretical construct of the two genetically successive phases of human symbol-organization. This is the case because 'scenic understanding' attempts to decipher incomprehensible utterances by adopting either one of two possible interpretive frames: these utterances are seen either as evidence of forced regression back to a prelinguistic level of symbol-organization (the palaeosymbolic) or as evidence of the break through of this level into language. The analytical procedure of scenic understanding functions, in other words,

as language analysis insofar as it allows the proper re-integration of privatized symbolic contents into the public realm of everyday language.

The first case (i.e. regression to the palaeosymbolic level) is rendered identifiable to the analyst when the analysand resorts to the defense mechanism of inhibition: (s)he proceeds to resist plausible interpretations made by the analyst. It is through this form of self-censorship that "the representation of the prohibited object is excommunicated from public communication and banished to the archaic level of palaeosymbols."³²

The second case (i.e. the breakthrough of the palaeosymbolic into language) becomes identifiable through the 'complimentary' defense mechanism of projection and denial:

While in the case of inhibition the language-game is deformed by the symptoms formed in place of the excommunicated symbols, the distortion in the case of this defense mechanism results directly from the uncontrolled penetration of palaeosymbolic derivatives into language. In this case the therapeutic type of language analysis does not aim at re-transforming the desymbolized content into linguistically articulated meaning, but aims rather at a consciously achieved excommunication of the intermingled prelinguistic elements.³³

Both of these cases point, in summary, to the underlying rationale of psychoanalysis-as-language analysis, namely to isolate the two symbolic levels and hence to dispose of the symptomatic manifestations. Unlike simple hermeneutic understanding or ordinary semantic analysis,

moreover, scenic understanding is not tied to the constraints of a given language system, but issues from the very structure of symbolic interaction.

The preceding theoretical propositions substantiate, according to Habermas, the interpretation of the structural model which Freud introduced as the categorical frame of metapsychology as a theory of deviant communicative competence. The specific constructions of this model-the 'ego', the 'id' and the 'superego' - are seen to "interpret the analyst's experiences in his encountering the resistance of his patients."³⁴ The 'ego' functions in the manner of reality-testing and censorship. The 'id' refers to those aspects of the self that are detached from the ego and which are actualized through repression and projection, as in the case of desymbolization. Finally, the 'superego' arises out of unconscious identifications with the expectations of primary reference persons. All of these three constructions reflect, Habermas maintains, fundamental experiences characteristic of systematically distorted communication. That is to say, "The dimensions established by id and superego for the personality structure correspond to the dimensions of deformation of the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding in informal communication."³⁵

Habermas summarizes the theoretical framework for the analysis of systematically distorted communication from the standpoint of its logic of explanation:

this example of the semantic analysis of specific incomprehensible manifestations is of interest because, in a unique way, it affords simultaneous hermeneutic understanding and causal explanation. The analyst's understanding owes its explanatory power... to the fact that the clarification of a systematically inaccessible meaning succeeds only to the extent to which the origin of the faulty or misleading meaning is explained. The reconstruction of the original scene makes both possible at the same time: the reconstruction leads to an understanding of the meaning of a deformed language-game and simultaneously explains the origin of the deformation itself.³⁶

He points out, however, that the explanatory logic of this type of analysis can only be validated through recourse to a theory of communicative competence; the theoretical framework for the analysis of systematically distorted communication presupposes, in other words, a theory of communicative competence.

1.3 Universal - Pragmatic Foundations of a Theory of Communicative Competence

1.3.1 Introductory Remarks

Jürgen Habermas' project of establishing universal-pragmatic foundations for a theory of communicative competence is grounded on the need to substantiate the meta-theoretical case for an expanded concept of reason in terms of a theory of communication. This theory of communication addresses the "pretheoretical" knowledge of speaking subjects engaged in the intersubjectivity of ordinary language communication; it claims to be empirical without, nevertheless,

being reducible to the canons of empirical-analytic inquiry.

The aim of Habermas' "universal-pragmatic" mode of analysis is to establish the fundamental norms of rational speech. Its central guiding hypothesis is that any communication that is oriented toward reaching intersubjective understanding inextricably involves the reciprocal raising and recognition of so-called "universal validity claims". Moreover, it is only by virtue of the raising and recognition of these background validity claims that subjects engaged in ordinary language communication are able to arrive at a rationally motivated consensus.

Habermas' universal-pragmatic mode of analysis bases itself on a methodological orientation termed "rational reconstruction." He understands "rational reconstruction" as designating any theoretical undertaking which has as its aim the systematic reconstruction of implicit, "pre-theoretical" knowledge. In the context of universal-pragmatic analysis, this pretheoretical knowledge refers to the practically mastered, intuitive "know-how" of speaking subjects who engage in the intersubjectivity of ordinary language communication. This "know-how" on the part of speaking subjects is rationally reconstructed as a rule system which enables speakers to successfully employ sentences in utterances:

[Universal pragmatics] thematizes the elementary units of speech (utterances) in the same attitude as linguistics does the elementary units of language (sentences). The aim of reconstructive linguistic analysis is the explicit description of the rules that a competent speaker must master in order to form grammatical sentences and to utter them in an acceptable way ... The assumption is that communicative competence has just as universal a core as linguistic competence. A general theory of speech acts would thus describe exactly that system of rules that adult speakers master insofar as they can satisfy the conditions for a happy employment of sentences in utterances - no matter to which particular language the sentences belong and in which accidental contexts the utterances are embedded.³⁷

The strategy of rational reconstruction can thus be seen to posit a different relation between theoretical knowledge and the empirical object domain than that posited by the strategy of empirical-analytic inquiry. That is to say, while the latter usually proceeds to refute and replace pretheoretical knowledge with provisionally correct theoretical knowledge, the former relies on a posteriori theoretical knowledge which renders pretheoretical knowledge itself explicit; it can, in short, be seen to make the "essentialist" claim that "If [rational reconstructions] are true they must correspond to precisely those rules that are operative in the object domain, i.e. that actually determine the production of surface structures."³⁸

1.3.2 The Consensual Basis of Speech: The Supposition of Universal Validity Claims

Habermas conceives the first stage of universal-pragmatic analysis as a reconstruction of the normative basis of speech as a system of "universal validity claims." It is only through such a reconstruction, he maintains, that "the universal conditions of possible understanding"³⁹ can be analytically discerned.

The reconstruction of the normative basis of speech draws upon three key distinctions vis à vis the "relations to reality" which become manifest when a grammatical sentence is uttered in a particular context. Specifically, a sentence will bear a relation to external reality ("the" world of objects and events), inner reality (the speaker's private world of intentional experiences) and the normative reality of society ("our" social world of shared norms, values and roles). These three dimensions ("the" world, one's "own" world, and "our" shared world) dictate the general pragmatic surface structure of speech acts. An analysis of communicative competence would thus (Habermas contends) have to account for a given speaker's ability;

- to select propositional content in such a way that he represents ... an experience of fact (so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker);
- to express his intentions in such a way that the linguistic expression accurately renders what is meant (so that the hearer can trust the speaker); and
- to carry out a speech act in such a way that it satisfies recognized norms or accepted self-images (so that the hearer can agree with the speaker in these values).⁴⁰

These respective abilities on the part of the speaker can in turn be understood as giving rise to a set of distinct "validity claims", claims that any competent speaker must at least implicitly raise in order for utterances to be intersubjectively grounded. These "universal validity claims" can be summarily outlined as follows: a given utterance must, first of all, lay claim to being comprehensible (i.e. linguistically well-formed), it must also lay claim to being true, it must communicate that the expression of intentions is truthful, and that the utterance itself is appropriate for a recognized normative context. Habermas formulates the argument for the positing of universal validity claims thus:

The speaker has to select a comprehensible expression in order that the speaker and hearer can understand one another; the speaker has to have the intention of communicating a true propositional content in order that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker; the speaker has to want to express his intentions truthfully in order that the hearer can believe in the speaker's utterance (can trust him); finally, the speaker has to select an utterance that is right in the light of existing norms and values in order that the hearer can accept the utterance, so that both speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance concerning a recognized normative background.⁴¹

Habermas views these validity claims as being classifiable in terms of the different relations to reality with which they are imbued. These relations to reality may in turn be conceptualized from the standpoint of the

pragmatic functions of speech, namely the representative, the expressive, and the interactive speech functions.

The truth claim can be seen to refer to the conditions for making statements about "the" world; it therefore adheres to the representative function. The competence to use language representatively presupposes, moreover, an attendant ability to make a distinction fundamental to the definition of any speech situation: the distinction between a public world (Sein: being, that which really is) and a private world (Schein: illusion, that which merely seems to be).⁴²

The claim to truthfulness (veracity) adheres, on the other hand, to the function of expressing the intentional experiences of one's "own" world, that is, of transparently representing one's own subjectivity. The competence to use language expressively presupposes, in turn, "the ability to make a second distinction that is fundamental to the definition of any speech situation: the distinction between the individuated self (Wesen: essence) and the various utterances, expressions and actions in which it appears (Erscheinung: appearance)."⁴³

Finally, the claim to appropriateness (rightness) adheres to the function of establishing the interpersonal relations that constitute "our" shared world, one based on the reciprocity of mutual expectations. The competence to use language interactively presupposes, in this case, "the

ability to mark a third distinction fundamental to the definition of any speech situation: the distinction between what is (Sein) and what ought to be (Sollen)."⁴⁴

For Habermas, it is the third function of speech (i.e. of establishing interpersonal relations) which must necessarily become the point of focus in a more extended analysis of the consensual basis of speech acts. That is to say, the clarification of this speech function is seen to provide the requisite analytical foundations for establishing communicative action (action that is oriented toward reaching intersubjective understanding) as a fundamental construct which would necessarily inform a general theory of social action (if such were to be developed). The mode of communicative action would, in short, be the fundamental, a priori mode of social action from which all other modes of social action would ultimately be derived.

1.3.3 The Consensual Basis of Speech: The Case of Communicative Action

For Habermas, the establishment of communicative action as a fundamental mode of social action requires, in the first instance, an elucidation of the characteristic "double structure" of ordinary language communication. This double structure is analytically pertinent because for any speaker and hearer to reach an understanding, they must simultaneously communicate at two levels: "a) the level of

intersubjectivity on which speaker and hearer, through illocutionary acts, establish the relations that permit them to come to an understanding with one another; and b) the level of experiences and states-of-affairs about which they want to reach an understanding in the communicative function determined by (a)."⁴⁵ These two levels can in turn be discerned in the surface structure of speech acts which consists of illocutionary and propositional components (the illocutionary component generally consists of a personal pronoun in the first person, a performative verb, and a personal pronoun in the second person - i.e. "I [hereby] promise you...", "I [hereby] assert to you..." etc.).

The illocutionary component of speech acts is seen by Habermas as central insofar as it aids to bring about the type of interpersonal relation intended by the speaker.⁴⁶ The illocutionary force of an utterance manifests itself through the hearer's confidence in or reliance on the seriousness of the speaker's specific engagement. This illocutionary force can, Habermas contends, be understood to have a rational basis:

With their illocutionary acts, speaker and hearer raise validity claims and solicit their recognition. But this recognition need not follow irrationally, because the validity claims have a cognitive character and can be tested. I would like therefore to defend the following thesis: in the final analysis, the speaker can have an illocutionary effect on the hearer (and vice versa) because the speech-act-typical obligations are tied to cognitively

testable validity claims, that is, because the reciprocal bonds have a rational basis. The engaged speaker normally connects the specific sense in which he wants to take up an interpersonal relation with a thematically stressed validity claim.⁴⁷

The specific "sense" of the speaker's engagement can, in other words, be analytically ascertained as the adoption (by the speaker) of one of three possible uses of language, these uses being the cognitive, the interactive, and the expressive. These uses of language are in turn linked to specific types of speech acts, namely "constative", "regulative", and "representative" speech acts, respectively.

It is in the constative speech acts (that is, speech acts which serve to report, explain, predict, assert, etc.) that the validity claim of truth becomes thematized - "In the cognitive use of language the speaker proffers a speech-act-immanent obligation to provide grounds. Constative speech acts contain the offer to recur if necessary to the experiential source from which the speaker draws the certain-ty that his statement is true."⁴⁸ Moreover, it is in the regulative speech acts (speech acts which function as recommendations, commands, warnings, etc.) that the validity claim of rightness or appropriateness becomes thematized - "In the interactive use of language the speaker proffers a speech-act-immanent obligation to provide justification. Of course, regulative speech acts contain only the offer to indicate if necessary the normative context which gives

the conviction that his utterance is right."⁴⁹ Finally, it is in the representative speech acts (speech acts which serve to admit, reveal, conceal, deceive, etc.) that the validity claim of truthfulness or veracity becomes thematized - "In the expressive use of language the speaker also enters into a speech-act-immanent obligation, namely the obligation to prove trustworthy, to show in the consequences of his action that he has expressed just that intention which actually guides his behaviour."⁵⁰ In all of the above cases, that is to say, in the cognitive, interactive, and expressive uses of language, the relevant validity claim may become problematic. Under such circumstances, the participants may either resort to strategic forms of action, or they may make the problematic validity claim itself subject to discursive examination. In both instances, the participants are forced to step out of the frame of communicative action proper.⁵¹

The central task of Habermas' theory of communicative competence is, as has been outlined, the reconstruction of the fundamental norms of rational speech as a system of universal validity claims. These norms of rational speech he in turn sees as inhering in that mode of social action categorically termed communicative action, action that is "governed by binding consensual norms, which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour and which must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects."⁵²

Habermas introduces a final distinction between two forms of communicative action, namely between speech oriented to bringing about an understanding, and speech that transpires within the framework of an already achieved consensus. He clarifies this distinction as follows:

In consensual action agreement about implicitly raised validity claims can be pre-supposed as a background consensus by reason of common definitions of the situation; such agreement is supposed to be arrived at in action oriented to reaching understanding.⁵³

From the standpoint of rational reconstruction, however, it is consensual action which takes priority over action oriented toward reaching understanding because it renders feasible the analytical task of establishing the rational basis of speech.

The motivation for my special attention to consensual action is that the constituents of action oriented to understanding can be more easily grasped in this limit case. I also believe that in action oriented to understanding, language finds the use for which it is fundamentally designed. In the end, the non-communicative [strategic] use of speech in action oriented to success pre-supposes the communicative use of language.⁵⁴

1.3.4 Systematically Distorted Communication

The example of the psychoanalytic decoding of systematically distorted communication served to highlight how pathologically frozen communication patterns can be identified and subsequently explained via recourse to certain theoretical postulates concerning the distinction between normal and deformed communication as well as the

connection between two successive phases of human symbol-organization. In contradistinction, Habermas' universal-pragmatic analysis seeks to ground, through rational reconstruction, the proposition that "normal communication conforms to intersubjectively recognized rules,"⁵⁵ and to establish, moreover, that these intersubjectively recognized rules have a normative, rational basis. Systematically distorted communication can thus be conceptualized, from the standpoint of universal pragmatics, as any communication which systematically disrupts (but does not purposefully challenge) the consensual basis of communicative action. However, this communication need not, Habermas maintains, necessarily take the form of the type of conspicuously pathological (i.e. privatized) communication posited by metapsychology. It can, rather, also take the form of pseudo-communication, that is to say, a form of communication where none of the participants recognize any communication disturbances and where a system of reciprocal misunderstandings is produced due to the false assumption of consensus where none factually exists. In this latter case, only a neutral, outside observer would be in a position to infer that the consensual basis of communicative action has in fact broken down.

Because, under conditions of distorted communication, none of the participants are aware of any communication disturbances, these disturbances cannot be attributed to

purposeful manipulation of the communicational context. Rather, they result from individual self-deception about the basis of consensual action:

Whereas in systematically distorted communication at least one of the participants deceives himself about the fact that the basis of consensual action is only apparently being maintained, the manipulator deceives at least one of the other participants about his own strategic attitude, in which he deliberately behaves in a pseudoconsensual manner.⁵⁶

Systematically distorted communication cannot therefore be seen to conform to the subjective conditions of strategic action, whether this action takes the form of pseudoconsensual behaviour that is not meant to become apparent to other participants (what Habermas categorically terms "latently strategic action") or the form of monologically carried out decision maxims oriented to the selection of means vis-à-vis predetermined ends (what Habermas categorically terms "openly strategic action"). Since systematically distorted communication issues from self-deception as opposed to purposeful deception, the subjective motivational conditions of consensual action remain in force, even though communicative action proper has been disrupted. Strategic action, on the other hand, is no longer tied to the motivational conditions of consensual action:

Strategic action remains indifferent with respect to its motivational conditions, whereas the consensual presuppositions of communicative action can secure motivations. Thus strategic actions must be institutionalized, that is, embedded in intersubjectively binding

norms that guarantee the fulfillment of the motivational conditions.⁵⁷

The systematic distortion of (what Habermas terms) the "rationalizable aspect of communicative action" is linked to those background validity claims which thematize the truthfulness of intentional expressions and the rightness of norms. In contradistinction, the thematization of the propositional truth of statements has to do with the rationality of purposive-rational action, a category of action which encompasses both instrumental and strategic action.

In the case of internal barriers to communication of the kind posited by metapsychology (i.e. pathological disturbances), the distortion of communication arises when a subject does not truthfully express his intentions in his actions or when "a norm of action is so little in accord with his needs that conflicts arise that have to be defended against unconsciously, through setting up internal barriers to communication."⁵⁸

In the case of pseudo-communication, distortion arises when validity claims connected with norms of action are not legitimate or when "the existing normative context does not express generalizable or compromisable interests, and thus can be stabilized in its de facto validity only so long as those affected can be prevented by inconspicuous restrictions on communication from discursively examining the normative validity claim."⁵⁹

1.3.5 Discourse and the Supposition of an Ideal Speech Situation

Habermas establishes a seminal distinction between communicative action (interaction) and "discourse." In discourse, the naively accepted background validity claims pertaining to communicative action come to be regarded as hypothetical and are explicitly thematized as such. Moreover, the action-orienting and action-oriented attitudes which prevail in interaction are suspended in favour of a cooperative attitude for coming to a rationally grounded agreement with respect to a problematic validity claim. The suspension of the "constraints of action" gives way, in discourse, to a pragmatic logic of argumentation in which it is solely through the "force of the better argument" that a truly rational agreement can be arrived at.

Habermas is clear to point out that the four validity claims (truth, comprehensibility, rightness and authenticity) which form the consensual basis of communicative action are not all subject to discursive examination. The claim to comprehensibility will ultimately be tested in the course of communicative action. Similarly, the claim to authenticity will unavoidably be tested in the context of interaction: "in the interaction it will be shown in time, whether the other side is 'in truth or honestly' participating or is only pretending to engage in communicative action and is in

fact behaving strategically."⁶⁰ This is not however the case for the claim to the truth of utterances as well as the claim to the correctness of norms for action (or the appropriateness of norms for valuation which are to be followed): both of these claims can be tested only in discourse. In other words, it is in discourse that "facts" about the world are "transformed into states of affairs which may or may not be the case"⁶¹ and that norms are "transformed into recommendations and warnings which may be correct or appropriate but also incorrect or inappropriate."⁶²

The discursive grounding of the rationality of truth claims on the one hand, and rightness claims on the other, cannot, according to Habermas, be apprehended without a clarification of their fundamentally different logical-pragmatic foundations (the former case he designates as "theoretical discourse"; the latter he designates as "practical discourse.")

The logic of theoretical discourse can be conceptualized as the "analysis of the structure and conditions of that form of communication in which (hypothetical) truth claims are argumentatively examined and rejected, revised, or accepted. As such it is a "logic of truth", an examination of how claims about the world can be rationally settled."⁶³ Habermas summarizes this logic as follows:

I may ascribe a predicate to an object if and only if every other person who could enter into a dialogue with me would ascribe the same predicate to the same object. In order to distinguish true from false statements, I make reference to the judgment of others - in fact to the judgment of all others with whom I could ever hold a dialogue (among whom I counterfactually include all the dialogue partners I could find if my life history were coextensive with the history of mankind). The condition of the truth of statements is the potential agreement of all others.⁶⁴

The concept of truth which is presupposed by the logic of discursive examination is one which hinges both on the asserted propositional content and the performative moment of constative utterances. This performative moment (the "declaring to be true") gives a statement its assertive force. Hence, for Habermas, truth must be understood" in a pragmatic context as a validity claim that we connect with statements by asserting them."⁶⁵ The concept of truth cannot be separated from the argumentative vindication of truth claims. These claims must, in other words, be intersubjectively grounded:

Validity claims are distinguished from experiences of certainty by virtue of their intersubjectivity; one cannot meaningfully assert that a statement is true only for a certain individual.... By contrast, the certainty of perception, the paradigm for certainties generally, always holds only for the perceiving subject and for no one else.... I register a validity claim as something intersubjectively testable; a certainty I can utter as something subjective, even though it might give occasion to place dissonant validity claims in question. I make a validity claim; I have certainty.⁶⁶

In summary, a rationally grounded consensus is, for Habermas, one which derives solely from the "force of the better argument", that is to say, from the formal properties of discourse.

The conditions under which a rationally grounded consensus can be achieved must in turn allow for the progressive radicalization of the argument in question,

there must be the freedom to move from a given level of discourse to increasingly reflected levels. More particularly there must be the freedom not only to enter into a critical discussion, to seek discursive justification of problematic claims, and to offer and evaluate various arguments and explanations but also to call into question and (if necessary) to modify an originally accepted conceptual framework ('metatheoretical discourse').⁶⁷

These conditions are meant to ensure that a rationally grounded consensus is possible and that such a consensus can be distinguished from a false consensus (the mere appearance of rationality). It is presupposed, moreover, that the argumentation which founds a rational consensus is not subject to systematic constraints such as strategic action or systematically distorted communication.

The absence of constraint can, Habermas maintains, be apprehended in terms of a set of formal stipulations which, taken together, constitute a "general symmetry requirement." This general symmetry requirement specifies that "the structure [of discourse] is free from constraint only when for all participants there is a symmetrical

distribution of chances to select and employ speech acts, when there is an effective equality of opportunity for the assumption of dialogue roles."⁶⁸ The individual stipulations which constitute the forementioned requirement refer back to the basic modes of communication, that is to say, to the different uses of speech as exemplified by the constative, representative and regulative speech acts. Specifically:

In addition to having the same chance to speak at all (to initiate and perpetuate communication), participants must have the same chance to employ constative speech acts, that is, to put forward or call into question, to ground or refute statements, explanations...so that in the long run no assertion is exempted from critical examination...[however] the symmetry requirements concerning the expressive and the interactive use of speech refer only indirectly to discourse and directly to the organization of interaction: to discourse are admitted only speakers who have, as actors, the same chance to employ representative speech acts...so that the participants can be truthful in their relations to themselves and can make their 'inner natures' transparent to others; to discourse are admitted only speakers who have, as actors, the same chance to employ regulative speech acts...so that privileges in the sense of one-sidedly binding norms are excluded and the formal equality of chances to initiate and pursue communication can in fact be practiced.⁶⁹

These requirements Habermas understands as concurring with the supposition of an "ideal speech situation", that is, a situation characterized by a pure intersubjectivity of mutual understanding, by a consensus achieved in unrestrained and universal discourse. He underlines that "the

design of an ideal speech situation is necessarily implied in the structure of potential speech, since all speech, even of intentional deception, is oriented towards the idea of truth."⁷⁰ Moreover, communicative competence itself implies "the mastery of the means of construction necessary for the establishment of an ideal speech situation."⁷¹ However, it is only if communicative competence is thought of in abstraction from social and institutional contexts that it "translates" into an ideal speech situation. In actuality, the pure intersubjectivity of mutual understanding which the structure of potential speech presupposes is deformed (i.e. systematically distorted) by an uneven distribution of the forementioned dialogue-constitutive universals. Hence, an ideal speech situation can at best only be "anticipated."

The deformation of intersubjective understanding Habermas hypothesizes as increasing "in proportion to the degree of repression which characterizes the institutional system within a given society."⁷² In addition, he propounds that this degree of repression in turn "depends..... on the developmental stage of the productive forces and on the organization of authority, that is of the institutionalization of political and economic power."⁷³ Succinctly stated,

Institutionalized power relations, like individual neuroses [i.e. the privatization of communication], bring about a relatively rigid reproduction of behaviour that is removed from criticism. Based on social norms, they permit the partial replacement of manifest compulsion through open force by inner compulsion through the affective force of unconscious mechanisms. Repressed motives for action are excluded from communication and directed into channels of substitute gratification. These symbolically redirected motives are the forces that dominate consciousness by legitimating existing power relations. In this sense, institutions of power are rooted in distorted communication.⁷⁴

However, what is at issue for Habermas is not the total liberation of social subjects from institutionalized power relations per se, but the reduction of socially necessary repression below the level of that demanded by the given stage of the productive forces of society. That is to say, systems of purposive rational action must be embedded in an institutional framework in which the normative exercise of power is not legitimated by historically obsolete ideologies. Historically obsolete ideologies may, in the present context, be understood as ideologies that do not hold up to the discursive examination of validity claims.

In contradistinction to theoretical discourse, Habermas posits practical discourse as the discourse in which moral-political questions can be decided with a view to their underlying rightness claims. Whereas theoretical discourse embodies a "logic of truth", vis à vis general laws and

regularities, practical discourse explicitly thematizes a general norm or principle of action, or a general norm or standard of evaluation. The pragmatic logic of practical discourse inheres from the "relation between descriptive statements about consequences for the satisfaction of needs and wants" and the normative statements they are intended to back."⁷⁵ In other words,

The backing that is required here is not (or is not merely) that type of observational and experimental evidence used (inductively) to support hypothetical general laws. The relevant evidence is first and foremost the consequences and side-effects that the application of a proposed norm can be expected to have in regard to the satisfaction or non-satisfaction of generally accepted needs and wants. As intersubjectively binding reciprocal expectations of behaviour, norms regulate legitimate chances for the satisfaction of needs. Thus what has to be agreed upon in practical discourse is the justifiability of a recommended regulation of such chances.⁷⁶

Because the norms, values, and conventions which practical discourse is capable of addressing are embedded in the very institutional framework of society, this form of discourse possesses a critical and self-critical dimension that goes beyond the pragmatic modalities of theoretical discourse. Practical discourse has, in other words, the power not only to legitimate the norms which characterize the institutional framework, but to undermine the legitimacy of these norms, and to supplant such counterfactual norms with factual ones. However, this presupposes that the needs and wants which are to be satisfied represent generalizable

interests and values, that is to say, ones which can be intersubjectively grounded in the medium of practical discourse and which admit of a rationally motivated consensus. Thus "the normative or evaluative judgments that give expression to 'reciprocally expected intentions' can claim a kind of objectivity; it is precisely this claim that is embedded in socially binding norms and standards."⁷⁷

In summary, both theoretical and practical reason are, for Habermas, moments of a comprehensive rationality which together signify the development of a rational will. This rational will can, moreover, be understood to arise from the motivational conditions secured through the consensual presuppositions of communicative action.

FOOTNOTES - PART I

¹Thomas McCarthy, The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), p. 58.

²Jürgen Habermas, Theory and Practice (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), pp. 8-9.

³Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 284.

⁴Habermas also introduces a further distinction between instrumental action and strategic action. The latter depends on the correct evaluation of possible alternative choices, and ensues from calculations supplemented by values and maxims. He distinguishes both of these modes of action from communicative action proper, which he takes to be "governed by binding consensual norms, which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour and which must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects." Habermas, Towards A Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 92.

⁵Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 124.

⁶The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 66.

⁷Op. cit., p. 309.

⁸Ibid, p. 313.

⁹The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, pp. 22-23.

¹⁰Ibid, p. 69.

¹¹Ibid, p. 73.

¹²Knowledge and Human Interests, pp. 168-169.

¹³"A Postscript to Knowledge and Human Interests," Philosophy of the Social Sciences 3, 2 (1973): p. 176.

¹⁴Theory and Practice, p. 9.

¹⁵The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 88.

¹⁶Ibid, p. 90.

¹⁷Knowledge and Human Interests, p. 287.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 312.

¹⁹Ibid, pp. 312-313.

²⁰Habermas, "On Systematically Distorted Communication," Inquiry, 13, 3, p. 206.

²¹Ibid, p. 207.

²²Ibid, p. 207.

²³Ibid, p. 208.

²⁴Ibid, p. 208.

²⁵Ibid, p. 209.

²⁶Ibid, p. 209.

²⁷Ibid, p. 209.

²⁸Ibid, pp. 209-210.

²⁹Ibid, pp. 210-212.

³⁰Ibid, p. 213.

³¹Ibid, p. 213.

³²Ibid, p. 214; Habermas holds to the assumption that neurotic behaviour is controlled by palaeosymbols, an assumption which he takes to be consistent with regard to the specific characteristics of this behaviour pattern (ie. its pseudo-communicative function, its stereotyped and compulsive form, its emotional load and expressive content, and finally, for its rigid fixation upon particular situations).

³³Ibid, p. 215.

³⁴Ibid, p. 216.

³⁵Ibid, p. 216.

³⁶Ibid, p. 217.

³⁷Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), p. 26.

³⁸Ibid, p. 16.

³⁹Ibid, p. 1.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 29.

⁴¹Ibid, pp. 2-3.

⁴²The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 281.

⁴³Ibid, p. 281.

⁴⁴Ibid, p. 282.

⁴⁵Habermas, Communication and the Evolution of Society, p. 42.

⁴⁶Habermas makes a seminal distinction between institutionally bound speech acts, that is, speech acts whose illocutionary force can be traced back to the "binding force of established norms," and institutionally unbound speech acts, that is, speech acts whose illocutionary force derives from the "recognizable and sincere willingness of the speaker" to enter into an indicated relation, to accept its obligations, and to apprehend the consequences for action. However, Habermas' own concern is with institutionally unbound speech acts since a clarification of such speech acts is concomitant with the objective of establishing the fundamental norms of rational speech, norms which are tied to the recognition of universal validity claims.

⁴⁷Op. cit., p. 63.

⁴⁸Ibid, pp. 63-64.

⁴⁹Ibid, p. 64.

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 64.

⁵¹See section 1.3.5 entitled "Discourse and the Supposition of an Ideal Speech Situation."

⁵²Habermas, Toward A Rational Society, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 91.

⁵³Communication and the Evolution of Society, p. 209.

⁵⁴From an unpublished reply to Ernst Tugendhat, "Zu Tugendhats kritischen Bemerkungen" (Spring 1976); cited in McCarthy, pp. 287-288.

⁵⁵See section 1.2, p. 18.

⁵⁶Communication and the Evolution of Society, p. 210.

⁵⁷Ibid, p. 118.

⁵⁸Ibid, p. 119.

⁵⁹Ibid, p. 119.

⁶⁰Theory and Practice, p. 18.

⁶¹Ibid, p. 19.

⁶²Ibid, p. 19.

⁶³The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 299.

⁶⁴"Wahrheitstheorien," in Wirklichkeit und Reflexion: Festschrift für Walter Schulz (Pfullingen, 1973), p. 219; cited in McCarthy, p. 299.

⁶⁵Op. cit., p. 300.

⁶⁶Op. cit., p. 219.

⁶⁷The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 305.

⁶⁸Ibid, p. 306.

⁶⁹Ibid, pp. 306-307.

⁷⁰Habermas, "Towards a Theory of Communicative Competence," Inquiry, 13, 4, p. 372.

⁷¹Ibid, p. 372.

⁷²Ibid, p. 374.

⁷³Ibid, p. 374.

⁷⁴The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas, p. 86.

⁷⁵Ibid, p. 313.

⁷⁶Ibid, p. 313.

⁷⁷Ibid, p. 315.

PART II

DISTORTED COMMUNICATION AND THE PROBLEMATIC OF RECEPTION

2.1 The Grounding of a Representational Concept of Distorted Communication

In a programmatic paper entitled "The 'structured communication' of events,"¹ Stuart Hall advances the seminal argument that modern public communications systems, such as those characteristic of liberal-democratic societies, exhibit so-called structural constraints, and specifically, that these constraints are immanent to these communications systems even though the historically specifiable conditions of their operation are subject to change.

The concept of structural constraint is posited by Hall in relation to an ideal-norm of "perfectly transparent communication." This ideal-norm of perfect transparency is in turn grounded in Jürgen Habermas' theoretical model of an ideal speech situation, a model which informs Hall's characterization of public communication as intrinsically subject to the systematic distortion of communication.

Hall outlines the basic hypotheses governing his analysis, as follows:

All public communication systems are subject to systematic constraints, systematic limitations. The overt censorship of media content is only one, limited case of such constraints - and, in our view, not characteristically the most significant obstacle to 'freer communication'.... All public-social communication is a form of 'systematically distorted communication.' The distortions are not always the same: They are not fixed. So it is worth our while...to examine some aspects of the structural constraints within which public communication operates, in order to see what changes can be effected which might eliminate or weaken some of the present obstacles. Communication systems in different societies certainly exhibit greater or lesser degrees of 'distortion,' and can be shown to be moving towards or away from greater 'communicative transparency' in their practices. These tendencies are crucial. But the ideal-norm of 'perfect transparency' is an empirical impossibility. The reason is clear the moment we examine the social and historical foundations of these communications systems.²

Hall's claim that the ideal-norm of perfectly transparent communication is an empirical impossibility is grounded in Habermas' historico-anthropological thesis that the communicative basis of social life is linked to the organization of work (material production) as well as to the institutionalization of power (steering capacity) under historically specifiable conditions. He cites Hans Dreitzel's exposition of this thesis:

communicative behaviour rests on work and power relations as well as on language; and if we comprehend the typification schemes of language as the most fundamental basic rules of everyday life, we also have to notice that even language is subject to distortions caused by the conditions of our life...the social world is not only structured by language but also by the modes and forces of material production and by the systems of domination.³

Habermas' historico-anthropological thesis as of strategic import for the development of Hall's argumentation insofar as it serves to contextualize the more formal concerns evident in his discussion of the structural constraints of media-mediated forms of communication. For Hall purports to examine this process of communication as a "communicational circuit" exhibiting formally identifiable aspects which articulate the process as a whole, without nevertheless acceding to what some contemporary critics have termed a reductivism and ahistoricism that purportedly characterizes so-called transmission-oriented studies of the process of media-mediated communication.⁴ In contradistinction to transmission-oriented studies, Hall advances the case that the circuit of communication is more aptly conceptualized as one which exhibits structural discontinuities and oppositions rather than as one which progresses along a linear continuum, and which presents an unproblematic unity between the stages of its articulation. Moreover, the specific manifestations of these structural discontinuities and oppositions are seen by Hall as having a social and historical basis rather than a purely communicative one. Hall's analysis suggests, in short, a departure from what has been termed a "media determinism, (which) in its arbitrary allocation of an unwarranted and unsupportable significance to the subject matter at hand, distorts beyond reprieve a balanced view of social structure and process."⁵

For Hall, the structural constraints on public communication can be formally apprehended in terms of two determinate moments in the chain of communication between "source" and "receiver", the moments of the "encoding" and "decoding" of messages-as-signs. Hall understands these structural constraints as inhering from the limited "reciprocity" between the moments of message encoding and decoding. The degree of reciprocity he in turn understands to be determined by the social-institutional contexts which frame these moments in the chain of communication, contexts which are moreover historically determined.

He underscores the historicity of these framing contexts in terms of the way social needs are historically produced and the way an understanding of the historical dialectic of needs mitigates against the assumption that public communication is a static process whereby the systematic distortions can themselves be apprehended by recourse to ahistorical, objectivistic criteria. To this extent, he can be seen to adhere to the view, propounded by Raymond Williams in his seminal investigation of the relation between technological developments in the media and society, that it is not communications technologies which give rise to needs, but socially and historically articulated needs which inform the development of technologies.⁶ Hall contextualizes this argument via reference to the specific example of broadcasting:

we are not dealing with static communications systems, with fixed goals, which can be progressively realized along some linear continuum. Broadcasting systems are dynamic structures which breed their own, further, needs and uses even as they satisfy existing ones. So, even if broadcasters could now, technically, reach all the existing audiences they can identify, and transmit perfectly to them whatever information they desire, the very overcoming of present obstacles which such a development would signal would, in its turn, suggest new, further kinds of communication, new potential uses for the technical means, new types of content, and mobilize new, unrealized demands and needs for communication in the audiences...in broadcasting, as in other areas of modern production, the satisfaction of existing communications 'needs' inevitably leads to the framing of new needs, and 'this production of new needs is the first historical act' (as Marx once observed) which initiates an unending dialectic, whose outcome cannot be predicted.

This argument points out most succinctly Hall's divergence from objectivistic and ahistorical approaches to the conceptualization and formalization of the process of public communication. It suggests, moreover, that a formalization of this process via the concepts of encoding and decoding need not necessarily imply a reductivist view of the contexts of message-production and message-reception, respectively. For while the moments of encoding and decoding may be analytically abstracted from the process as a whole (they are, in Hall's words, "determinate", "communicative" moments), the contexts of production and reception cannot, according to Hall, be likewise abstracted from social structure in its historicity.

Hall elaborates upon the framing contexts which determine the process of the encoding and decoding of media-mediated messages, again by highlighting the case of broadcasting,

public communications between broadcasters and their audiences requires two linked but separate acts: the act of 'encoding' the television or radio message, and the act of 'decoding' and interpreting it. These are linked, but not 'immediately identical' moments in the communication process. The 'encoding' process is very largely performed by the professional broadcasting élites, with their own social formation, their own selective recruitment, their own social position, their own connexions to and perspectives on power, their own professional competences and routines, their own professional ideologies. The 'decoding' process is performed by the heterogenous, complexly structured 'mass audiences', standing in their own relation to the unequal distribution of social, economic and cultural power, with their own connexions to and perspectives on the system of power as a whole, 'cultural power'...includes the differential acquisition by the different strata of the population of the competence to speak, transmit, verbalize and comprehend - a form of 'power' directly relevant to the capacity to 'communicate', and fundamentally shaped and distributed, in our kinds of society, by the education system.⁸

In this passage, Hall grounds the fundamental distinction between the encoding and decoding "communities" which frame the process of public communication.⁹ However, on the basis of this distinction alone it is not possible to apprehend exactly how the structural constraints of public communication come to be manifested. To this extent, Hall introduces the concept of mediation as a way of underscoring the circularity of the communicational process, a circularity which depends on the "structured gaps" intrinsic to this process:

The communicators, in a modern society, are more explicitly mediators, ...they must draw their materials, their events, their concerns, in part from the audiences which they address--they 'play back' the experiences of the audience to the audience, in addition to their other functions, such as bringing news about one audience to another.... In this sense... the audience progressively plays the role, in modern communications, both of source and receiver. But this is still not the same thing as the audience 'communicating'. The process must still pass through the mediating structures of broadcasting itself: the broadcasters must select (and reject), transform into 'messages' (encode), develop formats, shape contents for the communicative circuit to be completed from audience to audience. Thus, though the 'production' and 'consumption' of media content are linked, and each is required for the production of the other, they are linked in the manner of mediation as a process.¹⁰

For Hall, it is "in and through that mediation...that systematic distortions enter the chain"¹¹ of communication.

Alvin Gouldner (1976) has examined this problematic of mediation by foregrounding the manner in which situationally produced information, originating in particular social contexts, becomes decontextualized as it is incorporated into the generic form of "news" by the media.¹² For Gouldner, this process of decontextualization can be analytically discerned as a progressive disjunction between information and the attitudes and sentiments - the affect structure - to which this information is related. This implies, in turn, that "information systems become relatively context-free, or at least, freer of the limits imposed by operation of the affect structure in face-to-face communication."¹³

Moreover,

In word-of-mouth talk, it is not only information but interpretations, orientation, and appropriate notions of what is to be done, that are communicated. Commands are transmitted with clarity and force, along with reports... In face-to-face talk, command and report are mutually contextualizing and are more readily brought into an integration, in which each supports the other. With the mass media, however, the possibilities of a disjunction between the two grow. Given the absence of feedback, or low feedback, there is no way the media can judge whether their reports have elicited proper feelings.... Without doubt, the media intend to command appropriate actions and to elicit feelings consistent with their news; but the transmission of information has now been isolated from a multimodal pattern of social interaction and feedback that might enforce that intention.¹⁴

Translated into Habermas' terms, this isolation of information from the pattern of social interaction may be apprehended as the isolation of information from the context of the action-orienting self-understanding of social groups, a form of self-understanding tied to socially binding norms and standards which in turn define reciprocal expectations about behaviour.

Michael Schudson (1978) has suggested that the ideal of objective journalism itself presupposes a disjunction between the cognitive dimension of "news-as-factual accounts" and the normative value-orientations of societal groups, value-orientations which, in Habermas' words, may be seen to be grounded in the medium of practical discourse. Schudson's argument is a sociohistorical one (relying on extensive

documentation from the specific period he discusses) in that it purports to show how the ideal of objectivity in journalism came to arise. He summarizes this argument as follows:

Not until after World War I, when the worth of the democratic market society was itself radically questioned and its internal logic laid bare, did leaders in journalism and other fields, like the social sciences, fully experience the doubting and skepticism democracy and the market encouraged. Only then did the ideal of objectivity as consensually validated statements about the world, predicated on a radical separation of facts and values, arise. It arose, however, not so much as an extension of naive empiricism and the belief in facts but as a reaction against skepticism; it was not a straight-line extrapolation but a dialectical response to the culture of a democratic market society. It was not the final expression of a belief in facts but the assertion of a method designed for a world in which even facts could not be trusted.¹⁵

As Schudson proceeds to point out, the ideal of objectivity has, in its contemporary interpretation, become not so much a guarantee against subjectivity per se, as it has become the embodiment of professional methods in journalism (as, for example, the methods used for validating and corroborating sources), methods which have been instrumental in securing the legitimacy of the press as a public institution.¹⁶

It should be ~~emphasized~~ that the abstraction of news from normative value-orientations issues from the historical role of the modern media as addressors of heterogenous publics, a role which has become inseparable from the exigency of securing a degree of accountability vis-à-vis these publics. This exigency has in turn manifested itself in terms of institutionalized methods and procedures for ensuring that information is presented in an unpartisan, "objective" manner, or at least perceived to be presented as such. Crucially, the credo of objective reportage, which informs the factual presentation of information in the generic form of news, has eliminated the need for public communicators to choose between conflicting truth claims.¹⁷ These claims are, in other words, presented in a pluralistic manner as befits an occupational credo of objectivity which dictates that all relevant "points of view" be adequately represented. Moreover, it is generic to journalism as an institutionalized practice that claims are not explained via reference to their respective groundings: they are merely presented as such. As a number of media scholars have pointed out,¹⁸ the public communications media operate under organizational constraints, such as time-space limitations, which preclude the possibility of addressing issues with a view to their constitutive and developmental contexts. Furthermore, journalism as an institutionalized practice is a pretheoretic activity and is hence, by definition, not subject to social-scientific standards for the grounding and testing of problematic truth claims.¹⁹

It may finally be noted that Gouldner's remarks on the relation between the process of media-mediation and the decontextualization of information carry substantive implications vis-a vis the grounding of Habermas' concept of systematically distorted communication in terms of a concept of public rationality, implications which will be underscored in the course of this exposition.²⁰ What is of significance in the present context, however, is that Hall's conceptualization of the process of media-mediation rests on a fundamentally different problematic than Gouldner's. Whereas Gouldner addresses the isolation of information from patterns of social interaction, Hall, it will be shown, addresses the representations through which society may be said to interpret itself, and specifically, the "structured gaps" which inhere when media-mediated representations do not coincide with the representations of decoding communities. In fact, these two problematics - the informational and the representational - suggest different ways of conceptualizing the media-mediation process itself.

An informational problematic will tend to foreground the circulation and exchange of information in society, a problematization that is common to transmission-oriented studies, to organizational studies of the way the media, in their production practices, select, organize and channel information, as well as to "uses and gratifications" and "two-step flow" studies of the way this information is subsequently received

and/or disseminated. An informational problematic suggests that news is itself one limited form that information may take, and moreover, that information precedes its actual incarnation in the generic form of news.²¹

A representational problematic will, in contradistinction, tend to foreground the way in which categorizations and typifications produce so-called representations of reality, whereby meanings are seen not so much as channelled and disseminated meanings, as they are seen as situationally produced ones. It suggests that the form of "news" is itself the result of the categorization-typification procedures which journalists routinely use in order to transcribe events into frameworks for their comprehension. Audiences-publics may likewise be seen as bringing their own frameworks of comprehension to bear on media-mediated representations, frameworks which may or may not coincide with those that are internalized by journalists themselves.²²

Hall centers upon this representational problematic in his elaboration of the structured gaps which issue from the limited reciprocity between the frameworks of understanding of encoding and decoding communities, respectively.

He understands the representations produced by the media to issue, at a determinate moment in the communicative process, as encoded representations which must, in turn, at another determinate moment in this process, be properly decoded by audiences-publics in order for the particular message-forms to fulfill their intended communicative function(s). He propounds that, because these representations are transcribed into the form of messages-as-signs, they issue (at the moment of encoding) as symbolic, discursive structures organized through the operation of codes, structures which are themselves tied to the specificity of the medium and the organization of production practices in the particular medium.²³ Moreover, while the message-form is the determinate moment in the communicational process as a whole, this moment must, Hall maintains, also be apprehended in relation to the social processes of production and the social processes of reception which mutually articulate the circuit of communication. He develops these points via reference to the case of television broadcasting:

The object of production practices and structures in television is the production of a message: that is, a sign-vehicle or rather sign-vehicles of a specific kind organized, like any other form of communication or language, through the operation of codes, within the syntagmatic chains of a discourse....²⁴ The apparatuses, relations and practices of production thus issue, at a certain moment (the moment of 'production/circulation') in the form of symbolic vehicles constituted within the rules of 'language.' It is in this discursive form that the circulation of the 'product' takes place. The process thus requires, at the production end, its material instruments - its

'means' - as well as its own sets of social (production) relations - the organization and combination of practices within media apparatuses. But it is in the discursive form that the circulation of the product takes place, as well as its distribution to different audiences. Once accomplished, the discourse must then be translated - transformed again - into social practices if the circuit is to be both completed and effective. If no 'meaning' is taken, there can be no 'consumption.' If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect. The value of this approach is that while each of the moments, in articulation, is necessary to the circuit as a whole, no one moment can fully guarantee the next moment with which it is articulated. Since each has its specific modality and conditions of existence, each can constitute its own break or interruption of the 'passage of forms' on whose continuity the flow of effective production (that is, 'reproduction') depends. Thus while in no way wanting to limit research to following only those leads which emerge from content analysis, we must recognize that the discursive form of the message has a privileged position in the communicative exchange (from the viewpoint of circulation) and that the moments of 'encoding' and 'decoding', though only 'relatively autonomous' in relation to the communicative process as a whole, are determinate moments.²⁵

Hall's enunciation of the "relative autonomy" between the determinate moments of encoding and decoding on the other hand, and the social processes of production and reception on the other, leads him to a conceptualization of the relation between message-production and message-reception as an interplay between the "meaning-structures" of encoding and decoding communities, and the linguistic-formal coding structures of the message-forms themselves. He understands the forementioned meaning-structures in cognitive terms, that is to say, as mappings or representations of the empirical world which in turn inform

the ways in which messages are encoded and decoded. These foundational assumptions have a direct bearing on Hall's conceptualization of distorted communication: the distortion of communication issues, for Hall, from the structured gaps (or asymmetries) between the respective positionalities of encoders and decoders (positionalities which are articulated in terms of mutually distinct cognitive meaning-structures) as well as from the asymmetries produced at the determinate moments of encoding and decoding. In Hall's words:

The codes [ie. meaning-structures] of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical. The degrees of symmetry - that is, the degrees of 'understanding' and 'misunderstanding', in the communicative exchange - depend on the degrees of symmetry/asymmetry (relations of equivalence) established between the positions of the 'personifications', encoder-producer and decoder-receiver. But this in turn depends on the degrees of identity/non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly transmit, interrupt or systematically distort what has been transmitted. The lack of fit between the codes has a great deal to do with the structural differences of relation and position between broadcasters and audiences, but it also has something to do with the asymmetry between the codes of 'source' and 'receiver' at the moment of transformation into and out of the discursive form. What are called 'distortions' or 'misunderstandings' arise precisely from the lack of equivalence between the two sides in the communicative exchange. Once again, this defines the 'relative autonomy', but 'determinateness,' of the entry and exist of the message in its discursive moments.²⁶

In summary, Hall's grounding of the concept of distorted communication suggests that distortion may be conceptualized as issuing from the different frameworks of understanding, or cognitive meaning-structures, of encoding and decoding communities,

frameworks which inform the determinate moments of message encoding and decoding in the communicative process. It suggests, moreover, that the ideal-norm of perfectly transparent communication is an empirical impossibility to the extent that the signifying elements of messages are not univocal, but are tied to situational frameworks of understanding.

Hall develops these foundational assumptions in terms of a representational model of different decoding, a model which posits a typological framework of ideal-typical positions from which messages may be seen to be decoded. These ideal-typical positions are understood by Hall as taking the form of mutually distinct cognitive frames, or meaning-structures.

2.2 A Representational Model of Differential Decoding

Hall develops the hypothesis of a lack of equivalency between the meaning-structures of encoding and decoding communities by focusing on the problematic of the contextual framing of messages (at the encoding end) and the subsequent interpretation of already encoded messages. What is at issue for Hall is not the literal signification, or denotative content of messages-as-signs (ie. the relation between signifiers and their empirical referents), but the connotative or contextual dimension whereby denoted signs become imbued with associative fields of meaning - with what Hall terms "the deep semantic structures of a culture." He understands the systematic distortion of communication to manifest itself precisely at this connotative, contextual level:

Literal or denotative 'errors' are relatively unproblematic. They represent a kind of noise in the channel. But 'misreadings' of a message at the connotative or contextual level are a different matter. They have, fundamentally, a societal, not a communicative basis. They signify, at the 'message' level the structural conflicts, contradictions and negotiations of economic, political and cultural life.²⁷

Hall argues that the process whereby the public communications media transform real-world events into "communicative events" is one which involves the filling out of an initial "definition of the situation" by way of contextualizing frameworks and categories. Because of this, he maintains, the activity of decoding by audiences-publics is to an

extent already delimited and defined by the frameworks of meaning which inform the representational practices of the media. Hall elaborates:

The whole process of social communication, we would argue, implies an interpretive, contextualizing discourse. But this is especially true of the whole domain of news and 'political communications' in general. The discourses by means of which the broadcasters translate historical events in the 'real world' into 'communicative events' (messages of one kind or another) are, fundamentally, indexical discourses in Cicourel's sense. They depend on the use of connotative codes, by means of which 'larger networks of meaning' are indexed; and on the interpretive work which broadcasters must do to resolve events which seem intrinsically 'meaningless' (or whose 'meaning' is incomplete), into categories, explanatory contexts which 'make them mean something' in more than a merely literal sense. Likewise, the viewer must either already understand the context in which the event is being signified, or must be offered some 'explanatory context' so that he, too, can 'resolve' the event meaningfully. If the media can be said to shape the public debate, to mould popular consciousness about issues, it is not only because they have become the major, and most credible source of literal information about the world. It is because they also exercise the function of connecting discrete events with one another: they build or 'map' events into larger, wider, frameworks of meaning, so that viewers come, not simply to 'know what is happening,' but to construct from that knowledge 'pictures of the world,' scenarios of action.²⁸

Hall's characterization of the media production process as subject to indexical discourses deserves some clarification. The term "indexicality," which derives from the ethnomethodology of Garfinkel (1967), and Cicourel (1964, 1973), refers to the fact that social actors, in using accounts of empirical phenomena (such as terms, generalizations, stories, etc.), may confer meanings to them which are divorced from their constitutive and

developmental contexts. As Tuchman (1978) has pointed out,²⁹ indexicality is integral to the categorization-typification procedures which journalists routinely use in order to transform occurrences into news events, procedures which also enable particular items to be mapped into broader, connotative frameworks of meaning. One pertinent example of indexicality is the routine employment of what Sacks et al. have termed the consistency rule:³⁰ it stipulates that if some population is being categorized and if the category from some devices collection has been used to categorize the first member of the population, then that category, or other categories from the same collection may be used to categorize further members of the population. The Glasgow University Media Group has documented a news item by the BBC which foregrounds a particular use of the consistency rule:

The week had its share of unrest. Trouble in Glasgow with striking dustmen and ambulance controllers, short time in the car industry, no Sunday Mirror or Sunday People today and a fair amount of general trouble in Fleet Street, and a continuing rumbling over the matter of two builders' pickets jailed for conspiracy. (BBC 2, 18.55, 19 January 1975)³¹

As the Glasgow Media Group underlines, the category "unrest" is used simultaneously to frame diverse phenomena such as strikes, short-time working, and a conspiracy case: "The preferred hearing is clearly that we see (since we are talking of television) all of these as merely cases of unrest."³² In short, when the consistency rule is operative, a potentially ambiguous category or sentence

will tend not to be apprehended as such. This particular example serves to highlight what Hall, in the former passage, refers to as the interpretive work which goes into connecting discrete events with one another, interpretive work which, through its mappings of events into broader frameworks of meaning, tends at the same time to obscure the particularities and constitutive contexts of these events.

For Hall, the indexing of larger networks of meaning also has the effect of producing "preferred readings" at the encoding end of the communicative process; it is these preferred readings, he maintains, which define and delimit the work of decoding by audiences-publics. He emphasizes, however, that the encoding of preferred readings does not issue unproblematically from the specificity of the production practices of the public communications media, or from the formal news values which inform these practices.³³ The connotative mappings which produce preferred readings of messages are not, in other words, to be viewed as implying a residual "pluralism" of meanings which are "equal among themselves." Rather, Hall accords that these connotative mappings already have the "institutional/political/ideological order imprinted on them."³⁴ Or, as Tuchman would put it, these mappings are tied not only to the indexicality of journalistic accounts, but to the reflexive embeddedness of these accounts in society and its institutions: journalists

are not only mediators of public communication but are societal members as well, with their own common-sense knowledge about the workings of society. Hall elaborates:

Connotative codes are not equal among themselves. Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a dominant cultural order, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested. This question of the 'structure of discourses in dominance' is a crucial point. The different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organized into dominant or preferred meanings. New, problematic or troubling events, which breach our expectancies and run counter to our 'common-sense constructs', to our 'taken-for-granted' knowledge of social structures, must be assigned to their discursive domains before they can be said to 'make sense.' The most common way of 'mapping' them is to assign the new to some domain or other of the existing 'maps of problematic social reality.' We say dominant, not 'determined,' because it is always possible to order, classify, assign and decode an event within more than one 'mapping.' But we say 'dominant' because there exists a pattern of 'preferred readings'; and these both have the institutional/political/ideological order imprinted in them and have themselves become institutionalized. The domains of 'preferred meanings' have the whole social order embedded in them as a set of meanings, practices and beliefs: the everyday knowledge of social structures, of 'how things work for all practical purposes in this culture' the rank order of power and interest and the structure of legitimations, limits and sanctions. Thus to clarify a 'misunderstanding' at the connotative level, we must refer, through the codes, to the orders of social life, of economic and political power and of ideology.³⁵

This passage succinctly foregrounds the representational problematic which informs Hall's grounding of the concept of distorted communication as well as his development of the suppositions underlying his representational model of differential decoding.

On the basis of his extrapolations concerning the construction of preferred readings, Hall goes on to present a refutation of types of audience-based research which are based on an unproblematized notion of the "misunderstandings" issuing from the lack of equivalency between the encoding-decoding moments in the communicative process. Specifically, he takes issue with administrative-type, policy-oriented research which seeks to explain, via the psychological construct of selective perception, "aberrant" decoding practices by audiences-publics. Hall pinpoints the rationale of this type of research as inhering from the need to apprehend why audiences do not necessarily take encoded meanings as they were originally intended to be taken. According to Hall, what is implicitly assumed in this type of research, "is that [audiences] are not operating within the 'dominant' or 'preferred' code. Their [i.e. the public communicators'] ideal is 'perfectly transparent communication.' Instead, what they have to confront is 'systematically distorted communication.'" ³⁶

Hall emphasizes that selective perception "is the door via which a residual pluralism evades the compulsion of a highly structured, asymmetrical and non-equivalent process." ³⁷ He claims moreover that "'selective perception' is almost never as 'selective, random or privatized as the concept suggests. The patterns exhibit, across individual variants, significant clusterings. Any new approach to audience studies will there-

fore have to begin with a critique of 'selective perception' theory."³⁸

Hall's representational model of differential decoding proceeds from two foundational assumptions. First, that while decodings are already constrained by the preferred readings established at the encoding end, they are not nevertheless totally subordinated to these readings. That is to say, the preferred readings established by encoders merely provide the parameters, or points of reference, in relation to which decodings will be articulated. The second assumption is that decoding practices cannot be adequately apprehended via recourse to a theory of selective perception. Rather, these practices can (Hall maintains), only fully be apprehended in cognitive terms, that is, as issuing from different cognitive frames, or meaning-structures.

Hall conceives of his representational model of differential decoding as a hypothetical model of ideal-typical decoding positions, a model through which he wishes to highlight "the point of 'no necessary correspondence'"³⁹ between the positionalities of encoders and decoders, respectively.

The first hypothetical position he identifies is the dominant-hegemonic position. He elaborates:

When the viewer takes the connoted meaning from, say, a television newscast or current affairs programme full and straight, and decodes the message in terms of the reference code [ie. meaning-structure] in which it has been encoded, we might

say that the viewer is operating inside the dominant code [ie. meaning-structure]. This is the ideal-typical case of 'perfectly transparent communication' - or as close as we are likely to come to it 'for all practical purposes,'⁴⁰

Hall propounds that the dominant "code" is also to be seen as a hegemonic code in that dominant definitions of the situation "connect events, implicitly or explicitly, to grand totalizations, to the great syntagmatic views-of-the-world: they take 'large views' of issues: they relate events to the 'national interest' or to the level of geo-politics, even if they make these connections in truncated, inverted or mystified ways."⁴¹ He defines a hegemonic viewpoint as follows:

it defines within its terms the mental horizon, the universe, of possible meanings, of a whole sector of relations in a society or culture; and...it carries with it the stamp of legitimacy - it appears coterminous with what is 'natural,' 'inevitable,' 'taken for granted' about the social order.⁴²

The second hypothetical position Hall identifies is the negotiated position:

Decoding within the negotiated version contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules - it operates with exceptions to the rule. It accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions,' to its own more corporate positions.... Negotiated codes operate through what we might call particular or situated logics: and these logics are sustained

by the differential and unequal relation to the discourses and logics of power.... We suspect that the great majority of so-called 'misunderstandings' arise from the contradictions and disjunctures between hegemonic-dominant encodings and negotiated-corporate decodings. It is just these mismatches in the levels which most provoke defining elites and professionals to identify a 'failure in communications.'⁴³

The third and final position Hall identifies is the oppositional position:

Finally, it is possible for a viewer perfectly to understand both the literal and the connotative inflection given by a discourse but to decode the message in a globally contrary way. He/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference.⁴⁴

Hall advances the foundational claim that this representational model of "ideal-type" decoding positions serves to "ré-present the common-sense notion of 'misunderstandings' in terms of a theory of 'systematically distorted communication.'"⁴⁵ It is precisely this claim which needs to be subjected to critical scrutiny. For this claim suggests that the model of differential decoding represents the definitive grounding of Habermas' theoretical construct of systematically distorted communication. We propose, thus, to critically examine the underlying suppositions of this model in order to determine whether or not Hall's grounding of the construct is a valid one.

As has been seen, the key supposition underlying Hall's analysis in its entirety, has been that public communications systems exhibit structural constrains, constraints, moreover,

that he views as being generic to these communications systems. The systematic distortion of communication he has in turn posited as issuing from these structural constraints in their specificity and in their historicity. Moreover, it has been seen that Hall's conceptualization of systematic distortion has rested on the positing of an ideal-norm of perfectly transparent communication; that is to say, the concept of distorted communication has been articulated in relation to this ideal-norm of perfect transparency.

The central problematic issuing from Hall's grounding of the concept of distortion in terms of an ideal-norm of transparent communication is, it is suggested, the nature of the proposed correspondance between Habermas' construct of an ideal speech situation and Hall's construct of transparent communication. This correspondance is crucial insofar as Habermas' theorization of systematically distorted communication presupposes the construct of an ideal speech situation, one which, it will be recalled, is characterized by a pure intersubjectivity of mutual understanding between speaking subjects, and by a consensus achieved in unrestrained and universal discourse.

This proposed correspondance is problematic in two respects. First, because whereas an ideal speech situation is grounded in the intersubjectivity of ordinary language communication between speaking subjects, the construct of perfectly

transparent communication is grounded in media-mediated forms of communication. And second, because whereas an ideal speech situation represents a communicational context that is ipso facto divorced from institutionalized power relations, the case of perfectly transparent communication is articulated, à posteriori, in relation to these power relations, ones which Hall views as already informing dominant-hegemonic meaning-structures.

As concerns the first problematic, it may be specified that both ordinary language communication and media-mediated communication may, from a historico-anthropological perspective, be analytically posited as conforming to (what Habermas terms) the historically invariant dimension of "interaction." However, neither Habermas' universal-pragmatic analysis of the formal requirements pertaining to an ideal speech situation, nor Hall's formalization of the conditions pertaining to perfectly transparent communication are explicitly thematized on this level—indeed, were they to be thematized on this level, they would inextricably succumb to an epistemological category-mistake as concerns the distinction between the "theoretical" and the "meta-theoretical," as well as a methodological category-mistake as concerns the distinction between synchronic and diachronic modes of analysis.

As concerns the second problematic, it may be specified that Hall's grounding of the construct of perfectly transparent communication suggests a rhetorical strategy of "appropriating"

an objectivistic definition of undistorted communication precisely in order to critique this objectivistic definition. For, as has been noted earlier in this exposition, Hall's contention is that while an objectivistic definition of perfectly transparent communication may conform to the organizationally and institutionally embedded interests of media professionals, the fact of "systematically distorted communication" nevertheless calls into question this objectivistic definition. It is presently suggested, however, that while this rhetorical strategy may be valid in the context of an analysis conceived purely along the lines of a critique, it is not valid in the context of an analysis which purports to "represent the common-sense notion of 'misunderstandings' in terms of a theory of 'systematically distorted communication.'"⁴⁶ Hall's analysis suggests, in other words, a confusion between types of inquiry, namely a confusion between a type of inquiry generically termed "critique" and a type of inquiry that may be termed "theory-grounding."

Fundamentally, Hall's project may be deemed problematic because the concept of distorted communication is grounded in representational rather than communicational terms.

The representational problematic which animates Hall's project is founded upon an *a priori* separation of the cognitive and interactional dimensions of the social production of meaning. That is to say, the cognitive frames, or

meaning-structures delineated by Hall are analytically dissociated from the normative, action-orienting contexts in which the self-understandings of societal individuals are formed. This analytical reduction, while pertinent in the context of a delineation of the structural discontinuities intrinsic to the process of media-mediation, is not, however, pertinent if media audiences are also to be viewed as "publics."

The concept of the public, as advanced by Habermas, designates an institutionalized locus of communication in which the production of meaning is tied both to intersubjectively grounded claims about "the" world of objects and events, and intersubjectively grounded claims about "our" social world of shared norms and values. The grounding of the concept of distorted communication would, accordingly, need to be problematized not in terms of the determinate moments of the encoding and decoding of media messages, but in terms of the relation between the media and the public. Specifically, this grounding would need to be informed by a problematic of public rationality. This problematic will be elaborated upon in section 2.4 of this exposition.

2.3 The Empirical Analysis of Differential Group Decoding

Stuart Hall's representational model of differential decoding may be seen as inviting the question of its pertinence as concerns the empirical analysis of actual decoding practices by audiences-publics. It may be asked, for instance, whether a hypothetical model of ideal-typical decoding positions lends itself to a form of empirical analysis which would account for the situational embeddedness of decoding practices, without nevertheless abandoning the typological framework of the model itself. The empirical analysis of differential decoding would, in other words, have to demonstrate, on the basis of its ethnographic data, how and why specific decoding practices differ from one another. It would moreover have to demonstrate that these practices cohere to a significant degree around the ideal-typical positions posited by Hall.

This question of the pertinence of Hall's typological framework has been taken up by David Morley (1980) in a seminal ethnographic analysis of differential decoding practices, entitled The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding.⁴⁷ The central guiding hypothesis of Morley's analysis was that the different audiences sampled might be expected to produce readings of two pre-selected BBC-TV Nationwide programmes that would vary from "dominant" through "negotiated" through "oppositional" frameworks of decoding. This hypothesis was

operationalized by Morley in terms of "whether different sections of the audience shared, modified or rejected the ways in which topics had been encoded by the broadcasters."⁴⁸ Morley notes, moreover, that "this involved the attempt to identify the 'lexico-referential systems' employed by broadcasters and respondents."⁴⁹

The specific hypotheses governing Morley's analysis were that decodings might be expected to vary with:

- 1) Basic socio-demographic factors: position in the structures of age, sex, race and class.
- 2) Involvement in various forms of cultural frameworks and identifications, either at the level of formal structures and institutions such as trade unions, political parties, or different sections of the educational system; or at an informal level in terms of involvements in different sub-cultures such as youth or student cultures or those based on racial and cultural minorities.⁵⁰

Furthermore, Morley's analysis hypothesized that decodings would vary with:

- 3) Topic: principally in terms of whether the topics treated are distant or 'abstract' in relation to particular groups' own experience and alternative sources of information and perspective, as opposed to those which are situated for them more concretely.... What we need to know is precisely what kind of difference it makes to the decoding of messages when the decoder has direct experience of the events being portrayed by the media, as compared to a situation in which the media account is the audience's only contact with the event? Does direct experience, or access to an alternative account to that presented by the media, lead to a tendency towards a negotiated or oppositional decoding of the message?

- 4) Context: of particular concern here were the differences which might arise from a situation in which a programme is decoded in an educational or work context, as compared with its decoding by the same respondents in the context of the family and home.⁵¹

Morley notes that the dimension of context was not covered in his analysis. He emphasizes, however, that its absence should not be taken as vitiating his results; his claim being that there is a "fundamental level of consistency of decodings across contexts,"⁵² a consistency that he attributes to the specificity of the normative, socioethnic framing context which determines the lexico-referential systems employed in other, more occasional contexts.

The key methodological technique used by Morley was the focused interview technique originally developed by Merton (1955). Morley describes this technique as one which begins with the most "naturalistic" responses and which then progressively moves towards a more structured probing of hypotheses.⁵³ He specifies that, in the context of his Nationwide audience analysis,

The initial stages of interviewing were non-directive; only in subsequent stages of an interview, having attempted to establish the 'frames of reference' and 'functioning vocabulary' with which respondents defined the situation, did I begin to introduce questions about the programme material based on earlier analyses of it.⁵⁴

Moreover, this methodological technique was used by Morley in the context of the analysis of social groups, groups which were delineated on the basis of basic sociodemographic factors (cited above) as well as on the basis of shared institutional settings

which, taken together, were seen as contributing to their respective senses of group-identity.

Morley substantiates his methodological decision to make the group, rather than the individual, the unit of analysis on the grounds that the isolation of individuals from their respective social contexts tends to "treat individuals as the autonomous repositories of a fixed set of individual 'opinions' isolated from their social contexts."⁵⁵ For Morley's analysis purported to focus upon the process of public opinion formation within clearly delineated social contexts in order to account for, what Habermas would term, the normative contexts in which the self-understandings of social groups are established. Finally, Morley's analysis of social groups proceeded from the supposition that "the differences in decodings between the groups from the different [sociodemographic] categories is far greater than the level of difference and variation within the groups."⁵⁶

Morley's analysis of the data accrued through the focused interview technique was in turn conducted at three levels: the level of lexical repertoires, the level of patterns of argumentation, and the level of the premises through which arguments are structured,

At the first level I have attempted to establish the visible particularities in the lexical repertoires of the different groups - where particular terms and patterns of phrase mark off the discourses of the different groups one from another. Here it has been of particular

interest to establish where, because of differences in overall perspective, the same terms can function in distinct ways within the discourses of the different groups.

At a second level I have been concerned to identify the patterns of argumentation and the manner of referring to evidence or of formulating viewpoints which different groups predominantly employ. Here, for instance, an attempt has been made to establish how the central topic areas identified in the programme analysis ('common-sense,' 'individuality,' 'the family,' 'the nation,' etc.) are formulated by the different groups.

At a third level I have been concerned with the underlying cognitive or ideological premises which structure the argument and its logic. Here Gerbner's work on proposition analysis (1964) has provided the main guide. As Gerbner defines it, the aim of this form of analysis is to make explicit the implicit propositions, assumptions or norms which underlie and make it logically acceptable to advance a particular opinion or point of view. In this way, declarative statements may be reconstructed in terms of the simple propositions which support or underpin them (e.g. in terms of a question in an interview, explicating the assumptions which are probably being held in order for it to make sense to ask that question). Thus, the implied premise of the following question (Nationwide Midlands Today):

Q: 'But how will this research help us?' What is it going to do for us?'

would be reconstructed as:

'Everyone knows most academic research is pointless. Can you establish your credentials as actually doing research which will have practical use-value?' 57

Morley's analysis of the decodings of 28 groups, categorized according to their respective institutional affiliations (namely apprentice groups, trade union groups, teacher training college groups, black further education students, and higher education students), served to foreground two key problematics through its findings.

The central finding was that, contrary to what has been suggested,⁵⁸ class position does not in any way directly correlate with decodings. A number of groups sharing a common class position were seen to decode in significantly different ways depending upon the discourses and institutional settings with which they had come into contact. Morley articulates the problematic underlying this finding as follows:

The problematic proposed here does not attempt to derive decodings directly from social class position or reduce them to it; it is always a question of how social position plus particular discourse positions produce specific readings; readings which are structured because the structure of access to different discourses is determined by social position.⁵⁹

For example, Morley's analysis showed that the apprentice groups, the trade union/shop stewards groups and the black further education students, while sharing a common class position, nevertheless decoded in ways influenced more by the discourses and institutions with which they had come into contact. Specifically, it was seen that as concerns the decodings of the "19/5/76" programme (see appendix 2a, p.118) it was those groups most highly placed in the educational system which came closest

to an oppositional decoding of the programme material (see appendix 2b, p. 119). However, in the decodings of the "Budget" programme (23/3/77), which, as Morley points out, dealt more directly with issues of class and politics, there tended to be a "greater convergence of middle class positions with dominant or negotiated perspectives and working class positions with more oppositional readings"⁶⁰ (see appendix 2b).

In sum, Morley views these successive polarizations in the decoding practices of the working-class groups on the one hand, and the middle-class groups on the other, as issuing from the exigency that the fields of representation, or discourses, pertaining to the two individual programs were either central or peripheral in relation to these groups' respective positionalities in the social structure; that is, the structure of access to different discourses is seen by Morley as being determined by social position.

The second key problematic Morley identifies on the basis of a comparison of the differential decodings of different groups which focus on opposite aspects of the Nationwide program. He sees this problematic as being most clearly highlighted in the limit-case of the dominant decodings of the bank managers group on the one hand, and the oppositional decodings of the trade union groups on the other (see appendix 2b): whereas the managers group was seen to focus on the "style" of the

program to the relative exclusion of the framing of the issues themselves, the trade union groups were seen to focus on the program's framing of the issues to the relative exclusion of its style of presentation. According to Morley, this disjunction may be seen as an indication that Hall's model of differential decoding is, in a crucial respect, an inadequately conceptualized model.

As a means of overcoming what he perceives to be a lacuna in Hall's conceptualization of differential decoding, Morley proposes to adopt an analytical distinction between two dimensions of communication advanced by Neale (1977) — a distinction between the "ideological problematic" of a text-program, and the "mode of address" of a text-program.⁶¹ As Morley phrases it, "the concept 'ideological problematic' designates not a set of 'contents' but rather...the way a problematic selects from, conceives and organizes its field of reference."⁶² Moreover, "the problematic is importantly defined in the negative—as those questions or issues which cannot (easily) be put within a particular problematic—and in the positive as that set of questions or issues which constitute the dominant or preferred 'themes' of a programme."⁶³ The concept of mode of address designates, on the other hand, the "specific communicative forms and practices of a programme which constitute what would be referred to in literary criticism as its 'tone' or 'style.'... The mode of address establishes the form of the relation which the programme proposes to/with its audience."⁶⁴

For example, the decodings of the managers group are seen by Morley as highlighting the programme's mode of address at the expense of the ideological problematic imbricated in the program:

Their attention focuses almost exclusively on the programme's mode of address, which they reject as 'just a tea-time entertainment programme, embarrassing...patronising...exploiting raw emotion...sensationalism.' Their adherence is to a mode of address identifiable as 'serious current affairs'; they mention the Daily Telegraph, Panorama and the Money Programme as models of 'good coverage' of these issues, and dismiss Nationwide in so far as it fails to live up to the criteria established by this framework.⁶⁵

He contrasts the decodings of the above group with the decodings of the shop stewards group (see appendix 2b):

the shop stewards can accept the programme's mode of address to some extent: 'It's light entertainment/not too heavy/easy watching/quite good entertainment': what they reject is Nationwide's ideological formulation of the 'issues.' Thus in the case of the 'Budget' programme the dominant readings concentrate their comment (which is largely critical) on the programme's unacceptable style or mode of address, while for them the ideological problematic passes invisibly, non-controversially; whereas the oppositional readings focus immediately on the unacceptable ideological problematic, and the mode of address is treated as a subordinate issue and given little comment - or even appreciated.⁶⁶

The finding, highlighted in the above example of the decodings of the shop stewards, that an ideological problematic may either pass transparently or "naturalistically" (the case of the "Budget" program), or be cognitively apprehended as such (the case of the "19/5/76" program) may, according to

Morley, be seen to suggest the general principle that the unasserted (the obvious, natural, commonsensical) precedes and dominates the asserted (particular positions advanced within this unasserted, taken-for-granted framework). That is to say, "As long as the (unasserted) 'frame' is shared between encoder and decoder then the passage of the problematic embodied in that frame is transparent."⁶⁷ This case of a shared "frame" or problematic — whether asserted or unasserted — is in turn attributed by Morley to the exigency that the institutionalized discourses through which the positionalities of particular social groups are articulated are parallel/complementary, as opposed to contradictory, in relation to the program's discourse or representational field. For example, the groups which were apprehended by Morley as decoding in a dominant framework articulate their respective positionalities through different discourses (ie. radical conservative, traditional Conservative, etc.), discourses which nevertheless were seen to complement/parallel the program discourse (see the breakdown of the various groups in appendix 2b).

On the basis of his extrapolation of the principle that the unasserted takes precedence over the asserted in a given ideological problematic, Morley advances the hypothesis that there are four specific decoding positions. These are, as follows:

- 1) Where the problematic is unasserted and shared, and passes transparently (e.g. the unstated premise in a report that 'race' is a problem—which premise is 'unconsciously' shared by the decoder).
- 2) Where a particular position within a problematic is asserted and accepted; here the encoded position is accepted by the decoder but it is consciously registered as a position (not a 'natural fact') against other positions. To the extent that this is then a recognition of the necessary partiality of any position it is a weaker structure than 1 (e.g. the explicitly made and accepted statement that blacks cause unemployment).
- 3) Where a particular position within a problematic is asserted but rejected, while the problematic itself is not brought into question (e.g. the explicitly made statement that blacks cause unemployment is rejected as simply another of the politicians' endless excuses for their failures and the racist problematic is not necessarily challenged).
- 4) Where the underlying problematic is consciously registered and rejected (e.g. a particular report with racist premises is deconstructed to reveal those premises and another problematic is inserted in its place).⁶⁸

[See appendix 2c, p120 for Morley's diagrammatic illustration of these four decoding positions].

It may be noted, by way of conclusion, that Morley's analysis does, to a significant extent, attest to the pertinence of Hall's model as concerns the empirical, ethnographic analysis of differential group decoding. However, it is presently suggested that the pertinence of Hall's model issues from the fact that it is a relativistic, typological model of ideal-typical modes of decoding, and not from the specific construct

of cognitive meaning-structure or "code" which underlies this model. For it may be argued that the reduction of socially produced and discursively articulated positionalities (even if conceived in ideal-typical terms) to the abstracted cognitivism of meaning-structures/codes is indefensible to the extent that "ideas" do not pre-exist the formulations and premises as well the specific discourses through which these formulations and premises are produced.

2.4 The Problematic of Public Rationality

The central problematic which informs the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas is, it will be suggested, a problematic of public rationality.

This problematic was first enunciated by Habermas in an historical study of the emergence of modern bourgeois society, entitled Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit.⁶⁹ This study analyzed the emergence of modern bourgeois society in terms of two mutually constructive developments: the development of a "private sphere" that was to become legally sanctified as a sphere of individual property holders in the laissez-faire marketplace of an emergent bourgeois economy; and, the development of a "public sphere" - an institutionally sanctified forum of public dialogue - divorced from the restraints of so-called traditional action-orienting value-systems, such as those institutionalized in pre-secular society through the paternalism of Church and Monarchy.

A seminal thesis advanced in the context of this study was that the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere produced a new form of rationality, a rationality divorced from the exigency of legitimating the tradition-bound norms and values which characterized a pre-secular society. According to Habermas, this new form of rationality could moreover be seen as lacking in historical precedent to the extent that it was a self-grounding, as opposed to a pre-grounded form of rationality. That is to say, all aspects of public life were to be, under this form of rationality, potentially subject to critical discussion and review. However, as Habermas has been clear, to point out, this rationality is also a limited and constrained rationality to the extent that it is not exempt from historically specifiable conditions of repression and domination.

For Habermas, the form of public rationality is also, in its ideal form, a comprehensive form of rationality in that public questions "demand a rational discussion that is not focused exclusively either on the technical means or on the application of traditional behavioural norms. The reflection that is required extends beyond the production of technical knowledge and the hermeneutical clarification of traditions."⁷⁰

In fact, as has been seen, Habermas' discussion of the constitutive connection between knowledge and interest sought to ground the case for such a comprehensive form of reason in metatheoretical terms; his universal-pragmatic analysis of the fundamental norms of rational speech sought, in turn, to

substantiate this case in communications-theoretical terms.

Habermas contends that public rationality, as a comprehensive form of rationality capable of addressing practical questions of life-conduct is, in its contemporary manifestation, also a limited form of rationality to the extent that the liberal-democratic institution of the public does not perform the role cast for it in liberal-democratic theory. That is to say, the liberal-democratic ideal of an informed citizenry capable of exerting its political will on the basis of normatively established needs, goals and values is, for Habermas, an ideal that has been, to a considerable extent, short-changed due to a relative exclusion of practical questions from public discussion.

The problematic of public rationality is also thematized by Alvin Gouldner in a seminal historical study entitled The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology.⁷¹ In this study, Gouldner is seen to advance the problematic of public rationality in terms of the relation between the media and the public, a relation which he underscores in historical terms.

Gouldner's study proceeds from the foundational claim, also advanced by Habermas in his Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, that the emergence of the so-called mass media and of the "public" are mutually constructive developments. Gouldner apprehends the emergence of the "public" in dialectical terms, as an attenuation between culture-at-large on the one hand,

and patterns of social interaction on the other. He propounds that such a "public" is of a fundamentally different nature than the traditional social "group":

Traditional 'groups' are characterized by the association and mutual support of both elements; by the fact that their members have patterned social interactions with one another which, in turn, fosters among them common understandings and shared interests which, again in turn, facilitates their mutual interaction, and so on. A 'public', 'refers to a number of people exposed to the same social stimuli,' and having something in common even without being in persisting interaction with one another. (John Bennett and Melvin Tumin) 'Publics' are persons who need not be 'co-present,' in the 'sight and hearing of one another.' (E.B. Reuter and C.W. Hart) ⁷²

It need here be underlined that this construct of the "public" is a descriptive, sociological construct; Habermas' construct of a "public sphere" is, in contradistinction, an analytical construct grounded in an historical analysis of the emergence of the institutional framework of modern bourgeois society.

It need moreover be emphasized that while Habermas is seen to use the term "public," his use of the term nevertheless suggests more an "ideal" public which is fully capable of exerting its "will to reason," for Habermas contends that the empirically existing limits to public rationality can only be analytically apprehended on the basis of an a priori conceptualization of a fully rational public.

Gouldner is seen to ground the problematic of public rationality in terms of a distinction between information that is produced and disseminated in multimodal contexts of social

interaction, and information that is mediated by the modern public communications media. As concerns the latter, he notes that

With the growth of the mass media, exemplified at first by printing, numerous persons were now exposed to a continuous flow of information, at more or less the same time. Information becomes decontextualized, for it must be made intelligible, interesting and convincing even to persons of diverse backgrounds and interests, persons who do not know one another and do not meet and interact.... With the growth of the mass media, social interaction was less requisite for cultural communality. People might now share information and orientations, facts and values, without mutual access and interaction. The problem...arises as to how persons can evaluate information.

Gouldner contends that the de-grounding, or decontextualization, of situationally grounded information by the public communications media may be seen to raise the question of how this information is in turn re-grounded by audiences-publics. However, for Gouldner, this question also premises the underlying question of whether this de-grounded information admits of a rationally motivated re-grounding, that is to say, of a re-grounding by a rational public. His provisional answer to this latter question is that there are definite limits to public rationality as concerns the re-grounding of media-mediated information. He understands these limits to public rationality as issuing from the exigency that the public communications media constitute a locus of contradiction between opposite tendencies: a tendency, on the one hand, to encourage and foster public rationality, and a tendency, on the other hand, to restrain and delimit public rationality.

As concerns the tendency of the media to foster public rationality, Gouldner concurs with the argument, originally propounded by Robert E. Park,⁷⁴ that the media's provision of "diverse sources of potentially variable accounts of the imputedly same event"⁷⁵ tends to mobilize public attention and interest and to encourage a critical dialogue as to the relative merits and demerits of different accounts of the same event. Gouldner suggests, moreover, that because the media (in liberal-democratic society) are relatively autonomous, boundaried systems not tied to exclusively reproducing the accounts of official managers of social institutions, they are also in a position to generate convincing accounts of social reality which issue from different societal sectors. Succinctly stated, "quite apart from their 'objectivity,' media must generate accounts that differ in some measure (even if they do not 'expose' or criticize), from the accounts rendered by social managers."⁷⁶

As concerns the tendency of the media to delimit public rationality, Gouldner contends that media accounts of social reality may also be apprehended by publics as lacking any grounding at all in the sense that "what is important for people to know about their lives has become problematic, and can...no longer be taken as given."⁷⁷ That is to say, the disjunction between a plethora of factual accounts in the form of news on the one hand, and intersubjectively grounded norms and values on the other, may be construed as being irrevocable

to the extent that the "reports" issued by the media can no longer be translated into action-orienting "commands" by publics. The attendant problem may thus be apprehended as a problem of translating media-mediated information into the situationality and sociality of "meaning."

Since public rationality is also to be seen as a comprehensive form of rationality (Habermas), a radical disjunction between facts and values may further be construed as premising a disjunction between the constitutive contexts in which truth claims are grounded and the constitutive contexts in which rightness claims are grounded. It suggests, in other words, that utterances about "the" world of objects and events, and utterances about "our" social world of shared norms, values and roles no longer complement one another as mutually contextualizing "reports" and "commands": the "is" and the "ought," as well as "theory" and "practice" may hence be said to be radically disjoined.

FOOTNOTES - PART II

¹See Stuart Hall, "The 'Structured Communication' of Events," in Getting the Message Across (Paris: Unesco Press, 1975).

²Ibid, pp. 116-117.

³See Hans Dreitzel (ed.), "Introduction," Recent Sociology 2, (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1970).

⁴See Peter Golding and Graham Murdock, "Theories of Communication and Theories of Society," Communication Research, 5 (1978), pp. 339-356. See also James Halloran, "The Context of Mass Communication Research," Unesco ICSCP Paper, 1979.

⁵Golding and Murdock, ibid., p. 347.

⁶See Chapter 1 of Raymond Williams' Television, Technology and Cultural Form (Glasgow: Fontana, 1974) entitled "The Technology and the Society."

⁷"The 'Structured Communication' of Events," in Getting the Message Across, pp. 115-116.

⁸Ibid, pp. 117-118.

⁹Although Hall does not use the term "communities," the use of this term does nevertheless serve to highlight the specificity of social context as concerns the encoding and decoding of media-mediated messages.

¹⁰Op. cit., pp. 118-119.

¹¹Ibid, p. 119.

¹²See Chapter 4, entitled "The Communications Revolution: News, Public, and Ideology," in Alvin Gouldner's The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology. (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

¹³Ibid, p. 105.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 105.

¹⁵See Michael Schudson, Discovering the News (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 122.

¹⁶Ibid, pp. 157-158.

¹⁷See, for example, E. Barbara Phillips' paper entitled "Approaches to objectivity: journalistic versus social science perspectives" on the obviation of the need on the part of public communicators to choose between conflicting truth claims; in Strategies for Communication Research (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977), pp. 63-77.

¹⁸See, for example, Gaye Tuchman, Making News (New York: The Free Press, 1978), and Edward Jay Epstein, News From Nowhere (New York: Random House, 1973).

¹⁹See Phillips, op. cit.

²⁰See, especially, section 2.4 of this exposition, entitled "The Problematic of Public Rationality."

²¹It should be emphasized, in the present context, that Gouldner's study does not, in any substantive sense, adhere to this informational orientation, for it is an historical and interpretive analysis which foregrounds the dialectic through which the very notion of an "information society" can be said to assume significance.

²²The distinction between an informational and a representational problematic is pertinent as an analytical distinction, and not as a distinction between different paradigms of inquiry. That is to say, the specific units of analysis, as well as the methodologies and theoretical suppositions used will usually tend to foreground one problematic over the other. For example, an analysis of the "gate-keeping" practices of a news wire-service will tend to foreground the organizational constraints and/or decision-making processes which inform the selection of certain items of "information" over others. An ethnomethodological analysis of the occupational practices of journalists will, on the other hand, tend to foreground certain regularities in the manner that journalists interpret "events," regularities which, in the form of categorizations and typifications, inform their "re-presentations" of these events. One recent study - Edward W. Said's Covering Islam (New York: Random House, 1981) - is exemplary for the breadth and depth of scope which it brings to its critical,

interpretive analysis of the representation of "Islam" in the American media.

²³It should be underlined that the present concept of "discursivity" bears no relation to Habermas' grounding of the term "discourse" (cf. our discussion of Habermas' grounding of the term in chapter one of this exposition). In its generic usage, the term discourse (or discursivity) denotes the contingency that particular message-forms are mediated by culturally shared codes and conventions, ones which are articulated in symbolic, textual forms or artifacts (such as the form of "television news," the form of "narrative cinema," etc.) Textual forms are, in turn, decipherable because of their internal unity or coherence; because of the univocality of their mode of address. This gives them their "readability," a readability which, in many cases, goes hand in hand with the effects of "realism" or "naturalism" produced by given texts (ie. the classical Hollywood narrative film). Moreover, specific discursive, textual forms cannot be apprehended in isolation from the general cultural "intertext," the multiplicity of discursive forms and practices in a culture, of which they are a part. For example, the discourse of "television news" (itself a specific "genre" within the multiplicity of televisual and cinematic discourses) cannot be understood (decoded) in isolation from related discursive forms such as "current affairs television," "documentary" or "narrative film," for it appropriates specific codes of representation from all of these forms or "genres." For a critical, historical perspective on theories of discourse, see Colin McCabe's paper entitled "On Discourse," in Economy and Society, vol. 8, no. 4 (1979), pp. 279-307.

²⁴Stuart Hall, "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse," Stencilled Occasional Paper, Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1973, pp. 1-2.

²⁵Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in S. Hall et al., eds. Culture, Media, Language, (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 128-129.

²⁶Ibid, p. 131.

²⁷Op. cit., p. 16. Hall specifies that the denotation/connotation distinction is essentially an analytic distinction, and not a distinction that is empirically based. He notes that "in actual discourse most signs will combine both the denotative and connotative aspects.... It may,

then, be asked why we retain the distinction at all. It is largely a matter of analytic value. It is because signs appear to acquire their full ideological value - appear to be open to articulation with wider ideological discourses and meanings - at the level of their 'associative' meanings (that is, at the connotative level) - for here 'meanings' are not apparently fixed in natural perception (that is, they are not fully naturalized), and their fluidity of meaning and association can be more fully exploited and transformed. So it is at the connotative level of the sign that situational ideologies alter and transform signification." Culture, Media, Language, p. 133.

²⁸Stuart Hall, "The 'Structured Communication' of Events," in Getting the Message Across, p. 126.

²⁹See Tuchman, Making News, chapters 3 and 9.

³⁰See Gumperz, Hymes (eds.), Directions in Sociolinguistics (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962).

³¹Glasgow University Media Group, Bad News (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 23.

³²Ibid, p. 23.

³³Hall apprehends formal news values as those news values which are linked to the discursive organization of news, to newsmen as a professional group, as well as to the institutional apparatuses of news-making. He distinguishes formal news values from ideological news values, which he understands as belonging to the realm of moral-political discourse in society. Hall underlines the distinction between formal and ideological news values by citing the example of a news story about the death of the Duke of Windsor:

the death of the Duke of Windsor meets the requirement of 'formal news values' because it is unexpected, dramatic, a recent event, concerning a person of high status. But, at the ideological level, the event connotes a powerful, resonant 'set' of themes: 'Prince Charming,' the 'King with the people at heart'... 'the King who came Home.'

"The Determinations of Newsphotographs," Working Papers in Cultural Studies, No. 3 (1972), p. 74.

³⁴Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in Culture, Media, Language p. 134.

³⁵Ibid, p. 134.

³⁶Ibid, p. 135.

³⁷Ibid, p. 135.

³⁸Ibid, p. 135.

³⁹Ibid, p. 136.

⁴⁰Ibid, p. 136.

⁴¹Ibid, p. 137.

⁴²Ibid, p. 137.

⁴³Ibid, p. 137.

⁴⁴Ibid, pp. 137-138.

⁴⁵Hall, "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse," p. 16.

⁴⁶Ibid, p. 16.

⁴⁷See David Morley, The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding (London: British Film Institute, 1980).

⁴⁸Ibid, p. 23.

⁴⁹Ibid, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁰Ibid, p. 26.

⁵¹Ibid, pp. 26-27.

⁵²Ibid, p. 27.

⁵³Ibid, p. 33.

⁵⁴Ibid, p. 33.

⁵⁵Ibid, p. 33.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 33.

⁵⁷Ibid, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁸See chapter 3 of Frank Parkin's Class Inequality And Political Order (New York: Praeger, 1971), entitled "Class Inequality and Meaning Systems."

⁵⁹Op. cit., p. 134.

⁶⁰Ibid, p. 137.

⁶¹See Steve Neale, "Propaganda," in Screen, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1977).

⁶²Op. cit., p. 139.

⁶³Ibid, p. 139.

⁶⁴Ibid, p. 139.

⁶⁵Ibid, p. 145.

⁶⁶Ibid, p. 145.

⁶⁷Ibid, p. 146.

⁶⁸Ibid, pp. 146#147.

⁶⁹Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1962).

⁷⁰Habermas, "Technical Progress and the Social Life-World," in Toward A Rational Society (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), p. 53.

⁷¹See Alvin Gouldner, The Dialectic of Ideology and Technology, (New York: Seabury Press, 1976).

⁷²Ibid, p. 95.

⁷³Ibid, p. 95.

⁷⁴See Robert E. Park, The Crowd and the Public and Other Essays (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

⁷⁵Op. cit, p. 121.

⁷⁶Ibid, p. 123.

⁷⁷Ibid, p. 111.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It has been suggested in the present study that a comprehensive grounding of Habermas' concept of distorted communication cannot be effected in terms of an exclusively representational problematic. Rather, this grounding must account for publics as loci of communication in an "information society" where information is itself largely "media-mediated."

Since publics are both the "sources" and the "receivers" of media-mediated information, a key problematic that needs to be addressed is whether this information, once severed from its constitutive contexts, can be rationally re-grounded by publics. This is fundamentally seen as a problematic of public rationality in that utterances about "the" world of objects and events, and utterances about "our" social world of shared norms, values and roles need to take the form of mutually contextualizing "reports" and "commands." To the extent that media-mediated "reports" cannot be translated into action-orienting "commands" by publics, public rationality is itself seen as a constrained form of rationality.

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APPENDIX IIa.

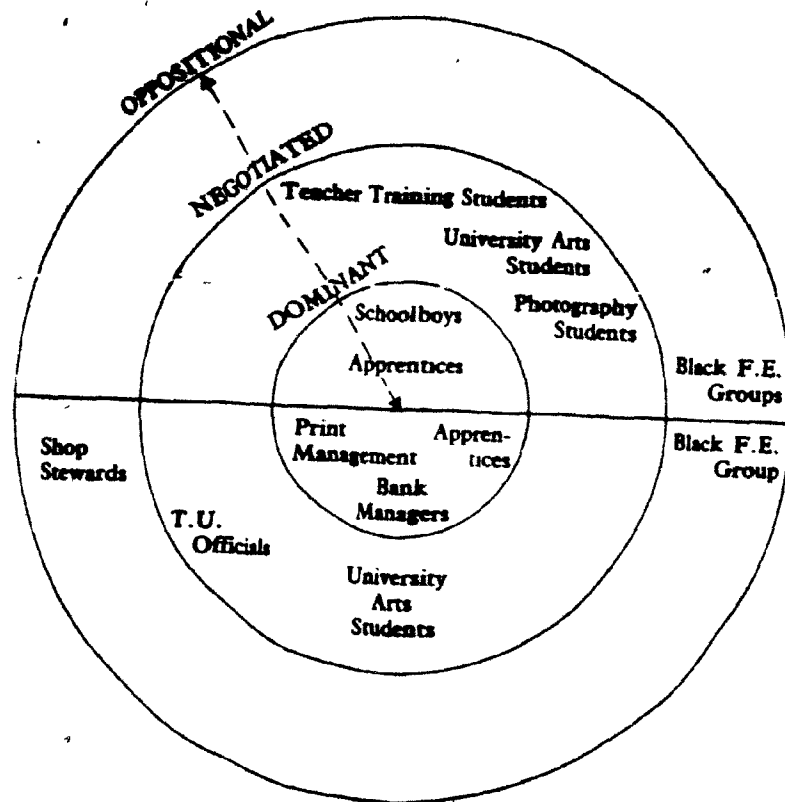
Programme Description 195/76

Summary

Time	Item	Comments
00	Regional Menu	Use of identification pronouns;
02	National Menu	'we meet'/'the person who'.
NEWS 'MIDLANDS TODAY'		
03	Shop steward at Coventry car plant sacked. Walsall firm cleared of charges of failure to protect their workers. Plesey management give ultimatum to workers on pay dispute.	A package of industrial news. All brief reports except for that on the carpet firm, which includes film, and some 'back-ground' information.
(06)	Kidderminster carpet firm in danger of closure. Earth tremor in Stoke-on-Trent.	
	Mrs B. Carter goes back to meet the lions who attacked her in West Midlands Safari Park.	Questioned exclusively about her feelings. C.U. on facial expressions.
NEWS		
	Cheltenham policeman praised by coroner for bravery. West Midlands Agricultural Show, Shrewsbury. 6 workers at Rolls-Royce Coventry win £200,000 on pools.	Photo stereotype of 'striking workers' redefined by commentators as 'individual success'.
13	Interview with Ralph Nader on consumer affairs.	'Devil's advocate' interview probing Nader's credibility.
15	WEATHER REPORT	Use of child's drawing.
	Report on a new invention from a Midlands College which will enable blind students to produce 3-D drawings. Report on a group of design students from Wolverhampton who've been building a 'Survival Kit' out of rubbish material	Both items focus on the role of 'technological development': visual emphasis on machinery in CU. Implicit contrast made between obvious value of the invention in former item and the dubious value of the latter project
25	NW team members go on boat trip on the yacht 'Nationwide' on the Norfolk Broads.	Self-reflexive item: the NW team become the 'actors' in their own story.
28	A report on American servicemen and their families on a US base in Suffolk.	Extensive use of stereotypes of 'Englishness'/'Americanness' in report on 'invasion' of 'Little Old England'.
37	Interview with Patrick Meehan, released from jail with a free pardon after being originally convicted for murder.	Focusing on the subject's feelings. CU on facial expressions.
40	What to wear/eat/drink at the races. The Nationwide horse: Realin. Report on the financial problems of English racing. Interview with Clement Freud, a racehorse owner.	The 'Sport of Kings' brought to NW audience: a highly composite item involving studio mock up, outdoor film, graphics and studio interview.

Source: David Morley. The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding. (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp. 39-40.

APPENDIX IIb

Forms of Dominant CodeGroups

- 26 Print Management: radical Conservative
 21, 24 Bank Management: traditional Conservative
 1-6 & 27 Apprentices: Populist-Conservative/cynical
 10, 12 Schoolboys: deferential (?)

Forms of Negotiated Code

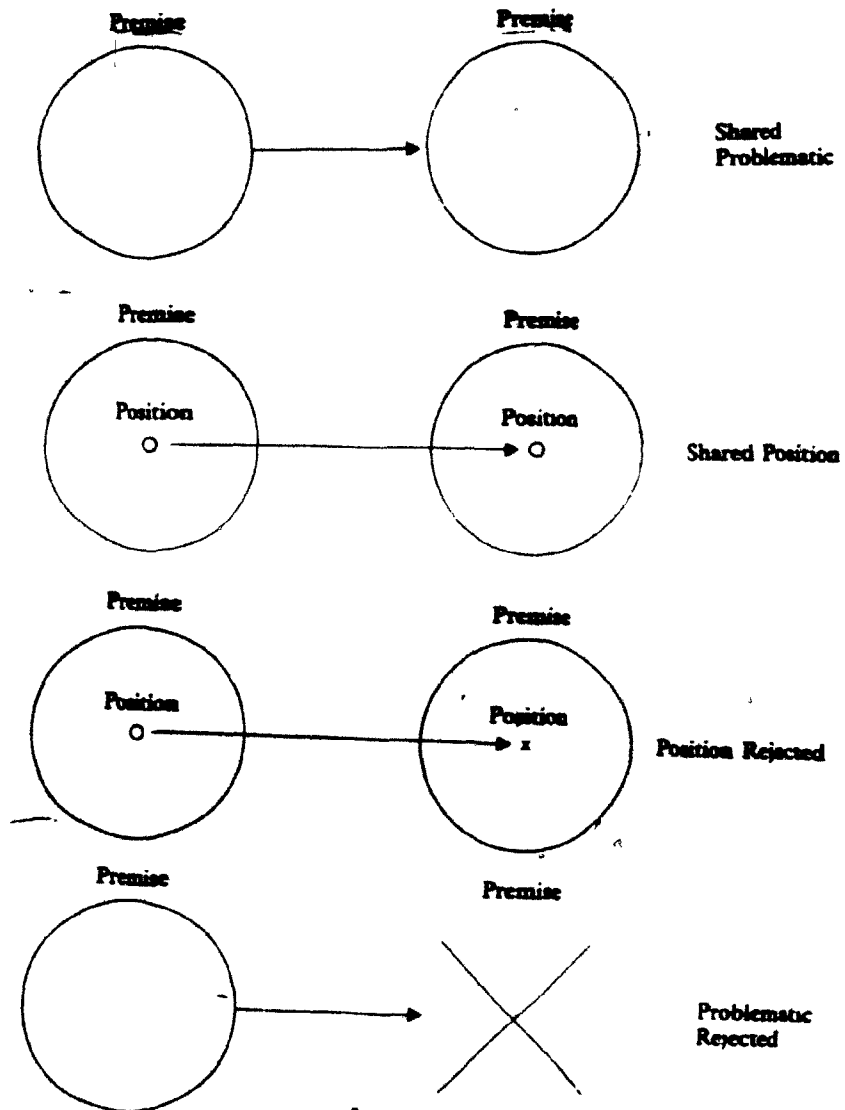
- 14, 15 Teacher Training College Students: Conservative Leavisite
 7, 19 University Arts Students: radical Leavisite
 8, 18 Photography Students: technicist 'professional' perspective
 20, 22 Trade Union Officials: Labourist 'official' perspective

Forms of Oppositional Code

- 11, 13, 16, 17, 25 Black F.E. Students: alienated 'critique of silence': subcultural perspective.
 23 Shop Stewards: radical rank & file perspective: class perspective.

Source: David Morley. The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding. (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp. 136-137.

APPENDIX IIc



Source: David Morley. The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding. (London: British Film Institute, 1980), pp. 146-147.