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Introduction

The ethnography on which this monograph is based derives from an anthropological study, undertaken in 1974–6, of immigrants, mainly of North African origin, living in a French provincial city. This book is, however, only partly concerned with such immigrants, and it has not been conceived in any straightforward way as a contribution to migration studies.

The discussion moves on three levels, or to put it less pretentiously, approaches the data from three directions, each leading toward a somewhat different, if ultimately related, range of analytical problems. The implications of “level,” which suggests differences of depth, subtlety, and perhaps sophistication, are not, however, wholly misleading, in that each raises problems of greater generality within the social sciences and greater complexity, at least for this analyst. They also represent phases in the analyst’s perception of his ethnography. We are rarely told so, but it is usual in anthropology, as in other disciplines, for the researcher to move through many stages in understanding a society in which intensive fieldwork has been undertaken. This occurs in the field itself and, in the aftermath, in the writing. In a sense, the process never stops, even after, perhaps especially after, results have been published. The anthropologist’s material is not something in which one can find a final, conclusive answer, any more than one can with a painting or a piece of music. If we are honest, any anthropological publication is a report on analysis in progress; and this is no exception.

The three levels formed, then, successive stages in the perception of ethnography obtained during fieldwork in the city of Lyon, France. Briefly, they are as follows.

The first is concerned with *immigrants*, and in the course of the book I deal at some length with the situation of migrant workers and their families who are recent arrivals, for the most part, in an urban and industrial milieu. In doing so, a number of issues are

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raised that are comparable to those encountered elsewhere in the literature of anthropology and other disciplines that focus on labor migration, ethnicity, race relations, and so on, in both Europe and the Third World.

Such issues were, in fact, my starting point; but as I will explain, experience in the field forced a switch in focus from immigrants to the *society of immigration*. Thus the second level of analysis, which is the most fully developed in this book, is concerned with the general milieu in which the immigrants are located: a major urban center in a highly advanced industrial society. Its focus is the attributes of such a milieu. It happens, therefore, that this book is as much about France and the French as it is about migrants.

The link between these two levels is that the analysis of French society concentrates on how the institutions of that society and their (mainly) French personnel perceive and manage what they call the “problem” of a defined section of the population: immigrants. There are two aspects of this.

First, any reader who goes through the speeches recorded in the “Events” described at intervals in the text will be struck by the frequency with which the word “problem” occurs, almost regardless of the ethnic identity or ideological persuasion of the speaker. No researcher in France could fail to note how orally and in writing (in reports, articles, books of every description) the words “immigrant” and “immigration,” or less euphemistically, “Arab” or “North African,” produce the word “problem.” So much so that early in his fieldwork it occurred to this investigator that this fact itself was worthy of investigation: How and why is the situation of immigrants in France viewed as “problematic,” and what is the role of French institutions in the “representation of problems”?

“Representation” here refers to perception and conception, an ideological dimension. But if there is “representation” of problems, there is also a problem of “representation.” The point is this: If the situation of immigrants is “represented” as problematic – perceived, conceived, analyzed, and finally handled in terms of the “problems” that immigrants pose or are believed to experience – and these “representations” are taken into the institutional system through which policies are formulated and implemented, then we must examine who presents the “representations,” that is, whose view is “represented” in a political sense, by what means, and how evaluated.

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The general approach taken here was outlined first in my report to the Social Science Research Council on the Lyon project (Grillo 1978). It is one that has received relatively little attention in the literature, although in France the work of Catani (1973) and Pinot (1973) has a generally similar focus, as does the compilation by Tewfik Allal and others (1977). In Britain, if such matters are discussed at all, it is in the context of policy studies or in accounts of the politics of race. (But see Rex and Tomlinson 1979:198, 244.) Gary Freeman's (1979) stimulating comparison of British and French policies toward immigrants since World War II adopts a perspective close to my own, although his concern is with the perception of problems at the center, rather than with their handling at the local level and in practice.

The analysis of the perception and management of "problems," with what I term their "representation," deals with ideas and beliefs. This leads to my third level: the nature and structure of ideological systems in advanced industrial societies. Here I touch on a number of themes tackled by scholars in the fields of "discourse analysis" and the sociology of knowledge. The link between this level and the others is provided by a question that runs through this book and presents a central organizing theme: What can be said about the construction and contextualization of ideologies in our type of advanced industrial society, having regard to their application via an institutional framework to a defined segment of the population (immigrants)?

URBAN SYSTEMS IN ADVANCED INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES: THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

I have said that this study is concerned as much with the milieu in which immigrants are located, and in particular with the "institutional complexes" that operate therein, as with immigrants themselves. Let me elaborate this, describing first in broad outline the characteristics of that milieu, which may be described briefly as advanced industrial and urban.

An anthropologist undertaking an urban study in France receives little guidance from the writings of colleagues who have hitherto worked in Europe. By and large, their research, so ably summarized in Davis's *People of the Mediterranean*, is irrelevant. So, too, is the bulk of urban anthropological research concerned with Third World cities. Not surprisingly, when analyzing my own data, I initially found the greatest stimulus in the ideas of a number of

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contemporary French urban and industrial sociologists – Touraine, Castells, and Lojkin, the last of whom happens to have written a monograph (1974) on Lyon.

One concept, found useful as a starting point, was that of the “post-industrial” or “programmed” society, as Touraine variously calls it:

A new type of society is now being formed. These new societies can be labeled post-industrial to stress how different they are from the industrial societies which preceded them, although – in both capitalist and socialist nations – they retain some characteristics of these earlier societies. They may also be called technocratic because of the power that dominates them. Or one can call them programmed societies to define them according to the nature of their production methods and economic organisation. [Touraine 1974:3]

Touraine makes it clear that this type of society occurs in both capitalist and socialist versions. Castells, whose vision of contemporary society in France is similar, equivocates (1976b:66). Lojkin, who like Castells is a more obviously Marxist writer than Touraine, confines himself to “the current phase of monopoly capitalism, State monopoly capitalism marked by the systematic and generalized intervention of the State to facilitate monopolistic accumulation” (Lojkin 1976:136). His book on Lyon may be read as an extended case study of such a system in operation.

An outstanding feature of writers such as Castells, Lojkin, and Touraine is that they firmly incorporate the study of an urban and industrial milieu within the framework of the broader social system. Thus, for Castells, the classic Wirthian definition of urbanism is no more, but no less, than “the cultural expression of capitalist industrialization, the emergence of the market economy and the process of rationalization of modern society” (Castells 1976a:38). Although not denying the existence of differences between town and country, he claims that the “fundamental features of . . . urban culture are the direct consequence of industrialization, and, in certain cases, capitalist industrialization” (p. 54).

The logic of this is that an anthropological study set in a city such as Lyon is, at one level, about the wider social and economic system of which the city is a manifestation. But how are we to approach the study of such a system? Castells, having with one hand abolished urban sociology as an autonomous discipline

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(1976a:59), with the other resurrects it by offering two fields for urban research: the study of relationships in space and of what he terms the “process of collective consumption” (1976b:74).

On this point there is a convergence in the views of Castells and Touraine. Both, while acknowledging the overriding importance of the system of production, insist on the significance of consumption, both public and private, and of what might be termed “relations of consumption,” in contemporary society. And both are concerned with “social movements” that arise from contradictions in the consumption system. As Touraine puts it, “It is both true and false that today’s conflicts are located more on the level of *consumption* than of production” (1974:84, his emphasis).

The analysis of consumption, individual and collective, public and private, forces attention on the organization of consumption, and thence on “consumer relationships.” Here I must stress that the term “consumer” is used very broadly and implies some similarity among people who buy a product in a shop, rent a house, go to school, and are patients in a hospital. Ahmed, a *cuisinier* in an Algerian-owned café in central Lyon, had been trying to find an apartment for himself and his family. Eventually he succeeded, and I asked him how it was. “Oh, it’s fine. The apartment’s very well placed. The school’s nearby, there’s the supermarket, the medical center, the social worker . . .” The relationships implied by the apparently heterogeneous collection of what I shall term “institutional complexes” in which they are embedded (landlord/tenant, teacher/parent or pupil, doctor/patient, salesperson/customer, social worker/client), of course, differ significantly in content and structure; but there is sufficient similarity to enable us to treat them collectively in the first instance.

One feature they share is a characteristic of the type of society we are discussing, which in fact cuts across other divisions such as that between private and public and, indeed, that between production and consumption. For many of the social relationships in which people engage are increasingly conducted within, or with the personnel of, an institutional complex: a network of formal organizations bureaucratically ordered in Max Weber’s sense. “Institutional complex,” rather than simply “institution,” as in most cases there are several linked organizations, or parts of organizations, operating in a specifiable domain. Of special interest and importance are those concerned with the domains of housing, education, health, welfare, and work.

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These institutional complexes significantly affect the day-to-day life of society's members. Indeed, it is impossible to exist in France without being continually touched, directly and indirectly, by their activities. Let me make five further points about them and their analysis in this book.

First, many of the institutional complexes with which we will deal are concerned with relations of *consumption* (e.g., in Chapters 4 and 5 on housing, 6 on the social services, 7 on education). This is not to say that relations of *production* will be ignored. (See Chapters 8, 9, and 10.) Nor does it mean that the former are thought to have greater theoretical importance than the latter. The two great fields of relations are linked, and ultimately one must suggest what the nature of the linkage is.

Second, behind much of the material to be presented lies the state (or the State, as most French writers would have it). Many of the institutions that make up a complex are, directly or indirectly, formally or informally, linked to the state system. A major problem we will have to tackle is the nature of the state's role in a society such as France.

Third, central to the analysis is the relationship between the personnel of institutions and their "clients," using that term in a broad sense. While, on the one hand, emphasizing an essential similarity among all such relationships, I recognize that there are differences between the personnel of different institutions and the clients they encounter. It is in respect of these differences that the value (and the limitations) of a study concentrating on one type of client – immigrant workers and their families – will become apparent.

Fourth, somewhat apart, at least in analytical terms, from the institutional complexes that organize production and consumption, are a variety of bodies that often share important organizational features with the institutions (e.g., a bureaucratic order) and, indeed, may be part of them (as is true of some social workers) but that *act on* relations in production and consumption. By that I mean in the way a trade union "acts on" the relationship between employer and employee. In some cases, such bodies may form or represent a relatively organized opposition to the activities of the institutional complexes.

Fifth, the study of the institutional complexes and their personnel, and the relationships with clients, has much to commend it from an anthropological point of view. The relationships they

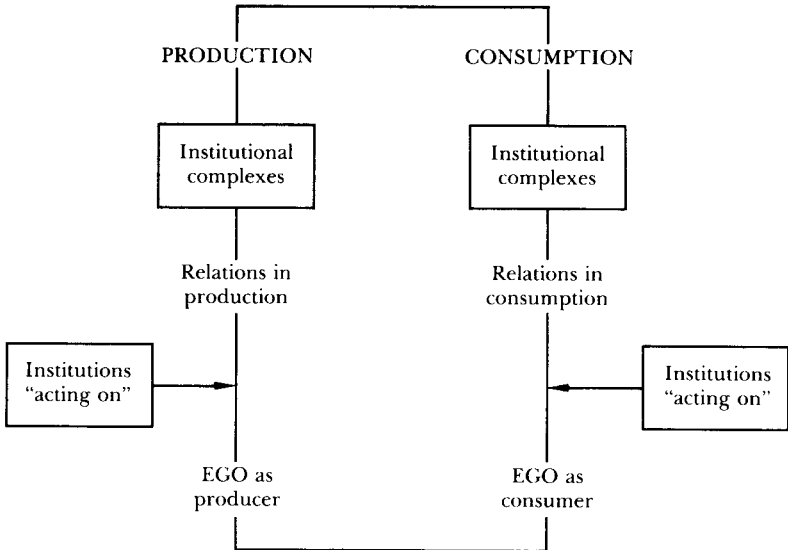


Figure 1.1. Relations of production and consumption.

entail are “pivotal,” or “nodal” (Grillo 1980a), linking a multiplicity of social fields at different levels of social organization. They thus provide a means of tackling the problem of relating macro- and microanalyses. They also provide a way into the difficult question of the relationship between institutional organization and ideological structure, both in terms of particular institutions and their personnel and in terms of the system as a whole.

The elements of this “system” are presented in a deliberately abstract form in Figure 1.1. Much of what happens in a city such as Lyon cannot, of course, be fitted into the framework suggested by that diagram. To attempt to make such a fit would be reductionism of the worst kind. The diagram simply indicates certain key relationships, and the linkages between them, that engage people in the kind of society Lyon is. Given the time devoted by my informants, French and immigrant, to discussing them, they clearly were crucial to those involved.

THE IDEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

When the Lyon project was proposed and I tried to define the contribution a British social anthropologist might make to a study of immigrants in an urban and industrial milieu, I argued that a

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distinctive feature of the discipline is its concern with interaction and process studied through the medium of detailed cases interpreted within the framework of the wider social, economic, and cultural contexts in which they occur. Central to this is what I then wished to call the “subjective dimension”: models, definitions, orientations that actors consciously or unconsciously employ in their management of relations with one another.

Although I recognize that terms such as “subjective” and “actor” are more problematic than they once seemed (see Grillo 1983), I would maintain that an interest in beliefs and attitudes expressed by informants must remain part of the anthropological project. It is this aspect to which “representation” in the first sense refers, and in connection with which I use the term “ideology,” meaning by that a relatively organized and organizing body of ideas manifested both verbally and in practice.

“Ideology” as such was not traditionally presented as part of the subject matter of British social anthropology, although there has, of course, been a long-standing interest in ideational systems, their “function” in the social order, and the meanings they convey. This absence of “ideology” from anthropological vocabulary was, one suspects, due partly to a belief in a fundamental difference between the systems of thought of traditional societies and those of the modern world. (See Gellner 1978:81.) It also probably owed much to the political connotations of the word. In the early 1970s, however, ideology (so termed) began to appear on the anthropological agenda in the writings of, for example, Asad (1979) and Bloch (1974 and 1975a:Introduction, 1977). Their work and that of others (e.g., in Bloch 1975b) drew extensively on a Marxist interpretation of ideology, in particular that recension of it associated with Louis Althusser.

Let me say at once that for reasons discussed in Chapter 12, my approach to ideology does not derive from an Althusserian perspective, which I believe preempts both questions and answers in the study of ideational systems. A much more fruitful approach to ideology in the sense used here may be found in the writings of Michel Foucault (1970, 1971, 1972, 1980), whose work has been curiously ignored by British anthropologists, although that of several of his compatriots – including, recently, Jacques Derrida – has made a considerable impact.

A key concept in Foucault’s writing is that of “discourse,” a term that designates a “group of statements in so far as they belong to

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the same discursive formation” (1972:117). Statements are “groups of verbal performances . . . linked at the statement level” (p. 115), identified by the way a statement has a “referential” (p. 91), which consists of “laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are affirmed or denied in it” (ibid.). In this sense, discourse bears a family resemblance to Kuhn’s modified concept of “paradigm” (Kuhn 1970:182), although in Foucault, as in Pêcheux (1969, 1978, 1982), there is a much greater concern with the language in which discourse is embodied and – much more problematically – in which it is embedded.

This perspective may be allied to that of the French anthropologist Louis Dumont, whose ideas are perhaps in certain respects closer to those of Foucault than the former might care to admit (compare Foucault 1972:184–6 with Dumont 1977:17–22 on the status of scientific discourse). Dumont is concerned with what he calls “modern ideology”: “a set of ideas common to many societies, countries or nations” (1977:7). This ideology consists of “configurations” (p. 14), particular ways in which ideas drawn from the set are constructed by, for example, different national or cultural groups. Thus, to rephrase what I said earlier, the discussion of the “representation” of problems in this book examines the structure and content of a variety of discourses and seeks to identify the ideological configurations embodied therein.

In a society such as France, however, there are always a multiplicity of discourses and ideological configurations, which interact and interrelate in subtle ways. This has been ably demonstrated by Gill Seidel in a fascinating series of papers concerned with right and left in both Britain and France (Seidel 1975, 1979a, 1979b, 1983; Seidel and Billig 1979). Besides revealing the complex semantic structure of political discourse and the morphology of its language, she also shows how discourses “play” on one another. There are, in addition, complex levels of similarity and dissimilarity among discourses in respect of the configurations they project.

Beyond that, of course, not all discourses are of equal status, power, and authority. Much of Seidel’s work tries to identify what she terms the “dominant discourse,” which she defines as a dominant “mode of argument and selection of meanings enmeshed in institutional norms and practices” (1979a). In this she follows Foucault, who like Althusser and Pêcheux, is much exercised by the relationship between discourse and power (cf. Foucault 1971,

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1980), whether that concerns the power of discourse vis-à-vis the “subject” or, more simply and with greater relevance to this book, the discourse that is powerful: the discourse that prevails.

In discussing the “representation” of problems, therefore, we are dealing not with passive systems of philosophical reflection but with views that are in more or less constant conflict. Discourse, as Seidel and others frequently state, is a “site of struggle.” The point is that the study of discourse is not primarily the study of ideas alone, of disembodied ideology; and this study is as much concerned with society as with ideology and, of course, the relationship between the two.

Here the link is made in two ways via the institutional framework described earlier. First, what are construed as “problems” are often, though not always, associated with the relationship between the migrant and the institutional complexes of French society. It is their roles as producers and consumers that frequently form the subject matter of discourse. Second, it is within and through the institutions themselves, at least some of them, that the “representations” of problems are “represented” in a political sense. The institutions themselves are one site of ideological struggle.

Throughout the text, discussion of “representation” in both senses alludes to what might seem a straightforward opposition in French thought and practice between ideologies and institutions of the right and left. (See Figure 1.2.) Although this opposition provides a constant frame of reference, both for participants and for the observer, it should be stated at the outset that it is by no means as simple as it seems; and, indeed, the validity of the opposition itself will eventually be questioned.

Analysis of these themes begins in Chapter 3. Chapter 2 presents an introductory account of the immigrant population of France and Lyon. The rest of this chapter is also introductory. It explains how my research in Lyon began and developed. It is intended partly to illustrate certain features of an advanced urban system, partly to demonstrate how and why I arrived at an understanding of that system.

Finally, regarding the use of French in the text, readers may note that all citations from written sources are given in the original language. Citations of the spoken word are in English, unless an analytically arresting word or phrase was used.