

Bourdieu, the Sociology of Culture and Cultural Studies: A Critique

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This article explores both the contributions and the drawbacks of the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. *Habitus* and symbolic violence, terms central to Bourdieu's thought, are explicated, as well as his critical assessments of methodological and epistemological problems in current social scientific research. In particular the drawbacks of public opinion polls and survey research, and the problematics of the social scientist as social subject, are treated. Bourdieu's metaphorical preferences are highlighted to indicate the assumptions he makes regarding social scientific practices and the hidden pitfalls of adapting his work wholesale to the field of communications. Finally, the social paradigm underpinning Bourdieu's work is compared with that underpinning a cultural studies approach to the study of communications.

Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, is an important figure in our field and of our time. He has produced what one critic calls the most comprehensive and elegant system since Talcott Parsons (DiMaggio, 1979; see also Sulkunen, 1982; Inglis, 1979; Thompson, 1984). In the space of this article I cannot do full justice to the body of Bourdieu's theoretical and empirical work. The entire oeuvre, both in the original and that which is translated into English, appears to be dominated by theoretical rather than empirical considerations, and consequently I tend to emphasize that portion of his work. In what follows I shall identify and elucidate two concepts central to Bourdieu's thinking: *habitus* and *symbolic violence*. The first term is important because the entire corpus of Bourdieu's thought is built upon it. The second is of central importance to those interested in the study of communications. Secondly, I shall make a series of observations concerning the methodological, empirical or linguistic problems Bourdieu's work either addresses or confounds. Finally, I shall compare certain aspects of the paradigm underpinning Bourdieu's work with that of cultural studies as it is practised in

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Great Britain (cf. Hall, 1980; Sparks, 1977) and the USA. I take into account the assessment made some years ago by Garnham and Williams (1980) of this major figure's contribution to the sociology of culture. Some might argue that, in the process of going everywhere, I get nowhere. Yet I see little value in critiquing Bourdieu's work without at the same time indicating what readers of the *EJC* might find particularly useful in his work.

Concepts Central to Bourdieu's Thought

Habitus

It is useful to begin by elucidating two major concepts in Bourdieu's thought: *habitus* and *symbolic violence*. *Habitus* is of critical importance to his theory of social practice. It is a term which surfaces early in his body of work (1967: 344) and which consistently reappears throughout with little, if any, variation of meaning. Briefly, it is a system of unconscious schemes of thought and perception or dispositions which act as mediation between structures and practice (1973a: 72). While the family (Bourdieu, 1977: 77–8) is the locus of the inculcation and development of an individual's *habitus*, it is the educational institution whose task it is to transmit consciously this system of unconscious schemes. The school's express function is 'to transform the collective heritage into an *individual* and *common* unconscious' (1969: 118).

Habitus, too, accounts for the reproduction of social and cultural domination because the thoughts and actions it generates are in conformity with objective regularities, or empirically observable regularities in social action. It refers to the principle of a structured but not structural praxis (1968b: 705–6). While the actions it generates are not structural, *habitus* itself is; it 'generates meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions' (1984: 172) and strategies (1973b: 64). *Habitus* is a product of the environment or conditions of existence and is mediated by the family in the form of lessons in morality, taboos, worries, rules of behaviour and tastes. It accounts for intergenerational conflict because it instills different definitions of what is possible and impossible or what is natural and what is scandalous (1973b: 66; 1977: 78). At the collective level, *habitus* is responsible for the continuities and regularities empirically observable in the social world (1973b: 73). Thus, to speak of *habitus* is to remind oneself that interpersonal relations are never individual to individual and that 'the truth of the interaction

never completely resides in the interaction itself' (1973b: 72; 1977a: 81).

Besides being a socializing agent, habitus, then, is a structural principle as well (as Barthes's *myth*). Moreover, Bourdieu sees it as a set of dispositions, in the sense that the term *disposition* describes a way of being, an habitual state or a predisposed inclination (1977: 214, n.1). Agents are possessed by these dispositions such that habitus becomes a *modus operandi* (1977: 18). Habitus is both a socially constituted structure of cognition and a motivating structure as well. Dispositions, being the internalization of objective structures, are such that the practices of members of a group or a class take an objective meaning that is unitary, systematic, and transcendent of both individual and collective intentions and projects (1977: 81). Social class, therefore, is not an aggregate of biological individuals, but a system of objective determinations in relation to a set of dispositions (1977: 85). Each individual disposition is a structural variant of a group (in non-stratified society) or a class habitus (in a stratified society) (1977: 86).

Similar to disposition, *cultural arbitrary* is a term closely connected to habitus. Every established order appears to be 'natural' to members of that order, whether one is speaking of a nation, a society, or a class (1977, p. 164). In other words the cultural order, meaning in this case the cosmological and political order, is completely arbitrary because it is one among many possible orders. Yet, because of the fit between the internal structures (individual dispositions and empirically observable objective structures [the school system, the class system, festivals of celebration, common-places, etc.]), this cultural arbitrary is perceived as self-evident and natural, and in consequence it goes unquestioned (1977: 160, 80; cf. Thompson's somewhat different interpretation, 1984: 57). In other words, from childhood on, human beings never encounter nature in the universe as science understands it; the social order intervenes between the individual and the world with 'a whole universe of ritual practices and also of discourses, sayings, proverbs, all structured in concordance with the principles of the corresponding habitus', all of which make the world conform to myth (1977, p. 167) and turn history into nature (1977: 78).

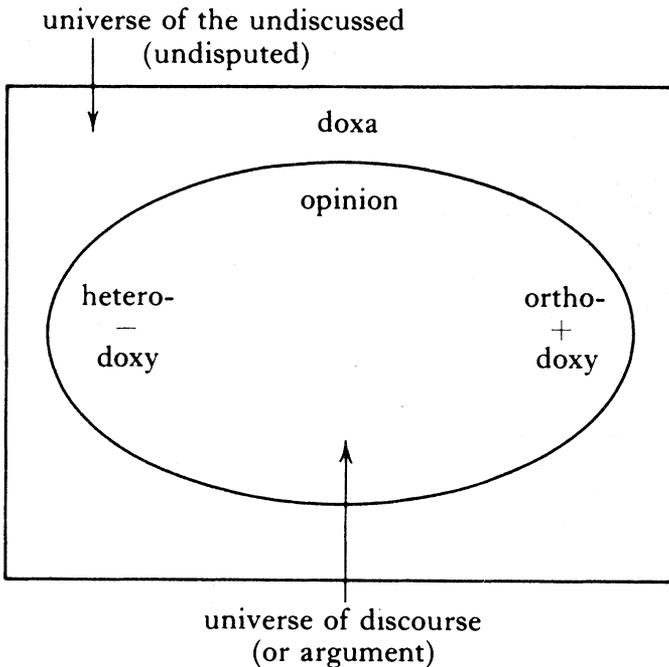
Every culture incorporates a doxic, as compared to an orthodox, relation to the social world. Members of a group or class recognize the legitimacy of the culture by misrecognizing its purely arbitrary nature. The cultural arbitrary thus embodies the universe of the

undiscussed (see Figure 1), where arbitrary classifications appear to be *necessary*.

Take, for example, the practice of sport. Conceived as the training ground for manly virtues (courage and fair play), sport inculcates the will to win in future leaders, but a will to win within the rules. The concept of fair play is, according to Bourdieu, an aristocratic disposition utterly at odds with the more plebian goal of victory at all costs (1978: 824–5). The history of sport is the history of a process of rationalization in the form of a corpus of rules and specialized governing bodies having the right to institute standards governing participation in the sport and to penalize infractions of these rules of behaviour. This process ensures predictability and calculability (1978: 824).

The school is the site where one acquires a distant disposition to

FIGURE 1
Outline of a Theory of Practice



Source: Pierre Bourdieu (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Copyright © Cambridge University Press, reprinted by permission.

the body: gymnastics, for example, makes the exercise of the body an end in itself. The frequency of sporting activity rises very markedly with educational level (in France) and declines more slowly with age as educational level rises. The French working class, for instance, typically abandons sports at marriage, which signifies entry into the responsibilities of adulthood (1978: 823).

Sport reflects all the features of the taste of the dominant class, the members of which prefer golf, tennis, sailing, riding, skiing or fencing, and practise them in exclusive places (country clubs).

The sporting exchange takes on the air of a highly controlled social exchange, excluding all physical or verbal violence, all anomic use of the body (shouting, wild gestures etc.) and all forms of direct contact between the opponents (who are often separated by the spatial organization and various opening and closing rites). Or, like sailing, skiing and all the Californian sports, they substitute man's solitary struggle with nature for the man-to-man battles of popular sports (not to mention competitions, which are incompatible with a lofty idea of the person) (1984: 217).

Furthermore, Bourdieu does not explain the class distribution of sporting activities solely in terms of economic capital. There are other, often hidden, entry requirements and socializing techniques which keep certain sports closed to working classes. For example, family tradition and early training can act as barriers or vehicles to entry.

Differences in tastes of luxury and tastes of necessity are further elucidated by the eating habits of various classes. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu (1984: 184–90) compares the yearly household expenditures on food for fractions of the dominant class: teachers, professionals, and industrial and commercial employers. Professionals spend a high proportion of their budget on expensive items: meat, fresh fruit, vegetables, fish and shellfish, cheese and aperitifs. Teachers spend more on milk products, bread, sugar, fruit preserves and non-alcoholic drinks. Industrial and commercial employers differ from the others in that they give more importance to cereal-based foods, especially cakes and pastries, and wine, meat preserves and game. These eating habits cannot be considered independently of a whole lifestyle since preparation and cooking are connected to domestic economy and division of labour among the sexes. On the one hand a taste for casseroles, which require both time and interest to prepare, is linked to a traditional view of sex roles, and hence to the French working class. On the other hand, women in the dominated fractions of the dominant class (e.g. teachers) tend to

devote less time to traditional household chores. Often their cuisine reflects the need to save time. Overall, things as diverse as food preferences and sporting habits are a product of habitus. Thus, it is best seen as a complex system of dispositions.

The range, imagination and verve of Bourdieu's work with regard to class habitus can be readily seen and appreciated in his attempt to render his theoretical model of social space, class habitus and their corresponding tastes in Figures 2 and 3. The first represents the space of social conditions as organized by the distribution of various kinds of capital. The second presents lifestyles in which social conditions manifest themselves. There are limitations to such a representation (see 1984: 126–31), but such a synoptic schema brings together areas which the usual sociological classifications separate. Through their juxtaposition, one can readily appreciate the relationships between properties and practices characteristic of a group. He has grouped around various classes and class fractions certain distinctive features making up their lifestyles.

Symbolic Violence

Besides habitus, symbolic violence and a closely associated concept, *symbolic power*, play a central role in the thinking of Bourdieu. References to these concepts are scattered throughout his writings, but he treats them extensively in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) and in the first half of *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Briefly, symbolic violence is exerted whenever any power imposes meanings and imposes them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its ability to impose those meanings. Accordingly, pedagogy in all its appearances, in the home, in the workplace, in the school and in the media, is symbolic violence. This concept is applicable to any social formation understood as a system of power, which is the precondition for the establishment of pedagogic communications or the imposition and inculcation of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary means (education). The pedagogy which assumes a place of dominance among all pedagogies is the one corresponding to the objective interests of the dominant groups or classes. Any pedagogic action is accompanied by authority, which gives it its persuasive powers; thus any pedagogic activity which revealed the violent aspect of its symbolic power would be self-destructive. This authority is especially powerful because it is unrecognized as such. It

is 'never more total than when totally unconscious' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 13).

The violent aspect of symbolic violence might best be rendered through example. American primary schoolteachers often treat their pupils with great affection. To do so, Bourdieu believes, is to gain possession of a very subtle instrument of repression: the withdrawal of affection. Most of us have had occasion to experience this kind of punishment. Many times, however, it was done with the idea of altering behaviour in a beneficial way, e.g. to curb a tendency to lie or steal or cheat. For Bourdieu all cultural choices are arbitrary and, apparently, equally 'good'. Conceding the fact that choices are arbitrary (e.g. in some cultures bribery is practised as a fine art), what then are we to do? Bourdieu never says.

Messages in any pedagogic transaction cannot be reduced to a simple communication. Always the power relations between the dominant and dominated classes determine the 'limits within which the persuasive force of a symbolic power can act' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 25). Proof of this occurs when pedagogic communication is maintained even when the information content of the message is almost zero, as in the case of beginning teachers or a local newspaper's truncated version of some national events.

Finally, it should be noted that symbolic violence cannot be equated with cultural acquiescence. Pedagogic communication does not necessarily inculcate the information constituting a dominant culture. Rather, it inculcates the recognition of the legitimacy of the dominant culture (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 41). To recognize the legitimacy of the dominant culture is, at the same time, to recognize the illegitimacy of the dominated cultures. Testimony to the force of symbolic violence is especially evident when individuals exclude themselves from, for instance, pursuit of a college education ('that's not for the likes of me'), ostensibly accessible to all.

The learning process involved in the process of inculcation of recognition of legitimacy is irreversible (something of an indication of teleological aspect of Bourdieu's theory). The habitus acquired in the family is the basis of the reception and assimilation of messages in the classroom. The habitus acquired in school, likewise, forms the basis for reception and assimilation of messages produced and transmitted in the culture industry. Thus one of the strengths of Bourdieu's work is that he situates the influence of culture industry, mass media, in a much larger framework than we communications scholars are likely to do. Despite the fact that we have visited

thousands of classrooms in search of subjects to determine the impact of, say, violence in television programming on children, little account has been taken of the role of the school in the cultivation process. Much more has been accomplished concerning the dialectic of familial and mass media cultivation.

On a more negative note, his work in this area is written from the viewpoint of the elite. In other words he assumes the working classes *do* recognize the culture of the elite as legitimate. I can find nothing in his work to indicate that he has actually tested whether or not members of the working class *do believe* in the inherent superiority of the so-called dominant culture. In England or the United States, or elsewhere, such an assumption might or might not be borne up by the facts. (Matthew Arnold once observed that everything in America is against distinction.) Perhaps the situation is different in France, but Bourdieu's work *as it is reported* does not provide evidence for us to make an assessment.

Bourdieu and Scientific Practice

Furthermore, while Bourdieu's observations on the practice of sociology may be disconcerting, in the sense that he describes some scientific practices as pernicious (1977: 2 and 9), the intricacy of his research design, augmented as it is by an elegantly articulated theory of social and cultural reproduction, bears close scrutiny. He has much to offer those of us who have raised questions concerning the culture industry, whatever research paradigm we tend to favour. His is interpretive social science at its best: he utilizes rigorous statistical measures which meet the criteria for success in ongoing positive social scientific research; he supplements his empirical data gathering with both a philosophy of sociology and a philosophy of social relations.

Methodological Problems

His reflections on scientific practice fall into two general categories: those directed towards methodological pitfalls and shortcomings and those concerned with the epistemological questions underpinning social science. With regard to the former, his remarks on public opinion polls and survey research can be instructive. Public opinion polls as they now exist, so he believes, have the dual consequence of actually destroying the study of pressure groups and opinions, and the study of dispositions not articulated through discourse, e.g. non-verbally. This is true for a variety of reasons. For

one thing, polls do not take into account the 'no replies'. This is, in effect, what happens in elections when blank ballots are discarded. On close examination, however, he notes, in France women more often fall into this category and the margin between the two sexes widens to the degree that the questions posed are political in nature. When a question has to do with degrees of knowledge (for instance, how best to treat nuclear waste) 'no replies' increase as one descends the class structure. On questions of ethics, however, the margin between the classes is slight. Also, the more a question generates tension or seems contradictory (for example, questions concerning the repression of the Solidarity Movement in Poland—given communism's view of the importance of working-class cohesion), the more 'no replies' will be registered in that category. In other words, an analysis of the 'no replies' offers a range of interpretations as to the meaning of the question posed and of the people questioned. It also would undermine the fundamental, overall effect of every opinion poll: it creates the illusion that a unanimous public opinion exists, which in turn legitimates this or that public policy (1979: 125).

Second, opinion polls take for granted that there is agreement about what the problem is, or which questions are worth asking and which are not, or that all opinions have the same value (1979: 124). Yet there is much evidence to suggest that different classes are aware of laws governing cultural, political and social change to different degrees. To produce an opinion one refers to one's habitus, or system of values interiorized from birth onwards. However, Bourdieu argues that for an opinion to be produced, one must perceive the question *as political* and apply political categories of understanding to it. Surveys often assume that this condition exists a priori and across the board. Yet many answers that appear political are in reality a product of class ethos or habitus (1979: 126).

Thus, Bourdieu takes American sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset to task for his views of the popular classes and their so-called authoritarian and repressive values. He argues that the statement, 'The popular classes are repressive', is neither true nor false. When questions deal with changes in social relations, e.g. 'Are you in favour of open marriages?', they provoke negative responses as one descends the class ladder. However, questions that deal with the transformation of class power and structure, e.g. questions about striking workers, provoke negative responses as one *ascends* the class ladder (1979: 127). While popular classes do appear more rigid

concerning moral issues, they are much less so concerning the political structure. This observation should prove fruitful to social scientists in countries other than France who can easily replicate Bourdieu's research design.

Overall, Bourdieu argues that the questions asked in public opinion polls are not the questions of real concern to the people questioned. Thus, he would favour an opinion survey in which the imperatives of scientific objectivity are overridden and people are provided with a series of explicit positions taken by explicit groups regarding an issue, such as legalized abortion (1979: 127).

[P]eople could place themselves not in relation to a question to which they must invent both an answer as well as problematic, but in relation to problematics and responses which have already been prepared. In other words, the opinion survey would be closer to reality if it totally violated the rules of objectivity and gave people the means to situate themselves as they really do in real practice in relation to already formulated opinions (1979: 127–8).

Most of Bourdieu's observations on survey research are scattered throughout his study of taste: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), a sociology of French culture summing up over a decade and a half of research. Many of his observations usefully apply to the study of mass media attendance or programme preferences and their corresponding gratifications. I say they are useful because Bourdieu brings to his work great intellectual flexibility as well as an astounding capacity for very fine and subtle distinctions (no pun intended). To illustrate, let me refer to his explication of the function of genealogies in traditional societies. It is commonly argued that genealogies legitimize the present social order (see Goody and Watt, 1968: 27–68). Bourdieu takes this scientifically agreed-upon and taken-for-granted classification of purposes, and indicates that there is indeed a whole range of practices, beyond the function of ordering the social world, to which the uses of genealogies apply, and that the genealogical diagram anthropology constructs merely reproduce the *official* representation of the social structure. Thus Bourdieu opposes the official to the practical *uses* of kinship. In a similar way the uses and gratifications tradition can draw on such distinctions as public versus private, explicit versus implicit, collective ritual versus practical strategy, etc.

Furthermore his emphasis on social life as a system of relations leads him to express cautions concerning survey research. Thus a second illustration of Bourdieu's usefulness concerns problems with

survey methods. 'Taste is the basis of all the features associated with a person' (1984: 174). The myriad dimensions of a person's being consciously and unconsciously communicate with and confirm one another. The same can be said for the social system as a whole. This overdetermination is readily recognized when a particular feature, such as television viewing habits, is isolated for observation and measurement. Television viewing habits are 'contaminated' so to speak by 'a whole set of features previously or simultaneously perceived' (1984: 174). Consequently, a survey tends to detach a feature from a system of mutual relations (tone of voice, posture, style of dress, all sorts of mannerisms). This, of course, is recognized by social scientists. However, what often goes unnoticed is the consequence of this detachment: deviations between classes or sub-cultures or subclasses are minimized.

This has important epistemological ramifications, and it underlines the difference between a positive approach to the sociology of culture and an interpretive one. Each regards the social world from a particular vantage point. They are often difficult to reconcile, but they are not mutually exclusive pursuits. Both must use empirical measures in order to understand 'real' social relations. The trick is not to forget that descriptive or explanatory surveys arrive either before or after the battle for the possession of rare goods (economic capital, status, etc.). In effect, a survey is like a photograph 'of a game of poker which freezes the balance sheet of assets' (1984: 245).

Thus, the overriding importance of remembering all the properties a statistician handles; not just those he measures, but those he himself uses to measure and classify. If nothing else, a survey can reveal a thorny problem: when a survey forgets to question itself, it forces itself 'authoritatively on agents for whom *it would not exist outside of that situation*' (1984: 505, italics added). In his own survey on taste, questions on personal photography, attitudes to photography, and other matters of taste, from interior decorating to preferences in music, cooking, film and clothing, were included. In order to account for the *systems of taste*, the closed questionnaire was abandoned in favour of extended interviews and ethnographic observation (1984: 503–12) to get at the dispositions of the population under study. As a consequence, the cadre of interviewers were able to take into account a whole modality of practices—the way things were done and talked about, and every indication of manner.

As in all interpretive social science, the unwritten rule that 'only data collected in socially scientific conditions, i.e. by prepared questioning and observation, may enter into the scientific construction' (1984: 509), had to be transgressed. The advantage of broadening what is scientifically acceptable data, is the inclusion of all the information the sociologist possesses *as a social subject* (something Bourdieu would have us never forget). This information must be verified by comparing it with the measurable data of observation. The result is a set of provisional systems of scientific propositions combining internal coherence and fidelity to the facts, as well as highlighting the structure of relations between the propositions (1984: 512).

Epistemological Problems

Besides these general observations on method, Bourdieu also examines the epistemological dimensions of social scientific practice. Some of his remarks in this area specifically concern French sociologists (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1967), but even these observations raise important questions for social scientists elsewhere. For example, Bourdieu reviews the history of French sociology: the triumph of Durkheim, the advent of quantitative sociology, the re-birth of theory with the influence of Claude Levi-Strauss. However, he notes, many descriptions which appear to be dealing with questions of fact in the history of sociology *really* deal with an epistemological question which is never raised. Whatever phase sociology goes through, whether it means to or not, it expresses philosophical options. The problem arises when these unformulated or even unconscious epistemological questions are confused with those questions posed to sociological practice, by and in the practice itself (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1967: 164-6). The questions we raise for study, the hypotheses we construct for testing, may be more determined by the relation of the sociologist to his or her peers than by the relation of the investigator to the object of study, e.g. the nuclear family's use of television or the adolescent's socialization via music.

Bourdieu further maintains that if the myriad of variations observable in a population under study can be explained via a single principle, this is because these variations express a *structure* 'in which the complete system of relations governs the meaning of each of them' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 85). Thus, in a study of taste or culture,

multivariate analysis would be likely to lead to a vicious circle or to reification of abstract relations if the structural method did not restore to the logical classes distinguished by the criteria their full existence as social groups defined by the ensemble of the relations which unite them and by the totality of the relationships they maintain with their past, and through the intermediary of their past, with their present situation (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 85-7).

So, to avoid rendering fictitious explanations concerning television viewing or some such other problem in communications, it is important not to isolate or treat as isolable various properties which can only be understood really as elements in a structure and moments in a process (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 87).

Bourdieu draws a picture of scientific practice as a 'field', a set of interlocking power lines. The scientific field is the site of competitive struggle for a monopoly of scientific authority or scientific competence, 'in the sense of a particular agent's socially recognized capacity to speak and act legitimately (i.e. in an authorized and authoritative way) in scientific matters' (1975: 19). The winners of this struggle are adorned with an august array of insignia (research prizes, citations in leading journals, chairs of important committees or programmes) which modify social perception of technical expertise. Consequently, any judgements regarding a sociologist's scientific capacities 'are always contaminated at all stages of academic life, by knowledge of the position he occupies in the instituted hierarchies' (1975: 20).

Furthermore, every social scientist wants his work to be not only interesting to himself but also important to others. Thus Bourdieu, in an attempt to describe the dialectics governing scientific research, argues that *investments* are made (consciously or otherwise) in anticipation of the average chances of profit. A sociologist's concentration on problems regarded as most important is explained by the fact that a discovery relating to the problem or a contribution to its solution will yield greater symbolic profit. In part this accounts for scientific change rather than mutual legitimation—a problem to which I shall return later: the degree to which a social paradigm, Bourdieu's or cultural studies, can account for social change. Here, the point is that every scientific choice (area of research, method, place of publication, etc.) is a political choice, a political investment strategy, in the process of which new scientific discoveries can be, and are in fact made, to the advantage of scientific cumulativeness (1975: 22-3).

In sociological practice Bourdieu sees the employment of two strategies, one for conservation, the other for subversion. Those who are

dominant, those well-endowed with the capital of consecration, resort to conservation strategies aimed at 'ensuring the perpetuation of the established scientific order to which their interests are linked' (1975: 29–30). These social scientists continuously point to examples of what deserves the name of science, and exercise censorship of heretical productions, either by rejecting them outright or discouraging the intention of trying to publish them. In the sociology of communications these battles have periodically occurred. The most recent is the struggle interpretive sociology has had to engage in to achieve recognition. Even today, when there seems to be a greater tolerance for various research strategies, there are countless examples of manuscripts being judged according to criteria of evaluation not appropriate to the research paradigm (e.g. requiring a literature review in an ethnographic study of rock fans, or requiring a researcher to construct an objectivist history when he is doing cultural history, which, like all interpretive social science, directs its focus to the reconstruction of history from the viewpoint of individual social actors in the drama).

Newcomers to the field can take the course of a risk-free investment of succession strategies involved in limited innovations within authorized limits; or they can choose subversion strategies, a more hazardous investment because the profits accruing from it will depend on whether or not they can redefine the principles regarding legitimate social science. As Bourdieu puts it, 'newcomers who refuse the beaten tracks cannot "beat the dominant at their own game" unless they make additional, strictly scientific investments from which they cannot expect high profits, at least in the short run, since the whole logic of the system is against them' (1975: 30). Again, most of us recognize this in our contemporaries and in our elder statesmen. Where I tend to part company with Bourdieu is in the choice of metaphors which guide his assessment of the practice of social science, and indeed, all of cultural and social reproduction.

Metaphorical Preferences

Bourdieu tends to favour two metaphors: game and capital. As Clifford Geertz (1980: 169) has said, the game analogy has become increasingly used in contemporary social theory, in particular the work of the late Erving Goffman. It is related to the capital metaphor in the sense that games involve manoeuvring towards payoffs. Speaking of social life as if it were a game has the advantage of suggesting an orderliness about human behaviour (we follow

rules). While Bourdieu's work does imply that a chessboard inevitability is at work in the social order, the game he refers to is a rather grim one. He takes great pains to say that of all possible ways of reading his work, the worst would be a moralizing reading

which would exploit the ethical connotations ordinary language attaches to terms like 'legitimacy' or 'authority' and transform statements of fact into justifications or denunciations; or would take objective effects for the intentional, conscious, deliberate actions of individuals or groups, and see malicious mystification or culpable naivety where we speak only of concealment or misrecognition (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: x).

Yet there is no question that whatever efforts the players in the game make, the cards are stacked against most of them. The teleological dimension of his research and theory bear witness to this. Bourdieu's is a dog-eat-dog world in which human beings engage in ploys, artifices, strategies, bluffs and disguises to increase their own social and cultural capital to the disadvantage of others.

Besides implying a certain orderliness and inevitability, the game metaphor also implies that what is engaged in is something of a sham. This is particularly true with regard to intellectual and cultural endeavours, where Bourdieu concentrates his use of the metaphor. (He never uses it to describe working-class rituals or practices.) The sociologist who undertakes an analysis of social science, he says, has a particularly difficult time of it. He cannot really understand and explicate what is at stake unless he takes as his object of study 'the game as such, which governs his own strategies too and is always liable to exert an insidious influence on his sociology' (1975: 40-1). Apparently Bourdieu does not believe that social science can be engaged in with the purpose of advancing human understanding. Yet it seems to me that, for every scientific hustler, there are countless individuals engaged in the selfless and even altruistic effort all genuine enquiry requires.

I mention this to point out the inadequacy of Bourdieu's explication of scientific practice. If all we do in social science can be explained in terms of a conscious or unconscious motive for increasing social and cultural capital, then the community of masters and scholars must have *perfect knowledge* of the stakes in the 'game' and *perfect knowledge* of specific practices to win them. This clearly is not always the case. In fact most of us, in the day-to-day helter-skelter of our work schedules, are *unaware* of the accomplishments of others.

According to Bourdieu the French educational system, particularly philosophy classes, is adept at producing people who have mastered the game and are determined to play it. In many respects Bourdieu himself is an example of that of which he speaks. He is fond of verbal gymnastics and semiotic manoeuvres. This aside, he consistently represents intellectual endeavours as a game. While all parts of the intellectual field are interdependent, some are more powerful than others (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1967: 205). In a chess game the future of the queen may depend on the lowly pawn, but the queen is still a much more powerful piece than any other. So too, in the intellectual field, while all parts are functionally interdependent, some bear greater weight than others and contribute to a greater degree to the structure of the intellectual field (1969: 105). In communications research in Great Britain, for example, critical studies exercise greater hegemony in the field than other branches of research (interpretive social science or positive social science).

Teachers are especially prone to engage in and to authorize games with an institutional rule. Pedagogic authority is deflected from the school onto the teacher's person. The teacher must display the symbolic attributes of the authority of his mission. Like the gestures of a surgeon or an acrobat, he must manifest symbolically the unique quality of his calling. Bourdieu writes:

The most typically charismatic feats, such as verbal acrobatics, hermetic allusion, disconcerting references or peremptory obscurity, as well as the technical *tricks* which serve as their support or substitute, such as the concealment of sources, the insertion of studied jokes or the avoidance of compromising formulations owe their symbolic efficiency to the context of authority the institution sets up for them (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 125, italics added).

Furthermore, pedagogic action always transmits more than content. Above all, it transmits the affirmation of the value of that content (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b: 125). The consequences of authorizing such games is to inculcate through the agency of the teacher a relation to the academic institution and, through this, a relation to language and culture, 'which is none other than that of the dominant class' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977b: 125).

Various members of the class hierarchy play this game with ease. Some (e.g. petit bourgeois in France), however, do not know how to play the game of culture *as a game*. They take culture very seriously; they think a cultivated man is one who 'possesses an immense fund of knowledge' (1984: 330). The language and culture

of the dominant class ultimately discredits and destroys the political discourse of the dominated, who must keep silent or use a borrowed language which remains the only defence for people who can neither play the game nor spoil it, 'a language which never engages with reality but churns out its canonical formulae and slogans, and which dispossesses the mandators of their experience a second time' (1984: 462).

A second, related metaphor punctuating all of Bourdieu's work, from the early pieces on the Kabyle peasant (see 1964 and 1970) to his more recent *Distinction* is capital. We live, says Bourdieu, in a universe characterized by a 'more or less interconvertibility of economic capital (in the narrow sense) and symbolic capital' (prestige or power) (1977: 177). Moreover, we are motivated in our daily lives to accrue profits of various kinds. Practice always conforms to economic calculation even when it appears to be disinterested by playing for stakes which seem to be non-material (i.e. symbolic, linguistic, educational, cultural or social capital). Thus Bourdieu extends economic calculation to virtually every aspect of daily life and human endeavour. These various forms of capital can be converted into other forms, as when symbolic capital in the form of the prestige attached to a famous family name is converted into economic capital through an advantageous marriage.

As can be seen, there are many kinds of capital: symbolic (prestige, authority, renown), linguistic (the ability to speak well and to speak apropos of the situation), economic (land, material goods, money, investments), and cultural (the recognition and appreciation of artistic works deemed rare and valuable by the academy). Critic Paul DiMaggio (1979: 1468–9) rightly points out that, as the kinds of capital increase, 'the metaphorical currency undergoes inflation and its value declines accordingly'. He is also correct when he says that capital in Bourdieu's work is not a very precise tool. However, he is incorrect, I believe, when he describes it as a weak figure of speech. Precisely because it proliferates in Bourdieu's work, it reveals an enormous amount about his thinking. We have already noted the implications of Bourdieu's thought regarding social scientific practice (1977, 1975). He would think me naive for arguing that scientists, both physical and social, often spend long and unrewarding hours, not with a view to profit, economic or symbolic. There are, indeed, far greater profits to be had outside the academy—at least in the USA. While it is true that we cannot all be investment bankers, many of us can be, and are employed by private

corporations that pay two or three times what universities do. Such firms include AC Nielson, AT and T, and Roper, Inc. However, some social scientists pursue work in the academy with the view towards improving the quality of life for the earth's inhabitants, contributing substantively to human knowledge about the social world, or (more in line with Bourdieu's *self-interest*) for the pleasure to be had by serious reading and serious writing. Thus the profit motive (economic or symbolic) *alone* is inadequate to explain why human beings engage in the pursuit of scientific research. At rock bottom, Bourdieu's metaphorical preferences deny the moral dimension of human pursuits and refuse to recognize the ludic and expressive quality of human experience. Human nature operates according to the old classical liberal belief in self-interest, modified by the Freudian notion of the unconscious, to which the logic of camouflage or *misrecognition* is tied.

Misrecognition

Many more problems arise when one considers the central role played in Bourdieu's theory by the logic of camouflage. Simply put, the logic of camouflage comprises all the techniques through which the social system conceals truth: 'relations and their real configurations are in some way lost, confused, blurred, nullified, disfigured in the intertwining of their appearances' (1968b: 694). For example, the series *madman, insanity, psychiatrist, mental institution, cure* disguises the 'real' series: *committed, commitment, forced residence, prison, concentration camp*, etc. (1968b: 696). This is problematic for two reasons. First, Bourdieu does not give the reader any criteria for evaluating his interpretation vis-à-vis others. Why not interpret the madman and insanity series as follows: *jester, humour, irony, caretaker, escape hatch, acceptance of responsibility for oneself*? Bourdieu does not say.

Bourdieu sees misrecognition everywhere he looks: in sport and dancing (1978), in gift-giving, marriage, and ploughing (1977). However, he especially notes its working in education (see particularly Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) and in scientific practice (Bourdieu, 1967, 1969). The school appears to be democratic, equally accessible to all. In fact, only some (those with cultural capital inherited from the family) receive the benefits of schooling. Thus the school ultimately entrenches socially conditioned inequalities of cultural competence. It treats cultural and social advantages

and disadvantages as *natural* inequalities or as talent (1968a: 607–10; see also 1973a: 83–6).

The advantage of this emphasis is that it reveals an important component in communications or signifying practices. Paradoxically, deep in the heart of much communication, whether seen as a process of exchange or as a process of social maintenance, lies secrecy, concealment and exclusion. These secrets are corporately held, told and retold. They serve to bind a group together and exclude others. The disadvantage of Bourdieu's notion of misrecognition, the second problem raised by his theory, is epistemological in nature. How do we *know* the hidden meaning of social acts? Bourdieu's notion about misrecognition bears strong resemblance to notions of hidden meaning which inform the Cabbala and Cabbalistic practices. In the end this implies an 'elect': men like Bourdieu who have been chosen to reveal the truth hidden from the naked eye.

Misrecognition reveals, too, the degree to which Bourdieu is willing to assimilate statements of fact with statements of value. While much of what he says rules out the moral dimension in scientific practice, his own 'reading' of empirically observable regularities is very much a value-oriented one. The dichotomy of fact and value disappears from view in most of his writing.

A statement of fact says something about the object it mentions, and, depending on the properties of these objects, it is either true or false. A value judgement is misunderstood if it is taken to ascribe a property to the object, act, or situation it mentions in the same sense in which a statement of fact is such an ascription; it is therefore literally neither true nor false. What it involves and misleadingly states as the property of an object, act, or situation [scientific practice, psychoanalysis, cultural production] alone is the fact that this object, act, or situation causes *in the one who makes the judgment a certain state of mind*, say, for instance, of positive aesthetic appreciation or of moral approval (Bergman, 1951: 206, italics added).

This tendency to confound fact and value, to mistake value as a property of an object, act or situation, violates a basic tenet of social scientific practice, whether interpretive *or* positive.

Two Paradigms: Bourdieu's and Cultural Studies

Definitions of Culture and Human Nature

Another problem arises connected with Bourdieu's use of the term *culture*. Most often he prefers the restrictive definition of culture as

an achieved state or a process of inner development by means of education and the arts. He follows, too, the tradition of Rousseau, who attacked the notion of civilization as artificial and superficial, and as distinct from 'the natural state' (see Williams, 1977: 14). The most cultured are also the most artificial (Bourdieu, 1968a: 608). Culture's primary function is class co-optation and legitimation primarily through schooling, which, as we have said, on the surface appears to be democratic but in fact 'transforms socially conditioned inequalities in regard to culture into inequalities of success, interpreted as inequalities of gifts which are also inequalities of merit' (Bourdieu, 1968a: 609; see also 167: 341-5; 1969: 110, and Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977: 122). Having talent or being gifted is, in Bourdieu's way of thinking, a synonym for being socially and economically advantaged.

This is particularly true of intellectual and artistic 'creation'. I put the word in quotation marks because Bourdieu's work as a whole denies expressivity (see, for example, 1968a). This is, of course, very much at odds with Raymond Williams, who gives experience both a creative and an expressive dimension. For Bourdieu, works (painting, music, professorial lectures) are a product of a system of social relations or the position of the artist or intellectual in the structure of an intellectual field. An agent is defined by positional properties and the kind of participation in the cultural field, seen in this sense as a system of relations between themes and problems. In keeping with the structuralist thrust of his thought, an agent's power in the intellectual field cannot be defined independently of his position within it (1969: 89).

As indicated above, most often, Bourdieu uses culture in the restricted sense of cultivation or distinction in arts and letters. In *Distinction*, he begins by saying that we cannot really understand consumers of cultural goods *unless* culture in the restricted sense 'is brought back into "culture" in the anthropological sense, and the elaborated taste for the most refined objects is reconnected with the elementary taste for the flavors of food' (1984: 1). On occasion he argues that culture is a common set of master-patterns from which an infinite number of individual patterns can be generated. According to him, there is a kind of intellectual and social programming to which we are submitted at birth; this eventually becomes 'second nature'. These patterns are not necessarily conscious. In fact it is primarily through the cultural unconscious that an agent belongs to a society, an age, or, in the case of intellectuals, a school of thought

(1967: 342–3). However, even when using this less restrictive definition, Bourdieu is referring primarily to systems of scientific thought and schooling.

This, of course, is somewhat at odds with cultural studies. Williams, for example, argues for the reconciliation of two meanings of culture: the traditional anthropological meaning (a whole way of life) and a creative meaning which involves extending the notion of creativity from art to all perception (see Williams, 1961: 19–56). The latter sense is the one preferred by Geertz, who has exercised an enormous influence on contemporary research, including cultural studies (see Walters, 1980; Higham, 1961; Wise, 1983; Lystra, 1983 and Berkhofer, 1972). Geertz treats cultures as systems of shared meanings, as webs of significance. These meanings are not in people's heads, but are shared by social actors. They are public, not private (see Geertz, 1973: 5, 360). The conception of thinking as a social act renders it capable of being discovered through systematic empirical investigation (1973: 362). Yet Geertz also recognizes that the material vehicles of thought are elusive, complex, convoluted and incomplete. Thus we arrive at a serious disjuncture between Bourdieu's approach to culture and that used by cultural studies practitioners. This is a serious disjuncture not only because of Bourdieu's use of the restricted sense of the term. After all, the cultural studies' view would include the more restrictive one. However, unlike Bourdieu, neither Williams nor Geertz sees an underlying structure. Nor do they tend to see unity, consistency and integration in complex cultural practices. There is, more often than not, contradiction and at least partial disintegration (see Geertz, 1973; Williams, 1982; Keesing, 1974). For example, Geertz says:

In the very nature of the case ideas are more difficult to handle scientifically than the economic, political and social relations among individuals and groups which those ideas inform. And this is all the more true when the ideas involved are not the explicit doctrines of a Luther or an Erasmus, or the articulated images of a Holbein, but the half-formed, taken for granted, indifferently systematized notions that guide the normal activities of ordinary men in everyday life (1973: 362).

Whereas Bourdieu views social practices as consistent in terms of the structure of relations, Williams, Hall and Geertz all see them as inconsistent. In *The Sociology of Culture*, Williams notes that when considering cultural practices in so many societies as well as in diverse historical periods, 'it is clear that it would be unwise to

adopt, as our first theoretical construct, some universal or general explanatory scheme of the necessary relations between “culture” and “society” (1982: 33, see also Parsons, 1972). This position can hardly be reconciled with Bourdieu’s theory of cultural and social practices.

Furthermore, while Williams does identify experience and social class, Hall takes great exception to that view and argues for no necessary (non)-correspondence (Hall, 1985: 94). Moreover, Hall carves out a theoretical position founded on the open-endedness of practices and struggle:

To put that more concretely: an effective intervention by particular social forces in, say, Russia in 1917, does not require us to say either that the Russian revolution was the product of the whole Russian proletariat, united behind a single revolutionary ideology (it clearly was not); nor that the decisive character of the alliance (articulation together) of workers, peasants, soldiers and intellectuals who did constitute the social basis of that intervention was guaranteed by their ascribed place and position in the Russian social structure and the necessary forms of revolutionary consciousness attached to them. Nevertheless, 1917 did happen—and as Lenin surprisingly observed, when ‘as a result of an extremely unique historical situation, *absolutely dissimilar* currents, *absolutely heterogeneous* class interests, *absolutely contrary* political and social strivings . . . merged . . . in a strikingly harmonious manner (1985: 95).

Even more problematic, however, are Bourdieu’s assumptions about the nature of human nature.

In Bourdieu’s work man is the more or less rational animal of the Enlightenment. Human nature obeys certain timeless laws: laws of interest, laws of transformation. Geertzian versions of cultural studies have abandoned the Enlightenment view of human nature in which man is seen as universally invariant. Instead, Geertz (1973) builds a case, largely from anthropological evidence, that there is no such thing as human nature, there are only human natures. He does not deny universal dimensions of human experience, but he does maintain that it is the differences between groups of men (in the generic sense of the word) that make us who, in essence, we are. The Marxist definition of man, with its emphasis on historicity, also favours this view.

Explanations of Social Change

Because Bourdieu’s work differs so radically with regard to the nature of man and the nature of social reality, he appears to have limited value for those who practise cultural studies. However, I

would argue that his view of social change *is* useful, particularly for non-Marxist versions of cultural studies. Bourdieu explains social change in a number of different ways: in terms of the distribution of cultural capital, in terms of dialectics, and in terms of rupture. The cultural field, including intellectual practices (social science) is transformed by successive restructurations, rather than by revolutions (1967: 342). These restructurations are linked to the distribution of cultural or scientific capital, including *potential recognition* and *potential position* of an agent or group in a given field (1975: 27). There is a permanent struggle in every given field between forces that are more or less unevenly matched in terms of capital (1975: 29). The cultural or scientific order is built up through 'competitive anarchy of self-interested actions' (1975: 33).

Bourdieu also explains change through reference to a dialectical relationship between a situation, on the one hand, and a habitus on the other. The habitus functions

as a *matrix of perceptions, of appreciations, and actions*, making possible the accomplishment of an infinite variety of tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes, *practical metaphors*, in the strictest sense of the term, which permit the resolution of problems having the same form . . . that these results dialectically produce (1973: 67).

The habitus 'arrives' at several junctures and assimilates and corrects the results that conjunction of the habitus and situations or stimuli produce. Consequently, Bourdieu is able to account for both social stability and social change. He also tends to favour a theory of change which is incremental rather than revolutionary. In art, for example, a particular style will dominate an age. It will reach its zenith and then decline as artists exhaust its possibilities. A period of *rupture* will follow 'in which a new art of inventing is invented, in which a new form-generative grammar is engendered, out of joint with the aesthetic traditions of a time or an environment' (1968a: 599). He does not say what the cause or occasion of these ruptures is, except to allude to objective factors which determine the position of those who are engaged in cultural or scientific practices (see 1975: 27–33, 1969: 111–12).

Finally, one of the most breathtaking aspects of Bourdieu's work is its capacity to account for *both* change *and* cohesion. I refer the reader to *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977: 64), where he shows that while habitus produces homogeneous dispositions and interests, it also encourages conflict. This is so because those inculcated in a

particular habitus are inclined to recognize and pursue the same goals, material or symbolic, whose rarity may arise from the competition itself. This is particularly useful for social scientists whose traditions emphasize either conflict (Marx or Simmel) or cohesion (Parsons).

In conclusion, I generally agree with Garnham and Williams (1980) in their assessment of the importance of this elegant and difficult oeuvre. However, I see far more problems than they which are attendant on adapting Bourdieu's thought to sociological practices in communications research. On the one hand, his explanations of social change are useful in some respects. Yet there are very serious differences between the paradigm underpinning Bourdieu's work and the paradigms underpinning positive social scientific approaches to the study of culture and cultural studies. These differences ultimately limit the value of Bourdieu's work for researchers interested in the sociology of culture or the cultural approach to communications studies.

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