

Pierre Bourdieu: Cultural & Symbolic Capital

EDUC 800 Presentation

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Agenda

Week One:

- Biography of Pierre Bourdieu
- Key Ideas: Habitus, Field & Doxa; Social, Linguistic & Cultural Capital
- Looking forward; "Thinker" and "Terms" handouts

Week Two:

- Key Ideas: Class Distinction & Symbolic Violence
- Discussion of "Pierre Bourdieu: A Biographical Memoir"
- Activity: Capital in your Environment

Week Three:

- Activity: Bourdieu in all the ways of knowing

Biography



circa 1944-48:
Studied at a lycée
in Pau before
switching to Lycée
Louis-le-Grand in
Paris

1948-55: Studied
philosophy in
Paris at the École
Normale
Supérieure with
classmates Michel
Foucault and
Jacques Derrida

1930: Born
in Denguin,
Pyrénées-
Atlantiques

Biography

"I thought of myself as a philosopher and it took me a very long time to admit to myself that I had become an ethnologist"

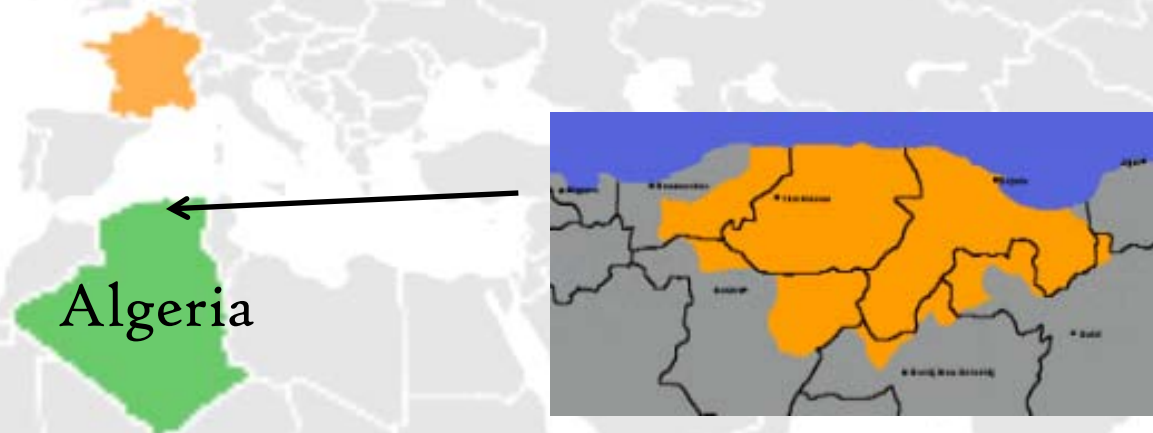
1955: Became agrégé (tenured secondary teacher) in Philosophy.

1960: Returned to France; taught at University of Paris (1960-62) and University of Lille (1962-64)

1964: Became Director of Studies at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris;
1968: Took over the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, the sociological research center, which he directed until his death.

1958-60: Drafted into army; served in Algeria during the French-Algerian war. Lectured at the University of Algiers, and studied traditional farming and ethnic Berber culture (Studied kinship, ritual and pre-capitalist economy of the Kabyle peoples of Northern Algeria).

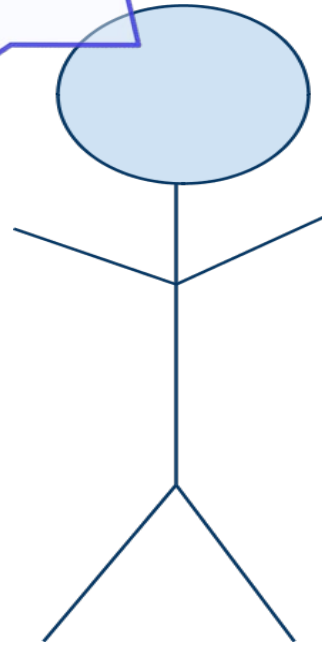
1975: Launched the interdisciplinary journal *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, "devoted to deconsecrating the mechanism by which cultural production helps sustain the dominant structure of society"



Algeria

Habitus =
dispositions;
lasting, acquired
schemes of
perception, thought
and action

Habitus manifests the structures of the **field**, and the field mediates between habitus and practice = The formation and expression of self around an internalized and usually accurate sense of social destiny.



Field = a social arena in which people maneuver and struggle in pursuit of desirable resources

Doxa = “true beliefs” that we take to be “self-evident universals” (e.g., belief in God)

An Example of Habitus/Field: Balzac's *Father Goriot*

- She's charming, said Eugene after having looked at Mme de Nucingen.
- She has white eyebrows.
- Yes, but she is wonderfully slim!
- She has big hands.
- But she has beautiful eyes!
- Her face is too long.
- But the long shape is a mark of distinction.
- It's good for her that she has that. Look how she takes and drops her lorgnette! **The Goriot betrays in all her movements** said the viscountess to Eugene's great surprise.

Il y a de pauvres bourgeoises qui, en prenant nos chapeaux, espèrent avoir nos manières = Some poor commoners think they can acquire our manners by putting on our hats

Some Thoughts

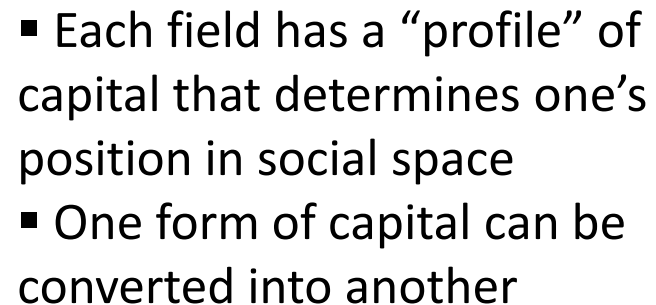
- “Schools could help give working-class kids the cultural capital--another key Bourdieusian concept--that middle-class kids get from their families. One could extend that insight to the American context and argue that depriving working-class kids of the ‘frills’--art, music, trips--in the name of ‘the basics’ is not just stingy or philistine, it's a way of maintaining class privilege” (*Subject to Debate*, article in *The Nation*, 2002).
- Sociology “discovers necessity, social constraints, where we would like to see choice and free will. The habitus is that unchosen principle of so many choices that drives our humanists to such despair” (*In Other Words*, p. 14).

If social agents develop strategies which are adapted to the needs of the social worlds that they inhabit—what does this mean for us as educators and scholars?

Capital

Capital = Resources

- The amount and distribution of capital determines one's position in social space
- Within each field, one tries to augment and profit from capital
- Types of capital
 - Economic
 - Cultural
 - Social
- Bourdieu and the use of economic terms

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- Each field has a “profile” of capital that determines one's position in social space
 - One form of capital can be converted into another

Economic Capital

“material wealth in the form of money, stocks, shares, property, etc” (Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, 1991, pg. 14).



Cultural Capital

“knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications” (Language and Symbolic Power, 1991, pg. 14).

Three forms of cultural capital

1. Embodied – inherited and acquired (but not genetic), usually through family socialization
 - Includes Linguistic Capital
2. Objectified – objects owned / cultural articles
3. Institutionalized – institutional recognition of cultural capital
 - Academic credentials or qualifications including diplomas and certificates

Social Capital

Social connections or relations that allows one to advance his/her own interests

[YouTube - Elements of Bourdieu: Social Capital in the Funny Pages](#)

Social Capital comes from group memberships and social networks

- Social capital can influence power and profit from economic and cultural capital
- Social capital is symbolic – exists through people recognizing and accepting differences and seeing them as naturally occurring

Linguistic Capital

The value of linguistic products and the power/resources one has to be recognized as a producer and user of a language in certain fields

- Language is a form of power
 - It can be a cultural obstacle in education systems
 - Social position limits or give access to the language of a group/field
- Access to legitimate language is not equal
- Linguistic capital determines who has the authority to speak and be heard
- Through linguistic capital one has the power to name things and impose a vision of the world
- Censorship: the structure within a field which determines the allowable form and content of expression
 - “Among the most effective and best concealed censorships are all those which consist in excluding certain agents from communication by excluding them from the groups which speak or the places which allow one to speak with authority” - Bourdieu

Cultural Capital Graph

CULTURAL CAPITAL
ECONOMIC CAPITAL

