

4 Bourdieu – Education and Reproduction¹

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INTRODUCTION

Many English-speaking commentators seem to assume that Bourdieu's fundamental work on education is to be found in two major books (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; 1979) and a number of articles (Bourdieu 1967; 1971; 1973b; 1974; Bourdieu and St Martin 1974).² But those who think this are mistaken. To the extent that these works constitute the limit of reading they constrain a proper understanding of Bourdieu's theoretical enterprise, which has blossomed from a continual reworking of his ethnographic material from Algeria (Bourdieu 1962; 1963; 1973; 1977; 1979), and from France itself (Bourdieu 1984). The essential point is that it is inappropriate to extrapolate Bourdieu's theoretical enterprise solely from the educational writings, since they predate the intensive development of his theory of practice during the 1970s. Hence evaluations of Bourdieu that appear in the educational literature and which do not take into account these later theoretical developments, are inadequate and misleading. This chapter attempts to overcome such difficulties.

The theoretical issues addressed by Bourdieu's educational critics (Giroux 1983; Willis 1983; Jenkins 1983) are covered elsewhere (see particularly Chapter 9), but some specific aspects will be taken up later in this chapter. First, however, an outline of Bourdieu's views on education will be given, together with an attempt to relate these views to his more recent theoretical work.

EDUCATION – INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Bourdieu's work is one of the few coherent accounts of the central role that schools have in both changing and in reproducing social and cultural inequalities from one generation to the next. He achieves this analysis in relation to education through an exploration of the tension between the conservative aspect of schooling (the

preservation of knowledge and experience from one generation to the next (*re*-production)), and the dynamic, innovative aspect (the generation of new knowledge (*pro*-duction)). This tension is exacerbated in a plural society by considerations of which particular cultural past (and present) is to be 'conserved' or reproduced in the schools. Bourdieu (1973b:80; 1974:39) has argued that it is the culture of the dominant group (the group (or groups) that control the economic, social and political resources) which is embodied in the schools, and that it is this 'embodiment' that works as a reproduction strategy for the dominant group. Such a reproduction strategy is never complete or perfect, but is an element of the process of class reproduction which is discussed further in Chapter 5. Bourdieu's early work on education attempted to show how this reproduction strategy worked out in relation to school practice.

He asks us to think of *cultural capital* in the same way we think of economic capital, as outlined in Chapter 1. Just as our dominant economic institutions are structured to favour those who already possess economic capital, so our educational institutions are structured to favour those who already possess cultural capital, in the form of the *habitus* of the dominant cultural fraction. The schools, he argues, take the *habitus* of the dominant group as the natural and only proper sort of *habitus* and treat all children as if they had equal access to it.

The culture of the *élite* is so near to that of the school that children from the lower middle class (and *a fortiori* from the agricultural and industrial working class) can only acquire with great effort something which is *given* to the children of the cultivated classes – style, taste, wit – in short, those attitudes and aptitudes which seem natural in members of the cultivated classes and naturally expected of them precisely because (in the ethnological sense) they are the *culture* of that class (1974:39).

In this way the dominant *habitus* is transformed into a form of cultural capital that the schools take for granted, and which acts as a most effective filter in the reproductive processes of a hierarchical society. Poor achievement for some groups (and success for others) in a society, then, is not something inherent in cultural difference *per se*, but is an artifact of the way schools operate. Those with the appropriate cultural capital are reinforced with 'success', while others are not. This is shown in Figure 4.1.

For an individual from a non-dominant background to succeed, a

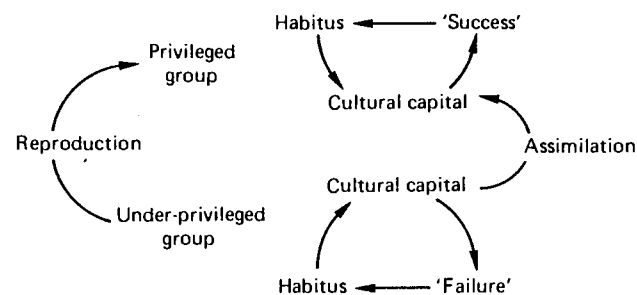


Figure 4.1 The cycle of reproduction

shift from the bottom cycle to the top cycle in Figure 4.1 is required – the appropriate cultural capital has to be acquired, with inevitable consequences for the habitus. Theorists of social class call this *embourgeoisement*; theorists of ethnicity refer to it as *assimilation*. But for Bourdieu this is not enough. He wants to show how the system of schooling works to maintain social order amidst all this potential for conflict.

The educational system, an institutionalized classifier which is itself an objectified system of classification reproducing the hierarchies of the social world in a transformed form . . . transforms social classifications into academic classifications, with every appearance of neutrality, and establishes hierarchies which are not experienced as purely technical, and therefore partial and one-sided, but as total hierarchies, grounded in nature, so that social value comes to be identified with 'personal' value, scholastic dignities with human dignity. The 'culture' which an educational qualification is presumed to guarantee is one of the basic components in the dominant definition of the accomplished man, so that privation is perceived as an intrinsic handicap, diminishing a person's identity and human dignity, condemning him to silence in all official situations, when he has to 'appear in public', present himself before others, with his body, his manners and his language.

Misrecognition of the social determinants of the educational career – and therefore of the social trajectory it helps to determine – gives the educational certificate the value of a natural right and makes the educational system one of the fundamental agencies of the maintenance of the social order (1984:387).

The part played by the school system may be conveniently reviewed

through an examination of his writing, which identifies five levels of practice through which inequalities are perpetuated. They may be summarised as follows.

- Level 1: For under-privileged children there is a lower success rate – expectations are adjusted accordingly, and become part of the habitus.
- Level 2: Where some success is attained, under-privileged children (and their families) tend to make the 'wrong' option choices.
- Level 3: Learned ignorance of schools and selection agents – recognising only those who recognise them.
- Level 4: ^{2007/02/28} Dénigration of the academic – style over content.
- Level 5: Devaluation of certificates – in favour of habitus. Where selection now turns on habitus (style, presentation, language, etc), these things then become a form of *symbolic capital*, which acts as a multiplier of the productivity of educational capital (qualifications).

At Level 1 the schools, by naturalising the culture of the dominant group, immediately place at a disadvantage all those children from groups other than that whose habitus is embodied in the school. For these individuals 'the school remains the one and only path to culture [in his special use of the term], at every level of education' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979:21). As such, he adds, schooling could be 'the royal road to the democratization of culture if it did not consecrate the initial cultural inequalities by ignoring them' (ibid.).³ One of the more obvious of the cultural inequalities is the complex and academic variant of language embodied in educational practice which is treated by teachers as *natural* to the gifted, and is used to rationalise academic judgements 'which in fact perpetuate cultural privilege' (1974:40) since language has its origins in the social milieu.

By defining education as the transference of culture from one generation to the next, classical theories tend to mask the function of *social* reproduction – that is, they treat the cultural heritage as being the undivided property of the whole society, rather than as belonging only to those endowed with the means of appropriating it for themselves (1973b:72–3). Such appropriation involves the mastery of a code of interpretation which is the result of systematic education – facilitated by an appropriate socialisation in the family. Thus the school tends to reinforce and consecrate the initial inequalities (with regard to cultural appropriation) that are engen-

dered by families – ‘cultural capital is added to cultural capital’ (ibid.:79). In this way the subjective elements of class are embodied in the objective structures of society, and serve as an example of the general themes outlined in Chapter 5.

There would appear to be, then, an homology between the structure of relations amongst social classes and the structure of achievement within schools. In spite of this, however, there is movement –

the controlled mobility of a limited category of individuals, carefully selected and modified by and for individual ascent, is not incompatible with the permanence of structures (of relations between classes) (1973b:71; see also 1974:42).

Bourdieu examines this particular phenomenon from two major directions – attitudes of pupil and parent, and ‘learned ignorance’ on the part of selection agents. Attitudes toward school, its culture and the various futures to which it leads are based, Bourdieu argues, on class-derived value-systems which are incorporated within the habitus (1974:33). Parents appear to be objectively aware of the probabilities for their children and make educational choices accordingly. Habitus must, of course, be seen as merely a source of choices, rather than a lock step prescription. The potential strategies to which it is connected vary according to circumstances. However,

everything happens as if parental attitudes towards their children’s education . . . were primarily the interiorization of the fate objectively allotted (and statistically quantifiable) as a whole to the social category to which they belong (1974:33).

Within this argument objective probabilities are intuitively perceived and internalised as subjective hopes adjusted accordingly (ibid.). This is a specific example of a more general theoretical proposition Bourdieu makes in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977:164):

Every established order tends to produce . . . the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents’ aspirations, out of which arises the *sense of limits*, commonly called the *sense of reality*, i.e. the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order.⁴

The children’s attitudes parallel those of the parents and are objectified in school-leaving rates. Further, he argues there are some groups for whom ‘success’ in school would imply an individual’s rejection of their social origins. Hence all sorts of quite subtle (and not so subtle) influences are at work which have the effect of discouraging excessive ambition (1974:35):

Objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a ‘sense of one’s place’ which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded (1984:471).

People come to want, and to value, what is objectively allotted to them, which Bourdieu has called ‘making a virtue of necessity’ (see Chapter 5 of this volume). At Level 2, the argument based on attitudes indicates a ‘double selection’ process at all levels of the educational system: first, a lower ‘success’ rate at any specific point; and second, even with ‘success’ for the few, a different pattern of options from the range made available by the ‘success’. Disadvantaged families tend to make choices which do not capitalise on the initial ‘success’ – thus advantages and disadvantages become cumulative. These option choices are not necessarily made out of ignorance of the range of possible options, but may be due to a family opting for known ‘security’, which for many families is a synonym for ‘success’. Habitus is thus incorporated possibilities, and must be seen quite differently from socialisation. The strategies which closely accompany habitus would be meaningless without its dynamic quality. But, the choices available to parents at any particular time are nonetheless constrained. Hence Bourdieu is arguing that the perception of success is very much a factor of the structural location of the perceiver.⁵ The implications of this argument for the structure–agency debate will be taken up in Chapter 9.

A qualitative shift occurs with Level 3. The further up the system, the greater the tendency for the schools to recognise only those who recognise them – what Bourdieu calls the *learned ignorance* of the schools and selection agents. Even if the student ‘succeeds’ and makes the right choices for further success, the habitus engendered by the school operates in such a way that at each cut-off point, those who succeed come to accept the criteria which recognised their success (see proposition 3 and its extensions, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977:31–54). Hence the students become more like each other, and

less like their diverse backgrounds, so at the next cut-off point the agents of selection (teachers, examiners) have even less cause to question the social neutrality of the selection procedure (Bourdieu and St Martin 1974:345).

This demonstrates nicely the objective structure of the relationship between the dominant class and the school, which

dominates the mechanisms by which the educational system reproduces itself by recognizing those who recognize it and by giving its blessing to those who dedicate themselves to it . . . (ibid.:358).

These structures of relationship serve to transform *social* advantages or disadvantages into *educational* ones through choices which are linked to social origins, thereby duplicating and reinforcing their influence (1974:36).

The learned ignorance is exacerbated by the conflating of the cultural capital of the dominant group with the educational capital supported by the school. The assumption that the habitus of the dominant or elite group constitutes the only proper criterion of scholastic success gives *de facto* sanction to initial cultural inequalities by ignoring them, and treating all pupils, however unequal they may be in reality, as equal in rights and duties (1974:38; Bourdieu and Passeron 1979:21). Hence formal equality masks an indifference or a dismissal of cultural differences, and teaching techniques take for granted a background in pupils which is true only for some.

For the underprivileged student who does succeed despite the structures of inequality described so far, there is still a further hurdle. This fourth level in the practice of inequality is constituted when the school devalues its own culture 'by denigrating a piece of academic work as being too "academic"' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979:21), and thereby gives favour to 'the inherited culture which does not bear the vulgar mark of effort and so has every appearance of ease and grace' (ibid.). And elsewhere:

Those who have by right the necessary *manner* are always likely to dismiss as laborious and laboriously acquired values which are only of any worth when they are innate (that is, acquired from family and class) (1974:38).

This mechanism is analysed in relation to social structure when he later writes of the distinction between the easy 'brilliance' of a student from a cultivated background, and the pedantic 'plodders' from underprivileged backgrounds (Bourdieu and St Martin

1974:347–51). "Pedantic" and "limited", their too exclusively scholastic interest and knowledge show that they owe everything to the school' (ibid.:355).

More specifically Bourdieu describes the relationship between social class and prestige linguistic forms, schooling, and taste, as a 'triadic structure', in which the working class is simply dispossessed through lack of an appropriate habitus, the ruling class simply actualises what is the norm for it, while the middle classes strive anxiously 'for correctness which may lead them to outdo bourgeois speakers in their tendency to use the most correct and the most recondite forms . . . the subtly imperfect mastery obtained by entirely scholastic acquisition' (1977b:658–9). This triadic structure involves ambiguity in the unique nature of the French school system and the kind of intellectual tradition which it fosters – described in some detail in the final section of his paper on 'Systems of Education and Systems of Thought' (1967:352–8) – characterised as a 'tendency to prefer eloquence to truth, style to content' (ibid.:355). The ambiguity surfaces when examination candidates are often criticised by their examiners for their over-didactic approach 'when in fact that is really why they are there' (Bourdieu and St Martin 1974:353). Bourdieu and St Martin also add wryly that the criticism is for 'usurping too soon one of the privileges of the teaching profession and exposing too clearly the reality of the exercise'. The style, wit and brilliance which the examiners appear to be looking for are attributes of the habitus of the cultivated classes and are objectified in the ideas of 'precocity' and 'giftedness' which are the 'ideological mechanisms by which the educational system tends to transform social privileges into natural privileges and not *privileges of birth*' (ibid.:346) – misrecognition in action – see Chapter 1.

The fact that schools may take as an aim the 'happy medium' between brilliance and pedantry merely acts as a cover for a dictatorship of 'good-sense', 'tact' and 'taste' which is the basis of the infallible and final judgements of teachers and agents of selection (ibid.:352).

In his later, encyclopedic work on French culture (1984:85–92), Bourdieu conceives of this phenomenon in terms of the operation of two markets, the sites of which are the family and the school respectively. In both of these sites the competencies deemed relevant are constituted by usage, and are simultaneously 'priced' – that is, made into capital. How you acquire the 'high-value' competencies, Bourdieu argues, is at least as important as (and in France perhaps

more important than) the competencies themselves, and constitutes a separate form of capital in its own right. When consuming cultural products (such as art, literature, films) the value of the products chosen is partly determined by the value of the chooser, which in turn is largely determined through the manner of choosing. The manner of choosing, he argues, which constitutes the highest form of cultural capital can be acquired only from the family:

What is learnt through immersion in a world in which legitimate culture is as natural as the air one breathes is a sense of the legitimate choice so sure of itself that it convinces by the sheer manner of the performance, like a successful bluff (1984:91–2).

This point is elaborated further, specifically in relation to art, in Chapter 6. In all of this, the basic ‘commodities’ which constitute the educational ‘capital’ at the end of the process are the qualifications and certificates which constitute the fifth level of the maintenance of inequality.

By awarding allegedly impartial qualifications (which are also largely accepted as such) for socially conditioned aptitudes which it treats as unequal ‘gifts’, it [the school] transforms *de facto* inequalities into *de jure* ones and *economic and social* differences into *distinctions of quality*, and legitimates the transmission of the cultural heritage [the *élite habitus*]. In doing so, it is performing a confidence trick. Apart from enabling the *élite* to justify being what it is, the *ideology of giftedness*, the cornerstone of the whole educational and social system, helps to enclose the underprivileged classes in the roles which society has given them by making them see as natural inability things which are only a result of an inferior social status, and by persuading them that they owe their social fate . . . to their individual nature and their lack of gifts. (1974:42).⁶

This power to dominate the disadvantaged groups, Bourdieu came to call *symbolic power* (‘the power to constitute the given by stating it’, 1977a:117; see also 1977:165), and the exercise of it, *symbolic violence* (‘the power to impose . . . instruments of knowledge and (*sic*) expression of social reality . . . which are arbitrary (but unrecognised as such)’ 1977a:115). This power to impose the principles of the construction of reality – in particular, social reality – is seen as a major dimension of political power (1977:165). (This point is taken up and elaborated in a more general way in the next chapter.)

Where the fit between the objective structures and internalised structures is strong, then

the established cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, i.e. as one possible order among others, but as a self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned, the agents’ aspirations have the same limits as the objective conditions of which they are the product (1977:166).

However, the fit is never absolute, and a considerable and increasing number of children from underprivileged homes do ‘make it’ through the school system. One of the consequences of this widening base to the educational pyramid is the process of devaluation that has occurred with the certificates passed out by the schools. As ‘everybody’ gets qualified, he argues, selection and recruiting agents shift to other criteria, such as presentation, ease, style and so on, all favouring the product of the dominant elite habitus. These ‘other’ selection criteria then are part of the symbolic capital utilised by the dominant fractions of society to ensure the reproduction of their domination (1977:171–97; 1979c; and see Chapter 1 for an extended discussion of capital).

The possession of such symbolic capital enhances the ‘productivity’ of the educational capital gained from certificates and qualifications.

the rate of return on educational capital is a function of the economic and social capital that can be devoted to exploiting it. (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979:79)

And further:

the habitus inculcated by upper class families gives rise to practices which, even if they are without selfish motives . . . are extremely profitable to the extent that they make possible the acquisition of the maximum yield of academic qualifications whenever recruitment or advancement is based upon co-optation or on such diffuse and total criteria as ‘the right presentation’, ‘general culture’ etc. (1973b:98; see also 1984:85–92).

In this way, Bourdieu argues, in societies where the hereditary transmission of power and privilege is now frowned upon, the education system provides an avenue by contributing to the reproduction of the system of class relations, but concealing the fact that it does (1973b:72).⁷ Thus educational capital (in the form of qualifications) is not enough in a society such as France. In order to convert it into

social and economic capital, the individual must also be the possessor of an appropriate amount of symbolic capital, derivable only from the habitus of the dominant elite, which can only be legitimately acquired from the family. This leads Bourdieu to a consideration of what he calls the 'populist illusion', that is:

the demand that the parallel cultures of the disadvantaged classes should be given the status of the culture taught by the school system (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979:72).

Bourdieu argues that there is more to mass school culture than a class habitus – it must conform to material conditions and levels of technology, as well as be seen to be in the 'best' interests of all. In addition, he claims that some aspects of school culture ('fluency of speech and writing and the very multiplicity of abilities', *ibid.*) are characteristic of all societies based on school learning.⁸

INTELLECTUAL HISTORY AND HABITUS

Bourdieu is also interested in exploring the relationship between schooling and the intellectual life in an historical context. In 'Systems of Education and Systems of Thought' (1967) he sets himself the question: Does school culture and thought replace the role of religion in socialisation for people in cultures with schools? He combines this with an examination of the way a common experience of schooling makes communication possible. 'The school', he claims, 'is the fundamental factor in the cultural consensus in as far as it represents the sharing of a common sense which is the prerequisite for communication' (1967:341). In non-school societies this function is fulfilled by religious institutions.

In a paradigmatic way people can be linked to their own period by their problem approach. Even though disagreements occur, outsiders can see (from an historical perspective) an implied basic concurrence – in their tacit agreement about what things are worth disagreeing about – 'the consensus in dissensus' (*ibid.*).⁹

In all cases . . . the patterns informing the thought of a given period can be fully understood only by reference to the school system, which is alone capable of establishing them and developing them, through practice, as the habits of thought common to a whole generation (*ibid.*:342).

In an alternative exposition of this particular aspect of 'Intellectual Field' (1971), Bourdieu refers to these habits of thought as 'the Cultural unconscious' (pp. 180–85), and which subsequently becomes incorporated into the concept of *habitus*. It must be remembered of course that such influences can only directly bear on those who actually attend schools. However the divisions of school organisation are the principle of the forms of classification, which in turn are forms of (symbolic) domination (Honneth et al. 1985), hence the school's influence is diffused throughout the whole society – see Chapter 6 where this position is elaborated further in relation to art and aesthetics.

THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

To apply Bourdieu's most recent theoretical formulations to education does not necessitate repudiation of the earlier work, but a recasting of it. Education would now be seen as a field in a multi-dimensional social space through which individuals (or whole social groups) would trace a certain trajectory or path. The trajectory is a consequence of the positions held in related fields, which in turn is largely a consequence of the amount of capital held, relevant to the particular fields. As pointed out in Chapter 1, a field can be seen as a site of struggle over a particular form of capital. To take this idea further, some forms of capital (such as educational qualifications, family background) 'generalise' to a number of fields (even to some where they may have little utility) and can be used to maximise a position in such a related field, hence enhancing the trajectory. The major sites, Bourdieu has argued, for the acquisition of such generalisable forms of capital are the family and the schools. In his work on the French educational system, Bourdieu argues that the education site presupposes that of the family. That is to say, the struggle between the capital produced by these two sites is biased in favour of the family. The habitus of the dominant social and cultural fraction acts as a multiplier of educational capital, not just in the field of education but also in the related fields of jobs, community work, cultural consumption and so on. It is important to point out here that Bourdieu's instancing of his theoretical framework in relation to France, should not be taken as applicable to all societies, all educational systems. Change the society and naturally there will be a change in the contiguity and juxtaposition of fields, a change

in the balance between family and school, between the kinds (and amount) of capital they produce, their generalisability, together with a whole host of other economic, social, political and cultural factors. Richard Nice emphasises this view in an interview (1985) and further makes the observation that Bourdieu (and French people generally) see education almost exclusively in terms of *training* and *selection*. There is no notion in his work of the individual, personal development implicit in the English-speaking world's understanding of the idea of education. Such a mechanistic view of education reflects in part, the field in French society where for virtually everything (job, status, mobility, power) paper qualifications are a necessary acquisition. The framework for analysis, however, while developing from his work in France (and Algeria) is generalisable to other countries, but requires active participation on the part of anyone who would wish to translate Bourdieu's model in terms of the social space of such other countries.

The problem of Bourdieu's writing on education being so closely tied to the highly centralised French system is very clearly spelt out by Archer (1984) in her critique of Bourdieu and Passeron's *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1977). It is this particular volume which in general is seen in the English speaking world as Bourdieu's *magnum opus* on education. The book itself was first published in French in 1970, hence is both a product and a culmination of his empirical work of the 1960s. It is our considerable loss, however, if we think that this is all Bourdieu has to offer the sociology of education.

Willis (1983), Giroux (1983) and Jenkins (1983) make the fundamental mistake of reading as *general theory*, what is in fact a *working out* in relation to the highly centralised French education system of a long-since reworked aspect of his method. Of course this 'working out' looks structurally-bound since that, as Archer (1984) points out, is the way the French system is – possibly the most highly bureaucratised and centralised system in the world (a Weberian paradise).¹⁰ It is hardly surprising therefore that such a working out does not 'square' with the field of education familiar to those from much more decentralised systems. His method demands that empirical realities be faced in ethnographic detail – hence the charges that he is too exclusively French. But those who would invoke Bourdieu's method must put it up against the evidence of their own educational reality – reconstruct their own field and try to discern the precise forms of capital, and the kinds of strategies operative within it. Of

those who dismiss Bourdieu because they don't recognise the French educational field, he says in an interview:

They easily cross the borders, but with empty suitcases – they have nothing to declare. From the moment one really wants to understand the relations between the changes of the economy and the changes of the school system, it is necessary to go into details, and therefore into the details of a historic situation. But it is also under this condition that one works out concepts and methods that are susceptible to universal application, and also that one discovers very general mechanisms that are susceptible of being observed in the most different systems.

(Schwibs 1985)

Hence there are two tasks in front of educationalists who would seek to use Bourdieu in relation to non-French school systems. First, it is necessary to catch up with Bourdieu theoretically, by seeing his work as a *method* of enquiry rather than a completed *theoretical edifice*; and second, to work out the method in relation to their own social space and the particular 'field' of education within it – Bourdieu's work on France cannot be taken as a substitute for this new empirical requirement. Nor should it be thought that a decentralised system is necessarily any less structurally bound than the French system. Power and control are likely to be exercised less directly, utilising contiguous fields, and hidden behind a much more opaque mask of ideology and rhetoric. Control, however, may be equally sustained.

EDUCATION, INEQUALITY AND THE REPRODUCTION DEBATE

The first part of this chapter has tried to show how power and control are exercised through schooling. For the remainder of the chapter attention will be turned to the broader issues of education and its role in the reproduction of inequality.

To recapitulate briefly, education is a field in which agents struggle for capital (credentials). But it is also related to other fields in the social space, and hence cannot be isolated for study from that social space and the relatively autonomous fields that surround it. Bourdieu's argument is that schools are artifacts of the dominant social and cultural fraction. Hence different groups have different relation-

ships to schools, depending on their trajectory in relation to the dominant group. Traditionally, some groups have used the school system to reproduce their class position (various 'middle'-class fractions) while others have not (farmers, trades, 'working'-class groups). As education becomes increasingly widespread and available to all groups, other means are resorted to in order to perpetuate the 'distinctions' between such social groups. (The way this works in relation to class analysis is taken up in the next chapter.) The most obvious of these strategies in education is a resort to alternative private schooling, which can become a part of the dominant group habitus (as in England), and thus preserve an educational distinction through the acquisition of a certain symbolic capital (the ethos, style, modes of speech acquired at private schools), through a reconversion of economic capital, which ensures a place in the dominant group for the children. Hence private schooling becomes an extension of the family for the dominant group.¹¹ Other aspects of these 'distinctions' have been touched on above in the discussion of the five-level model of educational inequality, and in Chapter 1.

In addition to his work on fields and the social space, Bourdieu has also worked on developing his theory of practice, as outlined in Chapter 1. These theoretical developments, while causing considerable interest in the fields of anthropology and, increasingly, sociology, are virtually ignored by educationalists, by whom he is dismissed as a structurally deterministic, reproduction theorist. At the simplest level, portrayals of Bourdieu's work as merely reproductive can be represented as in Figure 4.2.

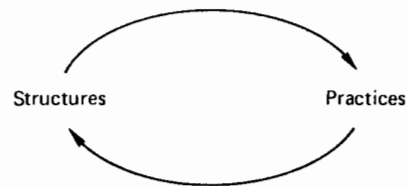


Figure 4.2 Simple reproductive model

In one of his major works, Bourdieu specifically rejects such a model as being of the 'objectivist' type, which fails to take time into account (1977:3). The addition of time to such objectivist formulations allows one to perceive the dialectical relations between objective structures and practices, thus providing a theoretical level which can account for change (including resistance). Further, Bourdieu

uses a mediating concept (that of *habitus*) between objective structures and practice. At the very least then, his work should be represented as in Figure 4.3.



Figure 4.3 Minimal Bourdieu model

But of course this is not enough to parry the charges that the theory is merely reproductive. Two things need to be examined further: first the nature of *habitus* and its production and secondly the determinants of practice.

Both of these examinations have been undertaken in Chapter 1, where it is shown that practice cannot be reduced to either habitus or through habitus to objective structures, since historical circumstances play their part in its generation. Nor can it be reduced to specific historical circumstances or forces, since the perception of these social forces is filtered through the habitus. We are left with practice as a dialectical production, continually in the process of reformulation. The reformulation may be almost imperceptible in a slowly changing, traditional-type culture, or of major proportions in a revolutionary situation. The latter events would involve a disruption of the habitus-controlled perception of historical circumstances (the destruction of false consciousness, the overthrow of a ruling hegemony), and a refocusing on a new set of principles (a 'true' consciousness, a counter-hegemonic transformation).

The model now looks like Figure 4.4, always bearing in mind

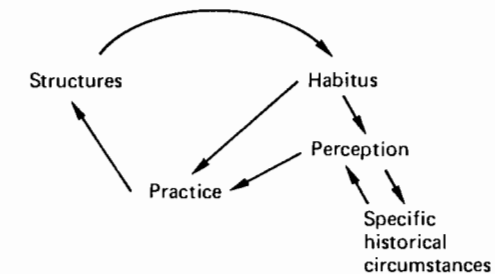


Figure 4.4 Reproduction and change

that the specific historical circumstances take on the attributes of structures in their turn. ^{because school}

This non-reductionist model of cultural practice, with a dynamic conception of habitus attached to strategy, with reflexivity and change built into it, and a clear dialectical link to the material world, does not appear to fit well with descriptions of Bourdieu's work by his educational critics. Giroux (1982) for example claims that a major gap in Bourdieu's theory is that it

is a theory of reproduction that displays no faith in subordinate classes and groups, no hope in their ability or willingness to reinvent and reconstruct the conditions under which they live, work and learn.

On the contrary, as Nicholas Garnham and Raymond Williams point out (1980:211), it is the specification of 'the conditions under which reproduction does not take place leading to the more or less rapid transformation of the social formation' which is a part of the problem to which Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* is addressed.¹²

A careful reading of Bourdieu's ethnographic work adds a dimension not readily discernible from the earlier educational writing. It provides a foundation for a theory of practice which incorporates social change (see particularly the first paper in Bourdieu, 1979) and human agency (Bourdieu, 1977), as well as an examination of the structural limits within which they must work.

EDUCATION AS CULTURAL PRACTICE

^{most of the time}
^{the school}
^{practice}
As a form of cultural practice, education can be interpreted in terms of Bourdieu's more recent theoretical developments. It is clear that the school does function to reproduce social inequalities, but not in the mechanistic way of the early Bowles and Gintis (1976) model, which is the model that many associate with Bourdieu. ^{the schools}
The schools operate within the ^{habitus, success} constraints of a particular habitus, but also react to changing external conditions (economic, technological and political). The perception of these conditions is filtered through the same habitus that is already established, often giving an ^{air} of unreality to the adaptations the schools make to changed external circumstances. For example, the reaction of many schools to rising levels of unemployment is to run courses on how to apply, to be interviewed, for a job – in Bourdieu's terms, to transmit the 'style' language and behaviour

of the dominant habitus. The irony of this strategy is that it is the manifestation of this very habitus through the school system that has led to their 'failure' in the first place. What is preserved (although the form may change) in all of the reactions of schools to such changing external circumstances as unemployment is the continued dominance of the group whose habitus is embodied in the schools.

But the reproduction is not mechanical as in a photocopy. The cumulative tendency of such adaptations in times of economic 'down-turn' is for the schools to become more vocationally orientated. However, the reaction is not immediate, nor is it complete. There is a time-lag between structures and habitus, the source of which lies in the dialectic between changes in the production apparatus and changes in the education system (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1981:142). This lag (and the consequent discrepancies that will inevitably arise) has to be understood in terms of the present state and history of the relationship between the system of 'education' and the system of 'production'. In modern industrial states, this relationship is one in which the schools become the dominant agency 'for the production of producers' (ibid.). Bourdieu and Boltanski go on:

But, because it fulfils not only functions of reproducing skilled labourpower (. . . technical reproduction), but also functions of reproducing the positions of the agents and their groups within the social structure (. . . social reproduction) – positions which are relatively independent of strictly technical capacity – the educational system depends less directly on the demands of the production system than on the demands of reproducing the family group (1981:142–3, their emphasis).

Furthermore, they argue that the education system organises itself in terms of the imperatives of its own reproduction. Each system (economy, family, education) ^{produces} obeys its own logic. The school has a relative autonomy (see Chapter 1) with respect to the economy, and its own tempo of evolution (ibid.). The main interplay between the systems of 'education' and 'production' is the conjunction between formal qualifications and jobs – the area in which the time-lag is perhaps the greatest, and which is most susceptible to the influence of the dominant habitus.

A point in the above passage from Bourdieu and Boltanski seems to me to provide the rebuttal for a criticism of Bourdieu in a paper by P. Willis (1983). In this reassessment of his *Learning to Labour* in the light of theories of both production and reproduction, Willis

typifies Bourdieu's theory as in Figure 4.3 above – that is, as a cyclical sequence of: structures, which through symbolic violence produce habitus; which provides the dispositions toward practices; which reproduce the original structures (1983:118–19). Willis's major criticism (as that of Giroux) is that the theory does not allow for cultural production, specifically as it relates to the production of working-class cultural practices, and hence has nothing to say about a radical politics of education. Certainly Bourdieu rejects as an 'illusion' the idea that the culture of the disadvantaged is a sufficient basis for an educational programme (see above, p. 96), but this does not mean that he is uninvolved at the political level to broaden the accessibility of school programmes (see Fr. ed. 1989; Actes 1987, 1987a; 1985a; and note 14, Chapter 2). Nor can it be concluded that the theoretical model which Bourdieu has engendered is incapable of generating such an analysis. This analysis could well start with Bourdieu and Boltanski's statement that (see above): 'the educational system depends less directly on the demands of the production system than on the demands of reproducing the family group.'

Willis himself notes that 'Individual working class kids may succeed in education – never the whole class' (1983:129), which points to the need for a level of analysis less than 'the working class' (see also note 11). Bourdieu's theory would suggest that the reproduction of family groups is more significant than that of whole classes – which are doubtful entities anyway, except in name (see the discussion in Chapter 5 of this volume). It will be recalled that habitus itself is largely concerned with transmission within families. Willis's own analysis of 'the lads' should not be taken as an analysis of the working class. What of 'the ear'oles' who are equally from a working-class background? The reproduction of family habitus would seem to offer the possibility of a finer-grained analysis, and thus get us closer to knowing that which is not reproduced. It is what is not reproduced that is at once the engine of change and the arena for human agency. By using habitus as a generative principle, varying strategies can be explained in a way simple reproductive theories cannot match.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have outlined what Bourdieu has to say about education, and contended that educationalists who wish to invoke the work of Pierre Bourdieu in their arguments, are setting up a

straw man if they rely only on his early work related to the French education system.

His theory of cultural practice develops the notion of reproduction to far higher levels than can be found in any of the specifically educational writing, and provides us with a unique methodological apparatus for a penetrating analysis of social inequalities and the part that schools play in their perpetuation.

NOTES

1. This chapter incorporates elements from two papers published previously: Harker, 1984, 1984a.
2. These dates are misleading and show the date of translation rather than their original publication date in French, the latest of which was 1970. The original sources of some of the ideas found in the books on education are to be found in the pages of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, and other journals – see, for example, Bourdieu 1967. In *Actes* the following show his continued interest in education: 1975/02:95–107 (with Luc Boltanski), 'Le titre et le poste: rapports entre le système de production et le système de reproduction'; 1975/3:68–93 (with Monique de St Martin), 'Les catégories de l'entendement professoral'; 1978/24:2–24, 'Classement, déclassement, reclassement'; 1981/39, 'Epreuve scolaire et consécration sociale. Les classes préparatoires aux Grandes écoles'; 1984/52–53:95–100, 'Le hit-parade des intellectuels français ou qui sera juge de la légitimité des juges?' A full issue was devoted to the issue of education and philosophy (47/48, Juin 1983), and educational matters are covered by Bourdieu and his colleagues in most issues. For other special issues devoted to education, see 1979/30 'L'Institution scolaire'; 1981/39 'Grandes et petites écoles'; 1982/42 'Classements scolaires et classement social'; 1987/69 'Pouvoirs d'école, I'; and 1987/70 'Pouvoirs d'école, II'. A well-known report written by Bourdieu for the Collège de France was issued to President Mitterrand in March 1985 (Bourdieu, 1985a). Further, Bourdieu and Monique de St Martin recently completed a report on transitions in the educational system, 'Structures objectives et représentations subjectives du champ des institutions d'enseignement supérieur', Juin 1986, *Écoles des hautes études en sciences sociales*. A large study of higher education, of which this report is a small part, has now been published (Bourdieu, Fr. ed. 1989).
3. This argument provides a parallel to that of Gramsci, who suggests that before even entering the classroom, a child from a traditionally intellectual family . . . has numerous advantages over his comrades, and is already in possession of attitudes learnt from