

***Reproduction* in Great Britain: Reception and Influence**

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Introduction

Reproduction is one of the most well known books by Pierre Bourdieu in Great Britain; certainly amongst educationalists. In this celebrity, however, resides much that is amongst the best and the worst of reception of his work. The best in the sense that this book put him 'on the map' in the 1970s and contributed to a radical view of schools and education, which would provide an entire paradigm shift for researchers; and one whose ramifications continue to this day. The worst in that the arguments in the book were 'over-interpreted', if not 'mis-interpreted' as well as being misunderstood. This miscomprehension of Bourdieu and his project also continues to this day. As well as his substantive goals in writing *Reproduction* with Jean-Claude Passeron, Bourdieu consequently is still widely misunderstood philosophically and methodologically in Britain: and it is this, which now undermines the potential that his work may provide – socially and politically - both in education and elsewhere.

This piece first addresses the context of the reception of *Reproduction* in Great Britain; it then discusses the 'new' sociology of education, which was a feature of its impact, and the influence it had; and finally considers its legacy fifty years on.

Context

In one sense, *Reproduction* arrived at exactly the right time and place in Britain. The post second world war period in Education had been marked by a policy of 'comprehensivisation' of secondary schools and the suppression of the 11+ examination which previously selected pupils for the elite grammar schools. The post-war generation of children was therefore offered a more 'democratic' route through their schooling. This policy was itself part of a broader project of social welfare and reform which found the state more actively involved in social transformation: including social housing, national health and the nationalisation of industry, for example. The focus on social progressivism also led to an expansion of higher education and thus research within universities. The history of the Institute of Education (IoE) in London can be traced back to 1902 and its origins in teacher training. However, in the 1960s, it became the centre of educational policy and research in the UK, with a new building in Bedford Square, London opened by the Queen in 1975, as if to consecrate its status.

As the IoE acted as a focus for educational research and policy, it had enormous influence on curricula, pedagogy and teacher education. The latter was 'reconceived' in terms of the 'foundational disciplines': sociology, philosophy, history and psychology. Seminal researchers – most of them at the IoE – then provided key texts for students across the country training to become teachers. Central to all this work was the philosophy of Paul Hirst (1966) and his ideas about the distinctiveness of *Educational Theory* and its relationship to classroom practice.

There had already been a modern sociology of education by writers such as Banks (1968) and Musgrave (1966), which offered evidence of the relative under performance of working class pupils in schools, even in the new comprehensive schools. Increasingly, however, more interest was being shown in actually what happened in the classroom in the construction of knowledge through pedagogic language itself. These ideas were evidently 'in the air': in 1971, the British sociologist of education Bernstein published *Class, Codes and Control* where he posited a distinction between 'elaborated' and 'restricted' codes embedded in the very language that pupils used - setting up congruence and incongruence with the language of school, and thus teacher.

At a similar time, the second half of the 1960s, Bourdieu was also increasingly making a name for himself in an anglo-saxon world with seminal articles in both academic and learned journals. This influence was not confined to education, however, and many of his ideas were also making their way into a fast expanding field of cultural studies – for example the *Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* in Birmingham (1964) where they became part of a radical and critical research agenda. The CCCS was founded by the literary theorist Richard Hoggart and later directed by Marxist sociologist and political activist Stuart Hall. The philosophy of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci was a key illuminating figure for many of those working at the Centre.

These developments in two academic disciplines show how Bourdieu was developing a reputation across a numbers of fields including literature, philosophy and race/ gender as well as education. Nevertheless, at the time it was with the founding of a 'new sociology of education' that he became most closely associated and this would very much shape what was to come.

The 'New' Sociology of Education and its Impact

The English translation of *Reproduction* appeared in 1977. However, another book appearing six years earlier had acted as an important introduction to Bourdieu's thinking on education: *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education* (1971 edited by Michael Young). The idea for the book first arose in discussion at a conference in Durham in 1970 with Bourdieu and Bernstein. The book offered an alternative to the conventional objects of enquiry in the sociology of education at that time; namely, the malfunctioning of certain key features of education. Instead, the articles included all addressed the 'problem' of the 'organization of knowledge' in the curriculum: Curricula, Teaching and Learning as the Organization of Knowledge; Social Definitions of Knowledge; Cognitive Styles in Comparative Perspective.

Bourdieu's contributions to the book were two articles: '*Intellectual Field and Creative Project*' (Bourdieu, 1971c/ 66) and '*Systems of Education and Systems of Thought*' (Bourdieu 1971a/ 67) – both of which he had previously published in French in 1966 and 1967 respectively. In 'Intellectual Field' the focus was on the relationship between social structures and the nature of thought itself. He had drawn on the work of Erwin Panowsky who had previously analysed the relationship between Gothic art and the Scholasticism apparent in training schools. Such scholasticism, he argued, emphasises, 'the principle of

clarification', 'the schema of literary presentation', 'the order and logic of words', and can be seen as the defining principles for the architectural designs for Gothic cathedrals - with their symmetries and correspondences. In short, it is a 'mental habit', a way of doing things, which should be understood, not in terms of instrumental replication, but of dispositional 'cause and effect'. Schools, Bourdieu insinuates, act in a similar manner and are a 'habit-forming force', which provides those who have undergone its direct or indirect influence not so much with particular and particularized schemes of thought as with that general disposition which engenders particular schemes of thinking as part of their *habitus*. This was also the first time that Bourdieu had used the term 'field' to describe a bounded social territory, which could be studied as such in terms of structures, positions, and various forms of symbolic capital distributed across this social space. Education was clearly one such 'field'.

In 'Systems' then Bourdieu asks whether it is a certain way of thinking that creates the world – in this case the scholastic forms of classification and thus thinking - or whether, it is the structure of this world itself which creates a certain way of thinking? His answer is to see 'culture' as the medium of the relationships between these two. In other words, culture does not provide a 'common set of codes' or answers to recurrent problems in the social world. Rather, culture offers a set of previously assimilated 'master patterns', which are brought to bear on immediate problems as a sort of 'art of invention' in directing how to act and think.

Bourdieu's thinking here suggests the direction his intellectual trajectory had been taking since his earliest work in Algeria and the Béarn, and in many ways also reflects the sociology of knowledge he had been developing. *Le métier du sociologue* had already been published (although an English translation would have to wait another 23 years to appear). Both articles in *Knowledge and Control* therefore represented developments both in his epistemological and methodological thinking, and went beyond conventional sociology of education.

Bourdieu was also connecting with other epistemological currents at the time. For example, in 'The Unthinkable and the Thinkable' (1971b) he addressed literally what could and could not be thought in terms of *field* orthodoxy. His 'structural constructivist' view was further reinforced by such books as *The Social Construction of Reality* (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) with its thesis on the social dialectics in the 'internalisation of externality' and the 'externalisation of internality' - a phrase that Bourdieu himself employed at the time. The influence of the Soviet socio-psychologist Lev Vygotsky was also growing at the time after the publication of his *Thought and Language* in 1962.

The irony is therefore that whilst the *Knowledge and Control* book was mostly interested in the construction of classroom knowledge, and moreover what teachers could do about it, Bourdieu was coming from and going to altogether different directions. What he had to offer differed noticeably from many other contributions in the book. For example, Bernstein's use of concepts such as 'Classification, Framing and Codes' to describe educational discourse only substantialised relational processes when compared to Bourdieu's arguments.

Furthermore, when Keddie examined 'classroom knowledge' and the way that subject and pupil orientation were dependent on the perceived abilities of pupils, she highlighted the way that knowledge was transacted between teachers and pupils. However, she had less to say about the form and status of that knowledge *per se*. While for Bourdieu, such was a further source of 'symbolic violence' in the judgement or verdict it implied when pupils did not learn. The methodology and epistemology, which Bourdieu had been developing with respect to structuring and structured structures, subjectivity and objectivity, in short, *habitus* and *field* into as a single 'theory of practice' thus remained unacknowledged for many readers. This lack of understanding of the texts shaped how *Reproduction* was subsequently read.

It would be true to say that few educational writers of the day understood where Bourdieu was coming from: they were unaware of his own philosophical background, his extensive works in Algeria and the Béarn – his work on culture, museums and photography remained to be translated. This then had a significant effect on how his work was received and used subsequently. Although the *Outline of a Theory of Practice* was published in English in 1977 (the same year as *Reproduction*) few educationalists would have got beyond the page 3 discussion of epistemological breaks, nor understood their significance. This tendency was underlined by the practical illustrations from Algeria, which again would have left readers somewhat bemused about their significance to education – assuming they actually read them.

But, one message was overwhelmingly received: the significance of *cultural capital* as a cultural arbitrary in the transmission – or not – of educational knowledge. This concept and Bourdieu's broadly ethnographic approach subsequently became defining methodological principles for educationalists in designing their researchers projects. One consequence was that from its statistical bases, the sociology of education took an 'ethnographic turn'. For example, a collection edited by Barton and Meighen (1978) both supplied and called for more classroom ethnographies in order to theorise the relationship between what was called the 'micro' and 'macro' in education. The Birmingham Cultural Studies Centre had by now also taken on board education as one of its main interests. One seminal study from the Centre, then dealt with the way working class boys end up with working class jobs. The thesis of the author – Paul Willis – is summed up in two questions: 'the difficult thing to explain about how middle class kids get middle class jobs is why others let them. The difficult thing to explain about how working class kids get working class jobs is why they let themselves' (1977). The answer to both questions is explained in terms of neo-Marxist analysis, which includes reference to Bourdieu and 'cultural capital'.

The provenance and reception of *Reproduction* therefore also needs to be understood in terms of two very different academic disciplines between Great Britain and France. In 'Systems' Bourdieu had already distinguished between French 'rationalism' and English 'positivism' as the resulting intellectual style of their two respective education systems. These traditions once again had an effect on how *Reproduction* was read, understood and applied. For example, the structure of the book - with the conceptual conclusions given first - was seen by

some English critics as lacking in empirical evidence; while others exaggerated the literal 'reality' of the concepts themselves. Neither group appreciated the process that Bourdieu had gone through to formulate explanatory concepts as epistemological matrices 'necessitated' by the empirical data in which he had submerged himself. Such a process had also implicated his own habitus and thus the development of a reflexive stance that both drew on his own thoughts and experiences and undertook the necessary work to break with them. The relationship between theory *and* practice was therefore misunderstood and the theory *of* practice unappreciated.

Such only led to further misunderstanding and confusion. For example, in an otherwise positive account of Bourdieu's theory, Bidet (1979) commits 'the error' of employing the word 'determinism' to describe the relationship between structure and *habitus*: 'structures produce habitus which *determine* practices, which reproduce structures', which eventually leads to the conclusion that for 'reproduction' we need to read 'perpetuation' and, 'The disregard for structural contradictions (e.g. within the relations of production) which define practices as adequate to the modification of structures, leads us to think of structural efficiency as that which reproduces the *identical* and to view the relationship between history and sociology as a purely external one' (p.207). Ironically, of course, 'Circular and mechanical models of this kind are precisely what the notion of habitus is designed to destroy' (Bourdieu, 1992a). In fact, he was seeking to build a dynamic theory, which attributed social position to the interaction between the social and the biographical, and the way dispositions and the logic of practice of particular contexts co-respond.

Another critique from Margaret Archer (1983). In an article entitled, 'Process Without System', she compared the work of Bourdieu and the English sociologist of education, Basil Bernstein. She objected to the way Bourdieu and Passeron apparently 'universalise' educational processes on the bases of the particular French case. Her target was the 'theoretical statements' set out in Book 1 of *Reproduction*, the so-called 'Foundations of a Theory of Symbolic Violence'. For example, she selects 2.3.1.1 in which Bourdieu and Passeron state that the unification of symbolic markets for educational goods is one means by which bourgeois society has multiplied the ways in which it is able to submit the educational outcomes of those dominated by its dominant bourgeois 'pedagogic action' to the 'evaluation criteria of the legitimate culture' - thus, confirming its domination. Archer accuses Bourdieu and Passeron of 'ethnocentric bias' (p.132), making the point that 'strong unification' only works in highly centralised systems; for example, France with its national competitive exams, state training of elites, and the Napoleonic university tradition of education as servicing the state. She goes on to state that, 'Bourdieu categorically asserts that every educational system necessarily monopolises teacher training and imposes standardise methods, texts and syllabuses to safeguard orthodoxy' (ibid.). If this is a mark of 'institutionalization', she argues, other 'decentralised' systems should be considered 'less institutional', which clearly they are not. She concludes, that an unfortunate consequence of what she calls 'their neglect' of the educational system itself is that, 'general theories of cultural transmission and cultural reproduction are severed from historical and comparative sociology

of education' (p.137)', whilst what is needed is 'the development of a more comprehensive theory capable of unifying processes of structuration and enculturation in education' (ibid.). She ends stating that the authors: 'cut their theories off from comparative sociology because their homogenization of educational systems precludes the cross-cultural examination of systematic structuration' (ibid.).

It is in fact the case that since Archer wrote these words many national systems have become more centralised, and thus institutionalised, in exactly in the way that Bourdieu and Passeron describe. One of the paradoxes of the neoliberal state is that it can become decentralized (in terms of responsibility) and centralised (in terms of surveillance and control) at the same time. In this way, educational agencies and institutions are both brought under the control of the state and have to survive as semi-autonomous structures at the same time.

There is a second methodological point to consider: Bourdieu and Passeron were not attempting to produce a general theory of educational practice, even though the way that *Reproduction* was presented might have suggested they were. What they were offering were 'foundations' for a 'theory of symbolic violence' with much broader ramifications and was an example of and an extension of the 'theory of practice' that Bourdieu was developing in a range of social contexts. This undertaking had a different type of 'theory' as its goal, one which would give rise to praxeological knowledge. What the approach is offering in *Reproduction* is not a type of deterministic knowledge to describe all education systems (as Archer suggests) – a set of universals exemplified with empirical evidence - but a set of axioms and thinking tools which could be used to illuminate other national systems. Passeron (1986) himself warned that: 'one must beware of taking a model of social reproduction as a comprehensive model of society, as a law or trend which appears to regulate the order of historical evolution'. Reproduction models are approximate models, 'constructed on a pattern of extremes', of hypotheses which would be the case if they existed in 'systematic perfection'. 'Society is not a *system*, and that is why it is the task of history to create a form of description of the dependencies and continuities which the use of models and typologies can never replace' (ibid.).

When reflecting on *Reproduction* and discussing socially constituted dispositions more generally, Bourdieu does in fact refer to Paul Willis' *Learning to Labour*. But, it is necessary to contextualise both these works in terms of the times and place from which they arose. Bourdieu was mostly responding to what he saw as a conservative view of schooling in France in the 1960s. Willis, on the other hand, was very much of the British 'counter-culture' generation of that decade. It is sometimes quite paradoxical to realise that Bourdieu's own theoretical perspective would suggest that the 'resistance' of the lads simply locked them into systems in which they will continue to be dominated.

Whatever the issues concerning philosophy and method, *Reproduction* nevertheless acted as a contributing inspiration that animated educational research and teacher education for the rest of the 1970s and 80s. Even outside of sociology, there was a new found interest in the language of pedagogy in

knowledge construction; for example Douglas Barnes work on the 'law of two thirds': that a third of classroom activity was talk, a third of that was teacher talk and a third of that was questions. But, the 'new' sociology was also inherently radical, and implicitly (and explicitly!) critical. If schools were complicit in reproducing the inequalities of society, then they needed reform. A policy of 'deschooling' emerged; the aim of which was to by-pass the pernicious effects of schools - or at least compensated for. If, in effect, schools were promulgating a certain kind of culture, which excluded the masses and privileged the sons and daughters of the middle and upper classes, there were three alternatives. Either resistance could be mounted - if the dominant culture was alienating and pacifying, it should be opposed. This approach was a blowing the whistle on what was going on and unmasking the causes of social inequalities. Or, 'alternative' cultures could be celebrated - indeed, partly as a form of resistance. In this case, the 'non-hegemonic' culture was held up for its rich diversity and alternative way of seeing the world. Or, 'compensatory' measures could be undertaken so that those who were 'culturally deficient' could be 'topped up' with the requisite cultural attributes. Here, even 'positive discrimination' was seen as one possible tactic to ensure that those who had hitherto been deprived of contact with the necessary culture - in form and content - now were given the opportunity to acquire this in the form of academic knowledge which would enable them to enter the social world on an equal cultural footing with their contemporaries.

Of course, there is a fatalistic aspect to Bourdieu's work when pushed to an extreme: that whatever we do, the inherent 'logic of practice' of a system will develop 'reconversion strategies' to reassert the mechanism behind the *raison d'être* of a field; and for education, that was the reproduction of an elite. Nevertheless, it is also clear that Bourdieu was active politically throughout his career and did make proposals for a 'rational pedagogy' and a 'sociology of inequalities' to redress the balance in scholastic achievement derived from social origin. These proposals remained mainly unexplored in a British context of the day.

Nevertheless, one of the reasons for the popularity of the 'foundational disciplines', and indeed the 'sociology of education', was their practical orientation; and many took solace from the practical dynamic at the heart of *Reproduction*. Throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s, teacher training programmes, both pre-service and in-service, included courses in sociology. But these were taught separated from psychology, philosophy and history of education, with the assumption that the necessary integration between these diverse fields would be made by the teachers or by individual students themselves. The belief was that somehow, by knowing what was going on, teachers could act to counter its effects. However, once again, this is somewhat counter to the internal logic of *Reproduction*, which concludes:

It is impossible to imagine a teacher able to maintain with his own discourse, his pupils' discourse and his pupils' relation to his own discourse, a relation stripped of all indulgences and freed from all the traditional complicities, without at the same time crediting him with the

capacity to subordinate his whole pedagogic practice to the imperatives of a perfectly explicit pedagogy which could actually implement the principles logically implied in affirmation of the autonomy of the specifically scholastic mode of acquisition.

Bourdieu and Passeron thus argue it was clearly too much to expect that an individual teacher, or even a small group, could affect radical change in pedagogy simply by understanding the way that classroom knowledge was produced and the effect it had on individual pupil academic achievement. Yet, many educationalist ignored their argument.

Legacy

The general thrust of educational research from the 1970s built on the developments outlined above. The focus on knowledge in the 'new' sociology of education' became a theme which concerned research outside of sociology *per se*. Increasingly, research approach took on board various qualitative and naturalistic methods, including the broadly ethnographic. Some of this approach was explicitly 'critical', but much of it was utilitarian with respect to improving classroom pedagogy of individual teachers – not Bourdieu and Passeron's mission at all. As part of this movement, Bourdieu became known as the 'cultural capital man' in terms of the negative influence of classroom language in the construction of educational knowledge; the ways it excluded pupils coming from outside of the 'home school' culture. This broad understanding led to a widespread acceptance on the 'relative' nature of scholastic knowledge as defined within a state educational orthodoxy. Increasingly, the resultant teaching approached became more exploratory and 'pupil centred'.

The great anthropologies of France that Bourdieu published in the 1980s, therefore, left an British educational profession somewhat perplexed; or at least it would have done if they had been widely read. Both *Le Sens Pratique* and *La Noblesse d'État* did not appear in English until the 1990s. *La distinction* did appear in 1984 but would have been considered too 'Franco-centric', and readers of *Homo academicus* from 1988 would mostly have missed the points about 1968 and the reflexivity at the heart of Bourdieu's method.

Of course, issues of reflexivity are central to ethnographic method, but in English this was often interpreted simply in terms of 'self-awareness'; it therefore fell for the temptation criticized by Bourdieu as the wish to 'transcend thought by the power of thought itself'. A different reflexive response was taken up by educational researchers inspired by Schön's 1983 book *The Reflective Practitioner*; here, with the emphasis on an 'epistemology of practice' – in other words, improving practice. There was subsequently a bifurcation between two strands in educational research: one became increasingly teacher and pupil centred, the other took a route into deeper philosophical enquiry including post-modernism. Although used as an en passant referent, neither strand particularly adopted Bourdieu's method and theory of practice in conducting research projects. Where it was cited, 'habitus' was reduced to issues of 'agency', 'field' was interpreted as 'context' and 'cultural capital' was often used as a metaphor to describe cultural variation in the classroom rather than a fully integrated

analytic instrument. Few could cope with the exemplars of Multiple Correspondence Analysis as presented by Bourdieu in his 1980s studies. The legacy of *Reproduction* was therefore significant yet muted

If the situation in British education was ripe for a reactionary backlash, that is exactly what happened. From the 1990s, educational research was heavily criticized by writers such as David Hargreaves for not providing enough information on how to improve teaching. For Tooley (1998), the reason for this was the whole qualitative thrust of educational researchers, which was seen as lacking in methodology and accuracy. Many, he argued, had also 'fallen in love' with French philosophers – Bourdieu was quoted as an example. The period became marked by increasing political involvement and a return to more statistical, evidence-based research.

In this context, publication of Bourdieu's *Principles for Reflecting on the Curriculum* (1992b), and the educational temoinages offered in *La misère du monde* (1999) were overlooked by all but the most avid educational Bourdieusians.

It could therefore be argued that in *Reproduction*, Bourdieu (along with Passeron) produced a book that was misinterpreted at the time – and this misinterpretation shaped what was to be made of it. Readers did not necessarily know where Bourdieu was coming from, his philosophical roots, and the method he was developing. What was gleamed from the book – cultural capital – was integrated within a British educational research agenda, but that was one that was markedly different from Bourdieu's own. In sum, the former was mostly concerned with teacher education and pedagogy; while Bourdieu was more interested in education as one of other social institutions – which he also researched – that formed an intermediary in the French Republic and the Nation state. Few British educationalists appreciated the role that education had played in the creation of the Fifth Republic – *Maisons de la Culture, Peuple et Culture, Education Permanente*, etc. – coming from a republican Jacobin tradition but also including the Catholic response to French déchristianisation. The form of reflexivity embraced in Britain also did not match Bourdieu's own, founded as it was on continental philosophies, including phenomenology. Neither did British research 'do' field analysis. Therefore, although there were often attempts to translate biographical variation in terms of *habitus*, few 'mapped' the field as such, or made explicit the links between the 'field of power' – in terms of curricula, for example - and what went on in the classroom.

Of course, in the intervening years, it has become acknowledged that Bourdieu is so much more than a 'sociologist of education'. And, it is not uncommon to still see his work quoted in educational research. Nevertheless, *Reproduction* – with its misinterpretations and misapplications – remain somewhat frozen in time. There is still a pressing need to understand this book in terms of Bourdieu's theory of practice and develop a philosophical appreciation of both the breaks on which it is predicated and the resultant *metanoia* it offers in terms of praxeological knowledge. Bourdieusian reflexivity also remains 'the elephant in the room, so that even educational Bourdieusians rarely mention or understand

it. However, such an appreciation would also require an understanding of what Bourdieu intended by subject and the object, the 'structural' relationship between them, and indeed its underlying logic of practice – in other words, his theory of practice. This understanding would then have to be applied to a more integrated methodological approach that includes distinct levels of analysis: the 'field and the field of power', 'field analysis', and the capital based positioning of those within the field corresponding to their habitus. All of this would need to be placed within a broader context of the relationship between educational systems and the Nation state, and its consequences.

In sum, despite its celebrity in Great Britain, the thesis announced with the appearance of *Reproduction* in English still awaits a more worthy and appropriate response in terms of its significance to schooling, research and policy reform.

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