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A Bourdieusian rebuttal to Bourdieu's rebuttal: social network analysis, regression, and methodological breakthroughs

Abstract

Bourdieu carved out a distinctive analytical niche for his reflexive sociology. His epistemological tool of field analysis, sometimes coupled with statistical correspondence analysis, is particularly powerful when deciphering the matrix of objective structures and subjective structures within social spaces (field) where agents vie for positions (capital), strategise dispositions (habitus), and negotiate practices. When grappling with the inner workings of the social world and the logic of practice within the social world, Bourdieu favours his field theory over network theory and considers correspondence analysis to be superior to regression analysis. In this paper, I argue that Bourdieu's canonical theory-laden analytical framework does not exclude other methodological approaches. Indeed, Bourdieu himself argues against "methodological monotheism". I therefore make an attempt to develop a Bourdieusian approach to Social Network Analysis (SNA) and regression analysis, despite Bourdieu's explicit rebuttal to these methodological schools. To this end, I first review Bourdieu's rebuttal to network analysis and regression analysis. I then tentatively incorporate SNA and regression into Bourdieu's analytical framework. This is followed by an example of using SNA and regression in Bourdieusian research conducted in a Chinese educational context. In this vein, I engage with a Bourdieusian rebuttal to Bourdieu's rebuttal.

Keywords: Relational sociology; Social Network Analysis; regression; field of mediation

Introduction

Bourdieu carved out a distinctive analytical niche for his reflexive sociology. He prodded and probed human existence mainly in two social spaces: the French-colonised Algeria and the neoliberalising France from the 1960s onwards. For Bourdieu, any individuals or institutions venturing or drawn into these two social spaces played upon the logic of practice within a field – defined as a network configured with both "objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97) and subjective dispositions acquired through "the embodied, assimilated properties" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 150). The style of play of individuals and institutions, and their success or failure in the field are largely decided by two "trump cards" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 150), namely habitus and capital. Here habitus denotes a system of cognitive schemata and a set of bodily dispositions that function as "an internal law relaying the continuous exercise of the lay of external necessities...without being able to give them a rational basis" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 82). That is to say, habitus is forged through ongoing and largely unconscious internalisation of external structures in the field. Capital refers to resources with recognised or misrecognised value that "commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97).

For Bourdieu, a field is fraught with struggles for latent, symbolic forces, that is, struggles over “the legitimate principle of legitimation and for the legitimate mode of reproduction of the foundations of domination” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 76). In this vein, the struggle for what is at stake in the field conceals the very logic of the field.

The logic of field, in general, urges agents to vie for positions – domination versus subordination – objectively defined by capital at their disposal, strategise their dispositions enculturated through habitus, and negotiate their practices in a particular social arena. To decipher the matrix of objective structures (capital) and subjective structures (habitus) within a social space (field), Bourdieu crafted an epistemological tool of field analysis, sometimes coupled with descriptive and statistical correspondence analysis. When grappling with the inner workings of the social world and the logic of practice within the social world, Bourdieu favours his field analysis over network analysis and considers correspondence analysis to be superior to regression analysis. Having said that, Bourdieusian research does not have to be restrained within Bourdieu’s original analytical approaches. For Bourdieu himself, methodological combination is hailed as “a breakthrough and a daring challenge to methodological monotheism” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 226).

Following Bourdieu’s “methodological polytheism” (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 101), in this paper, I argue that Bourdieu’s canonical theory-laden analytical framework does not exclude other methodological approaches. I therefore make an attempt to develop a Bourdieusian approach to Social Network Analysis (SNA) and regression analysis, despite Bourdieu’s explicit rebuttal to these methodological schools. To this end, I first review Bourdieu’s rebuttal to network analysis and regression analysis. I then tentatively incorporate SNA and regression into Bourdieu’s analytical framework. This is followed by a brief example of using SNA and regression in Bourdieusian research. In this vein, I engage with a Bourdieusian rebuttal to Bourdieu’s rebuttal.

A note of clarification is necessary before I proceed. I suggest that the paper be read as a conceptual discussion rather than an empirical study. The primary intention of the paper is to engage with a theoretical and methodological dialogue with Bourdieu, and the remaining space of the paper only allows for succinctly showcasing an example study to respond to the dialogue. Assuming the reader appreciates such intention, I now proceed to dialogue with Bourdieu.

Bourdieu’s Rebuttal to Network Analysis

By construing social world as field and the interplay of capital, habitus, and practice within field, Bourdieu recasts the ordinary social world into a relational sociological world. These two worlds have diametrically different ontological and epistemological assumptions. The ordinary social world fastens only on visible individual and group relationships, which are “only in appearance defined solely by the temporary or durable relations, formal or informal...and even relations understood as interactions, that is, as intersubjective, actually activated connections” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 96-97, n48). Such a world is rooted in ‘relational realism’ (Carolan, 2014) and ‘substantialist perspective’ (Emirbayer, 1997), both of which believe that social interactions and ties constitute the central existence of social life, and social structures shape individual praxis (Tilly, 2004). In stark contrast, the relational sociological world understood through the notion of field differs from the realist, substantialist perspective in that it does not “reduce the effect of the environment to the effect of direct action as actualised during an interaction” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 97, n48). Any field,

according to Bourdieu (1996, p. 205), cannot be relegated to “the sum of individual agents linked by simple relations of interaction or, more precisely, of cooperation” because the descriptive enumeration of interaction or cooperation fails to reveal the symbolic relations behind the substantial, actual links between individual agents. The notion of field, to move beyond individual interactions, captures the objective structures that “have produced the dispositions of the interacting agents” and have defined “their relative positions in the interaction” (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 59).

For Bourdieu, “the real is relational” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). As such, field analysis demands a relational mode of thinking rather than the structuralist, substantialist, or realist mode of thinking. Reality, logic of practice, and principle of immanent law cannot be fully understood through collision and direct contact between individuals and their visible interactions. Bourdieu elucidates: “what exist in the social world are relations – not interactions between agents of intersubjective ties between individuals, but objective relations which exist ‘independently of individual consciousness and will’” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97). These relations are different from market behaviours and intersubjective relationships often performed through rational cost-benefit calculations, developing and dissolving in the economic realm (see Becker, 1974). Hence Bourdieu lays bare the difference between himself and economists: “The only thing I share with economic orthodoxy...are a number of words” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 118). For Bourdieu, social networking comes into being through latent, unconscious, and symbolic relations instead of direct, rational, and calculative exchanges.

Bourdieu’s relational thinking also distinguishes him from social capital theorists such as Ronald Burt, Robert Putnam, and James Coleman. Burt (2000) argues that social capital emerges from the relative paucity of social ties because people occupying the “structural holes” are more resourceful. Bourdieu, on the contrary, construes social capital as “possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248), seen in memberships and material and/or symbolic exchanges. Putnam (2000) boils social capital down to networks pervaded with norms and trust that bind individuals as a community and contribute to individual productivity and civil development in the future. Bourdieu, however, provides some balance to the celebratory tone of Putnam. For Bourdieu, social networks give form to configurations of unequally distributed power that crafts not a civil society but a hierarchical society, perpetuating historical domination and subordination into the future society. In other words, Bourdieu concerns more with diachronic inequality than future prosperity. Coleman (1988) emphasises that social capital consists of social structures rather than individuals but it facilitates individual actions within social networks. Both Coleman and Bourdieu illuminate parental educational strategies and children’s academic achievements – a manoeuvre of social capital for Coleman and cultural capital for Bourdieu. Coleman (1988) leans toward a neoliberal lens, discussing the creation of human capital for the future generation. Yet Bourdieu rejects any predictable linear relationship between conscious economic investment and human capital development in social networks because such claimed predictability overlooks the confounding effect of historical, cultural, and symbolic correlates. He believes that social relations, though objectively defined as within-field positions by distribution and configuration of capital, are rarely observable as conscious actions but more interpretable as habitus-oriented internalisation of social structures. The possession of social networks differs from the resourcefulness of such networks and also differs from the capacity to obtain and

maintain them, a distinction explicit in Bourdieu but obscured in Coleman (Portes, 1998).

The foregoing discussion resolves around Bourdieu's rebuttal to network theory and network analysis. Structural configurations determine "the possibility or the impossibility (or, to be more precise, the greater or lesser probability) of observing the establishment of linkages that express and sustain the existence of networks" (p. 114). Bourdieu proposes: "the task of science is to uncover the structure of the distribution of species of capital which tends to determine the structure of individual or collective stances taken, through the interests and dispositions it conditions" (p. 114). For Bourdieu, social practice unfolds on the grounds of the triad of capital, habitus, and field – the structural configurations that cannot be reduced to interactions and practices "at the expense of the structural relations – invisible, or visible only through their effects – between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents" (Bourdieu, 1983, pp. 311-312). Bourdieu is against this form of reduction, which he calls "the short circuit effect" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 181).

Bourdieu's Rebuttal to Regression Analysis

Bourdieu's aversion to network analysis is conspicuous. Interestingly, Bourdieu seems equally aversive to regression analysis, cautioning against "the false independence between so-called independent variables" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 103), or in statistical terms, the notorious problem of 'multi-collinearity' that has long plagued regression analysis. In his book *'Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste'*, Bourdieu (1984) discovered that even the most powerful independent variable, such as socio-occupational category, "derives a major part of its effects from the secondary variables it governs" (p. 112). The determinant for any sociological problem is "a particular configuration of the system of properties...defined in an entirely theoretical way by the whole set of factors operating in all areas of practice...sex, age, marital status, place of residence etc" (p. 112). In other words, "what is 'operative' in the factor in question depends on the system it is placed in and the conditions it 'operates' in" (p. 113). For Bourdieu, what warrant sociological investigation are not the pre-determined "independent" variables but their covariances evolving within a particular field.

In addition to the problem of multi-collinearity, Bourdieu doubts the static, endogenous approach to "independent" variables in regression analysis. He is intolerant of the failure of regression to "raise the question of the real principle of the efficacy of the 'independent variable'" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 113) as if the relationship between any designated factor and other factors "did not itself have to be explained" (p. 113). Here Bourdieu (1984) criticises unconditional submission to "the positivistic arbitration" of fact (p. 12) and too much effort "in scientifically proving that self-evident fact" (p. 11) without probing the hidden facts behind the statistical relationships found between the so-called independent and dependent variables. He therefore suggests that sociologists must question the seemingly self-evident, self-explanatory initial appearances and relationships. When addressing these sociological questions, Bourdieu never cloaks his favouritism of correspondence analysis:

If I make extensive use of correspondence analysis, in preference to multivariate regression, for instance, it is because correspondence analysis is a relational technique of data analysis whose philosophy corresponds exactly to what, in my view, the reality of the social world is. It is a technique which 'thinks' in terms of

relation, as I try to do precisely in terms of field. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 96)

Bourdieu also favours correspondence analysis over network analysis. He asserts that uncovering the structural relations hidden in the networks necessitates a relational mode of thinking, which “is more difficult to translate into quantitative and formalised data, save by way of correspondence analysis” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 114). By dint of the relational thinking embedded in correspondence analysis, sociologists are able to delve into the “relationships between groups maintaining different, and even antagonistic, relations to culture, depending on the conditions in which they acquired their cultural capital and the markets in which they can derive most profit from it” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 12). Put simply, correspondence analysis, compared to regression analysis and network analysis, can better uncover the sociologically hidden “categories” behind the empirical categories, and can therefore realise the full value of Bourdieu’s sociological oeuvre that encapsulates his signature notions of capital, habitus, and field.

A Bourdieusian Rebuttal to Bourdieu’s Rebuttal

Thinking in terms of a field requires a conversion of one’s entire usual vision of the social world, a vision which is interested only in those things which are visible...in relations understood as interactions, that is, as concretely enacted intersubjective relations. In fact, just as the Newtonian theory of gravitation could be developed only by breaking away from Cartesian realism, which refused to recognise any mode of physical action other than shock and direct contact, in the same way, the notion of field presupposes that one break away from the realist representation which leads one to reduce the effect of the milieu to the effect of the direct action that takes place in any interaction. It is the structure of the constitutive relations of the space of the field which determines the forms that can be assumed by the visible relations of interaction and the very content of the experience that agents may have of them. (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 192; also see Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 96-97 n48)

Here Bourdieu makes a clear distinction between the “Newtonian” field theory and the “Cartesian” network theory. The former delves into a “structural relation” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 113) operating in a lasting and invisible fashion, whereas the latter grapples with an “effective relation” (p. 113) actualised in and by an observable exchange. Bourdieu is correct in a way that network theory often sacrifices the study of underlying social structure to the analysis of “particular linkages (between agents or institutions) and flows (of information, resources, services, etc.) through which they become visible” (p. 114). But this is not the case for Social Network Analysis (SNA), which is concerned with the structural relations and the implication that these structures have on individual or group behaviours and attitudes (Carolan, 2014). Therefore, SNA is a systematic and paradigmatic way of studying directly how patterns of linkages allocate power in a social system (Wellman, 1988, p. 20). In simple words, SNA aims to discover the social structures embedded and hidden in the social ties.

Unfortunately, Bourdieu did not have much encounter with SNA, which became a discipline in its own right in the 2000s, after Bourdieu’s death (Odaba, & Adaman, 2018). In Bourdieu’s era, the science of network analysis was nothing comparable to SNA developed today. The latter approach is built on the grounds of interactions but it goes beyond observable exchanges, making it possible to visualise and quantify objective positions, relative distances, social groupings, resource distributions, and

power structures within a field. It can also take into account history, culture, race, class, education, identity, gender, amongst many other sociologically meaningful individual and collective attributes. In this vein, SNA is not merely about “linkages” and “flows”; rather, it has become powerful enough to unearth the structural relations behind the effective relations. Having said that, much current SNA research contemplates the production of social capital through concrete, tangible networks – an interactionist, substantialist, and reductionist view that Bourdieu explicitly problematises.

Despite his explicit criticism of network theory, Bourdieu does not nullify social interactions. For example, gift exchange, marriage, advice, friendship, schooling, and intergenerational socialisation come to reproduce or reshape social structures (Bourdieu, 1977). However, Bourdieu fails to detail the generative role of substantial interactions in the constitution of field relations and minimises the theoretical significance of such interactions (Bottero & Crossley, 2011). In this vein, SNA has shown strong potential to deploy Bourdieu’s field theory while addressing criticism of it.

First, both Bourdieu’s relational sociology and SNA break away from individualistic, synchronic paradigms of social psychological field theory. For example, the German-American social psychologist Lewin (1936, pp. 33, 35) stresses the “principle of contemporaneity”, focusing on field actors in question at one time. He also construes field as in the head of the acting subjects (see p. 19). Such individualistic and synchronic framework assumes actions as grounded in the totality of the present and the individual (Lewin, 1936, p. 10). In stark contrast, both SNA and Bourdieu delve into the social structure that shapes patterns of practices within a given network/field over time (Bottero & Crossley, 2011). Both approaches are able to address power and resource flow within symbolic social worlds, challenging institutional boundaries normally conceptualised as more rigid. Second, both approaches question the false dichotomy of agency and structure, of quantitative and qualitative research, of theory and method. Moreover, SNA, similar to correspondence analysis, rejects the primacy of pre-determined attributional categories in favour of an “anticategorical imperative” (Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994, p. 1414). At the statistical level, the coding strategy of correspondence analysis and that of SNA are technically identical (de Nooy, 2003). Multivariate SNA techniques can perform correspondence analysis to discover patterns in a collection of measures (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2018). In sum, there appears no paradigmatic incommensurability between SNA and Bourdieu (Bottero & Crossley, 2011). For both contemporary social network analysts and Bourdieu, power is similarly defined in relational terms of an outgrowth of the positions that agents occupy in a given field or network (Emirbayer, 1997).

Marrying SNA and Bourdieu’s field theory has strong potential to address the challenges faced by the latter. Since field is only known by its effect (see Hesse, 1970, pp. 135, 141), “the biggest danger of field theory is the tendency toward tautology...to proliferate invisible fields that ‘explain’ whatever it is that we otherwise cannot explain” (Martin, 2003, p. 8). SNA differs in that it situates research subjects in a context – a field that has consequences for research subjects. The graphing techniques available through SNA help to visualise the field and mark its boundary where its effects vanish. As a ‘case study’ (Carolan, 2014), SNA lays out social relations and structures within a field. Indeed, as Bottero and Crossley (2011) argue, systematic analysis of empirical interactions by means of SNA helps to map out field positions, which is different from, but no less effective than, Bourdieu’s field theory.

Due to the strong potential of SNA to help tease out the field dynamics and complexities, the use of SNA in Bourdieusian research is emerging. Colleagues have performed Blockmodeling¹ and discovered a strong split between elite and marginal German writers and the fundamental distinction between high and low culture in the bipartition of the landscape of the culture field (Anheier, Gerhards, & Romo, 1995). SNA has also enabled scholars to investigate gendered academic choices across different disciplines and academic fields (Turnbull, Vanholsbeeck, Locke, & O'Neale, 2019). My own SNA analysis has investigated the shifting power relations of floating children² and urban Children within community schools (see Chapter Six in Mu, 2018). Recently some Bourdieusian colleagues have called for bringing field analysis and network analysis together as heuristic devices in investigations of networking strategies of players in the edubusiness of private tutoring (Dooley, Liu, & Yin, 2020). Despite these initiatives, systematic conceptual debates are still absent. In response, my foregoing discussion has made an attempt to marry Bourdieu and SNA. Yet one more question remains: Is SNA able to dissolve the tension between Bourdieu and regression models? I now proceed with a Bourdieusian rebuttal to Bourdieu's rebuttal to regression.

Correspondence analysis, indeed, was probably the best possible analytical strategy for Bourdieu, in his era, to understand social structures within a field. This does not necessarily exclude the utility of today's regression models, logistic regression in particular (see Fries, 2009). When Bourdieu rebutted regression analysis, he worried about the predetermined "independent variables" and their multi-collinearity. Yet today's regression models have become robust enough to appease Bourdieu's worries. In response to the former problem, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is able to investigate complicated interrelationships between the traditionally called independent variables and dependent variables. SEM no longer assumes the endogeneity of variables as if they were wholly free factors independent of all other factors in question. On the contrary, both endogenous and exogenous variances are taken into account. In response to the latter problem, Process Analysis (see Hayes, 2013) and SEM are able to model the interactions between variables and draw on moderation analysis to take stock of multi-collinearity.

Another challenge for using regression analysis in Bourdieusian research lies in a problem that Bourdieu himself never explicitly specifies: Relational thinking questions the statistical assumption of independence of variance required for performing regression analysis. For Bourdieu, agents in any field constantly venture or are drawn into symbolic power relations or/and material interactions. The practice of any agent, therefore, is not independent of that of another. In statistical terms, observations collected from agents in a field then become inter-nested data, which violates the principle of independence of variance required by classical statistics theory. Indeed, assumptions of randomisation, generalisation, representativeness, normalisation, and independence in statistical modelling are at loggerheads with classical, scientific social theories' interpretation of social life (Abbott, 1988; Emirbayer, 1997; Martin, 2003; McFarland, Diehl, & Rawlings, 2011). Although advanced regression models such as Hierarchical Linear Modelling can grapple with the inter-nestedness in the data, the

¹ See an introduction to Blockmodels in Borgatti et al. (2018).

² Floating children refer to those brought by their migrant parents from rural communities to urban sites. Without an urban household residency (*hukou*, 户口), these children are often faced with structural constraints when accessing urban social welfare, free public schooling in particular (see Mu, 2018, 2019; Mu & Hu, 2016; Mu & Jia, 2016; Mu et al., 2013).

required massive sample size often daunts quantitative intention at the beginning. SNA comes to mind here because it decrypts the inter-nestedness within a network without requiring large sample size particularly in context-based, case-specific research.

Nowadays the advanced statistical modelling enables the combination of SNA and regression to test hypothesis. Such a hypothesis testing approach is known as QAP regression in SNA (Borgatti et al., 2018). Bourdieusian scholars would be interested in the relationships among socioeconomic status, marriage, friendship, and business connections cross different families. Multiple correspondence analysis can help understand the patterns of relations among these sociological variables. Such analysis can be performed equally well through QAP-based logistic regression when each variable is transformed into a dichotomous network matrix: families with similar or different socioeconomic status, with or without a marriage tie, with or without a friendship relationship, and with or without a business connection. Depending on the research question, any one of these matrices can be treated as a dependent variable with other matrices treated as independent variables. QAP-based logistic regression is able to test the statistical significance of the connections across these networks and unveil the sociological mechanisms behind the empirical categories. Therefore, QAP modelling, here construed as a Bourdieusian approach to SNA and regression, can empower sociological investigations on problems that intrigue Bourdieusian scholars.

Assuming the success of my Bourdieusian rebuttal to Bourdieu's rebuttal, it would be no longer a conceptual fallacy or a methodological taboo to use SNA and regression in Bourdieusian research. I now instantiate my exercise that employs Bourdieu's sociology, SNA, and regression to grapple with empirical questions and to extend Bourdieu's methodological framing.

Empirical Use of SNA and Regression in Bourdieusian Research

Data reported here were drawn from my collaborative work with Evergreen, a Non-Governmental Organisation that aims to promote sustainable social development through various educational programs. I work with four Evergreen community schools in Beijing that provide free after school hour service to both floating children and Beijing children.

Migrant parents often engage in long-hour labour work and are unable to proffer decent parenting to floating children. Many floating children either linger around in the streets or stay home by themselves after school. In contrast, floating children enrolled in Evergreen community schools have opportunities to learn and play together with their urban peers after a typical school day, on weekends, or over school holidays. Elsewhere, I have shown that powerful institution such as school can transform the urban-dominant field that misrecognises the rural habitus (e.g., rural accent) of floating children into an enabling and welcoming social field that recognises the rural habitus of these children (Mu & Jia, 2016). By the same token, Evergreen community schools engage with the second-order change that reshapes the structural landscape of the field rather than the first-order change that retrains the dispositions of the habitus. The logic of practice here rejects the arbitrarily misrecognised rural habitus of floating children and redefines it as embodied cultural capital, further convertible to other forms of capital, whether social or symbolic. I now discuss this logic of practice through recourse to Bourdieu-informed SNA and regression.

SNA situates subjects within a specific context/network. Therefore, each network is an indigenised, rooted case. This does not necessarily ignore the heteronomy of one field to another. Two-mode SNA³ can delve into structural configurations across diverse social spaces, which is not my focus of analysis here. It is recalled that my SNA data were collected from four community schools. I now use one of them as a case to analyse power relations within the friendship network. In the raw dataset, some children were nominated by their peers as friends but they themselves did not choose to participate in the SNA survey. These children were therefore removed from the analysis. It should be acknowledged that removal of these children has inevitably introduced measurement error to the study due to reduced network dynamics; but inclusion of these children would be equally problematic due to the missing values associated with these non-SNA participants. In this respect, I have to confess that the incomplete dataset here remains a limitation of the study.

The dataset used for analysis consist of 45 responses, including 12 Beijing children and 33 floating children. The friendship network of these children was analysed through the software ‘UCINET’. Figure 1 was created by UCINET-NetDraw. The arrow line starts from the nominator and points to the nominee. Black nodes denote Beijing children and white nodes denote floating children. Family affluence measured by the Family Affluence Scale (Currie et al., 2008) is proportional to the size of the node.

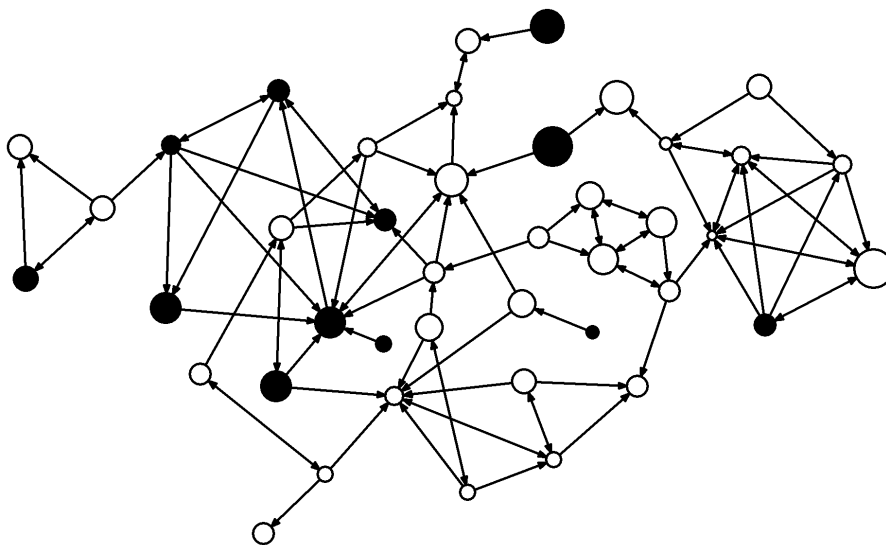


Figure 1. Friendship network of children in one selected Evergreen community school

Core-Periphery Analysis suggests that five children in the network are core nodes, who have a strong tendency to connect to one another and to the 40 peripheral nodes. The peripheral nodes, in contrast, tend to disconnect to one another while only connect to the core nodes. In this vein, SNA goes beyond empirical connections, and unveils the relational positions – core versus periphery – embedded in the subsistent interactions. SNA can also transform “attributes” into “matrices”. Accordingly, the attribute of floating children/Beijing children status was then transformed into a “matricised attribute”. This matrix no longer concerns the floating children-Beijing

³ See detailed introduction in Borgatti et al. (2018).

children dichotomy; rather, it lays out whether any pair of children has an identical social condition. By the same token, the core-periphery relational position was also transformed into a matrix that goes beyond the core-periphery dichotomy and teases out whether any pair of children has an (un)equal position in the network. Consequently, categorical data were transformed into relational data, into which Bourdieu's sociology often delves.

QAP-based Cross-Tab Analysis was then performed to test the hypothetical relationship between the core-periphery matrix and the floating children-Beijing children status matrix. Result shows a non-significant relationship between the two matrices ($\chi^2 = 1.803, p = .484$). Within the friendship network, some children take a more central position than others. Positions within the friendship network, whether core or peripheral, are defined, at least in part, by the social capital at children's disposal. Yet children are not predisposed to certain positions due to their floating/Beijing status. The finding indicates that the rural habitus of floating children or the urban habitus of Beijing children is not translated as inferiority or superiority in terms of power and positioning in the friendship network.

QAP-based linear regression was also performed to regress friendship network matrix (dependent variable) on two independent variables, namely family affluence matrix and floating/Beijing status matrix. Neither independent variable is statistically significant (family affluence, $p = .368$; floating/Beijing status, $p = .222$). In this vein, children exhibit a disassortative friendship networking irrespective of their socioeconomic status. Although floating children are more likely to come from a less affluent family background, they are networking with friends equally well as their Beijing peers. In this vein, the researched Evergreen community school has become a liberating, rather than limiting, social field that interferes the reproduction of disadvantaged social positions (e.g., family affluence and family origin). Such an interference demonstrates a sociological process of resilience that revolts against structural constraints.

Conclusion

In this paper, I make an attempt to dissolve a plethora of epistemological tensions between Bourdieu on the one hand, and SNA and regression on the other hand. I also instantiate using SNA and regression in Bourdieusian research. Such an attempt is certainly not out of ignorance of Bourdieu's explicit rebuttal to interactional thinking and linear framework. I acknowledge Bourdieu's aversion to SNA and regression. Yet I draw on modern SNA and regression models to critically respond to Bourdieu's aversion to these two approaches. It is by no means my intention to correct or calibrate Bourdieu, as it is ahistorical and uncritical to criticise historical legacy through a modern lens. My view here is one that Bourdieu's epistemological stance is justifiably legitimate in his era, so my attempt is to engage with a Bourdieusian rebuttal to Bourdieu's rebuttal.

Bourdieu asserts: "I believe it is possible to think *with* a thinker and to think, at the same time, *against* him or her" (Bourdieu, Schultheis, & Pfeuffer, 2011, p. 114). Bourdieu has also shown us to "use Weber against Weber to go beyond Weber...and be an anti-Marxist Marxist" (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 780). Following the exercise of the famed sociologist, my Bourdieusian rebuttal to Bourdieu's rebuttal, however embryonic or polemical, respects and recognises the inclusive epistemology that Bourdieu has bequeathed us:

We must try, in every case, to mobilise all the techniques that are relevant and practically usable, given the definition of the object and the practical conditions of data collection... The long and the short of it is, social research is something much too serious and too difficult for us to allow ourselves to mistake scientific rigidity, which is the nemesis of intelligence and invention, for scientific rigor, and thus to deprive ourselves of this or that resources available in the full panoply of intellectual traditions of our discipline and of the sister disciplines of anthropology, economics, history, etc. In such matters, I would be tempted to say that only one rule applies: "it is forbidden to forbid," or, watch out for methodological watchdogs! (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 227).

I conclude the paper with a plea for creating a 'field of mediation' (also see Mu, 2018; Yin, Dooley, & Mu, 2019) to spark epistemological breakthroughs within the academic space. Field analysis, SNA, and regression are different schools, each with its own thinking mode that receives symbolic recognition. Gatekeeping the scholastic boundary of each school can create a form of symbolic violence and a *doxic* situation where the "logic" of each school is consecrated, unquestioned, and unquestionable. When each school progresses towards a field of restricted production with its own peremptory verdicts, it is marked by what Bourdieu (1993, p. 116) would call "an increasingly distinct tendency of criticism to devote itself to the task, not of producing the instruments of appropriation". This would strangle possibilities for breaking disciplinary boundaries. The principle with the field of mediation is not to spurn away canonical scholarship; rather it is to create a reflexive academic space that venerates intellectual traditions and dissolves, whenever possible, scholastic conflicts between any seemingly insurmountable epistemologies.

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