

Quantifying Theory: Pierre Bourdieu

Karen Robson • Chris Sanders
Editors

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 Springer

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Abbreviations

ASCO	Australian Standard Classification of Occupations
CA	Correspondence analysis
CAMSIS	Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification Scales (UK)
CATPCA	Categorical principal components analysis
CEO	Chief executive officer
CIRP	Cooperative Institutional Research Program (US)
CLL	Campus Life and Learning project (US)
CM	Cohort members
EGP	Erikson-Goldthorpe-Portocarero
EPCV	Enquêtes Permanentes sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages ("The Continuous Survey of Living Conditions")
ESPN	Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (US)
EU	European Union
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education (UK)
GDA	Geometric data analysis
GEODE	Grid Enabled Occupational Data Environment (UK)
HLM	Hierarchical linear modeling
LCA	Latent clustering analysis
MCA	Multiple correspondence analysis
MSFI	Modified Sports Fan Index
NGO	Non-government organization
OLS	Ordinary least squares
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation

SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test (US)
SEM	Structural equation modelling
SID	Social interaction distance
SFI	Sports Fan Index
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TAFE	Technical and Further Education (Australia)
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

Chapter 1

Introduction: Approaches to Quantifying Bourdieu

Chris Sanders and Karen Robson

1.1 About This Book

This volume is the result of a conversation between the two editors about the importance of linking theory and methods. It may seem obvious to all social scientists that this is of upmost importance and indeed the foundation of the discipline of sociology (as sociologists, we can only speak of our discipline with any degree of certainty). In undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, however, the discourses of theory and methods are often rather disparate, with little direct communication between the two. There are ‘theorists’ and there are ‘methodologists’. One group often claims that the other does a job that they cannot do, which is actually rather preposterous, as anyone schooled in the discipline up to the level of a Ph.D. should be able to muster up a few facts about research design as well as the key features of the theories of Marx, Weber and Durkheim – at the very least.

After investigating the availability of ‘recent’ books and articles specifically addressing the linkage between theory and methods, we were surprised by the paucity of materials in the area. Indeed, any good peer-reviewed journal publication can, and often does, demonstrate the operationalization of a theory, but the readership of these articles is assumed to be rather specialized. It leaves the less seasoned without much detail on the actual steps involved in the process and the possibility that there might be more than one way of measuring a concept, and hence any serious discussion around such topics.

Readers may assume at the outset that this volume is a celebration of Bourdieu, and in some respects it is. It is undeniable that he did produce many interesting concepts and promoted a fairly radical idea (at the time) about the processes of

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social reproduction. In this sense, this volume does celebrate such an accomplishment – to have developed and promoted such an innovative and vast set of concepts and theories that are of great interest to social scientists (and others) today. We do not, however, believe that Bourdieu’s work is flawless, and indeed, the chapters in this volume have been written to *test* his theories, not blindly promote them. We do appreciate that some scholars (cf. Goldthorpe, 2007; Kingston, 2001; Nash, 1999) assert that Bourdieu is over-celebrated and that there is actually little consistent evidence in support of many aspects of his vast theoretical oeuvre. Indeed, chapters here do provide evidence that perhaps some aspects of his theory require rethinking and adjustment, particularly if we wish to apply them to present day conditions and to societies apart from France.

The chapters in this volume share in common that they all seek to answer a research question using one or more aspects of the theories put forth by Pierre Bourdieu. We could have selected a different social theorist, but felt that a focus on Bourdieu was particularly timely given his popularity in the social sciences in recent years. Figures 1.1 and 1.2, for example, show keyword hits in the databases Sociological Abstracts and Web of Science (focusing on the Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences databases) for “Bourdieu”, “cultural capital” and “habitus” from 1990 to 2007. It is true that not all hits for habitus may be specifically related to Bourdieu (as the chapter by Cockerham and Hinote in this volume discusses, the concept predates Bourdieu), but the exercise is merely to show the growth in the discussion of his work, theories, and applications of his theory to current research questions.

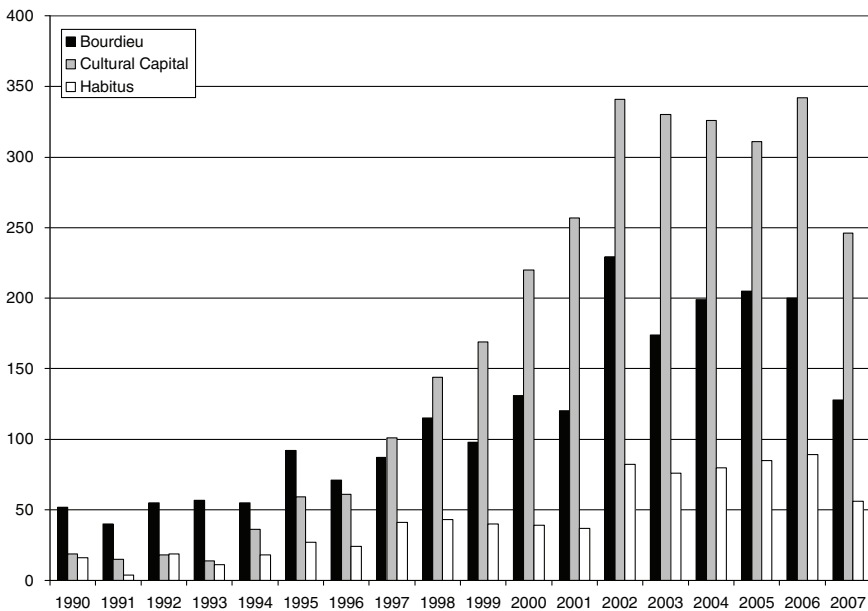


Fig. 1.1 Keyword hits in Sociological Abstracts 1990–2007

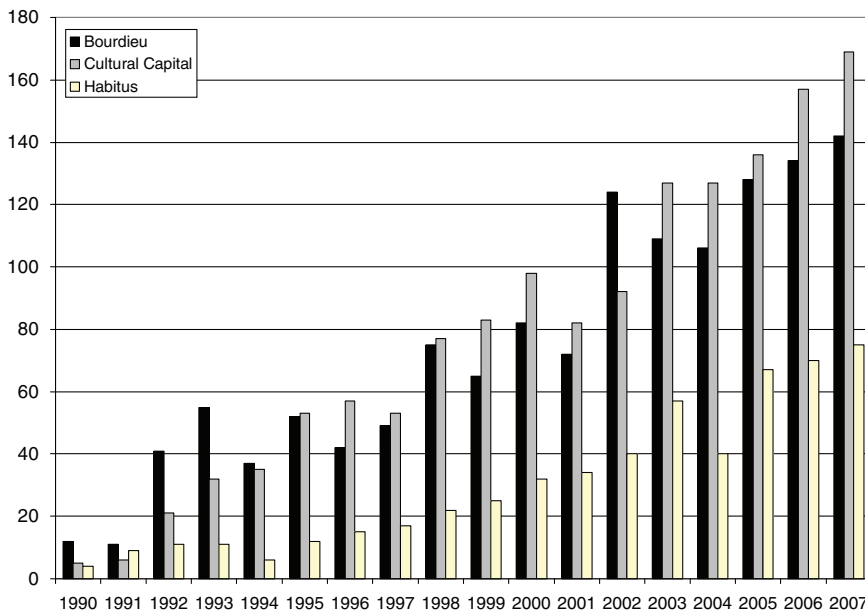


Fig. 1.2 Keyword hits in Web of Science, 1990–2007

After deciding to go ahead with the idea of an edited volume, we were in the position to solicit proposed chapters. We did this through an open call, which was circulated on various international listservs and through individual emails to known scholars in the area. The result was far more chapter proposals than we could ever put in a single volume. The selection in this volume are the ones that best fit around some general themes and which best fit the mandate of the book – to demonstrate the connection between theory and methods using the concepts suggested by Bourdieu.

It has always been our objective to keep this volume as diverse as possible while still maintaining an overarching continuous theme. Table 1.1 illustrates the diversity of the authors, data, quantitative approaches, and topic areas that comprise the chapters of this volume. The authors (and their data) come from North America, Western and Eastern Europe, and Australia. We also have a mix of junior and senior researchers, the latter of which have published extensively using Bourdieu’s theories to test relationships in their data. As the topic areas and research questions are so diverse, the authors also use a spectrum of quantitative techniques to undertake their analyses.

1.2 Organization of the Book

The contributors have been asked to tailor the structure and content of their chapters to accommodate a wide audience. We recognize that readers will approach this volume having varying degrees of expertise with empirical research in general

Table 1.1 Summary of chapters in this collection

Author(s) by chapter	Bourdieu concept	Subject area	Location	Method
Lebaron	Fields	Stratification	France	Theory/MCA
Hjellbrekke and Kornes	Fields	Power	Norway	MCA
Coulangeon and Lemel	Social topography	Social position	France	PCA and cluster analysis
Veenstra	Transmutations of capitals w/in field	Social space/ position	Canada	CATPCA
Andres	Cultural and social capital	Education	Canada	Structural equation modeling
Marks	Cultural capital	Education and labor outcome	Australia	Random effects models
Robson	Cultural capital	Forms of capital	UK	OLS and logistic regression
Zimdars, Sullivan and Heath	Cultural capital	Education	UK	Logistic regression
Vryonides	Social and cultural capital	Education	Greece and Cyprus	OLS and bivariate analysis
Bottero, Lambert, Prandy and McTaggart	Social topography	Occupational stratification	Global	Cambridge scale a tool to measure of Bourdieu
Garrett	Cultural reproduction	Gendered labor (historical context)	Canada	χ^2
Martin	Cultural capital	Education	US	Latent class analysis
Róbert	Cultural consumption	Lifestyles	Hungary	OLS
Levy	Habitus	Sport fandom	US	Cluster analysis
Cockerham and Hinote	Habitus	Health	Global	Theory/multilevel modelling

and quantitative methods in particular. In the interests of providing instructional value, the chapters place a heavy emphasis on operationalization of variables and step-by-step interpretation of findings. We anticipate that this approach will prove useful both to novice learners and experienced researchers with an eye toward expanding their methodological repertoire.

We decided to avoid organizing chapters thematically into discrete sections. Because so many chapters cut across a range of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, it was felt that rigid groupings would seem forced. Instead, the chapters loosely follow the trajectory of Bourdieu's research program outlined early-on by Frédéric Lebaron.

We turn, then, to our authors. In the next chapter, Frédéric Lebaron sets the stage by explaining the trajectory that led Bourdieu to develop his cohesive theory

of social stratification, comprised of familiar components including the forms of capital and the field, using quantitative modeling techniques.

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu develops the idea that if “quantification” is to take place in sociological research, it has to be multidimensional and aim as a first step at operationalizing each of the basic dimensions of social space, namely the various types of capitals (e.g. economic, cultural, social and symbolic)

Despite the perceived shortcoming of quantitative methods then and now as well as the distaste many of his followers seem to hold for such techniques, Lebaron reminds us that Bourdieu maintained specific reasons for his interests in quantifying data and putting his thinking into mathematical terms. Many of these concerns are carried forward in the subsequent chapters of the volume.

1.2.1 *Spatial Modeling Techniques*

One set of authors favor the use of spatial modeling techniques to creatively map aspects of social space in different cultural and geographic settings. For Bourdieu, social life consists of autonomous “fields” in which people are bounded by the hierarchies of social arrangements. Fields are essentially arenas of competition and often conflict, where individuals pursuing goals interact and maneuver. This is accomplished largely through the exchange of forms of capital. By way of spatial modeling techniques, some contributors map hierarchy and interaction within fields while others explore how forms of capital are exchanged.

Johs Hjellbrekke and Olav Korsnes apply multiple correspondence analysis to explore the dimensionality and space relations of elite structures of power in Norway. Using survey data of various elite positions and other high-ranking civil servants, they present a map of the Norwegian field of power. They conclude that not only is Bourdieu’s work valid outside French society, but also may produce new insights about processes of societal change in societies other than France.

Philippe Coulangeon and Yannick Lemel revisit the original principles of lifestyle analysed by Bourdieu in *Distinction*. In particular they empirically evaluate *structural homology*, the assumption that social class structure is linked to aesthetic preference. Using recent survey data on “cultural and sports participation,” they evaluate the extent to which structural homology between practices and social positions is still observable.

In a North American context, Gerry Veenstra uses Canadian data to analyze how different forms of capital are converted into one another. Departing from the approach of using linear models to test the effects of capital, he instead applies relational statistical techniques that he deems more “faithful” to Bourdieu’s field-theoretic approach to capitals.

It is worth noting that each of these three chapters either implicitly or explicitly addresses questions about validity frequently voiced in social science. And these findings suggest that, yes, Bourdieu’s theories have applicability both in France today and in other Western societies, to varying extents.

1.2.2 *The Capitals and the Life Course*

Some of Bourdieu's best known scholarship (with Jean-Claude Passeron, 1979, 1990 and others) is in education, particularly higher education and its role in the reproduction of class relations. So, it is appropriate that many of our contributors focus on aspects of education in different countries and its future contribution to student outcome. One group of authors approaches this challenge by applying different regression techniques to evaluate contradictory claims about the validity and long-term effects of types of capital. In one way or another, they all seek answers to same question: Are forms of capital really the strong predictors of cultural reproduction and stratification that Bourdieu assumed?

Leslie Andres' chapter, for example, employs longitudinal questionnaire data from the British Columbia, Canada *Paths on Life's Way* study. Her project investigates the ways young people's educational dispositions are constructed and shaped by examining how parents transmitted cultural and social capital. In turn, Andres evaluates how students have invested and converted the various forms of capital into educational attainment and occupational status. The longitudinal design is particularly useful for integrating consideration of habitus, an essential though often neglected component of research on cultural reproduction.

Gary Marks examines the effects of cultural capital on educational and early labour market outcomes in Australia. His data indicate that cultural capital only weakly mediates the effects of socioeconomic and social background. He notes that while the effects on educational outcomes are relatively strong, they can be largely attributed to reading behavior in general as opposed to participation in elite culture. Marks therefore concludes that the negative effects of culture are primarily due to the limited employment experiences of people with higher cultural capital.

One of the editors, Karen Robson, has also contributed a chapter to this volume, focusing on the forms of capital and the transmission of cultural capital into economic and social capital in later-life. Using time diaries collected in adolescence from a British birth cohort, Robson is able to examine if participation in elite culture at age 16 is associated with social and economic capital in adulthood. She finds evidence of this association, particularly with regard to investment to leisure reading and writing in adolescence and later-life capitals. She argues that the relation between the forms of capital must take into consideration the continuous conversion that theoretically occurs between them as well as the investment process that is implied within the metaphor of "capital".

Anna Zimdars, Alice Sullivan and Anthony Heath investigate whether cultural capital influences the chances of being offered a place for undergraduate study at the University of Oxford in the UK. Although they find that cultural knowledge helps to predict the chance of admission to Oxford, it cannot account for many significant differences by gender, ethnicity and class. They conclude that cultural capital is therefore not as strong of a class differentiator as Bourdieu proposed. In their appendix is an excerpt of the Cultural Knowledge Test (Sullivan, 2001), which is useful in parsing out components of cultural capital, and which is a key component of Sullivan's earlier much-cited work.

Marios Vryonides integrates measures of both social and cultural capital to examine students' post-secondary school choice, as well as their parents' aspirations in relation to their children's educational and occupational prospects in contemporary Cyprus and Greece. Notably, this work builds upon a well-known study by Katsillis and Rubinson (1990), which analyzed similar measures in the context of Greece. Vryonides' findings seem to support the contention these forms of capital influence the pursuit of education and occupation in both Greece and Greek Cyprus.

Something to take from this selection of chapters is that the notion of "capital" is more ambiguous than it is often credited as being. In fact, one of the issues faced by the authors was the complexity of measuring capitals, and in particular the cultural variety. As Kingston (2001) notes, many conceptually distinct variables have been categorized as cultural capital. Exactly what, then, constitutes cultural capital and which measures of the concept are likely to be significant, were key questions that each chapter addresses and in often innovative ways. We are pleased not only with how the contributors devised their measures but also with their explanations of why different measures were suitable to their projects. As such, we hope these examples provide food for thought to other scholars interested in empirically measuring forms of capital.

1.2.3 Class Structure

Another group of authors take up the broader issue of modeling social class structure over time. The concept of social class is somewhat vaguely defined by Bourdieu, though according to DiMaggio (1982) is reflected in strategic practices rooted in the division of labor. Thus, kinds of occupational measures figure prominently in many of these chapters. The variety of proposed methods are as creative as they are diverse, and draw upon a range of rich data sources in Europe and North America.

Wendy Bottero, Paul Lambert, Kenneth Prandy and Stephen McTaggart introduce to this volume an established methodology for studying social interaction distances between occupations – the Cambridge Social Interaction and Stratification Scales (CAMSIS). They point out that Bourdieu's own work neglects this aspect of social connectivity, thereby limiting analysis of a vital part of social networks. The authors then discuss the practical implementation and argue that social interaction distance measures – an approach to understanding social stratification through the analysis of social interaction patterns – connect very easily with Bourdieu's conceptions of social space.

Heather Garrett offers a unique historical analysis based on Canadian census data from the mid-nineteenth century. Using Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction as an analytic framework, she argues that taking in boarders was one strategy employed by married women to help supplement the family economy. Urban-rural and ethnic differences are explored by comparing married women