Pierre Bourdieu and North American Political Sociology: Why He Doesn’t Fit In But Should

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Pierre Bourdieu is often read as a theorist, a sociologist of culture or education, an anthropologist, but not as a political sociologist. This is particularly the case in the US though generally true in the UK and Europe as well. Yet arguably he was also a political sociologist. Bourdieu was centrally concerned with politics and saw his work as an expression of political struggle. It is striking, however, that few in American political sociology, and even fewer in political science, consider Bourdieu to be relevant to the study of politics. The purpose of this paper is to suggest some reasons for why this is the case.


Keywords: Bourdieu; American political sociology; American political science

Introduction

Pierre Bourdieu is often read as a theorist, a sociologist of culture or education, an anthropologist, but not as a political sociologist.1 This is particularly the case in the US though generally true in the UK and Europe as well. Yet arguably he was also a political sociologist. Bourdieu was centrally concerned with politics and saw his work as an expression of political struggle. However, his work did not follow the usual categories or objects of investigation commonly found in political sociology and particularly in political science. Nevertheless, Bourdieu’s life and work fundamentally concerned politics. Although not known as a political sociologist, I have argued elsewhere (Swartz, 1997, 2003b) that there is an important political sociology, or sociology of politics, in Bourdieu’s work.2

It is striking, however, that few in American political sociology, and even fewer in political science, consider Bourdieu to be relevant to the study of politics. The purpose of this paper is to suggest some reasons for why this is the case. It also suggests some features of Bourdieu’s work that might enrich the study of politics in the US context.
Bourdieu’s Absence in the US Political Sociology and Science Literature

Bourdieu is seldom cited let alone discussed in American political sociology and particularly political science. In surveys of relevant literature it is striking that Bourdieu is seldom referenced. Alford and Friedland (1985), for example, situate Raymond Boudon in the pluralist camp but say nothing of Bourdieu. There is very little mention of Bourdieu’s work in the Research in Political Sociology series. Consider two recent volumes. The only reference in Dobratz et al. (2001) is the (Bloemraad, 2001) paper that takes up collective identity and political mobilization in Quebec. (Canadian political sociology may be more open to Bourdieu’s work.) There is no significant influence of Bourdieu reflected in the work of Dobratz et al. (2002) either. A recent survey (Checa et al., 2005) of 120 US PHD sociology program websites, of 106 contacts within academic departments, and an examination of 17 graduate syllabi identifies (in rank order) the following five authors most frequently assigned in graduate political science courses: Theda Skocpol, Seymour Martin Lipset, Charles Tilly, G. William Domhoff, and Juan Linz. Examination of their writings reveals little acquaintance with the work of Bourdieu. Skocpol has in fact been sharply critical of cultural approaches to the study of political power and state institutions.

Bourdieu’s work has yet to find its place in any significant way in many contemporary textbooks in political sociology. An illustrative textbook from the late 1990s (Kourvetaris, 1997) mentions Alain Touraine’s work on social movements but nothing on Bourdieu. Another example from an even more recent textbook in political sociology (Neuman, 2005, 347–348) illustrates the very limited way that Bourdieu’s work is now coming to be acknowledged. Only his early work (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990 [1970]) on education reproducing class inequalities through the unequal transmission of cultural capital is mentioned in a chapter on cultural institutions that build and reinforce societal assumptions, values, and beliefs that shape political life.

Bourdieu is hardly cited at all in American political science. An informal survey of the flagship American Political Science Review shows little familiarity with Bourdieu. And when he is occasionally cited, it is not because of any direct contribution to our understanding of politics. Illustrative is Lisa Wedeen’s (2002) paper arguing for the usefulness of introducing culture as ‘semiotic practices’ to enhance understanding of political analyses. In an area where Bourdieu is particularly strong, Wedeen cites Bourdieu only as contributing to practice-oriented anthropology, which in turn has had some influence in political science, rather than contributing directly to political analyses.

The US may not be unique in this regard for a relatively recent review of political sociology in the UK shows no particular interest in Bourdieu and does...
not reference any of his work (Rootes, 1996). The Kate Nash text (2000) makes no reference to Bourdieu though a few references to Bourdieu appear in her edited collection (Nash and Scott, 2001). And another textbook by another scholar working in the British sphere (Faulks, 2000, 112), but drawing significantly on American political sociology literature, offers but one reference to Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital and its unequal distribution to help explain why dominant political culture is not more frequently resisted. Bourdieu appears not to have been picked up much in political science in other countries as well (Voutat, 2002).

Why Bourdieu’s Absence in American Political Sociology and Political Science

Why has Bourdieu rarely been cited by political sociologists and political scientists in the US. One obvious reason is that Bourdieu’s work focuses on France and has been sometimes slow in translation. American political sociologists and political scientists tend to read American work with the notable exception of comparative historical sociology and the recent interest in globalization. In addition, Wacquant (1993) points up the fragmented reception of Bourdieu in the US, attributing it to both the character of Bourdieu’s work and the nature of the intellectual field in the United States where strong academic disciplinary specialization selectively and narrowly channeled Bourdieu’s work into the sociology of education and anthropology, or simply ignored it altogether. While this is true generally of Bourdieu’s work, it is particularly the case of his analysis of politics. His intellectual project, his initial training in philosophy and the less bounded intellectual tradition of sociology in the French context have generated an intellectual project and method that clash with the sharply delimited academic disciplinary specializations in American universities.

One cannot say that US students of politics have been resistant to Bourdieu’s work simply because it is French. Consider the influence of Foucault. In a book that makes a case for the ‘postmodern turn’ in political sociology, meaning the paradigm shift away from state-centered, class-based models of participation (or non-participation) to a ‘cultural politics, understood in the broadest possible sense as the contestation and transformation of social identities and structures’, Nash (2000, 3, 19) argues that the single most important theoretical contributor to this shift has been Michel Foucault. Indeed, the author claims that Foucault’s work ‘on the new political sociology cannot be over-estimated. His direct influence is widely acknowledged by those who work on issues in the politics of identity and difference’ (Nash, 2000, 26). Foucault’s ideas on governmentality, discipline, and the inter-relations of
knowledge and power have been even more important in orienting attention toward the practices of power and the formation of identities across a broad range of domains. Foucault has been significant in shifting attention from conventional politics and dominant political institutions to other forms of politics in the organizations and institutions of civil society, in everyday life and interpersonal relations, and in global culture. Why Foucault’s influence has been measurably greater in political sociology than Bourdieu’s is an important topic that cannot be addressed within the limits of this paper. However, it reinforces a central point of the paper that Bourdieu’s importation into American social science has been highly selective reflecting in part the disciplinary concerns and preoccupations rather than just the stylistic and national character of his work.

Bourdieu’s work on politics has been neglected by political sociologists and political scientists because he did not write books or articles that fit directly within the disciplinary contours of the subfield of political sociology or the academic discipline of political science. Indeed, Bourdieu does not devote much attention to public demonstrations, strikes, police, army, prisons, or war. Nor does he devote much attention to those political units, such as legislatures or constitutions, commonly treated as institutions by political scientists. Except for the act of delegating political power, Bourdieu has not devoted much attention to political processes, such as decision making, coalition building, or leadership selection.

Bourdieu’s sociology attempts a broader sweep of political issues than those delineated by the boundaries of these academic disciplines. Indeed, I would argue that Bourdieu’s sociology makes no distinction between the sociological approach to the study of the social world and the study of political power. Bourdieu sees all of sociology as fundamentally dealing with power. He sees power as a central organizing dimension of all social life. Power is not an independent domain that can be separated from culture or economics but a force that pervades all human relations. Politics concern the structures and exercise of power; the sociology of politics must reveal that fundamental dimension of social relations regardless of level of analysis or substantive area. Bourdieu’s sociology of symbolic power and violence highlights that political dimension of all social life. He therefore rejects the validity of a substantive area of investigation specialized in the study of only the power dimension of social life. He rejects the traditional academic division of labor between sociology, political sociology, and political science.6

Politics in fact stand at the very core of Bourdieu’s sociology even though he has not devoted much attention to traditional political science concerns, such as the state, elections and voting, parties, pressure groups, polling, and forms of physical coercion and violence. For Bourdieu, the political dimension of social life goes to the very foundation of any collectivity, since he sees all

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instituted groups as emerging out of a symbolic struggle (struggle over representations) to impose selected representations as legitimate social identity. Any distribution of properties, such as age, gender, education or wealth, can serve as the basis of group divisions and therefore become the basis of political struggle (Bourdieu, 1981, 71). Such properties, or ‘capitals,’ as Bourdieu calls them, require legitimation to function as power resources. His concepts of symbolic power and violence call attention to that power dimension where there are particular interests that go misrecognized as representing universal interests. Symbolic power is a world-making power for it involves the capacity to impose the ‘legitimate vision of the social world and of its divisions’ (Bourdieu, 1987, 13, 1989). Bourdieu sees the very foundation of the social order as a struggle among various collectivities to impose as legitimate their particular identities and definitions of the social world. Symbolic power is a group-making power, for it is able to constitute social realities as legitimate entities. This occurs through struggle over the right to exercise that symbolic function. The task of sociology is to reveal the underlying character of those legitimation struggles. Viewed this way, all sociology for Bourdieu is in fact a sociology of politics.

American academic specialization

The case of political science

Bourdieu’s broad socioanthropological approach to power and politics clashes with the academic specialization of American universities. The American academic discipline of political science has focused on how political institutions actually operate (one of legacies of the behaviorist school), on the more visible aspects of governing operations (elections, laws, policies, parties, constitutions, judiciaries, executives, legislatures — the study of political institutions, etc.), and some of the ideal forms of governing, such as political theory. By contrast, Bourdieu approached the topic of power as a sociologist and anthropologist stressing the social and cultural bases of politics at the micro- as well as macro-levels, often those less visible aspects in the actual functioning of political institutions. Moreover, Bourdieu was decidedly interdisciplinary in his work making it less attractive for import into academic disciplines with strong boundaries. And perhaps more importantly, Bourdieu approached the topic of power critically, as someone who challenges the fundamental assumptions of existing political institutions. Thus, Bourdieu showed little interest in studying how political institutions actually operate on a day-to-day basis but focused his attention on their fundamental presuppositions for operation. To illustrate, Bourdieu (1979 [1971], 1985) sharply criticized political opinion polling for constructing forms of political understanding and knowledge that are dominated by professionals rather than focusing on opinion formation and
trends themselves. Moreover, Bourdieu’s work does not fit within any of the distinct schools of thought in political science on the actual working of the state in liberal democracies: pluralism, Marxism, rational choice, elite theory, or neo-pluralism (O’Leary, 2003).

Political scientists have tended to focus on the instrumentally rational calculations of class interests, party politics, or international security. This has been reinforced in recent years by the growth of ‘rational-choice’ theory in the social sciences, particularly in political science. Indeed, one estimate in the mid-1990s estimated that nearly 40 percent of the articles in the American Political Science Review had a ‘clear rational-choice orientation.’ Bourdieu was a sharp critic of the rational-choice model of human action.

The special case of social capital
Since the 1995 publication of his landmark article ‘Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,’ Robert Putnam’s (1995, 2000) notion of ‘social capital’ as the key basis for civic virtue and good governance has experienced a veritable bull market in conceptual fortune, debate, and research in political science. Putnam (2000, 19) acknowledges the much earlier use of the term by Bourdieu but notes that it was James S. Coleman (1990) who put the term on the American intellectual agenda in the late 1980s. Bourdieu first treated the term in 1980 (Bourdieu, 1980) and the English translation of its subsequent formulation (Bourdieu, 1986) did not receive much attention in the English-speaking world. However, the introduction and rapidly expanding use of the term in American political science has not created an inroad for Bourdieu’s work in the US literature because the intellectual agendas are quite different. Putnam thinks of social capital as a structural property of large aggregates (communities, cities, states) that provides the key cement for political unity and effective action. Bourdieu’s concept focuses on the potential benefits accruing to individuals because of their ability to draw up network resources and he stresses the stratifying effects of its unequal distribution.

The case of political sociology
If not in political science, why has Bourdieu’s influence not been greater in political sociology where his distinctly more sociological concerns might receive greater hearing? Disciplinary boundaries help explain why his work has not been imported in American political science but why have US sociologists of politics been particularly slow in picking up on Bourdieu? As Allardt (2001, 11701) insightfully points out, political sociology emerged historically as a ‘border field between political science and sociology’ and there has been ‘no stable consensus of what counts as political sociology in contrast to sociology and political science proper.’ If the common theme of relating the social and
the political can be found in the post-World War II history of political sociology and in Bourdieu's work, two areas of concern have not been preoccupations of Bourdieu: the study of electoral behavior as a central measure of citizens participation in democratic life\textsuperscript{11} and the study of 'master patterns of societal change' with increasing attention to the formation of states and nations, their problematic features, their globalization, and the breakdowns of social and political orders. While Bourdieu devoted some attention to political participation, particularly opinion polling, and later in his career to the symbolic dimension of modern states, his principal works did not concern directly these overarching topics of political sociology.

\textit{Emphasis on the state}

The intellectual agenda of American political sociology was shaped by the state-centered debate that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. Focus on the nature of the modern state became the overriding emphasis in American political sociology.\textsuperscript{12} This focus on state institutions excluded for the most part cultural considerations, or accorded them only a derivative role, and therefore limited interest in the kind of analysis Bourdieu proposed. The debate on state-formation and function pitted Marxist/neo-Marxist against Weberian/neo-Weberian perspectives. For the former, culture was considered as an effect of the state and/or economic conditions but not a constituent force in its own right. For the latter, culture played a role only in the analysis of premodern and non-Western states and was limited to formal—legal rationality in the case of modern states. Illustrative of neo-Weberian thinking is Theda Skocpol who in her landmark work \textit{States and Social Revolutions} (1979) explicitly rejected cultural analysis by asking researchers to 'rise above' the 'viewpoints of the participants' (Skocpol, 1979, 18).\textsuperscript{13} This perspective was further solidified in her influential programmatic introduction 'Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research' to (Rueschemeyer, Evans \textit{et al.} (1985). Influential in shaping a generation of graduate studies in sociology (Steinmetz, 1999a, 17), this neo-Weberian emphasis on the autonomy of the state from economistic and class-center approaches relegated culture to a very marginalized position. State-centered and structural Marxist perspectives on politics dominated political sociology until the end of the 1980s (Steinmetz, 1999a, ix). For the most part, culture was not taken very seriously as a causal factor or even an object of theoretical reflection, let alone as constitutive of politics and the state. Therefore, there was little interest in Bourdieu's work.

The state-centered analysis did not go without challenge, however. One came from the thinking of Michel Foucault (1977a, b) who argued that the very nature of power needed to be rethought, that power was not centralized in the
edifice of state institutions and ideologies but was widely dispersed through capillary networks and disciplinary dispositions. One sees the influence of Foucault on the thinking of the state in the work of Mitchell (1991a, b) and Steinmetz (1993). Another challenge came from globalization and increased acceptance of neo-liberal ideology that challenged the autonomy of the nation-state. And yet another challenge came from an emerging ‘cultural turn’ in the social sciences that also contributed to rethinking state-centered analyses of politics (Steinmetz, 1999b). Some openness to Bourdieu’s analysis of politics begins with the ‘cultural turn’ in the social sciences that asserts the constitutive role of culture and occurs more or less simultaneously with the growth of cultural studies.

Bourdieu (1994 [1993], 2004 [1997]) did not theorize explicitly the state until later in his work. For example, he did not participate in the lively debates in the 1970s over the nature of the state that pitted structuralist’s (Poulantzas, 1973) against instrumentalist’s (Miliband, 1969) views, or over the degree of state autonomy and contradictions in capitalist economies (Skocpol, 1981; Offe, 1984; Block, 1987). The work of Louis Althusser (1970) and Nicos Poulantzas (1975) contributed significantly to the rise in the 1970s in importance of the subfields of world systems, historical sociology, and Marxist sociology (O rum, 1996, 140–141). Bourdieu (1975) was in fact quite critical of this Althusserian/ Poulantzas emphasis that influenced American political sociology during that period. Nor did he engage the ‘state-centered’ (Nordlinger, 1981; Evans et al., 1985; Skocpol and Amenta, 1986) or ‘historical institutionalism’ (Skocpol and Campbell, 1995) approaches that followed. His principal book on the state, The State Nobility, did not appear in English until 1996.

Elite studies
Despite ignorance of Bourdieu’s work in the US, portions of it clearly intersect with key currents in American political sociology. Power elite theory and research pioneered in the US by C. Wright Mills (2000), G. William Domhoff (1983, 1990, 2001), and others clearly overlaps in many ways with power issues researched by Bourdieu. Bourdieu devoted considerable attention to ruling elites and this part of his work overlaps to some extent with the political sociology of elites in the Mills/Domhoff tradition. Yet, differences in the nature of the sociology of political power in the two countries helps explain why Bourdieu’s work reflects a particular focus that is not found in the US. Whereas Mills saw American society ruled by powerful business elites, historically WASP capitalists and their dependents, socioeconomic groups from the capitalist class and the military — with this focus being refined and elaborated by Domhoff (1983, 1990) and others — Bourdieu’s work focused on state bureaucratic elites more characteristic in France. Still, the overlap in
interests has been largely ignored by American elite researchers who have focused primarily on American elites.

Another reason that Bourdieu’s studies of elites have not resonated strongly with US students of political elite recruitment and careers stems from differences in the French and American political systems. France developed a strong administrative bureaucracy in which the technical training of an elite corps of bureaucrats exercise their authority and power within a centralized state. As in Japan and England, high-level state bureaucrats are recruited directly from elite institutions of higher learning (the Grandes Écoles, particularly ENA today) who pursue their early careers in state administration and often retire early to positions in big business or run for political office. Bourdieu produced a major book, *The State Nobility* (1996 [1989]), on precisely that system. By contrast, high office in the US federal bureaucracy is more permeable through recruitment from the business sector and internal promotion. American researchers have devoted relatively more attention to business and professional elites that are more important to American political life rather than to a fairly autonomous bureaucratic elite as found in France. The empirical objects are different.

*Recent shifts in American political sociology concerns*

It is noteworthy, however, that changes in American political sociology over the last several years seem more attentive today to the concerns animating Bourdieu’s sociology. American political sociology has experienced a significant shift over the last 30 years from a behavioral orientation to an institutional one (Robertson, 1993; Orum, 1996). There has been a shift away from behavioral studies of parties, voting, political participation, political attitudes, etc. toward an increased interest in social institutions, particularly the welfare state and social movements. Moreover, studies are increasingly informed by historical perspective. The shift from the view of state institutions as autonomous from social structure to one where the distinction between the political and social is fluid and indeterminant opens an inroad for Bourdieu’s thinking. Also, the expanded view of power that no longer views it as concentrated in and limited to state institutions may enhance interest in Bourdieu’s work.

*Social movement research*

Social movement theorizing and empirical research has been one of the most vigorous and expanding subfields of political sociology since the 1970s. Yet, Bourdieu’s work is seldom referenced in this exploding literature. In (Dobratz *et al.*, 2002), which takes stock of current research of political participation at the beginning of the 21st century, Bourdieu is referenced in just one of the 10
included papers. And Buechler (2002), who reviews the current theoretical orientations to social movement research, does not reference Bourdieu. Crossley (2002), on the other hand, devotes considerable attention to the relevance of Bourdieu for social movement research but Crossley is British and has written elsewhere on Bourdieu (Crossley, 2001). Crossley stresses how Bourdieu can be used to criticize the rational-action perspective in social movements research.

Bourdieu is not known as a social movement sociologist\textsuperscript{15} nor has his thinking today had significant impact on social movement theorizing and research.\textsuperscript{16} Yet, his framework is relevant to social movement research. In a case study of the demise of the Workers Alliance of America, a powerful, nation-wide movement of the unemployed formed in 1935 and dissolved in 1941, Chad Goldberg (2003) sees in Bourdieu a valuable resource for developing a needed and better synthesis of resource mobilization/political process perspectives with collective identity-oriented analyses of new social movements. Goldberg deftly applies Bourdieu's idea of classification struggles to build a bridge between two traditions of social movement research, resource mobilization/political process theories, and new social movements theoretical emphasis on collective identity. Bourdieu's stress on the importance of symbolic power in classification struggles provides an important corrective to each. Goldberg's study illustrates that political mobilization does not presuppose an already established political identity. Nor does political identity require a clear objective base in order to form. Both identity and mobilization can form simultaneously and dialectically out of struggle itself.\textsuperscript{17}

Bourdieu argues that collective identities are fundamentally political in that they are constructed identities that involve power relations. This is in part what he means when he stresses that fields are relational. Collective identity in social movements is one area where one might imagine scholars drawing some inspiration from Bourdieu. This is illustrated by Bloemraad (2001) in her study of the 1995 Quebec independence movement. Bloemraad draws on Bourdieu's concept of field to argue that collective identity cannot be separated from political mobilization. She sees 'parallels' between her concept of 'mobilization playing fields' and Bourdieu's concept of field to the extent that field identities are relational and differentiate 'them' from 'us.'

\textit{Culture and politics}

Bourdieu is receiving greater hearing in the emerging 'politics and culture' interdisciplinary site of theory and empirical investigation than in the traditional areas of political analysis, such as states, social movements, and voting behavior. Inclusive of but not reducible to 'political culture,' this broader arena of inquiry, eclectically informed by theory, history, and
anthropology, addresses not only problems of democratization and civil society but also institutions, such as law, religion, the state, and citizenship, political communication and meaning and collective action (Berezin, 1997). Bourdieu is discussed in Swidler (1986), possibly the most cited work in this broad area, and in Sewell (1992) that has had a major influence on the work with a historial orientation in this area (Berezin, 1997, 376). Lamont (1992a, 1992b) has also drawn on Bourdieu’s emphasis on boundary making.

Citizenship is another area of growing interest in research years that falls within the emerging ‘politics and culture’ research agenda. Brubaker (1992, 35–36), for example, makes a compelling case for understanding the ‘institution of formal citizenship’ as well as the rights and obligations of citizenship since ‘formalization and codification are themselves social phenomena, with sociologically interesting effects.’ Although he studies comparatively immigration policy in France and Germany, Brubaker draws from Bourdieu to argue that citizenship is a socially constituted boundary setting device for establishing who is and who is not a member of a polity and that the different ways the French and Germans think about immigration reflects their different political cultures about what constitutes national identity. Citizenship is not a given but a sociologically and historically constituted category. Thus, we see through Brubaker’s widely cited work influence of Bourdieu’s thinking on citizenship.

Finally, in the area of political culture, Aronoff (2000, 11642) mentions Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, doxa, and cultural capital, as resources being used by some to shift the focus of political culture analysis to how power is inscribed in ‘the scripts of everyday life.’

**Conclusion**

It is striking how little of Bourdieu’s work is known among American political sociologists and political scientists compared to their colleagues in the sociology of education, culture, social theory, stratification, and in anthropology. A combination of the distinctive character of Bourdieu’s work and American disciplinary boundaries help explain this lack of familiarity. Although fundamentally concerned with the sociology of power and politics, Bourdieu’s work has started only recently to find some hearing among American social scientists sharing similar interests. Recent shifts away from state-centered perspectives toward more culture-oriented views and methods suggest possible openings for Bourdieu’s work. We welcome these shifts for American analysis of politics will likely be enriched by the orientation of Bourdieu’s sociology and the American political terrain will offer an interesting test for the applicability of Bourdieu’s perspective.
Notes

1 Some notable exceptions include Lee, 1998; Steinmetz, 1999a; Topper, 2001, and of course Wacquant 2004, 2005 who belonged to Bourdieu’s research center at the Collège de France.

2 There is also an important politics of sociology, a political project behind Bourdieu’s sociology. One finds in his work a vision for what he thinks the practice of social science can do for democratic life and a critical role he assigns to social scientists as intellectuals (Swartz, 1997, 247–266; Wacquant, 2004, 9–12). Moreover, very little attention has been given to Bourdieu’s own political engagements. Yet, at the time of his death in 2002, Bourdieu was the leading public intellectual and social scientist in France, and perhaps in Europe as well, of the anti-globalization movement (Swartz, 2003a). We do not, however, take up those important topics in this paper.

3 This survey is not based on random selection and reflects a low response rate frequent in internet surveys. Its findings, however, support our informal survey of a number of textbooks, literatures reviews, and key writings in the field.

4 According to the APSA journal articles website, the most popular article downloads from the key APSA journals (American Political Science Review, Perspectives in Politics, and PS: Political Science and Politics) reveal the following major themes of interest: terrorism, war, US foreign policy, and governance in a globalized world (http://www.apsanet.org/section_604.cfm — August 29, 2005). None of these themes receive any extensive treatment by Bourdieu.

5 There is of course an important French current of political sociology influenced by Bourdieu’s work. See Daniel Gaxie (1978, 1990), Erik Neveu (2005), and Michel Offerlé (1987) for notable illustrations of Bourdieu’s impact on the discipline in that country.

6 Indeed, as Bon and Schemel (1980, 1203) point out, Bourdieu refuses to grant political science the status of a genuine social science. He considers it a form of practical knowledge designed to assist professional politicians in advancing their interests within the political field. He calls it a ‘false science’ in that it legitimates this political practice as ostensibly scientific.

7 The term comes from Nelson Goodman (1978).

8 The estimate comes from Hedström (1996) and is cited in Steinmetz (1999a, 13).

9 Bourdieu (1986, 248) defined the term as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition.’ See (Portes, 1998) for an excellent analytical overview of how the concept of social capital has been employed by its principal theorists in economics, sociology, and political science.

10 This is particularly the case from the 1970s onward. The student rebellions and political left radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s undercut the earlier focus in political sociology on electoral studies. Growth in a multiplicity of political concerns, such as ethnicities and the role of ethnic identities in nation building, occurred. In the 1980s and 1990s, interest in the master patterns of change generated renewed focus on nation building as the state became a central concern (Jenkins, 2000).

11 Voting and electoral behavior formed a central point of departure for academic sociology in the 1950s and 1960s. From the 1970s onward, electoral studies became increasingly sophisticated methodologically and concentrated in the field of political science (Jenkins, 2000, 11704).

12 Indication of that shift in American political sociology to focus on the modern state can be found in successive editions of Orum (1989). From the first edition in 1978 to the third edition in 1989, Orum (1989, ix) notes that ‘perhaps the major change has to do with the new thinking and research about the modern state.’ Prior to 1978 the state was only acknowledged by political sociologists; only in the late 1970s and 1980s did it become a major object of analysis. His 1989 edition, for example, incorporates many of the new writings on the state, in particular those of Nicos Poulantzas and Theda Skocpol.
13 Quoted in Steinmetz (1999a, 17). One should not underestimate the boundary-setting role that Skocpol's work had on political sociology. Writing in 1997 one observer (Berezin, 1997, 374) says that 'for the past 18 years' Skocpol's work 'set the research agenda within sociology.'

14 Domhoff and those working in this power research tradition have thought it important to demonstrate the active role of the capitalist class in shaping political life in a country where the traditional ideology has long denied the existence of social classes. In France, the existence of social classes is taken for granted.

15 In terms of French social movement research, US researchers are more likely to think of Alain Touraine and his collaborators, particularly with regard to the 'new' social movements.

16 Probably the one Bourdieusien influenced work that has been most noted by some social movement researchers is (Boltanski, 1974).

17 As Neveu (2005, 83–84) points out, Bourdieu's economy of practice can help show how political activism in social movements can be 'reasonable' or even 'rational' without reducing action to a rigid and over-simplifying cost/benefits calculation. The idea of fields with their illusio and actors guided by habitus helps take into account the diversity of social worlds with their own particular sets of goals, rewards, investments, motivations for engagement that need not stem from conscious calculation of material or symbolic benefits.

References


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