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## Original Research Article

# Geographical contributions of the work of Pierre Bourdieu

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### ABSTRACT

In the 20th century, Pierre Bourdieu made significant contributions to the social sciences. In his era, he was a master theorist as well as an empiricist. His considerable contributions to the fields of sociology and anthropology have placed him in a prominent position. He was able to work decisively on the features of social phenomena on a solid scientific foundation because to his ability to observe things methodically and systematically. His invention of the phrases "habitus" and "field," along with his creative and practical efforts, gave him a new identity. Other social scientists of his day as well as the philosophers of the following generation were influenced by Bourdieu's theories on class, culture, education, gender, economics, and politics to reconsider the topics from an empirical viewpoint point of view.

## 1. Introduction

Like Foucault, Barthes, and Lacan, Pierre Bourdieu was one of the foremost intellectual social scientists in France during the twentieth century. The sixth most significant social scientist of the 20th century in the discipline of sociology, according to the International Sociological Association, is Pierre Bourdieu. He was a researcher, anthropologist, well-known sociologist, proponent of education, and thinker. The expanding importance of Bourdieu's social theory in the humanities and social sciences has been acknowledged by a number of authors [1-6].

The expansion of human geography as a major subject of social sciences, covering human culture, economic status, political attitude, and gender studies, naturally led to Bourdieu's contribution to the development of contemporary human geographical philosophy. It is currently acknowledged that his contributions to the development of ideas in the fields of economy, culture, ethnography, and feminism are key themes in contemporary human geography. Bourdieu was a sociologist, economist, and human geographer in that order. Bourdieu's contributions are increasingly indispensable to the scientists working in the relevant field as modern human geography turns more and more toward humanistic fields. Without Bourdieu's contemporary thought, it is currently exceedingly challenging to analyse the philosophy of modern human geography.

## 2. Pierre Bourdieu's accomplishments and life

In Denguin, France, on August 1, 1930, Pierre Bourdieu was born into a postman's family. He began his career as a teacher after earning his degree in philosophy at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. He fought in the French army between 1958 and 1962 during the Algerian War of Independence. In essence, Bourdieu's decision to work on

ethnography at that time marked the beginning of his career as a well-known sociologist. After being hired as a lecturer at the "Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Sciences Sociales" in 1964, he joined the College de France in 1981. He established the "Centre de Sociologie Européenne" in 1968, serving as its director until his passing (23rd January 2002). In 1993, he received the "Médaille d'or du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique" (CNRS).



Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002)

## 3. The anthropological works of Bourdieu

The most well-known intellectual in recent French history, Bourdieu produced a significant body of theoretical work in the sociological and anthropological sciences. Bourdieu had written more than twenty books on anthropology, cultural sociology, language, and literature from the 1960s until his death. His impact on French politics was also thought to be substantial. Bourdieu had the unique chance to extensively investigate the socioeconomic circumstances of the middle-class families of the day in France because he was raised in a relatively middle-class family. As a result, he developed an



early understanding of the art of thinking in social science. He acquired the key tools for anthropology study from his observational experience. As a result, his studies became extremely practical and grounded in reality. His work included the homeless, unemployed, illegal immigrants, members of marginalised socioeconomic groups, and workers who were witnessing industrial strikes.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Bourdieu began participating in a variety of extracurricular social activities. In 1995, Bourdieu's outspoken support of the student and public sector worker strikes elevated his political reputation to a new level. As a result of his political involvement, he started editing the "Raisons d'agir series" to publicly address the political and social concerns that France is currently grappling with. Later, he came to feel that politics emerged from social conflict, which is a fundamental component of all social activity. And this politics controls every social phenomenon in contemporary civilisation. In his "social space" model, he exemplified the spatial dimensions of social standing and lifestyle. He utilises a figure in his essay "Distinction" to show how social and physical distance is similar.

Actually, he attempted to explain the reason for the clear class distinctions that we typically observe in our society, between various groups or communities, in his article "Distinction." Class divisions are a result of political, socioeconomic, and cultural actions. Throughout his entire life, he had made an effort to contribute in a positive way to human culture and society while taking into account the surrounding socioeconomic situations. Only a portion of that work dealt with studies of feminism in relation to class and culture.

### **3. Bourdieu as an empirical researcher**

Along with being a traditional sociologist, Bourdieu was an empiricist. He only trusted phenomena that could be observed. After witnessing and realising all sociological occurrences in the real world, he used to describe them all from a scientific standpoint. He found the sociological phenomena that affect us on a daily basis to be a fascinating subject. His work, therefore, resembled scientific descriptions exactly. He was, in essence, a prolific thinker and scientist. A cultural sociologist, Bourdieu. He was a master theorist as well as an empiricist.

He notably emphasised the words "habitus" and "field." The "system of social positions" that is based on power dynamics was named by him the field. He argues that because they are independent in terms of their cultural and social relations and cannot be controlled by others or by external forces, these independent or autonomous sectors are more prevalent in a complex and advanced society than in a simple, small, classical one.

Every social event, according to Bourdieu, occurs in what is known as a "social arena" on Earth's surface, where common people are continually engaged in a struggle for survival in order to meet their most fundamental requirements. He contends that no single model, theory, or point of view, such as the status of the economy or a certain government policy, can be used to analyse this contradiction. Similar to Weber, he used to consider some independent criteria, such as educational or cultural ones, when analysing social phenomena in any civilisation. Bourdieu viewed meta-theory as a set of analytical

resources for directing empirical inquiry. He employed thinking techniques for a thorough examination because of this.

According to Bourdieu, a community's "habitus" can be gauged by the calibre of its educational and cultural institutions. He took into consideration both the individual and the collective members of the society in question while discussing the term "habitus." An individual person's conception and perception style will always have an impact on their personality. Even when they examine the same issue from several angles and conduct divergent analyses of the episodes, there is still a collective or societal effect that directly affects how people form habits. In short, Bourdieu created a new method for examining literary and artistic works that are relevant to contemporary society while taking into account the daily lives of the average person. Later, Bourdieu examined the socioeconomic and cultural traits of society using his notion of "habitus."

### **4. Bourdieu with his theories on class, culture, and education**

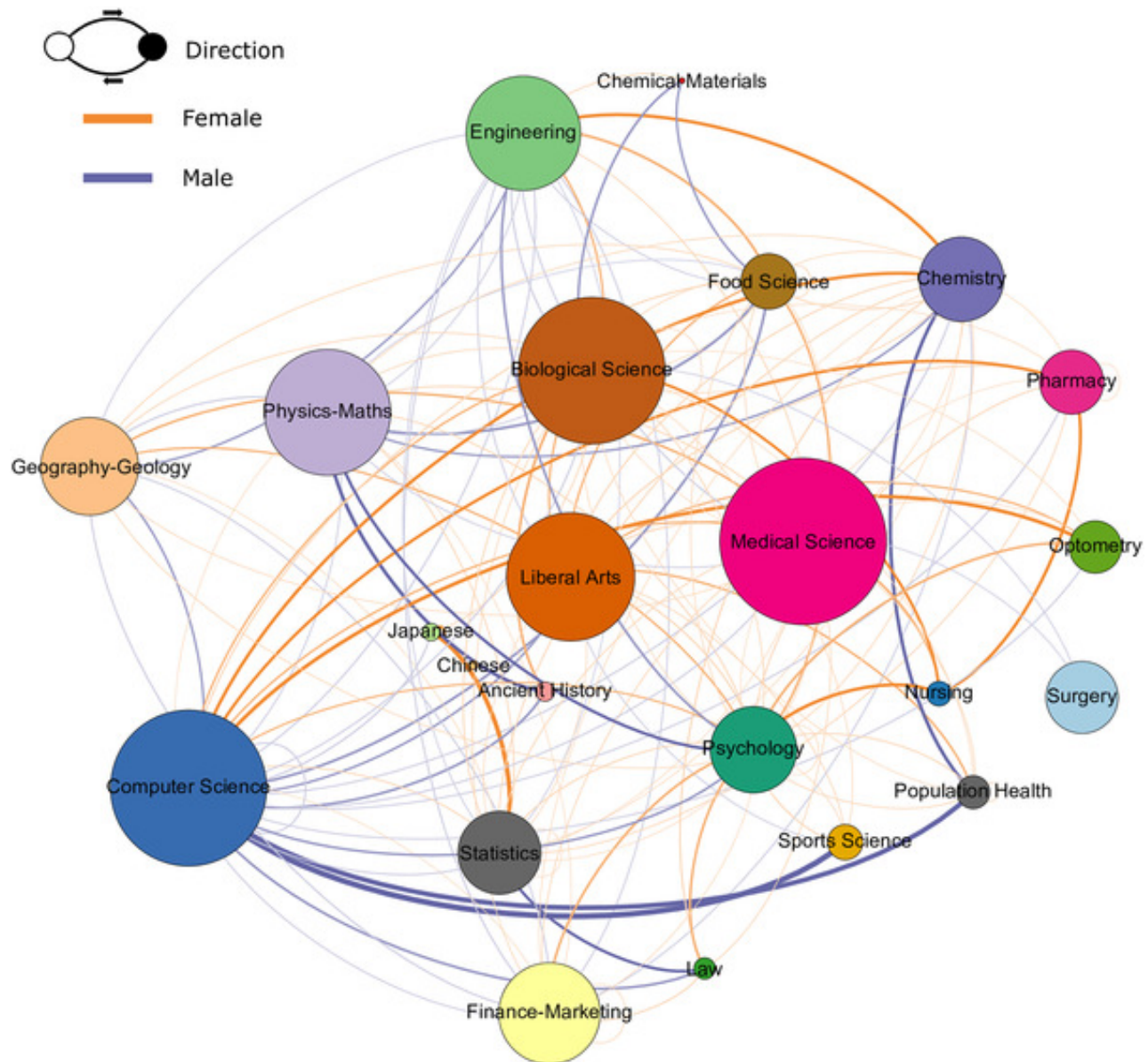
Bourdieu contends that the main factors confirming the existence of social class distinctions are culture and education. Bourdieu reasoned that if people don't recognise the significance of education, they won't be able to comprehend the significance of modern civilizations. The development of modern society is dependent on the effectiveness of the educational system. According to Bourdieu, the sociology of education can never be a supplementary field of study. It is the centre of contemporary society. Education systems impact the standard of living by raising income per capita and productive capacity.

The growth of the educational system in the society in question has a significant impact on the structure of our society. Therefore, as educational progress differs across the globe, so does the advancement of society. He thought that the advancement of education always plays a key part in the development of any civilization. There has been a close bond between them since the dawn of human civilization, and as time went on, that bond only grew deeper. He made the case that France's cultural division was solely the result of its educational system in his 1970 book "La Reproduction." Any society's educational system has the power to counteract the negative effects of the social class structure.

He stated that culture serves to create the dominating framework of our civilization while defining culture. Culture can also serve as a tool for dominance, with intellectuals playing a central role in the creation of cultural artefacts and symbolic authority. Capital for education is given priority in this case. Although Bourdieu stated that culture was a gift from "nature," he did not specify whether this gift was humanistic or inhuman. His later research, however, suggests that he was more fascinated by human culture, the human mind, and human taste, which made his study of nature humanistic. As our society develops, so does culture, which is formed by the nature of the human mind—both individual and collective. The connection between culture and education underwent a change in identity after Bourdieu. He noted in his "Distinction" that all cultural practises are closely related to the level of education in the relevant society.

Another outstanding work of Bourdieu's is his critique of the class system. As was previously discussed, educational and cultural elements play a major part in class system determination, but economic power and the political climate

also have a significant impact. Although when it comes to determining the social class structure in our society, politics and economics come after education and culture.



**Figure 1.** Bourdieu, networks, and movements.

## 5. Bourdieu and feminism

Bourdieu's thesis on social constructions, which included the female study, made a significant contribution during his lifetime and the years that followed. Bourdieu heavily referenced Catherine MacKinnon and other radical feminists in his feminism study. Due to its scientific foundation, feminists today often model their work after Bourdieu's writings on feminism. His modern theory of feminism is regarded as a genuinely beneficial book for contemporary feminist activists since it offers some notions on the conflict between structure and agency in relation to gender. In his most recent book, "Male Domination," he went into great length on women's

rights in society and how they varied from society to society depending on other sociocultural factors.

His feminist studies mainly examined how caste and gender differences in women's responsibilities in our society. He has talked about how daughters from lower socioeconomic status areas or households are under pressure to drop out of school and finish their education earlier. Following Sarah Thornton's suggestion, Bourdieu noted that women in backward societies also tend to marry young, which raises the rate of teen pregnancies in the relevant society. Thus, in lower-class societies that are culturally and educationally underdeveloped, women's rights are disregarded [7].

According to Bourdieu, the traits of the relevant society's class and field also have an impact on how gender is positioned in our society [8]. Most often, it affects women and girls from low-income homes. The positions of women in any given society differ significantly with the variations in educational, social, cultural, and economic backgrounds, according to Bourdieu's theory in this regard.

It is also true that Bourdieu's recommendations for the advancement of women have some drawbacks. Because social features are influenced by so many various factors and fluctuate from place to place, we are unable to apply a single theory or policy to progress feminism or gender studies. His explanation of the role of women in contemporary society, according to class and culture, is also difficult for everyone to understand at a glance because feminists are from many societies with various socioeconomic backgrounds. Figure 1 depicts Bourdieu, networks, and movements. Using the notions of habitus, field, and capital, one can comprehend the network analysis of gender disparities.

## 6. Bourdieu as an economist

The capital was Bourdieu's essential concept in the sociological study. He believed that there are two criteria that can be used to distinguish between people, organisations, and other agents. These are culture and the economy. Economy refers to one's control over money, assets, or capital. When discussing the economy, Bourdieu took communal property into consideration as well. The gross domestic product of the residents of the affected area also has a significant role, just as the economics of each individual has a significant impact on the state economy. However, it is also true that a growing economy does not necessarily translate into a growing per capita income.

Right now, a person's place and degree of influence in our society are mostly determined by their economic situation. Financially secure individuals have the power to sway others by influencing our society's political, cultural, and social spheres. But he remained sceptical of the neo-classical economic model of human behaviour being applied to all social sciences.

He made use of his cultural and conceptual authority during the economics conversation. Modern economics, in Bourdieu's view, is completely culturalized. More people are consuming cultural commodities. In this aspect, he had criticised Marxist theory. In his opinion, Marx's theory did not take into account cultural considerations when examining the economic phenomena that exist in modern society. However, it is currently impossible to analyse economic theory without also taking into account cultural issues. In modern culture, cultural variables are just as important as economic ones in determining the style of production. Culture and the economy have become inextricably linked. Therefore, the majority of social phenomena relating to either culture or economy, in his opinion, are merging.

## 7. Conclusions

Bourdieu was essentially an international thinker. His philosophy was not limited to France's borders or any one particular society. Other sociologists of his era were shocked by the breadth of his work area. The philosophers of the next

generation have closely followed his discussion of feminism, politics, economics, and ethnography. He not only addressed each of the aforementioned topics in detail but also made it clear how they are connected on a societal level. No one can totally disregard one subject area while studying another, despite the fact that these areas have independent identities and are not completely dependent on one another. Pierre Bourdieu has been "authoritatively placed in all major theoretical traditions, Marxist, Weberian, Durkheimian, even 'poststructuralist' or 'postmodernist,'" according to the authors of the 1990 book "An Introduction to the Work of Pierre Bourdieu" [9-11]. His treatment of each of these social science problems "was scientific and pragmatic in his day and" in some cases for the future as well, based on actual experience. He held that as social structures change over time all around the world, it is impossible to create any social science theory that will hold true indefinitely. Human civilization never stops moving; it keeps moving just like river water does. He made an effort to refresh both himself and his ideas. Due of this, Bourdieu's significance to modern sociologists has increased significantly.

Concepts from Bourdieu became useful instruments for considering particular social issues. It is a result of his updated perspective on social issues. In the realm of modern society, taking into account our social life, new issues are always appearing. As our economic, political, and social elements change, so too do the form and character of our culture. As a result, outdated ideas are no longer useful for handling relevant issues. As a result, Bourdieu's empirical studies were helpful to his supporters.

Even though Bourdieu started writing his empirical works in the first half of the 1960s, his contribution to the world stage was significantly elevated with the publication of "The weight of the world" [10], edited by Bourdieu. Unmistakably, the work conveyed a more general sense of France's political, cultural, and social ills.

Even though Bourdieu cannot be regarded as a true geographer, his work on topics like feminism, politics, and economics has had a significant impact on modern human geography [12, 13]. Various social phenomena are currently being examined on the topic of human geography. Based on his personal experience, Bourdieu, an empirical sociologist, has examined these phenomena. Therefore, while examining the components of contemporary human geography, Pierre Bourdieu's contributions cannot be ignored.

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