

Foreword to Criminology & Criminal Justice's Virtual Special Issue: Bourdieu and Criminology

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Abstract

This essay introduces the Special Issue 'Bourdieu on the Block: Punishment, Policing and the Street'. Although Bourdieu wrote comparatively little on criminological matters, references to Bourdieu's work have in the last decade gathered into a steady stream. There is a sense in which criminology, though something of a late-adopter, may be beginning to undergo its own 'Bourdieuian moment'. Notably, several of the contributions to this emergent discussion have taken place in the pages of this journal. Our intention in bringing them together is to take stock of the 'field of reception' into which Bourdieu's concepts have entered. We have selected articles that directly engage with Bourdieu, either embracing the framework or criticizing it, in something more than a throwaway reference. As represented in the papers, there are at least three tributaries that have pooled to form what we might term a putative Bourdieuian criminology: punishment, policing and the street. In recognizing the mutually

constitutive role of structure, culture and agency in the wellspring of social action, Bourdieu creates a vocabulary for a systematic sociology of crime and criminalisation that bears further development and debate. Taken together, we believe these papers demonstrate not only the important role that Bourdieu has played in criminological research but also the potential to expand further. In order to clarify and develop these approaches, we suggest two future directions for the development of a Bourdieusian criminology.

Bourdieu on the Block: Punishment, Policing and the Street

The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu has had astonishing influence across the social sciences. His academic contributions are prodigious and wide-ranging, extending to some thirty books and hundreds of articles. *Distinction: A Social Critique the Judgement of Taste* (Bourdieu 1979), is listed among the most cited books in the social sciences of all time, and he remains one of the most debated social scientists of the twenty-first century. Indeed publications, translations and subsequent works have accelerated in magnitude and intensity since his death (Santoro, Galleli and Gruning 2018). It is notable, nonetheless, that the reception of Bourdieu's ideas has occurred at varying rhythms among differing academic and geographical contexts. The global spread of Bourdieu's ideas have at times occurred at a staccato pace, determined by issues such as translation, publishers, and receptiveness. Bourdieu (2002) himself notes that the transfer of academic ideas often involve a failure to recognise the field of production in which they were developed, and the field of reception in which they become lodged. Though Bourdieu's 'thinking tools' of habitus, field and capital have proven malleable, there is not always an appreciation of the conceptual universe in which they orbit.

The current Special Issue focuses on the reception and treatment of Bourdieusian scholarship within the field of criminology. Though Bourdieu wrote comparatively little on matters of punishment and criminalisation (Shammas 2018), references to Bourdieu's work have in the last decade gathered into a steady stream. There is an sense in which criminology, though something of a late-adopter, may be beginning to undergo its own 'Bourdiesian moment' in studies of drug-dealing (Sandberg 2008; Fleetwood 2014; Moyle and Coomber 2017); punishment (McNeill et al 2009; Caputo-Levine 2013; Schlosser; 2013; Ugwudike 2016); violence (Winlow and Hall 2010; Fraser 2015); security (Bowden 2014; Kupka, Šmíd,

and Walach 2017); and reflexivity (Lumsden and Winter 2014; Blaustein, Armstrong and Henry 2016; Fraser and Hagedorn 2018). In recognising the mutually constitutive role of structure, culture and agency in the wellspring of social action, Bourdieu creates a vocabulary for a systematic sociology of crime and criminalisation that bears further development and debate.

Notably, several of the contributions to this emergent discussion have taken place in the pages of this journal. Our intention in bringing them together is to take stock of the 'field of reception' into which Bourdieu's concepts have entered. We have selected articles that directly engage with Bourdieu, either embracing the framework or criticizing it, in something more than a throwaway reference. As represented in the papers, there are at least three tributaries that have pooled to form what we might term a putative Bourdieusian criminology.

Bourdieu and penology

Bourdieu's work is probably best known to criminologists through Wacquant's (e.g. 2008, 2009) work on the urban disadvantage, particularly the operation of racialised and class-based forms of stratification as they exist across penal and urban zones of confinement. His close connection and work with Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) has secured criminology a "bridge" to the well-known sociologist. Wacquant's work is salted with frequent references to Bourdieu, reflecting both intellectual lineage and heritage. In *Urban Outcasts* (2008), Wacquant's draws from the intellectual well of Bourdieu's *Weight of the World* (1999), concretising Bourdieu's analyses of objective structures and social space into a panoptic comparative sociology of urban marginality. In *Punishing the Poor* (2009), Wacquant expands and extends Bourdieu's concept of the 'bureaucratic field' to untangle the Gordian knot of material and symbolic forces at play in the neoliberal containment of the urban poor. For criminologists, the latter work is of particular significance as it constructs an analytic and epistemic link between traditional penological concerns – law, policing and the courts – and the bases of social injustice on which Bourdieu expended considerable labour.

The issue begins with three articles that illuminate Bourdieu's importance for penology, building on foundations laid in Garland's *The Culture of Control* (2001). Following Garland's use of habitus to explain the disjuncture between shifts in penal policy and embedded working practices, the first two papers emphasise the meeting between probation

staff habitus and an increasingly bureaucratized penal field. In the first, Robinson, Priede, Farrall, Shapland and McNeill argues that the “probation habitus” among frontline staff is “stubbornly cohesive and/or resistant to change” (Robinson et al 2014: 13). They argue that although the habitus has its foundation in social work, it is constantly challenged by resource constraints and managerially driven processes that drive probation staff to remain behind the desk. In the second paper, Jake Phillips complicates this tension between field and habitus, arguing that compliance is an integrated part of probation staff habitus. When probation workers resist demands for change, it has to take specific forms. The result being formal more than substantive compliance, and an argument that we “need to examine not just the differences between the *habitus* and the field, but the way in which they interact and create new forms of practice” (Phillips 2016: 56). In the third article, Roxana Willis goes back to Bourdieu’s classic emphasis on social class, specifically on differences between working and middle-class linguistic skills and abilities. Through ethnographic fieldwork in restorative justice conferences, Willis shows that the organisation and logic of these meetings privilege middle-class forms of communication. Restorative justice thus suffers from the same class-based forms of discrimination that Wacquant and others have shown in studies of prisons.

Bourdieu, policing and security

Another early, and influential stream of works using Bourdieu in criminology originates in Janet Chan’s work on police culture (1996, 1997). In her studies of change in police organizations, she applies Bourdieu’s concepts to the changes, agency and structural constraints of police work. By contrasting the embedded knowledge through which police decision-making operates with changing bureaucratic imperatives, she challenges established concepts such as police culture. These studies have since become contemporary classics in police research and set the tone for the reception of Bourdieu within this field. Three of the articles we have included in this special issues address policing and security, building on Chan’s work.

In the first, Holdaway (2013) takes a critical approach to Chan’s use of Bourdieu. In a study of how ideas related to the “Big Society” influence policing, Holdaway argues that when police habitus does not reflect policy changes in the policing field, this means that habitus fails as a concept. For Holdaway, policing culture should be seen as an autonomous entity,

independent from the field. Contrastingly, in the second paper on US police culture after 9/11, Tara Lai Quinlan (2019) argues that while a police habitus can change, resilience is its most important characteristic. Quinlan argues that policing habitus is indispensable to understand police practices exactly *because* it is difficult to change, even when there are great alterations in the socio-political field. Both Holdaway and Quinlan agree that police culture is relatively stable, but disagree on how well this is captured by Bourdieu's concepts. This reflects the classic tension between agency and structure that these concepts were designed to overcome, but where critics and followers tend to disagree on how successful it has been (e.g. Hasan 1999; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 2000). Quinlan however, takes this a step further when she goes into details to show how "resilient habitus shapes competition between subordinate and dominant factions in the same field, causing profound conflicts" (Quinlan 2019: 14), namely how NYPD police habitus challenged FBI policing culture.

The last article in this section is Matt Bowden's (2019) depiction of an emergent "security field". Bowden argues that the growth of private security, based on responsabilization and security consciousness, has fundamentally changed the way that security is organised in Ireland. Recent developments within police and security governance, or "changes in technology, the onset of globalized society and the transformations associated with late modernity" (Bowden 2019:15), challenge old ideas about policing culture and instead points towards a growing merger of public and private actors, pluralization of policing and fracturing of police bureaucracies. When it comes to the role of habitus, Bowden seems to agree with Holdaway that the field does not reflect habitus, but differ from both Holdaway and Quinlan in playing down the role of established police habitus and police culture. Instead he sees habitus as something that will emerge as the security field gets more established.

Bourdieu and street culture

The third tributary of Bourdieu-inspired in criminology has been seen in studies of street culture and crime, through applications such as 'street capital' (Sandberg 2008), 'street social capital' (Ilan 2013) and 'street habitus' (Fraser 2013). The last three of the articles included in this special issue all address street culture, in one form or the other. The first is Shammass and Sandberg's (2015) attempt to systematize the concept of "street field". While constructing new fields may be controversial with orthodox Bourdieusians, it has the advantage of

specifying structural constraints and institutions, and making theory building more consistent. In their paper, Shammass and Sandberg argue that a sharper conceptualization of the “street field” will draw attention to domination and power, highlight the importance of context, and make it easier to see both effects of semi-enclosed domains of social action (habitus) and the resources they come with (capital). In the second paper, Sandberg and Fleetwood aim to broaden the scope of Bourdieusian criminology by synthesizing it with narrative criminology, building on Fleetwood’s (2016) earlier work on “narrative habitus”. They argue that language is more than a sign of cultural heritage and socialization and, in this case, a creative force that binds the street field together. In the third paper, Fraser and Matthews (2019) approach the street in a more novel way, moving beyond disadvantaged urban poor and their street world, to the street as an atmospheric space. The paper, based on a study of protest camps in Hong Kong’s ‘Umbrella’ movement, seeks to engage with the affective charge of fields as felt environments, moving the ‘backstage’ of the street front and centre to our understanding of field.

The final contribution to the issue comes in the form of a book review. Much of the criminological work in this area has been published in book form (e.g. Wacquant 2009, Sandberg and Pedersen 2011, Bucerius 2014, Fleetwood 2014, Graham 2016, Harding 2014, Ilan 2015, Fraser 2015), and Parkin’s book *Habitus and Drug Using Environments* (2013) can be included among these. His book is situated within the stream of street culture research, but also engages with issues of drug use and sociability. Instead of emphasizing those with a lot of “street capital” or with more resources in a street atmospheric space, he studies those at the bottom of the street hierarchies.

Conclusion

Taken together, we believe these papers demonstrate the important role that Bourdieu has played in criminological research, but also the potential to expand further. In order to clarify and develop these approaches, we suggest two future directions for the development of a Bourdieusian criminology.

The first direction is towards more systematic engagement with Bourdieusian theory. All articles are from the last six years, with a movement towards Bourdieu’s framework being used more extensively and systematically. This tendency toward systematization is best

represented by Shamma, who argues that criminologists should avoid piecemeal use of Bourdieu and instead engage with Bourdieusian theory at a meta-analytic level, to 'unify divergent strands of critique' by synthesising historical, symbolic, embodied, critical and activist traditions (Shamma 2018: 217). However, while Bourdieusian concepts often operate relationally and cumulatively, Wacquant (2014) has also argued that concepts such as habitus can be productively detached and deployed individually. Whether used separately or en bloc, we believe that it is paramount that researchers use the concepts in a way that is consistent with the larger body of Bourdieu's work.

The second future direction is to engage with sociological debate that seeks to instantiate a 'second generation' (Thatcher et al 2016) or Bourdieusian scholarship, or indeed a move 'beyond Bourdieu' (Lahire 2011, Atkinson 2016). The social conditions of scholarly work and the bureaucratic field in which it is nested have changed notably from those in which Bourdieu was writing, and it is natural that his concepts have been adapted, transposed, critiqued, and refashioned (Thatcher et al 2016). Rather than 'reifying the man', we endorse the view of Burke et al that the focus should be on 'putting Bourdieu to work' (Burke et al 2016: 1), as has been evident in recent elaborations within feminist and cultural criminology (Batchelor 2005, Grundetjern and Sandberg 2012; Prieur 2018). While there are almost endless opportunities to combine Bourdieu with other perspectives, we believe that the emphasis should be on those aspects that are not covered convincingly by Bourdieu. It is in these areas that the most productive dialogues and integration might occur.

This open spirit of empirical inquiry is consistent with the Bourdieusian notion of 'sympraxy', in which sociology is conceived not as adversarial, but as engaging fellow-travellers in dialogue on real-world empirical problems. Some basic knowledge of Bourdieu is necessary, and a return to earlier criminology's ornamental use of his theories should be avoided. An open but informed approach is an enterprise that we endorse for future contributions to Bourdieusian criminology.

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