Looking back at Bourdieu[1]

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The coeditors of this volume have asked me to discuss the influence of Pierre Bourdieu on my intellectual trajectory in an autobiographical mode. I have been quite reluctant to do so because writing such a piece requires a degree of reflexivity that I may have yet to achieve. Moreover, as a mid-career sociologist (or at least one who recently turned fifty), I also hesitate to approach my own work as an object of commentary for fear of hubris. I have taken on the challenge, if only to clarify for myself the last twenty five years.

My approach to Bourdieu's *oeuvre* has been to view it as a point of departure, as a means for generating new questions, mainly through an empirical confrontation between it and other realities – such as American class cultures. Most of my writings have critically engaged Bourdieu, and this, starting in the early eighties, before the tradition of *Distinction* in English, and at a time when American sociologists still for the most part "applied" and "extended" Bourdieu to the United States or engaged it through celebratory or expository exegesis. The growth and success of cultural sociology on this side of the Atlantic since the mid-eighties has paralleled and been fed by the diffusion of Bourdieu's corpus. I have benefitted from this diffusion, to the extent that the new research questions I identified often had Bourdieu's work in the background. In this sense, I have piggybacked on his work, with the ambition of opening new vistas. Without denying the enormous significance of his work, I have found the exploration of new terrains more satisfying (because less predictable) than applying an extant (and highly consolidated) theoretical approach, however elegant, seductive, multi-leveled, subtle and complex that approach may be. The place of Bourdieu in the small pantheon of individuals who have determined the shape of the social sciences at the beginning of the 21st century is beyond question. And, as demonstrated by the many divergent voices assembled in this volume, we are still debating, following Claude Levi-Strauss's formula, for what purpose he is "good to think with." My response is probably more pluralistic than most.

This paper, then, describes my multiple engagements with Bourdieu's work by means of narrating my intellectual trajectory as it intersected with his *oeuvre*. This approach helps to convey why his work was viewed as important in the early 1980s, the context in which it was imported to the United States, the discussions that surrounded it (connecting micro

interactions with broader processes of knowledge diffusion), and some of the transmutations to which it was subjected.[2]

First Encounters

Before encountering Bourdieu, I was a neo-Marxist. My first serious piece of scholarship (never published) concerned the contradictory relationship (of relative autonomy and determination) between subject and object in the theories of knowledge and class consciousness of V. I. Lenin. The context was the debates opposing humanist and structuralist theorizing that animated neo-Marxists and critical theory circles during much of the seventies, and that pitted (typically) Jurgen Habermas, Henri Lefevre and Rosa Luxemburg against Louis Althusser, Nicos Poulantzas, and V. I. Lenin. I was on the side of those who gave more power to agency over structure. I discovered a first paper by Bourdieu shortly before leaving Canada to pursue my graduate studies in France in 1978. It was his (1972) critique of survey research titled "Les doxosophes." This piece could only be described as mind-blowing: by analyzing survey researchers as agents involved in the construction and delimitation of social reality – as producers of a doxa – Bourdieu made the production of ideology something that could be circumscribed and studied in empirical terms. While this approach may seem commonsensical to many sociologists today, Bourdieu's focus on knowledge production practices was most refreshing when read against the background of a neo-Marxist tradition that ignored many of the micro-level relationships within which social agents operate in a field of cultural production. Moreover, Bourdieu provided an entirely novel approach to research that eschewed both naïve positivism and disembedded theorization, one that combined purposeful "construction d'object" (or theoretically motivated research design) with empirically grounded research (as developed in *The Craft of Sociology* (Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron 1990)). This was in stark contrast with the atheoretical approaches to survey research that prevailed at the time.

Within a few months after my arrival in Paris, I had reveled in the work of Michel Foucault (especially *The Order of Things*) and that of Michel de Certeau (*The Practice of Everyday Lif*e—then unknown in North America). But most importantly, *Distinction* was just coming out, and what an event that was. This book contained many "revelations" (self-evident to many cultural sociologists today, but still novel then) – for instance, that the class struggle manifests itself through daily interaction and through a symbolic violence pitting those who master legitimate culture against those who don't; that other kinds of capital besides economic capital matter; or that aestheticism is made possible by one's distance toward material necessity. The concept of habitus made a particularly strong impression as it appeared as a brilliant transmutation of the concept of practice, building on Karl Marx's theses on Feuerbach, while bridging the micro and the macro levels of analysis. I soon started attending Bourdieu's seminar at the Ecole des hautes études en science sociales and he offered to direct my studies.

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[2] For a more exhaustive discussion of the importation of Bourdieu's work to the United States, see Sallaz and Zavisca (2007). On Bourdieu social and intellectual trajectory in France, see Heinich (2004) and Reed-Donahay (2004) as well as Bourdieu (2004). This paper adds to a corpus of writings on Bourdieu's influence on the work of a number of French sociologists (Encrevé and Lagrave 2003).

Given my interest and background in the sociology of knowledge, Bourdieu suggested that I interview intellectuals for a dissertation that would make a contribution to the sociology of philosophers. Persuaded by the idea, and also influenced by his unmatchable charisma and solicitousness, I jumped at the opportunity, and started interviewing many influential intellectuals ranging from Michel Serres to Jean Baudrillard. I wrote a paper on Jacques Derrida, which became my first prominent publication: "How to Become a Dominant French Philosophe: The case of Jacques Derrida" (published in *American Journal of Sociology* in 1987). This article took Bourdieu's writing on intellectual legitimacy (on Sartre for instance) as a point of departure (Bourdieu 1969). Both building on and departing from Bourdieu, I proposed a systematic analysis of the intellectual, institutional, cultural and social conditions that led to the consecration of an interpretive theory (Derrida's work) for different publics (philosophers and comparative literature scholars) in two national contexts (France and the United States). Showing that Derrida was valued for entirely different sets of reasons in these different contexts, I emphasized the fit between context and cultural object and the adaptability of the cultural object as conditions for its diffusion and consecration. This interest in understanding valuation processes is one of the principal threads that has traversed all of my work to date, whether I have studied how upper middle class and working class people define a worthy person, how academics go about evaluating the work of their pairs, or more recently, how members of stigmatized groups give value to their collective identities. This focus on valuation processes was suggested to me in part by Bourdieu's writings on competing instances of consecration in the artistic, literary, and scientific fields, although I developed it in a very different direction (see Lamont and Zuckerman forthcoming). I could describe my research agenda through alternative, less Bourdieu-dependent frames, but I privilege this angle here given the mission of this edited volume.

During these Paris years, I progressively moved away from Bourdieu because, to put matters bluntly, he did not know how to mentor young women, wavering between far too great proximity and distance.[3] In the highly gendered (although not gender-aware) Parisian intellectual milieu of the early eighties, he was much more at ease with young brilliant men, onto whom he could project his younger self (I thought). Moreover, his research center had notoriously treacherous interpersonal dynamics which seemed far too complicated for the 21 year old woman that I was. Under the guidance of other generous mentors such as Pierre Ansart, I completed a dissertation on the rapid growth of the social sciences and the decline of the humanities in Québec between 1960-1980, analyzing the dynamics between the cultural and state-dominated poles of these academic fields. This dissertation, to which Bourdieu responded with great enthusiasm, developed a sociology of the academic field that resonated with themes central to *Homo Academicus*, which came out a few years later.

After the publication of *Distinction*, Bourdieu consolidated his theoretical apparatus (with *Le sens pratique* published in 1980) and started applying his concept of field to a wide

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[3] To clear any ambiguity, there was no sexual harassment involved, only awkwardness. Bourdieu's inadequacy as a mentor of women resonates with his ignorance of the feminist scholarship and of the literature on gender inequality that was available at the time (Silva 2005).

range of arenas (artistic, cultural, literary, academic, scientific, governmental, etc). This period coincided with his election at the College de France (also in 1981) and the institutionalization of his influence. What I came to perceive to be at times the over-mechanistic and highly predictable character of these applications lessened the appeal of Bourdieu's sociology for me; the generative and open-ended quality of his analysis remained what made it most attractive in my eyes. My departure from Paris turned out to be well-timed as I was already in the process of developing a heterodox orientation toward Bourdieu's corpus just when orthodoxy was becoming more normative in Bourdieusian Parisian circles.

Passage to the United States

After completing my graduate work in 1983, I obtained a post-doctoral fellowship that brought me to Stanford University. There I quickly familiarized myself with American sociology, learned to write in English, and immersed myself in the art of engineering research designs and crafting empirically sound papers that could survive the close examination of American peer reviewers.[4] Most importantly, I was exposed to the inspiring and phenomenologically-informed work of John Meyer, and also to a formidable woman, Ann Swidler, who was then working on her now famous "Culture in Action" paper (Swidler 1986). Conversations with her and others (Wendy Griswold was visiting for a year) oriented my involvement with the burgeoning field of the American sociology of culture. Although I did not know it then, I now realize how much these scholars helped shaped my intellectual tastes and proclivities – my understanding of what good sociology looked like -- including my views on the similarities and differences between French and American sociology, which unavoidably affected my relationship to Bourdieu' work.

At this time I also had several exchanges with Paul DiMaggio, then a fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behavioral Sciences. Paul had already published a few Bourdieu-inspired articles, most notably, his wonderful piece on how the Boston upper class used high culture to create itself as a class and define its group boundaries (DiMaggio 1982a). He also had a few articles that built on Bourdieu and mobilized American survey data on participation in high culture (1977, 1982b). Conversations with him fed my thinking about how Bourdieu's work could apply to the United States. I quickly became more critical of Bourdieu's approach than Paul was at the time.[5] Indeed, life in Palo Alto offered a splendid laboratory to think about *Distinction* in a comparative context – to consider the ways in which it could and could not account for the reality I was discovering. I observed that the Stanford upper-middle class graduate students who were my friends had little in common with the offsprings of the French "dominant class" I had experienced in Paris and that Bourdieu described in *Distinction*. These students were not as concerned with demonstrating familiarity with high culture as Bourdieu would have predicted and they were proud of being able to repair their bicycles (the French dominant class looked down at practical tasks, Bourdieu told us). They did not care about using the appropriate forks and knives, and functioned in what I later

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[4] This transition is described in Lamont (1988).
[5] Although DiMaggio also came to use Bourdieu as a springboard for new theoretical developments (see especially DiMaggio (1988)).

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described as a "loosely bounded culture" where cultural practices are not clearly hierarchalized (Lamont 1989), where distinction does not operate in terms of who is in and out, and where many are tolerant of or indifferent toward those who are different from them. My cross-national experience led me to question Bourdieu's writings and to formulate criticisms that inspired the development of the "omnivorousness thesis" (on this connection see Peterson 2005)

Tackling Bourdieu

Together with Annette Lareau, also a post-doc at Stanford at the time, I started working on an agenda-setting paper on cultural capital. Annette had recently completed a Bourdieu-inspired dissertation on how middle and working class parents interact with schools, which led to her award-winning book, *Home Advantage* (1989). Although she was and remains more exclusively focused on class reproduction and less critical of Bourdieu than I (see also Lareau 2003), we agreed to write on the ways in which one should adapt Bourdieu's work to account for the articulation between culture and the reproduction of inequality in the United States.[6] After a close examination of Bourdieu's writing on cultural capital, our paper concluded that it was often under-theorized and contained methodological flaws and conceptual gaps. We also developed many themes that have been empirically studied and widely discussed since: for instance, whereas Bourdieu presumed that a legitimate culture existed, we suggested that there is cross-national variability in the permeability of class boundaries and the degree of consensus and stability of the legitimate culture. We also suggested the multiplicity of forms of cultural capital and the potential autonomy of lower class culture; and the idea that forms of capital are like a hand of cards that can be played when needed (Annette's representation of habitus). We also argued that instead of defining cultural capital as familiarity with high culture and what is valued by the school system, one should examine through interviews and observation what counts as high status cultural signals for particular social actors (this became my agenda which I shared with others).[7]

This article, which came out in 1988 under the title "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in the Recent Literature" was warmly received in part because it parsed out the often contradictory meanings Bourdieu assigned to the concept of cultural capital at a time when many social scientists were trying to make sense of his work. Moreover, ours was also the first paper to attempt to "decouple cultural capital from the French context in which it was originally conceived to take into consideration the distinctive features of American culture" (Lamont and Lareau 1988, p. 153). An accompanying piece, a little-known paper I wrote titled "The Power-Culture Link in Comparative Perspective" published in 1989, located Bourdieu in relation to other authors such as Foucault and charted many of the questions that came to be at the center of my

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[6] Looking back, I now realized that Annette was more engaged at the time with the Bourdieu of *Reproduction* while for me *Distinction* was more crucial. Her work has centered on the intersection between family life and school, whereas my earlier work aimed at understanding high status cultural signals in a comparative perspective. She also adopted an ethnographic approach to study how capital is turned into profit, whereas I used in-depth interviews to analyze high status cultural signals – what counted as cultural capital-- across classes.

[7] To mention only a few: Hall (1992), Halle (1993), Bryson (1996), Erikson (1996), and Carter (2005). Holt (1996) reviewed some of this literature and defended Bourdieu against his critics.

comparative research on France and the United States from the late 1980s on. Here I developed the idea of studying classification systems comparatively and from the ground up. I was particularly concerned with variations in the degree of consensus surrounding cultural hierarchies (or their loose-boundedness, as revealed by the degree of tolerance for cultural differences and of hierarchalization of cultural tastes).

I was fortunate that I arrived in the United States before the translation of *Distinction.* I was already familiar with Bourdieu's work at a time when American social scientists were for the most part only beginning to become acquainted with it (with the exception of sociologists of education and a few cultural sociologists and cultural anthropologists). Having been offered by Anthony Giddens a Polity Press contract to write a book on Bourdieu, I had read almost all of his work and drafted chapters, yet by 1986 decided to abandon this project after becoming aware of the impossibility of writing a critical book on Bourdieu's work that would meet his approval. Bourdieu had invited me to help diffuse his work in the United States, just as he did with Loïc Wacquant a few years later – and this collaboration resulted in the influential and canonical *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, published in 1992. Interested in shaping its reception, he eagerly collaborated with the Polity Press project until I showed him a draft chapter that described his intellectual and institutional conditions of possibility, using the same theoretical model I had used in my Derrida paper. Perhaps paradoxically given his commitment to reflexive sociology,[8] I believed he was displeased by the objectifying character of my analysis and this was an additional reason for abandoning the project. Thus I changed course: my new familiarity with the entire Bourdieu corpus put me in a position where I could both explain his complex writings and critique it empirically. Partly inspired by Bellah et al. (1984)'s *Habits of the Heart*, I built on this knowledge to develop a research project that would allow me to consider empirically some of my main criticisms.

My first book *Money, Morals, and Manners: The Culture of the French and the American Upper-Middle Class* (1992) critiqued Bourdieu on a number of fronts, but also used his work as a point of departure to ask novel questions. This book took on explicitly and systematically the question of whether *Distinction* applied to the United States – not that Bourdieu claimed it would, but many scholars thought it did. It drew on 160 in-depth interviews conducted with professionals, managers, and entrepreneurs living in Indianapolis, New York, Clermont-Ferrand, and Paris to identify high status signals prevalent in the upper-middle class, and compare patterns of valued status signals across societies, between cultural centers and periphery, and between social and cultural specialists and for profit workers. It also offered an explanation for these patterns that considered the supply side of culture (available cultural repertoires) and the proximate and remote context in which people lived. I determined that high culture was less central a high status signal than Bourdieu's focus on "legitimate culture" suggested,[9] that it was a predominant type of high status signal only in Paris, and that across places

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[8] See especially his posthumous *Esquisse pour une socio-analyse* (Bourdieu 2004).
[9] The methodological approach which consists in conducting a large number of interviews was essential to establish the various types of high status signals valued among professionals and managers. Others scholars have used ethnographic approaches for analyzing the use of high status signals in a range of contexts (e.g. Sherman 2007, Rivera 2009). I view these questions and approaches as complementary.

professionals and managers were also concerned in various proportions with socioeconomic status and morality as types of high status signal.[10] The book tackled several additional empirical problems not connected to *Distinction*: for instance, the permeability of group boundaries, and the relationship between symbolic and social boundaries (describing the symbolic as a necessary but insufficient condition for the social). I argued that differentiation does not necessarily translate into exclusion as Bourdieu suggested and I questioned his assumption about the zero-sum character of social positioning implicit in his concept of field. Building on and criticizing Swidler (1986), I explained boundary patterns not only by available cultural repertoires, but also by the conditions that increased the likelihood that one would use some repertoires rather than others. Most importantly, contra Bourdieu, instead of predefining what counts as a high status signal, I used the interview as a laboratory to ask respondents to engage in boundary work within the context of the interview by describing who they liked and disliked and perceived to be similar and different from themselves. Against an essentialist fallacy often encountered in American interpretations of Bourdieu, my analysis showed that although the members of the American upper-middle class do not generally appreciate high culture, they nevertheless share cultural scripts concerning what is a worthy person, that are partly defined in opposition to scripts perceived to be valued in other groups.

As this book came out in 1992, I also published *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of Inequality*, which I co-edited with Marcel Fournier, a former student of Bourdieu who has since become a renowned expert on Marcel Mauss and Emile Durkheim. We were fortunate enough to be able to attract a strong cast of authors, all sociologists working on social closure and symbolic classification and who were influenced by theorists ranging from Emile Durkheim and Max Weber to Mary Douglas and of course Bourdieu. The volume fed the agenda of the growing field of the sociology of culture by attacking a number of related questions (about class cultures, ethno-racial and gender boundaries, high culture, classification systems, etc.). It also helped diffuse Bourdieu's work beyond cultural sociology to neighboring subfields and brought many new questions to the attention of the broader field of sociology.[11]

The timing was propitious: the late eighties and nineties were a period of exceptional growth for cultural sociology in the United States. The Culture Section of the American Sociological Association (ASA) was funded in 1986, under the leadership of Vera Zolberg, Gary Alan Fine, Richard (Pete) Peterson, and many others (I was also involved and chaired the section a few years after its founding). The section quickly grew to include over 1,000 members and is now the largest section of the ASA. The work of Bourdieu did a lot to stimulate this interest and has had a lasting influence. According to a colleague who served on the section's competition for the best book in the sociology of

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[10] At the time I was also influenced by Grignon and Passeron (1989). Lahire (1998), which took Bourdieu as a point of departure for an empirical exploration of habitus, was to be published a few years later.

[11] This influence also spread through the combined effect of a number of critical and less critical publications on Bourdieu's work, which essays were published before (e.g. Brubaker 1985) or after (e.g. Alexander (1995), Calhoun, LiPuma and Postone (1993), Schwartz (1997)) *Money, Morals and Manners*. See Sallaz and Zavisca (2007) for a detailed account.

culture in 2008, Bourdieu's work remains at the center of a significant majority of the books submitted for this competition. This increased influence has occurred at the expense of symbolic interactionism, which it partly absorbed: today, newly minted sociologists studying meaning-making in micro-interactions are probably more likely to declare themselves cultural sociologists than symbolic interactionists and concepts such as frame and script are as central to the literature as are the concepts of narrative and repertoire (Lamont and Small 2008). Cultural sociology also grew at the expense of cultural studies, which has flourished in literary studies, American studies, communications, and cultural anthropology, but less in sociology. While widely considered an isolated and marginal specialty of sociology in the early 1980s – at the time of the publication of Howard Becker's *Art Worlds* (one of the milestones of the subfield) -- the sociology of culture had become "mainstream" by the mid-nineties, with many of the top departments hiring in the field (Lamont 2004). The growing popularity of multi-method approaches, including in the training of graduate students, contributed to this sea change and to the decline of the polarization between quantitative and qualitative research, a decline also facilitated by the diffusion of Bourdieu's work.[12] Cultural sociology remains one of the fastest growing areas of the American Sociological Association, attracting a larger number of graduate students than any other section.[13] Its influence is spreading across a range of specialties, as demonstrated for instance by a 2008 issue of the *Annals of the Academy of Social and Political Science* which reviewed how culture was conceptualized and studied across a number of substantive areas (e.g., Charles 2008). Economic sociology, the sociology of organizations, the sociology of education, the sociology of social movements, comparative historical sociology, urban sociology, poverty, race, immigration, and gender studies, and even network analysis can be said to have taken or being in the process of taking a "cultural turn."

Away from Bourdieu and Back
After the publication of *Money, Morals, and Manners*, I became less interested in engaging Bourdieu than in studying boundary work per se (as noted by Sallaz and Zavisca (2007)). I started considering the properties of boundaries, the mechanisms that influenced their porousness, and other topics, and was for a few years involved in a "symbolic boundaries" network organized by the Culture Section of the American Sociological Association. This group, which met annually for a few years and organized various events (including a 2003 electronic conference), brought together approximately thirty scholars interested in a range of boundary related topics.[14] This new interest led to

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[12] In contrast, the success of symbolic interactionism was hindered by its anti-quantitative culture and almost exclusive reliance on ethnography, while the diffusion of cultural studies was hindered by its weaker culture of systematic empirical inquiry.

[13] Personal communication with Michael Murphy, American Sociological Association.

[14] The group was concerned with topics such as the salience of boundaries, their stability, spatial, temporal, and visual boundaries, signaling through expressive forms and consumption, the public/private boundary, the changing institutional character of boundaries, the bridging of boundaries, and the management of group boundaries. Coordinated by Bethany Bryson and myself, it included at various times scholars such as Richard Alba, Howard Aldrich, Elizabeth A. Armstrong, Mabel Berezin, Albert Bergeson, Sarah Corse, Michelle Dillon, Penny Edgell, Nina Eliasoph, Cynthia Fuchs, Epstein, Bonnie Erikcson, Roger Friedland, Chad Goldberg, John Hall, Maria Kefalas, Paul Lichterman, Christina Nippert-Eng, Michele Ollivier, Peggy Levitt, John Ryan, Abigail Saguy, Suzanne Shanahan, John Schmalzbauer, Art Stinchcombe, Charles Tilly, Diane Vaughan, Al Young, Robin Wagner-Pacifici, and Eviatar Zerubavel.

"The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences," a 2002 article coauthored with Virag Molnar which remains one of the most popular (or downloaded!) papers published in *Annual Review of Sociology*. This article helped consolidate an agenda for the study of group boundaries that went beyond Bourdieu's writings on classification struggles toward a broader sociology connecting with the tradition of Benedict Anderson (1972) in the study of imagined communities, Frederic Barth (1969) in ethnic and racial studies, the more recent writings of Richard Jenkins on identity (1996), and many others. The idea was to consider more systematically boundary processes across various fields of study and draw comparison so that, for instance, what we know about ethnic boundaries would feed our understanding of organizational boundaries, and vice-versa. The goal was also to draw from this comparison a better understanding of the properties of boundaries and of the mechanisms that produce and change them. This broader synthetic project is being pursued today in various literatures by a number of scholars --,for instance by Todd (2005) and Wimmer (2008) in the study of race and ethnicity (For an update on the more recent research, see Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007.) During this period, the study of boundaries moved closer toward the center of gravity of our discipline and was featured as the theme of the 2007 meetings of the American Sociological Association.

My study of the French and American upper-middle class was followed in 2000 by another book on the French and the American working class titled *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration.* This book drew on 160 interviews with African-American and white blue-collar and white-collar workers living in the New York area, and with North African immigrants and White French workers living around Paris. As in *Money, Morals, and Manners*, I asked respondents to produce boundary work in the context of the interviews and considered the criteria they used to determine the worth of others. Here also, Bourdieu helped shape the questions I pursued. While he described those who valued morality as "losers" (my term) who make virtue of necessity, I showed how workers use morality to maintain their dignity and draw boundaries toward "people above" and "people below" as well as toward members of racial minority groups and immigrants. Nevertheless, this book was far less engaged with Bourdieu, in part because he had not written on ethno-racial boundaries.

While writing *The Dignity of Working Men,* I was also moving closer to the work of Bruno Latour (1989, on black-boxing) as I studied the types of evidence mobilized by individuals to sustain their beliefs that ethno-racial groups are similar/different and equal/non-equal (what my former student Ann Morning (2009) came to call "racial conceptualization). I was also inspired and stimulated by the work of the Groupe de sociologie politique et morale (GSPM) at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales, which was animated by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, two former students of Pierre Bourdieu who had left his Centre de sociologie Europeennes in the eighties to develop an ambitious agenda focus on the frames of action (see Boltanski and Thévenot 1999). That agenda became one of the two most influential "post-Bourdieu" lines of research in French sociology (together with Actor-Network Theory developed by Michel Callon and Bruno Latour). GSPM researchers aimed to study the blind spots of Bourdieu's work, which they saw as the study of how ordinary people understand their

engagement with the world and how they go about making universalistic claims, including concerning morality (Boltanski 1984; Boltanski and Thévenot 1992).[15] Like me, they were also researching socially shared ways of classifying the world and in competing principles of justification (a type of cultural structure). Their approach overlapped significantly with my own interest in understanding competing criteria of evaluation. Thus, I began a four year collaborative project co-directed with Laurent Thévenot, which brought together eleven researchers from Princeton University (where I taught) and the GSPM to engage jointly in comparative research projects on various principles of evaluation at work across national settings around conflicts surrounding sexual harassment, the protection of the environment, journalistic neutrality, racism, contemporary art, voluntarism, and literary studies. We produced a collective volume titled *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States* (2000), which considered the relative availability of various types of cultural repertoires across national contexts and provided case studies to analyze the use of criteria of evaluation and/or principles of justification in France and the United States (with a focus on moral, cultural and socio-economic criteria and with civic, industrial, market and other justifications). For this book I analyzed the rhetoric of racism and anti-racism in France and the United States, which led me to consider whether, how, and why ordinary French and American men believe that racial groups are equal, focusing on principles of equivalence (of interest to the GSPM), but also on recognition, and definitions of social membership [16] -- this project grew into another international collaborative project on anti-racism and destigmatization strategies and the boundedness of ethno-racal identities in Brazil, Israel, and the United States.[17] Compared to the research conducted by the GSPM, my focus was the inductive analysis of boundary work (whose content is open-ended) instead of regimes of worth (or "grandeurs") and the "qualifications" they required. Although I was and remain very engaged by their work, I am also more concerned with the relative embededness of repertoires in institutions as well as with their relative availability and presence across various groups (in contrast to Bourdieu, the GSPM tended to downplay the social location of actors -- Lamont 2008 describes the convergences and divergences between my research and that of the GSPM).

I returned to Bourdieu in *How Professors Think* (2009) which analyzes how academics go about evaluating the work of their colleagues and students. Drawing on 81 interviews with panelists involved in five different multidisciplinary funding competitions over a two year period, this book focuses on the meaning given to criteria of evaluation by panelists as well as to the conditions that make it possible for academics to think about the evaluation process as fair. Bourdieu is among the few scholars who provide bases on which to ground a comparison of academic evaluation (1975, 1984, 1996). However, like others who have written on the topic, Bourdieu does not consider the varied meanings given to criteria of evaluation. These largely follow from his standard model of field

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[15] Luc Boltanski and Elizabeth Claverie had spent a year at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the early nineties, which created the opportunity for many exchanges and discussions around these topics.

[16] Thévenot (2005) also became interested in the question of what makes people equal or compatible in his research on "regimes of proximity." The political management of diversity and definitions of communities are now one of the main axes of research of the GSPM (http://gspm.ehess.fr/sommaire.php?id=170)

[17] http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/weatherhead_initiative/07_discrimination/projects

analysis which mechanistically opposes heteronymous and autonomous principles of structuration. In contrast, my book provides a detailed empirical analysis of the criteria on which U.S. scholars rely to distinguish "excellent" and "promising" research from less stellar work (1996). I do not predefine the content of criteria of evaluation, but leave open the question of their relative salience and presence among a wider range of alternative criteria.

There is another point around which my analysis of academia is essentially divergent from Bourdieu's. He views academic fields as animated by a competition for influence and power. Indeed, in *Homo Academicus*, he analyzes scientists as engaged in a struggle to impose their vision of the world – and their definition of high-quality scholarly work – as legitimate. He tells us that scholars compete to define excellence, and point to the co-existence of competing criteria of evaluation. Whereas Bourdieu's academics are presumed to engage in opportunity hoarding and the imposition of their definition of legitimate scholarship, I studied empirically their orientations. My approach revealed their pluralistic orientation in their role as evaluators.

How Professors Think points to other new directions for the study of academics. The interviews I conducted reveal that the self-concept of evaluators is central to the process of assessment and especially to the conditions required for producing evaluation that they perceive as fair. Self-concept is absent from Bourdieu's work on academics, as from his other writings, because he assumes that academics are moved by a quest for maximizing their position within fields (Lamont 2001 and Gross 2008; for another interpretation of Bourdieu, see Steinmetz 2006). In contrast, my interviews demonstrate the importance of pleasure and curiosity as alternative types of motivations. Moreover, I argue that the customary rules evaluators draw on as they deliberate, especially their respect for disciplinary expertise and their views on the importance of bracketing of self-interest, sustain their identity as experts and as fair and broadminded academics. These conclusions resonate with recent work in science studies that emphasizes how the selfhood of academics is central to the evaluation of knowledge, as opposed to being an extraneous and corrupting influence (Shapin 1994). Equally important, panelists' comments and observations reveal evaluation to be an eminently social and emotional undertaking, rather than a cognitive process corrupted by extra-cognitive factors. Emotions are also crucial to the functioning of the interdisciplinary research networks I am currently studying (with Veronica Boix-Mansilla and Kyoko Sato) -- at the Santa Fe Institute, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. In all cases, preliminary findings suggest that emotions are crucial to the creation of shared socio-cognitive platforms that individuals construct together for the purpose of collaboration.

How Professors Think also continues to be influenced by the work of the GSPM to the extent that I consider the production of agreements through interaction and how panelists justify their judgments.[18] I show how actors create a sense of justice that is not only a

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[18] In analyzing peer review as connoisseurship, I have also been influenced by the work of Nathalie Heinich, who has long been associated with the GSPM (see Danko 2008 on her work), and by that of Antoine Henion (2007) on taste (including taste in wine and classical music).

compromise between types of norms (a theme central to Boltanski and Thévenot (1992)) but also an outcome of following customary rules. Thus, I identify a number of pragmatic constraints that panelists have to take into consideration as they go about deliberating, such as the customary rules that are viewed as collective goods. But I also acknowledge the strategies panelists use—such as establishing credibility and respect -- in order to get what they define as good work funded. These rules act as constraints and regulators of behavior, but they are also justifications that create feelings of justice and that emerge from how evaluative practices are performed. While for Levi-Strauss (1983) rules are unconscious, and while for Bourdieu (1977) they are strategic codes used by actors, for *How Professors Think* they are rules pragmatically created by actors as they participate in a given situation.

Bourdieu, Good to Think With?

All in all, I have cultivated simultaneously multiple relationships with Bourdieu's work. I have made empirical correctives to it (for instance concerning the place of morality and high culture in the culture of the French upper-middle class). I have been inspired by it and extended Bourdieu's intellectual agenda (with my empirical examination of various forms of high status signals). I have also used Bourdieu's work as a springboard to open new vistas and ask new questions (concerning for instance the porousness of group boundaries). Finally, I have criticized its meta-theoretical assumptions (concerning the zero-sum character of social relations inherent in the notion of fields).

Because of my own life experience, I remain persuaded that pleasure, curiosity, and a need for community and recognition are powerful engines for human action, certainly as powerful as the quest for power and the maximization of one's position in fields of power that are privileged by Bourdieu. These essential meta-theoretical differences put me at odd in a fundamental way with his work and that of some of his followers. Thus, taking distance from Bourdieu was not simply a matter of drifting away or pursuing questions he had not considered. It meant proposing a different approach focused on boundary work which, if it did not supersede Bourdieu's, was fundamentally "other:" I took novel angles on new and different issues, and several of these angles required rejecting some of the keystones of Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus.

Against the experience of this complex relationship, I remain committed to a cumulative, or at least a path-dependent, view of knowledge development, i.e., to an understanding of intellectual change that emphasizes how new developments are constrained and channeled by what preceded them. At the same time, at the start of the twenty first century, I am convinced that broadening the study of inequality and social reproduction to systematically compare patterns of inclusion, recognition, and social membership has become unavoidable given the challenges of diversity faced by post-national societies. Moreover, it is also unavoidable from the perspective of the development of a discipline concerned with understanding fundamental mechanisms for the production and transformation of the social order. Exclusion and inclusion, differentiation and recognition, spatial segregation and self-segregation are increasingly acknowledged to be complementary pieces of the inequality puzzle. Thus I now see myself moving even

further away from Bourdieu, tempted by new and entirely different challenges. In 2003, I became involved in a long-term interdisciplinary collaboration on the conditions that lead to the production of "Successful Societies" (Hall and Lamont 2009), which is concerned with the role of institutions and culture in mediating the impact of inequality on health outcomes. I am have been studying the individual and collective resilience of members of stigmatized groups and how societies provide cultural and institutional scaffoldings that sustain this resilience. I have also become much more interested with the bridging of boundaries than with social exclusion, and particularly with the ways members of stigmatized groups contribute to the transformation of group boundaries and influence their social categorization.[19] These questions are for the main outside Bourdieu's paradigm, yet essential if we are to understand what we (collectively and individually) can do to prevent the daily wear and tear of experiencing inequality from getting under the skin of our most vulnerable populations.

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[19] My approach to bridging contrasts with that of Robert Putnam for whom bridging refers to engaging in joint activities with people with whom one has little in common (fans of a football team for instance). For a critique of Putman, see Portes (1997) and Hall and Lamont (2009).

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