



An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology

Pierre Bourdieu , Loïc Wacquant

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Over the last three decades, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has produced one of the most imaginative and subtle bodies of social theory and research of the post war era. Yet, despite the influence of his work, no single introduction to his wide-ranging *oeuvre* is available. This book, intended for an English-speaking audience, offers a systematic and accessible overview, providing interpretive keys to the internal logic of Bourdieu's work by explicating thematic and methodological principles underlying his work.

The structure of Bourdieu's theory of knowledge, practice, and society is first dissected by Loïc Wacquant; he then collaborates with Bourdieu in a dialogue in which they discuss central concepts of Bourdieu's work, confront the main objections and criticisms his work has met, and outline Bourdieu's views of the relation of sociology to philosophy, economics, history, and politics. The final section captures Bourdieu in action in the seminar room as he addresses the topic of how to practice the craft of reflexive sociology. Throughout, they stress Bourdieu's emphasis on reflexivity—his inclusion of a theory of intellectual practice as an integral component of a theory of society—and on method—particularly his manner of posing problems that permits a transfer of knowledge from one area of inquiry into another.

Amplified by notes and an extensive bibliography, this synthetic view is essential reading for both students and advanced scholars.

An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology Details

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Rhys says

Bourdieu that is easy to comprehend. A good introduction if you don't want to dip into the infinite secondary texts on Bourdieu.

Julio César says

Es una buena introducción a Bourdieu. También está bueno para los que no nos gusta tanto como teórico, porque en la segunda parte, "El Seminario de Chicago", Wacquant le pregunta sobre TODAS las cosas de su obra que fueron criticadas y recriticadas, y que Bourdieu se cansó de aclarar y justificarse. Wacquant no cae en condescendencias tontas. Eso está bueno. Aunque Bourdieu sigue siendo lo de siempre...

Chris Nagel says

If you've got a serious kink for iconoclasm and epistemology -- and who doesn't? -- this is a book for you.

Cassey says

Very useful for discussing reflexive work/process per the way the it's constructed by Bourdieu. Particularly, liked the thought of "knowing the unknown".

Aldon Rau says

As my mother unpacked our luggage from our recent family vacation, I was overjoyed to see my favorite book, Schutz's *Phenomenology* (of which you perhaps recall my review) emerge from the clothing and other detritus. I immediately set to work exactly where I left off, happily whiling away the dull moments while my mother attended to mundane household tasks.

Gradually I became aware of two other works in my vicinity, Simmel's book on sociology which I have reviewed, and the above-mentioned book by Bourdieu. Although I have seen this work sitting about the house for some time, I have purposely avoided reading it. Everyone is name-dropping Bourdieu these days, and I have no wish to be obvious.

But as there seemed no immediate prospect of anything more interesting happening than the making of innumerable piles of clothing (which apparently my mother finds quite absorbing), I decided to give it a go. I lifted it up, I shook it about, I turned it over in my hands, I placed it on my head. In short, I simply could not get into it (literally). Eventually, I abandoned it in favor of a Christmas card, the mashing of which I found

far more fascinating than my perusal of Bourdieu.

There is a metaphor in there somewhere, but for the life of me I cannot at the moment think of what it is.

Jen says

HM24 .B669 1992a, SSAH

Michael Mena says

By far the "easiest" Bourdieu book. This is because it is in the format of an interview so he doesn't have time to elaborate too much on stuff and is forced to condense concepts into a couple paragraphs! If you are familiar with other Bourdieu works, then you know he defines concepts in many places in many ways throughout a book/work. Here he is forced to narrow down key features of stuff like: field, habitus, symbolic power, linguistic market. This is a good introduction or companion to Bourdieu, when you need access to his concepts quickly.

Andrea says

A brilliant introduction to the sweep and scale of Bourdieu's thought, written in a manner that is much more accessible I think than Bourdieu's writing alone though I won't say it is easy. It is in three sections, the first a general explanation of Bourdieu's theory by Loic Wacquant, it's difficult but not as difficult as Bourdieu alone! The second emerged from a seminar series as set of questions and answers between Wacquant and Bourdieu, which is reflective and critical, particularly useful in disentangling the moments of potential rebellion and action from a more structural understanding of the world. The third is an introduction by Bourdieu to a second seminar series, laying out the methodology that he strives for, the risks that must be undertaken to advance our understanding, the limits of the academic world. Through all of these conversation it helps the reader understand not only the driving questions and beliefs behind Bourdieu's own work, but also his relation to the great theorists of sociology, philosophy, politics and economy...

Yang says

best guide to beginners.

Daniela says

Hay que escudriñar varis cosas y puede que sea algo repetitivo en muchos aspectos, pero Wacqueant hizo todas las preguntas correctas y Bourdieu tiene las metáforas más perfectas para explicar la dinámica de los campos.

Trevor says

One of the ideas Bourdieu sought to bring to the practice of sociology was that sociological research isn't really objective or subjective – but rather these categories generally merge into one another when push comes to shove. Instead, he believed that it was important to always stress the extent to which the researcher was implicated in their own research. Now, he didn't mean this in the sense that researchers ought to write a long and boring introduction to their research that was their own autobiography so as to locate themselves in their own findings – but rather that this needs to be an issue that researchers themselves are constantly aware of. It is not enough to say – “oh well, we are all subjective”. What is necessary is to lay traps for yourself to make sure you catch yourself out when you are just seeing the world as someone like you is likely to see the world. Naturally enough, this isn't something that is all that easy.

This book is particularly interesting as Bourdieu is effectively giving two symposia (both in the United States and in France) and being asked questions by academics about his research which he responds to and so, in effect, a large part of this book is a bit like an interview. However, there are problems with an interview technique when discussing issues like sociological methods and in trying to give an overview of someone's work and ideas. The interviewee might well assume much more knowledge on the part of the audience (particularly given this was an academic audience) than would be reasonable for the more general audience of a book. So, Wacquant, a co-author here, provides a remarkably useful introduction and then annotates the seminars with references to other books by Bourdieu that discuss similar issues in much more depth. As an introduction to Bourdieu, particularly in relation to his ideas on reflexive sociology, this is hard to beat.
