

Enhancing validity when researching the ‘Other’: Insights from Pierre Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Science Research Practice

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But if we grant that symbolic systems are social products that contribute to making the world, that they do not simply mirror social relations but help constitute them, then one can, within limits transform the world by transforming its representation (Bourdieu 1980, 1981) cited by Wacquant (2007: 14).

This article explores aspects of Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social science research practice and discusses their relevance for enhancing validity when researching the ‘other’. Aspects such as: a relational way of thinking about concepts, epistemology and methodology; the rigorous construction of the object of research; and epistemic reflexivity are analysed and illustrated by drawing on Bourdieu’s own research practice and reflections. The paper draws on Bourdieu’s original works as well as secondary publications on Bourdieu’s work. It argues that Bourdieu’s theory of research practice provides invaluable insights and guidance for enhancing validity when researching the ‘other’.

Keywords: social science research practice, relational epistemology, methodology, reflexivity, ‘other’

Introduction

The epistemic imperative or the search for ‘true’ or truthful knowledge as the goal of scientific inquiry or research (Mouton, 2009) is a challenging goal to meet. However, developing representations that are as close to the truth as possible is an even greater challenge when researching the ‘other’. A question that Bourdieu grappled with in his theory of research practice is: How is it possible for a historical activity, such as scientific activity, to produce trans-historical truths, independent of history,

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detached from all bonds with both place and time and therefore eternally and universally valid? (Bourdieu 2007: 1). This is a complex question with no clear-cut answer. On the one hand, Bourdieu argues that all 'truths' and knowledge are located in specific historical and spatial conditions, and he calls on Marxist philosophers to pay attention to 'the history and historicity of the concepts that we use to think about history' (Bourdieu 1990:17) and to 'historicisation of their concepts or their theoretical inheritance' (Bourdieu 1990:16). On the other hand, Bourdieu believes in the possibility of the social scientist producing truths 'if he fulfils the demands of the field' (Bourdieu 2008:116). In his theory and practice of research Bourdieu provides a range of ways to fulfil the demands of the field.

This article explores aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social science research practice and relates each to enhancing validity when researching the 'other'. The relational way of thinking, a key attribute of Bourdieu's theory, entails both an epistemology and a methodology. Epistemologically, a relational approach requires researchers to grasp the object of their research in its interrelation across subjective dispositions and objective conditions. Methodologically, a relational method requires the systematic and multi-stepped investigation of the field of power in which the object of research lies. The object of research ought to be constructed as a theoretical problematic rather than as 'given' or on the basis of common sense. While reflexivity as relating to the researcher has been much written about epistemic reflexivity is also advocated (Bourdieu, 2003: 281). Bourdieu 'turns the tools of science back onto science itself' with the spotlight on the scientist and the scientific habitus necessary to fulfil the demands of science.

This paper arises from the experience of teaching research methodology and methods courses and of engaging in research in a faculty of education in a research-intensive university. The challenge that researchers face range from the banal to the more complex. A hurdle for researchers of 'others' and research in general is formulating the research problem, deriving the research question/s and constructing the object of research in ways that are valid. There is a tendency often to construct the object of the research in common-sense terms that may include stereotypical ways of thinking of the 'other'. Then the uncritical deployment of dominant theories and intellectual orthodoxies might obscure empirical realities of the 'other'. Often, the spatial context and background of the study is conflated with its theoretical context, leading to weaker understanding and justification of claims made on the basis of scientific authorities in the field. The question that is most vexing is the epistemological assumptions that underpin selected methods. This might be due to research method courses that pay cursory attention to relating research methods to the epistemological and ontological assumptions which inform them. There is difficulty in shifting to a reflexive way of thinking which is essential in research. The more complex skills such as 'thinking relationally' and reflexively to be able to produce more valid accounts of the 'other' are much more difficult to achieve. The purpose of this article is to highlight aspects of Bourdieu's theory and practice

of research that provide guidance or tools to think about the above difficulties. The paper draws on Bourdieu's original works as well as secondary publications on Bourdieu and argues that Bourdieu's theory of research practice provides invaluable insights for enhancing validity when researching the 'other'.

A relational way of thinking

Bourdieu's relational way of thinking that requires a 'total science' approach includes the analysis of the research problem within the totality of social structures within which it lies. Thus, according to Mauss cited by Wacquant (2007: 7), 'total social facts are facts that set into motion in some cases the totality of society and its institutions ...and in others a very large number of institutions...'. While the concept is useful for the need to 'shed narrow, rigidly compartmentalised observational approaches' it 'can become dangerous when it fosters a kind of loose holism' (Maus, *ibid*) in guise of a relational approach. Loose holism could be checked by the rigorous construction of the object of research. The task of the researcher is 'to uncover the ... structures of the various social worlds' and the 'mechanisms which tend to ensure their reproduction or their transformation' (Bourdieu,) cited by Wacquant (2007: 7). Wacquant (2007: 7) explains that these structures 'exist twice' in the 'objectivity of the first order' and 'the objectivity of the second order'. The objectivity of the first order refers to the 'distribution of material resources and means of appropriation of socially scarce goods and values' (*ibid.*). The objectivity of the second order refers to systems of classifications, the mental structures and bodily schemata that inform practical activities – conduct, thoughts, feelings and judgments of social agents' (*ibid.*). Relating existing practices and dispositions to the objective social structures that shape them will enable more valid explanations for them. A relational epistemology and a double focus analytic lens which complements each reading are necessary to develop more truthful accounts.

A relational epistemology across the epistemological dichotomy of objectivism and subjectivism would enhance the validity of research accounts of the 'other' as it would enable relating perceptions, representations and actions of social agents to the objective conditions that generate them. Bourdieu argues that objectivism and subjectivism offer onside of an epistemology necessary to understand the social world (Grenfell, 2009). Thus Bourdieu says:

The knowledge we shall call phenomenological...sets out to make explicit the truth of the primary experience of the social world...the knowledge we shall term objectivist...constructs the objective relations...which structure practice and representations of practice (Bourdieu, 1977:3).

Objectivism attempts to explain the social world by bracketing individual experience and subjectivity and focusing on the objective conditions which structure practice. It sees social phenomena as things and ignores that they are objects of cognition. Subjectivism represents a form of knowledge about the social world based on the primary experience and perceptions of individuals. From this side of the

epistemological spectrum, the social world might be reduced to the representations that agents make of it. Thus, subjectivist theories are based on what participants perceive or think about the social phenomenon being investigated and not how they really are while objectivism fails to recognise that social reality is, to some extent, shaped by the conceptions and representations of individuals. A foundational principle of Bourdieu's sociology (Wacquant: 2007, 7) is the dialectic of social and mental structures:

There exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective dimensions of the social world and the principles ...that agents apply to it.

Applying Wacquant's (2007: 12) elucidation of Bourdieu's theory of practice to researching the 'other', the social analyst 'must elucidate the perceptual and evaluative schemata that agents invest in their everyday life. The question is: Where do they come from and how do they relate to the external structures of society? (Wacquant, 2007: 12). A relational epistemology requires participants' experiences, representations and practices to be related to the objective social and economic conditions that shape them. A one-sided epistemology might perpetuate myths about innate ability and natural causes for participants' representations and actions rather than external social and economic structures.

Bourdieu advocated a relational approach that would transcend conceptual dichotomies. He sought to develop useful concepts that would enable a relational form of analysis. In this regard, his key relational thinking tools, habitus and field designate bundles of relations (Wacquant 2007: 16). One of his key relational thinking tools, habitus refers to social actors' conventional way of thinking, feeling, acting, being and making sense. Bourdieu analyses the habitus as arising from both conditioning and construction:

On one side it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus... on the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992a: 127)

The analytical significance of the concept of 'habitus' is that it relates the dichotomy of structure and agency. Since the habitus is a product of both field structures and of cognitive construction, investigating the individual agent's habitus requires that both aspects be included and related in its analysis. This kind of relational investigation is achievable through a relational methodology that includes an analysis of capital positions and relations in the field as well as the habitus of participants in the field. Bourdieu suggested three steps in the investigation of the research object (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992): first, 'analyse the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power'; secondly, 'map out the objective structures of relations between the positions occupied by the social agents and institutions in the field' or capital relations in the field; and, thirdly, analyse the habitus of social agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing...economic and

social conditions...'(Bourdieu &Wacquant, 1992: 104). With reference to the first, it is necessary to analyse the field that forms the context of the object of research in relation to the field of power (both social and intellectual). This includes locating the object of research in its local, national, and international field and interrogating the ways in which 'previous knowledge about the object has been generated, by whom, and whose interest was served by that knowledge'(Thomson, 2008: 67). A relational rather than an essentialist way of thinking is privileged. An essentialist way of thinking 'is inclined to treat the activities and preferences specific to "other" individuals or groups in society at a certain moment as if they were substantial properties, inscribed once and for all in a sort of biological or cultural essence' (Bourdieu, 1998:4). For example, racism is based on stigmatising other races 'by imprisoning them in a negative essence' (Bourdieu, 1990: 28). Even taste that appears to be a personal attribute is according to Bourdieu socially constructed and relational.

Thus,Wacquant (2007: 11) advises that,*firstly*, the social scientist must '...construct the objective structures (positions)...the distribution of ...resources that define the external constraints bearing on interactions and representations' and,*secondly*, 'introduce the immediate lived experience of agents in order to explicate the categories of perception and appreciation (dispositions) that structure their action from inside' (Wacquant, 2007: 11).

The relational approach requires that the relationship between subjective representations and practices and the objective external conditions that shape it be researched so as to uncover the underlying generating mechanisms that structure representations, perceptions and actions of participants. In the South African context, researchers often focus on teachers' perceptions of educational policy changes or on the implementation of such policies in different socio-economic school contexts. While the local context of the school is outlined, the relationship between the context and the perceptions and practices of participants is often not established. Relating the perceptions and practices to each other and to the social structures, which are operative in the specific context and which, in turn, are related to historical and political structures would enhance validity of such accounts. The objective conditions are often ignored when researching the perceptions and subjectivities of the 'other', with profound ethical and representational consequences. A consequence of ignoring the objective social conditions that shape representations, actions and perceptions elides an understanding of a sociological explanation for them. The views and practices of the 'other' might then be seen as arising from natural sources rather than the social conditions and 'lack of cultural gifts' (Bourdieu, 1974) that characterise them.

Representing the 'other'

Of relevance to enhancing validity when researching the other in Bourdieu's work is his advice to represent the plural or multiple nature of social practices and

phenomena. Bourdieu (1990: 20) developed the theory of fields which according to him could be called:

'the plurality of worlds' based on a 'plurality of logics corresponding to different worlds; that is, to different fields as places in which different kinds of common sense, different commonplace ideas and different systems of topics, all irreducible to each other, are constructed' (1990:20).

Thus, Bourdieu (2002: 3) encourages researchers to 'work with the multiple perspectives that correspond to the multiplicity of coexisting, and sometimes directly competing, points of view'. Bourdieu's epistemological position of the plurality of worlds, fields and accounts enables the 'other' to be more validly represented.

Of great significance when researching the 'other' is Bourdieu's deeply humanistic relation to research participants, characterised by an attitude of compassion, respect and empathy, but not patronising, nor prejudicial. This is evident in his relation and representation of the Kabyle peasants (the other) that arose from his perception and experience with Bearn peasants (his own kind). Neither a 'cavalier point of view' nor an attitude of 'superiority' is appropriate. Thus he says:

It is clear that all this [field theory] was rooted in a particular social experience: a relationship, which was not experienced as either natural or self-evident, with the theoretical position. This difficulty in adopting a cavalier point of view, from a position of superiority, on Kabyle peasants, their marriage or their rituals, doubtless stemmed from the fact that I had known very similar peasants, who had similar ways of talking about honour and shame, etc., and that I could sense the artificiality both of the vision that I sometimes had by observing things from a strictly objectivist point of view – and indeed of the vision informants proposed to me when, in their concern to play the game, to be equal to the situation created by theoretical questioning, they turned themselves into spontaneous theoreticians of their practice (Bourdieu, 1990:22).

Enhancing validity when researching the 'other', also requires attention to be paid to the agency of participants in highly constraining conditions. Bourdieu's view that structure and agency are implicit in each other arose from his observations of peasants in rural France and Algeria. Bourdieu (1990: 6) proposed the concept of 'strategies' used by participants in the face of severely constraining structures. According to Bourdieu (1990: 59), 'individual action emerged from an unconscious calculation of profit and a strategic positioning within social space to maximise individual holdings'. He needed a 'theoretical approach to account for this hybrid activity of socially shaped strategic, but individually constituted personal practice' (Bourdieu, 1990: 68). Bourdieu's contribution of the concept of 'strategies' relates structure and agency and shows their interplay in practice. He proposed the concept of 'strategies' used by participants in the face of constraining structures, and explained this with the example:

The outcome of the social issue ...was dependent on a series of personal and contextual conditions, and the best way to think about it was not in terms of structure or personal choice (agency), but in terms of strategy (Bourdieu, 1990: 6).

By adopting a relational approach across an objectivist epistemology and paying attention to informants 'vision' or explanations – the subjectivist element - he was able to infer the operation of 'strategies' rather than 'rules, model or structure'(Bourdieu 1990, 9) and represent the hybridity of practice – socially shaped, but individually constituted practice. A relational approach would enable the agency of the 'other' as it emanates from the structures that enable or constrain it to be uncovered and represented.

The concepts of a total science approach, a relational epistemology, hybrid activity and strategy are invaluable for research of the 'other'. For example, when researching SA schools and classrooms, objectivism requires the researcher to represent the objectivity of the first order explicitly. The objective of the first order includes: the social and economic class context of the school, the distribution of material resources, and the opportunities and means available for acquiring scarce goods and values. Secondly, subjectivism requires that the researcher represent the objectivity of the second order – the systems of classifications, the mental and perceptual structures, including the conduct, thoughts, feelings and judgments of social agents that inform practical activities. Thirdly, the relational approach requires that the researcher make explicit the relations between the first and second order. Fourthly, the concept of hybrid activity enables the conceptualisation of the practices of participants as creative but constrained by the objectivity of social and economic structures. Fifthly, the broader historical perspective within which the object of research lies ought to be analysed and represented.

Concepts as open thinking tools

Bourdieu's view of how conceptual tools should be employed in research would enhance validity. First, according to Bourdieu, concepts are thinking tools that must remain open and provisional to new empirical realities. He also points out that this does not mean 'vague, approximate or confused'. In this regard, he writes: 'concepts can and to some extent must remain open and provisional which does not mean vague, approximate or confused' (Bourdieu, 1990: 40). For Bourdieu (1990: 41), 'openness of concepts gives them their "suggestive" character and thus their capacity to produce scientific effects (by showing things that have never been seen before)'. Secondly, Bourdieu notes the use of concepts that function as signposts which guide research. In his words, Bourdieu (1990: 40) notes the value of concepts 'that function as signposts pointing to phenomena that are worth examining'. Thirdly, concepts ought to be objects rather than instruments of research. This means deploying concepts but at the same time, subjecting them to 'testing'. Wacquant(2007: 23) explains:

The peculiar difficulty of sociology... is to produce a precise science of an imprecise, fuzzy, wooly reality. For this it is better that its concepts be polymorphic, supple, and adaptable, rather than defined, calibrated and used rigidly.

Bourdieu was also concerned about the use of social dichotomies in social research that filter observation and perception of the researcher; thus, hindering or imprisoning thought. He claimed:

I could give hundreds of examples of social dichotomies relayed by the educational system which, becoming categories of perception, hinder or imprison thought (Bourdieu, 1990:16).

The danger is that conceptions and conceptual categories might become perceptual categories which filter out empirical practices that lie outside the conceptual framework. Thus Bourdieu, cited by Maton (2009) cautions to not confuse 'the model of reality for the reality of the model'. A vicious cycle might develop in which the concept such as habitus is 'seen everywhere' (Maton, 2009) or simply superimposed on the reality. To counteract this tunneled vision, Bourdieu proposes first-degree monitoring which requires the 'empiricist mind' to not only 'wait for the expected', but also be alert to the unexpected (Bourdieu, 1991:87).

When researching the 'other', extra vigilance is necessary to ensure that the theoretical lens illuminate and not obscure the practices and actions of the 'other'. From the perspective of late modernity Beck, Bonss and Lau (2003) make a similar point about epistemological binaries and conceptual dichotomies:

The old certainties, distinctions and dichotomies are fading away, but through close investigation of that process we can discover what is taking their place. This approach couldn't be more foreign to the 'farewell to science' view found in some quarters of postmodernism. Rather it is a call for the strengthening of social science. Social science can no longer aspire to take a gods-eye point of view and the control that goes with it, but it can find another way to know.

Construction of the object of research

Bourdieu contributes further key insights about the construction of the object of research. From the Bourdieusian perspective, firstly the object of research is not 'given' nor defined in terms of everyday experiences. The object of research can only be defined and 'constructed in terms of a theoretical problematic which makes it possible to conduct a systematic questioning of the aspects of reality that appear obvious when defining the problem in our everyday experience' (Bourdieu, Cambrorredon & Passeron, 1991: 35). There is a significant difference between common-sense constructions of the object of research and the object of research 'as a system of expressly constructed relations' that theory enables. Constructing the object of research requires conceptual construction, and conceptual construction, in turn, requires rupture with ordinary perception. This would require breaking free 'from the representations, questions and problem formulations of common sense understanding' (ibid.).

Secondly, the use of theoretical language and classifications – not everyday language and classifications – represents an important dimension of sound research practice. In this regard, the use of technical/theoretical language should not be

confused with jargon; it should be seen as part of a taxonomy of concepts that enables one to analyse, know, construct and understand what is known about the research problem. In *Distinctions*, Bourdieu (1984: 509) suggests that 'the language used [in research] must signal a break with ordinary experience, which is ...necessary to appropriate...the knowledge produced and to produce it'.

Thirdly, Bourdieu advocates a kind of pre-reflexive reflexivity as early as the construction of the object of research. This requires researchers to be critical of the intellectual orthodoxies that are dominating the field, and to work towards 'a genuine object' (Bourdieu,1998: 4).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity ought to be a key attribute of the scientific habitus of the researcher of the 'other' throughout the research process. Wacquant (2007: 36) argues that Bourdieu's reflexivity differs from other conceptualisations in three ways:

First, its primary target is not the individual but the social and intellectual unconscious embedded in analytic tools and operations; second, it must be a collective enterprise rather than the burden of the lone academic; and third it seeks to ...buttress the epistemological security of sociology.

Notwithstanding the significance of epistemic reflexivity, the personal reflexivity of the researcher is essential when researching the 'other'. Scott and Morrison (2007) relate reflexivity as fundamental for producing 'truthful accounts of the world'. Thus:

...the insertion of the notion of reflexivity into research is a statement about what research is, and therefore it implies that research that is not reflexive offers less truthful accounts of the world (Scott & Morrison, 2007: 202).

According to Bowen (2009: 31), reflexivity requires an awareness by researchers of their own contribution to the construction of meanings and acknowledgement of the possibility of their subjective influence on research. The personal attributes of the researcher are fundamental to the knowledge that is eventually produced, a point underscored by Morrison:

Personal reflexivity foregrounds the personal characteristics and values of the researcher both in the conduct of research and in the way it is written up. Thus if the researcher is white, middle class and university educated, these characteristics are considered to be fundamental to the type of knowledge that is eventually produced (Morrison,2007: 202)

Reflexivity refers to the necessary disposition of the researcher, to a guiding principle of their research practice, to be conscious of their own position and disposition, such that it becomes part of their scientific habitus. The influence of the researcher's biography, race, class, gender, sexual identity, educational trajectory, social background, historical background and intellectual affiliations to orthodoxies/traditions, which are potential sources of bias or what Bourdieu calls 'unconscious determinisms', require constant checking. This type of reflexivity, participant objectivation, ought

to become a part of the researcher's scientific habitus. It refers to a necessary disposition of the researcher, to a guiding principle of her research practice, and to be conscious of her own position and disposition, such that it becomes part of her scientific habitus.

This type of reflexivity, classified as participant objectivation by Bourdieu (2003: 282), refers to 'the *objectivation of the subject of objectivation, ... of the researcher herself*' that refers to self-analysis of the researcher's own position and trajectory or biography. A reflexive way of thinking calls on researchers to be aware that their *habitus* or predispositions and capital or position are an essential part of the knowledge they produce. Therefore, researchers ought to objectivate their habitus, including their own conscious or unconscious bias so that their effect as obstacles to scientific knowledge is systematically monitored. In this regard, Bourdieu recalls his own 'cleft *habitus*' or his ambivalent attitude to formal education institutions which shaped his *habitus* and research practice and which might have biased his grasp of the research object.

Participant objectivation can be carried through objectifying the position of the researcher in the field of specialists and objectifying the illusion of the scholastic universe including the objective, pure and disinterested view. Bourdieu criticises observers and analysts who project their own vision of the world and their point of view onto the understanding of the social practices which constitute the object of their study, or unconsciously attribute to the object of their observations characteristics which are inherently theirs, of their own perception and comprehension of the world (Bourdieu, 1990). With reference to objectifying the illusion of the scholastic universe – the illusion of the pure, absolute and disinterested point of view Bourdieu advises: By expressing the social determinants of different forms of practice, especially intellectual practice (e.g. membership and commitment to social and religious groups, free time, symbolic structures and dispositions), Bourdieu (1990: 15) argues, the researcher gets the chance of acquiring a certain freedom from these determinants.

Reflexivity, according to Lash (Lash, 200: ix-x) is a quality of reflexive modernization, whereas reflection is a characteristic of first modernity. Reflection presumes a dualism of subject and object of knowledge between time and space whereas reflexivity requires the holding of the subject and object of knowledge in a space and time. Reflexivity assumes uncertainty whereas reflection presumes certainty. Reflexivity replaces the objectivity and certainty of knowledge by intentionality and uncertainty. It is precisely this intentionality and uncertainty that leads to unintended side-effects and consequences, that are to be welcomed by the reflexive researcher. That reflexivity does not mean non-knowledge and irrationality but capacity to be open to unintended side-effects that arise in the process. The relevance of reflexivity when researching the 'other' is of paramount importance as it enables openness to alternate forms of knowledge to come into being.

For Bourdieu, it is not just the lived experience or 'the biographical peculiarities' of the researcher that needs to be objectivated, but (Bourdieu, 2003: 282) also the social world that has produced the researcher including the intellectual field in which the researcher operates. This refers to the social origins of the researcher, her position and trajectory in social space, her social and religious membership and beliefs, her gender, age, nationality and her position within the microcosm of social researchers. Thus, the researcher's choices of topic, method, theory, etc., depend very closely on the location she occupies within her professional universe or intellectual field (Bourdieu, 2003: 283). For Bourdieu, the unanalysed element in any theoretical analysis is the theorist's relation to the social world and the objective social conditions on which it is founded. Left unanalysed, it leads to 'intellectual-centrism'. It is, therefore, necessary to subject one's scientific practice to 'critical knowledge of the limits to all theoretical knowledge, both subjectivist and objectivist' (Grenfell, 2009:46).

Bourdieu's extends reflexivity to epistemic reflexivity that has three key attributes: firstly, targets the fields concepts, instruments of analysis and practical operations of research; secondly, is collective rather than individual and thirdly, foregrounds concrete problems to be solved rather than a preoccupation with theoretical logic. The first requires that the biases or presuppositions built into concepts, instruments of analysis, and practical operations of research be subjected to reflexive thinking. Epistemic reflexivity stands opposed to the intellectual field itself and the scholastic dispositions and biases it fosters and rewards in its members (Bourdieu, 2003: 281). As Maton (2003: 58) noted, the aim is 'to uncover not the individual researchers' biases but the collective scientific biases embedded in intellectual practices by the field's objectifying relations'. Thus Wacquant (2007: 40) argues 'that what has to be neutralized is the collective scientific unconscious embedded in theories, problems and categories of scholarly judgment'.

Secondly, epistemic reflexivity 'must be a collective enterprise rather than the burden of the lone academic' (Wacquant (2007: 36). Bourdieu's epistemic reflexivity is collective and fundamentally anti narcissistic (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 72). The requirement of collective reflexivity would subject concepts, instruments of analysis and practical operations of research such as coding and interpretations to be interrogated by the collective. Furthermore, the 'self-referentiality of an introspective and socially distinct epistemological community' (Robbins, 2009: 37) also needs to be subjected to reflexive thinking. When researching the 'other' collective reflexivity is indispensable. Ideally, the collective ought to be made up of reviewers who represent the 'other' as well.

Wacquant (2007) describes the intellectual bias 'which entices us to construe the world as a spectacle, as a set of significations to be interpreted, rather than as concrete problems to be solved practically' (39). Keeping in mind the concrete problem and possible solutions to it would enable a grounded analysis that is not fixated on theoretical issues. Reflexivity as a methodological concept, stems from the extent to which a researcher is able to grasp the object of the study in its essence (Grenfell,

2008). As a scientific method, reflexivity is defined as a critical epistemological process, i.e. being aware of obstacles to scientific knowledge. Bourdieu provides an example of his own 'third-degree' monitoring. In writing about Algerian society and Algerian social movements, during the 50s and 60s when Algeria was struggling for its independence from its coloniser France, Bourdieu realised that developing a scientific analysis and representation 'meant trying to understand and explain the real foundations and objectives of the struggle...that were socially differentiated and even antagonistic...' (1990: 2). In that context when 'the problem of racism arose at every moment' Bourdieu's concern was not to 'reinforce racist representations'. Thus Bourdieu regards much of the work as a 'particularly scandalous form of ethnocentrism...which tending to justify the colonial order, described practices ...as unjustifiable' (ibid. 3). Bourdieu was mindful of 'expressions of a colonial gaze'. In 1972 he revisited his early Algerian research to go beyond second degree monitoring to effect third-degree monitoring which would take note of the eurocentricism of his analyses (Robbins, 2009: 37). This example illustrates the salience of subjecting one's gaze to third-degree monitoring that requires researchers to check whether their claims, descriptions and explanations are not biased by dominant ways of being.

In order to enhance validity, methodological reflexivity ought to be practised throughout the research process. For example, with reference to data collection, while all methods give us partial views, the methods chosen need rational justification. Further, different methods increase the validity of the data gathered. Thus, Bourdieu acknowledges that his data collection method of a survey by closed questionnaire for his work, *Distinctions*, was 'a second best' because it left 'out the modality of practices'. However, it was 'imposed by the need to obtain a large amount of ... data on a sample large enough to be treated statistically' (Bourdieu, 1984: 506). However, to counteract the limitations imposed by the survey technique, 'observations and questionings in real situations' were done whenever difficulties arose. In addition, researchers ought to ensure the efficacy of their data collection instrument/s by subjecting them to scrutiny. Given the habitus of researchers, the items in questionnaires and interview schedules might reflect the habitus and position of the researcher. Bourdieu (1984:505) indicates that it was possible through systematic reflexion to discover that, in one of his survey questionnaires, farmers and farm workers were excluded due to their social marginalisation from 'legitimate culture' and that the 'questionnaire was completely inappropriate' because 'quite other methods were required to identify the dispositions of a population totally excluded from legitimate culture'. Thus, Bourdieu highlights the problem of 'the almost universal recognition of the dominant culture' in research practices, which makes reflexivity essential when researching the 'other'. The items included in *questionnaires* might coerce participants to select responses that are not truthful. For example, in the item of which qualities participants would prefer in their friends, 'subjects were asked to choose, from a list of adjectives'. Bourdieu reflects that the respondents were 'forced' to choose the least unacceptable option (Bourdieu, 1998: 506) and, as such, the question yielded 'an attenuated image' of choice of friends or colleagues (Bourdieu, 1984: 506).

Furthermore, during the coding of the data, a critical point is the extent to which the codes emanate from subliminal influences on the coder instead of from the empirical data. Thus, Bourdieu reflected that the 'judgments formulated by a teacher to justify his marks and classifications' in the study of the 'categories of professional understanding' came from the coder's social conditions rather than from the data. This led Bourdieu to relate the categories or classification systems used to the persons who developed them and their educational training. Bourdieu (1984) noted practices when coding data that lead to invalidity. He cites the Garfinkel and Sachs (1986) study of two student coders who used 'ad hoc considerations' in order to fit the content of the files to the coding schedule Bourdieu (1984). This practice of ad hoc coding produces single and simple results, whereas the aim ought to be to present the many-sidedness of the phenomena being studied. Thus Bourdieu declares:

science can't do anything by paying lip-service to the rich inexhaustibility of life.... This acute feeling for the many-sidedness of social reality, its resistance to the venture of knowledge, was the basis of the thinking that I have been constantly engaged in on the limits of scientific knowledge (Bourdieu 1990 21).

With reference to data analysis, Bourdieu was concerned about the relationship between induction and deduction. Bourdieu *et al.* cited in Bourdieu (1984) questioned whether their findings were disclosing causal relations between phenomena or just expressing pre-dispositional, a priori logical connections. Bourdieu (1984: 510) argues that the 'concrete' analyses are there to assist the return into experience of the product of scientific description and to make distancing and neutralisation more difficult. Lastly, with reference to the reporting of findings, Bourdieu required that the findings be reported with sufficient detail to provide the reader all the documents (facsimiles of books or articles, photographs, extracts from interviews, etc.) which have been inserted in the text in order to discourage absent-minded readings. In this regard, Bourdieu (1984: 10) advises writers to break with 'genteel abstraction' and 'to show ...things and even people, make them palpable'.

Conclusion

Bourdieu's theory of research practice provides invaluable insights when researching the other: first, that a relational approach across both objectivist and subjectivist epistemologies and methodology are necessary to develop valid accounts of the social world; secondly, that conceptual tools be used as signposts and as 'open' tentative structures which could, in turn, lead to reframing, modification and extension of such conceptual structures in specific contexts; thirdly, a relational analysis of the research object in its field of power would expose the political, social and economic structures that are pertinent; fourthly, reflexive awareness of how one's own field, habitus and capital might introduce bias in representations of the 'other' and fifthly, epistemic reflexivity that requires a critical understanding and approach to hegemonic forms of knowledge and research processes. A reflexive approach across theoretical structures and empirical realities, together with personal, epistemic and disciplinary reflexivity, would also help guard

against a technical approach to conceptual tools. This opens further possibility for the development of counter discourses, truthful forms of understanding and theory that might represent the 'other' more validly. A fitting conclusion to this article then is Bourdieu's hope that 'if we grant that symbolic systems are social products that contribute to making the world, that they do not simply mirror social relations but help constitute them, then one can, within limits transform the world by transforming its representation (Bourdieu 1980, 1981) cited by Wacquant (2007: 14).

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