TOWARDS A REALIST SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION:
A POLYPHONIC REVIEW ESSAY

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ABSTRACT. This review essay evaluates Karl Maton's *Knowledge and Knowers: Towards a Realist Sociology of Education* as a recent examination of the sociological causes and effects of education in the tradition of the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu and the British educational sociologist Basil Bernstein. Maton's book synthesizes the scholarship of Bourdieu and Bernstein and complements their work with "discoveries" from the world of systemic functional linguistics to produce a new "realist sociology of education." It does so by means of Legitimation Code Theory, defined as a "toolkit" to analyze knowledge construction in cultural fields, especially education. The authors of this review essay take a polyphonic approach in assessing this ambitious synthesis, offering four perspectives on Maton's book. Brian Barrett provides a Bernsteinian perspective; Dan Schubert approaches the book from his grounding in Bourdieu; and Susan Hood contributes a view from systemic functional linguistics. Michael Grenfell weaves these three perspectives together and provides introductory and concluding reflections. They aim, through their combined expertise, to use Maton's book as an occasion to take stock of the state of the field of sociology of education generally and to reflect on the questions: What is its nature and what type of knowledge does it express? To what uses may it be set and what is its place within the larger project of educational theory?

Key influences in the social critiques of education that emerged in the 1970s were the works of the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu and the British educational sociologist Basil Bernstein.[1] From the 1970s through the 1990s both Bourdieu and Bernstein wrote extensively on the sociological causes and effects of education from a perspective of knowledge reproduction, and their contributions had a significant impact on educational research more generally as it became

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1. For an example of Bourdieu's work during the 1970s, see Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture,* trans. Richard Nice (London: Sage, 1977). For some of Bernstein's work during the 1970s and extending into the 1990s, see Basil Bernstein, *Theoretical Studies Towards a Sociology of Language*, vol. 1 of *Class, Codes, and Control* (London: Routledge, 1971); Basil Bernstein, *Applied Studies Towards a Sociology of Language*, vol. 2 of *Class, Codes, and Control* (London: Routledge, 1973); Basil Bernstein, *Towards a Theory of Educational Transmissions*, vol. 3 of *Class, Codes, and Control* (London: Routledge, 1975); and Basil Bernstein, *The Structuring of Pedagogic Discourse*, vol. 4 of *Class, Codes, and Control* (London: Routledge, 1990).

increasingly focused on classroom processes and the interactions between educators and learners. The book under consideration in this review essay — Karl Maton's *Knowledge and Knowers: Towards a Realist Sociology of Education* — represents an attempt to extend this tradition by synthesizing the works of Bourdieu and Bernstein, complementing both with "discoveries" from the world of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to produce a new "realist sociology of education."[2] Its means for doing so is Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), defined as a "toolkit" to analyze knowledge construction in cultural fields, especially education. To assess this ambitious synthesis requires a breadth of expertise and so we here offer four perspectives on Maton's book: Brian Barrett provides a Bernsteinian perspective; Dan Schubert approaches the book from his grounding in Bourdieu; and Susan Hood contributes a view from SFL. Michael Grenfell weaves these three perspectives together, offering introductory and concluding reflections. Together, we hope to use Maton's book as an occasion to take stock of the state of the field of sociology of education: What is its nature and what type of knowledge does it express? To what uses may it be set and what is its place within the larger project of educational theory?

Educational Theory, Sociological Theory, and Social Realism

In the United Kingdom, educational theory up until the 1950s was regarded in much the same way as theory in the physical, normative sciences, thus as a way of developing, connecting, and evaluating hypotheses in order to understand particular educational phenomena.[3] Because education is often seen as the "science of pedagogy," such a perspective was predicated on discovering what works best in the classroom through the application of science. A good example of this applied science approach in which theory could be directly translated into practice is the audio-lingual method of second language teaching; this method, which is based on behaviorist psychology, rests on the idea that we learn best by acquiring

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2. Karl Maton, *Knowledge and Knowers: Towards a Realist Sociology of Education* (London: Routledge, 2014). This work will be cited in the text as *KK* for all subsequent references.

3. See, for example, Daniel O'Connor, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (London: Routledge, 1957).

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the requisite skills through repetition (as in the language laboratory). However, a major shift took place in the 1960s when British philosopher Paul Hirst argued that the applied science view "misrepresents" the nature of theory in practical educational contexts. For him, educational theory is distinct from theories derived from the normative sciences:

> The word theory is used as it occurs in the natural sciences where it refers to a single hypothesis or a logically interconnected set of hypotheses that have been confirmed by observation. It is in this sense of the word that it is said to provide us with standards by which we can assess the values and use of any claimant to the title theory.[4]

Hirst argued that if we judge educational theory by these standards, it comes off badly. He then redefined it as "the essential background to rational educational practice, not as a limited would-be scientific pursuit"; in other words, the standard by which to evaluate educational theory, according to Hirst, is whether it supplies knowledge that is organized for "determining some practical activity."[5] Because educational activity was essentially social and contextual, such theory would have to take into account a range of human sciences — most noticeably, the so-called foundational disciplines: sociology, psychology, philosophy, and history. Educational theory was therefore seen as providing the "principles of practice" that would guide teaching and learning in the real world, principles that would be both predictive and descriptive and would take account of the particularity of education settings, including teachers and learners.

The foundational disciplines became the core of British teacher education — both pre- and in-service — throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and the expectation was that teachers' competence was best located in a developed understanding of these disciplines from which effective pedagogy could be derived; that is, it was left to teachers to synthesize what they could from the foundational disciplines as they framed their own practice. Clearly, this movement cannot be seen in isolation from the larger sociocultural shifts that were taking place at the same time, in which anthropological concerns began to eclipse the strictly scientific in depicting human processes. Sociology, and in turn the sociology of education and the theories underpinning it, then underwent an epistemological shift perhaps best summed up in the social constructivism of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann.[6] Bernstein and Bourdieu's *critical* sociology of education was part of this movement to focus on the sociology of knowledge and thus to see education itself as a set of constructed meanings that may be imposed or shared. For example, Nell Keddie's contribution to Michael Young's seminal "new" sociology of education volume sought to

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4. Paul Hirst, "Educational Theory," in *The Study of Education*, ed. John William Tibble (London: Routledge, 1966), 38.

5. Ibid., 42.

6. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1967).

analyze the ways in which "subject" orientation and "pupil" orientation in teaching were dependent on perceived capacities of the pupils.[7] Bernstein and Bourdieu were both concerned with the form and content of knowledge within educational processes. For Bourdieu, pedagogic action represented a form of "symbolic violence" for the way it somewhat invisibly reproduced social class hierarchies in the way relations to academic knowledge implied levels of convergence and divergence between individual learners (their habitus) and the orthodoxy of the education field. These relations were expressed through cultural and linguistic capital — a certain way of thinking and using language acquired from birth, which set up "elective affinities" between learners and academic discourses. Pupils were either "like a fish in water" or not! Bernstein then looked at the actual morphology of knowledge: through framing and classification — that is, "boundaries" between subject bases and the degree to which they are controlled; and the way that academic language could be understood as "codes" (elaborated and restricted) which arose in distinct social provenance and more (or less) resonated with those found in scholastic knowledge. Both the perspectives from Bourdieu and Bernstein amounted to identifying distinct relations to knowledge defined in terms of sociocultural background.

However, whatever this knowledge-based sociology did or did not deliver, and somewhat against its implied mission, it did not lead to the creation of "enlightened" pedagogies where teachers, aware of the pernicious effects of knowledge relations, could compensate for them through adopting more egalitarian practices in the classroom.[8] Nevertheless, it did support and encourage a growing preoccupation among education researchers with analyzing the language of classroom discourse itself under a range of naturalistic/ethnographic methodologies. This focus on language subsequently took in later postmodern approaches, including critiques of gender and race, stemming from similar language-based philosophies.[9]

Maton's book takes up the challenge of the Bourdieu/Bernstein legacy and, with Legitimation Code Theory (LCT), works to extend it as a way of analyzing education (and indeed a much broader range of cultural practice) from Bourdieu's and Bernstein's perspectives in an integrated way. LCT claims to represent a "realist sociology," defined as knowledge structures within phenomena with existence over and above the immediate knowing by individuals. This would include researchers themselves, which is one of the prime claims of LCT — that it can reveal knowledge structures, and their consequences, hitherto unknown. Maton mounts his case on the back of what he considers to be a "subjective

7. Nell Keddie, "Classroom Knowledge," in *Knowledge and Control: New Directions in the Sociology of Education*, ed. Michael F. D. Young (London: Collier Macmillan, 1971).

8. Perhaps the most powerful impact it had was on the whole radicalization of teaching that led to the "deschooling" movement as the only way of countering the unintended, "dangerous" effects of education.

9. Arguably, this general sociocultural paradigm, with its assumption of cultural relativism, also eventually gave rise to the reemergence of a more technical, functionalist approach to educational research (thus, pedagogy) that, increasingly from the 1990s on, looked for research that would improve pupil performance through identifying and developing better methodologies — hence teacher competence.

doxa" in much social science research that leads to a "knowledge blindness or myopia." Here, knowledge is always seen as socially constructed rather than having a structural reality in itself. Within this subjectivist doxa, Maton argues, "knowledge" and "knowers" are collapsed such that knowledge arising from research is both relativist and essentialist because everything is articulated from a particular stance. This has consequences for what you can do with the outcome in policy terms, and therefore is crucially relevant. Maton argues that theory derived from writers such as Bourdieu is, consequently, often applied in a metaphoric manner leading to *sideways* steps in knowledge building, rather than being accumulative. As an alternative to dealing with such knowledge construction between participating individual subjectivities (which Maton claims has been the salient approach in educational research in recent decades), LCT takes as its principal focus the nature (morphology, taxonomy) of knowledge itself in the belief that the application of Bernstein's code theory can allow researchers to develop precise concepts that can lead to cumulative knowledge understanding.

As Hood puts it:

The core concern of LCT is the pressing need in educational research and practice to overcome "knowledge blindness" and to take "knowledge seriously as an object of study" (*KK*, 3). Maton argues that the field of education has been caught in a bind by the simplistic dichotomizing of "constructivist relativism" with "positivist absolutism," leaving any attention to knowledge relegated to the latter and so banished. As a result, education has become dominated by constructivist orientations where learning is everywhere but the "what" of learning is elided from the picture. No account is taken of how the nature of knowledge itself impacts in critical ways on teaching and learning, and on knowledge-building. Maton argues that as a consequence "knowledge [is left] under-researched, the study of education underdeveloped, and the sociology of knowledge unaware of its ostensible object of study" (*KK*, 4). The quest in LCT is to make knowledge visible, to theorize knowledge by identifying its organizing principles, to provide a "basis for building knowledge about knowledge-building" (*KK*, 3), and to enable its exploration in empirical research.

Knowledge is then studied in terms of the structures that carry it and the nature of those structures. Barrett captures this well:

Maton picks up most specifically from Bernstein's notion of "knowledge structures."[10] Bernstein developed the idea of knowledge structures in an effort to understand and make visible the features of knowledge that are (and could be) ultimately made available to students through the pedagogic device and the associated structuring of pedagogic discourse as characterized by varying strengths and locations of "classification" (referring to the degree of boundary maintenance or insulation between contents or agents) and "framing" (referring to "the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organization, pacing and timing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationship").[11] For Bernstein, "hierarchical" knowledge structures work through the integration of knowledge at lower levels to create more general propositions and theories to explain in a coherent and systematically principled manner an expanding range of empirical phenomena. "Horizontal" knowledge structures, on the other hand, are organized segmentally, developing through

10. Basil Bernstein, *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control, and Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996).

11. Bernstein, *Towards a Theory of Educational Transmissions*, 89.

the serial accumulation of incommensurable "specialized languages with specialized modes of interrogation and criteria for the creation and circulation of texts"[12] which complicate the synthesis of knowledge. Bernstein's suggestive conceptualization here allows for these different types of knowledge structures to be identified in educational research but has left their underlying principles undertheorized. Maton proposes LCT as more than sociology of education and more than sociology of knowledge. He proposes it as "sociology of legitimacy or sociology of possibilities" (*KK*, 7).

But what sort of theory is Legitimation Code Theory? Maton explicitly states that he eschews offering an "intellectual pedigree" for LCT — what Bernstein refers to as "epistemological botany."[13] LCT is certainly a long way from Popperian scientific theory, with its qualities of falsification and predictability.[14] Nevertheless, Maton does seek to set educational theory on a firmer objective footing. For him, the constructivist trend in social science research has indeed blurred Popper's World 2 and World 3 (that is, the world of thoughts and the world of *objective* facts). His intent is to reassert knowledge in its more objectivist form — specifically, knowledge that can be accepted to exist independently of a knowing subject. Drawing on a schema originally proposed by Archer,[15] LCT is offered as an "explanatory framework for enactment in and (re-)shaping by subsequent research studies" (*KK*, 15). LCT is therefore perhaps best understood as offering the means of formulating a series of *conjectures* rather than *theory* in the more conventional senses of the word itself; this, of course, has implications in terms of what is done with its findings.

Hood explains:

LCT models five major dimensions in its framework: those of Specialization, Semantics, Temporality, Autonomy, and Density. The first two, that is, Specialization and Semantics, are explained in detail in *Knowledge and Knowers*: Specialization has to do with the conceptualization of fields of practice as kinds of knowledge–knower structures, that is structures with orientations "towards something and by someone" (*KK*, 29). The organizing principles around which variations in fields of practice are structured as specialization codes are those of epistemic relations (ER), or "what can be legitimately described as knowledge," and social relations (SR), or "who can claim to be a legitimate knower" (*KK*, 29). Importantly, these underlying principles are seen as continua of possibilities; ER and SR are always considered as relatively weaker or relatively stronger. Both principles are relevant however weakly or strongly they are enacted, and their application in empirical studies always results in the relative positioning of practices, dispositions, and fields. … Semantics has to do with the conceptualization of fields of practice as "semantic structures" generated by semantic codes. These codes are based on the organizing principles of semantic gravity (SG), or degrees of context dependency of meanings in social practices, and semantic density (SD), or degrees of condensation of meaning (*KK*, 129). The conceptualization of relative strength, as discussed earlier in relation to Specialization, also applies to Semantics in the relative strength of SG and SD. Their

12. Basil Bernstein, "Vertical and Horizontal Discourse: An Essay," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 20, no. 2 (1999): 157–173.

13. Bernstein, *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control, and Identity*, 92, quoted in Maton, *Knowledge and Knowers*, 15.

14. Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1967).

15. Margaret S. Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

intersection as continua on a semantic plane enables the mapping of structures. Additionally, the principles of SG and SD allow for the dynamic mapping of knowledge practices over time. Progressive strengthening or weakening (SG↑/↓, SD↑/↓) can be modeled as "a wave," with relative strength of each principle made visible in the range or depth of the wave (*KK*, 143). Maton argues that "dynamizing static accounts of knowledge forms is … crucial for capturing practices that unfold through time such as knowledge-building" (*KK*, 131). While the two principles SG and SD often adjust correspondingly with the strengthening of one associated with the weakening of the other, they are independently variable, allowing for separation of the waves.

Barrett elaborates:

Given that the framework inherited from Bernstein focuses on knowledge, Maton therefore argues that insights can be gained by illuminating how intellectual fields legitimate knowers. Presenting the history of the field of British cultural studies as a case in point, Maton argues that conceptualizing the different "gazes" promoted within knower structures can serve toward a more developed understanding not only of how cumulative knowledge-building is constrained but also of how it can be enabled within "social fields of practices" characterized by "horizontal knowledge structures and weak grammars" (*KK*, 87) for relating theory to empirical data, as Bernstein characterized the arts, humanities, and, to varying degrees, the social sciences. By understanding intellectual fields as knowledge–knower structures and analyzing their forms as specialization codes, Maton extends and integrates Bernstein's initial ideas about knowledge structures (ideas that Bernstein himself suggested would require further refinement) "within a broader and more systematic model that enables different kinds of gaze underpinning knower structures to begin to be conceptualized" (*KK*, 104).

Maton then shifts focus from the nature of knowledge-building in intellectual fields to educational fields and the conditions that foster either cumulative or segmented learning within them. The aim in each of these fields is to overcome "segmentalism," which occurs "when knowledge or knowing is so strongly tied to its context that it is only meaningful in that context" (*KK*, 106). This is a condition that ultimately inhibits cumulative progress in both research and learning. Maton contends that, in the educational field, "segmented learning can constrain students' capacities to extend and integrate their past experiences and apply their understandings to new contexts, such as later studies, everyday lives or future work" (*KK*, 106). "Semantic gravity" captures the degree of context dependence in knowledge practices. It suggests that mastery of semantic gravity — the ability to both strengthen and weaken context dependence in the creation of "semantic waves" (where knowledge can be "decontextualized, transferred and recontextualized into new contexts" [*KK*, 410]) rather than "flatlines" that remain only in the realm of the abstract and context-independent or, as is often proposed by advocates of "authentic" or "situated" learning, only in the realm of the concrete and context-dependent — may be one condition for cumulative knowledge-building and learning.

Other examples follow of knowledge fields and the codes they exemplify — the nature of physics and mathematics, music education, linguistics, professional education — and these are used to illustrate a developing bank of concepts. In addition to the ones already mentioned, other conceptual tools include gazes, constellations, cosmologies, insights, lenses, and so on. LCT is therefore awash with conceptual terms for its analyses. This way of proceeding — building up a cumulative conceptual framework to describe the nature of systems — has much in common with systemic functional linguistics (SFL): an approach to linguistics that considers language as a social semiotic system; as language always reflects our social organization, so our social organization can be expressed through principles of language.

Hood takes a lead in this aspect of LCT:

In *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, Michael Halliday encapsulates the SFL perspective on language thus: "Language actively symbolizes the social system, representing metaphorically in its patterns of variation the variation that characterizes human cultures." As he further explains, "[l]anguage is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people's lives."[16]

In SFL, a focus on the theorization of language alongside other modalities as symbolizing the social system is reflected throughout the theory from the core concept of "meaning" itself. Meaning is a metafunctional concept reflecting the fundamental dimensions of human interaction: the ways in which we present the world in our construal of activities, entities, and circumstances (the ideational metafunction); the ways in which we interact with others in the expression of relationships and values (the interpersonal metafunction); and the ways in which we recognize our messages to make sense to others in the context of our interactions (the textual metafunction). Social practices are then always seen through the reflection of these complementary perspectives in the semiosis of choices in language and other semiotic systems.

In SFL, meaning is also a relational concept. It lies in system choices such that what we say/mean is in relation to what we could have said/meant but did not. The core principle in language as social semiotic is that of choice, in sharp contrast to a theory of language as rules. Systems of potential to mean in language are elaborated across multiple strata, in phonology/graphology, in lexico-grammar, and in the systems of discourse semantics. Meaning choices in language across all strata reverberate with the concept of context as higher levels of abstraction. Context as register encompasses field of activity, tenor of relations, and mode of messages; context as genre encompasses the way these variables are configured in recurrent ways in cultures. All options in the expression of language are options in meaning potential that realize and reflect context.

As meaning potential, language can then be considered as dynamically enacting the social world, for example, in the unfolding of meanings in an interaction (a logogenetic perspective), as shifting meaning potential in the lives of individuals (an ontogenetic perspective), and in the evolution of the system over long wavelengths of time (phylogenetically).[17] Language can also be viewed from the perspective of the social distribution of potential to mean. Connections to Bernstein's code theory and his concepts of repertoire and reservoir are recognizable here. From both perspectives the theory engages in critical ways with fields of educational practice.[18]

Links between SFL and LCT are therefore evidently enabled by common social concerns. The empirical reach of SFL is broad but a significant number of scholars over several decades have explicitly focused their research on educational issues and contexts.[19] This work has been largely motivated by concerns to better understand and to disrupt the continuing role of education in undemocratic processes of social stratification, and to redesign educational practices in the interests of greater social equality in accessing educational knowledge — similar interests to the sociology of education and, indeed, LCT itself.

16. Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (London: Open University Press, 1978), 3–4.

17. Michael A. K. Halliday and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, *Construing Experience Through Meaning: A Language-Based Approach to Cognition* (London: Cassell, 1999).

18. For accounts of a broad agenda of SFL research in education, see, e.g., Ruqaiya Hasan, *Language and Education: Learning and Teaching in Society*, vol. 3 of *The Collected Works of Ruqaiya Hasan*, ed. Jonathan J. Webster (London: Equinox, 2011); J. R. Martin, *Language in Education*, vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of J. R. Martin* (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiaotong Press, 2012); and Frances Christie and J. R. Martin, eds., *Language, Knowledge, and Pedagogy: Functional Linguistic and Sociological Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 1997).

19. For a comprehensive account of this work, see David Rose and J. R. Martin, *Learning to Write, Reading to Learn* (Sheffield, UK: Equinox, 2012).

The purpose of this approach offers a way to uncover the dynamics of knowledge within knowledge fields.

Barrett explains:

> LCT serves to reveal the mechanisms of knowledge building: as a truly critical sociology of education, it brings into view the internal dynamics of symbolic control so frequently identified as "domination," "hegemony," and so on by other "critical" theorizing in education. In doing so, the means for contesting such domination become apparent and they are sometimes contrary to key aspects of ostensibly "student-centered" or "progressive" pedagogies widely advocated by critical educationalists seemingly as a matter of instinct and despite the lack of a supportive evidence base. Further, in mapping possibilities for cumulative knowledge-building through an integrating and coherent framework, it is claimed that LCT offers the field an alternative to the (ultimately self-defeating) "segmentalism" that has long characterized it. These features might then represent a considerable advance in areas where other approaches in the sociology of education have proven less efficacious.

Here, it is pertinent to again raise the question of the nature of the theory construction lying behind LCT and indeed its articulation in a wealth of conceptual terms. Much is made by the exponents of LCT, and by Maton, of the distinction between "relations to" knowledge and "relations within" knowledge. There is an apparent "failure" on the part of Bourdieu to provide empirical exemplification of pedagogic discourse itself, preoccupied as he often is/was with external power relations and their (re)construction in classroom practice. Even though Maton cites both Bourdieu and Bernstein as making up the intellectual legacy of LCT, it should be acknowledged that the two scholars took very different approaches to theorizing (at least as evidenced in their published work), with Bernstein adopting very much a deductive method with little or no empirical exemplification, and Bourdieu taking an inductive approach where theoretical concepts arose as "necessitated" by the practical data he engaged with. LCT seems to straddle both approaches, which is an uncomfortable place to inhabit. The line between the two, however, is important since ultimately it comes back to the precise nature of the relationship between "knowledge" and "knowers" — the subject focus of this book — and here there is a critical difference between Bernstein and Bourdieu, which perhaps risks misconstruing the latter.

Schubert draws out this distinction between the consequences of individual knowledge practice and the theory that is used to account for it:

> In his account of Bourdieu's place in the development of theories of social knower codes in the context of British Cultural Studies, Maton suggests that these codes "can be understood as strategies of capital maximization … that lead to fragmentation within the field and progressively inward-looking and individualized stances."[20] While this, it seems, is a historically accurate account of what has taken place in the last half century in the field and institutions of cultural studies, that fragmentation and inward looking are not processes intrinsic to Bourdieu's theory of field and habitus per se. To the contrary, to the extent that Bourdieu offers a relational approach to these concepts, it is never the case that individual stances are exclusively inward looking or that "only a specific knower can know," and to suggest as much may run the danger of succumbing to an identity politics informed by the very neoliberalism that

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20. Karl Maton, "Making Semantic Waves: A Key to Cumulative Knowledge-Building," *Linguistics and Education* 24, no. 1 (2013): 39.

Bourdieu explicitly sought to combat later in his career.[21] I suggest a slightly different reading of Bourdieu, one informed by the work of Donna Haraway.[22]

> Haraway, for example, recognizes the dangers of the "endless splitting" of identity politics and suggests instead an "affinity politics" that emphasizes not the specific content of various identities but rather the common processes by which identities are formed and maintained. It is important to remember that Bourdieu is not talking about the production and reproduction of identities per se, which, whatever else they might be, are first and foremost positions within regimes of regulation.[23] The social processes of identity production identified by Haraway parallel Bourdieu's own arguments about the mutually constitutive and structuring structures of habitus and field. One could even argue that he studies the common processes — education in all its guises, consumption, sport, and so on that classify these structured and structuring structures.

This balance between individual subjectivities and the social contexts in which they constitute themselves is further brought out for Schubert in Bourdieu's later work, where he offers an "auto-analysis" of his own professional trajectory in sociohistoric terms:

> In *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*, the text of which is taken from his final lecture at the Collège de France, Bourdieu cautions against the fragmentation sometimes wrought by inward-looking and (all too often) self-celebrating knowers.[24] Such introspection is not an essential part of Bourdieu's theory of the reproduction of social structures. What's more, it is part of the sociologist's job to make sure processes of fragmentation do not take place.

Yet, a further distinction, then, needs to be made between "knower knowledge" and the "subjectivist doxa" that Maton criticizes as it emerges from a recognized ontological relationship within social conditions:

> While the above reading of Bourdieu is "guilty" of the knower bias that Maton wants to critique for having been too much the focus of sociological studies of knowledge, Bourdieu's knower bias has no subjectivist bias — it is not, in Maton's terms (*KK*, 4), a part of a subjectivist doxa. Bourdieu's knower knows because she is herself the product of the structuring structures of habitus AND field, which are themselves the historically structured structures of social space, and because this is social space that includes knowledge that has originated from particular structuring structures themselves located in social space.

Admittedly, such knowledge is some steps removed from direct subjective constructivism, as it is constituted by practical knowledge of knowledge construction of knowledge. So, it is individually constituted but from an epistemologically charged theory of social practice:

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21. Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market* (New York: The New Press, 1998), v.

22. Donna J. Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990), 197. See also Margaret Grebowicz and Helen Merrick, *Beyond the Cyborg: Adventures with Donna Haraway* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

23. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004); and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

24. Pierre Bourdieu, *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

There is simply no knowledge that does not exist in social space. I do not reject outright Maton's call for an increased emphasis on knowledge as an object and the relations that exist between knowledge objects, but rather ask that LCT researchers remember that both the epistemic relations (those between knowledges and objects) and social relations (those between objects and knowers) that Maton describes (*KK*, 29) are relations found in space that is itself social. This interpretation is not necessarily anything new or different, and Maton himself points to it in *Knowledge and Knowers* and to some extent in earlier works.[25]

The issue here is the distinction between LCT and Bourdieu's field theory to which it claims partial allegiance, and the knowledge that is produced a result. Schubert insists:

As Maton states simply, Bourdieu offers a field theory, not a code theory (*KK*, 140). Researchers into LCT nevertheless need to be wary of engaging in their own kind of "scholastic fallacy"[26] (*KK*, 48). It is not only that we must be sure not to conflate fields of production, fields of recontextualizing, and fields of reproduction; as Bourdieu and Maton have pointed out, we must also be sure not to attribute too independent an existence to knowledge as an object in itself (knowledge for knowledge's sake, as analogous to art for art's sake). Knowledge may well have an impact independent of knowers, but knowledge is always *someone's* knowledge that itself has been produced, recontextualized, and reproduced in particular social spaces and for particular historical and political (that is, social) purposes. Knowledge is always social in the same ways that technologies are social, and ways of being men and women are social,[27] and ways of holding a fork at the dining table are social. While the knowledges embedded in these ways of being and doing do come to have an impact that is independent of the knowers who live them, their origins remain social.

What is perhaps most significant here is the use to which Bourdieu is put, both by others and by LCT. Consider, for example, the following observation by Schubert:

I think that perhaps my primary difference from Maton is in the use to which I ultimately want to put Bourdieu. Whereas in *Knowledge and Knowers* Maton is using Bourdieu's theoretical contributions in order to examine the ways in which knowledge itself plays a part in the generation and production of knowledge, I use Bourdieu to better understand the ways in which various ways of being and knowing are imposed as *the* ways of being and knowing, whether that being and knowing takes place in an English literature classroom, a scientific laboratory, or a dining room table in a working-class home.

At this point, it is worth referring to the epistemological pillars of Bourdieu's theory. Bourdieu's position is derived from his own synthesis of a range of theories: phenomenological (drawing on work by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty); anthropological (drawing on Claude Levi-Strauss and Alfred Schutz); and philosophies of the history of science (drawing on Gaston Bachelard, Alexandre Koyré, and Georges Canguilhem). It is these epistemological positions that lie behind Bourdieu's concepts such as habitus, field, and capital and

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25. Karl Maton, "Reflexivity, Relationism, and Research: Pierre Bourdieu and the Epistemic Conditions of Social Scientific Knowledge," *Space and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2003): 52–65; and Karl Maton, "The Sociology of Educational Knowledge," in *Pierre Bourdieu: Language, Culture, and Education*, ed. Michael Grenfell and Michael Kelly (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 1999).

26. Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

27. Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

that constitute the resultant knowledge claims. Bernstein, on the other hand — and thus LCT in conception if not in practice — seems to develop concepts in and of themselves. This is a significant issue with respect to the language within which the theories of Bourdieu, Bernstein, SFL, and, in its turn, LCT express themselves. Bourdieu's epistemology by definition necessitates a position of critical reflexivity at the heart of his intellectual practice. Here, as participant objectivation, the same tools of analysis are brought back to the researcher so that there is the "objectivation of the knowing subject" in order to avoid the scholastic fallacy of imposing a certain way of knowing on knowledge — this is an attempt to go beyond the knower–knowledge dichotomy in order to establish a true reflexive objectivity. This element of reflexivity seems to be absent from LCT, as Schubert argues, and this has significant implications both for the status of the knowledge and how it might be used:

> Bourdieu's *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* reminds us that it is the sociologist's role to provide an intervention, to remind all actors that strategies of capital accumulation and maximization need not lead necessarily to fragmentation within any field, nor must they result in progressively inward-looking and individualized stances. They need not, nor must they, exactly because they are social and not essential. In other words, our predispositions to act and be in particular ways are not absolute limits on the ways in which we *can* act and be.

Schubert further asserts that the *objectivation* of the knowing subject is central to this aspect of Bourdieu's theory and has political ramifications seemingly distinct from LCT:

> I believe that we can and should read Bourdieu's *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* as part and parcel of the efforts at political intervention that came so frequently in the last years of his life, and that it is the final piece of evidence that Bourdieu's project was decidedly not Maton's project. While most of Bourdieu's other late works are about political action needed in a variety of social fields, we must keep in mind the relational nature of field and habitus. If *Acts of Resistance* and *The Weight of the World* are political interventions into exploitative and changing social fields,[28] *Sketch* works best as an outline of how to understand and intervene in the structuring of the habitus. It is the book in Bourdieu's corpus that most explicitly identifies habitus as a site of necessary sociological and political intervention; although if Grenfell is correct (and I think he is), then perhaps it is better to say that *Sketch* is a sociological intervention into the habitus that sets the stage for ensuing political interventions.

This is why *Sketch* is most certainly not a biography, or even an autobiographical statement — because it emerges as part of a theory of practice and does not stand outside of it. This gives it a different status:

> *Sketch* is an important sociological and political text in that it is an attempt to apply the reflexivity that informed Bourdieu's methodological approach throughout his career to an analysis of his own life, including his life as an intellectual, a knowledge producer. Whereas biographical accounts, at least those that focus on great men and women, tend to be about achievements of great individuals — that is, what the subject has done (and, in intellectual studies, the knowledge that the knower has produced) — *Sketch* is much more about how the subject, in this case Bourdieu himself, is formed or constituted. By focusing on the construction

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28. Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the New Myths of Our Time* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998); and Pierre Bourdieu, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

of his own habitus, Bourdieu addresses the relationships between knower and knowledge that are so important to Maton's arguments in *Knowledge and Knowers*. In providing his own life trajectory, Bourdieu describes the formation of habitus as well as the trajectory of this structured structure through a variety of social fields, the most important of which is his life in academia — his life as a thinker. As he describes it: "In adopting the point of view of the analyst I oblige myself to retain all the features that are pertinent from the point of view of sociology . . . . I intend to subject that experience ... to critical confrontation, as if it were any other object . . . . To understand is first to understand the field with which and against which one has been formed."[29]

The question is why this is so important: is not reflexivity, after all, an afterthought? Schubert:

> Why bother to understand it? The answer is that it is for the same reasons that Bourdieu sought to understand the reproduction of inequality through all stages of education or the symbolic violence that takes place during processes of consumption.
>
>   We learn from *Sketch* that it was not only academia in general that provided this awareness. More specifically, and more obviously relevant for Maton, is Bourdieu's account of the way his personal and professional field contexts somewhat mirrored each other: "My perception of the sociological field also owed much to the fact that the social and academic trajectory that had led me there set me strongly apart."[30]

This clearly had both personal and intellectual consequences. Schubert:

> Thus, we see that the habitus — that structured and structuring structure — has structured ways of perceiving the academic field and its bodies of knowledge that set Bourdieu himself at a distance. It was in part this separation that provided him with the incentive and the means to analyze the relational nature of field and habitus. There was little fit between the Bourdieu habitus and the academic field. But why? He "entered into sociology and ethnology," he says, after a foray into philosophy and "in part through a deep refusal of the scholastic point of view which is the principle of loftiness [and] social distance."[31] Bourdieu's sociology thus becomes a reflexive sociology that can be used to study the very academic field of which he is a part, but his reflexivity is not that which seems to inform the row upon row of self-help books that fill the aisles of our chain bookstores. Those books are designed to tell us what's wrong with us and to provide a regime by which we can better fit, and fit more contentedly, into our worlds, without ever really questioning the legitimacy of those worlds, the knowledges they produce and sanction, or the hierarchies that provide their structure. Bourdieu's analysis is not designed to help him find this better fit, *but neither is it an attempt to understand the independent contribution of knowledge to the further production and dissemination of knowledge*. Simply put, neither of these pursuits is his focus. His is a radical and sociological reflexivity that is designed to lay bare the generative structures that produce the habitus and social fields, including various fields of knowledge and knowledge production. Identifying the ways in which a lack of fit between habitus and field can result in a kind of symbolic violence for those who experience the rift points to the ways in which knowledges are themselves always embedded in particular social structures.

This position has implications for the relationship between sociologists and the language they employ in their analyses, because it discloses an entire epistemological status that has ontological issues for identity. Schubert argues:

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29. Bourdieu, *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*, 1–4.

30. Ibid., 37.

31. Ibid., 41.

The sociologist cannot simply accept the categorizations of the world that seem self-evident or transparent. They must remember that "language is a system of power and action" as much as it is a means of communication. As for Mikhail Bakhtin, for Bourdieu words and the knowledge they convey or impose are never neutral.[32] To accept existing classifications (and, for example, those within the LCT toolkit?) is to reproduce their legitimacy, and to do so in a particularly insidious way because such acceptance adds "scientific" evidence that they exist. Reflexivity in sociological practice is designed to provide an epistemological break with those systems of classification that structure knowledge and that seem to be so natural.

In *Sketch*, Bourdieu turns those same techniques of reflexivity onto an analysis of the self, providing an epistemological break with self-understanding. Following Grenfell,[33] I argue that this is done not only for social scientific reasons — that is, not only to objectify the sociological objectifier or the bodies of knowledge that are objectified — but for political reasons as well. If reflexivity in sociological practice is designed to provide a break with existing systems of classification, reflexivity in an analysis of the self can serve as the basis for understanding the ways in which particular selves are constituted because of their positioning within social space, a space that includes a re-politicized base of knowledge that itself plays a part in the reproduction of habitus and field.

In response to LCT as set out in this book, Schubert accepts that the status of knowledge itself is an important part of the sociology of education, but it is important not to overstate its independence:

All of this is to say two things. First, sociological analyses of knowledge production and distribution must definitely be expanded to include accounts of the effects of knowledge itself (or, better, knowledges themselves) on the production and reproduction of knowledge and epistemic communities. But they must also recognize (as Maton does) that knowledge itself does not emerge from nowhere. It is developed within particular fields, particular relations within social space that structure both what counts as knowledge and what (and whose) knowledge counts as well as the ways in which such knowledge can be legitimately communicated. Second, Maton's project was not Bourdieu's project. And, at least from a Bourdieusian perspective, knowledge is not an end in itself. Bourdieu was not an epistemologist; he was a sociologist. Understanding knowledge in and of itself and, as Maton does, looking at the ways in which knowledge production is cumulative are important. But, to borrow the words of Grenfell and David James, behind all of these knowledges are "ways of constructing and understanding the world."[34] These ways emerge from certain historical and social conditions, they are written or spoken by some while others never speak or write, at least in ways that are recognizable to those keeping track. They emerge into certain historical conditions and thus they benefit some and are violent (symbolically or otherwise) to others, they privilege some and marginalize others. Failure to acknowledge as much runs the risk of attributing more to knowledge than some independent effect on the development of social and epistemic subjects; it is to reify knowledge itself and to concede a reality to it that should be independent of its independent existence.

Again, the nuance in these arguments really boils down to the substantive intent of the intellectual enterprise and the use to which the resultant knowledge can be put. Schubert sums up:

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32. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); and Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 40.

33. Michael Grenfell, *Pierre Bourdieu: Agent Provocateur* (London: Continuum, 2004).

34. Michael Grenfell and David E. James, *Bourdieu and Education: Acts of Practical Theory* (Lewes, UK: Falmer Press, 1998), 8.

For Bourdieu, it is ultimately not about knowledge-building — it is ultimately not about knowledge at all; rather, it is about the lived experiences of those who have dominant or subordinate positions in social institutions or in society more generally. To miss this is to misrecognize that whatever independent standing knowledge itself has will benefit some at the expense of others, and privilege the social positions of some at the expense of others, others who most likely didn't have access to that knowledge in the first place.

Conclusion

From this review essay, it is evident that LCT is a complex approach to the study of the nature of knowledge in its many forms; in particular, as it is instantiated within pedagogic discourses — although its ambitions clearly extend beyond this. By directly addressing the structures of knowledge themselves and their outcomes, LCT offers a major contribution to understanding the relationship between knowledge and research (knowledge and knowers), which has direct implications for educational theory and practice. Clearly, educational research employs a range of theory types, and LCT certainly raises issues of the implied consequences of each, as well as the syntheses between them that are attempted. Above all, perhaps, LCT reminds us that all theory is constructed around language, which invariably shapes and limits what can be spoken of in its name. However, as noted in this review essay, such language, and thus theory, also needs to be understood as arising within social groups (of researchers and theoreticians) with their own interests. LCT can reveal the dynamics of discipline structures, as well as the language of association they offer. Nevertheless, it is important that the approach itself not escape this scrutiny — future work in this area should include an LCT analysis of LCT. Reflexivity is a crucial element of Bourdieusian sociology, especially because of the politics it necessitates. Bourdieu did attempt to present his work as a reflexive exercise; indeed, its claimed legitimacy somewhat depends on it. The same seems lacking from the Bernsteinian tradition on which LCT is predicated.

So, what of the future for LCT, this "new" entity in the academic discourse? We are clearly in the early days of its development, and one of the exciting things about LCT is that it is an unfolding project — much is promised and yet to be done in fully articulating its potential. There is an aspect of the *enfant terrible* at play in Maton's *Knowledge and Knowers*, and such a stance makes it an engaging and energetic read. Nevertheless, and as noted, its task in bringing the so-called subjectivist doxa to heel and revealing the consequence of knowledge on knowers may only secure its own place within the field when it turns the gaze it is calling for back on itself, and this clearly does have political consequences.

LCT is an intervention into an academic field, and it has sought to position itself at a particular point within it by a series of strategic intellectual maneuvers (for example, by claiming both Bernstein and Bourdieu as a launch pad). This is a symbolic positioning that targets the accruing of power in the field by association. Politics are therefore implied by LCT in its own subjects of critique and indeed by the actions of those promoting it in an ever-expanding community of practice. It is not easy and will not be adopted lightly. In its claims and positioning, there is then an avant-gardism in LCT that stands in opposition to alternatives, including

the conventional scholarship of Bourdieu and Bernstein. At one point, Bourdieu anticipates the possible consequences of such: "To impose a new producer, a new product, and a new system of taste on the market at a given moment means to relegate to the past a whole set of producers, products, and systems of taste, all hierarchical in relation to their degree of legitimacy."[35] This "relegation" will, of course, be resisted because there is a cost in jettisoning any dominant academic doxa, and a price to pay in terms of opponents firing back when faced with such a fundamental challenge to their paradigm. LCT may well, then, attract fierce opposition from the very theoretical camps to which it claims allegiance. But such opposition can only add more fuel to its intellectual fire.

In their critical appraisal of LCT, each of the contributors of this essay is clearly committed to going beyond orthodox forms of theory in educational research. These forms and LCT ultimately return us to questions about the nature of educational theory. LCT's "explanatory framework" — its conjectures — certainly offer a wide range of conceptual terms, leading into subterms. But what of theory itself and its place in educational practice? Finally, perhaps we need to reconsider which elements of theory are most necessary for a new theory of education in terms of the most pressing research questions that need to be answered. Does LCT, or Bernstein, or Bourdieu, or SFL — or any other theoretical approach for that matter — move us nearer to consensus on what we mean by educational theory and how we use it? Or, is it now so multifaceted in a post-postmodern world that we must just accept all theory as relative and contingent? This issue is important, not just for the future of LCT, but indeed for our ongoing commitment to understand the nature and form of educational theory as a way of progressing educational research and the eventual policy and practice that is formulated in its name. In this endeavor, LCT as introduced to us in *Knowledge and Knowers* certainly has a potentially significant role to play.

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35. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1996), 160–161.