

A TREASURE WAITING TO BE DISCOVERED BY SOCIAL WORK: PIERRE BOURDIEU

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Abstract

Social work is a profession and discipline supported by psychology, sociology, anthropology and many other disciplines. In this study, it is aimed to discuss how the social work discipline can benefit from the giant legacy left behind by Pierre Bourdieu-one of the most important names of the discipline of sociology in the 20th century. Social work is based on knowledge, skills and value. In this context, the concepts of *field*, *habitus*, *reflexivity*, *capital*, *doxa*, *heterodoxa* were explained and the criticisms were put forward in the first chapter. In the second part, with case study, micro, mezzo and macro level social work practices in various social work fields were re-discussed in the light of the terms of Pierre Bourdieu. The discipline of social work, which has a multidisciplinary structure should focus more on the works of Pierre Bourdieu and this will help the social workers to have a wider perspective for the cases. With the changing society, social work is also under constant change and development, and the work of Pierre Bourdieu along with terms field, habitus, reflexivity, capital, doxa, heterodoxa and various other concepts are to be discovered by the social work.

Key words: *Pierre Bourdieu, social work, social work practice*

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SOSYAL HİZMET TARAFINDAN KEŞFEDİLMİYİ BEKLEYEN BİR HAZİNE: PIERRE BOURDIEU

Öz

Sosyal hizmet, psikoloji, sosyoloji, antropoloji ve daha birçok bilim dalından desteklenen bir meslek ve disiplindir. Bu çalışmada sosyoloji disiplininin 20. yüzyılına damgasını vurmuş en önemli isimleri arasında yer alan Pierre Bourdieu'nun ardında bıraktığı dev mirastan sosyal hizmet disiplinin ne şekilde yararlanabileceğinin tartışılması amaçlanmaktadır. Sosyal hizmet, bilgi, beceri ve değer temelleri üzerinde yükselmektedir. Bu bağlamda ilk bölümde Pierre Bourdieu'nun *alan*, *habitus*, *düşünümsellik*, *sermaye*, *doxa*, *heterodoxa* kavramları açıklanmış ve yöneltilen eleştiriler ortaya konmuştur. İkinci bölümde ise vaka çalışması kapsamında sosyal hizmetin çeşitli alanlarında mikro, mezzo ve makro düzeydeki sosyal hizmet uygulamaları, Pierre Bourdieu'nun kavramları ışığında yeniden tartışılmıştır. Multidisipliner bir yapıya sahip olan sosyal hizmet disiplini, Pierre Bourdieu'nun çalışmalarına daha çok odaklanmalı ve bu, sosyal hizmet uzmanlarının vakalara daha geniş bir bakış açısına sahip olmalarına yardımcı olacaktır. Değişen toplumla beraber sosyal hizmet de sürekli bir değişim ve gelişim içerisindedir. Pierre Bourdieu'nun çalışmaları, alan, habitus, refleksivite, sermaye, doxa, heterodoxa ve diğer kavramlar sosyal hizmet literatürü tarafından keşfedilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Pierre Bourdieu, Sosyal Hizmet, Sosyal Hizmet Uygulaması*

1. INTRODUCTION

Before mentioning about Pierre Bourdieu's biography, it should be noted that Bourdieu was against biographies. Bourdieu avoided referring to his own life in his works and said historians, not sociologists, should focus on human life (Grenfell, 2008). Therefore, we can obtain information about his life only from secondary sources. Pierre Bourdieu was born in the summer of 1930. In the first year of the Algerian War, he was sent to Algeria for military service. During his duty at Army, he had increased interest in the social sciences due to his experiences in Algeria. After the war, he remained in Algiers University, Algeria for a while and continued with his studies. Upon his return to France in 1964, he became Director of Studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. In 1968, he established a research center and in 1975 started to publish journals on sociology. He set up a team to conduct research on issues of symbolic power and social injustice. After 1970, by keeping the range of research; he continued his studies on language, religion, art, kinship, social classes, political institutions and various similar fields (Ollion, 2012; Garrett, 2009).

Bourdieu was married at the age of 32. He is the father of three children. In 1981, he was elected as the Department Chair of Sociology at the Collège de France and was awarded with a golden medal from French National Research Center in the same year. He collaborated with the socialist government in order to shape the French education system, and criticized the reflections of neoliberal politics in France during his political life. In the 1990s, he attended in numerous television and radio programs, and he was always at the front in the rallies and actions. He retired at the age of 71 from the Collège de France, and died from cancer at the age of 73. He has written more than 40 books and 400 articles on family relations, science, school system, social classes, culture, intellectuals, law, religion, male dominance, state, economy and various fields (Grenfell, 2008; Garrett, 2009; Wacquant L. , 2014). His major works include *La Distinction* (1979); *Le Sens pratique, Questions de sociologie* (1980); *Homo Acedemieux* (1984); *Choses dites* (1987); *Raisons Pratiques* (1994), *Sur la télévision* (1996) and *Les règles de l'art* (1998) (YKY, 2018).

2. BASIC CONCEPTS

There is a need to understand the basic concepts that Bourdieu has put forward in order to fully understand his ideas and works. Without fully understanding the basis concepts, any readings made do prevent the reader to establish the necessary connection with the work. In fact, Bourdieu (1994) said that although he warned the reader not to simplify the concepts he frequently put forward, these warnings were not taken into consideration by his readers. Bourdieu thinks that simplification of concepts is dangerous, and argues that discourse should be as complex as the problems.

Bourdieu's reflexive sociology can be interpreted along with the basic concepts he presented. Reflexive sociology, which is intertwined and associated with all other concepts, allows the professionals working on society to question the platform they are in. This questioning takes place with the consideration of historical, cultural and economic realities. In his works, Bourdieu opposed the constructivist ideas or ideas focusing only on the individual and he found a way to bridge the two. Bourdieu follows a reconciliatory approach between the structure and the agent. Bourdieu claims that the agent has established unequal relations within the framework of rationality and engages with social structures in the framework of contingency (Fram, 2004).

The field is distinct from the individual. Fields have different characteristics than one another. For example, money is in the forefront within the economic field, while in the artistic field, the fact that money is in the forefront is unaccustomed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2003). Field is the area where there are competing interests, where social relations are realized and which have specific rules. The interest of agent is to own the dominant power. The one with highest amount of symbolic power will control the field (Moi, 1991). Family can be given as an example for the personal field where people live, public institutions can be given as example of political field and occupations can be given as an example of professional field (Wiegmann, 2017). Bourdieu stated that society is also a social field and it contains smaller fields such as legal field, economic field and cultural field. Cultural field contains smaller fields such as literature, art and science (Emirbayer & Williams, 2005). Agents will act according to their position in the field and develop strategies. Agents' position in the field

will be determined according to the capital they own. Bourdieu emphasizes that there are points to be considered during analysis of field. In field analysis, the relationship of the field studied with the field of power; the interrelations of the agents in the field and the habitus of the agents should not be ignored. Bourdieu opposes the thesis that the government field has certain limits and the emphasis of Marxism on economic field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2003).

Bourdieu (1993) describes the habitus as a true autonomy for the determinism of the situation. As it can be understood in the definition of habitus, although the individual is an actor, this power changes upon conditions and it cannot be considered as independent from the structure (Fram, 2004). Habitus emphasizes the importance of experiences in the formation of existing perception. Along with past experiences, what is already happening construct the habitus (Wiegmann, 2017). Practices in the field reveal the habitus. If the field is considered as the location where the game takes place, the rules that are accepted silently during the game are doxas. At the end of the game, the winnings of the players *are illusio*. As the players get used with game, the habits of the player appear as *habitus* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2003). Habitus seems to be open to change, but is more likely to remain static (Garrett, 2007).

But, according to Friedmann (2002) fields where habitus is highly intend to change include:

- Change depending on migration (Change in the habitus of the immigrant child during the adaptation to the host society)
- Change depending on the influence of social movements (feminist movement mobilized collective habitus)
- The rapid change of habitus (the change caused by capitalism)
- The collapse of the habitus in society depending on the breakdown of the rules of social order

Capital and field are intertwined concepts. We cannot consider capital without field and the distribution of capital affects the structure of field (Emirbayer & Williams, 2005). Capital consists of cultural, economic and social capital and the sum of these capitals constitute the symbolic capital. The existence of capital is associated with being scarce, being beneficial for the

individual/group who holds it and not being equally distributed (Wiegmann, 2017) The concept of capital includes economic, cultural and social capital. Economic assets constitute economic capital. Cultural capital consists of symbolic assets, skills and titles. Education also plays an important role in the formation of cultural capital. Social capital is related with being a member of a particular social group and having social networks (Wacquant L. , 1998). According to Bourdieu (1990), it is not possible to think the concepts of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital as independent from each other. Cultural capital consists of special knowledge gained after the experience and training received. Social capital includes social networks, economic capital includes wealth and financial resources, and symbolic capital includes power, authority and prestige.

Turner (2003) emphasizes that it is important to understand the differences and the relationship between the types of capital in order to understand Bourdieu's understanding of class. Either one of the economic, cultural, social and symbolic capitals can indirectly contribute to the further strengthening of others. For example, social capital can provide the basis for the increase of economic capital. In addition, cultural capital can trigger an increase in economic capital. The services provided in the field of education can be decisive in shaping people's future. We should consider capital with the field for education. Families in the middle socioeconomic level aim to ensure that their children have cultural capital both within the family and through their school life. By acquiring the symbolic capital imposed by the dominant class, it will be possible for them to gain significant status in society. As a result of this, the education system will be re-shaped according to the dominant group (Özsöz, 2009).

Bourdieu (1990) defines *doxa* as the rules of the game. The information present in the field which is accepted without being questioning is called *doxa*. When analyzing the field; the actors who make up the field, the distribution of the actors, the self-perceptions of the actors and their rivals should be taken into (Emirbayer & Williams, 2005). The concepts of *doxa* and *heterodoxa* are important as they portray the experiences and the formation of experiences. *Doxa* is defined as being accepted as it is and is not questioned

due to its spontaneousness. When doxa is questioned, heterodoxa appears and the assumptions are shattered as a result of the crisis (Bourdieu, 1977). In summary, doxa is the individual's own reality, ortodoxa is defending this reality and heterodoxa is the challenge to doxa. The field will exist with the doxa of those who own high symbolic capital, and the counter statements of low symbolic capital owners will form heterodoxa. Any declaration that violates the rules of the field will be labeled as absurd, so symbolic capital will evolve into symbolic violence. The dominant group's claim of its own ideas as the sole truth and expecting full compliance with them will form the symbolic violence. Symbolic violence is not easily discernible, and can even be taken for granted by the society. Symbolic violence becomes apparent when group or class conflicts occur. Bourdieu believes that the origins of symbolic violence are laid in educational institutions. Through education, a doxa is formed where the rule makers have the right to make rules because they are better qualified. Examination papers also serve as evidence for this reproduction. With the education institutions, the power is legitimized and the ground for the alienation is being set (Moi, 1991).

3. CRITICISMS TO BOURDIEU

In spite of Bourdieu's unique contributions to the field, it is possible to examine the criticisms against his thoughts under three main headings.

The first criticism relates to the severity of his style. His severity of style is criticized as well as praised (Şen, 2014):

[...] Another difficulty is the long sentences, interruptions, brackets, and far and close references of Bourdieu. Bourdieu's use of language in this way is not an intellectual display or reflection of an academic ego. According to him, social sciences must connect everything they say against stereotypes of everyday language and state those by using a language that is prone to say something else completely.

His complex expressions, long sentences and metaphorical narrative choices in his works may lead to loss of meaning following the translation of works written in French into the native language of the reader. Bourdieu's thesis which says that readers need to spend a vast time in order to understand what he says is another reason of criticisms towards him (Garrett, 2007).

The second criticism to Bourdieu is about the subjects of cultural capital, family and gender. Bourdieu argues that cultural capital is related with the family's role, development of individual and social position. While the mother's contribution to the construction of cultural capital of an individual was so important that it could not be ignored, Bourdieu argued that the father was involved in the essence of this process. This assumption of Bourdieu, who places the father at focal point in the birth of cultural capital, is being criticized. Ignoring the dynamic structure of the family and approaching it in a static way, not mentioning the inter-individual interaction that causes the change in the family are among other criticisms directed to Bourdieu. There are also other criticisms that claim Bourdieu did not reach the necessary depth regarding the subjects of family and gender (Silva, 2005).

The third criticism is about the values. Although values can be found at each point of social life, in Bourdieu's analysis, concepts such as sacrifice, loyalty and unity were not sufficiently mentioned. However, values play an important role in the reproduction of social life (Skeggs, 2004).

4. CASE STUDY AND PIERRE BOURDIEU

Ezgi(38 years old) has been married to Murat(41 years old) for 16 years. They have two children called Kemal(11 years old) and Yeliz(8 years old). Murat was fired on the grounds of the economic crisis. Elif has been receiving treatment for breast cancer for 2 years. After Murat's dismissal, the family began to face many significant difficulties include financial problems. This situation also affected the academic success of the children. In addition, Murat(father) often states that he is very tense and he shows physical violence against his wife and children. The family is unable to pay rent due to economic difficulties and faces the threat of homelessness. In this case, let us consider how the social worker will benefit from Bourdieu's perspective in social work intervention.

In the case study, financial problems are affecting the well-being of the children. Let us consider habitus together with poverty, which is an important social problem. Children who live a low socioeconomic level starts his educational life. Due to the inability to keep up with the norms of the society and the impossibilities, he starts to get low grades and alienates from teachers. The reason of this alienation is not his personal characteristics, but his negative

experiences. In this example, habitus is the social position of poor student (Fram, 2004). There is a significant relationship between the well-being of the individuals and their social capital. Dependence on addictive substances other than smoking or smoking among children and adolescents is associated with low social capital. Social networks, easy access to social networks, distribution of social networks by age and gender, sense of belonging to the place, presence of fields for social interaction in the environment, participation in social activities, taking part in decision-making processes determine the quality of social capital. There is a relationship between social capital and social justice. For example, if social capital is the primary source for individual's access to job opportunities, it will be difficult to provide social justice (Morrow, 2001).

In the case study, Murat(father) has abused his children physically. Child protection can be given as an example for the reflection of *capital on* social work practice. The social workers who work in the field of child protection have made observations, questionnaires, etc. for the assessment of the family in cases such as child custody or adoption. And on the basis of measurements, the capital of the family is also evaluated. In this context, thinking of the child protection system together with Bourdieu's capital will increase the depth of the case study of the social worker (Garrett, 2007a).

In this case, financial difficulties have caused housing problems for the family. In a social work organization which serves the homeless people, homeless people are categorized as temporary, periodic and permanent. There is a general consensus that permanent homeless people taking part in services are more disadvantaged than temporary homeless persons. However, the permanent homeless people who build a good relationship with the social workers; who have a comprehensive knowledge of the operation of the organization due to the long-term services they receive develop their capital and settle in a more privileged position within that field (Emirbayer & Williams, 2005). The determination of the services to be provided for homeless client is carried out by social workers. Due to the wide range of facilities, some organizations have good reputation among the clients. Some organizations are not desired by the clients due to the negative attitude of the staff or the limited facilities of the organization. The decision given by the social worker

about the client and the organization he/she will take services from might cause a relation of dominance sometimes. The places where social workers are employed at (hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, courts etc.) may vary. Field analysis provides for the development of awareness of the difficulties faced by social workers during the intervention process. The reshaping of the client's habitus together with client involves a long and difficult process. Awareness of habitus will prevent to call the changes as coincidence or luck, and will position social work interventions on a more conscious level (Emirbayer & Williams, 2005).

In this case, social worker is working with family. It is possible to consider family, which is one of the focus groups of social work, in terms of doxa and heterodoxa. In the understanding of the traditional nuclear family, there is mother, father and child and this perception points to doxa. However, homosexual marriages and adoptions of single adults are among the contemporary family discussions. The opening of the traditional nuclear family into discussion can be examples of heterodoxa (Fram, 2004).

5. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SOCIAL WORK

Although Pierre Bourdieu is one of the most important sociologists of his time, his works are still not discovered by the discipline of social work (Emirbayer & Williams, 2005; Garrett, 2009; Fram, 2004). Bourdieu provides significant contributions to the knowledge basis of social work and his ideas overlap with the understanding of person in environment. Bourdieu encourages the social workers to gain awareness about their own habitus and position in social field (Garrett, 2007).

In the field of mathematics, informatics or music, scientists have the chance to build their own reality and ignore the reality in the world. However, a sociologist has no chance of ignoring the world (Bourdieu, Passeron, & Kraus, 1991). In Bourdieu's works, we see Montesquieu, Tocqueville and Voltaire's reformism; Comte's idea that natural law is composed of social rules; Marx's stand against capitalism; Weber's thought that ideas shape the human behavior and Durkheim's thesis which says that moral changes along with social structures (Grenfell, 2008). It will be useful to consider Bourdieu's approach to the structure and the distribution of capital together with the approach of

social sciences to social problems; and his analysis of field which looks for response to how the relations take place with social work research (Emirbayer & Williams, 2005).

Bourdieu argues that political leaders alone are not the only ones who have a say in government administration and that management is a field of struggle in itself. He states that the government is directed by structures which can be conceptualized as 'right hand' and 'left hand'. 'Right hand' represents units such as treasury, finance, state banks. The 'left hand' represents the areas include social work and education. Social justice and social welfare are among the concerns of the left hand, while the right hand is a supporter of liberal policies. At this point, the left hand actually carries out an ideological mission and transfers the wealth from weak to the dominant class (Garrett, 2007). Bourdieu did not only write about social justice, but he also transformed it into practice. He stood together with the workers in the streets in order to defend social justice. He defended the unity of workers to establish trade unions and argued that these structures should operate in a wide transnational labor market (Schinkel, 2003).

The use of resources by social workers to help vulnerable groups has created a doxa that social workers should function under a supervisor. The boundaries drawn by the supervisors can lead to the social work to become distant from the real nature of practice (Wiegmann, 2017). Concept of social justice is very important in social work discipline, profession and its education. Social change is also among the goals of social work. Social change is needed to achieve social justice. In studies on poverty, Bourdieu's theoretical framework and concepts of social structure, class, conflict and discrimination can be examined. Social change can be initiated with heterodoxa against the doxa of capitalism which strengthens the powerful and increases the class boundaries (Fram, 2004). Social research can be inspired by Bourdieu's concept of capital. For example, considering the research that will be carried out in the field of youth, the social life of the individual towards the physical well-being of the young individual and the subjective evaluations of the social environment should be considered (Morrow, 2001). It is seen that Bourdieu's work is in parallel with person in environment understanding which is also adopted in social work studies.

At a certain stage of social work education in the UK, clients and caregivers are involved in the performance evaluation of social work practices of social work students. In a study addressing this stage of social work education, it is stated that the clients do not generally know what criteria they will consider to evaluate the students. Nevertheless, the fact that the clients feel the responsibility of filling the student evaluation form indicates the doxa. In this process, the social work academicians are considered as high symbolic capital due to their positions (Ankaa & Taylor, 2016).

Symbolic violence is caused by the uneven distribution of capital. However, we should accept that resistance to natural symbolic domination which is considered as a given fact, is not easy. There is a relationship of power between the social worker who evaluates for social assistance and the client. The client who needs help is on one side, and the social worker who acts according to law and who has a high political capital on the other side. The client's exposure to symbolic violence is inevitable (Wiegmann, 2017). Education is considered to be one of the important tools of symbolic violence. The educational environment is a field where students are expected to comply with the written and unwritten rules and avoid violating those. Curricula, disciplinary punishments, examination instructions, regulations and directives are instrumental (Özsöz, 2014).

Bourdieu states that discrimination based on gender is essentially a result of symbolic violence. Although there are two different groups such as women and men in the society, the definition of sexual identity is made through the dominant and repressed groups. Being a woman is portrayed with the fulfillment of low quality jobs in labor force and being a male is portrayed as performing important works. These representations appear as accepted truths in a doxic society and the truths are constructed by society (Moi, 1991).

Bourdieu criticizes all sorts of domination and he says that individual and society have a mutual relation in which they affect one another. He focused on current social problems in his works and he offered an insight to his age. Early in his academic life, his works were mostly known in academia, however his visibility increased in the following periods. He defined neoliberalism as a less social state, more criminal state and defined state as the central bank

of symbolic violence (Wacquant L. , 2014). Social work practice is negatively affected by neoliberal policies. Social work organizations demanding the social worker to deal with more clients in a short time, adopting a performance-based system, and reducing social work intervention to form filling are undoubtedly the results of neoliberal policies. Against these neoliberal policies, social worker must retain the field of his/her profession. Bourdieu promotes pluralism and plurality, just like the social work discipline. Bourdieu stands against the neoliberal policies, and he stands on same platform with social work. The cultural capital, perceptions, ideas, prejudices and values of social workers can influence the process of cooperation with the client. The concept of reflexivity named and stated by Bourdieu is the objectification of the subjective evaluations of the individual. Reflexivity enables the social worker and the academics focusing on social work to examine the individual and collective habitus (Garrett, 2007a). The four stages (Houston, 2002) that should be followed in order to raise awareness of social workers' interventions are given in Table-1.

Table 1 Reflexivity for Social Work Practice



Bibliography: Houston, S. (2002). Reflecting on Habitus, Field and Capital: Towards a Culturally Sensitive Social Work. *Journal of Social Work* , 2 (2), 149–167. (Adapted by author)

6. CONCLUSION

In this study, how the social work discipline can benefit from the giant legacy left behind by Pierre Bourdieu-one of the most important names of the discipline of sociology in the 20th century was discussed. The concepts of field, habitus, reflexivity, capital, doxa, heterodoxa were explained and the criticisms directed towards these concepts were put forward.. Micro, mezzo and macro level social work practices in various social work fields were discussed with the frames and terms of Pierre Bourdieu.

Pierre Bourdieu had a significant impact with his extraordinary life, his versatility, his ideas that still illuminate the 21st century and his numerous works. Although the concepts and ideas that have been brought up by Bourdieu have added a new dimension to the field of sociology, we cannot say that the profession, discipline and education on social work has benefited from his works at an adequate level. In this context, social work discipline needs to use the works of Pierre Bourdieu focusing on his contribution in the field of sociology.

The discipline of social work, which has a multidisciplinary structure should focus more on the works of Pierre Bourdieu and this will help the social workers to have a wider perspective for the cases. With the changing society, social work is also under constant change and development, and the work of Pierre Bourdieu along with terms field, habitus, reflexivity, capital, doxa, heterodoxa and various other concepts are to be discovered by the social work literature.

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