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# Bourdieu's Reception in Israeli Sociology

## The Fragmented Imprint of a Grand Theory

by Lior Gelernter *and* Ilana F. Silber

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### 1. Introduction

The importance of Pierre Bourdieu's work would seem to be self-evident to most sociologists in Israel, where it has achieved a solid place in the theoretical canon, Bourdieu is regularly referenced in Israeli academic journals, and his ideas are regularly taught in courses on sociological theory as well as in courses on the sociology of culture, education, art, consumption, stratification, and social capital. He is also taught in education, communication, folklore and history departments, as well as programs in cultural studies. However, this widespread dissemination is less straightforward than it may seem at first glance. In this article, we shall try to assess the extent and kind of impact which Bourdieu's thought has had on Israeli sociology, and the particular trajectory it took. We also try to identify specific characteristics of the Israeli field that contributed to this pattern of reception.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We do not aim to offer a full account of the sociological and intellectual field. For extant contributions to a general analysis of the field of Israeli sociology, see Cohen [1988]; Herzog [2009]; Ram [1995]; Yair and Apeloig [2005].

Bourdieu has clearly achieved a solid renown in the context of Israeli sociology, and even become a “modern classic” of sorts. Among those engaging Bourdieu’s ideas may be found scholars from all major strands in the social sciences: positivists and anti-positivists, quantitative and qualitative, critical and mainstream oriented, researchers focusing upon Israeli society and such who are more interested in other societies. However, his ideas have failed to become the basis for either a dominant paradigm or a distinct school in Israeli sociology. Neither was his work absorbed as the unified and synthetic framework it purports to be. As a general theory, it remained of interest to relatively few isolated scholars, most of them addressing it in an often ambivalent or outright critical fashion. Rather, Bourdieu’s influence has mainly manifested itself in specific subfields of empirical research, where his ideas were adopted as conceptual tools disembodied from their broader theoretical matrix.

Our analysis is based on a variety of data, including: *a*) a comprehensive bibliography we compiled of Bourdieu’s works translated into Hebrew; *b*) all the articles in Hebrew social sciences journals that cite one or more of Bourdieu’s works in their bibliography, and *c*) interviews with a number of scholars identified as “key actors” in Bourdieu’s reception and shorter informal conversations with many others.<sup>2</sup>

These data, admittedly, remain far from comprehensive.<sup>3</sup> Within these limitations, however, we establish the main lines of the trajectory that Bourdieu’s reception has taken in Israel. First, we offer a chronological overview of this trajectory. A second section then analyzes references to Bourdieu in Hebrew journals. Lastly, we conclude with a discussion of our findings, in which we also examine the ambiguous nature of a pattern of intellectual canonization, whereby the very success of Bourdieu’s ideas in permeating institutional and intellectual boundaries contributed to the selective and fragmented nature of their reception.

<sup>2</sup> We are grateful to all those who shared their thoughts and personal understandings of their encounter with Bourdieu’s writings and of the place these occupy in the Israeli arena. We are fully aware though that we may well not have reached a fully comprehensive account in this first purview, and most welcome comments as well as further information that might improve this account.

<sup>3</sup> A more comprehensive assessment should include books, M.A. theses and Ph.d dissertations, as well as a systematic survey of teaching syllabi in diverse branches of the social sciences in Israel’s five main universities and many more undergraduate colleges. Another limitation stems from the fact that many sociologists in Israel tend to publish the bulk of their work in English and in American journals. Though we venture impressions based on books and other publications in foreign languages by a small group of Israeli sociologists identified as having actively engaged Bourdieu’s work, this cannot claim to be an exhaustive study, and a more thorough examination of Bourdieu’s reception in Israel would require complementary research.

## 2. The Chronology of a Dispersed and Discontinuous Trajectory

### 2.1. Initial Reception

The beginning of Bourdieu's influence in Israel can be traced to the mid- to late 1970s, when different aspects of his work appear to have been independently imported by different individuals. Among those who were the most important in first introducing Bourdieu's thought to the Israeli academic setting were three main types of key actors: researchers in the field of education; theoretically inclined sociologists interested in European theoretical currents; and scholars in literary studies and semiotics.

Probably the first to take notice of Bourdieu, during the mid-1970s, were researchers in education located in sociology or education departments. Bourdieu's reception in this domain was heavily mediated by Anglophone research literature, as researchers (some of them conducting their Ph.D. work in the United States) became acquainted with his writings through translations of small excerpts of his texts in readers in education compiled by British or American scholars.<sup>4</sup> As a result, Bourdieu's claims about the significance of schooling in social reproduction were read in dissociation from his more general theoretical framework.

This Anglophone mediation, and the disconnection from Bourdieu's larger theoretical framework, appears to have set the tone for his reception in the realm of education for years to come, long after his general theoretical writings had already been made fully accessible in English.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the reception of Bourdieu's by these education scholars – especially in Tel Aviv University – was accompanied by a strong tendency towards quantitative research and a strong connection to the study of stratification, both features that would persist to this day.

Secondly, towards the end of the decade, and irrespective of education and stratification scholars, Bourdieu also began to attract attention as a thinker of more general and theoretical importance in Tel-Aviv University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology.<sup>6</sup> A critical point in this process was the English translation of *Outline of a Theory of Practice* [Bourdieu (1972) 1977], which anthropologist Emmanuel Marx is credited for having been the first to teach.<sup>7</sup> Yet it was two other young scholars in the same department, both sociologists and with a pronounced interest for

<sup>4</sup> For example Eggleston [1974], and more significantly Karabel and Halsey [1977].

<sup>5</sup> Bourdieu's text usually read and referenced in the field of education in the last decades is the one published in Richardson [1986].

<sup>6</sup> In Israel, there are no separate departments in sociology and anthropology.

<sup>7</sup> By Abraham Cordova, who was in the department at the time (personal communication).

theory, who were to take on the role of active brokers for his ideas: Sasha Weitman<sup>8</sup> and Avi Cordova,<sup>9</sup> both with a keen interest in theory and able to read Bourdieu in the original French. Throughout the early 1980s, they promoted his ideas in departmental seminars and workshops on theory and culture that played a major role in the promotion of acquaintance with Bourdieu's work among both faculty members and students. While various aspects of Bourdieu's thought were addressed in this context, their main foci of interest, which had a formative influence for many in following years, were the implementation of his ideas to the sociology of knowledge and expertise and the production of art and culture.

From different quarters, at around the same time, an interest in Bourdieu's theory of culture also started developing independently among researchers of literature in the Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics at Tel-Aviv University, under the leadership of Itamar Even-Zohar. The intellectual trajectory that brought them to Bourdieu entailed a move away from literature in a strict and conventional sense and towards a broader understanding of literary production and dissemination mechanisms in relation to their social and institutional setting. While Even-Zohar did not accept Bourdieu's ideas, and instead promoted his own "Polysystem" theory, he introduced Bourdieu's work and especially his "field theory" making it a bridgehead for Bourdieu's future influence in the humanities.<sup>10</sup>

Significantly, this initial phase of multiple points of entry occurred almost exclusively in the institutional context of Tel-Aviv University. The attention to Bourdieu in this context may well have been facilitated by Tel-Aviv University's position in the intellectual field at the time. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Tel-Aviv University was a young and upcoming institution (gradually established over the 50's and 60's) and

<sup>8</sup> While born in Poland, Weitman grew up in Tangier (Marocco) and is of francophone background. He was trained in the United States (Ph.D. St. Louis Washington, 1968) and taught for several years at Stony Brook. Although his early research interests included the historical sociology of revolutions and semiotics, his interest in museums was related to his working at the time at the Diaspora Museum. Weitman met with Bourdieu during a visit in Paris, received from him an early copy of *Distinction*, and they maintained a friendly relationship ever since. Bourdieu refers to Weitman's work in *Masculine Domination*.

<sup>9</sup> Cordova studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and later traveled to the United States to complete a Ph.D. degree at Brandeis University. His focus was on the sociology of intellectuals until the late seventies, when he started also engaging general theoretical issues and taking an interest in the concept of the "new class," in which regard he combined aspects of both Bourdieu's and Foucault's writings. Though they were never published, his seminal lectures on the subject, as well as his more general theoretical orientations, had a formative influence on many generations of students in Tel-Aviv University's sociology department, including one of the co-authors of this article.

<sup>10</sup> Even-Zohar and Bourdieu held a personal and professional relationship around that period. Bourdieu mentions Even-Zohar's theory (though not without criticism) in his article on "The Field of Cultural Production or: The Economic World Reversed" [Bourdieu 1983]. Continuing the dialogue but also disagreement, see Even-Zohar [2005].

still relatively marginal with respect to the older, larger and richer Hebrew University in Jerusalem (founded in 1925). This was even more pronounced in the department of sociology and anthropology, which took form in the late sixties and the 1970s. While far from homogeneous, the fledgling department proved more hospitable to innovative, conflictual theoretical perspectives which stood in contrast to those then salient in the Jerusalem department.<sup>11</sup>

Bourdieu's conflictual perspective played an important role in Bourdieu's reception in another respect, as it seems that many of the students interested in Bourdieu, both in the humanities and in the social sciences, were attracted to his critical and radical appeal. This is especially true of those who identified with radical left political currents. Though some of them reported separating their interest in Bourdieu from the political facet of his work or persona (even when it became more salient in later years), there is a sense that at least at this stage, and notwithstanding some of his initial brokers' contrary inclinations, the attraction to Bourdieu's work was facilitated by a predisposition to a critical outlook.

## 2.2. *Bourdieu in the 1980s and 1990s*

While early uses of Bourdieu's work can be found in theses supervised by Cordova or Weitman as early as the beginning of the 1980s, his impact became more clearly manifest towards the end of that decade and the beginning of the 1990s, as a new cohort of sociology students at Tel-Aviv University started integrating his ideas into their thinking and writing, mainly in the form of M.A. and Ph.D. dissertations. Notable representatives of that trend include Uri Ben Eliezer, Gil Eyal, Motti Regev<sup>12</sup> and Graciela Trajtenberg. Works written by this cohort show an increasing dispersion of Bourdieu's ideas in various fields of empirical research, not only education

<sup>11</sup> In contrast, more traditional variants of Marxist theory were then more dominant in a third department in the same years, the department of sociology at Haifa University (founded 1963).

<sup>12</sup> Among the first students to take an active interest in Bourdieu, Motti Regev would stand out in later years as an especially important broker of Bourdieu's ideas. His Ph.D. thesis [Regev 1990] on the penetration of rock music to Israel, under Weitman's supervision but also influenced, by his own account, by his contacts with the Porter institute, gives much place to Bourdieu's field theory. Later in his career, he became known as the most ardent follower and promoter of Bourdieu's thought within Israeli sociology of culture, which he also helped spreading by teaching in several universities and colleges, including Tel-Aviv University, the Hebrew University and the Open University. He has published extensively in the field of global popular music from the point of view of Bourdieu's theories [Regev 1994; Regev and Seroussi 2004]. In addition, he edited and wrote the introduction to a special issue of *Popular Music* on canonization and cultural capital [Regev 2006a] He is currently working on a reader in the sociology of culture which would be the first Hebrew textbook with a full chapter dedicated to Bourdieu [Regev forth.].

but in the sociology of knowledge, in the sociology of art and in political sociology. Most of them focused on Bourdieu's field theory, used qualitative methods – in contrast with the dominant trend in the field of education – and manifested a tendency towards critical sociology.

Beyond the sociology department, a parallel dissemination of Bourdieu's ideas took place in the humanities departments in Tel-Aviv and in two new advanced interdisciplinary programs, the School of Cultural Studies and the Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas. Founded in the mid-1980s, these programs, made of Tel-Aviv University an unusually hospitable milieu for interdisciplinary and theoretically oriented research in the field of knowledge and/or culture, thus also facilitating attention to Bourdieu's theories as one of the newer currents in that domain in these years. Through these and other channels, number of advanced students started taking interest in Bourdieu's theories, including Gadi Algazi,<sup>13</sup> Ariela Azulai,<sup>14</sup> Nitzza Ben-Ari, Dani Filk, Sarah Chinsky, Rakefet Sela-Sheffy,<sup>15</sup> and Gisele Sapiro. In some cases, these students had been exposed – or further exposed – to Bourdieu's thought while studying in Europe, where some met him in person or even studied under him.<sup>16</sup> While extremely diverse in fields of study and and topics of

<sup>13</sup> Gadi Algazi, historian, is an especially prominent broker of Bourdieu's work in both humanities and social sciences, whose trajectory vis-à-vis Bourdieu is highly emblematic for present purposes. Introduced to Bourdieu's writings via the Porter Institute, Algazi then deepened his acquaintance with them – and with him personally – while studying for a Ph.D. degree in medieval history at the Max Planck Institute for History in Göttingen. Upon his return to Israel in the end of the eighties, he was active in translating some of Bourdieu's texts, published an article in the journal established by Bourdieu *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* [Algazi 1994], and gave extensive lectures on various aspects of Bourdieu's work on several occasions. Yet his stance also soon developed to include open ambivalence and reflexive criticism in his treatment of Bourdieu's ideas, and did not preclude combined interest in other major theoretical figures.

<sup>14</sup> Another scholar closely associated with Bourdieu's reception in the humanities in these years, Ariela Azulai followed some of Bourdieu's seminars while studying at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris in the mid-80's. Combining intellectual, political and practical engagement with the visual arts as scholar and art curator, Azulai came back to Tel-Aviv and played a major part in spreading his theories in the Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas. However, she defines her use of Bourdieu's work as "instrumental" ;he was only one of several intellectual figures who influenced her, (such as Foucault, Walter Benjamin, Hanna Arendt), and his presence in her works very much decreased in recent years.

<sup>15</sup> A student of Even-Zohar, later to head the Porter School of Cultural Studies and now chair of the Unit of Culture Research at Tel Aviv University, Rakefet Sheffy was early to notice Bourdieu's rising intellectual status [Sheffy 1991]. She is also one of the very rare scholars to have actively engaged Bourdieu's work on a theoretical level, as in her critical use of his ideas on habitus and suggestion of points of mutual fructification with polysystem theory [Sheffy 1997].

<sup>16</sup> This includes Ariela Azulai, who thereafter returned to Israel, and Gisele Sapiro, who eventually joined Bourdieu's research group in Paris and is known as one of his closer supporters. Sapiro took part in a conference in honour of Bourdieu at the Van Leer Institute in Israel in 2003, where she gave a keynote speech on Bourdieu's idea of symbolic violence.

interest, most of them were interested in various aspects of the production of art and culture. A shared feature of this eclectic group of scholars was their capacity and readiness to read Bourdieu's writings in the original French version, even if most of them were not native francophone themselves.<sup>17</sup> This competence was helpful to an important translation project initiated by Even-Zohar in the mid-1980s, meant to include a selection of Bourdieu's writings on the production of culture. This initiative, in which Azulai, Ben-Ari, Algazi, and Sapiro had a part, had a strange fate: though they were never officially published, copies of the translated texts have been circulating in Tel-Aviv University for decades, and were often the first medium for the encounter of Israeli students – including sociology students – with Bourdieu's work.<sup>18</sup>

As the 1990s progressed, Bourdieu's ideas disseminated and became taken for granted as part of the curriculum, both in the humanities and the social sciences. However, while interest in Bourdieu in the humanities remained by and large restricted to Tel-Aviv University,<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu's influence in the social sciences began to spread to other sites, as the academic field in Israel witnessed a period of major institutional growth, which also entailed increased movement of individual scholars between academic institutions. Much of this dissemination happened via the activities of the abovementioned cohort of students who had completed their doctoral degrees in Tel-Aviv's sociology department and began acquiring teaching positions in universities or colleges around the country.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, and as his renown was growing both in Israel and abroad, several sociologists from other universities, who had shown little interest in him until then, became interested in his work.<sup>21</sup> By this point, even sociologists who were not personally drawn to his theories started teaching them, recognizing them as an indispensable part of courses in contemporary theory as well as in more specific topics.

This diffusion of Bourdieu's ideas throughout the 1990s entailed the increased application of his ideas to further fields of empirical research by a new cohort of soci-

<sup>17</sup> This poses an interesting contrast to the Anglophone orientation that was seen to dominate Bourdieu's reception in the field of education, and sociology in general.

<sup>18</sup> This may very well help explain that one of the better known aspects of Bourdieu's work in Israel in general and in Tel-Aviv in particular is still his field theory and his ideas on cultural production.

<sup>19</sup> This will be confirmed later in our analysis of citations in Hebrew journals. For one example in English stemming from the milieu of the Cohn Institute mentioned above, see Feldhay [1999].

<sup>20</sup> Notable examples include Tally Katz-Gerro who went on to Study in Haifa University, Motti Regev who moved to the Hebrew university for a couple of years, Yossi Shavit who taught in Haifa, and Graciela Trajtenberg who moved to the Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yaffo.

<sup>21</sup> This includes such different scholars as Uri Ram (personal communication) and the late Baruch Kimmerling – both leading names in Israeli critical sociology [see Ram forth.], which in a sense only underscores the belated and marginal impact of Bourdieu in that strand of Israeli sociology; and Ilana Silber [see Silber 1995, and below fn. 15].



ology students. These years not only witnessed the continuing extension of Bourdieu's ideas to the field of education, art and culture, but also his impact in newer fields as folklore, the sociology of science, emotions, body, popular culture, taste and consumption. An important research project in this respect was Yossi Shavit and Tally Katz-Gerro's quantitative study of the connection between taste and stratification in Israel, done at Haifa University [Shavit and Katz-Gerro 1998].<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the Tel-Aviv department benefited from the contribution of junior sociologists from abroad who developed and propagated other aspects of Bourdieu's thought. These include Daniel Breslau, who did much to further the interest in Bourdieu in the context of the sociology of knowledge and science,<sup>23</sup> and Eva Illouz who made active use of Bourdieu's ideas in the context of her teaching and research in the sociology of culture and emotions [see Illouz 1997].<sup>24</sup>

In contrast to Tel-Aviv, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem seems to have been relatively unreceptive to Bourdieu for long. Yet one development in this context is the publication of an article addressing Bourdieu as a key example of the rise in use of spatial metaphors in contemporary sociological theory by Ilana Silber [Silber 1995], who was also instrumental in systematically introducing Bourdieu's ideas in theory courses at both undergraduate and graduate level.<sup>25</sup> In addition, we need note the presence in that same department in that decade of Motti Regev, originally trained in Tel-Aviv University as mentioned above, and systematic promoter of Bourdieu's ideas in the field of popular culture in particular.

Lastly, another important development in this decade was the publication, starting in 1991, of *Theory and Criticism (Teoria Vebikoret)*, a radical journal in Hebrew that gave a home to a range of critical theoretical currents in both the social sciences

<sup>22</sup> This innovative work was the basis for Katz-Gerro's long term engagement with research on consumption, in which she incorporated much of Bourdieu's framework first in the Israeli and later in comparative international context, thereby also fixing his presence in Haifa University where she returned after finishing her Ph.D. in the United States.

<sup>23</sup> Breslau joined the department for a few years after completing his Ph.D. in the United States, and specialized in science studies and the sociology of economists. After a few years he left in favor of a teaching position in Virginia Tech. See also Breslau [2002], confirming a lasting interest in Bourdieu.

<sup>24</sup> Educated in France, Eva Illouz joined the Tel-Aviv department in 1991 after completing a Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania, and moved to the Department of Sociology and Anthropology in 2000. Her use of Bourdieu's work in this decade tends to be flexible and eclectic, as well as in some aspects at least, outright critical.

<sup>25</sup> Of French background, Silber's interest in Bourdieu at this stage mainly stems from a general interest in theory and theories of culture in particular. Her perspective leans to a Weberian, interpretative form of cultural sociology, in many ways critical of, but also dialogically engaging Bourdieu's work.

and the humanities.<sup>26</sup> From its very first volume, it provided a venue for scholars employing Bourdieu's ideas in the Israeli context. Among those publishing articles pertaining to Bourdieu in it in the 1990s, one can find Ariela Azulai, Daniel Breslau, Dani Filk, Sarah Chinsky and Motti Regev – all names already mentioned in Tel-Aviv's earlier context of reception. However, its critical orientation, as well as preference for qualitative analyses, also prevented many of those researchers interested in Bourdieu in areas such as literature, education and consumption who did not share these preferences from publishing in it – making it thus selective in its diffusion of Bourdieu's ideas. On a different front, as suggested by some of our interviewees, it may have had the effect of further restraining Bourdieu's potential influence, as it also promoted the works of competing radical thinkers – Foucault most notably – whose intellectual and political appeal may have overshadowed his at this stage.

By and large, this decade was one of increased diffusion and institutionalization, but also one of increasingly fragmented reception. On the one hand, Bourdieu's ideas were cutting across divisions and cleavages and reaching a growing number of researchers in different subfields, both in the humanities and the social sciences. On the other hand, these same divisions also hampered cooperation or even simple mutual awareness between scholars interested in his work but working in different fields or identifying with divergent intellectual and/or political orientations research communities. In this decade at least, communication between those interested in him outside Tel-Aviv University was generally confined to researchers with similar methodological outlooks or topics of research that inflected the precise way in which they were receptive to, but also selected from, Bourdieu's ideas.

### 2.3. *The Last Decade*

Recognition of Bourdieu's importance further intensified over the last decade, which also witnessed growing engagement with his theories. The increasing number of articles citing him, the publication of several translations of his writings into Hebrew, and sessions and conventions held in homage to his work are among the many indications that his work is by now incorporated in the contemporary sociological canon as it is perceived in Israel. In addition, his death in January 2002 was a focal

<sup>26</sup> Until its inception, the only social science journal in Hebrew was *Megamot [Trends]* (published by The Henrietta Szold Institute since 1949), an interdisciplinary journal in the behavioral sciences, publishing also articles with an applied orientation. The only Hebrew journal article mentioning Bourdieu which we found dated before 1991 period was published in it in 1984, discussing the role of school counsellors in tracking mechanisms [Yogev and Roditi 1984].

point that boosted attention to his work and consolidated his rapid transformation into a “classic” – though still fragmentarily received – theorist.

Throughout the decade, Bourdieu's influence continued to spread to diverse institutions, to some extent via the movement of sociologists originally trained at Tel-Aviv University, as in the case of Dany Filk in Ben Gurion University and Tally Katz-Gerro in Haifa University. Significantly, a similar trend can be seen at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which had been relatively indifferent towards him formerly, partly as a result of the recruitment of sociologists with a past affiliation to Tel-Aviv University, such as Eva Illouz in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Julia Resnick, in the School of Education.<sup>27</sup>

Yet other strands of interest in Bourdieu in recent years stem from scholars with no previous association to the Tel-Aviv department. Two distinct examples are Ilana Silber, now positioned at Bar-Ilan University,<sup>28</sup> and Gad Yair, current chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University.<sup>29</sup> Their concern with Bourdieu is distinctly theoretical in nature, as well as distanced or even critical in perspective. Notwithstanding the many differences between them, both authors aim at exposing deeper orientations or contradictions in Bourdieu's writings, rather than elaborating or building upon his ideas.<sup>30</sup> This new wave of serious, critical

<sup>27</sup> Resnik would be the co-convenor of a conference on Bourdieu in 2003 (see below). She briefly attended one of Bourdieu's seminar while in Paris in the late 1990s. Her comparative research on globalization and education does not apply his ideas, and her interest in Bourdieu is rather in his role in the process of educational reform. With regard to Illouz, see footnotes 21 and 29.

<sup>28</sup> Silber joined the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Bar-Ilan University in 1998, after leaving the Jerusalem department where she had completed her doctoral degree and taught. Her work on Bourdieu attempted to expose unacknowledged developments in Bourdieu's writings that end up contradicting his own initial, critical theory of the gift, and thereby also exposing a self-contradictory faultline in his approach at large [Silber 2009].

<sup>29</sup> Confirming that the significance of Bourdieu was already early manifest to scholars in the field of education in other universities than Tel-Aviv, Yair remembers becoming acquainted with Bourdieu's work while studying with Reuven Kahane. His more recent work on Bourdieu, of his own account, represents a sharp departure from the straightforward way he had been applying some of Bourdieu's ideas to his research in the sociology of education for many years already. His recent articles and book on Bourdieu aim at identifying the ideological orientations cutting across Bourdieu's writings and uncover the “deep code” of French culture that in his view, powerfully shaped his sociological thought [Yair 2007; Yair 2008a; Yair 2008b; Yair 2009].

<sup>30</sup> In addition, and again however differently, they both operate with a Weberian-inspired, “Jerusalem school” kind of comparative cultural approach. In Silber's case, her critique of Bourdieu's theory of the gift partakes of a long term project furthering a comparative historical and cultural interpretative sociology of the gift. In Yair's case, his study of Bourdieu is part of a broad comparative project targeting the deeply diverse cultural orientations shaping sociological thought in the context of different national cultures.

engagement with Bourdieu's ideas may be seen as one more indication of the stature they have acquired over the years.<sup>31</sup>

TAB. 1. *Translation of Bourdieu's works into Hebrew*

Title	Year of publication	Publisher/Journal
<i>On Television</i>	1999	Babel
<i>Sociology in Question</i>	2005	Resling
<i>The Kabyle House or the World Reversed</i>	2005	Resling; Inside Tali Hatuka and Rachel Kallus (eds.), <i>Architectural Culture: Place, Representation, Body</i>
<i>La critique du discours lettré</i>	2006	Theory and Criticism (journal)
<i>Masculine Domination</i>	2007	Resling
<i>Sketch for a Self-Analysis</i>	2007	Hakibbutz Hameuhad

In addition, there are indications of widening waves of interest among graduate and advanced students beyond the milieu of Tel-Aviv University. Several interviewees thus reported signs of intensified interest in Bourdieu among advanced students in the Hebrew University department in recent years, perhaps a result of the combined impact of Illouz and Yair in that department.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, we even heard the term “St. Bourdieu” used a couple of times in this regard, hinting both at acute awareness of his canonization and at a tinge of ironic ambivalence towards the current “hype” around his theories. More generally, and across departments, many of our interviewees mentioned the practical utility of Bourdieu's key concepts, as “easy to work with” with regard to students' graduate theses or doctoral research in particular.

Further indications of Bourdieu's canonization in the last decade can be seen in the dramatic increase of the number of publications referring to him, and significant increase in the number of articles actively relating to his ideas, both of which will be described in the next section. This increase reflected not only his increasing

<sup>31</sup> Confirming the critical thrust characteristic of many of those manifesting a serious engagement with Bourdieu's work in the last decade, some of them began in recent years to pay close attention to Boltanski and Thevenot's pragmatic sociology, which developed to a large extent as a reaction against Bourdieu's approach [see Resnick and Frankel 2000; Silber 2001; Silber 2003; Illouz, forth.].

<sup>32</sup> As evident from what was already noted above with regard to both faculty members, this impact does not entail an orthodox or uncritical view of Bourdieu. Illouz's writings in that decade continue to make use of Bourdieu's work in the flexible and often critical fashion already characteristic of her earlier work while positioned at Tel-Aviv University [see for example Illouz 2003, 178 ff.; Illouz and John 2003], and as only one of many theoretical resources of no less importance to her various contributions to the sociology of culture.

importance, but also the increase in venues for the publication of articles and books in the social sciences.

One of the most important developments in this process was the publication of a new journal, *Soziologia Yisraelit (Israeli Sociology)*, established in 1998. This journal, initiated and published by the Sociology and Anthropology department in Tel-Aviv University, is the only venue dedicated to sociology in Hebrew. As we shall show below, in the years since its inception it became the most consistent and important source of references to Bourdieu in Hebrew, publishing articles by scholars interested in him from different perspectives.

The year after *Soziologia Yisraelit* was launched saw the first translation of a book by Bourdieu. Published by *Babel*, a young and radical independent publishing house, the translation of *On Television* was symptomatic of another change in the scholarly publishing market: after years of relative stagnation in the translations of social sciences and theory books, new and energetic boutique publishing houses such as *Andalus*, *Babel*, *Xargol* and *Resling*, began translating and printing contemporary thinkers, often with a preference for French intellectual currents.<sup>33</sup> However, the book – a relatively minor work, which in any case did not present a clear description of Bourdieu's theory and concepts – was not considered a success. Maybe as a result of this unenthusiastic welcome, this translation remained in isolation until 2005.

Bourdieu's death in January 2002, consolidated his transformation from a contemporary, innovative thinker to a "classic" one, and momentarily overcame the fragmentation that characterized his reception. A small occasion in his memory promptly organized by Sasha Weitman took place just two weeks later in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel-Aviv University. Besides the historian Gadi Algazi, a sole representative from the humanities, it included most of the sociologists known for taking a keen interest in Bourdieu, such as Avi Cordoba, Sasha Weitman, Motti Regev, Julia Resnik and Ilana Silber. A second, much larger event was a two-day workshop that took place at the Jerusalem Van-Leer Institute in November 2003.<sup>34</sup> Spanning more than twenty contributors from various departments and universities, it included sessions on popular culture, higher education and inequality, and the representation of suffering, and was a telling testimony to the dissemination of Bourdieu's influence in Israel. This event had the side effect of bringing together scholars with very different styles of interest in Bourdieu and who in many cases had

<sup>33</sup> An established publisher, *Hakibbutz Hameuhad* started a series called "The French" earlier on, which also contributed to this change.

<sup>34</sup> Involved in the organization of that workshop in various ways were Hanna Herzog, Julia Resnik, Gadi Algazi and Kinneret Lahad. Significantly, except for Algazi, none of the organizers are known for having actively engaged or promoted Bourdieu's approach.

never met before or were not even aware of each other. However, it neither generated increased collaboration between its participants, nor led to a collective publication.

Bourdieu's death also had a significant impact on the publication of Hebrew journal articles addressing his work or persona. An issue of *Soziologia Yisraelit* published in the winter 2002, had a special section dedicated to his memory, which included some of the talks that were delivered in the evening in Tel-Aviv University [Algazi 2002; Weitman 2002; Resnik 2002; Cordova 2002] as well as a translation of a text written by Bourdieu's close student and promoter in the USA, Loic Wacquant [2002]. In general, the following years were especially prolific in articles addressing Bourdieu, reaching eight journal articles in 2002 and nine in 2003.<sup>35</sup> In addition, a number of articles addressing Bourdieu's work had appeared in a volume of articles on inequality [Ram and Berkovitz 2006]. Notable among these were an article by Regev dedicated exclusively to the concept of cultural capital [Regev 2006] and an article by Katz-Gerro on consumption [Katz-Gerro 2006]

Soon thereafter, several translations of works by Bourdieu began appearing. *Questions in Sociology* and the "The Kabyle House or the World Reversed"<sup>36</sup> were both published in 2005 by *Resling*, and a translation of "La critique du discours lettré" appeared in *Theory and Criticism* a year later. In 2007 *Resling* published *Masculine Domination* and in the same year the large and established *Hakibutz H'ameuhad* published *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* – which was the trigger for yet another session in his honour in the Israeli Sociological Association's yearly convention in 2008.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, within the last decade or so Bourdieu became a name that every sociologist in Israel would recognize. However, the expansion of his ideas progressed mostly along parallel and disconnected trajectories, and seldom cut across topical, methodological or ideological divides. The infrequent interaction and absence of collaboration between scholars applying his ideas in different fields contributed to sustain considerable differences in the interpretation and application of his concepts, and a general lack of interest in the larger theoretical matrix in which these concepts were elaborated. As for those theoretically inclined scholars with a deeper interest in that general matrix, they themselves remain relatively isolated and do not have a bridging effect upon these many divides.

<sup>35</sup> However, an analysis of these articles indicates that they address Bourdieu in a manner more ceremonial than substantive, and rather conceptually fragmented. We shall go into this issue in some length in the next section.

<sup>36</sup> It was published in a collection of articles about culture and architecture, *Architectural Culture: Place, Representation, Body*, edited by Tali Hatuka and Rachel Kallus (Resling, 2005) – .

<sup>37</sup> Significantly, this outburst of translation did not include his major works such as *Distinction* and *an Outline of a Theory of Practice*, and given their length and complexity, they probably will not be translated in the foreseeable future.

In the next section, we shall examine the extent to which the development of Bourdieu's reception in Israel finds expression in citations of Bourdieu in Hebrew journals.

### 3. Citations of Bourdieu's Writings in Israeli Journals

As a means of evaluating Bourdieu's influence on the actual research and writing of Israeli scholars, we collected all the articles in Hebrew social sciences journals that reference his works in their bibliographies, in the period between 1991 and 2008.<sup>38</sup> We searched for articles in all of four journals relevant to social sciences: *Trends* (*Megamot*, published since 1949), *Theory and Criticism* (published since 1991), *Israeli Sociology* (published since 1998), and *Social Issues in Israel* (published since 2006). Our aim was to find out *a*) how many articles cite him, and whether there was a change in their number over the years *b*) who writes about him *c*) how significant is his impact in the text *d*) which concepts or ideas of his are employed *e*) what are the topics of articles citing him. Here follow our main findings.

#### 3.1. Number of Publications

Bourdieu's writings are regularly referenced to in the Israeli Journals. Articles citing Bourdieu appeared in all journals examined, at an average rate of almost five per year. A total of eighty-seven articles mentioned Bourdieu in their bibliographies at least once, constituting 5.9% of all the articles published in the examined period. *Trends* contributed eleven articles in the examined period, which represent only 2% of the articles published in it. *Theory and Criticism* was a major source of articles citing Bourdieu, with thirty-five such articles in the course of eighteen years, which represent 7.8% of the articles published in it. With eighteen articles citing him before 2000, it was clearly the main vector of Bourdieu's reception in the 1990s. However, over the last decade, *Israeli Sociology* overshadowed it with thirty-five articles in eleven years, which represent 8.3% of the articles published in it. Finally, *Social Issues in Israel* has published 6 articles in merely two years, reaching 11% of all of its articles.

We also found a very significant increase both in the number of times Bourdieu is cited over the years, and in the percentage of articles referring to him. While in the five years ranging from 1991 to 1995 he was cited in eight articles, he was quoted

<sup>38</sup> 1991 is significant as the year when publications referring to Bourdieu began appearing regularly: while the first publication we found referring to Bourdieu is dated to 1984 (in *Trends*, the only journal that operated at the time), this was the only such reference until 1991.

thirty-six times – more than four times over – in the equivalent period from 2004 to 2008. This increase reflects in part the creation of *Israeli Sociology* and *Social Issues in Israel* as additional venues of publication. However, there is also a corresponding increase in the overall percentage of articles referring to Bourdieu: while in the five years ranging from 1991 to 1995 he was referenced to in 3.3% of the articles, in the equivalent period from 2004 to 2008 he was referenced to in 6.4% of the articles.

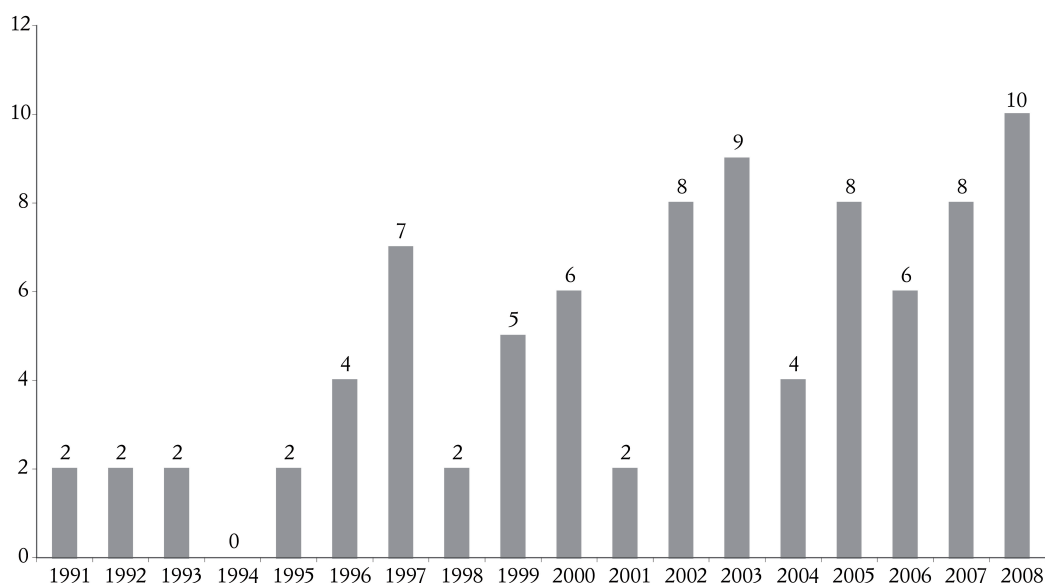


FIG. 1. Number of articles citing Bourdieu by year.

### 3.2. Authors' Institutional Affiliation

Authors of articles citing Bourdieu come from almost all of Israel's major universities,<sup>39</sup> and from eight colleges,<sup>40</sup> attesting to the extensive spread of Bourdieu's ideas. This spread is not even, however, as thirty-five of the articles were written by scholars affiliated to Tel-Aviv University. Moreover, a dozen or so articles were written by scholars affiliated to other departments or universities, but who were educated in Tel-Aviv University. By contrast, only nineteen articles were contributed by Israel's other large department in the Hebrew University – and only four of these were published before 2001, two of them written by authors who were educated in Tel-Aviv University. This finding confirms Tel-Aviv University's role in the initial reception of Bourdieu's thought, and the belated impact he had among Jerusalem-based soci-

<sup>39</sup> One exception is the Tehnion-Israel Institute of Technology, dedicated to the exact sciences.

<sup>40</sup> There is also a handful of writers who are affiliated to American and Canadian universities – Chicago, Michigan, Berkeley and Toronto.



ologists. However, there is a clear decline in Tel-Aviv University's centrality in this respect: while more than 60% of the authors of articles published from 1991 to 1995 were affiliated to Tel-Aviv University at the time, only a third were affiliated to Tel-Aviv University in the equivalent period from 2004 to 2008.

Only forty articles, less than half of the total, were written by writers affiliated with sociology and anthropology departments. Fourteen articles were published by scholars affiliated to education departments, mostly by sociologists of education. Eight articles were attributed to Tel-Aviv University's Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Ideas, all appearing in *Theory and Criticism*, attesting to the latter's central importance as a site for the propagation of Bourdieu's ideas in critical circles beyond the social sciences. However, this still leaves a substantive amount of articles that were written by scholars who belong to diverse academic departments, including general history, history and philosophy of science, folklore, theatre, communication, public policy, gender studies, political science and law. These departments contributed only one or two articles each, attesting to Bourdieu's lesser influence in these domains.

### 3.3. *Saliency*

In order to assess Bourdieu's saliency in the articles, we sorted the articles into three categories according to the level of importance implied by citations of his name in the texts. Of a total of eighty-seven articles in our corpus, sixty four articles (74%) do not engage Bourdieu's ideas and concepts at length, as a central part of their content. Most of these refer to Bourdieu only once, very briefly, often as part of the development of a specific domain of research, in footnotes, etc.; only some twenty of these articles mention some concepts or elaborate some ideas of Bourdieu's, but still in a way that does not permeate the overall conceptual framework of the article.

Eight articles (9%) deal directly and exclusively with Bourdieu and his thought, all appearing within the last decade.<sup>41</sup> This category includes book reviews, a translation of an article by Bourdieu (there is only one such article), and articles about him and his theories. We take this cluster of articles appearing in the last decade as a sign of recognition of Bourdieu as a general theorist, worthy of direct discussion and consideration in his own merit, and a contribution to his canonization. However, it should be noted that five of these articles appeared in the issue which appeared

<sup>41</sup> The articles we included in this category are (in chronological order): Bourdon [2000]; Algazi [2002]; Cordova [2002]; Resnik [2002]; Wacquant [2002]; Weitman [2002]; Algazi [2006]; Bourdieu [2006].

immediately after Bourdieu's death, four of them being summaries of speeches which were given in the evening held in his honour, and one is a translation of an article he himself wrote.

Finally, fifteen articles (17%) actively apply his ideas to an area of empirical inquiry.<sup>42</sup> Only four such articles appear before 2000 (three of those written by Ariela Azulai) and the rest thereafter, giving one more indication of his growing importance in the last decade. These articles are predominantly preoccupied with Bourdieu's notion of social fields: eleven articles focus on field theory, while only three focus on the concept of cultural capital, and one on the notion of habitus and embodiment. Many of the articles deal with art and culture (in the narrow sense of the word): six articles deal directly with the production of art and two with cultural consumption and cultural capital. Interestingly, only four of the authors of these articles are affiliated to sociology departments, while five articles were written by authors affiliated to Cohn Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Ideas, two by authors in education departments, one in gender studies, one in political studies, one in communication studies and one in a college (no departmental affiliation mentioned).

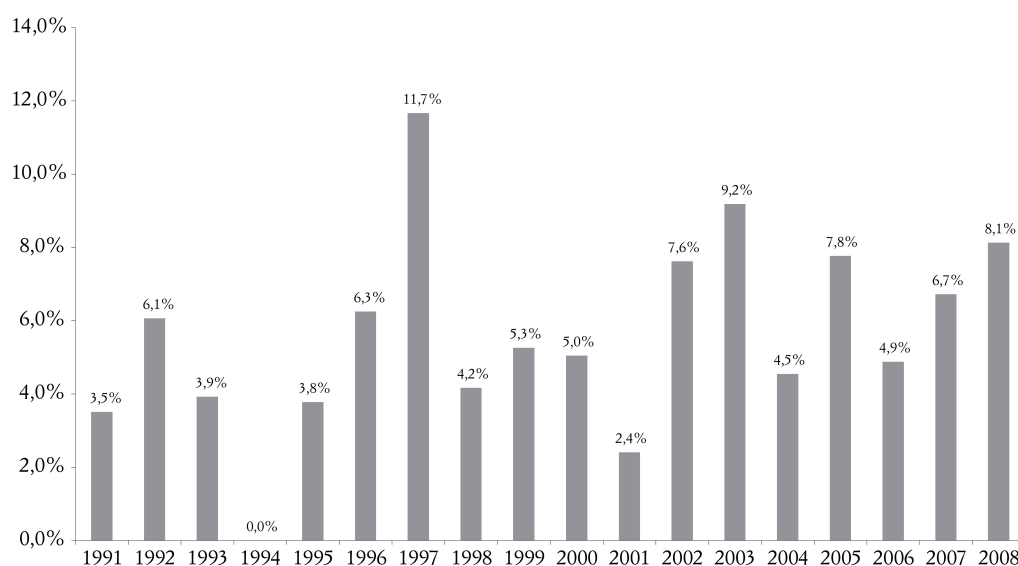


FIG. 2. Percentage of articles citing Bourdieu.

<sup>42</sup> The articles we included in this category are (in chronological order): Azulai [1992]; Azulai [1993]; Azulai [1995]; Shavit and Katz-Gerro [1998]; Mazawi [2000] Uriely, Mehrnaz, Bar-Eli, and Mena [2001]; Chinsky [2002]; Trajtenberg [2002]; Givoni [2003]; Brownfield-Stein [2005]; Gordon [2005]; Samimian-Darash [2006]; Canyon [2007]; Sagiv and Lomsky-Feder [2007]; Frenkel [2008].

### 3.4. *Concepts Used*

We also checked which concepts of Bourdieu were mentioned in the articles.<sup>43</sup> We found that thirty-one of the articles citing him did not employ any of his concepts at all. The most commonly cited concept was that of the *field*, which was mentioned in nineteen of the articles, supporting our finding that this was, historically, the most important aspect of his theory which was received in Israel. The second most used concept was *cultural capital*, with fifteen mentions, closely followed by *habitus*, with thirteen mentions. Surprisingly, the concept of *social capital* was only invoked five times, indicating the still rather weak grasp it has in Israeli sociology.

### 3.5. *Topics*

The articles in our corpus deal with a very large variety of topics, ranging from sports commentary and popular music fandom by young girls to the field of human rights in Israel and the demolition of houses of Arab residents in Jerusalem. However, a number of distinct groups of articles can be discerned. Almost half of the articles deal with one of three subjects: fifteen on *education* (17%), fourteen on the sociology of *knowledge* (16%) and twelve the production of *culture* (14%). Eight articles (9%) deal with *consumption* and leisure, and an equal amount on Bourdieu and his thought. There are six articles (7%) on general theory, five (6%) on gender, and an equal amount on political sociology.

This thematic division, besides showing the concentration of Bourdieu's influence in very specific areas of research, also helps expose differences in the types of use of Bourdieu's ideas that prevail among scholars with different domains of interest. Within each of this domain we usually found a relatively homogeneous cluster (or clusters) of articles, characterized by similar topics, research methods, ideological stance, and theoretical concepts. In what follows, we will focus on the leading domains of interest: education, the sociology of knowledge and the production of culture.

Out of fifteen articles dealing with education, eight were written by sociologists who studied at the Tel-Aviv University and six by sociologists who studied at the Hebrew University. This division is reflected in various aspects of the articles: while articles by sociologists from Tel-Aviv are usually quantitative in nature, the others tend to be qualitative. Almost all articles by sociologists from Tel-Aviv focus on the

<sup>43</sup> This leaves out the articles directly dealing with him and his theory, as they usually give a full review of his central concepts.

subject of inequality in the Israeli education system, while the others deal with a larger variety of subjects, such as immigration, identity, theory in education etc. Despite these differences, there are also common features: all writers except one cite Bourdieu only in passing, and almost always when addressing the issue of the role of education system in the reproduction of inequality. Half of them do not use any of Bourdieu's terms, and those who do refer almost exclusively to the idea of cultural capital.

Most (twelve out of fourteen) articles dealing with the sociology of knowledge were written by sociologists who studied at the Tel-Aviv University and only two by sociologists who studied at the Hebrew University. All articles are qualitatively oriented, employing ethnographic methods or hermeneutic methodologies on texts and interviews. They all describe the struggles and social mechanisms underlying the production and legitimation of professional knowledge in specific fields, often from a critical point of view. Most of them use the concepts of field and capital to analyze the struggles around the creation of specific types of knowledge. A few, however, simply cite Bourdieu as a source for the claim that knowledge is socially constructed and naturalized. This group of articles contains the densest use of Bourdieu's terms: The most popular is that of the field, used in all but four. Other terms used were cultural capital, symbolic capital, symbolic violence and habitus.

Articles on the production of culture were also predominantly written by scholars who studied in Tel-Aviv (ten out of twelve). Although six were written by sociologists and six by humanities scholars, we did not find any significant differences between the two groups. All articles are qualitatively oriented, employing ethnographic or hermeneutic methodologies (often on visual materials). Most articles on the production of culture focus on art as such, analyzing the production and canonization of painting, photography, museums, and the like. A few articles dealt with different kind of cultural production such as books, music and television. All but two employ the concept of the field as it appears in Bourdieu's writings on the field of cultural production, and some also used notions such as cultural capital and habitus.

On the basis of this overview, we can see that citations of Bourdieu tend to concentrate on a limited set of subjects, which correspond to the interests of those who mediated his early reception in Israel. The effect of this mediation is also evident from sustained differences in research methods, preferred concepts and institutional affiliation. It is also further confirmed by the fact that Tel-Aviv based scholars tend to be much more preoccupied with the three leading topics identified above, while scholars from other institutions tend to more evenly distribute their attention among topics. In a wider sense, it seems as if most of the scholars referring to Bourdieu can be grouped in several relatively homogeneous clusters, each preoccupied with different topics, employing different research methods, and taking different ideolog-

ical stances. Most significantly, in each of this cluster we find different concepts and ideas, which amount to a different version of Bourdieu's theories.

To conclude, these findings show a widespread use of Bourdieu's writings, as well as an increase over time. The authors who refer to Bourdieu come from a variety of disciplines, universities and departments, thereby indicating to the diffusion of his reception, in both geographical and disciplinary terms. Although almost three quarters of the articles referring to Bourdieu lack substantive reliance upon his concepts and ideas, the last decade sees an increase in more serious attempts to engage his writings. Further, the fragmentary nature of Bourdieu's reception is evidenced in the grouping of articles by topics, research methods, and institutional affiliation.

The early role of Tel-Aviv university as a site of mediation remains manifest in the tendency to concentrate on specific topics, namely education, the production of culture and the sociology of knowledge that had received privileged attention in the initial phase. It is also evident from the tendency towards using field theory, contrasting with the general lack of references to topics such as symbolic violence, social capital, colonialism, neo-liberalism and globalization. However, though authors from Tel Aviv University still comprise the majority in our database, their dominance is waning as Bourdieu's influence diffuses further. In the following years we will probably be able to see more clearly whether this diffusion will be able to supersede, or continue to be bound and inflected by the fault lines characteristic of the social sciences in Israel.

#### **4. Discussion**

As our findings show, Bourdieu's reception in Israeli sociology started relatively early, is well underway, and is progressing rapidly. By now, he is widely acknowledged as a central figure in the history of sociology, sort of a contemporary "classic" whose writings have become an "obligatory passage point" [Callon 1986] in the discourse of general sociological theory, as well as some more specific subfields of sociology and even some branches of the humanities. However, our findings also suggest that he is much more known, or known of, than actually and deeply influential in his impact on research and writing. Few scholars are interested in seriously engaging his writings, and most of those who do, address it in an ambivalent and sometimes even critical fashion. His key ideas and metaphors function mostly in the context of distinct topical research communities, relatively isolated from each other and each of them prone to select different aspects of his theories. Finally, little trace is felt of Bourdieu as a publicly active, political figure, most manifest in the later phase of his career.

The widespread recognition of Bourdieu's importance is hardly surprising when considering the deep connections Israeli sociology had with major centres of social sciences in Europe and America from its very beginning [Ben-Yehuda 1997; Yair and Apeloig 2005]. As Bourdieu became a prominent figure in France – and even more so after he was acknowledged as such in America – it was a matter of time until Israeli sociologists would take notice of him as of any other major new sociological figure. Furthermore, as some of his more specific claims achieved canonical status in various subfields, this only increased the chances that scholars active in these subfields would be acquainted with him.

However, as we saw, this acquaintance was seldom translated into serious, active engagement, be it in purely theoretical terms or through actual deployment and critical confrontation of his ideas with specific issues of empirical research. This absence of a widespread serious engagement is not altogether surprising. Bourdieu's leading promoters seldom addressed the main priorities of Israeli sociology such as political sociology, army and ethnicity, in part perhaps due the relative weak representation of these topics in Bourdieu's writings themselves; as a result, his overall relevance was limited to a few specific subfields that were not the most salient in the Israeli context, and to those few interested in theory for its own sake – itself a field confined to relative marginality.<sup>44</sup> The reasons for this relative marginalization of theory – which is in no way limited to Israel – cannot be disentangled here, but certainly include a system of academic promotion that favours empirically based research and publications as well as a growing specialization in various subfields of sociology. In any case, those few theoretically oriented sociologists who were or are still preoccupied with his theories were most unlikely to rally supporters around Bourdieu's ideas given the ambivalent, or even outright critical, attitude professed by most of them towards his theories.<sup>45</sup>

In contrast, a more sympathetic attitude towards Bourdieu's ideas was professed by scholars who implement them in the context of specific research communities. To some extent, this pattern has its basis in Bourdieu's own writings, which encompass a wide range of subjects and methods and a rich battery of concepts, making him a figure of importance not only in general-theoretical terms, but also specific subfields of research. Yet the result of this wealth – in Israel at least – is also considerable fragmentation, as writers addressing Bourdieu in different contexts tend to favour different concepts and ideas and, as a rule, do not present them as a part of a more comprehensive theory. Nor do they take pains to mention, or define their own stance

<sup>44</sup> On that issue, with regard to sociology in Jerusalem specifically, see Yair and Apeloig [2005].

<sup>45</sup> Bourdieu, however, is not the only one to have undergone that fate. Yet it is perhaps more striking in the case of Bourdieu as carrier of a form of general theory.

toward this more comprehensive theoretical dimension of Bourdieu's work, be it in a favourable or antagonistic way. Thus the fact that scholars in different research communities all address Bourdieu in their work in no way guarantees that they have a common language stemming from his ideas, or that they can benefit by discussing them – which indeed, they seldom do.

An additional factor in understanding this fragmentation, paradoxically, was the crossing of what are otherwise major boundaries in the field of Israeli sociology, between qualitative and quantitative researchers, between so-called critical and mainstream researchers, and between sociologists focusing their research on Israeli society and those who rather apply their efforts to topics not specifically anchored in the Israeli context. As sociologists engaging his ideas came and still come from all sides of these fault lines, they would be unlikely to find sufficient additional affinities that might have encouraged a shared theoretical outlook.

An interesting result of this fragmentation is the unequal attention drawn to different parts of Bourdieu's theory. While some aspects of his work, such as the concept of the field (and in particular the field of cultural production), reproduction in education and cultural capital were relatively influential, other famous and locally relevant aspects of his work such as the notion of social capital, his early writings about colonialism, the Algerian underclass and peasant society, and later writings dealing with reflexive sociology, globalization and neo-liberalism have been and are still hardly addressed in the context of Israeli sociology.

This unbalanced and fragmented reception pattern also reflects, at least in part, the effects of Bourdieu's initial phase of penetration in the milieu of Tel-Aviv University. It is mainly within this context that Bourdieu's ideas accumulated enough interest to shape the research interests of research communities in particular subfields. In general, Bourdieu's potential effect on subfields that were not considered relevant in this particular setting was dramatically diminished, as those who took interest in him in other settings could not amass enough support to make his concepts a common currency in their subfield or beyond.

A major factor which limited the consolidation of Bourdieu's status outside the welcoming context of Tel-Aviv University in the 1980s was the effect of competing intellectual allegiances and developments that in contrast, were relatively insignificant in Tel-Aviv's context. For some, mainly in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, it was the lasting dominance of a Weberian inspired macrosociology centered around the work of S. N. Eisenstadt. For others, more refractive to Eisenstadt's influence, both inside and outside the Hebrew University, it was the appeal of new currents based in a microsociological and interpretative perspectives, and resisting all form of grand macrosociological theory.

And in critical circles, especially since the 1990s, it would be competing theoretical figures such as Foucault<sup>46</sup> and a plurality of alternative currents such as cultural studies and post-colonialism – all forcefully promoted in the pages of *Theory and Criticism*. Perceived as more radical and sophisticated than Bourdieu, such currents also came across as better equipped to deal with issues of ethnic or national identities and inequalities that are of central concern to these circles in particular.<sup>47</sup> Relatedly, and notwithstanding Bourdieu's own ethnographic contributions (in his earlier phases especially) and sustained resistance to any strict separation between sociology and anthropology, Israeli anthropology appears to have remained generally unreceptive to Bourdieu's impact, and to have rather grown increasingly receptive to the impact of various currents of interpretative and symbolic cultural anthropology.

Finally, it would be interesting to examine to what extent the configuration described above was also operative with regard to the reception of other major thinkers in Israel. More broadly, a comparative angle would contribute to the better understanding of patterns of reception and canonization of theories. In addition, it would also help assess the extent to which the fate of Bourdieu's theory, in Israel or elsewhere, does not simply reflect the fragile status of theory as such in the fragmented state of contemporary sociology.<sup>48</sup>

*We wish to thank Hanna Herzog, Kinneret Lahad, Motti Regev, Ido Tavori and Tom Pesah for their helpful comments and encouragement on earlier versions of this paper.*

<sup>46</sup> Time and again, we were told in the context of either extended interviews or more casual conversations, of the stronger impact of Foucault in particular (if not only), and of how actors keenly interested in diffusing a broader acquaintance with Bourdieu's, felt there was not much space left for that as the critical camp was already heavily "saturated" with the impact of Foucault in the 1990s.

<sup>47</sup> Sociologist with such orientations were also often positioned in a growing camp of critical sociology hostile to Eisenstadt's brand of research, which they now defined as functionalist and reactionary "mainstream" sociology.

<sup>48</sup> Ironically, we may wish to consider the role our own article might play in this state of affairs. More than once indeed (in a striking example of what Giddens famously addressed as the double hermeneutic of sociology) sociologists and anthropologists of various shades whom we interviewed or just talked with not only reacted with lively interest, but also tried to understand themselves why they did not give more importance to Bourdieu than they did. Some even took it to heart to take out his texts to read, or read again, or read better. In other words, Bourdieu's reception in Israel may well still unfold to new and unexpected horizons.



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## **Bourdieu's Reception in Israeli Sociology**

### The Fragmented Imprint of a Grand Theory

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**Abstract:** The importance of Bourdieu's work would seem to be self-evident to most sociologists in Israel, where it appears to have achieved a solid place in the theoretical canon. However, an examination of citations of his work in Israeli journals, and interviews with key scholars who have actively engaged his work, reveal a pattern of reception that is less straightforward than may seem at first sight. Bourdieu's thinking was not absorbed as the grand, unified and synthetic theory it purports to be. Neither did his writings become the basis for the emergence of a distinct school in the context of Israeli sociology. Rather, this article traces a trajectory that led to increasing and diffuse canonization but also conceptually fragmented, largely de-politicized and often ambivalent reception. It also underscores major characteristics of this trajectory, such as the participation of brokers outside the field of sociology, an initial phase marked by the dominance of scholars based in then new and fledgling Tel Aviv University, and widespread diffusion and institutionalization in subsequent phases. Finally, we suggest that the very success of Bourdieu's ideas in permeating institutional and intellectual boundaries contributed to the selective and fragmented nature of their reception.

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*Keywords:* Bourdieu, theory, reception, canonization, Israeli sociology.

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