ELITES

A GENERAL MODEL

MURRAY MILNER JR.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations

For the non-elites

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polity

First published in 2015 by Polity Press

Polity Press

65 Bridge Street

Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press

350 Main Street

Malden, MA 02148, USA

ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-7182-6

ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-7183-3 (pb)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-8952-4 (epub)

ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-8951-7 (mobi)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Milner, Murray.

Elites : a general model / Murray Milner, Jr.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-7456-7182-6 (hardback : alk. paper) – ISBN 978-0-7456-7183-3 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Elite (Social sciences) 2. Power (Social sciences) 3. Elite (Social sciences)–United States. 4. Power (Social sciences)–United States. 5. Elite (Social sciences)–India. 6. Power (Social sciences)–India. I. Title.

HM1263.M554 2014

305.5′20973–dc23

2014015223

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Preface

I am always a bit suspicious of authors' descriptions of why they write what they do, including my own accounts. There is a tendency for most of us to underestimate the effects of social context, contingency, luck, and providence in what has happened – at least when it is linked to the completion of a project for which we can and must take credit. With this reservation and warning, I want to state what I now see as the influences that led to this book. While I was never a scholar who specialized in studying sociology's intellectual ancestors, for a number of years I taught courses in classical social theory. I was always struck by the differences in how Marx, Pareto, and Weber understood the link between social inequality, social conflict, and social change. Each one was extremely insightful, but I sensed that they told only part of the story. It was a number of years, however, before I considered trying to create a more complete picture. The second stimulus to this book came out of my study of the Indian caste system. The idealized indigenous description of castes – at least by those from privileged castes – draws on what is usually referred to as the varna system that suggests that there are four social categories of people and each one is called upon to carry out a particular social function. This scheme has been influential for several thousand years even though there is only the vaguest link between this idealized description and the actual organization of castes in village India. It was the interactions between these two stimuli – my questions about classical theories and my puzzle about how something as inaccurate as the varna system could continue to be the standard description of the caste system – that led to this book.

I also frequently taught courses in social inequality and became reasonably familiar with the literature on contemporary “power elites” and “ruling classes.” I often agreed with this literature – I think power in many contemporary societies is far too concentrated and unchecked – but the questions that I was asking seemed unaddressed. It seemed to me that the concentration of power, and many other important phenomena, derived, in part, from the patterns of conflict and cooperation between various types of elites and between elites and non-elites. Moreover, recurring patterns seemed to exist across a number of very different societies. That is a central focus of this book. There are three additional emphases. First, most treatments of elites and ruling classes do not give enough attention to non-elites. Second, elite theory tends to focus on economic and political elites – who are obviously important – but to ignore other important categories of elites. Third, class analysis can usefully be subsumed within a model of elites. To deal with these issues I am proposing a new model of elites and non-elites. The sources, content, and application of this model to three very different societies is the subject of this book.

I am indebted to many people: some because they encouraged me, some because they made me think harder about what I was doing, and some for a lifetime of personal support. To name all of these would both strain my memory and bore my readers, but some must be named. I learned much from the graduate students in a course I taught on several occasions called Elites and Non-elites. Paul Kingston, Simone Polillo, and Rae Blumberg provided useful critiques on earlier abbreviated versions of this work. Even though much of the year he lives in Italy, my good friend Gianfranco Poggi has phoned about once a month, in part to inquire about how the work is progressing, implicitly providing a much needed and much

appreciated reminder that I needed to get the book finished. Jon D. Mikalson of my university's Classics Department provided invaluable advice and guidance, including reading several versions of the chapter on Classical Athens. He was the very model of a good colleague. Another longtime colleague James Davidson Hunter has provided me an office and encouragement at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, an especially congenial and stimulating work setting. Mieke Thomeer and Megan Quetsch served as outstanding undergraduate research assistants and were of great help in finding sources and proofreading. I am also appreciative of the help and guidance provided by Jonathan Skerrett of Polity Press and the careful copyediting of Ian Tuttle. As always, I am indebted to Sylvia Milner for a lifetime of companionship.

1
Introduction

Introduction

Two of the recurring issues in social theory are (1) who has power and (2) how does the exercise of such power shape subsequent events? In an attempt to answer these questions, analysts have drawn on the concepts of class and elite. Sometimes these are made more specific by notions of ruling class and power elite. Often the analyses of classes and elites are linked to implicit or explicit arguments about what produces or limits social change. Some of the factors focused upon include production technology, weaponry, demography, and culture. The notions of class and elites have produced insights into the nature and direction of social life, but they seem increasingly inadequate to understand the complexity of contemporary social life. Moreover, they have been inadequate for understanding both the commonalities and the differences between societies, and between the past and the present.

The purpose of this book is to improve the analytical tools for addressing such problems by proposing a new model of elites and non-elites. The model suggests that it is important to look at the relationship between different types of elites *and* between elites and non-elites. The aim is to create a model that is general enough to usefully analyze a variety of societies and historical periods without lapsing into a philosophy of history, which already “knows” what the future will bring. While serious intellectual endeavors build upon the work of previous scholars, in my opinion this

too often leads to a kind of scholasticism that makes new work more arcane and inaccessible than it needs to be.

Much if not most of the literature about elites focuses on how concentrated or dispersed power is in a particular society or community or how the actions of those with power have shaped the past or will shape the future. While I do not completely ignore the first question my primary focus is on the second question. My approach to answering the second question does not focus on studying the biographies of past elites to explain the past, or interviewing current elites to predict the future. Rather, I look at the relationship between different types of elites and non-elites in such a way that we can begin to see patterns that cut across multiple societies and how these patterns are related to key social changes. I am especially influenced by Max Weber's notion that there are three main types of power: political power, economic power, and status power. Elites typically specialize in one of these types of power and in different cultures and historical periods the type of power and the type of elite that is most prominent can vary. I want to avoid the tendency to assume that a particular category of elites is always the most powerful, or that the future is predetermined. This has been the tendency of both Marxism and the elite theory. Marx assumed that history was driven primarily by class conflict. In capitalist societies the proletariat would be the key mover of history by bringing about a revolution and the eventual establishment of communism, which would eliminate class and class conflict. Elite theorists tended to assume the opposite. Elites make history and for the most part others were primarily their pawns. Any apparent moves toward egalitarianism, such as electoral democracies, were largely illusory and eventually succumbed to what Robert Michels called the “iron law of oligarchy.” Who made up the elite may change, but real

power was always held by a relatively small group. In contrast, the approach I am proposing attempts to avoid notions of inevitability – whether they are “optimistic” or “pessimistic” ones. The future is shaped by the past, but not determined by it. To paraphrase Marx's famous epigram, people make their own history, but they do not make it just as they want.

I have found four theorists especially helpful in formulating a new model: (1) Karl Marx, (2) Vilfredo Pareto (and other elites theorists such as Gaetano Mosca, and Robert Michels), (3) Max Weber, and (4) Pierre Bourdieu. I will discuss each of these in turn as a way of identifying some of the key elements that should be incorporated in a new model.

The “Classical” Theories

Since the pattern of cooperation and conflict between various elites and non-elites is my primary concern, rather than the precise concentration of power in particular settings, several classical social theorists seem most relevant to this task. I focus on how their work is useful in suggesting the relevant elements of a new model, though I try to present enough of their theoretical perspective to show how their theorizing about elites is related to their broader body of work.

Marxian theory

After a brief prologue, the *Communist Manifesto* begins: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” This pregnant sentence introduces three central concepts in Marx's thinking: history, class, and conflict. In Marx's vision, class differences, which were the basis of conflict, could and would be transcended following a Communist revolution. History, however, would not stop.

Stated in another way, Marx's notion of class conflict was placed in the context of a broader theory of social change. The power of Marx's analysis is not in his systematic and detailed analysis of the notion of class – he never got around to that. Rather, it is in his ability to throw light on the changes that were occurring as Europe was transformed from agrarian feudalism to an industrialized bourgeois society with new forms of exploitation and conflict. This part of Marx's analysis is not particularly controversial. More debatable has been the Marxian view of the long-term economic, political, and cultural consequences of these changes.

The classical Marxist sketch of capitalism goes something like this: New technologies and the dynamics of capitalist market competition usher in an enormous increase in productive capacity. Because of the pressure of competition, capitalists need to keep costs low, including the costs of wages. To lower costs, forward-looking capitalists invest most of their profits in more efficient technologies that produce more products with less labor. The working class experiences increased economic insecurity and a decline in their share of the income. As consumers they cannot afford to buy the increasing supply of products. This reduces consumer demand and lowers prices and profits. Many businesses go broke or have to lay off workers. This leads to recessions and depressions. The longer-term result is that capitalist economies go through alternating periods of booms and busts with the downturns becoming increasingly severe. This leads to political unrest and protest. Such protest may be reduced by various forms of ideology that mislead workers into a false consciousness. The state is primarily an instrument of the capitalist class and the police and army are used to suppress working-class dissent, protests, and strikes and to protect private property, especially private capital. Increasingly repressive

measures must be used to maintain order, intensifying working-class hostility. Eventually this leads to a proletarian revolution and the creation of a socialist state. The new state substitutes rational economic planning for the “anarchy of the market” and gradually morphs into fully developed Communism. This process is not limited to particular capitalist societies, but is an international process. Workers see that the key conflicts were not between different ethnic, religious, occupational, or national groups, but that this is a worldwide struggle between a capitalist ruling class and an increasingly internationalized proletariat. This is expressed through the effort to organize international associations of workers movements such as the “First International” (1864–1876) and the “Second International” (1889–1916).

In retrospect we know that the model was incorrect in predicting a series of proletarian revolutions and the disappearance of nationalism and religious affiliations. Most popular revolutions were supported by rural peasants rather than an urban proletariat. Following World War II, the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe were established under the military hegemony of the Soviet Union, which is not to say they had no popular support. These regimes not only failed to result in utopias, but were generally highly authoritarian and economically inefficient. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc and the economic liberalization of China (as well as Vietnam and Cambodia) are obvious indicators that these societies have not been economically sustainable.

The Marxian model has, however, been amazingly prescient with respect to pinpointing the economic dilemmas of market economies: The contradiction between keeping wage costs low and sustaining consumer demand continues. This tendency to boom and bust has been

problematic for most capitalist economies. This was certainly true of the U.S. economic downturn of 2008.

What Marx did not anticipate is that the state could significantly soften and limit these instabilities by manipulating taxes, public expenditures, and the money supply. These possibilities are the great insight and contribution of first Keynesian economic theory and policies, and, a little later, monetary theory and policies. While capitalist societies have not “solved” the contradictions that Marx identified, they have been able to manage them sufficiently to avoid the degree of economic instability and revolution that Marx predicted.

Marxism has often attempted to take into account Keynesian and monetary efforts to manage the economy by seeing the state primarily as an instrument of the capitalist class (Miliband 1969). There are, however, two fundamental problems with this view of the world. First, the vast modern welfare state has interests and goals of its own such as adequate funding for its bureaucracies and their expansion. Moreover, in democratic states the ruling government must retain the popular support of at least a large proportion of the non-elite voting population. The most urgent concerns of non-elites cannot be ignored with impunity. Second, defining government economic policies as the state pursing the interests of the capitalist class assumes that this class has a high level of consensus, solidarity, and farsightedness. This is unlikely in large, complex, and diverse societies in which many of the key actors are global multinational corporations.

It is in this context that Fred Block's work is useful (Block 1987, esp. chap. 3). He characterizes modern capitalism as having a “ruling class that does not rule.” The basic argument is that the managers of the state have a strong interest in maintaining a productive and expanding

economy. First, this is the basis of taxes and other sources of government income. Second, a stagnant or declining economy tends to erode popular support for the government in power. Since productive economic activity is highly dependent upon the willingness of individual capitalists and corporations to invest private capital in business enterprises, it is in the state's interests to avoid policies that would discourage such investment. Political elites are, however, interested in the productivity of the economy as a whole, rather than simply the profits of a particular capitalist, corporation, or industry. Therefore they sometimes pursue policies that benefit the economy as a whole, even though they may reduce the profits of particular economic enterprises. In Block's terminology, a key role of the state is to maintain “business confidence.”

The essence of Block's argument is that political elites have a strong vested interest in seeing that economic elites as a class prosper and in maintaining “business confidence,” but this is not primarily because they are “instruments” of that class, but because they are pursuing their own long-term interests.

To summarize, some of the key limitations of Marxian theory are:

1. While class conflict often leads to social change, other types of power and conflict are also important sources of change and these tend to be ignored or attributed to economic interests.
2. The Marxian assumption that polarization will lead to essentially two classes has been largely inaccurate with respect to historical developments in modern societies. (This is not to say that this could not happen in the future.) More specifically, the theory does not pay

enough serious attention to the significance of either the middle classes or the excluded and outcast groups.

3. While more recent versions of Marxian theory do not reduce political elites and the state to mere flunkies of the economic elites, Marxian theory still does not provide adequate tools for considering the non-economic interests of elites.
4. Similarly, Marxism does not provide the tools for an adequate analysis of status and status elites, for it still assumes that various forms of ideological hegemony are primarily disguises for economic interests.

Yet Marxian theory is especially useful for our purposes in the following respects:

1. It insists that variations in the means of production result in variations in the nature of social formations and the forms of cooperation and conflict they experience, which often depend on whether elites are associated with an older or a newer mode of production.
2. It insists that the interests of economic elites usually conflict with those of non-elites. While personal and cultural variations may accentuate or retard the cupidity of elites, the fundamental sources of exploitation and inequality are rooted in the nature of economic relationships such as the pressures that capitalists face to lower costs.

Elite theory

An alternative to Marx's understanding of history is elite theory. Vilfredo Pareto (1935, 1968 [1901], 1976), Gaetano Mosca (1939 [1896]), and Robert Michels (1998 [1916]) produced the classical statements of this perspective. Its most elaborate form is probably best represented by

Pareto. A small minority rules, and responsiveness to the masses is typically pragmatic or hypocritical. There is variation in the degree to which elites are closed to outsiders, that is, in whether elites “circulate.” Mobility or circulation takes several forms.

First, in certain periods, political elites rule primarily by force (Pareto's “lions”) and in other periods primarily by cunning (Pareto's “foxes”). This distinction, derived from Machiavelli, focuses on the means by which elites rule. These two approaches often involve different individuals who have dissimilar personalities rooted in different “residues,” which are deeply held tacit sentiments.[1] A successful regime is one that has an effective mix of lions and foxes for the historical context in which they are located. History is characterized by continual cycles of lions being replaced by foxes only to be replaced in turn by lions, etc.

Second, all elites tend to degenerate over time, but they may be renewed by co-opting able and ambitious individuals from non-elites, which both strengthens the elite, and deprives non-elites of those who might lead revolts or revolutions.

A third type of circulation results from successful revolutions in which old elites are replaced by new elites. Rebellions and revolutions are especially likely if elites are both closed to talented non-elites and “humanitarian,” that is, reluctant to use force and deceit. Regimes may fall from a revolution of non-elites (the “masses”) or from a coup 'd'état by a small cadre. In either case, a society will soon be ruled by elites largely committed to their own interests.

In the economic realm, rentiers and speculators are roughly the parallel to the notions of lions and foxes. Rentiers want to maintain tradition and “play it safe,” being concerned about maintaining their wealth, income, and

established status. In contrast, speculators are often "newcomers," willing to take risks to expand their wealth.

In the cultural and ideological realm Pareto makes a less well-known distinction that focuses on variations in ideology or alternative "theologies": "two theologies will put in an appearance, one which will glorify immobility of one or another uniformity, real or imaginary, the other of which will glorify movement and progress in one direction or another" (Pareto 1935: 2173).

While other types of power and elites may be formally recognized, the focus tends to be on political power and who controls the state or the executive offices of organizations. Similarly, the role of non-elites is formally recognized, but seen as quite limited. History is made primarily by elites and the influence of the lower orders is downplayed.

The tendency to attribute most power and agency to elites is characteristic of contemporary elite theorists such as John Higley and his various co-authors (Burton and Higley 1987, 2001; Higley and Burton 1989; Higley and Moore 2001). They focus on the ability of modern nations to establish and maintain liberal democracies. Democracies require an "elite settlement" in which competing elites agree to the "rules of the game" for selecting those who control the government. This settlement must also include agreeing to limit the consequences of "losing the game," so that being defeated in an election and turning power over to others does not result in death, prison, or loss of private property.

Thomas R. Dye, who has written extensively on U.S. elites, makes a similar point: "Elites in all sectors of American society share a consensus about the fundamental values of private enterprise, limited government, and due process of law … disagreement occurs *within* a consensus over

fundamental values" (2002: 209–10). He notes, "A recognized source of factionalism is the emergence of new sources of wealth and new 'self-made' individuals … a split between Sunbelt 'cowboys' and Eastern establishment 'yankees' " (2002: 210). The factionalism has increased, but even the Tea Party movement affirms the legitimacy of markets as the means to the key goal of economic growth.

The more pluralistic versions of elite theory (e.g., Dahl 1961; Lindblom 1965; Rose 1967; Verba 1987) emphasize that decisions are made by an ongoing process of negotiation and compromises that take a wide variety of interests into account. Virtually all elite theorists acknowledge that power is concentrated in a relatively small number of elites, but there is still disagreement about the degree of this concentration and level of consensus. Michels offered a more pessimistic version of elite theory, in his study of social democratic political parties; even in these avowedly democratic and egalitarian organizations, entrenched elites eventually monopolized power, producing an "iron law of oligarchy."

Some of the limitations of elite theory include the following.

1. It overstates the power of elites. The masses are always dominated by elites. What varies is the form and trappings of dominance. Whereas Marx saw change toward equality and justice as inevitable, elite theorists usually see progressive change as largely illusory. The less extreme versions – for example, Gaetano Mosca (1939 [1896]) and Joseph Schumpeter (1987 [1942]) – acknowledge that democratic institutions limit elites, but stress how often such limits are circumvented. In sum, a central theme of classical elite theory is that little changes with respect to the fundamental distribution of power.

2. It underestimates the ability of non-elites to mobilize and bring about change (e.g., the largely nonviolent Independence Movement in India, the American Civil Rights Movement, Women's Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and the Arab Spring of 2011). These may be infrequent and they may be co-opted or diverted. Nonetheless, they are crucial phenomena and our theoretical models should not obscure such possibilities.
3. It usually focuses on political power and economic power and largely ignores cultural elites and the influence they exercise. Dye (2002) provides a useful and in many ways admirable overview of elites in the first decade of the twenty-first century. There is, however, virtually no discussion of significance of cultural elites or celebrities such as Oprah Winfrey, Steven Spielberg, or famous sports heroes or movie stars, of conservative Christian elites such as James Dobson, Jerry Falwell, or Pat Robertson and the network of organizations they founded, not to speak of more traditional religious elites such as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Elite theory tends to ignore whole categories of leaders, organizations, and cultural influences.
4. While its realism helps to unmask the highly unequal distribution of power, it can lapse into cynicism and nihilism.

Elite theory does have several key virtues useful in constructing a general model. It recognizes that:

1. Political power is not adequately understood if it is seen primarily as a derivative of economic power;
2. The emergence of elites is a virtual inevitability in any large organization or complex society;

3. Societies and historical periods vary in the extent to which elites are a self-perpetuating “aristocracy,” but that there is a strong tendency toward domination of non-elites, social closure, and protecting elite power and privileges;
4. It recognizes that elites usually contain internal differentiations such as the differences between lions and foxes, rentiers and speculators, and conservative and liberal ideologues.

Max Weber

Weber certainly recognized the importance of economic power and ownership of the means of production, but he also saw the importance of other sources of power; for example, in some historical situations the control of the means of coercion might be more important than the means of production. In capitalist economies he thought that the basis of class differences was market power. Ownership of the means of production was only one source of such power. The notions of human, social, and cultural capital, developed in the last half of the twentieth century (Becker 1964; Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Coleman 1990; Mincer 1958; Schultz 1963), can all become forms of market power.

While Weber saw economic power was typically central, political power and status power were each important in their own right. Each type of power tends to be associated with a particular type of social formation, namely, classes, political parties, and status groups. While the members of a given class tended to belong to the same parties and status groups, and vice versa, this correlation was by no means perfect.

The status of a particular activity can shape the likelihood of that activity being pursued. He famously argued that the

“Protestant Ethic” played an important role in legitimizing and encouraging the emergence of bourgeois capitalism (Weber 1976b [1905]).[2] Similarly the prohibition against usury prevented Christians from becoming prosperous bankers, but Jews circumvented this limitation, arguing that the prohibition against charging interest only applied to loans to other Jews. This ethical dualism was likely to have been accentuated by the Jews' pariah status in medieval Christendom. Hence, some Jews were able to become prosperous financers to the Christian majority (Weber 1968: 612–14). In short, while ideology is often shaped by economic and political interests, an ideology that affects the status of different activities can also shape economic and political activities.

For Weber, elites had disproportionate amounts of power and influence, but non-elites also influence the nature and direction of social change. Moreover, he saw unintended contingent factors as “the great bulk of everyday action,” and it was “often a matter of almost automatic reaction of habitual stimuli” (Weber 1968: 25). Nonetheless, the patterns of everyday action do change. While there is a strong strain of pessimism in Weber, he was not a cynic. History is not simply one elite replacing another, nor habit playing itself out.

Weber's writings are ambiguous about whether the future was determined and therefore predictable. On the one hand, he often emphasized the seemingly overriding power of the rationalization of social structure and culture. For Weber, “rationalization” refers to a process that involves making human action and ideas more rational, that is, the extent to which magical elements of thought and action are eliminated and replaced by ideas that are systematic and/or scientifically accurate. More generally, it involves the selection of effective means to a specified end. Rationalization affects law, religion, bureaucracy, politics,

and most areas of life. His most familiar example of this theme is bureaucratization: the tendency of modern organizations to replace ad hoc sets of officials, which in pre-modern societies were often selected on the basis of kinship or personal loyalty, with trained professionals operating according to written rules. Religions are rationalized to the degree that magical rituals are replaced by systematic doctrines and ethical imperatives. Often rationalization is not only a dominant trend, but also a seemingly inescapable process. At close to the end of the *Protestant Ethic*, he notes that such rationalization may lead to an "ossification," and then he quotes an unknown author to describe what might be the state of the "last humans": "narrow specialists without minds, pleasure-seekers without heart; in its conceit, this nothingness imagines it has climbed to a level of humanity never before attained" (Weber 2009: 159).

Yet, charismatic power can always break through routinized patterns, and new prophets may arise or ancient traditions may be revived. Moreover, human actors and cultural variations can deflect dominant trends into more than one channel. Hence, the future is more open and contingent than in Marx or elite theory. Nonetheless, the thrust of his analyses suggests an increasingly rationalized and ossified future.

The limitations of Weber's work for our purposes include:

1. The trend toward rationalization is overemphasized in light of the Iranian revolution, the rise of the Falun Gong in China, Buddhist-led protest in Tibet, the rise of Hindu nationalism in India, the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East, North Africa, Nigeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, the Arab Spring of 2010, and the rise of the Christian Right and the Tea Party in the U.S. Ruling

elites have certainly had to take these movements into account. Some of these are clearly forms of resistance to rationalization.

2. Weberian notions of charismatic authority, breakthroughs, and religious virtuosos seem inadequate to conceptualize these twenty-first-century phenomena.

Weber's contributions are that he recognizes:

1. The importance of non-political and non-economic power;
2. Different types of social groups and formations emerge from the possession of different types of power;
3. The Marxian concept of economic power, but broadens it to include more than the ownership of the means of production;
4. The significance of cultural differences;
5. That while the historical future is shaped by the past and present, it is open to alternative possibilities. In Weber there is an acute realism, but he avoids determinism and nihilism.

Bourdieu

While Pierre Bourdieu is not “classical” in the same sense as the previous theorists, he is probably the most influential social theorist of the last quarter of the twentieth century (e.g., Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990, 1996, 1998; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) and his work continues to be very influential. Many articles and books have been written explicating and critiquing his work (e.g., Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes 1990; Lardinois and Thapan 2006; Susen and Turner 2011; Wacquant 1992). Here I can give only a brief outline of his key arguments and the

implications and limitations of his work as a way of understanding elites. Scholars often disagree about how to interpret Bourdieu and this needs to be kept in mind.

Instead of starting with either the subject's perceptions of the social world (characteristic of various forms of phenomenology) or an observer's perceptions of structures found in a society or culture (characteristic of objectivism and structuralism), he wants to focus analysis on the actual practices of everyday actors.[3] The relevance of this argument for our purposes is that neither elites nor non-elites should be denied agency. Even the most powerful elites, however, are to some degree limited by the objective structures and their agency is shaped by the content of their subjectivities, much of which has been inherited from the structures of their society and culture.

Practices need to be seen in relationship to the notions of *structure* and *habitus*. Structures are the abstractions that emerge from the past history of practices. These abstractions (e.g., norms, conventions, and articulated values) shape, but do not determine subsequent practices (Bourdieu 1977: 95). Social structures shape subsequent practices through social institutions that place constraints on acceptable behavior. This, however, leaves open the question of how social institutions are reproduced or transformed since they are made up of the practices of other actors in a given social context. Bourdieu uses the notion of *habitus* to understand the link between structure and practices. *Habitus* refers to systems of tacit knowledge and deeply inculcated dispositions, which generate and organize practices (Bourdieu 1977: 78; 1990: 53).[4] These are not primarily conscious preferences and choices, but rather deeply instilled inclinations and reactions. They are analogous to the moves of an athlete rather than the conscious decisions of a chess player (1990: 66–8). Bourdieu wants to distance himself from what he sees as

both a naïve structuralism and a naïve rational choice perspective. These notions have several implications for the understanding of elites and non-elites. First, elites want to inculcate a habitus that supports their interests. This takes at least two forms. One is creating social markers that distinguish elites from non-elites; more about this below. A second is instilling in the habitus of non-elites taken-for-granted assumptions that buttress the power and privileges of elites. Examples include the assumption that kings and priests are sanctified by God, or that markets are inherently efficient and governments are inherently inefficient. Elites also inherit a habitus that makes them take many things for granted; hence it is a mistake to see the legitimacy and taken-for-grantedness of the existing structure and habitus as simply the result of deliberate manipulation on the part of elites.

Central to Bourdieu's theorizing is the notion of *capital*. Following Marx, capital is accumulated labor. It becomes a form of power that biases subsequent exchanges in favor of those who have capital. Unlike Marx, capital is not limited to material capital in the form of economic and financial resources. It can also take a symbolic form and be embodied in humans as *habitus*. Capital takes a number of forms, but especially important is *cultural capital*, which is made up of the knowledge and dispositions that express the taste associated with various class positions. For dominant groups it is important that elite taste and style seem a natural part of one's identity (Bourdieu 1984, 1986). *Social capital* refers to social networks (including kinship ties) that give one access to, and alliances with, others who also have capital resources. Such connections may be more matters of an implicit consensus and “natural” solidarities of, for example, families and status groups rather than conscious real-politik alliances or specific favors for other elites.