THE PROBLEMS OF PROTEST AND THE PERSISTENCE OF DOMINATION:
SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND BOURDIEU’S ECONOMY OF PRACTICE

By

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Program in Political Studies
in conformity with the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario Canada
January, 2013

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ABSTRACT

The Problems of Protest and the Persistence of Domination: Social Movement Theory and Bourdieu’s Economy of Practice is a normative intervention into social movement theory and debates about social movement goals, strategies and tactics. The project asks: what normative implications derive from incorporating Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological framework into social movement research? My core arguments are that Bourdieu’s framework has the potential to sensitize activists and analysts to the tension between conformity and failure and that escaping radical/reformist debates requires working through this tension.

The dissertation intervenes in social movement theory from within the critical theory tradition by refusing to separate empirical and normative questions. I develop my argument using two strategies. First, I undertake a close reading of Bourdieu’s most important works and the debates they have provoked. Second I apply the conceptual tools this close reading offers to reconsider the logic behind two key social movement theory concepts: collective identity and repertoires of contention.

Following a general introduction and literature review, I undertake a close consideration of habitus and an argument for how attention to the suffering produced by symbolic power constitutes grounds for normative justice claims. I then consider how collective identity formation in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer mobilization indicates the presence of symbolic violence, primarily in the form of epistemic violence. Next I argue that the nature of neoliberal symbolic power creates political antinomies for representation and affinity-based segments of the alterglobalization movement. Finally I argue that Bourdieu needs to be balanced by Nietzsche and that an orientation toward ‘overcoming’ offers a way out of the tension between conformity and failure. My findings point to the need for more sophisticated instruments for understanding the relationship between objective interests and subjective perception, impositions of, and challenges to, ‘logical consensus’,
and strategies for counter-training and other mechanisms to support activists in resisting symbolic violence.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In completing this project I owe a sincere debt of gratitude to a number of people. My supervisor, Dr. Eleanor MacDonald, stands foremost among them. Eleanor has given me encouragement, a healthy dose of scepticism, and countless critical insights. Whether we were talking about my research, hers, or (equally likely) some interesting question in between the two, I always ended up feeling better about myself and the world. I have also benefited greatly from the mentoring, intellectual stimulation and support from Dr. Abigail Bakan, Dr. Zsuzsa Csergo, and Dr. Colin Farrelly. I would also like to thank Barb Murphy, Dianne Flint, and Frances Shepherd for their assistance navigating Queen’s procedures.

I am also particularly grateful to my family. The support from my parents, Lawrence and Judy Samuel has come in many forms but has always been unwavering. My mother passed away while this project was in its early stages and I am sorry she was not able to see its completion. My sister tolerates my wonkiness, celebrates my successes and fills our visits with good food and laughs.

Support from my friends has been invaluable. Alison Burns encourages me to be thoughtful about what constitutes a valued friend, and then fits that bill perfectly. Matthew Mitchell’s weekly commiseration, encouragement, and wide-ranging discussions over breakfast at the Sleepless Goat provided me with grounding and perspective – resources I sorely lack on my own. I have also been privileged by supportive and engaging friendships in the department, including Nadège Campoaré, Tim Abray-Nyman, Karla Schulz, Laura Kelly, Kyle Jackson, Timothy Luchies Landertinger, Dilan Okcuoglu, Adrienne Koning, and Erin Tolley. Of course a special thanks goes to my friend and office mate Rachael Johnstone, for helping me hash out ethical conundrums and distracting me with zombies and Time Lords.

I have also depended greatly on the support of my friends outside the department. In Edmonton I can always count on friendship and beers from Chantelle Hughes, Marilyn Hooper (who
still makes me laugh like no one else), Tom Emmens, Tina Faiz, Rob Andruchow, and Samara Jones.

In Kingston and Toronto, I rely on Don Collymore, Chris Peressotti, Alex Pershai, Al Chiasson, and Tim Murphy, for warmth, acceptance and hugs. Special gratitude goes to Dr. Simon Kiss for encouraging me to get back into graduate work and to consider Queen’s as the place to do so.

Above all, I want to offer love and thanks to my partner Cory. He came with me to Kingston, listens patiently to my excited ramblings about whatever piece of political theory I happen to be in love with or enraged by at the moment, and encourages me to pursue balance, colour, and joy.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

When the leaders of the world’s most powerful economies descended on Toronto in June of 2010 they were met by a state that spent nearly $1 billion to host the event – including building an infamous $9.4 million security fence and mobilizing thousands of police officers – a chief of police willing to misrepresent the law in the interest of maintaining peace, thousands of ‘peaceful’ protestors, a contingent of property-smashing Black Bloc activists and a population that was largely unaware of the political, economic and ideological stakes involved in the confrontation provoked by the G20’s descent.\footnote{Canadian Press, “Conservatives Make No Apology for High Cost of G8-G20”, Toronto Star http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/torontog20summit/article/866024--conservatives-make-no-apology-for-high-cost-of-g8-g20 (accessed 3 January 2012); Adam Radwanski, "A History of Violence: The G20 Barrier That Wasn't," The Globe and Mail, 2 July 2010, A9; Peter Weltman, Assessment of Planned Security Costs for the 2010 G8 and G20 Summits2010. ii.} Fallout from this struggle includes the arrest of 1,000 protestors, lawsuits against the Toronto Police Services, and several investigations into police behaviour during the protests. Nonetheless, the G20 reached an agreement to introduce aggressive austerity measures, the impact of which will be most directly felt – if history is any indication – by those who are already most vulnerable economically and socially.

In the same summer, Pride Toronto, the non-profit organization responsible for organizing Canada’s largest LGBT/Q festival, made a series of controversial decisions that brought to the surface struggles among festival organizers, politically engaged queers, municipal politicians and the significant numbers of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people who want pride celebrations to be about partying and apolitical cultural visibility. The organization’s close relationship with the City of Toronto – and particularly their reliance on $250,000 in annual municipal funding – contributed to their initial decision to require all signs in the 2010 Pride Parade to be vetted by an ethics committee. The decision was later reversed, but then reintroduced and narrowed to specifically
prohibit the phrase “Israeli Apartheid”. The revised ban was itself reversed after significant backlash from prominent members of the LGBT/Q community and an agreement was reached between Pride Toronto and the City of Toronto that all parade participants would adhere to the municipality’s ‘Non-Discrimination Policy’. Apart from their attempts to censure certain voices, Pride Toronto also recently provoked anger among some LGBT/Q activists by participating in a reception for Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair less than a week after officers at the G20 Summit allegedly segregated and detained LGBT/Q protesters, while using excessive force and homophobic language.

These events illuminate a number of controversies: opposing understandings of what counts as violence and suffering, debates over strategy and tactics, and the rules of fair engagement between the state and voices of dissent mark out central sites of struggle around the G20 summit. The meaning of community, whether political expressions within community contexts are valuable or distasteful, and the acceptability of articulating sexual identities to struggles that are not immediately sexual in nature marked the debates and organizing around Pride Toronto.

There are a number of different ways political scientists could try to understand these events. On the one hand, attention could be given to the normative stakes involved. If capitalism is understood as a threat to bodily integrity because it is exploitative and produces vast inequalities, does that justify direct action against its symbols and material embodiments? That is, if it is indeed the case that the G20’s austerity measures will make life worse for many on the planet while greatly improving the situation of a few, are Black Bloc activists justified in smashing windows and burning police cars to draw attention to this problem? Alternatively, do Canadian pride organizers have a

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3 Pride Toronto, "Pride Toronto to No Longer Restrict Language in the Parade," (Toronto: Pride Toronto, 2010).

duty to maintain the political nature of pride parades even after most formal, legal inequalities have been removed for lesbians, gays and bisexuals? Do lesbians and gays in Canada, benefiting from improved symbolic and political authority, have a duty to continue fighting alongside groups that do not enjoy those benefits including transgender people domestically and colonized and marginalized people around the world? What schedule of rights, entitlements, duties and obligations would allow us to make judgments about these struggles?

On the other hand, we could backburner the normative issues and try to understand these events mainly in terms of why they happened. What resources were available to be mobilized around specific conceptions of global economic and political justice? What opportunities were presented to Black Bloc and non-Black Bloc protestors by the police presence, labour mobilization and grassroots efforts to build protest alliances? Similarly, what collective identities are at stake in pride festivals, and how do alliances with state officials shape competition over the meaning of these identities? In short, can social movement theory explain the emergence and resolution of these struggles?

Of course thinkers in each trajectory (normative and explanatory) invoke components of the other. Flacks notes that there is a history of activism among social movement researchers going back to the 1960s and 1970s, where part of the normative value of research was found in being able to provide intellectual resources to help movement participants assess strategies and tactics. In fact, he continues, some academic research actually ended up in movement training programs and handbooks. Additionally, the fact that most social movement research focuses on ‘progressive’ projects such as unionism, environmentalism, feminism and anti-racism bespeaks a general concern with social justice, broadly defined. Similarly, normative theorists from John Rawls to Judith Butler base their thinking on some kind of engagement with empirical claims.

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The G20 protests and pride controversies ultimately point to two problems of collective action that would be best explained by paying attention to the particular mechanisms of collective action that were at work in these cases, but from within Bourdieu-inspired framework. First, radically unequal relations of power lead social movements to impasses regarding strategies and tactics: at the G20 neither violence nor peaceful protest would have succeeded in preventing austerity measures. Worse, peaceful protests alone might have legitimated the G20 as something that is compatible with democracy. The actions of the Black Bloc brought into relief the anti-democratic nature of the G20 and its reliance on authoritarian police tactics, but shifted public attention from the issues peaceful protestors were trying to raise.

Second, dynamics of opportunity shape social movement deliberations over goals and strategies along trajectories where movements not only lose the most transformative normative impulses of their politics, they also become incorporated into exactly the patterns of domination the initial normative impulse sought to resist. In the case of Pride Toronto, social movement research ought to grapple with more than the dynamics of collective identity formation at play in these events; it must also grapple with how these dynamics are bound up in a field of power, to look ahead to Bourdieu’s language, where de-politicizing pride celebrations seems politically and ethically reasonable to broad swaths of gays and lesbians. A disposition for seeing de-politicization as ‘reasonable’ does not reflect an intrinsic LGBT conservatism or rejection of politics, but rather an orientation toward a specific (neo-liberal) configuration of power and meaning and away from gay liberation and queer critiques. In short, the considerable explanatory leverage of certain concepts within social movement research, in this case collective identity formation, resource mobilization and
political opportunity, can only attain a deeper normative meaning in relation to the patterns of domination that condition them.6

Whatever the outcome of the investigations and debates following the G20 summit, the fact remains that none of the protesters’ core concerns were addressed and there was no discernable impact on the summit’s decision-making process, and this is despite the fact that the summit followed close on the heels of the largest crisis of capitalism since the 1930s. Debates about whether a particular group should be allowed to march in the Pride Parade, meanwhile, are a far cry from gay liberation demands for a complete overhaul of the sex-gender system. The central problem I address in my thesis, then, is the relationship between social movement dynamics and the patterns of domination that transcend, shape, and ultimately stunt progressive political movements. I will argue that an approach extending the explanatory strength of social movement theory’s best conceptual tools – collective identity, opportunity structures, resource mobilization and repertoires of contention – with key critical concepts from the work of Pierre Bourdieu – the habitus, field, capital, and symbolic violence – is required to best explain both the dynamics of social movement protest and relations of power that force movements into the kinds of impasses described above. Although the framework I will develop will provide fertile ground for future empirical studies – including, for example, the episodes I have been discussing – this project will focus on the theoretical and conceptual problems involved in developing the framework I suggest.

I hypothesize that the dynamic relationship between collective identity and structures of opportunity (broadly understood), and the political impasses this relationship entails, encourage movements to select goals and strategies that risk entrenching symbolic power. An important symptom of this process in many social movements is interminable struggles between reformist and

radical movement tendencies. Social movements would benefit from novel ways of reasoning about identity and strategy in order to grapple with – if not escape – the distortions domination creates.

A Bourdieuian analysis of social movements will support this claim in two important ways. First, Bourdieu’s work centred on a novel account of action, namely that there is a close relationship between the social context (field) in which actors act, and the practical reason they use to select strategies within that context. He called the set of dispositions underpinning practical reason ‘habitus’ and used the concept to overcome the division between objectivist and subjectivist approaches to social science. Second, Bourdieu developed a specific critique of how relations of power foster a logical consensus that conceals the domination this consensus supports. He called this effect ‘symbolic power’ and he used it to explain the complicity of dominated actors in their own domination.

Specifically, in this thesis I argue that Bourdieu’s understanding of the relationship between individual practical reasoning and the structure of the social space within which that reasoning occurs permits a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the social movement concepts ‘collective identity’ and ‘political opportunity’. Further, a Bourdieuian critique of the particular social relations that concretize domination-concealing consensuses about meaning (symbolic power) will help social movement researchers to understand how movements in contemporary capitalist societies are pushed into strategic impasses and sapped of their transformative potential.

In the next two sections I will provide brief overviews of the specific trajectory within social movement research that I will be engaging as well as the central components of Bourdieu’s philosophy of practice. Following those overviews I will further specify my hypothesis about social movement research and sketch out how my project will contribute to the study of social movements.
Social Movement Theory

As alluded to in the previous section, my thesis focuses on a particular trajectory within social movement research, namely the ‘Anglo-American’ tradition. The best way to delimit the approaches that interest me is to centre them on the important overview of social movement theory written by Doug McAdam, John McCarthy and Mayer Zald. In this work, the authors reviewed how researchers have grappled with problems of movement emergence and transformation at both the macro and micro levels. They focused on claims about specific movement mechanisms and contexts including the ecological concentration of movement organizations, the sudden imposition of grievances, how the state can control or foster movements, processes of goal selection, and so on.\(^7\) McAdam, McCarthy and Zald’s work is a snapshot of a longer conversation where, as I will describe in this section, several core models have been elaborated, debated, and tested. This conversation has been dominated by a few key figures, particularly McAdam, McCarthy and Zald themselves, but also Charles Tilly, Sidney Tarrow and Alberto Melucci.

In general, the conversation I describe has excluded ‘continental’ approaches to understanding social movements. Continental approaches include, for example, Alain Touraine’s work on new social movements, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s work on radical democracy and the postmodern interventions of researchers who take up Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida or Gilles Deleuze. I have three main justifications for excluding these approaches from my thesis. The first is my own practical judgment derived from having spent a number of years working with activist and partisan political organizations. It comes from countless hours spent in meetings where debates raged about the meaning of identity, about what organizational and financial resources could support actions, how these actions would be supported or hindered by allies and opponents, and how to balance the desire for immediate, widespread change with the practical limitations of a political

field not conducive to those efforts. This practical engagement gives the Anglo-American approach a certain intuitive resonance. The second comes from Bourdieu himself, who saw his work more oriented toward Charles Tilly than toward Foucault, Derrida or Deleuze. Finally, thinkers in the Anglo-American tradition have produced highly compelling accounts of some of the issues that centrally concern me. Miriam Smith, as will be discussed below, provides an excellent example. The explanatory value of the tools researchers in this tradition rely on make those tools an important part of a broader understanding of social movement politics. My contribution to these debates is to provide new normative insights into the dynamics of domination these tools are unable to capture.

The purpose of this section, then, will be to describe the central debates within Anglo-American social movement research. I will sketch out the broad contours of how this trajectory of research has developed and lay out my arguments for why this trajectory cannot explain the political imasses and reduction of the transformative impulses of action that my thesis problematizes. This discussion will be focussed around the innovations of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, the important work of Miriam Smith and the contributions of Melucci.

One way in which Melucci will be particularly important is in his definition of social movements, which captures important analytical themes in my project. Melucci embeds his definition of social movements in his larger efforts to de-objectify their study; his interest is in treating movements as processes, not concrete objects of study. Thus, he stresses that social movements are analytic categories, comprised of three analytic dimensions:

A movement is the mobilization of a collective actor (i) defined by specific solidarity, (ii) engaged in a conflict with an adversary for the appropriation and control of resources valued by both of them, (iii) and whose action entails a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action takes place.

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Each component of this definition has relevance to my project. Part (i) refers to the complex processes by which collective identities are negotiated and then become the basis for solidarity. Next, Melucci distinguishes between the disruptions produced by a crisis – such as a severe economic downturn, famine, or war – and actions that express antagonisms produced by opposing interests within social formations, and restricts social movements to those that manifest socially embedded conflicts. Finally, the ‘system within which the action takes place’ refers to the semi-autonomous but interconnected complexes of relationships relating to the productive, political, exchange and reproductive spheres. Each of these complexes has some flexibility in terms of what new relationships or patterns of relationships it can tolerate without the system being radically transformed. Social movements represent the potential to introduce sufficient new relationships or patterns of relationships to radically transform the system, though there are obviously numerous instances where this is unsuccessful.

This conception of social movements is potentially useful for investigating how various logics within a social totality mutually determine, constrain, or enable one another, and many of Melucci’s insights have been incorporated into most contemporary approaches, including the dynamics of contention approach articulated by Douglas McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly (MT&T hereafter). There are important similarities between Melucci’s semi-autonomous complexes of relations and Bourdieu’s notion of fields. However, Bourdieu’s unification of the material and cultural foundations of power permits a nuanced account of how power works within these fields, and how that power allows relations of domination to reproduce themselves across different social contexts and across generations. Injecting a Bourdieuan conception of power into how MT&T have incorporated Melucci’s insights will be an important contribution of my thesis. Therefore, when I

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10 ibid., 22 and 47.
Integrative Efforts in Social Movement Research

In the 1960s analysts began to turn away from the assumption that protest was the expression of a systemic dysfunction, experienced by people who protest as disorientation, relative deprivation, or some other pathologized psychological state. Instead, disorientation and discontent came to be understood as endemic features of society.\(^{11}\) When and how movements crystallize in order to express this discontent therefore became the central problem.\(^{12}\) Over the course of the next decades approaches based on rational choice theory (especially McCarthy and Zald’s work on social movement organizations), structuralist theory (especially Skocpol’s state-centred approach and the later approaches that emphasized political opportunity structures), and cultural perspectives (emphasizing the constructed nature of collective identities and the importance of social movements as both carriers and makers of meaning as in Melucci’s work) emerged. During the 1960s and 1970s, what MT&T refer to as the ‘classic social movement agenda’, focused on four key concepts derived from these approaches: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, collective action frames, and repertoires of contention.\(^{13}\) According to MT&T, most researchers during this time were working within ideological and methodological silos; most analysts adopted a single framework – rationalism, structuralism, or culturalism – and attempted to demonstrate why the related key concept (such as political opportunity) best explained movement outcomes. By the 1980s this was shifting; researchers tended to pay attention to all four but with differing emphasis on particular parts, an approach known

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as political process theory.\textsuperscript{14} By the 1990s most North American social movement analysts were taking the position that any model based solely on rationalism, structuralism or culturalism would be incomplete at best, and untenable at worst insofar as it failed to incorporate explanatory insights from the other approaches.\textsuperscript{15}

What is most useful about Anglo-American social movement theory is that it can provide detailed social scientific accounts of specific mechanisms and the ‘concatenation’ between identity, state structures and cultural shifts. The key focuses of social movement research – political opportunities, mobilizing structures, collective action frames, and repertoires of contention – have demonstrated important explanatory power, and allow for concrete analyses of social movement outcomes. The literature does, however have important limitations.

For example, debates about the relative causal weight of explanatory factors continue to plague social movement research. Researchers have not come to terms with how exactly culture interacts with rational assessments about changes in political opportunities. Fundamentally, this is an indication of faulty understandings of how social structures relate to individual agents. This type of research can provide snapshots of movements, but has minimal capacity to situate those snapshots within broader historical contexts and patterns of domination. For example, research on LGBT politics has come to focus on such things as the relationship between local political cultures and political outcomes (Fleischmann and Moyer) or the impact of movement successes on further mobilization (i.e., successful outcomes are understood to create new political opportunities).\textsuperscript{16} In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} ibid., 16.
\end{itemize}
these studies, statistical analyses are used to measure the impact of causal factors on social movement outcomes, but they remain limited. They are unable, for example, to describe how conservative impulses within processes of collective identity formation lead collective actors to forgo potentially more radical projects. Thus, the outcomes being measured need to be problematized themselves.

A more fruitful, though still limited approach within the Anglo-American social movement tradition is to take an historical institutionalist approach to look at the relationship between opportunity structures and policy outcomes. An important example of this approach is Miriam Smith’s efforts to demonstrate that the introduction of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was a central factor in shifting lesbian and gay conceptions of ‘equality’ between 1971 and 1995. Initially, activists made use of a ‘protest frame’, that aimed at building a gay and lesbian political identity, encouraging mobilization to challenge traditional sex, gender and family roles and the stigma attached to sexual difference and to thereby realize a “transformative social vision of sexual freedom”.17 This frame was ultimately replaced with a ‘rights-talk’ frame that made legal change the exclusive goal of politics, particularly focussed on anti-discrimination and partner recognition measures.18

Smith demonstrates that the Charter radically altered the political landscape in which LGBT activists were mobilizing, and therefore shifted the balance in negotiations and contests over the meaning and strategies of LGBT mobilization. It did so by sparking the creation of new organizations, by increasing the viability of strategies based on litigation, and by drawing pre-existing organizations into its ambit; each of these results helped promote the centrality of rights-

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18 ibid., 143.
Smith emphasizes that the Charter did not have a direct, one-on-one causal effect on LGBT mobilization, as funding, cultural changes, and the right-wing backlash of the 1980s were also influential.\(^{20}\)

Smith’s analysis points to a specific relation between the logic of collective identity and the logic of political opportunity. Institutions such as the Charter encourage movements seeking political ‘success’ to modify their goals in conformity with structures of rewards and punishments those institutions introduce. This analysis is important, but it remains bound in the closed circuit of social movement research, replicating the assumption that the social world would be radically or even meaningfully different should specific movement goals be achieved. In fact, elsewhere, Smith has argued that the goal of same-sex marriage is bound up in broader social and political critiques.\(^{21}\) However, it is not clear that the legal recognition of same-sex marriage has occasioned any broader critiques of relationship normalization generally (see Emens for an overview of the legal and cultural issues around polyamory) nor is there a mainstream effort to rethink the connection between social benefits and relationship status.\(^{22}\)

In the last decade, MT&T have attempted to articulate a method for social movement research that would integrate rationality, culture, and structure, an early expression of which they published in *Dynamics of Contention*. In that work, the authors recommend an *ad hoc* theory that eschews general, covering laws in favour of causal mechanisms linked together into causal processes.\(^{23}\) The mechanisms of interest to MT&T are those that occur across numerous cases but

\(^{19}\) ibid., 148.

\(^{20}\) ibid., 146.


which produce varying outcomes depending on the dynamics of the context in which they occur.\textsuperscript{24} The mechanisms they identify, including repression, brokerage, identity shift and opportunity spirals, are intended both to capture a dynamic and relational interaction among state and civil society actors, and to integrate rational, cultural and structural causality.\textsuperscript{25}

Despite the dominant position that MT&T’s approach has achieved within social movement studies, the project has serious flaws.\textsuperscript{26} For example, MT&T have been unclear in their definition of what a causal mechanism is or why some practices constitute a causal mechanism while others don’t.\textsuperscript{27} Platt has also argued that MT&T’s analysis is stunted by their ongoing (though disavowed) reliance on structuralist assumptions.\textsuperscript{28} For others, MT&T have become insufficiently structuralist to the extent that their approach and similar contemporary work “makes only weak and relatively unsystematic connection between macroeconomic conditions and political opportunity”.\textsuperscript{29}

The main tools of Anglo-American social movement theory, such as collective identity and political opportunity, provide significant explanatory leverage to questions of goal and strategy selection, as well as how micro and macro-level processes that influence mobilization. As noted, however, MT&T correctly argue that efforts to generalize these processes into universal covering laws have proven problematic. MT&T’s consequent focus on specific mechanisms of contention is admirable, but they create their own problems in shifting away from attempts to understand social totality, which they do in two ways. Firstly, they focus on ‘contentious politics’, which according to their definition necessarily involves the state as an actor or target of action.\textsuperscript{30} This simultaneously reduces the relevant relations of power to those directly in the state’s orbit, and sets up a false

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{24} McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, \textit{Dynamics of Contention}, 13.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} ibid., 69, 102, 162, 243.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Platt: 114; Zirakzadeh: 532.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Goodwin and Jasper; Platt: 112. See also: Goodwin and Jasper, 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Flacks, 139.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, \textit{Dynamics of Contention}, 5.
\end{itemize}
equivalence between challengers who seek reform, transformation or utopian transformation. If one is interested in the success of political mobilization, MT&T’s approach does not allow one to differentiate between the successes of Canadian LGBT activism that resulted in same-sex marriage rights, for example, and its failure to achieve its more radical goal of gay liberation.

Secondly, they favour explanations based on context-specific, concatenating mechanisms. In doing so, they do not offer a theory that recognizes the existence of underlying structures or patterns of domination. Rather than claiming, for example, that shifts in elite alliances, combined with a politicized identity will always lead to social movements, MT&T focus on the specific mechanisms mentioned above, and how those mechanisms amplify each other and iteratively shape the emergence, characteristics and outcomes of contentious episodes. This has the effect of fragmenting and therefore concealing the logics of power that precede these mechanisms. In part, dynamics of contention’s failure to capture broad logics of power comes from MT&T’s troubled relation to structuralism and post-structuralism. Despite the accusations of Platt, Goodwin and Jaspers, MT&T appear to have incorporated a number of post-structuralist elements into their work. In fact, Kurzman has accused MT&T and others who adopt their approach of a sort of haphazard post-structuralism, rife with hedged and modified causal factors and has argued that significant work needs to be done to make post-structuralism and constructionist approaches more compelling. My own objection is that MT&T’s political process and dynamics of contention approaches do not take seriously overlapping sets of relations in which collective actors engage in strategic behaviour. Their approach lacks a way of conceptualizing why such overlapping sets of relations mean that mechanisms interact in predictable ways, particularly in terms of why actors occupying certain positions within social

relations are more likely to consistently garner success in the presence of mechanisms such as opportunity spiral, or brokerage.

Melucci’s post-structuralism appears to offer some account of overlapping dynamics of domination, by locating all collective action within systems of relationships, namely, the productive, political, organizational, and reproductive systems. Each system has its own logic, giving it some autonomy, but each system is also essentially incomplete and therefore exposed to limitations imposed by other systems. Social movements entail a breach of the “limits of compatibility” (the range of variability permissible while maintaining structure) within which action takes place, though Melucci is sceptical about the possibility of simultaneous structural changes within all levels of society.

Melucci’s insights here are useful, but I will argue that Bourdieu offers a more materially grounded account of how different systems – markets or fields in his language – can function relatively autonomously while still being guided by a central logic. Where Melucci finds culture to be determining, Bourdieu’s conception integrates culture into a particular kind of economic motivation. This allows him to construct a more convincing account of the relationship between power and action, which can be extended to the study of social movement politics.

Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power, which I describe in a preliminary way in the next section and in more detail in subsequent chapters, offers a way of reversing the fragmentation inherent to MT&T’s analysis based on disparate and only loosely connected mechanisms alone. Because formations of symbolic power are historically contingent, a Bourdieuan analysis does not entail re-introducing universal covering laws. It does, however, provide the means to account for how some actors, on the whole, seem to systematically benefit from the various logics contained in different social spheres, and how those spheres can be semi-autonomous while operating according to similar logics. That is, the distribution of rewards, successes and exclusions in various areas of

32 Melucci, 25.
33 ibid., 28 and 53.
social interaction – economic, cultural and political for example – operate autonomously, but the logic that underpins them is similar. I elaborate on this notion further in my overview of Bourdieu, but for the present purposes it is worth noting that a Bourdieuan framework permits understanding of how existing sets of relations shape and constrain ‘mechanisms of contention.’

**Bourdieu**

Despite its shortcomings, historical institutionalist approaches to the study of social movement politics are important, because they can flesh out the concept of political opportunity structure.\(^{34}\) Thelen and Steinmo note that the key to such approaches is “the notion that institutional factors can shape both the objectives of political actors and the distribution of power among them in a given polity.”\(^{35}\) However, because historical institutionalism focuses on state institutions, it fails to connect distributions of power across a range of fields. Bourdieu’s work is analogous to historical institutionalism, but also moves beyond it by articulating the close relationship between opportunity and strategy to an account of sociality that integrates economic, cultural, social, political, linguistic and other moments. The state remained an important object of study for Bourdieu but he conceived it as only one particular site of struggle within a broader field of power. Therefore, while historical institutionalism provides context-specific insights about goal modification, Bourdieu’s conceptual tools allow us to examine whether goal modification in the West generally trends toward compatibility with liberal capitalist and neo-liberal social, economic, and political forms. In other words, Bourdieu’s work shares Smith’s emphasis on attending to specific contexts in understanding the relationship between opportunities, goals and strategies. Importantly, however, by multiplying the sites in which this relationship is played out for individual and collective actors he developed

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conceptual tools that could explain the outcomes of those relations. By integrating these multiple sites of struggle conceptually, he was also able to conceptualize domination – symbolic violence in his language – as an emergent property of these semi-autonomous contentious contexts.

The fact that Bourdieu’s conceptual tools are tightly integrated presents a specific challenge. Although chapters in this dissertation focus on relating specific concepts (symbolic power, fields, and so on) to social movements, these concepts cannot be convincingly abstracted from one another. Therefore, some repetition appears necessary. In what follows I will first describe the central features of Bourdieu’s sociological framework. I will then explore some of the problems that arise from Bourdieu’s work: the tendency toward determinism, the political problem of conformism, and the question of whether Bourdieu’s emphasis on the reproduction of power permits the possibility of actively contesting and transforming power-laden social fields. Similar but more detailed explorations are taken up in the chapters that follow.

Subjectivism, Objectivism, Thinking Tools

Bourdieu’s career-long project was to develop a “general science of the economy of practice” capable of overcoming what he called “the most fundamental, and the most ruinous” division in social science: the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism. The result was what McNay calls a ‘social phenomenology’, wherein the “essence of social being is not encompassed in experience itself but it does only begin to reveal itself through experience which must then be

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situated in a broader context." The central features of this social phenomenology are a motivational structure (interest), a capacity to act (habitus), and an agonistic social space (field) in which agents struggle to accumulate the resources (capital) necessary to improve and/or defend their position in that space. Notwithstanding his belief that intellectuals ought to be part of a collective effort to identify and critique hidden hierarchies and sites of domination, Bourdieu was wary of social and political theory generally. Bourdieu argued that any analysis of social practice must begin with close, empirical observation of the practice itself, and limited his own theoretical innovation to developing and refining what he called ‘thinking tools’ based on empirical observations. He insisted that these tools be deployed in context-sensitive ways to avoid reifying concepts, and that each tool is fundamentally incomplete and incoherent without its relational integration into the others. Thus, Bourdieu’s central thinking tools – habitus, field, and capital – represent inseparable components of a theory of practice seeking to link the production, meaning and experience of subjectivity and action to the demands and opportunities of objective structures.

Bourdieu relied on a primarily mimetic conception of subjectivity, although his interest in consciousness was secondary to his interest in action. Bourdieu was deeply critical of intellectualist and idealist philosophical traditions, treating Cartesian and Kantian dualisms as particularly pernicious. For Bourdieu, action is not the result of conscious, rational evaluation – or at least not primarily; it is the result of strategies, practical responses to the demands immanent to an actor’s environment and the relations that comprise an actor’s social context. In his reading of Bourdieu’s work, Charles Taylor suggests that the intellectualist tradition mistakenly conceives of individuals as ‘monologically’ constituted, atomistic selves who have representations of the outer world in their

mind and who use these representations to make decisions and judgements. Taylor argues that this tradition cannot account for either the bodily nature of some forms of knowledge, or the dialogical nature of selves. We only develop individual identities through relations to, and concerted actions with, other individuals who share our sense of the meaning of practices. Deference, for example, can only make sense as a social practice if there is someone who defers, and someone who is deferred to.

Bourdieu traces action back to practical belief, not as a reflection of ideas held in some consciousness, but as a bodily state. Agents don’t always perceive the totality of what they are doing, but they place (re-place) their body in a posture relative to objective structures. This posture recalls feelings associated with earlier positions and closely links emotion to bodily knowledge. As Elspeth Probyn argues, in Bourdieu’s framework “the body’s privileged role as productive of practical sense, emotion seems to work to amplify or reduce instilled tendencies.” This mimetically reproduces the past.

Listening carefully to the sequence of events described, the body feels, enacts an emotion, and then brings into being the past. It is therefore the feeling body which has the consequence of summoning the past – a spectral past as future.

The reiterative encounter of a body with social contexts that are structured both in terms of relations of power and in terms of authorized emotional responses produces what Bourdieu calls ‘interest’ or ‘illusio’, a subjective desire for particular outcomes, an emotional stake in the social ‘games’ in which actors are engaged. Interest, which energizes strategic calculations (even non-conscious calculations), provides a basis for linking subjectivity to profit making (via efforts to

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41 ibid., 50.
43 ibid., 232.
improve one’s position in various fields) and thereby provides an “an instrument of rupture” that can extend materialist analyses to non-material realms.45

**Habitus, Field, Capital**

Bourdieu makes use of three primary ‘thinking tools’. The first is the *habitus*:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.46

The *habitus* emerges from an individual’s structured encounter with other individuals, through the minutiae of everyday life and through ‘reproachful looks’ or ‘tones’ and ‘disapproving glances’. The powerful, often silent injunctions that police our posture and our behaviour are inscribed directly into our bodily comportment without necessarily passing through language and consciousness. This embodied sense then organizes how we perceive our social environment and how we distinguish its various components.47 Importantly, these inscriptions are not haphazard, or individualistic. They are the products of particular ‘classes of conditions’, which is to say that people occupying particular regions of social space will be systematically exposed to similar ‘reproachful looks’ and other sanctions. Thus, one can speak of a working class *habitus* and a bourgeois *habitus*, as well as *habituses* that are inflected with differences based on region, ethnic background, gender and sexuality.

The central elements of the *habitus* then, are: 1) that it is structured through encounters with other *habitus*-bearing actors; 2) it is an embodied ‘feel for the game’, a set of rules by which we interpret the social world from our particular, and therefore always partial, perspective within it; 3) it is a system of ‘perception and appreciation’ that can function consciously and reflexively, but

45 Grenfell, 154.
fundamentally works on a pre-conscious and embodied level; and 4) the *habitus* generates dispositions that are consistent across various social fields and contexts, without pre-determining specific actions. The *habitus’* embodied nature is centrally important for Bourdieu, as this embodiment is the result of the inculcation of the rules, divisions, and hierarchies of social space, and therefore a forgetting of those divisions and hierarchies. Because they are so fundamentally inscribed in our body, in how we are disposed to view the world, these divisions appear natural to us, and become misrecognized as such.

The cognitive work of the *habitus* is to identify differences of various kinds: up/down, hot/cold, good/bad, male/female, authorized/unauthorized, likely to succeed/likely to fail, and so on. None of these differences expresses an intrinsic property of an object. The *habitus* constructs an intrinsic difference between two objects as a *relevant difference*, as a difference that is important in some way, based on the system of classification the *habitus* has adopted. 48 Further, the very idea of difference:

… is at the basis of the very notion of *space*, that is, a set of distinct and coexisting positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through their *mutual exteriority* and their relations of proximity, vicinity, or distance, as well as through relations of order such, such as above, below, and *between*. 49

*Habitus* allows us to differentiate among objects, and to relate them spatially to one another, and to give those relations a value-laden, moral character. Recall that when *habitus* cognitively maps out spatial relations, it does so according to a schema of rules inscribed on it by structured encounters with other *habituses*. Therefore, the *habitus* is not constructing a social space afresh, but is cognitively replicating, with varying degrees of success, a field that pre-exists and structures the *habitus* itself. Further, the cognitive processes of the *habitus* cannot be separated from the physical positioning and experience of the agent’s body, returning us to Probyn’s account of the relationship

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49 ibid., 6, emphasis original.
between the body and emotion. The result is a cognitive awareness of social space that is structurally parallel to the objective field in which it is located and laden with a structured emotional response, and endowed therefore with an investment in improving one’s position within that space.

For example, in her examination of the class oppression underlying makeover shows like ‘What Not to Wear,’ Angela McRobbie notes the upper class experts’ reactions of ‘disgust’ and ‘revulsion’ at the dress and mannerisms of the show’s working class ‘victims.’ The habitus constructs social space by applying a system of classification to other social actors in this way. Every action within social space becomes an expression of the actor’s emotional and cognitive perception of that space and an effort to either defend their location within it, or to move to one that is higher, or more advantageous. But for an action to successfully consolidate or improve one’s position in social space, it must be perceived as following the rules of classification of that space.

Importantly, then, the system of classification by which the habitus constructs social space is not a static typology of actions. It is a dynamic and generative logic that connects differences and spatial relations from one moment to the next: a logic of practice. Further, it is a shared logic of practice by which one actor’s claim to a new position in social space is either recognized or challenged by other actors. Groups of actions and position-taking within social space, clustered around a particular type of activity and mobilized according to a specific logic relevant to that type of activity, constitute a second of Bourdieu’s major thinking tools: the ‘field.’ Thompson uses the analogies of football fields, science fiction force fields, and a field of force in physics to illustrate the various meanings Bourdieu intends field to take on. They are, respectively, that fields constitute a bounded space with particular rules and a shared purpose (as in a football field), that they operate semi-autonomously as the result of historical human activities (as in a sci-fi force field), and that fields are polarized spaces, meaning actions yield greater power the closer they are to one of the

poles, and that power acts in stable and predictable ways while remaining open to manipulation, alteration and re-orientation (as in physics, fields of force).\textsuperscript{51}

One can say that there are as many fields as there are clusters of practices bound together by a relatively autonomous logic. The most significant ones include the economic field, cultural fields, and the political field. As noted, fields are semi-autonomous in their logics, but they are also homologously structured, which is to say that the fundamental distinctions in each field (such as above, below, between, etc.) are structured in roughly parallel ways. Social actors always exist in more than one field simultaneously, and they bring the same \textit{habitus} to each field, so it makes sense that there would be the capacity for conversion between them. Bourdieu calls assemblages of more than one field “a field of power”. A field of power “is the space of the relations of force between the different kinds of capital or, more precisely, between the agents who possess a sufficient amount of one of the different kinds of capital to be in a position to dominate the corresponding field.”\textsuperscript{52} The homologous and ultimately porous operation of fields allows us to understand why actors who are dominant in one area – the economy for example – are able to dominate in others, such as the political field. Bourdieu emphasizes that this porousness is not a mere one-to-one equation, but the result of ‘labours of conversion’ where actions establish, or allow to be established, positions in more than one field, generally with the expectation of improved position in at least one of them. Full understanding of how power operates across fields requires understanding the specific labours required to transform a position in one field into a strong position in another, as well as the mechanisms and restrictions by which this can happen.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52} Bourdieu, \textit{Practical Reason}, 77; Thomson, 71.
\textsuperscript{53} An example of a labor of conversion would be to take economic capital and transform it into political capital by purchasing political advertising and then ‘profiting’ from the political capital acquired by having more people support your policy position, political organization or whatever was the target of the advertising.
Each of Bourdieu’s thinking tools is fundamentally incomplete and incoherent without its relational integration into the other tools. Fields are intertwined with the *habitus* both because they are the product of the *habitus* in the *habitus*’ work of identifying distinctions and investing them with moral and social content, and because they are the source of the *habitus* by providing the rules of division and classification by which other *habitus*-bearing individuals reproach, reward and mould emerging *habituses*. The specific mechanism by which this integration is achieved – Bourdieu’s third thinking tool – is ‘capital.’

As Robert Moore suggests, “capital can be understood as the ‘energy’ that drives the development of a field through time. Capital in action is the enactment of the principle of the field. It is the realization in specific forms of power in general”.54 Every field has rules about which actors can take various positions within that field, as well as rules about what actions constitute taking those positions. In the Canadian political field, for example, only the leader of the political party with the most support in the House of Commons can be Prime Minister, and can only do so after his or her party wins a sufficient number of votes in a sufficient number of ridings. Accruing a requisite amount and form of political capital therefore establishes Prime Ministerial authority. Capital is the mechanism by which the logic of practice – the rules of position-taking – immanent to a field becomes embodied in the dispositions and perceptions of social actors, or available to those actors in institutionalized forms such as money, titles and qualifications.

Bourdieu identifies three main forms of capital. Economic capital is what we generally think of in terms of money and is institutionalized primarily as property rights. Cultural capital is the ability to distinguish between different symbolic goods such as cubist and abstract expressionist art or correct and incorrect language usage. It is accumulated through long processes of classed socialization and institutionalized through, for example, educational qualifications. Finally, social

capital is the network of relations that an actor can mobilize in pursuit of a new position-taking within various fields.\textsuperscript{55} Accumulation of any type of capital is the result of strategic position-taking within social space, and performing lengthy labours of acquisition. For example, one doesn’t acquire the skills and dispositions – the cultural capital – to behave ‘properly’ at a fancy restaurant, overnight. The process requires long-term and consistent investments in labours of correction from parents and social networks already invested in those skills and invested in passing them on to their children.

Importantly, all forms of capital are unevenly distributed, which is what gives various actors their varying ability to successfully lay claim to positions within social space. Cultural capital is particularly important, as one of the forms in which it exists is the \textit{habitus} itself. In its embodied state, as \textit{habitus}, cultural capital transcribes the shape of the social field into principles of consciousness, predispositions, and bodily comportment.\textsuperscript{56} Because this transcription, this inculcation of the field into the body, is often pre-conscious, the arbitrary rules of the field become naturalized and therefore the fact that unequal relations within social space are based on unequal access to capital and not on natural merits or just distributions of power is forgotten.\textsuperscript{57} Therefore, the fact that these fundamental divisions legitimate and reward the actions of people already favourably situated in social space while degrading and punishing those less favourably situated, remains unrecognized. Bourdieu calls the advantage gained by benefiting from naturalized and misrecognized divisions ‘symbolic power’. The notion of symbolic power captures how a cognitive consensus about aspects of sociality – logics related to value, space, time, authority and correctness – permit each field to be constructed according to its own rules, but in conformity with the underlying cognitive consensus. Symbolic power is the ability to impose rules of division “with the complicity of those who do not

\textsuperscript{55} Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 106.
\textsuperscript{56} Moore, 105.
\textsuperscript{57} Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 108.
want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it.” 58 The exercise of symbolic power enacts symbolic violence on dominated groups, which manifests itself in various ways, including economic exclusion and poverty, the systematic devaluation of femininity and female habituses, and exclusion from the means of accumulating cultural capital, for example via exclusion from post-secondary education. It can also have more subtle – and therefore more pernicious – political expressions such as passivity and apathetic amour fati or affective ones including anxiety in social situations where one is made to feel lesser, incompetent, or gauche. 59

In the chapters that follow I address a number of objections raised against Bourdieu’s approach, particularly regarding its apparent reproductivism, determinism, and refusal to recognize possibilities for resistance. Despite these objections, there is reason for optimism regarding Bourdieu’s potential contribution to our understanding of social movement practice. Before turning to these questions, however, in the next section I will restate and specify my hypothesis, as well as detail the specific contributions my dissertation makes. In the final section I provide a brief outline of my overall argument.

Hypothesis and Contributions

Hypothesis

The hypothesis my project seeks to test is that a Bourdieuan analysis of practical reason (found in the relational dynamic between habitus, field, capital and symbolic power) will allow a more nuanced theoretical understanding of the related processes of collective identity formation and interpretation of opportunity for the sake of selecting movement goals and strategies. Further, a Bourdieuan analysis of symbolic power will allow social movement researchers to analyze

58 Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, 164.
59 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 169.
movements in terms of the political impasses late capitalism forces upon them and how efforts to escape those impasses sap movements of transformative potential.

The examples of anti-G20 protests and *Pride Toronto* controversies might be helpful here again to clarify how this hypothesis works. The Anglo-American tradition of social movement research I am engaging has demonstrated considerable explanatory power regarding mobilization, but it founders due to its failure to theoretically resolve the relationship between structures and agents. Bourdieu’s notions of *habitus* and symbolic power resolve this problem by accounting for action as the result of dispositions that are produced by and attuned to the relations of power from which they emerge. However, the close relationship between power and action creates an impulse toward conformity and de-politicization, a process that is arguably underway in LGBT communities across Canada and the West. That is, for as long as gay and lesbian suffering (i.e., from homophobia and exclusion) has been collectivized in the context of the Charter, as Smith argues, the opportunities for successfully reducing suffering in the short run have entailed further integration into liberal legal and cultural norms. Expanding research on collective identity and political opportunity through Bourdieuan concepts would deepen Smith’s analysis.

One way of avoiding the trap of conformity is to pursue radical action from a repertoire that is not sanctioned by the logic of late capitalist symbolic power. This was the strategy of Black Bloc protestors at the G20, but by stepping outside intelligible, or authorized political action the Black Bloc may have detracted attention from the issues opponents of the G20 sought to highlight. Conversely, however, it is not clear that the ‘peaceful’ protests of the majority of G20 opponents alone would have been sufficient to disrupt the G20 agenda or sway their decisions either. Here, Bourdieuan attention to symbolic power would be able to contextualize analyses of political opportunity and repertoires of contention.
Contributions

The contributions my project will make to the literature will be two-fold. First, this will be the first book-length synthesis of Bourdieu and Anglo-American social movement theory. Swartz has argued that Bourdieu has received less attention than he deserves in the North American context primarily because his work is not intelligible within North American disciplinary boundaries. Bourdieu gave little attention to the traditional areas of concern within political science such as demonstrations, strikes, state policy, war, legislatures, constitutions, decision-making, or coalition building. Nor did he focus on social movement theory specifically. Although sociologists and political scientists have notably taken up Bourdieu in traditional areas of concern to political science such as the study of nationalism, state theory, and international political economy, there remains a paucity of social movement research using Bourdieuan insights.

There have been a few attempts to integrate Bourdieu’s thinking tools with social movement categories. Nick Crossley, as discussed above has argued that the habitus needs to be re-thought both for its potential to become a ‘radical habitus’ disposed toward further participation in contentious politics and in terms of the more general question of how habituses can be reconfigured. Chares Demetriou has argued that legitimation of political violence can be understood through the generation of new habituses disposed to interpreting violence in particular ways and that these

61 Swartz: 87.
dispositions animate two of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly’s mechanisms of contention, in this case boundary drawing and certification, as well as Demetriou’s own conception of valorization.\(^65\) Though interesting and important, these pieces are limited in terms of scope: they focus mainly on the *habitus* and to a lesser extent fields and symbolic violence, but give scant attention to capital. Further, both Crossley and Demetriou are correct to inquire into the conditions under which the *habitus* changes, but do not take seriously the “stickiness” of *habitus*. Demetriou in particular seems to treat the dispositions generated by the *habitus* simply as political preference and not a fundamental scheme for interpreting the social landscape. My work will build on an understanding of *habitus* as an adaptation to natural and social environs, and bound up in a desire for recognition orients agents toward accumulating symbolic power. This orientation reproduces patterns of domination.

John Girling has made a book-length attempt at integrating Bourdieu’s approach with social movement theory. I distinguish my work from his in two ways. First, his interest, in terms of social movement theory, is in the work of Alain Touraine. This is not a useful focus for at least two reasons. As Adkins has persuasively argued, Touraine wrongly attempts to reduce all social conflict to a single axis.\(^66\) This reduction is immediately at odds with Bourdieu’s conception of conflict as occurring within a hierarchy of hierarchies operating across homologously structured but relatively autonomous social fields.\(^67\) Further, Girling notes, but does not resolve a fundamental ontological difference between Touraine and Bourdieu. Where the former bases his analysis in a functionally decomposed society, where cultural, economic and political spheres operate at odds with each other, Bourdieu’s work is based on a quasi-functionalist understanding of society wherein symbolic power


operates across cultural, economic and political spheres to facilitate dominant actors’ accumulation strategies.\(^{68}\) Without resolving this ontological difference, it is unclear how the two thinkers’ work can be synthesized.

My second difference from Girling is in my treatment of symbolic power, as Girling’s conception of ‘reverse symbolic power’ is deeply problematic.\(^{69}\) Girling characterizes any attempt at opposition as indicative of ‘reverse symbolic power’, yet it is not clear that he is justified in characterizing symbolic power this way. In my read of Bourdieu, symbolic power should be taken to operate in one direction: a claim is made and it is either believed because of naturalized schemes of perception or it is not. Contests over the schemes indicate struggle, not power; symbolic power can only be said to be operating when one participant in the struggle successfully imposes their scheme of perception. So, while Girling is correct to raise the question of when the schemes through which symbolic power is deployed can be changed, it isn’t clear that mere assertion of opposition to them is sufficient to do so. This error is perhaps the product of Girling’s account of the relationship between domination and capital, which seems to miss the cognitive aspect of the \textit{habitus}, namely its function in constructing social space. In this account domination appears simply ideational, as though it is simply a question of norms. The fact that symbolic power is embedded in the cognitive schemas of the \textit{habitus}, and the fact that these schemes operate homologously across diverse fields is central to the problem of persistent domination despite major reforms, which will be a central theme of my project. That Girling does not take into account the deeply embodied, generative nature of domination, and its relationship to strategic practice or position-taking within social space may explain why he misrepresents symbolic power as something that can simply be reversed.


\(^{69}\) ibid., 88.
Aside from the general uniqueness of a book-length synthesis of Bourdieuan concepts and Anglo-American social movement theory, my specific contribution will be an analysis of the relationship between symbolic violence, the *habitus* and the persistence of domination. Particular attention will be given to how the dynamics of opportunity (broadly understood) within which collective actors pursue their goals risks entrenching symbolic power primarily through a reduction in the oppositional capacities of the *habitus* (individually and collectively). This extends Crossley’s work by articulating a conception of the *habitus* that tends toward conservatism both in the content of its dispositions but also in its structure as the cognitive product of relatively stable fields of power. My analysis, therefore, will not only focus on activists, or those with Crossley’s radical *habitus*, but also on those who are not immediately available for mobilization such as the gays and lesbians who eschew politics at pride parades, or the majority of Canadians who are unconcerned with the economic and social stakes involved in confronting institutions of global capitalism such as the G20. Put another way, I will argue that social movement theory needs to take the *habitus* seriously within the context of symbolic power and the *field* of power, which includes de-mobilized, de-politicized populations as well as mobilized collective actors.

**Chapter Outline**

In the next chapter I provide a detailed account of Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* as the cornerstone of his overall framework. I emphasize the phenomenological origins of his thinking about agency and the centrality of correction and social investment on the production of subjectivity. As I have already noted, Bourdieu was not interested in theorizing subjectivity or consciousness as much as he was concerned to explain practical behaviour, but given that my contribution will be to understand symbolic violence in the context of social movement politics, then there are two ‘moments’ of consciousness that will bear careful examination.
The first, taken up in the third chapter is a nuanced understanding of the relationship between suffering, symbolic violence and collective action. I develop this by describing how suffering is socially and politically organized and demonstrating how the ways in which we conceptualize suffering have implications for how we conceive of justice. In turn, the connections I draw between suffering and justice will ground my efforts to apply normative measures to collective identity process and movement strategies.

The second ‘moment’ of consciousness I develop (in the fourth chapter) is an attempt to define a Bourdieuian understanding of identity. Since Melucci, identity has increasingly been accepted as a component of social movement organizing even when ‘identity politics’ are not at stake. In this chapter I describe the operation of symbolic power as a form of epistemic violence. I also problematize both mainstream lesbian and gay political projects (reformist) and queer challenges (radical) for their inability to grapple with dynamics of conformity and failure. The key contribution here will be to connect the social phenomenology developed in the second chapter to the account of suffering in the third. This allows me to articulate specific mechanisms by which collective identity – and therefore movement participants’ vision of the social world – is shaped by symbolic power.

In the fifth chapter, I investigate questions of protest tactics. Using the 2010 G20 protests in Toronto as an illustration, I explore conceptualizations of repertoires of contention from the social movement literature. Specifically, I argue that both the labour-led and Black-Bloc tactics were impeded by a ‘political antinomy’: the necessary failure of equally plausible but mutually exclusive approaches to protest politics. I then use this antinomy to explore the ethical stakes involved in political strategies based on representation and affinity.

The sixth and final chapter is the most speculative chapter. Here I seek to resolve, as best as possible, the normative questions raised throughout and address the potential for resistance for collective actors. I do this in two parts. First, I argue that because investment in capacities is required for successful action, investment in collective identities is necessary but needs to be shielded as much
as possible from symbolic violence. I use Bourdieu’s philosophy of science to make this case. Next, I argue that a Nietzschean relation to suffering provides the possibility of detaching the conformist investments described in the first part of the chapter and thereby maintaining some grounds for creative action and resistance.

The final chapter explores the major implications of my findings and points toward future research possibilities.
CHAPTER TWO: FOUNDATIONS OF HABITUS

Habitus

Having provided a rough outline of the central debates in social movement theory and introduced several of Bourdieu’s central thinking tools (fields, capital, habitus and symbolic violence in particular) in the preceding chapter, the aim of this chapter is to develop a somewhat detailed description of habitus, highlighting the conceptual elements that provide a foundation for discussions of suffering, justice, collective identity formation, political strategy, and symbolic violence in later chapters. In this chapter I argue that habitus is best understood as an adaptive capacity energized by pursuit of social recognition. In making this argument I rely primarily on three of Bourdieu’s most important texts: Outline of a Theory of Practice, The Logic of Practice, and Pascalian Meditations.

Abstracting habitus out of Bourdieu’s overall framework and into a discrete, bounded, and self-sufficient concept is somewhat artificial. As discussed in the previous chapter, habitus’ explanatory power is intrinsically linked to Bourdieu’s novel use of field theory, the various forms of capital relevant to various fields and above all else the close relationship between the unequal distribution of competencies organized in the habitus and the omnipresence of symbolic domination and violence. Yet, within this assemblage of linked concepts, habitus is surely central insofar as it is the location of biographically individuated agency; it is the location from which we experience all aspects of the social and physical worlds and the mechanism by which we act upon those worlds. Having a clear understanding of habitus will prove essential to the claims about power, strategy, and domination that I make in subsequent chapters.

70 Following Maton, I will use italics when I am describing habitus as a concept or referring to its conceptual features, as in the phrase ‘the habitus is a generative and transposable system of dispositions.’ Italics will not be used for the concept’s referent, as in the phrase ‘a petite-bourgeois habitus disposes its bearer to hyper-correction.’ Karl Maton, "Habitus," in Pierre Bourdieu: Key Concepts (Stocksfield: Acumen Inc, 2008), 64, Footnote 1.
The most oft-cited description Bourdieu provides of the *habitus* is from *The Logic of Practice*:

The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them.\(^{71}\)

I unpack this admittedly dense description in the main sections of this chapter,\(^{72}\) but a few central elements referred to in this quotation are worth restating in a preliminary way. In particular, I wish to emphasize these three aspects: the *habitus* is structured through regular and regulated encounters with a relatively consistent set of conditions; it systematically generates and organizes actions across social circumstances – although with varying degrees of success depending on how well adapted it is to a specific circumstance; and these actions are not causally dependent upon conscious goals. These features provide Bourdieu with grounds for a theory of practice that emphasizes practical reason, strategy and a close relationship between two instances of the social: the *habitus* is (1) social history incorporated into bodies and oriented toward history objectified into (2) institutions, physical structures and social fields.

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\(^{71}\) Bourdieu, *Logic*, 53. Similar summaries can be found at:


\(^{72}\) Lizardo suggests that the density of this passage and the analogous passage in *Outline* borders on obscurantism, which partially explains the delayed engagement *habitus* has received in Anglophone sociological circles. Bourdieu, however, defends the complexity of his writing, arguing that because language is always both a site of struggle over meaning and a forgetting of that struggle, only pre-accepted, obvious, ‘common sense’ truths can be reduced to simple, clearly stated propositions. Writing that seeks to challenge such common sense therefore needs to be complex, though this creates problems insofar as the instruments necessary for appropriating (interpreting, understanding and making use of) complex academic language are not widely distributed.


The Origins of Habitus

Several of Bourdieu’s readers have pointed out that the word ‘habitus’ did not originate with Bourdieu, most emphasizing its etymological and conceptual proximity to the notion of habit.73 By contrast, Bourdieu insisted that focusing on etymological debates to attempt to explain his development and use of concepts – strategy and habitus in particular – obscures the proper explanatory objects, namely the specific empirical problems that confronted him as well as the “space of theoretical and methodological possibles” that led to those problems being posed at particular times and in particular ways.74 Specifically, the notion of habitus ‘forced itself’ upon him as an empirical problem in his study of the colonial imposition of capitalism on the Kabyle people of northern Algeria and within a theoretical field dominated by what he described as the “most fundamental” and “most ruinous” of oppositions dividing social science: the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism.75 His theory of practice, then, derives from what he characterizes as two epistemological breaks, the evolution of which he describes in Outline of a Theory of Practice and The Logic of Practice. I will consider those breaks briefly here, but then turn to Pascalian Meditations for what I refer to as an ‘adaptive’ account of habitus. Bourdieu notes that he was “often surprised at the time it has taken me … really to understand some of the things I had been saying for a long time with the sense of knowing exactly what I was saying.”76 It is not surprising, then, that the emphasis he placed on certain aspects of habitus should shift in the 25 years between Outline and Pascalian Meditations, and that he should develop new ways of describing it in response to his

74 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 62-63.
75 For the concept of habitus and the Kabyle see Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 159. For subjectivism and objectivism as constituting the methodological and theoretical field in which Bourdieu was working, see ibid., 62. For the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism as “the most fundamental” and “most ruinous” of oppositions see Bourdieu, Logic, 25.
76 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 8.
critics, particularly their claims that the *habitus* is monolithic, immutable, inexorable and exclusive.\textsuperscript{77} Pascalian Meditations, among his last and certainly most philosophical works, provides his clearest statements about the origins and functions of the *habitus* as well as its central role in the operation of symbolic power. Nonetheless, before turning to an adaptive account of *habitus* it is worth starting where Bourdieu did, with subjectivism and objectivism.

In both *Outline* and *Logic* Bourdieu begins by describing three modes of knowledge beginning with subjectivism, which he elsewhere refers to as ‘intellectualism’ to draw attention to this mode’s misleading over-emphasis on the importance of consciousness in understanding agency. At various points Bourdieu includes phenomenology, existentialism and rational choice (or Rational Action Theory) models under this rubric, but his central objection to each of them is the same: they erroneously understand action to be explicitly oriented by reference to ends, and that these ends are defined through acts of free choice without reference to durable dispositions. Actions, according to subjectivism, are “antecedent-less confrontations between the subject and the world.”\textsuperscript{78} Phenomenology, for example, seeks ‘true’ accounts of lived experience through close description, but is methodologically and by definition not self-reflective, which is to say that the method depends on description of “the primary relationship of familiarity with the familiar environment” without undertaking to analyze what makes that relationship possible.\textsuperscript{79} Phenomenological interest in understanding agency through detailed and purified descriptions of human experience refuses to interrogate what makes those experiences possible and therefore abstracts them from personal and social histories, objective conditions of the production of experience, and above all, power. Similarly, existentialism’s refusal to investigate the conditions that produce and constrain subjectivity, and orient and limit choice, exemplified for Bourdieu by Sartre, is guilty of the worst kind of

\textsuperscript{77} ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{78} Bourdieu, *Logic*, 42.
\textsuperscript{79} Bourdieu, *Outline*, 25-26; Bourdieu, *Logic*.
voluntarism: a model of action that projects scholastic freedom from direct engagement with the practical and ‘viscous’ exigencies of the material world onto the world of action and that therefore imagines the world to be full of ‘interchangeable possibles’ dependent solely on an independent consciousness for their identification and accomplishment.\textsuperscript{80} Again, parallel to phenomenological and existentialist refusal of contingent engagement with material necessity, rational choice approaches gain explanatory leverage by assuming an abstract, unconditioned, purely rational economic subject. However, rational choice does so at the cost of oscillating between a pure voluntarism wherein every choice is taken to be made out of a pure, rational finalism that selects goals and ends based purely on taste, interest, and so on, and a deterministic mechanism where the objective conditions within which ends are selected force a mechanically ‘rational’ path of action.\textsuperscript{81}

Bourdieu credits objectivism with achieving the first epistemological break he considers necessary for understanding action. Objectivists accomplish this break by rejecting subjectivism’s reliance on primary, conscious, knowledge in favour of identifying social regularities independent of individual experience, consciousness or will. They do so, however by introducing a break between theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. That is, objectivists focus on, and give ontological priority to regularities, norms, and rules – theoretically identified and empirically observable – while excluding primary subjective experiences from explanatory consideration, and reducing consciousness and will to the status of epiphenomenal rationalizations or ideologies.\textsuperscript{82} For example, Bourdieu points to Saussurian structural linguistics as an exemplary instance of objectivist thinking.

The major achievement of structuralism lies at the ontological level: structuralism replaced substantialist thinking – which assumes objects bearing independent, essential properties – with relational thinking, which identifies the meaning and function of an object entirely and only with its

\textsuperscript{80} For Bourdieu’s critiques of Sartre, see especially Bourdieu, \textit{Outline}, 73-76; Bourdieu, \textit{Logic}, 42-46.

\textsuperscript{81} Bourdieu, \textit{Logic}, 47.

\textsuperscript{82} Bourdieu, \textit{Outline}, 3; Bourdieu, \textit{Logic}, 26.
relation to all other objects within a system. Where rational choice gains explanatory leverage from assuming abstract, rational agents, structuralism’s explanatory power depends on the determining force of durable relations between objects within a system. Because durable relations exist between and among objects in the form of official rules, class dynamics, and norms, they cannot be reduced to the level of shifting and epiphenomenal individual consciousness. Therefore structuralism must exclude on methodological grounds any active participation, decision-making, or production of meaning on the part of social actors and not produced by objective relations between structural elements.

Noting that there were already well-rehearsed critiques of structuralism’s commitment to prioritizing logic and structure over individual and collective histories and its tendency to privilege internal and specific relations over external economic and social determinations, Bourdieu focused his analysis on the viewpoint of the objectivist observer and found two central justifications for breaking with objectivism. First, he argued that the subordination of practical knowledge and action to structural rules, norms and so on was tantamount to constructing a map representing all possible routes for all possible travelers without paying attention to the routes that are actually maintained and used, the ‘beaten tracks’. The objectivist observer, detached from practical practice, attendant to the official rules described by informants rather than the actions actually taken, and refusing to ascribe actors any agentic characteristics such as will, or strategic thinking, treats action as manifestations of the observer’s formal and logical model. The distance between the official map, and the actual routes taken by agents exposes the inadequacy of objectivist approaches. Further, in their search for formal models that can account for practice, objectivists telescope actions by artificially collapsing

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85 Bourdieu makes use of the map metaphor in Bourdieu, *Outline*, 35. His more detailed rejection of objectivist formalism is developed in his analysis of Kabyle marriage and kinship practices, ibid., Chapter I Section II; Bourdieu, *Logic*, Part II Chapter 2.
temporally distant actions into a single logic or rule. Objectivists are therefore blind to relevant
temporal aspects of action and falsely impute finalist intentions to actions that are in fact spontaneous
and without necessarily including conscious deliberation. Bourdieu’s analysis of gift exchange, for
example, shows that the time between receiving a gift and offering a counter-gift is integral to
understanding the practice of gift exchange. A counter-gift offered too soon would appear crass and
expose the interested, economic value lying beneath an apparently generous and selfless act. Even
more, the time between gift and counter-gift is laden with tension insofar as until the counter-gift is
actually given there remains uncertainty about whether the original gift will be reciprocated, met with
a snub (refusal to offer a counter-gift) or condemn the recipient to an unfulfilled obligation in the
case that they cannot afford or achieve a suitable response. By reducing gift exchange to formal
norms of reciprocity, objectivists collapse action, response, pre-response tension and the practical
agency required to resolve that tension, into a single moment structured by a determining, formal rule
that excludes the nuanced practical and temporal strategies and constraints involved in gift
exchange. In short, while subjectivist approaches neglect to properly historicize the objective
conditions within which subjective actions are generated and oriented, objectivist adherence to
formal rules and official logics blind them to the practical and constructive aspects of agency.

Against the subjectivist and objectivist modes of knowledge Bourdieu proposes a third: his
theory of practice. This mode depends on breaking with subjectivist illusions of unconditioned
experience – a break objectivism achieves – and then breaking from the abstraction and telescoping
intrinsic to objectivism by turning a reflexive eye on the objectivist observer and by recovering the
practical and strategic bases of action that objectivist models suppress. In short, Bourdieu’s theory of
practice depends upon (structuralist) relational thinking while foregrounding the dialectical
relationship between primary experience, the conditions that produce the possibility of that

experience, and subsequent conditions that trigger or activate strategic and practical responses to new experiences.\textsuperscript{87}

As will be made clear in the next section, Bourdieu relied heavily on phenomenology to break from subjectivist and objectivist modes of knowledge, though his phenomenological influences were integrated with, rather than eclipsing, the structural relationalism at the core of his conceptions of fields, capital and symbolic violence. It is worth emphasizing, however, that his use of phenomenology was always critical. He argued that phenomenologists correctly opposed the mechanism of objectivist analysis by pointing to social agents’ active construction of reality, but fell short insofar as they refused to account for the construction of the principles according to which agents perform that construction.\textsuperscript{88} Bourdieu was methodologically and politically interested in rigorous historicization of all that appears natural in the social world, including the primary experience from which phenomenology begins, as he argued that historicization is the best way to reveal the arbitrary and power-laden genesis of what is taken for granted or accepted as inevitable.\textsuperscript{89} He explicitly extends that project to cognition, which he describes as the result of thousands of years of adaptation to ensure survival.\textsuperscript{90} I turn to the dynamics of adaptation and the organization of habitus in the following sections.

\textbf{Grounding the Habitus}

In \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, Bourdieu shifts from a methodological critique of subjectivism and objectivism to a more philosophical account of the acquisition and operation of habitus. His account

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{87} Bourdieu, \textit{Outline}, 3; Bourdieu, \textit{Logic}, 27.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 93.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Bourdieu, \textit{Practical Reason}, 53; Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 115.
\end{itemize}
proceeds from two foundational claims: first, that we acquire the dispositions comprising habitus because we are exposed to the necessities and regularities of the world; and secondly, that subjectivity emerges through a primary, binary, distinction between self and other, a distinction that engenders our attachment to and investment in the social world. Attention to these founding claims and their phenomenological roots can help correct the common mischaracterization of habitus as something passively acquired, often referred to as socialization or enculturation, in a one-directional way.91 These treatments neglect the active adaptation integral to acquiring habit. By contrast, the adaptive account of habitus I develop here places the notion of strategy, or better, practical knowledge and acquisition of practical mastery at the core of subjectivity. Further it provides theoretical grounding for understanding subject formation as fundamentally historical and, as I will show, social. That is, all of the cognitive, dispositional, emotional, and psychological strategies, skills, and competencies that agents develop are responses to the immediate exigencies of contingent conditions. In short, an adaptive understanding of habitus acquisition can articulate the conditioned and historical experience of the social world and its demands to an account of subjectivity where physical survival is integrated into a social desire for recognition. In turn, this provides grounds for an understanding of political struggle that extends strategic dynamics and the demand for recognition into struggles over political and symbolic capital.

“We are disposed because we are exposed”

With a Heideggerian play on words, one might say that we are disposed because we are exposed. It is because the body is (to unequal degrees) exposed and endangered in the world, faced with the risk of emotion, lesion, suffering, sometimes death, and therefore obliged to take the world seriously (and nothing is more serious than emotion, which touches the depths of our organic being) that it is able to acquire

91 Bourdieu uses the term himself, which is perhaps misleading. Maton, by contrast, argues that researchers tend to reduce habitus social background or socialization because habitus cannot be directly observed and there appear to be few methodological resources for establishing which structures of a habitus are being triggered at a given time. See Maton, 62.
dispositions that are themselves an openness to the world, that is, to the very structures of the social world of which they are the incorporated form.\textsuperscript{92}

A number of phenomenological claims operate in the above quotation, taken from Bourdieu’s consideration of the social’s individualization in biological bodies. Namely, Bourdieu makes a three-part claim about the biological nature of the human animal: human bodies have a conditionability about them; this conditionability is not only a survival mechanism, it fundamentally orients us toward the world outside us; and this mechanism expresses itself through regulated but evolving, habituated dispositions.\textsuperscript{93} Crossley points to Bourdieu’s reliance here on phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s notion of ‘corporeal schema’ as the site of knowledge acquisition. For Merleau-Ponty, the corporeal schema is incorporated practical sense and bodily know-how which can be distinguished from propositional ‘knowledge-that’ (i.e., propositional knowledge) by recognizing that ‘know-how’ is an interested and functional knowledge of the space around the bearer by which the bearer is capable of constituting and subordinating that space according to his or her interests. Crossley offers examples of know-how that include brushing one’s hair, typing, and driving a car as instances where agents act without intellectual deliberation, with a non-conscious awareness of the location of one’s body in relation to external elements, and by putting those external elements to practical use.\textsuperscript{94} Importantly, Merleau-Ponty was interested in demonstrating that the habituation by which the corporeal schema develops an expanded and expanding repertoire of know-how provides a more convincing account of learning than that offered by behaviourism. In particular, Merleau-Ponty was keen to show that habituation is not a mechanical response to fixed situations, the product of repeated accidental triggers, but a general and flexible power to respond to general situations. This requires

\begin{footnotes}
\item[92] Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 140-141; emphasis original.
\item[93] ibid., 134.
\item[94] Crossley argues that adaptation and habituation are an evolutionary advantage for humans and that habituation can be contrasted to the operation of animal instincts in survival. Nick Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," \textit{Theory and Society} 30, no. (2001): 111.
\item[94] Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 102.
\end{footnotes}
innovation, hypothesis-testing, and the ability to transfer skills from one body part to another through practical analogies. In short, Merleau-Ponty held that habit “is not a mechanical response … but rather a form of embodied and practical understanding or know-how that manifests itself as competent and purposive action and that “attaches” to the world by way of the meaning it forms at the interface with it.”

The combination of mimesis and correction at the core of Bourdieu’s conception of habitus relies heavily on the phenomenological claim that hypothesis testing and innovation are elementary components of learning. Bourdieu insists that mimesis is imitation that does not involve ‘pretending’ to be like the object being imitated, which would require positing a conscious, imitating subject when it is precisely the emergence of subjectivity that requires explanation. Rather, mimesis works through observation – again, the product of our openness and exposure to the world – and identification to generate a “practical reactivation” of the posture, emotion, and orientation of what is mimed. As agents strive to gain practical mastery over their surroundings, through experimentation and miming, they are inevitably and constantly confronted with corrections, rewards and reprimands. Indeed, the habitus:

… emerges from an individual’s structured encounter with other individuals, through the minutiae of everyday life and through ‘reproachful looks’ or ‘tones’ and ‘disapproving glances’. The powerful, often silent injunctions that police our posture and our behaviour are inscribed directly into our bodily comportment without necessarily passing through language and consciousness. This embodied sense then organizes how we perceive our social environment and how we distinguish its various components.

The practical mastery an agent gains over her surroundings through these processes is habitus: practical know-how organized into the generative, and transferable dispositions where dispositions are the tendency to apply structurally similar know-how in relatively diverse contexts.

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95 ibid., 106.
96 Bourdieu, Logic, 73.
That is, our bodies organize our practical know-how in uniform ways across contexts. The way we ‘know’ how to walk is related to the way we ‘know’ how to dance, and by extension all of the silent and explicit injunctions that organize appropriate behaviour in family, educational, and subsequent contexts provides the foundation for how we perceive and interact with any subsequent context we might encounter.

The environment over which practical mastery is sought is both natural and social, but the objects of mimeses and sources of correction are almost exclusively social. Therefore, the structured incorporation of those worlds through practical mastery of them, organized into *habitus* entails incorporation of social space, which is “the locus of coexistence of social positions, mutually exclusive points, which, for the occupants, are the basis of points of view”\(^9\)\(^8\). The *habitus* replicates the social world’s regularities, rules, distinctions, opportunities and foreclosures at a preconscious level and is therefore intrinsically social and historical, in direct contrast to Cartesian, existentialist, and other philosophies of subjectivity that emphasize *causa sui*, individualized and ahistorical consciousness. In short, the intellectualist tradition is wrong to conceive of individuals as ‘monologically’ constituted, atomistic selves who have representations of the outer world in their mind and who use these representations to make decisions and judgements.\(^9\)\(^9\) Instead, Bourdieu’s theory of practice, encapsulated in the *habitus*, emphasizes action that is at times based on conscious calculation but is generally based on deeply rooted, embodied, habituated but active and structured adaptations – achieved through mimesis, experimentation and correction – to the world.\(^1\)\(^0\) Because the world to which the *habitus* adapts is social, Bourdieu’s dialogical model recognizes the deep

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\(^9\)\(^8\) Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 130.

\(^9\)\(^9\) Taylor, 48.

\(^1\)\(^0\) I will engage debates about whether Bourdieu was insufficiently attentive to the role of conscious deliberation below. For now it is worth noting that Bourdieu acknowledged that *habitus* does not exclude the possibility of strategic, conscious calculation, but insisted that while both conscious calculation and *habitus* aim at “an estimation of chances presupposing transformation of the past effect into an expected objective” the *habitus’* responses are first defined by a probable ‘upcoming future’ that excludes deliberation. Bourdieu, *Logic*, 53.
penetration of the social into the individual, or rather, the constitution of the individual subject through deeply social processes.

**Subjectivity, Investment, and the Social**

While phenomenologists refuse to account for the construction of the principles by which agents construct their reality, as described in the previous section, Bourdieu uses *habitus* to explain this construction. *Habitus* allows him to wed his critical use of phenomenology to structuralism via the structured social environment into which subjects are always inserted and from which their subjectivity emerges. However, subjectivity is surely something more complex than an aggregation of learned dispositions and know-how, and *habitus* alone may not get beyond the deterministic objectivist sociology Bourdieu sought to overcome. Fourny traces Bourdieu’s oscillation, going back as far as *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, about the nature of the ‘subject’ and how the individual and collective are connected and links this ambivalence to his equally ambivalent relationship to psychoanalysis.\(^{101}\) In *Pascalian Meditations* Bourdieu offers glimpses into the connections between *habitus*, social structure, and psychic processes, though as I discuss in later sections, the connections remain underspecified.

This relationship between *habitus*, social structure, and psychic processes turns on what Bourdieu takes to be a founding pedagogical pre-requisite, on the basis of which mimetic identification and correction become possible, namely “the transition, described by Freud” wherein the child moves from a narcissistically organized libido,

… in which the child takes himself (or his own body) as an object of desire, to another state in which he orients himself towards another person, thus entering the world of ‘object relations’, in the form of the original social microcosm and the protagonists of the drama that is played out there[.]\(^{102}\)

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At stake in this transition is the question of how the general openness to the world and conditionability described above comes to be organized into a specific openness to the social world and the rules, constraints, opportunities, dangers – in short the structures – that manifest the social world’s regularity and therefore constitute it as a context to which habitus can adapt. The emergence of a cognitive mechanism upon which psychological operations (projection, identification, transference, sublimation) ultimately depend is fundamental to this process. That cognitive mechanism is the ability to construct a binary distinction between self and other:

Absorbed in the love of others, the child can only discover others as such on condition that he discovers himself as a ‘subject’ for whom there are ‘objects’ whose particularity is that they can take him as their ‘object’.

Importantly, the context of this cognitive achievement and subsequent psychic organization is already social and therefore Bourdieu locates, in this founding cognitive accomplishment, a search for recognition. Bourdieu continues:

In fact, he is continuously led to take the point of view of others on himself, to adopt their point of view so as to discover and evaluate in advance how he will be seen and defined by them. His being is a being-perceived, condemned to be defined as it ‘really’ is by the perception of others.

Fully appreciating what Bourdieu is doing here requires holding together two conceptual links in his overall framework: the cognitive ability to distinguish between self and other, an ability which can then be extended to distinguishing and ordering component parts of physical and social structures, and a psychic investment (interestedness or illusio in Bourdieu’s language) in achieving recognition from the social world. Mimesis and correction depend fundamentally on this combination of cognitive ability and social investment. With clear indebtedness to Rousseau, Bourdieu calls social investment, this “egoistic quest for satisfactions of amour propre which is, at the same time, a fascinated pursuit of the approval of others” the “anthropological roots of the ambiguity of symbolic

103 ibid., 165.
104 ibid., 166.
105 ibid.
I will pursue this dynamic further and more specifically in the context of social movement mobilization in a discussion of identity and collective identity in Chapter Four and symbolic violence in Chapter Five. Because my conception of justice depends on the relationship between *habitus* and field, however, it is worth specifying certain aspects of that dynamic. Important questions point toward an understanding of this dynamic: what is the nature of the social world to which we are investing? What is the cost of recognition?

**Social Space, Difference, Recognition**

Consistent with his structuralist commitment to thinking relationally and to understanding any component of a system in terms of its relation to all the others, Bourdieu treats physical and social space as bearing the same fundamental property: agents and objects occupy a site – the point in space where an agent or thing is situated – and have a place – the extent, surface and volume occupied in space.\(^{107}\) Just as the physical world consists of the composite of mutual exteriority of objects occupying sites and having a place, both of which are organized in terms of position, rank in an order, relative volume, and so on, social space is composed relationally of mutually exterior agents who perceive and are perceived within organized systems of relations (fields) in which all agents are defined negatively by the mutual exclusions of positions within social space (homologous to the mutual exteriority of objects in physical space) and positively in relation to other potential sites (above, below, between).\(^{108}\) This conception places perception of difference, of space between, and hierarchical relationality at the core of the experience of social space to which the binary distinction between self and other and the psychic investment in the social has established the subject’s openness. Sociality, then is fundamentally about difference and relational space:

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\(^{106}\) ibid.


\(^{108}\) ibid.
… that is, a set of distinct and coexisting positions which are exterior to one another and which are defined in relation to one another through the mutual exteriority and their relations of proximity, vicinity, or distance, as well as through relations of order, such as above, below, and between.¹⁰⁹

In fact, the main idea is that to exist within a social space, to occupy a point or to be an individual within a social space, is to differ, to be different.¹¹⁰

Openness toward sociality and exposure to continuous, pre-conscious, bodily correction sensitizes subjects to structured differences, or, more to the point, incorporates sensitivity to those differences and to the meaning of those differences at a bodily level and organizes them into the habitus. Moreover, those structured differences also provide an opportunity to acquire – indeed, ground the potential for – recognition. The family field provides the initial location of a dialectic between constraint and opportunity wherein infants renounce narcissistic drives and self-love in favour of recognition and amour propre. In fact, the ‘cost’ of recognition first manifests in the family field. In order to obtain “testimonies of recognition, consideration and admiration” such as ‘how well-behaved he is’, ‘what a good girl’, and so on, the child must first internalize all the rules of respect, authority and deference as they map on to the various locations within social space – to whom good behaviour is owed, and what gendered, racialized and other socially located forms it ought to take – and demonstrate a willingness to submit to those rules.¹¹¹ This original investment

¹¹⁰ ibid., 9.
goes unnoticed and entails no deliberate commitment, but profoundly structures how the dynamic between drives – now increasingly structured into increasingly specific desires and ambitions – and opportunities for satisfying those drives are reproduced between the *habitus* and fields outside the family.\(^{112}\)

The specificity of the schemes of classification and evaluation organized in the *habitus* is central to Bourdieu’s conception of social reproduction and the reproduction of arbitrary patterns of domination. Because the initial site of incorporation is the family, the *habitus* of family members is the subject’s primary object of mimesis and the primary source of correction, followed closely by the education system. Further, these are the primary sites where the *habitus* incorporates the various competencies needed to win recognition in diverse social fields. For example, in terms of language acquisition and use, Bourdieu points to empirical evidence that what appears to be generally shared meanings in linguistic communities mask the polysemy of signs and therefore the divergent and sometimes antagonistic connotations the same word can have for people from different class or ethnic backgrounds. This applies not only to common nouns such as ‘mother’, ‘love’, ‘family’, but also evaluative terms such as ‘neat’ or ‘clean’\(^{113}\) and, by extension more overtly political words such as ‘freedom’, ‘equality’, and so on. The polysemy of signs is by no means restricted to the linguistic realm; the meaning of manners of dress, recreational activities, ways of moving, even the shape and bearing of bodies have different connotations and, as importantly, structured likelihood of occurrence within class contexts. Put another way, individuals will have dispositions that are more similar to (though not identical to, obviously) other individuals from the same class, because the objects of mimesis and subjects of correction (parents, primarily) they encounter are more similar to each other than they are to mimetic and corrective opportunities from other class contexts. This is not to erase

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\(^{112}\) Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, Appendix.

\(^{113}\) Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 71.

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the reality of biological individuation, or biographic specificity, but to recognize that the commonalities in the sequence of exposures (family, school, work – each of which structures the experience of the exposures that follow) shared by occupants of certain social spaces and trajectories makes each habitus a structural variant of all other habitus from the same class. Personal style is therefore a matter of relative deviations from the style of a period or a whole class.\textsuperscript{114}

Connotation and competence are deeply connected because despite the polysemy of potential meanings available for various signs and styles, there exists within any given field an official meaning and value to those signs and styles. Competence in this sense entails using principles of selection (pre-consciously, embodied in \textit{habitus}) among possible signs, styles and practices in order to select and successfully deploy those that adhere to the officially authorized style.\textsuperscript{115} Verbal signals of respect or deference, which can demonstrate linguistic competence (the ability to produce technically correct and contextually appropriate speech acts), also provide evidence of broader submission to structures of authority, though the dynamic is by no means limited to language use.\textsuperscript{116} The limit case of conflicts over linguistic competence is actual misunderstanding, but the more typical process of linguistic exchange is that listeners interpret and evaluate the competence demonstrated by the speaker and ascribe to the speaker a position in social space based on that evaluation.\textsuperscript{117} Symbolic struggle is ultimately struggle over the definition and imposition of the


Bourdieu’s work on cultural consumption, for example, identified the practice of aesthetic substitution among working classes wherein affordable products are substituted for ‘legitimate’ expensive ones (i.e., sparkling wine for champagne). Such substitutions indicate recognition of the officially authorized style or practice and therefore submission to that cultural authority. Simultaneously, however, the substitution is recognized as illegitimate but necessary given working class financial resources. The recognized and accepted distance created between legitimate practice and available practice is, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the basis for symbolic violence and its effects. Bourdieu, \textit{Distinction}, 386 and 390.

\textsuperscript{115} For an analysis of the differences between forms of invitation (i.e., ‘Come’, ‘Do come’, ‘Wouldn’t you like to come’, ‘Would you be so good as to come’) and their relationship to authority, deference, and politeness, see:


\textsuperscript{116} Bourdieu, \textit{Language and Symbolic Power}, 79-80.

\textsuperscript{117} Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 57-58.
officially accepted style, and therefore official styles and sanctioned competencies are expressions of power.\textsuperscript{118}

In struggles over definitions, the state plays a dominant role. The state inculcates common principles of classification through its ability to establish and maintain classificatory differences, providing official representations of space through official geographies, and even imposes a common sense of time by officially coordinating major social activities (for example, the school year, official duration of years of schooling, age of consent, age of citizenship, the fiscal year, legislated duration of workdays and so on).\textsuperscript{119} Using Durkheim’s phrasing, Bourdieu characterises the resulting officialization of basic senses of time and social space as the basis of ‘logical’ and ‘moral conformism’: a pre-reflexive consensus on the meaning of the world and a shared ‘common sense’.\textsuperscript{120} Of course the state is rarely the only holder of the power necessary to impose an official definition. Participants in each field bring to that field their own competencies and resources for struggling over principles of classification and action in that field; these struggles are, however, rarely fully autonomous of some mechanism of classification, authorization or authentication that can be traced back to the state. So, for example, lawyers are supported in their efforts to impose definitions by having state-sanctioned qualifications (law degrees, passing bar exams), and mastery of official grammar (that is, state-sanctioned grammar found in school curricula and necessary for advancing through post-secondary education and into legal practice). State-guaranteed competencies (again, in the form of degrees, exams, even state-regulated professional membership) constitute a ‘social competence’ that lends their holders a misrecognized, naturalized authority. Therefore even

\textsuperscript{119} Bourdieu, \textit{Practical Reason}, 45 and 54; Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 175. Rogers Brubaker offers an insightful analysis of how the Soviet Union institutionalized territorial nationhood and personal nationality through a pervasive classificatory system, the effect of which was to create an “organizing ‘principle of vision and division’ of the social world” along ethnic and nationalist divisions. Brubaker, \textit{Nationalism Reframed}, 24.
\textsuperscript{120} Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 172.
movements that are concerned with cultural recognition or economic injustices remain in the state’s gravitational pull. As will be seen in Chapter Four’s discussion of LGBT/Q politics, it also makes sense that groups most authorized by the state – that is, those most endowed with officially sanctioned competences in the form of university degrees, official linguistic competence, procedural competence and so on – would orient their political goals toward supporting and expanding state-sanctioned legitimacy. That is, movement actors, not surprisingly, play to their strengths.

Return to Phenomenology: Adaptation, Anticipation, Adjustment

Bourdieu illustratively characterizes the *habitus*’ development as akin to “a train laying its own tracks.” The analogy captures the adaptive and adjustment-intensive nature of the relationship between *habitus* and social space as well as Bourdieu’s objection to the phenomenological refusal to historicize the cognitive and embodied principles according to which the world is experienced and engaged. The incorporated sense of social space, the rules and authorizations that structure it as well as the opportunities for recognition it provides, orient agents toward fields from which their *habitus* is likely to garner success. Recall that, as described in the first chapter, agents bring to fields a combination of various forms of capital, a ‘sense of the game’ (which is really cultural capital embodied in the *habitus*), and various kinds of competency. But what agents bring to fields also influences the fields to which agents bring themselves. That is, some fields will be excluded from consideration entirely, while others demand further renunciations, corrections and specifically constituted investments as a price of entry. The academic field, for example, has appeal primarily for those who share, among other characteristics, an interest in a certain degree of abstraction and distance from the practical world, but it demands of its entrants a willingness to internalize rules of citation, evidence-giving, argumentation, and so on. Therefore, the train laying its own tracks does not do so either randomly or in a pre-determined direction but through a dialectical relationship

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between the *habitus’* incorporated sense of the social and the contingent opportunities various fields offer or forbid.

Attention to agents’ active interpretation of contingent opportunities takes us beyond the *habitus* as simple adaptation to regularities in the physical and social world through psychically invested habituation and correction and toward adaptation as an embodied capacity to anticipate immanent demands of the social field and to adjust to those demands. Keeping with the phenomenological and materialist conception of bodies as oriented toward the world, ‘at stake’ in the world and therefore dependent for survival on the capacity to produce appropriate responses to it, Bourdieu emphasizes that *habitus* is a practical comprehension of the world and most importantly a capacity to *anticipate* it. This capacity for anticipation, manifested only in concrete situations, relies on practical pre-categorization, that is, on the cognitive ability evolved over thousands of years into *habitus*, to identify and classify – to construct – social and natural regularities and thereby to make predictions about the trajectories of those regularities and elements within them based on previous experience.

Bourdieu’s logic in this regard relies heavily on Husserl, particularly Husserl’s vision of interested agents pre-reflexively adjusting themselves to, and preparing for action in, an immanently forthcoming future. This entails an active construction of that future based on schemes of classification incorporated in the *habitus* and then pre-conscious orientation toward it. Bourdieu uses the image of a jumper preparing to jump and summarizes the relationship as follows:

Husserl did indeed clearly establish that the *project* as a conscious aiming at the future in its reality as a contingent future must not be conflated with *protention*, a prereflexive aiming at a forth-coming which offers itself as a quasi-present in the

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123 ibid., 210.
124 ibid., 144.
visible, like the hidden faces of a cube, that is, with the same belief status (the same doxic modality) as what is directly perceived…

and

The imminent forth-coming is present, immediately visible, as a present property of things, to the point of excluding the possibility that it will not come about, a possibility which exists theoretically so long as it has not come about.

It bears emphasizing that the immanent forthcoming Bourdieu is referring here to is not just one possibility among many, but an already-present future that is necessitated by the arrangement of things and dynamics already existing in a situation. He frequently refers to sports metaphors, pointing to the pre-reflexive way in which a tennis player moves to where the ball will be rather than where it currently is. That is, the certainty of where the ball will be collapses the practical (that is, action-oriented) perception of two points in time into a pre-reflexive unity. The tennis player moves without thinking because the certainty of the development of the space of the game (i.e., the location of the ball) leaves reflexive consideration both unnecessary and unprovoked. Importantly, the certainty referred to here is not just an objective certainty based on laws of physics, but also a subjective certainty based on the player’s finely honed sense of the game. More experienced players will have more certainty about where the ball will be. The regularities of the space of a tennis game are analogous to the regularities of social space generally, and therefore habitus gives us a more or less well-adapted ‘sense of the game’ being played in any social context. Again, while there is possibility for conscious deliberation, Bourdieu envisions the bulk of how we engage sociality to be according to a pre-reflexive sense of where the social world is moving and our place within that trajectory. In particular, this leads us to select which social settings – restaurants, schools, careers – are ‘for us’ and which are not.

125 ibid., 204.
126 ibid., 208.
127 Bourdieu, Practical Reason, 79.
128 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 143.
In producing this ‘sense of the game’ the *habitus* gives disproportionate weight to early experience, which is why the economic and social condition of family structures in terms of both the family’s social situation but also sexual divisions of labour within the family garner so much of Bourdieu’s attention.¹²⁹ Further, this intrinsically conservative tendency of the *habitus* replicates the sensitivity to difference at the core of its search for recognition insofar as difference is also the principle by which the *habitus* – without consciousness or intention – selects the occasions of its transformation:

If it is accepted that the principle of the transformation of habitus lies in the gap, experienced as a positive or negative surprise, between expectations and experience, one must suppose that the extent of this gap and the significance attributed to it depend on habitus: one person’s disappointment may be another’s unexpected satisfaction, with the corresponding effects of reinforcement or inhibition.¹³⁰

It would be tempting, given the emphasis I have been placing on adaptation, to conceive of the *habitus*’ adjustment solely in progressive terms as if it were only about acquiring skill and competence, but the story is not necessarily so optimistic. The key to a theory of practice based on *habitus* is in the *habitus*’ adaptive ability to spontaneously adjust, without conscious deliberation, to the immanent demands and opportunities of objectively structured social space. Bourdieu describes this adjustment as a kind of spontaneous interpretation of statistical probabilities, an interpretation based on the practical dispositions of the *habitus* rather than abstracted experimental conditions.¹³¹ Naturally, not all agents have the same objective chances in a given situation, given the highly unequal distribution of resources (economic, qualifications, skills, social networks) that they bring to a field of action. For those with little or no power, a spontaneous ‘retreat to the inner citadel’ à la Isaiah Berlin becomes a viable if non-intentional strategy.¹³² In other words, before the *habitus*

130 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 149.
131 Bourdieu, *Outline*, 78.
orients an agent toward a particular action geared to take advantage of the possibilities offered by a field, it has spontaneously ruled out all the impossibilities that field also offers, and it would take either a great faith in the spontaneous abilities of will or an obstinate ideological commitment to the limitless options through which rational individuals can pursue their rationally conceived goals to deny that some agents face a broader range of impossibilities than others.

Relative or absolute powerlessness, enacted through repeated adjustments to objective conditions that offer very few objective chances, tends to produce a number of adaptations. These can include what looks like disorganized behaviour, such as the oscillation between fantasy and surrender evidenced by one of Bourdieu’s interviewees, an economically marginalized young man who oscillates between submission to a hopeless economic future and grandiose dreams of opening a “Club Med for billionaires”.133 On a more basic level, according to Bourdieu, the durable experience of powerlessness also conditions dominated groups to put up with circumstances that dominant groups would find intolerable; this is not an intentional, purposive response, but a realistic means of adapting to the reality of oppression by adjusting subjective expectations. Alternatively, Bourdieu notes, where domination is resisted, this resistance often fails to ‘go beyond the limits of the immediate universe’, which is to say that rebellion generally targets persons rather than structures and instances of injustice rather than their underlying roots.134

However, recalling that the cost of recognition is always submission to the demands of a field, which is to say submitting (always without conscious intent) to the classifications, authorizations and restrictions of social space and thereby taking on the point of view of those who have succeeded in imposing those schemes of classification and authority, it should be no surprise that a common response is resignation.

Resignation is indeed the commonest effect of that form of ‘learning by doing’ which is the teaching performed by the order of things itself, in the unmediated encounter with social nature (particularly in the form of the sanctions of the educational market and the labour market), next to which the intentional actions of domestication performed by all the ‘ideological State apparatuses’ are of little weight.\footnote{135}{ibid., 233.}

Bourdieu explicitly cautions, however, is that it is just as dangerous to naturalize the adjusted dispositions of dominated groups as to ignore the very real effects of domination; dominated dispositions need to be understood in relation to durable conditions of existence.\footnote{136}{ibid., 232.} A central task of critical social and political theory is to de-naturalize these dispositions, historicize them, and take part in the search for and struggle to win alternative conditions. In Chapter Four I argue that collective identities have the potential to intervene in this dynamic, but are not unable to escape it entirely. Moreover, the differential relations to power, the differential relationship between objective chances and subjective expectations that individual participants bring to collective identity processes means that collective identity formation is also a set of objective chances against which subjective expectations are set and adjusted. In fact, I will argue, resignation, conformity, and submission are integral parts of social movement dynamics precisely because the shared injustice around which they are mobilized are rarely shared in the same way by all participants. The glossing over of resignation and submission by which collective identity is achieved is central to the story of social movement distortions and impasses I will develop in later chapters.

**Objections to Habitus**

Thus far I have articulated an understanding of *habitus* that has been based on its adaptive and socially interested aspect in order to lay groundwork for arguments about collective mobilization, strategy, and symbolic violence I make in later chapters. Naturally, this approach risks
obscuring or even erasing some of habitus’ more contentious elements. Therefore, before concluding this chapter, I will engage some of the most important criticisms of habitus.

Most objections to the notion of habitus center on one of several charges levelled against Bourdieu’s overall framework: the apparent determinism produced by the close relationship between field and habitus; the question of whether Bourdieu is sufficiently able to account for the reflexivity that critics take to be integral not just to agency but also in accounting for the empirical fact that sometimes structures are transformed or replaced, not just reproduced; and whether habitus is simply too coarse a concept, too reliant on statistical regularity to really tell us anything about the nature of subjectivity – gendered and queer subjectivity in particular – and therefore the nature of practice. I will begin with the question of whether habitus is too coarse to fully capture subjectivity.

The Question of Mechanisms

Charges that the specific mechanisms that comprise the habitus are under-specified generally fall into one of two categories. In one category, Bourdieu is said to gloss too quickly over the insights of psychoanalysis. For some, such as Skeggs and Butler, habitus cannot adequately capture the ambivalence at the core of subject formation and therefore Bourdieu’s understanding of how subjects adjust to fields and, more importantly, how power operates, rests on a problematically shaky foundation. Pointing to the insights of queer theory, Skeggs notes that:

Bourdieu’s terribly well organized habitus cannot encompass all the practices between gender and sexuality, the contradictions, plays, experimentations, swappings, ambiguities and passings both within gender and between gender and sexuality (which, of course, are always informed by class, race and age).137

Skeggs’ point is well taken. Recall that in Pascalian Meditations Bourdieu pointed to a two-fold accomplishment as the basis for the adaptive learning at the core of the habitus: the ability to distinguish between self and other and a willingness to renounce narcissistic self-love for amour

137 Skeggs, 27.
propre gained through recognition. Key to this renunciation is a willingness to submit to a “socialization of drives” through “a permanent transaction in which the child makes renunciations and sacrifices in exchange for testimonies of recognition, consideration and admiration.” Bourdieu then immediately links acquiring dispositions to the reproduction of political power via the fundamental docility incorporated through schooling, habitual submission to the legal and other state apparatuses, and misrecognition of the arbitrary bases of authority. However, this model cannot account for drives that refuse to be socialized into forms sanctioned by the family and other fields. Specifically, drives organized into ‘queer’ desires, desires that are by definition contrary to logics of classification and evaluation that structure society-level sexual economies and which dispose their bearers toward practices that are not only devalued but historically actively condemned and punished, would have to be treated, in Bourdieu’s model, as permanently failed transactions, transactions in which renunciations and sacrifices are refused, denied and perhaps merely pretended for the sake of recognition. This would be to figure queer desire as somehow intrinsically anti-social and install a heterosexual humanism as the threshold for subjectivity. Surely this is not Bourdieu’s intention.

Butler takes the problem further by arguing that two levels of ‘inclination’ are at work in Bourdieu’s conception of the habitus in relation to fields. On the one hand, the habitus is inclined to adapt to the immanent demands of an objectively structured field. On the other hand, objectively structured fields bear their own inclinations in the form of objective necessities. That is, objectively structured fields such as the economy, cultural fields, and so on, develop according to (though not completely determined by) their own internal logic. This double inclination might manifest, for example, in children of working class parents feeling inclined to pursue educational and career strategies (technical colleges as opposed to ivy league universities) based on dispositions

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139 ibid., 168.
incorporated through exposure to working class objective conditions. Prolonged exposure to objective conditions produces a ‘sense of the game’ and therefore a set of strategies based on the anticipated development of those objective conditions. According to Butler, this renders Bourdieu’s model deterministic. If he wants to avoid such determinism then he needs to provide an account of *habitus* that is not already inclined toward (in Butler’s sense, determined by) objective conditions. However, if a particular habitus is not already inclined to recognize and adapt to the inclinations of a given set of objective conditions, then ‘inclination’ becomes a site of necessary ambivalence and, psychoanalytic arguments would suggest, potentially the grounds for resistance to objectively structured demands (here Butler is interested in norms specifically).\(^\text{140}\) In short, Butler argues that, in Bourdieu’s account “the subject, insofar as it is necessarily embodied, and the body is itself the site of ‘incorporated history’, is not set over and against an ‘objective’ domain, but has that very ‘objectivity’ incorporated as the formative condition of its very being.”\(^\text{141}\) This critique is at the heart of accusations that Bourdieu is, despite himself, both pessimistic and deterministic, but it ultimately hinges on the assertion that Bourdieu wrongly ignores or undervalues the insights of psychoanalytic, queer, and other approaches more interested in specifying the relationship between psychic processes and subjectivity.

The objections raised by Skeggs and Butler are echoed in Fourny’s and Steinmetz’ analysis of how psychoanalytic mechanisms and conceptual tools haunt, but are rarely made explicit in, Bourdieu’s work. Steinmetz points to the ways in which Bourdieu deploys psychoanalytic arguments while surrounding those arguments with condemnations of psychoanalysis. He suggests this has an obsessive quality, and indicates a refusal of how psychoanalytic insights might transform Bourdieu’s


\(^{141}\) ibid., 119.
Perhaps more generously, Fourny traces an evolution of how Bourdieu treats psychoanalysis from *Outline*, through *Weight of the World* and ultimately to *Pascalian Meditations*. This treatment shifts from an early repudiation to an assertion of their complementarity and then, ultimately, the collapse of psychoanalytic categories into the *habitus* itself. Here, the lack of specificity comes from Bourdieu’s refusal to employ different conceptual apparatuses for treating sexual differences and their consequences synchronically (as psychoanalysis does) and diachronically (as sociology does). Instead, a single conceptual apparatus – the *habitus* – is used and the unconscious becomes simultaneously individual and collective.\footnote{Fourny: 104 and 109-111.} Certainly, Bourdieu does wave away the relevance of articulating specific psychic mechanisms as, for example, when he reduces these complex processes to a brief list – the “imperceptible transactions, half-conscious compromises and psychological operations (projection, identification, transference, sublimation)” – without describing or even theoretically situating the psychic phenomena.\footnote{Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 165.} Perhaps, though, Bourdieu is best understood as treating the psychoanalytic subject (constituted through repression, splitting, denial, sublimation and so on) in the same way he treats the phenomenological one (material, embodied, adaptive): as a contingent, historical product whose existing forms require historicization. The phenomenological and psychoanalytic subjects’ historical character gives them a statistical regularity that is amenable to sociological and political analysis precisely because their potential for variation and irregularity does not detract from the concrete and non-arbitrary conditions that produce regularity and even regular variation.\footnote{Bourdieu explicitly argues that the statistical character of the ‘accidental’ influences and events that shift agents from the social trajectory inscribed in their social origin as a field of possibles, means that, a fraction of any class will end up on a higher or lower trajectory than the modal path of agents from similar backgrounds. See: Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 111.}

treat such variations as mere methodological problems fails at the level of normative political analysis precisely because these regular variations are embodied by living – and often suffering – subjects. As I pursue in Chapter Three, attention to suffering provides a critical matrix for translating what Bourdieu’s framework (though not his own political interventions) treats as statistical variations into normative considerations of justice and demands for political action.

The second category of objections to the apparent under-specificity of *habitus* focuses attention on whether Bourdieu sufficiently describes cognitive mechanisms. While Lizardo argues critics make this accusation because they fail to appreciate the debt Bourdieu’s thinking owes to the cognitive structuralism of Piaget, Bohman suggests that the fault is Bourdieu’s for paying insufficient attention to the explanatory importance of identifying specific cognitive mechanisms. Referring to Elster, he points to the dynamic of agents adjusting their subjective aspirations in the context of objective conditions and suggests that *habitus* alone cannot account for cases such as the ‘sour grapes’ phenomenon. Where Elster accounts for how preferences are extinguished by identifying a specific cognitive mechanism – adaptive preference formation, wherein preferences are changed in order to reduce cognitive dissonance between beliefs about what is desired and what is attainable – Bourdieu’s account appears to rely on pre-incorporated dispositions. The problem, Bohman argues, is that dispositions are too entrenched to account for the kind of immediate shift in preferences indicated by ‘sour grapes’ responses. Similar to Butler, Bohman finds explanations relying on *habitus* to be too deterministic because the causal chain moves too quickly from objective structure to practice.

There are several specific problems with Bohman’s analysis. For example, in constructing his comparison of Bourdieu and Elster, Bohman misses an essential aspect of Bourdieu’s approach: the

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146 Lizardo: 376.
importance of repetition and mutual incremental, minor adjustments in the evolution of habitus and its adaptation to specific fields. The importance of this distinction can be seen by asking what happens to the initial desire for grapes in Elster’s account. Is it repressed? Is it transformed? Or does it simply disappear? If it is repressed, then an exhaustive account needs to describe what happens to that repressed desire. Bohman appears, however, to think that the desire is simply extinguished, which begs the question of how much psychic or even embodied weight the original desire had in the first place. Should such apparently transient impulses really be considered central to sociological or political analysis? Here again, Bourdieu’s interest in statistical regularity is important. In this light, Bohman’s objection really amounts to a misplaced methodological concern about the appropriate unit of analysis.

More fundamentally, there exists considerable room for debate about exactly what kinds of mechanism habitus ought to specify. Lau, for example, argues that critics are mistaken when they, as Bohman does, accuse Bourdieu of determinism by arguing that he reduces structure to practice.  

Lau acknowledges that Bourdieu under-theorized how these dynamics are worked out at the level of individual habitus but suggests that a critical realist perspective could account for how structure and practice are causally related in the habitus.  

Specifically, Lau argues that psychological mechanisms emerge vertically from the body’s neurophysiological strata and horizontally from the social strata synchronically. Lau’s point is that statistically regular conditions (for example, class, ethnicity) and emergent (psychological) mechanisms interact. It is certainly the case that on occasion

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149 Bourdieu was not directly associated with critical realism but, as Lovell observes, his work does have an affinity with critical realist epistemology. Terry Lovell, "Introduction," in (Mis)Recognition, Social Inequality and Social Justice, ed. Terry Lovell (Abingdon, UK; New York: Routledge, 2007), 3.
the psychological mechanisms may overwhelm the social, which is why *habitus* allows for statistical regularity but not certainty in terms of individual cases.150

In short, while there is certainly room for further research into specific psychological mechanisms, their organization in the *habitus* and their relationship to statistically regular conditions, the absence of this level of specificity does not detract from the explanatory potential of Bourdieu’s analysis. I reach this conclusion with an important caveat. There is a difference between the statistical remainders that can be accounted for by the kind of theoretical orientation Lau recommends and the ambivalence articulated by Butler and Skeggs. In the next section, where I look more specifically at accusations of determinism as they relate to problems of reflexivity, I will suggest that the important notions of strategy and practical reason can resolve this ambivalence.

**Determinism and Reflexivity**

Most critics tend to ignore both Bourdieu’s repeated assertion that reflexivity is possible and his specifications of the conditions of its emergence. Instead as Butler, Jenkins, Bohman and others do, critics emphasize the close links between the conditions of the production of the habitus and the practices the habitus organizes. Bohman is particularly clear on this score, arguing that Bourdieu’s account reduces non-academic actors to ‘cultural dupes’ and treats sociologists as autonomous, reflexive experts whose sociological knowledge constitutes a privileged source of liberation from domination.151

Either agents’ reflection on their own conditions is structurally determined, or agents are inevitably duped by their culture into misrecognizing its culturally arbitrary and dominating character. In either case, the possibility of innovation and transformation becomes improbable and dependent on external social conditions due to forces outside of agents’ control.152

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150 Lau: 373.
151 Bohman, 136.
152 ibid., 141.
A normative commitment to human agency and a social scientific commitment to accounting for both the reproduction of social patterns (which Bourdieu’s work does very well) and the observed fact of social change (which Bourdieu’s work does less well) are at stake in questions of reflexivity. The argument I am developing seeks to evaluate the possibilities of human agency in the face of patterns of reproduction that masquerade as empirically evidenced social change. This final section of this chapter contributes to this argument by locating agency in, and restricting it to, strategic responses to the polysemous opportunities offered by objective conditions. Making this contribution will require first turning to Bourdieu’s account of reflexivity.

An ideal-type habitus would be perfectly adjusted to the social fields it inhabits and therefore experience them as natural, beyond question because the idea of questioning them itself would never arise. Bourdieu frequently describes habitus in this way, but always to bring attention to general patterns of naturalization, reification and symbolic domination. In fact, the development of habitus always depends upon gaps, surprises, as discussed above, to which it responds and adjusts. Reflexivity, for Bourdieu, occurs when the gap between what the habitus expects and what objective possibilities actually offer is larger than can be easily accommodated through an adjustment of the habitus’ dispositions. In fact, as already noted, Bourdieu first began to develop his conception of habitus upon observing the mismatches created by colonial imposition of capitalism on the Kabyle people in Algeria, and he emphasizes that habitus may be exposed to a variety of such mismatches including location in contradictory social positions, ‘double binds’, location in social environments sufficiently altered (because of rapid economic or demographic change, migration, or even inter-generational contexts) as to become poor fits for the habitus remaining in that environment, and the simple fact of diversity of conditions in which a habitus adapted to specific environments might find itself.153

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153 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 159-161. On inter-generational conflict see also: Bourdieu, Outline, 78.
Any of the gaps created by field-habitus mismatch can provoke reflection in the sense of conscious consideration of the implications of these gaps, but Bourdieu distinguishes between two kinds of reflexivity. In most contexts, he argues, there exists the possibility of “practical reflection, the reflection in situation and in action which is necessary to evaluate instantly the action or posture just produced and to correct a wrong position of the body, to recover an imperfect movement.”154 This type of reflection remains focused on the practice at hand without calling into question the general scheme of classification and division within which the practice occurs. Bourdieu distinguishes practical reflection from scholastic reflection, which is an epistemological commitment necessary to overcome the sociological antinomy between objectivism and subjectivism,155 and takes the form of rigorously analyzing the objective relationship of the analyst to the object of study and thereby identifying the distortions that relationship produces (see the discussion of objectivism above). In making this distinction Bourdieu appears to be making his own evaluation of the general efficacy of the two kinds of reflexivity and constraining the possibility of producing major social transformations to either exogenous factors such as economic and demographic shifts, or to the epistemologically privileged position of the sociologist capable of piercing the veil of naturalized and doxic schemes of perception. Indeed, this is the most common objection to Bourdieu’s account of reflexivity.156

While Bourdieu did gesture toward the dynamics by which fundamental classifications could come to be challenged,157 he gave relatively little attention to the specific mechanisms by which that could happen.158 Not surprisingly, this gap has produced several responses, which can be categorized

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154 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 162, emphasis original.
155 Karakayali: 358.
Crossley, "From Reproduction to Transformation," 45.
157 Bourdieu, Outline, 169.
158 Crossley, Making Sense, 15.
into what I call ‘intra-field’ and ‘inter-field’ accounts of reflexivity. Key advocates of ‘intra-field’ perspectives have already been introduced: Butler and Skeggs. What I am calling the ‘intra-field’ trajectory of reflexivity critiques argue that reflection-provoking conditions arise more often than Bourdieu acknowledged because there exists greater room for mis-fits between field and habitus than Bourdieu recognized. Butler, for example, notes that psychoanalytic arguments would “underscore that the mimetic acquisition of a norm is at once the condition by which a certain resistance to the norm is also produced; identification will not ‘work’ to the extent that the norm is not fully incorporated or, indeed, incorporable.”159 Insofar as identification does not ‘work’, then habitus cannot orient action toward a given field as seamlessly as Bourdieu’s approach suggests. Similarly, Skeggs argues that Bourdieu mistakenly ignores the insights of psychoanalysts and poststructuralists by assuming that the unconscious simply acts as a structuring mechanism.160 The central claim that critics such as Butler and Skeggs make, then, is that regardless of whether fields are as homologously structured as Bourdieu takes them to be, the ambivalent dynamics of core categories operating within social fields – particularly the dynamics of class, race, gender and sexuality – produce opportunities for reflexivity Bourdieu failed to appreciate. That is, reflexivity is not provoked by conflicts between (or inter-) fields, but within them (intra).

The core notion inter-field accounts of reflexivity share is that the homology Bourdieu identified among domestic, economic and political fields in traditional or ‘undifferentiated’ societies cannot be transposed onto modern, ‘differentiated’ social contexts as easily as Bourdieu thought.161 In each of these versions the dispositions one incorporates in the way Bourdieu envisions regularly

159 Butler, 118.
160 Skeggs, 29.
161 Adams provides a detailed summary of the central debates within the inter-field accounts of reflexivity and argues that while the complex relationship between social transformation and reflexivity is interesting and worth critically examining, it is just as important to have a fuller understanding of the unequal distribution of opportunities for choice and action based on reflexive awareness. Matthew Adams, "Hybridizing Habitus and Reflexivity: Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Identity?" Sociology 40, no. 3 (2006).
conflict with the demands of fields to which they are ill-suited and thereby provoke reflection. Broadly speaking there are two versions of inter-field critiques. The first relates to what Matthew Adams calls the ‘extended reflexivity thesis’ posited by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. This thesis argues that modernization entails diminishing the determinative power of structures and a consequent increase in individualization. More specifically, expanding communication technologies, the increasingly global nature of employment, consumption and exchange of cultural imagery increases our exposures to others and radically undermines any unitary sense of ‘the way things are done’ that we may have. As a result, highly individualized agents cannot rely on the pre-generated dispositions organized through *habitus* and must instead reflect strategically on both practice and the meaning and value of norms and culture.\(^{162}\)

A similar model argues that although Bourdieu recognized the possibility of reflection and transformation of *habitus* in times of crisis – again, one can refer to Bourdieu’s research on the Kabyle people of northern Algeria\(^{163}\) – he ultimately failed to recognize the ubiquity of such crises. Crossley, for example, argues that *habitus* and rational computation ought not to be considered mutually exclusive because they are in fact mutually reinforcing aspects of practice during times of stability and crisis. He points to a variety of ways in which mobilization within social movements during times of crisis can embed dispositions toward critical reflection within agents. Political reflexivity arises from participation-induced reflection but then becomes a durable disposition.\(^{164}\)


\(^{164}\) Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 159.

Crossley, "From Reproduction to Transformation," 48-49 and 55.

Others point to awareness of what Bohman calls ‘second order desires’ (the desire to desire a thing) as the basis for sufficient reflexivity to allow intentional transformations of habitus. Bohman is interested in the possibility of intentional character development, but on a more overtly political register Haluza-Delay has argued that one goal of the environmental movement should be developing of ecological *habituses*, which
Further, Crossley has argued that reflexivity itself is rooted in the *habitus*, particularly because acquisition of language requires the formation of reflexive thoughts produced through an awareness of others via role-playing as children. Essentially, in this view, reflexivity is a habit.\(^{165}\)

Lois McNay also argues that agents are, in various ways, in crisis more often than Bourdieu acknowledges. She points to the conflicting demands that may arise for women entering the field of paid employment after child-rearing: the dissonance between the dispositions required in the domestic field and those required by the workplace may lead to greater awareness and reflexivity. In contrast to the extended reflexivity thesis of Ulrich and Beck, McNay argues that:

… reflexive awareness is predicated on a distanciation of the subject with constitutive structures. The questioning of conventional notions of femininity does not arise from exposure to and identification with a greater array of alternative images of femininity but from tensions inherent in the concrete negotiation of increasingly conflictual female roles.\(^{166}\)

McNay’s analysis best captures the ‘inter’ nature of the inter-field critiques. *Habitus* functions by generating consistent – structured – responses to the specific demands imposed by particular fields.\(^{167}\) Bourdieu’s commitment to the structured similarity of fields, their homologous operation, provides an account of why a single *habitus*-bearing agent behaves consistently across contexts, but overestimates how often those contexts actually compel consistent behavior.\(^{168}\)

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\(^{167}\) Adkins has similarly and persuasively taken up Crossley’s argument in order to show that reflexivity is not only a daily habit but also one that is highly gendered and offers gendered and class-stratified opportunities for day-to-day negotiation of objective fields. Adkins: 202-203.

Throughout my discussion of the *habitus* I have emphasized its active, adaptive nature as well as its dialectical relationship to the social wherein it submits to the demands of social fields, structured according to morally arbitrary schemes of classification, in exchange for recognition. It should come as no surprise, then, that I will depart from the reflexivity challenges to Bourdieu’s conception of agency and instead focus on its adaptive, *amour propre* aspects. In doing so, I conceive of *habitus* as a structured and organized set of dispositions oriented – with varying degrees of skill and competency – toward accumulating symbolic goods. The specific skill and competency on which accumulation is dependent relies on assumptions about practical reason and strategy.

Bourdieu develops his account of strategy and practical reason in *Outline* and *The Logic of Practice* in the same context as he developed his notion of *habitus*: his study of Kabyle villages and his particular concern with rethinking kinship and ritual, two traditional objectivist interests. In Part One, Section Two of *Outline* and in the second chapter of Book Two of *The Logic of Practice* Bourdieu argues that kinship patterns in Kabyle communities cannot be understood according to ‘official’ kinship norms. Instead, marriage and kinship arrangements are produced through complex strategies invested in protecting a family’s symbolic power through protection of patrimony and land and, in the context of sex of children, number, relative wealth, and so on. The distance between official norms and actual practice is centrally important here: actors easily subordinate official norms to practical exigencies and reduce official rules to instrumental mechanisms for accumulating symbolic profit.\(^{169}\) This strategic action demonstrates the under-appreciated efficacy of socially interested practical reflection and its function, over time, to reinforce and exacerbate unequal distributions of skill, competency and opportunity for successful accumulation. It also allows for a degree of innovation and novelty through sometimes cautious and sometimes desperate

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\(^{169}\) Bourdieu, *Outline*, 37 and 43.
experimentation, although the success of such experimentation is always constrained by the relative openness of a field to such efforts.

While strategy can be seen in the distance between official norms and the practical activities that deviate from those norms, practical reason is possible because of the inherent polysemy of objects. As already discussed, nouns, descriptors, even language use bear diverse connotations. In a discussion of Kabyle ritual, Bourdieu demonstrates the polysemous nature of objects, which is to say their tendency to carry multiple meanings depending on their specific context of use and their relation to all the other meaning-carrying objects constellating within that context. Ritual practitioners harness particular meanings to their objectives in the ritual’s practical magic. Bourdieu is interested in showing how this polysemy of symbolically identical objects or acts in rituals, their partial coincidence of significations (which are created through practical taxonomies) allows explanation through homology. That is, symbolic meaning can, through partial coincidence of significations and structural similarities of semi-autonomous contexts, allow habitus to transpose meaning from one field to another and thereby generate a theoretically infinite number of practices across theoretically infinite fields.\textsuperscript{170}

My interest is in harnessing the fact that practices are only \textit{theoretically} infinite (because the possibility of a practice is not the same as the authority to undertake a practice) to the structures of power that make practice \textit{finite}. Adaptation, strategy and practical reason transform social space from a static objective structure into a dynamic object of unequal and often unfair contest over which meaning will adhere to a particular object or practice. An agent’s willingness to experiment and therefore develop novel strategies and adaptations is itself contingent upon the context of experimentation (the stakes involved, the authority an agent can mobilize to reduce the impact of failure, etc.) as well as how well disposed the agent is toward risk-taking and creative imagination.

\textsuperscript{170} ibid., 143.
Invested in pursuing *amour propre*, the *habitus* emerges not as a conditionless subject asserting its will within social space, but a conditioned set of dispositions and orientations struggling to gain recognition and – as we will see in Chapters Three and Six especially – struggling to reduce myriad forms of suffering. Therefore, both individual and collective capacities to impose limits on theoretically infinite practices and to establish social spaces that are more or less arbitrary, more or less hierarchical, and more or less dominated must be taken seriously as a central consideration of political action.

A central contribution of the argument I am making is to historicize how agents transform pursuit of *amour propre* and struggles over meaning into collective, political struggles. In particular, Bourdieu’s conception of *habitus* gives no grounds for thinking that agents bring equal resources and skills or even identical manifestations of desire for social recognition to these struggles. Invested in pursuit of *amour propre* this conception of *habitus* imposes a Nietzschean will to power and will to knowledge on social practice, but where the free-wheeling subjectivist will Nietzsche imagined is replaced by the adapting aspirations of the Bourdieuian *habitus*. Indeed, the dynamics of group and collective identity formation, as I argue in Chapter Four, are bound up in normatively evaluable struggles over meaning undertaken by actors with vastly unequal distributions of skills and resources. Such struggles over meaning and over definition are not neutral efforts to understand the truth of social fields but to impose an interpretation of those fields that support particular strategies to accumulate symbolic power. Further, as I argue in Chapter Five, the symbolic terrain on which these struggles take place can be so uneven that oppositional politics become, in a sense, impossible. The capacity to experiment, to risk failure, and to overcome suffering is therefore as much at stake in social movement struggles as the specific claims they make.
CHAPTER THREE: SUFFERING AND JUSTICE

Introduction

In this chapter I articulate a Bourdieuan account of symbolic suffering. This account of suffering will provide the basis for a preliminary account of justice intended to allow researchers and activists to identify and assess what I have been referring to as ‘impasses’ and ‘distortions’ in social movement politics. I argue that attention to suffering provides a means of conceptually linking the adaptive and socially invested account of \textit{habitus} I developed in Chapter Two to the aspirations and distortions of collective political action and collective identity I describe in Chapter Four.

Suffering is a politically and socially mediated experience; our understanding of suffering, therefore, has explanatory and normative implications. At the explanatory level, social movement research’s consensus on the importance of collective identity in mobilizing processes points to what Melucci calls the ‘prophetic function’ of social movements:

Contemporary movements are prophets of the present. What they possess is not the force of the apparatus but the power of the word. They announce the commencement of change; not, however, a change in the distant future but one that is already a presence. They force the power out into the open and give it a shape and a face.\textsuperscript{171}

In Melucci’s view, social movements make existing conflicts and suffering publicly visible. Importantly, movements do not directly represent conflict and suffering, they construct it, mediating both how it appears and how it is experienced. As I discuss in further detail in the next chapter, social movements are products of power-laden negotiation and processes of meaning-making by which collective actors struggle to account for the nature of suffering, identify remedies to alleviate suffering, and articulate strategies for contesting its cultural and institutional bases. How movements articulate suffering to collective goals and to collective assessments of opportunities and resources is central to explaining movement dynamics.

\textsuperscript{171} Melucci, 1.
Importantly, while social movements might serve a ‘prophetic’ function in forcing symbolic power out into the open by making visible the suffering it produces, symbolic suffering is not just an object on which social movements act, but a mode of domination they replicate. Attention to symbolic suffering therefore recommends shifting from an account of group formation based on negotiation and collaborative meaning-making to an account based on domination, as I do in the next chapter. In turn, this permits treating social movements as potential sites of procedural justice amenable to normative evaluation. To begin laying the groundwork for an account of justice, in this chapter I follow Iris Marion Young in rejecting purely distributive approaches, though Young is doubtlessly correct in acknowledging that distribution is an important component in justice.\textsuperscript{172} My main interest in this chapter, however, is to set up two parallel distinctions. The first distinction is between Young’s conception of oppression, which she developed out of its use by New Social Movements from the 1960s through the 1980s, and Bourdieu’s conception of symbolic violence.\textsuperscript{173} Symbolic violence is the experience of feeling out of place, anxious, awkward, shamed, stupid, and so on resulting from both an objective inability to construct authorized actions (because the resources necessary to do so are unavailable to them) and a subjective commitment to (in the sense of recognizing) the very rules of social action by which a group or individual is excluded and dominated. The distinction between oppression and symbolic violence I draw in this chapter runs parallel to a second, namely, a distinction between Foucault and Bourdieu’s conceptions of power. The former lends itself to conceptualizing oppression and has been taken up especially by queer activists as I discuss in the next chapter, but Bourdieu’s conception of power and the related notion of symbolic violence provide the bases for the insights into social movement distortions I explore over the next several chapters.

\textsuperscript{173} ibid., 40.
On the basis of these distinctions, therefore, the final section of this chapter will briefly distinguish between alternative theoretical means of connecting suffering to justice and political practice. To emphasize, this chapter is intended to be connective; it provides an integral link between *habitus* and politics through an understanding of the kinds of suffering around which movement participants mobilize. Doing so will allow me to consider (in Chapter Six) specific mechanisms by which symbolic power in social movements might be organized in line with Bourdieu’s universalist vision for escaping the determinism and relativism critics have argued are unavoidable in his framework.

**Suffering**

**Incidental Injuries and the Organization of Suffering**

At first glance, it might seem as though the incidental injuries of everyday life – stubbed toes, boredom, minor disappointments, and so on – are politically irrelevant. Indeed, these kinds of injuries are generally not the stuff around which social movements organize. Yet it would be a mistake to misrecognize the uneven distribution of these kinds of injuries and the uneven distribution of the likelihood to experience these injuries as suffering. Appreciating the social and political context of everyday injuries opens the door to a more thorough understanding of the material exclusion and symbolic violence more generally associated with political or politicized suffering. Therefore, it is worth considering the relationship between certain ways of conceptualizing the relationship between distribution and justice generally and the account of agency on which these conceptualizations depend in order to contrast such accounts with Bourdieu’s more nuanced account of embodiment, hurt, and the distribution of chance.

Ronald Dworkin’s schema provides a useful heuristic device for illuminating this contrast. Of course, Dworkin was not concerned with incidental injuries but with the extent to which material inequality can be justified and what measures can legitimately be taken to reduce inequality that
exceeds justification. He begins by distinguishing between hardships that result from the morally culpable choices made by morally independent individuals and hardships that are simply the products of the hazard of living in an often unpredictable and harsh world. In Dworkin’s language, this distinction is between ‘option luck’ and ‘brute luck’. Dworkin uses this distinction to argue that providing an initial equality of resources through income taxes and insurance schemes creates just subsequent distributions of material goods by rewarding hard work and a willingness to take calculated risks – the scheme is ‘ambition sensitive’ – without punishing those whose talents or life circumstances through no fault of their own make accumulating ambition-sensitive rewards less likely or more difficult – the scheme is ‘endowment insensitive’. Dworkin’s ‘equality of resources’ model ultimately rests on an ontologically atomistic conception of moral agents who must make decisions about the kinds of lives they would like to pursue against background information about the actual cost their choices impose on other people and therefore on the total stock of available resources. For Dworkin, markets provide an institutionalized mechanism for resolving the technical problem of how to measure the costs of one’s own ambitions against the cost of other people’s. This is integral information for determining what ends can reasonably be pursued, and for knowing the social and individual costs of pursuing those ends. In this conception daily hurts and frustrations are either the result of an individual’s own choices and therefore not relevant to questions of justice or compensable through mandatory insurance schemes only insofar as these injuries create a material disadvantage through no fault of the injured individual.

Bourdieu’s anti-atomistic and anti-intellectualist vision of *habitus* suggests that normative accounts of the relevance of injury and suffering based on individual choice miss the point. Dworkin’s commitment to a vision of action wherein market mechanisms provide moral agents with

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175 ibid., 311.
176 ibid., 288-289.
a sufficiently objective perspective from which to identify all possible choices and each of the outcomes those choices entail exemplifies a central scholastic fallacy Bourdieu rejects. By universalizing the scholar’s relationship to an object of study, which is detached from the pressures and perspectives imposed by practical engagement, thinkers such as Dworkin in effect construct a map representing all possible routes for all possible travelers without paying attention to the routes that are actually maintained and used, the ‘beaten tracks’. The pressures and perspectives imposed by practical necessity and the set of dispositions, organized into the *habitus*, by which individuals perceive these pressures and determine possible responses have nothing to do with the external, objective perspective on which Dworkin’s market metaphor relies. The pressures and perspectives practical engagement with the world entail – the fact that we are exposed to physical and emotional injury, suffering, and death – forces us to take the world and its dangers seriously and orient ourselves, preconsciously through the *habitus* toward adapting to, avoiding, and overcoming the dangers the world poses. As Bourdieu suggests, injuries and traumas are in fact central to how *habitus* is formed: the corrections and adjustments that provoke adaptation may take the form of positive rewards but are more likely to manifest in psychological and physical suffering. What is morally relevant, then, is not the injury itself but the highly contingent adjustment it produces, an adjustment that, to emphasize, has nothing to do with adopting an objective perspective from which a list of all possible choices and outcomes can be drawn. If moral agents do not have such an objective perspective from which to make decisions about ends and possibilities, Dworkin’s distinction between brute and option luck as a means for distinguishing between the relative justice of distributive outcomes collapses.

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179 ibid., 165.
Further, sociality is always organized into fields since a field exists whenever there are two or more agents sufficiently invested in shared stakes (that is, a shared sense of the value of some object or interaction) and a sufficiently shared communicative structure to allow consideration of and action on those stakes. Fields are not, however, simply neutral meeting places in which actors encounter one another. Rather, they are structured social spaces in which actors strategically deploy the resources available to them according to the norms, rules and possibilities specific fields offer, knowledge of which is also a resource and the product of how well a *habitus* is attuned to the dynamics of that field. Therefore, sociality itself depends on *habitus* that are adjusted to participation in those fields. Short of injuries that are sufficiently traumatic as to cause ongoing distress or mental illness, minor psychological and physical suffering is beneficial insofar as it provokes the adaptation necessary for *habitus* to incorporate the necessary dispositions for successful struggle over stakes in various fields. Again, insofar as these adaptations are pre-conscious and yet orient us toward specific kinds of fields at an embodied, dispositional level, it makes no sense to develop an egalitarian model based on detached, rational decisions about life goals. Moreover, assessing one’s own resources, the costs of pursuing various goals, the resources others carry and the likelihood that other actors will use those resources to compete for the goals one values, all require skills – cultural capital – that are not evenly distributed because the distribution of the kinds of injuries, opportunities and corrections needed to foster those dispositions depends on class, gender and other divisions. Distributive justice alone is insufficient for an account of justice that is sensitive to the relationship between suffering and accumulation. Instead, justice demands a more thorough account of the relationship between adaptation to the demands of fields (whether provoked by injury or reward) and the distribution of potential for accumulation within economic, cultural and symbolic fields.

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180 I take up the theme of the relationship between suffering and action in Chapter Six.
As importantly, because Dworkin’s distributive approach to justice explicitly sidelines questions of power and reduces markets to a merely technical mechanism, his conception refuses important experiential aspects of belonging to a dominated group.\textsuperscript{181} Debates within positive psychology can help illustrate why this is problematic. Peterson, Park and Seligman distinguish between three kinds of happiness: hedonism (centered on sensory gratification and invested in maximizing pleasure while minimizing pain, with clear links to utilitarian political philosophy), the Aristotelian notion of \textit{eudaimonia} (centered on pursuing a life of meaning and invested in developing and putting to service for the greater good what is best in ourselves) and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s notion of ‘autotelic experience’ or ‘flow’.\textsuperscript{182} From the Greek auto (self) and \textit{telos} (goal), an autotelic experience is one in which the actor is so engrossed in what she is doing that she has no sensory capacity available for additional stimuli.\textsuperscript{183} People experiencing flow lose their sense of the passing of time, physical discomfort and even the instrumentally valuable consequences of their action. Flow produces happiness after-the-fact as, strictly speaking, the experience of flow itself is non-emotional. Rather, people emerge from flow activity feeling invigorated and satisfied.\textsuperscript{184} Csikszentmihalyi identifies three conditions for achieving flow. First, there must be clear rules for the practice at hand; participants must know moment by moment what is demanded of them. Sports are particularly amenable to flow precisely because the athlete’s environment provides ongoing demands for action with clear parameters and goals. Second, there needs to be immediate feedback such as a missed shot in sports, but also a wrong note in music or misspeaking during a particularly engrossing conversation, all of which stimulate immediate correction or adjustment. Finally, the challenges

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{181} Dworkin: 283-284.
\item \textsuperscript{184} Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "If We Are So Rich, Why Aren't We Happy?,” \textit{American Psychologist} 54, no. 10 (1999): 825.
\item \textsuperscript{184} Peterson, Park, and Seligman: 27.
\end{itemize}
involved in the activity must be sufficient to stave off boredom but not so great as to produce anxiety.\textsuperscript{185}

Tellingly, though Csikszentmihalyi argues that an autotelic personality is possible for everyone, that is, he argues that anyone can learn to achieve flow regularly, he has remarkably few generalizable suggestions for how that can be done. He is clear, for example, that any kind of work can produce flow: “People are not happy because of what they do but because of how they do it.”\textsuperscript{186} Yet, his advice boils down to an idealist intentionality: whatever your circumstances, no matter how boring or unchallenging an activity might be, flow can be achieved by concentrating on, and creatively engaging, the task at hand.\textsuperscript{187}

This shrugging of the shoulders with advice to simply intend to transform the banal into the interesting through concentration alone is somewhat disingenuous. Concentration and the opportunity to work in an uninterrupted manner are not universally available conditions. Concentration is itself a skill and the inclination to pursue the skills and opportunities required to achieve flow-inducing concentration are both the product of contingent biographical conditions and unevenly distributed, as is the freedom from immediate practical necessities required to set aside the time to develop this capacity. Further, many working conditions do not provide opportunity for uninterrupted attention to required tasks. Finally, as Bourdieu argues, the ability to “abandon oneself” to one’s automatisms depends on the degree of match between habitus and position in the social world. Experience of the world as a realm of objects and relations amenable to manipulation in rough accordance with one’s own skills and interests depends on close alignment between the conditions of \textit{habitus} production

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\textsuperscript{185} Csikszentmihalyi, "If We Are So Rich, Why Aren't We Happy?," 825.  \\
\textsuperscript{186} ibid.  \\
\end{flushleft}
and the context of social action.\(^{188}\) Yet, the mundane, routinized and alienated nature of most work likely does not fit the creativity, talent and interest of the workers employed to do it.

The political implications I am trying to draw out, however, go further than the organized distribution of opportunities to experience one particular form of happiness as a psychological condition. Critical theorists have long pointed to the markedly different subjective experience of the social world by members of dominated or oppressed groups. Iris Marion Young and Marilyn Frye point to the structurally produced experience of being closed in on all sides common to members of oppressed groups and foreign to the experience of privilege.\(^{189}\) I will discuss oppression more fully below, but the important point here is that everyday, banal incidents of suffering are not uniformly experienced as such because they cannot ever be entirely abstracted from broader distributions of frustrations, exclusions and, as I will also discuss below, misrecognized and subtle incidences of symbolic violence. Dworkin and others operating within the ‘distributive paradigm’\(^{190}\) are wrong to separate questions of power from questions of material well-being precisely because doing so also abstracts questions of material goods from the subjective experience of acting in a social world that hierarchically organizes actors’ ability to enjoy, accumulate, and derive psychic and symbolic benefit from those goods.

**Material Exclusions**

The ‘Occupy Wall Street’ (OWS) protest in New York and the occupations of public space it inspired in cities around the world in September and October 2011 point to the ongoing political relevance of disparities in wealth and income. Inspired by the successful spring 2011 occupation of Tahrir Square in Egypt by activists demanding the resignation of then-President Hosni-Mubarak, the ‘culture-jamming’ magazine *Adbusters* issued a call to action: “On September 17, we want to see

\(^{188}\) Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 163.


\(^{190}\) Young, 41.
20,000 people flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months.”

Although OWS refused pressures to present a coherent and unified list of demands, they quickly came to be associated with the slogan, ‘We are the 99%’, a reference to the economic and political distortions surrounding the consolidation of significant amounts of wealth in the hands of the richest 1% of the population. A report from the United States Congressional Budget Office, released shortly after the occupations began, confirmed many of the claims protesters were making about income disparity. The report found that between 1979 and 2007 overall average real household income increased by a modest 19%. Naturally this average increase was not evenly distributed, and those in the top 1% enjoyed a tripling of their income over the same period.

Similar research in Canada shows that in both the most prosperous growth era of the last generation (1997-2007) and the decade with the slowest growth (1987-1997) Canada’s richest 1%, whose average annual income was $404,500 took almost one-third of the national growth in income.

Given the massive upward redistribution of wealth developed economies have experienced over the last several decades and neoliberalism’s remarkable proclivity for producing wealth at the expense of large segments of populations who are condemned to precarious employment, poverty, and material suffering, economic exclusion constitutes an immediate and obviously political form of suffering. Nonetheless, Young correctly cautions against the attention to material inequalities that is typical of liberal debates about distributive justice. The defining features of the distributive

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paradigm include a conception of justice as coextensive with distribution, and with efforts to find a morally proper distribution of society’s benefits and burdens. Interlocutors in these debates maintain a socially atomistic conception of individuals wherein they are externally related to the goods they possess. This implies that the only inter-individual relationship of relevance to justice is a comparison of the amount and qualities of those goods.\textsuperscript{195} Young offers examples such as plant closures without community input and battles over the location of a hazardous waste dump to illustrate that justice claims are about more than material goods. What matters in these examples is who makes decisions about distribution, the cultural imagery and symbols that are used to portray groups (especially racialized groups, women, and sexual minorities), and the availability of opportunities for all members of a society to participate in meaningful work.\textsuperscript{196} None of these problematics are captured by questions of distribution. On the contrary, Young argues, the distributive paradigm provides ideological cover and depoliticizes important questions about decision making, the division of labour, and culture, and reduces these questions to one-dimensional debates about distributive policy.\textsuperscript{197}

Young rejects claims that distributive justice theories actually can be applied to issues beyond wealth because doing so affects aspects of social life that are better understood as a function of rules and relations than as things. For Young, this reification obscures the fact that what people do and what they have is structured by institutionalized relations and how the combined effect of their doings has a recursive effect on their lives. Thus, for example, rights are not things. They are relationships based on institutionally designed rules.\textsuperscript{198} Further, the distributive paradigm conceives issues of justice only in terms of patterns or snapshots that only capture the distribution of wealth at a specified point in time. Focus on snapshots establishes a static conception of justice, whereas

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{195} Young, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{196} ibid., 19.
\item \textsuperscript{197} ibid., 75.
\item \textsuperscript{198} ibid., 25.
\end{itemize}
understanding the relation between social structures and actions requires a temporal, process-based approach to social theory. This means conceiving of individuals as actors, with meanings and purposes who act in relation to one another and respond to the actions of others, rather than as recipients of goods or properties.199

Young’s critique is well-founded although her turn to oppression as a category of analysis is less useful than turning to strategy and domination. Following Bourdieu, my broader objection to the distributive paradigm is the way its attention to material suffering occludes the importance of symbolic violence and distinction-based suffering. Domination as it is conceived in the model I am developing is about active constructions, struggle over meaning and subjective adjustments. Naturally these entail reference to relevant material realities, particularly as those realities are articulated into class structures without being fully reducible to them. In the next section I turn to a consideration of Bourdieu’s vision of the relationship between class and symbolic suffering before turning to a structured comparison between oppression and symbolic violence as analytic categories.

**Habitus, Affectivity, and Symbolic Suffering**

Bourdieu grounds the analysis of the effects of neoliberalism he and his co-authors describe in *The Weight of the World* in a distinction between material poverty (‘la grande misère’) and the daily, or ‘ordinary’ suffering social exclusion and domination (‘la petite misère’) produce. This Rousseauian conception of sociality argues that suffering increases within “multiplied social spaces” created by capitalist social inequalities, even when overall poverty has been somewhat reduced.200 Indeed, attention to symbolic domination and the suffering it produces is central to Bourdieu’s critique of liberalism and to the individualizing, pathologizing and demobilizing effects of efforts to conceive of justice in solely distributive terms. There are three components to this critique: the

199 ibid., 28.
mimetic origins of affect; the dynamics of stratification, recognition and misrecognition central to Bourdieu’s conception of subjectivity; and the constant, practical and strategic pursuit of symbolic capital central to Bourdieu’s conception of agency. In this section I will focus mainly on the third element, as the first two have already been discussed at length in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, as I argue in the next two chapters, the three elements combined provide the grounds for serious doubts about the communicative and atomistic assumptions about the ethics of social movement strategies underpinning liberal theories of civil disobedience and the naïve pluralism underpinning faith in collective identities as expressing activists’ interests and preferences.

Bourdieu’s account of symbolic suffering hinges on his treatment of the symbolic as a structured construction of a shared classification of the social world, which is to say a shared schema of perception and meaning by which agents understand the value of objects, agents and actions within social space. For Bourdieu, the symbolic has three central features that give it its affective power. First, the symbolic depends entirely on recognition. If a symbolic object or representation did not meet with agents bearing habitus disposed to perceiving and appreciating that object, then it would have no social value or effect. Thus, Bourdieu describes habitus as a form of potential energy, a spring-like mechanism triggered by symbolic claims. Without the recognition appropriate dispositions afford, the habitus’ energy remains merely potential, and representations have no meaning.

Second, in a demonstration of Bourdieu’s reliance on structuralist thinking, the symbolic depends on relational logic to ascribe meaning and value to all objects within a symbolic system. As Schinkel notes, Bourdieu adopted the Saussurian principle of difference by which the meaning of every object within structured space (or in Saussure’s case, the meaning of each word and phrase

201 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 169.
within language) can only be determined in relation to all of the other objects within that space. Bourdieu cautions against the ‘substantialist’ mode of thinking in which the analyst assigns properties to objects and agents, when in fact the pertinent principle is the relationship among objects, and that the meaning of a given agent or object can only be appreciated in its relationship to other agents and objects. Therefore, the symbolic is a representation of the world, but not a direct, positive representation capable of nominally expressing some essential truth about the objects represented. The symbolic represents and naturalizes the system of arbitrary distinctions by which social fields are hierarchically organized and by which positions in social space receive their differential esteem or value.

Finally, the symbolic is a schema by which agents act upon the world and engage in struggles over the construction and shape of the structured system of meanings just described. The constructed systems of meaning that organize the symbolic are not spontaneous, random, or easily transformed – they exist durably in buildings and the physical structures of human geography but also are incorporated into the durable dispositions of habitus. Further, these schemes of classification, produced through long histories of struggles over interpretations of the world, having been objectified in habitus and geography, produce a ‘logical conformism’, a homogeneous conception of time, space, number and cause. This shared logic enables different agents to reach sufficient agreement about the meaning of the natural and social worlds that they are able to act upon them in socially intelligible ways. This logical conformism, fundamental agreement about the meaning of

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202 William Schinkel, "Pierre Bourdieu's Political Turn?," Theory, Culture & Society 20, no. 6 (2003): 76. As such, habitus are not only marked by their class conditions, but derive meaning from their class and field positions. That is, dispositions are always objectively related to all of the other possible positions within a field: Bourdieu, Distinction, 246.

203 Bourdieu, Distinction, 22.

204 Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, 166. Bourdieu’s approach can be distinguished here from other constructivist approaches. For example, while Berger and Luckmann argue that intersubjective interaction produces a reliable, shared or common sense from “the normal, self-evident routines of everyday life”, Bourdieu insists on both the imposed nature of this common sense (that is, its origins in relations of power) and the lack of commonality that derives from the differential social backgrounds from which agents
worlds and objects manifests in the dispositions of the *habitus* as pre-conscious structures underlying cognition and the basis on which agents encounter the world. Classed, gendered, and embodying unequally distributed capacities for participating in social fields but nonetheless sharing fundamental logical and normative assumptions and vested in social participation, *habitus* encounters the practical exigencies of the social world (and the possibilities and obstacles it contains) and reflects the schemes of classification that organize that world back onto the body in the form of emotional experience and evaluation. The tension between logical conformism and differentiated *habitus* underpins Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power. Symbolic power operates through the body to replicate the tension between conformity as agreement about the social world and *habitus* as unequally distributed chances to act successfully in the world, to be recognized by it, or conversely to suffer in it.

For this reason, Bourdieu emphasizes the close relationship among the mimetic, cognitive and affective aspects of *habitus*:

The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is.205

What is ‘learned by body’ is the entire cosmology of the body’s social environs; the body learns schemes of classification that articulate power and authority to *value* in the sense of what is desirable, beautiful and good. Affectivity, then, involves a two-stage process. First, agents acquire, in the form of *habitus* a practical bodily knowledge capable of giving them a sense of their present and potential position in social space (a ‘sense of one’s place), which is also a ‘sense of placement’

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205 Bourdieu, *Logic*, 73.
(awareness of rank, how to behave to keep that rank and to keep within it). Highly embodied and laden with emotional content structured by the structured dynamics of recognition, these senses of place and placement are then retriggered in social situations where bodies are re-placed in concrete relations of power and judgment.

The practical recognition through which the dominated, often unwittingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them, often takes the form of bodily emotion (shame, timidity, anxiety, guilt), often associated with the impression of regressing towards archaic relationships, those of childhood and family.207

Sense of place and placement take the form of emotion (unease if out of place, comfort when in one’s place) and when re-positioned in subordinate postures the habitus expresses unease through behaviours such as avoidance or unconscious adjustments speech and can have visible manifestations including blushing, inarticulacy, clumsiness and trembling.208 Two emotions demonstrate particularly well the socially organized, power-laden and collectively produced yet individually experienced nature of emotions: shame and disgust.

Sayer describes learned classification as ‘lay normativity’ and credits Bourdieu with attending to the fact, ignored by most social science, that decisions over momentous considerations and minutia alike are guided by reference to things we value. Sayer acknowledges that these valuations come from culture, but their internalization is only possible because human agents are the kinds of objects that are needy, radically incomplete and indeterminate, but capable of receiving culture and therefore not only capable of flourishing and suffering but also capable of evaluating (however fallibly) the extent to which they are flourishing.209 Following Bourdieu, Sayer connects lay normativity and the evaluations it entails to emotional content via bodily awareness of the

207 ibid., 169.
208 ibid., 169 and 184.
congruity or gap between the norms and evaluations that structure social space and an agent’s sense of their ability to meet those norms. Produced through an agent’s internalization of other agents’ real or perceived judgments, shame is exemplary among emotional responses to this gap. Shame is therefore deeply social, though experienced individually, and its tendency to remain unarticulated makes it a particularly powerful, embodied ‘re-enactment’ of the past.210

Describing what is arguably the flip side of the same coin, Lawler points to disgust as a particularly visceral mechanism by which social hierarchies are reproduced through a pre-conscious and affective evaluation of the self in relation to people in different areas of social space. Lawler notes that disgust is a particularly strong indication that there is a norm that is both presently operative and being violated – by definition a social evaluation, an evaluation based on internalized collective judgment. Like shame, however collective or social the origin of the evaluation, the experience is individual and visceral; in limit cases, disgust results in an actual physical expulsion – vomiting – in response to a norm’s violation.211

Both Sayer and Lawler are interested in the class-based dynamics of shame and disgust, and though Sayer’s analysis of the relationship between judgment and emotion is well-articulated, his overall argument is problematic. In particular, he falls into an intellectualist error by suggesting that people justify their actions based on normative evaluations, which figures the dynamics of recognition and judgment as existing in a mode similar to the abstracted, objective perspective Dworkin and other liberals assume to be central to choice and action. Sayer extends this error by distinguishing between morality and aesthetics on the claim that morality is primarily about relations to others while aesthetics is something akin to personal expression.212 These claims miss both the relational logic and the corporeality at the core of Bourdieu’s framework. Aesthetics are intrinsically

210 ibid., 94.
212 Sayer, 90.
about relations to others because they are expressions of taste associated with class, gender and other symbolically laden classifications. That is, the distinctions by which aesthetic boundaries are drawn, generally expressed through negative judgments of horror and refusal, mark out the line between legitimate styles of living and illegitimate ones. Contrary to Sayer’s minimization of the importance of aesthetics in social life, “aesthetic intolerance can be terribly violent.”

In addition to the intrinsically relational logic of aesthetics, Sayer underestimates the importance of the corporeal nature of both moral and aesthetic judgments. At stake here is not just whether aesthetics are morally neutral as is wrongly implied by Sayer’s contrast between aesthetics on the one hand and the practice of being honest or deceitful, generous or selfish, and so on the other, but whether domination is the product of conscious, intentional acts as implied by the notion of ‘justification’ and by Sayer’s efforts to restrict moral evaluation to actions that are ‘about relations to others’ in the limited way he suggests. Contrast Sayer’s above notion of justification-based lay-normativity to Lawler’s account of class and disgust:

‘Class’ is rarely explicitly invoked in contemporary expressions of disgust: instead, the ‘disgusting’ traits are presented as the outcome of individual and familial pathology. Representations of working-class people are marked by disapproval or disdain, not for the ‘objective’ markers of their position, but for (what are perceived to be) their identities. Everything is saturated with meaning: their clothes, their bodies, their houses, all are assumed to be markers of some ‘deeper’, pathological form of identity. This identity is taken to be ignorant, brutal and tasteless.

Lawler demonstrates the close relationship between aesthetic judgments, emotional evaluation and identity. She also points to how groups and individuals reproduce social space by acting upon these judgments (that is, acting upon their own sense of shame or disgust) to reproduce

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213 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 56. For an illustration, one can return to McRobbie’s analysis of ‘What not To Wear’, to which I referred in Chapter One. However, the aesthetic intolerance to which Bourdieu refers includes all facets of taste (including in food, art, music, and so on). For an interesting discussion of symbolic power in the context of sexual aesthetics in Toronto’s gay male community, see: Adam Isaiah Green, "Playing the (Sexual) Field: The Interactional Basis of Systems of Sexual Stratification," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 74 (2011).

214 Sayer, 92.

215 Lawler: 437.
the sense of placement the logical conformism underpinning dominant schemes of classification sanctions. As McRobbie argues, these dynamics gain expression in such current forms as the ‘What Not to Wear’ television show, where gendered and classed judgments about aesthetics, shaped and reinforced by popular culture, provide ‘corrections’ to promote *habitus* that conform to “contemporary requirements of the fields of employment, consumer culture and sexuality.”²¹⁶ These dynamics are not, however, relegated to the fields of employment and popular culture.

Researchers have also done considerable empirical work examining how affectivity and suffering plays out in class contexts. Frost and Hoggett, for example, have reviewed considerable literature on the relationship between hurt and class as well as hurt and race. They argue that class needs to be understood through patterns of fantasy and longing (what one seeks to be and avoids being) and that individualization (individualized blame for failure, for being a ‘loser’) and suffering are exacerbated by the distance between the popular delusion that there is no such thing as class (determination and hard work are all that are required for social mobility) and the reality of negative consequences and barriers produced by class circumstance.²¹⁷ Similarly, Reay points to the daily operation of class hierarchies in educational settings and finds examples of visceral aversion to school interactions (speaking with teachers and classmates, being seated next to children from different class backgrounds, etc.) because of conflicts between middle-class norms and working class *habitus*, and therefore heightened feelings of inferiority and superiority in routine, daily aspects of school. Working class children, for example, were almost uniformly treated as stupid and felt unable to confide in teachers, while middle-class students resented being forced to sit next to ‘stupid’ students – where ‘stupid’ operated as a proxy for ‘working class’.

²¹⁶ McRobbie, 108.
As I will attempt to articulate further in Chapter Five, these dynamics of symbolic violence and suffering play out in multiple ways, including in collective action. Lawler, for example, shows how media portrayals of protesters are more sensitive to demands presented by middle-class, ‘respectable’ women than when similar demands are made by working class women. She found that working class women participating in demonstrations and protests in working-class neighbourhood were vilified for “their bodily appearance (assumed to mark a deeper, pathologized psychology); their ignorance or lack of understanding; [and] their inadequacy as mothers.”\(^\text{219}\) By contrast, middle-class protesters were represented as sympathetic, devoted mothers.\(^\text{220}\) Such differences in media representation suggest that there is more at work in contentious political action than simple framing, ‘getting out the numbers’, or the rational exchange of justifications central to liberal and communicative political ethics. Further, the mechanisms and political opportunities identified by mainstream social movement research are ill suited to fully capture the dynamics of domination operating through unified cognitive, affective and practical encounters with political and social fields. As importantly, as I will argue in the next chapter, dynamics of symbolic violence function to install domination at the core of collective action through the process of collective identity formation, through which movement goals and strategies are selected. In both strategy and identity, symbolic, material, and ordinary suffering become the grounds for both mobilization and the mechanism by which some forms of suffering remain depoliticized, individualized and pathologized.

**Suffering and Justice**

Critical political theory, oriented toward normative reflection provoked by, as Young suggests, “hearing a cry of suffering, or distress” seeks to develop and defend conceptions of justice
interested in ameliorating suffering and therefore, implicitly or explicitly, to foster robust opportunities for all members of society to pursue their full human potential.\textsuperscript{221} Such critical projects demand that we engage with what Lukes, following Gallie calls ‘essentially contested concepts.’\textsuperscript{222} Describing power, for example, Lukes notes that the basic way political theorists tend to conceive of power, the concept of power they use – that A has power insofar as A affects B – always involves smuggling normative commitments into that conception because theorists never simply mean ‘A affects B’, but that ‘A affects B \textit{in a significant way’}.\textsuperscript{223} Asserting and measuring significance inevitably entails normative judgments. Asserting a relationship between suffering and justice involves similar normative partiality. Central problems for normative political theory therefore include determining what counts as politically relevant suffering and what institutional or procedural mechanisms (operating against existing background conditions characterized by unequal distributions of power and resources) can best remedy that suffering without producing new forms of politically significant suffering. As importantly, critical social and political theory concerns itself with mechanisms by which suffering obtains a collective or social and therefore politically contestable status. Bourdieu, for example, held this to be a central task of critical sociology. He called upon social scientists to recognize the social efficacy of “allowing those who suffer to find out that their suffering can be imputed to social causes and thus to feel exonerated; and in making generally known the social origin, collectively hidden, of unhappiness in all its forms, including the most intimate, the most secret.”\textsuperscript{224} More polemically, Bourdieu argues that social scientists, complicit in developing the tools of rationalization choose either to disavow responsibility for how tools of rationalization are

\begin{flushleft}{\textsuperscript{221}} Young, 6. Similarly, Holloway grounds his project in attention to “the scream… of sadness, a scream of horror, a scream of anger, a scream of refusal” from which theoretical reflection ought to originate. John Holloway, \textit{Change the World without Taking Power} (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 1.\textsuperscript{222} Steven Lukes, \textit{Power: A Radical View}, 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 14.\textsuperscript{223} ibid., 30.\textsuperscript{224} Bourdieu, \textit{The Weight of the World}, 629.\end{flushleft}
used to intensify and perpetuate domination or to put those tools to use in exposing and thereby resisting domination’s arbitrary and pervasive underpinnings.\textsuperscript{225}

The state, political parties and the journalistic field also play roles in the construction of suffering, but my interest is in social movements and their ‘prophetic’ function in collectivizing and politicizing previously unrecognized or marginalized forms of suffering. As is true of social scientists and institutionalized participants in the political field, attention to the processes of collectivization and construction in social movements are amenable to normative evaluation, in terms of distortions of how suffering is linked to views of justice. Before turning to those questions in the next chapter, however, I will briefly examine alternative theoretical approaches to making these connections in this section and the next.

**Suffering as Unjustified Coercion; Justice as Legitimate Coercion**

Liberal political theory – particularly within the social contract tradition – has generally concerned itself with questions of political legitimacy. The significant form of suffering addressed by this approach is the morally unjustified use of coercion by the state. Of concern here is how such coercion infringes on the individual’s sphere of autonomous decision-making. Liberals tend to remain neutral on suffering that results from individual choice or unavoidable happenstance, preferring to focus on the relationship between individual freedom and the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social existence. Justice in this view is to be found in an appropriate constellation of formal equality, universal application of the law and protection of individual freedom through some combination of legal rights. State coercion in matters ranging from criminal prosecution to economic regulation and redistribution is legitimate only insofar as that coercion can

be morally justified through reference to equality, universalism, pluralism and the protection of liberty.\(^{226}\)

There are, of course, myriad critiques of liberalism, and how best to hold together the constellation of central liberal commitments is vigorously debated within liberal political theory itself. Bourdieu’s particular rejection of social contract theories of legitimacy and indeed political theories of legitimacy in general proceeds according to the following logic. In relatively undifferentiated societies, common schemes of classification are incorporated in the habitus through the spatial and temporal organization of life, particularly through ritual, common layouts of towns and homes, and common daily activities. By contrast, modern, differentiated societies primarily produce and reproduce logical conformism through the state. The state regulates the major events of the social calendar (school calendars, fiscal years, public holidays, etc.), and imposes principles of classification such as sex, age, ‘competence’ or qualification through diverse mechanisms (voting ages, age of consent laws, educational credentialing and institutional regulation, etc.). Over time, the social categories thereby constructed become reified and naturalized cognitive categories through which agents perceive and act upon the world.\(^{227}\) Rogers Brubaker, for example, has demonstrated how the former Soviet Union constructed national identities by uniting ethnic nationality as both a statistical and legal category, for example, through the use of internal passports and other personal documents.\(^{228}\) Central to this process is the misrecognition both of the arbitrary nature of these


\(^{227}\) Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 175.

categories (though they may become the objects of political contests) and of the arbitrary origins of the state’s power to do so.²²⁹

Recall, in this connection, the embodied consciousness underpinning the *habitus* as the location of cognitive structures. Bourdieu explicitly calls for a break from Kantian intellectualism that views cognitive structures as forms of consciousness, in favour of the *habitus*-based conception of consciousness as dispositions of the body. Thus, obedience to the modern state is neither achieved through mechanical coercion nor through conscious consent to rational forms of legitimate authority. Rather, the state is a particular instance of social ‘calls to order’ which trigger dispositions predisposed to notice them: “The self-evidence of the injunctions of the State imposes itself so powerfully because the State has imposed the cognitive structures through which it is perceived.”²³⁰ He concludes that the generative nature of dispositions and the coherence of the schemes of generation embodied in *habitus* produced within generally unified positions provides the grounds for tacit agreement (not explicit contract) on the basis of doxic acceptance of the fundamental precepts of the established order. For Bourdieu legitimacy is therefore not a question of lucid consciousness (à la Weber) but an agreement between incorporated structures and objective organization. Noting Hume’s astonishment at ease with which men resign their sentiments and submit to rule, Bourdieu concludes that the problem of legitimacy is the fact that for the most part it is not a problem.²³¹

Lukes’ analysis of power is relevant here. Liberal and pluralist conceptions of politics, legitimacy and democracy typically limit themselves to what Lukes calls ‘one-dimensional’ and ‘two-dimensional’ views of power. These are approaches to power that assume the presence of power only when there is conflict between interests articulated as preferences and manifested as political

²²⁹ For a particularly interesting account of the arbitrary origins of the state, see: Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
²³⁰ For Bourdieu’s account of the origins of state power see: Bourdieu, *Practical Reason*, Chapter Three.
²³¹ ibid., 176-177 and 178.
action.²³² For Lukes, power is not simply a question of how competing interests are politically adjudicated; it is fundamentally a question of how consent is obtained by controlling the desires upon which interests are constructed.²³³ Lukes’ work is therefore not only useful for sensitizing theorists to the kinds of power that require legitimizing, but also for decentering questions of power and legitimacy from normative political theory in order to find other grounds for justice. Just as pluralist conceptions of power limit its legible operation to observable decision making and thereby mask prior effects of power, liberal conceptions of justice as the limited redress of suffering achieved by limiting the power exerted by the state to its legitimate exercise mask the myriad ways in which suffering is socially produced and organized and reifies state coercion as the central concern of political theory. A status-quo circularity results: questions of legitimacy are bound up in one-dimensional or two-dimensional conceptions of power and rest on a state-fostered doxic consensus over what counts as coercive use of power. The doxa of legitimacy is particularly relevant to strategies of contention that symbolically reject basic classifications of whether actions are violent or not, reasonable or not, democratic or not and so on, as well as political projects that strive to push what is considered legitimately desirable beyond a vision of what is immediately feasible.

**Suffering and the Politics of Experience**

Throughout this dissertation I will be emphasizing, with Bourdieu and with important trajectories in the social movement literature, the importance of a relational logic in understanding contentious political action. Articulating an account of justice to descriptions of suffering risks problematically treating *habitus* or suffering themselves as objects with normative statuses. Among others, Wendy Brown and Lois McNay provide persuasive arguments regarding the dangers of

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²³² Lukes, 16-17 and 25.
²³³ ibid., 27.
drawing on experience directly – treating suffering as though it were an unmediated concept – and linking it to a politics of identity.

In her effort to adapt Bourdieu’s work and apply it to feminist analyses, McNay argues that overcoming the determinism pervading structuralist thinking requires an understanding of agency that is sufficiently robust to connect identity to the determining force of economic and cultural structures. Feminist efforts to uncover women’s experience – particularly the gendered manifestations of suffering – have led in some instances to epistemologically problematic ‘standpoint’ approaches where experience is taken as self-explanatory, leading to empiricism without analysis of the relationship between experience and knowledge as well as a problematic and illusory unity among women. More broadly, Brown warns of the dangers of mobilization based on political identities organized around suffering. Taking up Nietzsche’s psychological notion of ressentiment, Brown argues that politics based on substituting moral codes for action valorize suffering as a social virtue. Such ressentiment leads politicized identities to invest in their own subjugation and ultimately to prefer political powerlessness and generalized impotence to collective liberation through empowerment. McNay and Brown both demonstrate the problematic results of abstracting suffering from action. For McNay, grounding analysis in experience reduces women’s experience to effects of repressive structures and renders impossible accounts of active negotiation of and resistance to those structures. For Brown, political projects that substitute morality for agency are destined to remain complicit in the legal, cultural and discursive structures that produce suffering.

Feminist critical realist accounts have important affinities with Bourdieuan approaches to the relationship between experience and action. Satya Mohanty and Paula Moya have both positioned their work as efforts to overcome the apparent impasse between the essentialism characteristic of

235 ibid.
237 ibid., 70-71.
certain forms of identity politics and the anti-foundationalism of postmodern theorising. Their central concern was to demonstrate that although experiences are socially constructed, it does not follow that all experiences are equally (in)valid bases from which to articulate progressive political projects. Rather, they argue, experience is not only socially constructed it is also cognitively mediated, which is to say that an agent’s theoretically informed understanding of an experience is a central aspect of how that experience is constructed. Theoretical and cognitive frameworks through which agents understand events can be more or less accurate and therefore experiences can more or less accurately reflect objective social realities. Mohanty points to emotions as a paradigmatic set of experiences that appear to be completely inner and private. She then distinguishes between the sincerity of emotions and their legitimacy. Thus someone may sincerely feel a particular emotion such as anger, but whether that is a legitimate or justified response to a particular set of conditions depends on political and moral claims about those conditions.

The question, then, is on what grounds we might evaluate the quality of the theoretical and cognitive mediation through which experiences become more or less accurate reflections of the external world? Moya and Mohanty argue that, among other requirements, theoretical understanding of experiences must be articulated to and through oppositional struggles and that these struggles provide the possibility (though not the guarantee) of privileged epistemic insights. I will take up critical realist epistemology in relation to Bourdieu’s version of realist scientific practice in Chapter Seven. For now what is important to recognize is that experience, social action, and reflexive mediation through which people apprehend the world are subject to the same processes of construction and reification.

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239 Mohanty, 38. Mohanty uses the example of Alice, a woman who obtains feminist interpretations of her experience through consciousness-raising groups. The legitimacy of her resulting anger will depend on moral and political views about gendered relations of power. See also Moya, 83.
240 Moya, 86-87.
awareness of the meaning of experience and action are deeply intertwined. In McNay’s words, the “essence of social being is not encompassed in experience itself but it does only begin to reveal itself through experience which must then be situated in a broader context.” Experience – including the suffering described in previous sections – does not on its own provide sufficient epistemological grounds for making claims about social being and, therefore, for making claims about justice. Instead, experience must be understood in relation to action for two reasons. First, because experience itself is constructed through relations of power, political theory can make normative claims about the moral value of various ways in which those relations are structured and the resulting distribution of suffering, privilege, and so on. Second, because the possibility of action in response to experience is also intricately bound to relations of power. Brown rightly points to Nietzsche’s conception of ressentiment as a type of action that responds – however problematically – to the relationship between powerlessness and action. In Chapter Six I will consider the value of another Nietzschean notion, the idea of overcoming as a matrix for evaluating the legitimacy of social movement strategies. While the matrix I describe there does not offer a positive, substantive account of justice it does offer some guidelines for movement toward more just social arrangements.

For now, I want to turn to a consideration of how to conceptualize power in relation to experience. Before doing that, however, it is worth pointing out what a close relationship between experience and action does not imply in terms of justice. This close relationship could recommend treating habitus as the site of justice. After all, in Bourdieu’s theory of practice, habitus emerges from practical experience of the world (including, but obviously not limited to, suffering) and functions to unite the various resources an agent bears to the range of objectively structured opportunities and necessities she confronts. As the previous chapter demonstrated, habitus is both a fundamentally relational concept and Bourdieu’s way of uniting agency in a dialectic of experience.

and action. Further, I have emphasized *habitus*’ adaptive nature and its strategic deployment of the capacities *habitus* mobilizes. It is tempting, therefore, to treat *habitus* as the site of a capacities-based account of justice. Political theorists could endeavour to describe a desirable or most desirable *habitus*, perhaps focusing on its strategic skill or its ability to identify and resist symbolic violence. Alternatively, mechanisms could be sought for enhancing the adaptability of the *habitus*, a sort of focus on reconciling even dominated agents to the conditions of their domination, but responding to unjustly organized social structures with adaptation rather than reorganization seems particularly undesirable.

Treating *habitus* as the site of justice depends on making a salutary use of relational logic, but selecting the wrong relation. *Habitus* is an explanatory concept that captures the relationship between distributions of capacities and the objective structures within which those capacities are deployed. Focusing on capacities alone is dangerous because, short of a just distribution of those capacities, the adaptive origins and development of *habitus* could recommend an account of justice based on adaptation to domination. However, it is also insufficient to simply attempt to identify a ‘just’ set of institutional arrangements (as in the distributive debates within liberalism) because the most perfectly just institutions would still require actors disposed to adhering to the institutions’ strictures.

Thus, a conception of justice ought to focus on promoting a relationship between *habitus* and field founded in fair terms of play: a distribution of capacities such that each has access to the universal and to political participation, and objective structures that both reproduce that distribution and allow for innovation, conflict, and conflict resolution. Reproduction is key here because the conception of politics I am relying upon does not imagine an end-of-history type teleology wherein a ‘perfectly just’ society is achievable. Rather, I rely on a basic assumption – an assumption that is itself grounded in Bourdieu’s empirical and theoretical findings – that the nature of interest and our induction into the social means agents will generally try to secure their own profits even, though not
necessarily, at other agents’ expense. Thus, the relationship between objective conditions and the distribution of capacities ought to be such that political struggle ensures the reproduction of fair terms of play. Justice, in this view, is a procedural requirement wherein suffering is politicized, recognized as socially organized, and acted upon within the context of a relationship between field and *habitus* just described. The absence of both the field conditions necessary for this relationship and *habitus* disposed to participate in these conditions produces distortions. These distortions manifest primarily through schemes of symbolic meaning that prioritize some forms of suffering while marginalizing others, and in strategic political efforts to alleviate the suffering of some while replicating the suffering of others.\(^{242}\)

**On Oppression and Symbolic Violence**

Young’s important conception of oppression as a way of understanding how suffering is socially organized provides a useful contrast to Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence and is worth considering both for its own conceptual merits and because of its considerable influence over how social movements have understood themselves.\(^{243}\) Young’s use of Foucault’s notion of disciplinary power in her articulation of group-based politics foreshadows much in contemporary identity and post-identity political movements. Nonetheless, I will argue in this section and the next chapter that

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\(^{242}\) Although central to debates within many movements, such exclusions and replications have been particularly contested through queer and liberationist critiques of gay and lesbian ‘rights’ and ‘equality’ discourses. See: Richardson. See also: Joshua Gamson, "Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct?: A Queer Dilemma," in *Queer Theory/Sociology*, ed. Steven Seidman (Oxford; Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1996), 400.

\(^{243}\) It is worth noting that Young’s work on oppression came relatively early in her intellectual trajectory. Her later work focused on phenomenology, global distributive justice and deliberative democracy. I focus on her treatment of oppression mainly as a way into the distinction between Foucauldian and Bourdieuan conceptions of power I develop in the latter part of this section. For some of Young’s important later contributions see: Iris Marion Young, "Throwing Like a Girl," in *On Female Body Experience: ‘Throwing Like a Girl’ and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Iris Marion Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," in *Debating Deliberative Democracy*, ed. James S. Fishkin and Peter Laslett (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003); Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23, no. 1 (2006).
Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence offers important explanatory and normative resources that are missing from Young and Foucault.

Young’s general conception of justice is the absence of domination and oppression, where domination consists of institutional constraints on agents’ self-determination and oppression is institutional constraints on self-development. Young seeks to maintain liberal commitments to individuals’ ability to autonomously select and pursue whatever life goals they value. She rejects, however, liberal conceptions of power that ignore the structural and group-based social contexts that differentially distribute opportunities to select and pursue one’s conception of the good life. In short, Young measures social justice by the degree to which institutions and norms allow agents to develop and exercise their capacities, express their experience and participate in determining their actions and the conditions of their actions.\(^{244}\) Making this argument depends on establishing a social ontology – in contrast to liberal individualism – that recognizes both the existence of groups and the structured power relations that produce those groups.\(^{245}\) Although democratic participation (non-domination) is important to her account, her treatment of oppression is particularly relevant because it is an overtly political attempt to understand the organized suffering of various groups, of describing various forms of suffering – racism, sexism and homophobia, for example – without reducing them to a single, unified axis (as was typical of Marxist conceptions).\(^{246}\) To that end, Young recommends five overlapping categories for understanding oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence.\(^{247}\)

Young’s conceptualization of oppression is motivated by a number of normative and theoretical goals. She is interested in establishing the grounds for justifying group-based policy and representation. This depends, as discussed above, on distinguishing her conception of justice from

\(^{244}\) Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, 37.
\(^{245}\) ibid., 3.
\(^{246}\) ibid., 42.
\(^{247}\) ibid., 48, 53, 56, 58 and 61.
the more limited conceptions typically advocated from within the distributive paradigm. Young makes this distinction by demonstrating why the institutional context of distribution, particularly the structures, norms and practices that guide distribution and the language and symbols that mediate social interactions in the state, family and civil society are relevant moral considerations. Young is also interested in following the communicative ethics of Habermas and Heller. Focus on group-based relations to structures of power, for Young, draws attention away from substantive, pattern-based conceptions of justice typical of distributive paradigms and toward proceduralist accounts that link participatory deliberation and decision making to positive evaluations of group difference.

There are important family resemblances between some of what Young describes as oppression and what Bourdieu might label symbolic violence. Cultural imperialism, for example, “involves the universalization of a dominant group’s experience and culture and its establishment as the norm.” Universalization and imposition of dominant groups’ judgments is central to symbolic violence as well, but where cultural imperialism appears to connote specific, substantive beliefs about groups and individuals, symbolic power operates through deeper divisions, homologously organized sets of distinctions. In a sense, Bourdieu is concerned with deeper cognitive classificatory structures that are both more misrecognized or doxic and also (and therefore) more resistant to transformation. Indeed, this is why conformist and distorting strategies can plague social movements: consciously rejecting the substantive, superficial definitions imposed through symbolic power does not transform the bodily dispositions by which underlying schemes of classification gain affective hold over dominated agents.

Admittedly, the kinds of suffering that Young labels oppressive and Bourdieu describes as instances of ‘la grande’ and ‘la petite misère’ are, for the most part, the same phenomena. Where

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248 ibid., 15 and 22.
249 ibid., 34, 163 and 184. See also Young, "Activist Challenges," 109-111 and 116.
250 Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference, 59.
their approaches diverge is not on the substance of the suffering of concern, but on the conception of power that explains how suffering comes to be institutionally and contextually organized in the ways that it is. The relevant distinction, therefore, is not just between oppression and symbolic violence, but between Young’s use of Foucault’s disciplinary power and Bourdieu’s conception of symbolic power.\textsuperscript{251} I will elaborate on this distinction further in later chapters, but for now it is worth examining the question of institutions in Young/Foucault and Bourdieu.

Young’s interest in Foucault’s conception of power is to reject conceptions that treat power as an object to be distributed, wielded, or shared. Foucault argued for treating power as positive, as productive, as immanent to and circulating among ‘relations of force’, which is to say that power operates in the minutiae of spontaneous strategies available to subjects through multiple, overlapping discourses.\textsuperscript{252} Foucault was particularly interested in how institutions – prisons, schools, and psychiatric hospitals provide paradigm cases – produce subjects through constant surveillance and discipline. Bourdieu’s superficially similar insistence on the connection between daily minutiae and social behaviour occasions an important distinction he drew between his work and Foucault’s. While Foucault was interested in how institutions such as schools, churches, and hospitals produce subjects through discipline and confessional moments, Bourdieu argued Foucault erred in this emphasis. Subjectivity truly emerges, according to Bourdieu, in the everyday minutiae of social interactions, what he calls the ‘ordinary order of things’ rather than through power’s officially authorized – that is, institutional – manifestations.\textsuperscript{253} Therefore, Bourdieu was less interested in normalization and the production of variously disciplined subjects – the psychiatric subject, the prison subject, etc. – and more interested in how the ordinary order of things and the continuous stream of corrections and normalizations turn subjects.

\textsuperscript{251} ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{252} Michel Foucault, \textit{The History of Sexuality, Volume 1} (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 93-95.
\textsuperscript{253} Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 141. For the importance of silent, ordinary injunctions see also: Bourdieu, \textit{Logic}, 69; Bourdieu, \textit{Language and Symbolic Power}, 50-51.
adjustments to which agents are exposed in ordinary life operate on the body to instil a preconscious sense of social space and its rules through the habitus.\(^{254}\)

In so distinguishing his own conception of power from Foucault’s, Bourdieu neglects a central feature of Foucault’s approach to power, namely that, as Cronin notes, Foucault treated institutions as laboratories, where strategies of control and techniques of normalization are developed and subsequently exported beyond the institution.\(^{255}\) Cronin rejects Foucault’s vision, arguing that the mechanisms of control available in institutions – above all surveillance and discipline enacted directly on the body – are either unavailable outside those settings or insufficient for explaining phenomena of power such as racism and class conflict.\(^{256}\) But Cronin, like Bourdieu, misses a central feature of Foucault’s theorization of this export of techniques, namely their articulation through discourses or organized sets of knowledges and practices that constitute the means by which subjects understand themselves and the strategies that are available to them. Indeed, these dual aspects of discourse, their organization of knowledge and their production of strategies, are precisely how Foucauldian subjectivity operates: institutions are no longer required for surveillance and discipline as individuals, in adopting and incorporating discourses, become the agents of their own normalization. Foucault offers the paradigmatic example of families, caught in contradictions between sexuality and alliance. Families experience conflicting demands produced by psychiatric and medical discourses but turn to psychiatrists and doctors as the experts authorized by these discourses for rescue from these contradictions. They become, as Foucault says “the chief agents of a deployment of sexuality which drew its outside support from doctors, educators, and later

\(^{254}\) While I am interested in drawing out the distinctions between Bourdieu and Foucault on power, they also held significantly different epistemological positions. These divisions are particularly apparent in terms of the relationship of sociology to philosophy and the relativism at the core of Foucault’s treatment of the history of knowledge. For an excellent overview see: Staf Callewaert, "Bourdieu, Critic of Foucault: The Case of Empirical Social Science against Double-Game-Philosophy," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 6 (2006).


\(^{256}\) ibid., 61 and 63.
Bourdieu and Cronin are wrong, therefore, to suggest that Foucault’s conception of power is overly institutional; power gains its efficacy precisely at the moment of export when the institutional discipline of subjects is taken over, through accession to the discursive demands of normalization, by the subjects themselves.

Cronin’s refusal of the centrality and complexity of discourse in Foucault’s analytics of power leads him to further suggest that Foucault’s account of resistance is problematic in two ways. First, Cronin argues that what Foucault calls a discourse, the discourse of ‘rights’ for example is meaningful only within the terms of the relevant discourse and institutions themselves, but those institutions don’t exhaust what is meant by ‘right’ and ‘legitimate’. We can, Cronin asserts, compare specific, contingent organizations (such as states) and demonstrate that one is more repressive than others. He takes this as evidence that we have external normative measures that provide content to resistance. Second, Cronin argues that Foucault’s notion of force-relations as the loci of power’s capillary circulation and deployment is overly naturalistic and mechanistic and insufficiently linked to macro-operations of power. If Cronin understands the content of discourses to be fully detached from external normative judgments, and power to be the expression of naturalistic force relations among quasi-atomistic mechanistic individuals, it is not surprising that he understands Foucault’s conception of strategies as tactics that “seem to crystallize spontaneously out of a chaos of shifting relations of force between interchangeable subjects and to float free of any specific social relations.”

A Foucauldian response to Cronin could legitimately suggest that while discourses of ‘rights’ and ‘legitimacy’ can be evaluated through external criteria, the simple exteriority of such normative criteria does not imply that they are not themselves bound up in their own discourses. Strategic action

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257 Foucault, 110-111.
258 Cronin: 62.
259 ibid., 61.
260 ibid., 60.
in this light is not simply a mechanistic response to the demands and opportunities produced by a single discourse, but must involve selection among multiple discourses. But this points to a more fundamental problem with Foucault’s approach: if families turn to psychiatry as agents of their own normalization, then we need to explain why they make that particular turn as opposed to a turn to religion or nihilism or politics or some other discourse by which they might understand and seek to resolve the contradictions they experience. Further, there is no room in Foucauldian conceptions of power and discourse for explaining why various agents, pursuing exactly similar strategies from within the same discourses are likely to have different levels of success.

At this point we can begin to re-engage with Young’s use of Foucauldian power to explain institutional contexts. As discussed above, Young uses a social ontology capable of recognizing structures and groups to support her claims of the existence of oppression (and therefore oppression’s usefulness as an analytic category) and subsequent claims about justice. Surprisingly, Young does not provide an explicit definition of structure, preferring instead to describe it in terms of institutional context and linking structure to “the unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules.”

Elsewhere, Young argues that power is relational, but non- dyadic, which means that, with Foucault, Young is suggesting that power exists only in relations between groups and individuals and that the exercise of power depends on the position one holds, an agent’s nodal point within a network of force relations. The essential difference between Bourdieu and Young/Foucault hinges on what gives structures their durability and therefore conditions the kinds of resistance available to groups and individuals within them. Young’s network-based conception of structures derives its durability from the homogenizing and ever-deepening operation of normalization. The fundamental contrast between the operation of an incorporated norm and an incorporated scheme of classification –

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262 ibid., 31.
between normalization and *habitus* lies in the fundamentally homogenizing nature of the former and the generative nature of the latter.

Normalization’s totalizing ambition derives its efficacy from the ever-deepening submission of the subject to the bounds and limits of discourse. As McNay notes, in Foucault’s later work he was interested in showing how:

> [m]odern power operates through the related techniques of individualization and totalization, where, as we have seen, the ‘truth’ of the individual is extracted through various disciplinary techniques and then is incorporated into normalizing structures of knowledge which efface idiosyncracies and limit individuality to a set of very specific patterns. This corresponds to Foucault’s understanding of the subject as subject to someone else by control and dependence, and also as tied to their own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.²⁶³

Foucault locates the modern origins of this mode of power in the expansion of pastoral power associated with Christian institutions and taken over by the state.²⁶⁴ A central characteristic of pastoral power (in its religious manifestation) is that its ultimate aim is to assure individual salvation in the next world by producing knowledge about and the ability to direct the inside of people’s minds through confession, doctrine, and so on.²⁶⁵ The modern state exercises a similar power but shifts salvation from the next world to this in the form of health, wealth, a standard of living via knowledge about and the ability to direct at the level of population and the individual. Importantly, this mode of power does not operate via violence, nor through consent, but by ‘action upon actions’:

> In itself, the exercise of power is not a violence that sometimes hides, or an implicitly renewed consent. It operates on the field of possibilities in which the behavior of active subjects is able to inscribe itself. It is a set of actions on possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; it releases or contrives, makes more probable or less; in the extreme, it constrains or forbids absolutely, but it is always a way of acting upon one or more acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ ibid., 333.
²⁶⁶ ibid., 341.
The crux here is that for power to be action upon action it requires a subject who acts. In fact, for Foucault power and freedom are not mutually exclusive because power’s operation depends on the existence of a free subject whose actions can be acted upon.\textsuperscript{267} But where his claim in *History of Sexuality* that ‘where there is power there is resistance’ seemed to rely on an uncertain ontological source of agency, here resistance appears by definition and tautology. Foucault’s turn to a political strategy based on the ethics of the self, through aestheticized experiments in living without the expectation of ‘freedom’ from power is therefore deeply problematic. McNay points to the myriad feminist challenges to the bourgeois, male, disembedded and disembodied conceptions underpinning this vision as well as to the conceptual inability to distinguish, in Foucault’s framework, between radical aesthetic gestures and pseudo-individualistic replications of power.\textsuperscript{268}

It is on this last point, the question of distinguishing among radical and conformist actions, that Bourdieu’s conception of power can be most easily distinguished from Foucault’s. As argued above, Foucault’s conception of agency depends on the production of individuals, but then the totalizing effacement of individuality through normalization and population-level constraints on action. This ever-intensifying normalization provides no conceptual grounds for understanding how subjects strategically shift from one discourse to another. By contrast, the efficacy of *habitus* lies in its non-specific incorporation of general schemes of classification that reflect the co-existence of homologously structured fields and therefore provides, through dispositions, an account of the generative mechanism by which the potential success of a particular strategy is articulated to and within the specific field whose immanent demands require practical action. The relative durability of fields in Bourdieu’s framework derives from the coincidence between the specific rules and demands

\textsuperscript{267} ibid., 342.
\textsuperscript{268} McNay, *Foucault*, 149-153 and 157.
of a particular field and the dispositions of *habitus*-bearing agents who participate in a field precisely because they are disposed to accept and therefore reproduce the existing structure of that field.\textsuperscript{269}

As importantly, reproducing fields depends upon agents deploying certain kinds of strategies depending on their kinds of capital they bring to those fields. In particular, the cultural capital and the general range of skills and competencies an agent is able to mobilize depends on the conditions of the production of their habitus (that is, their class and ethnic background, their position within gendered divisions of labour, access to time in educational institutions, and so on) and is always linked to both an agent’s own symbolic evaluation of what kinds of strategies and positions are ‘for us’ and the evaluations of all other participants in a field as to whether or not a strategy or position is ‘for them’. The dual face of action – resources and symbolic permissibility, which is to say opportunity – depends on two instances of differentiation: differentiation produced through the differentiated conditions of the acquisition of dispositions and differentiation within the field of action produced by symbolic distinctions manifested through the rules of division and action that inhere in particular fields. This dual face and dual differentiation contrasts with the homogenizing operation of disciplinary power through norms. It also means that the hierarchical organization of power and therefore the uneven production and distribution of suffering has already operated prior to the operation of oppression through exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness and so on. Indeed, the operation of oppression depends on prior incorporation of the rules and divisions underpinning symbolic domination.

Not surprisingly, attention to oppression derives different claims to justice than attention to dynamics of symbolic violence, though the distance between the two conceptions of justice is naturally much less than between either of these models and the redress for suffering offered by

\textsuperscript{269} Bourdieu suggests, in this regard that it is equally true that agents take advantage of the opportunities of a field to satisfy their drives and desires and that fields make use of agents by forcing them (through sublimation and reward) to adapt to the structure of demands and opportunities the field presents. Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 165.
liberal attention to legitimacy. Because Young maintains a normative commitment to the value of allowing every individual to achieve their full human potential, justice requires the elimination of oppression and domination. In turn, this requires a group-based ‘politics of difference’ in which decisions are made through deliberative and participatory procedures capable of recognizing and valuing group differences. Young takes social movement politics as the origin of both the critical insights that justify her normative vision and the vehicle through which this vision is most likely to be achieved.

Bourdieu’s conception of justice similarly demands procedural remedies, but fundamentally requires a prior step, namely the universalization of political capacities. For Bourdieu, the political field is a specific context in which specifically political stakes are exchanged and accumulated and where the tendency for agents to be dominated through arbitrary rules and divisions is particularly pernicious. Bourdieu’s vision demands exposing the arbitrary divisions of the political field – and other fields in which domination can be said to produce suffering – primarily through the conceptual tools of sociologists and what he calls the “ordinary means of political action – creation of associations and movements, demonstrations, manifestos, etc.” aimed at setting up the proper relationship between field and habitus. I turn to the challenges of the ‘ordinary means of political action’ in the form of collective identity and political strategy in the next two chapters.

\[270\] ibid., 126.
CHAPTER FOUR: COLLECTIVE IDENTITY AND SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

What I want to say can be summed up in a generative formula: every expression is an accommodation between an expressive interest and a censorship constituted by the field in which that expression is offered; and this accommodation is the product of a process of euphemization which may even result in silence, the extreme case of censored discourse. This euphemization leads the potential ‘author’ to produce something which is a compromise formation, a combination of what there was to be said, which ‘needed’ to be said, and what could be said, given the structure of a particular field.

– Bourdieu, *Pascalian Mediations* 271

Introduction: Beyond ‘Getting Better’

In September 2010 the deaths by suicide of four American teenagers brought into focus the risk of queer youth for self-harm and suicide, self-harm that was, in these cases, linked to bullying and anti-gay harassment. 272 Arguably the most visible response to these suicides has been the *It Gets Better Project*, launched after sex-columnist Dan Savage and his partner Terry Miller uploaded a video to YouTube, the central message of which was:

IT GETS BETTER. However bad it is now, it gets better, and it can get great, it can get awesome. Your life can be amazing, but you have to tough this period of it out and you have to live your life so that you can be around for it to get amazing. 273

In the two years since Savage and Miller posted their video, over 50,000 more videos have been posted in solidarity with queer youth, *It Gets Better* has been “branded”, and has been incorporated as a not-for-profit organization. 274 Beyond simply assuring young LGBT/Q people that a life exists beyond high school bullying, *It Gets Better* has become an important site for fundraising,

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271 Bourdieu, *Sociology in Question*.
networking, supporting the development of Gay-Straight-Alliances in high schools and constructing anti-gay bullying as a social problem and legitimate target for political and cultural action. Certainly, few doubt the heartfelt intentions that underpin the project.

There have been, however, major criticisms of *It Gets Better*. Most of these criticisms focus on the narrow range of LGBT/Q people for whom life does get better after high school. As Jasbir Puar argues, the assurance that things get better resounds differently for queers of colour, gender non-conformists and other young queers who cannot easily “fold [themselves] into urban, neoliberal enclaves,” and who might not want to do so.275 The founding video, for example, describes homophobic childhoods followed by the romantic love, parenthood, and travel of the video’s apparently gender-conforming and comfortably middle-class authors. Take this vignette, for example:

So I went out at four o’clock in the morning and strolled through the streets of Paris with DJ [Savage and Miller’s son] as the sun came up. And we talked … he was maybe five years old, maybe four and we chatted and strolled around Notre Dame and the Marais and the bakeries opened and we went to the back door of a bakery and ordered some croissants with sugar crystals on them. We got some juice and sat and watched the sun come up, the Eiffel Tower off in the distance, and it’s one of my happiest memories.276

This saccharine recollection weds the promise of successfully surviving the oppressions of youth long enough to settle into an urban gay lifestyle to a privileged travel experience and in doing so reiterates the constructed connection between tourism, mobility and gay identity noted by Hiram Perez.277 This connection is founded on ‘coming out’ as a founding metaphor for gay transition from secrecy and shame to freedom and self-determination, a metaphor that extends to recreational travel as an accomplished “flight from self-determination to freedom”. The trope of queer mobility, however, masks the matrix of privilege and material resources mediating the journey from oppressed

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276 Savage and Miller.
closet-dweller to liberated cosmopolitan. Queers who are prevented, incapable, or unwilling to make this journey are “gays who cannot properly be gay” or, in this context, gays who fall outside the promise that things will get better.

The concern, for critics of *It Gets Better*, including Puar, is that regardless of the good intentions motivating the project, whatever benefits accrue from the campaign will be unevenly distributed at best and at worst work to reinforce a problematic homonormative and homonationalist reworking of lesbian and gay identities into neoliberal patterns of domination. *It Gets Better* is a microcosm of the ambiguous promises of the dominant gay and lesbian political strategy of the past two decades and, as Puar notes, the outrage these deaths produced “is based precisely in a belief that things are indeed supposed to be better, especially for a particular class of white gay men.” What has been the point of decades of struggle for formal legal equality – with notably less success in the United States than in Canada – if not to make gay and lesbian lives bearable, or better, celebratory and thriving? For liberationist and queer critics of the pursuit of formal equality this was precisely the problem with the mainstream approach.

There is no question that in many ways things are ‘better’ for many gays and lesbians in North America – at the very minimum decriminalization of the most typical forms of gay sex in Canada and the United States, widespread anti-discrimination legislation in Canada and growth of the same in the United States, and widespread popular culture visibility provides legal and cultural space for many gays and lesbians – but broader questions about the relationship between legal rights, cultural visibility, liveability, and justice are certainly more complex than a simple assertion that ‘things are better’. If nothing else, those ways in which things are better mask how continued criminalization of the poor, racial discrimination in the criminal justice system, employment

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278 ibid., 177-178.
279 ibid., 177.
280 Puar: 151.
inequities, and normalizing pressures on dissident sexual practices impact the lives of LGBT and queer people in uneven ways.

Attention to these uneven experiences in relation to mainstream gay and lesbian political efforts such as marriage equality campaigns and the *It Gets Better* project takes its conceptual direction from critiques of homonormativity. Homonormativity critiques are the theoretical inheritors of queer critiques that emerged in the early 1990s. Where queer theory and politics oriented itself toward “regimes of the normal” to identify and resist ways in which society organized institutionally to support a narrow range of opposite-sex romantic and sexual practices while excluding, othering and punishing all other practices, critics of homonormativity point to how a similarly narrow range of same-sex romantic and sexual practices replicate heteronormative exclusions. In short, homonormativity points to how normalization is achieved by eradicating or reducing forms of difference. In the era of homonormativity:

…the responsibility of lesbians and gay men is now to adopt disciplined sexual practices through the internalisation of new norms of identity and sexual practices associated with a certain (heteronormative) lifestyle, with various rights granted through demonstrating a specific form of ‘domestic’ sexual coupledom.

Richardson argues that lesbians and gays, who have a long history of self-policing in order to avoid violence or harm now engage in self-policing out of a desire for normativity. According to Richardson, the ‘risk’ that lesbian and gay people pose to the heteronormative regimes is defused by encouraging LGBT/Q people to see themselves above all as responsible citizens, choosing lifestyles that are not radically different from those of heterosexual citizens and therefore compatible with neoliberal accumulation, privatization and governance structures. Homonormativity unites two

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282 Richardson: 521.
283 ibid., 522-523.
traditional elements of liberal inclusion, consumer lifestyles and juridical protections for gay and lesbian private spheres, into what Eng et al. call ‘queer liberalism’. 284

If LGBT and queer communities have achieved a collective journey from the era of closets and shame, through a collective coming out and demand for recognition into an era of homonormativity, then where does that leave us? Where have we arrived, and with what kinds of lives? Who has been left to straggle along behind, and whose own reduced liveability has paid the fare for the journey of the white, male, gender-conforming and able-bodied gay subject for whom things have gotten better?

In this chapter, I examine collective identity more closely to identify what I describe as collective identity distortions. Naturally, collective identity is only one portion of the complexly layered processes by which LGBT/Q lives and politics have struggled against homophobia, heterosexism and the myriad other institutional and cultural mechanisms by which sexualities are produced and regulated. Indeed, it is only a part of the broader context within which movement successes – whether it has gotten better – can be measured. Further, the central questions collective identities seek to answer, which I elaborate below, are ones with which all social movements struggle, including the alterglobalization movement whose repertoire of contention I consider in more detail in Chapter Five. Nonetheless, struggles over LGBT/Q collective identities offer particularly salient illustrations of how broad patterns of domination and injustice can be replicated within processes of collective identity construction and, via the strategies these constructions inform and motivate, as well as in the long-term outcomes social movements produce in terms of the new possibilities for identification and subjectivity.

The central purpose of this chapter is to bring together two sets of approaches to queer collective identity to show that neither is complete – that is, that each tells only part of the same story

– and that a Bourdieuan read of these stories might present new ways of connecting the processes of collective identity construction to considerations of justice. I argue mainstream social movement approaches to collective identity are overly mechanistic and without much-needed normative content. By contrast, queer critiques of gay and lesbian collective identities as normalizing are overly discursive and reliant on unspecified causal assumptions. The account I present in this chapter will focus on symbolic violence as a form of epistemic violence endemic to collective identity processes. This account will focus on the resources that are brought to these processes and will demonstrate that the structurally unequal distribution of relevant resources reproduces distinctions that can be linked to unjust movement outcomes. Extending the contrast I drew between the Foucauldian and Bourdieuan conceptions of power in Chapter Three, in this chapter I illustrate how that distinction plays out in LGBT/Q politics. The Foucauldian version has been taken up by queer theorists who make the additional claim that because the homogeneity normalization pursues is impossible, the necessary abjection and inclusion of certain lives is a constitutive feature of modern power and the rights discourse on which LGBT politics have relied. The Bourdieuan conception of power, by contrast, draws attention to relationships that symbolic fields produce among power, submission, and action by imposing distinctions among various social positions and because of the unequal possibilities for action those positions permit.

Doing so will allow me to identify the ethical content of collective identities. That is, to establish collective identity as a site of justice, which is an entirely separate project from treating them as instrumental either in the sense of traditional movement outcomes (policy change) or the kinds of outcomes associated with new social movement theory and, implicitly, anti-normalization critics (cultural change, affirmation of self – i.e., improved subjective sense). Further, the account I develop will constitute collective identities as sites of justice where the conditions of justice, the background conditions within which individuals come together to understand and ameliorate suffering, are such that they tend, predominantly, to reproduce existing inequalities in complex and
problematic ways. In turn, collective identities therefore become lenses through which we can critique existing patterns of domination, in part, through the extent to which they produce and reproduce themselves in collective identities.

I begin with an overview of how collective identity has been theorized, with particular emphasis on the insights of Alberto Melucci and social psychological accounts. I then turn to a consideration of epistemic violence within collective identity formation, followed by a brief illustration of these dynamics from within historical accounts of the Canadian experience. Finally, I articulate the conceptual stakes involved in a Bourdieuan approach to collective identity as opposed to one based on normalization and argue for the greater analytic leverage to be gained from the former.

**Theorizing Collective Identity**

In the 1960s social movement research moved decisively away from the collective behaviour approaches that had until then dominated the field. The common thread linking most of the collective behaviour approaches was the assumption that social movements and related phenomena ranging from protests to riots were manifestations of dysfunctions within otherwise coherent social systems. Corollary to this was this effort to explain social movements through the psychological processes by which individuals would deviate from social systems. The resource mobilization and political process approaches that emerged through the 1960s and 1970s were motivated in large part by an interest in overcoming the normative and pathologizing implications of collective behaviour approaches. They began from the premise that conflict was always present in society and that the emergence and behaviour of social movements could be best understood by analyzing the resources, mobilizing strategies and opportunities available to various potential contenders within the political

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field. In essence, resource mobilization and political process approaches replaced the collective behavior conception of social movement participants as irrational, psychologically dysfunctional mobs with a vision of activists as rational and strategic agents pursuing their legitimate interests within a context of widespread conflict over material and symbolic social resources.

Although a great deal of explanatory leverage was gained through resource mobilization and political process approaches, where the collective behavior paradigm reduced complex structural and material questions to deviant mental states, research in the 1960s and 1970s problematically reduced the complex motivations underpinning social movement participation to objectively determined social location. Ultimately, the rational action theory underpinning both resource mobilization and political process theory slips from, as Bourdieu might put it, a mechanical determinism to a ‘teleological finalism.’ That is, analysts ascribe ‘quasi-objective mechanical determinations’ to social actors based on objective conditions: they assume that any two agents occupying the same space would take identical actions, given basic assumptions about rational connections between location, interest and strategy. Despite rationalist intentions to restore agency to actors, location, interest and strategy therefore mechanically determine action. In short, the leverage enjoyed by rationalist approaches depended on ultimately untenable assumptions about the intrinsic connections between identity, understood as an objectively definable location in relation to objective social structures, and interest. Although these perspectives offered sophisticated analyses of the relationship between resources, opportunities and the cost-benefit calculations by which actors selected strategies, they neglected and refused any analysis of the relevance of how costs and benefits are perceived, which would require integration of cultural questions.

A number of culture-sensitive approaches and analyses began to emerge in the 1980s to address this shortcoming. The most important of these emerging perspectives focused on questions of

286 Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 139-140.
identity, and sought to re-introduce social psychological conceptual tools to the study of social movements. Amongst these emerging perspectives, the ‘new social movement theory’ approach, generally associated with Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci, stands out for its careful attention to processes of identity construction. A parallel trajectory also emerged in the 1980s and 1990s that eschewed continental, post-Marxist flavours of the NSM tradition, seeking instead to directly restore questions of psychological processes to resource mobilization and political process research. In this vein, for example, William Gamson argues that adding collective identity questions to the resource mobilization paradigm does not undo that paradigm; it merely expands the possible targets of movement claims for which resources might mobilized to include culture and processes of normalization. Drawing clear boundaries between these trajectories is, however, somewhat arbitrary, as their broad consensus over the need to think about culture, identity and social psychology was often masked by partisan, ontological debates over the ‘newness’ of contemporary movements, particularly in their attention to questions of identity, and whether the emergence of women’s, environmental, and gay and lesbian movements (among others) marked a decisive break from class mobilization. For the sake of establishing the analytic context of the arguments I make in this chapter regarding epistemic violence and distortions in collective identity processes, I will therefore remain agnostic on the question of ‘newness’ and reject any notion that adopting analytic


tools from either the NSM perspective or the integrative social psychological approaches commits the analyst to relying on those perspectives’ other analytic tools. Instead, I will briefly survey two central themes that arise from renewed attention to identity-culture-movement nexuses: collective identity as a negotiated orientation to goals, resources and opportunities, and collective identity as the product of concrete (social psychological) processes. I will then briefly consider the value of collective identity generally before pointing to some of the problems of dominant conceptions of collective identity.

**Collective Identity as a Shared Orientation**

The notion of collective identity as an analytic problem is most closely associated with the work of Alberto Melucci. Melucci’s fundamental contribution to the study of social movement politics lies in his interest in de-ontologizing social movements. That is, he sought to overcome understandings of social movements as coherent, empirical objects or unified entities that act upon an external world to satisfy pre-determined demands. Rather, he argued, collective phenomena are themselves complex processes that indicate a *system of action* rather than a stable *actor*. Collective actors are therefore the products of the processes through which individuals and groups produce meanings, communicate, negotiate and make decisions within the context of a social field where other actors, resources and pressures present a field of opportunities and constraints.\(^{291}\) Indeed, for a collective actor to be successful, it must devote significant resources to giving the complex processes by which these differentiated elements are articulated into the appearance of unity.\(^{292}\) A collective actor such as LGBT lobbying organizations – *Egale* in Canada or the *Human Rights Campaign* in the United States – is therefore an instance of complex processes coalescing into an institutional form within a specific system of opportunities. The rationalist accounts Melucci sought to overcome

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would treat these actors as unified objects with *a priori* interests – legal recognition of same-sex marriage, for example.

Melucci’s central contribution to social movement theory was to demonstrate that there is no objective, intrinsic connection between a social identity, collective actors claiming to represent that identity, and a set of social or political interests flowing from that identity. Instead, multiple collective actors belong to a social movement to the extent that they share a collective identity. For Melucci collective identity is both a descriptive category and an analytic tool for understanding the processes by which interests are constructed. Put another way, collective identity is the process by which what he calls an ‘action system’ is produced and maintained; it is the process by which identity, interests and action are oriented to the field of possibilities the current environment presents. Collective identity construction requires the negotiated integration of tensions produced by conflicting definitions of the ends (goals), means (strategies; possibilities and limits) and the field of opportunity (environment) in which action takes place. Melucci emphasizes three aspects of the process of collective identity formation: that it is a cognitive process involving a calculation between ends and means (however contradictory and internally conflicting these calculations may be); that collective identity refers to and depends on networks of active relationships; and that emotion always accompanies cognition making calculations non-rational, though not irrational.293 In short:

Collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a more complex level) concerning the orientations of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which such action is to take place. By ‘interactive and shared’ I mean that these elements are constructed and negotiated through a recurrent process of activation of the relations that bind actors together.294

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294 Melucci, *Challenging Codes*, 70.

In fact, a constructivist approach toward identity is currently the norm among social movement researchers. See, for example, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, where the authors affirm a constructivist approach to identity (55-56) and include constructivist processes such as identity shift (162) as mechanisms that help explain contentious political action.
For LGBT/Q communities, the process of collective identity formation involves understanding the differences embodied in queer sexual desires and practices, queer gender identities, and queer communities, and constructing an account of the low value those differences are afforded. It then articulates that assessment of difference into an orientation toward specific goals and strategies geared toward redressing the suffering those devalued differences accrue. Tensions between queer and mainstream lesbian and gay political movements can therefore be understood as expressions of divergent conceptions of collective identity and how identity orients collective actors toward goals and strategies. With few exceptions, most queer critics of mainstream politics argue that mainstream movement goals miss out or actively marginalize alternative political projects, particularly around physical and mental health, community building, and sex-positivity.\footnote{Tom Warner, \textit{Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 222. See also Michael Warner, \textit{The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life} (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 88-89.} This critique is rooted in competing assessments of the value of difference and the relationship difference has to suffering.

The treatment of collective identity as a negotiated orientation toward a field of action is not limited to advocates of new social movement perspectives. William Gamson argues that NSM theory’s focus on the so-called ‘new’ movements renders visible North American and Western European middle class movements, while occluding other movements from around the world and obscuring the fact that collective identity processes operate in nearly all social movements. Nonetheless, he credits Melucci with developing a persuasive contrast to utilitarian and rational choice models that assume the absence of collective identity, and with providing an account of how the production of solidarity and collective identity blurs distinctions between group and individual interest.\footnote{Gamson, "Social Psychology," 57.} Similarly, Diani and Bison argue that collective identity is analytically useful for how it allows actors to weave “different occurrences, private and public, located at different points in time.
and space, which are relevant to their experience, and that might as well have been conceived of as largely independent from each other under different circumstances” into a broad narrative capable of mobilizing movement participants.  

Mary Bernstein notes that identity has three analytic levels that are relevant to social movement research: the necessity of a shared collective identity for mobilization, the fact that expressions of that shared identity can be a political strategy aimed at cultural or political goals and that identity itself can be a goal (for example in gaining recognition and acceptance for a stigmatized identity or in efforts to deconstruct identity categories. Elsewhere, Bernstein argues that researchers need to be sensitive to different kinds of outcomes (political and policy, mobilization, and cultural) and the fact that activists’ understanding of political, mobilization and cultural goals as well as the feasibility of achieving them under context-specific circumstances explains a significant portion of why some goals are prioritized and how priorities shift over time. The shifting processes by which identities, goals, and a shifting landscape of resources and opportunities contribute to shifts in political and cultural priorities has been captured with regards to the Canadian gay and lesbian movement by Miriam Smith. As discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, Smith captures a transformation in the meaning of ‘equality’ to reorient gay and lesbian politics from a focus on mobilization outcomes to cultural outcomes via policy change in the form of integration and inclusion into mainstream social and political institutions.

Collective Identity as Social Psychological Processes

A number of authors, accepting the relevance of collective identity as a shared orientation toward goals and strategies but seeking to avoid the post-Marxist flavour of most NSM analysis,

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298 Bernstein, "Identity Politics," 59.
300 Smith, *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada*, 41 and 76.
have nonetheless argued persuasively for the reintroduction of social psychological tools for capturing the processes by which collective identities are produced. Stryker, Owens, and White go further to point out that despite eschewing social psychology (and in many cases explicitly calling for its exclusion from social science research), most resource mobilization and political process theorists implicitly relied on a specific social psychological model – that of the rational man. Beyond the logical problems entailed by such a blatant reduction, the authors argue that what was gained from this move (the ability to treat each participant as an equivalent, interchangeable piece and therefore concentrate on structural constraints, opportunities and resources) does not make up for its limited ability to explain the patently observable variations among participants (for example in the intensity of participation).

A number of specific social psychological processes have been articulated, most of which are analytically compatible. Snow and McAdam, for example, draw attention to what they call ‘identity work’, namely the range of processes by which individuals and groups produce and ascribe meaning to themselves and others. These processes are primarily comprised of efforts to construct collective identity by producing symbolic resources and boundaries, as well as through efforts to produce and maintain correspondence between individual and collective identities. Given that individuals carry multiple identities, corresponding to diverse contexts, roles and interests, and given that action is oriented in part to the identity that is most salient in a given context, then successful social

302 Stryker, Owens, and White, 3-4.
movements must increase the salience of the relevant identity, where salience can be understood as “the likelihood an identity will come into play in a variety of situations as a function of its properties as a cognitive schema.” According to Snow and McAdam, movements do this primarily through processes of convergence (that is, by mobilizing around an identity that is already salient for a significant number of individuals) and through construction. By construction processes, the authors refer to processes by which individual and collective identities are actively brought into alignment. Relevant social psychological dynamics in these processes include identity amplification (embellishing and strengthening an existing identity and thereby increasing its position in the salience hierarchy), identity extension (increasing the number of situations in which an identity is relevant, for example, constructing sexual identity as more than a ‘bedroom issue’ but also an employment issue, a recreational issue and a taxation issue), and identity transformation (encouraging individuals to adopt identities that are new to them, i.e., through conversion).

Attending to the related process of ‘framing’, Hunt, Benford and Snow point to the centrality of processes by which characteristics are attributed to relevant political and social actors. They argue that such characteristics tend to be about a group’s consciousness (levels of knowledge or awareness are attributed, values are highlighted, and changes in consciousness are noted or encouraged). They are also likely to be about a group’s character and here framing is pursued through discursive alignment processes (frame bridging, amplification, transformation). These processes recursively constitute a form of collective action and are necessary for it. The authors identify three types of core framing tasks undertaken by social movement organizations: diagnostic framing identifies the

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problem and the culpable agents, prognostic framing outlines a plan for redress, and motivational framing transforms understanding of ‘injustice’ into action by providing motives and rationales for action. In all cases, social movement organizations pursue frame alignment strategies that represent the organization’s ideology and goals as congruent with targeted individuals’ interests, values and beliefs.\textsuperscript{307}

The social psychological contributions noted above are typical of efforts to specify mechanisms by which the orienting task of collective identity production described by Melucci is accomplished and are therefore compatible with his approach.\textsuperscript{308}

\textbf{The Value and Problems of Collective Identity and Current Approaches}

In assessing the value of collective identity, it is essential to immediately adopt, or recognize, a dual vision. On the one hand, collective identity is an analytic tool. In the Meluccian vein it is a descriptor analysts and researchers impose on complex social processes as part of efforts to produce typologies among various forms of contentious social and political action, of which social movements are just one.\textsuperscript{309} Awareness of collective identity as an analytic tool and process description helps (or ought to help) prevent researchers from reifying collective identities and mistaking a momentary crystallization of these processes in the form of a collective actor for an independently existing object with stable and uncontested characteristics. At the same time, collective identities are nothing if not subjectively experienced phenomena that are bound up with political projects. Put another way, the processes collective identity as an analytic tool seek to capture are lived and practical processes through which movement participants actively struggle to understand their past and current experiences and transform the conditions of future ones. Therefore,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{307} Hunt, Benford, and Snow, 191.
\item \textsuperscript{308} Indeed, as a social psychologist himself, Melucci’s contributions are themselves implicitly and at times explicitly reliant upon social psychological approaches.
\item \textsuperscript{309} Melucci, \textit{Challenging Codes}, 29-30.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
social movement researchers have paid close attention to the instrumental value of collective identity as a strategic tool for making political claims.\textsuperscript{310}

Melucci’s work has demonstrated that collective identity is both a task and an outcome of social movements, but that a collective identity outcome is valuable for the extent to which it provides cultural support for previously stigmatized identities and, ultimately, a location from which to challenge cultural stigmatization. However, as Polletta and Jasper argue, collective identity is about more than cultural outcomes. It can influence participants’ biographies even after the movement ends (i.e., by making them more likely to participate in future activities or spilling over from one movement phase to another), it can produce symbols and strategies that resonate with and become available for appropriation by subsequent movements, and it may permanently alter the political landscape (for example in the current widespread expectation that decision-makers will now at least pay lip-service to considering the putative interests of people of colour, women, greens, and LGBT/Q people).\textsuperscript{311} Barr and Drury’s work has also shown that access to a collective activist identity may serve as a resource and strategy for overcoming feelings of disempowerment (which can lead to demobilization) in the wake of failed contentious events by providing narratives that can frame failures as successes (i.e., a failure to change policy is claimed to be offset by experiences of community, tactical innovations, etc.) and a community to support these narratives. A key finding, however, is that these anti-disempowerment resources are unavailable to movement participants who do not already have an ‘activist identity’. That is, those who do not have the social networks and

\begin{footnotes}
Polletta and Jasper: 294.
Polletta and Jasper: 296-297.
\item[311] Polletta and Jasper: 296-297.
\end{footnotes}
senses of community, solidarity and shared objectives those networks support are not exposed to, and therefore do not receive the benefits of, sustained and persuasive alternative narratives.\textsuperscript{312}

Barr and Drury’s findings point to a major shortcoming of NSM and social psychological approaches to collective identity, namely their failure to treat identity as an unequally distributed and unequally contested play of resources. The central philosophical ground of most social psychological accounts relies on framing. As Crossley argues, most framing theorists treat frames as self-contained pre-given packages, when they are in fact the products of historical struggle, anticipation of objections, and efforts to target opponents’ weaknesses (all of which are relational and processual).\textsuperscript{313} That is, they expunge collective identity of the constructivist insights of Melucci. More fundamentally, most social psychological approaches to collective identity – even ones that do not explicitly prioritize framing – rest upon symbolic interactionist accounts of action and identity.\textsuperscript{314} Symbolic interactionism shares rationalist assumptions that humans are actors with agency but departs from rationalist perspectives by arguing that action and interaction are shaped by shared meanings (definitions of situations) developed through interaction. These meanings include meanings persons attribute to themselves (self-conceptions) and therefore the basic proposition of symbolic interactionism is that society shapes self-conceptions, which then shapes social behaviour (though with the possibility of reciprocity among actors).\textsuperscript{315} While many, such as Stryker, push beyond traditional interactionism by recognizing that social structures constrain definitions, meaning that not all possible definitions of a given situation are equally possible within specific structured contexts, and identity is therefore not free-floating, ephemeral, or purely subjective, they nonetheless treat participants in symbolic interactions as antecedent-less, as free from durable dispositions, in short, as

\textsuperscript{312} Barr and Drury: 257.
\textsuperscript{313} Crossley, \textit{Making Sense}, 140.
\textsuperscript{315} Stryker, "Identity Competition," 26.
Bourdieu argues, as free from the embodied and differentially constructed constraints of *habitus*. In fact, Stryker’s observation that not every definition is possible needs to be specified further – not every definition is possible *for a given actor*, and not every actor has *the same possibility of imposing their definition* on the matter at hand.

Failure to develop the unequal distribution of the possibility of producing definitions has led researchers – and none less than Melucci himself – to treat the constructive processes of collective identity production as ‘interaction’ and ‘negotiation’ without specifying the background conditions of those negotiations even while acknowledging the presence of conflict. There is, no doubt, a connection between Melucci’s conceptualization of collective identity formation as an unmarked, negotiated process and his arguments about the ‘newness’ of collective identity in general. Melucci’s core claim here is that what marks out contemporary movements is that they emerge from within a society newly dominated by a surplus of informational resources. ‘Complex’ society, in his view, depends upon self-regulating individuals:

> It must presuppose and depend on individuals, groups and subsystems, which act as self-regulating units capable of sending, receiving, and processing information. To this end, development of formal skills of action, decision-making and continuous learning is encouraged. However, increasing systemic differentiation simultaneously threatens social life with fragmentation, lack of communication, atomized individualism, and calls for deeper integration of individual and collective practices. (Melucci, *Challenging Codes*: 8)

Surplus informational resources, and the conflicting imperatives to be individual while remaining within coordinated and deeply integrated individual and collective practices produce crises of identification. Melucci emphasizes that collective identity is a self-reflexive process by which identification shifts from History or God to new collective practices. Here again, however, reflexivity

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316 Bourdieu, *Logic*, 42.
319 Melucci, *Nomads*, 89.
remains unmarked and uninterrogated. Reflexivity requires an object of reflection – in this case the collective identity under construction – but also a reflecting subject and a medium of reflection (such as language or consciousness).\footnote{Lash, 201-202.} As should be clear from Chapter Two, on the habitus, the reflecting subject is not unmarked in terms of dispositions. As I argue in the remainder of the section this marking has implications for the circulation of ideas and claims about the object of reflection. Further, the reflecting medium, as I also argue below, is not a neutral terrain of language or Habermasian ideal speech conditions, but a realm of discourse structured by differential access to linguistic, cultural, and symbolic capital and therefore not a medium from which an undistorted reflection can emerge. Given the nature of the differential distribution of various forms of capital and its genesis in broad patterns of domination, collective identities as the objects of reflection and conflict are not neutrally constructed reflections, but reflections of the patterns of domination themselves. Further, if we can find mechanisms for tracing how distortions enter into the reflection and negotiation processes then we can use those distortions to better understand – indeed to reflect back upon – the power relations that produce them.

The ethical and political implications of this shift are important. Melucci’s vision of social movement politics – reliant upon assumptions about open media of reflection and negotiation – is to stimulate the construction of open, “unconstrained” arenas for raising and evaluating the differences and complexities contemporary society produces.\footnote{Melucci, Challenging Codes, 10.} By contrast, as I will argue in a subsequent chapter, a Bourdieuan interpretation of the ethics of collective identity formation requires highly constrained arenas of negotiation. Collective identities can only minimize the distortions produced by unequal distributions of various forms of capital if the circulation of that capital is constrained by equalizing and universalizing mechanisms.
For the purposes of this chapter, however, I turn my attention to specifying what it means to claim that distributions of capital affect the production of collective identity. I do so with reference to North American LGBT/Q politics to illustrate my claims.

**Collective Identity and/as Epistemic Violence**

In the remainder of this chapter I want to strengthen my critique of the Meluccian commitment to collective identity as negotiation, and the social psychological reliance on largely cognitive framing processes, both of which rely on conceptions of individuals as unmarked by the structuring encounters with the social described by *habitus* and of information as a (relatively) freely circulating surplus product capable of provoking and sustaining open and reflexive debates about identity. With the mainstream research on social movements, I take collective identity as a centrally important process within social movement emergence and development. More specifically, it plays a central role in collectivizing individually experienced but socially structured suffering; collective identity transforms subjective experience into something publicly describable and shared. Functionally, collective identity produces an account of who suffers, why they suffer, what remedies would mitigate or eliminate that suffering, and what tactics and strategies are available to pursue those remedies given the material and symbolic resources available to collective actors and the environment within which they act. As seen in the previous section, such accounts facilitate micromobilization (mobilization that takes place at the individual level) and resource accumulation, while orientating action.

Fundamentally, collective identity entails constructing a sub-episteme, a way of knowing about suffering that diverges from or contradicts dominant ways of knowing precisely because dominant epistemes either explicitly legitimate suffering – accusations that AIDS was a punishment for queers depended on an account of AIDS’s genesis and transmission in a lifestyle rather than a virus offer a deadly example – or they simply render suffering invisible or as a non-problem – as
exemplified by neoliberal constructions of poverty and exclusion as the ‘fault’ of the poor and the excluded and a reflection of their (supposed lack of) marketable merits. However, all oppositional ways of knowing are not equal. The mere presence of an episteme that challenges the dominant epistemes and therefore dominant ways of recognizing and erasing suffering tells us little about the value of that way of knowing. In political terms, it tells us little about whether the challenges it produces to dominant relations of power will tend to alter those relations in a direction that is more or less just.

For example, the suffering LGBT/Q people experience because of their sexual or gender ‘difference’ is a durable experience of exclusion and can be expected to produce a legitimate orientation toward alleviating that suffering in the most expedient means available… even if, to queer and liberationist dismay, the most expedient means is to reduce the appearance of difference rather than to elevate difference’s devalued status. In this sense, most LGBT/Q people come to what appear to be negotiations over collective identity with dispositions already shaped by the durable experience of embodying a devalued cultural status and are therefore prone to collusion in existing relations of symbolic power through a difference-reducing orientation. I elaborate some of the mechanisms by which these dynamics play out, with examples from North American lesbian and gay mobilizations below. For now, I emphasize that turning away from the liberal humanistic assumptions about the equal terrain on which ‘negotiations’ take place moves analysis toward dynamics of various forms of capital within those negotiations. In this section I describe two philosophical shifts necessary for appreciating collective identity as a site of justice as well as a heuristic device for critiquing patterns of domination and the negating struggles they produce.

The first shift follows Bourdieu in escaping liberal humanist assumptions about the equality of participants in collective identity negotiations. Bourdieu denounces the liberal conflation of moral equality with the equal distribution of the skills, dispositions and capacities required to participate effectively in political settings and negotiations, arguing that this naïve conflation ignores the
multiple effects of living under durable conditions of suffering. In critiquing aesthetic universalism, Bourdieu argues:

One cannot, in fact, without contradiction, describe (or denounce) the inhuman conditions of existence that are imposed on some, and at the same time credit those who suffer them with the real fulfillment of human potentialities such as the capacity to adopt the gratuitous, disinterested posture that we tacitly inscribe – because it is socially inscribed there – in notions of ‘culture’ or ‘aesthetic’.322

In terms of collective identity, what is true of the cultural and aesthetic, is true of political practice. The inhuman conditions against which queers struggle are loathsome precisely because they prevent those who suffer and resist those conditions from achieving whatever their full potential might be. To be clear, this is not to suggest that people who are highly excluded or highly marginalized are not capable of political thought and practice, nor is it to erase the active negotiation of social spaces undertaken by any social agent. It is, however, to say that the durable conditions in which the most dominated groups – those queers for whom things have not become ‘better’ because of their race, class, gender identity or sexual practices – do little to provide the cultural, material and affective resources necessary to resist symbolic domination and to impose a queer vision of the world on movement organizations. The liberal tradition is wrong to conflate moral and practical equality because doing so erases the inequalities mitigating practical outcomes – democratic decisions, market behaviour, collective identity formation, and so on – and thereby characterizes practically disadvantaged actors as morally culpable for their own disadvantage.

Refusing to equate moral equality with practical equality forces us onto the terrain of practical difference and demands an account of the mechanisms of that difference, an account best articulated through Bourdieu’ somewhat idiosyncratic conception of capital. In Chapter One I described the relationship between habitus and field, emphasizing Bourdieu’s central assertion that all action is understandable only through practical efforts of habitus-bearing agents – that is, active

322 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 75.
subjects structured by embodied dispositions – to improve and defend their positions within structured social fields. To be successful, actions within any given field – any bounded set of interrelated practices – must conform to the rules of that field. Moreover, action is only possible at all insofar as it involves mobilizing or making use of some form of what Bourdieu calls capital; the ontological premise underlying his theory of action is that the relationship among habitus, field, and capital explains action rather than abstract reasoning or structural determinations. For Bourdieu the social world is a product of accumulated history cemented into relatively stable (though contested and therefore changing) social structures and institutions. Without the notion of capital, the social world would become “a discontinuous series of instantaneous mechanical equilibria between agents who are treated as interchangeable particles…” and social scientists would be unable to account for the transformation of social structures. That is, capital links actions to fields by giving actions a weightiness or force not explainable with reference to the action itself. Actions not anchored by such inertia would constitute the world as a sort of game of roulette where every bet placed at every spin of the wheel would have equal chance of success. Such randomness is incompatible with the demonstrable regularities of social existence. Further, as a resource underpinning practical strategies within social fields, capital’s use is always oriented toward its accumulation. That is, it is always an effort to make use of some stock of historically produced goods (money, skills, qualifications, etc.) in order to acquire more.

Bourdieu identifies three main forms of capital, which, through specific labours appropriate to various fields, can be transformed into one another. Economic capital is what we generally think of in terms of money and institutionalized as property rights. Cultural capital is the ability to

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323 Conformity need not be absolute. Agents with demonstrated competence, the ability to appear sufficiently confident in their competence, or sufficient authority to allow deviations from the officially sanctioned rules can use such minor, personal deviations to accrue recognition – this is the basis of style. See: Bourdieu, Logic, 60.

324 Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 105.
distinguish between different symbolic goods such as art and language and which is accumulated through long processes of classed socialization and institutionalized through, among other things, educational qualifications. Finally, social capital is the network of relations that an actor can mobilize in pursuit of practical strategies within various fields. Each of these forms of capital can be analyzed by adopting a conception of a form of capital relevant to the field of action in question. Political capital, linguistic capital, and emotional capital can each be articulated within these broad categories. Embodied cultural capital has already been discussed at length in the previous chapter – it takes the form of the habitus. The habitus as the organizing mechanism of perception and disposition toward action relies heavily on skills. Skills are not evenly or uniformly distributed as the most rare and most useful skills – skills which are therefore most valuable – require access to familial, educational, and employment contexts where such skills can be mimetically acquired, learned and often produced through adjustment as described in the previous chapter. These skills are the core of the practical political inequality alluded to above. Aside from the obvious usefulness of economic and social capital in navigating political terrains such as those on which collective identities are produced, cultural capital manifested through, for example, the ability to communicate articulately (verbally but also through well-designed and professional-appearing literature), comfort dealing with elected officials, and even familiarity with how to navigate seemingly neutral organizational practices such as rules of order provide concrete advantages for some participants in these processes.

Jane Ward provides an insightful analysis of how unequal cultural capital can function within movement organizations when there is an influx of ‘skilled’ professionals bearing significant amounts of specific cultural competencies through her analysis of the depoliticization of the Christopher Street West Pride Celebration in Los Angeles. She traces how, when the festival ran into financial and operational difficulties, the predominantly working class board was made to feel

325 ibid., 106.
unskilled, unprofessional and unworthy of municipal funding for the pride festivities. Note, however, that skill, professionalism and financial responsibility are far cries from alternative measures of what a pride board should have. Queers and liberationists, for example, might be expected to value a board member’s capacity for community inclusion, their independent thinking and commitment to organizational autonomy as well as progressive and liberatory political commitments. Nonetheless, Ward’s Bourdieuian analysis of the class conflict around the organization of pride celebrations in West Hollywood found that middle and upper-class efforts to match expressions of pride to their own consumer lifestyles have been articulated as a fundamentally apolitical desire for professionalism in pride festival organization. The result was part of a broader trend wherein pride celebrations are becoming increasingly political. Queer activists have reason to resist this depoliticization and therefore benefit from analyses such as Ward’s that point to how depoliticization is rendered invisible by organizational shifts legitimated by concerns for professionalism and financial responsibility, and supported by community assent to a vision of pride celebrations as mere cultural festivals that ought to be professionally managed.


327 Elsewhere, Ward extends her argument in a less Bourdieuian tone to ‘diversity skills’ in major LGBT organizations in Los Angeles to demonstrate how cultural capital in the form of knowing how to deploy diversity rhetoric can actually operate to suppress forms of difference not captured by ‘respectable’ forms of diversity. See: Jane Ward, Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in Lgbt Activist Organizations (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008).

Keith Topper offers an account of how these dynamics might be reversed in: Keith Topper, "Arendt and Bourdieu between Word and Deed," Political Theory 39, no. 3 (2011). He argues that AIDS activists were able to develop the specific (scientific) linguistic capital needed to insert themselves into research and testing decisions over AIDS medication. There are, however, a number of problems with Topper’s analysis. First, Topper acknowledges that speech competence is about an entire ‘social personality’, and yet he fails to fully situate AIDS activists as part of a broader movement exerting moral pressure through political tactics. That is, he does not consider the extent to which the ‘seat at the table’ was won through political action rather than linguistic competence. This is theoretically important insofar as it would provide a more consistent read of Bourdieu and point us toward consideration of the circulation of capital rather than purely linguistic exchanges (which are, in a sense, epiphenomena of capital, or perhaps symptoms of capital). Similarly, Topper gestures toward the exclusions that this mastery duplicated … racial, gender,
The dynamics Ward identifies draw attention to a fourth form of capital Bourdieu describes, namely symbolic capital, which is less a resource and more a relation of knowledge underpinning symbolic power. Bourdieu’s conception of symbolic power rests on the observation that, in the final instance, all the distinctions and rules that comprise social space are arbitrary. Naturally, social fields are not historically arbitrary because they are the products of historical struggles over positions within space and the rules by which positions are taken, but they are morally arbitrary insofar as what counts as good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate in a given field reflects the historical construction of that object or practice in space rather than an inherent attribute of an object or practice. Symbolic power exists whenever the arbitrary nature of a field’s structure and rules is forgotten, misrecognized as natural and therefore pre-consciously accepted as the unthought premises of social interaction, what Bourdieu calls ‘doxa’. In such conditions, the judgments of dominant agents are accepted – often in advance through anticipation – by dominated agents, even when those judgments are contrary to the agents’ interest. Bourdieu emphasizes the bodily nature of this acceptance and indeed its foundation in pre-conscious embodied dispositions, organized in the habitus. Symbolic power gains its efficacy by triggering the dispositions in the habitus and thereby provoking a response.

The practical recognition through which the dominated, often unwittingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them, often takes the form of bodily emotion (shame, timidity, anxiety, guilt), often

class, and the possibility that lay experts were ‘captured’ by their linguistic mastery; in each case these exclusions raise doubts about their representative potential. Normatively speaking, these aspects of the dynamics and processes of what we might call collective social personalities would be essential to providing an overall account. In particular, it would help to determine whether the Arendtian power generated was actually successful. He notes at the beginning, for example, a lack of funding for anti-infectives (at the expense of funding for anti-viral treatments). He does not, however, indicate whether this lack was remedied. In fact, capture and disclosure perhaps represent a central problem as much as capture vs. rapprochement. If an agent is captured, then what he or she is able to disclose must be problematic. If the self that one discloses has already been instrumentalized by the need to render oneself intelligible within a public space, then it is not clear that an Arendtian expression of power as the keeping open of public space has been achieved.

328 Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," 115, note 3.
329 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 169.
associated with the impression of *regressing* towards archaic relationships, those of childhood and family.\textsuperscript{330}

The visible manifestations of submission to dominant judgments can include blushing, inarticulacy, clumsiness, and trembling.\textsuperscript{331}

Social movement literature is also beginning to pay attention to emotional dynamics.\textsuperscript{332}

Emirbayer and Goldberg point to the value of attending to collective emotions:

> By collective emotions, we mean (1) complexes of processes-in-relations that are (2) transpersonal in scope and that consist in (3) psychical investments, engagements, or cathexes, where these encompass (4) embodied perceptions and judgments as well as bodily states, forces, energies, or sensations.\textsuperscript{333}

Their central concern is to overcome traditional tendencies to separate reason and emotion, while recognizing emotion as a micro-location of power. They argue that power comes from flows and investments of psychical energy, and positions within networks of emotional cathexis, identification and trust.\textsuperscript{334} Similarly, Britt and Heise have shown how social movements mobilize the potential power of emotions by transforming them from what they call low levels of activation (shame, depression) into ones with higher levels (especially anger). They trace the stages through which gay and lesbian political activity has shifted shame (featuring feelings of vulnerability) to fear (i.e., through warnings of potential backlash, publicizing homophobic violence etc.) and then, by attributing the cause of the feelings of vulnerability to an external, controllable agent (as opposed to individualized self-blame) transforming fear into anger.\textsuperscript{335} Importantly, the social locations where these transformations can potentially take place are all locations where contests over collective

\textsuperscript{330} ibid.
\textsuperscript{331} ibid.
\textsuperscript{332} ibid.
\textsuperscript{333} On a slightly different register there have also been new efforts to theorize the cultural, social, and embodied manifestations of affect and emotion, as well as their political implications. See: Ann Cvetkovich, "Public Feelings," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, no. 3 (2007); Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, eds., *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
\textsuperscript{335} ibid., 492.

Lory Britt and David Heise, "From Shame to Pride in Identity Politics," in *Self, Identity, and Social Movements* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 255-259.
identity also take place. The media is an obvious terrain for pursuing emotional transformations, but they also point to the importance of demonstrations, particularly through emotional contagion of other people displaying pride, but also because, in parallel with Bourdieu though without relying on his conceptual framework, they note that performing the behaviours associated with emotions can induce those emotions.\(^{336}\) In short, anger is a potential resource for social movements – a form of ‘emotional capital’ – and movement activities are means of producing and cultivating this capital.\(^{337}\) The emotional potency of social movement processes, including collective identity construction, demands to be taken seriously. The structured production of these emotions, however, is not unmarked by power and is in fact characterized by the unequal ability to martial pre-existing resources in various forms of capital in a particular (rather than natural or inevitable) and useful direction.

At this point, three concepts related to the symbolic and central to Bourdieu’s work can be defined. *Symbolic power* is the ability to make use of the rules and distinctions of social space that are to your advantage. In anti-oppression frameworks, this is thought of as privilege and it can operate just as unconsciously as privilege does. So, for example, cisgender individuals make use of naturalized distinctions about bodies and gender in order to have relatively easy access to

\(^{336}\) ibid., 260-261 and 252-253.

\(^{337}\) ibid., 264-266.

Gould sketches a similar trajectory within AIDS activism, particularly through ACT UP. The anger ACT UP mobilized was not an inevitable emotional response (the gay community was primed to feel shame, grief and guilt in the face of lifetimes of homophobia), but a defining achievement of ACT UP was its ability to link grief to anger to action. Deborah B. Gould, "Passionate Political Processes: Bringing Emotions Back into the Study of Social Movements," in *Rethinking Social Movements*, ed. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper (Lanham; Boulder; New York; Toronto; Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), 169.

identification, medical care and so on. Because this ease goes unnoticed, the symbolic power enjoyed here is both an objective benefit and a subjective misrecognition of the fact that it is benefit. Symbolic power entails naturalizing that benefit and deriving psychic comfort from enjoying a world constructed for the sort of person you are. Symbolic power is perhaps most pernicious when agents who are disadvantaged by naturalized, arbitrary rules and distinctions within the social order fail to recognize the arbitrary disadvantages to which they are subjected. Bourdieu calls this phenomenon ‘allodoxia’: “mistakenly recognizing oneself in a particular form of representation and public enunciation of the doxa.” (Bourdieu, PM: 185).

Symbolic capital is the recognition agents receive when they perform technically correct and contextually appropriate actions in social space. Agents accumulate symbolic capital in the most banal settings – using the proper fork in a fancy restaurant, or addressing an employer with ‘appropriate’ deference – but also through technically correct and contextually appropriate use of rhetorical devices and arguments in political debates. Again, I will develop this argument further in the next section, but the arbitrary rules and divisions of social space extend to the kinds of arguments that are viable in a given context, who is able to deploy those arguments persuasively, and what benefits accrue from making them.

Finally, symbolic violence is the corollary experience of feeling out of place, anxious, awkward, shamed, stupid, and so on because – and this is important – those who experience symbolic violence are both objectively unable to construct appropriate actions (because the resources necessary to do so are unavailable to them) and subjectively committed to, in the sense of recognizing, the very rules of distinction by which they are excluded and dominated. Symbolic

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338 Transgender people and their allies commonly use ‘cisgender’ to indicate people who identify as the sex/gender they were assigned at birth. Avoiding ‘non-trans’ or equivalent expressions refuses to naturalize cisgender people and thereby mark out transgendered people as deviant or ‘other’.

violence consists of both the objective hardship and the subjective experience of self-blame, hesitation, self-censorship, and so on.

In the context of collective identity, symbolic violence may also take the form of epistemic violence, and analysis of collective identity as constituted in part through epistemic violence represents a second shift from the Meluccian emphasis on negotiation and the free circulation of information.\textsuperscript{340} In Spivak’s canonical consideration of epistemic violence her interest is in how French intellectuals – Foucault and Deleuze are her main targets – remained bound up in a narrative of imperialism. Specifically, the post-economic accounts they offer are ones by which ‘First World’ experiences of power as operating locally, contestable locally, and beyond the homogenizing and narrow grounds of economically determined divisions of labour are generalized and thereby render invisible the very real international divisions of labour characteristic of global production patterns. This reproduces in miniature the heterogeneous phenomenon of European imperialism.\textsuperscript{341} I share with Spivak an interest in the “mechanics of the constitution of the Other; [which we can use] to much greater analytic and interventionist advantage than invocations of the authenticity of the other.”\textsuperscript{342} Although my analysis has an overall affinity with queer critiques of mainstream gay and lesbian politics, my interest is not to posit some queer authenticity that has been sidelined by ascendant gay and lesbian interests. Rather, I am interested in how the production of collective actors as a Subject organized around an orienting collective identity duplicates patterns of domination while delegitimizing other perspectives. I do so through attention to the mechanics of epistemic violence located in configurations of habitus, field, and capital that instantiate symbolic power and exercise symbolic violence. My shift from Spivak, therefore, is two-fold. First, my object of interest is

\begin{footnotes}
\item[340] As indicated elsewhere, Bourdieu did not consider collective identity as a specific phenomenon and I am, therefore, moving beyond his own analysis with this claim.
\item[342] ibid., 294.
\end{footnotes}
collective identity as a site of conflict and (generally) injustice. Second, I want to distinguish a parallel critique. Rather than critiquing Foucault directly, my interest is in articulating an alternative to the queer reliance on Foucault and Butler and, thereby on an explanatory and ethical analyses based on normalization. By articulating epistemic violence to Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence we can see collective identity as based not on iteration and normalization but as a regime based on distinctions by which credibility is undermined. I develop this argument in the final section of this chapter.

To a certain extent, then, my project is more comparable to some of the ways in which the concept of epistemic violence has been taken up following Spivak, and two fairly typical approaches are particularly useful. The first is Dotson’s effort to extend Spivak’s assessment of how colonial narratives silence local knowledges to specific practices of silencing within testimonies as communicative scenes.\(^343\) In Dotson’s view, epistemic violence indicates a “… refusal, intentional or unintentional, of an audience to communicatively reciprocate a linguistic exchange owing to pernicious ignorance.”\(^344\) She understands ‘pernicious ignorance’ to refer to ignorance that predictably flows from epistemic gaps in the cognitive resources of the audience.\(^345\) This somewhat abstract definitional context becomes more clear through the two silencing practices she identifies.

One practice Dotson considers is testimonial smothering, wherein a speaker ‘smothers’ (i.e., restricts, truncates) her testimony because she perceives an audience as unwilling or unable to understand the offered testimony.\(^346\) The content may be unsafe or risky, as when speaking about intra-group problems might be expected to (unfairly) reinforce negative stereotypes (domestic violence within African American communities), or the conditions for speaking may become unsafe

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\(^{344}\) ibid., 238.

\(^{345}\) ibid.

\(^{346}\) ibid., 244.
as when an audience finds a testimony to be unintelligible and responds through microagressions (aversive racism; microinvalidations, microinsults, etc.), which are subtle, possibly non-conscious, non-intentional indications that they are unduly sceptical about a speaker’s claims. Testimonial smothering is closely related to a second practice, which Dotson calls testimonial quieting. Quieting “occurs when an audience fails to identify a speaker as a knower.” As an illustration, Dotson points to the work of Patricia Hill Collins, who argues that black women are refused identification as a knower because their personal credibility is overshadowed by ‘controlling images’ by which they are interpreted (mammies, matriarchs, welfare mothers, whores).

A clear parallel exists here with Bourdieu’s analysis of linguistic exchange. For Bourdieu, the ultimate measure of linguistic competency is the ability to create speech acts which are not only technically correct, but which are couched in ways that are sufficiently appropriate as to ensure their favourable reception.

What is called tact or adroitness consists in the art of taking account of the relative positions of the sender and the receiver in the hierarchy of different kinds of capital, and also of sex and age, and of the limits inscribed in this relation, ritually transgressing them, if need be, by means of euphemization.

The definition of acceptability is found not in the situation but in the relationship between a market and a habitus, which itself is the product of the whole history of its relations with market.

Every linguistic market carries its own logic of accumulation. So, a speaker can utter the same phrase in two different contexts and find that in one case she receives approval and reward for the utterance while in another she receives scorn and rejection. Bourdieu notes, for example, the importance in achieving the correct degree of formality when extending a dinner invitation: “Where

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347 ibid., 244-246.
348 ibid., 242.
349 ibid.
350 Bourdieu, Language and Symbolic Power, 80.
351 ibid., 81.
‘If you would do me the honour of coming’ is appropriate, ‘You ought to come’ would be out of place because too off-hand, and ‘Will you come?’ would be distinctly ‘crude.’”

For the most part linguistic exchanges work. Participants, through habitus, understand the rules and expectations and have varyingly sophisticated capacities to follow those rules and capitalize on opportunities to bolster their position within social hierarchies. Perhaps more importantly, because participants are also heavily invested in the exchange they are also willing to resort to neutralized, inoffensive language to maintain the structure of a particular linguistic market. They invoke what Bourdieu calls “strategies of mutual accommodation,” to maintain consensus about the rules of the exchange and the importance of observing those rules.

Political actors must accomplish two tasks when producing political speech and self-representations: they produce technically correct and politically persuasive arguments, but they must do so in a way that is acceptable, or palatable for the listener. As Bourdieu’s account of symbolic power indicates – and as Ward’s Bourdieuan analysis illustrates – the cultural and symbolic capital necessary to accomplish these tasks is not uniformly distributed. Self-silencing in the form of euphemization, but also quieting in the form of micro-aggressions in meeting contexts – dismissive language, intimidation, use of rules of order to prevent speaking and so on – translate symbolic power into epistemic violence. As communicative exchanges over the meaning of suffering and its remedy, collective identity production is structured by a circuit of capital, which legitimizes and misrecognizes arbitrary authority as a natural credibility, allowing existing symbolic distinctions to be reproduced within debates over identity and thereby become a new source of capital.

As McConkey argues, such circuits can be usefully analyzed in terms of ‘epistemic justice.’ Recognizing credibility’s social origins, which is to recognize that “credibility can only be conferred by one’s epistemic community,” permits the observation that some individuals (or groups) who ought

352 ibid., 80.
353 ibid., 41.
to be conferred credibility are not.\textsuperscript{354} Generally, underserved credibility and refused credibility track to the social location of the speaker, and “[epistemic] injustice occurs when the credibility that a person deserves to have does not correspond to the credibility they are actually afforded.”\textsuperscript{355} Insofar as collective identities articulate a sub-episteme to a set of tactics, strategies, and movement goals, any epistemic injustice within the construction of that sub-episteme can act as a proxy for injustice within those goals. This clearly implies a proceduralist conception of justice rather than the (somewhat ironically) substantive justice claims made by many proponents of queer politics.

\textbf{Illustration: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer in North America}

Bourdieu did not engage collective identity as an analytic tool, choosing instead to understand processes of group formation through delegation of the authority to speak on behalf of a group and submission, on the part of group members, to the spokesperson’s political vision. Naturally, this does not involve a simple relinquishing of authority; delegation is bound up in pre-existing struggles and distributions of various forms of capital – particularly cultural capital in the form of the ability to speak well and political capital in the form of being able to produce successful political representations and actions. Further, while Melucci saw collective identity formation as a process of negotiation, Bourdieu conceived group formation as an act of symbolic power in which those who speak on behalf of a group have disproportionate ability to impose their conception of the group, its environment and its chances on the group itself:

\begin{quote}
What is at stake here is the power of imposing a vision of the social world through principles of di-vision which, when they are imposed on a whole group, establish meaning and a consensus about meaning, and in particular about the identity and unity of the group, which creates the reality of the unity and the identity of the group.\textsuperscript{356}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{355} ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{356} Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 221.
Like all forms of capital, political capital is highly unevenly distributed. Those who have the least political capital of their own must rely the most on delegated spokespeople to represent them and accumulating political capital is associated with access to material and cultural resources (money, leisure time, cultural capital).\textsuperscript{357} As a result, movement organizations and even collective identities ought to be conceived as fields of action in which the central stake is that identity’s political vision: its conception of justice and assessment of opportunities. Gross inequalities in political and cultural capital mean that movement participants who are well-positioned outside the collective identity field are better positioned to impose their vision and to have less-advantageously positioned participants recognize that vision as natural and inevitable. Insofar as symbolic power relies on submission to dominant points of view, and to accepting and internalizing those points of view, LGBT collective identities can be recast as something other than the product of unequal negotiations: they are the product of symbolic domination and submission to dominant visions of justice and strategy as I described in my discussion of \textit{habitus} and symbolic power, above.

A Bourdieuan analysis of LGBT/Q politics, therefore, would gain explanatory leverage from identifying the operation of symbolic power and symbolic domination. Hints of these dynamics can be found in Tom Warner’s detailed account of Canadian queer activism, particularly in the experience of lesbians in gay male-dominated movement organizations. Warner cites lesbian activists’ sense of loneliness, isolation, and powerlessness within movement groups and, tellingly, their frustration at “the conditioning that makes us collude with men in discounting our own experience, our own skills, that makes us feel strangers to power and the use of money.”\textsuperscript{358} Elsewhere, Warner implicitly links socio-economic status to interest, as for example in the flooding of the liberationist Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario (CLGRO) with lawyers, civil servants and professionals interested in relationship recognition, in contrast to lesbians and gays of

\textsuperscript{357} ibid., 172-174.
colour, those on low incomes and those with disabilities.\textsuperscript{359} A Bourdieuan analysis of the history of the ‘influx’ of professionals into grassroots liberationist organizations could be expected to uncover manifestations of symbolic violence in the form of an often unarticulated sense that something has gone wrong, that the debate had shifted or the rug had been pulled out from under early organizers.\textsuperscript{360} Importantly, the shifting of the debate, the reorientation of movement goals was not necessarily the product of a reasoned, objectively reached consensus, though it may have had that formal appearance.

Shifts in movement goals and strategies cannot simply be attributed to the differences in habitus and cultural capital of movement participants. Indeed, Tom Warner’s analysis also points to the ways in which the assimilationist orientation of professionals within the movement, much to the chagrin of liberationists, resonated with:

\begin{quote}
\ldots a deep-rooted desire on the part of individual gays, lesbians, and bisexuals – still reviled and viewed as deviant – to achieve mainstream respectability and legitimacy, to have same-sex relationships seen as the same as heterosexual ones – as conventional families – and to be valued in the same way. It was a powerful motivator for the masses of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals who were not politically aware and who had no analysis beyond wanting to make their lives better and to have discrimination removed.\textsuperscript{361}
\end{quote}

This observation captures the collusion intrinsic to symbolic violence. The flip side of a concern for depoliticization and assimilation, is a concern for the ways in which acceding to dominant points of view, norms, and patterns of interaction can relieve suffering in the short run and improve an otherwise dominated position. As Lawler argues, there is a paradoxical relationship between submission and resistance that emerges from Bourdieu’s analysis: if a person’s social identity meets with reproach and disapproval (which is to say, symbolic violence), then it seems obvious that adjusting how they inhabit that identity might diminish their exposure to symbolic

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{359} ibid., 219-225.
\textsuperscript{360} Michael Warner expresses such a sentiment about the movement for relationship recognition generally in Warner, \textit{The Trouble with Normal}, 84.
\textsuperscript{361} Warner, \textit{Never Going Back}, 231.
\end{flushright}
violence. In discussing working class women’s efforts to negotiate their subordinated social position, Lawler asks rhetorically, “How liberating is it to have your clothes, your speech, your appearance vilified? On the other hand, how liberating is it to cast off these marks of difference and to adopt a normalized (middle-class) *habitus*?” She argues that while adopting a normalized *habitus* might be liberating for the individual it can hardly be expected to promote systematic transformation to relations of symbolic power. The deep-rooted desire for recognition held by mainstream gays and lesbians reflects accession to the dominant distribution of symbolic power and motivates adopting normalized *habitus* to reduce the distinctions between gay and lesbian individuals and symbolically more valued heterosexuals. In this way, symbolic power in the form of a willingness to gain emotional comfort through improved social position functioned as a resource to bolster the new professionals Warner identifies. The result is a two-fold operation of symbolic power: disparities in symbolic and cultural capital among participants in movement organizations is bolstered by the willingness of LGBT people outside those organizations to conform to the existing rules for accumulating symbolic capital.  

To summarize, the Bourdieuan notion of symbolic power provides the grounds for an alternative version to the typical critique of mainstream gay and lesbian politics as assimilationist projects submitting to the normalizing power of the capitalist state. In broad strokes, the Bourdieuan version would suggest that access to rights – particularly in terms of marriage rights – provides opportunities for accumulating symbolic capital and thereby improving the position of gays and lesbians in social space. This accords with the strategically legitimate but ultimately conformist approach Lawler identifies as a paradoxical implication of the operation of symbolic power.

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363 Smith’s analysis in *Lesbian and Gay Rights in Canada* has persuasively demonstrated the role of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in bolstering what Bourdieu would describe as the symbolic value of legalist movement strategies (see especially 109-110). Smith does not account for the inertia acquiescing to existing distributions of symbolic power fosters as evidenced by her optimism that same-sex marriage will ‘radically transform’ the institution of marriage (76).
However, the conformism behind rights-based strategies for accumulating symbolic power is problematic insofar as its success depends on devaluing the queer cultural forms, sexual practices, modes of intimacy and approaches to family and community-building that lie behind the queer ethical impulse I described in Chapter One.

**Distinction, Not Normalization**

Up to this point this chapter has largely focused on the importance of rendering mainstream social movement theory accounts of collective identity more sensitive to power dynamics, but that focus represents only a portion of my critical project. In this section I briefly continue the distinction I drew between oppression and symbolic violence in Chapter Three, where I sought to distinguish between Bourdieuan and Foucauldian conceptions of power by contrasting Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence and Young’s conception of oppression. Here, my interest is in contrasting the Bourdieuan approach to collective identity I have just articulated to the logics of Foucault’s normalization and Butler’s performativity. Normalization and performativity provide the conceptual foundation for most queer political and theoretical projects as well as objections to the mainstreaming impulses of gay and lesbian politics. I argue that symbolic violence and a Bourdieuan conception of power provide more satisfactory explanatory resources and point to important normative conclusions.

With few exceptions, most queer critics of mainstream politics argue that mainstream movement goals miss out or actively marginalize alternative political projects, particularly around physical and mental health, community building, and sex-positivity.\(^{364}\) Implicitly, most attribute this distortion to the unequal nature of the negotiations understood to underpin processes of constructing collective identity and interpret these negotiations from within a Foucauldian framework. For example, Michael Warner invokes the Foucauldian notion of ‘counter-public’ to describe the culture

surrounding queer cultural practices.365 In his account, these queer counter-publics have been sidelined by the normalizing impulses of mainstream gay organizations, media outlets and opinion-leaders.366 Such accounts gain explanatory leverage from Foucault’s dispersed, capillary notion of power in which relations of force discipline subjects in accordance with discursive norms. Miriam Smith, for example, has powerfully demonstrated how the introduction of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms altered the discursive context of LGBT/Q struggles for equality. The new discursive landscape after the Charter’s introduction gave new persuasiveness to equality frames rooted in ‘rights talk’ and helped shift movement goals toward formal legal equality and away from the transformative social and political vision of gay liberation.367 Famously though, the normative disciplining Foucault envisioned is never complete and, as Foucault argues, “[where] there is power, there is resistance”.368 Queer political projects, then, have been organized around the twin notions that queerness itself is a resistance to processes of normalization but that the unequal negotiations on which collective identity has been founded means the resistive potential of queerness has been swamped by the normative power of, for example, rights discourses.

In Chapter Three I argued that theories of practice, or accounts of agency, underpinned by Foucault’s conception of normalization rely on a logic of homogenization. Disciplinary power expands from laboratory settings – prisons, asylums, schools, hospitals – into all corners of the social via the export of disciplinary discourses from those laboratories and by the incremental incorporation of discursively produced subjects into the demands and opportunities those discourses structure. The uniformity of normalizing discourses, however, cannot account for various agents’ varying success within the same discursive fields, nor for the generative tendencies of practice across fields. Butler’s notion of performativity appears to offer a way of overcoming these problems, and it is not surprising

366 ibid., 68 and 79.
368 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, 95. See also: Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 346-347.
that many queer theorists and activists explicitly or implicitly ground their analysis in some combination of Butler and Foucault.\textsuperscript{369}

In \textit{Gender Trouble}, Butler weds Foucault’s rejection of the trope of bodily interiority and exteriority as descriptors of the soul, or of psychic process, to an account of gender as a parallel product of the incorporation of disciplinary norms:

In other words, acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.\textsuperscript{370}

With a similar genesis to Bourdieu’s habitus (i.e., in the “stylized repetition of acts”), gender is the sedimentation of norms into bodies that produce binary sets of corporeal styles.\textsuperscript{371} If acts and gestures do not represent an inner truth about a subject’s gender identity, but merely the incorporation of a norm, then sex, gender and sexuality bear no intrinsic connection.\textsuperscript{372} Like Foucault, Butler finds potential for resistance within disciplined productions of subjectivity. Unlike Foucault, however, Butler argues that the potential for agency against discipline is not produced by discourse directly, but by its necessary failure. In her consideration of what she calls “the John/Joan case,” for example, she argues that invasive and competing attempts to produce John as a girl and then as a man, or more specifically the failure to compel full incorporation of either indicate a gap, an “incommensurability, between the norm that is supposed to inaugurate his humanness and the spoken

\textsuperscript{369} Bernstein, "Identity Politics," 56-57.

\textsuperscript{370} Judith Butler, \textit{Gender Trouble; Feminism and the Subversion of Identity} (New York; London: Routledge, 1990), 136.

\textsuperscript{371} ibid., 140.

\textsuperscript{372} ibid., 137.
insistence on himself that he performs.” For Butler, this gap opens the possibility of political resistance through resignification and recontextualization, which can produce the effect of authoritative communication even where it is not officially sanctioned.

The frame on which Butler’s notion of performativity hangs, then, is a largely external (though socially constructed) system of norms and spaces of discursive possibility. In order to become fully human subjects, performers repeat the stylized gestures assigned to them within binary gender and heteronormative social relations. Given the ambivalence and constructedness at the core of these performances many potential subjects will fail to fully incorporate the expected norms, fail to produce satisfactory gender performances and expressions, and indeed, fail to become fully human. The cost of this failure is significant, and produces symbolic and material suffering experienced as a certain ‘unliveability.’

The model I have been developing presents two immediate challenges to this conception. First, we lose something when we think in terms of failure to incorporate an external norm rather than in terms of the active production of those failures within social contexts. Symbolic violence as the context-specific imposition of interpretations and definitions of action entails a conception of practice where some agents’ ‘failure’ is in fact the product of other agents’ active efforts and success. This is not to say that fields in which these successes and failures are produced are neutral or unstructured; quite the opposite is the case. What we lose by thinking in terms of failure is the opportunity to understand failure as the product of the historic struggles that make hierarchically

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I have also noted Butler and Skeggs’ parallel critiques of Bourdieu where each argues that there is a necessary ambivalence at the core of subject formation, see Chapter Two.


375 The language here may be unintentionally misleading. Butler does not intend the incorporation of norms nor the ‘assignment’ of gender roles, etc. to be understood in voluntaristic terms. Here she and Bourdieu concur that processes of habituation and the performances they evoke are non-cognitive and generally pre-conscious.

organized positions available to actors within a field, and the historic struggles over the forms, quantities and distributions of capital that energize social space.

The difference between gay and lesbian politics and queer politics, then, is not simply a failure on the part of queers to incorporate the norms of political space, a failure not shared by gay and lesbian subjects. By examining these issues in terms of collective identity and symbolic violence in the form of epistemic violence, we can see not only that queerness as a failure to become a fully political collective subject was erased from the realm of possibility within the processes of collective identity formation and that this erasure was enabled by the existence of habitus disposed – as most habitus are – to conformity, and the presence of cultural and discursive capital oriented toward successfully producing intelligible political subjects. I discuss these dynamics further at the tactical level – keeping in mind that manifestations of tactics in demonstrations, media campaigns and so on are also locations of collective identity production – in the next chapter. For now, however, I simply point to Gamson’s excellent analysis of the production of collective identity boundaries precisely through strategies aimed at constructing membership winners and failures within shifting discursive and political environments.377

Second, the model I develop rejects the impossibility of closing the gap between norms and subjectivity (central to performativity), at least at the collective level. Gay and lesbian politics have been successful less because of a disruptive resignification and more because they have moved a failed collective subjectification toward a successful one. Put another way, political success did not come from challenging norms to which collective actors were unable to adhere, but from leveraging sources of adherence in the form of cultural and symbolic capital, into cultural and policy change that track with neoliberal patterns of exploitation and individualization. Again, success did not come from

failure, but from… success! But this apparent tautology was not pre-destined. Rather, the contours of social space in which LGBT/Q people found themselves directed political action in relatively predictable ways, while those who were already performative failures – but with the most wide-reaching and radical critiques – were re-marginalized. Thinking about collective identity in terms of field, capital and symbolic violence allows a more nuanced account of politics than the queer critiques of failure. Further, it allows for an understanding of the dynamic relationship between structured social space and dynamics of ‘success.’

**Suffering, Submission, Survival**

My intention in this chapter has not been to paint allodoxia, misrecognizing dominant interests for one’s own and thereby submitting to one’s own domination, as an intrinsic feature of occupying a devalued location in social space. Indeed, objectors might point to the important work of James Scott as evidence that what may appear to be accession to arbitrary authority in fact masks ‘false deference’ and conceal hidden forms of resistance. Scott argues, essentially, that researchers who limit their understanding of resistance to rebellions and revolutions miss everyday forms of resistance. Through a detailed ethnographic study of a Malaysian peasant community, Scott describes “the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labour, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them,” with emphasis on “the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.”

Scott recognizes the possibility of actual submission to dominant perspectives on the rules of social space, diverging from Bourdieu ultimately is on the extent to which allodoxia is a phenomenon limited to extreme instances such as Nazi concentration camps. By contrast, Bourdieu sees misrecognition at the heart of sociality and expressed in even fairly banal

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379 ibid., 327.
cultural practices as when, for example, members of the working class recognize ‘legitimate’ culture by substituting inexpensive cultural products while maintaining the dominant class form (sparkling white wine for champagne, for example).  

Similarly, Skeggs argues that Bourdieu is blind to such forms of resistance because he conceptualizes dominated groups entirely in terms of lacking; because the working class and feminists lack cultural capital and symbolic power they are destined to unreflectively submit to the rules of the game established by dominant groups. This blindness, she argues, ignores what feminists have long known, namely that “there is a significant difference between suffering and survival.”

McNay takes up Skeggs’ findings as she points out that while working class women may strategically conform to middle-class norms, they do so at the cost of feeling like an interloper. However, she argues that this ambivalence reflects the structured emotional binds contradictions within fundamental social structures produce through equally ambivalent and contradictory forms of identification and affect. My argument is that this ambivalence traps dominated groups within a distorting relation to power. While Skeggs wants to re-value working class cultural forms as a source of strategic agency, my analysis in this chapter suggests that doing so erases the effects of symbolic violence in its epistemic forms and the impact it has on efforts by dominated groups to resist their domination. At best, this erasure overstates the possibilities for resistance. At worst it is symptomatic of a tendency to substitute a desire for agency for its actual possibility. I explore this desire using a Nietzschean anti-metaphysics in Chapter Six.

I conclude here with the observation that, as McNay argues, ambivalence and contradiction are rooted in social structure and therefore amenable to socio-centric (as opposed to linguistic or

380 Bourdieu, Distinction, 390.
382 McNay, "Agency and Experience: Gender as a Lived Relation," 188.
psychoanalytic) evaluation. Where contradictions and binds foster symbolic and epistemic injustices within social movements, we can say that they represent a distortion that is at best normatively problematic. Because the degree to which arbitrary authority is accepted or resisted is an empirical question and dependent upon the extent to which dominated agents submit to the visions of the dominant, alldoxia, survival, and ‘false compliance’ represent points on a continuum of submission and resistance. Social movement research seeking to operationalize the theoretical claims I have made in this chapter, of course, have to find ways of distinguishing between the two where relevant while attending to the complex relationships among domination, submission, resistance and distortion.

383 ibid.
CHAPTER FIVE: TACTICS AND ANTINOMY

Introduction

Where LGBT/Q politics offer rich possibilities for gleaning interpretive insights into relationships among domination, identity, symbolic power and movement strategies, the alterglobalization movement offers similarly fertile terrain for thinking about dynamics of domination in the context of movement tactics. By ‘strategy’ I mean the long-run positioning and overall orientation a collective actor takes within the social field. In the previous chapter I argued that distortions in long-run strategies of movements are produced by habitus and the uneven distribution of ‘capital’ within symbolic and political fields (including the epistemic and symbolic power and violence those fields engender). Unequal distributions of cultural and symbolic capital in particular produce collective identity processes that are plagued with symbolic violence and therefore reproduce relations of domination. By ‘tactic’ I mean the individual protests, demonstrations, and actions that, connected through organizational and cultural continuity, express the movement’s strategy.

More specifically, in this chapter I examine a specific protest event – the protests against the 2010 G20 meetings in Toronto, Canada – to demonstrate how a Bourdieuan analysis of the protests can bring to light specific challenges protesters face in neoliberal contexts. Since the ‘Battle of Seattle’ in November 1999, where demonstrators and Black Bloc activists challenged the World Trade Organization summit, protests around meetings of global economic ‘leaders’ have been the

384 What exactly to name the collection of efforts to resist the intensifying and global neoliberal project has not been settled. Early mobilization was called ‘anti-globalization’, but given the movement’s efforts to establish transnational networks of resistance, particularly through the World Social Forum and its regional and local versions, the movement is clearly not anti-global. Movement for Global Justice, anti-corporate globalization, and other terms have also been used. In this discussion I use the term ‘alterglobalization’ to capture the movement’s attention to global issues and efforts to build global capacities to resist but also to capture what I take to be the movement’s most urgent task: to resist the neoliberal doxa that alternatives are both impossible and undesirable. For discussions on naming the movement, see: Richard Day, Gramsci Is Dead (London; Anne Arber, MI: Pluto Press, 2005), 4. David Graeber, "The New Anarchists," New Left Review 13, no. Jan/Feb (2002): 62-63.
most visible manifestation of the alterglobalization movement. The presence of Black Bloc and other militant groups at these protests was used to legitimate extensive police and surveillance mobilizations, massive security infrastructure, and maintaining increased distances between decision-makers and protesters. In Toronto, nearly $1 billion was spent to host the event, a sum that included $9.4 million to build a massive security fence and the mobilization of thousands of police and security officers. Thousands of ‘peaceful’ protestors also mobilized for the meeting, as did a contingent of property-smashing Black Bloc activists. In the struggle over the G20 meeting nearly 1,000 protestors were arrested, and the aftermath included lawsuits against the Toronto Police Services and several investigations into police behaviour during the protests. Nonetheless, the G20 reached an agreement to introduce aggressive austerity measures, the impact of which – if history is any indication – will be most directly felt by those who are already most vulnerable economically and socially.

For activists and researchers interested in contentious politics generally and the alterglobalization movement specifically, conflicts at the Toronto G20 summit brought into relief tensions between proponents of divergent protest tactics and the challenges of ‘respect for diversity of tactics’. In particular, a small but well-organized group of anarchists making use of Black Bloc tactics were accused of undermining the mainstream People First demonstration organized largely by the Ontario labour movement. Taking up Adorno’s observation that “wrong life cannot be lived rightly,” I argue that to a significant extent debates about the relationship among divergent protest

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385 Canadian Press. Radwanski. Weltman. ii.

tactics risk neglecting a central feature of domination: the impossibility of adopting a ‘right’ form of protest in a ‘wrong’ political field. 387 A wrong system cannot be protested rightly.

To make this argument I move away from the search for positive causal mechanisms that is currently dominant in mainstream social movement studies. 388 That is, I focus attention on a negative characteristic of the political space of the Toronto G20 and argue that the structure of symbolic power constituting that space produced what I call ‘political antinomies’ for the G20’s opponents. In logic, antinomies refer to contradictions between two logically necessary conclusions. In this paper, ‘antinomy’ refers to the contradictions exposed by the necessary failure of equally plausible but mutually exclusive approaches to protest politics. Therefore, when I suggest that a wrong system cannot be protested rightly, I am arguing that the considerable energy social movements expend grappling with ways to be both ethical and effective is itself a feature of domination. Indeed, just as domination produces distortions in collective identity processes, so too does it produce distortions within tactical selection by turning movement energies inward through impossible efforts to identify ‘right’ protests.

A Bourdieuan attention to symbolic capital within protest fields distinguishes itself from the contentious politics approach articulated by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (and currently dominant within mainstream research on social movement politics) in two ways. First, introducing symbolic power (which depends conceptually on the habitus and Bourdieu’s conception of capital) rejects the rationalist social psychology the contentious politics perspective continues from the resource mobilization, political process, and repertoires of contention frameworks. As I argue further, below, this ontological break leads to an ethical one. Namely, that the contentious politics perspective is silent on the question of whether possibilities for ‘success’ exist within given institutional

388 McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention*, 24.
arrangements. That is, the contentious politics approach offers two explanatory possibilities: either openings exist within political and cultural power arrangements and can be capitalized upon through movement mobilization, or no such openings exist, prohibiting significant contentious action. The approach remains bound up in the question of ‘when’ contention occurs but despite McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly’s interest in developing a dynamic model, their reliance on rational agency and institutional arrangements binds the approach to a snapshot-by-snapshot account of political evolution. It provides no insight into how the tactics deployed within contentious episodes articulate to the evolution of domination more generally.

In this chapter, then, I develop the notion of political antinomies in relation to the Black Bloc and People First protests to bring together a number of political logics. These include the logic behind repertoires of contention and tactical selection, the logic of affinity as a mode of resistance, the logic of normalization as it relates to demonstrations, the logic of the political economy of political representation and, finally, the logic of symbolic markets and distinction. I begin by describing the measure of efficacy I use in claiming that there is no ‘right’ way to protest and expanding on what I mean by political antinomies. I then briefly re-state the most relevant aspects of Bourdieu’s sociology before exploring Charles Tilly’s important notion of repertoires of contention. Following a brief description of the ideological context of the G20 protests I analyze the symbolic manoeuvres and possibilities of Black Block and People First protests.

**Efficacy and Antinomies**

What I have been calling a ‘political antinomy’ exists when a political field is structured in such a way as to make it impossible for dominated actors to gain sufficient position within that field to alter its basic structures and, therefore, to alter the relations of domination that are structured by the field. This impossibility is bound up in the misrecognition of arbitrary distributions of capital within social space. Bourdieu refers to practical ‘double binds’ in *The Weight of the World* to indicate
a situation wherein the contradictory demands of a social field are impossible to satisfy simultaneously.\textsuperscript{389} Importantly, this double bind is found in the relation between an actor, the resources she carries with her and the field in which she acts. Lawler draws out the implications of this relation in terms of efforts to overcome symbolic violence. She argues that Bourdieu’s framework allows us to perceive a paradox wherein someone who is dominated may find a legitimate strategy in accommodating herself to the very relations that do her harm. In such cases, by conforming to unjust relations of power an actor might achieve a certain amount of individual liberation but without challenging those dominating relations.\textsuperscript{390} Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the ability to accommodate oneself to relations of power is a skill that is evenly distributed among dominated groups and individuals. For Lawler, conforming to the dominant strictures of a field allows an individual or a group the space to exert a certain degree of agency, but because this agency is purchased through submission to rules of the game that unevenly distribute opportunities for success, the actor is never able to gain sufficient hold to alter the rules themselves.

My intention in this paper is to apply Lawler’s analysis to the G20 protests in Toronto, but with equal attention to the conformist and marginalizing strategies deployed in the People First and Black Bloc actions respectively.

Naturally, claiming that the ‘wrongness’ of the political field and the structures of symbolic power G20 protesters faced meant they had no ‘right’ way to protest available demands an account of what constitutes a ‘right’ protest. As rough shorthand, I suggest that ‘right’ protest would be both ethical and effective. I will leave a discussion of what constitutes ethical protest to my analysis of the G20 protests below, but an account of efficacy is surely warranted here.

A central difficulty of the critique of domination I am attempting here lies in the need to parse out what constitutes efficacy. Simply measuring efficacy by identifying an action’s goals

\textsuperscript{389} Bourdieu, \textit{The Weight of the World}, 189-191.
\textsuperscript{390} Lawler, "Rules of Engagement," 122.
would be problematic strategy for a number of reasons. First, goals were almost certainly multiple both within and among groups and protesters. Individuals and groups almost certainly had ambivalent and possibly conflicting goals, and part of most organizations’ pre-protest discussions and internal disputes would have centered on exactly this ambivalence, possibly without resolution. Put simply, domination is neither so simple nor so direct that it provokes univocal and unidirectional resistance. I suggest, therefore, that any analysis of the G20 protests must necessarily be selective about what it considers to be relevant outcomes.

An obvious measure might be whether the protesters were capable of stopping the G20 meetings or at least having marked influence on its decisions.\textsuperscript{391} There was some of this efficacy in the 2001 protests against the FTAA in Quebec, so one might assume that it could have been a hoped-for outcome of these protests. In all likelihood, explaining outcomes at the level of actual G20 decisions would require analysis at multiple levels: international political economy, the geography of the summit, the domestic politics of host countries, analysis of policing, as well as mechanisms of contention. Clearly such a comprehensive analysis is beyond the ambition of this project. A common alternative is to point to less concrete outcomes such as building a sense of community and common purpose, in short, developing collective identity. There is certainly room for this type of research, particularly in light of Barr and Drury’s finding that the sense of empowerment derived from participation in summit protests is less evenly distributed amongst protest participants than organizers might hope.\textsuperscript{392}

My interest, however, is on the relationship between protest tactics and power. Therefore, the axis of efficacy I am interested in is one that Melucci has argued is a central effect of new social

\textsuperscript{391} Richard Day has been prominent among observers who question the usefulness of summit protests. Where Day questions state-centered ‘politics of demand’ generally, my interest is in the antinomies produced by symbolic domination as a specific mode of power – which may or may not include the state as an actor or target of action. See: Day, 80.

\textsuperscript{392} Barr and Drury: 257.
movement mobilization: making power visible. Underpinning my argument, however, is an awareness of the fact that, particularly when it comes to questions of power, visibility is not an all-or-nothing question. Rather, visibility must always be thought of as a dynamic process wherein bringing certain features to light necessarily occludes others. Certainly the police response to even the possibility that Black Bloc tactics might make an appearance rendered visible the state’s capacity for brute coercive power. If the Black Bloc had not participated, would that power have remained invisible? Certainly one implication of the People First efforts to negotiate with the police (discussed below) might have been to maintain that power’s invisibility. That is, the state’s reliance on coercive power ‘in the last instance’ to ensure its operation of economic power, which the Black Bloc exposed, demanded tactics designed to render visible that aspect of state power by provoking coercion. Nonetheless, Black Bloc’s detractors argue that Black Bloc tactics produce distortions in media coverage and public discussion about the G20 meetings and, in a sense, therefore were also complicit in removing the G20’s economic power from sight. That is, exposing the state’s capacity for policing eclipsed the G20’s economic violence. In an effort to navigate the dynamics by which power is rendered visible and invisible through protest I argue that the state’s police power and the G20’s economic power are separate components of a broader scheme of power – Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power – that is nearly impossible to render unproblematically visible. Yet, rendering visible the relationship between the arbitrary and disproportionate symbolic power of the G20 and the effects of the use of that power on people’s lives must surely be a necessary condition for confronting neoliberal hegemony.

**Fields, Symbolic Power**

In the previous chapter I argued that incorporating Bourdieu’s notions of *habitus*, capital and symbolic power into social movement theory’s conceptual tools – specifically collective identity –

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allows us to bring to light ethical features of LGBT and queer political movements in North America. To make my argument about political antinomies, the relevant Bourdieuian conceptual tools are fields and symbolic power, neither of which can be detached conceptually from the notion of habitus. In this section I briefly restate the relevant aspects of habitus, field and symbolic power before turning to the relevant concepts from existing social movement theory – repertoires of contention – in the next.

Bourdieu’s central purpose in articulating his ‘economy of practice’ was to break from objectivist and structuralist accounts of action that reduced agency to epiphenomena of objective, structural conditions. The habitus figures centrally in this project because it allows Bourdieu to conceive of action as practical strategy oriented toward struggles to accumulate material and symbolic profit. An account of action as practical strategy requires an account of agency consistent with an actor who evaluates the context of their action, the resources available to support action and the likely effects of action. The hallmark of Bourdieu’s sociology, however, is to refuse to treat an actor’s evaluative skills and schema, resources, and effects as either uniform abstractions applicable to all agents (as in the rational actor model, whose analytic leverage depends on ascribing a single, abstract model of rationality to all agents) or to assume that identical actions would have identical effects (or even the same chances of being undertaken) when taken from differing social locations. Instead, his model depends includes an account of the genesis of schema by which the possibilities of action are assessed, a social space that constrains and shapes the possibilities of action, and an unequal distribution of the resources – authority, cultural skills, and know-how as well as the social connections, and economic – required to act successfully. In short, agents’ actions are not simple reflections of abstract interests, but the product of an agent’s interpretive capacities and dispositions (habitus), resources (various forms of capital) and current context (field).

394 Bourdieu, Logic, 16.
Habitus are incorporated through repeated exposure to various social fields, an exposure that confers varying amounts of capital available to agents in social fields and which therefore creates a close relationship between field, capital and habitus. By ‘capital’, Bourdieu means the structured combination of cultural know-how or knowingness, official qualifications, economic resources, social networks and symbolic advantages that actors mobilize and make use of within social fields. Such fields are always hierarchically organized and contain distinctive divisions of labour and methods for classifying the people, groups and objects that fall within them. Once incorporated into the habitus, these hierarchical systems of division and classification become the cognitive and affective bases for future actions. Put more concisely, the habitus is structured by the fields that it encounters and subsequently becomes a structure according to which judgements about social practice are made. Because these judgments and actions are oriented toward success within a given field, they tend to act in accordance with that field’s system of division and classification, and therefore tend to reproduce those divisions and classifications.

The immanent, practical demands of fields mediate the dispositions comprising the habitus in at least two ways. First, the overall amount and structure of capital that an actor bears – an objective measure – significantly affects the likelihood of that actor’s success in taking action in social space. Second, the actor’s subjective perception of a field as available for successful intervention introduces judgements based on practical reasoning rather than on mechanistic determinations produced by the structure of the field itself. Actors assess the field, their position within that field, their capital, and make corollary assessments of other actors within the field. Because these judgements are always undertaken from the actor’s concrete position from within a field, they are always made from a partial perspective. Partial, that is, both in the sense that the actor is psychically invested in the assessment and in the sense that action is never the result of a rational evaluation based on full knowledge of opportunities and constraints as per rational action theory nor is it undertaken in conscious keeping with a norm or rule and with full awareness of the meaning and implications of
that rule as per objectivist thinking. For Bourdieu, action is based on immanent strategies and is the product of context-specific but nonetheless structured encounter of field and perception.

Bourdieu’s treatment of social fields reflects the relational logic at the core of his early intellectual orientation toward structuralism. In particular, Bourdieu adopted the Saussurian principle of difference by which the meaning of every object within structured space (or in Saussure’s case, the meaning of each word and phrase within language) can only be determined in relation to all of the other objects within that space in a system of meaning that would be free-floating entirely were it not anchored by convention.\textsuperscript{395} Similarly, Bourdieu’s social fields are social spaces bounded by unrecognized or pre-conscious agreement on what elements (objects, actors, capital and practices) belong within that space, the meaning of the various forms of those elements and, most importantly, the value ascribed to those elements. The topographical spatial metaphors Bourdieu uses modify our conceptual understanding of physical space: just as the reciprocal externality of a bounded set of objects constitutes a physical space, social space is constituted through mutual exclusion or distinctions. The value of every agent or action is produced by virtue of it \textit{not} being other possible agents or actions within the bounded set of possible objects, agents and actions that constitute the outer limits of a given social space.\textsuperscript{396} Within the artistic field, for example, consumption of so-called ‘high-brow’ art is best understood as the expression of an aesthetic disposition – which is the product of specifically classed familial and educational experiences – oriented toward certain ‘legitimate’ aesthetic objects and capable of experiencing them in legitimate ways \textit{and not} an aesthetic disposition oriented toward base or unrefined tastes.\textsuperscript{397} The value of Chopin is that it isn’t monster truck rallies; or, as I argue in relation to the political field below, the value of peaceful mass demonstrations is that they are not riots. Benefiting from such distinctions depends on symbolic

\textsuperscript{395} Schinkel: 76.
\textsuperscript{396} Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 134-135.
\textsuperscript{397} Bourdieu, \textit{Distinction}, 32.
power, the ability – by virtue of social location and possession of relevant forms of capital – to assert
the distinction and have it recognized by other participants in a social field.

Bourdieu envisioned a broad social field comprised of multiple, bounded and relatively
autonomous subfields, each with its own system of meaning and therefore mechanism for ranking
and distributing objects, agents and practices within its parameters. The main fields of concern for
Bourdieu were the educational, artistic, scientific, linguistic and, of course, political. Although each
field is anchored by its own morally arbitrary assumptions they are all homologously organized,
which is to say that they share structural similarities. Thus, what is valuable in the domestic field –
submission to parental authority, respect for elders, participation in the collective efforts of the
family – has similar value in the education field but in the form of submission to teachers’ authority
and willingness to participate in learning as a collective process replete with behavioural norms,
benchmarks for success, and so on. The structural similarity of the relational logic underpinning all
subfields within the broader social field enables habitus to act intelligibly and consistently across
social contexts.

Fields are relative durable because the structural similarity common to each field and
manifested in the various positions taken up by elements within them are doubly inscribed in the
social world: objectively in social space and subjectively in the structured dispositions of the habitus-
bearing agents within that space. Bourdieu points to the objective distribution of resources (capital)
in various forms including authorizing titles and qualifications, geography and physical structures as
central instances of the objectification of the system of classification that habitus incorporates and
according to which it acts. Thus, for example, the concentration of corporate and political power on
Wall Street is not just a coincidence of real estate, but a reflection of complex processes by which
objective distributions of economic resources have become geographically sedimented. In turn,
having a corporate location on Wall Street conveys a certain economic and political authority to those dispositions attuned to recognizing it.\textsuperscript{398}

The fact that \textit{habitus} is formed by, and incorporates, various forms of objectified field distributions is key to fields’ durability. \textit{Habitus} subjectively replicates the values and possibilities of action objectively inscribed in social fields. Agents whose \textit{Habitus} disposes them to recognize the value of the stakes involved in a particular field – Bourdieu refers to this psychic investment as \textit{illusio} – are both inclined to participate in those fields and relatively competent to do so. No field is a perfect fit, however, and therefore agents undergo incremental adjustments in their dispositions in order to more successfully participate in a field to which they are oriented. Thus, the process by which an agent becomes a miner, farmer, artist, and so on involves lengthy, continuous, and generally imperceptible adjustments, starting in childhood but extending throughout the agent’s interaction with particular fields. These adjustments normally accrue without radical conversions and usually without crisis or conflict.\textsuperscript{399}

Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power provides a conceptual means of connecting the unequal distribution of a particular kind of capital – symbolic capital – to practical assessments about the field and particularly about the resources one brings to the field. It therefore allows social movement analysts to focus on how symbolic violence mediates between \textit{habitus} and field and to specify the ways in which this mediation hinders successful mobilization. The ‘symbolic’ in Bourdieu’s work is the shared and structured system of distinctions that renders social space, distributions of capital and rules of accumulation intelligible to subjects within that space. These shared symbolic structures are the grounds for “consensus on the meaning of the social world” and therefore produce logical and moral integration and ultimately logical and moral conformity.\textsuperscript{400} The pre-conscious, pre-linguistic

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{398} Bourdieu, \textit{The Weight of the World}, 124-125.
  \item \textsuperscript{399} Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 165.
  \item \textsuperscript{400} Bourdieu, \textit{Language and Symbolic Power}, 166.
\end{itemize}
mimetic process through which objective structures are incorporated into bodily dispositions (habitus) tends to make habitus-bearing actors misrecognize (or fail to recognize) the morally (though not historically) arbitrary nature of the distribution of resources, authority and benefits objectified in any given field. As a result, the habitus is disposed to perceiving arbitrary inequalities as both natural and inevitable, ‘doxic’ in Bourdieu’s language, and therefore to misattributing the cause of suffering or benefit produced by hierarchically organized social space to the merits or shortcomings of individuals within that space rather than to those individuals’ unequal access to various material, social and cultural resources. Symbolic power is the ability to take advantage of unequal distributions of various forms of capital to impose or maintain the system of distinctions that support that distribution. The central feature of Bourdieu’s conception of symbolic domination, therefore, is that dominated groups adopt the point of view of the dominant precisely because both groups share a doxic misrecognition of naturalized arbitrary distinctions.

It would be a mistake, however, to treat these naturalized distinctions as giving positive content to specific elements within the symbolic. As I illustrate in my discussion of neoliberalism below, symbolic classifications operate via a system of distinctions rather than by ascribing nominal meaning to isolated objects. The ‘meaning’ of labour unions or anarchists, for example, is not derived from a positive ascription of their characteristics but by situating them within an interconnected system of distinctions between freedom and constraint, public and private, legitimate and illegitimate. Thus, while protesters clearly disagreed with the G20 state representatives on the meaning of substantive policy issues, the degree to which they adopted doxic understandings – the point of view of the dominant – about norms of communication, protest and the public versus private nature of property marks out the terrain and strategy of the symbolic struggle they waged through

divergent protest tactics. It also marked out, in different ways, the constraints on effective symbolic action.

These dynamics are essential for understanding how social movements select specific strategies. Charles Tilly’s notion of *repertoires of contention*, which I examine in the next section, was intended to explain why some forms of protest appear in some historical contexts but not others. More specifically, Tilly was interested in demonstrating that histories of contention constrain current choices; collective action is constrained by what collective actors have learned from previous tactics, by the fact that antagonists (police and other state actors in particular) also develop repertoires for responding to collective action, and by the institutional and social arrangements (police practices, laws regarding association and gatherings) that are not part of collective action but shape it.401 While Tilly’s attention to the historical genesis of practical strategies and their context-specific contours has a superficial compatibility with the Bourdieuan economy of practice, the structuralist and rationalist assumptions on which Tilly’s approach rests renders it insufficient for capturing and evaluating patterns of domination and the suffering they engender.

**Repertoires of Contention**

Tilly introduced the notion of ‘repertoires of contention’ to social movement analysis in his study of how forms of protest evolved over three centuries in France.402 Over the next decades he sought to work through and refine the notion and by 1995 gave the following account:

The word *repertoire* identifies a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice. Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda; they emerge from struggle. People learn to break windows in protest, attack pilloried prisoners, tear down dishonoured houses, stage public marches, petition, hold formal meetings, organize special-interest associations.

At any particular point in history, however, they learn only a rather small number of alternative ways to act collectively.\textsuperscript{403}

Crossley’s analysis points to five features of Tilly’s notion that are emphasized in Tilly’s work and in the literature more generally: (1) repertoires constrain behaviour and choice, which (2) tacitly requires that repertoires involve know-how or acquired skill in specific protest forms. Repertoires are (3) practically constituted, out of struggle and everyday life activities as opposed to being derived from abstract thinking. Finally, repertoires (4) involve deliberate choice (though choice is constrained by the stock of tactics available within a given repertoire) and are (5) identified with specific historical periods.\textsuperscript{404} My own emphasis for the purpose of this argument will be on repertoires as involving selection from established stock, which demands a discussion of agency and processes of choice-making, repertoires as constituting a language through the circulation of shared meanings and interaction, and repertoires as structured around a logic of development.

As one of the few sociologists interested in putting Bourdieu’s conceptual tools to work in understanding social movements, Crossley has already made important arguments for the value of incorporating \textit{habitus}, field, and capital into Tilly’s notion of repertoires. He argues that Tilly treats repertoires as the broad stock of available forms of protest from which activists choose, but gives insufficient account of the fact that particular groups or agents – even within the same movement – make consistent (and distinguishable) choices. According to Crossley, agents develop a habitual repertoire, which can be linked to protest ‘styles’ such as radical, reformist, insider, outsider, and so on.\textsuperscript{405} Based on empirical evidence from anti-psychiatric movements in the United Kingdom, Crossley makes a prima facie case for how \textit{habitus}, field, and capital influence tactic selection from within broad stocks of available protest forms. He points to the existence of what he calls ‘radical

\begin{footnotes}
\item[403] Tilly, "Contentious Repertoires," 26.
\item[405] ibid., 51.
\end{footnotes}
habitus’, namely a “reflective and reflexive self-consciousness” that shapes action insofar as activists draw on knowledge they gain from both from a longstanding interest and involvement in radical politics, and from learning lessons from other movements.\textsuperscript{406} As is the case with habitus more generally, a radical habitus is a durable disposition, orienting activists toward some causes and not others, some strategies and not others, but not in a determinative way, and it is also structured through ongoing participation in protest: “It is generated by structured movement practices and it generates structured movement practices.”\textsuperscript{407}

Ibrahim develops Crossley’s idea of a radical habitus by arguing that habitus can be further specified with ideological pre-fixes such as socialist, anarchist, feminist, environmentalist, and so on.\textsuperscript{408} Protesters with histories of participation in peaceful demonstrations organized by the labour movement, for example, will be comfortable with and drawn to tactics that involve delegated spokespeople, clear expectations about divisions of labour between organizers and participants, rhetoric of solidarity and, as I discuss below, a democratic orientation based on the politics of representation. Those who have participated in anarchist protests will be more comfortable with horizontal organization methods, a refusal of pre-fixed divisions between leaders and participants, and a democratic orientation to the logic of affinity, also discussed below. In short, perceptions of the feasibility and desirability of marching, holding placards, throwing bricks, and physically confronting the police, vary in part with previous experiences of those activities. Again, habitus is not absolutely determining, but some forms of protest make a practical sense, or intuitively fit with activists based on the structure of their previous encounters with protest fields.

Attention to the habitus of participants risks individualizing the notion of repertoire when it is intended to capture a collective and, more specifically, interactive phenomena. Crossley invokes the

\textsuperscript{406} ibid.  
\textsuperscript{407} Crossley, "From Reproduction to Transformation," 51, emphasis added.  
Wittgensteinian notion of language games, to point to the connection between the consensus that gives various forms of action their meaning and effects. Specifically, he points to the presence of legitimate and illegitimate moves and the fact that institutions both shape and are shaped by protest. Thus, contemporary actions “take place in the ‘space’ forged by these earlier struggles” and that space is constituted by a symbolic schema of meaning, classification and intelligibility.  

The action takes its meaning and effectiveness from shared understandings, memories, and agreements, however grudging, among the parties. In that sense, then, a repertoire of actions resembles not individual consciousness but a language; although individuals and groups know and deploy the actions in a repertoire, the actions connect sets of individuals and groups.

Repertoires of contention, therefore always refer to collective, not individual performances because they always involve sets of actors. The smallest unit of contentious political action involves two participants – a contending actor (for example, a group of workers) and a target of demands (their bosses). These sets compound and combine up to the level of national politics. Collective claims may or may not involve conflict – there is no conflict in affirmations of shared identity, for example, but if claims are in conflict then Tilly suggests we are able to speak of contention. Thus, “repertoires of contention are the established ways in which pairs of actors make and receive claims bearing on each other’s interests” and these claims are made within culturally and symbolically structured sets of shared meanings. This notion of repertoires as a shared language will be relevant to my consideration of Black Bloc tactics, particularly in the contest of Graeber’s claim that contemporary anarchist tactics involving property destruction are part of a self-conscious attempt to develop a ‘new language’ of civil disobedience that falls between Gandhian non-violence and outright (armed) insurrection.

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409 Crossley, "Repertoires," 49.
411 ibid., 27.
412 Graeber: 30.
Finally, the notion of repertoire depends on a logic of repertoire evolution. That is, Tilly’s initial articulation of the idea of repertoires was to account for changes and continuities in the modes of protest that groups relied upon across historical periods.\textsuperscript{413} Crossley perhaps wrongly suggests that Tilly gave insufficient attention to the emergence of new forms and the elimination or modification of old ones. However, he is correct to note that for Tilly evolution follows interaction and innovation.\textsuperscript{414} In fact, the core of Tilly’s argument is that, as institutions changed, groups built on and modified familiar tactics in order to respond to new institutional conditions. The emergence of political parties, trade unions and centralized national governments forced protesters to develop new ways of making claims. Successful tactics are used again while unsuccessful tactics fall by the wayside.\textsuperscript{415} Tarrow has specified this process by likening it to cycles of contention, or periods when the number of contentious claims increases and then falls away. Through an analysis of the cycle of contention that appeared in Italy between 1965 and 1974 Tarrow concludes that social movements experience periods of increased experimentation and innovation, but that newly invented modes of protest do not gain automatic or unmediated entrance into the repertoire. Rather, it is “distilled, refined, and often routinized products [that] become part of a more lasting practice of collective action.”\textsuperscript{416}

As claimants gain experience with new forms of collective action and as those forms gain legitimacy they become easier to use and to diffuse across groups and movements. However, as Tarrow argues, this also creates incentives for agents to find ways of controlling and directing the energies generated by protest forms. Unions re-assert organizational control; authorities develop counter-measures. Piven and Cloward point to the dynamic relationship between innovation and

\textsuperscript{413} Tilly, "Contentious Repertoires," 28.  
\textsuperscript{414} Crossley, "Repertoires," 49-50.  
\textsuperscript{415} Tilly, "Contentious Repertoires," 27-28.  
counter-innovation in their assessment of the potential of successful worker and labour movement resistance to neoliberal globalization. They argue that Tilly failed to capture the ‘drags’ on repertoires that insert outdated practices into contemporary times: employers have developed a number of new strategies and institutional arrangements to which workers repertoires are only slowly responding. Hope for improving the conditions of working people lies in new worker strategies capable of capitalizing on the fact that capital still depends on workers (who therefore have some potential power) and that corporations remain rooted in nation states (opening the possibility for citizen power).  

While Piven and Cloward are right to point to the drag between the evolution of capital and strategies to resist exploitation, the notion of drag needs further development. It may be the case that there is something systemic, something in the nature of unequal distributions of symbolic and other forms of capital that allows bourgeois strategies to stay consistently ahead of worker strategies. Worker strategies may inevitably come too late if they are bound up in a repertoire dynamic that undercuts efforts to resist the fundamental justifications for that unequal distribution. If this is the case then regardless of institutional arrangements there is no ‘correct’ strategy waiting to be discovered by workers and their organizations. Insofar as every action alters the social field in which it takes place without fundamentally altering its morphology, there may be no principles of action capable of achieving a revolutionary redistribution within that field, particularly if action is limited to strategies that are already culturally legitimate but also predictable and therefore capable of being countered.

For the notion of repertoires of contention to be useful, then, it needs to be conceived of as something other than an enumerable stock of protest options from which activists select. Tilly and his followers approach the constructivist elements of collective identity processes, framing, and so on.

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through the contentious politics approach, the notion of repertoires throws them back onto a vision of actors as fundamentally rational, rationally selecting from available tactics. However, the cultural nature of repertoires embeds the process in unequal distributions of symbolic capital and, as Crossley and Ibrahim demonstrate, cultural capital – the knowingness, skills and competences embodied in *habitus*. The relevance of symbolic and cultural capital suggests that tactical selection is based on something other than an encounter between rational actors and objective structures. What is needed then is an account that focuses on the *distribution* of cultural and other resources rather than a stock-taking of culturally available forms of protest.

The impact of unequal distribution of resources on tactical selection can best be seen through debates on what is known as ‘respect for diversity of tactics’, which emerged after the ‘Battle of Seattle’. According to Conway, these debates had become fully articulated by the time of the FTAA demonstrations in Quebec City, 2001. Proponents of respect for diversity of tactics argue that the best way to combat capitalism is to allow activists to engage in diverse political activities including cultural work, popular education and grassroots-community organizing, but also militant protest activities including property destruction – which can range from stickering, spray painting and painting guerrilla murals to smashing windows and defacing or destroying signs or other property. The ethical foundation of respect for diversity of tactics lies in an anarchistic commitment to egalitarian autonomy, an autonomy that stands in stark contrast to the hierarchical order-following that characterizes the actions of state agents. Autonomy as an ethical principle finds organizational expression in affinity groups: small, autonomous organizations that determine their own projects and

418 Conway: 510.
419 ibid., 516.
420 Francis Dupuis-Déri, "The Black Blocs Ten Years after Seattle: Anarchism, Direct Action, and Deliberative Practices," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 4, no. 2 (2010): 59. It is worth noting that although currently heavily associated with anarchism, affinity-based direct action was in fact an invention of feminist organizers and rooted in 1960s feminist critiques. She also notes that structurelessness was deeply contested, even then. Linda Martin Alcoff, "Then and Now," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2012): 269.
strategies without central movement authority.\footnote{Conway: 510. Dupuis-Déri: 59-60.} Affinity groups demand and retain the right to pursue whatever tactics they consider to be both ethical and effective. The decisive feature of respect for diversity of tactics, then, is an ethical commitment to a respect for tactical pluralism, and specific tactics are decided upon by horizontally organized, independent affinity groups. Advocates further understand their commitment to autonomous action and organization as creating a duty to refuse to publicly denounce other activists for their willingness or unwillingness to make use of any particular tactic.\footnote{Although anarchists tend to emphasize respect for plural tactics, Dupuis-Déri notes that not all anarchist and anti-authoritarian organizations have demonstrated such respect themselves. Dupuis-Déri: 64 and 65-66.}

At the G20 protests, as at the Battle for Seattle, other summit protests, and in the more recent student protests against tuition increases in Québec, not all G20 protest participants were willing to endorse a plurality of tactics.\footnote{In Montreal, for example, a Black Bloc activist smashed the window of a Canadian Forces office and was "shoved back by a pack of marchers as she tried to blend back into the crowd." Benjamin Shingler, "To Smash or Not to Smash? In Montreal, Pacifists Tell Vandals to Tone It Down", Huffington Post (Canada) http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/04/30/to-smash-or-not-to-smash_n_1463618.html?view=print&comm_ref=false (accessed 30 April 2012).} While the Toronto Community Mobilization Network defended the rights of all protesters to choose their own protest strategy many activists were quick to condemn the Black Bloc actions.\footnote{Marcus Gee, "Why Some G20 Protesters Won't Condemn Violence," Globe & Mail (Metro Toronto), 24 June 2010, A14. Jennifer Yang and Liam Casey, "As Protesters and Police Move in, Downtown Workers Move Out," Toronto Star, 23 June 2010, A4. Sid Ryan, "Thousands Stood up for Humanity; Marchers Braved Hooligans, Police and Even the Weather to Push People's Agenda," Toronto Star, 29 June 2010, A19. Canadian Labour Congress, "Statement by Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labour Congress on Vandalism Surrounding the G20 Meeting", Canadian Labour Congress} Most notably, Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, one of the central organizers of the People First march described Black Bloc activists as ‘cowardly’ and ‘hooligans’ and Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti issued a statement condemning the Black Bloc activists.\footnote{Sid Ryan, "Thousands Stood up for Humanity; Marchers Braved Hooligans, Police and Even the Weather to Push People's Agenda," Toronto Star, 29 June 2010, A19. Canadian Labour Congress, "Statement by Ken Georgetti, President of the Canadian Labour Congress on Vandalism Surrounding the G20 Meeting", Canadian Labour Congress}
My interest does not lie in participating in the debate over diversity of tactics directly. Instead, I take that diversity as a fact (i.e., I accept that in the near-run at least some activists will pursue property damage, particularly at summit protests) and argue that the structures of possibility into which those tactics are inserted pose considerable risks to the efficacy of any form of protests and that this risk needs to be taken seriously. My further claim is that contentious politics, resource mobilization and repertoires of contention approaches are ill-suited to grappling with the implications of this possibility.

The Context: Neoliberalism, Normalization, and Liberal Protest Ethics

In his later years Bourdieu increasingly focused his research and polemics on neoliberalism’s deepening naturalization. After several decades of growing neoliberal hegemony its features are well known, but a few are worth rehearsing briefly.

Neoliberal partisans equate economic liberalism and efficiency to democratic freedom and therefore diacritically articulate all collectivism, state intervention and market restraint to archaic forms of totalitarianism. This allows them to construct their opponents as either naively or perniciously fighting hopeless and ideological battles against inequality’s inevitability and desirability. As Day notes, neoliberalism’s shift from Keynesian economics to radically unrestricted markets brought along with it a new common sense, namely that:

…those who are oppressed deserve their oppression; everyone (except the rich) must work more for less; the bigger a corporation is the better; the less the state intervenes


Schinkel: 79.


in the economy (except to bail out failed corporations and provide them with free infrastructure and the right to pollute at will) the better.\textsuperscript{429}

Neoliberals conceive the state’s role to be primarily for providing neutral, technical economic management and promote a prescriptive focus on austerity financing, state downsizing and privatization in a concerted effort to roll back the progressive gains of the last century.\textsuperscript{430} As Duggan argues, a primary effect of neoliberal restructuring has been to redraw the divide between public and private and consequently the division between the political and the non-political.\textsuperscript{431} The redrawn division between the boundaries of the political and the non-political, particularly as it relates to the authority to oversee the technical management of global capitalism, will be central to my argument about expressive protest, below.

It is worth noting that neoliberalism is not the sole determinant of the symbolic space of protest in G8 countries. As Della Porta and Filleule note, disruption has been delegitimized as ‘communication societies’ endeavour to eliminate all traces of social conflict. The moral framework behind such desire to eliminate disruption by transforming conflict into communication has roots in both liberal political ethics and deliberative democracy.\textsuperscript{432} In both cases, ‘mutual recognition’ and civil negotiation of differences are premised on eschewing actions or modes of communication that either radically question fundamental principles of social organization (for example, because they underpin and legitimize exploitation and marginalization) or are expressed in ways that are “impassioned, extreme, and the product of particular interests.”\textsuperscript{433} For his part, Rawls narrows the category of legitimate civil disobedience by imposing a number of conditions. Most relevant here is the requirement that the disobedience be a ‘political act’. However, he problematically restricts what

\textsuperscript{429} Day, 7.
constitutes a political act to those guided by principles of justice regarding social institutions and the constitution, which is to say that they are not actions based on appeals to personal morality or doctrine. On its own there is little to object to here, except he argues that in acting politically “one invokes the commonly shared conception of justice that underlies the political order.”434 However, it is a basic premise of critical theory from Marx to Bourdieu that shared conceptions of justice merely reflect adherence to social relations that foster exploitation and domination. Young, for example, argues that activists may orient their claims toward universalist, non-partisan causes, while recognizing that the powerful may not have sufficient motivation to engage in deliberation over wrongs and alternatives. Therefore, activists are justified in engaging in protest actions to inform fellow citizens about social injustices without being bound to “a common conception of justice”, much less common agreement on what counts as civil and orderly forms of public expression of dissent.435 What is important to recognize here is the dual restriction neoliberalism and liberalism construct. Neoliberalism simultaneously conceives of the economic as having superior value to democratic practices and heightens liberalism’s classic restriction of what policy measures count as political – economic issues are clearly excluded from the realm of democratic consideration. At the same time, liberal criteria for civility, restrict who can ‘legitimately’ engage in democratic practices to those who either already share conceptions of justice that present little challenge to entrenched forms of domination or who are willing to minimize disruption for the sake of ‘civil’ public communication.

Bourdieu and Wacquant argue that imposing these conceptions of the relationship between the state and the economy has depended on a form of symbolic violence, which, as discussed above, depends upon dominated groups adopting the point of view of dominant actors.436 The doxic

assumptions I am emphasizing here are not points of view about policy prescriptions, but about what constitutes legitimate political activity. Neoliberal restructuring entails constraining the state and anything associated with it as much as possible and organizing as many fields as possible according to principles associated with the market, namely according to particular conceptions of freedom, flexibility, individuality and democracy. As fields have been objectively structured according to this scheme of classification, these schemes have been slowly incorporated into the *habitus* of people living within them. Keil, using a Foucauldian analysis points to the ‘everydayness’ of neoliberalism in urban settings, which is to say, the ways in which people’s daily activities and particularly their encounters with cityscapes reinforce the divisions on which neoliberalism is based.437

While further empirical work on the relation between neoliberal hegemony and public perception of protest needs to be done, the dynamics between the everydayness of neoliberalism and its consequent incorporation into the disposition of the general public gives ample reason to predict that as Torontonians and Canadians watched the encounters between police and protesters they would be disposed to perceive and interpret these encounters according to naturalized and misrecognized neoliberal doxa. Not surprisingly, according to at least one poll, the public did not appear to sympathize with either People First or the Black Bloc activists, with the majority of respondents expressing disgust, shame, anger and sadness at the event.438

To summarize, the symbolic spaces within which G20 protests struggled were characterized by a neoliberal set of distinctions between public and private, freedom and liberty and so on. Complementing this schema was a further liberal orthodoxy regarding legitimate and illegitimate forms of communication, an orthodoxy that, as Della Porta and Filleule suggest, increasingly

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delegitimizes disruption in favour of a moderate, communicative ethic. Given that there was a neoliberal public watching events unfold, accruing symbolic profit in the G20 field depended, in large part, on the consonance between protest actions and liberal and neoliberal distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate protests, efficiency and disruption, neutrality and bias. There is nothing novel in arguing that the success of protests depends in part on the relationship between participant frames and mainstream beliefs and values.\textsuperscript{439} What I argue, however, is that symbolic domination cannot be captured through cultural models alone insofar as such approaches tend to emphasize the causal effects of ideas and consciousness. The Bourdieuian framework I am developing here traces the success or failure of protest to specific distributions of various forms of capital, naturalized through specific schemes of classification.

\textbf{Two Protests}

This section sets the groundwork for the analytical sections that follow by identifying the central actors in the G20 field and articulating their differences not as reflections of differing natural properties, but as distinctions based on specific schemes of classification and perception manifested through the actions or position-taking they perform within social space.\textsuperscript{440} These position-taking constitute concrete attempts on the part of actors to establish their own self-definitions as well as a definition of the field itself; that is, to establish constructions which in turn have real effects on subsequent developments of the field.

The week prior to the G20 summit included protests and events focusing on issues ranging from Indigenous rights to queer liberation and climate change. In this paper, I will focus, however on two major events: the ‘People First’ march and the Black Bloc ‘Get off the Fence’ action. The People


\textsuperscript{440} Grenfell, "Postscript: Methodological Principles," 220-221.
First march was organized by labour unions (primarily the Canadian Labour Congress and the Ontario Federation of Labour) as well as a number of allied groups (such as the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace, Oxfam Canada and the Canadian Federation of Students) and attracted between 4,000 and 30,000 participants. Organizers of this event negotiated with police and attempted to gain symbolic leverage through their visibility, their numbers and the moral content of their message.

By contrast, the Get Off the Fence action intended to join with the People First march until it turned away from the fence toward the police-sanctioned ‘free-speech’ zone, at which point activists would break off to engage in “a militant, confrontational demonstration where we [will] challenge the global apartheid and injustices the fence represents.” As promised, where the People First march was stopped by three rows of police, Black Bloc activists broke off and undertook a highly choreographed burst of property destruction. Activists engaging in Black Bloc tactics insisted on maintaining anonymity, framed the police as singularly hostile and violent representatives of state power and sought to gain symbolic leverage through the destruction of the ‘symbols of capitalism’, primarily storefronts of big businesses such as Starbucks and various banks.

Politics of disruption

An obvious place to begin seeking political antinomies is to examine the use of so-called ‘violent’ actions by Black Bloc protesters, although the use of force is not their only form of protest. For example, Dupuis-Déri points to an instance of Black Bloc activists protecting a police vehicle as

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441 Richard Lautens, "Tear Gas Fired in Rampage; Mayor Calls Violent Protesters 'Criminals,' Says They're 'Not Welcome in This City',' Toronto Star, 27 June 2010, A6.
Ryan, A19.
it, perhaps provocatively, made its way through a three-thousand strong rally of anarcho-communists at the 2002 NATO summit in Prague.\textsuperscript{444} Similarly, Day argues that:

\begin{quote}
[by] participating in a Bloc, activists offer up their semi-protected bodies to state-sponsored violence, in the hope not only of saving other protesters from physical harm, but also to provoke shock, horror and perhaps event dissent among liberal citizens who hold to values like freedom of speech and the right to legitimate protest.\textsuperscript{445}
\end{quote}

Nonetheless, at the G20 protests, Black Bloc activists did make use of politically motivated vandalism and therefore its value as a tactic bears consideration. Dupuis-Déri, following Sian Sullivan, argues that the use of force in direct action political events has positive emotional effects for protesters, namely increases in senses of well-being and reduced levels of depression. This motivates a demand for the ‘right to be angry’; the deliberate (and deliberated upon) use of force becomes a legitimate mechanism for combining emotion and rationality in political action and contrasts with liberal and academic efforts to restrict legitimate political action to the realm of rationality.\textsuperscript{446} Conway identifies a number of features of political property destruction that are worth briefly recounting here. Supporters of the tactic argue that property destruction is a continuum of actions from stickering to window-smashing and that some actions on the continuum (graffiti, billboard ‘corrections’ and stickering in particular) are well-accepted as legitimate forms of protest. Further, advocates argue that any protesters who act outside legitimate, routinized and bureaucratized forms of dissent are indiscriminately deemed violent and that the term ought only to be applied to situations where people actually get hurt. Finally, advocates argue that people engaged in this type of property destruction distinguish between private (capitalist) property and personal (use-value) property and only target the former. The intention in doing so is to unsettle reified middle-class attitudes about private property and thereby open up debates about alternative ways of organizing.

\textsuperscript{444} Dupuis-Déri: 48.
\textsuperscript{445} Day, 29.
\textsuperscript{446} Dupuis-Déri: 54-55.
ownership and material goods.\textsuperscript{447} These justifications appear to have been at play in the G20 field as well. Media reports contain claims such as: "This isn't violence. This is vandalism against violent corporations. We did not hurt anybody. They (the corporations) are the ones hurting people".\textsuperscript{448} Mathieu Francoeur, of the Montreal-based Anti-Capitalist Convergence, called the vandalism “a means of expression [that] doesn't compare to the economic and state violence we're subjected to.”\textsuperscript{449}

Understanding the place of these tactics in neoliberal opposition requires breaking from substantialist thinking about violence. Violence is not an object with moral properties but a site of struggle over how to understand relationships between individual or group actions, structural conditions and those people and objects that are somehow damaged by those relationships. Analysts ought to avoid joining Black Bloc activists in arguing for a different definition of violence – that would be to treat violence itself as an object of study – but to take the conditions under which definitions are produced as the object of study. The task, in Bourdieuan terms, is to objectify the structures by which violence itself is objectified (i.e., constructed as an object of study). In this way we can interrogate the viability of activist attempts to impose a new definition of violence or even to open up the question of violence in the minds of the watching public.\textsuperscript{450}

In Bourdieu’s view:

The specific efficacy of subversive action consists in the power to bring to consciousness, and so modify, the categories of thought which help to orient

\textsuperscript{447} Conway: 535.
\textsuperscript{448} Jesse Mclean, "In Black and Running Wild; Masked Members of Anarchist Group Responsible for Much of Window-Bashing," \textit{Toronto Star}, 27 June 2010, A7.
\textsuperscript{450} It is not my intention to give a full accounting of how violence had been constructed prior to the protests nor even a full account of its construction during the meetings. Although such an analysis would be useful, my focus is on the efforts of one set of actors – Black Bloc activists – and the problematic strategy of using symbolically devalued tactics in struggles to construct meaning.
individual and collective practices and in particular the categories through which distributions are perceived and appreciated.\footnote{Bourdieu, \textit{Logic}, 141.}

The question, then, is the conditions under which vandalism has the power to modify conscious beliefs about property and its relation to capitalist exploitation. But elsewhere Bourdieu cautions that modifying consciousness is not a simple task of changing ideas that people have about the world, it entails changing the embodied dispositions – the \textit{habitus} – through which they perceive the world.\footnote{Bourdieu, \textit{Pascalian Meditations}, 180.} There is reason for concern, then, that Black Bloc tactics may be too discursive. That is, the logic behind Black Bloc tactics appears to rely on the philosophical lineage associated with Butler and Foucault I have critiqued in previous chapters. In such approaches, discourse appears as something that is universally available and amenable to resignification. By contrast, a Bourdieuan analysis points to how symbolic power structures – and unevenly distributes – the capacity for resignification on which Black Bloc strategies appear to rely.

Lovell makes a compelling argument against overly discursive strategies in her rejoinder against Butler’s critique of Bourdieu. Butler argues that Bourdieu’s conception of the \textit{habitus} is too deterministic particularly because it gives insufficient attention to the performative possibilities of resignification. She poses the question of:

\begin{quote}
... whether the improper use of the performative can succeed in producing the effect of authority where there is no recourse to a prior authorization; indeed, whether the misappropriation of the performative might not be the very occasion for the exposure of prevailing forms of authority and the exclusions by which they proceed?\footnote{Butler, "Performativity's Social Magic," 123-124.}
\end{quote}

Lovell takes up Butler’s use of Rosa Parks as a paradigm example of unauthorized resignification and shows that, in fact, apparently unauthorized performatives do require insertion
into amenable – which is to say authorizing – social fields.\textsuperscript{454} Similarly, then, Black Bloc tactics need to be understood in terms of the field in which they enter.

The antinomy protesters faced centres on the question of violence. Black Bloc activists sought to subvert the category of violence without having sufficient symbolic and material capital to do so. Importantly, symbolic domination is not simply the result of framing or messaging; it comes from the complicity between neoliberal schemes of classification, the physical space occupied within the G20 field – the fence, the police lines, the kettles, the protest crowd – as well as from the symbolic and material capital all participants bring to the field and the disposition of the ‘public’ toward appreciating or depreciating activist attempts at resignification.

While Black Bloc activists sought to unsettle and transform reified valuations of the tactical and ethical value of ‘violent’ property destruction, their use of tactics already devalued by reified conceptions cannot resonate with a neoliberal public. As a consequence, the action itself diminishes their capacity to accrue sufficient symbolic capital to impose a new definition. Fundamentally, the relationship between the tactics and the symbolic structures into which the tactics were inserted foreclosed any possibility that the tactic would find success.

This analysis is in no way a commitment within debates about the value of property destruction as a political tactic. Rather than taking sides I am trying to demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between the moral leverage upon which movement actions implicitly rely and questions of tactical efficacy. De-objectifying violence and other movement tactics entails reconceiving ‘moral leverage’ as symbolic capital. This kind of political contention requires a two-stage struggle. First property destruction needs to be endowed with adequate moral content to be recognized as a legitimate action within the political field. Only then can violence be deployed against specific objects. The close relationship between \textit{habitus} and field, on which social

intelligibility depends, means that actors cannot simply force their way into a field and make socially intelligible actions that disregard the entire scheme of distinctions according to which that field operates. Put another way, discursive efforts to disrupt reified conceptions of property risk short-circuiting the relationship between symbolic power and property destruction.

The question could be raised as to whether Black Bloc activists are properly considered as part of the political field, or rather, whether they conceive of themselves in this way. If submission to the rules of the political field entails a commitment to routinized and legitimate forms of political action (including expressive but not disruptive demonstrations), then Black Bloc tactics might suggest a different political project, one where the political is subverted in favour of a performative freedom to resignify the value of property and the symbols of capitalism. This argument would suggest that Black Bloc activists have freed themselves from symbolic violence precisely because they reject the doxic rules of the political field.

Responding to this objection returns us to Bourdieu’s central assertion that action cannot be understood solely on the basis of the conscious intentions of the actors involved, because the meaning and cause of action depends on conscious calculation but also subjective dispositions and the objective conditions of the field within which action takes place (Bourdieu, 1998: 96; Callewaert 2006: 78). I go beyond Bourdieu here to suggest that participation in a field itself may not be entirely intentional and that even anarchist Black Bloc activists who intentionally reject participation in ‘legitimate’ political processes get caught up in a political field without necessarily intending to do so.

Black Bloc activities, if they are distinguishable from random or merely criminal acts of vandalism, and surely they can be so distinguished, entail a communicative relationship with an addressee. Indeed, the very symbolic nature of the attacks implies an audience in a way that attacks on the materials of capitalism – machines, factories and so on – or upon capitalists themselves, do not. While the intended audience might be Starbucks and bank CEOs, the unlikelihood of CEO
conversions to anti-capitalist perspectives suggests the intended audience of Black Bloc property damage is more likely some combination of fellow protesters and the wider public. Insofar as it is the wider public, then this indicates a reliance on mass media, although this reliance must be hopelessly troubled (see McCurdy 2010), and upon appeal to dispositions of a wider public that misrecognizes, and therefore accepts as natural, neoliberal doxa about property and democratic behaviour. This is the moment at which Black Bloc activists – intentionally or not – become bound up in the rules of the political field and submit – consciously or not – to a regime of symbolic value that delegitimizes the very strategy by which they entered into the field.

To summarize, an impossibility emerges from the relationship between the objective possibilities inscribed in the G20 protest field as part of a broader political field constructed on neoliberal doxa and the combination of dispositions and capital upon which the protesters construct their actions. Despite themselves, Black Bloc activists seek symbolic leverage where there is none to be had, a position-taking occasioned by the resolution of their ambivalence about the political field through their forced incorporation into the very scheme of legitimacy-accumulation their tactics seek to undermine.

Politics as pluralism, or, protests are not democratic

Appreciating the impossibilities facing the People First march requires breaking from the democratic sensibilities of expressive protests and relocating protests within the non-democratic space of symbolic markets. The difficulty lies precisely in accomplishing what mainstream approaches to social movement research fail to do, which is to understand protests neither in terms of their own self-conception nor in terms of their function within democratic structures, but in terms of the relationship between self-understandings within the G20 protest field and the structures of the field itself.
Several researchers have already begun to point to the diminishing effectiveness of demonstrations. Della Porta and Filleule, for example, argue that, “to the extent that demonstrations have become widespread, acceptable, and more predictable, they seem to have lost political effectiveness.” Following Piven and Cloward, they describe the growing acceptability of protests as a process of ‘normalisation’ rather than ‘institutionalization’. As this process deepens, movements shift their strategies away from efforts to ‘make trouble’ and toward efforts to ‘make up the numbers’. Further, they accept a delegitimization of disruption generally as communication takes priority over exposing social conflict. They conclude that this trend produces a distinction between groups who have the resources to mobilize sizeable demonstration and those groups whose resource poverty encourages more disruptive strategies. As they put it, “the distribution of resources that allows one to adapt to the new rules of the game of ‘opinion-geared democracy’ is neither equally nor randomly distributed among social groups.”

Organizers of the People First rally pursued a strategy that, at least in part, attempted to increase their symbolic capital by distinguishing themselves from the activities of the relatively resource-poor anarchists using Black Bloc tactics. Sid Ryan polemically equated the threat to democratic space posed by Black Bloc ‘hooligans’ to the threat posed by the state’s massive police presence and boasted of working to create a democratic space by working with police. In fact, prior to the summit, organizers argued somewhat ironically that they were providing a safe place to express dissent that was “free from the overblown security presence that's become so commonplace during meetings of the world's most powerful heads of state” precisely by working closely with

455 Della Porta and Filleule, 235.
456 ibid., 236.
457 Ryan, A19.
representatives of the overblown security presence on details of where the demonstrations would take place.\textsuperscript{458}

Close cooperation with security forces can be understood as precisely the kind of paradoxical manoeuvring Lawler identifies. Instead of looking at cooperation with police as a mechanism for producing democratic facilitation, it can be better understood as a mechanism – intended as such or not – for accumulating symbolic capital by producing a distinction between People First and Get off the Fence. By demonstrating that People First was not Black Bloc, People First organizers accumulated symbolic capital at Black Bloc’s expense. The organizers’ ability to produce this distinction depended materially on their organizational resources but they also brought to bear important symbolic resources: they used their institutional stability to maintain relations with police and thereby portray those relations as supporting ‘legitimate’ protest. Further, their commitment to non-disruptive politics conformed to liberal pluralism and the neo-liberal equation of efficiency and order to progress, and to liberal conceptions of conflict as located in, and resolvable through, democratic and communicative spaces. As Piven and Cloward argue, the resources needed to establish the permanent bureaucratic organizations on which this strategy depends are not evenly distributed.\textsuperscript{459} In terms of the relationship between People First and Black Bloc activists, the class bias Piven and Cloward associate with the normalization of mass protests helps reproduce a symbolic distinction between the ideological value of the political goods produced by the social democratic claims of People First with its accompanying politics of representation and the anarchistic challenges of Black Bloc activists and their accompanying politics of affinity. Again, Bourdieuan attention to the political economy of the institutional background and symbolic space (in this case a naturalized valuation of a particular form of protest) tracks mediated production and consumption of political goods without reference to the substantive content of the claims being made. The question remains,

\textsuperscript{458} ibid.
\textsuperscript{459} Piven and Cloward, "Protest," 318.
though, of whether People First could mobilize sufficient material and symbolic capital to render visible the G20’s economic and political power, or whether it merely indicates accession to a field structured precisely against the possibility of such change.

The People First organizers sought to achieve symbolic leverage by repeatedly emphasizing the size of the protest and the moral virtue of both their claims and their means for expressing them. Both of these strategies rely on a state and public disposed to appreciating the value of a particular size of demonstration and the claims being made, that is, on a shared understanding of the structure of the social field and positions taken within it. Implicitly, the strategies rely optimistically on the potential for a combination of size and virtue to provoke reflection in the watching public and to thereby make public them available for other opportunities to oppose neoliberal projects.

There are good reasons for thinking these strategies were doomed to failure in the G20 field; they miss out on the fact that neoliberalism has, wherever possible, shifted decision-making out of the democratic arena and into technical ones. Attempting to confront neoliberalism from within democratic space fundamentally misrecognizes the semi-autonomous operation of different subfields within the Canadian field of power. As discussed above, consolidating the apparent obviousness of the need to technocratically protect an expansive capitalist economy at the expense of all other considerations has been a primary achievement of neoliberalism. As a result, questioning the underlying premise of the G20 – technical global economic management – has been removed from the democratic field. The doxic, unspoken and misrecognized character of this removal makes the expressive demands of the protesters politically (though obviously not literally) unsayable. Or, to be more accurate, such demands are unintelligible in a democratic field where socially motivated intrusions into the market have become practically (in both senses of the word) unthinkable. Thus, the commitment to liberal pluralism that underpins the expressive politics of demonstrations, a commitment that imagines groups making rational and moral claims for justice in a democratic arena and which entails expressive protesters submitting to the rules of democratic engagement that restrict
allowable appeals to those based on reason and shared moral values and those presented in non-disruptive, reasonable ways, misses a critical feature of contemporary political struggle: conflicts within the democratic field are at best minor skirmishes in the broader field of power and have been highly marginalized by the neoliberal reorganization of the relationship between economic management and democracy. This constitutes a political impossibility. The field in which protesters are competent to protest, the field in which they have the requisite knowingness, organizational capacity and symbolic legitimacy is a field in which neoliberalism is sufficiently dominant symbolically to have already excluded anything protesters might say from the realm of the politically thinkable.

**Affinity, Representation, Symbolic Space and the Field of Power**

Graeber suggests that Black Bloc activists and other anarchists willing to use force during political protests are interested in creating a new language of protest, one that is less restrictive than strict non-violence but without the unethical violations of bodily integrity caused by armed insurrection. Doing so would require accumulating (all at once or, more likely, over a considerable period of time) sufficient authority to make the system of meaning – the links between social facts, ethical premises, and action – common to, or shared by, other participants in the system. I have argued above for why anarchists’ considerable deficit in symbolic capital makes this an uncertain enterprise, but it may be that the logic of pre-figurative and affinity-based politics also restricts this project in ways that raise broader ethical questions.

Graeber centers contemporary anarchist politics on tactics that are “less about seizing state power than about exposing, delegitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning ever-larger spaces of autonomy from it.”\(^{460}\) Importantly, these tactics are intended to be prefigurative; tactical selection and tactics themselves reflect the kind of society participants seek but also have

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\(^{460}\) Graeber: 68.
profoundly transformative effects on participants.\textsuperscript{461} Most importantly, however, Graeber argues that unlike sectarian models of mobilization that demand ideological uniformity, the anti-globalization movement seeks diversity. Debate is focused on action, not ideas, because participants have no hope or desire to convert everyone to a single point of view. This means debate is also usually focused on the task at hand without trying to force the action into a long-range (beyond the predictable future) program.\textsuperscript{462}

What is clear from Graeber, Dupuis-Déri, Day, and other activists, however, is that diversity of tactics masks a singularity of political logic. That is, the logic of diversity of tactics does not operate on the same level as logics of affinity and representation. Diversity of tactics depends precisely on a refusal of long-range action in order to unite ethical commitments to autonomy and immediacy to organizational form, expressed through affinity. Bourdieu, relying on Husserl’s distinction between ‘protension’ and ‘project’ provides a means of conceiving how ethics, organization and time relate to each other.

Recall that a central characteristic of fields is that they are relatively stable but nonetheless evolve as a result of internal struggles. Habitus-bearing agents are able to undertake actions within a field because they are able to anticipate how those actions will be perceived by other agents, what actions other agents are likely to take, and the cumulative effect of how these actions circulate and accumulate the form of capital specific to that field.\textsuperscript{463} Importantly, ‘anticipation’ takes two forms.

\textsuperscript{461} ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{462} ibid.
\textsuperscript{463} It is worth emphasizing that although structured and relatively stable, fields are not determining precisely because agents acting within them rely on practical reason, which is itself based on partial perspectives, more or less accurate perceptions of one’s own and other’s dispositions and stocks of capital, and so on, and therefore amenable to error. This is the crux of Bourdieu’s break with structuralism and objectivist approaches and how he escapes accusations of determinism and reproductivism.
‘practical’ sense of gravity, wind conditions, the way soccer balls move, and so on gives them such a clear sense of where the ball will be that it might as well be there now. Indeed, phenomenology rests on such a relationship between time and space: agents do not stop at every moment to recalculate where a moving object is going to be in space, and adjust accordingly, they simply pre-consciously move to where it is going to be, based on embodied practical sense. Here, Bourdieu describes such phenomena in accordance with Husserl’s notion of ‘protension’: a pre-perceptive anticipation and reaction, based on a practical relation to the evolution of a field of objects and agents rather than on conscious deliberation and intentional mobilization. Bourdieu likens the certainty inscribed in a field which can only unfold in one way – because the time-scape of unfolding is so short that there is no room for alternative actions or intervening variables to the certainty of knowing the sides of a cube are present without seeing them.\footnote{Bourdieu, \textit{Practical Reason}, 80.} At the individual level, protension is the least reflective mode of action; it represents a \textit{habitus} perfectly in tune with the field it encounters, as in the case of a skilled athlete responding to the exigencies of a game.\footnote{As analytic categories, ‘protension’ and ‘project’ have no content in terms of being either radical or conservative. If the \textit{habitus} through which one responds to the immediately inscribed future is oppositional, then protensive action will be also be oppositional. However, judging whether or not action is oppositional requires some external measure. What protension captures is the immediate and pre-reflective nature of certain actions, rather than the specific content of actions in relation to the unfolding of fields.} By contrast, a ‘project’ entails marshalling capital and resources to some long-range goal. At the very least such marshalling requires making assessments about the field in which action is to take place and within which resources are marshalled and therefore will have an element of conscious consideration about it, although such consideration is likely to be practical and strategic, rather than reflexive consideration about the doxic assumptions underpinning the field.

My point in introducing the distinction between protension and project here is not to argue that either one is inherently radical or conservative. Rather, I want to point to specific assumptions entailed by projects in contrast to protension. First, a reasonable faith in the morphology of the field
in which the future resources are to be deployed. That is, a relative certainty that although the field will evolve and various actors will manoeuvre within it over time thereby amending its shape, the fundamental rules of the field will not be overthrown and that the species of capital being marshalled for a future intervention will remain relevant. It would make no sense for political parties to fundraise, for example, if they did not have reasonable expectations that they would be able to use those funds for campaigning, advertising, organizing, and so on. Protension requires no such commitment precisely because it entails action on the field as it is currently unfolding, in the future that is so near as to be essentially present. Affinity-based politics that refuse to think beyond the predictable future have the ethical advantages of restricting ethical reflection to questions of immediate resources without question of future investments and a use of capital that does not need to submit to the logic of the political field. By narrowing its horizon to the value of autonomous action and its apparently transformative effects on individual protesters it refuses investment in the — admittedly hierarchical and arbitrary — norms of credibility, authority and legitimacy that structure political interaction. Again, a diversity of tactics is perfectly compatible with this self-constrained conception of the political.

Political projects, again in contrast to political protension, also require, secondly, an identity between the collective actor that makes investments in the current field in order to benefit from those investments in future field interventions and the actor who acts in the future. This is part of why the formation of collective identities involves such high political stakes. Collective identity depends on an ability to perceive duration, and establish a relationship between past and future and to action and effect.\(^{466}\) That is, for agents to identify with a collective identity they must engage in the constructive work described in Chapter Four by which suffering, opportunities, goals, and strategies are brought into an ‘action system’. In turn, these shared perceptions of duration, the effects actions are likely to

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\(^{466}\) Melucci, *Challenging Codes*, 74.
have, and the relationship of those actions to suffering, all of which are necessary for collective identity are also necessary collective action in the form of intentional and strategic uses of capital over time. Because collective actors by their nature do not enjoy the unifying corporeal consistency we associate with individual identities, their mechanisms for unifying perceptions and strategies across time are organizational and cultural. Identity therefore does not only rely on the logic of representation and delegation to the institutional mechanisms including leadership roles and institutionalized channels of authority (the institutional mechanisms create the unity across time rather than the leaders themselves), which are anathema to anarchist commitments to organizing through affinity. Identity relies on this logic but as well requires a commitment to maintaining the value of its capital through maintaining the current morphology of the political field. This is accomplished primarily through excluding and disavowing those tactics that jeopardize the field itself or, what is more common given the absence of such tactics – disavowing those that by association threaten the value of the capital investments being made. Thus, insofar as diversity of tactics depends on a protensive disavowal of representation in favour of an immediate connection between autonomy and organization it is compatible with affinity-based politics but incompatible with representative politics and long-range political projects. Protensive actions are not inherently opposed to projects, however the two forms of protest described above, within the context of protesting the G20 suggest they may come into conflict. If diversity of tactics requires an ethical commitment to allowing such conflicts to arise as expressions of activist autonomy, then it remains a constant component of protest fields, which representative organizations must anticipate and act upon.

On its own the fact that respect for diversity of tactics troubles and/or obscures the diversity of political logics is not sufficient for rejecting it entirely. The fact remains that political antinomies wreak havoc on both protensive and project-oriented political strategies. Diversity of tactics does, however, raise questions about the ethical duties protesters have toward one another given reasonable
disagreement about the value of autonomy and affinity on the one hand, and representation and investment on the other. In the previous chapter I pointed toward the presence of symbolic power and epistemic violence as potential markers for whether collective actors are replicating patterns of domination. At the G20 protests, organizers clearly made an effort to exploit the distance between themselves and Black Bloc activists for symbolic gain and thereby reinforced a classificatory scheme (i.e., peaceful, non-disruptive marches are legitimate, political vandalism is illegitimate) that jeopardizes the Black Bloc efforts to stake their own symbolic claims. This may constitute a form of epistemic violence. Yet, the wilful refusal to consider the effects of vandalism on media representation of the protests as a whole similarly jeopardizes People First’s efforts to speak and be heard.

Fundamentally, however, the problem lies – as I have been arguing – with the nature of symbolic space. It is impossible to find ethical action within unethical space and one effect of such spaces is to direct the frustrations of dominated actors toward themselves and their fellow sufferers. In the next chapter I will endeavour to consider some means of thinking through the distortions and impasses developed in this chapter and the previous one by recommending activists adopt a Nietzschean relationship to suffering. By focusing on overcoming suffering rather than resolving it, movements might find alternative approaches to balancing the competing demands of conformity and resistance.
CHAPTER SIX: OVERCOMING THE REFORM/RADICAL DIVIDE

Introduction: Competing Values and Ruinous Divides

Through examination of LGBT/Q collective identity and alterglocalization protest tactics in the previous two chapters, I have been making a case for the value of integrating Bourdieu’s conceptual framework into analyses of social movements and contentious politics. Specifically, I have argued that the value of such integration lies in providing a lens through which observers can identify and understand distortions in efforts to resist various forms of domination. In this chapter I want to move from specific questions about movement dynamics to larger ethical questions. Here, rather than integrating Bourdieu into social movement research, my intention is to connect his economy of practice into Nietzsche’s philosophy of action. It is my hope that by exploring broader questions of justice and subjectivity I might identify novel ways for thinking about movement goals and capacities.

In Chapter Three I argued that considerations of justice depend on sometimes implicit judgments or valuations about what counts as suffering, or at least what counts as politically relevant suffering, and what thereby generates regimes of duty, responsibility, and entitlement. Similarly, efforts to resist unjust social relationships and arbitrary, hierarchical distributions of material, cultural and symbolic capital (as well as the opportunities these distributions produce and constrain) are organized around political values that may be compossible, but may also be in direct competition. Indeed, the myriad ways in which advocates of various visions of collective identity articulate values such as autonomy, solidarity, collectivity, and equality produce competing visions of justice and recommend divergent tactical prescriptions. Most progressive social movement participants will likely agree to the political value of equality, autonomy, and reductions in suffering, but, as the previous two chapters sought to illustrate, unequal distributions of epistemic authority and the symbolic violence they occasion subvert independent efforts to articulate dissenting visions of what
kind of equality can best reduce suffering. Further, the shape of the symbolic field in which collective actors make their claims may produce unavoidable obstacles, producing problematic orientations toward investment in political fields. At bottom, then, social movements embody various potential interpretations of the value of collectivization itself: as a strategy for counteracting disparities in material and symbolic capital between claimants and powerholders; as an emotional accomplishment and resource in the face of the individualizing tendencies of domination; or, especially in the anarchist mode, as a temporary site of autonomous action in the company of likeminded groups and individuals.

What I am trying to describe here is a vision of social movement analysis that views various values, and the suffering to which they respond, as elements that collective actors – constrained by the social facts of habitus, field, and capital – bring into specific constellations through which they understand and justify their actions. All too easily, however, activists and observers alike reduce complex interactions between values, dispositions, and resources to simplified visions of political projects that are either radical or reformist, and then credit symbolic value to their preferred pole. The conflict between the Black Bloc activists and the labour-led march against the G20 could be interpreted as a radical/reformist polarization produced by the incompatibility of political projects rooted in autonomy in the case of the former and empowerment through representation in the latter. In an analogous register, conflicts between queer and lesbian/gay visions of collective identity are rooted in conflicting conceptions of the value of immediate, integral responses to the suffering experienced within heteronormative North American socio-political systems show similar and problematic radical/reform polarization. Because such polarizations are ultimately rooted in alternative accounts of suffering and political value, any radical-reformist contrast is deeply unstable and might be configured differently at the level of identity, strategy, and tactic, depending on the configuration of opportunities and constraints presented by a specific field and the resources individual and collective actors within that field are able to mobilize.
Nonetheless, given the energy expended on such debates, and the animosity they tend to produce, it might make sense to say that parallel to Bourdieu’s claim that the subjectivist/objectivist division is “the most fundamental, and the most ruinous” opposition that divides social science, we could treat the radical/reformist split as the most ruinous to progressive social movements.467 Arguably one symptom of dysfunction among many (including the violence and antinomies I describe in the previous chapters), antagonism between bearers of reformist and radical visions is without a doubt a primary source of conflict and needlessly wasted energy. Certainly both LGBT/Q and alter-globalization movements (not to mention feminist, anti-racist, environmentalist, disability, Indigenous and class movements) have been plagued by this symptom.

In this chapter I introduce an alternative matrix through which social movements might reflect upon their strategic, tactical and identity-based orientations. As I argued in Chapter Two, reflexivity is not an automatic accomplishment, and in Chapters Three and Four I argued that symbolic violence intervenes upon and distorts processes by which suffering is reflected upon and collectivized. Nonetheless, I share with Bourdieu a certain optimism that critical social and political theory can provide tools with which symbolic violence can be combatted. Beyond having tools for naming processes as symbolically violent, or fields of action as creating political antinomies, social movements will also be served by having a different set of questions through which they can interrogate the value of a tactic or an identity – different, that is, from asking whether an action is sufficiently pragmatic or sufficiently radical.

My central interest in this chapter is to continue shifting social movement debates from questions of reformism and radicalism onto the terrain of conformity and failure. Ultimately, this will allow movement actors to think – in a category of action taken from Nietzsche – in terms of overcoming. Overcoming, I suggest, ought to be thought of as wilful acts of creativity connected to a

capacity not just to succeed, but to position oneself in a continuing relation to struggle and therefore further overcoming. As I will argue in the concluding section of this chapter, overcoming does not entail disavowing immediate political urgency, or concrete political goals. It merely demands that the collective articulation of those goals must be extended into an ethical dimension. This ethical dimension will ultimately have instrumental value insofar as it includes capacity building and therefore prepares movements to resist domination and effect social transformation in ways that current relations of power prohibit. Indeed, overcoming demands active engagement and collective struggle in order to prepare the conditions for convalescence and decathexis I describe below. My argument does not advocate quietism or individualistic relations to politics, only the inclusion of a specific ethical component within those politics. Further, my interest in conformity and failure is not to argue that conformism is intrinsically negative – indeed, as I argued in the previous chapter and as I discuss further below – some conformity in the form of investment in social and political fields as they currently exist may be an ethical duty in order to keep open spaces in which creative acts remain possible and to orient action toward universal principles. Indeed, as I argue in the fourth section of this chapter, the logic of affinity disavows the temporal logic of identity required for overcoming suffering. The danger, however, is that even minimal conformity risks diminishing the possibility of creativity (the first criteria of acts of overcoming). Following Nietzsche I recommend a vision of creative action that is enabled by particular fields and closed down by others. This vision suggests that while LGBT activists may over-reach with their conformity, anarchist refusals to delegate autonomy to a collective subject neglect the conformist investment necessary for overcoming.

It bears emphasizing that the mix of Bourdieu and Nietzsche I articulate will not pre-settle debates within political organizing. It will not settle once and for all the value of property destruction or same-sex marriage. Rather it is intended to serve as a tool to help dominated actors challenge dominant actors and to push them toward new justifications for action. If we build a campaign that makes claims for same-sex couples because they are ‘the same’ as opposite-sex couples, will that
make it easier or harder to act differently from opposite-sex couples in the future? If we submit to police coordination in planning protest activities now, will it make it harder or easier to act against police preferences in the future? Naturally, given the impossibility of knowing the answers to such questions in advance, they will generate arguments and these arguments will be fraught with epistemic violence and unequal distributions of cultural capital and material resources. Nonetheless, as one among the many critical theoretical and practical tools – most still in need of development – with which dominated actors can challenge misrecognized and naturalized divisions within and surrounding social movements, a demand to overcome may support efforts to resist movement distortions.

My argument here can be summarized as follows. For action to have sufficient traction within fields of power to challenge the distributions of resources and opportunities by which some groups are dominated, some degree of investment in those fields is required. This investment permits accumulation of the capital necessary to gain the traction just described. By definition, investment requires an agent that invests over time. For social movements, this has two major implications. First, the investing agent itself is a site of investment. That is, social movements must constitute themselves as subjects that exist over periods of time in order to invest in and accumulate the material and symbolic capital necessary to achieve their goals. This means the dynamics by which social movements are constituted are politically significant. At this level, justice depends on a specific relationship between *habitus* and field, where movements themselves are fields of action and which I describe in the next section via Bourdieu’s philosophy of science and universality. Second, although social movements are their own fields of action they are never autonomous from the broader field of power and therefore conformity risks reproducing hierarchal relations of power and domination. Therefore, an account is needed of how movements might gain space for non-conformist action through the cultivation of a specific collective disposition: an orientation toward Nietzschean overcoming and convalescence.
To make this argument I first turn to a potential Bourdieuian approach to movement organization as anti-metaphysical and rooted in an orientation toward the universal, which accords with a more general logic of representation contained in his vision of the political field. I then turn to Nietzsche and describe more fully the notion of overcoming I am advocating and its relation to action, creativity, metaphysics, and the universal. As a counter-point I return, in the fifth section, to anarchist political models based on ethics of affinity-based organizing. While escaping some of the dangers of politics of representation, affinity organizing contains its own ethical problems.

**Mechanism, the Universal, Representation**

Bourdieu rejected the notion that the morally arbitrary nature of social spaces condemns those spaces and the ideas and objects produced within them to relativity. In order to escape relativism and advance the universal – which for Bourdieu meant negating the subjective in favour of the transpersonal, the objective, the disinterested – the universal itself must be a prize sought in fields with specific features and populated by appropriately disposed *habitus*-bearing agents.\(^{468}\) Recall that the distinctions through which space is structured and the rules for position-taking within that space are instituted in two places. On the one hand, they are institutionalized in the space itself, the shape of which is the result of historical struggles and position-taking. On the other hand, they are instituted in *habitus* of the participants. Indeed, bearing a *habitus* disposed toward recognizing the rules of a particular social space as well as the stakes involved in that space is a pre-requisite for participation in the field. As an agent participates more fully in a field, their *habitus* undergoes continuous and often unnoticed adjustments to become more compatible with the demands of the field. To be consistent with Bourdieu’s framework, pursuit of universality therefore must be conceived of as an appropriate distribution of dispositions needed to orient agents toward the transpersonal, the disinterested, and social space within which these dispositions can manifest in intelligible action that

\(^{468}\) Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 123.
actually promotes the same. In this section I will contrast two fields that might reasonably be expected to have the universal as their focus: the political and the scientific. While the latter has superficial potential for overcoming the problems of representation inherent in the former, it is not altogether clear that it can meet the criteria of overcoming I will establish in the following section and therefore ought to be approached with caution.

The Political Field

As with aesthetic and scholastic dispositions, political dispositions are products of specific relations to the world and mobilize specific forms of political capital, and therefore political dispositions and skills are not evenly distributed throughout populations.469 For Bourdieu, democratic political fields consist of struggles among individual and collective agents bearing various kinds of resources, or capital, and invested in gaining control of the specific resources and advantages the state offers through elections, lobbying or other forms of influence. Naturally these resources include not only economic capital, but also social capital in the form of organizations capable of mobilizing members and supporters as well as cultural capital in the form of the skills needed to communicate effectively (both in terms of crafting political messaging but also in terms of appearance, mannerisms) and possession of the ‘political instincts’ needed to perceive and capitalize on opportunities the field presents at any given time.470 Analysis of political fields, then, begins with assessing the political economy of political goods such as commentaries, analyses, partisan proposals, communications strategies and political messaging produced within the field and the

469 ibid., 67–68.
470 Bourdieu’s analysis of opinion polling suggests that possession of technical competence in terms of political communication is insufficient. As I argue in Chapter Four, technical competence depends on social authority and entitlement: “‘Technical’ competence depends fundamentally on social competence and on the corresponding sense of being entitled and required by status to exercise this specific capacity, and therefore to possess it.” That is, to understand political participation, one cannot look at an individual’s capacity alone, but also their sense of entitlement to be concerned with politics, their sense of being authorized to speak about them, and so on. Such senses have demonstrably classed and gendered distributions. Bourdieu, Distinction, 409.
division of labour and consumption within and external to the field itself. That is, he insists on understanding the production, circulation and consumption of political goods – and the mobilization of supporters that this circulation seeks, a form of social capital – as conditioned by constraints of symbolic power (which establishes the rules of production and value of political goods and which is an artificial construct mediating the value of political goods without reference to the truth or coherence of their claims) and the institutional arrangements that structure the political field.\textsuperscript{471} He argues that:

Because the products offered by the political field are instruments for perceiving and expressing the social world (or, if you like, principles of di-vision), the distribution of opinions in a given population depends on the state of the instruments of perception and expression available and on the access that different groups have to these instruments. This means that the political field in fact produces an effect of censorship by limiting the universe of political discourse, and thereby the universe of what is politically thinkable, to the finite space of discourses capable of being produced or reproduced within the limits of the political problematic, understood as a space of stances effectively adopted within the field – i.e. stances that are socio-logically possible given the laws that determine entry into the field.\textsuperscript{472}

The conditions of entry into the political field are central to understanding dynamics within the field. Bourdieu’s detailed analysis of political fields in \textit{Language and Symbolic Power} centers on the division of political labour between consumers and producers of political goods. Importantly, most political consumers appear within the field itself primarily through representatives, particularly through the political parties, organized interest groups and lobbyists that Bourdieu considered to constitute the space of the field itself. In this regard, Bourdieu identified two broad trends. First, that the more dispossessed of various forms of cultural, economic and symbolic resources a category of people is – he had working-class people in mind here – the more they rely on acts of delegation to representatives in the form of organizations, parties and spokespeople. These representatives function


\textsuperscript{472} Bourdieu, \textit{Language and Symbolic Power}, 172.
to aggregate the comparatively scarce and diffused resources of dominated groups and to transform it into political products appropriate for exchange within the political field. However, this delegation always threatens to become dispossession because although spokespersons are representatives in the sense of having delegated authority, they are also representative in the sense of portraying a vision of the group’s concerns, ambitions and self-image. Insofar as representation in the latter sense is articulated through production of goods oriented toward a specific state of a political field it is always a mediated representation. Thus, the second trend Bourdieu identifies, the trend toward monopolization of the means of political production and the accompanying increase in the esoteric nature of political discourse intervenes between how dominated groups experience the world and how that experience is manifested in the political field.\[^{473}\]

Potential monopolization of representation is particularly at stake in competing visions of the alterglobalization movement, as I argued in Chapter Five. Rather than repeat that argument here, I will simply point to two levels at which anarchist concerns about representation might be expressed in this context. First, as I suggested in the first section of this chapter anarchists may simply prioritize one value – autonomy – over a competing one – representation-based collective action as a means of resisting domination by consolidating various kinds of capital. Second, many anarchists argue at a more fundamental level that representation entails falsely imposing identity. For example, Holloway, following Adorno, argues that capitalism reifies action (doing) into being and is characteristic of capitalism’s tendency to hypostatize the present, divorce things and people from processes and action, to reify those processes and actions. Collective identity and identity-based politics’ failure to escape these reifications deadens lived individuality.\[^{474}\] In both cases, the central concern is that the delegation intrinsic to representation entails a loss of autonomy. Further, as in any political economy, accumulation favours those who already have the most capital and, in the context of political fields,

\[^{473}\] ibid., 173-174.
\[^{474}\] Holloway, 63-64.
dispossesses the most marginalized of the ability to refuse delegation. As Dupuis-Déri argues, the ephemeral nature of affinity-based organizing negates the possibility of consolidating power, and thus prevents official imposition of wills on subordinates.\textsuperscript{475} As I argued in Chapter Four in relation to collective identity formation, political fields are rife with symbolic violence by which representation may be seen as not just a negative constraint on freedom as this anarchist critique implies (i.e., my freedom is constrained insofar as social movement organizations prevent me from undertaking actions that are not officially sanctioned) but also a constraint on positive freedom insofar as representation involves imposition and acceptance of political projects contrary to the interests of those for whom representatives claim to speak. That is, when dominated delegators come to accept an imposed vision not on its merits, but because of the epistemic and symbolic authority of its advocates, it is impossible to conceive of delegation as the expression of autonomous political agents. On the contrary, in this view, representation begins to appear exploitative insofar as political organization appears to mobilize the energy of participants not for the sake of their own interests, but for the sake of dominant actors within a social movement. In this light, the dispossession that underpins monopolization in the political field appears to be incompatible with pursuit of the universal.

The Scientific Field

Is there a model of social action that promotes the universal while avoiding exploitative delegation? If so, can this model be translated into prescriptions for political practice? For Bourdieu the field most closely aligned with the universal and therefore embodying the most potential for avoiding the distorting effects of dominant interests is the scientific field.\textsuperscript{476} Because the field of science (understood, like any field as a norm-based exchange of claims) is, according to Bourdieu,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[475] Dupuis-Déri: 60.
\item[476] Obviously this potential is relative. Bourdieu does not take the scientific field to be a fully universal social space, only one that offers insights into how dispositions might be channeled toward universality.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
intrinsically bound up in dialogue amongst invested participants, and its participants agree to common standards for this dialogue, it provides a model for escaping the relativism implicit in his conception of fields as quasi-autonomous spaces where agents undertake evaluations and actions based on the arbitrary rules of that space. Crossley describes Bourdieu’s approach to science as founded on a notion of ‘communicative rationality.’ That is, in Bourdieu’s conception, reason progresses through human interactions rather than through individual, private deliberation; rationality depends upon such interactions being based on logic and evidence rather than coercion or bribery; and where the previous two conditions prevail there exists the possibility that particular perspectives may be replaced by universal ones. In contrast to the scientific field, agents within artistic and political fields are not bound by shared conceptions of logic and evidence. As a result, the artistic field falsely universalizes a particular aesthetic gaze and the political field remains oriented toward particular claims rather than universal visions.

Bourdieu emphasizes that competence within any given field is closely connected to having a habitus disposed to participating in that field, which means being disposed to follow the rules and recognize the distinctions of that field. Indeed, he saw the relationship between field, habitus, and competence as circular: an agent’s habitus disposes them toward participation in a field; participation leads to adjustments in the habitus, including (with varying success) accumulation of the cultural capital necessary to participate in that field, which further disposes the agent toward participation. In academia and scholastic settings, disposition and competence appear as practically synonymous, and successful participants in those fields must pre-consciously adopt specific orientations and ambitions in order to succeed. Bourdieu characterizes scientific fields as similar to others in that participants are mobilized by selfish interests and engage in conflicts over resources, but exceptional in the degree to which the use of reason is instituted in the structures, dispositions, and rules that comprise the field.

Specifically, participants in scientific fields mobilize technical competence and scientific knowledge for the sake of accumulating symbolic capital, but the weapons they use in this struggle must be sanctioned principles of proof (i.e., generalizable evidence, rational argumentation, peer review, citation, etc.). In the scientific field, social constraints take the form of logical constraints. Naturally these standards and norms are highly contentious and debated, but those debates – struggles really – also recursively rely on reason, logic, evidence and persuasion. Science advances because it has available to it *habitus*-bearing agents willing to sublimate their drives and interests to the ‘censorship of the scientific field’, namely the rules of methodology, proof, and so on. Importantly, this means there must be reasonably high entry barriers to participation in the scientific field. Otherwise, the norms of reason and proof by which the field advances could be jeopardized. For Bourdieu, the relationship between well-disposed *habitus* and struggle over specific (scientific) forms of symbolic capital undertaken in the context of high entry barriers and participation rules that emphasize reason, method and proof, rescues truth from the relativism.478

Bourdieu contrasts the dynamics of scientific fields with that of the political field. The political field has low entry barriers – anyone with an opinion can participate at some level – and norms of participation have more to do with advertising, rhetoric, framing strategies and emotional manipulation than rational debate. He argues that:

If one wants to go beyond preaching, then it is necessary to implement practically, by using the ordinary means of political action – creation of associations and movements, demonstrations, manifestoes, etc. – the *Realpolitik* of reason aimed at setting up or reinforcing, within the political field, the mechanisms capable of imposing the sanctions, as far as possible automatic ones, that would tend to discourage deviations from the democratic norm (such as the corruption of elected

Incidentally, in pointing to the accumulation of capital and the relative agreement over the norms of scientific practice as central to the field, Bourdieu distinguishes his conception of scientific progress from that of Thomas Kuhn. Bourdieu suggested that Kuhn’s scientific ‘revolutions’ were not as revolutionary as he thought and that he undervalued important continuities in terms of scientific tradition, community, and the sociological relation of scientific practice to the outside social world. Bridget Fowler, "Autonomy, Reciprocity and Science in the Thought of Pierre Bourdieu," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 6 (2006): 104-105.
representatives) and to encourage or impose the appropriate behaviours; aimed also at favouring the setting up of non-distorted social structures of communication between the holders of power and the citizens, in particular through a constant struggle for the independence of the media.

This somewhat abstract political vision needs to be specified. In particular, Chapter Four demonstrated that the “creation of associations and movements, demonstrations, manifestos, etc.” on which Bourdieu’s Realpolitik rests is itself contentious because core components such as collective identity formation are already sites of domination.

Understanding collective identity in terms of domination immediately presents a twofold conceptual challenge: how do we identify domination/submission and on what grounds can we say that movements arising from patterns of domination are distorted or not? Symbolic domination depends on the internalization of the dominant point of view by those who do not benefit from that vision. That is, symbolic power rests on the incorporation and naturalization of schemes of classification by which social space is constructed and perceived and the unequal distribution of resources those classifications engender. These schemes are incorporated and naturalized both by individuals and groups who benefit from unequal distributions and those who do not. The existence of external measures capable of assessing the extent to which adopting a particular point of view or scheme of classification is in accordance with, or in opposition to, one’s interests is an important problem for normative social theory and indicates an important tension. On the one hand, most queers – that is, those who seek to resist imperatives to live according to standards of ‘normalcy’ – would be rightly suspicious of an externally derived conception of justice given the horrors realized through 20th century revolutionary and utopian movements. At the same time, there appears to be exactly such an external, moral standard operating in accusations that mainstream gays and lesbians who accumulate symbolic capital through strategies based on conforming to, as opposed to resisting,

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dominant patterns of symbolic power, are misguided, traitorous, complicit in entrenching relations of
dominance, and so on. 480

Treating the sites of collective identity formation – social movement organizations, movement media, and so on – as sites of justice could help resolve this tension. More specifically, by extending Bourdieu’s realist philosophy of science to social movement politics, justice could be conceived according to procedural rather than substantive measures. The point would not be to ask whether a movement goal or outcome sufficiently moves the movement toward the universal because it adequately represents the interests of all affected participants, but to ask whether there are procedural mechanisms in place within the process of collective identity formation. Researchers would ask whether and to what degree, in the struggle over a vision of the world, a vision that explains queer difference and the exclusions that difference suffers and articulates that assessment to specific goals and strategies, epistemic violence in the form of symbolic violence replaced rational deliberation. Researchers can take seriously the various stakes and interests involved in partisan debates internal to social movements, assess internal movement outcomes, and draw clear conclusions about processes of domination without relying on external, theoretical judgments about objective interests. Put another way, the normative issues of democratic theory, particularly in terms of epistemic violence and epistemic injustice need to account for symbolic power in processes of collective identity construction.

The interim task then becomes to identify procedural mechanisms capable of obstructing the operation of symbolic power within collective identity production as Bourdieu believed was the case in scientific and academic fields. Such mechanisms go beyond most deliberative accounts of democratic practice in that they would not assume a universal capacity or disposition to engage

480 For a discussion of the difficulties of externally establishing ‘objective’ interests, see: Lukes, pp. 144-151.
whatever mechanisms are instituted in a uniform way.\footnote{For a good introduction to debates about deliberative democracy, see Gutmann and Thompson Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, \textit{Why Deliberative Democracy?} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).} In light of the conceptual relationship between \textit{habitus} and field described above, procedural mechanisms ought to focus on precisely that relationship and on forcing participants to align pursuit of symbolic capital with pursuit of the universal. Thus, collective identity procedures must include both mechanisms to ensure that the universal is the object of symbolic struggle within movement fields (as opposed to treating movements as the vehicle for promoting an already-established conception of the universal, such as the universal ‘right’ to marry) and that promote the presence of \textit{habitus} disposed to sublimating subjective interests and drives in order to participate in the struggle over the universal.

There is, however, a danger to efforts to the procedural approach just outlined. In particular, by emphasizing the ‘norms’ by which the scientific field forces participants to sublimate their interest in symbolic power and submit to demands of evidence, logic, and so on, Bourdieu approaches a more Foucauldian vision of sociality. As I argued in Chapter Three, the logic of norms and normalization is fundamentally homogenizing. By praising norms in the scientific field, Bourdieu is escaping the power-laden imposition of difference through distinctions that he finds to be arbitrary and devastating in cultural fields, but at the expense of internal diversity. Bourdieu was not naïve about the power relations surrounding academic institutions, nor the economic power underpinning scholastic dispositions. Nonetheless, his reliance on economistic models of accumulation, tied to institutions that distribute scarce productive capacities (access to labs, to publication opportunities, to research grants, etc.) means scientific economies remain, ultimately, political economies. The danger of mechanism-based, or procedural approaches to justice within social movements in keeping with Bourdieu’s vision of universality, then, is that the homogeneity underpinning the norms operating in ‘properly structured’ fields both in the rules of the fields themselves and in the embodiment of those
rules in *habitus*, may undermine creativity, dissidence, and independence. Particularly given the dynamics of delegation and representation inherent in the political field as a democratic space, it is not clear that homogenizing norms are compatible with what Nietzsche calls the ‘plastic power’ necessary to transform suffering into creativity (see below).482

The collective subject I envision requires more than the ability to conform that the Bourdieuan vision I have been describing requires. Although conformity to rules oriented toward the universal can channel agents’ pursuit of symbolic power toward a political project that transcends particular interests (even particular group interests), there remains the danger that the investment conformity will foster over-identification with the existing system and therefore reproduce distortions and domination that pre-date that investment. In noting this danger I am intentionally shifting from the *economic* sense of investment (i.e., long-run accumulation of symbolic power by developing capacities and especially the dispositions necessary to sublimate particular interests) to the *psychoanalytic* sense, both of which Bourdieu collapsed into his understanding of the term.483 I do this in order to connect to Jackson’s compelling argument that Nietzsche’s philosophy contains a way out of a central concern not just for Bourdieu (and his critics) but most of modern social theory: how can theorists recognize the force of socialization while also providing an account of freedom that does not fall back onto an unconstrained and voluntarist conception of free will?484 More specifically, Jackson argues that Nietzsche’s notion of overcoming and convalescence provides a cultural analogy to the psychological process of mourning in that overcoming and convalescence provide a model for a slow, prolonged working through of ressentiment and detachment in order to

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483 Fourny: 111.
“throw off the weight of history and begin again.”  

In the context of social movements, the specific orientation toward suffering and creativity that overcoming entails suggests that the strategy of developing dispositions and field mechanisms designed to orient symbolic capital accumulation toward the universal must be augmented by dispositions oriented toward disinvestment. Such disinvestment requires both a collective subject and a disavowal of the metaphysical attachments to hope and a morally well-ordered world underpinning both reformist and radical politics.

Very little scholarly work exists on the relationship of Bourdieu to Nietzsche and most of what exists focuses on Bourdieu’s cultural analysis. Nonetheless, Nietzsche heavily influenced Berger and Luckmann’s work on social constructivism, to which Bourdieu owes a significant debt.

In the section that follows, however, I am less interested in Nietzsche’s sociology and more interested in the specific disposition toward suffering he advocated.

Nietzsche

“What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a going-across and a down-going.”

– Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Man here figures, of course, as the precursor to Nietzsche’s famous overman, but the metaphor evokes a number of themes I have been threading together over the previous chapters. The metaphor suggests that humankind is a process of becoming rather than a fixed being. Further, we should be concerned about the direction of our becoming; which gulf the bridge spans matters, our motivation for crossing (i.e., the suffering that pushes us forward) matters. Further, the notion of crossing or travel itself implies intention and effort. Finally, by connecting the self who is on this side of the bridge to the self who *has travelled* to the other side, travel introduces a temporal dimension.

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485 ibid., 155.
My intention here is not to complete the metaphor by fleshing out what exactly Nietzsche envisioned on the other side of the bridge, nor to artificially map some concept of the overman onto collective actors and collective action. Rather, I want only to point to the connections Nietzsche’s metaphor illuminates between suffering, self-awareness, time and above all action.

Overcoming, Action, and Creativity

Nietzsche foreshadows the overman in much of his work, particularly *Zarathustra*, but the overman remains essentially indescribable.⁴⁸⁸ Allison argues that this indescribability is inevitable given Nietzsche’s intention to use Zarathustra as an illustration not of a fixed being, but again, of the process of overcoming. Thus, “… the notion of the overman signifies humanity’s capacity for achieving a self-transformation of itself and a fully truthful understanding of the human condition.”⁴⁸⁹ Nonetheless, three criteria for overcoming are apparent: a capacity condition in the form of what Nietzsche calls the ‘plastic power’ of an actor, and two dispositional conditions, namely a specific orientation to suffering, and a closely related and specific relationship to time and history.

Plastic power can be usefully situated in relationship to Nietzsche’s somewhat idiosyncratic interpretation of health not as the absence of illness, but as the ability of an organism to overcome disease.⁴⁹⁰ Someone who had never fallen ill could not be considered healthy… their health would be unproven. Rather, the person whose constitution is sufficiently robust to recover from even the harshest physical adversity is the most healthy. Thus:

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⁴⁸⁹ ibid., 119.
I mean by plastic power the capacity to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds.\(^{491}\)

Illness, as a specific form of suffering, and health as the degree of plastic power an organism is able to marshal in overcoming illness can be generalized to suffering and its apparent opposite, joy. Just as illness and health are inseparable (as they would be if health were a state-of-being constituted simply by the absence of illness) Nietzsche’s distinct approach to suffering refuses to conceive of the possibility of joy without suffering and vice versa. In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche demands of his ‘Higher Men’, ‘Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well.’\(^{492}\) Further, as Kaufmann argues, the inseparable relationship between suffering and joy is not merely the instrumental relationship that suffering would have to joy if Nietzsche merely meant that one suffers now in order to experience joy at the end of suffering through reaping the results of investment or even through the relief occasioned simply through the cessation of unpleasant sensations. Rather, Nietzsche thought suffering and joy alike are valuable as *conscious activities* within the *process* of overcoming.\(^{493}\) Jackson suggests overcoming occurs when exhaustion and subsequent convalescence provide the time and place to slowly work through *ressentiment*. That is, the overcomer can slowly detach from psychic investments that do not support life and action.\(^{494}\)

Suffering here is not simply an experience an agent endures, but a reference point from which they act. That action, if it is conscious and oriented toward producing new horizons of both suffering and joy constitutes overcoming. Given the unequal distribution of plastic power implicit in Nietzsche’s description, it is not surprising that not all sufferers overcome their suffering. For the majority, suffering remains an experience to be endured or ended, not an object to be acted upon. Put simply,


\(^{492}\) Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 331-332; emphasis original.

\(^{493}\) Kaufmann, 274.

\(^{494}\) Jackson: 155.
on the one hand, Nietzsche valued harsh circumstances because they bear the potential for great action and expansive overcoming. Indeed, adversity appears to be a necessary condition for greatness. On the other, Nietzsche remains committed to a restrictive observation: “The poison of which weaker natures perish strengthens the strong – nor do they call it poison.” Thus, suffering and joy, harsh conditions and great achievements are linked, but only in those who have the ‘strong natures’ constituted by high levels of plastic power. A central concern for Nietzsche was the conditions within which ‘a man, a people, a culture’ could transform suffering into greatness. Greatness, for Nietzsche, was fundamentally rooted in action, as one can see from myriad comments on creating, the origins of morality, and the use of history. However, as he argues in The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life, culture, context, and disposition limit and constrain action. Thus, whether an agent possesses sufficient plastic power to enable them to transform their suffering into an opportunity for overcoming is not a question of luck or random chance but of context, culture, and disposition. Context, culture, and disposition are each amenable to cultivation but can also be prone to stifling and distortion.

Maintaining the specific unity between joy and suffering Nietzsche envisions requires a temporal element. Nietzsche is not suggesting that joy and suffering are united in the sense that, when an agent experiences one, he or she necessarily experiences the other. Rather, the relative capacity to act upon suffering now is the same capacity that is needed to act joyfully in the future. Plastic power is only useful insofar as it enables overcoming the present in order to experience an expanded future. Overcoming, then, needs to be thought of in terms of a relationship between the plastic power that enables action in the present and the expanded plastic power required to overcome future suffering.

In this context, social movement struggles can be understood as three-point constellations, bringing into specific relationships a form of suffering, a capacity (degree of plastic power) and a field or context in which the other two points operate. LGBT/Q politics could be schematized as bringing together a specific form of suffering (difference), with a capacity to metabolize and either endure or act upon that suffering (that is, through a contingently oriented collective identity) and a context in which homonormative, legalistic strategies are most conducive to pragmatic success. Of course, each of the points in the constellation is comprised of its own forces and relations. ‘Difference’ stands as a short-hand for the micro-violence, legal and economic exclusions, physical violence and other concrete ways in which LGBT/Q people suffer, the interpretation of which (and therefore the relationship that LGBT/Q people can intelligibly adopt toward their suffering) is a core component of collective identity formation. Here too, collective identity is no singular entity, but the product of interactions among numerous sufferers and their relative capital as described in Chapter Four. The suffering of concern to alterglobalization activists could be mapped onto a similar three-point constellation focusing, as I did in Chapter Five, on the relationship among material injustice (itself feasibly disaggregated into myriad forms: poverty, exploitation, environmental degradation, etc.), the possibilities of collective action, and a neoliberal symbolic field. In each case, the specific constellation of suffering, plastic power, and context provides different possibilities and obstacles for creative action and the possibility of creative action in the future.

As I argued in Chapter Five and will return to below, the relationship between current capacity and future capacity is best conceived of as an investment. Bourdieu insists on both economistic and psychoanalytic connotations of investment, which is to say that investment is both a delayed gratification in order to accumulate resources for future use and an increased psychic attachment to the object of action and the field of possibilities to which action is articulated. Further, he insists that both economistic and psychoanalytic versions of investment require time: neither acquisition of various forms of capital implied by the economistic connotation nor the incremental
adjustments of the *habitus* to the values and rules of fields implied by psychic investment can be achieved instantaneously. Further, attention to *habitus*, field and capital demands that current distributions of plastic power need to be historicized as do the existing fields in which agents suffer and act. Investment and historicization entail specific sociological relations to the future and the past. I will consider these below, but first want to emphasize that these are not the relationships to time that concerned Nietzsche. Rather, as I discuss in the next section, his world-view shaking notion of the eternal return and his emphasis on the importance of forgetting, encourage an orientation toward time, history and the future intended to perform a rigorous evacuation of all metaphysical thinking and its moral and psychic constraints on action. In turn, the rigorous anti-metaphysics Nietzsche envisions forces us onto novel ethical terrain.

**Anti-Metaphysics and Pursuit of the Universal**

Nietzsche’s clearest statement of the provocation he believed lay at the core of his discovery of the ‘eternal recurrence’ or the ‘eternal return of the same’ appears in *The Gay Science* and is worth quoting at length:

> What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence - even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!"

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, “Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?” would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how
well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?\textsuperscript{497}

Allison notes that this characteristically enigmatic passage prompts a number of readings, depending on what the interpreter thinks Nietzsche meant returns eternally. The interpretation I rely on here, and the one Allison argues is the most persuasive, is that the eternal return is not a cyclical vision of cosmology where every action literally recurs infinitely, but that the universe is constituted by the eternal flux or interaction of the same dynamic forces – that is, the ceaseless interaction of matter and energy according to the laws of physics.\textsuperscript{498} While this interpretation loses its immediate psychological force – a literal recurrence would provide a motivational resource for living the best life possible – it provides a more nuanced impetus: the challenge to see the universe as only eternal flux. A universe comprised solely of laws of physics, of matter interacting with energy has no \textit{metaphysical} content:

The eternal return, however conceived… becomes the remains, the leftovers, of traditional metaphysics and religion. In short, the eternal return is nothing other than the natural order itself: bereft of God, wholly immanent, radically finite.\textsuperscript{499}

Without metaphysics there appears to be no \textit{working toward} in Nietzsche’s philosophy of action.\textsuperscript{500} Action cannot be justified by claims to accord with the unfolding of God’s will, of Historical necessity, or the moral orderliness of the natural world. Further, he insists on the value of forgetfulness, and of \textit{amor fati}, love for what is necessary, to sever us from the constraints of remembering too much from being thereby being bound by regret and ultimately freeing us for new-beginnings and self-propelling, creative action.\textsuperscript{501} As an illustration, where the notion of the eternal return appears in \textit{Zarathustra} it is through the image of a gate between two paths:

\textsuperscript{497} Nietzsche, \textit{The Gay Science}, 273-274.
\textsuperscript{498} Allison, 121.
\textsuperscript{499} ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{500} Kaufmann, 321.
\textsuperscript{501} Nietzsche, \textit{Zarathustra}, 55; Nietzsche, \textit{The Gay Science}, 223.
Two paths come together here: no one has ever reached their end. They are in opposition to one another, these paths; they abut on one another: and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is written above it: ‘Moment’.\textsuperscript{502}

To summarize, Nietzsche’s philosophy of action can be schematized as follows:

i. There is no ‘better’, necessary, or morally ordered future embedded in the nature of the world and to which we ought to orient action;

ii. Agents are best served by maintaining an appropriate amount of forgetting of the past;

iii. Action requires us to forget enough history to avoid psychic paralysis through regret, guilt, obsessions, and so on, but not so much that we lose a horizon broad enough to contextualize and understand current suffering and opportunities;

iv. Action should overcome suffering by transforming it from an experience to be endured into an object of action, and therefore the context for pursuing greatness in the form of creative action;

v. Creative action does not eliminate suffering but it can augment plastic power and thereby augment capacity for future overcoming of future suffering.

Ultimately, then, the ethical impulse of Nietzsche’s doctrine does not refer to specific actions in the form of a set of behaviours the overman would and would not perform. Rather, it refers to a disposition toward action and the consequences of action. Fully appreciating the eternal return and thereby freeing oneself from metaphysical constraints on action expands our capacity for creative action and contributes to the plastic power needed to transform suffering into action. And yet, the social facts around which my arguments in the previous chapters have been organized – \textit{habitus}, field, capital – mean that action cannot fall out of time so easily. Action restricted to ‘Moment’ could never simply be the product of a robust will freed through its awareness of the eternal return; action depends upon historically conditioned capacities and opportunities inscribed on the body through \textit{habitus} and structured objectively through social fields.

In Chapter Two I constructed an account of \textit{habitus} as an adaptive response to regularities in the natural and social world. Regularities are necessary to action because they orient an agent within the schedule of possibilities offered by social fields. In turn, social fields have rules of development

\textsuperscript{502} Nietzsche, \textit{Zarathustra}, 178.
and therefore trajectories. Action must remain either bound to the development of social fields or escape into a purely solipsistic retreat. Insofar as action remains bound to social fields, it is one thing to claim with Nietzsche that actors ought to bear the courage to overthrow previously existing ‘tables of value’ but it is something entirely different to suggest that action ought to reject social regularity to the point of unintelligibility. However, to say that action is dependent upon practical relations to the social and natural world need not re-install metaphysical justifications for actions. Indeed, the table of values that might accord with anti-metaphysical action could be rooted precisely in the social nature of subjectivity and action itself. Young, for example, offers a social connection model of responsibility to suggest that a social agent’s obligation to alter unjust structures of power increases with relative power, privilege, interest and capacity for collective action that particular agents hold. But these obligations depend on an assumed intuition that one human ever has any moral duty to another. Does this duty rely on metaphysical justifications about the value of human life per se? Butler provides an account of fundamental mutual obligation originating in the interconnection between our precariousness and the dialogic nature of subjectivity:

One’s life is always in some sense in the hands of others; even when I extend my own hand, it is as one who has been handled and sustained that I may offer something sustaining. We are all over each other, and that is true from the start. This implies struggling for and against dependency, negotiating exposure to those we know and to those we do not know. Sometimes these are relations of love or even of care, but sometimes they are relations to anonymous others, to institutions, to states, or to nongovernmental agencies.

For Butler, the intuition that we bear responsibility for one another derives from our inescapable precariousness. This precariousness, in turn, is a product of the deep sociality of subjectivity. Butler presents a surprisingly pragmatic foundation for moral claims to just social and political organization: if we are all vulnerable, then we all have equal stake in arrangements that will

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503 Young, "Responsibility," 127.
safeguard us against injury and destruction. What happens when we situate Nietzsche’s action ethics within a dialogic – that is to say social – account of agency? How can the temporal orientation underpinning the constellation between plastic power, suffering, and action at the core of Nietzsche’s work be articulated to a social and power-sensitive ontology? Bourdieu’s work on the relationship between time and practice has direct ethical implications for agency and for Nietzsche’s plastic power and can, therefore, provide some direction. Bourdieu argues in Distinction, for example, that sustained freedom from economic and material dispositions plays a fundamental role in developing aesthetic dispositions because distance from the urgencies of survival allows one to neutralize those urgencies and bracket off their practical ends. Regularly bracketing practical ends renders the habitus free to appreciate practices and activities that are ends in themselves, including aesthetic activities. Economic power (especially when inherited and therefore constituting the class background of the habitus’ formation) manifested as freedom from urgency thus translates into an aesthetic disposition, a ‘purified’ gaze capable of considering form without function. Put another way, having time to spend away from practical pursuits produces a particular (and symbolically valued) kind of aesthetic disposition. He makes similar claims about the uneven distribution of scholastic dispositions, which he argues are produced primarily through extended exposure to educational settings – not because of the information transmitted but because of the break from economic necessity and submersion in the what he calls the ‘epistemic doxa’ of the scholastic disposition, namely an ignorance of the world of practice. Finally, it is worth noting that the relationship of habitus to field tends toward aligning objective chances and subjective expectations; the objective opportunities provided by a social field constrain both the power an agent has within particular conditions, but also that agent’s desire for

505 ibid.
506 Bourdieu, Distinction, 54.
507 Bourdieu, Pascalian Meditations, 14 and 16.
power itself. Prolonged exposure to powerlessness and disruption of chances can undermine practical strategy altogether and produce disorganized, incoherent behaviour oscillating between fantasy and surrender… a far cry from the possibilities enjoyed of the powerful who experience the world as seamless, obvious, and predictable. Here is my point: the experience through which *habitus* adapts to its natural and social conditions is not just of a static set of objective relations, but also of an enduring extension of those conditions through time. Because the *habitus* – the schemas of perception and embodied orientations – through which agents act are the product of conditions existing through time, normative evaluation of both conditions and actions must also be made from within the appropriate temporal horizon.

By taking seriously Butler and Young’s ethical arguments, not to mention the dialogic account of subjectivity at the heart of *habitus*, it is possible to find ethical grounds for challenging the unequal economic power that produces and legitimizes gross inequalities in the distribution of plastic power… and the dampening effect these inequalities have on collectivized plastic power as I demonstrated in the previous two chapters. Bourdieu eloquently captures that justification:

> The social world gives what is rarest, recognition, consideration, in other words, quite simply, reasons for being. It is capable of giving meaning to life, and to death itself, by consecrating it as the supreme sacrifice.

The aesthetic, scholastic and disorganized dispositions produced through lengthy, time-consuming exposures to specific conditions provide quite different tools for understanding, abstracting, and therefore acting upon one’s suffering. In fact all dispositions and capacities, being socially produced and oriented, provide unequal opportunities to transform suffering into reasons for being, that is, to transform suffering into life. Bourdieu derived from this orientation a specific state

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508 ibid., 216.
509 ibid., 221.
510 ibid., 240.
511 It is certainly worth emphasizing that the description of the three dispositions above should not be taken to imply that they are mutually exclusive or intrinsically linked to class position. Bourdieu would defend their use as describing statistical regularities. I am more interested in the temporal and distributive logics that underpin the general phenomena as well as the moral implications of those logics.
function: to act as a ‘central bank’ of symbolic capital and therefore a (potential) guarantor of recognition, even if only in the last resort.\textsuperscript{512} He argued that, as a central bank, the state is best positioned to extend recognition as near universally as possible. This is why the political field ought to include the kinds of mechanisms envisioned by my discussion of Bourdieu’s scientific realism, above. Whether the state ought to play this central banking role rather than some other institution is certainly amenable to debate, but we can nonetheless conclude that the relationship sociality bears to action implies a political vision. That vision finds that pursuit of ‘the universal’ in the form of equitable distributions of the skills and capacities necessary for overcoming suffering provides a non-metaphysical ethical framework to inform political action within the state and, of greater relevance for my argument, within social movement contexts. The value of this vision is its potential to retain Nietzsche’s connection between anti-metaphysics and a sustained capacity for creative action through overcoming, while nonetheless retaining an ethical and political commitment to sociality.

My purpose in this section has been to establish conceptual links from Bourdieu’s thinking concepts, habitus, field and capital, which he intended to be used primarily for empirical, sociological analysis, to the realm of normative political assessment. I have tried to show that, far from being the ‘merely metaphysical’ matters Bourdieu took them to be, ethical questions can be grounded in non-metaphysical claims. In the next section and in the concluding section that follows, I pursue ethical questions in relation to specific claims made within anarchist thinking and collective mobilization.

**Affinity and the Metaphysics of Hope**

Adorno praises the anti-metaphysical direction of Nietzsche’s work:

Nietzsche in the *Antichrist* voiced the strongest argument not merely against theology but against metaphysics, that hope is mistaken for truth; that the impossibility of

living happily, or even living at all, without the thought of an absolute, does not vouch for the legitimacy of that thought.\textsuperscript{513}

He cautions, however, that by preaching \textit{amor fati}, love of one’s fate, Nietzsche reintroduces the same error into his own thought:

Love of stone walls and barred windows is the last resort of someone who sees and has nothing else to love. Both are cases of the same ignominious adaptation which, in order to endure the world’s horror, attributes reality to wishes and meaning to senseless compulsion.\textsuperscript{514}

Adorno counters \textit{amor fati} with hope. Hope that current reality can be negated is the only possibility for truth’s appearance.\textsuperscript{515} The distinction between \textit{amor fati} and hope, both of which appear to their respective advocates as essential to action forces us once again back onto the temporal terrain of action. In Chapter Five I argued that a certain amount of investment may be a practical necessity of collective action and, further, that investment itself depends on a logic of identity. In this section I return to the politics of affinity to examine the tension between conformity and failure from a second angle. Earlier in this chapter I argued that Bourdieu’s account of the scientific field’s ‘communicative rationality’ offers a potential model for alleviating social movement distortions by insisting upon procedural mechanisms that motivate sublimation of particular interests in the pursuit of the universal. I also suggested that this model bears its own danger insofar as it depends upon internalizing norms and therefore risks a degree of homogenization that is incompatible with creativity and, therefore, the plastic power necessary for overcoming. Anarchist critics of representative politics, however, emphasize a separate problem with representation, namely that the act of delegation on which representation depends entails both an undesirable reduction in autonomy and complicity in the forms of power that enable domination. This position has compelling elements, which I will briefly summarize in this section. However, I will ultimately argue that anarchist

\textsuperscript{513} Adorno, 104.
\textsuperscript{514} ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{515} ibid.
refusals of collective identity and representation depend upon an overvaluation of failures (refusals) to conform to the dynamics of political fields. In short, certain trajectories of anarchist mobilization intend practices that keep with hope as revealer of truth, but that doing so depends on a psychological disavowal that ultimately reveals a metaphysical substitution of hope for truth.

A good place to begin this discussion is with Day’s careful argument in *Gramsci is Dead*. The central concern orienting his project is very close to mine, namely the question:

What is it about the status quo that renders it, no matter how horrible, almost impervious to transformation?... It has become apparent to some tendencies within both [anarchist and Marxist] traditions that action and struggle over long periods of time are necessary to transform subjects who enjoy giving away their autonomy into subjects who are willing to take on the work necessary to preserve it.\(^5^{16}\)

If globalized capitalism is here and apparently impervious to transformation, what possibilities are there for resistance? Day argues that previous paradigms (liberalism and Marxism) in particular have failed largely because they remain bound to counter-hegemonic efforts, a fundamental belief that a different hegemonic order, one organized perhaps from below rather than from above would foster just social relations. Day calls this political logic *hegemony of hegemony*: the consensus that some form hegemonic mastery is the best way to organize power. The newest movements (anti-globalization but also indigenous and some feminist and queer), he argues, act non-hegemonically rather than counter-hegemonically because they have shifted away from ‘movements’ and toward ‘non-branded strategies and tactics’ (independent media centres, affinity group, reclaim the streets actions, black/pink/yellow blocs, and so on). He describes this as an *affinity for affinity*, “non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments.”\(^5^{17}\)

Central to affinity based anarchism is a turn away from the state and what Day calls the ‘politics of demand’ in which liberal and postmarxist (especially radical democrats) approaches

\(^5^{16}\) Day, 130.
\(^5^{17}\) ibid., 9.
assume the state to be a neutral arbiter that can be either persuaded or compelled to provide relief from various forms of suffering by “giving ‘us’ (a little more of) what ‘we’ think we need.”

Similarly, Holloway argues that state-centered transformative struggles make two mistakes: they abstract the state from its social relations (i.e., conceive of it as a hammer, an external object that can be wielded rather than embedded within myriad social relations) and they adopt the “logic of power.” The latter error in particular transforms the negative opposition motivated by critiques of existing injustice into positive projects that rely on reproducing power rather than dissolving it.

Affinity-based politics advocates solidarity rather than identity across struggles and is better characterized as a politics of ‘the act’ in opposition to politics of demand.

My central critique of the politics of affinity, which I introduced in Chapter Five, is its tendency – despite Day’s recognition of the need for struggles over long periods of time – to pursue an ahistorical politics, or what might be called an auto-telic politics. I will point to some examples of this type of thinking below, but the central implication of auto-telic politics is that they implicitly rely on a synchronic conception of power to justify organizational forms and tactics. By contrast, the Bourdieuan commitment to trajectories of field development, discussed and problematized in the section above, has the virtue of a diachronic vision of the development of power. More specifically, it allows us to trace how subjects who ‘enjoy giving away their autonomy’ become more conformist, how their delegation becomes both more necessary and more naturalized through the unceasing

518 ibid., 80.
519 By ‘logic of power’, Holloway means the belief that changing society in ways that would foster attrition of the state or at least replacing the bourgeois state with a workers’ state requires first conquering state power Holloway, 15.
520 ibid., 17.
521 Day, 88.

It is perhaps worth noting that trajectories in Marxist theory argue that capturing the state is instrumental and temporary and will lead to its eventual elimination. Day and Holloway’s argument is that the complicity of such projects with the logic of power means that such projects are bound to further entrench the state rather than eliminate it. Given Bourdieu’s commitment to the state as the central bank of symbolic capital and an ultimate guarantor of recognition, his framework similarly does not appear to advocate the elimination of the state, only a just organization of its relationship to how the field of power is constructed and its role in just distributions of symbolic, cultural, and other forms of capital.
adaptation of *habitus* to fields neither constructed by dominated subjects nor organized for their benefit. In short, the direction of global capitalism and its current neoliberal patterns are not simply a new face of oppression, but a process of rationalization and instrumentalization that constrain the possibility of imagining and rendering intelligible practices within the politics of the act.

Anarchists certainly articulate strong arguments against the politics of representation. At the very least, as Graeber notes, anarchist mobilization actively promotes diversity in the face of the ideological uniformity threatened by representational politics. However, he also notes that anarchist debate focuses on action, not ideas (since there is no hope of or desire for conversion to a single point of view) and are moreover focused on the task at hand without trying to force the action into a long-range (beyond the predictable future) program. Following from my Bourdieuan analysis of social movement politics, however, the problem is that, however fraught processes of collective identity formation are, and however uniform the ideological products of social movement organizations might be, they nonetheless perform a fundamentally important task of opposition: they de-individualize suffering and orient action within a developing and dynamic field of possibilities. In fact, solidarity without identity, and action without ideas, depends upon a quasi-atomistic view of movement participants who arrive at the organizational scene with full understanding of their oppression, and an independent assessment of that oppressions’ trajectory.

Of course, Graeber’s observation that debates focus on action not ideas should not be taken to imply that robust debates about oppression and exploitation are absent from anarchist organizing. In fact, the opposite is true. Robust and deeply sophisticated debates do take place, but the ethical commitment to autonomous action operating in the background does not free them from the symbolic violence and economic power that also operates within these scenes. Kennelly, for example, has shown that constructions of the ‘good (youth) citizen’ regulate youth activist subcultures via a

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522 Graeber: 72.
structure of feeling that shapes their responses to each other, the state and the cultural field. She argues that, in partial response, youth activist subcultures have become grounded in attention to exclusionary axes of social conflict, while nonetheless masking how those exclusions are replicated in activist culture itself.\(^{523}\) Using a Bourdieuan conceptual framework, Kennelly demonstrates how class-differentiated accumulation of cultural capital and ‘activist habitus’ translates not only into unequal activist performances (and therefore the symbolic violence described in Chapter Four) but also re-inserts neoliberal ideological commitments into youth activism:

The way in which one situates oneself within the internal power relations of activist cultures marks how well one has absorbed the unspoken cultural norms that allow one to ‘belong’ or not. What this does is conflate the notion of social change and social movements with a misconceived emphasis on one’s personal attributes – a regime of emphasis that is easily reconciled within a neoliberal ideological space that asks the subject to be forever self-perfecting.\(^{524}\)

Anarchist commitment to modes of direct action that refuse identity are bound up in exactly the wrong kind of forgetting needed for the practices of overcoming I am advocating. Kennelly’s concern with misrecognized commitments to individual self-perfection is that it reflects a fallacious belief that individual action is sufficient for overcoming structural inequalities. She argues that neoliberalism produces citizens who embody a form of subjectivity centered on being a highly individualized consumer citizen. This does not mean that people are solely motivated by material gratification through consumption, but that they are committed to self-perfection and believe that this is to be (best) achieved through individual choice. Neoliberal individualization encourages political passivity and complacency largely because highly individualized entrepreneurs and consumers (i.e., an aggregate) replace public space, or the body politic. This narrows the possibility of collective, communicative, and plural action.\(^{525}\) Again, because ‘activist identity’ is something that is performed

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\(^{524}\) ibid., 97.

\(^{525}\) ibid., 23-24.
through adherence to specific subcultural codes that even in anarchist circles over-emphasize personal responsibility (i.e., my choices can save the world or destroy it) it can undermines collaborative action based on solidarity and shared principles.\footnote{ibid., 106-107.}

Although organized around salutary ethical commitments, prefigurative politics are symptomatic of this same orientation… that is, the belief that individual or small-group actions can have world-transformative effects without the investment in collective capital that is typical of the acts of delegation to movement representatives Graeber and other anarchists oppose. Chester's and Welsh's analysis of the World Social Forum is exemplary of this form of thinking. Their main goal in this analysis is to move social movement researchers beyond an understanding of framing as limited to a Goffman-esque model and to introduce the notion of reflexive framing. However, their description belies a metaphysical hope that prefigurative projects are sufficient for transformative politics. So, for example, they argue that the World Social Forum “derives as much of its antagonistic quality from its capacity for cultural intervention and experimentation as it does from its acts of political and economic contestation,” and that:

the [alterglobalization movement] can be described as a network that is concerned more with sociality – the quality of interaction and the process through which spaces for interacting are opened, reproduced and sustained – than with the prescription of outcomes for those interactions. This represents ‘faith in the process’ that tacitly acknowledges the contingent and unpredictable qualities of emergence and equates to what Deleuze and Guattari called a ‘revolutionary-becoming…’

At a more abstract level, there is a deep commitment [in the World Social Forum movement] to providing spaces of encounter that involve and invoke recognition, trust building and affectivity that have little obvious instrumental value in terms of immediate social change. Rather, there is a presumption that the iteration of such practices through the extension of similar spaces within the nested networks represented, and the linkages formed through the practice of encounter are, in and of themselves, a coherent model for achieving change.\footnote{Graeme Chester's and Ian Welsh, "Complexity and Social Movement(S)," \textit{Theory, Culture & Society} 22, no. 5 (2005): 188 and 203; emphasis added.}
What is the value of an ‘antagonistic quality’ for cultural intervention on its own? Chesters and Welsh link this intervention to a faith in process and a presumption that prefiguration is sufficient for transformation. This kind of thinking represents the hidden metaphysical thinking that Nietzsche sought to eliminate, hidden because while not concretely theological or bound to Marxist teleology, prefigurative politics nonetheless betray a faith in process, faith in recognition, and faith that ‘just’ actions will beget justice, even if only in the long run. While prefiguration might offer truth in the form of an Adornian negation of current political structures, it depends psychologically on a disavowal of neoliberalism’s momentum and really of the momentum of a long history of human relations of domination. In short, while the Bourdieuan fields I described in the second section of this chapter have the benefit of structuring practice toward universality, they do so at the expense of creativity and diversity. By contrast, while the politics of affinity force open room for individual and small-group creativity and autonomy, it does so at the expense of identification with diachronic developments of power relations. By refusing to invest in the symbolic field – particularly via the State as the central bank of symbolic power – and by concomitantly refusing to participate in emancipatory politics of representation, affinity politics narrow the horizons of suffering to the immediately actionable (to borrow corporate lingo), to the temporary, to the personal. This narrowed horizon of suffering, refusing as it does to construct a collective identity that sublimates and acts upon suffering over the development of political space and therefore as identical across time, may permit self-overcoming in the short term, but cannot affect the transformations to symbolic space that are needed to sustain a politics of overcoming more generally, in the long run.

**Conclusion: The collective convalescent**

To bring the disparate threads from this chapter together I want to return to Jackson’s notion of cultural convalescence. To re-iterate, Jackson argued that Nietzsche’s process of suffering, exhaustion, and overcoming, when understood as an ongoing, recursive process in which the sufferer
undergoes a “decathexis from the various dimensions of the cultural superego.” While Jackson points to the ways in which individual convalescence and decathexis can be facilitated or inhibited by social and political context, my interest is in how social movements can undergo this process. I am suggesting that analysts and participants need to shift their thinking from the terrain of collective actors to the slightly different collective subject.

By collective actor I mean the instances in which people come together to act, instances ranging from affinity groups and protests to the more institutionalized forms of labour and social movement organizations. Following Melucci, I emphasize that it is not simply the coming together that constitutes a collective actor, but that preceding action a (relative) consensus is formed about the meaning of the action, its potential effects, and the environment in which the action takes place. In these contexts justice would be best served via the mechanistic relation of habitus to field described in the second section. That is, justice here would be oriented toward reducing epistemic violence and ensuring the pursuit of particular symbolic capital is only successful when it is oriented toward pursuit of the universal. However, because the mechanistic relation just described depends upon conformity to norms and therefore to a logic of homogenization, it is not likely that this approach alone will ultimately provide the means for challenging and restructuring patterns of domination. Movements also need ways to detach from conformity. The model of overcoming I have offered recommends a relationship to suffering that might foster such detachment, but it requires a slow process of working through. For this reason, the agent who suffers and overcomes needs to be something more than collective actors. It needs to include intentional investment in the capacity and skill for plastic power, creativity, and action, an investment that must extend beyond particular participants. Melucci’s language, which oscillates between collective actor and collective identity,

528 Jackson: 154.
529 ibid., 167.
530 Melucci, Challenging Codes, 40.
does not quite capture this requirement. Indeed, in most social movement research collective identity appears as simply a re-iteration of the process of forming a collective actor. That is, collective identity appears as a coming together to act (including the process of constructing the meaning of that action just described) with the additional criteria that the collective actor recognize a unity among a series of collective actions insofar as it is able to “recognize the effects of its actions and to attribute these effects to itself.”\footnote{531} By referring to collective subjects I want to capture something more than processes of constructing the meaning of action, or attribution of the effects of action. Instead, I want to conceive of collective subjects as undertaking an intentional shift in the object collective self-definition. This shift would maintain specific political dimensions (that is, variously defined political goals of action) but also intentionally include the somewhat separate ethical project of convalescence and overcoming. The difference between a collective actor and a collective subject, then, is that the former depends on consensus about goals, tactics, and opportunities within a specific field and for the sake of concrete political goals (including legislative, cultural, economic, and so on), whereas a collective subject subordinates (without eliminating) definite political goals to an ethical project, namely the decathexis and capacity building of overcoming.

Reference to a collective subjectivity that suffers, convalesces, and overcomes, does not need to be either abstract or idealist. It does, however, require investigation into what connects embodied individual subjects to structured relations of multiple individuals. Such investigation is beyond the scope of this project, but elements are worth noting. The kinds of collective identity processes described in Chapter Four will, of course, continue to be a significant part of that story, but collective identity processes alone cannot give the entire picture.

A collective subject capable of overcoming would require a properly historical relationship to suffering and investment in capacities to transform suffering into the conditions necessary for

creativity. A ‘properly historical’ disposition toward suffering consists of an *amor fati* that recognizes the inevitability of suffering and its unity with creative action. It refuses to be overly historical, that is to transform past suffering into a model for future sociality, as the ‘wounded attachments’ of LGBT politics have done. At the same time, proper historical dispositions look to the future and recognize that current suffering and future suffering are related to one another through the relatively predictable trajectories of fields of power. Suffering *per se* is of no value – here Bourdieu needs to inform Nietzsche – rather the value of suffering lies in the relationship of sufferers to the conditions of their suffering, in whether those conditions foster the dispositions and capital necessary to overcome that suffering, and the opportunities fields provide to overcome and convalesce. The question, though, is how or whether we can conceive of ‘properly historical dispositions’ at a collective level. The recent turn to investigate affect might offer some guidance.

Detailing the conditions necessary for fostering creative action will also be important. That is, if Nietzsche is correct that creative action is historically conditioned, then we might ask what conditions a collective subject might engender in order to promote plastic power. Promoting social movements free from symbolic violence by constructing them as fields in which pursuit of symbolic capital is also pursuit of the universal is surely an integral element. In particular, such constraints must be oriented toward a proliferation of movement goals rather than allowing collective identities to coalesce around relatively narrow agendas. The overwhelming consensus on the obviousness of marriage as a cornerstone political goal for LGBT groups in North America is a *doxa* that is not compatible with robust movement creativity. The homonationalism and homonormativity underpinning the current mantra that ‘it gets better’ effaces the real economic and symbolic
distinctions that mean things do not necessarily get better for all queers. This effacement is also incompatible with collective investment in plastic power.\textsuperscript{532}

Because the politics of affinity refuse the identification necessary to invest in and accumulate the capital necessary to resist the deepening penetration of forms of domination, and because the Bourdieuan approach to reducing symbolic violence within movements makes this investment through logics of norms and conformity, neither achieves a properly historical disposition and investment in creative capacity. Nonetheless, the political claims made by social movements are often of an urgency that demands pragmatic response and/or direct action. Extreme poverty, violence, threats of dispossession or deportation, irreversible environmental damage: the stakes are real and immediate. But noting this inevitably returns activists to the impossibility of politics with which this dissertation has grappled. The point is that representation, prefiguration and hopelessness must be combined in novel ways. The danger of this approach, however, is that it risks avoiding debates over radicalism and reformism at the cost of new confrontations about how social movements can be sure to maintain this diversity rather than replicating - as I have shown in chapters four and five - homogenizing and marginalizing dynamics. But this is precisely where Bourdieu and Nietzsche ought to be combined. Bourdieu’s vision of communicative rationality provides an account of investment in sociality that permits a sustained and developing collective subject. If disposed toward Nietzsche’s ethic of overcoming and convalescence, this subject could – precisely by working through debates about how to relate to suffering as a collective subject and how to foster creative potential – disinvest in sociality sufficiently to imagine and pursue singular, autonomous collective projects. This would not resolve debates between reformist and radical approaches any more than it would between lesbian/gay and queer politics, or representation and affinity. It nonetheless has the

\textsuperscript{532} Again, Sarah Schulman’s excellent analysis of the relationship of AIDS to gentrification and loss of political imagination is relevant to this direction of research.
potential to take these debates to new conceptual terrain and possibly channel energy in what could turn out to be a significantly more productive direction.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This dissertation has sought to grapple with domination as it plays out in a series of homologous relations: lesbian and gay/queer; representation/affinity; reformist.radical. Their structural similarity does not mean that each pole expresses itself in the same way in each version, but they are nonetheless structured by the same tension. On the one side, these homologies represent the need to conform to the rules of existing social space in order to invest in and thereby attain the necessary capital to act on that space. On the other side, efforts to disavow the complicity with domination such conformity entails comes with considerable practical and ethical problems. The central problematic of this dissertation, then, has been the relationship of various versions of radical and reformist politics to each other and to broader patterns of domination. Analytic leverage on these relationships was sought through a basic normatively-inflected hypothesis: that domination – and neoliberal configurations of domination in particular – prohibit conceiving of radical and reformist political projects as merely alternative strategic approaches. Instead, I argue that a Bourdieuan analysis of these approaches provides a theoretical framework capable of producing novel insights about the relationships between seemingly opposed strategies. My argument goes beyond Bourdieu’s in its explicit interest in the normative implications of the relationship between social movement activity and domination. Not only did Bourdieu pay scant attention theoretically or empirically to social movement politics, he considered normative political theory to be ‘merely metaphysical’, without the rigour, concreteness, and universality of proper social science.

Similarly, my dissertation can be distinguished from current trends in social movement research in two ways. First, with the notable exception of a few scholars (including Nick Crossley, Jacqueline Kennelly, and Keith Topper) social movement researchers have largely neglected Bourdieu’s conceptual tools. This is reflective of a broader problem within the currently mainstream
approach to social movement research, namely the limitations of the *dynamics of contention* approach pioneered by Charles Tilly, Douglas McAdam and Sidney Tarrow. Specifically, because it disaggregates social movement dynamics into discrete, though concatenating, mechanisms, dynamics of contention cannot capture the fullness of domination synchronically, nor can it tell us much about the diachronic development of domination and its implication for how social movements struggle to restructure relations of power and various efforts to redistribute economic and symbolic capital.

In fact, a normative concern about the evolution of neoliberal relations of power is a cornerstone of this dissertation. My effort to articulate this normative concern to research on social movements situates the dissertation within a broader tradition of critical theory. This tradition refuses to separate normative and descriptive analysis. The dissertation’s central contribution is that it provides a novel means of identifying mechanisms of domination and their negative effects not as a force operating externally to social movements, but internally through symbolic violence and political antinomies. More specifically, my analysis takes up the paradox of submission and resistance contained in the logic of practice underpinning Bourdieú’s framework. In short, this paradox lies in the fact that conformity to the rules of social spaces is necessary for successful action within that space. At the same time, by unevenly distributing the resources actors require for success, these rules naturalize domination within social spaces and facilitate that domination’s reproduction. To the extent that dominated actors conform to these rules in order to mitigate their suffering in the short run without challenging the rules themselves in the long run, they become complicit in their ongoing domination. At the same time, efforts to combat domination in social fields without conforming to the rules of those spaces appears unable to garner sufficient traction to affect major changes to structures of domination. Both reformist and radical political projects – measured either in terms of movement goals or strategies – are captured by this paradox. Strategies seeking to invest in the capital needed to be successful within political and cultural fields risks reducing political imaginations and projects to logics of success, but these logics demand submission to the very
relations of power that produce and reproduce domination in the first place. Strategies that refuse such investments disavow the long-term collective subjectivity needed to resist domination. Investment in representation and collective identity as well as a relationship to suffering that is disposed toward Nietzschean ‘overcoming’ are both necessary.

My argument was presented in four stages. In Chapter One I elaborated my critique of mainstream social movement research and introduced Bourdieu’s central thinking tools: *habitus*, field, capital, and symbolic power. These conceptual resources provide my argument’s normative claims with a theoretical foundation. The second stage was a more detailed look at *habitus* and symbolic power. Chapter Two argued that *habitus* needs to be understood as an adaptive capacity energized by pursuit of social recognition. Bourdieu intended the notion of *habitus* to overcome objectivist and subjectivist accounts of agency, the former of which tends to erase any practical and active aspect of individual and group practice, the latter of which tends to falsely conceive of actors as ahistorical, unconstrained subjects of an entirely free will. *Habitus* unites structure and active construction by conceiving agents as acting through a coherent set of dispositions that are objectively structured but expressed through practical actions within existing social fields. Chapter Two identified three elements of *habitus* that are essential for understanding domination and collective action. First, the founding pedagogical moment of *habitus* occurs when the subject transitions from a narcissistically organized libido to one that is focused on another person. This brings the subject into the social world and binds them to the pursuit of recognition. This desire for recognition drives agents to accumulate recognition in the form of symbolic capital. Second, the *habitus* is an adaptive capacity of the body. This means that learning is essentially mimetic and that an agent’s emotions and schemes of classification through which the social world is perceived and acted upon are deeply interconnected through the *habitus*’ system of dispositions. By locating action and interpretation in an adaptive capacity of the body, Bourdieu provides an account of agency as operating generally (though not exclusively) pre-consciously. Finally, the *habitus*’ adaptive capacity also indicates an
anticipatory capacity. The regularities of the social and natural worlds that allow *habitus* to emerge also allow *habitus* to predict the development of the social world and therefore act upon it with varying degrees of success depending on the resources it is able to mobilize in doing so. This final element inserts a logic of conformity into the core of social practice: socially intelligible actions require accession to the logic of the social field in which the action takes place and this accession may often occur pre-consciously but with subjectively experienced manifestations. Conformity to the logic of social fields does not eliminate the possibility of struggle within those fields. Indeed, agents continue to struggle to impose meaning; they just do so with unequal resources and dispositions that both reproduce and enable the terms of such struggle.

Chapter Three presented symbolic violence as a specific mode of suffering around which political action can be organized. Symbolic violence was distinguished from normalization and oppression by its specific mode of operation. Specifically, symbolic violence works by producing and imposing distinctions between people and groups. Distinctions are only successfully imposed insofar as they are recognized by agents whose *habitus* and perception of the symbolic field generally disposes them to do so. This differentiation is in contrast to the homogenizing logic of norms. Whereas normalization depends on a logic of sameness, symbolic power depends on misrecognized distributions of authority. Rather than submitting to uniform discourses, social actors submit to differentially distributed resources, particularly epistemic resources in the form of social authority.

Having established the argument’s theoretical foundations, the next three chapters illustrate the specific normative implications of *habitus* and symbolic violence for social movements. In Chapter Four, LGBT collective identity formation illustrated the complex relations of identity to symbolic violence within and outside movements themselves. Internally, disparities in symbolic capital within LGBT collective identity processes fostered epistemic violence and radically restricted the political visions available to LGBT collective actors. Importantly, internal dynamics of symbolic power were bolstered by a willingness to conform to existing distributions of symbolic power.
external to the social movement, manifested in a willingness to gain emotional comfort through improved social position rather than by challenging hierarchical evaluations of the cultural value of various sexual identities. This fostered a political orientation toward success within the existing field of power and was therefore least likely to affect broad transformations of gender and sexuality, nor alter how gender and sexuality are incorporated into capitalist, racist, and patriarchal modes of domination. I then argued against queer theoretical and political approaches that tend to wrongly treat queerness itself as a source of resistance. In particular I argued that attention to symbolic and other forms of capital in collective identity formation point toward a political logic based on success, as opposed to Butler’s politics of resignification, which depends on raising the inevitable failure of norms to the level of political contention. My central argument in Chapter Four was that although queerness itself does not provide grounds for a sustained political project, the cost of the lesbian and gay logic of political success and commitment to existing relations of power demonstrated was a self-imposed narrowing of political vision.

Chapter Five introduced the notion of political antinomies, which were defined as the contradictions exposed by the necessary failure of equally plausible but mutually exclusive approaches to protest politics. The labour-led People First rally sought symbolic leverage through visibility, mobilization of large numbers of protesters, the moral content of their anti-G20 message, and their refusal of Black Bloc tactics. This leverage was undercut, however, by neoliberal restrictions on what is amenable to democratic deliberation. By shifting economic decisions to the terrain of technocratic expertise, neoliberalism has marginalized the democratic leverage large-scale peaceful demonstrations can exercise. On the other hand, Black Bloc tactics designed to challenge the symbolic value of private property and render visible the coercive power underpinning the state were also unable to garner significant symbolic leverage to challenge dominant symbolic meanings. I then considered the politics of affinity and the ethical claims underpinning respect for diversity of tactics and representative politics as articulating political values to alternative temporal relations to
practice. My claim is that, autonomy and affinity can only provide grounds for immediate action that refuses to engage the long-run morphology of social fields. On the other hand, investment in social fields for the sake of gaining the capital necessary to act meaningfully in those fields demands a delegation of autonomy to a collective representative. Such delegation exposes activists to the problems of collectivization and symbolic violence described in Chapter Four.

Finally, Chapter Six sought to respond to potential criticisms that an analysis of the problems – the impossibilities – of successful mobilization (mobilization that does not lead to conformism as in the LGBT illustration or antinomies as in the G20 mobilization) might suggest that there is no point to social movement participation whatsoever. Using Nietzsche’s anti-metaphysical philosophy, I argued that an orientation toward overcoming transcends debates about radicalism and reformism. As a political orientation overcoming refuses to bind itself to logics of success by refusing to conceive of eliminating suffering as a core political goal. Rather, social movement projects ought to build the capacity needed to develop a proper disposition toward suffering, namely the collective capacity to sublimate suffering into new forms of creative action.

Implications and further Research

The dissertation has been – at times uncomfortably – interdisciplinary in its object and in its method. Although sociology tends to dominate in the study of social movement politics, an important goal of my project has been to emphasize the potential contributions of normative political theory. There are several important potential directions this research ought to take, which I now consider in a brief and in a highly preliminary fashion.

Chapters Four and Six both point to the need for attention to democratic practice within social movements. Currently, important democratic theory is being elaborated through deliberative and radical models. As Simone Chambers notes, deliberative advocates tend to emphasize three key features deliberative democratic theory: it is a normative theory intended to enhance democratic
practices and provide a more just method of managing pluralism than aggregative or realist models, which are over-general and inattentive to community-based politics; it is an approach centered on communicative processes rather than voting; and it argues that accountability ought to replace consent in determining the legitimacy of concrete policies and institutions.\(^{533}\) At its core, deliberative democracy pursues a specific moral economy: in giving reasons for decisions, citizens and representatives should try to find justifications that minimize their differences with their opponents. Democratic practices organized in this way foster consensus and willingness to continue with deliberation.\(^{534}\) In short, rather than gaining legitimacy from capturing the preferences of the largest number of participants in a vote (as is done in aggregative democracy), deliberative democracy gains legitimacy through the mutual accountability of participants as expressed through reason-giving, a willingness to change one’s preferences, and an orientation toward consensus.\(^{535}\) Critics have argued the model has an overly narrow conception of legitimate forms of expression, underestimates the extent to which social authority (based on race, class, gender, and so on) displaces rational justifications in deliberation, and fails to attend to the importance of confrontation rather than consensus in democratic practice.\(^{536}\)

Radical democrats have emphasized the problems created by deliberative democracy’s insistence on moving toward consensus. Proponents insist that because power is endemic and because relations of domination produce interests that are not merely divergent but actively conflicting, consensus is either impossible or achievable only by suppressing dominated groups’ perspectives.\(^{537}\) Radical democracy seeks mechanisms by which potentially hostile, antagonistic


\(^{534}\) Gutmann and Thompson, 7.

\(^{535}\) Chambers: 309.

\(^{536}\) Sanders. Young, "Activist Challenges."

relationships are transformed into adversarial (what Chantal Mouffe calls *agonistic*) relations. In this framework, participants share a commitment to recognizing each other’s legitimacy as democratic actors, without expecting to persuade opponents through rational discussion. Instead, actors establish temporary compromises without seeking to annihilate or dominate adversaries. Critics of radical democracy charge that despite its Marxist heritage, radical democratic practices pay insufficient attention to economic (as opposed to discursive) foundations of relations of power and that radical democracy thus does not ultimately permit transformation to the relations of domination at the core of the current system.

A Bourdieuan critique of democratic practice within social movement spaces would add considerably to this debate. In Chapter Six I described Bourdieu’s account of the scientific field as a site of collective reason. Crossley has already begun to argue that this account ought to be extended to debates within democratic theory. The key feature of Bourdieu’s account of collective reason is that the dispositions of participants within a specific social field and the structure of opportunities and rewards that field offers must orient action toward the universal by making the universal itself a desirable form of symbolic capital. Are there concrete democratic mechanisms that might mobilize participants self-interested pursuit of symbolic capital in the interest of universal principles? Properly organized, struggles to accumulate symbolic capital in democratic spaces might promote the universal if participants must rely on strategies based in norms of impartiality, fairness, and so on to do so. Specifically, I am suggesting that democratic theorists pursue a model of ‘symbolic’ democracy that can integrate deliberative democracy’s attention to formal constraints on participation

540 Crossley, "Distorted Communication."
541 To reiterate from Chapter Six, in the scientific field this is done by attributing symbolic value to researchers who provide recognized forms of evidence in support of arguments based on logic, reason, etc.
(in the form of justifications, public reason, and so on) and radical democracy’s recognition of the inevitability of struggle (as opposed to consensus) through the relationship between habitus, field, and norms of democratic struggle.

A model of symbolic democracy would also require increased sophistication in the conceptual and empirical tools used to identify instances of alldoxia. That is, there must be a means of identifying when the rules of democratic spaces are opposed to the interests of certain groups and, further, when that opposition of interests remains unrecognized and therefore unchallenged by those groups. Symbolic power is not an absolute phenomena as I point out in reference to the work of Skeggs and Scott in Chapter Four. Their challenges to Bourdieu’s totalizing vision of domination suggests that at the very least, the submission and misrecognition at the core of symbolic violence is difficult to operationalize. At what level does ‘agreement’ about social space and distinctions operate? How comprehensive does the ‘logical’ consensus underpinning symbolic power need to be? Researchers ought to investigate the disparate ways in which symbolic salience operates within social movement fields, as social psychology has done with identity salience (see Chapter Four). That is, given the transferability of the habitus’ dispositions but also the competing and sometimes contradictory roles agents must take on (see the debates over reflexivity I recount in Chapter Two), what mechanisms orient a specific embodied response – the affective and practical responses necessary for symbolic power – within given social spaces? As importantly, how can political actors intervene upon those mechanisms?

On the surface, intervention in debates about deliberative democracy and the sociology of symbolic violence appears to recommend a proceduralist account of justice in social movement mobilization. This would accord with attention to mechanisms I described and problematized in Chapter Six. For procedural justice in social movement contexts as sites of deliberation, specific mechanisms, ‘automatic ones’ as Bourdieu says, would be needed to discourage deviation from the pursuit of the universal or compel movements to return for what has been excluded. There would be
a second project necessary that would take research beyond current deliberative models. This project is to foster the sorts of habitus amenable to recognizing and participating in the movement mechanisms suggested above. Because the procedural conception of justice I am suggesting depends on an appropriate relationship between field and habitus, simply identifying field mechanisms alone is insufficient. Theoretical and practical work is already being done on notions of intentional community formation and prefigurative politics, and this work ought to be extended in the direction of understanding how to foster habitus that are both geared toward participation in social movement politics and disposed to adjusting its political activities to the demands of properly constituted movement mechanisms. Further, work needs to be done to identify mechanisms that can provide emotional support to victims of symbolic violence and to direct their response to domination away from self-blaming, shame, and conformism and toward transformative political projects. In other words, mechanisms need to focus on providing dominated actors with the affective and cognitive skills necessary to resist the ‘deep-rooted desire’ to achieve mainstream respectability and legitimacy. It is worth distinguishing this work, as Bourdieu does, from projects oriented solely toward consciousness-raising. While “making things explicit can help, only a thoroughgoing process of counter-training, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete’s training, durably transform habitus.”

Many movements are already engaging in this work in numerous forms, from self-defence classes, to activist training, skill-sharing and prefigurative efforts to imagine ways of sharing space. The goal, then, is to identify sociologically and politically grounded mechanisms for producing explicit analyses of the operation of power and then producing, within social movement organizations, the counter-training necessary to produce a durable disposition oriented toward

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543 One could think, for example of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement’s encampments as providing opportunities to collectively practice inhabiting unauthorized social positions by inhabiting unauthorized physical spaces.
resisting domination. Importantly, such counter-training must make both individual and collective investments in the skills and dispositions necessary to orient pursuit of symbolic capital toward pursuit of the universal, but also to ensure that movements undertake an ongoing cultivation of the creativity and the long-run orientation toward suffering needed not to resolve suffering but to overcome it.

If this dissertation has succeeded, then it is not because it has resolved questions about the relationship of domination to social movement strategy. Rather, it will have succeeded if it has introduced just the right amount of pessimism about the progressive potential of progressive movements given the context of domination in which they operate. The right amount of pessimism does not discourage activism or encourage submission to the status quo. Rather, it recognizes the challenges involved in the work activists do and pushes progressives into new relationships to suffering, investment, action, and overcoming.

Although many movements engage in such counter-training already, for a specifically Bourdieuan analysis, see Haluza-Delay’s examination of the environmental organizations. Haluza-Delay.


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