

PRACTICE WITH PURPOSE

A Comparative Analysis of American Pragmatism, Goffman, and Bourdieu

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an analysis of some of the key theoretical concepts in the work of the American Pragmatist school—here represented by William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead—Erving Goffman, and Pierre Bourdieu. Pragmatist understandings of truth, habit, and self ground the discussion of commonality and divergence among these theorists. Goffman expands the analysis to the meso-level of situation and institution, adding conflict and the struggle for individual affirmation. Bourdieu elevates the analysis again, showing how individual and group habitus relate to interlocking fields of social practice. The social nature of habitus and the non-conscious generation of dispositions make possible new understandings of the perpetuation of domination, but suffer somewhat from the lost pragmatist attention to individual experience and resourcefulness. The paper concludes with suggestions about new directions for post-Bourdieuian practice theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

The affinities between the work of Pierre Bourdieu and that of Erving Goffman and the American pragmatist philosophers have been remarked upon by social theorists (e.g., Alexander 1995; Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005) and by Bourdieu himself (Bourdieu 1983; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 122), yet these conceptual traces have not been studied in detail. This type of analysis is interesting in its own right, given the lack of direct transmission between these parties over time. Given the tremendous contemporary influence of Bourdieu and practice theory in general on American sociology, framing Bourdieu's work in this way is especially useful. The particular direction of this "trajectory" (with Bourdieu as telos) shows how ideas that are central to American pragmatism have become "socialized"—that is, the unit of analysis expands from individual to situation to field of social practice. But this development occurs at the sacrifice of individual experience and reflexivity in favor of causal explanation of statistical pattern. Looking back on the trajectory helps us to discover the pragmatic reflexivity of agents that is often lost in contemporary use of Bourdieu's theory.

This paper presents some of the key theoretical concepts and threads of commonality and divergence between the work of the American Pragmatist school—here represented by William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead—Erving Goffman, and Pierre Bourdieu. The paper is structured such that each set of ideas is presented in roughly chronological order. In the first section, I review key pragmatist concepts, highlighting each theorist's unique emphases, as well as themes they share in common. Second, I present Goffman's work, noting selected areas of affinity and contrast with pragmatism. Third, I present Bourdieu's work in three sections: an introduction to its key concepts; development of these ideas in relation to pragmatism; and discussion of Bourdieu in relation to Goffman. The paper concludes with a review of the findings

unearthed in this exploration, a review of the issue of pragmatic reflexivity in relation to Bourdieu, and suggestions about new directions for post-Bourdieuian practice theory.

II. AMERICAN PRAGMATISM

One of the most striking features of pragmatist thought is a radically empiricist definition of truth. Both James and Dewey are explicit in saying that truth is not an inherent property of a concept or an action, but is found in the consequences that these produce in the world. James writes, “*ideas (which themselves are but parts of our experience) become true in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience, to summarize them and get about among them by conceptual short-cuts instead of following the interminable succession of particular phenomena*” (1997a [1907]: 109, emphasis in original). For James, this definition is a collapse of the “true” with the “good,” an “‘instrumental’ view of truth” (ibid: 100). He continues, “truth is *one species of good*, and not, as is usually supposed, a category distinct from good, and co-ordinate with it. *The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons*” (ibid). Dewey extends this argument to the social context of everyday communication. He writes that signs and gestures become language “only when used within a context of mutual assistance and direction” (Dewey 1998 [1925]: 54).

Habit is a central concept to pragmatist conceptualizations of mind and body, and shows how these thinkers collapse that duality. James connects the tendency for continuity in human thought and belief to the plasticity of organic tissue—“especially nervous tissue,” which possesses “a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once” (1950 [1890], Vol. 1: 105). In practical application, “our nervous system grows to the modes in which it has been exercised” (ibid: 112). Just as a flow of water creates its own channel

through erosion, consciousness follows an organic “stream.” Dewey seizes on this biological insight to mark the social and ethical application of pragmatist ideas. Just as a stream of water can be channeled, habit can be trained; harnessing the power of habit is the key to promoting personal (and therefore social) change. “[R]eason,” Dewey writes, “is an outcome, a function, not a primitive force. What we need are those habits, dispositions which lead to impartial and consistent foresight of consequences. Then our judgments are reasonable; we are then reasonable creatures” (2007 [1922]: 247).

Consistent with the pragmatists’ understandings of truth and habit is that of the self as a contingent yet durable construct. Sensations and states of mind are experienced as singular, distinct entities, yet are linked through self-perception of personal continuity. James connects this paradox to the experience of time: “our maximum distinct *intuition* of duration hardly covers more than a dozen seconds,” yet our experience of the present “stands permanent, like the rainbow on the waterfall” (1950 [1890], Vol. 1: 630, emphasis in original). The water beneath the rainbow, the medium that integrates perceptions into personal identity, is the stream of consciousness itself—or Thought. Thought performs a unifying function through the dual principles of continuity and sameness. James writes: “Resemblance among the parts of a continuum of feelings (especially bodily feelings) experienced along with things widely different in all other regards, thus constitutes the real and verifiable ‘personal identity’ which we feel. There is no other identity than this in the ‘stream’ of subjective consciousness...” (ibid: 336). Thought, “the present mental state,” “appropriates” stimuli and they become a matter of self-conception—accepted as *me* or rejected as *not-me* (ibid: 338). James concludes that the “real unity” of “substantial identity” is a fiction. Philosophy’s “soul” and the Transcendental “Ego” are but representations of a common-sense desire which James believes falls aside under the

scrutiny of scientific study. Instead, James refers to Thought as the “hook” which the chain of past selves dangles (ibid).

Mead follows closely the spirit of James’s and Dewey’s theories but emerges with a clarified conceptualization of the constitution of meaning and the self through social interaction. He writes: “Meaning arises and lies within the field of the relation between the gesture of a given human organism and the subsequent behavior of this organism as indicated to another human organism by that gesture” (1934: 75-6); “[t]his threefold or triadic relation between gestures, adjustive responses, and resultant of the social act which the gesture initiates is the basis of meaning” (ibid: 80). Mead describes the self as a “structure of attitudes” rather than of habits, relating the latter primarily to “sensuous experience” (ibid: 136). The self is singular but has two constituent parts: the I, “the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others” and the Me, “the organized sets of attitudes of others which one himself assumes” (ibid: 175). For Mead, “taking on the attitude of an other” is a capacity that is learned; he describes three stages of consciousness that proceed developmentally. Throughout, Mead considers reflexiveness, “the turning back of the experience of the individual upon himself,” as “the essential condition... for the development of mind” (ibid: 134).

Like James, Mead insists that although his theory of self relies on the habitual reaction to the environment, it is not deterministic. For Mead, “organism” and “environment” are mutually constituted; thus “[w]e are not simply bound by the community,” but are “engaged in a conversation” with it (1934: 168). It is in this spirit that Mead uses the concept “emergence,” the constantly changing nature of social life through interactions. “Emergence involves a reorganization, but the reorganization brings in something that was not there before” (ibid: 198). Once again taking a cue from James, Mead addresses the “possibilities” of the self: “The

possibilities of the ‘I’ belong to that which is actually going on, taking place.... It is there that novelty arises and it is there that our most important values are located. It is the realization in some sense of this self that we are continually seeking” (ibid: 204). This is consistent with Dewey’s thoughts on training, in particular the potential for such to be carried out in the public sphere:

We can recognize that all conduct is *interaction* between elements of human nature and the environment, natural and social. Then we shall see that progress proceeds in two ways, and that freedom is found in that kind of interaction which maintains an environment in which human nature and choice count for something.... When we look at the problem as one of an adjustment to be intelligently attained, the issue shifts from within personality to an engineering issue, the establishment of arts of education and social guidance. (2007 [1922]: 10)

It is not in contemplation that habits change, but in action. As James writes: “It is not in the moment of their forming, but in the moment of their producing *motor effects*, that resolves and aspirations communicate the new ‘set’ to the brain” (James 1950 [1890], Vol. 1: 124).

This brief review shows the introduction of ideas in pragmatist philosophy that remain influential to the contemporary sociology of practice. Truth and moral good are relational and contingent, and must be studied where they occur, in such social contexts as “fighting, festivity, and work” (Dewey 1998 [1925]: 52). The embodied self is both contingent and durable, formed through social experience yet unified through time in each person’s self-consciousness. Habit bridges mind and body, referring to behavioral patterns that can be manipulated through training but can also emerge in social interaction.

III. GOFFMAN

Was Erving Goffman a pragmatist? Goffman himself acknowledged the centrality of Mead’s influence on his early work, calling it “a kind of Urban Ethnography with Meadian Social Psychology” (quoted in Kendall 2011: 115). Yet Hans Joas, one of the foremost contemporary

interpreters of pragmatist philosophy, minimizes this influence, saying Goffman's *oeuvre* "cannot be explained by the premises of pragmatism" (Joas 1993: 47n29). In this section, I will show that Goffman used a pragmatic sense of meaning and of the self as social constructs—particularly Mead's interactionist orientation—and broadened their applicability to wider domains of sociological analysis. Goffman follows Dewey's lead in focusing analytic attention not on the person, but on the situation in which meaning is collaboratively created (Emirbayer 1997). "Not, then, men and their moments," Goffman writes of the objects of his inquiry; "[r]ather moments and their men" (1967: 3).

Goffman (1959) extends Mead's reflexive understanding of meaning in his studies of how individuals work to maintain a "definition of the situation" in everyday social interaction. Unlike Mead, Goffman emphasizes that the process can be manipulated with purposive—and sometimes deceitful—intention: "Thus, when an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interest to convey" (1959: 4). This potential for manipulation in everyday meaning construction brings out the conflict inherent in social relations. Goffman writes: "A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated" (ibid: 70). Goffman (1963) also shows that in many situations, the playing field is not level; the conditions that make individuals into "discredited" persons are historically patterned. But by keeping his analysis of power at the micro-level, Goffman can show how normative hierarchies are reproduced in everyday encounters. He writes: "Together the participants contribute to a single over-all definition of the situation which involves not so much

a real agreement as to what exists but rather a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honored” (1959: 9-10).

Therefore, Goffman provides an expanded sense—in relation to Mead—of the contingency of truth as a social construct. In a clear reference to James and Dewey, Goffman writes: “In any case, in so far as the others act *as if* the individuals had conveyed a particular impression, we may take a functional or pragmatic view and say that the individual has ‘effectively’ projected a given definition of the situation and ‘effectively’ fostered the understanding that a given state of affairs obtains” (1959: 6). For Goffman, the potential for disruption is the most important sociological issue in interaction: “We will want to know what kind of impression of reality can shatter the fostered impression of reality, and what reality really is can be left to other students” (1959: 66).

Goffman takes James’s and Mead’s lead in treating the self as a “dramatic effect” of social interaction. In fact, he appropriates James’s “hook” metaphor for a self that is contingent, yet durable:

In analyzing the self we are drawn from its possessor, from the person who will profit or lose most by it, for he and his body merely provide the peg on which something of collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time. And the means for producing and maintaining selves do not reside inside the peg; in fact these means are often bolted down in social establishments. (1959: 253)

One implication of this model of the self is the skill required to manage self-image in various contexts. On the “moral career” of a stigmatized person, Goffman writes: “if role and audience segregation is well managed, he can quite handily sustain different selves and can to a degree claim to be no longer something he was” (1963: 63). Moreover, Goffman writes that stigma is a nearly universal phenomenon, not a particular experience of certain classes of failed persons.

[I]n an important sense, there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant married father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports.... Any male who fails to qualify in any of these ways is likely to view himself—during moments at least—as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior. (1963: 128)

Yet Goffman also shows that the person's ability to manage self-image in this way is often limited in social life.

Goffman makes a stronger statement about personal contingency by showing that in “total institutions” like a mental hospital, social relations are structured in ways that require systematic “curtailment of self” (1961: 14). Upon entering such an institution, a patient's status changes irrevocably; he becomes a failed person who must rebuild a sense of self that is in keeping with institutional imperatives. In other words, in such places the patient lacks control over his situation in a formal sense—but what interests Goffman is the ways in which he maintains and rebuilds his sense of self in resistance to the sheer force of the institution. “Our sense of being a *person* can come from being drawn into a wider social unit,” he writes, whereas “our sense of *selfhood* can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks” (ibid: 320, emphasis added). Among the evidence that Goffman provides for this effect are “secondary adjustments,” exertions of control over one's own personal space, possessions, and appearance, that occur in the “cracks” in institutional surveillance. He also extends the analogy to all institutional settings in social life. If “every institution has encompassing tendencies” (1961: 4) then it may be *against* these tendencies that we act in order to shore up at least some valued aspects of personal identity.

Goffman's analysis of micro-social practices within institutions also highlights discourses of power that structure them. Each type of institution offers a “theory of human nature” that

corresponds to its purposes (1961: 89); in mental hospitals, this is provided by psychiatric doctrine. The logic of behavioral and medical treatment provides the rationale for the management and surveillance of patients' everyday lives. Yet Goffman finds a fundamental rupture between this rationale and the way things actually work in practice. "In the main," he writes, "state psychiatric hospitals do not function on the basis of psychiatric doctrine, but in terms of a 'ward system'" (ibid: 206). Thus it is to the latter system—the movement (and threat of movement) of inmates between wards, each of which has a different level of scrutiny and freedom attached to it—that Goffman looks to study the "conception of the actor" and "assumptions about identity" that the institution generates (ibid: 186).

In conclusion, Goffman makes several important pragmatist gestures but uses these to pursue studies that take the situation rather than the individual as the unit of analysis. His work continues pragmatism's legacy of relational truth and the contingent yet durable self. But Goffman emphasizes the power differentials found within situations, such that participants must develop their skills of impression management. His work has a dark, conflictual edge not found in pragmatism and contradictory to Dewey's spirit of social hope. To Goffman, individuals are not struggling against the imposition of norms, but rather struggling to conform to them. In this vision of social life, we are all active participants in our own domination.

III. BOURDIEU

Bourdieu's work, like Goffman's, contains important pragmatist tendencies. Like Goffman, Bourdieu applies these tendencies to broader realm of social analysis; whereas Goffman moved from individual to situation, Bourdieu looks at society as a whole, uniting micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of analysis. Like Goffman, Bourdieu highlights the work that actors do to reproduce domination—but he provides a much more substantial analysis of what that

domination consists of. In this section of the paper, I introduce several of Bourdieu's central concepts and themes, followed by analysis of Bourdieu in relation to pragmatism and then in relation to Goffman.

A. Review of key terms. *Habitus* is Bourdieu's conceptualization for the process through which individuals are constituted in relation to the objective forces of social life. Bourdieu defines habitus as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions," which are "regular" without being overly regulated, "adapted" to goals without being "predetermined," and "collectively orchestrated" while lacking a conductor (1977: 72). Habitus is similar among the members of a group that shares a historic trajectory and material conditions in common (ibid: 80). The groups in question vary by the nature of the empirical project at hand, from the Kabyle extended family in rural Algeria (1977) to class fractions in France (1984). Habitus organizes the activity of the body as well as that of the mind; Bourdieu often refers to the "feel for the game" or "practical sense" linking habitus to a particular field of social practice (e.g., 1990: 66). It represents an internalization of social order that is specific to one's time and place, a practical definition of how the world works and how one is to work in the world as a social actor. Yet the use of the words ordered, structured, and regular should not lead one to assume that social relations are determined; Bourdieu repeatedly speaks of practice as "improvisation" (e.g., 1977: 171).

Fields are domains of social life in which habitus become practicable. And like habitus, fields refer to "bundles of relations": "A field consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital), while habitus consists of a set of historical relations 'deposited' within individual bodies in the form of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation, and action" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 16). A constant comparison is to "battlefield," a "space of conflict and competition... in which

participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it,” to use the rules to one’s advantage and to be able to set the rules to maintain one’s advantage (ibid: 17). The competitive nature of field is reminiscent of Goffman’s situation, however Bourdieu’s concept applies more broadly to a web of interpersonal and institutional relations that are patterned and predictable over time.

Finally, *capital* refers to the “species” of valued assets through which the competitive struggles within fields are played out. While economic capital is one notable variety, Bourdieu also names honor as a form of symbolic capital informing the logic of many Kabyle practices, including matrimony. Economic metaphors follow Bourdieu’s use of the term into all applications: for example, “symbolic capital is credit,” which can be stored up and used strategically to position the individual and his group favorably in relation to others (1977: 181). Yet the relationship between economic and symbolic capital is no mere metaphor, as they operate simultaneously and are often mutually transposable. Moreover, the symbolic can be considered a “misrecognized” form of the economic, which Bourdieu considers to be the historical determinant above all. He writes: “Symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby *disguised* form of physical ‘economic’ capital, produces its proper effects inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in ‘material’ forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects” (ibid: 183, emphasis in original). The same can be said of cultural capital in modern France, where participants—with varying degrees of skill—jockey for position within a social order that is objectively defined according to one’s relative class position and trajectory.

B. Bourdieu and American pragmatism. In reading Bourdieu with an eye to pragmatism, the first clue is rhetorical: Bourdieu tends to define his key concepts in terms of

their function rather than essence—what it *does* rather than what it *is*. For example: “Each field (religious, scientific, economic, etc.)... offers to agents a legitimate form of realizing their desires” (1996: 228); and habitus is defined as “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (1977: 72). Although Bourdieu himself has said that he was unfamiliar with pragmatism until late in his career, he writes that he found the “affinities and convergences” to his own work to be “quite striking” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 122). Bourdieu shares with the pragmatists a commitment to breaking down time-honored dualisms of social science, such as objectivity/subjectivity and theory/practice. Yet Bourdieu’s research takes him into empirical realms that far exceed what the pragmatists were trying to do; for example, his use of field to ground the flow of capital emphasizes the political, material, and historic, versus pragmatists’ interests in cognition, the self, and ethical conduct.

The key substantive point of continuity between Bourdieu and pragmatism may be the centrality of the notions of *habit* and *habitus*. Both of these concepts capture a sense of inertia operating throughout the individual’s relationship to the social environment, and both reflect the biographical experience of training. Bourdieu, like James, discusses the conditions under which new information becomes incorporated as being one of continuity with what one already “knows” (that is, takes for granted) about oneself and the world. Pragmatist habit is, like habitus, an unconscious pattern of embodied dispositions. To break a habit takes deliberate and sustained effort, while departing from (or even viewing self-reflexively) the habitus of one’s group may be impossible. Yet Bourdieu shares with Mead an interest in emergence—the possibility of creative, unscripted thought and action. “We are not simply bound by the community,” writes Mead, but are “engaged in a conversation” with it (1934: 168); constant change is the norm. Bourdieu

repeatedly emphasizes that “practical knowledge” necessarily involves improvisation. Tradition and ritual regulate practice; they do not determine it (Bourdieu 1977: 21).

The most important difference between the pragmatist habit and Bourdieu’s habitus is the latter’s origin in the material and historic conditions of the social group in question, and its members’ locations vis-à-vis particular fields of practice. Indeed, the very group-ness of habitus is a feature not generally found in the more monistic pragmatist habit. Dewey is the pragmatist whose concern with the rapid changes in American society is most pronounced—changes that he links to the need for ideological intervention. Yet his account of social change lacks the systematic attention to social structures and the perpetuation of hierarchies of domination that animate Bourdieu’s work.

C. Bourdieu and Goffman. There are several substantive areas in which the work of Goffman and Bourdieu appears to converge. Bourdieu creates an important place for embodied practices, as Goffman does with impression management and secondary adjustments. We have already seen how both connect these practices to contests over status and honor—Goffman in situations, and Bourdieu in fields—yet these are very different contests. Goffman’s situation exists in an indeterminate relationship to history and any broader, structural domains of social life. The situation has its own logic, but that logic is invariant in the abstraction of dramaturgical analysis. When he looks at the quest for renewed moral status that patients undertake in *Asylums*, the situations themselves—like actor’s behavior and their sense of self—are constrained by institutional logic. Yet whereas Bourdieu devotes extensive effort to explaining field formation (e.g. Bourdieu 1996), tracing the socio-historic origins of the institution is not Goffman’s concern. Both address taken-for-granted minutiae; however, their self-evidence in Goffman’s account is not linked as clearly to the rest of the conceptual scaffold, as is Bourdieu’s *doxa*.

Most importantly, while Goffman makes the important distinction between institutional practice versus the logic of psychiatric treatment, Bourdieu gives a sense of how the conflict between the two could be examined more systematically. For example, the regimentation of time is an important function of the mental hospital, and an intriguing parallel to Bourdieu's discussion of the daily and seasonal routines of the Kabyle. To use Bourdieu's language, the schedule of activities in the hospital follows the "structuring principles" of the ward system. Goffman locates the practice-logic rupture in the misapplication of a service model (with its roles of server and served) to the medicalized psychiatric institution. He diagnoses participants' inability to see that "this individual-oriented service framework is not the only one that medical action fits into" (1961: 348). Goffman, therefore, explores the resulting conflict in the personal experience of staff members, rather than as a form of misrecognition inherent to the causal relationship between material and symbolic structures.

As a result of Goffman's focus on the micro-social, his use of history—such as with the "moral career"—stays on the personal level, closer to Mead than to Bourdieu. This focus does allow Goffman to observe such phenomena as secondary adjustments, one of the innovations for which Bourdieu (1983) gives Goffman credit. With the practices of "make-do," Goffman shows how mental patients gently resist the "encompassing tendencies" of the institution, asserting their individuality and self-worth. Looking at secondary adjustments through Bourdieu's analysis of ritual suggests further agreement between the two on this point. Bourdieu writes: "Understanding ritual practice is not a question of decoding the internal logic of a symbolism but of restoring its practical necessity by relating it to the real conditions of its genesis, that is, to the conditions in which its functions, and the means it uses to attain them, are defined (1977: 114). He continues: "Rites take place because and only because they find their *raison d'être* in the conditions of

existence and the dispositions of agents who cannot afford the luxury of logical speculation, mystical effusions, or metaphysical anxiety” (ibid: 115). If one interprets Goffman’s discussion of secondary adjustments as operating within a moral economy in which the logic of petty freedoms is superimposed upon a hidden theory of personhood, this may be another occasion in which Goffman is prescient of Bourdieu.

It is also intriguing to note that Goffman’s mental patients are making these adjustments as a subtle but active force of resistance against institutional authority—a feature of social life not found in Bourdieu’s tightly structured analysis of Kabyle life. The closest parallel may be to Bourdieu’s subsequent analysis of the practices of cultural distinction, in which individuals attempt to stand out and stand above the crowd by displaying cultural competence (Bourdieu 1984). But again, Bourdieu interprets such efforts as misrecognized reproductions of historic class or group relations—whereas the status of Goffman’s actors remains an affair of the individual within a micro-social context. Due to the misrecognition that is always attendant to actors’ attempts to reproduce their own place in “social space,” Bourdieu’s actors are themselves deceived by the true nature of their own motivations. The only advantage of those who are in a superior position in a class structure is the greater likelihood that they will have—and use—the skills needed to manipulate events in their favor.

In this section I have shown how Bourdieu’s theory of practice continues certain tendencies found within pragmatism and the work of Goffman, while using a more sweeping analysis of social life and maintaining a constant referent point in material relations. *Habitus* is much like pragmatist habit, but is defined as much by its group-ness as by its identification with unique individuals. Bourdieu follows Goffman’s image of inherently conflictual sociality, but connects this conflict to what he considers the objective features of the society in question: class

struggle misrecognized as classification struggle. An important point of departure concerns the nature of the self. Bourdieu avoids this term, emphasizing instead the corporeality of the habitus. Habitus also lacks the contingency of the pragmatist self; once formed, the habitus, like organically-channeled habit, is hard to break. The attendant limitations that Bourdieu's theory places on agents' reflexivity make these comparisons especially fruitful—and it is to those questions that the final part of the paper will turn.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR POST-BOURDIEUSIAN PRACTICE THEORY

The work that is traced here in only the lightest sketch covers a 100-year period that saw the growth, crystallization, and fragmentation of sociology as an international academic discipline. The contribution of pragmatism to that development has been overshadowed, in part due to the falling out of vogue of some of the school's strongest sociological adherents, such as the Chicago School and symbolic interactionism. Revealing the commonalities between Goffman, Bourdieu, and the pragmatists suggests how these ideas live on, in conceptual inheritance as well as in style. These continuities are particularly useful now that the powerful influence of Bourdieu on American sociology has reached its maturity. Tracing the pragmatist heritage through Goffman helps us understand two key points in Bourdieu's theory: the non-consciousness of habitual action and the one-dimensionality of agents' motivations as generated by the habitus.

For some commentators, the ability of the habitus to generate dispositions in a non-conscious way is a source of strength in Bourdieu's theory. The philosopher Charles Taylor (1993) speaks of the habitus as a promising development in "embodied understanding." Taylor writes that the background in which an action is formed is more important than conscious deliberation to understanding motivation. In everyday social life—albeit less so in institutions—the rules go without saying. Indeed, Taylor follows Wittgenstein in arguing that "the subject not

only isn't but *couldn't* be aware of a whole host of issues which nevertheless have a direct bearing on the correct application of a rule" (1993: 45, emphasis in original). If we understood what the rule was really asking, in other words, it would be impossible to follow it. Thus Taylor embraces the corporeality of the habitus while indirectly approving of Bourdieu's misrecognition.

What Taylor takes to be a strength of Bourdieu's theory strikes other commentators as a limitation (e.g. Cicourel 1993), in that the mainly non-conscious genesis of dispositions in the habitus excessively limits actors' conscious manipulation of self and situation. It is the groupness of habitus—the fact that it organizes the practices of similarly located individuals in ways that are patterned and predictable—that makes Bourdieu's theory so instructive of the perpetuation of hierarchies of domination. But at the individual level, expression, creativity, and uniqueness appear stifled. Recall that for James, Thought is the key to understanding the consistency of self over time. Above a rushing torrent of experience and information, the "rainbow" of self-conscious reflection remains. James and Goffman find individual uniqueness to be rooted, however contingently, in the "hook" or "peg" that is self-awareness. For Bourdieu, personal uniqueness—the individualized habitus—results simply from the impossibility of inheriting identical histories and experiencing identical fields. While this form of durability may be well-suited to an analysis of early-life training such as education, the habitus, once formed, seems to lack the significant mutability found in such concepts as "secondary socialization" (Berger and Luckmann 1966). In short, Bourdieu lacks pragmatism's emphasis on the mutual constitution of agents and environments due to the underdevelopment of his notion of improvisation.

That Bourdieu's agents lack the resources for meaningful resistance to social expectations is further demonstrated by the comparison to Goffman. Recall that when there is a gap between institutional practice and a governing discourse, mental patients fill that gap by asserting their individuality with "make-do's." Where Goffman emphasizes the creative tension between the expectation and one's follow-through—following Mead's I/me binary—Bourdieu emphasizes inculcation. His is a theory of social reproduction rather than of individual experience; the durability of subjects' internality rather than its contingency and constant re-creation are the focus. The dispositions that the habitus generates cause the actor to follow an already-written script; despite Bourdieu's repeated call for improvisation, it is unclear why anyone would do so. Doomed to perpetuate the reproduction of forms of capital that are valued in specific contexts—and yet misrecognized as such—we are active players in the game of social life who cannot fully understand the rules, nor agree to change the rules.

This discussion prompts the question of how to work in a pragmatic tradition that respects the gains of Bourdieu's theory while retaining a unique and resourceful self. A potential example comes from Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (2006), who study the ways in which people solve disputes over meaning. They find that in specific situations, we draw on multiple vocabularies of worth in order to be persuasive. Boltanski and Thévenot endorse the competitive nature of Bourdieu's fields—but they also "relativize" the habitus (Dosse 1999: 160) by demonstrating that shared meaning requires multiple "orders of worth" to operate simultaneously. For Bourdieu, in contrast, the order of worth is tagged to the field in question; only one will justify agents' and groups' attempts to accumulate capital. Influenced directly by Goffman, Boltanski and Thévenot make room for meaningful resistance and greater reflexivity—both of which are achieved in the enactment of moral traditions—yet their orders of worth

supersede the situations in which they are enacted. Thus Boltanski and Thévenot provide but one example of a practice theory that restores agents' sense of purpose. They find room for the dignity of interpersonal meaning-making at the micro-level while acknowledging the ways in which structural contexts and imperatives shape how this is done.

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