

**Power, Social Media, Social Movements:
A Bourdieuan Path to Discovering the Power of Social Movements
Within the Space of Social Media**

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Abstract

Communication technologies in the 21st century have changed how social movements have been able to develop, organize and mobilize. Social media has become a space where these social groups can acquire power, enabling them to increase the social status of an ideology. This paper will show how and when social movements can gain power within social media by using Bourdieu's concepts of power and practice. The development of communication technology, the socialization of social media and the transference of social and cultural identity into the space will show how Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* shapes our approach to social media and allows social movements to form within it. Social movements can accrue power through Bourdieu's concept of *social* and *symbolic capital*. They can acquire *social capital* by using collective ideology to attract followers. Social movements can also use *misrecognition*, symbolic language and their ability to distance themselves from a negatively perceived social norm to accrue *symbolic capital*. The accrued *capital* allows the social movement to gain recognition and legitimation, which in turn increases their social standing within a *field*. Bourdieu's concept of *field*, in this case represented by the socially structured space within social media, is made possible by the inherent characteristics of the space; its capacity to reproduce social structures and function as a space where social movements can strive to increase their social standing and the status of an ideology through acquired capital. These elements will demonstrate how and when social movements can acquire power within the space of social media. Furthermore, this paper will go beyond Bourdieu's definitions of *habitus*, *capital* and *field* by exploring the limits of each concept in relation to social media, the transference of identity from the 'real' embodied realm to the 'virtual' disembodied realm, and

a social movement's ability to use accrued power to mobilize action outside of the *field* of social media.

Introduction

When we use terms like, 'tweet', 'wall' and 'chat', we are referring to forms of cyber communication that are engrained in our language and society. When millions of individuals use social media platforms to communicate ideas and establish networks with an ideological focus, we start to see the power of networks transcending borders. When social media can be used to organize a protest, facilitate an uprising, or as a space where terrorist organizations can propagate ideas, they can become a powerful tool and space for social movements.

Technology, the Internet and social media platforms have created a new space where power can be harnessed to increase a group's social status and ideology. Individuals are connected to the world through a system of linkages that extend widely, and are hosted by mediums where ideas and information can seek refuge, be developed and propagated. The integration of social media platforms into our everyday lives has effected how we act as social agents. In a digital age where we can 'follow' people on Twitter, 'like' an idea on Facebook, and have online conversations via third party hosts; a space where ideas can gain power emerges. Within this space social movements have been able to gain momentum, creating an opportunity for the concentration of power.

This paper will attempt to reveal the conditions that lead to how and when social movements gain power within social media using Bourdieu's concepts of power and practice as a theoretical base. According to Bourdieu, a practice is defined by the *habitus* and *capital* in effect within a certain *field*.¹ Bourdieu's habitus is the foundation of all practices, whereby practices are determined by the social structures in which they were formed. Habitus shows how individual action is based on primary socialization. It demonstrates why individuals act a

certain way within a society by looking at the link between agents and structures. Capital is a valued resource that can come in the form of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. Bourdieu's concept of capital functions as the power that a social agent can acquire to increase their position within a specific *field*. Field is a structured social space where habitus and specific capital are relevant. It is formed through socially structured relations of power, struggles to acquire power and principles associated with the field that are given (accepted prescriptions).² Bourdieu suggests that this formula can demonstrate how power can accumulate in a structured social space. This paper will apply Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field, to social media by looking at the power that can be accrued by social movements. Before exploring the key aspects of Bourdieu's concept of habitus it is important to look at the development and effect of internet technology and current forms of social relationships in an age where social media has become an integral form of communication. Habitus and its use by social movements within social media becomes relevant when we examine the socialization of social media and the transference of social and cultural identity into social media. Two forms of capital can be accrued by social movements within social media. Bourdieu's concept of social capital is valued by social movements as a networking tool that helps increase a movement's number of followers. An increase in social capital is facilitated by a social movement's ability to promote a collective ideology that appeals to individuals, resulting in increased recognition. Bourdieu's symbolic capital legitimizes the rhetoric and actions of the social movement. Within social media, symbolic capital becomes relevant through *misrecognition*, symbolic language, and a social movement's ability to distinguish itself as separate from a perceived oppressive social norm. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital become pertinent within the field of

social media, which functions as a structured social space with its own rules. The field of social media and the space it occupies provides the ideal social arena whereby social agents can circulate, produce and exchange information which can result in the accumulation of acquired capital. By looking at the inherent characteristics of the space within social media, as a network that connects people transnationally and allows them to share or disseminate information, its capacity to reproduce social structures, its value as a relatively ungoverned space, and its function as a space where there is a struggle for power in an attempt to acquire capital, social media becomes a highly valued space where social movements can gain power. Although Bourdieu does not directly address the interactivity between fields, in the case of social media the product of the power which is accumulated within the field can also be used to mobilise action outside of the field. This relationship between 'virtual' and 'real' spaces highlights a unique product of the power that can develop within social media.

This paper will discuss how and when social movements can acquire power within social media. The crucial interrelationship between habitus, capital and field will situate and illuminate the power that social movements can acquire within this space.

Theories of Power and Practice

Understanding how social groups acquire power within social media is important in a world where cyber technology and the social spaces within it are expanding. As social media is a relatively new, transnational social space, with growing popularity amongst individuals, exploring the conditions where power can develop provides new insights into power relations in the 'virtual' world that in turn affect the 'real' world. Determining the types of power that social movements can accrue within this space sheds light on the social progression of resistance groups in the modern age.

Power is defined in various terms, and has been explored by numerous social theorists. A ubiquitous definition of power comes from Weber, as he states that power "...is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests."³ Weber's description of power also focuses on modes of domination, whereby domination "...is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons."⁴ Weber's concept of power and practice in the "Political Economy of Religion" is the foundation for Bourdieu's sociology of culture; however, Bourdieu expands the model to include cultural and social relations.⁵ When exploring the power of social movements within social media, cultural and social relations of power become central to the analysis. Bourdieu also uses Weber's model of ideal goods and interests and expands it to encompass both material and symbolic practices allowing Bourdieu to develop concepts like cultural capital.⁶ As outlined by Swartz, Bourdieu's approach "...includes a political vision that is more egalitarian and socialist in orientation than that of Weber."⁷ This allows Bourdieu's approach to focus on

the egalitarian social relations as well as hierarchical relations. Foucault approaches power in terms of social life, rather than in terms of discourse, highlighting that power is 'cognitively and bodily' embedded in cultural practices.⁸ Bourdieu shares Foucault's concept of power, but elaborates on how power becomes embedded in culture with his conceptualization of different forms of capital resources working within a field.⁹ This gives Bourdieu the ability to explore valued resources such as social and symbolic capital, which go beyond the traditional forms of resources. Bourdieu also adapts Marx's sociology of reproduction, but he does not limit class and power to positions within social relations, rather he adapts it to encompass 'conditions of existence', for example; education, age, status and notions like false consciousness in the form of *misrecognition*.¹⁰ Bourdieu's concept of field can also be seen as a bridge between Marx's notion of superstructure and infrastructure, whereby "Bourdieu conceptualizes the social world as a series of relatively autonomous but structurally homologous fields of production, circulation, and consumption of various forms of cultural and material resources."¹¹ Furthermore, Bourdieu expands on Durkheim's notion of knowledge and social perception regarding the 'social origin of schemes of thought, perception, appreciation and action' by looking at the function of differentiation as well as integration in terms of classification systems relating to logical and social integration.¹² As social movements often represent an ideology that differentiates themselves from a negatively perceived social norm, Bourdieu's expansion of Durkheim's concepts are valuable when exploring the power of social movements within social media.

The foundation for Bourdieu's theoretical approach to sociological inquiry, power and practice is derived from these social theorists (amongst others); however, his approach expands

on each of their theories and remodels them into the elements that shape habitus, capital and field. These elements provide an effective overarching framework that encompasses history, experience, social and cultural relations, capital that constitutes more than just material value, and an arena where social agents produce and circulate valued 'goods' to acquire power. As a result, Bourdieu's framework is valuable when exploring the power of social movements within the space of social media.

An alternate theory to Bourdieu's power and practice is one that Barnett and Duvall call the taxonomy of power. They argue that "Power is the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate."¹³ Barnett and Duvall state that power operates in social relations of interaction or constitution, which produce direct or indirect forms of power. These forms of power are defined as: compulsory (direct control), institutional (indirect control through diffuse relations of interaction), structural (direct structural relations), and productive (socially diffuse production of subjectivity in systems of meaning and signification).¹⁴ Barnett and Duvall's approach to power is similar to Bourdieu's in that it focuses on direct and indirect social relations as well as systems of meaning; however, Bourdieu's framework becomes more valuable as more dimensions and concepts are added to the analysis. According to Guzzini, Barnett and Duvall provide a non-explanatory taxonomy that solely identifies classifications of power whereas Bourdieu focuses on the relationship between different concepts, providing a better tool for analysis.¹⁵ The relationship between habitus, social capital, symbolic capital, *misrecognition* and field provide a more analytical approach to the conditions under which power can develop and be manipulated. Furthermore, Bourdieu's concepts of power and

practice are valuable because they are intertwined with prescribed social structures that establish a base that give rise to divisions of power within society. This becomes important when determining how social movements can acquire power as they often disseminate an ideology that is based on social divisions. This base, along with a delimited social structure and the opportunity to gain power through valued capital, is a methodology that has a three dimensional approach to power and practice.

Bourdieu's theories encompass the necessary elements to discovering how and when power can develop within social media. Other notions of power and practice do not encompass or extend to different forms of capital, integrated social and cultural relations, multiple classification systems or distinctive practices operating within a field. Although Bourdieu has been criticised on aspects of his approach (which will be explored throughout this paper), his theories provide a concrete base for analyzing and exploring power and practice, and provide a multi-faceted framework that looks at interdisciplinary social relations within a structured social space. Thus, for the purposes of this paper Bourdieu's concepts of power and practice will be used as the primary source for determining how and when social movements can acquire power within social media.

Habitus: The Social Structures within Social Media

Bourdieu's habitus can be defined as the foundation of all practices; "...a system of durable and transposable dispositions...integrating all past experiences..."¹⁶ Past experiences, practices and social structures establish and demonstrate how individuals or groups act within a society. This is the idea that "...practices [are] patterned after the social structures that spawned them..."¹⁷ Habitus is an essential component to Bourdieu's formula for determining how social power can develop in a field. Although Bourdieu does not directly explore the relationship between technology, 'virtual' spaces and habitus, the following paragraphs attempt to show that in the case of 'two-way', interactive technology, such as social media, Bourdieu's theories become crucial for identifying elements of habitus associated with 'virtual' spaces. In applying the concept of habitus as a foundation for how social movements can gain power within social media, it is first necessary to look at the development of internet technology and social media platforms and their integration into the everyday social lives of individuals around the world. As social media has become a central aspect of our communication norms, elements of habitus have taken form within the space. By looking at the socialization of the space within social media and the transference of social and cultural identity into social media, Bourdieu's habitus establishes a foundation for showing how social movements can use this habitual space to propagate ideas and gain power.

In the past one hundred years communication in the modern world has rapidly transformed. From the creation of the telephone, to the social spaces we occupy online, the way we communicate is intertwined with technology. Our relationship with social media has developed over the past fifteen years to a point where this communication technology is

embedded in our everyday lives and social norms. Code highlights that, “Over the past decade, the proliferation and use of social networking in mainstream society has grown exponentially.”¹⁸ A move from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 instigated this notable change in the social dimension of communication. Davidson states that “Web 2.0 described not only the new set of tools but also the new relationships between producers and consumers of those tools. In its most idealistic manifestation, Web 2.0 is best defined by interactivity and user participation...”¹⁹ User participation on the Internet and within social media platforms is a direct indicator as to how these platforms play a role in our everyday lives. Statistics show that the number of users on the Internet has gone from 360,985,492 in 2000 to 2,405,518,376 in 2012.²⁰ Furthermore, social media platforms like Facebook have over 835 million users.²¹ As social media platforms expand and user participation increases, they are becoming increasingly essential to our actions as social agents, making social media platforms central to communication and social interaction in the modern age. Although, individuals have different levels of participation rates and online activity is more common amongst younger people, the fact that millions of people participate in social media in order to socially interact demonstrates that it is becoming part of our habitual social behaviour and thus the space within it is susceptible to becoming associated with our engrained social habitus.

We can see social media becoming a central communication tool as people use newly formed language that is associated with social media in everyday life. According to Hanks “People construct the social world using language; they deliberately and continually formulate reality through reference, description, and a variety of other speech functions.”²² In 2013 the social media definition of the word ‘Tweet’ was added to the oxford dictionary. Furthermore,

various words that individuals use in everyday language are synonymous with social media platforms, words like 'wall', 'like', 'chat', 'blog', 'poke', 'pin', 'tag', etc. The language used in the modern age reflects how social media has come to be integrated in our everyday lives and central to society's social interactions.

Social media has also become an integral communication tool in the 21st century because of the expansion and increased accessibility to the Internet and the technologies within it. Dartnell highlights that the Internet "...is an environment that provides interactivity, synchronicity, flexibility, affordability, and availability to a...population."²³ Furthermore, the increase in technological software and hardware development and the decrease in monetary cost of technology has resulted in the widespread accessibility of digital communication devices (i.e. computers, mobile phones, tablets, etc.). The growth in the number of broadband towers and increased WiFi accessibility means that the Internet and social media platforms can extend globally. Although, social media is a valuable communication tool, social interaction is not confined to operating within this space. This affects levels of participation within the space; however, this does not diminish its importance as a tool for social interaction to those who operate within social media. These added features establish a space for social relations to flourish, allowing social media to become a social communication norm.

The way we approach the Internet and social media platforms is part of our social fluency, as it is engrained in us, as social beings, to actively seek and participate in social arenas. This instinctive desire to communicate creates a will to find better means to communicate. In turn, the methods that we use to communicate shape how we act as social agents and affect our social norms. The relationship between social beings and the technology we use to

communicate in the modern age has created a space where practices and structures can unite. This occurs because a space like social media that hosts social interaction comes to possess a social structure as more and more individuals project their social identity into the space.

The fact that the Internet and social media platforms facilitate our social relations and are accepted means of communication is essential to understanding social media in relation to habitus. The use, development and integration of social media as a tool for social interaction has facilitated the socialization of the space within social media. Within this space, habitus can develop and take form. According to Navarro, "Habitus is especially developed through processes of socialisation and determines a wide range of dispositions that shape individuals in a given society."²⁴ Socialization is a process whereby individuals within a society adapt to the norms, values and behaviour of the society in relation to their social position. According to Bourdieu, "Habitus emerges through primary socialization from a practical evaluation of the likelihood of the success of a given action in a given situation..."²⁵ This is the idea that a social actor (starting from infancy) adapts to norms, values and behaviours as they develop within society, and that "Dispositions incline the actor towards one or another practice, which will only be effected in a dialectic with the position that the individual occupies in the field."²⁶ The space within social media is susceptible to socialization as individuals regard the space as essential to social identification and expression; and as linguistic habitus and social structures are reproduced within it.

According to Code, "The Internet has played, and continues to play, an important role in...social identification, as it allows individuals to explore their values and beliefs within any number of social contexts easily and virtually. Social media – represented by online games,

social networking sites, and virtual communities – are critical contexts for socialization and identification experiences.”²⁷ The common use of the Internet and social media platforms has created a space where individuals feel comfortable to socially interact. Code highlights that “Social media enables identity expression, exploration, and experimentation; something innate to the human experience.”²⁸ As social media acts as a tool which enables individual expression, individuals project their identity into social media and seek to further develop it within the space by participating in online communities. Social movements use individual identity expression to their advantage as individuals seek to participate in online communities based on socially engrained identity characteristics.

Language functions as a key tool for social identification within social media. Bourdieu’s perceptions of language are related to social distinctions emphasized within linguistic habitus. Linguistic habitus is “A set of socially constituted dispositions that imply a propensity to speak in certain ways and to utter determinate things (an expressive interest), as well as a competence to speak defined inseparably as the linguistic ability to engender an infinite array of discourses that are grammatically conforming, and as the social ability to adequately utilize this competence in a given situation.”²⁹ Linguistic habitus is evident within social media as individuals use language that reflects their position within society and the social and ideological groups that they are members of. According to Myles, “Bourdieu addresses...language theory by understanding language as just another form of more general social practices of distinction.”³⁰ In the case of social media, the type of language used by social agents within the space, amplifies ideological distinctions related to engrained social characteristics or ‘conditions of existence’. This creates divisions within the space that are determined by an individual’s

socially engrained habitus. Furthermore, individuals use different languages within social media. As a result participation within an online community is determined by the language spoken by an individual, which ultimately unities groups of people who share linguistic characteristics. Bourdieu's concept of linguistic habitus amplifies distinctions within social media and shows how individuals possess socially engrained characteristics based on language. Linguistic characteristics attract individuals to social movements that possess the same characteristics.

The social structures that form within social media develop through online identity exploration, but they are also a product of the social structures that operate outside of the space. Jäkälä and Berki highlight that "To some extent identity in real life and cyber life can be seen as composed of same qualities."³¹ As a result individuals transfer their socially engrained identities into social media creating an opportunity for ideology-based communities to develop. Whether an individual is 'like'-ing an idea, joining a community or commenting on a position that someone else has taken, the reflection of the self is portrayed in the words and actions of individuals within the space. Although one may argue that individuals create fake social media profiles and make untrue statements within the space, one's identity still transfers into the space based on the sites or blogs they go to or the online communities they take part in. As a result, their cultural interests still come across and their participation within the space is still evident. Although Bourdieu does not necessarily discuss the relationship between the 'virtual' disembodied realm and the 'real' embodied realm, aspects of an individual's social characteristics can transfer to and from these realms and influence the social structures within one another. As discussed by Koole and Parchoma, "Just as in the real world, individuals

actively manage online impressions using 'dramaturgical' techniques learned from socialization within communities. Socialization within communities results in its members acquiring a sense of shared history, purpose, norms, hierarchy, ritual belonging, and continuity."³² The dramaturgical approach developed by Goffman consists of technical, structural, political, cultural and dramaturgical perspectives which dictate and facilitate techniques for impressions management.³³ As social media platforms have become a social center for communication in the modern age, an individual will approach the 'virtual' disembodied realm of social media with a type of habitus that is linked to their socially embedded personal characteristics that form in the 'real' embodied world.

Grenfell states that "Habitus links the social and the individual because the experiences of one's life course may be unique in their particular content, but are shared in terms of their structure with others of the same social class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, occupation, nationality, region and so forth."³⁴ These shared social characteristics are reproduced and manifested within social media. The transference of identity into the space may not be a perfect projection of one's identity or of social reality, but still creates a primary social structure within social media which social movements can exploit to distinguish different social stratospheres in order to further their cause. According to Dartnell, nationalism on the web is a "...representation of a network of relations based on a common language, historical experience, religion, and/or culture."³⁵ An individual's projection of identity into the space creates an opportunity for social movements to highlight social differences and increase their number of followers by representing a shared social characteristic. Thus, the importance of one's shared social identity outside the field becomes important within the field of social media. It is

important to note that social actors enter the space with predisposed social positions but have the ability to alter these positions within the space as they are entering a diffused reflection of an external social structure. This highlights that the relationship between the 'real' embodied realm and the 'virtual' disembodied realm may possess different subjectivities based on the inherent characteristics of the 'virtual' space. As social agents have the ability to enter the space anonymously and operate in a diffused social structure, they may not project all of their positional social characteristics. Bourdieu would argue that their predisposed social identity would still be projected into the space based on their linguistic habitus. Furthermore, their inherent social characteristics would lead them to interact within specific online communities. Regardless, the subjectivities related to the 'real' embodied realm differ from those in the 'virtual' disembodied realm, this highlights that not all actions within social media are determined by one's embodied habitus.

Although Bourdieu argues that culture is intertwined with social structures, which is evident in the case of social media, LiPuma argues that only focusing on historically arbitrary influences leaves no room for the exploration of non-positional epistemology. As LiPuma states, "The idea that culture is homologous to social structure and that the contents of the symbolic system are a function of distinction (historically arbitrary) means that there are no forms of knowledge and understanding that are not a product of position and position taking within a social field."³⁶ Although, Bourdieu argues that past experiences and functions of distinction form our habitus, sometimes action is a result of non-positional interest. As social media operates on the Internet, and the Internet is an information reservoir, individuals can explore information that is not related to their engrained social identity and may choose to take part in

online communities that are not representative of their socially engrained characteristics. Although, non-positional interests are evident within social media, as most social movements represent ideologies that are based on socially engrained characteristics, non-positional participation is less likely. Furthermore, the stringency of an ideology-based community becomes important when determining non-positional interest of a social movement. If an individual is part of a strict ideological group they will be less likely to explore other opposing ideological beliefs. If an individual is part of a non-aggressive ideological group they are more likely to explore other ideological associations. In the 'real' world these factors are important; however, the 'virtual' world allows users to explore anonymously, thus individuals might be more likely to explore other ideology-based communities within social media. As a result, non-positional interests may be evident within social media. This highlights that historically arbitrary interests do not always account for the exploratory nature of individual action.

The development of the Internet and the social media platforms that operate within it have become engrained in society, resulting in people approaching social media with a habitual sense of social knowledge and projecting their individual identity into the space. Since the rise of the Internet and social media platforms, it has become acceptable to interact with individuals on the Internet, be part of online communities, and form relationships on the web. As more people operate within the space, more people become comfortable with participating in online social communities. Social movements operate within social media in an attempt to accrue followers by representing an ideology that appeals to an individual's habitus, in a space that has become habitual to users. The socialization of social media and the transference of social identity into the space has shown how Bourdieu's concept of habitus can be applied to

social media. A unique relationship emerges as habitus from the 'real' world is reproduced in the 'virtual' world. Although Bourdieu does not himself explore the significance of 'virtual' spaces and its effect on habitus, there is a link between habitus in the 'virtual' disembodied realm and the 'real' embodied realm; however, the issue of new subjectivities within a 'virtual' disembodied realm highlights a need to further explore the relationship between the two.

Social and Symbolic Capital: Recognition, Legitimacy and Accrued Power

According to Bourdieu, capital can be described as a type of valued resource that can take the form of economic, cultural, social or symbolic capital.³⁷ These forms of capital act as resources which enhance power within a field. Economic capital can come in the form of money or property; cultural capital can be information, knowledge, or educational credentials; social capital can come in the form of acquaintances or networks; and symbolic capital can be legitimation or prestige.³⁸ Bourdieu's concept of social capital and symbolic capital are valued by social movements and highlight the power that can be accrued within social media. Social movements can gain social capital by increasing network connectivity using collective ideology to attract followers. They can also acquire symbolic capital through *misrecognition*, symbolic language and distinguishing themselves from a perceived oppressive social norm. These forms of capital allow social movements to gain power through recognition and legitimation, which in turn increases their social status. It is important to note that Bourdieu's forms of capital are often intertwined and related, and even though this paper only focuses on social and symbolic capital elements of other forms of capital are evident in both.

As access to the Internet increases across the globe, social media platforms have become powerful tools that connect individuals on a transnational scale. Social movements value social media platforms because social capital can be acquired by increasing connectivity and followers which in turn increases their social status. As more followers join the social movement the accumulated recognition legitimizes and reinforces the power of the movement. According to Bourdieu, "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized

relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition-or in other words, to membership in a group-which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital..."³⁹ According to Chesters and Welsh, "Social movements are networks of individuals, groups and organisations involved in complex interactions in real and virtual spaces representing and embodying a variety of causes, ideological positions and expressions of identity."⁴⁰ An online social movement is an ideology-based community connected by a system of virtual linkages allowing the movement to share and disseminate information across time and space. Chesters and Welsh state that "Network nodes denote a particular 'place' – virtual, situated or textual – that performs particularly intense communicative work for a movement."⁴¹ Network nodes can be interpreted as active participants, who form a system of linkages (informational or social) that help increase the connectivity of the movement. Social media provides the ideal space where a movement can increase their network nodes on a transnational scale, which ultimately increases their chances of accruing capital. This is reminiscent of Bourdieu's notion that, "The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent...depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and the volume of the capital...possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected."⁴² As a social movement attracts followers and expands its network, its recognition and power increases. This ultimately attracts even more individuals, which in turn increases the social status of their cause. Chesters and Welsh state that "The denser a network the greater its solidarity and capacity for certain forms of mobilisation."⁴³ This is the idea that if social movements successfully attract numerous individuals, their social capital increases, augmenting their ability to mobilise action, incite change or increase their social standing. Although

Bourdieu would argue that an increase in social capital results in an increase in social position within the space, in the case of social media it also has the potential to mobilise action outside the field.

Chesters and Welsh state that network movements can be catalysed by the availability of computer mediated communication and the use of established information architecture, for example, free software.⁴⁴ The widespread accessibility of social media and the fact that most of the platforms are free, adds to their value as a reservoir for social capital. As a result, social movements are able to expand their network across different countries and various types of people, acquiring more followers and increasing social capital. As the social movement acquires more social capital, a collective ideology becomes a significant mechanism for increasing power.

Collective ideology plays an important role in how and when social movements can acquire social capital. Chesters and Welsh highlight that “Social movements often form around a shared sense of political interests that are associated with experiences derived from a particular aspect of their identity – gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.”⁴⁵ Collective support of an ideology can facilitate a social movement’s ability to acquire power. Social movements acquire social capital by setting forth an ideology that has a common denominator which individuals can often relate to through their habitus. The ideology itself establishes a relational connection between complete strangers, one that may not necessarily occur in spaces other than that of social media. This is a result of the interconnected, transnational nature of social media. According to Gerbaudo, the role of social media in activism “...entails symbolic construction of a *sense of togetherness* and the fuelling of an *emotional tension* extending from

distant mediated connections to the 'effervescence of physical proximity'."⁴⁶ These symbolic relationships are essential to determining when and how social movements acquire power. A social movement's ability to establish a recognized collective ideology with symbolic construction is a powerful mechanism for acquiring social capital within social media. Habitus becomes an important factor for social movements as they tend to attract followers based on a common ideology that is linked to predisposed social characteristics. Although most individuals will choose to join a social movement based on habitus, social media provides a space where the dissemination and exchange of information may push or pull individuals towards ideologies that are not reflected in their habitus. As discussed earlier, Bourdieu does not necessarily focus on the non-positional interests of individuals who may choose to join a network for reasons apart from those outlined by one's habitus. According to Calhoun, Bourdieu "...fails to consider action which is not consciously or unconsciously strategic. He accepts the notion of interest, albeit as part of a "deliberate and provisional reductionism," in order to be able to show that cultural activity is not "disinterested"..."⁴⁷ He "...gives an account of the various socially determined interests people may pursue and the ways in which social structures constrain such action, but not of any internal tendencies of those structures to change in particular directions."⁴⁸ As social media functions as an open resource where individuals have access to an array of information regarding different ideologies and different social movements, individuals may choose to join a social movement for reasons that are not related to their habitus, but that are based on logical or empathetic deductions. Regardless, as mentioned above, more often than not individuals join social movements based on characteristics related to their habitus. The relationship between habitus and a social movement's ability to project a collective ideology

that will attract followers is essential to understanding the social capital that can be accrued by social movements.

Although a social movement expands its network with a collective ideology, it uses elements of symbolic capital to increase recognition and legitimize action and rhetoric. According to Bourdieu, “Symbolic capital is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition.”⁴⁹ When social movements have acquired authority through social and symbolic capital they have the means to impose symbolic power (Bourdieu distinguishes between symbolic capital and symbolic power but often uses them interchangeably as they are interconnected⁵⁰). Swartz states that Bourdieu’s “Symbolic power entails the capacity to impose symbolic meanings and forms as legitimate. It is a capacity to shape perceptions of social reality by imposing cognitive categories through which we understand the social world. It is the capacity to conserve or transform social reality by shaping its representations through inculcating classifications, schema of perceptions that hide or reveal the fundamentally arbitrary character of authority relations of the social order...It is also a constitutive power, formative of social group identities and intergroup relations.”⁵¹ Social movements use notions like *misrecognition*, symbolic language and perceived social divisions to alter perceptions and acquire followers. Furthermore, the power of network leaders to impose these notions is essential to acquiring symbolic capital. According to Gerbaudo, social media platforms and the social movements that operate within them have no ‘absolute’ leader, but ‘soft’ leaders. He argues that social media facilitates “...the rise of complex...or ‘soft’ forms of leadership which exploit the interactive and participatory character of the new communication technologies. Influential Facebook admins and activist tweeps have

played a crucial role in setting the scene for movements' gatherings in public space, by constructing common identifications and accumulating or triggering an emotional impulse towards public assembly."⁵² Gerbaudo regards these individuals as leaders who subscribe to the 'ideology of horizontalism', "...whose scene-setting and scripting work has been decisive in bringing a degree of coherence to people's spontaneous and creative participation in the protest movements."⁵³ These 'soft' leaders have the ability to control and manipulate information in a way that incites participatory reactions with the potential to increase followers and mobilise the network. Although Bourdieu highlights the power of leaders to accrue symbolic capital, he does not explore their potential to mobilize action outside of the field.

When new network nodes (new followers) get farther away from the central nodes (main actors), the central point of an ideology can become diffused. As a result individuals may join the network under false pretenses. Dartnell argues that "...Web activists spread information, attempt to alter perceptions, and embody the complexity of global power."⁵⁴ This diffusion of information lends itself to enhancing the power of the movement through *misrecognition*. For Bourdieu *misrecognition* "...denotes denial of the economic and political interests present in a set of practices."⁵⁵ This is the idea that participants are blind to the objectives and interests of the agents projecting the ideology. Misrecognition can be used by the leaders of social movements to acquire symbolic capital and increase legitimacy by attracting more followers. If we go beyond Bourdieu's concept of *misrecognition* the information within social media has the potential to be misconstrued on a more basic level. According to Jones, "...the context in which a reader finds a particular text can be divorced from the context for which the author originally wrote it. In the case of Twitter, this could take the

form of a user reading a tweet that was part of a larger conversation without the surrounding messages that comprise the whole. While such a situation would not always lead to misunderstanding, it underscores the fact that written communication is subject to decontextualization in a way that oral speech is not..."⁵⁶ This highlights that information that is exchanged within social media has the potential to be misconstrued. This may result in an individual choosing to join a social movement based on a diffused misconstrued ideology that is not necessarily the product of the leader's tactical misrecognition. As a result individuals who are not necessarily part of the social movement are operating within the space under pretexts that are not related to the dominant ideology of the movement. This allows the social movement to increase recognition and legitimacy through falsely acquired symbolic capital. This can increase the social movement's power as more individuals are operating within the space and are participating in the social movement.

Dartnell highlights that "Web activism's power lies in its strongly symbolic, image driven, and representational form along with its claim to provide immediate and authentic information from specific groups."⁵⁷ As a result, language and symbols become a powerful tool within the field of social media. According to Swartz, "...Bourdieu posits that the fundamental logic of symbolic processes and systems, beginning with language itself, is one of establishing difference and distinctions in the form of binary oppositions."⁵⁸ A social movement will use specific language to evoke emotion, amplifying injustices or a negative aspect of their opposition's position, often feeding into an ideology that fits the needs of each individual separately. As outlined by Dartnell, "Social and political movements base their appeals for support and messages to the public in identarian terms. They use symbols to define the lines of

debate and establish boundaries.”⁵⁹ This is a powerful tool for social movements as the language and symbols they use can increase capital, which ultimately legitimizes their cause. A social movement’s ability to signal a compelling ideology to individuals through language and symbols within social media allows for the accumulation of power. Bourdieu would argue that social movements reach out to individuals based on identity characteristics that are a result of their habitus. Although this is true, social movements are also able to attract individuals by situating an ideology in relation to temporal events that are not necessarily related to one’s habitus. Chesters and Welsh argue that “A network actor may be an individual or group that is particularly adept at utilising the communications opportunities of a network to popularise a particular cause or issue, or to facilitate mobilisation of those who might otherwise be socially disconnected.”⁶⁰ Thus, language can draw on contextual meanings rather than only socially structured distinctions. Regardless, identifying group distinctions is a powerful tool for social movements in an attempt to acquire symbolic capital.

Capital can also be regarded as “...a social relation of power that has a differentiating and stratifying effect between individuals and groups.”⁶¹ According to Swartz, “An object becomes a capital when it establishes a social relation of power that differentiates the holder from the nonholder, when it establishes some degree of social closure.”⁶² Social inequalities often play an important role in why individuals choose to be part of a social movement. Whether the factors are political, economic or cultural, the transference of social identity into the field of social media determines the social positions that individuals take within it. This connects individuals with a similar ideology and establishes a divide between social groups that gives rise to social power. According to Chesters and Welsh, there is a tripartite process of

recognition that social movements use to quantify their social position. They identify themselves, their adversaries and a system or structure of power.⁶³ Social movements often acquire legitimacy by characterizing their position based on their distance from the social norm through this process. This often entails representing a social view that opposes a negatively perceived political, cultural or economic status quo. According to Swartz, Bourdieu argues that “Class-boundary institutionalization depends on the relative symbolic power of particular groups to impose as legitimate their vision of the social divisions in society.”⁶⁴ For social movements this is the ability to represent themselves as an escape, outlet or other, by projecting an ideology that differentiates itself from the norm or another social regime. Furthermore, power lies in symbolic systems which “...are classification systems built upon the fundamental logic of inclusion and exclusion.”⁶⁵ Social movements inherently include and exclude depending on the premise of the social ideology, as well as through the internal mechanisms of the social media tool, which allows them to ‘friend’ or ‘unfriend’ other individuals. According to Warburton and Hatzipanagos, “Within digital worlds inclusivity and exclusivity have totally new semantics and terms of definitions with different application tools and membership management.”⁶⁶ This inclusivity and exclusivity is fueled by the projection of social identity into social media.

Valued capital within the space of social media creates an opportunity for social movements to increase power over other social movements, or a perceived socially oppressive regime. Social movements can gain power through social capital by using collective ideology to increase their number of followers. They can also acquire symbolic capital by using misrecognition, symbolic language and distancing themselves from a negatively perceived

social norm to appear legitimate. The acquired social and symbolic capital increases a social movement's recognition and legitimacy, giving it the ability to mobilise, incite change and alter their position in the social order. Bourdieu's concepts of social and symbolic capital demonstrate the types of resources that social movements can accrue in order to enhance their position and power within the field of social media.

Field: The Space within Social Media

The field of social media is a space where social movements can accrue power. The characteristics of the field and the social processes within it are what define it as a structured social space. According to Bourdieu, a field is a social arena or a structured space where specific capital is relevant.⁶⁷ A field is a boundary, and within this boundary actors have set positions as social agents. It is a space where power can accumulate and social movements can increase their social position through acquired capital. According to Kaplan and Haenlein, social media is defined as "...a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological foundation of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content, and the expression of individual and collective agency."⁶⁸ Social media platforms are applications which connect individuals transnationally and operate in cyberspace, a notional space where computer networks function. The spatial situ of social media allows it to possess unique characteristics that enable it to function as a field where power can accumulate. Social movements use the space within social media in order to gain power above other social or political movements. The inherent characteristics of the space as an arena of production, circulation and exchange allow social media to function as a field where social movements can exploit habitus and accrue capital. Furthermore, its capacity to reproduce social structures and act as a space where there is a struggle for power in an attempt to acquire capital allows social movements to increase their social status. These factors make social media an ideal space where social movements can gain power.

The inherent characteristics of social media allow it to function as a delimited social arena/field where public relations can form. Fields function as "...arenas of production,

circulation, appropriation and exchange of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate, exchange, and monopolize these different kinds of capital.”⁶⁹ Social media can be characterized in these exact terms. Social media is like a modern day agora/marketplace where people can exchange information and ideas, where social relationships are formed, and where social and symbolic capital determines hierarchies of power.

Social media is a field that is not territorially bound but can be socially bound through inclusive and exclusive interest-based communities. Bourdieu’s concept of field is a “...network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.).”⁷⁰ The interplay between habitus and field determine positions within the space; however it is also characterized by its own internal history and logic of action.⁷¹ The social structures within this space are initially determined by the projection of one’s social habitus into the space. This makes the space susceptible to amplifying social differences, ultimately creating a basic social structure which is then fuelled by an internal struggle for power. The social structure that forms within the ‘virtual’ disembodied realm is reminiscent of the ‘real’ social world outside of the field, which becomes delimited by the types of capital that can be acquired in the space. Although Bourdieu posits that “...fields are logically structured to a significant extent by their own internal mechanisms and are relatively

autonomous from external domains”⁷², an individual’s culture, class and environment transfers into the field of social media creating social relations that produce the initial relational positions within the field, which then develop through the internal mechanisms of the field itself. As a result there are social structures and relations of power within the space which are accentuated by the mirrored self that individuals project into social media. Once an individual’s identity is projected into the space, the internal mechanism which drives the social structure is dependent on the struggle to acquire capital, power and recognition within the space.

Navarro states that Bourdieu’s “...fields are arenas of struggle for control over valued resources that structure dominant and subordinate positions based on types and amounts of capital and, as a result, it imposes on agents several specific forms of struggle.”⁷³ Social movements acquire social and symbolic capital in order to increase their social position through recognition and legitimacy above other social movements, giving them a voice in the social arena. According to Au, “While all web content may start out on the proverbial “level playing field” where anyone can have a voice, Web 2.0 enables dynamic production of hierarchies of users and content.”⁷⁴ Thus social media facilitates a space where social hierarchies can form, and are dependent on the amount of capital that has been acquired. Social movements struggle to have a voice in the space and use different types of capital to rise to the top of the hierarchy, or maintain power over other social or political movements expressing opposing views. According to Bourdieu, “...a field of power struggles among the holders of different forms of power, a gaming space in which those agents and institutions possessing enough specific capital...to be able to occupy the dominant positions within their respective fields confront each other using strategies aimed at preserving or transforming these relations of power.”⁷⁵ The

struggle of social movements is embodied in their attempt to increase network connections and use language and perception to acquire symbolic capital. The result of acquired capital allows them to be perceived as stronger, larger and legitimate. This ultimately increases their position in the social order as the ideology of the social movement becomes more recognized with increased numbers of followers resulting in the power to incite change. The field of social media can show how power is accrued by social movements as they struggle to become more visible through the production of ideology and dissemination of information. This allows them to acquire more capital, and ultimately acquire power through recognition and legitimacy.

Furthermore, social media is often controlled by third party hosts, usually represented by corporations whose main objective is related to acquiring economic capital from the system's use rather than a social relation of power within it. As a result there is a perceived sense of freedom associated with the space. According to Dartnell, "Web activism centres on producing, providing, and spreading information outside of government control or regulation."⁷⁶ This is made possible by the inherent characteristics of the space as socially structured but with no particular authority except those who acquire capital within the space. Thus the space provides an outlet for social movements to gain power and expand. As Dartnell highlights, "Non-state actors especially benefit from Web access when conditions for open opposition are not available, and, like all political movements, they recognize the power of communication."⁷⁷ This neutral characteristic of the space makes it an ideal place for a social movement, standing in opposition to the status quo, to acquire power.

Although Bourdieu does not directly address the inter-activity between different fields, the field of social media is unique as it can mobilize action outside of the space as well as inside

the space. Hacking, infiltrating or even delegitimizing the social platforms of other social movements or government websites would consist of internal mobilization; organizing riots, public assembly or revolution would consist of external mobilization. Chesters and Welsh argue that "...there has been a significant rise in the importance of 'network movements' as physical mobility and instantaneous electronic communications have transformed the mobilising capacity of social movement actors."⁷⁸ Increased access to social media via mobile devices has also affected the connecting and mobilising power of social movements. Furthermore, multiple social media platforms can be used in conjunction with one another to mobilise action. According to Mason, "Facebook is used to form groups, covert and overt-in order to establish those strong but flexible connections. Twitter is used for real-time organisation and news dissemination, bypassing the cumbersome 'newsgathering' operations of the mainstream media. Youtube and the Twitter-linked photographic sites-Yfrog, Flickr and Twitpic-are used to provide instant evidence of the claims being made. Link-shortners like bit.ly are used to disseminate key articles via Twitter."⁷⁹ Thus, a social movement can use and exploit different social media platforms to acquire the power to mobilize. In this case, social media acts as a tool that mobilizes action outside of the field. According to Gerbaudo, "...social media [platforms] have been chiefly responsible for the construction of a choreography of assembly as a process of symbolic construction of public space which facilitates and guides physical assembling of a highly dispersed and individualised constituency."⁸⁰ This demonstrates that the product of the power produced within social media can incite physical mobilization in the 'real' world.

The inherent characteristics of social media create an environment where habitus and capital can operate. It also provides social movements with a space to that is not territorially

bound allowing them to capitalize resources and increase recognition and legitimacy. Social media possess an initial social structure as a result of the transference of identity into the space. The internal struggle for power within the space creates relations of power that are based on accumulated capital. As social movements increase their capital they increase their social status within the field. This power can also be wielded in a way where it mobilizes movement outside of the field. Furthermore, the fact that social movements view the space as relatively 'ungoverned' or 'free', makes it highly prized by groups who wish to increase their social status. The field of social media provides an environment where social movements can accrue valued capital and increase their social status, which ultimately increases their power.

Conclusion

Communication technologies in the 21st century have changed how social movements have been able to organize, mobilize and gain power. With the development of communication technology and the expansion of information network technology, social movements have come to value social media as a space where they can accrue power. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field show the conditions under which this power can develop. Social media has become part of our habitus as a result of the socialization of the space as well as the transference of social and culture identity into the space. Social movements value habitus because they are able to exploit habitual user activity within the space and attract followers based on shared social characteristics, allowing them to develop ideology-based communities in support of their cause. Bourdieu's forms of capital have highlighted where and when social movements can accrue power. They have been able to accrue social capital by increasing their number of followers by using collective ideology to attract individuals. Social movements have also been able to acquire symbolic capital by using misrecognition, symbolic language and distinguishing themselves from a negatively perceived social norm. Social movements value the capital that can be accrued within social media because it results in increased recognition and legitimacy, which allows the social movement to increase their position in the social order. The field of social media is essential to understanding the space where social movements can exploit habitus and accrue capital. Social media is a structured social space that connects individuals on a transnational scale and is relatively ungoverned. Its capacity to reproduce social structures and function a space where social movements struggle to increase their social standing highlight the 'playing field' where social movements can acquire power. Furthermore,

social movements value the field of social media as it has the capacity to mobilize action in the 'real' world. This unique feature adds to the value of social media as a resource that can increase the power of social movements. Bourdieu's concepts of power and practice effectively reveal the unique power that social movements can acquire within the space of social media; however, the 'virtual' world creates new subjectivities that go beyond Bourdieu's theories highlighting a need to further explore the relationship between the 'virtual' disembodied realm and the 'real' embodied realm.

¹ Navarro, Z. (2006), p. 16

² Pouliot V. & Mérand, F. (2013), p. 30

³ Weber, M. (1978), p. 53

⁴ Weber, M. (1978), p. 53

⁵ Swartz, D. (1997), p. 41

⁶ Swartz, D. (1997), p. 41-42

⁷ Swartz, D. (2013), p. 40

⁸ Swartz, D. (2013), p. 41

⁹ Swartz, D. (2013), p. 41

¹⁰ Swartz, D. (1997), p. 39

¹¹ Swartz, D. (1997), p. 40

¹² Swartz, D. (1997), p. 47-48

¹³ Barnett, M. & Duvall, R. (2005), p. 39

¹⁴ Barnett, M. & Duvall, R. (2005), p. 39, 43

¹⁵ Guzzini, S. (2013), p. 79

¹⁶ Bourdieu, P. (1977), p. 261

¹⁷ Wacquant, L. (2005), p. 317

¹⁸ Code, J. (2013), p. 37

¹⁹ Davidson, C. (2008), p. 709

²⁰ Internet World Stats. (30 June 2012)

²¹ Internet World Stats. (31 March 2012)

²² Hanks, W. (1993), p. 139

²³ Dartnell, M. (2006), p. 6

²⁴ Navarro, Z. (2006), p. 16

²⁵ Bourdieu, P. (1977), p. 77

²⁶ Pouliot V. & Mérand, F. (2013), p. 29

²⁷ Code, J. (2013), p. 40-41 (In reference to Lehdonvirta & Pekka (2011))

²⁸ Code, J. (2013), p. 37

²⁹ Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. (1992), p. 145

³⁰ Myles, J. (1999), p. 884

³¹ Jäkälä, M. & Berki, E. (2013), p. 2

³² Koole, M. & Parchoma, G. (2013), p. 18 (In reference to Lapatdat (2007); Schwier (2007); Rovai (2002))

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- ³³ Goffman, E. (1959) p. 240
³⁴ Grenfell, M. (2008), p. 53
³⁵ Dartnell, M. (2006), p. 32
³⁶ LiPuma, E. (1993), p. 22
³⁷ Navarro, Z. (2006), p. 16
³⁸ Swartz, D. (2013), p. 50 (In reference to Bourdieu (1986); Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992))
³⁹ Bourdieu, P (1986), p.51
⁴⁰ Chesters, G. & Welsh, I. (2011), p. 120
⁴¹ Chesters, G. & Welsh, I. (2011), p. 121
⁴² Bourdieu, P (1986), p.51
⁴³ Chesters, G. & Welsh, I. (2011), p. 121
⁴⁴ Chesters, G. & Welsh, I. (2011), p. 120
⁴⁵ Chesters, G. & Welsh, I. (2011), p. 50
⁴⁶ Gerbaudo, P. (2012), p. 14
⁴⁷ Calhoun, C. (1993), p. 71
⁴⁸ Calhoun, C. (1993), p. 71
⁴⁹ Bourdieu, P. (1989a), p. 23
⁵⁰ Swartz, D. (2013), p. 83
⁵¹ Swartz, D. (2013), p. 83
⁵² Gerbaudo, P. (2012), p. 13
⁵³ Gerbaudo, P. (2012), p. 13
⁵⁴ Dartnell, M. (2006), p. 14
⁵⁵ Swartz, D. (1997), p. 89
⁵⁶ Jones, J. (2012), p. 27
⁵⁷ Dartnell, M. (2006), p. 18-19
⁵⁸ Swartz, D. (1997), p. 84
⁵⁹ Dartnell, M. (2006), p. 33
⁶⁰ Chesters, G. and Welsh, I. (2011), p. 121
⁶¹ Swartz, D. (2013), p. 51
⁶² Swartz, D. (2013), p. 51
⁶³ Chesters, G. and Welsh, I. (2011), p. 50
⁶⁴ Swartz, D. (1997), p. 148
⁶⁵ Swartz, D. (1997), p. 84
⁶⁶ Jäkälä, M. & Berki, E. (2013), p. 2
⁶⁷ Navarro, Z. (2006), p. 18
⁶⁸ Kaplan, A. and Haenlein, M. (2010), p. 61
⁶⁹ Swartz, D. (2013), p. 57
⁷⁰ Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. (1992)
⁷¹ Postone, M. et al. (1993), p. 5
⁷² Navarro, Z. (2006), p. 18
⁷³ Navarro, Z. (2006), p. 18
⁷⁴ Au, V. (2012), p. 202
⁷⁵ Bourdieu, P. (1989b), p. 264
⁷⁶ Dartnell, M. (2006), p. 6
⁷⁷ Dartnell, M. (2006), p. 25
⁷⁸ Chesters, G. & Welsh, I. (2011), p. 1-2
⁷⁹ Mason, P. (2012), p. 75
⁸⁰ Gerbaudo, P. (2012), p. 5

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