Throwing Bricks at a Brick Wall:
The G20 and the antinomies of protest

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> In fact, a given agent's practical relation to the future, which governs his present practice, is defined in the relationship between, on the one hand, his *habitus* with its temporal structures and dispositions towards the future, constituted in the course of a particular relationship to a particular universe of probabilities, and on the other hand a certain state of the chances objectively offered to him by the social world. (Bourdieu, 1980: 64)

Introduction

This paper is part of a larger project geared toward assessing the viability and feasibility of large-scale, social movement-based changes to North American economic and political arrangements. The normative grounding of the project is both a critique of neoliberalism and a concern that decades of neoliberal restructuring and intensification have diminished the viability of large-scale radical projects to reduce or eliminate the inequalities, modes of exploitation and the anti-democratic impulses at neoliberalism's core. In this paper I argue that Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework can be extended to identify and understand instances where relations of domination foreclose the possibility of effective protest. I use the debates about protest tactics at the June 2010 G20 protests in Toronto to illustrate this problem.

The central concern of this paper is to find methodological grounds for arguing that, as neoliberalism deepens and becomes increasingly entrenched, it produces what I call 'political antinomies' for its opponents. In logic, antinomies refer to contradictions between two logically necessary conclusions. In this paper, 'antinomy' refers to the contradictions exposed by the necessary failure of equally plausible but mutually exclusive approaches to protest politics. Mainstream social movement research – particularly McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's 'dynamics of contention' explains social movement outcomes by identifying positive mechanisms, mobilization opportunities and strategies, counter-movements and so on. Using a Bourdieuian analysis, I argue that this research agenda problematically burdens movements with finding the 'right' strategy, where no such strategy exists. Bourdieu's conceptions of *habitus*, social fields and symbolic violence illuminate conditions where a dominated agent's efforts to improve their situation ultimately entails further submission to existing patterns of domination. While Bourdieu was interested in the sociological and psychological effects of these conditions, in this paper I introduce the notion of political antinomies with a view to eventually assessing the political distortions and failures these conditions produce.

Awareness of the existence of political antinomies might encourage movements to reflexively reconcile themselves to doing what they can 'in the meantime' while continuing to seek long-term strategies for evading existing antinomies. Ideally, such reflexivity would help radical activists to better grapple with the beneficial and detrimental aspects of pragmatic, conformist and short-run political strategies. Obviously such debates already take place in most progressive movements, but understanding the close relationship between symbolic power and political impasses would give participants in those debates additional conceptual tools for understanding and evaluating the opportunities available in a given field. For academics, the antinomies I conceptualize could help refocus critical social scientists and intellectual producers on understanding and confronting the absence of 'right' strategies and, further, developing tools for understanding how these antinomies impact current mobilization. The existence of political antinomies also opens up new ground for normative political theory, particularly in terms of how to evaluate dominated political strategies relative to critical accounts of social justice.

I focus on the Toronto G20 protests because debates about forms of protest at the summit brought to the surface the kind of antinomy this paper tries to understand: in the wake of the police response and massive indifference to the protests on the part of G20 leaders, different modes of protest appeared to entail making choices between alternative kinds of inefficacy. Such protests need to be situated within a broader struggle against neoliberalism, which includes other sites of global justice activism such as the World Social Forum and efforts at local organization and resistance. However, given the prominence of summit protests within the movement, capturing the political antinomies for mobilization operating in this specific moment of contention might allow broader reflection on the character of neoliberal domination and the possibilities for resistance.

This paper is mainly theoretical and is intended primarily to work out some of the conceptual challenges my approach presents. It is part of a larger research agenda that ultimately would provide a theoretical and methodological framework for empirical observation. At this stage, this is largely an interpretive project wherein manifestations of antinomies are sought in the relationship between the *habitus*, a particular political field, and the position-takings of actors within that field, without the existence and character of antinomies being reducible to any one of those components. My methodology is therefore a combination of Bourdieuian conceptual tools, preliminary empirical observation in the form of media coverage of the positions taken by various actors within what I will call the G20 protest field,[1] and my own efforts to adapt Bourdieu's tools to the specific question of anti-neoliberal social movement politics through the notion of political antinomies.

In the next section I will introduce key aspects of Bourdieu's conceptual framework, the notions of mechanisms underlying McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly's 'dynamics of contention' approach and a brief discussion of how I conceptualize political antinomies. Finally, I will attempt to demonstrate how this conceptualization can be applied to the antinomies operating at the G20 by contrasting the vandalism and militancy of the Black Bloc tactics with the pluralism underlying the expressive 'People First' march.

I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Pierre Bourdieu's Thinking Tools

In an effort to overcome the opposition between subjectivism and objectivism (Bourdieu, 1980: 54), Bourdieu developed three inter-related 'thinking tools': the *habitus*, fields, and capital. The *habitus* is a deeply embodied, generative set of dispositions by which individuals perceive social space and formulate judgments about actions to take within that space (Bourdieu, 1980: 53). In Bourdieu's words, *habitus* are:

> ...systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu, 1980: 53)

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[1] The bulk of material came from reviewing all G8 and G20-related articles published in the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star from June 15-July 15, a total of 389 articles. I also undertook an informal but thorough review of the articles, blogs and some forum discussions on two independent media websites: www.rabble.ca, and http://toronto.mediacoop.ca/.

The *habitus* contributed to Bourdieu's break from objectivism by allowing him to conceive of action as practical strategy oriented toward struggles to accumulate material and symbolic profit (Bourdieu, 1980: 16). *Habitus* are produced through repeated exposure to various social fields, an exposure that confers varying amounts of capital available to agents in social fields and which therefore creates a close relationship between field, capital and *habitus*. Further, these social fields are always hierarchically organized and contain distinctive divisions of labour and methods for classifying the people, groups and objects that fall within them. These hierarchical systems of division and classification are incorporated into the *habitus* and become the cognitive basis for future actions. That is, the *habitus* is structured by the fields that it encounters and subsequently becomes a structure according to which judgements about social practice are made. Because these judgments and actions are oriented toward success within a given field, they tend to act in accordance with that field's system of division and classification, and therefore tend to reproduce those divisions and classifications.

The immanent, practical demands of fields mediate the dispositions comprising the *habitus* in at least two ways. First, the amount and composition of capital an actor brings to a field, where capital here is understood as a structured combination of cultural know-how or knowingness, economic resources, social networks, symbolic advantage, and so on, constrains or enables action. The overall amount and structure of capital that an actor bears – an objective measure – significantly affects the likelihood of that actor's success in taking action in social space. Second, the actor's subjective perception of a field as available for successful intervention introduces judgements based on practical reasoning rather than on mechanistic determinations produced by the structure of the field itself. These judgements involve assessing the field, assessing one's current position within that field, assessing one's capital, and a series of corollary assessments of the other actors within the field, and all of which are undertaken from the actor's concrete position from within the field and therefore from a partial perspective.

Symbolic Power, Symbolic Violence, Symbolic Domination

Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power provides a conceptual means of connecting the unequal distribution of a particular kind of capital – symbolic capital – to practical assessments about the field and particularly about the resources one brings to the field. It therefore allows social movement analysts to focus on how symbolic violence mediates between *habitus* and field and to specify the ways in which this mediation hinders successful mobilization.

The 'symbolic' in Bourdieu's work is the shared and structured system of distinctions that renders social space, distributions of capital and rules of accumulation intelligible to subjects within that space. These shared symbolic structures are the grounds for "consensus on the meaning of the social world" and therefore produce logical and moral integration (Bourdieu, 1991: 166) and ultimately logical and moral conformity (Bourdieu, 1998: 53). The mimetic process through which objective structures are incorporated into bodily dispositions and cognitive structures is pre-linguistic and unconscious and therefore the *habitus*-bearing actor misrecognizes (or fails to recognize) the fact that the hierarchical distribution of resources, authority and benefits objectified in any given field is (morally, though not historically) arbitrary. As a result, the *habitus* is disposed to perceiving arbitrary inequalities as both natural and inevitable, 'doxic' in Bourdieu's language, and therefore to misattributing the cause of suffering or benefit produced by hierarchically organized social space to the merits or shortcomings of individuals within that space rather than to those individuals' unequal access to various material, social and cultural resources. Symbolic power is the ability to take advantage of unequal

distributions of various forms of capital to impose or maintain the system of distinctions that support that distribution. The central feature of Bourdieu's conception of symbolic domination, therefore, is that dominated groups adopt the point of view of the dominant precisely because both groups share a doxic misrecognition of naturalized arbitrary distinctions.

The effects of these arbitrary but naturalized schemes of classification are no more neutral or evenly distributed than the distributions of various forms of capital on which they are based. Indeed, Bourdieu was very interested in the concrete forms of suffering symbolic violence produced among dominated groups and actors. While Bourdieu emphasized the psychological and economic manifestations of symbolic domination, political scientists can benefit from going further to articulate a specifically political form of suffering – distortions and failures produced by political antinomies – by teasing apart the relationship between symbolic domination, physical coercion, and resistance, as I do in a preliminary way in the final sections of this paper.

Mechanisms of Contention

In 2001, Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly published *Dynamics of Contention* in an effort to reorient social movement research away from its historic pursuit of general covering laws and toward a focus on specific mechanisms. Mechanisms "… are a delimited class of events that alter relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations" (24). The authors understood mechanisms to emerge dynamically from within concrete historical conditions and to then articulate into historically specific processes. Rather than being an instantiation of general tendencies, then, a process of contentious politics derives its specificity from the particular sequence in which its constitutive mechanisms are ordered (24).

By conceiving mechanisms as events that alter relations among elements, the authors captured the relational character of social movement (and counter-movement) activities by capturing the ways in which mechanisms alter the terrain on which groups and individuals struggle. Brokerage, for example, links "two or more previously unconnected social sites by a unit that mediates their relations with one another and/or with yet other sites" (102) and thereby creates new, or at least altered, conditions for mobilization by fostering new and sometimes diffused opportunities for constructing solidarity (103). In the context of the G20 protests, the Toronto Community Mobilization Network provided such a mechanism by facilitating information and strategy exchange and creating opportunities for diverse groups to coordinate actions.

Attention to mechanisms motivates a particular research agenda. In terms of global justice politics, the approach appears suited to research designs that focus on the role of police/repression, the collective identities of protesters, attribution of threats and opportunities as central to tactical decision-making, and so on. These are, of course, important questions and the dynamics of contention approach rightly encourages context-sensitivity and provides sufficient explanatory flexibility to grapple with diverse instances of contentious politics and their equally diverse outcomes. There have been a number of criticisms of this approach (see for example Zirakzadeh, Platt, Goodwin and Jasper, and Flacks) but I argue that the approach's central shortcoming is its inability to identify and therefore understand the ways in which existing relations of domination insulate themselves from the possibility of being radically altered by any combination of the mechanisms McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly identify.

Antinomies

In his analysis of the devastating impacts of neoliberalism on dominated groups and classes in France, Bourdieu cautions against the empiricist impulse to understand social reality by searching "for the explanatory principles of observed realities where they are not to be found (not all of them, in any case), namely, at the site of observation itself" (Bourdieu et al.: 181). To overcome this impulse, the analyst must shift attention away from what is happening and place it on the "true object of analysis", namely the social construction of reality as an unequal composition of numerous representations, a composition that in turn has real effects (181). For social movement research, to which Bourdieu paid little attention himself (Crossley, 2002: 189), this means breaking from the impulse to focus attention on the existence of mechanisms or on the relative merit of the strategies and tactics undertaken during a given episode of contention, and to examine instead the degree to which the collective construction of reality forbids any combination of mechanisms to alter the relations of power underpinning that construction. What I have been calling a 'political antinomy' exists when a political field is structured in such a way as to make it impossible for dominated actors to gain sufficient position within that field to alter its basic structures and, therefore, the relations of domination that are structured by the field and ultimately to alter the social construction according to which the field is reproduced. This impossibility is bound up in the misrecognition of arbitrary distributions of capital within social space.

Bourdieu refers to practical 'double binds' in *The Weight of the World* to indicate a situation wherein the contradictory demands of a social field are impossible to satisfy simultaneously (189-191). Importantly, this double bind is found in the relation between an actor, the resources she carries with her, and the field in which she acts. Steph Lawler draws out the implications of this relation in terms of efforts to overcome domination and disapproval in social space. She argues that Bourdieu's framework allows us to perceive a paradox wherein someone who is dominated may find a legitimate strategy in accommodating herself to the very relations that do her harm. In such cases, a certain amount of individual liberation might be accomplished by conforming to what the actor might otherwise consider unjust relations of power, but overall patterns of domination are maintained (Lawler: 122). Moreover, there is no reason to believe that the ability to accommodate oneself to relations of power is a skill that is evenly distributed among dominated groups and individuals. From Lawler's analysis emerges a picture of resistance wherein conforming to the dominant strictures of the political field allows an individual or a group the space to exert a certain degree of agency. However, because this room to manoeuvre is purchased through submission to rules of the game that unevenly distribute opportunities for success, the actor is never able to gain sufficient hold to alter the rules themselves.

While Bourdieu does not exclude the possibility of strategic, conscious calculation (1980: 53), he does argue that the estimation of chances on which such calculations rest is the product of a scheme of dispositions already conditioned toward regularities that have been objectified in the structures of social fields and therefore equipped to render all the practical 'impossibilities' immanent to a particular field unthinkable and, ultimately, unthought (54). Therefore, agents, without consciously knowing that they are doing so, select the stimuli that mobilize and orient them toward some goals and along some paths rather than others. 'Political antinomies' refer to specific conditions within which agents act, namely conditions in which the practical possibilities and impossibilities immanent to a field force agents to (consciously or

unconsciously) select stimuli that orient them toward action that produces both real effects such as failure, repression, burn-out and apathy, and normative ones such as distortion of movement goals, and entrenchment of existing patterns of relations.

II. The G20 Protest Field

The Field

This section sets the groundwork for the analytical sections that follow by identifying the central actors in the G20 field and articulating their differences not as reflections of differing natural properties, but as distinctions based on specific schemes of classification and perception manifested through the actions or position-taking they perform within social space (Grenfell: 220-221). These position-takings constitute concrete attempts on the part of actors to establish their own self-definitions as well as a definition of the field itself; that is, to establish constructions which in turn have real effects on subsequent developments of the field.

a. Two Protests

The week prior to the G20 summit included protests and events focusing on issues ranging from Indigenous rights to queer liberation and climate change. In this paper, I will focus, however on two major events: the 'People First' march and the Black Bloc 'Get off the Fence' action. In describing the two, I will distinguish between them as being "expressive" and "disruptive" respectively; these descriptors avoid the more commonplace depictions of one as peaceful and the other as violent as these latter depictions already accept neoliberal distinctions that need to be troubled.[2] Further, I will insist that each contained expressive and disruptive elements. The People First march was largely envisioned as an opportunity to foster democratic expression, but was also disruptive of traffic and pedestrian mobility. By contrast, the Black Bloc tactics of the Get off the Fence action were intentionally disruptive economically, symbolically, of police strategies, and possibly of the expressive protest, but, as will be seen below, also was undertaken to express specific political convictions.

The People First march was organized by labour unions (primarily the Canadian Labour Congress and the Ontario Federation of Labour) as well as a number of allied groups (such as the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace, Oxfam Canada, and the Canadian Federation of Students) and attracted between 4,000 and 30,000 participants.[3] Organizers of this event negotiated with police (Ryan, 29 June: A19), and attempted to gain symbolic leverage through their visibility, their numbers, and the moral content of their message.

By contrast, the Get Off the Fence action intended to join with the People First march until it turned away from the fence toward the police-sanctioned 'free-speech' zone, at which point activists would break off to engage in "a militant, confrontational demonstration where we

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[2] My use of 'expressive' and 'disruptive' here are merely as useful shorthands and my analysis does not depend upon this, admittedly, problematic typology. See Taylor and Van Dyke (266-267) for an overview of debates about social movement typologies.

[3] The low estimate is from the Toronto Star (Lautens: A6). The Canadian Civil Liberties Association estimates 10,000 people (CCLA: 10) participated in the march, while protest organizers made the highest estimate at 30,000 (CLC "Labour's G20"; Ryan, 29 June: A19).

[will] challenge the global apartheid and injustices the fence represents" ("Get off the Fence"). As promised, where the People First march was stopped by three rows of police, Black Bloc activists broke off and undertook a highly choreographed burst of property destruction. Activists engaging in Black Bloc tactics insisted on maintaining anonymity, framed the police as singularly hostile and violent representatives of state power and sought to gain symbolic leverage through the destruction of the 'symbols of capitalism', primarily storefronts of big businesses such as Starbucks and various banks.

Understanding the relationship between the two groups requires familiarity with the debates over 'respect for diversity of tactics' that have emerged since the 'Battle of Seattle' in November 1999 and which, according to Conway, had become fully articulated by the time of the FTAA demonstrations in Quebec City, 2001 (Conway: 510). Proponents of respect for diversity of tactics argue that the best way to combat capitalism is to allow activists to engage in diverse political activities including cultural work, popular education, and grassroots-community organizing, but also militant protest activities including property destruction – which can range from stickering, spray painting and painting guerrilla murals to smashing windows and defacing or destroying signs or other property (516). According to Conway, the ethical foundation of respect for diversity of tactics is an organizational style based on affinity groups: small, autonomous organizations that determine their own projects and strategies without central movement authority (510). Affinity groups demand and retain the right to pursue whatever tactics they consider to be both ethical and effective. The decisive feature of respect for diversity of tactics is a respect for the pluralism of tactics that results from organizing via affinity groups, and a refusal to publicly denounce other activists for their willingness or unwillingness to make use of any particular tactic.

Not all G20 protest participants were willing to endorse a plurality of tactics. While the Toronto Community Mobilization Network defended the rights of all protesters to choose their own protest strategy (see Gee: A14; Yang and Casey: A4) many activists were quick to condemn the Black Bloc actions. Most notably, Sid Ryan, president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, one of the central organizers of the People First march described Black Bloc activists as 'cowardly' and 'hooligans' (Ryan, 29 June: A19) and Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti issued a statement condemning the Black Bloc activists (CLC, 26 June).

This paper does not take up this debate over diversity of tactics. Rather, it takes that diversity as a fact (i.e., accepts that in the near-run at least some activists will pursue property damage, particularly at summit protests) and asks about the structures of possibility into which those tactics are inserted.

b. Neoliberal state, neoliberal public

In his later years Bourdieu increasingly focused his research and polemics on neoliberalism's deepening naturalization (see Schinkel: 79; Bourdieu and Wacquant: 2; Bourdieu et al.: 182). After several decades of growing neoliberal hegemony (for an overview of the development of neoliberalism, see Duggan, 2003: ix-xxii; for neoliberalism as an ongoing process, see and Peck and Tickell: 383) its features are well known, but a few are worth rehearsing briefly.

Neoliberal partisans equate economic liberalism and efficiency to democratic freedom and therefore diacritically articulate all collectivism, state intervention and market restraint to archaic forms of totalitarianism. This allows them to construct their opponents as either naively or perniciously fighting hopeless and ideological battles against inequality's inevitability and

desirability (Bourdieu et al.: 182). Neoliberals conceive the state's role to be primarily for providing neutral, technical economic management (Duggan, 2003: xiv) and promote a prescriptive focus on austerity financing, state downsizing and privatization (Peck and Tickell: 381) in a concerted effort to roll back the progressive gains of the last century (Bourdieu and Wacquant: 2). As Duggan argues, a primary effect of neoliberal restructuring has been to redraw the divide between public and private (Duggan, 2002: 179) and consequently the division between the political and the non-political. The redrawn division between the boundaries of the political and the non-political, particularly as it relates to the authority to oversee the technical management of global capitalism, will be central to my argument about expressive protest, below.

Bourdieu and Wacquant argue that imposing these conceptions of the relationship between the state and the economy has depended on a form of symbolic violence (2), which, as discussed above, depends upon dominated groups adopting the point of view of dominant actors. Neoliberal restructuring entails constraining the state and anything associated with it as much as possible, and organizing as many fields as possible according to principles associated with the market, namely according to particular conceptions of freedom, flexibility, individuality and democracy. As fields have been objectively structured according to this scheme of classification, these schemes have been slowly incorporated into the *habitus* of people living within highly neoliberalized societies. Keil, using a Foucauldian analysis points to the 'everydayness' of neoliberalism in urban settings (584), which is to say, the ways in which people's daily activities and particularly their encounters with cityscapes reinforce the divisions on which neoliberalism is based. This observation can be usefully combined with Bourdieu's careful analysis of the relationship between material, geographic space and symbolic power, which points to the ways in which the structures of symbolic space become inscribed in physical space (Bourdieu et al.: 124) particularly through the 'mute injunctions' of physical structures, which 'spontaneously' compel particular forms of etiquette, reverence and distance (126).

In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu argues that:

> "Every social order systematically takes advantage of the dispositions of the body and language to function as depositories of deferred thoughts that can be triggered off at a distance in space and time by the simple effect of re-placing the body in an overall posture which recalls the associated thoughts and feelings in one of the inductive states of the body which, as actors know, give rise to states of mind." (69)

One cannot help, in this context, but think of the infamous security fence constructed to keep protesters at bay. The fence enacted a physical separation of the technocratic elite from the messy and (for neoliberals) economically 'autocratic' demands of the protesters (a separation that was doubled within the fence by the segregation of NGOs away from mainstream media and the official state delegations, see Ward: A13). In short, the wall became a physical manifestation of previous encounters with authority could therefore stand in for authority generally. Comments by some Toronto City Councillors suggested that anyone fearful of trouble, or police violence should not have participated in protests in the first place (Rider: GT1), an attitude that re-enacts a naturalized relationship to authority; it also re-enacts the neoliberal divide between the supposedly efficient technocrats inside the fence and the disruptive protesters who should, apparently, show more respect to the former. Importantly, this repositioning was not just experienced by potential protesters and therefore it produced something far more than psychological intimidation for this group. It also repositioned the non-protesting public in their relation to authority. It symbolically underpinned attempts to link dissidence to disruption,

disruption to misbehaviour, and misbehaviour to an illegitimate position-taking within social space. Thus, protesters not only had to confront strategic decisions about where to protest and whether to try to confront the wall directly as a symbol of authority. They also faced a symbolic terrain in which politicians and the public were pre-disposed to negatively evaluate those actions.

While further empirical work on the relation between neoliberal hegemony and public perception of protest needs to be done, the dynamics between the everydayness of neoliberalism and its consequent incorporation into the disposition of the general public gives ample reason to predict that as Torontonians and Canadians watched the encounters between police and protesters, they would be disposed to perceive and interpret these encounters according to naturalized and misrecognized neoliberal doxa. Not surprisingly, according to at least one poll, the public did not appear to sympathize with either People First or the Black Bloc activists, with the majority of respondents expressing disgust, shame, anger, and sadness at the events ("Canadians Want Federal Government": 1). This appears to show that the public did not distinguish between the kinds of protesters and their strategies, although it is also likely that distinctions were drawn but polling was unable to capture them (for Bourdieuian critiques of polling see Wacquant: 7 and Bourdieu et al.: 214).

Given that there was a neoliberal public watching events unfold, accruing symbolic profit in the G20 field depended, in large part, on the consonance between protest actions and neoliberal distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate protests, efficiency and disruption, neutrality and bias. There is nothing novel in arguing that the success of protests depends in part on the relationship between participant frames and mainstream beliefs and values (Taylor and Dyke: 282-283). What I argue, however, is that symbolic domination cannot be captured through cultural models alone insofar as such approaches tend to emphasize the causal effects of ideas and consciousness. The Bourdieuian framework I am developing here traces the success or failure of protest to specific distributions of various forms of capital, naturalized through specific schemes of classification. The specific hierarchical distributions of capital endemic to neoliberalism and the naturalized distinctions that support it produce a certain kind of suffering: political suffering in the form of political antinomies.

c. The Police

Arguably, the police were the most visible participants in the G20 field. Approximately 20,000 security personnel, including police from jurisdictions across Canada and private security personnel contracted by the federal government, were deployed during the protests (Marin: 25). In response to mounting protests, the police undertook the largest mass arrest in Canadian history and had the dubious distinction of making the first use of tear gas in Toronto's history.

Della Porta and Filleiule have argued for the importance of attending to 'police knowledge' in understanding protest policing. Police knowledge is "the police definition of their own role as well as the dangers involved in the protest forms, the judgment about the groups involved in protest and the assessment about the demands coming from their environment." (Della Porta and Fillieule: 222). Internally, the relevant aspects of police knowledge include the dominant social location of recruits, the degree of feelings of belonging to an isolated cadre and the prevalence of macho attitudes that tend to prioritize crime-fighting over peace-keeping. Externally, the police perceptions of the 'environmental' culture are relevant. This includes their tendency to adopt shorthand assessments consisting of generalizations about people based on external characteristics (skin colour, hair length, clothing style) and to use this shorthand selectively to categorize protestors as either good (non-violent, cooperative, legitimate) or bad

(violent, hooligans, more interested in rioting than in the issue at stake, illegitimate). In turn, these shorthand assessments become de facto guidelines for responding to demonstrators, as Gorringe and Rosie confirmed in their analysis of police protesting at the 2005 G8 Summit in Scotland (692).

There is ample evidence that such divisions were, at least initially, at work in Toronto as well, as evidenced by Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair's distinction between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' protesters (Lautens: A6). However, although the Canadian Civil Liberties Association found evidence that police officers were already indiscriminately and unconstitutionally searching all protesters prior to the summit's commencement and certainly prior to any Black Bloc action (CCLA: 11), police ability or willingness to distinguish between kinds of protesters appeared to collapse entirely in the wake of Black Block actions on June 26th. The police therefore appeared to take an ambiguous position within the G20 field. In their symbolic representations, they reinforced a division between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' protest, but in their concrete actions they only reinforced the division between neoliberal insiders and disruptive outsiders.

Antinomies

a. Politics of community, politics of disruption

An obvious place to begin seeking political antinomies is to examine the use of so-called 'violent' actions by Black Bloc protesters. Conway identifies a number of features of political property destruction that are worth briefly recounting here. Supporters of the tactic argue that property destruction is a continuum of actions from stickering to window-smashing and that some actions on the continuum (graffiti, billboard 'corrections' and stickering in particular) are well-accepted as legitimate forms of protest. Further, advocates argue that any protesters who act outside legitimate, routinized and bureaucratized forms of dissent are indiscriminately deemed violent, and that the term ought only to be applied to situations where people actually get hurt. Finally, advocates argue that people engaged in this type of property destruction distinguish between private (capitalist) property and personal (use-value) property and only target the former. The intention in doing so is to unsettle reified middle-class attitudes about property and thereby open up debates about alternative ways of organizing ownership and material goods (535). These justifications appear to have been at play in the G20 field as well. Media reports contain comments such as: "This isn't violence. This is vandalism against violent corporations. We did not hurt anybody. They (the corporations) are the ones hurting people" (Mclean: A7). Mathieu Francoeur, of the Montreal-based Anti-Capitalist Convergence, called the vandalism "a means of expression [that] doesn't compare to the economic and state violence we're subjected to" (Chung: A6; Fancoeur was similarly quoted in Peritz: A10).

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

definition of violence or even to open up the question of violence in the minds of the watching public.

In Bourdieu's view:

> The specific efficacy of subversive action consists in the power to bring to consciousness, and so modify, the categories of thought which help to orient individual and collective practices and in particular the categories through which distributions are perceived and appreciated. (Bourdieu, 1980: 141)

The question, then, is the conditions under which vandalism has the power to modify conscious beliefs about property and its relation to capitalist exploitation. But elsewhere Bourdieu cautions that modifying consciousness is not a simple task of changing ideas that people have about the world, it entails changing the embodied dispositions through which they perceive the world (Bourdieu, 2000: 180). There is reason for concern, then, that Black Bloc tactics may be too discursive, that they might exist too firmly in the realm of the symbolic to act directly on dispositions.

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

> … whether the improper use of the performative can succeed in producing the effect of authority where there is no recourse to a prior authorization; indeed, whether the misappropriation of the performative might not be the very occasion for the exposure of prevailing forms of authority and the exclusions by which they proceed?" (Butler: 123-4)

Lovell takes up Butler's use of Rosa Parks as a paradigm example of unauthorized resignification and shows that, in fact, apparently unauthorized performatives do require insertion into amenable – which is to say authorizing – social fields (Lovell: 9). Similarly, then, Black Bloc tactics need to be understood in terms of the field in which they enter. Attention to the media field may be a useful way of approaching this question. In his Bourdieuian analysis of the journalistic field Champagne distinguishes between "spectacular acts of violence" and "ordinary violence" and argues that the former masks the latter (Bourdieu et al.: 59). In the G20 field, the spectacular vandalism masked the ordinary violence the activists sought to expose precisely because the primary mechanism of exposure is a mass media prone to preferring to represent the spectacular to the mundane.

Protesters, therefore, face a political impossibility on the question of violence. They seek to subvert the category of violence without having sufficient symbolic and material capital to do so. This analysis refutes Butler's criticism of Bourdieu, and rejects Foucauldian or discursive analyses of protest events. Symbolic power in the G20 protest field – as in any other field – was not evenly distributed, nor was it capillary or irrigative. Rather, it congealed around certain homologously positioned actors within social space, namely the media and the state, both of whom wielded greater amounts and more advantageous compositions of the capital needed to impose definitions of violence and legitimacy. Importantly, this symbolic domination is not simply the result of better framing or messaging (or certification or attribution or any of the other mechanisms described by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly). Symbolic domination resulted from the complicity between neoliberal schemes of classification, the physical space occupied within the G20 field – the fence, the police lines, the kettles, the protest crowd – as well as the symbolic and

material capital all participants bring to the field and the disposition of the 'public' toward appreciating or depreciating activist attempts at resignification.

'Violence' quickly became reified as a tactic of debatable ethical and strategic value rather than understood as being a construction, the result of previous struggles and antagonisms and a site of struggle within a broader field of power. While the Black Bloc seems to want to resist this reification, their use of tactics already devalued by the reified conception cannot resonate with a neoliberal public. As a consequence, the action itself diminishes their capacity to accrue sufficient symbolic capital to impose a new definition. Fundamentally, the relationship between the tactics and the symbolic structures into which the tactics are inserted forecloses any possibility that the tactic will find success.

The above analysis is in no way a commitment to a debate about the value of property destruction as a political tactic. Instead, the analysis I am recommending distinguishes between the moral leverage upon which movement actions implicitly rely and the question of tactical efficacy. De-objectifying violence and other movement tactics entails reconceiving 'moral leverage' as symbolic capital. This kind of political contention is a two-stage struggle. First property destruction needs to be endowed with adequate moral content to be recognized as a legitimate action within the political field. Only then can violence be deployed against specific objects. The close relationship between *habitus* and field, on which social intelligibility depends, means that actors cannot simply force their way into a field and make socially intelligible actions that disregard the entire scheme of distinctions according to which that field operates.

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

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

Black Bloc activities, if they are distinguishable from random or merely criminal acts of vandalism, and surely they can be so distinguished, entail a communicative relationship with an addressee. Indeed, the very symbolic nature of the attacks implies an audience in a way that attacks on the materials of capitalism – machines, factories, and so on – or upon capitalists themselves, do not. While the intended audience might be Starbucks and bank CEOs, the unlikelihood of CEO conversions to anti-capitalist perspectives suggests the intended audience of Black Bloc property damage is more likely some combination of fellow protesters and the wider public. Insofar as it is the wider public, then this indicates a reliance on mass media, although this reliance must be hopelessly troubled (see McCurdy), and upon appeal to dispositions of a wider public that misrecognizes, and therefore accepts as natural, neoliberal

doxa about property and democratic behaviour. This is the moment at which Black Bloc activists – intentionally or not – become bound up in the rules of the political field and submit – consciously or not – to a regime of symbolic value that delegitimizes the very strategy by which they entered into the field.

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

b. Politics as pluralism, rights, expression, efficiency, or, protests are not democratic

Appreciating the impossibilities facing the People First march requires breaking from the democratic sensibilities of expressive protests and relocating protests within the non-democratic space of symbolic markets. The difficulty lies precisely in accomplishing what mainstream approaches to social movement research fail to do, which is to understand protests neither in terms of their own self-conception nor in terms of their function within democratic structures, but in terms of the relationship between self-understandings within the G20 protest field and the structures of the field itself.

Several researchers have already begun to point to the diminishing effectiveness of demonstrations. Della Porta and Filleiule, for example, argue that, "to the extent that demonstrations have become widespread, acceptable, and more predictable, they seem to have lost political effectiveness" (Della Porta and Fillieule: 235). Following Pivan and Cloward, they describe the growing acceptability of protests as a process of 'normalisation' rather than 'institutionalization'. As this process deepens, movements shift their strategies away from efforts to 'make trouble' and toward efforts to 'make up the numbers'. Further, they accept a delegitimization of disruption generally as communication takes priority over exposing social conflict. They conclude that this trend produces a distinction between groups who have the resources to mobilize sizeable demonstration and those groups whose resource poverty encourages more disruptive strategies. As they put it, "the distribution of resources that allows one to adapt to the new rules of the game of 'opinion-geared democracy' is neither equally nor randomly distributed among social groups" (Della Porta and Fillieule: 236).

Organizers of the People First rally pursued a strategy that, at least in part, attempted to increase their symbolic capital by distinguishing themselves from the activities of the relatively resource-poor anarchists using Black Bloc tactics. Sid Ryan polemically equated the threat to democratic space posed by Black Bloc 'hooligans' to the threat posed by the state's massive police presence, and boasted of working to create a democratic space by working with police (Ryan, 29 June: A19). In fact, prior to the summit, organizers argued somewhat ironically that they were providing a safe place to express dissent that was "free from the overblown security presence that's become so commonplace during meetings of the world's most powerful heads of state" (Ryan, 16 June) precisely by working closely with representatives of the overblown security presence on details of where the demonstrations would take place.

Close cooperation with security forces can be understood as precisely the kind of paradoxical manoeuvring Lawler identifies. Instead of looking at cooperation with police as a

mechanism for producing democratic facilitation, it can be better understood as a mechanism for accumulating symbolic capital by producing a distinction between People First and Get off the Fence. The organizers' ability to produce this distinction depended materially on their organizational resources but they also brought to bear a number of symbolic resources: their ability to use their institutional stability to maintain relations with police and to portray those relations as supporting 'legitimate' protest, their commitment to non-disruptive politics central to liberal pluralism and the neo-liberal equation of efficiency and order to progress, and above all a commitment to a conception of social conflict as being located in, and resolvable through, democratic and communicative spaces. The question, though, is whether the amount and composition of material and symbolic capital organizers of the People First demonstration could mobilize was sufficient to affect change within G20 protest field, or whether it merely indicates accession to a field structured precisely against the possibility of such change.

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

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

Further, this impossibility does not just exist between the demonstrators and the state. If Bourdieu's sociological argument is right, if people act based on embodied dispositions oriented toward interpreting the world in accordance with its existing organization precisely because these dispositions are the product of repeated exposures and accommodations to the field, then appeals to public reason and reflexivity are bound to fail. There is a further critical concern. If agreement already exists between neoliberal economic, spatial and political organization and most people's *habitus*, then there is no reason to expect massive support for opposition to neoliberalism. Indeed, the pernicious and everyday ways in which neoliberalism envelops the *habitus* and encourages the *habitus* to accommodate to its regime of social and economic doxa is precisely the problem, as it is this accommodation that naturalizes the exploitation, inequality and domination characteristic of neoliberalism. In a sense, every demonstration that accedes to the symbolic demands of liberal democratic practice commits itself to, supports, and ultimately reinforces a symbolic order that ostensibly claims to be responsive to large-scale expressions of doubt and dissidence, while effectively rendering doubts about basic social and political organization unthinkable by neoliberalized *habitus*.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

I have argued that applying a Bourdieuian framework to the analysis of contentious politics allows us to perceive and appreciate the existence of political antinomies: the necessary failure of mutually exclusive modes of protest point to a contradiction between the conditions under which certain protests are mounted and the possibility of adopting successful protest strategies. In the case of the G20 protests in Toronto I have argued that neither strategies based on expressive demonstrations nor disruptive vandalism were supported by sufficient symbolic capital to effectively alter public dispositions toward neoliberal economic and political structures, and indeed that the structure of the G20 field prohibited any chance of successful protest.

This analysis marks an extension of Bourdieu's own sociological work into the realm of political theory by combining empirical analysis and normative critique to problematize liberal pluralist and neoliberal conceptions of democratic practice, particularly as it relates to protest politics. Doing so draws attention to the growing distance between the democratic pretensions of liberal pluralism on the one hand and the conditions of the field of power, the democratic dispositions of the *habitus*, and the distribution of material and symbolic capital among protesters on the other. Further, the analysis has important implications for how opponents of neoliberalism conceive the goals of mobilization. Crossley (2003: 50) and Haluza-Delay (213) have already begun to assess the relationship between protest actions, movement participation and *habitus*; such work suggests mobilization might have interim benefits notwithstanding failures to affect significant policy changes. These might include constructing solidarity, finding ways to support lives and communities that intentionally pull away from neoliberal economic and social practices, and developing protest practices geared toward shifts in dispositions rather than immediate gains. Many activists and groups are already pursuing these goals, but, by refining the conceptual tools we use to understand the possibilities – and especially the antinomies – offered by political fields, critical political scientists can help negotiate a balance between immediate efforts to sustain mobilization in the face of overwhelming material and symbolic inequalities and long-run efforts to overcome neoliberalism.

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