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## Doxa and Deliberation

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*Recent democratic theorists have drawn on the work of the late Pierre Bourdieu to make the case that patterned inequalities in the social capacity to engage in deliberation can undermine deliberative theory's democratic promise. They have proposed a range of deliberative democratic responses to the problem of cultural inequality, from enabling the marginalised to adopt the communicative dispositions of the dominant, to broadening the standards that define legitimate deliberation, to strengthening deliberative counter-publics. The author interprets Bourdieu's theory of the linguistic habitus to prompt an even more radical critique of deliberative democracy than these theorists acknowledge, one to which the proposed solutions fail adequately to respond. Her argument suggests that empirical work on deliberative democracy should expand to address specifically the problems of cultural inequality that Bourdieu's work highlights.*

Near the start of the 1950s Broadway hit, *My Fair Lady*, Professor Henry Higgins breaks out in song, announcing, famously: 'An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him. The moment he talks, he makes some other Englishman despise him' (Lerner & Lowe 1956). In the context of the musical, this claim is meant to be a truism. Higgins shows early on that he can identify Eliza Doolittle's place of birth simply by eavesdropping as she peddles flowers outside a London opera house. He proves, as the show progresses, that how Doolittle is perceived by other members of her society – and in particular how she is regarded by members of the dominant social classes – is largely a function of how she speaks. When she bickers in a cockney accent in the London streets, she is socially defined as nothing more than a 'flower girl'. But when she speaks in the cultivated manner in which Higgins coaches her to speak, she is transformed, through a kind of socio-linguistic alchemy, into what, in the parlance of the day, was known as a 'lady'.

A key premise of the musical's story line is that social actors tend to (de)value particular speakers, not only because of what they say, but also

because of how they say it: because of their accents, for instance, their word choices, their syntactical patterns. Is this premise more than a felicitous starting-point for an entertaining story? Is it, sociologically speaking, accurate? If so, does it describe a pattern evident not only in early twentieth-century London but, more generally, in pluralistic and hierarchical societies? If Higgins's claim does contain at least a kernel of sociological truth, how susceptible to institutional remediation is this tendency to 'classify' according to linguistic and other communicative dispositions?

One way to characterise recent developments in deliberative democratic theory is to say that questions such as these have moved to the fore. Several recent surveys suggest that deliberative theory has shifted from a 'theoretical statement' to a 'working theory' phase (Chambers 2003), in which the focus is less on developing an ideal theory of deliberative democratic legitimacy than on analyzing practices of deliberation to explore questions of the feasibility of deliberative democracy (Bohman 1998; Tully 2002). Among the most pressing questions now facing participants in these debates is whether democratic deliberation is capable of realising the egalitarian standard that most ideal theorists consider to be its necessary precondition.<sup>1</sup>

A number of the most pointed interventions that speak to the latter question draw on the work of the late Pierre Bourdieu to make the case that patterned inequalities in the social capacity to engage in deliberation threaten to undermine deliberative theory's democratic promise (see, e.g., Bohman 1996, 1997; Fraser 1992, 1997; Knight & Johnson 1997; Kohn 2000, 2003; Sanders 1997; Young 1996, 2000). These Bourdieuan critiques of deliberative theory articulate important concerns, which deserve the attention of students of contemporary democratic politics. In the present essay, however, my principal claim is that Bourdieu's theory of the linguistic *habitus* prompts an even more radical critique of deliberative democracy than many of these critics suppose. Recent years have witnessed an impressive growth in the empirical literature on deliberative democracy, much of which addresses problems of political inequality in deliberation. That literature, my argument suggests, should expand to take into account and to address the specific challenges that Bourdieu's thought poses for the theory and the practice of deliberative democracy.

### Deliberation and Political Equality

Since ancient times, political equality has been a – if not the – core democratic value. Despite disputes about which persons should be included in

the definition of the relevant *deixis*, and about what precisely political equality entails, democratic theorists tend to agree that 'rule by the people' requires that the interests, the good, and/or the will of each exert an equal force in processes of collective decision making. Democratic equality is understood by most to involve both formal equality (that is, equal formal opportunities to participate at all stages of the democratic process, including the agenda-setting and the decision-making stages) and also equal access to those resources necessary to make use of these formal opportunities (equal access to relevant information, for example, and to the basic material resources, time, and education needed for effective participation) (see Dahl 1989: chs 6–8).

In addition, for theorists of deliberative democracy, who envision citizens influencing political outcomes not only and not principally by voting, but also indirectly, by shaping the preferences of others via the give-and-take of reasons, democratic equality demands a rough or an approximate equality in the capacity to engage in effective argumentation: to pose problems and to advance arguments that engage one's fellow citizen-interlocutors in ways they might find persuasive (Knight & Johnson 1997). Although some inequality in such deliberative capacities among individuals is likely unavoidable, it is troubling to deliberative democratic sensibilities if one person's effect on an argument and its outcome is greater than that of others because, for instance, she is able to convert her greater wealth or her social status or her personal connections into argumentative influence. It is troubling, further, if inequalities are patterned in the sense that they vary with subject position, so that the perspectives and the claims of some count less than those of others, or do not count at all. Hence, for the deliberative theorist, democratic legitimacy requires all to be equally enabled to engage effectively in collective deliberative and decision-making processes: to introduce topics of deliberation, to make claims and arguments, to pose questions, to articulate objections and criticisms, and to challenge the rules that govern the debate (Benhabib 1996b, 2002). In James Bohman's words, 'Equality within deliberation must be strong enough to ensure the inclusion of all citizens in deliberation and the exclusion of extra-political or endogenous forms of influence, such as power, wealth, and preexisting social inequalities' (Bohman 1996: 36).

Thus, the deliberative theorist is concerned to challenge not only formal inequalities in decision-making power, but also formal inequalities in opportunities to deliberate: inequalities in access to deliberative fora, for example, as well as inequalities in people's opportunities to advance

their claims and arguments; to express their needs, experiences, and points of view; and to listen to and to engage their fellow citizens (Bohman 1996; Christiano 1996; Knight & Johnson 1997). She is concerned to challenge, what is more, not only inequalities in the resources and the capacities that are necessary for effective decision-making influence, but also inequalities in the resources and the capacities needed for effective participation in deliberation: inequalities in education, information, and skills needed for effective argumentation, as well as inequalities in income, wealth, social status, and power, to the extent that these translate into deliberative inequalities (Bohman 1996; Knight & Johnson 1997).

These concerns, notice, function to broaden the set of inequalities that already preoccupy theorists who hold a more adversarial view of the democratic process. Deliberative theory, that is to say, expands the set of formal rights and the categories of resources and capacities that adversarial democrats long have claimed political equality demands.

Qualitatively different, however, is a third type of inequality that concerns deliberative theory: inequality that some deliberative democrats term 'cultural'. As introduced into debates about deliberative democracy, the notion of cultural inequality signals the differential valuation of culturally particularistic communicative dispositions, and hence the differential capacity of the dominant and the marginalised to participate in deliberative politics in ways that are socially recognised as legitimate. The story of Dr Higgins and Eliza Doolittle is one popular illustration of this phenomenon: an illustration of how status distinctions can work to devalue the communicative tendencies of the marginalised, while defining as legitimate the communicative practices and products of those who are socially dominant.

Drawing on Bourdieu's social theory, some thinkers have made the case that cultural inequalities can persist even under conditions that guarantee equal formal political equality, due to the constitutional logic of human communicative practice. Differences in culture, the claim is – or, more precisely, differences in *habitus* – function, not like resources or opportunities that can be redistributed or like rights that can be institutionalized, but as 'distinctions' that mark all communicative practice. Thus, according to Nancy Fraser (1992: 120), 'In stratified societies, unequally empowered groups tend to develop unequally valued cultural styles. The result is the development of powerful informal pressures that marginalize the contributions of members of subordinated groups both in everyday life contexts and in official public spheres.'

This Bourdieuan claim that social inequalities are, in significant part, linguistically inscribed poses an important challenge to the view that deliberative practice can approximate the politically egalitarian preconditions specified by deliberative theory. If, each time he speaks, Dr Higgins is distinguished by virtue of the communicative dispositions that he demonstrates, and if each time she speaks, Eliza Doolittle is marked as inferior (as unintelligent, inarticulate, unpersuasive), it is far from clear that deliberative decision-making involving these interlocutors will be a democratically egalitarian political process.

Nonetheless, there may be compelling reasons to attempt to reform, rather than to limit, deliberative democratic institutions. Deliberation, some argue, promotes important democratic values, such as the public use of reason in collective decision-making, and critical reflection on preferences in light of the claims and the reasons advanced by others (see, e.g., Benhabib 2002; Dryzek 2000; Young 2000). Hence some theorists have worked to develop deliberative democratic responses to the challenges that cultural inequality poses. They have identified three analytically distinct strategies for attempting to alter the relationship between, on the one hand, the communicative dispositions of the marginalised, and on the other, dominant discursive norms.

First, some have looked for ways to change the habits and the tendencies of the marginalised, so that their communicative styles more closely match the styles of the dominant. Think of this as Dr Higgins's approach. The phonetician's task, after all, is to teach Eliza Doolittle to dress, to carry herself, and above all to speak in the ways in which she needs to in order to be perceived as, and treated like, a 'lady'. In a similar vein, some theorists have looked for ways to enable the marginalised to engage in political deliberation, employing the forms of speech, the communicative styles, and the argumentative conventions that are defined as legitimate in the social contexts they inhabit. Some make the case, for instance, that political equality demands education in public speaking, in rhetoric, in grammar, or more generally in the skills needed to be perceived as, and treated like, a rational deliberator. Thus, according to Jack Knight and James Johnson, deliberative equality requires enabling minorities effectively to use 'the language and concepts of the dominant group'. Doing so, they suggest, requires publicly funded education; publicly funded relief from extreme poverty, which can interfere with the cognitive capacities needed for deliberation; and public support for secondary associations, on the grounds that the latter foster the development of skills and dispositions needed for effective deliberation (Knight & Johnson 1997: 299, 307).

A second strategy is to search for ways to alter extant status distinctions, ideally in society at large, but if not, then at least within the deliberative setting. What if Dr Higgins, instead of changing Eliza Doolittle, had worked to change the standards that define Eliza Doolittle as less than (i.e., less worthy than, less valuable than) a 'lady'? Thinking along these lines, some have emphasised redefining deliberative norms and standards in ways that accommodate a relatively wide range of forms and styles of speech. If, for instance, the claims of the marginalised tend to be dismissed or devalued because framed by background experiences and assumptions that differ systematically from those of the dominant, this approach suggests expanding our conception of deliberation to include communicative acts aimed at bridging differences in background understandings. If the utterances of the marginalised are often dismissed or devalued because perceived as passionate rather than rational, it suggests redefining political deliberation to include not only reasoned argumentation, but also impassioned statements and stories and testimonials (Sanders 1997; Young 1996, 2000). More generally, it recommends challenging communicative norms that distinguish the (in)articulate, the (un)intelligent, the (un)persuasive, the (il)logical. It aims for a conception of political deliberation that recognises multiple legitimate deliberative aims or ends, as well as multiple legitimate styles and forms of deliberation.

A third tack involves looking for ways to support and to strengthen those social and political niches where communicative status distinctions are inverted. Even if, in early twentieth-century London, a cockney accent relegates Eliza Doolittle to a life spent selling flowers, nonetheless there likely exist neighbourhoods in that same city where the linguistic distinctions of the working-class define the norm. Here – where Higgins's inflated speech is more likely than Doolittle's 'improper' speech to be the object of ridicule or even scorn – Eliza Doolittle might explore, together with others who share her communicative habits and dispositions, and in the absence of the normalising pressure of dominant discursive norms, her needs, her perceptions, her experiences as a working-class English woman. In places like this, where Doolittle's communicative contributions are not devalued as a result of her *habitus*, she and other working-class women might develop a political consciousness that enables and motivates them to challenge dominant communicative (and other) norms. Some deliberative democrats have emphasised this third strategy, arguing that democrats should challenge cultural inequality not only directly (by changing habits and/or by changing norms) but also indirectly: by supporting multiple deliberative fora, and in particular those fora that

enable communication among the marginalised. Their claim is that the 'decentered public sphere ... of mutually overlapping networks and associations' (Benhabib 2002: 139) enables 'counterdiscourses' consisting in 'oppositional interpretations of ... identities, interests, and needs' (Fraser 1992: 123; see also Bohman 1996, 1997).

Each of these responses represents an important challenge to the problems that cultural inequality poses for deliberative democracy. In the second part of the essay, however, I suggest that those concerned about the role *habitus* plays in shaping communicative exchange should be sceptical of claims that they are adequate to the task. Focusing on Bourdieu's work on those tacit understandings that he terms *doxa* – that is, perceptual and classificatory schemes that are misrecognised as having no alternative, and hence as inevitable' – I make the case that his theory of the linguistic *habitus* prompts a more radical critique of deliberative democracy than that elaborated by recent theorists, including some who draw heavily on Bourdieu's work. If and to the extent that this Bourdieuan theory is right, the three responses outlined above fail to address key underlying causes of the devaluation of the deliberative contributions of the marginalised.

### Doxa and Deliberation

To explore the relevance for deliberative theory of Bourdieu's claims about the political work performed by *doxa*, there is perhaps no better place to begin than with his notion of *habitus*. For Bourdieu, *habitus* signals a complex of relatively enduring dispositions that human agents acquire over the course of our socialisation. Consisting in a wide range of patterns of perception, action, and valuation, *habitus* manifests itself in, for instance, particular ways of comprehending and classifying social phenomena, particular sets of tastes and distastes, particular ways of dressing or holding the body or gesturing.<sup>4</sup> As noted above, *habitus* is comprised, in part, of specifically communicative dispositions. These a given speaker might evidence in the form of an accent, a way of pronouncing words, a grammatical construction, a bodily stance, a set of intonations.<sup>5</sup> When the social actor finds herself on the receiving end of a communicative exchange, *habitus* reveals itself again: now in the ways in which she distinguishes, for instance, the (un)reasonable, the (un)intelligible, the (in)plausible (Bourdieu 1991: esp. chs 1, 3).

From where does *habitus* come? Bourdieu's claim is that it is formed and maintained via processes of socialisation, with early childhood learning in the family playing a pivotal role. Take, as an example, a practice as

apparently mundane as walking. When the toddler takes her first steps, Bourdieu might suggest, she begins to learn not only how to get about, but more specifically how to get about in a manner socially defined as fitting for, say, an upper-middle-class American girl. She begins to acquire an express set of perambulatory dispositions as she mimics the gait of the girls and the women around her: as she mimics, that is, socialising agents whose own practices are shaped by *habitus*. This implicit teaching is reinforced by explicit teaching, which can be at its most effective when most subtle (a downward glance of the eyes, a restrained, 'please!'). It is strengthened, as well, by material conditions, which Bourdieu conceives as indurated *habitus*. An example is the high-heeled shoe, which destabilises the body while pushing its weight toward pinched toes, making it all but impossible, say, to climb stairs two or more at a time.<sup>6</sup>

The example is meant to illustrate a more general Bourdieuan claim. If *habitus* is shaped by material conditions, as well as by the *habitus* of socialising agents, then in any society comprised of different social groups that confront different material conditions (different institutions, different opportunity structures, different spatial configurations, which differ differentially, what is possible, what is probable, what is thinkable), *habitus* will vary systematically with social position.<sup>7</sup>

The Bourdieuan notion of *habitus* has obvious affinities with the conceptualisation of cultural inequality that informs popular understandings of linguistic status distinctions, such as those encapsulated in the story of Dr Higgins and Eliza Doolittle. It is because of *habitus*, Bourdieu might suggest, that someone like Eliza Doolittle talks the way that she does. Similarly, the classificatory and the valuative dispositions that comprise the *habitus* of the privileged in turn-of-the-century London go a long way toward accounting for Dr Higgins's predilection to view as 'improper' working-class forms of speech. If the dominant devalue the speech of the working-class as aesthetically displeasing, the Bourdieuan claim is – or even if they devalue it simply as *wrong* – their judgement is largely a product of the differential dispositions that *habitus* produces in every pluralistic human society.

Yet Bourdieu's theory also departs in significant ways from more popular accounts of cultural inequality. According to the theory of linguistic distinction implicit in *My Fair Lady*, speakers and listeners consciously recognise socially relevant communicative patterns and dispositions. These we explicitly approve or disapprove. And we can learn and unlearn sets of linguistic habits relatively easily via formal lessons in rule-following. Consider, again, Dr Higgins's intoned declaration, cited at the start

of this essay: 'An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him. The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him.' With this pronouncement, the doctor makes it clear that he consciously understands the work performed by communicative distinction in the social context he inhabits. He not only understands *that* talk produces distinction; he also understands quite well *how* it does. That is to say, he knows with some certainty which particular rules Eliza Doolittle needs to follow in order to speak in a way socially recognised as legitimate. What is more, he is able to teach her to master those rules in a matter of months.

For Bourdieu, by contrast, *habitus* consists in *embodied* dispositions. *Habitus* is inscribed, that is to say, not primarily in the conscious mind, but at the level of the muscles and the nerves and the tendons that make up a human body. Think of the difference between, on the one hand, how you learned (and how you recall) the rules for performing algebraic manipulations, and on the other, how you learned (and how, daily, almost as if by instinct, you are re-called) to walk or to sit or to eat like a 'civilised woman' (or like a 'civilised man'). The latter, Bourdieu might suggest, differs from the former in that – and because – it is evidence of *habitus*. It is evidence of the practical mastery of a social competence for which rule-following behavior can only ever serve as a second-best substitute (see Taylor 1993).

*Habitus* is governed, not by abstract principles to which actors consciously and deliberately conform, so much as by what Bourdieu calls a 'feel for the game':

Action guided by a 'feel for the game' has all the appearances of the rational action that an impartial observer, endowed with all the necessary information and capable of mastering it rationally, would deduce. And yet it is not based on reason. You need only think of the impulsive decision made by the tennis player who runs up to the net, to understand that it has nothing in common with the learned construction that the coach, after analysis, draws up in order to explain it and deduce communicable lessons from it. (Bourdieu 1990: 11)

*Habitus* is less a structure of standards or a theoretical model of the social world than a practical 'sense' that the actor, quite literally, incorporates: a sense of style, a sense of decency, a sense of humor, a sense of reality (Bourdieu 1977: 124). It is not readily articulated. It is not readily subjected to critical reflection and to conscious manipulation.

Hence Bourdieu's theory suggests that explicit instruction in the capacities and the tendencies that comprise the *habitus* will be relatively ineffectual. It always will come after the fact of *habitus*. It always will reinforce (for the dominant) or attempt to undo (for the marginalised), by working through the conscious mind, a kind of work that implicit teaching already has done – and more efficiently – directly upon the body.

To be clear, in drawing attention to this aspect of Bourdieu's theory, I do not mean to suggest that political theorists should assume the existence of an immutable *habitus*. To the contrary, if and to the extent that this extreme position is implicit in Bourdieu's work, it seems to me an implausible element of his theory, and one that should be rejected.<sup>3</sup> Yet democratic theorists do need to take into account the possibility that explicit teaching to the marginalised the skills they need for effective political deliberation will be insufficient to close the gap *habitus* opens between the ways in which they speak, reason, and argue, and the ways in which they are expected to. Even if formal schooling in grammar and logic and public speaking were to improve some individuals' communicative efficacy, we need to take seriously the possibility that, on a larger scale, Dr Higgins's plan will fall short. Compensatory schooling, Bourdieu's claim is, insufficient to challenge those social hierarchies rooted in the skills and the tendencies that comprise the linguistic *habitus*.

Nor is re-defining deliberative standards an adequate remedy, by the Bourdieuan view, for at least three reasons. First, classificatory and evaluative dispositions are not only embodied at the level of *habitus*. They are also institutionalised at the level of what Bourdieu terms 'fields': at the level, that is, of normative matrices that define socially valued ends and standards, and that circulate goods (such as money, awards, prestige, positions, or degrees) accordingly.<sup>4</sup> Consider, again, the oft-cited valuatve disposition to hold rational argumentation in higher esteem than 'stories' or 'testimony'. If actors in a given social context tend to embody this disposition, a Bourdieuan might claim, they do so in significant part because the institutional constraints they face in a range of fields (including, and arguably most significantly, in the educational field) define for them an incentive to do so. The practical knowledge that is *habitus*, that is to say, is a competence *relative to* a series of institutionalised normative structures. It is one that the agent cannot suspend simply by withdrawing her endorsement. It is one that the political philosopher cannot extirpate simply by re-defining standards of legitimate deliberation.

Second, by the Bourdieuan view, even if political theorists and political practitioners were able effectively to challenge some embodied and

institutionalised communicative norms, others would elude us. It may be possible to render explicit, to interrogate, and to alter in at least some institutional contexts the practice of socially privileging speech defined as 'rational' vis-à-vis speech defined as 'impassioned'. It may be possible to thematise and to criticise the practice of regarding arguments that logically deduce conclusions from stated premises as more persuasive than testimonials or personal narratives. Even if so, however, communicative patterns and tendencies that largely escape our notice may continue to perform similar work. Subtle differences in accent, for instance, and in the rate of speech and in the volume and pitch of the human voice may vary systematically with what Bourdieu calls *habitus*. These may 'mark' speakers. And they may do so in ways that escape conscious awareness. Subtle stylistic differences – the use of certain types of gestures or certain linguistic forms, for instance – may do the same.

Thus, although Bourdieu likely would approve efforts to relax those communicative standards that social actors understand and that we consciously can manipulate, even still, he would worry that these leave in place more subtle forms of linguistic distinction, which continue to undermine political equality. Thus expanding deliberative theory's definition of politically valuable forms of speech might produce, not communicative equality, but patterned dominance across a wider range of forms of speech. It might produce patterned dominance in testimony-giving, or patterned dominance in story-telling. *Habitus* might affect, that is to say – and in ways that are inequalitarian, and systematically so – which testimonies people experience as the most moving, which stories they find the most compelling. Systematic differences in listener perceptions and categorisations of narratives and testimonials can mirror the inequalities characteristic of more argumentative forms of linguistic exchange.<sup>5</sup>

Third, even if the social theorist were able to identify and to interrogate some significant fraction of these more elusive communicative standards, it does not follow that the social actor would change her practical disposition to employ them. Think, for a moment, about the social scientific knowledge to which you are exposed, daily, in your professional life. To what extent does it cause you to change your everyday social practices? In the third section of this essay I cite a number of social psychological studies that lend support to the Bourdieuan claim that *habitus* shapes communicative efficacy. If you were to read those studies, and if you were to find yourself persuaded by the evidence that they present, would you therefore divorce your judgements of your interlocutors and the messages they communicate from the dispositions they evince?

Key to the Bourdieuan account of the interaction between *habitus* and field is what Bourdieu characterises as social actors' chronic misrecognition of its effects. Intellectually, his claim is, people may be capable of apprehending the logic of communicative practice. Practically, however, we consistently fail to do so. If Bourdieu conceives this misrecognition, from the standpoint of the collectivity, as a lie that we join together in telling to ourselves,<sup>11</sup> from the standpoint of the individual it can be characterised as no more and no less than the selective use of (limited) cognitive resources in ways that enable our functioning as competent social actors. A speaker's success or her lack of success in producing a statement that achieves an intended effect on her listener (a statement that impresses her listener as appropriate to the situation, or intelligent or reasonable or compelling) tends to strike us as a product of the sense of the words themselves, or perhaps as the result of the speaker's unique abilities and efforts. What this common-sense understanding overlooks is the role *doxa* play in legitimising arbitrary distinctions: specifically, the role *habitus* plays in insinuating, and field plays in marking, a set of linguistic dispositions that, in turn, mark the speaker.

Hence, by the Bourdieuan view, the trouble with the third strategy sketched above is that it merely postpones, rather than solves, the difficulties it aims to address. Bourdieu's theory suggests that when – as they must, eventually, if they are to be politically efficacious – subaltern publics address the publics of the dominant, their contributions will be systematically devalued. What is more, they will be systematically devalued in ways that deliberators tend to misrecognise. If Bourdieu is right on this count, then the deliberative ideal defines as a precondition a kind of equality that deliberation in practice functions to undermine. If every socially situated communicative encounter takes place in the context of a market that rewards a circumscribed set of linguistic constructions while sanctioning others, then in every pluralistic and hierarchical society, speech will introduce to politics, even as it disguises, class-based forms of distinction.

#### Cultural Inequality: Toward a Practical Understanding

In drawing attention to these aspects of Bourdieu's social theory, I should be clear that I do not mean to endorse them unequivocally. As critics have noted, Bourdieu often overstates his case. He tends to emphasise the structural determination of practice, at the expense of reflective and deliberate human action (see, e.g., Alexander 1995b; Bolman 1999; Connell 1983a;

Jenkins 2002). He emphasises equilibrium and the reproduction of social relations, at the expense of individual and collective actions that produce change (see, e.g., Calhoun 1995; DiMaggio 1979). More generally, Bourdieu seems to underestimate the extent to which people can achieve conscious awareness of and critical distance from the social world, including from their own dispositions and from the doxic legitimization of dominant linguistic and other practices. Nevertheless, Bourdieuan social theory can serve as a useful counterweight to deliberative democratic theory, because it underscores dimensions of cultural inequality that deliberative democrats tend to overlook. The starting point for many theories of deliberative democracy is the claim that to render politics more like a reasoned search for agreement is to reduce the political influence of relations of power. Approximating as closely as possible a counter-factual state in which no force but 'the force of the better argument' shapes collective decisions, deliberative democrats suggest, mitigates the role that power plays in democratic politics.

Bourdieu's work suggests that too sanguine a view of the relation between human communication and social power sustains this deliberative democratic claim. Differential social positioning, he argues, shapes differential systems of dispositions (*habitus*). These, in concert with normative matrices defined by the values and the standards of the dominant (fields), produce status distinctions that function in *all* social exchange – including intersubjective communicative exchange – as mechanisms of power. Hence it is wrong-headed to regard communication, even under highly idealised conditions, as an antidote to power. To the contrary, he claims, 'linguistic relations are always relations of power' (quoted in Wacquant 1989: 46). What is more, because *habitus* is embodied and enduring, because the norms and the standards that fields institutionalise often elude conscious awareness, and because actors tend to misrecognise the work that *doxa* perform, by the Bourdieuan view, the solutions proposed by friendly critics of deliberative democracy – changing habits, changing norms, and supporting multiple deliberative fora – are insufficient to challenge the cultural inequalities that function to undermine deliberative democratic equality.

Thus, although his critics may be correct in asserting that Bourdieu overestimates the extent to which power shapes communicative and other forms of social exchange, his work nonetheless helps generate a series of hypotheses, which social theorists and social scientists should address as the literature on deliberative democracy evolves from its ideal theory to a more empirically engaged phase. In this final section, I sketch

approaches that empirical research might take in order to address the problem of cultural inequality as Bourdieu theorises it. First, however, I want to draw attention to some important practical work that already has been done on problems of inequality and deliberative politics, which might serve as a model for the empirical study of specifically cultural forms of inequality.

A number of political theorists and political scientists have attended to evidence suggesting that actors who occupy dominant social positions tend to dominate deliberative and other communicative interactions. Consider, for instance, Lyn Kathlene's work on deliberation in the Colorado state legislature (Kathlene 1994). Analysing tapes of hearings conducted by house standing committees, Kathlene finds deliberative participatory patterns to be decidedly skewed. Male committee members and chairs take more turns speaking than do their female counterparts. They interrupt other speakers more frequently, and they speak more overall. Lynn Sanders (1997), reviewing studies of jury deliberations and of communication among interlocutors in educational settings, documents remarkably similar patterns. Experimental evidence suggests that these patterns hold, as well, outside legislative and other expressly political settings, likely affecting the extra-governmental communicative encounters that, for the deliberative theorist, comprise the democratic public sphere.<sup>12</sup> What is more – and which holds particular significance for theories of deliberative democracy – listeners tend to perceive those speakers who dominate communicative exchanges to be more influential and more competent than those who take relatively few turns speaking, take shorter turns, and interrupt infrequently (Giles & Street 1994).

Research on deliberative participatory inequalities has prompted a series of practical responses. Perhaps the best-known are the experiments in 'deliberative polling' conducted by James Fishkin and his colleagues, who view deliberative polls as a means to resolving the tensions they see between the values of deliberation and political equality (see, e.g., Fishkin & Luskin 1999, 2000). Deliberative polls use a range of institutional mechanisms to check inequality in deliberation. For example, random sampling helps bring people from different social and political backgrounds to the deliberative table; the privacy of post-deliberative polling reduces normalising pressures in preference articulation; and trained facilitators work to reduce participatory inequalities of the sort identified by Sanders, Kathlene and others. In a similar vein, Archon Fung (2001) and David Schlosberg (1999) have shown that the

use of trained facilitators and other forms of institutional remediation can reduce at least some deliberative participatory inequalities.

However, as demonstrated above, concerns about the specifically cultural inequalities that Bourdieu's theory highlights are analytically distinct from these concerns about deliberative participatory inequalities. If Bourdieu is right – if *habitus* in conjunction with field works to legitimise the linguistic products of the dominant, while delegitimising the statements and the other deliberative contributions of the marginalised – then even perfect participatory parity is compatible with significant political inequality in deliberative settings. Deliberative institutions and procedures, in other words, even if they succeed in bringing together differentially positioned interlocutors and ensuring that each has an ample and an equal opportunity to participate, may produce systematic biases in outcomes due to the arbitrary devaluation of particular communicative styles.

Hence political researchers and political practitioners need to devote attention not only to questions of deliberative participatory inequality, but also to the questions about deliberative cultural inequality that Bourdieu's work helps pose. We can begin to think about these in terms of three pairs of hypotheses that I want to suggest are generated by the theory of the linguistic *habitus*. The first centres on the distribution and the reception of relatively enduring dispositions. If Bourdieu is correct, then the linguistic and the other communicative dispositions that speakers exhibit should vary systematically with their social location. What is more, these dispositions should exert a patterned and an asymmetrical effect on what Bourdieu terms 'success' in those communicative 'markets' defined by the evaluative dispositions of the dominant.

Clearly, a broad survey of evidence that supports or disconfirms these hypotheses is beyond the scope of this essay. Nonetheless, I want to consider, briefly, some relevant evidence that offers provisional support. With respect to the first hypothesis, a substantial body of evidence suggests that linguistic dispositions do, as Bourdieu would predict, vary systematically with markers of subject position, including class, gender, ethnicity, race and social status. Syntactical complexity and lexical diversity, for instance, vary with social class. Not only do the pitch and the volume of the human voice vary with gender, so do pronunciation, patterns of bodily distance and gaze during communicative exchange, and the tendency to perform gestures and other bodily movements while talking. Phonological and syntactical patterns have been shown to vary with ethnicity and with race, as have bodily distance, gaze, and the proclivity



to touch one's interlocutors while speaking and listening. Posture, gaze, and bodily orientation vary, as well, with social status and with position in a hierarchical structure of authority (See Carli 1990; Fitzpatrick et al. 1995; Giles & Street 1994; Johnson 1994).

In addition, an established body of work lends support to the second hypothesis in the pair: i.e., that communicative dispositions affect the ways in which listeners perceive both speakers and the messages speakers communicate. Speech rate, lexical diversity and intonation affect listener perceptions, as does the extent to which a speaker uses qualifiers or hedges (e.g., 'sort of' or 'I guess'), tag questions (e.g., 'right?'), indirect speech ('would you mind...?'), and verbal intensifiers (e.g., 'so') and reinforcers ('mimmmmm hummmmm'). Posture, hand gestures and the eye contact that a speaker makes with her interlocutors exert significant effects, as well, on what Bourdieu would call her communicative success.<sup>11</sup> For example, in laboratory settings, speakers who present a persuasive message are perceived as less competent than other speakers who present an identical message when they adopt what researchers term a 'submissive' style of presentation (Carli et al. 1995). In similar studies, subjects presented with sentence pairs that differ only with respect to a single relevant dimension of speech style rate as more competent, organised, systematic, decisive, intelligent, confident, logical, serious and strong the supposed author of sentences written in what researchers term a 'nonfeminine' or a relatively powerful style, compared with those they believed authored sentences written in a 'feminine' or a relatively powerless style (Quina et al. 1987). Ethnic dialect 'marks' speech, as well; listeners tend to imbue with competence, status, intelligence, and success those speakers whose accents match the accents of dominant ethnic groups (Giles & Street 1994).

It is worth underscoring that these differential speech patterns affect not only the impression that a speaker makes on her listeners, but also her persuasive influence. They affect, that is, the extent to which she can induce listeners to alter their opinions to correspond more closely to the position that she advocates (Carli et al. 1995).

This evidence, although not decisive, seems to me sufficient to demonstrate that cultural inequality should be a central concern for students of deliberative democracy. But we need to know more. Specifically, we need evidence that bears on at least two additional pairs of hypotheses generated by Bourdieuan social theory. The second centres on the processes by which the dispositions that comprise the *habitus* are formed. If Bourdieu is right, actors learn these dispositions implicitly. What is more, if he is

correct, once 'incorporated', habit-like constraints become relatively difficult for people to un-learn or otherwise to change.

A third pair of hypotheses centres on the normative standards that define and govern linguistic legitimacy. Again, if Bourdieu is right, actors learn these standards preconsciously, in much the same way that we learn dispositions. In addition, it should be relatively difficult for us to un-learn these standards, to thematise them, and to subject them to critical evaluation and deliberate change.

At present, the literature on deliberative democracy is devoid of evidence that speaks to these hypotheses. Such evidence is needed, however, if deliberative theory is to address effectively the challenge of cultural inequality. Are the dispositions that affect communicative success effectively taught and learned through explicit teaching, as implied by the story of Dr Higgins and Eliza Doolittle? Alternatively, are they principally – and best – learned implicitly, and very early in life, as Bourdieu posits? In either case, how difficult is it for people to un-learn and to re-learn these dispositions? Similarly, do actors apply the normative standards that define and govern linguistic legitimacy consciously, or do we do so, at least in part, unconsciously? How readily can interlocutors 'move' these standards from the realm of unstated background assumptions to the realm of explicit claims that they might evaluate, criticise, and change? More generally, can specifically cultural inequalities be remedied through institutional mechanisms, as some participatory inequalities can? Or are they, as Bourdieu might argue, a constitutive, rather than a merely contingent feature of deliberative politics?

Much rides on the answers. If, on the one hand, cultural inequalities are relatively unyielding to institutional change, then institutions more often associated with agonistic or adversarial views of the democratic process may be necessary checks on the egalitarian tendencies of deliberation. If, on the other hand, cultural inequalities can be eliminated, or at least significantly mitigated, though institutional mechanisms, then further questions arise. Which institutional mechanisms best check cultural forms of deliberative inequality? How do these institutions work, and in which contexts and under which conditions do they work?

No doubt, one reason empirical researchers thus far have not tackled these questions is that nontrivial challenges face those who would study implicit learning and unconscious evaluative processes. But there is no reason to assume these challenges are insurmountable. Researchers might begin by adapting methods that cognitive scientists have developed to study human language acquisition, as well as methods they have

used to analyse relatively complex but entirely unconscious cognitive processes. For example, developmental psychologists have employed what they call a 'high-amplitude sucking procedure' to demonstrate that, during the second half of their first year, human babies lose their inborn sensitivity to those phonemic contrasts that are not part of a language in which they are being socialised: evidence of at least one relatively enduring perceptual disposition that varies with early and implicit linguistic learning, much as Bourdieu would predict.<sup>14</sup> Similar studies could investigate other relevant dispositions that, by the Bourdieuan view, comprise the linguistic *habitus*. Deliberative democrats might borrow, as well, from cognitive scientific methods employed to study the unconscious learning and application of norms and standards. The so-called 'artificial grammar experiment', for example, has been used to demonstrate that people can master and make accurate judgments with respect to complex grammatical rules of which they have no conscious knowledge.<sup>15</sup> A modified version might explore whether and to what extent the standards defining legitimate linguistic products are learned and applied unconsciously.

Other questions that Bourdieu's theory generates could be explored using the more familiar techniques of the social and the political psychologist. Experimental subjects could be presented with incentives to alter relevant communicative dispositions, for instance, in order to test whether and to what extent these are susceptible to conscious manipulation. Similarly, subjects could be presented with incentives to change the standards that they use to judge the communicative performances of others, in order to test their capacity to do so.

### Conclusion

It would be rash to conclude, on the basis of the evidence presented here, that differential communicative dispositions render unrealisable the politically egalitarian standards that deliberative theory defines. We need to understand better the extent and the depth of communicative inequalities. We need to understand better how it is that people learn and employ the specific dispositions that shape deliberative exchange.

Yet, by the same token, absent reasonably clear answers to the questions for deliberative theory that Bourdieu's work helps prompt, it seems wrong-headed to assume that efforts to change the habits of the marginalised, to change discursive standards, and to strengthen deliberative counter-publics are adequate to the task of challenging cultural inequality.

To the contrary, whether 'an Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him' remains an open – and from the standpoint of deliberative democratic theory, a crucial – question.

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### NOTES

1. I do not provide a detailed review of the literature on deliberative theory in this essay, because it is, by now, quite well-known. For important statements of normative arguments supporting deliberative democracy, see Benhabib 1996b; Cohen 1989; Dryzek 1990; Elster 1984; Gutmann & Thompson 1996; Habermas 1996; Martin 1987.
2. The reference is to Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Here 'distinction' signals a privileged social classification that – although the product of a social structure defining class-based differences in material conditions – actors experience as natural, a reflection of individual 'tastes' (Bourdieu 1984).
3. Bourdieu first develops this notion in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, where he characterises the experience of doxa as 'the subjective experience [of the social world as] realised ought-to-be' (Bourdieu 1977: 166). Here Bourdieu contrasts the opinions expressed in argument – which he notes might be orthodox or heterodox – with those un-argued assumptions that function as the constitutive outside of any discursive field. It is worth noting that this Bourdieuan schematic is not entirely in consonance with Habermas's – and hence, at least implicitly, with many deliberative democrats' – understanding of the relation between taken-for-granted background assumptions and consciously thematised claims. The principal difference between the two views centres on the question of to what extent and how easily agents can 'move' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions from the doxic to the discursive field. Bourdieu's contention is that we can do so only under extraordinary circumstances: under conditions of 'culture contact, for instance, or other forms of crisis, which undermine the doxic quality of particular perceptual and classificatory schemes by breaking the connection between material conditions and the 'senses' that comprise an agent's *habitus*. Crises, the claim is, can de-naturalise the social world, which can then be subject to critique. But actors generally cannot de-naturalise doxa simply by deciding to suspend their beliefs. Habermas, by contrast, seems to me more sanguine about the latter possibility. See, in particular, Habermas (1990a), a concise statement of the position elaborated in his two-volume *Theory of Communicative Action* (Habermas 1984, 1987).
4. See Bourdieu (1977: esp. ch.2); Butler (1999: 116) characterises as 'mimetic identification' the processes through which the body incorporates *habitus*; by conforming to social norms repeatedly, over time, she explains, Bourdieu claims the body makes them 'second nature'. For a thorough overview of the role the concept plays in Bourdieu's work, see Swartz (1997: ch.5).
5. Although the phrase Bourdieu uses to signal such dispositions is 'linguistic *habitus*', and the preponderance of the examples he gives are examples of specifically linguistic dispositions (such as grammar, syntax and pronunciation), it seems to me in keeping with his central claims and concerns to attend, as well, to nonverbal communicative

- dispositions (e.g., gestures) that can contribute to the social definition of a message or another form of expression as (il)legitimate. For Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus* as applied specifically to communicative practices, see especially the essays collected in Bourdieu (1991), Shusterman (1999b), Snook (1996) and Thompson (1984a, 1991) offer excellent synopses of Bourdieu's work on language.
6. For an extended application of the concept of *habitus* to gender relations, see Bourdieu 2001. McCall (1992: 844) suggests that Bourdieu generally conceives gender as a biological difference that actors assign social meaning only in relation to more basic differences in class, as defined by educational achievement and occupational status. However, on an alternative plausible interpretation, she argues, gender figures significantly in the analysis of social space, escaping the superstructural status assigned to it by the first [interpretation]. This alternative interpretation, she argues, renders Bourdieu's social theory a useful tool for feminist theorists.
  7. The term Bourdieu uses is 'class'. I use 'position', instead, to draw attention to those moments in his writing when Bourdieu conceptualises class in terms of, not relation to the means of production or a shared subjective sense of collective identity, but positioning within networks of social relations of power. 'Classes' thus conceived are theoretical constructs that identify 'sets of agents who occupy similar positions and who, being placed in similar conditions and submitted to similar types of conditioning, have every chance of having similar dispositions and interests, and thus of producing similar practices and adopting similar stances' (Bourdieu 1991: 231). For overarching discussions of the concept of class in Bourdieu's work, see Brubaker (1985) and Swartz (1997: ch.7).
  8. Alexander (1995b: 147), among others, is of the view that something close to this position is implicit in Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus*. He claims that *habitus*, as Bourdieu conceives it, changes only in response to 'systemic, objectively generated discontinuities', such as market shifts that generate gaps between objective possibilities and subjective expectations. That this position is implausible is shown by Bourdieu's own biography. As Loïc Wacziarg noted in an interview just after Bourdieu's death, 'He had a unique social trajectory. He came from a peasant background, from a very small and isolated village, as far from the centers of intellectual power as you could imagine. He had a very thick accent from the south of France, he was the first in his family to finish high school. And yet he had an extraordinary success in the educational system' (quoted in Melencoe 2002).
  9. According to Bourdieu, 'Social reality exists twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in *habitus*, outside and inside of agents. And when *habitus* encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself "as fish in water," it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted' (Wacziarg 1989: 43). Or, less lyrically, but more concisely: '[*habitus*] (canon) + field = practice' (Bourdieu 1984: 101).
  10. On this matter, the Bourdieusian is in agreement with Dryzek (2000: ch.3) and Miller (2000: ch.9).
  11. 'Everything takes place as if agents' practice ... were organised exclusively with a view to concealing from themselves and from others the truth of their practice' (Bourdieu 1977: 6).
  12. In laboratory settings, for instance, the length of time that conversation partners speak tends to vary with cues about their social status or their authority. Absent such cues, if studies show that men talk longer than women in mixed-sex groups. Women speak more, however, when conversing with same-sex interlocutors. Some early studies suggest that the frequency of interruptions varies with gender, as well (see, e.g. Zimmerman & West 1975). But more recent evidence is mixed. Carl (1990), for example, finds no gendered difference in frequency of interruptions. Smith-Lovin & Brody (1989), although they find no gendered difference in the frequency of interruptions, do find that men interrupt women significantly more than they interrupt other men, and
- that interruptions are more likely to succeed (i.e., more likely to result in the interrupted speaker yielding the floor) when women are interrupted than when men are.
13. Robin Lakoff (1975) spurred research on the effects of speech characteristics with her hypothesis that listener perceptions of female speakers are influenced by a specifically 'feminine' style, marked by the relatively frequent use of linguistic forms signalling powerlessness. Partial support was found in early studies centring on courtroom interactions, which showed that perceptions of the raters' competence, trustworthiness, and persuasiveness of witnesses and of fellow jurors varied with such factors as the frequency of their use of hedges, intensifiers, hesitation, and indirect speech forms, and the pitch and the loudness of their voices (Lind & O'Barr 1979; Scherer 1979). For a recent overview of studies documenting the (culturally variable) effects of speech style, see Krauss & Chiu (1998).
  14. The procedure involves conditioning babies to suck on a pacifier in order to receive a stimulus. After receiving the same stimulus multiple times, a baby will grow bored, and reduce her rate of sucking. The researcher then presents her with a new stimulus. If she perceives the difference, she becomes interested again, and increases her rate of sucking. See Werker (1989), who reports findings from a series of studies demonstrating that all infants are able to discriminate all phonemic contrasts, but that at about ten to twelve months of age their sensitivity to nonnative phonemic contrasts dramatically declines. (Note: a phoneme is a semantically significant sound contrast. Contrasts that are phonemic in one language are not necessarily phonemic in another.)
  15. In artificial grammar experiments, subjects are asked to memorise letters or other symbols that, unbeknownst to them, are arranged systematically according to rules analogous with a natural grammar. Only later are they informed that the symbols they studied were rule-governed. They are then presented with new sets of symbols, generated in accordance with the same artificial grammar, and asked to judge their grammatical accuracy. Generally, people perform significantly above chance levels on these tests, despite being unable to identify or to explain the rules governing the grammar. Interestingly, they perform better when researchers tell them to rely on their 'gut feeling' when making their judgements, because the grammatical structure is too complex to discern, than when they tell them to work consciously to discover the rules and to apply them. In fact, amnesiac subjects perform just as well in these experiments as do those with functioning memories, although the former perform significantly more poorly when tested for their ability to recognise and to recall the previously presented symbol strings (Knowlton et al. 1992; Knowlton & Squire 1994).

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## The Ideal of Civilisation: Its Origins and Socio-Political Character

BRETT BOWDEN

*There has been a revival in the use of the terms 'civilisation' and 'civilisations' to describe and explain events in the social sciences and humanities, nowhere more so than in politics and international affairs. This revival has seen the terms interpreted and applied in a variety of manners and different contexts. In too many cases this endeavour has been less than effective because of an oversimplification of what the terms mean and what they have historically represented. In part in response to this revival but also in part as an explanatory tool itself, this article gives a comprehensive overview of the Enlightenment origins and meanings of the term 'civilisation(s)'. A central concern is the oft-neglected normative component of the ideal of civilisation and the implications it carries.*

It is never a waste of time to study the history of a word.

Lucien Febvre, *A New Kind of History*

Civilization is a fact like any other – a fact susceptible, like any other, of being studied, described, narrated.

François Guizot, *The History of Civilization in Europe*

### Introduction

In recent years the terms 'civilisation' and 'civilisations' have regained some of their lost prominence as tools for describing and explaining the workings of various fields of the social sciences and humanities. Both of these terms continue to be interpreted and applied in a variety of manners and different contexts, or in some cases, misinterpreted and misapplied. In part in response to this revival but also in part as an explanatory tool itself, the object of this article is to give a comprehensive overview of the