

Habitus and cognitive praxis among environmentalists

(from *Developing a Compassionate Sense of Place:*

Environmental and social Conscientization in Environmental Organizations,

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*Research on social movements has looked primarily at activists involved in campaigns. Since the environmental movement has maintained that the everyday lifestyle of the citizen is part of the environmental problem and part of the solution, we would do well to examine also these lifestyle practices and what generates them. Using tools from Bourdieu's sociological method, this ethnographic study considers how environmental "logic of practice" is informed by habitus. A logic of practice is the "feel" for living (*sens pratique*) generated by internalized and "pre-logical" dispositions (*habitus*) and the social field. Another approach to explaining the operations of social movements, particularly for members, is that of "cognitive praxis." In this formulation by Eyerman and Jamison, social movements create new knowledge systems.*

*This research assesses the environmental habitus of environmentally-active persons in a region, finding several common dispositions amidst the great variety of ways of being environmentally active. These individuals tried to live in environmentally responsible ways, but were keenly aware of their inconsistencies. Being different than the dominant ways of being in contemporary society, they engaged in a variety of practices to "self-dispose" or non-cognitively support their environmental dispositions. However, their place in contemporary society where a routinized environmental sensitivity is contrary to the dominant or mainstream logic of practice, led to increased self-awareness. Thus, an environmental habitus could be said to include reflexivity, which appears to contradict the "pre-logical" description of the habitus. Reflexivity is a core part of being environmentally active, and participates in developing movement identity. The paper concludes by explaining the link between *sens pratique* and cognitive praxis, thereby advancing social movement theory.*

Mick Smith (2001) argues, following an extensive survey of sociological and social theory, that for genuine and long-lasting environmental improvements to occur, a social theory grounded in place and everyday practice is needed. He calls for a social theory that is relational in its approach, culminating in an ecological habitus. The result would be an ecologically sound "logic of practice" or "feel for living"—rather than environmental rationality as has been the focus of environmental ethics. Social theory's purpose is to help explain social phenomena. In this case, perhaps the diagnosis can help with prognosis for a more ecologically sound future.

For the most part, research on social movement participants has looked primarily at activists involved in campaigns. Given the goal of the environmental movement to change societal and personal practices in more ecologically adequate ways, the everyday lives of environmentally-

active people are at least as significant as the “heat of battle” environmental campaigning (Almanzar, Sullivan-Caitlin & Deane, 1998). This study analyzes the logic of practice of environmentally-active persons involved with environmental organizations. The research is guided by Bourdieu’s sociological tools; as others have noted, Bourdieu’s concepts are “good to think with” (Camic & Gross, 1998; Reed-Danahay, 2005). It also draws on Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) conceptualization of social movements as “cognitive praxis.” Specifically, this research interrogates the broad parameters of the habitus that shapes the lived practice and articulations of practices of environmentally-active people in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Secondly, it pursues the interrelationship of habitus and cognitive praxis among these individuals in order to advance social movement theory.

Conceptual Background

The complexity of modern society is such that rules for living are near impossible. On a practical basis humans do not live by rules, but by a *modus vivendi*, a way of living rather than a rationally derived ethic. Drawing on French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, Smith (2001) argued for reconceptualizing human-environment relationality in terms of an ecological habitus. Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field provide a means of understanding social reproduction without determinism, and integrating agency and structure in a parsimonious manner. Bourdieu’s is a relational social theory (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Society is a multilayered edifice of interlocking social fields, each with its internal logic. A field is the intersection of positions held by actants in relation to other actants.¹ The field is constructed by the configuration of their shifting positions, changing as they interact. Habitus, in Bourdieu’s thought, is the internalized and embodied set of general dispositions of a class of actors in a given social setting. Habitus generates practices and beliefs as it forms individual and collective representations of the world. Habitus is thus formed in the biography of social agents, and in everyday practices generated within social fields. Together, the field and its habitus generate practices that work in

¹ I have intentionally used this word, drawn from Latour’s (1999) work. Since “actors” usually conveys connotations limited to human agency yet for an ecologically-sound social theory the influence (if not action) of non-human components of the ecological community needs to be acknowledged, the term “actants” opens discursive space that matches socio-ecological realities.

their context.

Bourdieu's own favourite expression of habitus was as a "feel for the game" of the specific field. This embodied sense of effective play on the field generates what Bourdieu calls the "logic of practice," which acts back upon both the habitus and field which co-generated it.

Because this logic is not necessarily cognitive or reasoned, the French equivalent *sens pratique* conveys more of the tacit and unreflexive operations which are at the root of routinized everyday life. For Bourdieu, a key element of habitus was its "pre-logical" character (Wacquant, 2004b).

Bourdieu (1998) explains,

The theory of action that I propose (with the notion of habitus) amounts to saying that most human actions have as a basis something quite different from intention, that is, acquired dispositions which make it so that an action can and should be interpreted as oriented toward one objective or another without anyone being able to claim that that objective was a conscious design. (pp. 97-98)

Put simply, we do not think about all our actions in everyday life, particularly those practices that have become routine. The common-sense knowledge of what "works" is the *doxa* of the field. Most people would be described as orthodox. In Smith's (2001) analysis, environmentally-sensitive practice is heterodox because in modern society, everyday living of most citizens pays little attention to the environment. Effective and lasting environmental improvement requires that such an "eco-logic of practice" needs to become routinized (see also Bell, 2004).

Habitus is creative, providing a basis for generalized practice able to adjust the variances of circumstances. Therefore, the habitus has also been described as "forms of embodied competence... [the] basis for improvised, innovative action" (Crossley, 2002, p. 176). It could be extended into the notion of an ecological habitus which generates practices appropriate for the socio-ecological characteristics of a specific place. Smith uses Bourdieu's terminology to discuss the practical sense of living in a way that is consonant with environmental sustainability. An ecologically sensitive habitus can generate the practices effective for the ecology of a particular place, distinguishing what is environmentally sustainable or "right." "The point is that an ethics of place requires that one cultivate a *practical sense* of what is significant and fitting and when and where it is so" (Smith, 2001, p. 219, emphasis added). Ecologically sensitive living is contextual – what works for one place is not necessarily appropriate in another.

Bourdieu's approach prioritizes neither agency nor structure, yet links them in ways very

useful for social movement analysis. “Agents act, think, reflect, desire, perceive, make sense, etc. but they always do so by way of habits inherited from the social locations in which they have socialized, which are in turn shaped by wider dynamics of the social world” (Crossley, 2002, p. 175). Crossley notes that few social movement scholars have incorporated Bourdieusian insights into their analyses. Their emphasis has typically been on the deliberate actions of the social movement actors. In contrast, social change from a Bourdieusian framework views the practical logic(s) of society as primarily remaining below the keen of rationality. Yet since the coexistence of habitus and field cogenerate a logic of practice, such a logic that does not fit the dominant field will dwindle without support. An environmental lifestyle needs a social field where an ecological logic of practice ‘makes sense.’ From the sociological point of view, a significant part of the work of environmental organizations would be oriented toward effecting an ecological logic of practice.

A different approach is that taken by Eyerman and Jamison (1991), who describe social movements as creators of a “cognitive praxis.” As they describe,

The forms of consciousness that are articulated in social movements provide something crucial in the constitution of modern societies: public spaces for thinking new thoughts, activating new actors, generating new ideas, in short, constructing new intellectual ‘projects.’ (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, p. 161)

The mark of a social movement is the extent to which its cognitive praxis is taken up by the society in which it operates. If it is incorporated into the society at large, the social movement is a success and will be absorbed; if it is not incorporated, the social movement will become marginal and irrelevant; if partially incorporated, the movement will have to change with the times, and frame its knowledge and practice innovations differently. Analyses such as Yearley (1994), Wall (1998), and the recent “Death of Environmentalism” assertions of Schellenburger and Nordhaus (2004) argued that the cognitive praxis of the environmental movement has been diluted such that it has become less about an overarching vision for social transformation and more about professionalized operation and technical battles over policy cases.

Smith (2001) argues that environmentalism needs both the “practical sense” and a “theoretical (or reflexive) language that can do justice to the idea of... creating new relations to environmental others” (p. 204). Environmental organizations and their members, insofar as they seek transformation, challenge the doxa of society and must certainly include a reflexive and

cognitive element. However, Smith emphasized that the logic of practice derived from habitus must be considered as the foremost sociological descriptor of the dynamics of everyday life. From this perspective, Eyerman and Jamison overemphasized the cognitive aspect and both environmentalism's strategies and social movement theory could benefit by including a Bourdieusian theory of practice (Crossley, 2002; Smith, 2001). Scholars of social movement learning show there is a highly tacit dimension to what members apprehend from movement involvement (Conway, 2004; Foley, 1999; Le Cornu, 2005). Such research concludes that praxeological motives and behaviours are not completely available to the cognitive attention of a movement's members.

Similarly, research in environmental education demonstrates that knowledge and behaviour are not well linked. In a survey of the frameworks used to explain the gap between environmental knowledge and environmental behaviour, Kollmus and Agyeman (2002) concluded that cognition is only a small part of environmentally-responsive behaviour. They argue that there are three major barriers to pro-environmental behaviour: lack of internal incentive, lack of environmental consciousness, and lack of external options. In their final discussion, the two authors note that:

There are several factors that influence our decisions towards pro-environmental behaviour that we have not elaborated on.... We have not discussed the influence of habits. If we want to establish a new behaviour, we have to practice it. We might be perfectly willing to change our behaviour but still not do so, because we do not persist enough in practicing the new behaviour until it has become a habit. (p. 246)

Such "old behaviour patterns" block all three of the major barriers, they observe. Kollmus and Agyeman's focus on the individual (consistent with the bulk of environmental education practice) ignores social dimensions. In Bourdieu's model "old behaviour patterns" are generated by a durable logic of practice grounded in the habitus created in the particular social space. Pro-environmental behaviour in an unecological society will be difficult to practice as routinized habits of everyday life yet the cognitive aspects of environmental sustainability has continued to be emphasized in most literature and research.

Methodology

The present study sought to clarify any relationship between an ecological habitus and cognitive praxis within the environmental movement. In this study, I have differentiated between an ecological habitus and an environmental habitus. An ecological habitus would be an ecologically sensitive and internalised orientation that drives *appropriate* practices for the ecological characteristics of a specific locale. It is an idealization, given the limits to our ability to know the “best” ecological relationship with the rest of the earth (see Milton, 1997). Furthermore, at the individual lifestyle level access to home and work environments would be needed to investigate ecological habitus-in-action. Access to the participants of the study was through their involvements with environmental organizations. This study focuses on the dispositions and *sens pratique* involved in being environmentally active, what I have called an environmental habitus, rather than those facets of the habitus that would drive ecologically sound lifestyle practices.

The city of Thunder Bay sits in a remote region of Ontario, far in the northwest corner of the province. Thunder Bay is a large urban centre with a population over 100,000. Nestled on a protected bay of sparkling Lake Superior, it is hundreds of kilometres from other urban centres. The generally working class economy (Dunk, 1991, 1994) revolves around resource extraction and has now experienced more than two decades of economic decline. Outdoor recreation, especially hunting, fishing and snowmobiling are common pursuits.

Deliberate fieldwork occurred between May and December 2002, but I had lived in the city of Thunder Bay for nearly three years previously. While there are about 20 non-profit, non-governmental groups that could be labelled environmental organizations, most are small with few meaningful meetings or events. People also come together in *ad hoc* association over particular matters. During the fieldwork I increased my level of participation with environmental groups by attending public gatherings, as well as more private meetings and personal encounters. During this time I was also involved with other community groups, particularly related to follow-up of a well-publicized study of racism (Haluza-DeLay, 2002, 2003).

Forest issues, and water and land management were the most prevalent issues labelled as “environmental” issues during the research time. Some mobilization began around a proposal for a new power station utilizing “pet-coke” (a byproduct of Alberta tar sands oil production, and

disallowed as a fuel by Alberta law). There were some groups dealing with “lifestyle” issues of energy conservation, recycling and consumerism. These latter foci tended to be very local in character. On land management issues, especially forestry and protected lands designations, several provincial or national organizations were involved, but with relatively little local involvement other than specific well-recognized individuals.

I went to every publically advertised environmental event or meeting that I could attend during the period of fieldwork and as many other gatherings as feasible. Field notes were kept with the observations facing constant analysis in order to direct further data collection (Creswell, 1998; Lofland, 1996; Spradley, 1980). I initially focused on environmental organizations, attempting to discern the terrain. Researchers attempting to delineate the extent of environmentalism in an area are faced with classificatory concerns (Andrews & Edwards, 2004; Kempton, et al., 2001). For example, is a hunting and fishing group that does some game management an environmental group? There were other difficult classifications, such as health groups, food security and social sustainability organizations. Ultimately, however, I made the decision that an environmental group was one that sought to protect the environment, and was “recognized” as an environmental group by other groups in the region (Andrews & Edwards, 2004). Over time, I learned that many of the same people were involved with two or more groups.

At the close of the field research, 23 interviews with 27 people were conducted. Arcury and Quandt (1999) described a “site-based procedure” for recruiting participants for qualitative studies. Modifying their procedure I generated a list of organizations that had become visible in the participatory phase of the study. Depending on the apparent diversity of viewpoints in the organization, I identified specific individuals to interview. The 27 people are reasonably representative of the field of environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) in Thunder Bay. Although I selected the interviewees through their organizational involvements, the individuals were not consistently affiliated over the months of fieldwork. Involvement shifted for a wide variety of reasons.

It is important to note that these were environmentally-active people, not *activists* per se. Three of the interview participants would more fairly be described as “social” activists (anti-

poverty, food security, housing), but had been involved in an environmental event. The youngest interview participants were in their late 20s; participants otherwise ranged across the ages into their 70s. Professions included doctors, foresters, biologists, a retired teacher, among others. Eight were actually employed – often part-time or contract – by environmental organizations. Most were volunteers. Eleven of the 27 were female. All were white, which is significant because Aboriginal people make up between 7-15 percent of the population of Thunder Bay. In fact, there were few linkages with Aboriginal organizations. Because there were few Aboriginal peoples involved in environmental organizations I did not include any representatives. The cross-cultural dimension of coming to understand the concepts and practices in the First Nations cultures of the region would have added a great deal of complexity to the study. Furthermore, social science research has often been historically misused as a tool of colonialism (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Therefore, this study was limited to participants in environmental organizations.

Fontana and Frey (1994) described an interview as a “co-constructed encounter.” Because of the effort to explore deep-seated, often unreflexive, and perhaps unconscious elements of the *sens pratique*, participants and I deliberately conducted the interviews as conversations loosely structured by the question plan (See Appendix A). The interviews took between 45 minutes and two hours. Interviews were tape recorded and converted to digital recordings. Transcription software was used to facilitate the transcribing process (Transana, 2004). This software allowed the typed transcript to be linked to the actual digital recording. Thus, not only were the words available for analysis, but so were the inflections, tone, and other vocal modalities that convey meaning. Full transcriptions were produced of the first dozen interviews; partial transcripts were produced after emerging categories became apparent and saturation of categories began (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Transcripts and field notes were imported into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software package (ATLAS.ti, 2004). Pseudonyms have been used throughout, and in some cases personal details have been obscured to protect anonymity. These documents were coded top-down by a rudimentary coding manual developed prior to analysis and added to during the hermeneutic cycle that followed. A method of constant comparison involving saturation of categories was followed (Creswell, 1998; Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). The analysis was guided by the question, “What is the ‘feel for the game’ of being environmentally concerned and

active in Thunder Bay?”

Findings

The difficulty in interrogating environmental habitus is that the very nature of habitus is that it would be unavailable to ready articulation by its holders. As creatures embedded in a social fabric, we have only a tentative understanding of the social milieu we have internalized. It is evident that the habitus of environmentalists was conditioned by mainstream society as well as by their involvement in the environmental organizations. Furthermore, the embodied sense of being environmentally oriented took many different expressions but contained a number of common components. This constituted the backdrop for the feel for the game of being environmentally-active.

The 27 people interviewed in this research included, among others: employees of environmental organizations, for whom the work was a job that they cared about, but a job nonetheless; employees and volunteers for whom it was a ruling passion for their efforts; a financial analyst known as one of the most effective environmentalists in Thunder Bay who moved comfortably in the nexus of joint corporation-government-ENGO commissions; a vegetarian deep ecologist whose lengthy and greying beard and ponytail conveyed every image of the hippie environmentalist that he was; a city employee who pushed ecological modernization in his workplace and in the business sector, sat on several ENGO boards and drove many miles twice a day to his acreage. Even though all participants were involved in ENGOs and identified themselves as being environmentally-active, it became clear that there were many ways of being environmentally-active. It is conceivable that there will be multiple *sens pratique*. Nevertheless, as different as they were, the environmentally-active persons in this study “recognized” each other as part of “the team.” So while there were variations in the way it was expressed, their embodied habitus contained some common dispositions. Four components of an environmental habitus will be discussed, followed by consideration of the roles of environmental organizations.

Characteristics of an Environmental Habitus

First, a general orientation of *trying to live environmentally* appeared. Second, this

orientation was in concert with an *awareness of inconsistency*. The consciousness that they were not living as they wanted demonstrates how an environmental habitus brushes up against dominant habitus and practices. Third, given the relatively weak social support for ecologically sensitive practices, environmentally-active people sought ways to buttress their internalized *sens pratique*. Specifically, they *engaged in self-disposing* through non-cognitive means such as attraction to natural settings, moralizing about “the way things ‘should’ be,” and maintaining a sense that they were “against the mainstream.” Such internalized strategies for maintenance of environmental dispositions were generally not explicitly mentioned by participants but were evident in observation and analysis. Finally, and in addition, there was a significant element of *reflexivity* evident in the dispositions of environmentally-active people involved in this study. The socially marginal character of their concerns for the environment surfaced to awareness as the structure of the social field forced inconsistency between the environmental practices they desired and those they could perform. Reflexivity thus became a crucial component to their practices. This fourth facet of environmental habitus draws attention to a role for cognitive praxis in the *sens pratique*. These four facets helped to link the individual to the environmental movement. Despite my use of the “game” metaphor, environmental concern was a serious game to which these people were committed.

Trying to Live Environmentally.

Most salient was an internalised orientation among participants of *trying to live environmentally*. One would probably expect this orientation, as it would be the obvious manifestation of environmental commitment. As noted already, the forms this disposition took differed considerably among the participants in the study. Participants explained and justified and apologized for their lifestyle choices from the commitment of *trying to live* in an environmentally conscious manner. From living out of town and closer to natural settings, to living in town so one could walk or bike; from recycling, reducing waste, and composting to counter-cultural simplicity; from building an energy efficient home to renovating an existing one using reclaimed materials; from getting involved in visible environmental campaigns, to trying to do local things with neighbours to running a business that promoted environmental sustainability; from extensive,

wilderness-based recreation to staying close to home – the practices of the participants of this study were underlain with a deliberate intention to pay attention to environmental considerations. This theme was the underlying “rule” for the game of being environmental, independently defined, but generally consistent. The ability to play by its guidance is closely connected to the next theme, so they will be further elaborated together.

Awareness of Inconsistency.

Participants made considerable judgements about the appropriateness of their specific lifestyle choices and frequently allowed that they were not doing enough or were not consistent in their practices.

I don't live in an urban setting, or a co-op. I live in the country. My house is surrounded by trees. I don't harvest them. I harvest only what has fallen to the ground. I don't cut trees off my property although wood-burning [to heat the] house. Only those trees that have reached the end of the life-cycle. My children are the same way. We do promote recycling. Composting. Vegetable garden. Not enough to keep us going for a year, but we try to practice what we preach. I have some things that I have not been able to get a handle on. My family is a large consumer of fossil fuels. We commute back and forth – two vehicles, and a third trip back at some point. Can I do anything about that right now? Not if I want to live in the country. (Interview, Edward)

There's only so much I can do. I've got a few more jackets than I need. How many of those do I give away? And how many of all my stuff do I give? (Interview, Richard)

Others asserted that they could do more, and that their organizations could do more, even while recognizing that many members contributed a lot of effort, and might even be tapped out. Nearly every participant expressed at some point that they did not “always do everything right.”

In many ways, acceptable practices were a matter of living in this society. To be environmentally-active already meant being different than others. Many of the interviewees pointed out that the general public does not want to hear that they should be doing more. Christoff represented this when he observed that “A lot of [other] people just lose out because traditions are too big, and I think it's because they don't bite enough of the piece off. They don't say: well, maybe I can change just by buying a fluorescent fixture.” Socially acceptable ways of doing things – traditions, in Christoff's words – were the context in which these environmentally-active people conducted their lives. As they observed, their own attempts to live in a more

environmentally-conscious manner set them apart from others in the community.

I suppose things are better than they used to be, but I don't think that [they've changed much] – look at recycling, our blue-bag program, depots. Go down the street in this neighbourhood on a day when it's blue-bag pick-up day and you'll hardly see any blue-bags. (Interview, Richard)

But still the pesticide issue. Like, 'I cannot have a dandelion on my lawn – what will my neighbours think?' There are still a lot of people out there who cannot bear to cancel the weed man because the neighbors might hate them if they have a dandelion. You know that's still very strong. (Interview, Mary).

The participants in this study were often alert to the “unusualness” of their dispositions in the broader social field. And while they sought to live consistent with their environmental beliefs, they found it difficult at times. Their own practices would be affected as they worried about being perceived by their neighbours. This was partly related to being negatively labelled as an environmentalist (and will be addressed later). The study participants further expressed some sense that their lives and the choices about their practices were not completely their own. For example,

Because if you can do it then [live an environmentally-appropriate lifestyle in some settings], why can't you do it now? The only difference is the fact that we – don't know when – became a consumer society.... [It's] related to time – go to a drive-through because I have to be somewhere. So drive-through, with the packaging, and my car idles. What's wrong with the planning, that you can't sit down? We recognize that as part of our culture, but what can we do to break that vicious loop, and say 'This is what you can do to help your quality of life issues, and future generations?' (Interview, Edward)

Most of the interview participants talked about their own lifestyles as Edward did. While the details were different, an apologetic tone demonstrated an awareness of self-established inconsistencies with what they thought were the “better” practices of their normative environmental logic. Similarly, reasons for the inconsistencies varied, but this *awareness of inconsistency* is an important part of recognizing that an environmental habitus does not match what even an environmentally-active person would assert is a properly ecological praxis. Awareness of inconsistency in their own lives also illuminated how an environmental habitus brushed up against dominant habitus and practices. This sense of being “against” the mainstream was part of the following themes as well.

Engaged in Self-Disposing.

The above awareness implies a reflexive or self-scrutinizing element in what I have described as an environmental habitus. But there are indications that these people used various non-cognitive or unconscious means to maintain the practical logic for living environmentally in the face of inconsistencies due to societal limitations and personal contradictions. Due to the fact that these efforts were generally not discussed explicitly by participants and appeared more as internalisations, I describe these methods here as “*engaging in self-disposing*.” The intent is to highlight the strategic, albeit unconscious, character of these strategies resulting in practical action that supported or reinforced their existing dispositions. Such efforts included seeking natural settings, identifying themselves as nature’s protector, claiming to act on the basis of “caring” (instead of self-interest),² and feeling part of a movement that was opposed by forces allied against their deeply-held environmental convictions. To illustrate, this section will focus on two strategies that demonstrate this component of the environmental habitus – the use of “nature” and the sense of being “against” mainstream social institutions and practices.

One of the clearest examples of the use of nature as a self-disposing practice occurred during a meeting of people from around the Lake Superior Basin on environmental threats to the basin. This meeting occurred as the final stop in an around-the-lake tour, and was the second tour meeting I had attended. There was a sense of defeat in the small crowd, a defeatism that I had noted in other encounters with a variety of movement members. As one person commented, “Our action is so small compared to the assault on the watershed” (Fieldnotes, November 14). However, the meeting began with one of the main organizers giving an overview. He started by talking about his drive up from Duluth. “We sat by the water, watched trees hanging onto the rock...” he said. It was fascinating to hear this story, as it corresponded to a common pattern of environmental narrative, that of the rejuvenatory power of natural settings and the consequent importance of protecting “nature” (Kitchell, Hannan & Kempton, 2000). Others in the small

² In Bourdieu’s (1990) theory, “disinterest” is an illusion that actually masks deep social norms of reciprocity that are part of the play upon the field. Appearances of disinterest serve as symbolic capital, to be exchanged for other benefits in due time (Lane, 2000). For example, “protecting nature” is a more symbolically powerful position than “protecting my recreation opportunities.” Similarly, when corporations advocate development as increasing jobs in a community, they are expressing a level of disinterest more socially legitimate than their real motives of increasing financial profit-taking.

audience nodded. The narrative set the stage for the meeting as one about this group taking the responsibility to protect nature, arrayed against others who would be destroying it via contamination or development of Lake Superior.

Similarly, at another meeting, held in a provincial park, we trooped out at lunch on an interpretive nature walk led by one of the participants. Comments immediately before the walk indicated that people accepted that time in nature would provide the refreshment for continuance of the meeting. Not only does this incident point out the salience of the nature trope, but also the contradictions of those who are environmentally intent. Ironically, as we all walked past the parking lot, we realized that everyone had driven their own car out to the park, an hour from Thunder Bay. In an interview months later, Richard (who had not been present at that meeting) commented on similar occurrences,

How many people go to a meeting who live within a few blocks of each other and drive themselves separately? How many green people – [Green] Party people – are going to be the only person in their car there, without having thought, ‘why didn’t we organize a car pool?’ It’s because we’re so used to going out and jumping in our cars. (Interview, Richard)

The reason given for the meeting to be held at that location had been that in order to develop an environmental network for the region the group should meet in one of its most beautiful places. Such reasoning further demonstrates the internalised code of nature used to support environmental dispositions.

In numerous other ways, the study participants referenced nature – backyard nature, green space, recreational experiences, caring for creeks or birds or bird habitat – as a means by which they maintained their orientation to environmental involvements. Even the interviewees who were more focused on social justice referred to nature as important to their personal orientations. For example, an affordable housing advocate told me that she “doesn’t get out as much as I’d like.” While well aware that few of her clients had such opportunities, she felt that this was a human necessity and important to maintain. Environmental issues are not all about nature, as numerous analysts have pointed out. But the stereotype persists, due in part to the nature-disposition that forms part of the habitus of environmentalism (Greenbaum, 2005). Greenbaum’s analysis demonstrated how appreciation for nature is culturally trained, and is deployed within environmentalism as a means of status distinction. Such a nature-orientation, however, is a barrier

to cross-movement fusion with other forms of social and environmental activism.³

A second example of self-disposing strategies was the positioning of environmental concern as opposing and being opposed by powerful (and often unspecified) social forces. This oppositionality, or sense of “against,” was clearly visible in many observation settings and underlay many of the interviewees’ expressions of being environmentally-involved. The internalisation of oppositionality is evidenced in the following exchange from fieldnotes taken at a meeting of a group trying to form a wind energy co-operative. In the exchange, they discussed another meeting of stakeholders trying to develop a different wind energy project associated with the regional electrical generation company.

Someone mentioned that Monday was the meeting of the Community Sustainable Energy Association. If I remember correctly, this is a fairly well-to-do association, not working with people, but seeking ways to make good money off of renewable energy. Someone commented “I’m cynical” because the cost to attend reduces civil society participation.

Ernie: Yes, and [electrical] grid costs cut out smaller scale operations.

Peter: Rural development plans force people into urban centres.

Richard: By charging attendance costs, and application fees limits who shows up.

Helen: Even convention costs do the same.

Laurie: If that’s the political environment [here in Thunder Bay], are we going to be blocked at every step?

Ernie: If so-and-so’s name [name deleted] shows up, you wonder what’s behind the scenes. ([Name deleted] is a Thunder Bay city councillor. He’s a businessman in town and is generally considered to be one of the pro business slate. He’s also the council representative to and for this ‘association’). (Fieldnotes, October 31)

A rapidly developing issue near the end of my field time was a proposal for an energy production facility that would be run on “pet-coke.” A group of about nine gathered in the shared home of two activists to discuss options. Many of the participants were very concerned that this was happening in their community. I wrote in my fieldnotes:

I got the sense that in this meeting that there was a NIMBY thing happening. People were concerned about the kinds of effects this pet-coke plant might have. They were against it. They didn’t really have alternatives. At one time people talked about how bad the coal-fired plants in Atikokan are, but nobody had any alternatives. They were against, without seeming to show a sense that energy production still needs to happen. Of course it seems that this pet-coke plant is an environmental bad, and probably to be fought against.

³ Such as environmental justice, which has been heavily urban-oriented, and concerned for issues such as safe housing, health, toxics and ground-level pollution far removed from standard perceptions of “nature.”

However, most everything at this meeting gave me a sense of *Against*, just *Against Things*. (Fieldnotes, June 25)

At times there was surprise and a sense of “How could people think this way?” For example, at one meeting of the Lake Superior Basin group, one of the organizers said that the U.S. Corp of Army engineers “tried to replumb the Great Lakes.” People reacted, sitting up more alertly, looking around, with expressions of surprise and “aghast”. There was a common sense of having a different sort of orientation from the mainstream.

The sense of being “against” sometimes became visible as motivation for being environmentally active, as exemplified in this comment by Chrissy:

I think the people involved with Earth Home partly perceive a threat to this city... and we want to see some changes. I mean we see the coal-fired generating plant. We see the smoke coming out of the mill all the time, and we’re looking at that and thinking, there has to be a better way. And we’re very much involved in the wind energy study that’s going on and alternative energies for the city... So at the same time as we have that positive sense of, we want to do some good stuff... we also have that sense of impending doom that this community, and any community based on primary natural resources, is doomed unless we start taking care of those resources.

But more than just as motivation, this sense of opposing and being opposed was internalised as supporting dispositions for remaining environmentally-active.

None of these methods of buttressing their dispositions for living environmentally – nature experiences or oppositionality, nor the others mentioned above – were consciously deliberate for these environmentally active people. These strategies were ways to maintain an environmental habitus in a field where that habitus did not fit. Because of their non-cognitive and internalised character, calling them dispositions of the environmental habitus is appropriate. Furthermore, as these strategies were normalized in the subfield of people involved with environmental organization, they served to support some degree of identification with the environmental movement, even if, as we shall see, these people did not claim the labels of “environmentalist.”

Aware of their Reflexivity.

Finally, there was a significant element of *reflexivity* in the habitus of the environmentally-active people included in this study. By reflexivity, I mean practices open to sustained self-scrutiny (Adams, 2006). The ways that their environmental convictions were experienced as

socially mis-fit led to understandings of marginality, oppositionality and inconsistency, thus making awareness and analysis crucial components of their practice. This fourth facet of environmental habitus even more clearly helped to link the individual to the environmental movement. It also drew attention to roles that cognitive praxis may have in the *sens pratique* of a social movement.

As described above, trying to live environmentally yet being aware of their inconsistencies was an important part of the internalised dispositions of the study participants. Part of the reflexive dimension was analysis about the nature of this inconsistency and the felt opposition which could then lead back to self-scrutiny.

I was getting tired of that banging my head against the wall and making lots of noise but basically not getting heard, except by people – you know – the converted already. And I started to look at what was going on around me and people were talking about bad air, water – tracing that back through the political process and what could be done about that. This was about the mid-80's when I started to focus my learning on how ecosystems actually function, and the human impact on that function. (Interview, Richard)

I was working on that Nuclear thing [deep-depositing wastes in the boreal shield] and you might get engaged in a particular issue and see how corrupt or unfair the system is. And that just fuels you to continue to do your work.... I know that happens to me emotionally – I see injustices that occur against common sense and knowledge and science... So when I see that – I get more engaged when I see those injustices occurring. (Interview, Jack)

For me, it's been incredibly hard to break through that barrier of letting anybody see me act out. On the one hand, I'm a performer [She is a professional musician] but that's still a very particular role. You know, you step into the role and do it.... But to become an activist, to go out and organize a rally, then I'm saying 'I have an opinion about what's going on in this world and about our government and what it means to live in this country and I'm going to stand up and say that.' You know and I know that that is somewhat scandalous to do. (Interview, Laurie)

Such self-awareness was a form of self-education. Reflexivity was a developing practice.

Ultimately, for the environmentally-active, reflexivity became a regular part of their way of life. Repeatedly, participants referred to their environmental engagement as making them think differently, which they then sought to help others do also. "You have to put the burrs under the saddle and make people think [about doing things differently]," is how Roger saw his efforts. In contrast, many of the interviewees believed that most people would only become conscientized by a personal experience or threat – a "pinch" in the words of two different interviewees. Short of a

pinch, or directly experienced threat to family, neighbourhood or other personally relevant matters, it was difficult to get others interested in environmental concerns. The disposition for reflexive analysis may itself be a problem.

I find that with a lot of activists, they're too far down the road. Maybe they partially live in the changed world but it hasn't changed yet. So they develop plans and programs and stuff that don't work because the people that are in there [municipal government or other positions of influence] aren't ready for them. (Interview, Richard)

Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that high degree of reflexivity was standard practice for an environmental habitus. That habitus itself is conditioned by the logic of practice of the environmental field, is shown by the consistency with the environmental master narrative of nature of the practice of self-disposing with nature. There were also "blind spots" among the varieties of environmental involvements. One such blind spot was the lack of association with other types of community development organizations, or the large Aboriginal community in the region, which has considerable political power, land management responsibilities, economic development desires and comprises about an eighth of the population. Finally, there were also considerable differences in their analyses of the causes of environmental problems, and little commonality in whether incremental change would be adequate or transformational social change would be necessary to resolve persistent environmental problems, particularly on global scale.

The four components expressed here – trying to live environmentally, awareness of inconsistency, efforts at self-disposing, and a reflexive awareness – are components of an environmental habitus. They represent important aspects of feel for the game of being environmentally-active in this community. These characteristics also demonstrate why there are many ways of being environmentally active. The dispositions will and did generate a variety of practical logics. Together, such components provided a practical sense of living environmentally, and united the diverse people who engaged with environmental organizations in Thunder Bay.

Environmental Organizations and Being Environmentally Active

As already noted, there were many ways of being environmentally-active yet the participants of the study had a number of internalised dispositions in common. These dispositions guided their involvements, constituting their serious play at being environmentally-active.

Environmental organizations played a role in supporting the practical action of being environmentally-active, and, to a lesser degree, were sites for learning of environmental praxis. That is, they were sites for development and maintenance of an environmental habitus. While becoming committed to the environment had developed over a long time for some of the interviewees, it was relatively more recent for others. Even some longtime environmentalists, like Samantha, Chuck, Virgil, and Sam, described ways in which the organizational involvement had facilitated greater learning, and commitment for them.

There was little deliberate education in the organizations. Because of this detail, most learning involved with environmental organizations was incidental. Participants described it as significant, however.

Your behaviour does change. I think your level of awareness, understanding – it's education in a way. I mean that's obvious you work at a job for a couple of years and you're gonna learn something and I think you do. I can't speak for Mary [She is agreeing] but I do think your behaviour does change as a result of some of the things that do go on. I think those are positive changes. (Interview, Brian)

Randy: Has your involvement with environmental work changed your understanding of yourself?

Edward: [Quickly] Oh yeah. Oh yeah. There's no doubt. I think it's a combination of things – you've probably experienced this. [It's a] combination of learning, age, wisdom, children, partnerships. It doesn't end just because you've walked out the door. You have a desire to learn. (Interview, Edward)

What I notice – I notice it when I go home to Kingston. I am more conscious of being less materialistic than people around me. I don't think I have really changed much, it's just [being] more conscious than other people are. I was wandering behind three women, each who had 2 shopping carts... (Interview, Mary)

Mary, like Brian, was an employee of an environmental organization. She had clearly stated that the job was meaningful, but it was a job and not a passion. Nevertheless, she said because of the job, "I've changed a lot of the way I do things, like the way I do things at home." Many of the interview participants expressed how the environmental involvements with which they were engaged as employees or volunteers had produced subtle shifts in themselves, as represented above.

In some cases, environmental organizations had a more deliberate educative effect. Stan gave credit to a presentation at some meeting for raising his awareness enough to get involved,

eventually even to the point of starting his own organization. Similarly, Olivia and Garry were at a presentation that helped them realize the significance of a particular issue that had affected them as homeowners, giving them the knowledge basis for addressing the issue in what turned out to be a lengthy, expensive, but provincially-significant and precedent-setting battle. Organizations made a deliberate effort to provide some learning opportunities, primarily through presentations and speakers. However, most interviewees allowed that information alone was not enough to generate social change in environmental awareness. More importantly than deliberate educative forums, organizations gave people a place to “plug-in.” Organizational involvement provided a site for seeing action happening, for pooling efforts to make a productive change, or for interacting with similar-minded people said participants.

Some of the members of the organizations, and even organizations themselves, did not consider themselves environmentalists. The term “environmentalist” had reduced value in Thunder Bay, which even the staunchest environmentalist recognized. At one meeting, an activist stated “Young students feel they don't want to be called environmentalists but would go to an anti-globalization rally” (Fieldnotes, May). Chrissy referred to “... negativity towards so-called tree huggers. People think ‘I just don't want to hear one more thing is wrong with how I'm living.’” Numerous interviewees mentioned that environmentalists were viewed as always saying “nothing is ever good enough.” Others noted the difficulty of the word “environmentalist” in a community with a high degree of mining and timber production. As a result, some of the groups did not label themselves as environmental organizations. Nevertheless, such organizations played a role in shaping the many ways of being environmental, including the development of an environmental *sens pratique*.

The Thunder Bay Field Naturalists (TBFN) provided an example of these processes. Virgil, one of the organization's officers, observed that “local nature clubs are a gathering point... we have information, but we *see* [emphasized] the problems on the land.” Three interviewees mentioned that being on one of the committees of TBFN tasked with fact-finding and crafting positions for the membership had heightened their attention to environmental problems. The organization had recently come to understand itself differently which also affected its members. For example, at one of the monthly meetings, Virgil presented some of the land protection and

wildlife enhancement activities of the group. “We expanded until we're a real conservation organization with many interests, not just ornithology,” he announced. The organization had been quite involved in a province-wide campaign to preserve large natural areas and create new protected spaces (the Lands for Life project), and, as I summarized, “It seemed to have given them the idea that naturalists should be involved with conservation.” (Fieldnotes, September 23). Similarly, at a different point in that meeting, another member commented, “Being this is the naturalists’ club, our philosophy is one of recycling. We have recycled [name deleted] through all the [organization’s] jobs!” (Fieldnotes, September 23). Virgil later confirmed that the Lands for Life campaign had caused some in the group to rethink their natural history interests and convert them to conservation or environmental concerns. As time passed, the organization and its members identified more with environmental practices, and were beginning to see this as an accurate identification.

On the other hand, a person heavily involved with Ducks Unlimited (DU) definitively declared TBFN to be “an environmental group.” Doug had been surprised to have found common ground between TBFN and DU in joint land protection efforts. Although repeatedly declaring DU was not the hunter’s group it has often been perceived, he was also uncomfortable with DU being increasingly identified as an environmental group, which was a relatively new organizational strategic plan. “So we are an environmental group, up to a point,” he qualified. Ironically, that new trajectory committed him less to the organization, and allowed more personal time, which he used for involvement in a lake management committee and for lifestyle-oriented practices.

One of the organizers of another group which primarily worked to protect the urban forest of Thunder Bay and engaged in tree-planting (which were not strictly intended as beautification projects), had an interesting response when I asked if the organization was an environmental organization.

Stan: We’re never... we don't promote it and members may not make that connection.

Randy: Are you [an environmentalist]?

Stan: Oh definitely.

Randy: Is [organization name deleted] an environmental organization? [Asked for second time.]

Stan: Yes, when it comes down to it and when you look at other areas, like urban growth... The label as an environmental group carries a lot of baggage. Rightly or wrongly it carries that baggage. (Interview, Stan)

Stan later talked about his interest in promoting greenspace generally, and how he once got involved in a presentation to city council on a development project. He noted that one councillor “Thought we should be sticking to trees. Thought it was muddying the image [of the organization]. He’s taking a very narrow view of what we’re about.” Per Bourdieu’s sociological approach, we can see that as this organization operated on the social field, those operations contributed to the shaping of the field and the shaping of local habituses. Progressing from trees, to greenspace, to development in general, the organization extended its purview. This position-taking contributed to shaping notions of what could be construed as legitimate concerns and practices, eventually extending to what is “environmentally” appropriate. And in the process, the effects shaped Stan, and (he thinks) other members’ internalisations and identifications.

The examples above represent how the environmentally-active participants in this study incorporated organizational involvements, along with other sources of environmental knowledge, into their own practice in ways that formed dispositions for practice. That there were many ‘ways of being environmentally active’ suggests that researchers must avoid a singular approach conveyed by the idea of a “movement” (Lofland, 1996), and attend to the fragmented and complex character of the environmental field. There was recognition of other persons as environmentally involved, despite the range of environmental practice, suggesting that there are commonalities among them. Furthermore, organizational involvement had some effect on personal dispositions.

This finding provokes consideration about ways that an environmental habitus can become more mainstream. Some pro-environmental change had occurred, observed numerous of the study’s participants. Brian’s explanation represented most of the interviewees:

I was thinking – there is almost a level of background noise out there about environmentalism. It used to be a big thing when someone screamed or shouted or this organization or that organization [said or did something]. Now it’s a background roar almost ... It’s out there and everyone accepts it as part of business now. Even the ZWAT people [a business group addressing waste reduction], they accept it as a part of business. (Interview, Brian)

Many others acknowledged the business community and the general public as having more awareness of the environment than in the past. However, most also struggled to explain why more change, despite the evidence of environmental degradation, was not occurring. An ill-defined

“social” dimension was accused.

I think what holds people back on certain things is the perception that, you know ‘You’re [sarcastic] riding the bus?’... I think there’s a social aspect to all this that I just can’t define. In some ways it’s advancing because it is socially acceptable to recycle or naturalize your lawn... [but] I think the social aspect has a hold that’s larger than we give it [credit]. (Interview, Brian)

[People are] doing things because it’s politically incorrect not to. Not because they truly believe that it has any connection to place or to save the environment it’s because all the neighbours are putting the blue bags out so I will too. (Interview, Mary)

I don’t know what that [social change in environmental attitudes] is. It’s not like people don’t have the information. The information is there.... Anything we’re doing or not doing is not because of a lack of information. So what is it? What’s the key here? (Interview, Chrissy)

As noted, information was not perceived as being sufficient to change practices and attitudes in more pro-environmental directions. Yet they were unsure what could produce the changes that they felt necessary. I propose a more sociologically robust explanation based on habitus and *sens pratique* would lead to more effective environmental strategy.

Analysis

Interpretation of the data presented above helps us to understand certain aspects of the environmental movement and its effects on those involved. Clearly, there was no singular way of being an environmentally-active person. It has also demonstrated that such persons understood to a certain extent that the effort to be environmentally consistent often falls short. This led to efforts to shore up their environmental dispositions as well as a greater degree of self-reflexivity about the personal and societal difficulty in doing so. And organizations had a role in the developing understanding and practice of environmental concerns. It is possible that organizations can have a greater role in facilitating the development of an ecological habitus.

Bostrom’s (2004) study of the members of six Swedish environmental organizations asserted that members incorporated the organizational “cognitive practice,” thereby assuming

organizational identity as their own.⁴ Environmentalists maintained different positions in the environmental field in accord with their organizational operational focus (e.g., “eco-labelling,” “green democracy,” “nature’s protectors”). However, Bostrom’s research focused on the cognitive aspect of environmentalist work and was ultimately unconvincing for this reason. Emphasizing the cognitive as Bostrom does fails to address important aspects of what happened in Thunder Bay in two important regards. First, Bostrom focused on how organizations “frame” their campaigns. While there are relatively clear demarcations in Thunder Bay between organizations as environmental actors and between them and other social actors (and perhaps professionalized organizations prevalent in Bostrom’s research are more careful about their framing and other cognitive practices), the Thunder Bay organizations seem more to have stumbled along as they found “things to do.” So rather than codified rules and knowledges as Bostrom emphasized for cognitive practices, those involved with Thunder Bay’s environmental organizations had a sense of what to do, and only in retrospect were able to look back to see distinct patterns that more or less matched a general orientation in their organizational identity. Even more precisely, Thunder Bay’s environmental organizations were the people. If Samantha said something was a significant parcel of nature and should be protected or Jack put out a media statement on some concern, or Roger got a toxic waste project going, or Edward or Mary or Brian or Dawn thought it important to address a lifestyle practice such as water conservation, pesticide-free lawns or automobile idling, the various organizations became the visible proponent. The concerns and actions (and means of approaching them) of individuals were then perceived as TBFN’s conservation project, or Environment North’s position, or the Remediation Action Project’s work, or EcoSuperior’s, Earth Home’s or ZWAT’s project. In actual operation, the organizations were the people, rather than the people being “of the organization.”

This highlights the second contradiction with the work of Bostrom and others who have emphasized the cognitive aspect of social movement activity. For the individuals involved in Thunder Bay, acquisition of differentiated organizational framing could not be discerned.

⁴ Bostrom nodded to Eyerman and Jamison’s (1991) theory of social movements as cognitive praxis, then focused almost exclusively on “framing,” that is, the diagnostic and prescriptive messages which organizations employ to explain the problem and mobilize for solutions. This is not the same as saying that movements develop new forms of thinking and social organization, as Eyerman and Jamison did in their conceptualization of cognitive praxis.

Participants in this study blurred concepts and incorporated into themselves as environmentally-interested persons a diversity of beliefs, practices and analyses drawn from a variety of sources. Moreover, it was clear that this process was less intentionally thought out than that these things became embodied dispositions that then structured their diverse ways of being environmentally-active. Thus, the participants internalised a form of movement identity, without necessarily specifying their association with the environmental movement. The point is that to focus on the cognitive aspects of practice may miss a great deal of the other facets of environmental practice. Researchers may then misconstrue the practical ways that people actually develop ecological awareness and behaviour and recommend ineffective environmental education and communication efforts. In other words, that we read the logic of theory into the logic of practice (Bourdieu, 1998).

Horton (2003) presented somewhat of an alternative in his analysis of environmental “distinctions.” Horton examined the environmentalist field in a northern British city. The purpose of his study was to articulate the “codes” of being environmentalist, that is, how one earns “‘green distinction,’ the markings of a green identity” (p. 64). Earning such distinction occurred, not through the articulation of an environmental philosophy, but by “the embodied performance... following the logic of their habitus, playing according to green cultural codes” (p. 64). According to Horton, “green capital” was gained through such practices as type of clothing (fleece or scruffy-looking), frequenting of certain stores or cafes, purchasing certain items (and displaying them), or being carless. However, although Horton did highlight some differentiation among environmentalists, he implied that certain ways of being an environmentalist were recognized by other environmentalists as the most legitimate way.

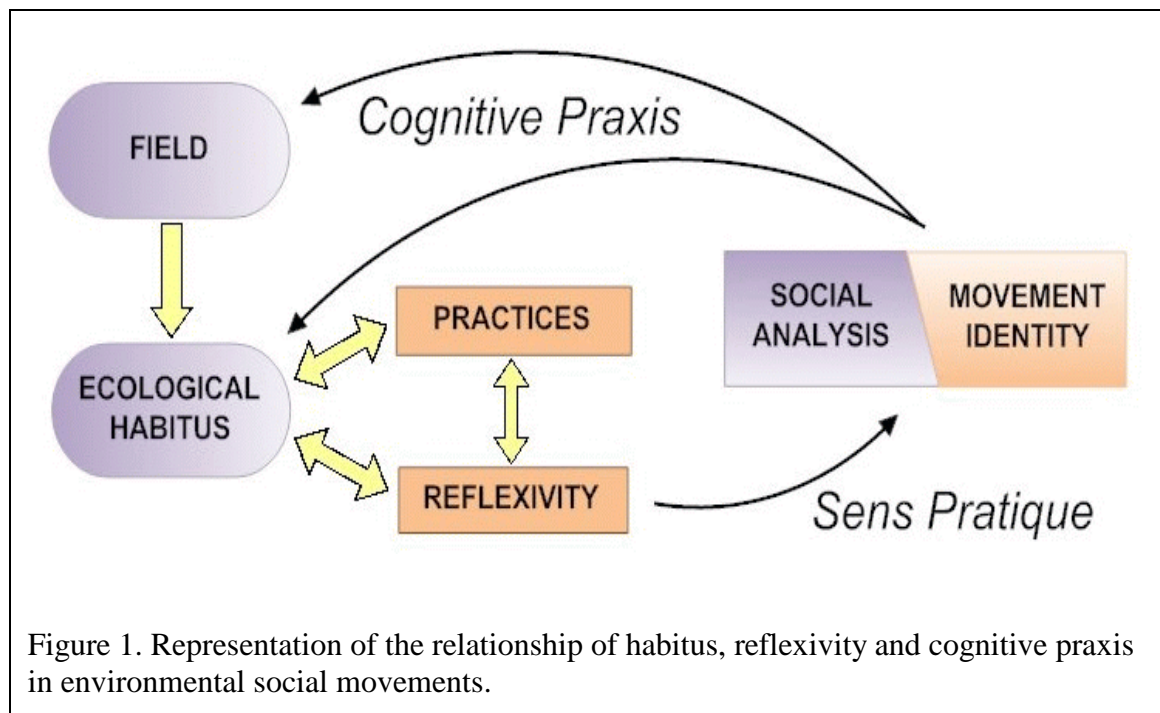
Horton dismissed what he termed “environmental culture,” citing the need for broad relevance in order to create sustainable societies. Perhaps it was the narrow distinctiveness of certain types of green lifestyles that Horton seems to have observed that led him to the conclusion that environmental culture is not broadly relevant. Thunder Bay’s environmentally-active people incorporated a wide variety of ways of being environmentally active into their practices and their self-identification. Even the “old-hippie” participants at the pet-coke meeting warmly welcomed a late arrival, a lawyer arriving in his suit. Such heterogeneity is potentially beneficial because

sustainability will rely on practical environmental logics routinized in everyday practice in many such positions within a complex society. Also present were other influences, including the effects of an un-ecological society as the field pushing against the ecologically-oriented habitus of the environmentally active. However, such *sens pratique* will remain unlikely or weak without cultural settings in which the practices make sense. Hence the role for social fields, such as environmental organizations, in which this alterity as environmentally-oriented is normalized and supported. This research shows that environmental organizational involvements had effects on members' understandings of themselves and the internalisation of environmental praxis, diverse as it was.

The findings of this study, while pointing to limitations in social movement theory's understanding of cognitive praxis, support a synthesis of this concept with habitus in social movements, at least in the case of environmental involvement. There was a *sens pratique* for how to live well environmentally that had a cognitive element because of the experience of being marginal to the "normal logic" of the social field. Reflexivity was therefore important as a dimension of the habitus of environmentally-active people, supporting the notion that movements must create cognitive awareness of movement alternatives for social structure or personal praxis. Reflexivity had a role in disrupting the doxa of society.

"Habitus is naturalized" (Meisenhelder, 1997, p. 166), but the ecological habitus cannot be, because it is not "natural" to the field of an unecological society. The social field and its habitus exerted pressure on the study participants' efforts for ecologically sound practices, thus forcing attention on their attempts to live in more ecologically appropriate ways. An environmentally-oriented *sens pratique* does not "fit" the mainstream social world. Once alert to their alterity, these people began to think about the lack of fit between an unecological society and their attempts to be ecologically appropriate. Thus, an environmental habitus cultivated ecological practices plus a measure of reflexivity, constituting the environmental *sens pratique* (Figure 3).

In Figure 3 this reflexive *sens pratique* leads to analysis in line with the movement, along with movement involvement and identification with the movement. It converts into the personally-appropriated cognitive praxis of the movement, which latterly acts on the individual habitus and on the social field.



Acknowledging reflexivity as part of the disposition of an alternative habitus helps to account for how habitus could potentially provide an analysis or critique of the society in which it is derived. If habitus as an unconscious manifestation of the social field drives the strategies of the actor on the field it would be largely invisible to the actor. Yet without being visible, the actor would have little ability to perceive his or her own strategies, much less develop any understanding of the ‘doxa’ native to the field or act in a fashion that presents alternatives to the dominant logics of the field (Karakayali, 2004; LiPuma, 1993, Maton, 2003).⁵

⁵ Bourdieu himself accords his ability to perceive the habitus (especially the academic one, Bourdieu, 1988) as a function of his insider/outsider status, according to Reed-Danahay (2005) in an account of the development of Bourdieu’s theories that draws on his writing as something of an autoethnographic database. My reading of Reed-Danahay’s analysis is that Bourdieu, reaching the top echelon of French academia, positioned himself in this insider/outsider position as a strategy that enabled and justified his critiques of French academia. By this reading, the insider/outsider station is inadequate to explain the development of genuine reflexivity to counter the epistemic capital of the doxa (Maton, 2003).

Where could reflexivity vis a vis the environmental (mis)logic of Canadian society come from for these environmentally-active informants? Building on the insider/outsider position, one could suggest that “nature” helps provide that outsider element. Nature is often considered outside of social reckoning, and considerable research has shown that nature experiences are often important in the life history of environmentalists (e.g., Kahn, 1999). However, if our perceptions of nature are socially constructed, then narratives about nature can hardly justify such a distinction; Kempton et al. (2001) studied the social shaping of narratives within environmental discourse.

That habitus may include reflexivity seems counter to its pre-logical and doxic character as described by Bourdieu. However, Bourdieu allowed that under some conditions the habitus could be altered, particularly when it was mis-fit with the field (although he considered that the field conditions usually changed before the habitus). An habitus that includes a reflexive component is particularly relevant in light of recent theorizing about “reflexive modernization,” namely, that the features of this period of late modernity have meant that society and individuals are subject to increased demand to constantly reconstruct themselves and their practices (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994). “The question ‘How shall I live?’ has to be answered in day-to-day decisions” with far less sure foundations upon which to rely than ever before (Giddens, 1991, p. 14).

Such theorizing is contrasted by theorists who seek to explain continuity, gradual change and resistance, as did Bourdieu in the concept of habitus. Adams (2006) summarized several attempts to “hybridize” reflexivity and habitus, observing that “the persistence of forms of habitus heavily qualify, but do not fully deny, the transformative potential of reflexivity” (p. 516). In particular, Adams argued that the limit of reflexivity is in the wielder’s potential to exercise meaningful choice, that is, “convert ‘reflexions’ into meaningful realities” (p. 524). Without such positional power, reflexivity is rather meaningless. Organizations, as places to “plug-in,” concentrate individual effort.

This highlights the relevance of social movement organizations, and moves us further along the trajectory represented in Figure 3. The mis-fit with the field generated a sort of analysis – “Why is it so hard to be environmental?” and “What could be done?” – and for these people at least the answers involved continuing involvement with environmental organizations. Thus, habitus and reflexivity were combined with movement participation to become a sort of “movement identity.” The organization(s) then became an anchor point – of collective identity, or socio-ecological analysis, or how to be environmentally-involved – from which support for identity and practice was found (Bostrom, 2004; Melucci, 1996). The environmental organization

Furthermore, criticisms of this distinction exist with urban or environmental justice activists, or activists from the Global south who will have different cultural constructions of “nature” (Guha, 1989; Milton, 1997). In addition, we are never *outside* society, nor not *inside* nature, although we may be more or less oblivious to one or the other. Thus, “nature” is not a true “source” of reflexivity. It could be a source of epistemic capital – that is, a resource of information that can help reorganize knowledge (which is always socially constructed) – to help produce reflexivity.

could potentially become a new field that encouraged environmental habitus, or even supported its maintenance in the face of a dominating social field while individualized *sens pratique* became affiliated with the cognitive praxis of the social movement organization. The combination of reflexivity, practice, and movement involvement participated in shaping analysis and identity among the environmentally-involved. This became the genuine cognitive praxis of the movement, which then operated back on both individual habitus and the social field. The pressure exerted by the dominant field became a little easier to handle within the system of meaning provided by the intersubjective relations of the social movement organization.

As depicted in Figure 3, *sens pratique* and cognitive praxis are placed in relation to each other. In contemporary society we have seen some acceptance of mildly environmental practices, such as a generalized concern for the environment, recycling, and moderate environmental regulation (although these are being rolled back, see Paehlke, 2000). This shows that there has been some shift toward inclusion of certain ecological practices in the mainstream logic of practice (Almanzar, et al., 1998; Dunlap, 2005). Recycling, for example, has become a somewhat regular practice for more people.

Nevertheless, while an habitus that generates an ecologically appropriate *sens pratique* may be the eventual goal, it is clear that we are not there: consumption of energy and materials is escalating, as is environmental degradation. Therefore, the environmental movement's cognitive praxis is still important until an environmental praxis sufficient for the resolution of environmental problems becomes normalized. It should be emphasized, however, that there is no single cognitive praxis of the environmental movement (Brulle, 2000). There are presently many ways by which the diverse cognitive praxes of the movement affect either field or habitus. We would expect this to remain so, even were the broad parameters of environmental awareness more fully absorbed by the broader society.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates several conclusions related to the development of an ecological habitus. First, an ecological *sens pratique*— a feel for the game of living in an ecologically sound manner — is more realistic than a rule-directed ethic in the construction of

environmental lifestyles. Second, reflexivity is important, particularly when a position is recognizably marginal, as are social movements. Third, “the feel for the game of living ecologically” needs to be extended via deliberate articulation. An ecological ethos with explication would be the effective praxis of the environmental movement. Fourth, this articulation will compete with other logics of practice to shape the habitus of the local community.

That this contestation occurs at all is a hopeful sign. Habitus is not so determined nor sedimented as some critics will make it. That there is a reflexive component, and that the doxic *sens pratique* can link with the alternative construction of a social movement’s cognitive praxis means that there is a learning component, which social movements and environmental educators can exploit. Although the primary habitus will remain deeply influential, a secondary habitus can be shaped by social movements such as the environmental movement (Reed-Danahay, 2005). As Wacquant (2004a) notes, critical thought is “solvent of the doxa.” Moreover, it is possible for environmental organizations to be the social field upon which an ecological habitus can be shaped, supported, and maintained in opposition to the unecological logic of practice of our contemporary society. This would seem particularly important in that the environmental movement presents a way of life that differs from the dominant logic of the modern world and which will seem peculiar to that logic.

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