

**The Social World Reversed:
Towards a Sociology of Activist Community Arts Practices**

by

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Abstract

This thesis draws upon Pierre Bourdieu's framework of 'practice' to theorize Activist Community Arts (ACA) as a cultural practice deeply embedded in the social and as strategies to have impacts on the social conditions of possibility for groups of social actors who are often experiencing social disadvantage (based in economic exclusions, political situation, race, gender, disability, and others). This thesis introduces ACA to a sociological audience as a new area of sociological investigation, contributes to theory on ACA and proposes that Bourdieu's framework can be extending by examining practices of cultural engagement that aim to create social change.

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In memoriam, Arlene Raven.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis addresses two paradoxes. The first paradox is that for the past four decades, an artistic, culturally-engaged practice resembling political and social activity has been at work in local communities and throughout the world, yet it is a largely invisible phenomenon to North American social theory and sociology. The practice is known by many names¹, referred to here as Activist Community Arts (ACA). ACA brings together groups of social actors who are usually at a social disadvantage, often based in economic exclusions, but also race, ethnicity, gender, disability, political situation, and others. These groups are defined in various ways and often have multiple factors of social disadvantage intersecting with economic disadvantage. The social groups or ‘communities’ of ACA would not otherwise consider themselves artists or have access to the arts. ACA uses culture and the arts to confront social issues that are significant to member communities. ACA negotiates dominant social ideas and practices, actively participating in social construction and change for and by communities experiencing disadvantage. Practitioner accounts of ACA projects often describe ACA practices as processes that engender change for individuals and communities. Participants are regularly quoted in the literature propounding the ways in which ACA projects have changed their lives and made a functional difference to their communities.

Yet despite the widespread social practice of ACA, this interdisciplinary practice is overlooked in several of the disciplines it might be examined by. Very little attention has been paid to ACA in North America in social criticism and even less in sociology. Neither general sociological inquiry nor the sociology of art have examined these social artistic practices at any length. One or more factors may be at the root of this oversight. A

¹ See pg 57 for a discussion of ACA’s alternate names.

general neglect of art as an object of inquiry in American sociology (see Zolberg 1990: 15) may contribute in part. In addition, the sociology of art, which often includes a wider swath of cultural activities to their subject of analysis than does a field such as art criticism or art history, has a general practice of deferring to art professionals to constitute the object of study for the sociology of art. By scanning the objects of study for the sociology of art one can see that this discipline still tends to defer in large part to the arbiters of artistic merit (critics, granting institutions, museums, galleries, curators, music halls, theatres, reviewers, etc.) to constitute the category of 'art'. This practice reinforces a Fine Arts vs. 'not art' separation² that silently excludes the likelihood of an examination of community arts practices. Even within the practice of ACA, though a small body of solid research is being published thorough, well-supported research is lacking or is not widely disseminated, [Cleveland 2005: 118]. Clearly, more systematic and sociological study of ACA is needed.

ACA is also largely disregarded by the mainstream of art (as constituted by art critics, galleries, funding bodies). It is often considered 'not art', or not 'good' art, or not 'serious' art by the criteria of mainstream art worlds. ACA has often been seen as too propagandistic and political to be art (and ironically, 'too artistic' to be politics), the creators are considered too unprofessionalized to be good artists, the style is often seen as lacking in professional skill and the product is too collectively created to be attributed to

² The question arises as to whether sociology of culture is better situated to examine ACA than the sociology of art, due to the broader scope of the former. An advantage of the sociology of culture over the sociology of art is that it is not so necessary to address the question of whether sociology should engage with aesthetic judgement. Some sociologists of art suggest that since aesthetic judgement is a central concern of art practice, sociologists cannot ignore or sidestep aesthetics, that they must entertain them as significant to the arts and thus to a sociology of the arts. Zolberg (1990) proposes that sociology's positivist roots are responsible for the hesitancy to engage in aesthetics and a legacy of a value-free science of the social. However, I suggest that perhaps it is a commitment to sociology as grounded in the empirical and against essentialism. An object is only art, good or bad art, in the relationships of historically, politically and socially situated social actors.

any one artist. So ACA has been, and is still, usually ignored by the guardians of art world legitimacy. ACA is usually not considered art and therefore has a hard time garnering arts funding and receiving legitimacy as an arts practice. To be accurate, this cannot be understood entirely in terms of a hostile, professionalized Fine Arts establishment trying to maintain their position of social legitimacy. Community arts have often circumvented Fine Arts institutions and networks. Sometimes it seems to be due to being blocked from art institution legitimacy. Other times it seems to be more related to a lack of identification with the assumptions and aims of market-based cultural production. Community arts has a tendency to be less involved with arts institutions, more involved with local social service organizations and publicizing themselves through their own specialized networks rather than through art institution networks.

ACA is not claimed as a political and social agent either. The major obstacle to this is what constitutes the second paradox that this thesis addresses—the entrenched separation between culture and the social in social and political thought and in popular common sense reasoning. This division marks off a limited territory for culture that does not allow for an understanding of how culture acts within and co-constructs the social. Because cultural practices, such as ACA, are relegated to a separate realm of ‘culture’ they are not understood to have the ability for political and social efficacy.

A sociological study of ACA is timely due to certain aspects related to accelerated, neo-liberal economic globalization. Development discourses are beginning to recognize the need for approaches that involve communities as partners. ACA is such a practice. ACA presents a consensus-based model where participants from communities experiencing disadvantage perform practices catalytic to developing spaces for social

change. At the same time, the notion of a social relevance of the arts is increasingly dominated in arts discourses and civic policy discourses by economist-oriented discourses of the 'creative city'. 'Creative city' discourses argue that the social role of the arts is to bring young, hip, elite, 'knowledge workers' to cities that have more 'creative capital' thus generating economic wealth (see Florida: 2002 or Landry: 2000). The logic of 'creative city' discourses maintains art as a domain of the elite classes. The implementation of 'creative city' discourses could have the effect of shifting attention away from culturally-engaged, class critiques that ACA might help to engender. This may be happening presently, though more study is needed to ascertain whether this is the case. In Australia where community-based art practices have enjoyed a certain amount of arts funding and recognition, this seems to be increasingly curtailed in favour of 'creative city' projects.

In sum, ACA is a social and political activity that seems to be creating change for individuals and communities. However it is not being examined by sociology and largely ignored by mainstream art, even though there is a strong possibility that it can complement the literature on development, and though it may be at risk of dispossession by new elite discourses of the role of art in society.

Research Question:

The overarching question that this thesis will answer is:

How can ACA be understood in a sociological way to present possibilities for changing and transforming the social?

This question is broken down into three sub-questions:

- What is characteristic about ACA art worlds?
- How is culture embedded in the social such that it can impact the social?
- How can ACA be understood to use its embeddedness in reimagining, changing and transforming the social?

Speaking to these questions requires attention to three interconnected domains: 1) the process of cooperative activity that constitutes ACA ‘art worlds’, 2) the social embeddedness of culture in the social, and 3) the possibilities for a cultural practice such as ACA to use its social embeddedness in strategies to contest class domination. These questions are addressed by using a cultural, sociological theoretical framework through which to understand ACA and relating the framework to empirical examples.

Argument

The thesis argues that ACA is a socio-cultural practice that is embedded in the social. Through cultural means it uses its social embeddedness to engender resistance to dominant socio-cultural practices and to present possibilities for change and transformation. In order to argue this, the thesis combines three major theoretical threads: accounts and theories written by ACA practitioners, Pierre Bourdieu’s framework of ‘practice’, and critiques of Bourdieu’s framework that allow for a greater sense of change and transformation, notably feminist interventions regarding insufficient attention to identity factors in his framework and William Sewell’s (1992) proposals of how agency can be read through Bourdieu’s structure-heavy framework. ‘Practice’ is an analytical tool focused primarily on class and does not explicitly take into account oppressions of race, gender or sexuality. In terms of ACA it may need to be modified to account for multiple *intersections* of class, gender, race and ethnicity facing many ACA participants.

Theories of ACA written by practitioners suggest that social change is taking place for participants and their communities in many ACA projects, but they fail to account for the relationship between the cultural practice of ACA and social change. Practitioners of ACA are providing theories about ACA practice that are detailed and provide an overview to the practice, but these theories lack systematicity, a connection to an overarching theoretical framework of society and a theory where cultural agency acts upon social structure. Though practitioner theories and data suggest a link between ACA practice and change in the social, they account for this through notions that propose changing the consciousness of social actors to change social relations. The problem with this way of thinking about change and ACA is that consciousness-raising has a weak relationship to social change, as sociologists and ACA practitioners alike have pointed out. However, the problem lies not with the observations of change, rather it demonstrates a need for research and a broader social framework to account for the change in its embodied and not always intentional, conscious actions.

Part of the problem practitioners face in explaining how ACA makes change in the social is the division of notions of culture and notions of the social into two separate realms. This is also one of the contributing factors in why ACA is not studied by sociologists and the sociology of art has been marginal to the discipline. Art and society have chiefly been viewed, in common-sense notions and in social theory, as two different things. This thesis uses a notion of 'practice' to bridge the gulf, specifically Pierre Bourdieu's notion of practice which embeds culture within the social. What a framework of practice does is to bring binary oppositions of culture and society, structure and agency, thought and activity into the same analytical space. Through a framework of

practice, Bourdieu argues that culture is used as a resource to position social actors vis a vis social class. In many of his writings Bourdieu shows that everyday cultural practices, such as taste in art and lifestyle consumption, social ritual, social networking, choices about pursuing careers, rewarding 'merit' in education, ways of speaking, ways of holding the body, and ways acting towards other social actors are all enrolled in a process of distinguishing differences in social classes. These cultural practices of social distinction are often embodied and undetectable to the social actor thinking and performing them, according to Bourdieu. Bourdieu provides an account of cultural practices that are material and embodied, which complements ACA accounts of primarily deliberate, conscious action. Using cultural symbols of class dominance, social actors enact embodied, hidden, class-based type of violence Bourdieu calls 'symbolic violence' to protect their class interests. The populations that ACA draws from to constitute its participants are social actors who would experience a great deal of this symbolic class violence.

Bourdieu's framework of practice is useful in connecting culture to the social, providing accounts of cultural practices that are embodied and unconscious, and describing how culture is used in social practices of domination. However, it does not account for the change and transformation that ACA attempts to engender. Bourdieu's writings can readily be applied to an explanation of ACA practice, but not how ACA uses culture to change the social. This does not mean that Bourdieu's theoretical constructs are not relevant to ACA, rather they need to be extended to account for agency and cultural practices of resistance. This is where critiques of Bourdieu's framework of practice, particularly William Sewell's [1992] interventions into Bourdieu's structure-heavy

framework, can contribute to extending Bourdieu's framework to account for strategies of cultural resistance such as ACA. Using Sewell's proposals in concert with Bourdieu's framework, ACA can be understood to use cultural strategies as a means of resistance rather than domination. ACA is proposed here as a socio-cultural strategy with two parts, to push back the unquestioned aspects of domination (the doxa) and to engender transformative action. Through ACA strategies, spaces are developed for resistance to social domination and to create conditions of possibility for social change and transformation.

Chapter Outline

In order to situate ACA empirically, chapter two briefly introduces five recent exemplars of ACA practice: The Dorothy O'Connell Monument for Anti-Poverty Activism, Tuganire, Crossing Communities, Staging Human Rights, and Templates For Activism. A description of each is followed by a more detailed discussion of aspects of the project which are discussed using the theoretical constructs in subsequent chapters.

Chapter three is designed to provide an overview of the characteristics features of ACA 'art worlds'. It begins from Howard Becker's (1982) premise that art is always a collective activity, using this notion as a springboard from which to develop a sociological understanding the of ACA 'art worlds'. The chapter brings together writings by ACA practitioners to elaborate on seven key attributes that differentiate ACA from conventional art practice. Attention is given to ACA epistemology and methodology, particularly to the participatory approach. ACA's focus on process and social engagement are discussed as central distinctive features.

Chapter four grapples with the question of how culture relates to the social. Using Pierre Bourdieu's framework of practice it argues that culture is embedded in the social and is used as a means to develop, maintain and change social class hierarchies. Chapter four details Bourdieu's concepts relevant to the discussion of ACA presented here so that they can be applied in chapter five. Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is central to the exegesis and chapter four details seven key features of habitus. Economic, symbolic and cultural capital are discussed as the resources that social actors employ in social 'fields'. 'Doxa' and 'symbolic power' or 'symbolic violence' are introduced as cultural weapons to maintain social dominance. Critiques of Bourdieu's lack of notions of change and transformation within his framework round out the chapter.

Chapter five uses Bourdieu's framework to explain the larger social embeddedness of ACA art worlds, processes and social actors. It is here that Bourdieu's framework and critiques are applied to ACA to explain how ACA engenders resistance, change and transformation. The chapter argues that ACA is a practice in the Bourdieuan sense and presents strategies of resistance to domination, strategies of social change and strategies of transformation. Further, that ACA works through the habitus of participants, including their embodied and unconscious thoughts and performances, in a reversal of how symbolic violence is enacted upon social actors. Two ACA strategies, 'anti-doxic' strategies and strategies of transformation, are outlined using Bourdieu's concepts and Sewell's extensions of Bourdieu's concepts to include agency and change. Lastly, the chapter proposes that ACA practices consecrate social legitimacy of their strategies through ritual, that ACA is a ritual practice that attempts to confer legitimacy to passages of social, symbolic and cultural capital from dominant to dominated social actors.

The thesis concludes by presenting questions arising from the discussion, limitations of the research and suggestions for future study.

Contributions of the Research

The proposed thesis will make several contributions to sociology, the sociology of culture in particular. This thesis will:

1. establish ACA as a new and appropriate object of sociological investigation. The aim is to provide a starting point regarding ACA for sociologists of art, sociologists of culture and sociologists researching substantive social issues that intersect with ACA.
2. provide lines of flight to use Pierre Bourdieu's framework of practice for sociological research into ACA and other cultural practices of resistance
3. provide directions in which to extend Bourdieu's framework to account for resistance, change and transformation within practice
4. act as a groundwork for future alliances between progressive sociological research and ACA practice.

Methodological Approach

This thesis is designed to accommodate an experimental, theoretical cultural sociology perspective on ACA. It is primarily a theoretical project, theory understood as a set of 'thinking tools'. An inductive approach informs the organization of the chapters. The thesis moves the reader from exemplars of ACA practice, to a general overview of ACA practice, to Bourdieu's theory of practice, to an application of Bourdieu's theory of practice to ACA.

The exemplars in chapter 2 are not to be confused with case studies. Exemplars, in this case, are examples of ACA practice in which some of the theoretical constructs operate; ‘case studies’ would be the ‘data’ for a research project. The purpose of the exemplars here is to provide *context* for the theoretical constructs in subsequent chapters. The exemplars provide a certain degree of “thick description” (Geertz 1973). Geertz suggests that providing *contexts* for cultural practices is key to grasping the meanings of cultural practices. According to Geertz, thick description helps to determine the meaning of a cultural practice of, for example, whether a wink is just an involuntary twitch or an intentional signal to a friend. By describing the context, an ‘involuntary wink’ can be differentiated from an ‘intentional wink’. The ‘intentional wink’ can then be theorized as a different kind of social activity than an ‘involuntary wink’. Thus, thick description helps to describe the practice in context and differentiate it from other cultural practices. Then researchers can theorize about the social meaning of one or another similar-looking practice. The thick description of ACA practice in the exemplars of this thesis works the same way. The exemplars are empirical examples of context. The context consists of the types of activities involved in ACA practice and how practitioners talk about ACA practice. This enables the reader to understand the context in which the theoretical discussion of the cultural practice operates. Thus, it is important to see instances of ACA in their empirical contexts in order to better understand the circumstances that the theoretical constructs operate in.

A sample of five recent exemplars of ACA projects are used to help situate the theory in subsequent chapters. The sampling approach was based on Miles and Huberman’s (1994) discussion of purposive, theory-driven sampling. The method is

appropriate for analysis that does not seek to establish statistical generalizations, aiming instead to elaborate on and draw new connections to existing theory. Purposive sampling is non-probability sampling. It does not seek traditional notions of probability and causality. Most non-probability sampling in sociology is ‘purposive’, that is, the researcher handpicks the sample population with a purpose in mind (as opposed to non-probability sampling techniques whose sampling is based primarily on convenience or quick ‘person on the street’ surveys popular in journalism).

Theory-driven sampling methods are sometimes confused with or conflated with ‘theoretical sampling’ often used in grounded theory research (see Strauss and Corbin 1998:73). The difference is that a purposive, theory-driven approach relies much more heavily on apriori bodies of social theory on which research questions are based. This thesis is theory-driven, not grounded research. This thesis relies heavily on pre-existing theoretical constructs.

The thesis employs multiple cases of exemplars for two reasons. The first reason is that there is a recognized need for greater theoretical discussion of ACA within the field [Cleveland 2005: 118]. There are many instances of indepth, individual case studies of ACA within the ACA literature (though not in the sociology literature) but there is relatively little research that draws out the general characteristics of multiple cases of ACA projects and provides theoretical discussion. This thesis project is centred around providing a sociological approach to this gap in the literature.

The second reason to employ multiple cases is to deepen the explanatory capacity of the theory. This thesis project does not employ multiple cases out of a concern with statistical generalizability as many empirical projects might, but rather with the purpose

of experimenting with theoretical frameworks for thinking about ACA, and cultural production more broadly. A multi-case approach seeks to address tensions between the particular, empirical instances of ACA and the universalizing tendencies of theory (see Miles and Huberman 1994: 173). By employing particular instances of the practice, a reader who may not be familiar with ACA practice has a stronger grounding to understand how the proposed theoretical framework might work in practical instances. They can then examine the theory in terms of the particular, allowing for a more thorough consideration of strengths and limitations of the theoretical framework applied.

Exemplars were obtained within my own pre-established networks of ACA practitioners. For the past four years I have been part of a network of artists, researchers, practitioners and participants involved with ACA. Through my participation in projects, conferences, meetings, informal discussions, correspondence (supported by an extensive review I conducted of reports and theory written by those who practice ACA) I have developed an extended network of contacts with ACA practitioners. Exemplars were obtained from within this network.

Exemplars were chosen with reference to Miles and Huberman's [1994: 34] theory-driven sampling criteria: relevance to the conceptual framework, potential to generate rich information, a level of analytic generalizability, potential to generate believable explanations, ethics and feasibility. Instances of similar practices that did not meet these criteria were rejected. Also, two of the interviews I conducted did not yield usable exemplars and were not included in this project. Two of the interviews I conducted did not meet the parameters of the description of 'ACA' practice as I have defined it and so they were not included as exemplars.

Interviews were conducted between April 28, 2006 and July 7, 2006. In the first and fifth exemplars, interviews for a previous research project were also utilized in order to fill out gaps in the narratives. I transcribed the interviews selecting parts that illustrated constructs from the theory and some ‘thick description’. I adjusted the method used to present the exemplars in response to the co-constructive principles held by respondents concerns around representation of their projects. It was necessary to assure respondents at the interview stage that they would be able to edit the narratives about their projects that were presented in this thesis. Several respondents reported an experience of having their projects represented in ways that ran counter to their aims and that this experience was emotionally painful. In one case an article written by a journalist in a local newspaper described a participant, who was from a sensitive community, in a way that caused psychological and emotional harm to the participant and created bad press for the project. In response to these concerns, I did two things. I translated the interview transcriptions into written narratives, removing awkward phrasing that is common in conversational speech and rearranged sections of texts to provide a smoothly flowing narrative. Then I sent the corresponding narrative to the respondents for editing. I incorporated the edits I received into the narrative presented. Since the purpose of the exemplars was to present the practitioner’s perspectives on the projects they facilitated, it was not problematic to have them edit the text. The thesis was not looking to uncover anything ‘hidden’ in the initial responses. Neither was it the aim to present ‘objective’ accounts of the ACA projects, acknowledging conventional notions of ‘objectivity’ in social research as problematic. The method I have employed openly acknowledges that research is always a co-construction between the researcher and the interviewee and it opens up that co-

construction for questioning. The co-construction of the exemplar narratives parallels the co-construction in ACA practice and asserts a legitimacy for collective authorship.

In order to give the reader a sense of the exemplars as particular in their creative cultural forms of social practice they are presented in ‘alternative ethnographic’ forms of writing such as those exemplified in the journal *Qualitative Inquiry*³ and promoted by Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner [Ellis and Bochner 1996]. ‘Cool’ descriptive passages from secondary literature are juxtaposed with hot’ and evocative narrative from a first-person perspective [Ellis and Bochner 1996: 30]. This helps to highlight the passion that often motivates participation in ACA projects, providing the reader with access to this very important aspect of ACA practice within the rather ‘cool’ theoretical discussion that the thesis provides. The exemplars present the respondents’ sections of the exemplar in boxes to differentiate them from secondary literature. These sections are not in quotations because, as I have explained above, they are not direct quotations.

The arguments presented in this thesis would not change in a substantive way if different exemplars were chosen or if no exemplars were included. However, there are advantages to including exemplars and utilizing interviews to assist in composing them. Including a chapter of exemplars, as discussed earlier in this methodology section, introduces ACA practices to readers who have not encountered the practice before and strengthens the explanatory capacity of the theory. In addition, there are two benefits to composing the exemplars from interviews instead of exclusively using pre-existing literature. First, many of the accounts of ACA practice do not provide a detailed account of process. There are many reasons for this, which there is not space here to explore. Conducting interviews broadened the array of choices of exemplars to include projects

³ *Qualitative Inquiry*. (eds) Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

that do not have a previously written account of their process or the previously written account has limited accessibility to a researcher. Second, including a chapter of exemplars provides the opportunity to present current community arts projects in Canada that have not been written about extensively before. This adds more accounts of ACA practice to the literature on ACA.

Theoretical Tools

The theory for this project is drawn from four major sources: the synthesis of dozens of reports of community arts projects that I have read over the last three years, most often written by ACA facilitators; writings on community arts in general usually written by practitioners who have many years of experience on multiple projects; social and cultural theory from the field of cultural sociology; and my own experiences in the ‘art worlds’ of community arts.

In general, this thesis takes a critical, politically-engaged, cultural sociology approach to ACA. This requires a theoretical lens capable of accounting for three things: art-making as a collective, socio-cultural activity; cultural activity as a class-based resource that is embedded in the social; and cultural activity as a strategy for repositioning social actors experiencing social disadvantage. A effective methodological strategy to account for these three things combines 1) local understandings of ACA practice with sociologies of art and culture and theory developed by ACA practitioners; 2) Howard Becker’s sociology of art scholarship (1982), 3) and Pierre Bourdieu’s framework of ‘practice’ were found applicable to this task.

Theory developed by ACA practitioners is most useful in describing the conscious ideas and intentional activities that inform and develop from ACA projects.

There is little to no sociological research on empirical cases of ACA, so data must be gathered either from accounts written by those involved or by collecting primary data. Though primary qualitative data collection would be feasible for examining single cases of ACA, when studying larger numbers of ACA projects it is practical, and perhaps even necessary, to rely to a certain extent on practitioner accounts to study ACA practice *in general*.

Many aspects of ACA practice would make studying more than one ACA project at a time in an indepth, qualitative way prohibitively expensive and time-consuming. ACA projects often take place over extended time spans of several years or more. For example, four of the five exemplars, The Dorothy O'Connell Monument project, Tuganire, Crossing Communities Art Project, and Templates For Activism all take place over multiple years. Projects can involve numerous social actors in diffused networks whose connections may only become clear later in the project or after the project ends. ACA works with sensitive populations, so access to ACA participants is usually limited. The process by which an outside researcher could gain access to the sensitive populations involved requires a long period of trust-building and may necessitate a commitment of participating in the project.

None of these are hurdles are, in themselves, unique to researching ACA but the combination of these factors and the lack of foundational sociological research on the topic makes a primary-data study of multiple ACA cases particularly prohibitive. Each case would require at least one researcher per project over a period of months or years. Research of this sort would require dozens of researchers or more in order to get a representative sample of ACA practices. It would produce reams of thick description to

analyze. The research process would be expensive and require a considerable commitment of multiple researchers' time over a period of years. Therefore due to the limitations of an MA thesis project interviewing and using the secondary data from project practitioners were the most practical choices in garnering information about ACA. Time and resource restrictions were factors, as was the level of expertise required to conduct indepth interviews with multiple respondents from sensitive populations.

It is the aim of this thesis to be clear about who the respondent is in the primary and secondary data and mostly it is a practitioner voice. Using interviews and written accounts of ACA practitioners and not interviewing participants directly could create biases and limitations that must be recognized. Most significantly, practitioners and participants understandings may vary due in part to different class positioning and different relationships to the sensitive communities involved. Some of the ACA literature does include participant responses, but further sociological data collection into participant understandings would be very useful to understanding participant points of view. This would provide a more well-rounded understanding of ACA practice. This thesis is designed as an exploratory project and to raise sociological interest, since there is so little sociological writing on the topic, rather than being comprehensive.

As I have pointed out in the opening to this chapter, both sociology and ACA theory have yet to fully investigate the means by which ACA contributes to social change and transformation. In order to make the argument in a sociological way that ACA does this, the thesis combines Howard Becker's premise as a starting point which states that art is always collective with what could be called the 'grounded theory' of ACA practitioners and with Pierre Bourdieu's framework of practice and his critics, notably

William Sewell in his article on structure and change [Sewell: 1992]. This set of authors provide theoretical accounts of ACA and cultural practice that allow for an understanding of how ACA is embedded in and has the potential to change the social.

Becker's role is minor in this project. His *Art Worlds* (1982) is used as a springboard to introduce ACA as a collective social practice⁴. The main argument in Becker's sociological analysis of the work of artists is that art-making is *always a* collective social activity. His contribution to the sociology of art and culture is to render visible the conventional, collective, social activities in making a work of art, the multiple activities by networks of multiple social actors, and the 'support' activities which are often ignored as peripheral to the artistic 'genius' of artistic creation. His approach in *Art Worlds* is a conventionally sociological, constructionist, social organization analysis [xi]. However, the application of the approach to art was Becker's innovation. Becker deploys an analysis of the labour of artists and the social networks that their labour is situated in. Applying a 'sociology of work' approach to art worlds runs counter to conventional, aestheticist approaches which 1) perpetuate the myth of the lone genius artist to the neglect of the collective processes and hierarchical social positioning of the 'artist' 2), that tend to reproduce ideas of art and culture as essentialist, transcendental or spiritual instead of scientifically and empirically observable, and 3) entrench the binary between culture and the social by presenting art-making as cultural activity as opposed to its opposite, social activity. Thus, Becker's work establishes art-making as a collective social activity that, like other social activities, is appropriate to sociological analysis.

⁴ Becker's analysis of art worlds and artists was unique in American sociology in the 1980s and was subsequently influential to art theory and the sociology of art.

The main argument in Becker's sociological analysis of the work of artists is that art-making is *always a* collective social activity. He renders visible the conventional, collective, social activities in making a work of art, the multiple activities by networks of multiple social actors, and the 'support' activities which are often ignored as peripheral to the artistic 'genius' of artistic creation. Becker's 'Art Worlds' is a largely descriptive account of how collective action functions to produce an art work and artistic professionals.

Becker's specific insights are only of limited use to discussing ACA, because he focuses on 'integrated professional' artists, individuals with formal art training, that display or perform their work in settings that are within conventional standards of art practice. Only part of one chapter is devoted to artistic activity performed by social actors outside of this category of artists.

Unlike Becker who limits his analysis to the 'inner workings' of art world subcultures, Bourdieu's focus is the overarching social relations that cultural activity, including art worlds, are embedded in. Bourdieu's writing on art and art worlds can be understood as part of a larger, socio-cultural framework of 'practice'. Whereas Becker does not account for class conflict in the constitution of art worlds, for Bourdieu cultural activity must be understood in terms of the social macrostructure of class domination and unequal access to goods, both material and symbolic. Bourdieu's premise is that art is one of cultural resources such as are enrolled in the political positioning of social actors. Culture is used by social actors to reflect and reiterating social inequality.

Bourdieu's framework of practice is described in detail in chapter four and applied in chapter five, but to be brief Bourdieu's framework of practice provides a

theoretical model in which to understand how culture and the social are intertwined and enrolled in practices that situate social actors vis a vis social class. Many understandings of culture view it as divorced from the social, but Bourdieu's work shows how taste, art consumption, art production and everyday practices of performance of lifestyle are intimately involved in establishing and maintaining class relations of domination. Particularly useful to this discussion is Bourdieu's concept of habitus, which brings together individual and collective identity in a cultural/material sense.

Both Becker and Bourdieu's work suggest a demystification of art but differ in strategy. The approach that Bourdieu uses, often considered a 'structuralist constructivist' approach, points to the ties between cultural production and consumption as limited by social factors, of which class conflict is the most significant constituent. In an effort to reject both structuralist notions which do not adequately explain social agency and voluntarist notions that explain everything in terms of social agency, Bourdieu develops a framework of 'practice' that attempts to bridge objectivism and subjectivism, agency and structure, the social and the cultural. It brings together the conscious and unconscious, thought and activity, the mind and the body.

Bourdieu's work is significant to ACA because in order to understand how ACA acts on the social it is important to show the interrelations between arts, culture and the social. Bourdieu's framework of practice provides a path through two epistemological hurdles to understanding ACA this way: 1) finding a way to bring 'culture' and 'the social' into the same analytical space, and 2) finding a way to understand structure and agency as part of that same framework. Bourdieu's framework helps to explain how ACA works culturally to effect the generative and regulating aspects of social reproduction and

change within the cultural aspects of participants lives. ACA practice aims to uncover and encourage spaces of possibility for change and transformation.

Though Bourdieu's scholarship is very useful to understanding ACA's embeddedness in the social it does not provide a clear sense of social transformation and thus an understanding of how ACA could contribute to social transformation. Bourdieu has been critiqued for his tendency to emphasize structure at the expense of agency. However, this is not to say that agency cannot be read through his structure-heavy framework. William Sewell's critique of Bourdieu provides avenues in which to understand transformation. His five axioms are applied to understand how transformative approaches of ACA work to engender change and transformation. At the same time, Sewell's axioms provide avenues to extend Bourdieu's framework beyond the limitations of Bourdieu's own writings.

My strategy for continuing this inquiry is thus to use my own experiences with community arts projects and to draw upon the complementary capacities of four theoretical contributions: Becker's starting point declaring that art is always collective and social, ACA practitioner theories, Bourdieu's framework of practice and critiques of that framework that enable it to provide a sense agency. This thesis brings together my academic training in both the fine arts and sociology as well as my experiences over the last three years with attending, witnessing, performing in and writing about community arts work. I bring to this thesis my continued commitment to combining artistic, academic and activist work and to providing ways for people to understand ACA as a creative, change-making, socially-engaged practice.

CHAPTER TWO: EXEMPLARS OF ACA PRACTICE

The purpose of this chapter is to present exemplars of ACA practice in order to enhance the explanatory capacity of the theoretical discussion that follows. These projects are conceptually dense, multi-year projects involving multiple social actors. In this sense they do not lend readily to summarizing, nor is it the project of this thesis to present any one project in depth. The exemplars are meant to provide a ‘slice’ of thick description from the perspective of one of the organizers of the project. Five exemplars compose this chapter.

1. *The Dorothy O’Connell Monument for Anti-Poverty Activism*
2. *Tuganire*
3. *Crossing Communities Art Project*
4. *People’s Palace Projects: Staging Human Rights*
5. *Templates For Activism*

The responses from ACA practitioners who participated in interviews conducted for the purpose of this thesis are placed within a box in order to distinguish their responses from secondary information sources. A brief introduction to the respondent’s position relative to the project precedes the response. The presentation of the exemplars is organized to contextualize multiple theoretical constructs at the same time in a condensed manner. A brief overview of some of the key concepts that arise in the exemplars is presented before each exemplar.

Exemplar 1
The Dorothy O'Connell Monument for Anti-Poverty Activism
2000 -2004
Ottawa City Hall
Primary respondent: Candice Beale

There were a small core of organizers for this project and hundreds of participants. One of these organizers was Candice Beale, an anti poverty activist who is actively involved with several different groups in the Ottawa area that attempt to alleviate the effects of poverty. Candice believes that the people who are most affected by a situation are also the ones best able to put forth workable solutions and that people living in poverty need to be more involved in the processes that impact their lives.

The Dorothy O'Connell Monument for Anti-Poverty Activism is an instance of public ritual, which will be discussed in chapter 5. This exemplar shows an instance involving disagreement and negotiation in ACA's collective decision-making process to achieve agreement to collectively create a public monument. It hints at the strong emotional sentiment surrounding an ACA project regarding social conditions of poverty and anti-poverty activism which the project engages with. The monument serves to provide both symbolic 'spaces' for people in poverty in the Ottawa area and physical public space at the same time.

The Dorothy O'Connell monument developed out of the People's Hearings in 1996 where a bunch of people who were dealing with poverty got together and told their stories. The group of people that I was involved with at the time felt that if the general public could just hear these stories - because at the time they were not public, they were told more privately – they would have a better understanding of the issues faced by people living with poverty. The general public and the press were excluded from these events to create a safe place for people who live in poverty to tell their stories. Out of this we decided to create a Poverty Awareness Week, to help draw attention to and raise awareness about the issues. Some of the bolder speakers from the People's Hearings

spoke out during Poverty Awareness Week. We created an award to recognize the work of one anti-poverty activist each year. Partly, it was because we saw that awards got public attention and we wanted to shine a light on the issues of poverty. Dorothy O'Connell was the first recipient. I had the idea to make a plaque-type of thing that we would hang in city hall for recognition of anti-poverty issues. Then Bob Crook got involved and the plaque became a monument. The idea went from being something small that would hang on the wall in city hall, to an eight-foot monument on city hall grounds. This process involved many rounds of negotiation with Ottawa city council over several years in order to obtain permissions and to account for practical considerations for building the monument on Ottawa City Hall property.

We invited community artist cj fleury to workshop with the community. Amongst us, Sue and Linda and I, we sent out invitations that we knew would gather a diverse group of people living in poverty. About twenty or thirty people came from a cross-section of the community. We designed a series of brainstorming workshops to raise the issues that people wanted to have represented. Cj facilitated, people raised ideas, then she responded and wrote them down. Several people voiced considerable anger and political sentiments about poverty issues that they lived in. They made requests of what the monument should do; it should be a bench, a podium, a shelter. Some of their suggestions contradicted each other. Some of their suggestions seemed unworkable to me and some of their suggestions... I just shook my head. There was even an idea that I thought was, well, bad and cj was really excited by. I was thinking, "I hope that this idea looks different in her head." It was a scary process for us. It's hard to come up with something that represents everyone.

The first concept drawing that cj came up with seemed to be too political for the people in the workshops. It was a sculpture with shoulders and hands in buckets, like the oppressive government with its hands in the pockets of the poor. I can see why cj came up with this interpretation and I thought it was quite good. Well, some people responded saying that it didn't represent them. It was too political, too representative of the politicians and not of the people in poverty. At the meeting, people were very political and vocal. It took time to get everyone on the same wavelength.

So then cj came up with I call the "Wonderbread" design and we all immediately felt that it was right. It's a large slice of bread on an angle with a house cut out that sits in front of the monument as a bench and podium. Everyone on the monument committee and all of our friends who live in poverty love the design! Mind you, we had some discussions over the colour. I vetoed the green dye. A green slice of bread! The moldy monument! Blue too. The penicillin monument! We settled on red (Beale 2003).

As well as facilitating workshops to collectively design the monument, fleury facilitated and coordinated the construction over the course of four years. The completed concrete sculpture, located on the south lawn of Ottawa City Hall on Lisgar Street, shows a nine by nine foot slice of bread made with a house carved out of its centre, signifying the needs of people in poverty for food and shelter. The house shape carved out of the centre sits on the ground as a bench or a podium. A tear-filled and deeply moving dedication ceremony was held on October 17, 2004 in which roses were laid in memory of people who have died in the Ottawa area as a result of poverty-related causes. There are still ongoing legal issues to be addressed regarding the monument.

The idea of this monument attracted publicity. Bob Crook spoke with the press because of his experience with this and his excellent speaking abilities. There were two articles written, one by the Ottawa Citizen and one by the Ottawa Sun, that did not promote the monument. I think it would have been better for one of us (people in poverty) to do the interviews because I think people in poverty usually get treated better when they speak about poverty issues. I would set them straight and I am not normally all that self-restrained! I would tell them that poor people want this monument. I would tell them that if they distributed the money that it took to make this monument amongst the poor that each person would get approximately \$1.50. People in the press really had no idea. I would have discussed with them beforehand the war that government has waged on poor people. In 1995, 21.6% of the money was cut out of welfare benefits. In 2003, because of the lack of increase for cost of living, that amounts to 37% less than 1995 levels. Welfare cheats account for less than 1% of the people on welfare. Did you know that when a person is banned from welfare they can not access any social welfare services, not even shelters! The only thing that they can access is soup kitchens. This isn't widely publicized, certainly not by the government. Banning people from welfare is a death sentence. Did you also know that the child tax benefit is considered income and if this puts a welfare recipient over the income limit to receive benefits it is clawed back. Also, regulations here have been changed to make it easier to evict tenants. Tenants now only have five days to respond to a hearing notice. Before the unveiling of the monument, the press didn't understand why we would want to erect this monument. Despite the possibility of the press being unsympathetic, I think it was important to have the press at

the unveiling event so that hopefully they get a better idea and encourage other people to know more.

I'd like to clear up some misconceptions about this monument. First, no government money was used for the monument. It was all fundraised. Second, community members in poverty are much more impacted by the money being spent as a public reminder of poverty than they would be by giving the money to the foodbank or other services. Third, the monument stands as a daily reminder, at city hall, that people are living in poverty. It is intended to make middle-class people think differently about how they conduct their lives. We wanted the award in a prominent place so that during the 51 weeks of the year when it isn't Poverty Awareness Week these people would remember that people are still living in poverty. Perhaps that knowledge would influence how they led their lives, how they voted, how they gave to charity, how they spoke to people on the street that were homeless or otherwise disadvantaged. Another thing that people can do is call their politicians and discuss poverty as a political priority.

We also wanted people to recognize and appreciate those who spend so much time and energy fighting for people who live in poverty. These people go largely unthanked. Hopefully the work involved with this monument will also inspire the next generation of anti-poverty activists. It is a small incentive that works against the burnout that anti-poverty activists face. It is a little reminder saying, "thanks for fighting for us!" This monument is the only award that is specific to anti-poverty activism. It is important because it publicly recognizes anti-poverty work. Anti-poverty activism has a high rate of burnout. Often, you don't see the results of your work as an anti-poverty activist. Sometimes, despite all your efforts, the situation still gets worse. The lift that a little

recognition gives allows anti-poverty activists to continue their work. Dorothy O'Connell, to whom this monument was dedicated, was on a high for a couple of months! This kind of thing is what makes external acknowledgement of anti-poverty activists so important.

Overall, this monument is a reminder to each person to think of more than just him or herself, even if this monument is just a subconscious reminder for them to do something about poverty. The purpose is to slowly, gently reorder peoples' mindsets. The daily reminder of the monument does this better than anything else could (Beale 2003).

Since it was erected in 2004 the monument has served as a place to start marches, to hold private and public ceremonies, to commemorate those living with and dying in poverty and to provide a place on the city hall grounds where people living in poverty can sit and rest without fear of being removed.

Exemplar 2
Tuganire
2003-present
Montreal

Primary respondent: Lisa Ndejuru

Lisa Ndejuru is the facilitator of Tuganire, a program that aims to facilitate dialogue on social issues relevant to the Rwandan community in Montreal using traditional dance, drumming and singing. Ndejuru is currently completing her Masters degree in Pastoral Counseling at Concordia University.

This exemplar is one of the many ACA projects that negotiates a complex of social identities within a place-based ethnic community. The project creates discussion around notions of traditional culture and identity and how these notions are negotiated with contemporary diasporic identities. Ndejuru's discussion of process highlights the very common initial resistance that the community can have to engaging through ACA in the social issues that affect them. The extended process of gaining trust with and within communities from which participants identify also arises in this account. This account also demonstrates an instance where other members take responsibility for the project or new projects to emerge. Like many ACA projects Tuganire is multi-year project. This account gives the reader a view of a project currently in progress.

After the 1994 genocide in Rwanda I wanted to do this project. I wanted to start dialogue. I wanted to ask "Does life feel normal with this in it?" It wasn't really a question though, it was more like a scream. This doesn't make sense! We have to talk about this! I think what was uppermost in my mind was how something like this could happen and life just goes on. Genocide is not a natural disaster, it's a manmade thing. People have argued that this is the sort of thing that happens when a place is overpopulated, but that isn't the cause. It doesn't make sense. A lot of things didn't make

sense to me growing up but I kept doing things I was told to anyhow. And at some point I questioned all of it. I knew that if I scratched the surface something was going to come out.

Tuganire (too-gən-yə-rā) means “let’s talk” or “let’s discuss” in Kinyarwanda.⁵ I noticed that people from the Rwandan community here in Montreal talk, but they don’t say anything anymore. Many of these people have lived with unbelievable realities and I don’t know where they put them everyday. There was the genocide in 1994, but there was also the war in 1990. There have been various violent clashes. Everyone has been touched by the difficulties of violence. Genocide is an extreme violence but violence has existed for a long time in Rwanda. How do you see yourself as Rwandans when you are being killed constantly? How do you live with that? We carry this reality around and we don’t look at it. I wanted to make sense of the complete unreality of it all.

There used to be a very strong culture of the spoken word in Rwanda. For example, when someone is to be married it is a very lengthy and verbal process of negotiating to securing the details of how the families will come together. There is a kind of committee of people who are chosen to speak for the parents of the bride and the groom. It is like an elaborate verbal game. Everybody has a good time. Traditionally it would go on for days. There is so much imagination and play that goes into it. It is done with a lot of laughter but it is serious business. This process puts everything together in negotiation everything that is needed to join families together. People recall these discussions later and laugh. I am trying to infuse our dialogue in the group with this spirit.

⁵ Kinyarwanda is the main spoken language, and the official language, in Rwanda.

This would be the spirit in which we could settle our parameters here in Montreal through dialogue and collective reflection. The issues are no less serious here in Montreal. Added to the issues of violence in Rwanda are the issues and difficulties involved in immigration, exile and our identities in Canada. We're all supposed to be Rwandan, but what does being Rwandan mean in a Canadian city where people identify you not necessarily as Rwandans but rather as Black people, African people, maybe Francophones? Also, there is a rip in the middle of the Rwandan community here along the ethnic line between Hutus and Tutsis. It is not supposed to be there anymore but it continues to exist anyway. In Rwanda, some of the same conditions are still going on twelve years after the genocide. This kind of violence is going to happen again. There is a world view that makes it so that we just continue as these things are going on. Something has to happen for the healing to take place. How does the healing happen?

It took me ten years after the genocide to start talking about some of the issues. It took another year and a half of spending time with the community here in Montreal before I could speak. Then I had to get people talking. People don't want to be used, they don't want to be a project, they think "I don't care about a project, I'm living my life". Unless the project feels like it is really part of their life they don't want to participate.

To get people talking, I worked differently. I worked with the dance troupe and used my studies to delve into the history of the country and genocide. I worked a lot with dance. Dance was the thing that the community would gather around. Back then I was wondering why we were dancing dances that had to do with cows and kingdoms and those traditional things when we were in a modern, or postmodern, reality (in Montreal after the genocide). What did that mean? If you take away the music, the songs and the

traditional dress what happens? I wondered if we worked with that kind, how would it look? I used the music of Bobby McFarrin⁶. It was the dance version of a basic stick drawing that a child would draw. It was difficult to do too because there was resistance to changing anything. The tradition is very entrenched. Back then tradition was all there was left. So I couldn't change anything without meeting with great resistance. The people practicing the dance and the audience weren't hostile, but change created a great amount of anxiety. Now I know that there are words for the kind of practice I was doing but back then it was quite intuitive. It was very tough work. I couldn't speak directly to the dancers because I wasn't part of the community. Though I have been living with the community (the Rwandan community in Montreal) I have been on the outskirts of it. It's been a love/hate kind of thing because I don't speak Kinyarwanda. There is a line between 'real' Rwandans and 'not real' ones. I was born in Rwanda and grew up in Germany. Then I came here when I was thirteen. I am taught and schooled as a westerner and have a western attitude about asking questions and critiquing the way things are. I have strange ideas that I want to practice. I was not disliked, but seen as someone strange. My cousin was one of the leaders of the youth. He was a reference. I would speak to him. He was steeped in the traditional culture so he was quite open to discussing new things and less resistant to change. My ideas would exhilarate him *because* they were new and he was so advanced. He could then translate my ideas and make it possible for others to try them. We did one project and it was so exhausting that it took another ten years before I went back into the community.

Right now I'm working with a youth group of Rwandans. They come together on Sundays around traditional drumming, dancing and singing. These youths who have

⁶ Bobby McFarren's music is in a popular jazz style.

come together have been part of this group for seven years. They've grown up together basically, dancing and singing. They were all youth when they started but now the youngest is fifteen and the oldest is thirty five. Though in Rwandan culture, a person is a 'youth' until they are married and have their own family.

The project of Tuganire is an empowerment project. The idea of Tuganire was a way to negotiate self, family, community of origin, and host community. It is about the healing and about settling. They organize out of need, not out of conviction. It is about people living lives. It is about a group of dancers, singers, drummers, mostly youth, struggling to survive, to make their lives and build the community. It's that struggle, it's all about the struggle.

There's a healing part and an art part. The art part remains nebulous for me yet. I lose sight of the 'art' for the logistics of struggling through the everyday needs for the survival. This could involve someone living with past trauma striking out, and having to take care of someone who could be hurting you; holding his pain and your pain, holding it for something better to emerge out of this. There's art in the transformation and it's intense.

When I first asked the community, "when you project yourself into the future what do you want for yourselves?", they couldn't come up with an answer. So I got anxious and asked "what drives you?" Still no response. It was a matter of starting those conversations. It took three years to get to the point where these conversations are happening. In the first year, people from the Rwandan community would hang out and clap and dance. In the second year, they thought I had weird ideas but "that's ok". Then it took another year until they thought, "Oh, you want to talk about it? She wants to talk

about it". At first they weren't talking about their future, now they want a cultural centre. I have never made a cultural centre before. Now we have this community-building project around a community centre. I am one of a number of members of the community centre building committee.

What I felt has been missing from our community is trust and holding an openness for something different to emerge. People from the community don't trust each other, themselves or those on the outside. I've been working very hard. I don't feel as though I've been able to hold that possibility. I have a hunger for it though. I want it to be like a wave so that people can experience the ripple effects of working on the self, working on the immediate family and so forth.

Exemplar 3
Crossing Communities Art Project:
Video projects, *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* and *Trying to Exit*
2002-2005
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Primary respondent: Edith Regier

Edith Regier is the director of the Crossing Communities Art Project in Winnipeg. She has been developing arts mentorship through the *Crossing Communities* project in women's prisons in Manitoba and Saskatchewan since 1996 and at the downtown Winnipeg studio site. Among her many pursuits and duties with *Crossing Communities*, she is currently co-authoring an article with Magno Barros (now with *Crossing Communities*) and Cathy Fillmore at the University of Winnipeg on how art and Crossing Communities projects can affect criminalized women who self-harm.

A two-part video, *Women and Girls in the Sex Trade* and *Trying to Exit*, was produced in the Crossing Communities Art Project, where artists collectively make artwork with girls and women who are criminalized or at risk of being criminalized. Participants in the video projects were women involved in the sex trade in and around Winnipeg. Crossing Communities is an art studio mentorship program that provides a forum for visual communication, mentorship models, healing through creativity and the opportunity to develop awareness of the arts and art skills.

To begin these projects I went to the Elizabeth Fry society and to a number of organizations that work with women involved in the sex trade: Sage House which is a drop in centre, Transition, Education and Resources for Females (TERF) which is a longer term training centre, NDAYAAWIN which is a peer mentoring program for women and girls in the sex trade. Some of the people in these organizations I have known for years, such as the director of Sage House, I have known for seven years and we've talked for seven years about wanting to do a project together. So there's a trust there. Even if they didn't fully understand the project they knew that they wanted to participate

in something that was happening at Crossings. So we all had a meeting. They talked about things that they worked with, how they didn't want to be represented, what they didn't want. They didn't want the sex trade to be glorified. We talked about the process of the authorship being passed to the women and the types of workshops we could offer. They recommended their clients to the project. They picked women that they thought would be most open and interested in working with us.

Trust was passed to us. They trusted the people at the organizations who then said they trusted us. So then that trust was somewhat there before we started the project. We didn't start at ground zero with trust. Then two professional artists, Shauna Dempsey and Erika MacPherson, met with the organizations. Then we all met with the women for the first time. We've got it all on camera, us shaking hands for the first time and we all look a little nervous. Now we know them really well.

At that first meeting we displayed work that the artists had previously done. The artists were chosen because of their work with gender and sexuality. So the women participating got to know each other and the artists a bit better, they got to know the arts space at Crossing Communities and we all ate a lot of food. We had dinners and snacks and joked around a lot. We described the project to them as telling how they saw things. We let them know that we were there to support them and to be their 'crew' in a sense. We told them that we would be giving workshops and that we wouldn't be deciding what was going to be the content, what would be expressed was completely up to them. So that was the first series.

Next we went into script writing. We broke off into small groups. Everyone individually found a corner and a space and started writing. Then people started circling

around the room reading each others' scripts. There were workshops in direction, performance and how to take the stage.

We had a trip to Value Village to get props and that was really fun. So we got a bus from one of our partner organizations, Mt. Carmel Clinic and everyone got on this big bus. Everyone had seventy dollars to spend. There are pictures on the wall of a transgendered woman with a wedding dress on in Value Village. She took photographs of herself, which never became part of the video but it was part of the trust-building. The experience. Getting to know each other.

Then we started to shoot video of the scripts that the women devised. Basically they could edit anything out at any time they wanted to. We encourage them to really think about what they were saying and whether they would want to say it in public. We emphasized that there may be some things that you may want to express but you may not want to express them in public. We talked about that as something every artist makes decisions about. When we got down to final editing nobody was saying, I don't want that part in the video, so I think people understood. They took huge risks putting themselves out there.

The end result is a two-part video that are being used by the Manitoba government and across Canada to train service providers who are in contact with sex trade workers. It is being used in nursing departments to train students who have then gone back into the hospitals and who have written research papers. One of the things that arose from the discussions in the videos was the lack of services. In *Trying to Exit*, they talk about not being able to access health care. Some nursing students that saw the video wrote a paper about this and talked to the participants in the video about what particularly

they need to access. Some of these researchers were also practicing nurses who then went back into the hospitals with an interest in wanting to change nursing practice.

What happens when the project ends? Well, why does the project have to end? With adequate long-term funding who knows what it could become... The arts could be integrated within the culture in a way that isn't always a separation between professional artists and community arts projects and the rest of the public. Art could become part of your daily existence. We could find ourselves in a place where the arts just become a part of functioning in daily life, the same way that we read a newspaper or watch TV or play video games. I've watched my kids draw pictures and at a certain age they stop. That's what is taught in our culture, either you become a professional artist or you stop making art. It doesn't need to be an either/or situation. We don't know what it could do if projects like the video work we are doing became long term. We don't know the potential art has to recreate the patterns that people have about themselves, the patterns that organizations have about themselves. We've just scratched the surface with projects like these to see a bit of change [Regier 2006].

The Crossing Communities Art Project has made a proposal to create another site of the project in a new women's correctional facility in Manitoba. The two sites together would allow for healing, skills development and reintegration of criminalized women into the community [see Regier 2005].

Exemplar 4
People's Palace Projects: Staging Human Rights
São Paulo, Brazil, 2001
Primary Respondent: Magno Barros

With interest and expertise in bringing good management techniques to social programs, Magno Barros was hired as an executive director of Brazil's Staging Human Rights project. As of March 2006, Barros has been working with the Crossing Communities Art Project in Winnipeg.

Paul Heritage, cited in the secondary literature in this exemplar, is a drama professor from Queen Mary University in London who has been working in the prison system in Brazil on isolated projects for a number of years before received a sizable, long-term grant from the British government for the People's Palace Projects which included the Staging Human Rights project.

Staging Human Rights began as a project to train prison staff in forum theatre techniques in order to use them to raise awareness, debate and understanding of human rights issues with prisoners and prison staff. While it was recognized that physical conditions were in need of improvement—accommodation, sanitation and security—organizers of the project recognized the need, as found in many reports on the prison system in Brazil, to address the dehumanizing attitudes and environment fostering the physical conditions [Heritage 2004: 98]. Partners in the project included the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed, FUNAP (São Paulo State Prison Education Service), Queen Mary University and many others.

It was about understanding a prison just like a society, as a system. You cannot deal with any issue from one side, you have to get everyone involved. In dealing with prisoners it became clear that we had to work with the guards. We were working in prisons where the opportunity to speak out was limited. It was the first time ever that we worked with prison guards, human rights workers and prison workers. Up until then it has always been about the rights of inmates. We didn't know that actual workers felt very

oppressed. We hoped that by allowing prison guards to speak out changes might occur (Barros 2006).

According to research cited by project organizers, prison guards in Brazil face interminable working hours, pittance salaries requiring them to work additional jobs, lack of proper equipment, non-existent workers' rights, lack of accident and life insurance, and unwillingness from employers to take responsibility for workers. Alcoholism, family breakdowns and obesity are only part of the personal problems cited by guards (Heritage 2004:99].

The language of 'human rights' and human rights organizations had previously been regarded by prison workers as obstacles and "the rights of bandits" rather than applying to those who lived and worked in the prison [Heritage 2004]. Forum theatre techniques were used to give the language of human rights back to those in prisons who were effected. Workshops in forum theatre were used to raise dialogue amongst those who compose prison populations, both workers and prisoners. To give a very brief explanation to the uninformed (though this description does not do justice to the complexity of the practice), forum theatre involves the writing and staging of a short play by social actors involved in a social problem or situation. Often antagonists will be played against each other unsympathetically. The play is performed once without stopping. Then it is performed a second time where the 'audience' is able to jump up on stage and take the place of any of the actors at any time, acting with a different point of view to resolve the problem differently. This stage can be repeated multiple times.

The 'art' of it was not so much about originality as it was about structuring a debate. We taught people how to move from simple games into something more elaborate that can be used to promote debate. In doing this kind of project it is important to take the focus out of the artistic quality of the art work and focus on the content. I think many artists might take issue with that in terms of where quality sits in relation to the project and in giving authorship to the participants. However, that's what our goal was. We were really impressed with the outcomes. Some of the psychologists who work for the prison system worked hard on the project and their testimony was very impressive. The project introduced them to new and different tools than what they were used to. They were able to do things to make people feel comfortable with the project that they wouldn't have dreamed of. They were very surprised with how their colleagues responded to the process, opening up their thoughts and emotions and talking in ways that wouldn't have happened otherwise. We were aiming at changing policies and improving human rights. Oftentimes our goals were very ambitious. We often find out after starting that the relationships that maintain the status quo are very complicated. We had to level our expectations. It is very common to get frustrated at the difference between our expectations and the changes that can be accomplished (Barros 2006).

Forums were open to different social actors involved in the prison system. For example, we invited a group of twelve public defenders. Their role was to defend youth in court. None of them had been in a prison. The play exposed these public defenders to a representation of the prison environment. The audience were not sitting in chairs, they were pushed over into a small space and told what to do. The public defenders were able

to see the youth that they work with performing, being artists, being valued (Barros 2006).

At the end of the smaller forums participants were asked to contribute to writing a declaration of human rights based on what is particular and important to them. These declarations were written by both prisoners, guards and other participants in the forum theatre sessions.

Some of our projects' youth were invited by the federal university of Rio to present one of their forum performances. This was great! These were kids coming from São Paulo slums talking to professors and university students [Barros 2006].

By 2001, over 2000 prisoners in 34 prisons had participated in *Staging Human Rights* projects [Heritage 2005: 100]. On December 12, 2001 a final *State Forum* was staged in an building normally reserved for members of parliament. Attendees included prisoners, prison guards, lawyers, law-makers, representatives from human rights agencies, families, students and the press. Three, twenty-minute forum theatre plays were presented, one by prison guards, one by male prisoners and one by female prisoners.

The play from the prison guards: tells of the frustrations they experience when the human rights agencies come into the prisons looking for cases of abuse. They feel invisible, inside the prisons and outside on the street. Nobody sees what they suffer and nobody listens. The play is funny and moving and the interventions bring a blaze of anger from members of NGOs who feel that the picture presented is not an accurate portrayal of their behaviour in prison. Their debate is forthright, fulsome and fierce [Heritage 2005: 101]. Plays from prisoners followed. All the actors meet together for the first time over

lunch. The plays were facilitated by team members from the Centre for the Theatre of the Oppressed.

Part of the art was about balancing what was going to be said. The project was not about putting everything on the table, but rather about reaching specific goals. So the questions were: how do you balance that so that it is a cooperation between you as an organization, the target group, government, society? And how do you manage all these interests? How do you keep a forum like that from becoming an aggression or a war? We do this, in part, by taking care that people know what is going on and in what position they will be in a public event. We handed out the questions that had been previously debated beforehand so that people know what is coming. Our facilitators are trained to be very aware of the debate and dialogue and to calm down and to maintain a friendly environment. Also, being careful that one organization is not targeted with all the responsibility and blame for a social problem. Shared responsibility is very important. So in dealing with prisons we don't simply hold the Minister of Justice responsible. There are histories and futures to the problem. In all our forums we were careful to bring numerous representatives in society and target questions to different people so that everyone is partly responsible [Barros 2006].

At the end, the thirty-six declarations of human rights written by the smaller forum participants were read out by FUNAP (*São Paulo State Prison Education Service*) education monitors. They were “presented to the Secretaries of Justice and Prison Administration who arrived for the final ritual”. A single, unified Declaration of Human Rights written document was written from the thirty-six declarations designed in the

smaller forums. The final document⁷ aspired to link prisoners and guards and Brazilian society. As of 2005, projects were being implemented in six states throughout Brazil [Heritage 2005:104].

⁷ To view a list of the rights detailed in the final document see Heritage 2005: 102-103.

Exemplar 5
Templates For Activism
2001-present
Ottawa area and beyond
Primary Respondent: cj fleury

Cj fleury is an artist in Wakefield, Quebec who has been facilitating and actively participating in a range of socially-engaged collaborative arts practices since 1993. She has been involved in large and small scale, collaborative public sculpture in Ontario and Quebec. She has published on the topic of socially-engaged collaborative practices and her work has been taught and researched in Canadian and American universities.

The exemplar begins with a dramatic reproduction of the scene of one of the Templates in the Templates for Activism project. The style of the presentation here echoes that which Jim Mienczakowski [1996] employs to describe a theatrical performance in an ‘alternative ethnographic’ form. This style utilizes the ‘hot’, evocative narration style mentioned in the methodological approaches section of the introduction [see page 15 of this thesis]. It employs this style to emphasize that though ACA may seem similar to social movement work, it is distinctive in its aesthetic [see page 53 of this thesis]. This exemplar is very strong in highlighting the ways in which metaphors are creatively employed in public ritual in attempts to present experiences that utilize transformative possibilities (see discussion pages 133-149 of this thesis).

The following exemplar does not include a section defined by a box because the information results as much from the dozens of conversations I have had with fleury over the past four years as our formal interviews.

.....
Setting: The scene of the *Hearings At the Rape Maze* performance, Template 2.

Six of them enter the room. Slowly. Solemnly. They are wearing black judges’ robes. The guttural, atonal bleat of a baritone sax pipes them toward the fire-charred

‘Table of Experience’. They navigate through the fictitious courtroom, past the maze of tiles marked with litigious language that dominates the centre of the room. They don the ceremonial ‘Aural Headdresses’. Then they stop to face the audience. These justices are about to preside over *Hearings at the Rape Maze*.

“Sticks and stones can break your bones ...But words will never hurt you. HAH!!” Three of the women in black sing back defiantly, “No, no, no-o-o-o. She... said... no-o-o”. They continue calling these phrases back and forth, varying rhythmically and melodically, replicating the poetics of a defense lawyer and rape trial complainant. There are paper-white sticks overlaying the maze, bone-like documents bearing a body of statements from feminist legal scholars and human rights sources on the subject of rape. Performers stoop and collect the bone-sticks, one by one approaching the empty Table of Experience, reading the phrases aloud, ceremoniously placing the sticks on the Table of Experience, amassing them into a feminist theory nest. Fleury is the last to approach the table and in the final gesture lifts off her Aural Headdress and draws from it an egg-shaped globe fully formed from the head of feminist scholars, like Athena springing fully formed from the head of Zeus. The egg-globe is placed in the nest to be cradled in feminist knowledge [fleury 1995a].

.....

The performance that has just been described was called *Hearings at the Rape Maze* and took place in Ottawa in the spring of 2002. It is one component of the larger, ongoing project, *Templates for Activism*. Community artist cj fleury and feminist legal scholar Dr. Elizabeth Sheehy initiated *Templates for Activism* in the spring of 1999. They intended it as a series of templates, models to be repeated, modified and added to.

Multiple projects that comprise *Templates for Activism* bring together members of the feminist law community, feminist artists and women who are rape survivors. Dozens of individuals in the feminist law and feminist art communities have contributed to various phases of the project.

The project aims to negotiate aspects of prejudice and subordination of women in the legal system to confront systemic representations that impede substantive legal equality and to contribute to the movement for substantive equality in the law and in the community. The projects establish “a flow of artistic and political literacy” (fleury 2002: 89) between artists and the feminist law community, In fleury’s words, the point is

To place feminist art into the many spaces of law; places where the research, analysis, defense, education and public action occur, thereby using symbolic means to give sustenance to women working in such sites. (fleury 2005a: 1)

At the time that this thesis goes to print there are four *Templates*; each *Template* has anywhere from one to eight components within. Many of the projects have taken place in the Ottawa area between 1999 and 2003, however the initiative is ongoing, open ended, and receptive to new additions as opportunities arise. The following discussion can only touch lightly on a few projects and a few issues involved.

Several of the artworks in *Bridging Visions/Template Two*, exhibited at the 2002 National Association of Women and the Law (NAWL) 14th Biennial NAWL Conference entitled *Women, the Family and the State*, provided a space to articulate women’s bodies in law. Through the artworks the female body was exposed and concealed, in pain and in pleasure, subject and object, young and older, in the public and private spheres, passing, slipping, immersed, entangled in the places and procedures where it is legally governed. Audrey Churgin’s audio piece invited the audience to physically engage with the artwork,

to listen to music and poetic text about children and child rights on a series of brilliant pink telephones placed on matching café tables. Gale Kells wide painting of a full-figured, nude female back was juxtaposed with the concealment offered by a body girdle embedded with thousands of straight pins. Kathy Gillis' sculptural installation articulated the transgression and oppression of a personal and political Falun Gong body. Cindy Stelmackowich's punctured legal dictionary cut and floated its phrases into a bulbous glass vessel below, examining the ways that bodies become subjects and objects of legal regulation. Ngoc Tuyen Dang's installation of light and shadow upon demolished drywall reflected the presence of immigrant women's labour against its legal and social concealment (fleury 2002: 89-93).

The performance piece that fleury and Sheehy initiated, *Hearings at the Rape Maze*, (part of which is described at the beginning of this exemplar) addresses the power play of poetic strategies of lawyers courtroom talk, reconfiguring the words and devices used in order to unveil and renegotiate social and courtroom power relations. It critique the discursive absurdities and 'Black Letter' realities of rape trial prosecutions. The call-answer series mimicked the poetics of the question and answer sequences of rape trials. Performers played with multiple linguistic devices in using the words in phrases. For example, the children's sing-song proverb, "Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words will never hurt you" and the imperative response, "No!", was developed into a melodic call-answer sequence: "Sticks and stones!", "No, no, no-o-o", "Words! Will never hurt you", "She... said... no-o-o ...".

"You have to whack the complainant hard" and "You have to slice and dice her", declares a scrolling text emblazoning the screen in the *Template Four* video, *Slice*. In this

short video, with quick sharp edits between scenes used to great effect, these defense strategies combine with a frenetic red onion chopping scene to create one of the most jarring images of rape trial experience in the video. Law students walk with the Supreme Court of Canada on the horizon balancing key legal tomes on their heads. Later in the video, A law student tap dances on a precarious ledge of this federal court house, her arms weighed down with stacks of law books, calling to a monumental Veritas, “There’s so much more!” The stone statue of Veritas is her only witness as a low British voice calls back “The whole truth and nothing but the truth!”

Appearing like the words from a scrabble game, the *Paper Rape Maze of Template Three* is a small, poster-sized replica of the large floor maze of tiles on the floor in the *Hearings at the Rape Maze* performance. These identical mazes contain words and phrases used in rape trial proceedings, some complex and unfamiliar to many, such as “actus reus” and “mens rea”, others such as “promiscuous” and “mischievous” are an all too familiar reminders of the ways women are labelled when they seek justice against their attackers. The *Paper Rape Mazes* are printed on neon yellow paper referencing the yellow tape used for danger zones and crime scenes. Additions to the maze and other responses written on them are encouraged.

Like many aspects of the *Templates*, the *Paper Rape Mazes* are designed for reimagining the same projects in different places and times. They can be reproduced at minimal cost and are meant to be easily and freely distributed. Participants are encouraged to write a word or phrase in response before posting the mazes in contested spaces or women’s safe spaces in order to perpetuate action and reaction. Many of the materials for the performance piece are low-cost and easy to access, such as the use of

paper maché and the body. Reproducibility and repetition are key to the design of *Templates for Activism* because the *Templates* projects acknowledge that social change is usually the result of numerous individuals coming together in processes involving many acts of defiance against oppression, not the heroic act of a single individual. The *Templates* encourage repetition in a way that demotes the importance of the ‘original’ author and the ‘original’ art work, challenging people to question the purposes at work in venerating the ‘original’ and the authorship of art by the sole, inspired individual. The *Templates* are reproducible models for engaging with and shifting people’s perceptions women’s about feminist legal issues, encouraging social and legal change. Through numerous reenactments of the creative process, *Templates for Activism* seeks to comment on social and political conditions and enact change.

The *Templates* project was inaugurated to set precedents, encourage dialogue and foster continuance for future projects elsewhere (fleury 2005c). The *Templates for Activism* website (www.templatesforactivism.ca) is set up to assist others by means of providing a model for starting points, processes and projects. Variation, mutation and creative repetition are all part of the community arts process. *Templates for Activism* was not conceived in terms of one-time events, but rather as the title suggests, as a pattern for processes that shape and assist in supporting future feminist legal activism.

Templates for Activism uses the arts to engage in the educational, research and reform goals of NAWL and other feminist legal communities. The *Templates* depict and speak from within the communities of feminist law and feminist art on behalf of these communities. *Templates for Activism* aims to raise awareness, encourage critique, express women’s interests and innovate legally and artistically to develop new potentials for

progressive, artistically-literate legal work and socially engaged feminist art informed by legal activism. Through creative processes of repetition and representation, both aesthetic and political, bringing bodily sensation into legal discourse and highlighting legal linguistic domination, *Templates for Activism* opens up new ways to understand and promote feminist legal concerns. It pushes the boundaries of two disciplines, feminist art and feminist law to present an multidisciplinary challenge to the status quo. *Templates for Activism* projects make explicit that legal representation serves political interests that utilize aesthetic means. It critiques the complicity of the law and legal proceedings to reproduce and compound gendered violence against women, exposing linguistic strategies in the courtroom used to dominate women who take their attackers to court, using art as a safe space to articulate women's narratives of rape trial experiences and to safely bring their bodily experiences into rape trial discourse.

Templates for Activism proposes an interdisciplinary model to engage in and support creative legal struggle. Each time one of the *Paper Rape Mazes* is photocopied and posted to a bathroom wall or the *Slice* video is copied and shown to a law class, a new potential is created, however small, for education and transformation of current social and legal norms. The project continues to build on this potential, fostering community capacity for activist production regarding these concerns by adding to and repeating templates with new voices in new communities. Through repetition of community arts projects such as *Templates for Activism* the goal is to first imagine, and then actualize real legal change in courts and transformation in patriarchal attitudes in communities.

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CHAPTER THREE: ACTIVIST COMMUNITY ARTS ‘ART WORLDS’

Introduction

Already it is evident from the previous chapter that activist community arts (ACA) is different from what is commonly understood as art. Its practice resembles social or political advocacy much more than it resembles conventional art. ACA uses the creative process as a means to negotiate individual and collective social issues and as a catalyst to effecting those social issues. However, it is not reducible to social or political advocacy; these practices have a distinctive aesthetic sensibility. The previous chapter provided some examples of ACA that this chapter will draw upon as it sketches some of the characteristic features of ACA art worlds and how they differ in politics from conventional arts worlds. The major divergences of ACA from conventional art can be understood by examining ACA’s epistemology and methodology of collective, participatory, socially-engaged creative activity. This chapter highlights seven major aspects in which the epistemology and methodology of conventional art and ACA differ, providing an overview to ACA as a unique, socially-engaged practice claimed neither by social or political advocacy nor by the conventional art world. Following that, the chapter introduces the centrality of negotiation of social issues and tensions between social actors in ACA practice. As negotiation is the medium of ACA it is subject to challenges, victories and stumbling blocks.

‘Art world’ is a term that is commonly used to describe the activities of social actors and institutions within a particular genre of art practice. Art worlds “consist of *all* people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art” [Becker, 1982: 34 emphasis mine].

Although most conventional art is presented as the product of an individual artist, this notion is empirically unsustainable. Howard Becker [1982] demonstrates that art-making is always a collective process involving the labour of a broad network of social actors and is not the work of an individual artist working alone. Moreover, the myth of the lone, genius artist serves to naturalize exclusive, hierarchical art worlds, to withhold the social status of ‘artist’ from the majority of social actors and limit access to legitimate means of disseminating artistic creativity. Many sources take as their object the political economy of contemporary conventional art worlds within a capitalist market system to explain the relationships of labour between social actors and the social purposes of conventional art; since this is not the focus of this chapter, there is no need to reproduce their work here. The purpose of this chapter is two fold. First, to introduce ACA, a practice that has not been previously discussed within sociology. ACA is a form of art and of social action that rejects the myth of the lone genius artist in seeking to organize art worlds with a different system of social relations and with different social purposes. Second, this chapter presents ACA as a self-consciously collective social practice appropriate to sociological investigation. Collective social activity is the most rudimentary element of sociological study. Like the art worlds Becker describes, ACA can be understood in ways that other collective social practices are discussed in sociology.

Art as a Collective Activity

The focus of Howard Becker’s, *Art Worlds* [1982] is to demystify artistic ‘genius’, instead presenting art as a collective activity. Becker suggests that the ‘lone genius artist’ idea is a modern, western social construction shaped by history, economics and politics. An ‘artist’ is a social status that changes over time as do the social notions of

the qualities attributed to their ‘giftedness’ [10-24]. According to Becker, attributing artistic activity to a single ‘artist’ is premised on the assumption that there is a division of labour between artists and ‘support personnel’ who are not considered artists and are not credited with artistic creation. [24-28]. Social actors who are often commonly understood to be support personnel include technical staff, materials suppliers and even domestic support workers. Also included are those whose work forms the art world context for artists and artistic projects, such as art professors, curators, gallery goers, critics, and state funding councils. Support workers who are even more obscured are those whose work has formed the historically situated conventions that the artist uses, such as those who have developed musical notation and designed the instruments that musicians play [28-34]. These conventions have been developed previously and have been conventionalized through use over time [13]. He suggests that these divisions of labour are not natural or necessarily configured in the way they are but are shaped by histories, social factors, institutionalization and a reliance on particular configurations of these to constitute a barely visible convention underpinning the work.

Becker’s *Art Worlds* is a significant contribution to the study of ACA because it provides a sociological understanding of art as collective process. However, given his approach, ACA does not fall within the scope of his writing. Becker states that his book is intended to be a “sociology of occupations applied to artistic work.” The analysis mainly addresses the professional activities and the support work of what he refers to as ‘integrated professionals’ [see 1980: 228-233], individuals with formal art training, that display or perform their work in settings that are within conventional standards of art practice. Becker makes the analytical choice to use a sociology of professions instead of

considering a broader notion of art-making, such as anthropology might. Though he stretches the category of art a little more than some art theorists or others with a more elite notion of what art is, he focuses his analysis on conventional notions of art as made by a 'Fine Arts' producer and doesn't stray far from categories of art and artist as defined by the 'in group' of this historical moment, even in his chapter on mavericks, folk artists and naïve artists [226-271]. Aside from a few references to rock musicians and Hollywood film scores seeded throughout the text, only this chapter discusses possible exceptions of other sets of social actors whose creative production falls outside of the institutionally sanctioned definition of who can legitimately claim the title of 'artist'. These cultural creators, he suggests, are often too different in form and conception to be accepted by the art world or too common to be considered for the special category of 'artist'. He investigates how art world participants draw the lines around what is and is not art and by doing so he inadvertently maintains the distinction between fine art, which is what 'integrated professionals' do, and amateur art, which are those creative practices by social actors whose work is not edified by conventional art institutions. The sociology of art as a field tends to make similar analytical choices, though perhaps for different reasons, reifying the contemporary, conventional distinction of 'artist' from other social actors.

This is the point in which this chapter diverges from Becker's object of study and from the sociology of art. In order to understand ACA, we can use conventional art functions as a foil, because ACA organizes around political and ethical principles that (deliberately) contrast with those of conventional art.

ACA EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

What are activist community arts [ACA]?

Broadly defined, activist community arts [ACA] are collective, participatory processes where an artist works together with a community to develop creative projects in the interest of a community or the 'public' [Raven: 1993]. ACA brings together aesthetic practices with grass roots-type community organizing; ACA is more aligned with new social movements than with conventional art. Most often the projects address the self-defined needs, social problems and concerns of members of groups experiencing social disadvantage in a participatory and largely consensus-based manner.

Arts practices such as these are referred to by a variety of names, such as community cultural development, community site art, community animation, etc.⁸. The term 'activist community arts' [ACA] is used here to highlight community arts practices focused on affecting sociopolitical conditions of the communities, it serves in ways that the communities themselves define. By any of these names ACA engages members from a community together with social institutions, advocates and other interested parties in a collective, participatory process of creative or artistic practice. The aim of these projects is to foster social advocacy in a way that is decided on by the participants from the community. The process provides an opportunity for these individuals, most of whom

⁸Alternative names include: community cultural development, arts-based community development, community site art, art in the community, community building art, community cultural development, creative social development. Subgenres include: popular theatre, theatre of the oppressed, theatre for social change. Cultural production resembling ACA is often included as a genre of public art [see Lacy 1995]. The term 'community arts' is used most Anglophone countries including the Canada and the UK and sometimes in Australia, but can be undifferentiated from amateur conventional arts activity within the community. Practitioners in the US and Australia tend to use the term 'community cultural development' [Adams and Goldbard, 2001: 4]. 'Development' is a contested term in the social literature. I choose to distance activist community arts work from mid-century development work in third world nations.

have had little access to the arts, to use the arts in negotiating social issues that are important to them and to their communities.

Though some authors situate the roots of ACA in ancient traditions where collective, public, ritualized symbol-making has been integrated into communities for centuries, the present practice of ACA in western countries is actually a recent phenomenon dating from about the 1960s [Kelly: 1984: 9; Hawkins: 1991]. ACA is a practice that promotes a democratization of art, aiming ‘to give art back to the people’ [Owen 1984: 9]. It would be anachronistic to speak of ACA in a time and place when the social object we call ‘art’ did not exist or when symbol-making was already part of community practice such that it did not require democratizing.

In western countries and in Australia, ACA grew up in the tremendous ferment of grassroots social movements of the 1960s, aligned with other grassroots activist movements that aimed at consciousness-raising, impacting social change, transforming public perceptions and/or affecting social policies [Cohen-Cruz 1991; Felshin, 1995: 13-14]. Though community arts councils existed in England, Australia and the US in the early part of the last century, they did not share the purposes of contemporary ACA. These councils sought to organize groups that were the amateur version of professional arts activity. Some of these councils developed the aims and methods of ACA, while others acted as local councils for conventional arts [Ewell 2000: 15]. Yet other groups and organizations sprung up during the 1960s with expressly activist community arts aims. By the late 1960’s, ‘arts labs’ and other less organized activist community arts activities were active in several cities in Britain [Owen 1984: 7]. Community arts activity in Australia was radical from the beginning, advocating equity and access to art and

culture. It became the most professionalized infrastructure for supporting community arts activity [Grostal and Harrison 1992:147-149] leading to the formation of the Community Arts and Development Committee of the Australia Council for the Arts (now the Community Cultural Development Board) in 1973.

The general militancy of the late 1960s era in many Western nations encouraged a burgeoning of activist artistic practices developing out of conventional art. Materials and technologies that had not been previously used for fine art, such as fiberglass, women's craft mediums, mass-culture objects, and others were incorporated by conventionally trained and accredited artists. The new performance art brought contemporary art forms into public spaces [see Kaprow and Kelly 1993] and the land art movement made public spaces into art [see Felshin 1995: 17-19]. Feminist artists of the late 60s and the 70s made the personal political by challenging and revisioning identity through art [Lacy 1995:27; Raven 1988]. The sensibility for taking art outside concert halls and museum walls permeated the art scene in the US and the UK. Some activist artists who were interested in alternatives to conventional art found themselves in ACA.

Although there are many connections between ACA and other politicized arts practices, it is important to distinguish it from conventional art practice and from other socially engaged arts practices, such as activist art or art therapy. Some of these arts practices appear to be very similar to ACA and often share some of ACA's attributes. Activist art can be considered a subgenre of conventional art in the sense that it tends to involve professionally trained artists rather than engaging non-artist community members as equal co-creators. When activist art does engage community members, their role tends to be an advisory one. Like with conventional art practice a *product* is usually the focus

of producing activist art and this product is owned by the artist. Though ‘activist art’ is usually understood in terms of its political content, Lucy Lippard makes the distinction between political art and activist art. “‘Political’ art tends to be socially concerned... ‘activist’ art tends to be socially involved” [1984: 349].

Art therapy is another arts practice that bears similarities to ACA. Though art therapy is socially involved it is centrally concerned with the psychological rehabilitation of individuals, rather than with social groups as such. Art therapy is organized and professionalized within the disciplines of psychology and social work and is often practiced with children [McNiff: 1998]. ACA often involves psychologically therapeutic aspects for the individuals and the group. Indeed, many participants may require a process of psychological healing in order to negotiate collective social and political interests. However, in ACA collective political and social engagement are integral, whereas for art therapy these are optional [see McNiff, 1998]. A closer examination of seven main aspects that distinguish ACA from conventional arts practices helps to explain some of the significant characteristics of ACA:

Figure 1. Comparing ACA with Conventional Arts Practice

ACA	Conventional Arts Practice
2 ACA is a collective activity that engages a non-arts community, usually one that is experiencing social disadvantage.	1 Conventional art practices tend to be understood as individualized activities. Under this system there is division of labour between an individual creative ‘genius’ artist and support workers who do not share the artist’s elevated social status.
2 ACA uses a consensus-based, participatory approach to decision-making and creation.	2 Conventional arts practices use a specialized division of labour in decision-making and creation. In the case of collective projects such as theatre production there is still a fairly strictly delineated decision-making system that privileges ‘artists’ over ‘support workers’.
3 Though a product is usually produced, the process is the main focus of the project.	3. An artistic product is the desired outcome of the project.
4 ACA is socially engaged in the political concerns of the participating community.	4 Political or social engagement is optional.
5 In ACA art is a medium for social engagement. Creative process is a means to negotiate individual and collective social issues and a catalyst to affecting those social issues.	5 Conventional art largely serves aesthetic purposes of philosophical reflection, emotional inspiration and entertainment. The creative process is a means to create a product through the display of which engages an audience, or the creative process can serve the personal uses of the individual artist, which does not require display.
6 ‘Good’ or ‘valid’ ACA mainly reflects an epistemology of collective, participatory, socially-engaged, openly political, process-focused, instrumental or transformative art-making.	6. ‘Good’ or ‘valid’ conventional art mainly reflects a logic based in aesthetic criteria.
7 The projects and any products produced are open-source, that is, they are intended as templates to be shared.	7 The art product is the property of the artist.

The ACA process may use any variety of mediums to serve as the context for creative engagement. ACA is resourceful in mining conventional arts media without necessarily taking on many of the conventions that govern artistic production in those art worlds. Visual arts mediums, public art mediums, drama, dance, movement, sound, music, film and others are utilized by ACA projects, especially if a professional artist is brought in to provide workshops or a ‘community artist’ who is trained in one of these media provides the opportunity for participants to develop their skills with the art medium. ACA is set apart from conventional art practices in its willingness to embrace a broader vocabulary of creative talents of a non-arts community than conventional art does [Adams and Goldbard 2001: 24]. Craft media are often employed in community arts, such as quilt-making, bead-making, collage, traditional ethnic arts and many others, especially if the project works with children. Sometimes media associated with public spectacles may be used, for example parade banners, giant puppets or street performance. What draws together under the banner of ACA these seemingly different media and styles of art-making is a shared methodology of collective, participatory art-making in the service of the social needs of a community [Barndt 2004; Felshin 1995:9; Lee 1998].

ACA and Community

ACA is conscious that art-making is a collective activity. Broadly speaking, ACA draws upon a community of people experiencing a social disadvantage, bringing them together with a professional artist to construct a socially-engaged creative project. These community members are people who usually have not had previous training in the arts, usually they would not even have access to higher education or art school.

Notions of community are central to ACA, however there is no consensus on what ‘community’ means in ACA. The term ‘community’ is used in a variety of ways in ACA, referring sometimes to geographic places (for example the Mt. Pleasant Community in the Mt. Pleasant Community Fence Project [Hall 1989: 44-55]) social networks (for example, the Rwandan community in Montreal), participants in a project (the project community), and others.

ACA projects are not designed to represent a cross-section or statistically representative sample of the community, rather it is often organized along formal or informal social networks. Membership in ACA communities does not tend to centre around nation-building or creating communitarian communities, though it is not uncommon to find collectives of ACA practitioners. Often, though not always, the communities that ACA draws upon tend to share a local geographic location. Quite often ACA projects are located within geographical communities: rural communities [Mills and Brown 62-73], socially and economically disadvantaged urban communities [exemplars 1-4], and geographically-based ethnic communities [exemplar 2; Lee 1998: 38-39]. This is not necessarily due to an investment in notions of community as a social identity based in locality, though in some cases it may be. Geographic-based ACA works toward addressing concerns or problems of that specific geographical community as it has been constituted over time and as the new negotiations develop between the social actors involved, explicitly or implicitly, in the ACA project. It may simply be that the artistic methods used to engage the community tend to require proximity of the majority of the project participants.

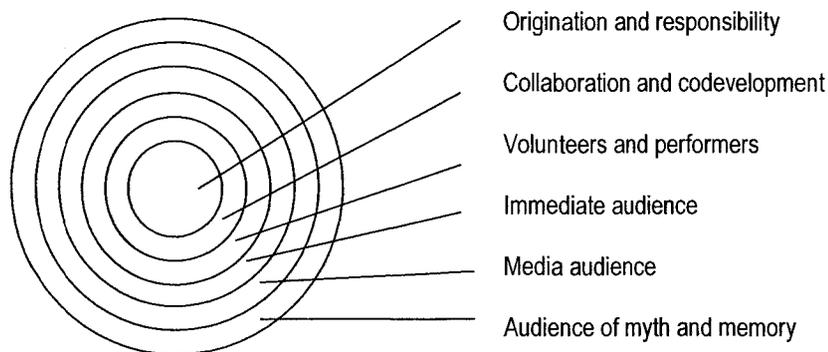
Membership in the project community is voluntary. Reasons for joining and remaining with the project may vary from individual to individual. Motivations such as individual self-fulfillment and expression are not necessarily opposed to collective aims.

Participants are gathered in a variety of ways. In addition to participants from the disadvantaged community, there can also be family members and friends of the community members and the artist, participants from advocacy agencies, individuals in government positions, other artists, and individuals who have stumbled into the project network by hearing about the project in a variety of ways. Participants often come and go at various times in the process. A project's 'community', more often than not, has permeable boundaries [Felshin 1995: 10; Lacy 1995: 180].

Membership in the source community can be identity-based, but is often based more broadly on who is facing a set of social problems that the project will negotiate. Sometimes 'community' is understood as a set of relationships or a network that either forms as a result of an ACA project or preexists the ACA project. For example, Suzanne Lacy's [1995: 175-180] discussion of the 'audience', a term more familiar to the conventional artist/audience dichotomy, has been influential in clarifying and theorizing a new model for ACA-type work. Her model trades in the artist/audience binary for a concentric circle model based on the degree of participation in the work (see Figure 2). The inside circle, origination and responsibility, refers to project facilitators. This can be community artists, social advocates or community members themselves. The second ring refers to those who actively collaborate in the development of the project, often community advocates, community member participants, families and friends. The third ring refers to those who participate but are not invested in the development of the project.

The fourth ring, immediate audience, refers to those who experience the project but were not involved in the primary creation of the project. Media audience refers to members of the media who attend the project and recordings of the project. The last ring, audience of myth and memory refers those whose experiences were in some other way touched by the project, those who have been told about the project and those who have read of the project.

Figure 2. Suzanne Lacy's model of participation in ACA-type projects



The shifting composition of the artistic communities of ACA challenges the market-driven model that insists on attributing the creation and ownership of the artistic product to an individual artist [Felshin 1995: 11]. Ownership of the process and any resulting products usually ends up resting with the community [Cleveland 2005: 112].

Many questions about community arise and are debated within projects and between ACA practitioners: What is a community? Who is a community [Cohen-Cruz 2005: 89-90]? How does a community define itself? What holds communities together? How do ACA projects identify community members? How should an ACA community be composed? However, there has been little systematic theorizing about community by ACA practitioners [Cleveland 2005: 118]. Many of these same questions have arisen within contemporary social theory as well, which suggests that ACA practitioners may

find it useful to examine many of the sociological debates around community in terms of ACA.

The Participatory Approach

ACA is an approach-based social engagement, not a style-based art movement. Some sources refer to the approach as ‘democratic’ or ‘participatory democracy’. However, most practices employ a consensus-based model rather than a majority-rule model, therefore the approach is best described as ‘participatory’. It bears striking methodological similarities to what is known in the social sciences as ‘participant action research’ (P.A.R) [McTaggart, 1997; White 1991] or more broadly as ‘participatory inquiry’⁹ [Reason and Heron: 1997]. There are various related forms of participatory inquiry which focus more on the ‘participatory’ or on the ‘action’ aspects: action science [Argyris et al, 1985], action inquiry [Torbert, 1991], participatory action research [Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; McTaggart, 1997; more.], emancipatory action research [Kemmis, 2001], cooperative inquiry [Heron, 1996], and some feminist empowerment research [Ristock & Pennell 1996]. The work of Paulo Friere [1970] and the popular education movement provides the heavy influence of an ‘educative’ function in both participatory social research and in ACA. Social development research often uses PAR for education and ‘empowerment’ with disadvantaged communities.

Participatory inquiry makes a political shift from constructing the participant as subject to the participant as co-creator [Reason and Bradbury 2001: 285; also see Guba and Lincoln 1981: 260]. The participatory approach necessarily involves those who may be affected by the outcomes of a project in the decision-making aspects of the process

⁹ The practices of participatory inquiry have roots stretching back into the nineteenth century [McKernan 1991:8; Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991] but have only really found legitimacy in Anglo-American social science in the last two decades.

[Reason and Bradbury 2001: 1]. This approach welcomes epistemic participation of participants and encourages participants' contributions to the design and applications of projects. Participatory inquiry is committed to involving participants as part of the processes of constructing the research. In terms of social scientific research, this ideally involves participants in developing the methods, the data, representing the findings and making use of the findings; in terms of ACA, participants are involved in decisions about the purpose, design, process and art product or performance. The participatory approach is seen as crucial to ACA practice and to generating transformation that is not imposed 'from above' but involves communities as partners.

In ACA, the participatory approach aims to mitigate against the artist/support worker hierarchy. Instead of the artist using project participants as non-attributed 'helpers' or passive subjects upon which the artist bases his or her artistic interpretation, this means that the project participants are co-creators. Participants collaboratively develop the project design and work together to complete the practical aspects of the project. Unlike conventional arts practices where the artist tends to make the significant artistic decisions, in ACA the decision-making is primarily consensus-based. Since this approach privileges participatory ways of knowing and the knowledge of participants, ACA projects are defined by the people who take part [Cleveland, 2005: 103-4, 111].

The participatory approach brings together research and constructive action. In the social sciences, these functions have conventionally been viewed as separate due to a long-standing philosophical divide in Western thought between rational thought and practical action. Participatory approaches recognize that the researcher or artist unavoidably influences the other project participants and proposes that instead of

attempting to separate researcher/artist from researched and value from research, that the researcher/artist engage actively with participants and use his or her own values within the context of the project. There are always political interests involved in constructing research, even scientific research that aims at value neutrality, just as there are political interest involved in cultural production that claims to be apolitical. Participatory approaches make apparent that these political interests exist. In doing so, participatory research highlights asymmetrical relations of power that favour the researcher over the researched in social science research, and those who hold legitimate means of disseminating symbols through cultural means, such as conventional art, over those who do not. ACA's adoption of the participatory approach is an attempt at redressing these asymmetrical relations.

The Creative Process as a Practice of Social Engagement:

Conventional Explanations of How ACA Creates Social Change

ACA is premised on the notion that material social conditions shape and are shaped by cultural factors, such as identity, through practice-based processes. ACA brings together several senses of the term 'culture' as a means for social engagement – anthropological, ethnicity-based, class-based and artistic. It is generally understood by ACA practitioners that access to the legitimate means of disseminating representations of the social world in public discourse, such as in 'Fine Art', mainstream media and other cultural forms is contingent upon social, economic and political privilege. The next chapter will speak further to this connection, but it is important to introduce this perspective here to understand how ACA practitioners perceive ACA to have social uses

that are different from conventional art. Andrea Wolper [1994: 251] puts the questions this way:

Can art help society's "throwaways" to reclaim positions as independent functioning members of the community? Can it provide a means for people living on the edges to participate fully in their own reclamation, becoming the codesigners rather than the mere recipients of programs created to facilitate their reintegration? Can art—whose practice often is considered a luxury, and whose product, at least in recent years, may be considered solely for its market value—have any appreciable impact on the lives of people struggling merely to survive? Finally, can art function as a kind of operating theatre in which the often polarized segments of a community come together to create something not seen before?

ACA is a process through which people in socially disadvantaged communities come together artistically to express their social, psychological, spiritual and physical needs, to negotiate individual and collective social issues and to engage in practice. To begin with, ACA is viewed by practitioners as a process of social engagement. *Process* is the central focus of ACA [Felshin 1995:10], unlike conventional art where producing a product is central to the art. What happens during the making of the project is more significant than [or at least equally significant to] the material product that results [Cleveland, 2005:106]. Any products resulting from ACA are not allowed to overdetermine the process [Adams and Goldberg, 2001: 22]. To say that something is a process is to highlight its temporal aspect. Social process is the continuous, often gradual, change which takes place as a result of the interactions and relationships between individuals and social groups. ACA recognizes that social conditions are constructed through multiple practices over time. Temporality in ACA is process-based. Time in ACA projects follows the rhythms and time that it takes to negotiate social issues by the social actors involved and collectively, largely through consensus decision-making. In

contrast, in conventional arts practices time is measured by the duration from conception to production of a product. The time that the majority of ACA projects take extends far beyond the period of most conventional art projects because of the process involved. ACA engages in lived social practices over time to provide conditions for different social possibilities. Participants are encouraged to think of themselves as artists and creative people, both in individual and collective ways. ACA provides the space (often a physical space), technical assistance and group negotiation skills to a group of people that would not otherwise have access to the techniques and processes of art making. Participants are encouraged to put into practice the idea that all people have the potential to use their critical thinking skills to understand and exercise agency in the social in creative ways. Some projects even provide the space and training for individuals to go on to further their artistic expression in a more formal sense.

When I was released from Portage (correctional facility) I went to the Elizabeth Fry Society they referred me to Crossing Communities. I started going once a week painting, taking workshops trying new things new ways of making art. It really opened my eyes. I knew this was my life, I was meant to do this. With the help of professional women artists at Crossing Communities I got the confidence I needed. I submitted my portfolio (to an art school) and the rest is history [Regier 2005: 10].

The first step in many ACA processes is identifying and establishing the project community. The project community may be assembled in one of two ways. Individuals may already belong to a pre-established group who agree to take part in the project or an outside organizer may enlist volunteers. Often the outside organizer is a 'community artist' or a conventional artist who has been commissioned for the project. A community artist will often critically examine notions around community before taking steps to form a group for the project. If the community is not already established, individuals and social

organizations may use formal institutional networks [see exemplar 3] and informal networks such as word of mouth [Lowe 2000: 362] to bring people to the project.

Depending on how inclusive the project is, people may even happen upon the project in a public space and be invited in.

With each project, I consider whether to start by immersing the participants in materials or to start by discussing the issues. Do you start with tactile engagement and move to conceptual issues or vice versa? With the monument project I started with the conceptual issues. With the Feminist Law Project we started with the design and tactile projects. The law community participants needed to know if this was something they could commit their interest, time and thinking to, so I had to begin with design and practical issues so they could envision what might come of the project [fleury 2003].

Securing a space is an important element to ACA process. Members of marginalized social groups often lack public space, both in a practical and a figurative sense. Practically speaking this means that many groups do not have public spaces to gather for cultural expression or access to the means of public discourse, including communications media, public discussion and political representation. *The Dorothy O'Connell Monument* project is an example of an ACA project securing a physical and symbolic space, on the grounds of Ottawa City Hall [see page 24-29 of this thesis]. The physical locations of ACA activities are not always or even usually the formally sanctioned locations that art is made and displayed. Claiming public space for people who may not have access is often an important practical starting point for ACA projects [Goldbard and Adams 2001: 30]. In many cases the project can begin when a facilitator is able to secure a space for the project and the artist provides the setting for group interaction [Lowe, 200: 364].

The ways in which the ACA process proceeds depends on the skills, needs and aims of the facilitator and participants. The role of the ‘integrated professional artist’ involved in the project is that of a facilitator of process rather than a producer of products. The process is open and largely guided by epistemological commitments, community and individual needs, as defined by participants and the skills at hand. ACA process has not become rigidly codified. One of the reasons for this is that very few opportunities for formal training in ACA are available,¹⁰ so training for ACA is variable and practitioners are open to new influences. Some practitioners train in conventional art or have worked in social work activities. A variety of guidebooks to the ACA process exist and are used by practitioners.¹¹ However, many practitioners and participants do not know about these guidebooks or do not have access to methodological resources, so they work from their epistemological commitments and previously acquired skills.

There is usually a research phase early in the process. The purpose is to provide the conditions for the participants to decide which social issues are the most salient to the group and what the purpose of the project will be. This phase may draw out or uncover personal experiences from participants or participants may go out into their communities to draw on the experiences of others. The idea of uncovering what has been buried or rendering visible the socially invisible are common themes in ACA. Chapter 5 of this thesis will speak further to this.

¹⁰ The Community Arts Network [www.can.net] maintains a list of training opportunities in the US and Canada. In Australia the main portals for community arts information are: Community Arts Network of Western Australia [<http://www.canwa.com.au>], and www.feralarts.com.au. Community Cultural Development in Australia [<http://www.ccd.net>]. In the UK, the Arts Council of England [<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk>] and many regions have their own community arts councils.

¹¹ There are guidebooks available from community arts councils, and some written by community artists [eg. Lee: 1998; Adams and Goldbard 2001] and those involved in community arts process. Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* [1985] is the touchstone for socially-engaged performance.

What happens next are processes of individual and collective creation. Along with art-making there is: dialogue, compromise, developing a shared world-view, embracing difference, engaging in learning experiences, skills building, self-esteem building, negotiation of social issues and social identity, and construction of verbal, visual or performed metaphors of the social. Chapter 5 will speak to this in greater detail. Discussion and debate is usually a large component. Participants share their experiences regarding the relevant social issues and the experiences of people they know, as well as their beliefs, emotions and theories. These discussions often include what participants would like to see change around certain social issues, on a micro or a macro scale, in practical and utopian ways.

Some of the purposes of ACA projects are articulated by project members before the project begins, but many of the outcomes of ACA are not planned at the outset. They emerge within the practice and develop through the process, even after the project's completion. It is easier to develop a typology of conventional art practices because the distinction can be based on the final product: painting, dance, play, etc. However, ACA's cross-disciplinary, improvisational [Cleveland 2005: 109-110], participatory nature makes for too many variables to create categories that projects will neatly slot into [Adams and Goldbard 2001:26]. An ACA project may draw from a constellation of practices and purposes.

A useful analytic to understand processes of social change-making in ACA and the differences between their emphases is Deborah Mills' distinction between instrumental and transformational approaches [2004: 9]. The definitions that she gives to distinguish the two focus on policy development, but she shows that instrumental

approaches centre on consciousness-building and transformational approaches use critical consciousness to enact transformation. These two approaches are not opposed or incompatible with each other and they may be employed in an interconnected manner. Several of these aspects of each approach that are described below may even fit under both categories. However, these categories provide a starting point with which to organize and examine ACA processes.

It is common for instrumental approaches to draw upon Frierean practices of education for social action, providing tools for participants to critically examine their personal and social situation and deal critically with it. An important element of Friere's pedagogy that ACA projects draw upon is his concern with 'conscientization', developing critical consciousness that could have the power to transform reality [Friere 1980: 19].

Another instrumental aspect would be boosting individual and collective esteem in marginalized communities. The purpose of this is to mitigate against denigrating messages about the character of social groups or communities, messages that have been internalized by participants and their communities [Adams and Goldbard 2004:61]. Legitimizing the creative expression of the community is one of the ways this esteem-building works in practice.

Relationship building [Cleveland 2005: 110-111] is one of the often cited benefits of ACA and can be necessary to facilitating other purposes. Building community relationships is sometimes understood through Robert Putnam's [2000] notion of 'social capital'¹² [Mills 2004: 11]. In Putnam's schema 'bonding social capital' are the ties

¹² I only raise Putnam's notion of social capital here because some ACA sources use it. I consider Putnam's framework of capital to lack a grounding in economic relations, which I think is

between community members based on personal and collective trust. ‘Bridging social capital’ refers to the bonds between community groups or between community groups and expert systems.

Civic enhancement would also be among the instrumental aspects of ACA processes. Some projects are designed to bring communities together to beautify a neighbourhood facing economic deprivation evident in run-down or unsightly infrastructure. This promotes a sense of taking care and pride in neighbourhood community and sometimes enhances community members’ sense of safety as a result of the social ties created.

Under the category of transformational approaches, some ACA community improvement projects go beyond beautifying communities and aim to ‘revitalize’ them. Mills [2004] speaks of ACA’s aim of improving economic viability, one of the four pillars of the health and well-being of communities that she identifies. Economic revitalization has been the focus of much rural and regional ACA in Australia [Mills and Brown 62-73].

Increasing community capacity is one of the often cited transformational benefits of ACA. This refers to the capacity for the community to address and resolve its own social and economic issues. This is sometimes referred to in the literature in terms of emancipatory development [Adams and Goldbard 2001: 21].

Many American sources in particular present ACA as providing an opportunity for intensifying social citizenship and civic engagement that communities, however defined, may have lost or which may be considered to be ‘weak’. These projects provide

indispensable to any idea of capital. In terms of a cultural notion of social capital I prefer Bourdieu’s notion, which is used in subsequent chapters.

a space to bring community members together and a direct means to negotiate social issues and engage in public life.

Within the literature and practice of ACA many projects make youth a priority. Projects for youth often provide space, tools and training in arts practices so that there are alternatives to school-leaving and criminalized activities in disadvantaged communities [Cleveland 2005: 113].

Many ACA practitioners view interaction with a broader public as integral to the art [Raven 1989]. Instrumental approaches use the arts to educate and raise awareness of social issues. A project may use educational aspects and awareness developed among its participants to raise the consciousness of a broader public and sensitize it to the community's social issues. This process can challenge commonly-held stereotypes or assumptions about the social identity of a community. ACA projects can present a challenge to mainstream history, narratives and attitudes. The social inclusion of marginalized groups and promotion of cultural diversity in public dialogue were the aims of.

Instrumental and transformational processes of ACA take time to develop. ACA involves processes that often take years to plan, implement, change, develop and sometimes do not end but continue to evolve. Thus, ACA practice often involves multi-year projects [Cleveland 2005: 108-109].

Our last project was very much about creating awareness. We want to take it a step further in the next project. The plan is for a longer term project where people will be experiencing themselves in the active sense. They will be trained to do dance and visual art. Participants will be trained in all aspects of cultural production. We want to take the social and economic development part and add it to the mix because it is a longer term process for change to really happen. Not only that but change must occur from all sides. In terms of our project that means change in terms of the justice

system but also change in terms of the participants. Change in the relationship between them. Change can't happen in an isolated place. You can't change one thing in the relationship without everything else [Regier 2006].

Questions of Validity and 'Good' Community Art

Questions of quality are perennial debates concerning the legitimacy of ACA as an art practice. These questions seem to resound from three sources: the conventional art world, funders (who may be from the conventional art world, the public sector or NGOs), and ACA practitioners. Some people invested in a fine art system of value question whether the products of ACA can ever be 'good' art because these products are made by non-professionals who have not honed the techniques of the practice. Distinctions between fine art and ACA, based on who can make 'good' art and what 'good art' looks like, work to maintain the boundary around who can legitimately claim the title of 'artist' and any monies or status that might come with it. This boundary is usually maintained through approval conferred by conventional art world professionals in an elite gallery system and is based on aesthetic criteria. In many cases, claims that ACA's 'non-professional' arts participants lack the skill or training to satisfy aesthetic criteria are indeed accurate. The lack of training and resources can determine a more hand-crafted look or amateur performance in ACA projects. Sometimes, however, a handcrafted or 'amateurish' style is a deliberate choice, the purpose of which is to reject slick, conventional art production values and favour a look that has fewer potentially off-putting social codes for a non-elite audience [Adams and Goldbard 2001:22]. The principles of 'good' or valid community art are still a matter of some debate within the practice.¹³ The degree to which ACA applies aesthetic criteria varies by how invested

individual practitioners are in a conventional system of value. Even if certain aesthetic criteria are desired in ACA projects, they must be balanced with the other purposes of ACA, which may outweigh aesthetic criteria partially or totally.

Several authors on ACA suggests that social science methods can be useful for the evaluation of ACA [Cleveland 2005: 124; Lacy 1994:46; Monahan 2005:134]. One way a social scientist might look at the question of quality in ACA would be to ask questions of validity. Generally speaking, when something is said to be valid it is correct or sound, such as ‘good’ science or in this case ‘good’ art. In science ‘validity’ is a measure of rigour that is grounded in the logically correct or sound correspondence to ‘truth(s)’ and ‘reality(ies)’ [see, eg. Schwandt 1997]. Since validity is shaped by notions of truth, reality, values and the nature of being, it is necessarily situated and contextual. Conventional art differs epistemologically from ACA so conventional arts evaluation methods are not appropriate to ACA. Since validity is meant to correspond to epistemological commitments ACA will have different measures of validity than conventional art. ACA cannot logically adhere to a validity of aesthetic criteria that necessitates a highly-developed, skilled specialist division of labour such as conventional art because ACA is premised on recognizing the collective labour of non-specialists. ACA validity has its own logic, grounded in the participatory process, which it must adhere to soundly.

Some ACA practitioners suggest that ways of thinking about ‘good’ community art could be borrowed from the ways participatory researchers in the social sciences achieve congruence between epistemological reflection and methodological action. There seems to be a similarity been methods of validity used in community arts and three types

of validity in the social sciences: face validity, catalytic validity and cycling. Face validity is a judgment from the appropriate community as to whether the project reflects in practice the epistemological constructs used by the project. Simply put, a project is valid if other ACA practitioners and the project participants feel that the project process and outcomes reflect the 'truths' of the community's experiences. Monahan [2005:135] proposes that an "inquiry audit" [Guba and Lincoln 1989: 318] could be used effectively in community-based art. This is where a peer evaluator that is familiar with a broad range of community arts practices and understands the complexities and the variables of the particular project sufficiently would perform a review of the project [see also Cleveland 2005: 131]. Cleveland suggests that this evaluation should take place while the project is in process, rather than only after the project is completed [2005: 117-118]. Similar procedures to 'member checks' [see Guba and Lincoln 1981; Lather, 1986; Reason and Rowan, 1981] are also found in ACA as a way to test for face validity, for example in exemplar 1, page 79 of this thesis. This is where one of the researchers (in social science) or facilitators (in ACA) checks with the participants and sometimes with the broader community that is affected by the project to establish the validity of the project. This type of check is a staple in ACA process.

Questions about the effectiveness and the limitations of member-checking arise in social science methodology and ACA practice. How thoroughly can the researcher 'member check' a large and possibly diffuse community? Is the research less sound if the researcher cannot check the research with each member? Participatory research attempts to deny the 'expertise' of the researcher in favour of the experience of the participants. To what extent can the research dismantle the privileged position of the researcher and

adhere to a fully co-creative process, especially if the findings are to be written up by the researcher or directed by the facilitator? Does the community affected by the social issue in question necessarily have an 'epistemic privilege' over the researcher/facilitator?

Community members could be self-deceived about the role in the social situation

[Krimmerman 2001:68] if they lack information about the problem at levels beyond their own community. How does the facilitator deal with individuals that are perpetuating sexism, racism or other commonly held stereotypes instead of providing new insight on the issue? These are all questions facing the ACA facilitator as well as the social science researcher.

ACA projects often aim to use a type of validity known in the social sciences as 'catalytic validity'. Catalytic validity [Reason & Rowan: 1981] is a measure that:

Re-orient, focuses, and energizes participants in what Friere [1973] terms 'conscientization', knowing reality in order to better transform it. The argument for catalytic validity lies not only within recognition of the reality-altering impact of the research process, but also in the desire to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ultimately, self-determination through research participation" [Lather 1986: 67-68].

Catalytic validity means that ideas are not only sound but they are also inspirational. This is very important to both instrumental and transformative approaches to ACA.

Instrumental approaches to ACA attempt to 're-orient, focus and energise participants' in their new understanding of 'reality', improving possibilities for action. Transformative approaches use 'conscientization' to provide participants with the means to propel themselves into activity that will have a 'reality-altering' impact. While the language of 'reality' is perhaps problematic, if it were substituted for language appealing to a *material* impact then it would describe the aims of transformational approaches to ACA.

Third, validity can be checked for at various times in the project in what Reason and Heron [1997: 282] refer to as ‘cycling’. Participatory methods often combine repeating cycles of preparation, action, examination, reflection, reaction and so on [Kemmis and McTaggart 1981]. ACA processes almost always includes these various cycles.

There are neither set methods of evaluation nor a sufficient body of reliable, publicly available evaluation of ACA. Sociological literature on ACA is almost non-existent. However, there are indications that further study into the mechanisms and conditions in which ACA induces progressive social changes would be fruitful. Dozens of arts impact studies show qualitative and quantitative changes in communities as a result of art projects in the community, particularly with youth. Research on art programs in prisons suggest reduction in self-harm of participants and drastically reduced recidivism rates [see Regier 2005: 2-5]. Participant responses gathered by ACA practitioners indicate changes as a result of the practice. “I think if I was given some direction the first time I went to jail, I wouldn’t have gone back the second time. I would have pursued my career in the arts at an earlier age” [Regier 2005: 10]. “I was motivated to take university courses and read books that otherwise I would not have” [Regier 2005:10].

Much of the stakes of assessing ACA has to do with funding. Certainly it is important to ACA practitioners to be responsible to the communities they work with and to the field of ACA. Responsibility to the community is important to the successful fulfillment of the project aims. Many practitioners suggest that more assessment should be done for the purposes of the community. Assessments produced for funders are not

usually made available to other practitioners in the discipline [Cleveland 2005: 117-118]. However, much of the assessment of ACA that *is* done is developed for funders. Arts funding councils usually require pre-funding and post-funding evaluation according to sets of criteria often developed by community arts practitioners. Often projects do not fit into the funding parameters of the fine art institutional systems. Many projects have difficulty convincing both arts and non-arts funding bodies to fund cross-sector work [Cleveland 2005: 119]. Social sector funders have their own sets of criteria they develop to meet their own objectives. Not all of these objectives may be a comfortable fit with the objectives of the ACA project. Practitioners have cited the need for flexible funding arrangements that are not overly directive [Cleveland 2005: 121].

There is a hesitance on the part of arts bodies in Canada, and to a certain extent in the US, to fund ACA. Some funding bodies, both arts and non-arts, have difficulty accepting the proposition of these communities functioning in an artistic partnership. For example, fleury has had two experiences of being denied funding from arts granting councils because they failed to comprehend what a 'feminist law community' and a 'justice' community were, or could be, in terms of a collaborative project. Partly due to a lack of understanding on the part of funding bodies, there is a tendency for community arts projects to be less involved with arts institutions and more involved with local social service organizations, either being ignored by arts institutions or circumventing them. Sometimes even social sector organizations have difficulty with these artistic partnerships, failing to comprehend how art could have a transformative effect on communities, so they can also be reluctant to fund ACA projects.

Despite the difficulty many ACA projects have in finding funding, ACA is practiced throughout the world, in western countries presented in this thesis and even more notably in countries in South and Central America where public funding for these kinds of projects might be far more complicated to garner or non-existent.

NEGOTIATION AND TENSIONS IN ACA PRACTICE

The difficulties associated with gaining and maintaining funding is one part of a complex of struggles that ACA is involved in. This complex involves, among other struggles, the struggle to negotiate between social classes, the struggle for legitimizing ACA source communities, the struggle to be recognized as legitimate creative social practices, and the struggle to introduce and advance alternative viewpoints on social issues. Chapter four will elaborate on how ACA practice is embedded in larger social practices and social struggles; however, it is important to point out here that negotiating tensions, social struggle and social negotiation between and amongst social actors¹⁴ regarding social issues is the point of ACA practice. Indeed the feature that characterizes ACA practice more than any other is its aim to bring oppositions and alliances together in the same space for negotiation: the individual and the collective; the cultural, social and the political; conscious thought and practical action; the social agency of participants and the social barriers they face.

These negotiations are by no measure easy or always successful. Initial resistance to the project is common, even among community members who might later participate in the project (see Exemplar 2, pages 30-35). Resistance to engaging with the social

¹⁴ Some of these social actors have intentionally participated in the project and many are drawn in by the social stakes involved.

issues or problems that the project attempts to negotiate often manifests as a lack of engagement with the project.

Many factors, too numerous to list here, affect the ease and success of projects. Some projects end or fall apart due to lack of funding. Sometimes projects end up in legal problems. Some projects fall to particular interests instead of negotiating lively debate. All manner of stumbling blocks and pitfalls happen to ACA projects *because* they engage in social struggle. The negotiation of social issues through struggle, exposing tensions, hierarchies and alternatives is the *raison d'être* of ACA. Social struggles are the medium of ACA, and they are far more difficult and subject to problems than an artist working alone in a studio.

By critiquing social conditions ACA, practice exposes social tensions and struggles to contest and impose dominant ideas. For example, the Garbage Collection Project in Toronto in 2000 responded to battles over what to do with unchecked consumer waste by painting murals on garbage trucks, one of which demonstrated the capitalist interest in dumping waste in an abandoned Northern Ontario mine by depicting two businessmen holding dollars behind city hall. The city councilor advocating the deal ordered the mural whitewashed, which provoked more media coverage and public debate [Barndt 2004: 228]. In this case the social actors and the interests engaged in the struggle for dominance become clearer through provocative acts: ACA practice acting to expose the interests involved in the debate, a city councilor attempting to use his prominent position to impose his idea as dominant. Most often the social actors and interests involved are more subtle. For example, for the last six years there have been no new names added to the Women's Monument project in Minto Park in Ottawa. The Women's

monument has served as a place to organize Take Back the Night marches, International Women's Day events, and the Dec. 6 vigil for the 14 women slain in the 1989 massacre in Montreal. Names of some of the Ottawa-area women who have died as a result of gendered violence are engraved there. In half of these cases, the perpetrators were the victims' partners; in the rest, they were strangers. Debate continues over whether the names of women whose deaths have gone undetected, or whose manner of death remain a mystery, or cases in which charges are dropped to manslaughter through plea-bargaining, should appear on the monument. Due to a legal issue where a woman's name had to be removed, all new names are expected to be legally vetted. The interests and the social actors who may be included and excluded from this project has yet to become clear.

ACA practice is often experienced as messy, complicated, lengthy, difficult, frustrating, exhausting, transformative and exhilarating. ACA practice has been cited by participants and practitioners as a process that despite all the struggles, often provides them with hope and changes people's lives. When asked why sociology should pay attention to ACA practice, practitioner Lisa Ndejuru said, "because we are like dung beetles or the fish at the bottom who clean the tanks. We are willing to dive into the difficult stuff and if not transform it, at least look at it and try to make something useful of it" (Ndejuru 2006).

Though the aim of most of my discussion in this chapter has been to draw out the unique set of characteristics of ACA epistemology and methodology, this last section points out that the *practice* does not always strictly adhere to a set of consciously-

conceived epistemological principles¹⁵. For instance, some projects are less consensus-based than others for a variety of reasons, falling more or less into one of the other socially-engaged art categories such as new genre public art. More research and a theoretical framework are needed through which to understand the ways that ACA practice does not necessarily adhere to rules but enacts strategies to meet the aims of those participating in the projects, a framework that can account for the unintentional and unconscious thoughts and actions that make up ACA practice. Pierre Bourdieu's framework of practice is such a framework and it will be introduced in the next chapter and applied to ACA practice in chapter five.

Conclusion

This brief sketch of the practical logic of ACA art worlds examines a limit case in contemporary cultural production. The limits of conventional art worlds are evident in the way they tend to vigorously oppose ACA as art. ACA both shares characteristics with and denaturalizes aspects of conventional art worlds. Both ACA and conventional art worlds often share tools in common and sometimes ACA products even resemble conventional art. However, much of what ACA does is deeply antithetical to the system of conventional art worlds.

By starting from Becker's [1982] research, which demonstrates that all art-making is a collective process whereby social actors rely on other social actors producing culture in this relationship, it is evident that while conventional art world logic promoting a 'lone, genius artist' requires a concealment of the network of activity that is necessary for supporting the art-making. ACA makes this collective activity explicit. Unlike

¹⁵ This is one of a variety of reasons why it is difficult to pin down what practices might count as ACA and what practices might better be characterized as 'art of social engagement' or some other more general title. Often descriptions of ACA projects will be found under anthologies of such categories.

conventional art, the epistemology of ACA allows for its self-consciousness of art-making as a collective social practice. It recognizes the contingency of conventional art's epistemology, which requires the restriction on the status of artist and the means of access to the title, divisions of labour between artistic genius and support worker. ACA offers an alternative practice based in an alternative epistemology.

Due to their diverging epistemological commitments, ACA and conventional art have different answers to the question of what art is for and what makes it 'good' art. Art is a medium for social engagement in ACA, whereas conventional art mainly serves aesthetic and contemplative purposes of beauty and contemplation. Even where conventional art is socially concerned, it can be distinguished in its practice from ACA which is socially engaged. ACA engages social actors through a participatory process. The participatory approach to art-making expands the means of art-making to social actors who, for many reasons (often related to economic disadvantage), would otherwise not have access to the creative process through art-making and the dissemination of their cultural viewpoints. ACA's consensus-based decision-making process is contrary to hierarchical decision-making inherent in conventional art practice. ACA is attentive to power structures in decision-making and in a myriad of social practices. Social practices constitute the social world with its objects and subjects. Struggles over legitimate representation are fought out between social actors and social groups through practice and so practice is the focus of ACA's social engagement. What ACA aims to do with its social engagement can be understood through the categories of instrumental and transformational approaches. Instrumental approaches, such as education, dialogue, boosting community and individual esteem for community members, attempt to bring

about conditions of possibility for disadvantaged social actors and their communities. Transformational approaches take this a step further, actively promote community-directed change-making *with* disadvantaged social actors *for* themselves and their communities. Different criteria of evaluation must accompany different epistemologically-based commitments to the quality of art produced by ACA or by conventional art practices. Aesthetic criteria of ‘good’ art, beautiful art pieces that cause the viewer to reflect philosophically, are the province of conventional art. Though many ACA projects are also beautiful and provoke philosophical contemplation, ‘good’ ACA projects are necessarily socially engaged.

This is not to say that ACA produces effects by intention or that ACA produces the effects that participants had intended at the outset. ACA practice develops with the actions and discussion of participants, rather than following a pre-determined plan. ACA is a practice of negotiating social problems, interests, and tensions, and so it is open to both victories for participant communities and a host of problems for participants and practitioners to deal with.

Art worlds are the basic unit of analysis in the chapter. As this comparison between ACA art worlds and conventional art worlds demonstrates, and as Becker states at the outset of his book on art worlds, both ‘artness’ and ‘worldness’ are problematic. Becker suggests that there are no essential boundaries around art worlds, defining what *art* is or what constitutes a *world*, or at least that any boundaries drawn around art worlds are not systematic. I agree with him in the sense that there are no essential boundaries and no definitive consensus about boundaries, though art historians and art critics, of both the professional and the armchair variety, spend much time and attention on these questions.

However, I disagree with Becker's assertion that boundaries are not systematically drawn. In his inquiry into the social organization of art world practices Becker asks when, where and how participants draw the lines around what art is, but he misses one crucial question - why? This is the question the next chapter will address as it looks at the embeddedness of ACA in larger social processes and Pierre Bourdieu's framework of socio-cultural practice.

CHAPTER FOUR: ART AND CULTURE ARE EMBEDDED IN LARGER SOCIAL PRACTICES

Introduction

All art, as Howard Becker [1980] suggests and as Pierre Bourdieu goes on to systematically explain in a number of his writings, is the result of relational, collective social activity arising within and shaped by particular historical and social circumstances. If you think of the boundaries around art worlds as social ‘force fields’, Bourdieu’s framework of social ‘practice’ allows an understanding of the systematicity of keeping certain social actors inside and highly positioned within those fields and keeping other actors lowly positioned, or outside of them altogether. These boundaries are drawn by what is usually considered *social* rather than cultural factors, though the separation of these categories requires denaturalizing. Bourdieu [1993: 34-35] acknowledges a debt to Becker for his work on art as a collective activity; however it is Bourdieu who demonstrates that art and cultural activities are embedded in larger social practices which include socialization, social class distinction, and relations of reproducing and maintaining domination.

In order to understand how ACA is embedded in the social and acts within it to engender social resistance to domination, it is important to first examine the relationship between cultural practice and the social. There are two major epistemological hurdles in understanding how a cultural practice could effect social reproduction and social change: 1) finding a way to bring ‘culture’ and ‘the social’ into the same analytical space, and 2) finding a way to understand structure and agency as part of that same framework. Bourdieu accomplishes both tasks through his use of a notion of ‘practice’. The focus on studying social practice is not particularly new to sociology or to Bourdieu, however

what Bourdieu does is provide a theoretical *model* of practice. In addition to bridging the social/cultural and structure/agency divides, this model relates the macro-level patterns of social life and the micro-level actions that people perform in their everyday life and it does this within a critical, material framework. Bourdieu's larger framework of social practice deeply embeds culture within the social and the social within culture, sketching the conditions of possibility for social reproduction and change.

Bourdieu demonstrates that political and class interests are at stake in the everyday deployment of culture, not only in the fields of cultural production (art, literature, etc.); culture is used often, in the everyday, as a tool to reproduce domination. So instead of focusing heavily on Bourdieu's studies of specific art worlds (19th century French literature and painting in *The Rules of Art* [1996a], photography in *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art* [1990c], museums in *The Love of Art* [1990d]), this chapter will look more broadly to Bourdieu's socio-cultural framework of practice to understand the implications of culture in the social. In the first place Bourdieu's writing on art worlds is only a small part of a larger socio-cultural framework and its use in social domination. In the second place, as I have argued in the previous chapter, ACA is more aligned with social movements than with artistic fields. To briefly put it in Bourdieuan terms, the economy of conventional art worlds, their structures and interests, are not like ACA. The specific economy of conventional art worlds is based in a particular form of belief regarding its aesthetic and social value. It is a belief in an autonomy from the market and in the essential value of the work itself. The economic principle is obscured such that the most disinterested-looking party wins even though they are strongly invested. This is not the same economy as in ACA, which is self-consciously invested in material, economic

and social struggles of social actors. Though ACA may seem similar to the ‘social art’ that Bourdieu describes in the literary field, social art is akin to activist art. Social art, like activist art, is socially concerned but not socially involved; social art is the art of professionally trained artists unlike ACA which engages non-artist community members as equal co-creators. ACA is more like social movement struggles but it is distinctly cultural; it is situated across different fields and it uses cultural means in its attempts at social change. As I will propose in the next chapter, ACA itself does not constitute its own art world; it is a strategy, not a field. ACA’s cultural strategies will be discussed in the next chapter, but I raise it here to provide an understanding of why this chapter does not focus more on Bourdieu’s analyses of art worlds. Instead, this chapter will focus on the core concepts that Bourdieu uses throughout his writings which demonstrate how culture is embedded in the social.

It is this distinct cultural aspect of Bourdieu’s model of social practice, deeply embedding art and culture within the social, that makes it very fertile for understanding how ACA is embedded in larger social practices. This chapter looks to Bourdieu’s framework of practice to understand how cultural practices are embedded in larger social practices so that the next chapter may address how using Bourdieu’s framework may contribute to an understanding of the social embeddedness of ACA and the conditions of constraint and possibilities for social transformation of this cultural practice.

This chapter will begin by sketching the bare bones of some of the concepts from Bourdieu’s framework that are salient to a discussion of ACA. This discussion is meant to provide an introduction and an overview to Bourdieu’s concepts such that they can be applied to ACA. By no means does it do justice to the scope or depth of Bourdieu’s

writings, nor does it include the many interlocutors and critics to Bourdieu's theory. This discussion is provided for the purpose of explicating these concepts that embed culture in the social. Bourdieu's framework will then be applied to the cultural practice of ACA in the next chapter.

PRACTICE: THE SOCIAL/CULTURAL CONNECTION

One of the most significant things that Bourdieu's focus on a notion of 'practice' does is to provide a way to study observable, empirical objects of culture [see Wuthnow 1987; Keesing 1974; Swindler 76]. This is one way to resolve long-standing debates over how culture could be related to social action. It links culture to the social as a co-construction. This is a significant change to how culture has conventionally been understood in sociology and the issue is still a matter of debate in the sociology of culture and elsewhere within the discipline.

The term 'culture' is an 'essentially contested concept' with multiple meanings. The Oxford English Dictionary provides three related definitions: 1) reverential homage, 2) cultivation and 3) "the civilization, customs, artistic achievements, etc., of a people, esp. at a certain stage of its development or history". The first definition, reverential homage, locates the normative direction of the second and third definitions. The second definition refers to the cultivation of living organisms (e.g. bacteria, crops, animals), of minds and of tastes, and of bodily habits and manners. Combined with the first definition this means, in short, that the more 'cultivated' the better. The third definition is strongly tied up in normative homage. The history of the peak of a people's civilization, customs and artistic achievements is written by the dominant class of the dominant culture.

'Culture' has often been considered in sociology in many ways that are idealist, focusing

on beliefs, values and norms, and so the connections between culture and social activity have been difficult to make. A scan of the entries on culture in first-year textbooks demonstrates that this focus is still taught.

Though Bourdieu does not define culture in his writings, he brings together a notion of class-based reverential homage ('social capital' or 'honour' in Bourdieu's terms) with normative senses of cultivation: of the mind, body, objects, manners, tastes and practices (Bourdieu's sense of 'class distinction' through conventional artistic production and consumption) and a more anthropological sense of the term "the civilization, customs, artistic achievements, etc., of a people..." (Bourdieu's notion of class-based practices of the habitus and social fields). For Bourdieu, culture is not simply a matter of beliefs, values and norms, but also of concrete, material, everyday activities. Cultural activities participate in the development and maintenance of social structures, notably class, and social hierarchies. They have normative aspects, they involve cultivation and the civilization, customs and artistic achievements of people. Both conscious thought and unconscious action pervade cultural practice. "The theory of practice as practice insists, against idealist materialism, that the objects of knowledge are constructed, and against idealist intellectualism, that the principle of this construction is practical activity oriented towards practical functions" [1977: 96]. For these reasons, the social cannot be analyzed without attention to culture.

In order to understand the social and cultural in a way that transcends binary, structuralist notions of objectivity vs. subjectivity and structure vs. agency, social vs. culture Bourdieu develops a model of practice. Bourdieu's focus on practice is part of what has been termed the 'practice turn' in sociology [see Schatzki, 2001]. Social

theorists have become interested in the language of ‘practice’ and its ability to circumvent long-standing debates over subjectivism versus objectivism, individuality versus totality and structure versus agency. Practices constitute subjects *and* objects, structures *and* agents, theory *and* practice. As such they are always relational, contingent and temporal entities situated in local and social matrices of human relationships [Schatzki 2001: 2]. Practices mediate between the agency of human social actors and incorporate the social life of non-human social actors, such as machines, scallops and door-closers [Callon 1986; Latour 1988].

What the various notions of practice have in common is that they tend to deemphasize the idealist preoccupation with what is going on in the heads of individuals and collectivities. A focus on *practice* shifts attention away from Weberian ‘ideas’ or Parsonian ‘values’ [Swindler 2001: 74-75] towards what social actors are *doing*. ‘Practice, for Bourdieu is situated in material, practical social relations – ‘le sens pratique’, a practical sense or practical logic. Analyzing culture as a social ‘practice’ gives less prominence to idealist conceptions of culture as the ideas and values of groups of social actors.

This is not to say that practice ignores the conscious thoughts and actions of individuals. Bourdieu does not think of people as social automatons: “practice always implies a cognitive operation, a practical operation of construction which sets to work, by reference to practical functions, systems of classification (taxonomies) which organize perception and structure practice” [1977: 97]. Though “each agent, wittingly or unwittingly, willy nilly, is a producer and reproducer of objective meaning”, agents act *within* conditions that they have not themselves produced. Neither do they know the

method of operation of these conditions. In this way, actions often outrun the intentions of the agents involved. He suggests that the things agents do have more meaning than they know [1977: 79]. Both unconscious and conscious actions create social practice.

Habitus

Key to Bourdieu's framework of practice, is a notion of 'habitus'. The concept aims to bridge the explanatory gap between structuralist and voluntarist accounts of social activity, that is, between explaining social reproduction and change as determined by objective structures and explaining social reproduction and change solely in terms of decision-making by social actors.

Habitus is a complex concept that Bourdieu develops over the course of his writings and describes in various ways. One of the most frequently quoted definitions of habitus is:

a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks ... and on the other hand an objective event which exerts its action of conditional stimulation ...” [Bourdieu, 1977:82-83].

This description requires unpacking. There are seven central features to discuss about habitus: 1) it is reciprocal or dialectical, 2) it is adjusted to objective conditions, 3) it is a shared history of likely outcomes, 4) it is generated by both thoughts and actions, 5) habitus is both conscious and unconscious, 6) habitus is generated both by subjective individuals and objective structure, and 7) the dispositions of habitus are transposable.

Habitus is a complex, lived, relational concept that in an analytical sense can be distinguished between individual and collective aspects. However, in practice, as the first feature of habitus proposes, the individual and collective aspects of habitus cannot be

separated and are reciprocal or dialectical. In the first sense, habitus is an *individual* acquisition of habits, dispositions, experiences and thoughts that are imprinted and embodied by individuals through primary socialization and throughout the course of life. In the second sense, habitus is a *collective* set of dispositions, classificatory categories and generative schemes that are the product of history and likely social outcomes. Habitus is reciprocal or dialectical between the individual and collective aspect. It is a relationship between individual subjectivity and the collective, objective world of structures and other things – ‘a bundle of relations’ [Wacquant, 1992: 16].

As a result of the particular dialectical relationship between the individual and collective habitus, they mutually reinforce one another. This is the second feature of habitus; individual habitus is adjusted to objective conditions. Habitus is “An acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted” [1977: 84]. This suggests that social actors belonging to similar class backgrounds will tend to have similar experiences, opportunities and dispositions.

The third feature is a shared history of likely outcomes, often experienced as individual. The habitus learned in childhood disposes social actors to do certain things and have certain tastes according to Bourdieu. He emphasizes that early learning, in childhood, provides the dominant shape of the habitus to come. Bourdieu [1964; 1975; 1977; 1989; 1990a; 1994] demonstrates the tendency of social actors to reproduce throughout their lives the systems that they learned in childhood, of dispositions, such as taste, manners, language use; classificatory categories such as social class; educational attainment; and generative schemes, such as production of social symbols of lifestyle and understanding of the social world.

The fourth feature is that habitus is generated by both actions and thoughts, and more specifically by a relationship between the two. Bourdieu speaks less about conscious thoughts, in reaction to the overemphasis of conscious thought in rational action theory and other forms of voluntarism. However, he does acknowledge the homology between conscious thoughts and unconscious actions of the habitus. Habitus produces and is produced by people's bodies, "movements, gestures, facial expressions, ways of walking and ways of looking at the world" [Moi, 1991: 1031]. Bourdieu calls this relationship between bodily action and thought 'hexis'. Hexis is produced in a relationship between the body and structured space, both physical space and social space. It is "the appropriating by the world of a body thus enabled to appropriate the world" [1977: 89]. The childhood imitation of specific bodily actions develops this hexis [Bourdieu 1990a: 74]. "The book from which children learn their vision of the world is read with the body, in and through movements and displacements which make the space within which they are enacted as much as they are made by it" [Bourdieu 1977: 90]. However, hexis is better understood as the relationship between thoughts and actions; a "political mythology realized, em-bodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of speaking and thereby of feeling and thinking" [Bourdieu 1977: 32]. In other words, hexis is a politically and socially situated relationship between thought and action. It is important to highlight that Bourdieu proposes the hexis to be *durable* throughout the life of the social actor.

The fifth feature of habitus is that it is both consciously and unconsciously produced, though Bourdieu places more importance on unconscious actions. "The principles em-bodied in this way [through hexis] are placed beyond the grasp of

consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit” [1977: 32]. Bourdieu is trying to develop a notion of a combined conscious and unconscious thought and action, *strategies* of the habitus employed in the field that reflect this combination of conscious and unconscious thought and mediate between the determinism of structure and the voluntarism of agency¹⁶. He calls these partly conscious strategies ‘le sens pratique’– practical sense or practical logic. Bourdieu uses the metaphor of social life as a game, played out on a field and the embodied strategies employed, the practical sense, can be understood as ‘a feel for the game’. There are rules which the players know and actions that constitute the game play. After a while, game play becomes routine and a matter of habit. Players act rather more with unconscious action than with conscious thought. Their actions are ‘reasonable without being reasoned’ [Bourdieu, 1992:120]. Players employ their practical sense in their struggle over the stakes of the field.

The sixth feature of habitus is that it is neither completely determined by individual thought and action, nor completely determined by objective structures. Bourdieu came out strongly and repeatedly against what he called an “absurd opposition between individual and society” [Bourdieu 1990b: op. cite. 31]. In his study of Kabyle society Bourdieu found that objectively governed ‘rules’ do not explain social practice with any greater accuracy than ‘what is going on in people’s heads’. Habitus is generated in the relationship between *both* subjective individuals and objective structures. Individual habitus is generated by thinking, acting, social actors in response to their

¹⁶ Bourdieu’s transition from a notion of *rules* to *strategies*, developed in his fieldwork in Algeria, marks his break with structuralism [Jenkins, 1992: 38-41].

conditions; this thought and action is both shaped by and generative of larger social patterns.

The seventh feature is the transposability of dispositions. Though Bourdieu does not clearly define ‘dispositions’¹⁷, he refers to a broad range of thoughts and feelings that the social actor is inclined or predisposed to think and do. He emphasizes the role of the embodiment of these dispositions in actions, and that they relate to everything from categories of classification to a sense of honour. Their transposability refers to the capacity of the social actor to use basic dispositions in contexts other than the ones in which they are generated, that is to say, to apply basic cultural categories to diverse social settings and practices. Bourdieu’s anthropological work in Kabylia forms the basis for this notion. For example, he demonstrates how the Kabyle house reflects dualist conceptions of man and woman: man represented in that which is light, outside, high, fertilizing, etc., and woman represented in that which is dark, inside, low, fertilizable, etc. The traits of the gendered opposition are transposed to an object, the design of the Kabyle house. And they are transposed to practice, interacting with the Kabyle house, among other things by entering and exiting the female aspect via the male aspect. In these ways dispositions of habitus are transposed to material objects and bodily practices, which are utilized in other social settings as well. The possibilities for transposition may be endless. Transposability of dispositions is a very significant aspect to ACA which will be discussed later in the chapter.

¹⁷ In a footnote, Bourdieu [1977: 214] does provide an explanation of what ‘dispositions’ are meant to cover, though this does not provide much clarification. Disposition “expresses first the *result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a *way of being*, a *habitual state* [especially that of the body], and in particular, a *predisposition*, *tendency*, *propensity* or *inclination*”.

Field

The field is the social arena where struggles over the stakes and resources of the games of social life take place [Wacquant, 1989:50]. Bourdieu suggests that field is not to be mistaken for a vague social background, but constitutes a “veritable social universe where, in accordance with its particular laws, there accumulates a particular form of capital and where relations of force of a particular type are exerted” [Bourdieu, 1993: 164]. To a certain extent fields can be delimited by what is at stake and by examining position-taking over time. Bourdieu extensively analyses different social fields in his many voluminous works (the academic field, the educational field, the literary field, etc.).

What is to be included in a field and what is excluded is unclear in Bourdieu’s theory. This may be because Bourdieu designed the concept of field so that the questions of its constitution, its logic, the stakes, the players, etc. would have to be determined in each empirical context¹⁸. Bourdieu does tell us that there are many fields, but how fields interrelate to one another is also unclear, likely for the same reason. However, the field of power (politics) is regarded as dominant and the source from which relationships are structured in other fields. The logic of the field, its structure, its rules and its stakes are most often taken for granted or unconsciously understood.

To return to the analogy of the game, each field contains players at various positions who struggle for dominance and maintenance of dominant positions. Bourdieu’s concept of field is relational, because fields operate through the relationships between and power relations among social actors in the field. “It is *in the relation* to certain structures that habitus produces certain discourses and practices” [Bourdieu,

¹⁸ Bourdieu reminds his readers that “social research is something much too serious and too difficult for us to allow ourselves to mistake scientific rigidity, which is the nemesis of intelligence and invention, for scientific rigor” [Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:227].

1992: 135, emphasis in the original]. The shifting relations between positions of social actors, not the positioning itself, is Bourdieu's focus of analysis. Fields are temporal and dynamic in Bourdieu's account; his analysis examines social fields over a historical period. In addition, habitus can only be understood in relation to the dynamics of the field. Different configurations of a field can result in different expressions of the same habitus.

The resources that players may take into the field or gain from the field, which are the stakes as well, are of four types: economic capital, social capital (personal connections to other significant players), cultural capital (legitimate cultural knowledge, which comes in embodied, institutionalized and objectified forms¹⁹) and symbolic capital (prestige). Forms of capital can often be traded for other types of capital. For instance, a person who has economic capital and embodied cultural capital can often go to university and advance their social capital, institutionalized cultural capital and symbolic capital.

The use or maintenance of the various types of capital is not governed by social rules, but enacted through strategies. Social actors use their practical sense or practical logic and act through improvised practice, rather than following rules. They draw upon the dispositions that they have developed through the habitus, which is a constrained freedom of development, and act (consciously and unconsciously) within the constraints of their resources. Social actors may not be fully aware of the strategies that they enact, nor are they necessarily aware of their own interests or the stakes in the field.

¹⁹ See Bourdieu [1979] for a discussion of the three forms of cultural capital.

Doxa and Symbolic Power

‘Doxa’ is the term that Bourdieu uses to describe the implicit, unquestioned principles that organize the hierarchy of social actors in a field. This includes taken for granted interests (illusios), investments, strategies and structures of the field that may not be immediately apparent. Doxa appears to be natural, ‘just the way the world works’. Bourdieu [1977: 167] says of doxa that “what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying: the tradition is silent, not least about itself as tradition” Since doxa naturalizes the ‘way things are’ it censors what people say and do or provides them with a ‘sense of limits’ [ibid: 64]. This works either by self-censorship or through the operation of hidden censorship by other social actors and institutions which provides social actors with a ‘sense of reality’ limited by doxa [Bourdieu 1991].

The dominant classes have an interest in maintaining the doxa through strategies of employing their resources in practice [1977: 169]. These classes do not usually exercise their means of legitimate physical violence (police or military) to preserve their dominance; overwhelmingly they exercise power of another sort which Bourdieu calls ‘symbolic’ violence or symbolic power. Symbolic power is exercised by social actors who have more symbolic capital over those who have less. It is the authorized imposition upon others of legitimate ways of thinking and acting.

In class societies, everything takes place as if the struggle for the power to impose the legitimate mode of thought and expression that is unceasingly waged in the field of the production of symbolic goods tended to conceal, not least from the eyes of those involved in it, the contribution it makes to the delimitation of the universe of discourse, that is to say, the universe of the thinkable, and hence to the delimitation of the universe of the thinkable”... to effect “the ‘aphasia’ of those who are denied access to the instruments of the struggle for the definition of reality [1977: 170].

This power is 'symbolic' in that the stakes are the recognized legitimacy of dominant symbolic capital (prestige). Symbolic violence, the garnering of prestige over lower classes at their expense (and sometimes with their complicity) is enacted through cultural means. Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, is the imposition of systems of meaning and symbolism in such a way that it is considered natural and legitimate.

Education, Bourdieu explains [1989], is the tool par excellence of symbolic violence. Though people are taught from primary school onward that educational advancement is based on merit, it is organized to favour the reproduction of dominant classes. The classes of individuals who advance most quickly through education systems are those with upper-class cultural capital. The ease of advancing through the education system is naturalized as merit in the forms of 'intelligence', 'natural' abilities, 'motivation' or 'talent' and those who have difficulties are considered less intelligent, able, motivated or talented, thus less deserving of grades or advancement. This cultural capital translates into other conditions that advance or constrain the student: whether they go on in an 'academic' or 'vocational' stream in secondary school; whether they go to university and if they do, what programs they go into and the prestige of the university they attend; the social capital from the milieu that the student socializes in and the job prospects at the end of their study period. These factors shape the social class that the student will end up in; thus symbolic capital and symbolic violence are at the same time economic, political, and social and operate through culture. Bourdieu demonstrates that education has a strong tendency to reproduce relations of dominance [Bourdieu 1989].

Symbolic power is a broadly-based battle over cultural legitimacy waged using the weapons of culture, transposable symbols of prestige. Though education is a strong

example, Bourdieu suggests that the reach of symbolic power extends to encompass even the most mundane aspects of everyday life and lifestyle. Bourdieu attempts to provide a reconceptualized understanding of the relationship of reproduction between social stratification and cultural practices. 'Taste' and judgement are central to the arsenal in the battle over prestige that Bourdieu calls 'distinction' [Bourdieu 1994]. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* [1984] Bourdieu demonstrates that class interests are at work in the consumption of art and culture. Even though 'taste' is widely considered to be individual, through an extensive survey of art consumption in France, Bourdieu shows that people's so called 'individual tastes' have a distinct pattern that relates closely to social class. Bourdieu suggests that social distinction applies itself not only to taste in art, but more significantly, to social and cultural activity in general. Cultural classifications systems and class distinction is not just operating in the realm of art consumption, but in everyday social life. Bourdieu proposes that this distinction shapes and is shaped by the conditions of possibility of social reproduction and for social change.

Basically, the idea of distinction is that people learn to consume and produce culture in relation to their social class and educational level and their tastes and preferences tend to correspond accordingly. The aesthetics that develop are class-based and differentiate the individuals espousing them. The body and corporeal practices are significant here. Bourdieu suggests that taste in consumer products, housing, education, language use, bodily dispositions, manners, decoration, recreation, food choices, etc ad infinitum is shaped by social class socialization. Taste, rather than being an individual attribute, demonstrates a strong pattern within classes: "that's not for the likes of us"

[1977: 77]. Working class taste is a dominated aesthetic, petit bourgeois middle-brow taste struggles to differentiate itself as above the working-class aesthetic and attempts unsuccessfully to emulate the taste of the class above it, and upper-class bourgeois taste is allowed a 'playful seriousness' in its remove from necessity, only needing to differentiate itself in times of inflation of the tastes below it. Taste categories would not be such an issue if it were not for the hierarchy of taste corresponding to class reproduction and the use of taste to symbolically enact violence upon the lower classes.

One of the features of symbolic violence that Bourdieu emphasizes is that symbolic violence is oftentimes "exercised upon a subject with his or her complicity" [1992: 167]. By this Bourdieu proposes that symbolic power is 'misrecognized' as not being power at all. This power operates primarily upon shared belief that those who have prestige are naturally endowed with a greater proportion of talent, which they then profit from in the form of prestige. Those who do not have the prestige are also misrecognized, as not possessing those traits that endow prestige.

Not only does distinction act to reinscribe the life-chances of individuals and of classes, but this dispossession tends to be evident in the political field as well, as Bourdieu points out in chapter eight of his study of social distinction [1994: 397-465]. Authorized political speech is connected to status-generated feelings of competency, so that the middle and upper classes tend to dominate 'general opinion'.

The dominated classes have an interest in exposing and pushing back the limits of the doxa [1977: 169], but this interest often goes unrecognized due to the self-obscuring effects of symbolic violence. The delegitimized viewpoints and actions of the dominated classes are called 'heterodoxy'. Bourdieu says that "crisis is a necessary condition for a

questioning of doxa”. By ‘questioning’ Bourdieu seems to indicate an event of larger-scale class struggle in the field rather than ordinary second thoughts that individuals engage in about their social situations. Crisis, for Bourdieu, is visible through events such as those in Paris in 1968. Exposing the doxa, according to Bourdieu, is a necessary but not sufficient quality in creating social transformation [1991: 125-136].

CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION: BOURDIEU AND HIS CRITICS

There has been much attention paid in recent years to Bourdieu’s concepts in cultural and feminist theorizing. However, Bourdieu has come under much criticism, particularly by feminist writers and in the cultural sphere, for his limited discussion of change and social transformation. The most prevalent charge is a structural determinism that does not leave space for agency [Fowler 1997: 5], particularly for feminist agency [Adkins and Skeggs 2004; Arnot, 2002: 49; Butler, 1997; McNay, 2000; Lovell 2000]. Another common feminist criticism is that Bourdieu relies on his research on gender relations in Kabyle, speculating on the lack of possibilities of transformation of gender relations based on this research, instead of doing the type of contemporary historically grounded empirical research on contemporary gender relations that he has done on other fields. Bourdieu’s account of gender oppression is not well integrated into his account of class oppression and has come under fire from many scholars too numerous to name here. Moi suggests that gender, and perhaps also race, are like class in Bourdieu’s theory. They are “combinatory” social categories that influence and infiltrate every other social category in the “whole social field” [Moi 1991: 1035].

Arnot [2002: 49] charges Bourdieu with underestimating the potential that an ‘awakening’ to one’s habits of thought, perception and action can have for breaking

sexual and economic divisions instead of reproducing them. McNay [2004: 183] makes a similar critique suggesting that Bourdieu's notion of reflexivity is not expanded upon, beyond the academic's reflection on his or her activity, when it could be conceptualized in terms of the social agency of social actors more broadly. McNay also calls for reimagining habitus as less tightly determined, particularly in regards to the instability of gender norms and the 'internally complex nature of subjectivity' [McNay 2000: 72]. Lovell [2000: 27-48] suggests that Bourdieu seems to have, at times, an oversocialized notion of the individual habitus. She proposes more examination into the exceptional, such as how one acquires a cross-gender habitus (which she suggests may not be so exceptional). In *Excitable Speech*, Butler [1997] critiques what she considers the determinism of field and habitus in Bourdieu's work on symbolic violence in relation to performative speech acts. She suggests that he misses the indeterminacy of the performative. Butler critiques the one-way relationship that Bourdieu draws between habitus and field, in which field impacts upon habitus but not the other way around. A lack of indeterminacy misses an understanding of the incompleteness of the embodiment in the habitus of domination, according to Butler. Indeterminacy is necessary, in Butler's view, for social change that comes from the margins, such as how marginal groups may appropriate and subvert dominant norms [McNay 2004: 180].

Fowler's discussions and critiques of Bourdieu and the cultural sphere have been extensive. In terms of specific critiques of his limited discussion of transformation in Bourdieu's work, she suggests that he underemphasizes the potential for a critical cultural practice to imagine new alternatives [Fowler, 1997: 11]. Fowler [134-173] points out that Bourdieu does not examine popular art or women's literature in his analyses of art worlds

in capitalist societies [1992; 1993]. In doing so, according to Fowler, Bourdieu misses the potential of culture from the peripheries to effect the conscious beliefs and legitimize the struggles of social actors²⁰. Fowler suggests that Bourdieu too readily accepts the division between high and low art, a division that aligns itself with dominant class hostility towards popular art [Fowler, 1997:153]. A more charitable view would propose that it is instead the effect of Bourdieu's attendance to more mainstream art worlds instead of an examination of the peripheries and exceptions.

Bourdieu's notions of change and transformation are not gathered up neatly into a volume, but are scattered throughout his later works. Bourdieu examines the emergence of new fields as social change. He analyses specific fields – the French university in *Homo Academicus* [1988], French bureaucracy in *La Noblesse d'Etat* [1989] and French literature in *The Rules of Art* [1996a] – as historical processes that have the ability to maintain themselves and to change, to develop habitus in relation to the field, to engender changing strategies of social actors and to resist drastic changes in the field itself. Bourdieu also examines crisis within these fields and the strategies of resistance and survival that were developed in relation to the crisis.

He locates the conditions for social transformation, in the mismatch between objective conditions and agents' expectations, such as the events leading up to the crisis in universities in Paris 1968 [1988]. The expanding educational system was swollen with young baby boomers and opened up scores of non-tenure track lecturer positions that had to teach large classes, leading to a two-tiered system of faculty. The mismatch, for new lecturers, between the expectations of obtaining prestige and institutional power and the conditions they found themselves in was what the crisis crystallized around [1988: 152].

²⁰ See especially chapters 6 and 7 and the conclusion of Fowler 1997.

When this combined with student overcrowding and the mismatch between students expectations of obtaining a good tenure track job at the end and the systemically constrained opportunities it catalyzed crisis that led, Bourdieu suggests, to social transformation.

Adkins critiques Bourdieu's notion of social transformation, occurring in the mismatch of objective opportunities with subjective expectations, for being incongruous with the rest of his social theory. Instead of a theory of change as part of practice, she says, Bourdieu resorts to an understanding of change based on conscious beliefs, values and perceptions. To address this, Adkins proposes an examination of incorporation of norms and mimesis in the recognition that social norms are not completely embodied, *pace* Butler. This, Adkins says, avoids what she calls liberal notions of freedom and reflexivity, instead emphasizing the temporal aspects of practice [Adkins 2004: 207].

Bourdieu provides three explicit rebuttals to the charge of structural determinism, in chapter seven of *In Other Words* [1990b: 116]. First, he reminds readers that his theory is *relational*. Habitus is responsive to field. Two social actors with similar habitus can enact different practices and take different stances in response to the different states of the field. Bourdieu cautions against seeing a change in habitus itself as change, rather than being attentive to the changing *relation* of habitus and field. Second, he points out that habitus is not a static concept. It is dynamic, constantly transforming in response to field, either to reproduce itself or to change. If the habitus is changing it could lead to social transformation proper, although for Bourdieu this is another matter arising out of crisis. Third, Bourdieu suggests in addition to transformation in the habitus, that this transformation can be controlled through “awakening of consciousness and

socioanalysis”. The more reflexively aware that individuals become of the categories of their thought and action, the less likely it is that these categories of thought and action will be enacted upon them. Bourdieu argues that socio-analysis can help with this, it can assist in distinguishing between zones of constraint and zones of freedom. The business of a sociologist, according to Bourdieu, is to debunk myths and doxa and expose the exercise of power [Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 49]²¹.

On the problem of change in his work, Bourdieu seems genuinely puzzled at the charge. In response to critiques Bourdieu explains that change is not the opposite of reproduction, rather that reproduction always involves change. He asserts that structure constitutes strategies; structures (tensions, oppositions and relations of power) are exactly what the principle of the strategies of transformation are made out of. To put it another way, structure is a structure of actions, structure and strategy are not separable. Reproduction and transformation are not opposing concepts, Bourdieu points out, but both are part of the same basic principle of fields [Bourdieu 1990a: 118-119]. Social actors constantly make adjustments to other social actors mobilizing resources in the field. “Belonging to a field means by definition that one is capable of producing effects in it” [1992: 80].

Since dominated social actors are part of fields, Bourdieu suggests that “the dominated, in any social universe, can always exert a certain force” [1992: 80]. However, Bourdieu cautions against voluntarism, which underestimates the extent to which domination is durably embodied in the habitus [1991:127-136]. He also cautions against overestimating the abilities of collective strategies. Due to the inseparability of structure

²¹ Bourdieu is not naïve about the actions that can result from the elite position in the field of power of academics, such as those in sociology. He has written quite extensively, especially in *Homo Academicus* [1988], about the pitfalls of academics wielding symbolic power in inappropriate ways.

and strategy, collective strategies (such as social movements) are part of the contradictions of 'mechanisms' that tend to reproduce the social order as are the social actors that enact collective strategies [Bourdieu 1990a: 118-119]. He does not seem to hold out much hope of collective strategies driven by the dominated, "It is clear that, at least in the case of dominated individuals, this effect does not tend to favour political action". However, Bourdieu seemed to be hopeful that intellectuals might conduct themselves reflexively; indeed he insisted their job was to do so and that they might align with critical journalists especially, along with writers, artists and others who could act within cultural production in an attempt to resist neo-liberal economic and social forces [see Bourdieu 1998: 73; 1996b;1992].

Bourdieu's limited response to the critiques from feminist and cultural scholars and his focus on social reproduction of domination in his work without a reciprocal examination of social change leave some scholars somewhat pessimistic about using Bourdieu to talk about cultural change. What critics of change in Bourdieu's framework seem to be missing is that what Bourdieu considers transformation is a 'deep and lasting' change, a revolutionary reconfiguration of a social field. His critics are talking about change as strategies of resistance, of mobilizing resources and repositioning social actors in a field; he is talking about a revolution capable of producing practices other than a dominator/dominated relationship. He does not consider repositioning in the field to be deep and significant change itself, nor does he consider strategies aimed at repositioning to contribute to revolution of a field. Strategic change is, for Bourdieu, part of reproduction; transformational change is nothing short of revolution.

For scholars who consider repositioning groups in the social field to be deep and meaningful change however, Bourdieu's scholarship on reproduction and change can be very useful. Bourdieu's theory of practice can be useful to those who wish to understand strategies of domination through culture and use culture to reposition dominated social actors, such as ACA aims to do. Bourdieu's theory of practice remains immensely fertile for cultural and feminist scholarship, as the volume and depth of engagement and critique of Bourdieu's work appears to indicate. A thorough and comprehensive, *alternative* notion of cultural change has yet to be developed that theorizes both the possibilities of change through cultural means and the limitations for change in light of dominant strategies and the durability of habitus.

Conclusion

Bourdieu's model is used by cultural theorists for his systematic understanding of how culture is embedded in the social through *practice*. This is where Bourdieu makes his strongest contribution to a cultural sociology. Bourdieu's notion of habitus is tightly theorized (too tightly for some scholars). With habitus Bourdieu is able to bring together six major aspects of socio-cultural activity: 1) the reciprocal or dialectical nature of individual, subjective activity and collective, social, objective structure; 2) how the subjective is adjusted to objective conditions; 3) why there is a shared history of likely outcomes between members of the same class; 4) how thoughts and actions come together; 5) how both (subjective) individuals and (objective) structures generate the social; and 6) how social actors 'strategize' in a largely unconscious way by transposing their dispositions. All of this thought, action and structure is grounded in his concept of field, where capital comes in forms other than economic, forms that recognize culture as

an asset: cultural capital (legitimate cultural knowledge, which comes in embodied, institutionalized and objectified forms) and symbolic capital (prestige). Bourdieu's notion of doxa is a cultural means of guarding class capital investments. Symbolic violence is a widespread cultural practice of expressing through innumerable micro practices of power, conscious and unconscious, structural and subjective, how domination can be constantly reproduced and passed on to the next generation within the social class. Without a doubt the empirical evidence of Bourdieu's studies suggest that symbolic domination through culture and its class-based structural factors tend to reproduce themselves. Even though Bourdieu aims to consign a dualist conception of structure and agency to the dustbin, his findings seem to come down on the side of structural reproduction. Reproduction of statistical averages is the object of Bourdieu's study, not the exception.

Though Bourdieu argues for a relational understanding and against conceiving of reproduction and change in oppositional terms, he does not give as much attention to change in the habitus in his writings. Bourdieu does write about change in a limited way in comments dispersed throughout his writings, especially his later writings, but he does not clearly and systematically provide readers with a guide to understanding change that is in any way comparable to his writing about reproduction. Though Bourdieu recognizes that social action is a mixture of freedom and constraint, he does not spend much time examining this freedom. Bourdieu's studies focus mainly on explaining the reproduction of habitus and how culture is implicated in this reproduction, not those cases where habitus changes. His major contribution is to provide insight into the enduring enigma of how class domination continues to reproduce itself *through culture* under changing strategic (technological, social and political) circumstances. Bourdieu's work does not

provide for notions of transformation, short of his suggestion that transformation would have to happen in a crisis between subjective expectations and objective conditions.

Though change is not Bourdieu's focus, this is not to say that Bourdieu denies that change can occur. Bourdieu does admit that the habitus is generative and "durable, but not eternal!" [1992: 133, emphasis in the original]. Despite the overwhelming constraints of habitus, change does occur in the field and in the habitus of groups and individuals. Though Bourdieu's studies indicate that culture is used most effectively to reproduce the position of the dominant classes, this does not exclude the possibility of resistance. The stakes of the field are always a *matter of contest*, they are dynamic, and Bourdieu suggests that in fact strategies of social reproduction provoke strategies of resistance. Bourdieu's framework suggests a constant struggle to generate strategies of domination using cultural tools, against resistance that is enacted through cultural tools as well. Bourdieu acknowledges that the field is constantly changing. However, he does not observe it transforming in any *significant* way. Change is part of reproduction for Bourdieu, but what Bourdieu seems to consider deep and meaningful change seems to involve transforming capitalist relations of domination.

Though Bourdieu's framework of practice does not provide a theory of 'deep and meaningful' transformation, it can be used to understand strategies of resistance to domination and repositioning in social fields, which other scholars may consider deep and meaningful change. Though Bourdieu's focus is the use of symbolic power by dominant actors, this does not preclude scholars from examining symbolic power in strategies of resistance. Bourdieu's writings discuss strategies of mobilizing symbolic power to create change within fields, using art and culture as tools. In this sense, even a

determinist-inclined framework such as Bourdieu's provides for spaces of possibility for resisting symbolic violence *through* the tools and strategies inherent to symbolic power, art and culture. Though Bourdieu does not provide explicit guidance regarding social change, he does supply his readers with tools to go beyond his own theories.

CHAPTER FIVE: BOURDIEU, ACA AND CHANGE

Introduction

This chapter aims to “twist the stick in the other direction” on Bourdieu as he wished to do with the ideology of academic professionals. This will accomplish two things: to provide a Bourdieuan explanation for the unconscious and embodied aspects of cultural resistance in ACA, and to extend Bourdieu’s own framework in the process. Though it may seem counterintuitive to use Bourdieu’s framework to explain practices of cultural resistance, the lack of a clear sense of possibility for social change in Bourdieu’s writing need not obscure the usefulness of Bourdieu’s work for conceptualizing resistant cultural practices. Bourdieu’s framework of practice is a comprehensive and tightly theorized argument for the co-construction of the cultural and the social within a broad framework that speaks to the unconscious, embodied and symbolic aspects of culture and symbolic power. These aspects tend to be missing from many accounts of ACA.

Most conventional accounts of ACA projects explain in detail the conscious, cognitive and intended ways in which ACA facilitates negotiation and change. However, the unconsciously embodied aspects of social practice are rarely apparent. The relationship between the ACA practice and social change in many accounts of ACA projects is often characterized in idealist and voluntarist ways, where new ideas developed in the creative realm propel intentional changes in the social. Consciousness-raising figures fairly heavily in the ACA literature. When discussions of ACA practice refer to working *through the body* they tend to characterize ACA as a type of fictional realm in which to reimagine ‘real’ social practices [Lacy 1995: 37]. Augusto Boal’s work and thought, a strong influence in performance-based ACA, interprets the links between

artistic and social performance in terms of a “rehearsal space for real life” [Boal 1995: 43]. Boal refers to the relationship of how critical theatrical practices effect social engagement as “aesthetic transsubstantiation” [1995:43]. Conventional understandings may work well within the context of ACA practice; indeed, a phenomenological project in the understandings of participants about how ACA works may be an informative endeavour for future study. However essentialist and mystical explanations of how the practice works within the social and a divide between ‘fictional’ and ‘real’ practices are sociologically unsatisfying.

Bourdieu’s focus on the unconscious, embodied aspects of habitus provides a way for sociologists to understand these aspects within ACA projects. Bourdieu’s emphasis on practice as *improvisation* and *strategy* is central to the argument about how ACA works. I will suggest that ACA is not a field of cultural production, but a set of strategies, a practical sense or ‘feel for the game’. ACA is not a something that effects change from the outside, but it is a deployable set of strategies that act *through the habitus*. ACA’s strategy, or practical sense, can be understood as embedded in the social as it works through the aspects of habitus discussed in the last chapter.

ACA strategy can be understood fundamentally in terms of two strategic moves. The first strategy involves practices that attempt to unmask the doxa. This is usually understood as consciousness-raising, but it involves much more than the conscious and intentional thoughts of social actors. Anti-doxic strategies are a form of resource accumulation to dominated social actors that is embodied and unconscious as well as intentional and conscious. Due to Bourdieu’s focus on reproduction, he does not speak much to the possibilities for dominated social actors to push back the limits of the doxa.

He does suggest that political action is possible but constrained by dominated social actors, and that subversive ideas or heterodoxy is necessary but not sufficient for effecting social transformation [1991: 125-136]. Progression to the second strategy is characteristic of transformational approaches to ACA practice. The second strategy is an attempt at transforming socio-cultural practices. By using Sewell's suggestions about how transformation can be read through Bourdieu's structure-heavy framework, this chapter will argue that ACA works through the habitus to engage the unconscious and embodied dispositions in a program of transformation. An application of Sewell's axioms demonstrates a potential for extending Bourdieu's framework in the direction of cultural resistance, raising possibilities for new understandings of change through cultural means.

By examining practices of cultural resistance here, which are for the most part absent from Bourdieu's work, it is possible to see how symbolic power can be used in strategies of resistance. Bourdieu suggests that rites or rituals tend to consecrate or legitimate. They allow social actors to "act on reality by acting on its representation" (Bourdieu 1991:119). This may sound similar to the ways that ACA writings usually describe how projects work, acting in a fictional realm to rehearse for real life, but Bourdieu suggests that this symbolic efficacy is quite real. Socially dominant actors use symbol in ritual to consecrate their power over the dominated. Though Bourdieu focuses on how the dominant classes use symbolic power to dominate, resistant practices such as ACA appropriate symbolic power for participants, who tend to be dominated or at least less dominant positions, creating possibilities for change in the fields where the social issues in question are at stake.

Using Bourdieu to Talk About Change?

Given that Bourdieu does not provide a clear sense of social change, it may seem counterintuitive to use Bourdieu's work to talk about ACA, which usually quite expressly aims to create social change. However, I suggest that Bourdieu's work may furnish a complement to theoretical approaches that focus on consciousness-raising and the intentional aspects of cultural resistance. Bourdieu's framework of practice was conceived, on one hand, in response to the inadequacies of structuralism to account for subjectivity, including his own self-proclaimed 'blissful structuralism' [Bourdieu 1990a: 9], and, on the other hand, in response to rational choice theories – or, as he prefers, RAT (rational action theory) [Jenkins 1992: 72-73]. Bourdieu's work can be understood as an attempt to provide a corrective to social science models that either explain social activity and social change as resulting from structural causes to the neglect of the subjectivity of social actors, or characterize human behaviour as a resulting primarily from the intentions of social actors who act on rational and calculated choices. It is the either/or conception of the social that Bourdieu rejects, not structural features of social life or the generative activity of social actors.

Bourdieu does not dismiss entirely the possibility of acting on rational self-awareness, as some of his critics imply. In particular, he insists on reflexivity in social science as a requirement and form of collective sociological practice [Wacquant 1992: 38]. However, Bourdieu's notion of reflexivity is embedded in scientific practice [ibid: 46] and does not present possibilities for epistemological reflection among non-sociologist social actors. I suspect that this is more than simply something that Bourdieu did not write about, but rather expresses what Bourdieu sees as a tight homology in the

habitus producing a strongly durable reproduction. It is not clear in Bourdieu's writings why scientific reflexivity is particularly useful in breaking the bonds of habitus. Bourdieu saw rational action theorists, and others who advocate changing ideas in order to change action by 'consciousness raising', as overemphasizing the ease at which doing so can counteract the repetitive inscriptions of symbolic violence in the body [Bourdieu 2000: 172].

To twist the stick in the other direction on Bourdieu: if voluntarist notions of change lack a dispositional theory of unconscious practices [2000: 172], his dispositional theory of unconscious practices seems to lack a well-developed notion of conscious, popular, reflexive practices. Bourdieu suggests that revealing the doxa is a necessary step towards social transformation but not sufficient in itself to effect social transformation [1991: 125-136]. However, in his focus on academic rather than popular education strategies of reflexivity, he misses the possibilities of revealing doxa through consciousness raising of dominated groups. There is a complementarity here, that would not be without precedent.

Wacquant [1992: 80-81 n24] raises the point that Birmingham school scholars who highlight resistance, struggle and creative praxis of the dominated have taken actively complementary positions to Bourdieu's 'structural reproduction'. Feminist thinkers and cultural scholars are, to use Lovell's phrase, 'thinking with and against Bourdieu'. To characterize these scholars in opposition to Bourdieu would be to misrepresent the relationship between them and to foreclose potentially productive alliance of ideas. In addition, Sewell [1992] sketches possibilities for transformation

within a structure-heavy framework such as Bourdieu's²². Bearing in mind the complementarity of feminist and cultural critics and Sewell's axioms, the following discussion turns now to Bourdieu, ACA and change.

ACA, Time and Field or ACA is Not a Field

The site of all social practice in Bourdieu's framework is a field or a set of fields²³. Not simply a background for social activity, field is a space of relationships between social actors and between the field and the social actor. It is the site of struggle over stakes particular to that field. Painting and literature are fields of cultural production that Bourdieu has elaborated on, but there are three reasons to suggest that ACA itself is not a field of cultural production. First, a medium-based distinction of field, such as Bourdieu makes for painting and literature, does not make sense for ACA practices which cohere based on approach not medium. Second, examining the conditions of the development of ACA does not provide a clear sense of a 'field' emerging. Determining the field where an ACA project is situated is not an easy or straightforward operation and it must be determined in each empirical instance. Bourdieu's methodology is rather more

²² Exploring Sewell's proposal in a thorough and rigorous theoretical manner, such as Bourdieu's method proposes, would require a large-scale undertaking in itself. It would require (in the manner of Bourdieu's examination of reproduction) numerous, empirical examinations of the conditions of those cases that are the exceptions to the durability of class habitus and the conditions in which collective actions find spaces to effect social change. Then these cases would have to be compared to find if there is coherence. Such an examination would both test Bourdieu's theories about reproduction and extend Bourdieu's theory of practice. Unfortunately, this is far beyond the scope of this MA thesis.

²³ Field might serve as a useful concept to capture the differences between social actors affected by projects and the antagonisms within the social spaces where ACA locates its work. The site of ACA projects is usually referred to as 'the community' or 'communities'. As the second chapter outlines, the term 'community' is used loosely in ACA to mean different things in different contexts. What can be said about many of its uses is that the term confers a more unified sense of connection between social actors than is often the case. While a sense of unity may be useful to bring about collective solidarity, the term does not emphasize class antagonisms. Field could be applied to conceptualize the hierarchical constitution of the 'social universe' where the ACA project is taking place, the players, the dominant logic, the relations of force, the stakes, the doxa and position-taking as the ACA projects develop and change over time. However, the class-centrism of the concept of field is one instance of a larger problem inherent in Bourdieu's framework of practice

rigorous than can be executed or even described within the bounds of this discussion.

According to Bourdieu's methodology, determining a field requires an examination of the most significant empirical cases to the object of study: how each is constituted, its limits, what players are involved and excluded, what the stakes are and then a determination is made as to whether the cases cohere to form a field [Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 100-101]. This work would need to be undertaken in an in-depth Bourdieuan analysis of the field of a single ACA project, which could be the focus of a future study.

However, it is clear that the fine arts fields have usually rejected ACA as outside of the concerns of their fields. Mainstream local social development in many places has not strongly embraced ACA either. In Australia, one could make an argument that there has been somewhat of a 'cultural development' field. Since the 1970s ACA has been recognized and funded in Australian development policy. However, recent incursions by discourses of 'creative capital' and 'creative cities' seems to be diverting cultural policy directions and funding. A weaker case could be made for an American 'cultural development' field in itself, given that ACA is more of a marginal practice in community 'development'. In the UK, ACA would probably be recognized a marginal practice of amateur arts (sometimes known as community arts). In Canada, ACA's relationship to the fields of 'development' and the arts fields is uncertain because it is not strongly situated in either field nor does it have its own field. Few histories of ACA in Canada exist and the practice would benefit from a more detailed social history.

Third, ACA seems to intersect many fields. In addition, different projects intersect different fields. For example, the *Staging Human Rights* projects intersected the fields of

prisoner and human rights, employer/employee relations, justice, corrections, therapy, theatre and performance, just to name a few.

ACA as a Ritual Practice

ACA then is not a field in itself. Rather, it is an approach, a ritual practice employed within fields. ACA projects have been understood as ritual practices in which to negotiate social issues and the material conditions that hold them in place [Lowe 2000:381]. Jan Cohen-Cruz [Cohen-Cruz et al. 2005: 84], veteran facilitator of community-based performance and a leading author on the subject suggests that ritual provides a tradition of performance that serves social or spiritual functions which community-based performance draws upon. Further, that ritual may account for social and spiritual dimensions of community-based performance. In discussing the place of ritual in community-based performance, Cohen-Cruz [2005: 84] cites anthropologist John MacAloon's discussion of ritual as part of cultural performance, "occasions in which as a culture or society we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and history, (and) present ourselves with alternatives." Cohen-Cruz suggests that ritual's tendency to collective cohesion can lead to a dangerous collective conformity. However, in community-based performance, the potentially conformist tendencies of ritual are mitigated by art, which Cohen-Cruz sees as having the potential to "interrogate assumptions" and "renew perception" [Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman 2005: 84-87]. Community-based performance draws upon the ability of ritual to facilitate change. "Like rituals", Cohen-Cruz suggests, "community-based performances are structured processes capable of taking people through changes" [Cohen-Cruz 2005: 101].

Bourdieu's account also proposes that rituals serve as conduits for processes of change. "Ritual practice always aims to facilitate *passages* and/or to authorize encounters between opposed orders" [Bourdieu 1997: 120]. Based largely on his research in Kabyle, Bourdieu [1977] observed that social actors create order by creating distinction, they divide the social world into basic opposed orders: male and female, dry and wet, up and down, inside and outside, high and low, etc. These basic oppositions are then transposed in the form of abstract, embodied metaphors to most operations of thought and action. When oppositions need to be united or the boundaries of the distinctions need to be breached, social actors employ rituals or rites, such as in the union of man and woman in marriage.

As discussed in chapter three, ACA practice can be characterized by its aim to bring together concepts that are usually considered opposed orders into the same space for negotiation: the individual and the collective; the cultural, social and the political; conscious thought and practical action; social structure and social agency. Practitioners of ACA demonstrate a recognition of a relational or dialectical quality to social relations and social issues [see exemplar 4, page 40-41]. ACA can be understood as a relational logic [Lacy 1995: 35-36], in the Bourdieuan sense of a ritual *practice*, to bring together opposed orders. ACA convenes in the same analytical space the conscious and unconscious habitus of social actors and their ability to act with social situations that are often considered objective and structural in nature. ACA facilitates a more holistic approach to negotiating social issues and problems, using the processes of ACA projects as a ritual space in which to reflect consciously and act (both consciously and unconsciously) upon the social issues in question. The *modus operandi* of ACA is to

facilitate negotiation of social issues in their complexity. ACA is a process that negotiates social issues through the unconscious habits of thought and bodily practice as well as through the cognitive and conscious, beliefs, emotions. The following section on habitus will expand upon the ways that ACA works to effect change through ritual, cultural practices.

ACA uses cultural practices as the medium of the ritual, factoring in the uneven distribution of access to legitimate cultural production in society. Bourdieu's writings demonstrate that early training in the primary habitus of the dominant class disposes those with adequate social, economic and/or cultural capital to produce culture that will be recognized as legitimate cultural production, which is then reinforced in formal training and informal recognition (prestige) later in life. Participants from disadvantaged communities would not have been likely to experience dominant culture art-making practices as part of their habitus, due to lack of resources or strong forces of social distinction that discourage whole classes of people from participating in legitimized art-making. One of the reasons that some of these creative and artistic practices may be unfamiliar is that the practices of social distinction regarding art-making are so strong that most individuals stop performing art-making practices in adolescence. 'Art'-making is then reserved for the individuals with adequate social, cultural and/or economic capital to continue on to be professional artists or to take up less distinguished practices that are marginally considered art, such as amateur or 'Sunday painters' or to engage in even less distinguished, craft practices. The majority of people are considered by others to be 'non-artists' or self-profess their lack of legitimacy in cultural production: "but I can't draw".

Through ritual, embodied practices of art-making and performance, ACA facilitates more access to legitimate cultural expression than dominated groups and individuals would otherwise have. The embodied aspects of these practices are expanded upon in the section on habitus and ACA practice. According to Bourdieu, access to legitimate means of cultural expression, in the field of cultural production [1993] and in everyday cultural practices [Bourdieu 1977; 1990a; 1994], is restricted on a class-basis. Legitimated cultural knowledge and practice is a type of capital, a resource that can be mobilized within a social field. ACA facilitates the passage of cultural capital to those whom it is usually withheld from, providing them with new cultural resources to mobilize.

Strategy and Habitus

The ritual practice of ACA can be characterized in the Bourdieuan sense as a *strategy* or a set of strategies to assist dominated social actors. Bourdieu is not very clear about his notion of strategy, but at its most basic it can be understood as a set of practices that form a pattern that benefits the bearer more than other patterns of thought and action. Strategies involve *accumulating, developing and mobilizing resources* in order to maintain or reposition the field. Resources are not restricted to any one type of capital, economic, social, cultural, and can involve the conversion of one type of capital into another.

The term ‘strategy’ is most commonly associated with consciously premeditated actions, but this is not the sense in which Bourdieu employs the term.²⁴ In Bourdieu’s framework, strategy is more of a ‘feel for the game’ which is not entirely or even mostly conscious or premeditated. A ‘feel for the game’, or a practical sense, is the necessary

²⁴ See Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 128-129, 129 note 83.

improvisation that social actors perform in their daily life. Since there are not rules for every social situation, and since even when there are they are not necessarily followed in practice [Bourdieu 1977], social actors perform by transposing dispositions from the habitus to new situations. The ‘feel for the game’ is based on the interaction between the new encounter and the habitus: past experiences, habits of thought, socialization, past actions and principles of conscious thought and transposed cultural categorization schemes. This process most often reproduces the habitus, but it can also be generative of new or alternative practices as I will discuss later in this chapter. A feel for the game is not wholly conscious, which is another axiomatic feature of Bourdieu’s emphasis on practice, rather it works through the conscious and unconscious dispositions of habitus.

ACA strategies work through the habitus of participants as a ‘feel for the game’. Change in ACA practice is not generated from outside. As Bourdieu [1977: 77] points out, a resilient habitus rejects practices that are not adjusted to it, “that’s not for the likes of us”. Change in ACA must occur through the habitus. Bourdieu [1990a: 77] asserts that “every effort at mobilization aimed at organizing collective action has to reckon with the dialectic of dispositions and occasions that takes place in every agent”. ACA practice may stimulate social actors and provide a space in which to negotiate social issues, but it goes about working *through* the habitus.

This is where Bourdieu’s notion of habitus is particularly useful to a sociological understanding of the material workings of ACA process. It brings together understandings of the links between cultural activity and social activity, thought and action, the conscious and unconscious, and structure and agency. As discussed in the last chapter, habitus provides an explanation of the reciprocal or dialectical relationship

between the individual and collective aspects of social activity; how individuals are adjusted to objective conditions; how a shared pattern of likely outcomes develops; how both thoughts and actions come together to shape social activity; how the conscious and unconscious relate to social activity; how social activity is generated both by subjective individuals and objective structure; and how dispositions of individuals and collectives are transposed to social situations other than those that generated them. These aspects help to provide a sociological understanding of how ACA works holistically through aspects of practice that are explained in ACA theory in essentialist, mystical ways, or not at all.

ACA practice brings individuals and groups together to engage the relationship between individual and collective habitus. Rather than being a practice that works with individuals in isolation, *individual* habits, dispositions, experiences and thoughts are brought together through thought and activity with *collective* sets of dispositions, classificatory categories and generative schemes, of the participating group and of the collective imprint of habitus. There will often be a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the group²⁵, these two aspects may act upon and reinforce one another. The consensus-based process is key to the dialectical relationship between the individual and the collective. What achieving something by consensus means is that there must be agreement by each individual on the decisions of the group. Negotiation continues until each individual can agree with the collective. Bourdieu might refer to the dialectical educative function that consensus-based negotiation engenders as ‘diffuse education’, education that happens amongst members of social groups. As Bourdieu states, the

²⁵ While I am not suggesting that all aspects of ACA practice are the paradigm of consensus, consensus is the basis for decision-making in ACA.

generative nature of habitus, its flexibility and its responsiveness to stimuli, occurs not only in childhood but also throughout the lives of the social actors. I suggest that diffuse education in ACA provides an opportunity for reciprocal reflection between individual social actors and the group upon the epistemological commitments and practical conditions that produce domination. However, I will have to come back to ACA's reflexive practices in the discussion of antidoxic strategies²⁶.

ACA is both less than completely conscious and more than intentional. It is less than conscious in that it works through the unconscious dispositions of participants and other social actors using their practical sense. An ACA project is rarely planned out in advance, rather it develops out of negotiations and actions of participants and structural factors that shape the conditions of the project. The early development of ACA projects often involves a stage where participants explore a wide range of expressions of habitus, conscious and unconscious, through both verbal and performative means. ACA practice works through both conscious and unconscious dispositions: systems of categorization; individual and collective habits of thought, speech and action; investments in identity and honour; manifestations of physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual and symbolic violence; and the ways that these are inscribed in the body. Unconscious expressions of hexis are explored in exercises and games using body gestures and movement, sounds, drawings, handling and working with objects, and in language, etc.

²⁶ It is at this point that the resistant possibilities of formal or diffuse education must turn to theorists such as Friere and others. When Bourdieu talks about diffuse education, his focus is on the ways that symbolic violence is perpetuated with the social actor's consent through their social networks. The possibilities for resistance through education is the point at which Bourdieu falls silent. Bourdieu does not expand much upon the possibilities of education and reflexivity beyond the academic domain. This is not to suggest that theories of pedagogical action are in opposition to Bourdieu's, but that it is necessary to complement Bourdieu's work with that of authors who focus on resistance.

It is not only, or perhaps even primarily, through conscious discussion and action that ACA practice works within the habitus. Participants improvise, or ‘feel their way’ through the process of an ACA project. During the process of a project, participants draw upon their unconscious dispositions, their ways of understanding the world and their experiences.

ACA’s Heretical Strategies

Although Bourdieu’s writing does not focus much attention on the possibilities of collective action of the dominated, he speaks of the necessity of pushing back the limits of the doxa as a necessary, but not sufficient condition of social transformation [1991: 125-136]. The doxa is the conventional, naturalized understanding of social life, ‘how the world works’, that benefits the dominant classes. According to Bourdieu, it is necessary for progressive social action to breach this established order in order to provide the conditions for transformative practices. “Politics begins, strictly speaking, with the denunciation of this tacit contract of adherence to the established order which defines the original doxa” [Bourdieu 1991: 127]. Both dominant and dominated social actors create representations of the social world— this is what constitutes political activity. Heretical subversion, or heterodoxy, is to “exploit the possibility of changing the social world by changing representation” [1991: 128]. Heterodoxy presents a paradoxical representation to that of the doxa. These representations are projects or programs, sometimes seemingly utopian in nature, that denaturalize the doxa and make alternatives conceivable and, most importantly, credible.

Consistent with his theory of practice, Bourdieu suggests that heterodoxy consists of both thoughts and actions enacted through performativity and utterances. *Language*

and Symbolic Power [1991] is one of the few but significant works in which Bourdieu focuses on the speech act, which he considers an embodied activity, a “labour of enunciation” [129]. Heretical discourse is one of the consequential ways through which heterodoxy works. The power of the heretical speech act lies in its ability to authorize language and dispositions of dominated groups, “to name the unnamed, and to give the beginnings of objectification to pre-verbal and pre-reflexive dispositions and ineffable and unobservable experiences ... to break the censorships” [ibid]. It is the performance of speaking words that are meaningful and are able to socially sanction through the “labour of dramatization”, which Bourdieu suggests is “capable of destroying the self-evident truths of doxa” [ibid].

As Bourdieu demonstrates, social distinction acts to prevent actors of lower social classes from having certain experiences that would provide upward mobility in the field. Dominated social actors are at a disadvantage, according to Bourdieu, since they are prevented access to legitimate accumulation, development and mobilization of resources. Bourdieu states that they have less critical competence of legitimacy, “the instruments of knowledge, the utterances and the actions” from which they are dispossessed. Bourdieu is pessimistic about the abilities of dominated individuals to mount a symbolic revolution, which would be necessary to subvert the social order [Bourdieu 1991:131]. ACA is far more optimistic about the capacities of dominated individuals, especially when provided with extra symbolic resources to develop and mobilize.

ACA strategies work through the habitus of participants to assist them in accumulating, developing and mobilizing resources in order to identify and possibly

transform their social circumstances. ACA strategies²⁷ can be understood as undertaking one or both of two strategic moves: pushing back the limits of the doxa and engendering transformational practices. ACA's anti-doxic strategies work to provide dominated social actors with the competencies that the dominant classes have deprived them of, revealing the doxa underlying their social circumstances. To be anti-doxic is to situate the hierarchy of practice in the field in which it arises, to question its self-evidence and to publicly articulate the dominated, unspoken or private expression that runs counter to the doxa.

Antidoxic Strategies

Accounts of ACA practice often describe in detail the conscious and intentional ways that the ACA project they focus on allows dominated social actors to come to new understandings and how these new understandings are presented, received and negotiated by communities and publics. In other words, these accounts describe social actors consciously and intentionally pushing back the limits of the doxa. ACA practice engages a multiplicity of social groups and traverses a broad range of social issues, but two major themes occur in most ACA projects. One major theme arising in relation to what I consider ACA's anti-doxic strategies is of exposure, unearthing or discovery, of the unconscious becoming conscious, speaking the unspoken. Many social thinkers and political mobilizers, and notably feminists, recognize that "private" experiences undergo nothing less than a change of state when they recognize themselves in the public objectivity of an already constituted discourse, the objective sign of recognition of their right to be spoken and to be spoken publicly" [Bourdieu 1977: 170; also see Bourdieu

²⁷ In order to understand the strategies of any one ACA project, it would be necessary to analyze in empirical detail the resource acquisition and mobilization of ACA participants over time and their position-takings relative to the individual project. Not only would that require writing a book for each project investigated, the focus of this thesis is to provide an overview to the practice of ACA.

1992: 201]. The second major theme is renegotiating representations of social identity. Social identities are the stakes and site of strategy and struggle over power relations [Bourdieu 1984]. Social movements, ACA included, often rely on an identity politics seeking to strengthen politically oppressed groups by improving members' sense of identity. Social identity, like meaning, is negotiable; it is the product of agreement and disagreement [Jenkins 1996: 5]. Identity is an open system of dispositions – regulated liberties – that are “durable but not eternal” [Bourdieu 1992:133]. Four of ACA's anti-doxic strategies will be discussed in relation to the themes of exposure and identity: 1) resource accumulation; 2) critical reflexivity; 3) enlarging social space for dominated social actors; and 4) using the medium of domination (culture) to resist domination.

Resource Accumulation

ACA process often provides some of the resources (the capital) necessary to externalize and negotiate dominated understandings of the social world which would otherwise be constrained by lack of resources. Different types and amounts of capital – symbolic, cultural, social and economic capital – are involved in different ACA projects. ACA develops symbolic capital (sense of honour or prestige) first of all by legitimizing dominated social actor's creativity. ACA insists that all people are legitimate producers of culture art and culture. This runs counter to the conventional cultural fields and their place in the political field, which tend to concentrate the legitimacy in the dominant classes. In terms of symbolic capital, ACA projects sometimes describe gains to participants sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Regier 2005: 7).

The dominated classes are often not credited with representation with social space or the right to legitimate speech. Often ACA provides space – physical, social, collective

and reflexive space – in which to undertake and support anti-doxic processes. To gain physical and social space can be understood in terms of an increase in symbolic capital. Having a collective space to gather, contemplate social conditions, discuss with others and take actions helps accrue social capital through increasing the capacity of interpersonal networking for dominated social actors.

Improving or increasing critical thinking and reflexivity skills can be understood as a gain in cultural capital. Access to time and training for reflexive, critical inquiry is often restricted by dominant practices. ACA frequently engages in popular education-type work. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [1990] and other popular education approaches are regularly cited by ACA practitioners and they speak more directly to the potential of dominated social actors than Bourdieu. Though this discussion does not permit the space to explore the idea in detail, Bourdieu's notion of doxa and Freire's idea of prescription [1990: 31-37] are very similar concerning the dominated or oppressed social actor internalizing their oppression and resisting change to their identity. However, Freire's and other popular education strategies are more optimistic than Bourdieu about that the abilities of the dominated to reflect on social conditions and spaces for possibility. ACA projects attempt to provide improved conditions for reflexivity through methods of popular education, helping dominated social actors to uncover the interests involved in maintaining their oppression. Through creative reflexivity, dominated social actors can expose doxa and reflect upon alternatives to the dominant ways of thinking about social issues.

ACA strategies are distinctly cultural avenues with which to think and act through processes of uncovering doxa and realizing heterodoxy. They uses the medium of

domination (culture) in their strategic attempts to resist domination, assisting dominated social actors to accumulate, develop, and mobilize resources to expose and undermine the doxa. When unspoken or private experience finds creative, public, cultural expression it is “a step on the road to officialization and legitimization” [Bourdieu 1977: 170-171]. However, dominant social actors have an interest in maintaining the doxa and instituting it as orthodoxy, so there is much resistance to changing the reproduction of domination. Bourdieu’s scholarship is at its best in his explanations of how dominant social actors institute and maintain doxa. Bourdieu states that the purpose of a reflexive sociology is to “allows us to discern the sites where we do indeed enjoy a degree of freedom and those where we do not. So that we do not waste our energy struggling over terrains that offer us no leeway” (Bourdieu 1992: 199). In this sense, Bourdieu’s scholarship is an important complement to ideas that stress the possibilities for popular social change.

Transformational Strategies

Although exposing the doxa is a necessary condition for social transformation, it is not in itself sufficient [1991: 125-136]. Fortunately, anti-doxic practices are only one part of the corpus of ACA strategy. In order to create conditions for transformation, not only must cultural practices such as ACA push back the limits of the doxa but they also must produce a new, commonsense, program of practice that is imbued with legitimacy. There are two parts to this: creating the alternative program, and consecrating the new way of thinking and acting. Bourdieu speaks of consecration through public ritual, but he does not see the possibilities for the dominated to use ritual practice since it is often the domain of the dominant classes. However, Sewell [1992] suggests that there is more space for transformation in Bourdieu’s framework than Bourdieu was able to realize in

his writings. Transformative strategies of ACA can be understood to work through the spaces of possibility that Sewell raises, using them to create alternative programs. Sewell proposes that transformation can be understood through Bourdieu's framework through attention to five key axioms: 1) the multiplicity of structures, 2) the transposability of schemas, 3) the unpredictability of resource accumulation, 4) the polysemy of resources, and 5) the intersection and overlap of structures. The following discussion will examine Sewell's axioms in relation to how ACA creates alternative programs and then it will discuss consecrating the new dispositions.

1. The multiplicity of structures – Bourdieu's account of a "universally homologous habitus", that is, a habitus that reproduces its conditions when it encounters different structures, is perhaps too integrated of an account [Bourdieu 1992: 17]. Bourdieu explains, as Sewell reiterates, that social practices derive from not just one, but a variety of structures, for example, kinship structures, religious structures, productive structures, aesthetic structures, educational structures, and so on. These structures all have different logics. Sewell suggests that not all of the logics will be in harmony with one another and some will conflict. Social actors, Sewell proposes, are then capable of mobilizing a wide and heterogeneous array of resources from the array of structures [Sewell: 16-17].

ACA brings different structures – institutions, social groups and social relationships – into the same space for negotiation of social issues. Different logics from the different structures come to bear upon the different social issues and stakes related to the project. For example in the *Crossing Communities* project legal and prison structures, gendered structures, particular racial structures, class structures, structures of labour,

activist structures, structures of governance, aesthetic structures, etc. come together with different logics and different stakes while policing structures may have interests in adherence to law, prevention of crime, public safety, public morality, public opinion, etc.; At the same time, activist structures may be invested in care of vulnerable populations, engendering social transformation, etc; meanwhile sex trade workers may have concerns for identity, self-esteem, healing trauma, economic viability, protection under and from the law; and aesthetic structures may have an interest in an innovative creative process and producing a high quality product. These interests come together in an ACA project. Different social actors bring with them logics from structures with which they identify. It is likely that a variety of these interests and logics will not be in harmony and several may even be at odds with each other. In addition, structures intersect not only at the point of the ACA project, but also for each social actor involved in a project. An individual social actor may find his or her self at the intersection of several structures, several logics and numerous interests at the same time, not all of which may be part of her habitus. ACA process facilitates the negotiation of these different logics and interests. Clearly a process of negotiation needs to be at the crux of ACA projects in order to do so.

2. *The transposibility of schemas* – Transposibility is about mobilizing resources and applying them to contexts other than those in which they originate. ACA holds potential for renegotiating the terms of the symbolic resources, to create a public resistance to dominant narratives and propose alternatives. Bourdieu examines the socially organized, material outcomes of transposition, but has been critiqued for not explaining how transposition occurs as well as for pessimism regarding the spaces for change. Cognitive scientists Lakoff and Johnson [1980, 1996] discuss the transposibility

of mental structures to cultural/political issues. Their discussion revolves around language, to the neglect of performance and their discussion of embodiment is limited to primarily to the brain, but their work can be read as a complement to Bourdieu's. Bourdieu provides a framework for a creative and performative transposition of habitus which tends toward reproduction, while Lakoff's framework discusses the embodiment of mental structures in physiological structures of the brain and how this relates to political speech acts.

Transposition, for Bourdieu, is an aspect of habitus, "the generative (if not creative) capacity inscribed in the system of dispositions as an art, in the strongest sense of practical mastery, and in particular as an *ars inveniendi*²⁸" [Bourdieu 1992: 122]. Social actors do not have rules for each social situation, they must transpose dispositions of habitus to generate their thought and social action. Transposition is necessarily ubiquitous, "each thing speaks metaphorically of all others" [Bourdieu 1977: 91]. Transposition is largely unconscious, but it is generative of cultural practices. Bourdieu's notion of metaphor is material. Cultural practices are embodied in resources, in bodies and in material objects. From his study in Kabyle society, Bourdieu relates the way the Kabyle house is designed according to notions of masculinity and femininity, which also organize how the department of men and women are embodied. Dispositions are transposed between and among resources, bodies and material objects.

George Lakoff's cognitive science scholarship on metaphor [Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 2002] is complementary to Bourdieu's and provides strategies for social change using transpositions of metaphor. Lakoff proposes that metaphor actually means metaphorical concept, which is to understand and experience one thing in terms of

²⁸ 'art of discovery'

another” [1980: 6]. Further that metaphors organizes categories of classification that are used to understand cultural experience. In his work on metaphor he propose that social acts of category construction lay down synaptic pathways in the brain that create unconscious mental structures, habits of thought which he calls ‘frames’. New information is assimilated, physically and cognitively, through these frames. The ability to impose a dominant political worldview on others, naming and framing [Lakoff 2002], are the stakes of effectively using metaphor to creating frames. The frames are difficult to change, but not impossible to modify. Lakoff lays out a framework that explains the sets of metaphors that dominate American politics, and provides suggestions on how to frame alternative constructions of political metaphor so that dominant political discourse can be altered for means of resistance.

ACA provides a means and a forum to modify dominant social metaphors and innovate upon dispositions of the habitus. Art-making is a practice in creative transposition of symbolic resources in visual, performative, and aural forms. Artists train in the arts of transposing metaphors using their artistic medium. Metaphor is embodied in art objects and the bodies of artistic performers. Art’s facility for generating new or alternative metaphors, new or alternative transpositions of habitus, is one of the factors that makes art such a powerful symbolic force. This power is made evident when socially-engaged or political art is censored or denigrated. Through the processes of ACA, participants can create alternative, paradoxical symbolic systems or world views—a new set of metaphors in the broadest sense, which includes speech acts, written words, embodied dispositions and performances.

3. *The unpredictability of resource accumulation* – ACA promotes accumulation of resources that are not predictable at the outset. Since participants use their practical logic and act through improvised practice they cannot know in advance which symbols and resources will be accumulated, developed, mobilized or how they will be transposed. Participants act in partial awareness of the resources that they deploy, the ways in which individual participants actions effect the group or the field and what new potentials become possible. Social actors apply dispositions *creatively* [Sewell 17-18]. For this reason, Sewell suggests, social scientists cannot know in advance either whether social actors will transpose any one particular aspect of their habitus (‘schemas’ in Sewell’s terminology, ‘dispositions’ in Bourdieu’s). Transposability is not fully predictable. Decisions are made *in practice* about which dispositions to transpose. This suggests a particular notion of agency, the creative, generative choice (however constrained) to transpose and extend resources to new situations.

By partaking in ACA processes, participants gain access to an array of resources and opportunities for application to employ the resources outside of the contexts in which they were initially learned. Some projects even provide training or the conditions in which participants can pursue training in the arts or the social sector [Regier 2005: 10]. Possibilities for resource accumulation of all types of capital can be furthered by pursuing additional training.

4. *The polysemy of resources* – Social actors have the agency to deploy arrays of resources in numerous, creative ways. The resources themselves, Sewell proposes, exhibit a multiplicity of meaning and can be interpreted in any number of ways. Though ‘polysemy’ is usually a word that refers to language, Sewell uses it to describe the

heterogeneity of meaning through which resources can be comprehended and then adapted. Social actors can use resources in ways that others did not intend. So in addition to the set of resources that have already been claimed or deemed appropriate to the class or group, social actors can also borrow or appropriate resources from other structures. Social actors may have, or may be able to obtain, a variety of intersecting and overlapping resources to choose from and choices about how to interpret them. Sewell draws on Marx's point that the factory form can teach capitalist forms of property at the same time as teaching collectivity in production, the two of which serve overlapping and opposing interests. Social actors, he suggests are capable of interpreting resources in a variety of ways, ways which empower different social actors differentially.

ACA often uses cultural resources in ways in other than which they were originally generated. For example, in the Hearings at the Rape Maze performance and the paper copies of the maze that followed, described in Exemplar 5: *Templates For Activism* (pages 46-52 of this thesis), legal language which was intended for use in legal structures, is claimed as a resource in presenting a critique of the maze-like effect of legal language on a person negotiating a rape trial. To give another example, in Exemplar 2: *Tuganire* (pages 30-35 of this thesis), 'traditional' Rwandan dances are set to 'modern' music in order to start conversations about negotiating Rwandan diasporic culture and identity. There are so many examples of ACA using creative interpretations of resources that this topic could constitute a research project in itself.

5. *The intersection of structures*— Social actors capable of mobilizing a wide and heterogeneous array of resources, according to Sewell, due to the intersection and overlap of structures. He suggests that not only are resources polysemous, but structures

themselves intersect and overlap. The factory is a structural resource for both capitalists and workers and therefore is fought over by competing parties, Sewell points out. Therefore the meaning and context of the factory gives rise to both strategies of domination and contestation, dominance and resistance. Resources and strategies from one set of structures can be applied creatively to other structures as is evident from the last example. For example, many of the participants in the Hearings at the Rape Maze performance described in Exemplar 5 *Templates For Activism* (pages 46-52 of this thesis) were professionally involved in the legal system as lawyers, legal scholars and legal activists. Steeped in the structures involved in the legal system they creatively applied meanings involved in their legal experiences to performance and visual art. In this way, the meaning and context of the courtroom gave rise to the possibility of contesting dominant meanings within the structures intersecting the legal system. A dramatic performance intended for critique of structures of domination within the legal system was possible in part due to the same structures that produce that domination.

Constructing Legitimacy

As I have argued, ACA uses metaphor and ritual to advance social aims. But what is the social use of ritual such that it can serve the purposes of ACA? It is the power to transform the social and consecrate the transformation. In his exposition of language and symbolic power Bourdieu [1991] asks what the social function of ritual is. More specifically, he asks what the significance is of allowing the transgression of boundaries in a *lawful* way [1991:117]. Due to the social power rituals enact, instead of 'rites of passage' Bourdieu prefers to call them rites of consecration, rites of legitimation or rites

of institution. Rites of institution, Bourdieu continues, tend to involve solemn transgression of ordinary limits in a lawful, but extraordinary way. This is clearly evident in secular and religious rites such as marriage, graduation, circumcision, and funerals. In enacting a solemn transgression of limits, Bourdieu says, observers' attentions are drawn to the *passage* (as in the expression 'rites of passage'). The thing that is emphasized is the *line*, Bourdieu asserts. He insists that the significant thing about the movement of social actors through a ritual passage, over the line, is that it effects a separation, it consecrates a difference, between social actors on either side of the line. This act produces the appearance of discontinuity rather than continuity. This "magical consecration of difference" is achieved, according to Bourdieu, by a symbolic act that makes a pre-existing difference known, recognized, sanctioned and sanctified [1991:118-119]. It is an "act of social magic", a communication that signifies a change in identity [1991:121]. A symbolic change in identity produces 'real' effects Bourdieu claims. Most significantly, in his opinion, the effect of what he calls 'noblesse oblige', where social actors feel both authorized and under obligation to comply with the new status assigned [1991:119]. Ritual imparts prestige (symbolic capital) from legitimized social actors onto other social actors, which the conferee then feel authorized to recognize and mobilize. Through acts of ritual social legitimacy is consecrated.

Due to Bourdieu's hyper-focus on reproduction, he perceives the process of ritual as a strategy only benefiting dominant social actors. This may indeed be the statistically predominant pattern, but ritual is not the sole domain of the dominant. By exploiting the spaces for change within the habitus, such as those that Sewell points out, ACA can use ritual in an attempt to legitimize and consecrate alternative, paradoxical programs that

provide possibilities for legitimizing the dominated. “Any language that can command attention is an ‘authorized language’, invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed but also authorized and legitimated” [Bourdieu 1977: 170]. This is not only the case with dominant groups but also with ‘heretical discourses’. For example, ‘city hall’ represents that which is important to and legitimate of civic life. Erecting an Anti-Poverty Monument on the lawn of city hall in Ottawa and holding a public ceremony to share it with the public is an instance of using ritual in an aim to consecrate legitimacy of the impoverished in Ottawa.

Conclusion

This chapter endeavoured to ‘twist the stick in the other direction’ on Bourdieu, but not to ‘throw the Bourdieu out with the bathwater’. My intent in using his framework was to unearth the unrealized potentials for change and transformation and at the same time extend the facility of the concepts. His framework provides a wealth of assets for understanding how the spaces of possibility for ACA are both enabled and constrained through the habitus by the interactions between structures and agents. Bourdieu’s writings are a significant contribution to understanding the constraints of the reproduction of domination with and within culture. Bourdieu’s framework can be used not only to discover ‘the terrains that offer no leeway’, but also to elucidate ‘sites of freedom’ in regard to ACA.

Examining ACA through a Bourdieuan framework demonstrates that ACA is more than simply a process of intentional actions that occur in a particular space over a specified project period. Rather ACA is a strategy of a cultural nature that is deployed at the site of social struggle. ACA is a cultural strategy for changing the culturally

embedded categorical notions about groups of people. A Bourdieuan framework of practice contributes to a sociological understanding of the unconscious and embodied features of habitus and ways that ACA works through the embodied aspects of social practice. This is something that is not explained in a thoroughgoing, sociological manner by conventional explanations of ACA practice, and so a Bourdieuan lens provides a complement. His focus on improvisation within the habitus clarifies the generative feature of ACA's consensus-based work *through* the intrinsic understandings of participants and their communities. ACA brings together individual and collective habits, dispositions, experiences, classificatory categories and generative schemes with reflection on the conditions of their genesis. ACA provides space – physical, social, collective and reflexive space – for individual, community and public negotiation of the ways in which social identities dominate and are resisted. Through the consensus-based work of participants engaged in processes of creative cultural production, ACA practice attempts to denaturalize symbolic violence, to challenge doxa with its heterodoxy, to make evident the hidden stakes of the field and to articulate the unspoken that runs counter to the doxa. It enacts these challenges through activities that are deeply embedded in the social. Developing collective meanings and collective symbols that hold potential for being legitimized are not only within the domain of the dominant. ACA attempts to encourage new patterns of practice for individuals and groups. The aim is to provide avenues, even though they are limited, for transforming social practices. Transformational practices assist the social actors to access resources, mobilize them and improve their capacity to effect a change in the field in regard to their social circumstances. ACA exploits the spaces for possibilities within the nexus of structure and agency: the multiplicity of

structures, the transposability of schemas, the unpredictability of resource accumulation, the polysemy of resources, and the intersection and overlap of structures. ACA uses the metaphor-making endemic to arts and cultural performance in its aims. These approaches recognize that in order to provide conditions for social transformation, not only does ACA heterodoxy have to break the bonds of doxa, but it also must produce a new, commonsense, program of practice that is imbued with legitimacy. There are two parts to this: creating the alternative program, and consecrating the new way of thinking and acting. Transformative practices of resource accumulation and mobilization are the means through which ACA creates an alternative program. Rituals are enacted in ACA to legitimize alternative understandings generated in ACA processes and to consecrate passages of resources from dominant to dominated.

Although this chapter has focused on the possibilities for social change and transformation that ACA can engender, this is not to say that transformation is easy or that ACA always transforms practices in a deep and lasting way. One of the difficulties ACA practitioners regularly report is that embracing new or alternative practices or ideas, which arise from group encounters, meets with resistance from both participants of the disadvantaged communities and from institutional social actors. Habitus is adjusted to objective conditions, and as Bourdieu demonstrates habitus tends to be resilient. Bourdieu suggests that “only a thoroughgoing process of countertraining, involving repeated exercises, can, like an athlete’s training, durably transform habitus” [2000:172]. An ACA project often has to engage in repetitive reinforcement of the practices it introduces over an extended period of time in order to mitigate the forces of the previously formed habitus. To see change ACA takes time and multiple repetitions.

One of the most difficult things for me in working on the project is seeing how long it is taking for there to be change. Yes, service providers are using the video that we produced, but what's happening to the people who made the video? And it's painful, to meet them and see the ways in which change hasn't happened. Just yesterday, (one of the participants) was telling me that another one of the participants got beat up. Things like that. Harsh reality. I wish we could do the (video) project in a really beneficial way with a lot of women. None of them wanted to stop, they didn't want to stop coming to the studio, they didn't want to stop learning how to video tape. They didn't want to stop. If we had high funding to offer them a salary, to make work, to continue to produce in the arts, then there would be a really longer term way of shifting things [Regier 2006].

As the above narrative illustrates practical limitations can constrain ACA projects from achieving transformative effects, notably a lack of economic resources. Sometimes the symbolic, social and cultural resources that ACA helps to mobilize are not enough to counteract doxa and dominant social strategies.

This purposes of this chapter were to demonstrate how Bourdieu's framework of practice could be useful to understanding how ACA is embedded in the social, and how ACA enacts anti-doxic strategies to resist dominant practices and transformative strategies in an attempt to change the conditions of reproduction of domination.

Hopefully this thesis provides some directions for further sociological research into ACA. More research of greater depth and breadth is needed that examines the specific conditions under which ACA projects are constrained by structures and dominant practices and conditions where ACA alters the probability that the same conditions of domination will be reproduced. Such research will extend a sociological understanding of how cultural strategies of resistance can change the social and hopefully will assist those involved in ACA practice to provide those conditions that engender change.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated that ACA can be analyzed in a sociological way to show that it is a cultural practice embedded in the social which uses its social embeddedness in strategies to change and transform the social. The key to understanding this lay in addressing two problems: the lack of attention to ACA in sociological scholarship and the division between culture and the social. Largely ignored by writers in the mainstream of sociology as well as the sociology of art, but easily within the purview of an emerging sociology of culture, this thesis situated ACA within the concerns of sociology. The overarching task was to argue that a sociological analysis of ACA is an appropriate object of study and to prepare a ground for future sociological research into ACA. The analytical tools found useful to this task were a combination of ACA practitioner accounts and theory, Pierre Bourdieu's framework of practice and critiques of this framework, notably William Sewell's [1992], that allowed for a sense of change of transformation to be read through Bourdieu's framework.

In order to present the object of investigation without previous sociological scholarship in the area, this thesis did two things: it presented five recent exemplars of ACA practice and reviewed the literature on ACA written by practitioners to provide an overview of the characteristic features of the practice. In order to orient readers to a collective sense of art-making, which is a self-evident commitment in ACA, the discussion begins with Howard Becker's [1980] sociological understanding of all art-making as collective. Becker's notion of art-making as collective activity conducted by multiple social actors provides a starting point for understanding the connections between social actors that have been separated into arts/non-arts categories. Most scholarship in

the sociology of art implies an 'inside' and an 'outside' to cultural production. Inside is the 'art world' with its artistic production, cultural economy, producers of culture and receivers of culture. Outside is the social world with its political activity, its social structures and its social activity. This separation of 'art worlds' from the 'social' sets itself up as a naturalized difference in categories. Becker's work begins to address this separation by showing the support activities as part of the art created by 'integrated professional artists'; art is the collective activity between all of these social actors.

Becker's premise that arts and cultural activities are always collective and part of the social is a solid point of reference from which to outline the similarities and the differences between ACA and other collective 'art worlds'. This is where chapter three begins, with comparisons of how ACA is similar and how it is different from other socially-involved arts practices and other conventional art practices. Though in some ways ACA resembles these other arts practices, seven major differences differentiate ACA. The epistemology of ACA is based in a participatory worldview. Likewise the methodology of ACA is a community-based, consensus-based and participatory process where epistemic participation by project participants and their communities is welcomed. The thesis argues that ACA projects can be understood in terms of two related approaches: instrumental and transformative. Instrumental approaches focus more on consciousness-raising and relationship building within the group of participants and with the public. Transformative approaches attempt to go a step beyond the instrumental, using a changed consciousness to pursue material changes for dominated social actors. Measuring 'good' or valid ACA requires different measures than does conventional art.

Several measures used in ACA are presented along with the similarities shared with some of the measures used in the social sciences.

By the end of chapter three it is clear that Becker's work is of limited use to ACA due to his focus on 'integrated professional artists'. This excludes ACA from his analysis and results in a blind spot to the economy of cultural production where the dominant social actors define who engages in 'legitimate art-making' and who may legitimately consider themselves cultural producers. Though Becker suggests that there is not an inside/outside, art vs. social dichotomy to art worlds, he inadvertently reifies it by focusing on 'integrated professional artists'.

Bourdieu picks up where Becker leaves off and thus chapter four focuses on providing an overview and clarifying Bourdieu's central theoretical constructs so that chapter five can apply them to ACA. Bourdieu's writings demonstrates that art, like other aspects of cultural production, are enrolled in processes of distinguishing social hierarchies. The 'inside' of art worlds is part of the 'outside' social world, such that an inside/outside distinction is not a useful analytic. As Bourdieu points out in many of his writings the idea of a separation between a disinterested cultural producer and the economics of the field of power is both false and serves the logic of the economy of cultural production. Not only is this the case with artistic production, but with seemingly innocuous practices of taste in lifestyle, pursuit of education, rewarding educational merit, passing cultural knowledge to children, how people speak, how they hold their bodies and who they associate with.

In order to prepare for an application of Bourdieu's concepts to ACA, first it was necessary to provide an exegesis of Bourdieu's framework beginning with 'practice'.

Practice is a way to bridge the separation between the social and cultural. A framework of practice brings together into the same analytic space what have been considered binary oppositions: the objective and subjective, the social and cultural, structure and agency, and thought and activity.

A notion of habitus is key to Bourdieu's framework of practice. Seven main aspects of habitus are detailed: 1) its reciprocal or dialectical nature, 2) the adjusting of individual to objective conditions, 3) a shared history of likely outcomes within classes, 4) generation by both thoughts and actions, 5) both the conscious and unconscious make up habitus, 6) it is generated both by subjective individuals and objective structure, and 7) the dispositions of habitus are transposable.

Social actors bring capital from their habitus into social fields. Four types of capital were overviewed in this chapter: economic, symbolic, cultural and social. Social actors mobilize their capital in a class-specific way in strategies of symbolic power to accumulate and maintain their social positioning. When classes and individuals mobilize their resources, in a hidden and symbolic way, as weapons to exclude lower classes from legitimacy and resource accumulation this is what Bourdieu calls the 'doxa'. Bourdieu illuminates the naturalness with which this class violence of doxa appears as not 'natural' at all, but rather in the class interest of elite social actors. Battles over things such as taste are symbolic doxa to keep lower classes in a lower position in social fields. Such practices tends to reinscribe life chances of classes of social actors and dominates the political field. Pushing back the doxa is in the interest of dominated classes, and is a necessary but not a sufficient action for social transformation.

Bourdieu does not provide a clear and detailed explanation of what would constitute social transformation. Many of his critics have pointed this out and the last section of chapter four introduces some of the objections. Bourdieu's framework focuses on class as the primary analytic and does not weave identity factors such as gender, sexuality and others through his framework, nor does he highlight how they intersect with class. It does not foreground change, but occasionally refers to transformation of a revolutionary sort based in crisis. Bourdieu is charged with being overly structuralist to the point of being determinist. Though it may seem that Bourdieu is no longer useful to understanding a change-making cultural practice such as ACA, but chapter five begins by arguing that Bourdieu's framework provides a complement to theories that highlight intentional thought and conscious social action, such as those of ACA practitioners. In this chapter, Bourdieu's concepts are applied to ACA to argue for the embeddedness of ACA as a socio-cultural practice. Here Bourdieu's framework is 'twisted in the other direction' to talk about the efficacy of social change through cultural means. The chapter argues that ACA is a ritual practice and a strategy that works to mobilize cultural resources against the doxa and in performances of resistance. These strategies work the habitus of participants as a 'feel for the game', discussed in the seven aspects of habitus presented in the previous chapter. ACA strategies are divided into two approaches: anti-doxic and transformative. Anti-doxic strategies focus on resource accumulation for dominated social actors. Transformative strategies use this resource accumulation of anti-doxic approaches to exploit the spaces for possibility of for change and presenting alternative programs to the dominant doxic order. Sewell proposes within Bourdieu's framework of practice that five key axioms provide spaces for transformation: 1) the

multiplicity of structures, 2) the transposability of schemas, 3) the unpredictability of resource accumulation, 4) the polysemy of resources, and 5) the intersection and overlap of structures. These axioms are described with reference to ACA to argue that ACA is a practice that exploits the spaces for transformation in order to advance new or alternative social programs that benefit dominated social actors. These programs are consecrated through ritual practice; The social purpose of ritual practice being to construct social legitimacy. Bourdieu suggests that ritual practice is used by the dominant in the consecration of their legitimacy, but the last section argues that ritual is not the sole domain of the dominant classes and can be used by ACA practices to legitimate their anti-doxic and transformative strategies.

Finding a sociological way to argue that ACA is embedded in the social and can be a transformative social practice was the overarching task of this thesis. In order to accomplish this it was necessary to modify Bourdieu's framework using Sewell's axioms to account for change in the framework in order to do so. The application of Bourdieu's framework is a unique contribution to the literature on ACA and the application of Sewell's axioms to a substantive topic constitutes an extension of a Bourdieuan framework to account for cultural change. The project implies that other critical cultural practices could be examined in future research using this same framework. More focused research into extending Bourdieu's framework to account for cultural change would yield a stronger theoretical project in which to do so. The project undertaken here is intended as a germinal work for future research into a sociology of activist community arts practices. Many issues and questions remain.

Further empirical and theoretical sociological research needs to be conducted on ACA practice. In general, a sociology of ACA needs to examine cases from outside of where this thesis draws its information on ACA practice. This thesis uses the literature from four countries primarily: Canada, the US, England and Australia based on the availability of the literature on ACA in English. It uses French and American theory to situate ACA practice in these countries. Preliminary investigation into ACA in South America, particularly Brazil, suggests that the practice varies in ways that may not allow for generalizing from the literature used in this thesis. The shape of ACA practices presented in this project is very likely to be related to the social, political and economic conditions where it is located. This means that there will be differences in the practice of ACA in contexts other than the ones that this thesis locates. A broader understanding of ACA in a global context would examine specific practices in their empirical contexts and compare studies based on political contexts. Clearly the next step is to develop a research program that examines and compares ACA practices in relation to their national and globalizing political contexts.

Further empirical research could begin with more in-depth narrative study with a small sample size as Cleveland [2005: 123] suggests and expand from there. Lowe [2000] suggests a longitudinal study would be useful in assessing the endurance of community sentiment and the long-term effects of social and individual change after a project is completed. Surveys of a greater number of ACA projects may prove useful in establishing with more accuracy the characteristics and effects of ACA as a practice.

More research is needed into the links between ACA practice and transformative effects that is not tied to project funding. The greatest volume of reporting and study

currently conducted on these practices is done to satisfy funding requirements. In addition, this writing is often not publicly available. The design of the reports and research are subject to the needs of funding requirements rather than scholarly enquiry or the practical or scholarly needs of ACA practice.

Research into the links between ACA practice and transformative effects would clarify the conditions under which ACA is producing material, empirical effects, the degree to which it is doing so, and where it is not. Such a study need not be quantitative and could determine qualitative effects, though a mix of the two could serve a broad variety of theoretical and practical purposes.

Further theoretical examination could draw more indepth links between cultural theory in sociology and theorizing in ACA. This thesis has only begun to suggest that there is a complementarity. Further research would draw out the similarities, complements and tensions between these disciplinary bodies of theory.

A Bourdieuan framework such as this thesis has drawn could be applied to individual case studies of ACA in order to develop the framework. A more indepth study of a single case or a couple of cases would extend the explanatory capacity of the theory and test it for strengths and weaknesses.

Further theory-based research into ACA could examine the practice in terms of bodies of theory in cultural sociology other than Bourdieu's, such as the work of Angela McRobbie, Ann Swidler, Lyn Spillman, Raymond Williams or Michel Foucault. Though Bourdieu's theoretical framework seems to be one of the most comprehensive in the field of cultural sociology for explaining the combination of many factors—how culture is embedded in the social, how a combination of structures and actions provide the

conditions of possibility for reproduction and change, how cultural practices are class-based—other bodies of theory may more adequately address social change through cultural practices and the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and other factors of politics and identity. Examining ACA through these theoretical lenses may lend more easily to a complementarity between theory developed and used by ACA practitioners and that of cultural sociology.

Further questions need to be asked about the limitations of ACA practice. The limits are mainly discussed in practitioner literature in terms of the efficacy/funding relationship, resources and the quality of the resulting product, and the constraints to capacities of the practitioners and communities. A sociological study into the characteristic limitations of projects might assist ACA practitioners in their battles to exceed the characteristic limits of ACA projects.

An additional question about limitations that should be asked is, under what conditions is ACA at risk of becoming another tool of liberal governance? Considering that there has been some degree of recognition, at least in theory, of the flaws of many Western ‘development’ efforts at home and abroad, especially of governing the populations that they suggested that they were ‘empowering’, how can ACA be used in ways that assist the dominated to resist governance instead of reproducing it? How can those in the universities, the middle-class advocates and the social agencies better assist communities that wish to use the arts to negotiate their political and economic struggles?

The title of this thesis, *The Social World Reversed*, is a play on Bourdieu’s discussion of the field of cultural production as an ‘economic world reversed’ [1993:29-144]; that is, the logic of the field of conventional cultural production takes the position

that it is the 'reverse of the economic world' invested in aesthetic reflection and detached from participation in producing class hierarchy. By contrast, ACA is invested heavily in the social world and in recognizing the ways culture reproduces and changes social possibilities. ACA works to create different "spaces of possibles" [Bourdieu 1993: 32] using cultural practices. Critical reflection upon ACA as a marginal, but significant cultural practice is part of recognizing social contingencies of cultural production.

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