



TYPE: Article

Title: 'Misrecognition of the Limits': Bourdieu's Religious Capital and Social Transformation

Author(s): Lora Stone

Source: Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory (JCRT)

Published by: Whitestone Publications

Stable URL: <https://jcrt.org/archives/03.1/stone/>

DOI (newest version): [10.17613/fr3x1-2xk34](https://doi.org/10.17613/fr3x1-2xk34)

Copyright © held by the author(s). All rights reserved. This text may be used and shared in accordance with the fair-use provisions of U.S. copyright law. Any use of this text in other ways requires the consent of the author and the publisher, the *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, and must cite publication in this journal.

<https://jcrt.org/copyright/>



Stone - "Misrecognition of the Limits" - JCRT 3.1

"Misrecognition of the Limits": Bourdieu's *Religious Capital* and Social Transformation

Lora Stone
University of New Mexico

Political process models attempt to address the interaction between a social movement and the larger social environment, and treat society as a complex system of power relations through which a group may be denied or granted access to power. With the political process model, social movements are explained in terms of broad economic, demographic, and political processes that determine not only the context of a social movement, but how a movement develops or dissipates. Expanding this model, recent works in the study of social movements and social transformation have presented analyses that not only address the structural forces contributing to social movements, but include an analysis of their cultural and symbolic elements as well. However, political process theories do not explain many aspects of those social movements that occur *within* institutions. Concepts drawn from the work of Pierre Bourdieu can contribute to an increased understanding of the dynamics of social movements occurring within institutions, especially those organized around or emerging from religious interest. In the following paragraphs I examine various political process theories, discuss Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*, *field*, *symbolic power*, and *religious capital*, and consider the case of a social movement within an institution: the women's ordination movement in the Catholic Church.

Introduction

3. Disobedience, dissent, heresy, and apostasy are all terms used to describe deviation from the accepted orthodoxy of a religious belief system. By challenging an established internal order, an individual or group, once perceived as members of a religious body through their position on doctrine or practice, come to be seen as standing in opposition to that same body. For the most part, however, religions are dynamic, moving with their generative social context. In this tension then, between orthodoxy and dynamism, a question is apparent: how does internal transformation within religious institutions occur? In part, this tension can be understood by examining religion as a social institution, with the internal transformation of a social institution being conceptualized to some extent as a type of social movement, through which, like social movements in general, existing power relationships are challenged. In that the challenge is mounted within an institution, as an internal conflict, an understanding of this process calls for an additional examination of religion as a field, or "arena of struggle" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:103), in which participants continuously reassess distribution of power within the field.
4. Doctrine and practice are not fixed, immutable ideals, but rather are dynamic components of religious institutions. Although a religion creates and maintains order and meaning, it is also shaped by and responds to the needs of the society of which it is part. Christianity, including Catholicism, has continuously adapted to social circumstances and needs, yet has likewise continuously resisted change, thus resulting in the tension between transformation

and orthodoxy. Towards understanding internal transformation in religious institutions in general, and the conflict over the ordination of women in the Catholic Church in particular, I will use in this paper existing research and theory on social movements and the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, with reference to the work of others who have offered explanations and definitions relevant to the study of religious institutions. Beginning with a discussion of research and theory directed at social movements, in particular political process theories, I will then move to an examination of terms drawn from the work of Bourdieu. Using this theoretical framework, I will analyze the issue of the ordination of women in the Catholic Church. The paper will conclude with comments on both the issue of women's ordination and the theoretical approaches visited in this article.

Social Movements As Political Process

5. Political process theory in general is grounded in the argument that the success of a social movement depends on how elements of major social systems oppose or support a movement, as well as how a movement mobilizes its own resources. The political process model identifies social movements as essentially political, rather than psychological, with social movement itself being a continuous process, rather than "a discrete series of developmental stages" (McAdam 1982). Implicit in political process theories is the assumption that social movements are political in that they challenge existing power relations and are directly affected by the reactions of entities involved in these relations.
6. Political process theories, developed to some extent as a reaction to resource mobilization theory, posit that a movement's success depends on the resources of major social systems as well as the movement's own resources. Expanding on their earlier work, McCarthy and Zald describe the resource mobilization approach as depending "more upon political, sociological, and economic theories than upon the social psychology of collective behavior" (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1213). Political process models attempt to address the interaction between a movement and the larger social environment, and treat society as a complex system of power relations in which a group may be denied or granted access to power. With the political process model, social movements are explained in terms of broad economic, demographic, and political processes that determine not only the context of a social movement, but also how a movement develops or dissipates.
7. In defining social movements in general, Sidney Tarrow asserts "power in movement grows when ordinary people join forces in contentious confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents." Tarrow and others situated in the tradition of viewing social movements as being primarily political process argue that movements are created when relevant political opportunities become available. Although Tarrow approaches the study of social movements with an emphasis on political process, he argues, "at their base are the social networks and cultural symbols through which social relations are organized" (Tarrow 1994:1).
8. A social network can be described as a collection of connecting relationships that link individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions together. As established patterns of interaction, networks facilitate formation of movement identity along the lines of existing relationships as well as providing a means of expansion (McAdam 1982:136). Network ties are not "stockpiles of a fungible resource," but rather can be seen as patterns of connections that inform and influence individuals' judgements and actions about their socio-political groupings (Gould 1998:36).

9. In his discussion of how individuals are convinced to act collectively, Tarrow argues that this problem is solved in part through “shared cultural understandings” (Tarrow 1994:9). Once collective action begins among a group of individuals, then their shared beliefs and messages can be conveyed to the larger population in a way that serves the mission of the movement. This process can be explained using elements of the theories of frame alignment, which presuppose a dynamic relationship between movement development and the cultural heritage of both the regions and the institutions involved (Snow et al. 1986; Alberoni 1984). In short, movement messages are integrated with cultural elements from the population that is addressed. Movements draw from cultural currents in the general population and their own traditional heritage, then present them from a new perspective. Culture is thus essential to both the identity of a movement and the acceptance of its messages. In her analysis of culture and its effects on action, Swidler presents culture “as a ‘tool-kit’ of symbols, stories, rituals, and world views” which people use to solve problems and construct strategies of action (Swidler 1986).
10. Tarrow defines political opportunity structure as consistent “dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure” (Tarrow 1994:85). This definition is grounded in earlier political process theories, including Tilly’s seminal ‘polity’ model, that emphasize the mobilization of resources external to the group, with resources being whatever can be used to realize shared interests or purposes (Tilly 1978).

From The Work Of Bourdieu

11. Political process models emphasize the larger political environment in which a movement is situated, and use a rhetorical framing that focuses on the opposition of external and internal aspects of a situation. Yet, when a collective challenge is mounted within an institution, and is directed at the accepted authorities of this institution, the models most often applied in analyses of social movements typically do not discuss social movement as an internal struggle within an institution. True enough, struggle within political, including religious, institutions is discussed in terms of reform. Reform, however, begins as a challenge, and retrospective labeling allows for a movement, perhaps initially viewed as dissenting or heretical, to become known as ‘reformist’.
12. Several concepts from the work of Pierre Bourdieu can provide insight into transformation within institutional religion, including *habitus*, *field*, *symbolic power*, and *cultural capital*. In addition to the insight that these concepts offer, an interesting parallel exists between Bourdieu’s analytical approach and the question regarding tension between orthodoxy and dynamism. When Bourdieu defines his concept of *habitus*, he uses such terms as structure, matrix, pattern, and system, all suggesting a structuralist approach to social phenomena. When viewed as structural in nature, social phenomena appear static to some extent, constrained through conceptual constructs. Similarly, religious institutions, continually developed and often strengthened through adherence to orthodoxy, can appear essentially rigid or fixed. Religious institutions, as structural entities, are resistant to change, yet arguably dynamic, and this point does not escape attention in the work of Bourdieu. The concept of *field* as a distribution structure that defends orthodoxy (Bourdieu 1980:72-77) brings to light the dynamic and potentially heretical aspects of *habitus*. Keeping with the questions and issues presented up to this point, I will examine more closely the concepts *habitus*, *field*, *symbolic power*, and *cultural capital*.

Habitus

13. Beginning with his early *Algeria 1960*, and continuing through to more recent works, Bourdieu has defined *habitus* in several ways. The term has, however, been consistently used by Bourdieu to describe the “system of lasting, transposable dispositions” as well as the “cognitive structures” through which individuals and groups perceive, understand, and evaluate their social environment. Although much of his analytical work in the social sciences began through the engagement of what is generally known as structuralism, Bourdieu asserts the existence and even importance of agency within a structuralist framework, thus challenging the often implied notion of human action as structurally determined. It is towards this relationship between action and structure that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is directed.
14. In *Algeria 1960*, Bourdieu defines habitus as “a system of durable, transposable dispositions which function as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices” (Bourdieu 1979: vii). Regarding his choice of the word *disposition*, Bourdieu explains that the word expresses what the concept of habitus covers: “the result of an organizing action . . . a way of being, a habitual state” and “in particular, a predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination” (Bourdieu 1977:214). In his early work, Bourdieu introduces the concept of habitus as a way of freeing the subject from potential construction through externally imposed frameworks. With the term habitus, the behavior of agents, or actors, is explained as being adopted in relation to structures inherent in situations, rather than being imposed through enforced regulation by structures. In short, it seems that the intentions, at least in part, are to critique and to begin to replace the artificial models applied by observers, and to acknowledge human agency. Although patterned, external forces (social structures) appear to exist, individuals and groups engage in actions that are influenced by their understanding of what seems reasonable and practical in a given situation; this process is neatly summed up by Bourdieu’s description of habitus as “necessity made into virtue” (Bourdieu 1977:77). In the discussion of the ordination of women, I will return to this idea of “necessity made into virtue”.
15. Bourdieu’s early concept of habitus implies a process of internalization-externalization similar to that suggested in Peter Berger’s analyses of society as a dialectic phenomenon. Noting that “every society that continues in time faces the problem of transmitting its objectivated meanings from one generation to the next” (Berger 1967:17), Berger describes *internalization* and *externalization* as the processes through which not only this transmission occurs, but as the fundamental means of socialization. Internalization is part of the social dialectic, in which the individual is a participant “formed in the course of a protracted conversation.” The social world, including institutions, roles, and identities, “is not passively absorbed by the individual, but actively *appropriated* by him,” with the individual then becoming “a *coproducer* of the social world” (Berger 1967:18). The processes of internalization and externalization suggested by Bourdieu’s early conceptualization of habitus, are likewise clearly defined and proposed in Berger’s descriptions of the “social construction of reality”.
16. Bourdieu, using phrasing similar to Berger’s and other social constructionists’, writes that habitus is “the dispositions of agents . . . the mental structures through which they apprehend the social world, are essentially the product of the internalization of the structures of that world” (Bourdieu 1989:14-25). This parallel with Berger’s approach is remarkably evident in Bourdieu’s definition of habitus as the “dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality”. Habitus then is seen as both producing and being produced

by the social world: it is both “structuring structure” and “structured structure” (Bourdieu 1977:72). These structures are, according to Bourdieu, “dispositions” or “principles” that “generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcome” (Bourdieu 1990:53). These structures are resistant to change, yet they do change as a consequence of individual and group actions.

Field

17. While Bourdieu conceptualizes habitus as being structural in nature, he defines field as being relational: a “network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions”. Although Bourdieu devotes much theoretical effort towards bringing “real-life actors back who had vanished at the hands of Lévi-Strauss and other structuralists,” the concept of field reveals his intention to measure social space empirically, rather than define social phenomena in relativistic or constructionistic terms. Yet while asserting, “what exist in the social are relations’not interactions between agents or subjective ties between individuals,” Bourdieu presents actors as having limited freedom, constrained by their positions in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:97). Actors in turn exercise their limited freedom using strategies that maintain or improve their positions in the field. Bourdieu offers the analogy of a *game* as a way of understanding his concept of field, yet cautions that, unlike a game, “a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules or, better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:98).
18. Within all fields, there is a struggle over resources, or capital, and although he grounds his concept of capital in economic theories, Bourdieu is primarily concerned with the struggle for cultural, social, and symbolic capital that takes place in these fields. All fields have structural properties, and although each field has “specific properties” that are “peculiar to that field,” Bourdieu proposes that there are “universal mechanisms” characteristic of all fields (Bourdieu 1993:72). All fields are arenas of struggle for control over valued resources, or capital, and are structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions based on the struggle over capital. Also characteristic of all fields are the internal mechanisms that direct actors toward specific forms of struggle; these continuously developing internal mechanisms also establish and maintain a field’s autonomy from the larger external environment. There is a structured struggle over capital in every field, as well as internal mechanisms of a field that direct the internal dynamics and develop autonomy.
19. Bordieu conceives of fields in terms of struggle and development. The struggle is over forms of capital, which in the work of Bourdieu includes all resources that contribute to a “social relation of power.” There are as many forms of capital as there are fields, and “when one speaks of a specific capital, this means to say that this capital is effective *in relation to* a particular field” (Bourdieu 1993:73). The very definitions of which resources are most valued are worked out within the fields themselves: what is considered scientific would be worked out by experts within the scientific field; what is accepted as holy or sacred will be defined by those with authority in a religious field; the constraints of an artistic field will be set and maintained by experts or critics. Struggles within fields, however, are not only over definition and distribution of the various forms of capital, but are about the “conservation or subversion of the structure of the distribution of the specific capital” (Bourdieu 1993:73).
20. Further considered as arenas of struggle and development, fields are structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions that comprise the social relations based on the definition

and distribution of capital. Bourdieu describes the opposition between dominant and subordinate in terms of *orthodoxy* and *heresy* (Bourdieu 1993; Bourdieu 1991). In his analysis of religious fields in particular, Bourdieu describes this opposition as being between the church and the prophet who are involved in the struggle for the “monopoly over the legitimate exercise of religious power over the laity and over the administration of the goods of salvation” (Bourdieu 1991:23). This opposition, within any field, is acted out through three types of field strategies: conservation, succession, and subversion. Those who hold dominant positions in a field employ conservation strategies, those who have less or no seniority may attempt to access dominant positions through succession strategies, and those who challenge the definitions of legitimacy established or enforced by the dominant group, engage in subversion (Swartz 1997:125; Bourdieu 1993:82-84).

21. All fields have internal mechanisms that both direct the internal dynamics of the field and develop the field’s relative autonomy from the external environment. Fields set the stage for struggle and direct actors towards specific forms of struggle through the deep structure, or *doxa*, that is agreement between all participants in the field. Bourdieu defines *doxa* as “a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which represents and imposes itself as a universal point of view” (Bourdieu 1998:57). Whether the participants are of the dominant or of the subordinate, they believe the field to be of primary meaning and importance, a belief that Bourdieu refers to as *illusio*. *Illusio* is “the fact of being caught up in the game...that playing is worth the effort.... the fact of attributing importance to a social game, the fact that what happens matters to those who are engaged in it” (Bourdieu 1998:76-77). Be they conservative, successive, or subversive, all participants accept this *illusio*, although as a structural mechanism it is collectively “misrecognized” (Bourdieu 1993:81; Bourdieu 1998:95).
22. Bourdieu also attributes to internal mechanisms the fact that fields develop and maintain degrees of autonomy from the external environment. Drawing from Max Weber’s work, Bourdieu notes the autonomy that a field develops as it becomes increasingly rationalized. This process of rationalization contributes to the “development of a body of specialists,” which in the case of religious fields is “accompanied by a process of systematization and moralization of religious practices and representations” (Bourdieu 1991:7-8). This model is a particular instance of the process that Bourdieu presents as a field universal: fields develop corps of specialists who define, maintain, and transmit the interests of the field. All fields, then, have relative autonomy from the external environment to the degree that value and authority within a field are defined according to internal interests, rather than the interests of external forces.

Symbolic Power

23. Much of Bourdieu’s work is grounded in French structuralism and its linguistic model. He extends the structuralist, linguistic model to include not only symbolic systems, but also social and political uses of symbolic systems. For Bourdieu, symbolic power “is defined in and by a determinate relationship between those who exercise this power and those who undergo it” that is to say, in the very structure of the field in which belief is produced and reproduced” (Bourdieu 1977:117). Symbolic power legitimizes existing economic and political relations, and contributes to the intergenerational reproduction of inequalitarian social arrangements. Bourdieu defines symbolic power as a “worldmaking power” that imposes the “legitimate vision of the social world and of its divisions” (Bourdieu 1987:13). This power not only conceals the power relations that “are the basis of its force,” but also “adds its own specifically

symbolic force to those power relations” (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977:4). In this respect, although Bourdieu does draw from Marxian conflict models, he does not conceptualize culture as being reducible to economic relations.

24. Both the dominant and the dominated engage in a process of *misrecognition* that is in essence the denial of political and economic interests that drive the practices of a given field or a social system. Symbolic power is effective only through symbolic capital, “a transformed and thereby disguised form of physical ‘economic’ capital” (Bourdieu 1977a:183), which presents interested relations as disinterested pursuits. In other words, symbolic capital is not perceived as power that is exerted, but rather as legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience, or service. Religious fields in particular maintain and reproduce themselves with symbolic power: participating individuals believe that they are not following material interest, but rather are pursuing salvation, opposing evil, or realizing the sacred.
25. In his analysis of the religious field in particular, Bourdieu supports this conceptualization of the disguising effect of symbolic power and its production of misrecognition with insights offered in the works of Max Weber, Marcel Mauss, Wilson Wallis, and E. Evans-Pritchard. In the work of Weber, the prophet is associated with crisis situations, while the priest presides during periods of order (Weber 1978). Bourdieu notes Mauss’s assertion that “scarcities, wars, arouse prophets, heresies” (Bourdieu 1991:34). Also defining religious vocation as grounded in material reality, Wallis notes “when national prosperity blossoms again, messianic hope disappears” (Wallis 1943:182). As with the association between prophet and crisis, here again religious identity is defined in relation to economic or political conditions. Evans-Pritchard points to a similar association in his description of prophets, in which he notes that the primary social function of prophets of the past was to instigate raids and actions against foreign groups (Evans-Pritchard 1962).

Cultural Capital

26. Although much of Bourdieu’s work bears the mark of conflict theory, his analysis of culture differs from Marxist interpretations in that he argues that culture as a power resource is not reducible to a derivative of underlying economic factors. However, his analysis of power in general follows a conflict approach, in that ideas, aesthetics, and cultural forms are seen as embodying and furthering the interests of those who produce them. Using a synthesis of Weber’s concept of legitimation and of Marxist concepts of ideology, Bourdieu asserts that cultural practices assume symbolic value and obscure their own role in justifying social inequality. In other words, culture and all of its forms are used to delineate distinctions among the different classes, and are symptoms of underlying social distinctions.
27. Bourdieu asserts that there are three fundamental types of capital: *economic*, *social*, and *cultural*. *Cultural capital*, as conceptualized by Bourdieu, is a form of knowledge that allows the possessor to understand or to interpret cultural relations and artifacts. It is an internalized code, a learned ability to associate certain meanings with certain symbolic forms or goods that are distributed and reproduced through “familial strategies” and educational institutions (Bourdieu 1998:19). Although he has considered all three fundamental types, Bourdieu has directed most of his attention to cultural capital, which he identifies as having three different states: dispositional, institutional, and objectified.
28. Habitus, as entrenched familial and communal practices, guides the cultivation of dispositions that are internalized by the individual. Learning appropriate interpretations of symbolic

forms and goods, be they language, artifact, or concepts, which accompany socialization. Once learned, this dispositional element of cultural capital predisposes individuals toward the accepted or orthodox meaning of symbolic goods, a process that involves “disinterestedness” and “collective misrecognition” of practical or commercial interest (Bourdieu 1993:74-76). This dispositional state includes the specialized abilities to use cultural capital in its objectified form. Objectified cultural capital includes any objects, including artistic images, texts, and music that have “meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code into which it is encoded” (Bourdieu 1984:2). The dispositions cultivated through socialization prepare individuals for cultural capital in its institutionalized forms, which Bourdieu identifies as educational credential systems (Bourdieu 1998:19-24). Bourdieu associates these three states with all types of cultural capital, including *religious capital*. Religious capital is particular to the religious field, which has institutionalized specialists who guard and maintain a “*deliberately organized corpus of secret...knowledge*.” These specialists are themselves socially recognized by a laity, who both perpetuate and live within the lines of a habitus that develops the dispositions (Bourdieu 1991:9-10).

The Ordination of Women

29. In political process models, one of the fundamental assertions is that social movements challenge and change existing power relations. In *A Church Divided*, sociologist Terrance Sweeny analyzes the recent shift in attitudes toward hierarchical power relations within the Catholic Church, and the challenge and conflict associated with this shift. Sweeny contends that the substantial decline in United States Catholic seminary enrollment, as well as the resignation of over 100,000 priests since Vatican II, is directly associated with the persistence of ordination policies emanating from human, not divine, authority (Sweeny 1992). Fiorenza and Häring, in their attempt to “explore the politics of power that has led to the most recent authoritarian assertions,” state the problem similarly: “the issue at hand is no longer a ‘woman’s problem’, the question goes to the very heart and integrity of church and theology” (Fiorenza and Häring 1999:vii). Whether presented in the context of sociological analysis or theological critique, the conflict surrounding the issue of ordaining women in the Catholic Church can be seen as a manifestation of an internal social movement and, using elements from Bourdieu’s analyses, as the tension between orthodoxy and heresy within a field.
30. Tarrow’s work offers insight into the collective action involved in inducing the tension between orthodoxy and heresy, in that the elements of political opportunity, social networks, and cultural symbols are all necessary for any sustained challenge to dominant field authority. The participants in the religious field, in this case that of the Catholic Church, share both the cultural symbols and a commitment to the ‘truth’ represented through these symbols, and this common pool of meaning continues as the heretical movement emerges through existing networks in the field. The political opportunity to voice this challenge can be explained as a “frame alignment” (Snow et al. 1986; Alberoni 1984) between the emerging movement and the cultural and social heritage of the larger social environment: women have gained increasing power in social institutions over the last century, and this external change has inserted political opportunities for movements within the religious field. Indeed, some have argued that the resistance to women’s ordination is in actuality part of a broader cultural resistance to liberal modernity (Chaves 1997; Meyer-Wilmes 1999).
31. In the Catholic Church, the institutional opposition to women’s ordination is based on the assertion that the sacramental agent must resemble Christ, with maleness being essential

to this resemblance. Although this assertion is currently codified in canon law, this and several related restrictions did not enter ecclesial law until around 1140 C.E., when Gratian's foundational work the *Decretum* was composed (Raming 1976). Centuries later, following questions raised in Vatican II, the *Declaration on the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* reasserted maleness as an indisputable requirement of ordination (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1995). From the twelfth century to the present, there has been a constant, legal exclusion of women from the sacrament of ordination, with the twelfth century likewise corresponding to the marked rationalization of the religious field that Bourdieu asserts is "accompanied by a process of systemization and moralization of religious practices and representations" (Bourdieu 1991:7-8).

32. What may have been habitus, or generational "necessity made into virtue," previous to the institutional church of the twelfth century, with its increasing canonical codes generated by the increasing body of specialists—the scholastic theologians and ordained administrators—became an infallible truth encoded in canon law. If viewed through a filter lined with concepts drawn from Bourdieu's analyses, participants in this rationalized religious field, laity as well as professed religious, engaged and have continued to engage in the misrecognition of political and economic interests that he asserts drive a field. As it becomes increasingly rationalized, religion "consecrates by converting into limits of law . . . the economic and political limits and barriers of fact and . . . by contributing to the symbolic manipulation of aspirations, which tends to ensure the adjustment of actual hopes to objective possibilities." Religion, through a "system of consecrated practices and representations," reproduces the existing structure of economic and social relations generated by material conditions, yet can only do so through a "misrecognition of the limits" of the very knowledge that allows the emergence and development of a religious field (Bourdieu 1991:14). The religious field is itself reproduced through symbolic power exerted through religious habitus that, although not recognized as material interest, legitimizes existing social relations and contributes to inegalitarian social arrangements. Similarly, religious cultural capital, in its dispositional, institutional, and objectified state, contributes to the reproduction of misrecognition.
33. Perhaps, the argument against women's ordination in the Catholic Church can be understood, at least in part, as a misrecognition of inegalitarian gender roles: habitus of the early middle ages became codified into a rationalized religious institution, which in turn shaped subsequent habitus. The specialists of the religious field, those who educate and administrate, possess the symbolic power to legitimate obedience to the orthodox, institutional church. Yet, much like Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus, the religious field is both structural and dynamic; it is both fluid and fixed. Those challenging the orthodox stance on women's ordination can be seen as recognizing, at least partially, the once misrecognized socio-political interests at the base of current institutional ordination practices. Leonardo Boff, in his analysis of Vatican II, presents this particular challenge as an element of the "confrontation between two ecclesiological paradigms, that of church-society and that of church-community" (Boff 1999:31). Historically, the first paradigm was that of church-community, while the successive dominant paradigm, developing and rising after the first millennium C.E., was and has continued to be that of church-society.
34. Taking the historical distinction even further, some challenge the declaration that the current orthodox position is "founded on the written Word of God," and "from the beginning [has been] constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1995:401). This challenge has been mounted not only by those

considered by definition to be radical, such as feminist scholars, but by the 1997 Task Force of the Catholic Theological Society of America. Likewise, the National Coalition of American Nuns, in response to the 1995 Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's reassertion of infallibility in pronouncing that only males can be ordained, have criticized the institutional church 'which can be seen as the material manifestation of the church-society paradigm' and its invocation of "tradition . . . as a sacramental to bless centuries of injustice. The persistence of an evil practice over time does not legitimate its continuation" (NCAN 1995). As to being "founded on the written Word of God," heretics, as well as sympathizers outside of the religious field, point to the scriptural absence of a defining statement on the question of the ordination of women in the Catholic Church.

35. In that it is engaged in the political process of challenging existing power relations, including confronting elites, authorities, and opponents, the recently increasing collection of groups and individuals in favor of women's ordination in the Catholic Church can be described as a social movement. Given that it is not only a social movement, but an internal movement within a clearly defined field, inserting Bourdieu's concepts into a modified political process model can be part of an insightful analysis. *Habitus*, as the system of dispositions that were and are the generative base of structured practices, can explain some aspects of the historical change: in the original communal church, ordination practices had regional differences, with these in turn being increasingly influenced by Greek and Roman law and practice regarding the status of women. What began as gendered division of labor of a practical sort, was later constructed as divinely inspired law, a righteous commandment, and transcendent truth, bringing us back to Bourdieu's description of *habitus* as "necessity made into virtue." The subsequent emergence of the institutional church was accompanied by the emergence of a religious *habitus* that predisposed all participants toward reproduction of the religious field. In Bourdieu's analysis, this generative base of religious *habitus* allows for the distribution of religious capital and the exertion of symbolic-religious power (Bourdieu 1991:22). Regarding the issue of women's ordination in the Catholic Church, religious *habitus* remains the generative base for both the orthodox and the heretical: predispositions are beneath the stated concern for thinking and acting in the "best" or "right" way as defined by the field.
36. Those members of the Catholic Church challenging the orthodox position on women's ordination, for the most part, remain committed to the church and are not advocating its dissolution. These people are participants, albeit heretical, in the religious field, which like all fields in Bourdieu's analysis are "arenas of struggle" where the distribution of power is continuously reassessed. In the challenge to the Vatican's "legitimate vision of the social world and its divisions," symbolic power is being questioned, and to some extent "misrecognition" is being recognized. Many members see the exclusion of women from ordination as an abuse of power in the secular sense, rather than a sacred law that guides the faithful. As symbolic power is being challenged, so is its resulting gendered concentration of institutional religious capital' arguably another instance of the recognition of existing misrecognition. Although the conflict is between the orthodox and the heretical within a clearly defined and structured social space that has a relatively autonomous existence, the case of women's ordination is, however, more than just an internal struggle within a field. During the past century, as women have gradually gained political and economic power in the larger social environment, the question of women's ordination has entered several distinct religious fields. Although occurring within a specific religious field, the challenges initiated against the exclusionary practices of the Catholic Church can be seen as manifestations of more general changes in society at large.

Figure 1

Figure 1: Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 2: Figure 2

Conclusion and Continuance

Figure 1. Political process model.

Figure 2. Challenge within a field.

As to social transformation, whether occurring as a field challenge between orthodoxy and heresy, or through challenges mounted by social movements against institutions, it seems culture is an important factor in the success of a movement. All social relations are supported by a system of shared understandings, and these understandings are shaped by code as both objectified culture and practiced culture. The success of a social movement, then, may depend on how well cultural biases are reshaped, and to what extent misrecognition is recognized.

-
37. Social transformation often occurs through the collective action of individuals who share cultural understanding as well as social networks. Recent work in the study of social movements has emphasized both the cultural and social elements of collective action, and how movements use culture and relationships to challenge social institutions. A simplified political process model (see figure 1) places a social movement in opposition to institutional authorities, elites, and other opponents who have denied movement members access to political resources' power and authority' that can determine the distribution of other resources. The Civil Rights Movement in The United States, for example, has been analyzed by political process theorists who have made significant contributions to our understanding of the ongoing development of social institutions. Similarly, the relational and structural elements of the various movements concerned with changing the institutional status of women can be revealed using political process models. However, political process models, in general, do not focus on social movements as internal conflicts within institutions of which both the challengers and the challenged are committed members.
 38. While political process theories provide a general model with which to contextualize most social movements, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, symbolic power, and cultural capital can be used more specifically in the analysis of a social movement occurring within an institution or of an internal challenge within an organization (see figure 2). Given the example of the women's ordination movement within the Catholic Church, a synthesis drawing from both political process theories and the work of Bourdieu can provide an especially appropriate framework for related research. At the present, the Catholic Church can be accurately described as a field in which competition for both symbolic power and religious capital is occurring. Field specialists, in this instance theologians, and other cultural interpreters, have been and continue to define not only the field itself, but the code of membership as well. Orthodoxy and heresy, terms universally applied by Bourdieu to all fields, are in fact the terms used by religious field specialists themselves to describe competing forces in the struggle for symbolic power.

References

- Alberoni, Francesco. 1984. *Movement and Institution*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Berger, Peter. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Doubleday.
- Boff, Leonardo. 1999. "The Uncompleted Vision of Vatican II: The Church-Hierarchy of People of God?" Pp. 31-39 in *The Non-Ordination of Women and the Politics of Power*, edited by Elisabeth Sch'ssler Fiorenza and Hermann H'ring. London: SCM Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. "Symbolic Power." Pp. 112-119 in *Identity and Structure*, edited by D. Gleeson. Driffield: Nafferton Books.
- . 1977a. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1979. *Algeria 1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- . 1987. "What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32:1-18.
- . 1989. "Social Space and Symbolic Power." *Sociological Theory* 7.1: 14-25.
- . 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- . 1991. "Genesis and Structure of the Religious Field." Pp. 1-44 in *Comparative Social Research: Religious Institutions*, vol 13, edited by Craig Calhoun. Greenwich, CN.: JAI Press.
- . 1993. *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1993a. *Sociology in Question*. London: Sage Publications.
- . 1998. *Practical Reason: On Theory of Action*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron. 1977. *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Lo'c J. D. Wacquant. 1992. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chaves, Mark. 1997. *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. 1995. "Reply to the dubium concerning the teaching contained in the apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*." *Origins* 25 (November 30, 1995): 400-403.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. 1962. *Nuer Religion*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Fiorenza, Elisabeth Sch'ssler, and Hermann H'ring. 1999. "Introduction: They Can't Kill the Spirit." Pp. vii-x in *The Non-Ordination of Women and the Politics of Power*, edited by Elisabeth Sch'ssler Fiorenza and Hermann H'ring. London: SCM Press.
- Gould, Anthony. 1998. "Political Networks and the Local/National Boundary in the Whiskey Rebellion." In Hanagan, Moch, and te Brake (eds.), *Challenging Authority*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- McAdam, Doug. 1982. *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930- 1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McCarthy, John D., and Zald, Meyer. 1973. *The Trend of Social Movements in America*. Morristown: General Learning Press.
- Meyer-Wilmes, Hedwig. 1999. "The Diversity of Ministries in a Postmodern Church." Pp. 69-88 in *The Non-Ordination of Women and the Politics of Power*, edited by Elisabeth Sch'ssler Fiorenza and Hermann H'ring. London: SCM Press.
- National Coalition of American Nuns National Coalition of American Nuns. 1995. "This Teaching Cannot Be Infallible." Adopted by the NCAN Board, December 8, 1995.
- Raming, Ida. 1976. *The Exclusion of Women from the Priesthood: Divine Law or Sex Discrimination?* Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press.
- Snow, David A., Rochford, Burke E., Worden, Steven and Robert Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review* 51.3:463-481.
- Swartz, David. 1997. *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sweeny, Terrance. 1992. *A Church Divided: The Vatican versus the American Catholics*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books.
- Swidler, Ann. 1986. "Culture and Action: Symbols and Strategies." *American Sociological Review* 51.3: 273-286.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 1994. *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York: Random House.
- Tilly, Charles. 1988. "Social Movements, Old and New." In L. Reisberg (ed.), *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change*, vol.10. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.
- Wallis, W. D. 1943. *Messiahs, Their Role in Civilization*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs.

Lora Stone is currently a doctoral student and an instructor in the Department of Sociology at the University of New Mexico. Her research interests include culture, religion, social movements, and theology.

Copyright © held by the author(s). 2001 Lora Stone. All rights reserved.
 Updated 07/28/21.
jcrt.org/archives/03.1/stone
