

Article

Conscientisation and Radical Habitus: Expanding Bourdieu's Theory of Practice in Youth Activism Studies

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Abstract: Bourdieu's *theory of practice* is a useful tool to understand people's everyday behaviours, dispositions and habits. However, this theory struggles to explain how some people diverge from the social norms that structure their habitus. This article proposes an extension of Bourdieu's theory of practice by incorporating Freire's *conscientisation*, that is, a theory of how individuals develop a critically conscious awareness through engagement with the world around them. Here, we use young people's engagement in activism as a case study to show how these two theories can work together. We analysed previous youth activism research articles to explore how the theory of practice and conscientisation can explain the representations made of young people's activism. Combining the two theories allows an explanation of how and why the young people in the studies that we reviewed took pathways of alternative actions from within their habitus. We argue that by adding Freire's conscientisation to Bourdieu's theory of practice, young people's activism can be understood as the development of a generational radical habitus.

Keywords: theory of practice; habitus; radical habitus; conscientisation; DIO politics; young people's activism; school strike; climate strike; political participation; activism



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1. Introduction

Around the world, young climate activists are participating in political action even where it means missing out on school days and the consequences that result from that. In a world where their political voices are not welcome, and following the rules of formal schooling is expected, their determination to participate in activism is a transformative educational experience in itself. Bourdieu's [1] theory of practice offers an explanation as to how people's norms and circumstances shape their actions. It balances his concepts of habitus, capital, and field to show how practice achieves particular outcomes [2]. But his theory of practice struggles to explain why people sometimes act outside of or contrary to what would otherwise be expected of them. Here, Freire's [3] theory of conscientisation can expand Bourdieu's theory of practice. Conscientisation explains how people develop a conscious awareness of their reality and their ability to shape that reality [3]. By combining the two theories, the resultant analytical tool provides a framework for understanding how and why people select a pathway of alternative actions from within their habitus.

This paper has come about as a theoretical reflection throughout the process of reviewing literature for a research project relating to young people's activism. While using Bourdieu's theory of practice, it became clear that Freire's conscientisation holds an equally important place in explaining how people come to develop a 'radical habitus'. We argue that the process of conscientisation enables people, dependent on their access to capital and the field in which they are operating, to think and act beyond the structures within their habitus. Activism is a site of education which provides young people with a unique opportunity for learning and development while enacting change [4,5]. In this paper, we use

young people's activism as a case study to demonstrate an application of the combination of Bourdieu's theory of practice and Freire's conscientisation. In particular, we explore the literature in this field to demonstrate the relevance of the combination of the two theories to fully understand the process of developing a radical habitus.

2. Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice incorporates the concepts of habitus, capital and field. *Habitus* refers to the behaviours, dispositions and habits that a person embodies as their internalised norm [1,6]. Described as a "conductor-less orchestration", habitus is not a system of mechanical or practiced reactions, but refers to the historical reproduction of practices which have become so internalised over time to become nature [1] (p. 59). Habitus subconsciously influences how people act within a set of circumstances and how they see others around them. As a system of pre-disposed ways of being, habitus defines people's tendencies and inclinations by determining which practices are deemed to be sensible and reasonable in a given set of circumstances [1]. Critics of Bourdieu argue that he tends towards a deterministic approach where personal agency is not acknowledged, even to be denied. However, despite the influence of habitus over decisions and behaviour, it is not set as a firm or calculated framework, and these criticisms will be addressed further below.

Habitus must be considered alongside *capital*. Bourdieu's concept of 'social capital' refers to the resources person can access as a result of their networks, relationships and position in society. It refers to the sum wealth of valuable resources at one's disposal due to their social relationships. Bourdieu [7] describes capital as being available in three forms: economic, cultural and social. Economic capital relates to the value of a person's monetary, property or other assets, while cultural capital refers to the value of cultural opportunities, artefacts, knowledge and education. Social capital is tied to membership in a group which enables a person to have the backing of collectively-owned capital. Memberships can be practical, in terms of exchanges/agreements to maintain the membership, or they can be socially attained, such as through a family name or studying at a particular education institution. Bourdieu's social capital is different to understandings of capital as conceptualised by theorists Coleman and Putnam, who describe social capital as a mutual trust and cooperation between members of a network and of mutual benefit to those members [8,9]. In this sense, social capital is a transactional arrangement of benefit to all people involved in the network, with each person playing a part to cooperate for the benefit of themselves, others and the network as a whole. Rather, in Bourdieu's conceptualisation, the structure of society is constantly shaped by the distribution of capital while maintaining, contesting and renegotiating class and power [10,11].

Field relates to the external environment; namely, the settings in which people associate. People inhabit many differing fields dependent on their activity at any given moment. For example, one can simultaneously inhabit the professional field of a workplace whilst inhabiting a parental field at their children's school. Bourdieu [10] describes the social space as a multi-dimensional set of fields, meaning the social situations and institutions which make up that space. France and Threadgold [11] add that fields are "leaky containers of social action with their own set of rules and norms" (p. 624). *Doxa* are the rules that operate within a field, often unwritten and taken-for-granted [1,11]. Within each field that a person occupies, their internalised habitus subconsciously guides their behaviours and interactions as to what is appropriate and normal for each given field. Despite these norms having been socially constructed throughout history, habitus is deeply entrenched to seem normal and natural.

The theory of practice is best visualised where practice is seen as a combination of habitus and capital, in a specific field ([2] (p. 101)):

$$([\textit{habitus}] [\textit{capital}] + \textit{field}) = \textit{practice}$$

Practice is how people behave in different contexts. For example, as a school student, a young person may interact with other students in a vastly different manner to how

they interact with their parents in their home environment. These behaviour choices are largely subconscious and part of an internalised set of knowledge of what is deemed to be appropriate and normal in the circumstances.

There are of course critiques of Bourdieu's theory of practice, as noted above. In particular, habitus is often seen as deterministic, not able to account for individuals' agency and capacity for change. As Akrivou and Di San Giorgio [12] (p. 1) state, "the main problem in Bourdieu's view of habitus is that it largely accounts for human action being reproductive of an existing field, rather than transformative". In this way, habitus is seen to leave no room for critical questioning and denies the decision-making processes that disrupt the status-quo and aim to interrupt the field where action is occurring. Yang [13] addresses such deterministic criticisms of Bourdieu and argues that there is room for the nuances of agency and change beyond a formulaic understanding of the theory of practice. Habitus operates below the level of consciousness and is "durable", functioning as "structuring structures" [1] (p. 71). Yang [13] highlights how Bourdieu himself developed and moderated his theory of practice throughout his work, suggesting that change in practice is possible.

Lesser-known concepts from Bourdieu's work demonstrate the development of his theory of practice to include a more complete and nuanced insight into people's practice. These are useful in countering criticisms of determinism and include *illusio*, social gravity, *doxa*, crisis, hysteresis and homology [11,13,14]. In addition, France and Threadgold [11] use Bourdieu to counter Coté's [15] claim that young people operate with a 'false consciousness', meaning that they are unthinking and their lives and actions are driven by forces outside of themselves. Rather than having a false consciousness, young people's actions are not predictable or predetermined, and they are not passive or mindless 'dupes' [11]. They refute this commonly held belief by drawing attention to Bourdieu's concepts that feature beyond the key triad of habitus, capital and field, and the more sophisticated possibilities inherent these propose, in particular *illusio* and social gravity. For France and Threadgold [11], *illusio* reaches beyond agency by acting as a realistic response to the world, rather than inert compliance. Similarly *social gravity* implies that while the social world contains push and pull forces, there is space for individuals to immerse themselves in their own interests. This enables individuals to invest themselves and their practice in a specific field [11]. By engaging in reflexivity, agents have the capacity for change [13].

3. Radical Habitus

In a specific application of Bourdieu's theory of practice to activism studies, Crossley [16] has developed a discussion of *radical habitus*. Radical habitus refers to an individual's disposition to participate in activism, not necessarily in a singular cause, but a durable disposition for perpetual activism [16]. It is an acquired habitus that occurs from the experience of activism participation and, in turn, structures further activism, by creating the mindset and habit to engage politically. Practice is both structured and structuring [1,16]. By extending habitus into the disposition that creates the inclination to be involved in activism, Crossley [16] (p. 56) has also extended Bourdieu's theory of practice in this way, to explain social movements:

$$([\text{habitus}] [\text{capital}] + \text{field}) = \text{movement}$$

A radical habitus, combined with one's access to capital, and in association to a particular field, influences involvement in social movements. In the context of youth activism, an example of this in practice could be young climate activists who, through increased learning of their cause, can see the inequality in climate consequences, where certain members of society are more greatly impacted. The young activists may then become engaged in activism relating to that inequality, or for the rights of that group in society, in addition to their climate activism. Their radical habitus expands and incorporates multiple movements and structures their dispositions in a way to enable and increase the likelihood of their continued participation in activism.

Crossley further argues that when an individual has a strong habitus in the field of social movements and activism, this habitus eventually spreads into other fields, such as their choice of occupation and their lifestyle. This could include their habits and practices within the home, such as recycling and being mindful of energy usage. This is an example of the personal being political [17]. When one's 'political' involves striving towards social change, these actions spread across other fields and become a habitus in many aspects of life. Indeed, experiences of activism, political participation, and social movements tend to become a long-term disposition, namely a radical habitus [14]. Daser [18] came to a similar conclusion when examining the activism efforts of refugees in Turkey, who felt compelled to participate due to their internalised life experiences. In turn, their habitus was further shaped by their activism to become a radical habitus which would stay with them beyond the singular cause and structure further activism [18]. In a way, activism becomes a new habitus in that it is normalised and internalised. This idea has been used to explain how adult learners in Australia form a radical habitus [19] and how Greenpeace activists share activism praxis with other activists to sustain momentum [20].

Bourdieu's habitus and Crossley's radical habitus can also be extended into other applications. *Eco habitus* [21] refers to the internalisation of ecological frameworks of practice which carry beyond the movement to become internalised and personalised as part of an extended habitus into multiple fields. Ecological activism extends activists' learning, and they develop deeper understanding about the reality of ecological issues. However, activists also learn that their capacity to act upon that reality can be personal as well as collective. Similarly, Ibrahim [22] argues that an *anticapitalist habitus* demonstrates the internalisation of a habitus beyond the field of activism. It forms the norms for the activist's life, linking the political and the personal, and influencing their behaviour in the multiple fields they engage in. While radical, eco, and anticapitalist habitus are significant topics in their own right, they are included here to demonstrate the possibilities of expanded habitus when learning and awareness is combined with action and practice.

Underlying Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, and extensions of his original works, is an all-important focus on the relational nature of the social world. Applying the theory of practice is not a mathematical process whereby a person's specific habitus, capital and field produces an exact calculated pre-determined outcome of practice. Rather it is the relational balance between the factors that influence, shape and inform how a person acts. However, the issue of habitus as reproductive rather than transformative remains a key problem for studies of social change. Radical habitus seeks to address this, but does not fully explain the processes that enable the shift towards a more radical set of dispositions. Freire's theory of conscientisation may provide a useful way to explain Bourdieu's theory of practice and, in particular, understanding the development of a radical habitus.

4. Conscientisation

Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educator whose work focused on the emancipatory potential of education to enable people to effect change within their lives and to liberate themselves. His work was originally in the context of peasant workers who were limited by the oppressive structures that maintained their illiteracy and powerlessness, but has since been used as pedagogy for transformative learning in a range of contexts.

Freire's theory of *conscientisation* (also known as 'critical consciousness') refers to human beings' ability to be aware of and act on reality:

"Their reflectiveness results not just in a vague and uncommitted awareness, but in the exercise of a profoundly transforming action upon the determined reality. *Conscious of and action upon* reality are, therefore, inseparable constituents of the transforming act by which men [sic] become beings of relation" [3] (p. 453, emphasis in original).

In order to understand conscientisation, Freire [23,24] states that it is critical to acknowledge how humans are beings who do not merely exist in the world. Instead, they co-exist with the world and with other beings in the world. He differentiates this relational co-existence from the existence of other animals who do not reflect on or question their

existence. That is, that humans have a unique and distinct relational existence to the world, their reality and to others, that exists in “the domain of work, of history, of culture, of values” [3] (p. 453). Without co-existing in this relational nature with the world and other being in it, humans could be merely deterministic beings.

To simply exist in the world, knowing how and what to do to survive, is vastly different to reflecting upon and questioning the conditions of survival [24]. Simply knowing one’s condition and the circumstances of existence would bind an individual to these circumstances: determined, stuck, or in a fixed state. But humans exist in relationship with the world and their reality, and exist in a specific historical and physical context. It is the capacity to see the possibility of transformation that allows for change. As Freire [3] (p. 455) states, “conscientisation is viable because man’s [sic] consciousness, although conditioned, can recognise that it is conditioned”. And it is this recognition of possibility beyond the limits that motivates and propels change.

Just as with the theory of practice, conscientisation necessitates the recognition of the relational nature of the social world. In the words of Freire, “the oppressed . . . exist[s] in a dialectical relationship to the oppressor” [23] (p. 34). Merely perceiving oppression without the relationship cannot lead to transformation, but conscientisation involves the understanding of the interdependence of factors in one’s condition; that they are relational to each other, operating as a balance of struggles, not as fixed concrete reactionary cause and effect.

In this way, by combining Bourdieu’s theory of practice with conscientisation, determinism is again refuted, and the possibility of transformation is accounted for. Conscientisation inherently involves awareness; it is a process of consciousness. Importantly, conscientisation is a process rather than a state of being. One may come to a critical consciousness through becoming aware of reality and one’s ability to transform it. By combining habitus and conscientisation we allow for the intense learning that occurs through participation in activism; a learning that both understands the issues and what action is possible and required to enact change. We demonstrate the combination of theory of practice with conscientisation by examining literature in the following case study relating to young people’s activism.

5. Case Study: Young People’s Activism

Young people’s activism is the subject of much political and social debate. Being politically active is not a new trend. Throughout history young people have been central actors in numerous and varied acts of resistance and activism. These range from smaller acts of resistance, such as do-it-yourself movements and eco-lifestyle choices, as well as larger historical events such as the South African anti-apartheid movement and the gun control movement in the United States. Since 2018, aided by the horizontal networking made possible via digital technologies, young people’s climate activism has developed into a sustained global movement where mass mobilisations of Gen Z school students and their supporters have rallied against government inaction in the face of the growing climate crisis. Human-induced global warming has created observable changes in the climate system which present a significant risk to natural and human systems [25]. Scientific evidence points to the fact that urgent action needs to be taken to limit global warming to 1.5 °C [25,26] and young people are heavily involved in activism to push governments to take that action.

Recently, research into young people’s activism has grown with an increasing interest in better understanding the nuanced and complex aspects of their participation. Young people are located in a particularly precarious position where their political voice and participation is largely excluded [4]. In most democratic societies they are excluded from the electoral system until reaching the age of 18 years [27,28]. This age barrier is based on the assumption of their developmental immaturity, childhood supposedly rendering them incapable of rational participation in political matters. Instead, society expects ‘youth’ to represent a period of preparation, training or apprenticeship for adulthood, including

schooling, where they are ‘appropriately’ socialised before stepping over the age-threshold into full participation in society [4,28,29]. In this way, young people are relegated to a status of future beings, or “human becomings” [30] (p. 643). Simultaneously, they face the reality of being the generation who will bear the future consequences of current political decisions.

In his work, Bourdieu seldom wrote about young people or activism, even though his work was activist in nature. Bourdieu [31] is often cited as having said that, “youth is just a word”. In a contemporary re-translation of Bourdieu’s French writing, Bessant et al. [31] reiterate that Bourdieu states that someone will always be older or younger than the other, with an age-based categorisation of people being laden with power as a struggle between older generations and young people. What is commonplace for one generation is likely to have been a source of struggle for the previous generation and, for Bourdieu [32], this progress explains why older generations frequently disapprove of younger people or have differing world views. This perspective of youth is particularly useful for highlighting the relational aspect which is characteristic of Bourdieu’s work and theories.

For scholars who use the generational approach to youth studies, as opposed to the life-span developmental focus [33], habitus and radical habitus may provide an important analytical tool. Mannheim’s [34] generational approach takes note of the specific contextual experiences of people born within a time and place, creating a shared habitus or a collective memory [35]. Habitus informs inner subjectivities and therefore can add understandings to the conditions in which practice takes place [36]. As a group of people born into a specific era and experiencing similar conditions and events, a generation is likely to have a particular habitus which informs their practice.

6. Method

This paper draws on literature that relates to young people’s social and environmental activism. As part of a broader research project, we conducted a desktop search for articles relating to young people’s activism and political participation. We undertook two main searches of the library database at a comprehensive (teaching and research) university, both filtered for peer-reviewed online social science articles only. The key words included Bourdieu’s main concepts, search phrases related to young people and political engagement, and in a second search, climate activism. The specific search strings were:

Search 1:

(bourdieu OR habitus OR field OR capital) AND (you* OR child*) AND (activis* OR politic*)

Search 2:

(school strike OR climate strike) AND (you* OR child*) AND (activis* OR politic*)

We scanned a total of 200 articles to determine their suitability for the overall project. While far from an exhaustive collection of literature, when scanning, we found that there were very few relevant articles after the first 100 from each search string, suggesting that saturation had been reached. After an initial review, we selected a total of 32 articles from the first search, and an additional 25 articles from the second search. We analysed these articles firstly, to determine dominant themes used by the authors, and secondly, to identify whether Bourdieu’s theories could also be used to explain the representations made of young people’s activism. The value of Freire’s conscientisation then became clear and was subsequently incorporated into the analysis and discussion. We have synthesised the main themes from these articles, which are presented below for discussion.

7. Results and Discussion

Academic literature that discusses young people’s activism in terms of habitus, capital and field tended to focus on migrant activism, social justice issues for people of colour or school-related participation projects. The second search focused specifically on literature relating to research of young people’s climate activism in different international locations, in particular in the Global School Strikes (also known as Fridays for Future and School Strike for Climate). In this search, few articles directly applied Bourdieu’s theories. Instead, activism as a site of learning and education was one of the main themes that we identified

in the second search, as well as everyday activism, and varying ways that Pickard's [37] Do-it-Ourselves (DIO) politics is manifested in young people's activism. Across the studies that we reviewed in this project, many challenge the dominant narratives regarding young people's capacity as valid political actors; narratives which inform and shape their habitus. There was also a strong focus on how young people develop conscious awareness (though this was rarely referred to as conscientisation). Only one article that we reviewed combined the process of conscientisation with the analysis of habitus, and particularly radical habitus, to explain young people's activism. These themes, and the relevance of a combined theoretical lens of radical habitus and conscientisation to them, will be further expanded upon in the discussion below.

7.1. *Habitus and Capital in the Field of Activism*

Capital provides access and resources, enabling the capacity for action. The influence of social capital is particularly pertinent to studies of activists known as DREAMers who were promoting the proposed *Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act*. These undocumented youth activists had been brought to the United States of America as children without valid entry permits and the DREAM Act proposed to provide a pathway to citizenship [38,39]. DREAMers were in a unique position of risk because while fighting for the bill that would provide them citizenship, they were also exposing their status as undocumented and therefore at risk of arrest, detention and deportation [38,40]. In this case, public activism came with great personal and potentially life-altering risks, and not all DREAMers could participate publicly due to their limited social and cultural capital. Cabaniss and Shay [38] find that those activists with greater social and cultural capital (due to education and class socialisation) engaged in public activism as a voice for those unable or hesitant to participate due to more consequential risks. In this case, "the DREAMers' cultural capital served as a safeguard just in case anything went wrong" [38] (p. 297). Linked to their navigation of capital is the development of DREAMers' shared knowledge and experience that built a collective consciousness that, with their varying access to capital and therefore their varying capacity to mitigate risks, together they can take action and turn their oppression into resistance.

Where young migrants have valid residency permits, they are often nonetheless a marginalised group due to their non-citizen habitus, and they seek to establish their identity in a new location [41]. For many migrants, their access to economic capital is limited, and their cultural and social capital is also limited due to differences in culture and sometimes race and ethnicity [8,42]. In the case of migrants in Italy, Farini [41] suggests that school activism allows young migrants to build social capital in their new location by developing relationships, rapport and networks, and that they exercise their agency throughout. Education and political systems can be sites of exclusion for young migrants who are consciously aware that this exclusion is systemic in nature, rather than simply the result of individuals' actions towards them. By undergoing this process of conscientisation, they also become aware that they can resist by creating alternative pathways to inclusion, namely, by engaging in activism as a space where their citizenship status and migrant identity is overridden by the shared objective of the activism. This enables them to construct cultural capital and combat their experience of inequality [41], and is an example of conscientisation due to their awareness which is followed by action.

Exclusion or marginalisation can also occur by way of gendered barriers. When examining the influence of parental power on young people's participation in high school student movement organisations, Gordon [43] finds that "girls' and boys' divergent understandings of and responses to their parents' dictates shape their sociopolitical development in gendered ways" (p. 32). (Gordon [43] uses the terms 'girls' and 'boys', and we follow this terminology here, noting that it is problematic in the way that it relies on a gender binary and potentially implies childishness and immaturity.) Boys and young men experience varying expectations of independence and defiance from the adults around them, producing a form of gendered social capital. Gender is a key influence on habitus as it

informs people's predispositions and internalised norms and influences behaviours and outcomes, as well as affecting access to capital due to the greater accesses and differing expectations for boys. Understanding this activism as conscientisation demonstrates how girls become aware of the gendered barriers to participation and the actions required to mitigate these barriers. As Gordon [43] states, the activist girls took action to develop adult allies who could be understanding of their gendered experience, and they also sought to educate the activist boys on how they could act in order to lessen the gender gap.

Economic capital also plays a role in young people's activism, such as in Lam-Knott's [44] examination of the context of Hong Kong youth activism against the proliferation of brandscapes. Young people's experiences of these urban spaces reflects the inequalities in power between the Hong Kong government, corporations and the community [44]. The youth activism against capitalism increases their conscious awareness of their subjugated position in society and is an attempt to contest their relationship with the government and corporations, but due to the disparity in availability of economic capital their successes are small-scale within their local communities [44].

Young people's activism is relational, which further highlights the relevance of both Bourdieu's and Freire's explicitly relational theories to understanding this phenomenon. Building relationships and community ties can also be a method connected to personal inequality with broader societal or collective issue [45]. Although Ginwright [45] uses Putnam's social capital, the similarities are nevertheless relevant with regards to building capital which allows for a site of learning and action, namely conscientisation. In cases where activists may not have the benefit of networks in the community via employment, adult allies can act as a bridging pathway. Such is the case in Ferman's [46] study of youth activists in the United States who are protesting against neoliberal trends, such as privatisation and increased inequality. Adult allies used their greater capital in the form of age, professional status and education to facilitate connections for the young activists so that their personal narratives could be connected to the collective issue [46]. Similarly, Getrich [40] refers to the DREAMers' cause benefiting from activists' navigational capital, an extension of Bourdieu's cultural capital defined as their ability to exercise agency in institutional settings and formal systems [47]. Some activists utilise the social and political capital that is generated through employment to connect others within the community [40]. In these examples, people develop a conscious awareness that is able to translate into action, through access to capital.

Studies of young people's activism needs to account for global inequalities in access to capital, and studies of climate activism needs to be particularly alert to the unequal effects of climate change across the globe [26]. The ability to participate in activism, and to participate in research about activism, depends on access to that capital [48], and thus researchers in the field of young people's climate activism must take care to avoid amplifying existing inequalities [49,50]. Just as in the case of the DREAMers, where those with greater capital were consciously aware of their capacity for heightened action, many young climate activists are also making efforts to act on behalf of their peers with less ability to do so. Stoecklin [51] speaks of a worldwide habitus where it is normalised to listen to the voices of those who speak the loudest, or perhaps it is a case of having the greatest access to amplification. Those with access to greater capital, in areas of less marginalisation or disadvantage, are consciously aware that they stand in solidarity and should take action for those who do not have the capital themselves.

7.2. Radical Habitus and Conscientisation

Activists and movements develop a radical habitus through the process of conscientisation which informs that change is possible through action. The manifestation of radical habitus in youth activism is particularly clear in Ibrahim's [22] Bourdieusian study which finds that activists' political predispositions, or what he refers to as political habitus, and their accumulated capital reinforces and reproduces those dispositions. Specifically, the activists developed a political ideology based on the networks and organisations they

engaged with, and this ideology predisposes them to acquiring certain forms of capital. Political actions shape and re-shape activists' practice and can predict future behaviours in the field of activism and politics [22].

Similarly, in post-Soviet activism, Ivanou and Flores [14] find that the activists' habitus as Soviet people, their Soviet habitus, influenced their activism practice. This study demonstrates the usefulness of Bourdieu's concepts to social movement analysis and uses *illusio* to explain their responses to the social world. While Dragoman and Luca [52] found that the democratisation of post-Soviet required a sustained and long-term effort to change persistent dominant structures, Ivanou and Flores' [14] study can be seen as an example of conscientisation. While socialisation enabled conscientisation, the post-Soviet activists consciously chose to act in a way that allowed them to connect to other people's concerns. This could be seen as a major shift away from Soviet habitus, known for its totalitarian inflexibility.

Similarly, Konstantoni [53] speaks of how activism can disrupt habitus by breaking with norms and order and resetting the predispositions. An example of this is in Jeffrey and Dyson's [54] study of young people's generative politics in the remote Indian village of Bemni. In this instance, young people are over-educated and under-employed and their ideals regarding the state conflict with the reality of the state that they experience. Although their habitus informed a particular way of being, they developed a conscious awareness of the reality beyond the predisposition of their habitus. This shaped their decision making and subsequent practice and the young Bemni people became involved in a form of generative action where they proactively tackled issues in the community, creating their own work which facilitated networking with the aim to alleviate unemployment [54].

Academic literature about young people's climate activism makes clear the importance of understanding conscientisation as a key process in the development of radical habitus. Verlie and Flynn [5] argue that young people's climate activism is a call of reckoning for formal education to adapt radically and rapidly to respond to the needs and demands of young people who are facing climate-changed futures. Although many adults view young people's strike from school as a form of deviance in need of punishment [4], White et al. [55] uses the term 'principled disobedience' to indicate that young people are thoughtful about their choices rather than just 'misbehaving'. They argue that the Global School Strikes are an opportunity to rethink education because young people are learning so much through their experience of climate activism. Schools and education practices need to adjust in order to be current and relevant in this crisis [55]. Habitus and capital clearly play a role in shaping the activists' predispositions, with conscientisation further shapes action by increasing awareness and making space for action.

7.3. *Do-It-Ourselves Politics*

The current societal context that many young people operate in involves a structure of education and socialisation that is formalised, approved and aims to produce competent adults who are capable of contributing appropriately. Yet as a result of the climate crisis of global warming and the resultant environmental devastation, young people have been rejecting pre-structured environments to enact politics in their own way. Pickard [36,56] has called this do-it-ourselves (DIO) politics. DIO politics relates to the perception that politicians are not doing enough, or are doing it wrong. Action is, therefore, required of the young people, and they do so collectively; doing it ourselves (themselves), deliberately and differently [19,56,57].

In doing politics in their own alternative manner, young people are subjected to a great deal of debate and opinion. Mayes and Hartup [58] find that young people are represented in Australian news media as 'ignorant zealots', 'anxious pawns', 'rebellious truants' and 'extraordinary heroes'. Likewise, Alexander et al. [4] found that young people involved in the climate strikes were represented as immature and irrational, brainwashed pawns. These categorisations contribute to furthering their position as unfinished, still in training, and not yet capable or sufficiently mature [4]. Despite these persistent dominant narratives,

young people have demonstrated competent political agency, with an energy that arises from their moral emotions and personal claim in the issues at stake (see [19,57,59–64]). In rejecting their formal education for a day, the school strikers prioritise their internal and generational conscientisation which has informed their political ideology that change is required and possible.

Throughout young people's challenge to the limiting structures in their experience, it becomes evident that their awareness of those structures continues to increase. As stated by Sloam et al. [65] (p. 3), "today's younger generations are transforming democratic politics on a global scale." Not all activists have access to the same opportunities and possibilities for climate action. As in Bourdieu's theory of practice, habitus and capital play an important role in influencing a person's practice. Global inequality pervades the possibility for climate action as well as the consequences of climate inaction [48]. Cultural differences also play a role, as argued by Chang [66] in relation to the Taiwanese expectation of young people regarding academic performance and parental intervention.

Nonetheless, activism is a site of learning and education. In fact, the school strikes can be seen to advance the goals of education by creating informed and active citizens [4]. Tattersall et al. [67] discuss how the school strikes enable young activists to develop leadership pathways. As present and active citizens, young climate activists are bridging the personal and political in a way that challenges the binaries and top-down approach of political participation and opens new possibilities for engagement [68]. While adult-centred narratives and frameworks continue to limit young people, transformation occurs through young people's climate activism [69].

Through the process of conscientisation, young people are aware of the structures and expectations surrounding them, and they are also aware of the dangers of climate inaction and how they are situated to bear those consequences. This awareness does not remain as mere knowledge of their reality, but transforms into action, as a generational radical habitus. Holmberg and Alvinus [70] argue that their resistance reaches beyond the family and the local, and individual resistance should not be written off as disobedience as it is connected to, and can spur, collective resistance. They state that this results in a power shift to young people and young people will ensure change occurs even if the current dominant generation continues to resist and disallow [70].

For young people it is a conscious and deliberate choice to participate in climate activism. As Brügger et al. [71] state, politics can have a formative effect on young people and develops a generation with shared concerns and attitudes. This is evidence of a radical habitus developing in young people, not just in the activism field, but as part of their habitus in multiple fields. They are keenly aware of the information and issues, of their limits within that situation, and of their ability to deliberately do politics differently [57]. In this way, activism is a site of learning and education. It results from conscientisation in the political, environmental and radical fields, while influenced by habitus and capital, and is a site of learning for continued conscientisation to transform their reality.

8. Conclusions

This research explored the uses and potential of combining Bourdieu's theory of practice and Freire's conscientisation in studies of young people's activism. In the literature we have reviewed, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and social capital were used more prominently in studies of young people's activism in general, rather than in those specifically relating to climate activism. However, the ideas of habitus, and in particular radical habitus, are important to illuminate the radical dispositions that young people are developing via their participation in climate activism. These studies also highlighted the intergenerational interactions and nature of both intergenerational support and tensions which are evident in young people's activism. Incorporating an understanding of habitus in these studies supports a generational analysis of young people's activism. Habitus is formed over time, through history and relevant to a particular place and time. In fact, habitus has been used in Mannheim's [34] generational approach to understanding the field of youth studies,

an approach which is particularly useful in activism studies as well. While the life-span approach lends itself towards developmental aspects of age and life stages, the generational approach highlights the dynamics of the context into which youth are born and their lived experience. Thus, what we can see from using Bourdieu to analyse climate activism is that climate activism is not part of a developmental stage but rather the emergence of a generational radical habitus. Despite differences in access to capital and field, which undoubtedly shape an individual young person's practice, the current generation of young people have a generational disposition towards taking action.

Dominant narratives seek to argue that children should be in school pursuing their education rather than participating in political matters and strike actions [4]. These narratives also minimise the actions and capacity of young people as being irrational and immature and therefore not to be taken seriously because they rely on a life-span approach to understanding youth. Studies of young people's climate activism, in particular since 2018 when the Global School Strikes began, explore how young people's activism is a site of education and learning. There is value in considering the strikes as a form of conscientisation to further understand how this generational radical habitus is developing. As a generation with a shared experience and concern for their future, as well as a collective and personalised manner of political action, combining their conscientisation and radical habitus is essential for understanding the complexities of their engagement in activism.

While this study is a limited desktop literature search, the theoretical contribution is applicable beyond the case study of young people's climate activism. Combining Bourdieu's theory of practice and Freire's conscientisation has analysis potential for application in other situations, fields and areas of studies and generations. In particular, conscientisation helps us to understand the processes at play when habitus shifts, and assists in understanding how practice can differ from what is expected. Future research could explore these concepts in contemporary ethnographic projects with young people regarding their political participation, activism and civic engagement.

Throughout history, young people have experienced and campaigned regarding a range of political and social issues. For this generation, the current climate change crisis is global in scale and devastating in proportions not previously felt. As a result, young people have undergone a process of conscientisation. They have a heightened sense of awareness of the science relating to climate change, and this awareness has translated into a conscious lifestyle approach that involves individual and collective political action.

As a generation they are aware that they are facing the consequences of climate change and that they can take action to effect change upon that future. Through this conscientisation, young people have collectively mobilised to follow alternative pathways to politics and action. While habitus is a "structuring structure" [1] (p. 71), conscientisation is a process of realisation and action upon the possibilities for transformation within structure. In the words of Freire, "to do this authentically they must perceive their state not as fated and unalterable, but merely as limiting—and therefore challenging" [23] (p. 73). Today's young generation is living in a time of global crisis, where the environment is being devastated by global warming that threatens the life and wellbeing of species on earth, and instead of seeing this as fated and unalterable they are developing generational practices of activism.

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