A subtle kind of certainty

Market dynamics and symbolic violence in professional financial planning

Patrick F. Parnaby
University of Guelph

Using data collected from 42 semi-structured interviews with professional financial planners and eight recorded meetings between planners and clients, this paper examines two interrelated social phenomena from a Bourdieusian (1977, 1991) perspective. First, it examines how professional financial planners legitimize their expertise by constructing and maintaining a distinction between short-term economic uncertainty on one hand, and the inevitability of long-term economic growth on the other. Second, it conceptualizes those legitimation practices in terms of their symbiotic relationship to broader structural conditions. The analysis concludes by reflecting on the significance of misrecognition as it relates to industry claims about the future.

Keywords: financial planners, uncertainty, markets, power, expertise, symbolic violence, Bourdieu

Introduction

As the proverbial foot soldiers of the investment industry, professional financial planners help channel economic capital from the general population into the marketplace: doing so, however, requires clients to believe in a planner's ability to secure them a brighter financial future. Thus, this paper asks: how do professional financial planners legitimize their expertise? And, how are these legitimation practices connected to broader structural conditions? Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977, 1991) work, I argue that the perceived legitimacy of a planner's expertise depends on the extent to which clients take the distinction between short-term economic uncertainty and the inevitability of long-term growth for granted. Moreover, although these legitimation practices take place during focussed encounters between planners and clients and, thus, appear temporally and spatially contained,

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they exist in a *symbiotic* relationship to broader structural conditions. Bourdieu's work, I argue, provides a strong theoretical framework for understanding these social processes.

Professions, expertise, and discourse

Scholars have been examining the legitimation of professional expertise for decades; the literature is theoretically and substantively diverse and many of the key debates have become quite protracted (Hughes 1963; Larson 1977; Freidson 1986; Evetts 2013). Generally speaking, it is understood that, at the level of labor market relations, the perceived legitimacy of professional expertise stems from advanced training, accreditation, and the development of strategic partnerships with government offices and/or institutions of higher learning. The resulting state of "market closure" (Freidson 1999) allows professionals to lay claim to a specialized body of knowledge and position themselves advantageously relative to the marketplace (Freidson 1986, 1999; Brint 1993; Evetts 2013; Noordegraaf and Schinkel 2011).[1]

At an individual level, focussed encounters between professionals and laypersons involve "acts of persuasion" (Freidson 2001: 105), where the former seek to establish the legitimacy of their expertise relative to the latter. Medical scholars, for example, have shown that perceived legitimacy is a function of how well practitioners manage perceptions of uncertainty and risk (Fox 1957; Nilson 1979; Sarangi and Roberts 1999; Candlin and Candlin 2002; Zinn 2008). Although the medical literature has been most prolific in this regard, similar processes have been documented in other fields, including crime prevention (Parnaby 2006), public relations (Treem 2012), and international law (Kessler and Werner 2013).

Professionals must also legitimize their expertise in relation to other professionals and/or colleagues. As Reed (1996) argues in his review of expert power in late modernity, the politics of expertise often involve protracted struggles over jurisdictional domains, as experts struggle to maintain or extend their control over specialized bodies of knowledge (Abbott 1988). Again, the medical literature has documented how practitioners use language and other forms of symbolic communication to delineate and defend the boundaries of their expertise when new opportunities arise and/or when competing claims to expertise threaten the existing distribution of status and power (Joyce 2005; Burri 2008; Pickard 2009). Similar dynamics have been documented outside the field of medicine. Lyon's (2005) study of a rapidly growing software company, for example, examines the competitive

1. For the purpose of this paper, I will use "professionals" and "experts" interchangeably; that said, I recognize the two are not *always* one and the same.

"verbal sparring" that underlies the legitimation of expertise in knowledge intensive organizations (see also Treem 2012).

Regardless of (the particular) professional field, whenever the legitimacy of expert knowledge is taken for granted, laypersons become subject to social control. According to Foucault and his contemporaries, regimes of expert knowledge, while deriving their legitimacy from the scientific truths at their fields' core, have enabled the corporal and subjective regulation of specific populations for centuries (Foucault 1988, 1990, 1991). Building on Foucault's (1991) concept of 'governmentality', for example, scholars have conceptualized professions as nodes in what is now considered a vast, decentralized network of institutions. Through expert discourse, the conduct of individuals or groups is brought into line with existing organizational structures and/or ideologies (Foucault 1991; Fournier 1999; Rose 1996; Miller and Rose 2008; Brante 2010). Even though some scholars of the professions have argued that Foucault overstates the relationship between expertise and control – suggesting, for example, that he fails to recognize the extent to which professional discretion alters how knowledge is used to "guide the use of institutional power" (Freidson 1986: 217) – a close reading of the governmentality literature, for example, reveals that social control is never absolute and that choice is never abolished entirely (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982).

Although the literature on professional expertise is vast and spans all levels of analysis – from structural approaches to labor market systems on the one hand, to nuanced discourse analyses on the other – it has yet to examine the legitimation practices of financial planners; also, it has yet to provide a convincing explanation of how legitimation practices in general intersect with structural conditions and vice versa. With respect to the latter, as Pilnick (1998) argues, those who have studied professional expertise from a structural standpoint have tended to reduce symbolic communication to a mere by-product of structural conditions. Freidson (2001) for example, acknowledges the importance of persuasion when it comes to establishing the legitimacy and power of expert knowledge, but says little about what acts of persuasion look like or how they work. On the other hand, discourse analysts frequently note the importance of "contextual conditions" (Linell et al. 2002: 216) and how such conditions "impinge on the locally managed contexts of interaction" (Candlin and Candlin 2002: 122), but fail to explain *how* it happens; in addition, they often imply that the relationship operates in one direction only (while structural conditions impact discourse, the latter does not impact the former).

Although, as Noordegraaf and Schinkel (2011) point out, Bourdieu's work (1977, 1991, 2000) is rarely associated with the study of professions and/or the legitimation of expertise, it offers a strong theoretical framework for doing so. To be fair, scholars have recognized the utility of certain Bourdieusian concepts; however, their analyses rarely go much beyond noting the significance of capital in the struggle for expert recognition (cf. Lyon 2005; Arnoldi 2007; Burri 2008). As I will demonstrate, a deeper engagement with Bourdieu's ideas, especially the epistemological and ontological dimensions of his thinking, allows for a stronger understanding of how expertise is legitimated and how legitimation practices and structural conditions intersect.

Bourdieu

Bourdieu theorizes individual perceptions, tastes, and actions as specifications of our collective existence: we are, in part, products of the social realities into which we are born and to which we are differentially exposed (Bourdieu 1977, 1991, 2000). That said, human cognition – our ability to sense, reflect, and decide – affords a degree of human agency. At the heart of this dialectic are Bourdieu's intersecting concepts of 'habitus' and 'field'. As a type of socialized subjectivity (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), the habitus translates the intrinsic and relational qualities of objective, external fields into cognitive schemes which then dispose us to particular courses of action (Lizardo 2004). When the habitus and a given field are aligned – that is, when participation in the rhythm of social life seems effortless – subjects are said to have developed a "feel for the game" whereby the subjective meaning and spatiotemporal qualities of fields appear self-evident, as if they were entirely "natural" (Bourdieu 1977, 1991, 2000). This 'doxic' state renders opaque the asymmetrical relations of power that underlie what is actually an arbitrary state of existence (Bourdieu 1991, 2000; Schinkel and Noordegraaf 2011).[2] Individuals are thus often complicit in their own control by virtue of their embrace of the doxa which is imposed upon them by the existing configuration of fields – a dynamic Bourdieu calls "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu 1977, 1991).

Although his critics would suggest otherwise (cf. Cronin 1996; Bohman 1997; Burawoy 2012), Bourdieu has argued clearly that submission to the doxa is *not* inevitable. Indeed, the habitus functions as a kind of matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and is therefore capable of generating a vast array of diversified actions by analogically transferring its cognitive schemes (Bourdieu 1977; Lizardo 2004): however, the resulting actions are always constrained by subjective capacity and objective possibility (Wacquant 2014). Moreover, the habitus can also be out of synch with unfamiliar fields. While this disconnect is usually experienced as nothing more than a fleeting "blip" or "misfire" (Bourdieu 2000: 162) requiring only a

2. The doxa *is* the taken for granted sense of reality. Reality is "arbitrary" in the sense that our present subjective and objective structures are products of a historical trajectory, defined by relations of power and struggle that could have ended differently.

minor schematic adjustment to restore a sense of ontological security (Bourdieu 1991, 2000; Lizardo 2004), sometimes individuals will use "strategic modifications of discourse" (Bourdieu 1991: 78) in an effort to transform how social reality is subjectively perceived and, ultimately, objectively structured, so it better reflects their interests. The efficacy of such efforts, however, always depends on the distribution of what Bourdieu calls "symbolic capital"; as he makes very clear in *Language and Symbolic Power*, habitus "is not destiny" (1991: 180).

This paper examines the legitimation of expertise in the context of professional financial planning. There *is* a small academic literature on financial planners that examines, for example, predictors of success and matters of communication (cf. Miller and Koeston 2008; De'Armond 2011; De'Armond and Durband 2011; Hunt et al. 2011); however, these works are not *critical* in any sociological sense. With the partial exception of Aldridge's (1997, 1998) work on cultural capital and the financial planning industry in general, the literature does not examine planners reflexively. A Bourdieusian approach is therefore important as it brings a critical dimension to the literature.

Methods

Bourdieu addresses the significance of discourse and other forms of symbolic communication in a number of places, most notably in *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), where he explains clearly how discourse is structurally constrained on one hand and amenable to strategic modification on the other. Thus, it stands to reason that a close examination of how and when language and other forms of symbolic communication are being used to demonstrate and legitimize expertise would be theoretically and methodologically congruent with Bourdieu's work.

Data for the current research was collected through a series of semi-structured interviews with planners between 2006 and 2010. In total, 42 interviews were conducted with planners (26 male and 16 female) who specialized in providing clients with estate, tax, insurance, and investment advice as part of a 'full-service' approach to client care. Planners' industry experience varied, with approximately 55% having less than 10 years, 30% having between 10 and 19 years, and approximately 15% having 20 years or more. Total assets under management ranged from approximately \$500,000 to over \$100 million. Seven participants worked for major Canadian banks while the remaining 35 worked for other money management organizations.

Participants were recruited with the assistance of the Financial Planners Standards Council of Canada (FPSC), the organization that promotes the industry's interests and grants the Certified Financial Planner (CFP) designation. The

FPSC agreed to include a call for participants in an e-newsletter sent monthly to more than 12,000 certified planners across Canada. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with planners working across southern Ontario, while those working elsewhere were interviewed over the telephone.[3]

To examine exchanges between planners and their clients, eight meetings were audio recorded. Not surprisingly, perhaps, permission to record planner/client meetings was difficult to obtain, in part because people tend to consider personal finance a private matter (Atwood 2012); it was also difficult because some planners were concerned about liability. However, this gate-keeping effect was rather limited because a sufficient number of planners believed clients should decide for themselves whether or not to participate.

Planners were asked to send a recruitment letter to clients who had already scheduled a meeting. When all parties convened at the client's home or the planner's office (usually the latter), they were asked to record the proceedings, using a digital voice recorder. To minimize interviewer effects (Adler and Adler 1994), the researcher waited elsewhere for the meeting to end, at which time the recorder was retrieved. Planners were compensated $50 (CDN) for their initial semi-structured interview and, along with clients, an additional $50 if they participated in the recorded meeting. When interest in the project began to taper off, compensation was increased to $75. The digital audio files from the semi-structured interviews and recorded meetings were later transcribed, de-identified, and imported into NVivo for coding and thematic analysis.[4]

Methodologically compatible with realist and constructionist frameworks, thematic analysis involves identifying patterns in data with respect to participants' responses and/or their underlying meaning (Braun and Clarke 2006; Saldana 2014). Coding can be an inductive or deductive undertaking, although scholars often move back and forth between the two approaches while letting themes emerge from the data (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Whatever the case may be, as Braun and Clarke (2006) argue, researchers must be clear about how they approached the coding process. For the purpose of this study, the identification of themes involved a combination of "open" (Weber 1985) and "axial" (Berg 2001) coding. The open coding process was informed or "sensitized" (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 50), first and foremost, by the existing literature on professional language use where the relationship between managing perceptions of certainty and/or uncertainty and

3. Telephone interviews can be problematic. Because the interview setting cannot be observed directly, the absence of nonverbal cues can make assessing an interviewee's level of interest or emotional state of mind difficult (Stephens 2007; Brinkmann 2014; King 2010); nevertheless, the telephone was the only practical means by which some participants could be interviewed.

4. NVivo is a qualitative analysis software package.

expertise has been well documented (cf. Candlin and Candlin 2002). Open coding yielded myriad themes which were then refined during the axial phase to ensure sufficient exclusivity and validity. In what follows, I focus primarily on how planners and clients conceptualized and communicated about the future.[5] To support my argument, I draw on excerpts from field notes and interview transcripts involving many different participants, in order to demonstrate thematic consistency across sex, years of experience, and place of employment.

Constructing short and long-term financial futures

In meeting rooms and private offices, participants were asked about the nature and value of their expertise as well as what they believed was certain or uncertain about the future. Time and again, the data revealed a habitus deeply inscribed by the following belief: although our short-term economic future is always uncertain, our long-term future will inevitably bring market growth and financial security to individuals who heed their planner's advice.

For example, in 2006, Joseph, a planner with seven years experience working in a regional office for a large money management organization, explained the difference between short and long-term economic futures:

> Joseph: And, but you know, you don't have any control … it's … uh … you know, one of the great sayings in this business is that we're the only industry in the world where tomorrow is totally murky but 10 years from now is *crystal clear*. Every other business in the world … um … tomorrow is crystal clear and 10 years from now is murky. Because …
>
> Researcher: Can you explain?
>
> Joseph: Sure. Tomorrow the markets could collapse. A plane could fly into a building. We really don't know what's going to happen. But 10 years from now we know that … um … the capitalist system will work and you know this [because] business is grow or die so that the capital markets *will be* better than they were today. We just don't know how the events are going to take it there, we just know that it's going to be higher.

There was clearly no question in Joseph's mind that, despite tomorrow's uncertainty, the long-term future promised economic growth and financial security for his clients. Joseph was not alone, however. Vince, a planner with more than 10 years experience, said he was able to relieve clients' existential anxieties because

5. Other relevant themes have been discussed elsewhere (cf. Parnaby 2009, 2011).

he knew, with "certainty", economic growth over the next 10 to 15 years would bring them the financial security they were seeking:

> What I can give clients is that reassurance that … uh … what we're doing will work. Um, it's the comfort of knowing that we're going in the right direction I think. It's uh … it's … what's better than giving them the reassurance that … uh … *I know exactly what will happen*? I don't know what'll happen tomorrow … uh … but I know *with certainty* what'll happen in ten and fifteen and twenty years.

Likewise, with 14 years experience in the financial services sector and six years experience as a Certified Financial Planner, Andrew went as far as to predict how much markets would grow over the next two decades: "I can't tell you that something is going to happen … 6 months … from now in the market. What I can tell you is that, the market … 20 years from now … the TSX [Toronto Stock Exchange] will be 20% higher than now." Finally, with 35 million dollars under management and more than 12 years experience, Nancy worked for a large investment company located in Toronto's financial district. In an office overlooking the city she remarked: "We can't predict the next … six months to a year. However, over time I can … I *can* predict that things are gonna be fine." Nancy then leaned back in her leather chair and appeared confident.

Of course, it is not only *what* planners say that is important; it is also *how* they say it. Most planners spoke with a sense of conviction when explaining the difference between short and long-term economic futures: they would, for example, lean forward, make eye contact, tap the table with a pen, or gesture with their hands. These actions were not trivial expressions of individual character; rather, each gesticulation was a reflection of a deeply inscribed and embodied habitus capable of yielding conduct entirely congruent with cultural expectations regarding how an expert should behave and sound (Bourdieu 1977, 1991).

Not surprisingly, perhaps, a belief in the immutable distinction between short and long-term economic futures was also reflected in the symbolic content of planners' offices. Almost every participant, for example, had ready access to an Andex chart that depicted graphically short-term market volatility and long-term growth over time. With its colourful trend-lines and historical detail, the Andex chart conveys a sense of scientific precision and legitimacy.[6] In other instances, pieces of scrap paper, used to sketch flows of capital moving from one account to another while investment balances trended upward over time, were left haphazardly on a table or left visible in the trash. (During semi-structured interview planners would reach habitually for a pen and paper to "sketch" the logic behind long term

6. The Andex chart can be found here: http://corporate.morningstar.com/ca/asp/subject.aspx?xmlfile=6775.xml (Accessed June 4th, 2015).

investment strategies.) Other examples were less conspicuous; for example, some offices were adorned with motivational posters that appeared to encourage clients to deal with life's unexpected moments by staying focussed on what was certain to be a more prosperous future.

For planners, these symbols are merely tools of the trade and are used without much conscious deliberation. However, by virtue of where and by whom these seemingly mundane symbols are deployed, they carry with them a degree of institutionalized authority and symbolic power that make them an important means by which, as in the present context, a client's habitus can be strategically aligned with the field. Indeed, as Bourdieu notes, symbols are "… instruments of knowledge and communication … [that] make it possible for there to be a *consensus* on the meaning of the social world" (Bourdieu 1991: 166).

The doxa meets a heretic

That planners hold the difference between short and long-term economic futures to be obvious is a function of their professional training and their on-the-job socialization (Noordegraaf and Schinkel 2011): the distinction is inscribed into their habitus by external social conditions over time and then enacted as part of their expert identity. Thus, one is led to expect that any attempt to call the distinction into question would elicit attempts to restore the doxa's integrity and, by extension, the planner's sense of him- or herself as an expert. As Bourdieu (1991) argues:

> … dominant individuals, in the absence of being able to restore the silence of the doxa, strive to produce, through a purely reactionary discourse, a substitute for everything that is threatened by the very existence of heretical discourse … they endeavour to impose universally, *through a discourse permeated by the simplicity and transparency of common sense, the feeling of obviousness and necessity which this world imposes on them*; having an interest in leaving things as they are [italics added].
> (Bourdieu 1991: 131)

Semi-structured interviews with planners thus provided a valuable opportunity to be the proverbial "heretic". For example, Ryan, a planner with more than 15 years experience with one of Canada's largest planning companies, appeared surprised when asked whether markets could grow indefinitely:

> Ryan: Well. I mean, I *think* they can. I mean things are always going to change, markets are going to open up, globalization, umm, you know, hopefully Canada will stay competitive. I mean we've got the resources which is probably our edge. But I do think you *have* to believe that, because what's the other alternative?

> Researcher: What *is* the alternative?
>
> Ryan: If you don't believe that companies are going to grow and become more profitable and your standard of living is going to at least stay the same, if not get better, then *that's a pretty pessimistic view* [laughs]!

The question caused Ryan to pause and reflect for a moment, as if he was experiencing a slight disconnect between his habitus and a field he thought was familiar. Especially noteworthy, however, is the apparent shift in his rationale. Insofar as Ryan began by emphasizing new markets, the importance of natural resources, and the need for Canada to remain competitive, he offered an expected performance of his expertise. But his professional logic then gave way to assertions underscored by a sense of obviousness and necessity, as if his 'expert' response to the question was no longer viable (i.e., "I do think you *have* to believe that" and "what's the other alternative?"). He then drifted further away from the institutionally authorized response he started with and lapsed into a defense of the doxa on grounds that were more normative: those who question the inevitability of long-term growth, he suggested, are pessimists.

When asked whether long-term growth was inevitable, Lois also emphasized what she thought was self-evident:

> Researcher: … can we always count on our markets to keep growing?
>
> Lois: Yes absolutely! Let … let me put it to you this way.
>
> Researcher: Okay.
>
> Lois: I think capitalism is here to stay, right? Uh … communism is certainly not gonna creep in so ya know this … this is it … this, you know, since the beginning of time almost … you know … and it will and I also think that um, for the most part capitalism works, right? It works well and, your know, we're not gonna go to communism.

According to Lois, markets will grow indefinitely because there is no alternative to our current economic system (i.e., "this is it"). Capitalism, she argued, not only "works", but has been in place ''since the beginning of time almost". Although neither statement is technically correct, what matters here is that her response amounted to a series of declarative statements regarding what should have been obvious to everyone: like it or not, capitalism is here to stay and markets will grow forever.

When asked the same question, John conflated the inevitability of market growth with progress and improvements to our (presumably North American) quality of life:

> Researcher: Can the markets keep growing, as they have been, indefinitely?
>
> John: Well uh … and then people have a wrong impression of what the market is or what the market is represented-representative of uh … the market is representative of quality of life and progress. Can quality of life continue to improve? Yes it absolutely can and it has a staggering amount.

The question was then modified slightly to provide John with a more specific, and perhaps more challenging, point for consideration: when asked whether the earth's finite resources might render long-term economic growth less certain, he replied:

> That's one of those things that it … it's true and it's an interesting environmental and uh theoretical, philosophical question um, but *sitting down with people in the real world* it's not something that we can plan for or make … you know … it doesn't affect in any way the type of planning that I would do for somebody.

John appeared to think the question was too abstract to warrant serious consideration; moreover, his reference to "sitting down with people in the real world" implied *he* was engaged in tasks that were more authentic, practical, and real. While speaking, John also shifted uncomfortably in his chair, pursed his lips, and sighed as if he was becoming frustrated by the interview.[7]

As I have demonstrated, the distinction between short term uncertainty and the inevitability of long-term economic growth is inscribed deeply into the subjective structures of planners' habitus and thus comprises a taken for granted part of what it means to think and act like a planner. Thus, in order to legitimize their expertise vis-à-vis clients, planners must manage the latter's subjective perceptions of certainty and uncertainty such that their habitus is brought sufficiently into line with the field. If they are successful in this regard, a shared feel for the game emerges and planner/client relations become more efficient and less prone to conflict (Bessner 2008).

Managing perceptions of certainty and uncertainty in real-time

Data from semi-structured interviews with planners was supplemented by audio recordings of their meetings with clients to glean insight into how forms of symbolic communication and forms of capital are used to manage clients' perceptions of certainty and uncertainty. Three examples are provided below.

As an experienced financial planner with a Canadian bank, Julie's office was located down a short corridor that left the commotion of daily banking behind: its

7. When a person's sense of ontological security is undermined, anxiety is not an uncommon response.

frosted glass and dark wood trim created an air of sophistication and importance. Framed credentials with gold and silver marks of distinction hung next to Julie's awards for outstanding customer service. Tucked neatly beneath a large desk was a high-backed leather chair and, on one of two filing cabinets, a graduation photo was positioned carefully beneath the glow of a banker's lamp. The office suggested expertise, trustworthiness, and dependability – it was a symbolic testimonial to Julie's institutionally delegated authority (Bourdieu 1991).

Julie was preparing to meet Lauren, a client who had scheduled an appointment previously to discuss her long-term financial goals. The first objective was to reassess Lauren's risk tolerance using the bank's standard "Know Your Client" questionnaire and a number of other instructional images. One image in particular – a bar graph approximating the shape of a normal curve – was used to show the two phases of long-term financial planning: "time to save" was represented by the first half of the distribution and "time to spend" was represented by the latter. The image depicted saving and spending as incremental and predictable processes that unfold over time. However, that the potential effects of personal tragedy or economic ruin were not reflected in the image was not surprising, given that images are typically constructed in ways that legitimize dominant configurations of power (Lynch 1985; Cohn 2004). Indeed, from a Bourdieusian perspective, one could argue the bank's instructional images are symbolic manifestations of the field's existing (and inequitable) configuration, and thus an important means by which a client's habitus can be brought into line with the field.

Julie then proceeded to evaluate Lauren's risk tolerance using the bank's standard questionnaire:

> Julie: Ok so uh … the last question is, "if the stock market dropped twenty percent in the past three months what would be your reaction to this kind of news?" And because we've worked together for the past four years, I know what was your reaction in 2008 [laughs].
>
> Lauren: Leave it alone!
>
> Julie: Leave it alone. So we have several choices, that you would freak out and stop everything right away or you would do nothing and – and I think that's what you like … what you chose right?
>
> Lauren: Yeah.
>
> Julie: I will do nothing, "I understand the value of my investments will fluctuate and I'm willing to invest for the long term" [reading the questionnaire out loud].
>
> Lauren: Yeah, because everything I've ever heard is just don't run away, just hang in for the long haul.

Interestingly, Julie actually rephrased the bank's risk assessment questionnaire in two places, as if she was deliberately tempering the hypothetical risks being presented to her client. In the first instance, the questionnaire actually presented a more serious hypothetical loss of 40%, not 20%. After leveraging the social and symbolic capital she had acquired as Lauren's friend and advisor (i.e., "… because we've worked together for the past four years"), Julie then verged on answering the question *for* her client before being interrupted by Lauren who then provided the 'correct' response. Julie rephrased the questionnaire a second time by replacing the bank's prudent and rational sounding "I would sell all of my shares to eliminate any further uncertainty" with "you would freak out and stop everything right away." Again, Julie then tells Lauren how the question *should* be answered before concluding the discussion by reading the most desired course of action out loud. Julie and Lauren's exchange is important because it demonstrates how, as Bourdieu (1991) notes, an individual will strategically modify his or her discourse in an attempt to reinforce someone else's desirable state of habitus/field alignment.

A similar exchange took place in 2010 when Donald and Marie met Sadia, their planner, to discuss investment strategies and plans for retirement. After several minutes of pleasantries, Donald and Marie shared their anxiety about the market's recent performance and their portfolio's declining value. As the excerpt below demonstrates, Sadia found herself having to re-construct the distinction between short and long-term futures:

> Donald: What happened [referring to his portfolio's loss during the 1st quarter]?
>
> Sadia: Yup. And absolutely a normal concern but just, um, want to remind you were we came from, just so you can see that June was actually a pretty healthy pull back. It was something that probably needed to happen. So, here's the peak in 2008 [Sadia shows Donald her computer monitor] … everything looked great, and then we saw it drop down to the bottom here in 2009.
>
> Marie: Mmm hmm.
>
> Sadia: Umm and then we saw a very quick recovery for a good six months or so and you [can see] the flattening off, right?
>
> Marie: Mmm hmm.
>
> Sadia: So all of a sudden, everybody saw these great positive returns for a few quarters and then all the sudden in June, umm, your June statement came out and in the month of June the markets came down quite a bit and so everybody started remembering what happened back in '08 and '09 … but you can see here, based on the chart, that it's really not *that* big of a drop.
>
> Marie: It seemed like it was … like $30,000 or something for me.

> Sadia: Well … but do percentage-wise right? Take a look at your portfolio size. You've got $347,000 and Donald you've got $87,000 so from that perspective it's about 10% … it's about a 10% drop. You are in the market … most of your funds are in the market … and if you'll remember why we did that … we moved your portfolio into the market to take advantage of this. So we still have a long way to go until markets are back to the peak. I'm not suggesting that I know when it's going to happen but I do really want you to have that … you've got the time, even though you feel like you don't, so let's enjoy that recovery and then scale you back to a more moderate approach.

The embodied dimensions of Sadia's habitus reflected the kind of performance one might expect from a professional advisor: she waited patiently for her clients to finish speaking before addressing their concerns and did so in a calm and confident manner. Nevertheless, Marie's anxiety meant Sadia had to re-establish a shared feel for the game; that is, she had to realign her client's habitus with the field so the loss of value would be considered a function of the market's "normal" behavior and not a consequence of poor financial planning. Sadia begins by discursively positioning events of significance along a temporal axis in a way that leaves the perceived legitimacy of her expertise intact; a common discursive strategy in professions where perceptions of certainty and uncertainty must be managed (cf. Sarangi 2002; Parnaby 2006; Broom and Adams 2010). For example, she referred to the 2008 market decline as something that "probably needed to happen", as if it was a foregone conclusion that, despite her expertise, could not have been foreseen. Next, Sadia prognosticates long-tem market growth before boldly reminding David and Marie that they have plenty of time left in their lives to benefit from the inevitable recovery.

By way of contrast, some clients have developed such a strong feel for the game that the distinction between certain and uncertain futures requires little management. For example, Coleen was an experienced planner with a large money management organization in Toronto's financial district. Her office was on the 25th floor and offered a beautiful view of the city. The company's support staff took people's coats and offered them gourmet coffee or bottled water prior to their meeting. Insofar as material conditions help authorize the power of discourse (Bourdieu 1977; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), the symbolic capital on display contributed to the legitimization of the company, its employees, and the planning industry in general.

Prior to their meeting, Coleen characterized her client, Arthur, as a "low maintenance": someone who understood how the industry worked and who recognized the value of good advice. In other words, Arthur had a good feel for the game, was disposed to conduct congruent with his planner's expectations, and was unlikely to contest the doxa. While reflecting on their accomplishments together, Arthur spoke about what he had learned from Coleen and about the importance of being patient while investing over time:

> Arthur: And we learned … we learned a lot. We learned the power of putting your money to work for you.
>
> Coleen: Right [sounding enthusiastic].
>
> Arthur: You know, whether … the big thing is where the trust came from … when we had ten cents you treated us with as much respect as if we had come to you with you know, $1 million dollars.
>
> Coleen: Oh, that's nice.
>
> Arthur: So that was a big thing for us, like you know our … you came to the house, it was winter time, cold, February, parked in the driveway, you know it's night time and we're like you know "so we have like $5 dollars, what do you think it's going to make us?"
>
> Coleen: [Laughter].
>
> Arthur: You know. The learning alone from that … of knowing that there are ways to have money work for you…
>
> Coleen: Right.
>
> Arthur: And how you can do it just by doing what you do with it and by being patient … the learning experience alone was more valuable than anything.

Arthur's comments are important for two reasons. First, he seemed to believe he owed Coleen a debt of gratitude for her having shared her expertise in such a selfless manner. Interestingly, his sentiments lend support to what scholars of professions have known for quite some time: professionals deliberately construct an impression of 'disinterested service' to obfuscate the extent to which they are motivated by their *own* socio-economic interests (cf. Freidson 2001). Second, by virtue of his appropriation of what is essentially promotional discourse (i.e., "the power of putting your money to work for you"), Arthur revealed his willingness to tolerate the market's ebbs and flows and, therefore, the extent to which he had embraced the doxa.

Discussion

When planners engage their clients and inform them of the difference between short and long-term economic futures, they are attempting to align their clients' habitus with the field so they will see the planner's expert position, and the field itself, as being inherently legitimate (cf. the Arthur and Coleen case). Conversely, if a client's habitus cannot be aligned with the field, or if a pre-existing state of habitus/field alignment is undermined, planners will modify their discourse in an effort to remediate the situation (cf. the Marie and Sadia interaction). Whatever the case may be, these exchanges are, at a fundamental level, struggles over the very definition of social reality. How, then, do we account for the symbiotic relationship between these legitimation practices and broader structural conditions? The answer, I argue, requires the social-psychological dimensions of social interaction to be taken into consideration, which is why Bourdieu's work is important: his "structuralist constructivism" (Bourdieu 1989: 14) blends the social *and* psychological (although the latter aspect of his work is often ignored; Lizardo 2004).

By virtue of their habitus having been inscribed at different points in time and space, agents bring cognitive and behavioral dispositions to each interaction that bare residual traces of social systems experienced previously (Lizardo 2004; Bourdieu 2000): the *effects of social structures are therefore reflected in and realized through those cognitive and behavioral dispositions* (Bourdieu 1991).[8] That said, the distribution of symbolic capital will determine if and how those dispositions will be instantiated in social behavior and whether other agents privy to the interaction will develop a shared feel for the game; after all, individuals don't always believe or do as they are told (Brint 1993; Parnaby 2009).

In the present context, the effects of broader structural conditions are present in the cognitive and behavioral dispositions planners *and* clients bring to the interaction. On one hand, a planner's habitus is deeply inscribed by the logic of the professional field, especially the symbolic distinction between short and long term economic futures. Planners are therefore disposed to thoughts and actions that will reflect and, depending on the distribution of symbolic capital, ultimately reproduce structural conditions that favour their current socio-economic position and that of the industry itself. On the other hand, clients bring their own cognitive and behavioral dispositions to each interaction which, depending on *their* position relative to the field, may or may not be congruent with those held by the planner. Again, the distribution of symbolic capital will determine the extent to which a client's subjective structures become aligned with the field and thus reflect and reproduce its existing configuration. A client with a strong feel for the game, for example, will think more like a planner, seek industry-sanctioned investment opportunities, consume industry-related information, and perhaps encourage others to consult a financial expert (Bessner 2008).

That said, complicit behavior is also facilitated by the structure's *existing* capacity for symbolic *violence* insofar as other individuals and institutions leverage

8. A similar line of reasoning is present in Giddens' (1986) work on the duality of structure and in Foucault's (1990, 1991) genealogy of the subject: in both instances, 'exterior' social forces are instantiated in the subject.

symbolic capital to establish the legitimacy of financial planning in general and/or the financial services industry as a whole (Aldridge 1997, 1998). Although the reproduction of existing social structures and relations of power is never a foregone conclusion, symbolic violence, even in its most banal form, contributes to a sense that reality is self-evident or 'natural': as if somehow detached from the inequities and struggles that brought it to fruition in the first place (Bourdieu 1977, 1998). This taken for granted state of existence (i.e., the doxa), by virtue of its ability to render the *social* origins of reality opaque, means that individuals are prone to living in what Bourdieu (1977, 1991) calls a state of "misrecognition." In the financial planning field, misrecognition is especially acute in the distinction between short and long-term economic futures.

Regardless of what even the most experienced financial planner might suggest, we live in what Luhmann (2008) calls the "perpetual present" and thus have absolutely no way of knowing for *certain* what the future will bring, either tomorrow or 20 years from now. We *do* know that some events are more or less probable than others, but that does not mean we can predict the future with certainty: it is a troubling assertion, in part because we derive a sense of ontological security from a belief in the continuity of our own existence over time (Giddens 1986, 1999; Varki and Brower 2013). Existential concerns aside, however, the assertion is also troubling because, on a daily basis, millions of people heed their planner's advice, take the distinction for granted, and invest their hard-earned money in the market under the erroneous presupposition that the long-term future is certain to bring economic security.

Lest we forget: in 2006, the planners who participated in this study were adamant that financial markets were certain to bring clients prosperity over the next 10 or 15 years. Approximately two years later, however, global markets collapsed, banks closed, retirement savings disappeared, and homes were abandoned (Harvey 2010; Lewis 2010).[9] Although those events would have been consonant with the short-term uncertainty planners were discussing with their clients in 2006, those same events would have compromised a client's supposedly economically sound *long*-term future 10 years earlier (when he or she was told the market was certain to deliver financial security by the early 21st century).

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9. According to the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), 476 American banks have closed since 2008. The FDIC's policy is to insure deposits up to a maximum of $250,000; assets in excess of that amount require the consumer to place a lien on the bank's assets. The FDIC's website refers to bank failure as an "unlikely event" (see http://www.fdic.gov/bank/individual/failed/index.html accessed May 27, 2015).

Conclusion

Research has revealed that experts strategically use forms of symbolic communication to demonstrate and legitimize their expertise and that such processes often involve managing laypersons' perceptions of certainty and/or uncertainty (Candlin and Candlin 2002; Sarangi 2002; Parnaby 2006). That structural conditions influence what transpires during micro-level exchanges between experts and clients is also widely understood; however, scholars have yet to effectively elucidate the symbiotic relationship between micro- and macro-level processes. As I have demonstrated, a deeper engagement with Bourdieu's work helps to explain how these processes intersect. Most importantly, perhaps, a Bourdieusian approach also provides the necessary conceptual tools and frames of reference to question what often appears to be self-evident, be it the legitimacy of professional expertise in general or the alluring promise of a secure financial future in particular.

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About the author

Patrick Parnaby is an associate professor of sociology at the University of Guelph, where he teaches courses on deviant behavior and policing. His research examines risk communications and expertise in relation to crime and criminal justice issues. Together with Daniel Kudla, Dr. Parnaby is currently examining the relationship between Twitter use and police image work.

Address for correspondence

Patrick F. Parnaby
University of Guelph
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
50 Stone Road East
Guelph, N1G 2W1
Ontario
pparnaby@uoguelph.ca