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Snaps!: Bourdieu and the Field of Photographic Art

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Abstract: This article forms part of an ongoing body of work where the authors apply the theoretical perspective and conceptual approach of the French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu to a range of artistic field contexts (see, for example, Grenfell and Hardy 2003), Grenfell & Hardy 2007, Hardy & Grenfell 2006, and Hardy 2009). These studies have employed Bourdieu's three-level approach to field analysis in order to tease out the relationship between individual artists' practice, their immediate cultural environment and relations to other fields such as the political and commercial. In the current article, we address the field of photography; in particular focussing on the relationship between the photographic field, its legitimate institutions and its agents, and photographers themselves. First, the article briefly addresses Bourdieu's 'thinking tools'. It then considers some of his own photographs and their relationships to the context of Algeria and Béarn in late 1950s in order to show how photography featured in his own work and his studies of the photographic field. We do this to set a methodological baseline. The case of Roger Fenton, an early British pioneer in photography, is then discussed in order to demonstrate how individual habitus, field context and photographic image are intimately linked. Finally, we offer further examples of C20 photographers in order to extend the exploration of the relationship between their lived experiences, the photographs they took and the social and political context of the time.

Keywords: Photography, Habitus, Field Dynamics, Theory of Practice

Introductory Remarks

Methodological Considerations

BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF practice offers a methodological framework which takes account of changes in social spaces. It depends on both a personal and systemic level of analysis – that is, *habitus* and *field*¹ – all whilst highlighting the dynamic between them. In order to represent the structural relations of any *field*, three distinct perspectives are needed: the relationships between the *field* studied and other *fields*, particularly the *field* of power (this is the most dominant *field* which is constituted by the most powerful and prominent individuals in society, and is typically associated with the State or with dominant business organisations); the relationships between legitimate *field* institutions and the people (agents) associated with them (the structure of the *field* itself); and thirdly, the subjective characteristics and dispositions of the *field* participants in relationship to each other (*habitus*) (see Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 105). For Bourdieu, *field* relations – both within and between *fields* – are normally mediated by what he terms 'capital', or symbolically

¹ It is our practice to write Bourdieu's principal conceptual terms – habitus, field, capital, etc. – in italics in order to indicate that these are underpinned by a complex philosophical theory of practice which distinguishes them from everyday understandings of the same words (see Grenfell, 2008: Introduction and Postscript for further discussion).

powerful objects and attitudes – both physical and ideational - which literally ‘buy’ positioning within the *field*.

It is both the volume and configuration of an individual’s *capital* which allows the occupation of a desirable *field* position so that, in any one *field*, participants struggle with each other for an appropriate range of *capital* in order to secure the best positions within the particular *field* context. To use Bourdieu’s own words:

The crux of any individual’s position (and their choices about position-taking) within a particular field is the quantity and form of capital which has been accrued by that individual.

(Bourdieu 1986/83)

Bourdieu identified three distinct forms of *capital* (See Bourdieu 1986/83): *cultural capital* including embodied dispositions, cultural goods and educational qualifications; *social capital*, which includes social connections, opportunities and obligations; and *economic capital*, or money wealth, and into which, given certain conditions, all other *capitals* can be converted. Only the most dominant *field* participants are therefore able to influence the rates of exchange between these different forms of *capital*. En passant, we may note that formal education has little value for most photographers as *capital*. Informal learning, particularly learning independently or from others, predominates as active *field specific capital* in this unstable *field* where a willingness to abandon previous practice and ‘start again’ is a valuable constituent of *habitus*. As Bourdieu found for French photographers, the less *economic capital* you have, the less likely you are to be a successful photographer (Bourdieu 1990/65).

Space does not permit us to give a full analysis of the photographic *field*². Here we offer a further exploration of the method by focussing on the relationship between the photographic image itself and both the *field participant* – the photographer – and the contextual *field* environment. By focussing on the art product – in this case the photo - we are in effect offering a ‘fourth’ stage or level to the analysis. In this article, we provide illustrations of how the method can be used in relation to the *field* of photography and consider a number of notable photographers and their photographs³ in terms of their *habitus* and their *field* positions.

Photography

Photography is a distinctive cultural *field* where change is routine and diversification commonplace, simply because of the frequency of technological innovation. Indeed, there is a strong correspondence between changes in photographic equipment and changes in the nature and content of the photographs themselves. In such a relatively young *field*, founded in the 1830s, photographic practice is as diverse as the photographers themselves, who consequently are obliged to respond with alacrity to frequent technological innovations if they are to maintain desirable positions within the changing structures of the *field*. The dynamic and relational nature of Bourdieu’s *field* theory is therefore well matched to the inherently unstable cultural context of photography, where, as Bourdieu writes:

² See Grenfell and Hardy 2007 for a more detailed account of the photographic field.

³ Unfortunately, we are unable to include many actual photographs in this article because of the prohibitive cost of copyright. However, we recommend the following on-line sites where the reader can consult further images. www.tate.org.uk ; www.vam.ac.uk ; www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk ; www.metmuseum.org ; www.moma.org

It might ... be part of the 'essence' of photography to oscillate between the imitation of art and *an interest in technology*, the systematic exploitation of the technical resources of photography.

(Bourdieu 1990/65: 104-5)

In later parts of this article, we develop the discussion to explore the relationship between the *fields* of photography, fine art and technology; indeed, Bourdieu writes that photography is 'an art which imitates art' (Bourdieu 1990/65: 73). We also consider the extent to which this statement is true for different photographers in different times and places: whether photographers do indeed mimic fine art practices, and how? The next section considers Bourdieu's own complex relationship to photography as an object of research and as a practical activity.

Bourdieu and Photography

Bourdieu both studied photography as a cultural practice and took photographs himself. He researched photography as one aspect of French cultural consumption in *Les Étudiants et leur Études* (1964), *Les héritiers* (1964) and particularly in *La Distinction* (1979). In the 1960s, he led a team of researchers in a series of empirical investigations of French photographers and their practice. These studies were presented in his major work on photography: *Un Art Moyen* (1965), translated as *Photography: a Middle Brow Art* in 1990. Bourdieu claimed that photography was a 'middle brow art', which was trapped between the spheres of popular art and that of the 'legitimizable' but was itself not legitimate; that is, between the aesthetic sense demonstrated through 'upper class taste' and the patterns of popular culture typically seen in the use of photographs in the family (see Bourdieu 1990/65: 96).

Bourdieu was himself an avid photographer, using the best handheld cameras he could buy at that time, a Zeiss Ekoflex and later, a Leica (see Bourdieu 2004: 19) to take photographs, often without being seen. He recorded people in their changing cultural settings, specifically in Algeria, and in the rural region of France in which he was born, the Béarn⁴. Working in Algeria, Bourdieu reports that the harsh light presented technical problems (ibid.) which led to his seeking advice from local photographers. Using street lighting in his pictures of Paris at night, a similar technical difficulty with strong light contrasts was reported by Brassai.

⁴ Bourdieu's photographs may be seen in his published works, particularly *Travail et Travailleurs* (1964), *Distinction* (1984/79), *Le Bal des Celebataires* (2002), *Actes de la Researches Sciences Sociales*, 150, (2003), *Les Images de L'Algerie*, (2004).



Figure 1: Bourdieu's Camera: Zeiss Ekoflex from 1952-5

Bourdieu's own steep intellectual and social trajectory from the son of a postal worker to professor at the *École des Hautes Études*, one of the most prestigious higher education institutions in France, produced what he called a 'cleft habitus': 'the durable effect of a very strong discrepancy between high academic consecration and low social origin' (Bourdieu 2007/2004: 100). He claimed that this 'conciliation of contraries' showed itself in 'the research objects that interest me, and in the way I approach them' (p. 103). This fragmented relationship to his social and cultural context is clearly reflected in Bourdieu's own choice of subject matter from his photographs: for example, dominated and fragmenting cultures; Algeria at time of revolution, and, post-war Béarn as its population moved slowly but determinedly from a rural setting to an urban one (see Grenfell, 2006). His own early family experiences in the Béarn were of a culture with strong contrasts between farm and city, and a reluctance to embrace urban practices like photography. As he wrote later: 'It is not the practice of photography in itself which is refused: as a city dweller's caprice, it is perfectly suitable for 'outsiders' but only for them' (Bourdieu 1990/65: 50). This sentiment is reflected in his later relationship to his photographic subjects – that of the outsider. We can therefore surmise a close relation between the individual *habitus* in his case, what photos are taken, and how.

Whilst on National Service in Algeria in the 50s, Bourdieu photographed the local people, their homes and their daily lives. He collaborated with local photographers whom he also hired. Together they made a photographic record of the social and cultural consequences of the tragic events of the colonial war. Some of these photographs were published in his book, *Travail et Travailleurs* (1964), under the title *Etude sociologique*. These photographs illuminate the text by offering images of the economic necessity of work, the diversity of work tools, traditional and modern, and a fragmentation of traditional cultural modes of living. A spice seller in a bustling market kneels on the ground beside his scales offering a sharp contrast to the solitary factory worker surrounded by sparks. A cobbler sits quietly in the Casbah

d'Alger waiting for trade, whilst a group of workers attack a steep dusty bank with spades, pick axes and pneumatic drills. On a busy street, a beggar, wearing a darned and mended overcoat, holds out his upturned hand towards his photographer, his eyes modestly averted.

Bourdieu's Algerian photographs are full of edgy juxtapositions and cultural contradictions; for example, the contrast between the subtle decoration of traditional Kablye dwellings with the regimented functional buildings of the resettlement. His pictures show people in the towns engaged in their everyday tasks – buying, selling, travelling, talking – dressed in worn and mended garments, a strange mix of the traditional Arab and modern European dress. Ladies with covered heads and flowing white traditional robes reveal strappy stilettos and sling back shoes (Bourdieu 2004: 204) as they walk down an urban street. Rural life - men gossiping and drinking coffee under an ancient olive tree (p.31) - is juxtaposed with the bustle of the town where poverty predominates in the traditional cultures, fragmented by colonial interventions. The photographs show themes strongly reminiscent of his childhood experiences in the Béarn.

In *Les Images d' L'Algerie* (2004), where these photographs were published, Frisinghelli, Director of Camera Austria, writes, quoting Schultheis:

Photography captivated him (Bourdieu) because it expressed the distant regard of the researcher who records, but who remains always aware of what he is recording, with its capacity to fix immediately, and at a familiar distance, the details which, at the moment of perception, pass by unnoticed or escape from a more in-depth examination
(p. 205)

Bourdieu describes using photography as essentially 'anthropological'; a mode – somewhat as 'the outsider' - which reflects his own early experiences of recording images in the Béarn. In this case, we can see Bourdieu's own *habitus* mirrored in both the images he photographed and his relationship to the photographed subject. Writing about photographic practice in France in the sixties, he showed that he is well aware of the dangers of making strong claims for the objectivity of photography when he wrote that:

... only in the name of a naïve realism can one see as realistic a representation of the real which owes its objective appearance not to its agreement with the reality of things, but rather to its conformity with rules which define its syntax within its social use.
(Bourdieu 1990/65: 77)

In other words, a photograph is considered realistic only if it adopts a visual form which matches that held more broadly by the social group which 'consumes' the image. As noted above, Bourdieu's first 'consumers' were sociologists like himself. However, almost half a century later, the visual quality of his archive of photographs was recognised by a new public through Camera Austria who co-curated with Bourdieu himself an international exhibition which visited the museum of the *Monde d'Arabe* in Paris, and later London and Graz in 2004. The exhibition catalogue was published in the same series as the work of distinguished photographers such as Robert Doisneau and Jean Cocteau, and secured Bourdieu a position as an acclaimed high brow photographer and social activist.

This brief discussion of Bourdieu's photographic practice seeks to illustrate how, for Bourdieu at least, a photographer's *habitus* can shape his photographic practice, as did the

social and cultural norms of both the society being photographed and the broader social space within which the photographer works. The next section takes these features to an early pioneer of photography

An Early Photographer: Roger Fenton

Roger Fenton was a pioneering photographer who played a significant role in developing the use of photography in Victorian England, and was a founder member of the *Royal Photographic Society* (see Baldwin et al 2004). Although his photographic practice spanned less than a decade from 1851 to 1861, his active participation in the social and cultural *fields* of his time played a crucial role in developing the structures of the newly emerging photographic *field* in Britain. His own dramatic social trajectory - from mill owner's son to Royal advisor and prominent Barrister - shows the importance of the interactions between the artistic, the technological *field* and the *field* of power which shaped early photography.

Fenton accrued considerable *economic* and *cultural capital* from his early family experiences. His grandfather founded a successful private bank and used his profits to establish an equally profitable cotton mill and to buy several manor houses in the North of England. Hence, Fenton's early *habitus* combined his family's provincial middle-class dispositions (*embodied cultural capital*) with their recently acquired *economic capital*. Although he was well placed economically, he was far from the centre of national power. When his father became a Member of Parliament, Fenton moved with him to London and studied law at University College. Formal study gave him highly consecrated *cultural capital* and *social capital* derived from his future profession - the law - close to the *field* of power. His *habitus* was now matched to the occupation of a desirable position within the *field* of power. But, like other young, well placed Victorian gentlemen, he discovered a new vocation as a fine art painter. In a classic avant-gardist *field* strategy (Bourdieu 1984 151), he abandoned law and moved to Paris where he studied artistic composition in a French atelier. Returning to London, he duly exhibited at the *Royal Academy* but, like many other artists, with unspectacular results. In one sense, photography rescued him for this failure.

Now in his thirties with a wife and family, Fenton returned to law to become a barrister. Almost simultaneously, he saw and was greatly impressed by the photography in the Fine Art section of the 1851 Great Exhibition. He took up photography. Fenton, like all photographers at that time, needed cumbersome equipment and scientific skill to take and develop his own photographic images. To make the process mobile required the dedicated support of a servant and a fully equipped horse-drawn van.



© Victoria and Albert Museum Figure 2: Fenton's Photographic Van with his Servant

At the invitation of a friend who was designing a bridge for Czar Nicholas 1, Fenton undertook his first photographic expedition to Russia where he took the first ever photographs of Moscow. When he presented these images in London, public acclaim held the exhibition open for several months rather than the intended two weeks. A visit to the exhibition by the Royal family, and their purchase of Fenton's twenty-five Moscow photographs, secured both his reputation as a photographer, and photography's place in London society.

In Paris, Fenton had also recognised the crucial role of membership of a prestigious artistic group in cultural legitimisation. Consequently, he led the successful founding of the *Royal Photographic Society*. In 1853, he was duly elected honorary secretary and became adviser to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert in their growing interest in photography. When later he was commissioned to photograph the Royal family (and Windsor Castle), Roger Fenton accrued *the most* consecrated *cultural capital* available in Victorian Britain – Royal patronage. One of these photographs, Figure 3: shows the Princess Helena and Princess Louise, composed formally and symmetrically in keeping with fine art conventions of painted royal portraiture but an element of informality – the fallen stool – is also introduced.



Figure 3: Princesses Helena and Louise 1856

Fenton sought to distinguish his photographic practice from that of 'hack commercial portraitists' and used his fine art training to compose photographs of the celebrated beauty spots of Wales and Yorkshire, cathedrals and stately homes.



© Victoria and Albert Museum Figure 4: Roger Fenton, River Wharfe, 1854

The legitimacy of the subject of a photograph determined its price. Given his fine art training, Fenton chose to imitate high art genres: landscapes, orientalist odalisques and opulent still-life fruit displays (See Figure 4 and www.vam.ac.uk). This imitation of fine art was a successful *field* strategy since, in the *field* of artistic consumption at that time, a photograph

functioned as an alternative to a portrait and landscape painting: as a valorised object only available to the most privileged - e.g. Queen Victoria. Following in the footsteps of the Royals, other *field* participants sought to own similar photographs, since they signalled, in ways which a painting could not, an awareness of scientific progress which was itself a potent and prestigious form of *field capital* at that time. As newly-rich, middle classes also recognised photographs as desirable cultural objects in themselves (*objectified cultural capital*), the market for commissioned portraits, landscapes and prints was superseded by ownership of photographs and the fine art *field* was restructured. Changes to *field capital* and *field structures* of this type, where both producer and consumer are involved, is a regular feature of the *field* of photography because of its interpenetration with the artistic and technological *fields*. (See Grenfell & Hardy 2007: 167ff).

By 1861, photography had advanced technologically and was increasing popular. In the *International Exhibition* 1861, photography had been reclassified from the Fine Art category to one with Machinery and Instruments. This move reflected the rapid pace of technological change in photographic processes, and a corresponding decline in the importance of photography within the artistic *field*. Fenton's *habitus* had conditioned him to value photography as a fine art rather than as a quasi-industrial process which was after all rather too close for comfort to his family's industrial roots. Hence, these new *field* structures did not suit him. He returned to his law practice and, in 1862, was appointed to the prestigious post of Barrister for the Manchester courts.

Fenton's brief artistic career offered him opportunities to photograph the most highly consecrated subjects – royalty, fine art objects and stately homes. In Victorian England, as Bourdieu found later in 1960's France, photographing prestigious subjects gave a photographer prestige, simply by association. Unsurprisingly then, Roger Fenton, the Royal family's first photographer, was able to move from the *nouveau riche*, industrial middle classes to a highly consecrated dominant position in the *field* of power as a law maker. In other words, Fenton's *field* strategies, including his *avant-garde positioning* as neglected artist and pioneer of a new medium, have proved to be successful in terms of artistic consecration. Even today, he can be described as a Master of the photographic *field*.

Photographers' Habitus, Field Dynamics and the Field of Fine Art

In order to understand the socio-cultural trajectory of any career, it is necessary to consider the *habitus* associated with the *field* positions which are successively occupied, as was demonstrated for the cases of Fenton and Bourdieu himself. Bourdieu emphasised, one must 'take into account not only capital volume and composition but also the historical evolution of these properties, i.e. the trajectory of the group as a whole and of the individual in question and his lineage, which are the basis of the subjective image of the position objectively occupied' (Bourdieu 1984a/79: 453). This was very clear for the case of Roger Fenton. We now discuss the photographic *field* and its ever changing relation to the *fields* of fine art and technology in light of the photographic practice of the examples of other contemporary photographers: namely, Brassai, Lange, Mapplethorpe and Billingham.

A French/Hungarian Photographer: Brassai

Brassai was a celebrated twentieth-century photographer, much liked by Bourdieu. Born in 1899, the son of a Hungarian university professor who studied French literature at the Sorbonne, Brassai's trajectory began in what Bourdieu (ibid.: 452) called a 'left wing dominated dominant' *field position* – high in *cultural capital*, but less endowed with *economic capital* – a *field position* often associated with university teachers and avant-garde artists (See Bourdieu 1984/79). As a young man, Brassai served in the Austro-Hungarian cavalry and studied fine art in Budapest and Berlin. His companions included noted artists, writers and musicians – Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Kandinsky, Kokoschka, Varese and Bartok. When Brassai moved to Paris in 1924, he had fine art training, was bilingual in German and Hungarian, and was studying French. In other words, he had accrued a significant volume of *capital*, largely from education.

In keeping with his family's intellectual origins, he chose to live on the Parisian left-bank, earning his living as a journalist for German and Hungarian magazines. He collected old photographs, knew established photographers, including Eugene Atget, and, in 1929, began to take his own photographs with a borrowed camera. Shortly after, he bought a professional camera, a *Voigtlander*, with which he took the atmospheric photographs of Paris for which he became famous. During his nocturnal walks around Paris with Henry Miller, he photographed bars, night clubs and their clientele, pictures which established his reputation when published in 1932. Some of these photographs echo fine art images: Impressionist pictures like *Le Bar aux Folies Bégères* or *The Absinthe Drinker*. More often, Brassai's choice of photographic subject reflected his own 'alternative' environment in Paris, and his circle of artistic friends including Max Jacob, Léger, Le Corbusier and Picasso – the celebrities of his day.

When Picasso commissioned Brassai to photograph his sculptures, the effect on Brassai's *capital* configuration was electric. As the 'royalty' of the artistic avant-garde, Picasso's patronage endowed him with highly consecrated *cultural capital* so that, through changes homologous to Fenton's transformation by Queen Victoria's patronage, his career as a photographer, albeit in a lesser art, was secure. Brassai went on to photograph the studios of Picasso, Giacometti, Lipschitz, Astride Maillol and Matisse – the celebrities of his time. Like both Fenton and Bourdieu, the nature of Brassai's photographic practice and his choice of photographic subjects matched his own *habitus* – 'Bohemian' Paris and his avant-gardists friends. With highly consecrated *social* and *cultural capital* derived from the restricted artistic *field* of 1930's Paris, Brassai occupied a dominant *field position* within the dominated part of the *field* of cultural production, a *field position* entirely in keeping with the artistic group to which he belonged and which he photographed.

Brassai's successful photographic career continued over three decades, but like Fenton before him, Brassai gave up photography and returned to his previous occupation – as an artist and sculptor. Brassai explained: '... I have taken many photographs in my life and published relatively few books, so now I prefer to travel the universe of my photographs and make them better known' (Sayad & Lionel-Marie 2000). Ironically, this *field strategy* proved to be a successful in further consecrating his *field position* through prestigious awards: a gold medal from the Venice Biennale; the first Grand Prix National for photography; and the Légion d'Honneur – as successful a photographic career as is possible.

An American Political Photographer: Dorothea Lange

The American photographer Dorothea Lange also worked in the thirties but her *habitus* and photographic practice differed greatly with that of Brassai. In her early childhood she faced some difficulties - she caught Polio and her father abandoned the family home in Long Island – but she graduated successfully from college. After apprenticeships with commercial photographers, she worked as an independent portrait photographer in California. However, during the Depression, she had started to photograph the homeless, displaced people she saw around her. 1935 was a turning point in her personal and photographic life: a dramatic change in her *habitus* and in her photographic practice. She was commissioned by the Farm Security Administration to document the poverty of migrant workers. She also married her second husband, a politically committed Professor of Economics who, she claimed, educated her socially and politically. They worked together to document and record the poverty in America – he recorded interviews, she unflinchingly photographed the poor. Figure 5 shows Dorothea on a field trip, and demonstrated the nature of the technology which shaped her photography: the car and the camera.



Figure 5: Dorothea Lange's Technological Support

Her empathetic photographs make no claim to artistic status, although she herself has received awards and prizes for them. The continuing power of her photographs means that even today she is considered an icon of politically committed photography.

Transgressive Photographer: Robert Mapplethorpe

Robert Mapplethorpe's artistic career offers a *field trajectory* dogged by controversy. His social origin was conventionally middle class. He was born in 1946, the third of six children

in a Roman Catholic family living in suburban America, Long Island. He graduated in Fine Art in Brooklyn, producing mixed media art works. Following in the established footsteps of Picasso, Braque and Duchamp, he used commercially produced materials and pre-existing photographic images in his collages. His first celebrity portrait made use of a torn photograph of Warhol whom he claimed as his role model. Thus, his early *habitus* was typical of many fine art graduates in the 60s - inherited middle-class *social* and *cultural capital* combined with more 'alternative' artistic *capital* in the form of educational qualifications and artistic practice.

Mapplethorpe began to take his own photographs in the 1970s when he again followed Andy Warhol in choosing an instant camera – a *Polaroid*. He then used the photographs in collages, assembling images of his girlfriend Patti Smith, a self portrait, and more controversially 'Kissing Boys 1972'. Mapplethorpe's enduring interests in the 'photograph as an object', and in male nudity and sadomasochistic imagery can be seen even in these early art works. He came to notice by courting controversy, a *field* strategy which secured a left-wing *field* positioning within the New York artistic avant-garde.

In the mid 70's, he acquired a large format press camera and photographed his wide circle of friends and acquaintances, including visits to underground sex clubs. This '*field* move' shows a direct, and, probably knowing, deployment of *social capital* in a strategic transgressive position-taking within the cultural *field*. In contrast, he also produced technically superb still-life photographs of delicate flowers with shimmering light and classical symmetrical beauty – a symmetry which he 'blamed' on his Catholic upbringing. Mapplethorpe's later pictures developed a more elegant and gentler beauty so that he became an expensive and sought-after portraitist of the celebrities of his time. However, some of Mapplethorpe's more startling images of male nudes, often homo-erotic, arguably pornographic and produced with the aid of a National Arts Endowment Grant, caused such scandal that national systems for art funding was reviewed.

Like the other photographers discussed here, Mapplethorpe's *habitus* – his artistic dispositions and patterns of practice - reflected his *field* position which in turn shaped the environment in which he lived and which he chose to photograph.

A Working Class Photographer: Richard Billingham

Controversy has been a *field* strategy of choice for many recent art photographers. Richard Billingham was an art student from Northern UK working-class roots (low *economic* and *cultural capital*). He studied painting in Sunderland where he was advised to work directly with the visually arresting photographic images he was making of his own family. Later, with Saatchi's patronage, Billingham presented huge, unsettling colour photographs of his dysfunctional family in the unlikely 'consecrated' artistic settings of the Royal Academy's *Sensation* exhibition and subsequently, in the *Tate*, as a possible winner of the Turner Prize. This cultural *trajectory* – working class boy makes good through transgressive art – matches that of the other *Young British Artists*. For Billingham, *consecrated cultural capital*, which is often derived by a photographer from within the *photographic field* through the prestigious photographic subject, is reversed through deployment of the images in the highly consecrated artistic *field* itself. With these photographs, class *habitus* itself is at stake.

In Conclusion

In the case examples here, we have explored and exemplified the relationships between each photographer's *habitus*, the *field* conditions at the time, and the nature and choice of photographic subjects. Technology, and perhaps most importantly technological change, play a crucial if somewhat overlooked part in determining what is possible and/or of interest in photographic practice. The *field* of photography is clearly subject to continual structural change brought about by changes in other *fields* so that photographers can only hold desirable *field* positions if they are prepared to 'move with the times' by maintaining technical expertise and adapting their practice to take full account of the latest developments in equipment.

With the stark exception of Roger Fenton, each of the photographers discussed here has quite literally focused on the dominated and marginalised social groups of the broader socio-political *field* setting of their own times: the Kabyle in Algeria (Bourdieu), the homeless in 30s America (Lange), the gay bars of 70s and 80s New York (Mapplethorpe), the artistic nightlife of Paris (Brassai), his own working class parent (Billingham). Bourdieu:

...in conferring upon photography a guarantee of realism, society is merely confirming itself in the tautological certainty that an image of the real which is true to its representation of objectivity is really objective.

(Bourdieu 1990/65: 77)

We have also seen that the line between photography as a documentary or ethnographic recorder of actual events and as an *objet d'art* is a thin one, and that the fine art *field* is ever present in the largely taken-for-granted aesthetics which underpin the *field* of photography. Photographers who seek to be recognised for the visual quality of their work must by necessity also be 'au fait' with contemporary practice in the fine artist *field*. To conclude, as Bourdieu wrote of the photographers he himself researched:

Photography is never an end in itself, and once it ceases naively to express social relationships it is obliged to rely on a system of norms which are sometimes those of art, sometimes those of technology.

(Bourdieu 1990/65: 104)

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