# The Logic of Practice: Reflexive Sociology of **Knowledge Construction**

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What is the nature of the politics of power that goes into knowledge production? Why is our social location important when we attempt to comprehend social relativ? How do we capture social reality both objectively and subjectively through a simultaneous momentum? How power is reproduced over generations and how do we capture the everyday sociabilities and make sense of it? What are new premises in Sociology of knowledgein terms of both-theory and methodology? This paper attempts to answer some of these questions through the lens of Bourdieu's logic of practice.

#### Introduction

To comprehend politics of truth formation, it is instructive to examine Foucault's notion of 'episteme'.

"This episteme may be suspected of being something like a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, which imposed on each one the same norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular period cannot escape- a great body of legislation written once and for all by some anonymous hand...; the episteme is not what may be known at a given period...; it is what, in the positivity of discursive practices, makes possible the existence of epistemological figures and sciences... (Foucault 1985: 191-2)

It is in this context that the theorization of Bourdieu (1977, 1979, and 1990) enables us to connect the past with the present through the introduction of temporality and spatiality. In this chapter I argue that Bourdieu's theorization of logic of practice and social capital offers a way to construe social and political processes and mobilizations as relational, contested and dynamic rather than fixed and given entities.

Bourdieu's argument of fields and capital is instructive in the way that it extends the analysis of power to more subtle and disguised expressions i.e. beyond that of material advantage and coercion alone. Power requires justification and belief- a naturalisation of the system. Bourdieu argues that in the process of the construction of the state a simultaneous process of the construction of a common historical transcendental i.e. common cognitive frameworks, memories, perception, symbols, thought and a certain kind of reason gets naturalised and becomes immanent to the masses. This internalisation of value systems through the process of socialisation- in the family, schooling and through interaction- in society provides the necessary impetus for the

reproduction of the system. This embedded dominant knowledge system is situated within the individual that operates at mental and cognitive levels, which Bourdien terms as habitus. (Kalpagam 2006: 86)

Thus. Bourdieu's (1984) theorisation of habitus and fields together with his conception of species of capital prove to be instructive for examination of how social realties are captured and a 'truth' is discovered

Bourdieu proposes sociology of symbolic power in which he addresses the important topic of relations between culture, stratification, and power. He contends that the struggle for social recognition is a fundamental dimension of all social life. In that struggle, cultural resources, processes, and institutions hold individuals and groups in competitive and self-perpetuating hierarchies of domination. Bourdieu focuses on how these social struggles are embedded and interwoven through symbolic classifications, how cultural practices place individuals and groups into competitive class and status hierarchies, how relatively autonomous fields of conflict interlock individuals and groups in struggle over valued resources, how actors struggle and pursue strategies to achieve their interests within such fields, and how in doing so actors unwittingly reproduce the social stratification order Culture, then, is not devoid of political content but rather is an expression of it. (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984)

The concept of field of power was elaborated by Bourdieu (1990) to further qualify the Marxist understanding of the "ruling class". His theoretical position makes possible a relational approach to understanding distribution of power and also provides an alternative view of the state (rather than an organizational monolith) i.e. he reveals the internal divisions and struggles of the actors that the state constitutes. He points out the multiple sites and constellation of interlinked institutions within which the holders of various species of capital (economic, religious, legal, scientific, academic, artistic and symbolic) compete to impose the surpremacy of the particular kind of power they wield. (Bourdieu, 2000; 215)

This theorisation is especially useful while analysing class rule in democracies and in my thesis the nature of the colonial state and later the Indian democracy. Bourdieu analyzes power in three overlapping but analytically distinct ways: (1) power in valued resources (capitals), (2) power in specific spheres of struggle (fields), and (3) power in legitmation (leading to the operationalisation of the phenomenon of symbolic vio lence). (Swartz, 1997, Wacquant, 1998)

Bourdieu conceptualizes valued resources as capital when they function as social relations of power by becoming objects of struggle. Capitals can be created, accumulated, exchanged, and consumed. Bourdieu places the source of capital, not just in social structure but in social relations and connections. For him social capital entails

"the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." (Bourdieu, 1984: 249)

Thus, Bourdieu's (1985) conceptualisation of the social capital is instrumental, in that, it centres on the benefits accruing to individuals which are convertible into economic and cultural capital (includes the embod

ied cultural capital that confers power and status) by virtue of participation in groups and on the deliberate. construction of social networking (sociability) for the purpose of creating this resource. His conceptualisation attempts to show case the "constructedness" of social capital and that it is used for specific instrumental ends such as domination Cultural capital can also be described as cultural competence. Like economic capital, it conveys legitimacy, and a legitimacy regulated by institutions within the society. In the case of cultural capital, that legitimacy is regulated not by the government but by educational and artistic institutions. Cultural capital can be converted into economic capital, just as economic capital can be converted into cultural capital. However, these conversions happen at different rates of exchange.

Capitals as forms of power exist not in isolation but relationally in what Bourdieu calls fields. Fields denote arenas of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status, and the competitive positions held by actors in their struggle to accumulate and monopolize different kinds of capital. (Bourdieu, 1990, Swartz, 1997)

## Social Fields

Fields are structured spaces that organize around struggle over specific types of capital. Field struggle, for Bourdieu, has two distinct dimensions: struggle over the distribution of capitals (i.e. struggle to accumulate the more valued forms of capital or to convert one form into another more valued form) and struggle over the very definition of the most legitimate form of capital for a particular field.

Bourdieu (1989, 1993) conceives of fields (or spaces) as relatively autonomous social microcosms. exhibiting, their own distinctive structures and dynamics and functioning according to their own inner logics. He posits a multiplicity of such spaces in any complex and differentiated society. Modern society, he claims, is marked not by the ascendancy of any one singular logic like that of the social relations of production but by the existence of a number of more or less independent social universes that, although empirically interrelated and mutually determinative (and structurally homologous), nonetheless obey, again to some extent, their own inner laws and principles. What happens in (any one of these fields)," he writes, cannot be understood by looking only at external factors. (Bourdieu 1998, 39)

Another characteristic of fields is that actors and entities within them not only have interests (and therefore corresponding strategies of action) manifest in the discrete positions they occupy relative to others in the field but also have shared commitments to and investments in the field overall. Bourdieu describes these ties as an illusio, or "objective complicity which underlies all the antagonisms" (Bourdieu 1993; 73) or tacitly shared interests, concerns, and ultimate beliefs that constitute of those actors. Bourdieu points out those such unspoken agreements are often lodged at the level of the habitus.

Those actors who occupy the most dominated positions in the field tend also to be those with habitus least well-suited for the contestations specific to that field. However, commonalities at the level of habitus also serve to bind all these actors together, even despite the structural tensions that tend to separate them. (Bourdieu 1993; 74)

Bourdieu (1990) indicates that the nodes or positions within a field are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents, or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). In other words, positions within a field, including those that mark the dominant and dominated poles of that field, must be analyzed in terms of the distinctive profiles of capital associated with them. Bourdieu refers here to "species of capital" in the plural: while capital most often connotes material or economic resources, for him it also encompasses a wide range of other types of resources, any of which, when accrued by actors within the field at hand, can enable them to climb to positions of relative privilege within the field. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97)

Within any given field, different specific entities can be said to engage in the struggles ongoing within that field as bearers of different amounts and combinations of capitals, some yielding greater advantages within that particular field than others. The concepts of field and capital are intrinsically interlinked; just as "a capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field," so too, conversely, the distribution of capital (or capitals) "constitutes the very structure of the field" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992;101). Capitals function both as weapons and as stakes in the struggle to gain ascendancy within fields. Any field (from a synchronic perspective) is a structure or temporary state of power relations within what is also (from a diachronic perspective) an ongoing struggle for domination waged by the deployment or accumulation of relevant capitals, a struggle for successful monopolization "of the legitimate violence (specific authority) which is characteristic of the field in question". (Bourdieu 1993; 73)

Bourdieu's (1990), perspective highlights the structural tension between occupants of dominant and dominated positions within any social milieu. It requires that any field be conceived of as an arena of contestation among occupants of positions differentially endowed with the resources necessary for gaining and safeguarding an ascendant position within that arena. Indeed, much of the contestation among actors can be said to concern the legitimate valuation that is to be accorded the precise species of capital in which they happen (actually or potentially) to be well-endowed: that is, such conflict is about gaining the capacity to produce a recognition of the legitimacy of this capital distribution among the other contending actors. For instance, the fields inaugurated by the colonial state such as the bureaucracy, the military, judiciary, police, political representation, and university and education system required specialized kinds of capital. The colonial educational system privileged certain section of Indian indigenous actors.

Within the social space as a whole, the most important contestations over symbolic capital takes place within what Bourdieu (1990) terms the field of power, a relational reframing of what we call as a ruling class. He defines this field of power as a space of contention for ascendancy among dominant actors from all the other fields that constitute the social order (high level bureaucrats, high end bankers, financers, journalists.

scientific figures, jurists, legislators among many others): Since the field concept is meant to be applicable at all scales, from the most expansive to the most circumscribed, each of the more delimited social microcosms, too, can be said to feature something like its own internal field of power. Bourdieu claims that, in analyzing any field, it is important to determine precisely how its constituent actors, differently positioned as they are within the field in respect to the distribution of capital (or capitals) operative therein, perceive themselves, their competitors, and the field as a whole, in all its opportunities and challenges.

Bourdieu emphasizes that the primary field in modern societies is the field of power, which is an arena of struggle among the different power fields (particularly the economic field and the cultural field) for the right to dominate throughout the social order. Bourdieu identifies different subfields within the field of power, such as the artistic field, the administrative field, the university field, the political field, and the economic field. Leaders of particular subfields compete to impose their particular type of capital as the most legitimate claim to authority.

Central to but not synonymous with the field of power is the state, which assumes the key role of regulating the struggle within the field of power. For Bourdieu the state consists not only of bureaucratic agencies, political authorities, routines, and ceremony but also of official classifications that regulate individual and group relations.

"...[t]he political field is one of the privileged sites for the exercise of the power of representation or manifestation that contributes to making what existed in a practical state, tacitly or implicitly, exist fully, that is, in the objectified state, in a form directly visible to all, public, published, official, and thus authorized. (Bourdieu, 1991;235)

Power for Bourdieu also appears in a specific form of capital and in a specific sphere of activity that is commonly associated with politics- the political field and political capital. Political capital refers to a subtype of social capital that is the capacity to mobilize political support. The political field refers to the arena of struggle to capture positions of power within the state using political capital (political parties, political positions, bureaucratic and military positions, media, university and judiciary). The political field is thus structured around competition for control of the state apparatus.

Bourdieu (1984) examines the social construction of objective structures with an emphasis on how people perceive and construct their own social world, but without neglecting how perception and construction is constrained by structures. An important dynamic in this relationship is the ability of individual actors to invent and improvise within the structure of their routines.

#### Field of Power/Politics

According to Bourdieu (1984) the pre-eminent field is the field of power, from which a hierarchy of power relationships serves to structure all other fields. To analyze a field, one must first understand its relationship to the political field and also has to map the objective positions within a field. The nature of the habitus of

the agents who occupy particular positions in different fields can thus be mapped. These agents act strategically depending on their habitus in order to enhance their capital. (Swartz, 1997)

I argue that in India there were two phases of construction of these fields i.e. the colonial and the post independence period. In the colonial period some mobile castes were able to create such fields which were coterminous with interests of the colonial authorities. These fields such as caste associations were constructed by using caste identities which were rooted in the classificatory colonial categories i.e. census.

Also colonial authorities reinvented categories such as martial race which based itself on the reconstruction of historical ideas of kingship and kinship. In the post independence period the fields got reconstructed in the context of electoral democracy. Power was now routed in and through the state. The principle of one person one vote now created spaces for the organisation of caste blocs and coalitions. In some States new coalitions emerged which were misrecognised by scholars as caste blocs and caste coalition and clusters

Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice allows us to overcome this methodological ambiguity. He proposes that social organisation and agency can be construed through the lens of practice rather than rules. He argues that the individuals and actors are placed in fields and the actors employ certain strategies to accumulate certain kinds of capitals. Using this understanding one can contend that this whole process is misrecognised in social science discourse as caste.

His theory of power is anchored in the cultural reproduction of power which operationalises through the logic of practice i.e. through the dialectic interaction between the habitus and the fields. The habitus is the mental structure through which people deal with the social world. It can be thought of as a set of internalized schemes through which the world is perceived, understood, appreciated, and evaluated. A field is a network of social relations among the objective positions within it. It is not simply a set of interactions or intersubjective ties among individuals. Agents act strategically depending on their habitus in order to enhance their capital. (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990 and Swartz, 1997)

Bourdieu (1977, 1989, and 1990) located power at the centre of the functioning and the structure of habitus, since habitus involves an unconscious calculation of what is possible, impossible, and probable for people in their specific locations in the stratified social order. Symbolic power creates a form of violence that finds expression in everyday classifications, labels, meanings, and categorizations that subtly implement a social as well as symbolic logic of inclusion and exclusion. Symbolic violence also finds expression through body language, comportment, self-presentation, bodily care and adomment. It has a corporal as well as a cognitive dimension. And symbolic capital designates the social authority to impose symbolic meanings and classifications as legitimate that individuals and groups can accumulate through public recognition of their capital holdings and positions occupied in social hierarchies. Symbolic capital is a form of credit and it takes symbolic capital accumulated from previous struggles to exercise symbolic power. (Waquant, 1992)

Two key properties of symbolic power are its naturalization and misrecognition. Bourdieu's symbolic power does not suggest "consent" but "practical adaptation" to existing hierarchies. The "practical adaptation" occurs pre-reflectively as if it were the "thing to do." the "natural" response in existing circumstances. The dominated misperceive the real origins and interests of symbolic power when they adopt the dominant view of the dominant and of themselves. They therefore accept definitions of social reality that do not correspond to their best interests. Those "misrecognized" definitions go unchallenged as appearing natural and justified. (Bourdieu, 1990)

Bourdieu's observations that the construction of the state is accompanied by the construction of a kind of common historical transcendental- i.e. common cognitive frameworks, social schemes of perception, symbolic frames of thought, understanding, and a certain kind of reason- which after a long process of incorporation, becomes immanent to all its 'subjects'. It is the habitus that lends order to customary social behaviour by functioning as "the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices" (Bourdieu 1979:7).

In short, habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history. The system of dispositions- a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices and in the bodies of individuals. Habitus generates a "practical sense" for organizing perceptions of and actions in the social world. The dispositions of habitus incorporate a sense of place in the stratified social order, an understanding of inclusion and exclusion in the various social hierarchies. (Bourdieu 1979; 82)

Taken as an entire system of schemes of perception, appreciation, and action, these dispositions constitute what Bourdieu terms the habitus. However, the habitus must be seen not simply as a historically produced structure that functions to reproduce the social system that generated it, but as a set of schemes both imposed and imposing. Habitus does not only, or even primarily, function at the level of explicit, discursive consciousness. The internal structures become embodied and work in a deeper, practical and often pre-reflexive way.

To answer this question I invoke Bourdieu's concept of doxa. Through the theory of the habitus Bourdieu (1977) argues that social agents develop strategies which are adapted to the needs of the social worlds that they inhabit. These strategies are unconscious and act on the level of a bodily logic. Having naturalised the objective social structure at the cognitive level, the action of the actor is in concordance with the required exigencies of the social field and this leads to a doxic relationship to emerge.

### Bourdieu writes

"Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents' aspirations, out of which arises the sense of limits, commonly called the sense

of reality, i.e. the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to established order." (Bourdieu 1977: 164)

For Bourdieu, doxa is the assumed levels of reality. Schemes of thought and perception can produce the objectivity that they do only by producing the misrecognition of the limits of the cognition that they make possible, thereby founding immediate adherence, in the doxic mode, to the world of tradition experienced as a 'natural world' and taken for granted. The instruments of knowledge of the social world are in this case (objectively) political instruments which contribute to the reproduction of the social world, seen as self-evident and undisputed, of which they are the product and of which they reproduce the structures in a transformed form. It is the construction of the intentional and unintentional, conscious and unconscious, of constructed social relations, which creates seemingly objective norms and rules which claim "this is just the way it is." Doxa necessitates a collective amnesia as to the origins of the system. In Bourdieu's (1977) words.

"...(Doxa) exits as a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization...(in which) the natural and social world appears as self-evident. Doxa is the unsaid in the field of cultural possibilities, making it seem as if there are not multiple, but only a single possibility." (Bourdieu, 1977: 164)

Thus, Bourdieu's sociology offers conceptual tools for analyzing three types of power: power vested in particular resources (capitals), power concentrated in specific spheres of struggle over forms of capital (fields of power), and power as practical, taken-for- granted acceptance of existing social hierarchies an categories.

# Bourdieu: Sports and the Body

Bourdieu's (1978, 1988, 1990) groundbreaking work on sport sought to demonstrate how different classes and class fractions embody (often unconsciously) their points of honour and schemes of evaluation in their sporting practices and how the dominant classes use sports, done in rarified ways and at exclusive venues, in order to distance themselves from others (Bourdieu 1978, 1988). Bourdieu's theories have focused on demonstrating that sport operates as a type of cultural capital. Bourdieu conceives of the body as the point where culture and social structures are manifested and produced. Sporting practice is, at once, enabling yet constraining and constitutes a social practice through which particular culture and class is embodied. He sees sport training as a bodily practice in which the performer strives to reach a state where complex movements and responses become second nature. At this point these movements are embedded in the body beyond the reach of the conscious mind in a process through which the logic of the field in which the individual trains and plays comes to saturate the body. Bourdieu sees sport as a class specific practice, as with the practices of eating or the consumption of goods, in which choice is socially structured. This 'taste' is seen as both reflecting and reproducing dominant culture and it is through his key conceptual tools of habitus, field,

practice and capital that he seeks to capture the dynamic processes through which culture is embodied and reproduced.

The field of sport appears to go against the intellectualist and aesthetic aspects of many high cultural and higher educational activities. Doesn't sport represent the lowbrow side of the body versus mind, mass versus elite distinctions that are institutionalized in modern culture forms? And if it does, how can sport be used to draw culturally exclusive boundaries? A key to answering this puzzle lies in Bourdieu's (1992), conception of gendered intra-class distinctions within the dominant classes. As Bourdieu (1978) posits

"As the dominant fractions of the dominant class always tend to conceive their relationship to the dominated fraction- 'intellectuals.' 'artists,' 'professors'- in terms of the opposition between male and female, the virile and the effeminate....one understands one of the most important implications of the exaltation of sport..." (Bourdieu, 1978: 826)

The underlying principle of distinction according to Bourdieu (1984) is that the dominant classes cultivate the body for its own sake while the "popular" (working class and lower middle classes) treat the body as an instrument used towards some other end (as in giving up or sacrificing one's body). (Bourdieu, 1984)

Bourdieu's work on cultural capital can be seen as providing a fourfold typology that begins with asceticism and luxury as the elementary forms of cultural distancing. In the field of culture the two opposing principles are

"...luxury, as the manifestation of distance from necessity, or asceticism, as self-imposed constraint, two contrasting ways of defying nature, need, appetite, desire;... the unbridled squandering which only highlights the privations of ordinary existence, and the ostentatious freedom of gratuitous expense or the austerity of elective restriction" (Bourdieu, 1984:254-5).

These two principles can take either 'elementary' or 'aristocratic' forms. Aristocratic forms restrain or aesthetizicize asceticism or luxury by cutting out the excesses or immature enthusiasm for either principle or lead to applying the principles with greater ease, restraint and authoritativeness. (Wacquant, 1998)

Using Bourdieu's (1984, 1990) theory, we would expect those with high levels of cultural capital to be drawn to more ascetic bodily practices and those with more economic capital to be drawn to sports that straightforwardly represent wealth, status, and power, and to use sports to embody and display personal qualities like a will to win, drive, grace under pressure, and sportsmanship that are sometimes grouped together as "character." Although most sports can be approached in an ascetic manner, the so-called "fitness" sports that emphasize working and sacrificing to reshape the body, and to increase one's energy and "health" most closely fit the ascetic principle. (Bourdieu, 1984)

Competitive sports that entail straightforwardly pursuing and displaying dominance and status, especially the ones that require great cost and provide opportunities for displaying wealth and status fit the luxury principle. We would expect that the dominant fractions will be drawn to or develop "aristocratic" forms of sport participation to draw boundaries between their lifestyles and those of the lower middle classes. Among ascetic sports a key dividing line should be between the sports that emphasize beauty and strength vs. sports that pursue more abstract and restrained goals of "health" and inner control of the body (cultivating the body for its own sake). Among luxury sports; the dividing lines should come in quantitative terms of how much wealth and status is being displayed and/or the dominant class sports should restrain the level of direct physical contact and violence between competitors (restraining straight forward domination and drawing the line of civilized/uncivilized exercises of power). (Bourdieu, 1988 and 1992)

I have argued that Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1990) concepts such as social capital, habitus, field and practice enable one to circumvent the antimony between the structuralist and phenomenological and ethnomethodological scholarship or the objective versus subjective binary. By invoking Bourdieu's (1990) theorisation one can bring in the component of time and space i.e. together with structural constraints and agency into the argument. I have argued that this enables one to better understand societal phenomenon which is extremely complex and dynamic. The structuralist scholarship maps the societal phenomenon through an objective lens thereby interrogating social interactions through the prism of rules and regulations- giving an impression of a timeless, frozen societal phenomenon.

#### Conclusion

To sum up, Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1990) sociology of logic of practice and his theorisation on symbolic power sensitizes us to the more subtle and influential forms of power that operates through cultural resources and symbolic classifications that interweave everyday life with prevailing institutional arrangements. It calls for looking at expressions of power that emanate through inter-personal relations and presentations of self as well as organizational structures. It suggests an intimate and complex relationship between symbolic and material factors in the operation of power. He identifies a wide variety of valued resources (capitals) beyond sheer economic interests that function as ways through which actors access the field of politics/power. Bhattacharyya, Jayal, Mohapatra and Pai, (2004:23) point out that the concept of social capital is basically extracted from the North and that it has limitations to address the issues of inequality, class, power and hierarchy in the Indian context and also because of its methodological ambiguity. They argue that as it is a construct of the 'North', where societies are individuated, in which public life turns largely on identities that are individually chosen rather than collectively ascribed they ask how this can hold true in the context of Indian democracy. Though Bourdieu's (1977, 1984, 1990) theorization are generally deemed to be Eurocentric i.e. assessed power relationships in Europe and global North. His early works (1977, 1979) examined societal processes and practices amongst the Kabliya of Algeria. It is in this context that I argue that his theorization

and conceptual tools have an applicability to examine societal processes in India which has a colonial past.

Comaroff, (1991: 23-24) suggests the overlapping of the concepts of hegemony and doxa. Hegemony refers to that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies - drawn from an historically situated cultural field - that comes to be taken for granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it. Bourdieu's 'doxa' is similar as it suggests an order of things that go without saying because, being axiomatic, they come without saying; things that, being presumptively shared, are not normally the subject of explication or argument. In Bourdieu's words (1977:167) '...this is why its power has so often been seen to lie in what it silences, what it prevents people from thinking and saying, what it puts beyond the limits of the rational and the credible.' Quite literally, hegemony is habit forming. For once its internal contradictions are revealed, when what seems natural comes to be negotiable, when the ineffable is put into words - then hegemony becomes something other than itself. It turns into the 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy' of Bourdieu's (1977) formulation.

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