

COMMENTARY

Operationalizing Bourdieu in Management Research: A Relational, Power-Aware Toolkit

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Abstract

Purpose - To translate Bourdieu's theory of practice into an actionable methodological toolkit for management research. The commentary clarifies the relational logic of data collection and analysis and adds concrete instruments (protocols, questions, and analytic options), extending prior work by integrating boundary spanning and gender capital, and by proposing a practice-based participatory action research (PAR) design.

Design/Methodology/Approach - Conceptual/methodological synthesis informed by exemplars across management, information systems and supply chain studies. We operationalize three methodological moments—(1) mapping the field, (2) capturing habitus, and (3) tracing capitals—then specify case selection, unit of analysis, and multi-source evidence (interviews, archives/documents, observations). We outline complementary analytic paths: thematic analysis, inductive/Gioia-style coding, and critical discourse analysis, and embed epistemic reflexivity practices.

Findings - Provides: (a) an interview guide mapped to field-habitus-capital-nomos with probes; (b) indicators for identifying and valuing forms of capital, including gender capital; (c) a lens on boundary spanning as a mediating practice across fields; (d) procedures for integrating documents and observations; (e) validity safeguards (triangulation, audit trail, positionality memos). We propose a power-aware, multi-cycle PAR protocol.

Originality/Value - Moves the Bourdieusian conversation from justification to application: a step-by-step, field-oriented methodology that integrates boundary spanning and gender capital, specifies analytic choices, and advances practice-based PAR for impactful management research.

KEYWORDS

Bourdieu, Theory of Practice, Field, Habitus, Capital, Nomos, Boundary Spanning, Gender Capital, Reflexivity.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Bourdieu's theory of practice has been shown to be a powerful framework to study many aspects of business and management, including the impact of the political environment on firms (Śliwa et al. 2020), employability (Robinson and Kerr 2015, Ariss and Syed 2010), diversity management and gender inequalities (Karataş-Özkan and Chell 2015, Tatli 2010), academic journals and university rankings (Burgess

and Shaw 2010, Bocquet et al. 2024). The accumulation of Bourdieu-inspired studies has given rise to a practice turn in management studies (Lissillour and Silva 2024).

Lissillour et al. (2023) highlight the methodological implications of integrating Bourdieu's theory of practice into Supply Chain Management (SCM) research. The authors encourage scholars to examine how power, capital, and habitus shape the coordination and decision-making of actors in the supply chain. They contribute to the literature by streamlining a Bourdieu inspired methodology for management studies that contribute to the shift from the positivist approaches that dominate logistics research to interpretive and relational investigations (Lissillour 2024). While their argument effectively justifies the reasons for

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adopting Bourdieu's theory of practice, it provides partial actionable insights on how researchers can design data collection tools within case study methods, conduct data analysis, and incorporate reflexivity when using the sociological framework. Furthermore, extending Lissillour et al. (2023)'s methodological framework, business and management practices have been examined through both foundational work (Touboullic and Walker 2015) and recent studies (Silva and Figueiredo 2019, Touboullic et al. 2020), highlighting it as a socially embedded practice shaped by agents' dispositions and field dynamics. The integration of Bourdieu's concepts of field and habitus allows scholars to move beyond instrumental and performance-driven views (Gold and Schleper 2017, Montabon et al. 2015), toward an understanding of how management practices are enacted and reproduced through social relations and historical trajectory (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, Lissillour 2017, Lissillour and Bonet Fernandez 2018). This perspective responds to calls for practice-based organizational research by framing business and management issues as an outcome of socially constituted dispositions rather than purely rational choices, thereby offering critical insights into the reproduction of power structures (Deetz 1992, Lissillour 2024).

This commentary aims to fill this methodological gap by offering complementary insights into the practical application of Bourdieu's theory of practice within management research. The purpose is two-fold: first, to clarify the methodological logic underpinning data collection and analysis inspired by Bourdieu's relational approach as elaborated by Lissillour et al. (2023); and second, to provide concrete guidance for researchers aiming to operationalize this framework in empirical, real-world contexts.

2 | BOURDIEU'S THEORY OF PRACTICE

Bourdieu (1990)'s theory of practice offers a holistic epistemological shift since it views social life as a system of social relations rather than a series of independent variables. In Figure 1, five main interdependent concepts shape the analytical foundation, namely practice, field, capital, habitus, and nomos. In Bourdieu's sociology, practice refers to the meaningful, socially informed actions and behaviors of individuals and groups, which are neither entirely determined by external structures nor purely the product of individual free will (Bourdieu 1998). Practice emerges from the dynamic interaction between habitus, the internalized dispositions, perceptions, and tendencies of actors, and the field, the structured social space in which they operate (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). In essence, practices are the observable enactments of social life that reveal how power, capital, and norms shape everyday behaviors, while simultaneously reproducing or transforming the social structures in which they occur (Bourdieu 1977).

Field conceptualizes a social space governed by implicit rules and shared stakes, where actors compete for greater status (Bourdieu 1998). In organizational research, agents can include managers and their subordinates, while the field is characterized by the issue, the conflict, or the struggle that brings them together. The agents have diverging interests

or shared stakes in the field, and field analysis consists of understanding who is involved in the focal issue and what their relative position is concerning the issue being analyzed. Capital, on the other hand, represents the resources mobilized by actors to maintain or develop their positions. According to Bourdieu (1986), there are four main forms of capital: economic capital, which includes financial assets and resources; cultural capital which comprises knowledge, credentials, and skills; social capital which refers to networks and relationships; and symbolic capital which entails status, legitimacy, and recognition. In addition to these four forms of capital, other forms of capital can be useful to understand certain fields. For instance, Huppatz (2009)'s study included gender capital. Bourdieu (2000, 107) stated that "sexual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity," underscoring that class relations are always gendered. Yet despite recognizing this inseparability, Bourdieu did not conceptualize gender as an independent form of capital. His framework remained largely focused on class, treating capital as gender-neutral and overlooking how gender itself functions as a form of power and value. Huppatz (2009) identifies this as a significant theoretical gap and argues that gender capital offers a useful framework for understanding contemporary gender relations. She distinguishes between feminine capital and female capital, suggesting that women's advantage manifests in two ways. Female capital refers to the advantage associated with being perceived as having a female body, regardless of whether one displays traditionally feminine traits, while feminine capital arises from gendered dispositions and social skills developed through socialization or through being recognized as feminine. This differentiation avoids conflating "female" with "femininity," emphasizing that gendered identity operates as both an embodied and socially constructed resource. The concept of gender capital has since been extended to explore how women navigate and challenge organizational hierarchies. Ross-Smith and Huppatz (2010) demonstrate that gender capital can enable women to negotiate power and recognition in male-dominated fields, shaping agency, positioning, and the situational advantages and constraints of feminine dispositions. Ashall (2012) further argues that gender capital parallels Bourdieu's broader forms of capital by influencing habitus and determining access to symbolic and economic capital. More recently, Maza (2025) has shown that gender dynamics themselves can function as sociocultural capital, revealing how systems of kinship and social networks reproduce inequality. Collectively, these perspectives illustrate that integrating new forms of capital into Bourdieu's framework enriches the analysis of social stratification.

Habitus denotes long-lasting dispositions and embedded tendencies that guide perception and practice. This concept links structure and agency, and explains how individuals behave in continuous but adaptive ways (Sweetman 2009). In supply chain studies, researchers acknowledge that supply networks are not neutral collaborative processes, but rather structured fields constructed through power-laden practices and sustained by stakeholders' habitus (Lissillour 2025). Similarly, Egan and Tweedie (2018) used the practice theory to explain accountants' behavior of sustainability when confronted to institutional restrictions. The

authors highlighted the conflict between ethical habitus and economic imperatives by investigating how accountants' professional habits, resources, and organizational contexts combine to create both adaptations and limitations. Comparable perspectives have also emerged in other disciplines. For instance, in marketing, Cova et al. (2007) examined how brand communities develop collective identities and social capital that influence consumer behavior. Similarly, in information systems management, Orlikowski (2007) explored how technology enactment is shaped by social practices and institutional logics rather than being a neutral managerial tool. These examples underscore that across disciplines, habitus and power structures influence professional practices and the ethical dimensions of organizational behavior.

According to Bourdieu (1977), *nomos* refers to the fundamental principles, norms, or moral order that underpin a field. It defines what is considered legitimate, acceptable, or valuable within a particular social space and provides a sense of stability and coherence for actors operating within it. Lissillour et al. (2021) further argue that *nomos* shapes the rules of the game and helps explain why certain actions and forms of capital are recognized and rewarded, while others are marginalized or ignored. *Nomos* defines "the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence, namely the principles of vision and imposed division in the field" (Lissillour et al. 2021).

Levina and Vaast's research on boundary spanning broadens the analytical framework of Bourdieu's theory by elucidating how individuals navigate such social and institutional boundaries. Levina and Vaast (2005) explain boundary spanning as the acts that link disparate social fields, enabling people or social groups to interpret meanings, negotiate legitimacy, and synchronize expectations across several communities. In their study of information systems professionals, Levina and Vaast (2006) identified two contrasting modes of boundary-spanning practice: community-like and market-like. Community-like boundary spanning emphasizes relational engagement, mutual learning, and shared identity construction; it reflects a form of cooperation grounded in trust and shared capital. Market-like boundary spanning, by contrast, centers on transactional exchange, goal alignment, and formal communication. The authors later extended this analysis to examine how status differences and power asymmetries shape boundary spanning across organizational and national contexts (Levina and Vaast 2008). They demonstrated that boundaries are not only structural but also situated in practice, emerging from the everyday interactions that reproduce or challenge inequalities. In offshore collaboration, for example, boundaries arise around unequal endowment in expertise, legitimacy, and control over resources, but they can be renegotiated by agents who occupy "intermediate" positions and possess symbolic or social capital sufficient to mediate between fields (Levina and Vaast 2008). Therefore, boundary spanning is to be incorporated into the data collection and analysis approach to investigate how these mediating functions function across fields.

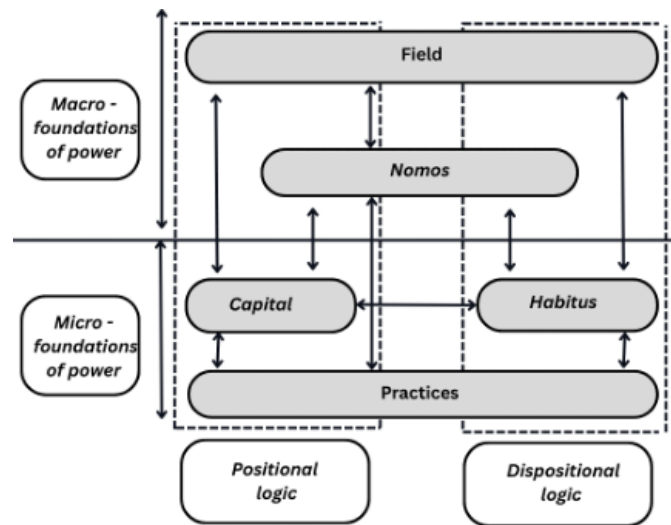


FIGURE 1 Stylized representation of Practice Dynamics. Source: Lissillour et al. (2023)

3 | THE LOGIC BEHIND DATA COLLECTION

A relational inquiry is the core of methodological design and enables researchers to map and interpret the dynamic interplay between structures (field), agents (habitus), and resources (capital) rather than testing hypotheses. Lissillour et al. (2023) proposed the following three methodological moments that translate the practice theory into a systematic research practice:

1. Mapping the field, which involves identifying the actors, the stakes they pursue, and the forms of capital that are valuable.
2. Capturing the habitus, which explores how the actor's engagement with these stakes is guided by dispositions, beliefs, and professional norms.
3. Mapping the capitals, which refers to logging the collection, conversion, or contest on the resources that matter within the field. (Figure 2).

Lissillour (2022) applied this triadic approach to sustainability practices in the shipping industry. To reveal how habitus and the pursuit of symbolic capital define the organizational everyday practice, the author combined interviews, archival data, and field observations. Comparable relational approaches have been applied in other disciplines to demonstrate how Bourdieu's framework can guide empirical research. For example, in organizational studies, Vaughan (2008) employed a relational logic to investigate how organizational fields and agents' habitus shape practices and power dynamics within organizations, integrating observations, interviews, and archival data to translate theory into practice.

Bourdieu (1971) outlines three levels of practice-based analysis, namely analyzing the power position of agents in the field, describing the objective structure of the relations between agents or institutions

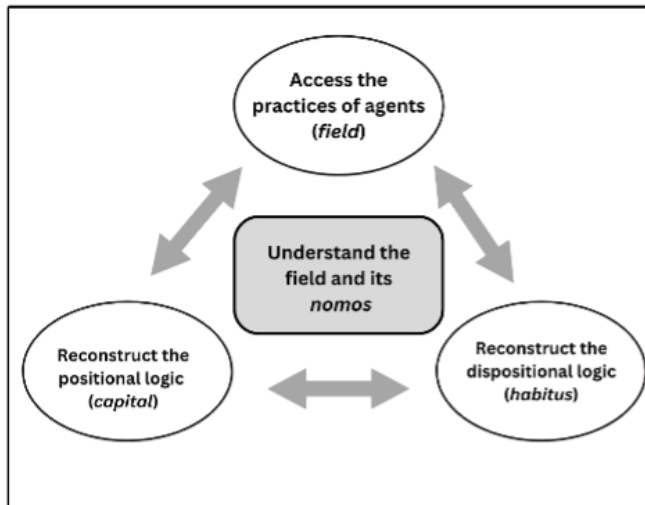


FIGURE 2 Putting the theory of practice into practice: Three Methodological Moments. Source: Lissillour et al. (2023)

competing for specific authority, and examining agents' habitus. Building on (Lissillour et al. 2023), Bourdieu-inspired scholars conduct analyses in three interlinked stages, namely to identify 1) the key agents and their stakes in the field, 2) the recurrent themes in language, routines, and decision-making attitudes, 3) how the mobilization, contestation, and exchange of various forms of capital, including economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital, reflect into practices.

4 | THE RATIONALE AND PRACTICE OF THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

A data collection strategy in line with Bourdieu's sociology applied to management studies is the case study method, which is ideally suited for investigating complex, context-dependent relationships Yin (2013). The unit of analysis is the field, which can be within an organization (Lissillour 2021) or span across several organizations as in Lissillour and Bonet Fernandez (2021)'s multiple case study. The multiple case study enables researchers to generate an in-depth understanding of the dominant and subordinate agents involved in the field. For instance, Kamoche et al. (2014) conducted a two-year case study at a global confectioner with over 60,000 employees to analyze the deployment of a new knowledge management system. Harrington et al. (2013)'s case study focused on manager-to-employee bullying claims.

A critical case study focuses on a particularly revealing or theoretically significant example that offers deep insight into a broader phenomenon, as demonstrated in several studies applying Bourdieu's theory of practice across diverse educational and professional contexts. Correspondingly, Egan and Tweedie (2018) explored the moral agency of individuals under pressure at the field level using this approach. Building on the approach adopted by Kamoche et al. (2014), the study

followed a standard case study protocol (Yin 1994), in which respondents were asked open-ended questions followed by probing questions. These interviews, which on average lasted 90 minutes, explored the company's objectives in setting up a knowledge management system, the types of knowledge-sharing the system was designed to accomplish, the challenges faced during implementation, and how these initiatives were linked to human resource practices. The approach taken and the number of participants interviewed are considered adequate for a case study analysis (Easterby-Smith et al. 1991, Yin 1994). This methodological rigor ensures depth and contextual understanding, consistent with Bourdieu's emphasis on uncovering the relational structures that shape practice within a field. The case study approach is well established in the information systems literature and a preferred way of investigating organizational experience (Tsang 2013). Case studies have been well theorized in management studies (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007) and are particularly suitable for answering why and how questions. They allow researchers to explore new areas and to unravel underlying dynamic processes (Siggelkow 2007).

In this regard, Bourdieu (1977) practice theory provides an interpretative lens that complements the exploratory and explanatory strengths of case studies by situating individual and organizational practices within wider social fields. Accordingly, in Monod et al. (2022), the authors specified that the cases were intended to be illustrative (Siggelkow 2007) and they used an inductive data analysis (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). (Monod et al. 2022) examined the challenges of implementing artificial intelligence (AI) systems, noting that success rates remain low due to technology-driven approaches that overlook everyday work practices. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of practice, the authors analysed power shifts in customer relationship management through the concepts of field, capital, and habitus. Using two longitudinal case studies, they found that although the AI systems were originally designed to support employees, their implementation ultimately shifted power towards management, leading to a devaluation of employees' work practices.

Among other researchers conducting a case study approach are Levina and Vaast. In their qualitative study, Levina and Vaast (2005) conducted a seven-month ethnographic investigation of a medium-sized European insurance firm's IT department to explore how the introduction of a new IT application transformed community-like practices into market-like ones. To reach this end, authors engaged in participant observation, attending team and client meetings, observing daily work routines, and accessing the IT application to understand how it was integrated into project teams' processes. The iterative collaboration between the two authors and the integration of theoretical concepts allowed the study to illuminate how technology reshaped the IT department's field of practice, turning cooperative, community-like interactions into more transactional, market-oriented relationships.

A case study can be based on a critical ethnography approach which is a particular kind of ethnographic research, emphasizing that the research itself is an emergent process (Myers 1997). Also, "critical ethnographers describe, analyze, and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden

agendas, power centers, and assumptions that inhibit, repress, and constrain” (Thomas 1993, 2). Lee and Myers (2004)’s study used a critical ethnography approach to analyse one firm’s attempt to pursue information technology-enabled enterprise integration. Taken together, these examples illustrate that a case study approach inspired by Bourdieu’s theory of practice allows researchers to explore how habitus, capital, and field interact to shape behaviors, power dynamics, and institutional change. By grounding analysis in rich empirical contexts, this methodology ensures that theoretical insights remain closely connected to lived realities.

5 | DATA COLLECTION

5.1 | Interviews

Prior studies have indicated that semi-structured interviews are a main method for accessing participants’ dispositions and lived meanings (Bryceson and Ross 2019, Monod et al. 2022, Egan and Tweedie 2018). This method enables researchers to gain deeper insights into participants’ realities and subjective interpretations. The interviews aimed to capture a comprehensive, contextually grounded understanding of the three dimensions of Bourdieu’s theory: practice, field, and capital. Kamoche et al. (2014) interviewed 15 individuals in two phases across Australia and the UK. Similarly, Harrington et al. (2013)’s case study conducted semi-structured interviews with HR professionals individually, and used focus groups to enhance data richness and comparative perspectives. In Lee and Myers (2004), the data was obtained over a six-year period in total, from 1996 to 2001. Data sources included interviews, informal chats, and meetings. In another area, Lissillour (2022) used interview data that focused on people’s personalities and habits to look into the sustainability of supply chains. In Huppatz (2009)’s study, personal narrative is presented as a significant resource for data collection, as it “is situated, embodied and material – stories of the body told through the body which make cultural conflict concrete and accessible” (Langellier 1999, 447). Moreover, personal narrative provides marginalized groups with a political voice through which they can express their identities and lived experiences: it holds “the transformative power to assert self-definitions about who matters and what matters: the existence, worth, and vitality of a person or group as meanings not otherwise available” (Langellier 1999, 454). The narratives elicited from participants were semi-structured through the interview questions, which guided discussion while allowing for individual expression and reflection. This alignment ensured that the data not only reflected participants’ personal accounts but also engaged critically with the sociological dimensions of power, structure, and identity embedded in Bourdieu’s framework.

Below is a set of sample interview questions used in prior studies to elicit data relating to Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field, capital, nomos, and practice (Bourdieu 1990, Maton 2003, Lissillour 2022, Huppatz 2009, Levina and Vaast 2008, Lissillour and Sahut 2021). We then

tailored as follow-up probes to explore participants’ lived meanings. The table that follows shows the concept, example questions, and suggested probes.

5.2 | Documents, archives and observations

Data typically also includes documents and archives. A study by Monod et al. (2022) looked into how the rollout of an AI tool changed worker empowerment and managerial control by using internal newsletters, technical documents, and archives. Lee and Myers (2004) used the company’s Intranet, and various documents such as e-mails, annual reports, and newspaper articles. Townley (1993) examined personnel records, training manuals, and policy documents to understand how human resource management techniques function as disciplinary instruments to shape corporate conduct. O’Mahony and Bechky (2008) analyzed internal communications and project archives to gain insights into how temporary organizations challenged authority and competence. In Kamoche et al. (2014)’s study, archival review focused on organisational newsletters, policy memos, and change communications that illustrated shifts in social relations and the mobilisation of capital.

5.3 | Field and participant observations

To further understand the routines and embodied practices in the research context, both participant and non-participant observations are conducted. Observations follow a defined process that includes carefully identifying places, obtaining informed consent, taking extensive field notes, and keeping reflexive memos to document the researcher’s reflections (Lee and Myers 2004). Typical approaches include making brief trips to different venues, shadowing specific roles where possible, and taking systematic notes on interactions, artifacts, and spatial arrangements (Monod et al. 2022). Field notes and memos are coded iteratively to detect patterns, repeating behaviors, and meaningful interactions (Emerson et al. 2011). To maintain transparency, the duration, setting, and observer role (participant or non-participant) are all explicitly documented in the report. Reflexive notes aid interpretation by documenting the researcher’s positionality and growing insights, allowing the data to address both seen behaviors and underlying meanings (Riach 2009).

6 | DATA ANALYSIS

Researchers employ various approaches and data analyses. First, observations, interviews and documentation data are combined into a case study database to improve validity and provide a more complete knowledge of the setting.

TABLE 1 Sample interview questions by concept (Bourdieu-inspired) – Part A

Concept	Example questions	Suggested probes / follow-ups
Field	● Please tell me about your background and how you came to be in this position (Levina & Vaast, 2008). ● Can you describe the main actors and institutions that shape decisions in your area of work? ● How would you describe the overall structure of relationships among the main actors (Lissillour, 2022)? ● Who are the main stakeholders and what specific interests or goals do they pursue (Lissillour, 2022)? ● Was/is this career path straightforward for you (Huppatz, 2009)? ● What techniques did you use to secure and maintain your position (Huppatz, 2009)? ● Are you comfortable with doing this (Huppatz, 2009)?	● Who holds influence here? How are decisions made? Recent example? ● How are boundaries between actors defined? ● How do positions shape the balance of power in the field? ● Why / why not?
Boundary spanning	● Is there resistance when you try to open channels with other stakeholders (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? ● How did intermediaries come to occupy bridging roles—appointed or emergent (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? ● How did boundary objects come into use—deliberate or organic (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? ● What are the main communication channels among agents (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? ● What tools/systems bridge stakeholders effectively (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)?	● Underlying power/cultural factors behind resistance? ● Who initiated these tools/objects; how were they institutionalized? ● What works well in this relationship? Key challenges? ● Effectiveness of channels for understanding/knowledge exchange? ● How do tools enable shared understanding or collaboration?
Practice	● How do you and colleagues carry out day-to-day tasks? ● With whom do you communicate and by what means (Levina & Vaast, 2008)? ● Under what conditions do tensions/conflicts arise (Lissillour, 2022)? ● How do you think the relationship is going overall (Levina & Vaast, 2008)?	● Walk me through a recent task—which routines matter most? ● How are conflicts managed; what do they reveal about power? ● Which skills/forms of capital enable success in this role?
Capital: Economic	● What resources or financial pressures affect how work is organized? ● Which actor controls key financial resources (Lissillour, 2022)? ● Who makes financial investments that drive operations/initiatives (Lissillour, 2022)? ● Who determines budget allocation—centralized or decentralized (Lissillour, 2022)?	● Who controls budgets? How does funding shape choices? ● How does resource control affect authority and decision-making? ● What motivations guide investment choices? ● How does budgeting structure influence transparency/power?
Capital: Social	● Who do you rely on for support? ● Who holds strong relationships with policymakers/decision-makers, and how are these maintained (Lissillour, 2022)? ● What is the nature/direction of influence between key actors; how has it shifted (Lissillour, 2022)? ● To what extent do actors maintain lobbying ties; how do these shape influence (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? ● Who acts as an intermediary/bridge between stakeholders (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? ● Which groups hold the strongest lobbying capacity (Lissillour, 2022)?	● Which networks matter most? How were ties formed? ● How do networks affect access and influence? ● What strengthens/weakenes these relationships? ● How do lobbying efforts affect decisions/policy? ● How do intermediaries align mutual interests? ● How is lobbying influence demonstrated/legitimized? ● Who drives lobbying efforts? Role of informal alliances?

TABLE 2 Sample interview questions by concept (Bourdieu-inspired) — Part B

Concept	Example questions	Suggested probes / follow-ups
Capital: Cultural	- What forms of knowledge, training, or credentials are valued here? - Which group controls access to information and determines its meaning (Lissillour, 2022)? - Have there been shifts in how information is controlled or shared (Lissillour, 2022)? - To what extent does technical expertise grant influence over generalists (Lissillour, 2022)? - What is your role in the company?	- How do credentials affect status/decision-making? - How does information control shape expertise/legitimacy? - What information is retained/restricted, by whom, and why? - Who decides what information is made available—and to whom? - How is technical expertise recognized/valued in the field?
Capital: Symbolic	- Are there reputations, titles, or honors that influence treatment? - How do actors build and sustain credibility (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? - Which actors must actively maintain credibility to remain influential (Lissillour, 2022)? - Is credibility contested between groups; how is identity constructed (Lissillour, 2022)? - Which actors retain information; does this affect influence/-control (Lissillour, 2022)? - Has the dominant agent integrated dominated agents' feedback into policies/operations (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? - What grants legitimacy to boundary spanners (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? - Are tools/resources used similarly across contexts (Lissillour & Sahut, 2022)? - What if you and the client disagree about system functionality (Levina & Vaast, 2008)? - What if you and the client disagree about the development process (Levina & Vaast, 2008)? - Does declining credibility of one group open space for others (Lissillour, 2022)?	- Example where reputation changed an outcome. - What practices/representations sustain trust? - Legacy vs. innovation as bases of reputation? - What drives information retention—strategy, protection, power? - How are adoptions framed—collaboration, concession, adaptation? - How is legitimacy maintained or challenged in practice? - How are meaning clashes resolved across contexts? - How often do disagreements occur? Do you try to persuade? How/why not? - What factors drive rises/declines in legitimacy?
Capital: Gender	- To what extent do gendered roles/expectations shape access to resources/authority (Lissillour, 2022)? - Did/will your gender assist you in gaining employment (Huppatz, 2009)? - Are job-success characteristics related to gender (Huppatz, 2009)? - Has your gender or femininity worked to your advantage (Huppatz, 2009)? - Are these characteristics viewed as masculine or feminine (Huppatz, 2009)?	- How do feminine/masculine identities influence recognition/power? - Why/why not? In what situations and how?
Habitus	- Are there cultural differences that play a role on the project (Levina & Vaast, 2008)? - How do your dispositions/professional background shape your approach? - To what extent are stakeholders seeking to maintain/strengthen influence; how is it exercised (Lissillour, 2022)? - How do stakeholders respond to or negotiate these power dynamics (Lissillour, 2022)? - Do any groups promote transparency/open communication to reduce dominance (Lissillour, 2022)?	- Please describe; how do you address them (examples)? - Past experience shaping a response? - Examples where actors shaped policies/standards? - What practices illustrate dominance; how do others respond? - Are responses guided by norms/professional values? Regional differences? - Initiatives promoting openness; motivations; effectiveness in shifting power? - Shifts in decision power; how do others capitalize?
Nomos	- What norms are respected among stakeholders; who instigated them? - Are actors imposing competing norms? - Which stakeholders are tacitly excluded by this norm?	- Have you adapted behavior to fit norms? What influenced that decision? - How do norms confer legitimacy and organize the "rules of the game"?

6.1 | Thematic analysis

In their study, Harrington et al. (2013) coded interview transcripts thematically to uncover patterns of dominance and subordination, which were then analyzed using Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital. This method enabled the authors to track how participants' speech reflected underlying power dynamics and the allocation of symbolic, cultural, and social capital within the organizational context.

Building on this, several studies have combined thematic and content analysis to examine both explicit statements and latent meanings in participants' narratives (Kamoche et al. 2014, Schreier 2012). This integrated approach allows researchers to quantify certain aspects of data while also interpreting the underlying meanings conveyed through participants' language. Such methodological combinations have been particularly effective in studies seeking to balance descriptive and interpretive depth.

6.2 | Inductive analysis

Other researchers have employed inductive analysis to explore meaning emerging directly from data. Braun and Clarke (2006), for instance, utilized a systematic process that begins with open coding of transcripts, grouping similar codes into categories, and refining these into themes that capture participants' experiences and perspectives. This inductive approach emphasizes immersion in the data and sensitivity to contextual nuances rather than the use of predefined categories. Levina and Vaast (2008) are among other researchers using inductive analysis of data. The researchers took an inductive approach, guided by grounded theory ideas. In their study, data gathering and analysis were intertwined "rather than separate steps. Following each interview, the researcher took analytical notes to discover "emergent conceptual themes and propositions". New interviewees were chosen to "confirm or challenge the emerging patterns" based on these emergent propositions. This cyclical process proceeded until "theoretical saturation" was achieved. In a second step of analysis, short descriptions for each project were written and compared to develop "high level theoretical themes". The researcher then coded the entire interview data according to these topics.

In conducting their research, Monod et al. (2022) employed a concurrent data collection and analysis process consistent with constant comparison techniques (Glaser and Strauss 1967). While not fully aligned with grounded theory, this overlap allowed for early analytical engagement and adaptive adjustments to data collection instruments, such as adding new interview questions as themes emerged (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). The analytic process followed the inductive framework proposed by Corley and Gioia (2004), consisting of three stages: identifying first-order concepts, defining theoretical categories, and aggregating theoretical dimensions. The first-order concepts were derived inductively from interviews and document analysis, using open coding to capture recurring issues and relationships across data sources (Glaser

and Strauss 1967, Yin 2013). These concepts were then refined through systematic comparison and evidence building. The second-order concepts were interpreted through Bourdieu's practice theory (Bourdieu 1977), linking emergent patterns of power and practice to theoretical constructs. Finally, the authors aggregated these insights into broader theoretical dimensions. The analysis followed a recursive, iterative logic (e.g., Eisenhardt (1989), Yin (1994) to build theory from the case data, focusing on understanding a process as it unfolded over time (Ragin 1994).

6.3 | Critical discourse analysis

Harrington et al. (2013) conducted a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to identify four interpretive mechanisms used by Human Resource Practitioners that served to exonerate managers from bullying behaviors, thereby protecting the interests of the organization at the expense of an employee advocacy role. These data suggest that, rather than being solely a phenomenon perpetrated by individuals, workplace bullying is often a symptom of managerialist and capitalistic discourses of intensified performance management in organizations, reinforced by the embedding of existing professionalization discourses with the field of Human Resource Management in the UK. Harrington and colleagues also suggest that CDA examines dominant discourses in their socio-historical contexts, emphasizing the importance of language as a tool for interpretation and social function. Similarly, Willig (1999) proposes analyzing social structures and practices to understand their impact on individuals. According to CDA, discourse shapes individual subjectivity, making it a target for analysis. CDA situates persons in their socio-historical contexts, allowing for an exploration of how various discourses influence subjective experience and practice (Riley et al. 2007, Willig 2008). CDA allows for an explicit investigation of Bourdieu's notion of language and power, allowing HRPs to examine how they produce and express bullying.

7 | REFLEXIVITY

Bourdieu's work is distinguished by a strong element of reflexivity. He not only applied his theoretical concepts to his own academic practice (see, for example, Bourdieu (1988)) but also frequently analyzed his theory's reception based on his peers' personal backgrounds and positions rather than objective scientific evidence (see, e.g., Bourdieu (1993)). He emphasized the importance of turning the analytical lens inward to examine the structures, power relations, and hierarchies within academia itself. The goal of this "reflective stance" is to uncover the academic field's own "unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 40)). This legacy has been highlighted within management studies. In a citation context analysis, Sieweke (2014) notes that the "high degree of reflexivity and the theoretically based discussion" found in Bourdieusian research provides significant "insights into academic practices within

the field". This is a topic that Sieweke (2014) observes has garnered much attention (see, e.g., Golsorkhi et al. (2009), Meyer and Boxenbaum (2010). In his earlier works (Bourdieu 1988 1975), he argued that the concept of field is directly applicable to academic disciplines, as they function like any other social field such as politics or the economy, operating according to specific rules, hierarchies, and systems of value. Within this context, he described academia as a field where a particular (scientific) game is played, shaped by struggles over legitimacy, recognition, and intellectual authority. Bourdieu (1990) argues that reflexivity is an essential methodological necessity, not an afterthought. As shown in Egan and Tweedie (2018), researchers reflected on their own academic opinions and assumptions throughout the study. In practice, this entails delineating one's position within the research domain, recording reflexive memos, and examining the impact of symbolic and cultural capital on data access, interpretation, and representation (Grenfell 2014). Recent research has implemented this concept via structured reflexive methodologies. Ribeiro and Miraldi (2022) stress that reflexivity means looking at the epistemic and institutional conditions that shape research, while Holthaus (2025) shows how it can be used to look at how researchers' colonial and disciplinary positions affect how they interpret data. Likewise, Guttormsen and Moore (2023) utilize Bourdieu's epistemic reflexivity to mitigate bias in international business research by methodically interrogating researchers' assumptions and positionality. In this way, reflexivity is not just an extra step in the research process; it is an important part of Bourdieusian research that makes sure the analysis is thorough and the ethics are clear.

Collective epistemic reflexivity refers to a process of mutual reflexivity in which academics and practitioners act as boundary spanners, developing mindfulness to avoid reproducing stigma arising from differences in practice, capital, and habitus. Different phases of reflexivity are likely to occur (Kennelly et al. 2024), including a necessary "active and methodical listening" (Sweetman 2009, 497) to understand the field from which individuals act, and stakeholders' willingness to engage in "uncomfortable conversations" (Gökarkısel and Smith 2017, 640) as organizational change often requires personal transformation. Indeed, akin to the experience of Ishkanian and Saavedra (2019), this process might involve "acknowledging our positionalities" (researchers and practitioners), "our differences" (in capital endowment), and recognizing "the inherent power dynamics in any research endeavor" (diverging habitus).

A key element of Bourdieu's theory, as highlighted by Egan and Tweedie (2018), is the need for explicit reflexivity in one's research approach. Although reflexivity has many dimensions (Bourdieu 2004, Grenfell 2008, Schirato and Webb 2003), Bourdieu emphasizes how one's social history and position shape research questions and methods, introducing "unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 40). One such "predetermination" in Egan and Tweedie (2018) analysis is the fact that the sustainability accounting arguments have distinct histories and normativities than the researchers'. These debates, for example, focus on social rather than firm-level (e.g., cost efficiency) sustainability,

and they usually presume that social sustainability is desirable. Furthermore, because academic researchers seek independent knowledge building, they can examine accountants, organizations, and their sustainability objectives without being restricted by the same economic pressures that their "subjects" experience.

8 | CONCLUSION

8.1 | Contribution

While Lissillour et al. (2023)'s study contributes to the methodological discussion, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations and areas of their research for further exploration. For instance, the authors did not include the use of personal narratives and the notion of reflexivity. The current commentary extends their methodological framework by incorporating these dimensions to complement the methodological guidelines and data analysis methods. Furthermore, we included additional concepts that Lissillour et al. (2023) did not discuss, such as boundary spanning which allows researchers to investigate how boundaries are produced and maintained through "status differences" and the "pronounced imbalance of resources" (Levina and Vaast 2008); how different forms of capital (e.g., technical expertise, industry knowledge) are valued or devalued across different fields; and how "boundary spanning competence" (Levina and Vaast 2005) is itself a form of social and cultural capital that actors must develop to collaborate effectively. In a similar way, we introduced a form of capital that has been overlooked in management studies: the gender capital. This form of capital captures how gendered dispositions and identities function as a source of power within social fields (Huppertz 2009). The interview questions compiled in this study and the follow-ups were designed to provide researchers with actionable suggestions to develop their own interview guidelines for these advanced concepts.

8.2 | Future research: a practice-based PAR

Many Bourdieu-inspired studies treat practitioners as passive participants rather than active change agents, thereby constraining their ability to influence and facilitate organizational transformation. PAR studies remain underrepresented in academic literature, and this approach is seldom prioritized in methodological discussions (Christofi et al. 2024). However, although such designs can generate complex and sometimes unequal power relations between researchers and participants (Perkins et al. 2021), a practice-based PAR encourages collective epistemic reflexivity, ensuring that academic research contributes to meaningful, real-world impact. This approach adds value to critical management studies (Tatli 2011) by actively engaging stakeholders in addressing context-specific issues through emancipatory and transformative practices. Future studies could propose a power-aware multi-cycle protocol

for practice-based PAR (diagnosis → co-design → intervention → reflexive review → stabilization) in which the target community and change initiative (defining the field) are socially analyzed in relation to their embedded practices, capital, and habitus. Such an approach would enable PAR projects to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and disrupt practices that sustain inequality. This could involve implementing innovative routines throughout the PAR process, such as co-memos, positionality mapping, rotating facilitation, and the integration of specific artefacts to promote reflexivity and sustained transformation.

Overall, future research could explore practice-based PAR as a transformative methodology that bridges theory and practice through collaboration, reflexivity, and critical discourse analysis. By integrating personal narratives and examining emerging forms of capital, PAR has the potential to expand Bourdieu's theoretical legacy while fostering social change and equity in contemporary research environments.

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