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## The symbolic face of power

*Every established order tends to produce...the naturalization of its own arbitrariness.*

Pierre Bourdieu (1977)<sup>1</sup>

Inspired by Bourdieu's theorizing, and considering the limitations of conventional notions of power used to study trade politics, I argue in this chapter that a critical framework on symbolic power is of intellectual importance. At its centre, the notion of symbolic power offers a way to conceptualize how political language, as a pre-eminent symbolic system, both reflects and constitutes power. For Bourdieu, language is taken seriously because of how it is used to legitimize certain material forms and social relations and not others. Linguistic constructions are thus read as being, at the same time, instruments of communication, political domination, and, potentially, resistance. The struggle over political language shapes the fundamental definitions of issues, the organization of agendas, and the mobilization capabilities of agents. Importantly, in the Bourdieusian vision of the political world, there is not a sharp divide between material structures and symbolic structures, but an interdependent relationship. Symbolic power can thus be thought of as a kind of '*worldmaking power*', alerting us to the construction of the 'legitimate vision of the social world and of its divisions'.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter debates the merits of Bourdieu's careful thinking on power, offers illustrations from trade politics to show how such ideas can be empirically applied, and, when needed, explains distinctions and similarities between symbolic power and the other critical notions of power from Chapter 2. Symbolic power should be treated here as a conceptual framework that houses a series of important sub-concepts. With an eye on relational analysis, these sub-concepts work together to form a larger theoretical design. In the subsequent chapters, symbolic power will, in turn, be compared to the concepts of compulsory power and institutional power in order to better explain strategies

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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pursued by Southern countries in recent WTO negotiations. There are three main sections to the chapter.

First, at a deeper level, the analysis of symbolic power begins with attention to those ‘background’ notions or elements of the political world that pass as ‘taken-for-granted’ or, as Bourdieu puts it, ‘doxic’. Examining the doxic relations that agents have with their social environment helps to shed light on potentially covert features of power, aspects that are arguably missed when using traditional power concepts. These features may prove particularly significant if certain dominant players have shaped the ‘common sense’ in ways that privilege their particular interests. In the second section, the argument advances to debate the complex relationship between power, language, and processes of political legitimation. Bourdieu’s notion of a ‘linguistic market’ is introduced here, a conceptual device for exploring the competition between political actors for symbolic power and the potential profits that may result. Three major dimensions of the linguistic market are debated: at a macro-level, the role played by classification systems; at a meso-level, the struggle between ‘orthodox’ and ‘heterodox’ opinions; and at a micro-level, the social valuation of particular political spaces and speakers. Understanding the relative potency of symbolic power in a given situation, including its potential to shape the definition of problems, identities, and material outcomes, lies in studying the relationships between these elements.

However, although it will be argued that Bourdieu offers a rich theorization of power, his framework is not a radical innovation. This leads to the third section, which explores complementary conceptual resources in IR theory and sociology. In terms of context, Bourdieu is first compared to literature on the relationship between argumentation and power in IR in order to further tease out the distinctiveness of symbolic power. The chapter concludes through briefly discussing two additional notions that offer synergies with Bourdieu’s thought: the importance of framing as an agenda-setting device, and the idea of mimicry for studying social adaptation or the subversive appropriation of an opponent’s argument. Together, the chapter argues that these added concepts can help refine our understanding for how mechanisms of legitimation work in the service of symbolic power to favour some issues and groups over others. In the larger picture, it will be suggested that symbolic power, as a malleable conceptual framework, aims to dissolve, rather than strictly police, the structure–agency relationship. In one sense, it warns us about how symbolic systems enframe actors, establishing parameters on action. In another sense, however, symbolic power can be interpreted in more instrumental or substantialist terms, potentially to be used by all, like a weapon or a commodity.

### 3.1 The doxic relationship to the political world

For some readers, the concept of doxa could be considered to be associated with a very old problem in the social sciences: how to theorize the relative stability of political relations. What David Hume referred to as ‘implicit submission’, others have come to call ‘socialization’, ‘internalization’, or ‘logical conformity’.<sup>3</sup> Within these critical traditions, many authors have been preoccupied with explaining how certain political arrangements acquire a so-called ‘normal’ appearance and, in particular, how less-privileged agents may come to adhere to, or identify with, their own subjugation. For instance, as already noted in Chapter 2, in Gramsci’s writings on hegemony, he argued that some discourses could reflect and reproduce justifications for the status quo that come to be accepted as the ‘common sense’.<sup>4</sup> In a similar vein, Louis Althusser’s work on ideology argued that general assumptions about meanings, what he called ‘obviousness’, are inter-related with the social identities of actors.<sup>5</sup>

Bourdieu was equally sceptical of those presumptions or ideas that appeared ‘natural’. In his view, the stability of the political order is not inevitable, but rather remains contingent upon the management of two universes: not only the public arena of discourse and argument, but also a ‘background’ space of stable beliefs. Doxa or, more precisely, the *doxic relationship agents have with the social world*, is his chosen expression for ‘that which is taken for granted’.<sup>6</sup> For Bourdieu, explaining the workings of symbolic power begins with trying to grasp the significance of more latent histories that may pass unacknowledged or be intuitively sensed by agents as ‘settled’ and thus part of the consensus. Although the empirical debates in this book overwhelmingly concentrate on the ‘foreground’ of trade negotiations, where conflicts are more visibly represented and documented, the analytical focus here is on how power can be conceived in more covert forms as imagined in the notion of doxa.

#### 3.1.1 *Explaining how the ‘common sense’ undergirds power*

If a particular perspective exerts such a deep hold upon agents that other alternative schemes become marginalized, then the perspective has the potential to be sensed as not arbitrary (one among many) but, instead, as the ‘natural’ or, indeed, possibly ‘only’ vision. In these situations, as Bourdieu puts it, some agents may ‘misrecognize’ how the particular social order of the day is a product of historical struggle. As he argued with Luc Boltanski, ‘Symbolic domination really begins when the misrecognition (*méconnaissance*), implied by recognition (*reconnaissance*), leads those who are dominated to apply the dominant criteria of evaluation to their own practices.’<sup>7</sup> The

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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concept of doxa enters here as a conceptual tool to help shed light on how the common sense is conserved and how, in the process, particular histories and politics may be misrecognized by certain actors.

Like other ideas in Bourdieu's theoretical arsenal, the basic purpose of the concept of doxa is to explain why social relations often remain relatively stable but, at the same time, by no means rigidly impervious to change. In any particular social environment, a doxic relationship can be said to operate when agents hold on to 'cognitive and evaluative presuppositions' that often pass as 'accepted' and hence without criticism.<sup>8</sup> For instance, in different cultures at different historical periods, patriarchy, or the concept of human rights, or racial superiority, or religious belief have often appeared as given, self-evident 'truths'. For Bourdieu, there is thus a limit to the possibilities 'allowed' by the perceptual framework of any actor within the conventional political universe. The constraining effects of the doxa 'work'—without any kind of lead orchestrator, strategic plan, or conspiracy—to define these limits. This does not mean that one is blinded to an analysis of how doxic relations of gender symbolism, for example, are both strictly enforced and yet contested in actual practice.<sup>9</sup> Rather, Bourdieu's main aim is to examine how power can work through the *internalization of previously external structures*, that is, how a successful doxic relationship exists where there is a correspondence or 'fit' between the 'objective structures' of the political world (such as physical institutions or common categories of problems) and the schemes of perception constructed by the agent.<sup>10</sup> The tighter this 'fit', the stronger the effects of the doxa on the actor in question or, in other words, the more likely they will misrecognize how the doxa is operating.

With this in mind, it is useful to mention how Bourdieu uses the related word 'disposition' to give himself further conceptual space to explore this nexus between structure and agency, which defines doxic relations. As he argued, the term 'expresses first the *result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates *a way of being, a habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination*'.<sup>11</sup> In Bourdieu's view, agents carry with them sets of 'durable dispositions', which, while being special to their own experiences, are also shaped by external structures. These dispositions tend not to change very easily because they have become historically sedimented and incorporated into each actor, through explicit motivations as well as by a range of tacit means. For instance, one may be able to reveal such qualities when an agent verbally characterizes an action as 'a traditional approach' or explains 'habitual frailties' as 'natural conditions', rather than reflecting upon how such behaviour may be the product of complex patterns of socialization. One should not assume, therefore, that issues of explicit 'constraint' will inevitably be recognized on the part of those who appear (from the

### The symbolic face of power

perspective of an outsider) to be strongly constrained, since the subject may read their own position or capabilities as ‘appropriate’ for the time and setting. For Bourdieu, therefore, an adherence to a doxic presupposition is, in short, more fundamental, more effective, and, arguably, pre-reflexive, a ‘true foundation of a realistic theory of domination and politics’.<sup>12</sup>

While any particular doxa is most likely embedded in different institutional settings and territories, shaping what is accepted as the *sens pratique*, it is also important to reflect upon its agent- and field-specific qualities. It is here, however, that one needs to raise some qualifications or criticisms regarding how Bourdieu has generally handled the notion. Despite a later acknowledgement that one can find ‘variations in the extent of the realm of doxa’—that is, doxic relations can be exposed or broken—the concept still remains part of his general power-as-domination outlook.<sup>13</sup> It can be remarked in passing that his reading of the concept was partly a reaction to Edmund Husserl’s conceptualization of doxa within the tradition of phenomenology.<sup>14</sup> However, some scholars in the critical literature have suggested that Bourdieu has tended to ‘overpolarize’ Husserl’s thinking by marking a radical break between opinion as ‘undiscussed’ (doxa) and opinion as discursively articulated (orthodoxy to heterodoxy).<sup>15</sup> Husserl, instead, preferred to speak of how agents revealed different modes of recognition, from a deeper, ‘passive sense’ that he called ‘urdoxa’, before considering other states of awareness such as ‘judgement’ or ‘predictiveness’.<sup>16</sup> In relation to any social space, therefore, one could imagine that an actor may form different sets of appreciation of the world, from a deeper internalization of dominant notions to a more cynical or pragmatic conformity. Not all readers will be convinced, therefore, that there is always complicity between socially diverse actors over certain doxic presuppositions. Moreover, the degree of congruence between any institution and the doxic assumptions in question arguably never reaches a ‘perfect’ alignment, even within those structures commonly called the ‘institutions of power’. Rather, there is often at least a limited struggle between political actors over competing governing principles that may have implications for different doxic features.

That said, what contribution can this concept ultimately perform when compared to the other critical concepts of power discussed in Chapter 2? To return to neo-Gramscian perspectives again, one could argue that the idea of doxic presuppositions appears to be very similar to the notion of hegemony and the ideological means by which powerful actors defend their interests. It may be read as a concept for grasping the ‘microstructures’ of ideology.<sup>17</sup> There are, however, some important differences. First, while neo-Gramscians place an emphasis on how elites engineer the consent of dominated actors to ensure a predictable common sense, Bourdieu rejects ideology and consciousness as suitable concepts for explaining such processes. For him, ideology is a

### Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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rather blunt conceptual tool that has been tarnished through different political and scholarly uses (or abuses).<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Bourdieu repeatedly argues that power often works through very obscure processes, especially involving the space occupied by the body, for which the conventional definition of ideology in terms of representation and false consciousness has trouble accounting.<sup>19</sup> Second, on the related question of intentionality, Bourdieu asks researchers to probe, against the Marxist or compulsory-power vision of totalizing control, how behaviour is often regulated without necessarily being the result of 'strategic' purpose. As he once expressed it, 'social mechanisms are not the product of some Machiavellian intention. They are much more intelligent than the most intelligent of the dominant.'<sup>20</sup> Thus, seen in this light, one needs the concept of doxa to avoid treating power as simply the operations of an 'omniscient strategist' whose every move is undertaken with calculation, foresight, and self-interestedness.<sup>21</sup> The powerful themselves are socialized creatures who may misrecognize how certain features of the order have been normalized, a point Bourdieu illustrated in his studies of the making of cultural elites in the French academy.<sup>22</sup>

In comparison with the Foucauldian sense of *épistémè* and productive power, however, the concept of doxa does share some broad similarities. Both Bourdieu and Foucault have, as a starting point, a common education in the history of science, and frame their theorizing of power in terms of techniques of domination and bodily incorporation. The notion of doxic presuppositions, however, does not necessarily need to be referring to large-scale, transhistorical forces that the idea of *épistémè* attempts to highlight. Rather, a doxic quality, an internal practical sense, could be generated within a narrower institutional or cultural setting. This qualification is, in turn, emblematic of perhaps the major difference between Foucault and Bourdieu; that is, how the latter, by using the tools of social science rather than philosophy is much more sensitive to contemporary forms of legitimation in particular social spaces.<sup>23</sup> Bourdieu's conceptual approach on symbolic power enables, according to Wacquant's reading, an ability 'to link the objective structures bequeathed by history to the historical practices of agents and, therefore, a mechanism to account for the social patterning and objective meaning of strategies'.<sup>24</sup> This distinction will be returned to at the end of this chapter in order to further clarify what contribution symbolic power provides in relation to other critical notions of structural power and productive power.

In essence, as Bourdieu argued in one study of bureaucracy, 'Doxa is a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view—the point of view of those who dominate by dominating the state and who have constituted their point of view as universal by constituting the state.'<sup>25</sup> The task of critically understanding and

## The symbolic face of power

empirically applying the notion arguably calls for a close attention to history, not only in assessing how one possibility among many became actualized, but also how certain historical presuppositions remain a source of ongoing struggle between agents, even if they take latent forms. But in keeping with the criticism of Bourdieu's use of the concept, it is perhaps better to imagine how political orders could contain doxic elements, particular features or moments when 'the "right" opinion or calculation simply "falls right", in a sense, without knowing how or why... that the agent does what she "has to do" without posing it explicitly as a goal'.<sup>26</sup> Stabilizing these doxic elements, over time and territories, is in part dependent upon how privileged actors preserve ideas of tradition, custom, and deference, and yet, suitably, remain silent about the genesis of such social practices. As Bourdieu encapsulated it, a doxic relationship simply 'goes without saying because it comes without saying'.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.1.2 *Doxic relations within trade politics*

Whenever the epithet 'common' is uttered or implied—to indicate why a certain agenda, policy, or rule is the prescribed universal starting point—it is possible that an underlying doxic feature is present. Because Bourdieu used this notion across different fields of analysis—including the arts, education, and the economy—it can be viewed as a flexible conceptual tool that could 'come in many empirical guises in modern societies'.<sup>28</sup> With this in mind, when returning to the social space of international trade relations, where can one find doxic elements of significance? One could cite many assumptions and presumptions that pass with little or no criticism. But perhaps an obvious starting point is the very practice of diplomacy itself as the dominant mode of political organization. As explored by Vincent Pouliot in his Bourdieu-inspired account of international security, conditions of inter-state peace could be considered 'a form of doxa'.<sup>29</sup> Once peace has been established and becomes stabilized over time between a group of states, it may come to acquire a certain 'self-evidence' in the minds of relevant diplomats, thus forming part of the 'background knowledge' of exchanges.

There is, of course, a long intellectual tradition that has sought to examine how trade can both reflect and constitute international peace. Immanuel Kant, Richard Cobden, Cordell Hull, and the modern disciples who have defended the democratic peace thesis have all discussed such themes.<sup>30</sup> Even if current trade officials have never dwelt upon the ideas of these thinkers, the practice of negotiating through diplomacy has become deeply entrenched through the institutional establishment of the postwar GATT/WTO system, building on earlier preferential arrangements. As Joseph Weiler has explained in reference to the closeted and 'self-referential' practices of GATT diplomacy, an 'ethos' emerged that contracting parties would work to 'prevent trade

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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disputes from spilling over or, indeed, spilling out into the wider circles of international relations: a trade dispute was an “internal” affair which had, as far as possible, to be resolved (“settled”) as quickly and smoothly as possible within the organization’.<sup>31</sup> It was expected that the process for managing disputes would be conducted with discretion, often insulated from not only broader social forces, but other government ministries that were not specifically tasked with a trade remit. In other words, the implicit aim was to prevent possible discord from spreading, in contrast to the interwar period, which served (and continues to serve) as an illuminating negative example.<sup>32</sup> As Robert Howse has expressed it, drawing on Pascal’s imagery, a ‘sense of pride’ existed among this community that they stood above the ‘madhouse’ of international politics, notably the UN system.<sup>33</sup> Such insiders thus developed, through close engagements, what Bourdieu would call a practical ‘sense of the game’ regarding how to adapt to the GATT style of diplomatic culture, including all the customs and proclivities that passed as ‘natural’ or ‘appropriate’.<sup>34</sup>

But perhaps what matters most when trying to apply the notion of doxa to trade politics is to examine not diplomacy *per se* as a larger construct, but how the adherence to some predispositions results in distributional consequences. This, indeed, was Bourdieu’s chief motivation: to understand how inequities were manifested through agents adhering to seemingly innocuous practices. Take, for instance, how the notion of reciprocity is politically conceived and acted out in trade relations. This idea, one of the oldest in trade and social exchange more generally, was codified into the GATT as a principle to encourage sovereign nations to engage in the mutual submission of their markets to international competition.<sup>35</sup> Governments were said to need certain ‘payments’ or ‘concessions’ for engaging in liberalization, particularly for managing the public acceptability of trade deals at home with constituents. The effects of reciprocity, however, are often very ambiguous and difficult to interpret in trade relations, both for negotiators and outside analysts alike. In most trade talks, the meaning of reciprocity takes a diffuse quality, to use Robert Keohane’s descriptor, whereby the definition of equivalence (of equity of value) is less precise, more approximate, possibly involving multiple actors, or negotiations that extend over time.<sup>36</sup> Such points are crucial to recall when analysing the struggles over WTO policy and, indeed, will be reflected in the case studies addressed in this book.

But reciprocity is, at the same time, not simply an objective legal fact that is given material reality through codification and the physical exchange of goods. Thinking more sociologically, with an eye to the effects of symbolic power, the normative theme of reciprocity also shapes the very bodily dispositions of the trade diplomat. A trade negotiator is not ‘made’ when they pronounce from a prepared statement or fold their arms in opposition to another speaker. Rather, the most expert reciprocal dealer is one who senses

### The symbolic face of power

and judges the intentions (calculated or not) of other parties; explores and discerns the potential pathways to compromise; beckons and entices players together at the right time, in the most appropriate forum, and with the most suitable methods; and anticipates where obstacles could disrupt or derail the process. One could view Pascal Lamy, in his former capacity as EU commissioner for external trade, or Arthur Dunkel, as GATT director general during the Uruguay Round, as figures that have embodied such qualities.<sup>37</sup> What passes in the common vernacular as the ‘technique’ or ‘personality’ of the negotiator—expressions that often conflate or obscure a multitude of potential attributes—is, to use Bourdieu, a set of practical dispositions that shape the conduct of the diplomat. Through common patterns of ritualization, such practices are socially tested and refined, yet this sometimes evolves in an almost imperceptible way beyond explicit calculation and consciousness.<sup>38</sup> In these moves, the trade negotiator begins to form what could be considered a doxic relationship with the ideal of reciprocal exchange; that is, it becomes inscribed into their practices in an unquestioning manner, ‘guiding’ their ‘feel’ for the game.

However, as Keohane rightly notes, appeals to reciprocity are not necessarily normatively ‘good’ for all parties concerned and in all contexts. Rather, what is declared as reciprocal, including the desire for reciprocal behaviour, may in some cases be ‘fraudulent, hiding domination and exploitation’ and that ‘even genuinely reciprocal relationships are not power-free’.<sup>39</sup> One is reminded, in this sense, of the related literature on gift exchange, to which Keohane notes in passing through the work of Marcel Mauss.<sup>40</sup> The act of gift giving, as Mauss explored through his studies of traditional societies, often has a double-edged quality. On the one hand, according to the conventional reading, the transferring of a gift from a donor to a recipient results in a bond of solidarity. Often, the giver may appeal to an ethic of ‘generosity’ or ‘sincerity’; that is, they claim or imply that they have transcended their particular (economic) interests to become, in Bourdieu’s language, ‘disinterested’ (an idea that will be returned to below).<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, however, gift exchanges also appear to reveal social inequities or even hierarchies where the donor holds some form of superiority over the recipient. Moreover, ‘if this hierarchy already exists, then the gift expresses and legitimizes it’.<sup>42</sup> In one move, therefore, the gift transaction could reinforce relations of power and dependence, yet be intuitively perceived by both participants and observers through the common—and often highly legitimate—lens of ‘charity’.

In trade relations involving many Southern countries, the most institutionalized form of gift exchange would probably be the idea of ‘technical assistance’ (TA). The management of such officialized gifts, such as through the WTO Secretariat, can take different forms, including the provision of training courses on particular topics or internship programmes for select diplomats, to name two services.<sup>43</sup> But prior to even opening a debate on the precise content

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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of such programmes, including concerns regarding objectives, effectiveness, and accountability, one needs to note how the notion of TA often exerts a strong taken-for-granted, doxic effect on many trade policy actors.<sup>44</sup> Discord may exist between policy-makers over the form of TA projects, including some expressions for more serious reforms, but the fundamental principle of conducting such exchanges is rarely doubted. In the broader critical literature on international aid, Tomohisa Hattori has drawn upon Bourdieu to argue how the notion of foreign aid can be conceptualized as a form of symbolic domination.<sup>45</sup> In bestowing a gift, a donor has the potential to transform their status in the relationship 'from the dominant to the *generous*'.<sup>46</sup> When applied to studying trade-related TA, a Bourdieusian vision of symbolic power would thus be attentive to these subtle processes of (mis)recognized power, particularly when inequalities are neutralized through dominated actors adhering to whatever is deemed 'obvious'.

What would Bourdieu's conceptual tools help to reveal in this context? Two points could be raised. First, doxic relationships are defined here through an implicit commitment among a range of actors to a common stake in the trade policy game. But what tends to be marginalized or, indeed, 'abolished' through time is the genesis of such ideas and, crucially, the particular political principles that underpin its ongoing salience. If one does not understand such history there exists a risk of missing a deeper, pre-reflexive logic of symbolic power or, in other words, how an issue such as TA became problematized in only certain terms. For instance, one would need to initially analyse how internationally administered TA was a radical concept born with the UN in the 1940s; how it was given policy direction by President Truman; and how the notion was attached to a belief that world poverty could be solved in the context of decolonization and theories of modernization.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps most significantly for our current period, one would also need to study how TA was conceived within a positivist, compartmentalized model of technocratic rationality and how only certain public agencies and experts became authorized to speak with competence on the subject.<sup>48</sup> Decades later, one can still see the traces of these principles undergirding the TA initiatives led by the WTO Secretariat. In sum, these primary doxic presuppositions pass as 'settled' or, in the most profound sense, 'forgotten'; they are mental constructions that require little, if any, effort to be grasped by trade officials that are part of the diplomatic game.

Second, this doxic relationship—to be precise, the 'fit' between the legally sanctioned category of TA and the cognitive structures of the trade policy agent—is often marked by an apparent sense of permanence. Yet, to clarify again, any particular doxa is never completely insulated from all types of exposure or change. In this regard, one can note a general critique of TA that has resurfaced in different forms over the postwar period: the question of agency, 'dependence', or 'powerlessness' on the side of the recipient. The

## The symbolic face of power

more recent shift towards naming TA as ‘technical cooperation’ or ‘capacity-building’, a development that spilled over into the trade field from debates in international aid politics, can be understood as ‘perhaps signalling a more equal, interactive relationship between giver and the receiver’.<sup>49</sup> The appeal to ‘partnerships’, ‘networks’, and ‘demand-driven’ approaches in relation to TA has become common in current policy debates. But these terms also conceal and obfuscate larger historical social forces at work in capitalism, which the trade regime and its institutional manifestations are, in a broad sense, merely reflecting. In this regard, one could argue that what passes as doxic now in social arrangements on TA is, at a deeper level, the shift from the previous ‘spirit of capitalism’ (with its emphasis on hierarchy, dictation, and authoritarian methods of social organization) to the ‘new spirit’ that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>50</sup> Empirically, what needs to be analysed today, among other enquiries, is whether aspects of the ‘older’ cultural spirit survive in new forms and the extent to which the agency of some recipients may be constrained through more subtle means.

There are two concluding points that can be made at this stage. First, inspired by Bourdieu’s theorizing on symbolic power, I have suggested that one can understand doxic elements as being very stable features of political orders that often present a particular point of view as the universal point of view, sometimes without resorting to any justification. These elements can work to ‘smooth’ and ‘quieten’ resistance, to the extent that the very discussion of fundamental critique fades into the background. Since the doxic relation does not stand out as a recognizable ‘problem’ to be addressed, it may be difficult for some actors (not only the dominated, but the dominant) to recognize the social conditions that have made some presuppositions of the world pass as ‘normal’. In turn, this leads to a second conclusion as a bridge to the next part of this chapter; that is, the doxa operates in a relationship with its close ally, orthodoxy, yet denies such a relationship exists. In the ‘ideal’ theoretical model for Bourdieu, the empirical justifications for orthodoxy begin to align and ‘fit’ with the internal common sense of agents, both universes in a mutually constitutive relationship. In these moves, the most powerful actors hope to universalize and concretize their systems of classification, the ‘authorized’ institutional languages, and the policies that derive from them; in sum, to defend ‘the integrity of doxa or, short of this, of establishing in its place the necessarily imperfect substitute, orthodoxy’.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.2 Power and its need for legitimation

This second section continues the examination of Bourdieu’s theorizing on symbolic power, but shifts focus to explore how agents engage in the common

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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struggle over the representation of the political world. It is divided into two subsections. First, I explain why an attention to legitimation processes is integral to the broader study of power, including specific reasons advanced by Bourdieu. Second, this discussion provides a basis for further grounding the notion of symbolic power with the WTO empirical context. As a conceptual organizing device, the idea of a ‘linguistic market’ is introduced and core properties of this market are debated. At relevant points, the argument also integrates insights from constructivist and critical authors in IR and law who have had similar concerns to Bourdieu.

### 3.2.1 *The importance of legitimation*

Bourdieu consistently argues that social practices—from the faintest of utterances to the hardest of legal rules—almost always require some form of justification and that ‘figures’ or structures of power are intimately bound up with strategies of legitimation. As he expressed it, ‘No power can be satisfied with existing just as power, that is, as brute force, entirely devoid of justification—in a word, arbitrary—and it must thus justify its existence, as well as the form it takes, or at least ensure that the arbitrary nature of its foundation will be misrecognized and thus that it will be recognized as legitimate.’<sup>52</sup> For Bourdieu, what motivates the notion of symbolic power is this concern with analysing the mechanisms of legitimation that are intertwined with power. This aim, however, requires some initial contextualization and clarification in order to unpack its significance and provide a basis for the subsequent discussion in this chapter.

Legitimation is, to be precise, a dimension of the concept of legitimacy, referring to the techniques and methods that agents use to make certain actions appear legitimate. The notion of legitimacy, however, is often opaque, intangible, and inherently contested, being understood and applied in different ways. The academic literature on legitimacy—engaging the social sciences, moral and political philosophy, and law—fully reflects this ambiguity, with scholars adopting a range of epistemological and methodological views.<sup>53</sup> For instance, debates have opposed normative theories with empirical theories of legitimacy, or positioned scholars who adopt procedural accounts of legitimacy against those who hold more substantive conceptions. Many definitions of legitimacy gravitate around a sense of ‘belief’ or ‘oughtness’ on the part of the subject. A particular institution or rule, for instance, is seen as legitimate if it is justified in terms of certain common values leading, in turn, to actors obeying or adhering to the institution or rule. Thus, seen through a variety of possible subjective lenses, what makes an object pass as legitimate is, in one major sense, defined by what is absent: coercion or, in other words, the intuitive conventional sense of power-as-domination.<sup>54</sup>

### The symbolic face of power

For those theorists who subscribe to the compulsory vision of power there has been, by definition, a tendency to see legitimacy, as defined in terms of consensus, as an oppositional concept. To recall the discussion in Chapter 2, if power is characterized by actions that are commanding and dictatorial, and which constrain the agency of one actor by another, then placing the concept of legitimacy close to power would seem inappropriate. However, in relation to the other major notions of power in IR, I have already raised the issue of legitimacy and legitimation, which appears to be implicated in any adequate understanding of these concepts. For instance, the idea of institutional power aims to grasp how some agents shape the practices and codes of organizational complexes in order to better control other actors. In this way, the actor-to-actor power relation operates indirectly and less obtrusively, thus potentially cultivating less resistance and hence implying that the action has some degree of legitimacy. Similarly, the notion of structural power in the Marxist and Gramscian traditions has highlighted the role of ideology as a ‘cloaking’ device that aims to secure the legitimation of the dominant order. In this regard, the emphasis is placed on how methods of legitimation are used by actors to maintain particular social relations and how conflict is minimized or ‘masked’. One can also note in passing here Jürgen Habermas’ contribution to the theorization of legitimation. Borrowing from Marx and Parsons, Habermas likewise argues that legitimacy is a kind of facade or screen, which is necessary for a stable social order, particularly in terms of managing the tensions between capitalism and democracy.<sup>55</sup>

Broadly speaking, Bourdieu falls within this critical tradition. Where he differs on the subject of legitimacy is in his incorporation and extension of Weber’s ideas.<sup>56</sup> Why, then, does Bourdieu argue that legitimation is important to study? Three sets of reasons can be suggested. First, put simply, teasing out different mechanisms of legitimation helps to reveal what is hidden in political life, specifically, the complexity of forms of domination. To accomplish this, Bourdieu is keen to expand the concept of interest (following Weber’s translation of the economic model into the realm of religion) in order to trace how actions defined as ‘self-interested’, such as a desire for economic capital, can often mutate and transform into ‘disinterested’ actions.<sup>57</sup> ‘Disinterest’ here does not mean an absence of interest but, rather, the projection of an *apparent* sense of impartiality, often through an appeal to whatever is defined as the ‘universal’. For Bourdieu, symbolic power is essentially ‘denied capital’; it aims to obscure the underlying ‘interested’ relation, including the original sources of power, through legitimation.<sup>58</sup> Agents need to develop symbolic power, as Bourdieu sees it, because a large number of social practices could not be performed if they were recognized as emanating from the pursuit of pure self-interest. By contrast, he views all notions of legitimacy that are uncritically ‘consensus-based’, that posit implicitly or

### Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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explicitly that legitimation works at a distance from ‘power’, to be fundamentally misleading.<sup>59</sup> Rather, the challenge is to figure out how legitimation is imbricated with power; how it works, through manifold ways, to protect power.

This idea that the ‘arbitrary’ nature of power needs to be insulated leads us, in turn, to a second reason for studying legitimation: how it helps to explain the regularities in politics. The concept of symbolic power is hence useful in terms of shedding new light on the patterns and continuities in political relations and, in particular, forms of inertia. This is because legitimation strategies are often pursued in ways that attempt to stabilize or ‘fix’ political relations in certain forms; that is, as Weber put it, to see ‘purely factual power relations’ transformed ‘into a cosmos of acquired rights, and to know that they are thus sanctified’.<sup>60</sup> If a particular power relation or principle is successfully legitimized it could make the job of active policing easier and the intervention of violence less likely. In short, the effects of legitimation may work to enhance the durability or efficiency of the power in question. Third, for Bourdieu, it is only through analysing legitimation techniques that one can better probe and detect the fractures within the walls of symbolic power. Legitimation implies an active process of construction and renewal where symbolic labourers struggle for better positions in their primary social spaces.<sup>61</sup> It is a process that is often unsteady, unpredictable, and, for Bourdieu, increasingly arduous in advanced industrial societies.<sup>62</sup> But the potential for agency is always possible when the fractures are chipped open to reveal vistas, and the vistas lead, in turn, to new visions, including all those perspectives that were closed off or denied under the search for ‘consensus’.

#### 3.2.2 *The properties of the linguistic market in trade politics*

Symbolic power thus represents for Bourdieu ‘a way of talking about the legitimation of power relations through symbolic forms’.<sup>63</sup> But what exactly are these symbolic forms? Religion and art could be represented as two symbolic systems of prominence, but Bourdieu spends most of his time on perhaps the major symbolic system, one which plays a paradigmatic role in politics: language. His major argument is that language does not simply function as a tool of cognition and communication; that is, as a method for ‘coding’ and signifying the meanings of objects. Rather, Bourdieu sees symbolic systems as being *simultaneously* ‘instruments of domination’ that serve political purposes, in particular through enabling the ‘legitimation of the established order by the establishment of distinctions (hierarchies) and the legitimation of these distinctions’.<sup>64</sup> In respect to any social environment, when actors meet and engage, they do so within what Bourdieu refers to as

## The symbolic face of power

a 'linguistic market', which is structured in certain ways.<sup>65</sup> The next sections explore three key properties of this market:

- (1) the role of classifications
- (2) the organization of arguments into orthodox and heterodox opinions
- (3) the social valuation of particular contexts and speakers.

### CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

In the Bourdieusian social world, it is the 'logic of difference', of 'differential deviation', that matters most.<sup>66</sup> Symbolic systems, from this viewpoint, are essentially classification systems, constructed around principles of inclusion and exclusion, of dividing categories into opposing classes and hence generating meaning through such separation. Binary distinctions—such as between normal or special; distinguished or vulgar; or the master bipolar relationship for Bourdieu, dominant or dominated—are particularly significant, acting as 'primitive classifications' that underpin many mental formulations.<sup>67</sup> A major stake in the contest for symbolic power, often the first, is therefore over which classificatory schemes become legitimized or delegitimized, and who benefits from these processes. Why do classifications matter so much in politics? Two sets of reasons can be given here. First, the struggle over, and 'fixing' of, classifications often takes place at a high level of abstraction in political debates, serving as a kind of conceptual organizing grid. This is significant because the classification may have a determining effect on many issues, policies, and modalities operating at lower levels of abstraction; indeed, this is often a stated goal. The classification may also have a conceptual reach across institutions, territories, or spheres of politics. In other respects, the classification may have a long lifespan, shifting in meaning only gradually through time. Such designs are important to analyse because if an actor wins a classification battle—that is, in other words, if more of its particular interests become attached to a 'universal' category—they will likely have an upper hand in subsequent competitions on that same conceptual terrain.

The significance of classifications has not escaped the attention of IR theorists, particularly those who have adopted constructivist perspectives on international organizations. For instance, Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore have argued that the ability of international bureaucracies to classify political problems is a major objective for such bodies and that these processes can be considered 'a form of power'.<sup>68</sup> This thinking has, in turn, been utilized by other authors in theorizing classification mechanisms involving the UN Secretariat and the OECD.<sup>69</sup> In trade scholarship, one can identify other writers who have explored the powerful effects of classifications. For example, Jane Kelsey has examined the links between schemes of categorization and political interests in the history of services trade. Building on the earlier work

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

of William Drake and Kalypso Nicolaidis, Kelsey has examined how ‘trade in services’—an alien notion prior to the 1980s—was in part legitimized through the work of institutions such as the OECD, which acted as a restricted forum and knowledge producer for Northern countries to debate how services could be classified in the GATT system. For Kelsey, the point of such enquiries is to trace how ‘trade in services’ had particular roots in the commercial interests of US, European, and Japanese corporations, but was subsequently legitimized through a ‘globalizing’ process that was aided by the OECD.<sup>70</sup>

In law, Andrew Lang, who has adopted an explicit constructivist framework, has further enriched such analysis by explaining how this ‘regime of knowledge’ in services was assembled and monitored by interested actors.<sup>71</sup> As noted in the introduction to the book in respect to the relationship between power and ideas, he draws attention to the potential for law—symbolic power par excellence in Bourdieu’s opinion—to ‘close’ opportunities for contestation over time through the common work of objectification and officialization.<sup>72</sup> For instance, Lang argues that through the legal codification of particular definitions of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (such as the four ‘modes of supply’ in Article I), as well as the ongoing labour of statistical analysis, particular dominant meanings acquire a certain salience and have the potential ‘to reflect and embody shared ways of classifying services’.<sup>73</sup> Trade law, in this sense, has not only a ‘regulative power’, but also an ‘imaginative power’.<sup>74</sup> In other related work, Lang has also critically engaged with the ‘trade’ versus ‘non-trade’ distinction, otherwise known as the ‘trade linkage’ debate, as in ‘trade and environment’ or ‘trade and labour’.<sup>75</sup> Through attention to the standard vocabulary and social narratives used by trade lawyers in these discussions, he questions why such a conceptual opposition arose between, on the one hand, a positive and apparently ‘self-evident’ category of ‘trade’ and, on the other hand, a more problematic class of ‘non-trade’.<sup>76</sup> Lang argues that this distinction has proved to be ‘ultimately counter-productive’, tending to legitimize and naturalize the *telos* of the liberal trade project via the privileging of those (commercial or political) values attached to ‘free trade’.<sup>77</sup> The linkage debate thus gives the appearance of subjecting the trade regime to political contestation but, in practice, such classifications typically work to ‘reproduce and reconstitute’ a conservative opinion, in the process blunting more profound critiques.<sup>78</sup>

Second, the struggle over the symbolic power of classifications is, at the same time, a struggle over groups. For Bourdieu, the capacity to make groups, to constitute them, to divide them, or to destroy them, is an enduring feature of the workings of symbolic power. This is because classifications can shape the very ‘basis of the representation of groups, and therefore, of their mobilization and demobilization’.<sup>79</sup> As Wacquant has argued in his reading of Bourdieu, the ‘political work of group-making calls our attention to the

### The symbolic face of power

panoply of techniques of symbolic aggregation and instruments of claim-making whereby a population is forged into a collective, a “class on paper” turned (or not) into a real collective, endowed with the capacity to move its (putative) members, voice demands, and act as such on the historical stage’.<sup>80</sup> The modern state can be highlighted as a classic object of analysis for analysing the relationship between group-making and classifications. For Bourdieu, the state has evolved to become the ‘central bank for symbolic credit’ or, in an extension of Weber, the ‘holder of the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence’.<sup>81</sup> By this he means that when the state claims responsibility for adjudicating over a territory, it needs to collect, treat, and redistribute symbolic resources it considers valuable. Among these activities, the logic of which tends towards totalization and objectification, Bourdieu draws attention to the ways in which the state classifies populations for the purpose of managing social problems, most prominently through the education system.<sup>82</sup>

In turning back to the WTO, one can see how political actors form groups to construct as much as to express their reality. Perhaps the most fundamental division is the master tripartite classification between ‘developed’, ‘developing’, and ‘least developed’ members. As in the UN, from where the system is borrowed, this is a self-designated categorization in the WTO. But that has not prevented repeated struggles between countries over the validity of certain members associating themselves to particular groups. The category of ‘developing country’ has become a notable bone of contention. For instance, China’s original accession to the WTO featured negotiations with the US over its ‘developing country’ designation and the extra legal provisions attached to such categories. This was particularly apparent in agricultural talks, where it was agreed that Chinese domestic support payments would be capped at 8.5% of agricultural production, not the 10% conventionally given to countries that are defined as ‘developing’.<sup>83</sup> In recent years, in the context of the Doha Round, the US has tried again to argue that countries such as China, India, and Brazil represent ‘advanced developing countries’ as a result of their changing economic status and that, due to this distinction, they need to assume ‘greater responsibilities’.<sup>84</sup> In general, however, most Southern members have resisted any effort to fundamentally alter the logic of differentiation in this area. One can see how the power of symbolic naming, in this example, is highly significant because it is being used to defend access to potential material benefits. Explaining the design and consequences of classifications is thus, for Bourdieu, an important contribution of the concept of symbolic power. But it is also apparent that we need to address, at a lower level of abstraction, the content of opinions expressed on the linguistic market in question.

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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### ORTHODOX AND HETERODOX OPINIONS

As noted at the end of Section 3.1, in Bourdieu's mind there exists a two-way relationship between the 'background' doxa and the idea of orthodoxy. Some doxic presuppositions that today pass as taken-for-granted were, at a previous period in time, part of public debate on the orthodox point of view. Conversely, some contemporary orthodox judgements contain the traces of doxic elements.<sup>85</sup> To speak of an orthodoxy is to define a particular opinion, which may constitute a broader system of knowledge, as being 'the convention'; a 'straight', 'right', or 'correct' orientation.<sup>86</sup> For Bourdieu, this raises the question of which political languages become recognized as 'authoritative', including all the theories, principles, and modes of expression that acquire a quality of 'good usage'. But the strength of an orthodoxy, perhaps its defining feature, centres on how it defends itself against other *potential orthodoxies*, opinions that are positioned as *heterodox* by virtue of having a marginalized status.<sup>87</sup> In short, the notions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy can be thought of here as conceptual devices for teasing out the range and value of potential positions that can be adopted on the linguistic market.

In this struggle over the symbolic power to define a legitimate opinion, Bourdieu points to three general features. First, following the economic analogy, the idea of a linguistic market implies a space where individuals enter into an exchange of goods, which results in a market price. But like the potential for monopolies in the economic market, the linguistic market also features more dominant producers who structure the scope for deliberation (controlling the price) in ways that may serve their interests. Certain utterances or propositions may thus acquire a greater profit, while others are recognized at a lower value. Second, Bourdieu introduces the related notion of 'linguistic capital' as a way to trace the perceived balance between orthodox and heterodox values. Linguistic capital refers to the 'power over the mechanisms of linguistic price formation, the power to make the laws of price formation operate to one's advantage and to extract the specific surplus value'.<sup>88</sup> For Bourdieu, each linguistic market will experience episodes of 'linguistic inflation' or 'linguistic devaluation'—phrases that highlight the praising or tarnishing of certain ideas—as actors battle to impose their 'correct' definition. Although each interaction can be significant, agents seek, at the same time, to ensure that their stock of linguistic capital can be reproduced over time through structuring key mental frameworks on the world. As noted, this could include classification schemes, premises, or standards.

Third, more specifically, Bourdieu argues that a 'crucial process' to be analysed in this study of symbolic power 'is the work of dissimulation and transfiguration (in a word, euphemization)'.<sup>89</sup> What does this entail? A euphemized discourse is, by definition, concealing something distasteful, something that may provoke if fully revealed. The euphemism represents a substitute for a

### The symbolic face of power

harsher term that may more accurately reflect reality. Although one could say that all linguistic expressions are, to some degree, euphemized, it is in politics where such formulations are most carefully composed. As George Orwell famously argued, 'political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness'.<sup>90</sup> The primary reason why Bourdieu pays attention to such forms and formalities is because some euphemized utterances can work as a kind of censorship on the structure of the linguistic market. To be clear, this is not censorship defined in terms of explicit repression, directed by an identifiable agency. Rather, it is a softer form of censorship, a 'constrained communication' to be precise, which derives its efficacy from a majority of actors in the game recognizing the same euphemisms.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, over time, some euphemisms may become so normalized that agents may misrecognize what precisely is or was being concealed.

How, then, can one define this relationship between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the WTO setting? Due to the complexity of literatures in this area, embracing history, economics, and international politics, one cannot possibly conduct an extended analysis of how the contemporary linguistic market on WTO policy has evolved into its present state. Such work would represent a major enquiry beyond the scope of this book.<sup>92</sup> The following points should therefore be read as an initial mapping exercise or conceptual sketch, with further, more detailed applications to come in the fourth and fifth chapters. The more restricted aim here is not to capture some 'immutable essence' or rigid definition of an orthodox or heterodox opinion in the WTO system but rather to highlight the fluid struggle over symbolic power at this level.

Among possible starting points, one can begin with the role of international trade theory, as refined and defended primarily in the academy. As is well known, modern trade theory owes its debt to the canonical work of David Ricardo who, along with James Mill, articulated the principle of comparative advantage: that mutual gains from trade can be realized when nations specialize in the production of a good in which their opportunity cost is lowest.<sup>93</sup> The later neoclassical extensions of Ricardo's thought have provided, in turn, the basis for theorists to justify the orthodox vision of freer commercial exchange.<sup>94</sup> According to writers who fall within this broad tradition, it is claimed, first and foremost, that trade liberalization exists in a positive relationship with economic growth. Increasing trade provides access to worldwide resources and markets, enlarging the consumption capacities of a country and enabling scale economies. Trade helps to reward those countries or, more precisely, sectors and firms, that possess a comparative advantage, whether in terms of labour efficiency or other factor endowments. In turn, it is argued that with more growth, a country is in a better position to reduce poverty, as commonly illustrated by the enlarging middle class in China and India.<sup>95</sup> In the contemporary literature since the 1970s, these arguments have built

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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upon a general critique against import-substitution policies, which are claimed to foster biases against exporting. Economic planning behind import quotas and other instruments is to be severely questioned according to these authors. Among other undesirable outcomes, they argue that such policies can lead to the rationing and misallocation of foreign exchange, the empowering of 'special interests', and the weakening of national institutions.<sup>96</sup>

Nevertheless, such economic ideas do not travel in an uncontested, uni-directional manner from the academy to the WTO negotiating room. Trade practice, as Sidney Weintraub has rightly expressed it, 'draws its legitimacy from trade theory, but by no means does it mimic theory'.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, one of the most common frustrations among trade economists, particularly those who have engagements in public debates, centres on how many WTO agreements function, through a labyrinth of ways, to inhibit freer trade and provide justifications for protection. As Paul Krugman once bluntly put it, 'The compelling economic case for unilateral free trade carries hardly any weight among people who really matter'; that is, the trade diplomats.<sup>98</sup> However, since the 1990s, what is considered 'orthodoxy' in trade policy has shifted. Increasingly, theorists have issued more cautious assessments regarding what precisely international trade can accomplish for different countries, particularly in terms of the linkages between trade, growth, and poverty. For instance, scholars have debated the use of different measurements of 'openness' and encountered problems with evaluating causal relationships. In one prominent analysis, Francisco Rodríguez and Dani Rodrik critiqued the econometrics underpinning some major studies, arguing that the case for the relationship between trade openness and growth was not 'general' and 'unambiguous', but most likely 'contingent' and 'dependent on a host of country and external characteristics'.<sup>99</sup> Such conclusions have dovetailed with a broader concern for examining how the consequences of trade policy changes are connected to factors such as industrial organization, domestic institutions, and the so-called 'sequencing of reforms'.<sup>100</sup> In sum, as a normative baseline, trade liberalization remains a consensus opinion within the community of authorized trade experts, but the consensus is now marked by different shades of grey.

Orthodoxy in the trade policy game, then, is partly founded upon an historical opposition to theories of import substitution. However, although it should be acknowledged that import replacement policies were poorly implemented in a number of Southern countries in the postwar period, this does not automatically equate to a condemnation of the entire vision underpinning such an approach. Rather, as Robert Wade has argued, the task for Southern states should be to rethink how such a strategy could be pursued in the contemporary trading context.<sup>101</sup> As a source of inspiration, this often takes the form of Southern officials in the WTO concentrating their energies on that malleable and often vague idea of 'development'. To speak of

### The symbolic face of power

'development'—however conceived—as heterodoxy in the political economy of international trade may strike some readers as unusual. There is not the space here to conduct a larger genealogical analysis, only to note how one needs to acknowledge that ideas associated with development have a deep history in the trading system and cannot be easily encapsulated. In the post-war context of decolonization, one would need to trace how, for instance, the paradigm of modernization theory implied that all 'backward' or 'underdeveloped' areas could advance to the same economic status of the North.<sup>102</sup> In the specific circumstances of multilateral trade policy, 'development', as imagined in terms of exceptions to liberalization, was politically contested in debates surrounding the failed International Trade Organization (ITO), as well as the later GATT 'Haberler Report' into the concerns of Southern countries.<sup>103</sup>

In more recent years, the idea of 'policy space', a notion associated with debates at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), has been seized upon by some scholars, advocates, and government representatives as a way to articulate a vision of trade policy that is slightly removed from, but still 'speaks to', the conventional orthodoxy.<sup>104</sup> Under this heterodox frame, theorists have argued that the Uruguay Round was detrimental for many Southern countries. In areas such as tariff reductions, provisions on patents, and investment rules, many WTO members lost 'development sovereignty' according to Kevin Gallagher.<sup>105</sup> The concept of 'policy space' remains controversial for some, but for proponents it is claimed to offer a vehicle to debate, first, the historical use of trade policy instruments and, second, the inevitable tensions between multilateral obligations and degrees of national political autonomy.<sup>106</sup> The point of such heterodox enquiries is not to condemn multilateral disciplines *per se*, since the complete abandonment of such rules could significantly damage international trade for all. Rather, it provides a spotlight to explore which powerful interests become attached to certain rules and how, in light of such constraints, less-privileged agents can maximize their symbolic power, leading in turn to greater material and political gains.

The labels 'orthodoxy' and 'heterodoxy' thus provide a means to plot the positions of agents within the linguistic market on trade policy. However, this picture is complicated by three important qualifications. First, these terms should not be considered representative of fixed bodies of thought, as in some classical Marxist sense of an actor who unwaveringly defends the so-called 'dominant ideology'. Rather, in contrast to those critical writers who represent the WTO as a monolithic institutional entity dictating 'neoliberalism' to all, it is my argument that the movement and constellation of symbolic power in the trade field is much more complex.<sup>107</sup> Second, I argue that a distinctive feature of this complexity centres on how orthodoxy evolves in a dialectical relationship with heterodoxy. Those agents who are privileged by

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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an orthodox opinion are often found adapting to and, in some cases, integrating heretical criticism into orthodox justifications. This is not a new observation in itself. As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann argue with respect to theological doctrines, orthodoxies tend to struggle with, and incorporate, deviant beliefs, so as to better control them.<sup>108</sup> When this labour of incorporation is successfully accomplished, the legitimacy of orthodoxy is often rejuvenated since it has checked the potential advance of the heterodox vision to become a new orthodoxy. In this sense, when applied to the WTO system, one should not crudely pigeonhole all opinions deemed orthodox with Northern countries and all heterodox values as somehow inherently 'Southern'. It follows, in dynamics that will be returned to, that the 'would-be most radical critique' from the heterodox actor 'always has the limits that are assigned to it by the objective conditions' of orthodoxy.<sup>109</sup>

Third, the empirical analysis in this book pays particular attention to how WTO actors struggle over the meaning of keywords within the negotiating environment. This focus can be considered linked to the importance of classifications in the evaluation of symbolic power but allows added conceptual space for critiquing political language. In particular, Bourdieu's eye on the politics of euphemized discourse becomes useful here. Notions such as 'openness', 'reform', 'development', and 'policy space' or, as will be explored later, 'competitiveness', 'poverty reduction', and 'food security' are major terms in the lexicon of trade policy officials. But these expressions often conceal as much as they reveal, containing multiple potential definitions and associations. Crucially, like some classifications, particular political interests are often attached to the common meanings of these keywords, yet these interests are frequently obscured and misrecognized due to appearances of 'neutrality' and 'universality'. Similar to Rorden Wilkinson's analysis of the different catalysing effects of the popular 'crisis discourse' in WTO negotiations, the attention to keywords provides an entry point for discerning larger-scale changes, including shifts in methods of legitimation, the relative importance of trade issues, and the means by which actors mobilize themselves and others.<sup>110</sup>

### SPACES AND SPEAKERS

By analysing the discourse of a particular linguistic market, with opinions that tend to oscillate between orthodox and heterodox values, I have suggested how one can uncover some key symbolic properties. But words in themselves carry no intrinsic power. Symbolic power, for Bourdieu, is only generated when there is 'a belief in the legitimacy of the words and of the person who utters them, a belief which words themselves cannot produce'.<sup>111</sup> Any attempt to autonomize language, to abstract it from the competences of the agent within a given social environment, is therefore likely to prove

## The symbolic face of power

analytically short-sighted. In order to grasp how the inequalities of symbolic power are manifested, one needs to incorporate these additional variables into the overall conceptual design.

At a fundamental level, the recognition of a particular opinion is dependent upon it being heard in the most prized forums of expression. Some actors have an easier passage into those valued spaces—be it a political institution, a media outlet, or a department of the academy—where the crucial work of legitimation takes place. It follows, therefore, that one of the surest forms of control over the reproduction of a given orthodoxy or heterodoxy is to simply deny certain (problematic) players from entering the privileged spaces of expression. Spaces such as courts of justice, for instance, have highly restricted rights of way, including exclusive positions for those actors who have been officially ‘anointed’ by the institution.<sup>112</sup> This effort to police the membership of the space may produce different effects depending upon the situation. For instance, some agents who are denied entry may rebel and walk away, while others may develop an even greater desire for acceptance and seek the conditions that will ensure their passage. In essence, therefore, the competence to speak in an orthodox or heterodox tongue only has value, and can only begin to acquire a profit, so long as it can be heard within a space that values such competence and can permit the development of expression.<sup>113</sup>

Like other political actors, one can see how trade negotiators struggle among themselves over the social value accorded to particular spaces. Take the example of the so-called ‘green room’ forums for select delegates in Geneva and at ministerial meetings. Depending upon the precise context, these gatherings, which are commonly called ‘informal’, tend to feature around 20–30 country representatives. The green room has historically been justified as a means to advance ‘consensus-building’ among the largest traders at a quicker pace. According to the conventional wisdom, a smaller setting may facilitate the conditions for detailed deliberation that would not be possible in a negotiation involving a large number of players.<sup>114</sup> Yet the green room format has been strongly criticized on the grounds of ‘accountability’ and ‘transparency’, particularly at the Singapore Ministerial in 1996 and the Seattle Ministerial in 1999.<sup>115</sup> For instance, in Seattle, USTR Charlene Barshefsky and director general Michael Moore called a green room meeting on the final day in an effort to broker a settlement. It was a move that greatly angered many other delegates, such as Jamaica and Kenya, who were denied entry and feared that a *fait accompli* for the rest of the membership was in the making. The Dominican Republic ambassador, Federico Cuello Camilo, was reported to have accused the participants of the green room of treating the WTO like it was their own ‘club’ in a manner reminiscent of the GATT: ‘They still think 20 countries can decide for the rest of us.’<sup>116</sup>

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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In contrast to the green room, the WTO General Council, as the top decision-making body, represents a highly legitimate space. Participants and observers rarely question its *raison d'être* because, to use a Bourdieusian interpretation, it symbolically embodies the definition of the universal. All members are present and potentially can be heard (although the agenda formulation begins elsewhere, such as in the lower councils).<sup>117</sup> Decisions are made in the shadow of law which, through its logic of formalization and codification, tends to lay the conditions for social adherence or, at the very least, a stifling of potential dissent. The General Council also bolsters its legitimacy as a prized space through other (apparently) mundane activities deemed 'bureaucratic', such as openly publicizing its meetings and issuing reports that are carefully written to avoid any charge of political bias. Thus the fears and frustrations of the excluded delegates at Seattle can only be understood in comparison to the General Council, which exists to officially 'crystallize' political and economic interests, some of which may, indeed, originate in closeted green rooms. In turn, under the pressure of time constraints, if the universal membership 'blesses' a proposition that was formulated in a green room it makes the subsequent task of critique more difficult for any opposing actor. Now, the particular interests of the green room do not simply exist in an arbitrary form but, instead, will be insulated under the symbolic cover of the 'universal'.

But even if one is accepted into the spaces of negotiation that matter, further problems can confront actors in their efforts to effectively use symbolic power. For Bourdieu, there is also a need to assess the social position of the speaker in the linguistic market because what speaks 'is not the utterance, the language, but the whole social person'.<sup>118</sup> Linguistic capital, in this sense, is not a mere technical capacity, but part of a more complex process of mobilizing and projecting symbolic power in relation to an audience. The so-called 'authoritative' or 'credible' speaker, the one who has the capacity to persuade and intimidate others (which need not be considered mutually exclusive), has typically incorporated the dominant values of the linguistic market.<sup>119</sup> In this sense, to return to the idea of bodily dispositions discussed in Section 3.1 in reference to the notion of doxa, the 'appropriate' speaker often exhibits an assured or relaxed attitude of someone who believes, and wants others to believe, that they should be respected and obeyed (the 'sense of entitlement'). In contrast, the less-privileged speaker, the one who fights to be heard and to be understood, seeks to produce, often at the cost of anxiety and tension, linguistic formulations in keeping with a dominant linguistic market that is not of their making. Such players therefore tend to talk in limited and hesitant ways or, in an effort to overcome such apprehension, to adopt methods of hyper-correction and formality.<sup>120</sup> We thus find, in these

### The symbolic face of power

instances, a central relationship between the linguistic strategies at the disposal of the agent and their social position in the political game.

We can now summarize the core features of the linguistic market as a way to understand the broader concept of symbolic power. My discussion began by contextualizing how Bourdieu aims to explain the legitimation techniques and mechanisms that are common within the exercise of power. He does not draw any hard division between the concept of power and legitimation but rather seeks to illuminate how such notions need to be braided together. In other words, when applied to practice, they are flipsides of the same coin. For Bourdieu, symbolic power represents a kind of authentic 'credit' that agents draw upon in their social struggles for domination.<sup>121</sup> The precise manner by which this credit is obtained, the fluctuating value it accords over time, and the extent to which such processes are (mis)recognized by agents are core enquiries. Linguistic markets are open environments to a degree, porous in admitting and organizing certain ideas but, at the same time, structured spaces that contain the expression of opinions that only 'make sense' to those who negotiate within the market. For Bourdieu, it is important to study such features because it helps to clarify the particular historical form of political relations within the market, rather than reifying it uncritically as an 'ordinary' state of affairs.

In order to trace the processes by which agents struggle for the accumulation of symbolic power, I have debated three core properties of the linguistic market. First, at a macro-level, it is space which is framed by systems of classification that work to define objects of significance into opposing classes. Classifications are important because of their potential reach and permanence within structures, to the extent that they may be read by agents as 'inevitable' or 'appropriate'; in essence, symbolic resources that must be used. Crucially, classifications can shape, in mutually interdependent ways, the scope for political deliberation and the very constitution of agents, classic problems in any study of power. Second, at a meso-level, agents tend to struggle over the representation of politics by categorizing certain opinions as either orthodox ('straight' or 'correct') or heterodox ('alternative' or 'critical'). In contrast to the deeper doxic sense of *fait accompli*, orthodoxy represents the public face of the dominant opinion. Here, one needs to pay attention to the complex, often arduous, labour of justifications advanced by agents to defend certain interests. Third, at a micro-level, the efficacy of any movement of symbolic power depends upon where it is exercised and by whom. In those highly prized spaces, where material and political stakes are under threat, the struggle for symbolic power is often more intense. In sum, the power of words essentially represents the power to mobilize authority in a field of operation, to establish and insulate 'circuits of legitimation'.<sup>122</sup>

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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### 3.3 Beyond Bourdieu: complementary concepts

Bourdieu's theorizing on symbolic power provides a subtle and rich framework for re-examining the objectification of material and political interests, particularly through questioning why and how such interests are protected through legitimation processes. The attention to the relationship between language and power is not, however, a scholarly agenda that Bourdieu monopolizes. For instance, I have already discussed how classification schemes have been examined by constructivist theorists in IR and law. More broadly, there exists a tradition of scholarship that has sought to explain how argumentation can be studied in the social and political world, including the relationship between conceptions of arguing and power. This final part reflects upon debates in this area and how they can be compared to Bourdieu's ideas. It begins by discussing some of the literature on argumentation, before addressing two complementary concepts that will complete the overall design for studying symbolic power in this book: framing and mimicry.

#### 3.3.1 *Argumentation and power*

As a result of constructivist research over the past twenty years, it is now recognized that 'arguing matters' in IR. Among important enquiries, constructivists have sought to explain the appropriation and advocacy of particular norms in world politics, methods of persuasion and reason-giving, and how the logic of argumentation can be compared to other modes of social action (such as the 'logic of consequentialism').<sup>123</sup> Studying the practice of arguing within multilateral negotiations has been a particular theme within this field. Often informed by a Habermasian perspective, 'pure arguing' has been conceived as an ideal type of communication 'in which the power of reasoning prevails' through political agents exchanging empirical and normative assertions.<sup>124</sup> In turn, such scholars have claimed that the effectiveness of an argument can be explained through examining the institutional context, where propositions will be shaped by particular norms, rules, and decision-making procedures; the role of external authorities who pass judgement on validity; as well as the perceived credibility of the speaker in question.<sup>125</sup>

But how precisely does the notion of power relate to this literature? In one important sense, as initially raised in the introduction to this book, constructivist authors have often treated the concept of power as being in opposition to the logic of argumentation. This understanding has been underpinned by a view that power essentially refers to egotistical calculation and domination, the common meaning found in the realist tradition and, more generally, rational choice perspectives. Hence, with this compulsory sense of power

### The symbolic face of power

reconfirmed, multilateral negotiations are claimed to represent “hard cases” for arguing, since deliberation as such is not the purpose of such talks, but to accomplish certain goals including the maximization of interests of the negotiating partners.<sup>126</sup> For these authors, ‘power politics’, with its associated references to threats and deception, is an analytical problem, a description that fails to adequately capture ‘truth-seeking arguing’ as a core feature of international relations.<sup>127</sup> In Habermas’ theory, communicative action advances the potential for mutual agreement (*verständigung*) through the exchange of arguments. A rational consensus, presented in his earlier work as an ‘ideal speech situation’, is when reason escapes domination, facilitating not ‘distorted communication’ through power, but intersubjective understandings in which access to, and empathy for, dialogue is present among parties.<sup>128</sup> Relations of power, according to this sense, are essentially replaced by relations of meaning.<sup>129</sup>

However, this treatment of the relationship between power and argumentation can be criticized. First, from the Bourdieusian perspective I promote here, it is more fruitful to conceptualize how power works *through language*, rather than compartmentalizing the relationship into two autonomous spheres. Even if this Habermas move is read as a counterfactual theoretical exercise, maintaining a strict linguistic analysis neglects how power can seep into all forms of ‘speech acts’, to use John Austin’s idea.<sup>130</sup> Thus the efficacy of a group consensus is derived not (or not only) from illocutionary force or empirical rationality but, rather, through the belief in the authority of the speaker who is situated within a concrete social *milieu*. Relations of meaning are interlaced with relations of material and political power. For Bourdieu, to separate these notions, even in a normative form, is to confuse how domination secures its (mis)recognized legitimacy. Given this understanding of power, it is perhaps not surprising that some constructivists have reported empirical difficulties distinguishing between, on the one hand, arguing and, on the other, the notion of bargaining (which is typically attached to coercive behaviour).<sup>131</sup> Second, the Habermasian framework on argumentation can also be problematic in terms of overlooking how agents acquire the ‘entry requirements’ to speak and be heard. The idea that all political actors have ‘equal access’ to a discourse is simply not the case in many fields of world politics.<sup>132</sup> Rather, as Bourdieu often argues, the instruments of expression are always unequally distributed, with seemingly ‘common’ or ‘rational’ linguistic devices bearing the traces of particular political interests. In sum, a Bourdieusian framework goes further in unravelling all the power dynamics that inevitably distort communication.<sup>133</sup>

Such criticism is not meant to crudely condemn all IR constructivist work on argumentation. The attention to the broader social conditions of negotiations and how arguing processes can be connected to political change

### Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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represent valuable theoretical investigations. Nonetheless, perhaps closer to actual political struggles, one can also note other scholars who examine how diplomatic language is deployed by agents, but choose to avoid Habermas as a key inspiration. Frank Schimmelfennig's idea of 'rhetorical action' can be highlighted as an example. For Schimmelfennig, rhetorical action is defined as the 'strategic use of norm-based arguments in pursuit of one's self-interest'.<sup>134</sup> In contrast to communicative action, this notion aims to showcase the instrumental use of arguments, rather than how agents seek to yield to the stylized 'better argument'. Such actors are 'subjectively rational' in the sense that 'they do not possess objective knowledge about the effectiveness of their arguments and do not necessarily use the *most* effective argument (only)'.<sup>135</sup> Schimmelfennig points to how political agents often use multiple types of arguments due to anxiety about the relative effectiveness of claim-making, a point that will be returned to in the subsequent case studies. Importantly, in a bridge to Bourdieu, he also explains why rhetorical action is important: because it helps players acquire and reproduce legitimacy within a community setting. Although Schimmelfennig still categorizes 'power' as being an alternative explanatory notion in his model, the focus on how actors 'manipulate' arguments or become 'rhetorically entrapped' by the legitimacy standards of the community illustrates his desire to link egoistic preferences with collective outcomes.<sup>136</sup> Bourdieu would agree that such potential uses of discourse are possible, but one major difference would centre on how agents also incorporate themselves into a community through less deliberate and conscious processes, as the concept of *doxa* tries to highlight.

The framework on symbolic power advanced in this chapter is, nonetheless, in need of some extra conceptual support. The properties of the linguistic market already discussed—classification systems; orthodox and heterodox opinions; and the social valuation of spaces and speakers—provide a basis for uncovering the means by which symbolic power is exercised and reproduced. At a lower level of abstraction, however, the discussion would also benefit from two notions that are able to further tease out the links between language and power, as well as patterns of social adaptation. By returning to the empirical focus on the WTO system, we can now introduce these two concepts.

#### 3.3.2 Framing

In the WTO regime, as elsewhere in international politics, mental short-cuts are used by actors to distil information, shape understandings on problems, and encourage action. Before coherent arguing begins, there must be at least some provisional resolution of meta-arguments, or 'frames'. Agents have to agree on what they are arguing about or, more precisely, one set of frames

### The symbolic face of power

(and not another set) has to be recognized as a legitimate starting point.<sup>137</sup> Frame analysis is an analytical tool derived originally from Erving Goffman's formulation and now used widely in the social sciences, including the literature on argumentation in IR.<sup>138</sup> In its broadest sense, according to Michael Barnett, a frame can be understood as a representation tool, 'to fix meanings, organise experience and alert others that their interests and possibly their identities are at stake, and propose solutions to ongoing problems'.<sup>139</sup> As a category of perception, framing may strongly shape subsequent discourse, although not necessarily in a unidirectional or top-down logic. In social movement studies, pioneering work conducted by David Snow and Robert Benford, among others, helped to develop the idea of frames as 'conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action'.<sup>140</sup> Framing is also clearly an important political resource in wider WTO negotiations, yet its explicit use in scholarly accounts of the trading system has been limited.<sup>141</sup> One only needs to note how the 'masterframe' of the Doha Round—'development'—has been so heavily contested to appreciate how the framing process can be significant.

These contributions offer useful starting points for any researcher keen to study the notion of framing, but I would also argue that one needs to analytically delineate the concept into two phases. According to Snow and Benford, a first stage could be represented as diagnostic framing, referring to problem identification. In social movement analysis, for instance, the 'injustice frame' or 'victim frame' has been often studied.<sup>142</sup> The character of a problem is formed by interpreting the actions of an authority or another player as unjust. In the WTO context, one can see how variations on victim framing are often utilized by Southern countries in their positions, statements, and arguments. A prime example of this would be the emergence of the G20 coalition in 2003 which, according to many trade analysts, was conceived in order to prevent the US and the EU from 'pulling another Blair House'.<sup>143</sup> It must be noted, however, that in some instances identifying the most salient or primary factor underpinning a problem may not be immediately determinable. If multiple systemic forces or agents have contributed to an issue, internal framing contests may emerge at this stage in order to unravel differences of opinion. The task of defining the most empirically credible and consistently appealing diagnostic frame is therefore critical. Once constructed, it has to be defended and sustained. The greater the number of causal stories that can explain why a problem exists, the more space becomes available for opponents to challenge the veracity of the promoted diagnostic frame.<sup>144</sup>

Beyond issue identification, Snow and Benford also draw attention to a second stage of framing: the prognosis of a recognized issue. Even if agents agree on the legitimacy of discussing a certain problem, it does not necessarily

### Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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lead to accord on what is the best set of solutions. In many situations, one finds that the degree of correspondence between the diagnostic and prognostic frames is not in alignment and, therefore, struggles continue between actors. Importantly, if the linkages between these two stages are not robust enough, openings may emerge for opponents to undermine the overall framing process. Again, this points to how the dynamics of framing often do not proceed along a single path but, rather, are subject to contests, featuring actors that intervene in the linguistic market to reframe or counter-frame. The degree to which such moves are successful is, as Rodger Payne has rightly underscored, in part dependent upon 'material levers' that certain privileged actors can activate.<sup>145</sup> For instance, in his analysis of how 'core labour standards' are debated in reference to the WTO system, Payne argues that the frame has been 'distorted by very strong states or by other claimants making misleading and even troublesome claims'. According to him, US government officials use the frame 'almost exclusively' in reference to poor working conditions in Southern countries, whereas a more comprehensive analysis would also examine urban sweatshops, inequitable pay, and other labour abuses on US soil. Payne suggests that the particular meanings attached to the frame by US representatives can be partly explained by their desire to protect material interests, particularly those of US-based corporations.<sup>146</sup> In sum, in another nod towards Bourdieu's emphasis on symbolic power, such accounts help to tease out how frames are always the product of social and political construction, no matter how self-evident they may appear on the surface.

#### 3.3.3 *Mimicry*

In many political encounters in the WTO system, when actors are closely observing each other, they choose to copy, borrow, or adapt certain ideas for their own ends, rather than inventing anew. This is particularly the case for many Southern countries with resource constraints, but even the most privileged actors are often compelled to adhere to institutional standards or, at the very least, not consistently act in ways that would be deemed 'arbitrary' by others. The method of mimicry can be conceptualized in light of these major concerns.

From the viewpoint of a less-privileged actor, the technique of mimicry could be understood in two main ways. First, it may be used for purposes of social adaptation, whereby a Southern agent appropriates some of the practices of orthodoxy in order to assimilate into the prevailing order. This may not necessarily be for reasons of strategically emulating those actors deemed to be 'successful' but, rather, on a more fundamental level, to simply participate and be acknowledged as a 'player', one who has a stake in the game and a right to be heard. Thus mimicry brings to the fore issues related to political

### The symbolic face of power

status, recognition, and relations of deference and dependence within power relations. For Alastair Iain Johnston, one of the few IR theorists to discuss the concept, mimicry is often used by actors to manage situations of uncertainty, but this may be 'prior to any detailed ends-means calculation of the benefits of doing so'.<sup>147</sup> Mimicking, in this sense, should be understood as a method of survival for certain agents, providing them with the 'modal procedures, models, norms, languages, and (perhaps) preferences' that will allow them to 'relate' and 'make sense' to orthodoxy.<sup>148</sup> In the WTO context, one could suggest that China's entry into the organization has exhibited elements of this form of mimicry. WTO admission was vital for China's self-proclaimed status as an 'emerging power'. Once inside the institution, it preferred to adopt quiet modes of diplomacy that did not appear to trouble Northern actors unduly. Particularly in its early years, China did not take a leadership role in the conceptualization of trade problems but, rather, preferred to deal with the initial uncertainty of moving through a new organization.<sup>149</sup>

Second, mimicry can also be conceived in a more critical manner. How could an actor both appropriate and critique orthodoxy in the same moment? For Homi Bhabha, the effect of mimicry on the authority of the dominant actor can potentially be 'profound', 'disturbing', and 'menacing'.<sup>150</sup> The threat emerges when the less-privileged agent is able to bridge some of the symbolic distinctions (which may or may not correlate to material distinctions) that are commonly claimed to separate them from the dominant actor. On the surface, it may appear that such actions are in keeping with the work of assimilation and deference to the established order, but this time, however, there is a subversive subtext. I would argue that the force of the critique, including the ability of agents to disguise it as such, is dependent upon how the central relationship between Self and Other is exposed and manipulated. On the one hand, Northern actors often want the validity of orthodoxy to be proven and for others to adjust and conform to them, but on the other hand, the very movement towards homogeneity challenges the inviolability of the Self. For Southern actors, it pays to mimic if one can reveal this unstable '*ironic compromise*' as Bhabha has expressed it, whereby the dominant player desires 'a reformed, recognizable Other, as a *subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*'.<sup>151</sup> In an effort to place the dominant actor in an uncomfortable position, where the distinction between teacher and student is blurred, this form of mimicry can often border on parody. The replication of orthodoxy may appear 'too perfect' to be believed.<sup>152</sup> Again, this partly explains why mimicry can be appealing for actors who hold few other cards at the negotiating table. In the next chapter, I will argue that this method of subversive mimicry was used by a group of west- and central-African cotton-producing countries in their political struggles with the US.

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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Notwithstanding these critical features, is mimicry as ‘menacing’ to dominant actors as Bhabha claims? Two points are worth highlighting here. First, one can see that when mimicry becomes a kind of risk management tool—the first approach discussed—it does not seriously jeopardize the legitimation of orthodoxy. On the contrary, it could actually invite ‘amusement, tolerance, even encouragement’ from the privileged actor (imitation being the sincerest form of flattery).<sup>153</sup> Second, one also has to keep in mind how mimicry can be equally adopted by Northern actors in their efforts to acquire greater legitimacy. Orthodoxy, as I will argue in reference to the case studies, does not advance in the WTO system on its own independent path; rather, it evolves in a relationship with what are deemed heretical ideas. Depending upon the circumstances, it may be in the interests of a Northern actor to ‘attach’ some of their own legitimacy to a heterodox initiative promoted by a Southern agent. This could be based on an assessment that the risks of ignoring or antagonizing the demander may be greater than acknowledging the heterodox notion. In the Doha Round, at a general level, this can be seen in the efforts of many privileged agents to take the term ‘development’—perhaps the most important word in the trade lexicon of many Southern delegates—and affix it to numerous agenda items and proposals, to the point where it has become highly malleable. But it needs to be recalled that this widespread dissemination of ‘new development speak’ within the WTO system was not an inevitable process. Rather, it was only following the collapse of the Seattle Ministerial in 1999, when Southern animosities were intense, that Northern actors began to repeat the word more frequently and worked towards its codification into the Doha Declaration. Thus part of the Northern reaction to Southern demands for ‘more development’ has been to mimic and echo such language.

Finally, let me clarify why the notions of framing and mimicry are needed as extensions to a Bourdieu-centred approach to symbolic power. Both concepts can be conceived of here as sociological thinking tools, which are, therefore, amenable to a Bourdieusian vision preoccupied with the intersubjective constitution of ideas and identities. Indeed, Goffman’s work, which was used by social movement theorists to define the notion of framing, was a notable inspiration for Bourdieu. The concept of mimicry is also complementary to Bourdieu’s analysis of how agents tacitly adapt to social situations, rather than viewing all action through the lens of conscious rule-following. However, Bhabha’s notion of mimicry as a form of subversive and ironic social resistance is a slightly different idea that is not found in Bourdieu. In the case studies that follow, framing and mimicry provide conceptual glue at key points in the empirical stories. As will be explained, this is particularly important for unpicking and tracing micro-level practices of legitimation in the WTO negotiating environment. Both notions thus help to sharpen analytical attention

## The symbolic face of power

on the processes through which subjects actively define and redefine the commercial world. In comparison, the ideas of orthodoxy and heterodoxy discussed in Section 3.2 are, in one sense, initial mapping devices for plotting the position of arguments within a given social space. We need the concepts of framing and mimicry to reveal the active process by which agents draw upon cognitive and cultural resources to win a place in the WTO order and, ultimately, to secure material advantages.

### 3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to shed new light on how we can conceptualize symbolic power and apply such a framework to the WTO system. I argue that we need to analyse power through this critical lens in order to better understand why and how material structures take their objectified forms, and how agents are either enabled or disabled in their actions. To this end, symbolic power is a kind of '*worldmaking* power' in the sense that it involves the capacity of agents to create and impose the 'legitimate vision of the social world and of its divisions'.<sup>154</sup> Inside this conceptual toolkit, Bourdieu points to doxic relations as a way to reveal the 'taken-for-granted' historical features of the political order. We also find the properties of the linguistic market, a structured, but still fluid, social space where agents struggle over classifications and definitions of the 'conventional wisdom'. As a framework, symbolic power only acquires its full analytical value when conceived within a relational logic of analysis. This refers not only to the links between the internal sub-concepts discussed in this chapter, but also to how Bourdieu's approach can help us understand when and why the notions of compulsory and institutional power acquire added meaning. Importantly, the conceptual framework of symbolic power does not exist to explain some presumed autonomous 'realm of ideas' in the political world but, rather, should be used to study the interdependence between symbolic structures and material structures. In sum, material profits are predicated on the historical and contemporary generation of symbolic profits and vice versa.

In the subsequent empirical chapters, I take forward the three concepts of compulsory, institutional, and symbolic power, but leave behind the notions of structural and productive power. Comparisons between symbolic power and the other two critical concepts have been made at different points in this chapter, but it is worthwhile underlining these differences here. The notion of structural power, specifically its neo-Gramscian variant, shares with symbolic power the attention to diffuse processes of social incorporation. Similar to a Bourdieusian approach, the idea of productive power highlights the relationship between

## Symbolic Power in the World Trade Organization

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power and knowledge, and how power can be considered a property of the body inscribed in dispositions.

However, the concepts of structural and productive power can be criticized on two key grounds. First, while both notions are useful for illuminating certain patterns in political relations, they are less effective at explaining how precisely such continuities are manifested in practice. For Bourdieu, the social world features elaborate and laboriously constructed schemes of justification. One must explore the mechanisms of social legitimation in detail in order to understand why certain political forms and interests remain enduring. The notion of structural power speaks to the historical relationship between capital and labour, and for some neo-Gramscians this contest features elite-led techniques of ‘manufacturing’ the consent of the dominated. But while Bourdieu would agree in broad terms to this depiction, he would also argue that there is nothing inevitable about the political order. Rather, the active work of legitimation necessitates continual renewal, conceived topologically rather than hierarchically, and extending from subtle sleights of hand to the most rigorously defended laws. Second, one can also question the scope for agency within the concepts of structural and productive power. The notion of productive power, along with its associated idea of ‘disciplinary methods’, is particularly troublesome when it appears to marginalize the potential for actor-led strategizing. Similar problems exist in more classical Marxist analysis. While it may also appear that Bourdieu could be accused of underplaying the capacity for historical change and resistance, in reality it is contention and struggle, rather than stasis and reproduction, that lie at the heart of his social vision.<sup>155</sup> Symbolic power thus alerts us to not only the strength of the political world, but also its potential fragility.

In the case study chapters that follow I seek to explain in detail how the conceptual resources of symbolic power can be put to work to enhance our understandings of Southern strategies within the Doha Round specifically, as well as institutional change in the WTO system defined broadly. My major focus is on contests within the linguistic market on trade policy, particularly between orthodox and heterodox opinions, although I do not lose sight of how the regime arose out of a series of historical contests and possibilities. Symbolic power is the major lens through which I analyse these cases, but my explanations are also closely informed by investigating the relationships between symbolic power and the modes of compulsory and institutional power. Each case study stands on its own merit but, at the same time, I also seek to discover patterns and regularities in the dynamics of symbolic power, particularly in terms of assessing when, how, and why it becomes more prominent and valuable for understanding political action. To recall the outline in the original introduction, the empirical issue area is agricultural

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**The symbolic face of power**

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trade, in respect to both offensive and defensive concerns of some key Southern countries. Turning to the next chapter, I will now begin this examination by exploring how a group of west- and central-African countries have campaigned for the reform of the international cotton regime and the extent to which they have been successful.