

# Consent: from generation to co-production

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of consent and its origin is a topic of intense debate within academia. This paper contributes to the discussion by examining two main perspectives on consent. One viewpoint argues that consent is manufactured or produced, particularly by the ruling class, known as the Marxist perspective on consent. This perspective is supported by the ideas of three influential Marxist thinkers – Antonio Gramsci, Michael Burawoy, and Louis Althusser. The other perspective on consent comes from relational sociology, which suggests that consent is a collaborative effort between the parties involved. This paper delves into the works of three sociologists – Charles Tilly, Pierre Bourdieu, and Nick Crossley – associated with the relational approach in sociology to explore consent as a collaborative process. It presents two contrasting viewpoints on the concept of consent and how it is originated. The paper argues that consent can be not only manufactured but also co-created by social actors. Moreover, it introduces relational sociology by applying it to analyze consent and its creation, generation, and co-production within society. Though the relational approach in sociology is relatively recent, its roots can be traced back to the early days of the discipline in the Durkheim-Tarde debate and the contributions of Georg Simmel. This paper provides an overview of relational sociology, using it as a framework to examine the concept of consent, particularly its generation.

**Keywords:** consent generation, consent co-production, hegemony, relational sociology

## INTRODUCTION

Inequality is always present in society, and this leads to an imbalance in the distribution of power and resources. This disparity creates the condition for domination and exploitation to exist in society. Exploitation and domination are key sociological concepts and have been the subjects of sociological investigations.

How domination and exploitation are fabricated is the subject of debates and discussions. Some argue that domination and exploitation are imposed by dominant groups on disadvantaged groups while others who contend that inequality is necessary, accept their existence as inevitable. Domination and exploitation entail coercion and consent. Coercion and consent are key ingredients for a group or a class to dominate or

lead other groups in society. Coercion which requires force, intimidation, or threat is very apparent when employed. The deployment of the coercive apparatus of the State is the clearest manifestation of the forceful imposition of a group of its will over other groups.

How consent is generated or produced is, however, contentious. Winning or getting consent by a group from other groups is not a matter of deception or trickery. Consent entails agreement or permission. The dominant groups give their approval of the existing arrangement between them and the dominant or hegemonic group. This willingness of the dominated groups or consent to the unequal condition they are in is not the result of them being blind to their situation. They consent not because they are unable to see the asymmetrical structure that is disadvantageous to them but because they accept it. When the dominated group consents, it sanctions or allows the prevailing imbalance set up to exist.

It is perplexing why would the disadvantaged group consent or agree to an arrangement that is detrimental to them. Why does the dominated group accede to such arrangement and how does the dominant group gain the approval or the consent of the subjugated groups?

The question of why subjugated groups consent agree, or assent to their subjugation has been hotly debated by scholars. Social psychology through system justification theory offers a perspective as to why the disadvantaged group consents to their subjugation and even defends the status quo that oppresses them. Proposed by Jost and Banaji (1994), system justification theory argues that “people actively defend and bolster existing social arrangements, often by denying or rationalizing injustices and other problems, even when doing so comes at the expense of their personal and group interests” (van der Toorn & Jost 2014, p.414). They further hypothesize that “members of disadvantaged groups sometimes participate in the justification of the status quo, rendering them partially complicit in their subordination” (2014, p.414).

System justification for Jost and Banaji (1994: 10) is a “psychological process by which existing social arrangements are preserved despite the obvious psychological and material harm they entail for disadvantaged individuals and groups” and this is possible through the “production of false consciousness.” They emphasize the role of stereotyping in this psychological process. Citing Mason (1971,p. 11) who suggests that “the disadvantaged come to ‘believe that the system is part of the order of nature and that things will always be like this’” Jost and Banaji believe that “stereotypes often are used to serve this ideological function” (1994,p. 11). They assert that “disadvantaged groups subscribe to stigmatizing stereotypes of themselves and others and thereby justify the system which produces the oppression. The result, of course, is that the existing arrangements are perpetuated” (1994, p.14) they conclude.

This paper offers to answer the question of consent generation and production from a sociological standpoint. Two main perspectives on consent are contrasted in this paper. The first one is the Marxist position drawn from the works of Antonio Gramsci, Michael Burawoy, and Louis Althusser. The second perspective on consent is from the point of view of relational sociology. The relational explanation of consent is derived from the works of Charles Tilly, Pierre Bourdieu, and Nick Crossley.

The next section presents consent generation from the Marxist perspective. First discussed is Gramsci's hegemony, followed by the manufacturing consent of Burawoy and last is the Althusserian notion of hegemony.

### **Consent generation: the Marxist perspective**

Domination and exploitation are major themes in Marxist literature. The notion of consent is derived primarily from the work of Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci. Marxist sociologist Michael Burawoy investigated how consent is manufactured in the workplace. Structural Marxist Louis Althusser also developed his notion of Gramscian hegemony particularly with his concept of RSA and ISA. Their ideas explain the generation of consent from the Marxist perspective.

Antonio Gramsci is one of the original, innovative, and influential if not the most influential Marxist thinkers of the 20th century. Despite having parliamentary immunity as a deputy, he was arrested by the fascist government of Benito Mussolini in 1926. While in prison he grappled with events unfolding outside and put down his ideas in more than 30 notebooks which were turned into a book first published in 1947, ten years after he died. Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* remains a highly influential work today. Scholars in the fields of politics, sociology, culture, international relations, history, and related areas continue to scour and mine its pages.

A former president of the American Sociological Association (ASA), Michael Burawoy is a sociology professor at the University of California – Berkeley. He developed the extended case method which uses participant observation to extract insights from everyday life through a reflexive model of science. Working within the Marxist tradition, Burawoy sought to reconstruct it within the framework of research. He extensively researched industrial workplaces in four countries - Zambia, the United States, Hungary, and Russia, with a focus on the organization of consent to capitalism.

Structural Marxist Louis Althusser was a prominent French philosopher widely known for his rejection of the Hegelian legacy in Marxism. He strongly argued that social structure determines individual action. Despite being a strong critic of the French Communist Party, Althusser remained a long-time member. His two major works are *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* published in 1965. Althusser influenced several thinkers including Jacques Derrida, G. A. Cohen, Anthony Giddens, and Judith Butler.

### ***Gramsci's Hegemony***

The concept of hegemony is perhaps Gramsci's most notable contribution to social and political theory. Gramsci's idea of hegemony first appeared in an earlier article, *Some Aspects of the Southern Question* where he argues that the proletariat as a "hegemonic class" wins over "the broad peasant masses" by 'gaining their consent' in a class alliance "against capitalism and the bourgeois State." In *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci elaborates on hegemony, going beyond mere class alliance but does not extensively discuss it. There is no specific section in the book that is solely devoted to hegemony but reference to it or its concept is scattered in many parts of the book. It can be gleaned from the *Prison Notebooks* that hegemony encompasses the political and economic spheres and Gramsci discusses it in each area.

### ***Hegemony in the political sphere***

In the section on intellectuals, Gramsci discusses their role. The intellectuals according to Gramsci exercise "the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government" (1971,p.12). He further says that social hegemony and political government comprise "spontaneous consent" and "apparatus of state coercive power." Here Gramsci is saying hegemony has two elements or components, consent and coercion.

The 'spontaneous' consent is given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental; group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

The apparatus of state coercive power which is 'legally' enforces discipline on those groups who do not 'consent' either actively or passively. (1971, p.12)

The Piedmont State achieved "hegemony" through its dominance of the Italian Risorgimento observed by Gramsci in Notes on Italian History (1971: 104-106). Gramsci mentions hegemony in *The Modern Prince* as a combination of coercion and consent symbolized by "Machiavelli's Centaur – half-animal, half-human. They are the levels of force and consent, authority and hegemony." Also in the same section, Gramsci explains the three levels of relation of forces on how a class achieved hegemony, by presenting its interest as the interest of everyone (1971, pp.180-183). In *State and Civil Society* Gramsci defines the "state as dictatorship + hegemony" (1971, p.239). He further writes that "State = political society + civil society, in other words, hegemony protected by the armor of coercion" (1971, pp.262-263).

In the chapter on the role of intellectuals, Gramsci refers to hegemony as both coercion and consent as well as in the section on the *Modern Prince* where Machiavelli's

Centaur represents its two components. In *State and Civil Society*, hegemony seems to reside in civil society while in *Notes on Italian History*, it is domination. But the domination of the Piedmont State is through its leadership of the Risorgimento implying that it exercises coercion and generates consent from other groups.

### ***Hegemony in the economic sphere***

How hegemony emerged in the economic sphere is discussed by Gramsci in *Americanism and Fordism*. In the passage below, hegemony is both force and persuasion.

Recall here the experiments conducted by Ford and to the economies made by his firm through direct management of transport and distribution of product. These economies affected production costs and permitted higher wages and lower selling prices. Since these preliminary conditions existed, already rendered rational by historical evolution, it was relatively easy to rationalize production and labor by a skillful combination of force (destruction of working-class trade unionism on a territorial basis) and persuasion (high wages, various social benefits, extremely subtle ideological and political propaganda) and thus succeed in making whole life of the nation revolve around production. Hegemony here is born in the factory and requires for its exercise only a minute quantity of professional political intermediaries (Gramsci, 1971, p.285).

Fordism is Henry Ford's hegemonic project in his factories, co-opting his workers through high wages and fringe benefits while neutralizing unions through intimidation. The Fordist system forged a labor-management pact which led to the "shaping of the new rationality of the working class... the actual internalization of these industrial requirements...became parts of the new way of life for the industrial proletariat" (Bonanno, 2017, p.40). Workers' internalization of the Fordian ideology leads to their social integration in the Fordist regulated capitalism. This is done Gramsci notes through the ingenious combination of persuasion and consent" (1971, p.310).

Overall, Gramsci's concept of hegemony is the domination of a group or a class. This domination or hegemony involves coercion and consent, force and persuasion. In some passages especially on politics, Gramsci seems to identify hegemony with consent and separate it from coercion but in other passages especially on economics, hegemony consists of force and coercion. Gramsci however did not extensively discuss how consent is generated. In *Prison Notebooks*, he mentions that consent is done by the "educative and formative role of the State" through the school. The State also generates consent using civil society (Gramsci, 1971, p.242; pp.458-459). In the economic sphere, Gramsci says capitalists persuade workers through benefits and some privileges. However, he never explains the processes or points out the mechanisms that create or reproduce consent. In

this regard, it is important to discuss the work of Marxist scholar Michael Burawoy (1982) on how consent is manufactured in the workplace.

### ***Manufacturing consent***

Marxist scholar Michael Burawoy attempted to flesh out Gramsci's hegemony in his major work *Manufacturing Consent*. He did an ethnographic study in a factory to understand the labor process. Capitalist exploitation is not just despotic for Burawoy but it also involves "a more hegemonic methodology of co-option and subtle coercion." Inverting the Marxist question "Why do workers work at all (given their interests are opposite of the capitalists?)" Burawoy instead asks, "Why do workers work as hard as they do (knowing their efforts merely make more money for the company owners?)" Capitalism for Burawoy "is distinct in how it creates consent and conflict" (hazelsapien.blogspot).

How do the workers consent to their exploitation? In his study, Burawoy found that workers consent through the process of making out. It involves a piece-rate system that "created the illusion of labor as a game" for the workers. Workers in the piece-rate system found that aside from their wages, they could increase their income by raising their quotas and cutting time.

Workers engage in various 'making out' behaviors, such as *goldbricking* (the slackening of output because it is very unlikely one will surpass the base wage), *banking* (producing over the 140% capacity, and then keeping the surplus for the next shift's kitty); and *chiseling* (where workers redistribute time on timesheet to show fudged amount of time per job to meet surplus incentive rates. (hazelsapien.blogspot)

To "make out" workers have to cooperate since they have to circumvent the system and ignore rules on the shop floor. In situations where the management increases incentives for individuals and makes it difficult for workers to coordinate, the piece-rate system breeds competitiveness among them thus disabling their capacity to unite.

Workers competed with each other to "make out" and surpass their expected production quotas. Over time job satisfaction came from mastering the intricate and often devious strategies to "make out" under various production conditions. Those more skillful in 'playing all the angles' garnered the most respect and prestige. (hazelsapien.blogspot)

The game of making out for Burawoy generates consent.

Firstly, it represents the link between individual rationality and the rationality of the capitalist system...Secondly, just as playing a game generates consent

to its rules, so participating in the choices of capitalism forces us to make also generates consent to its rules, its norms...Thirdly, just as a game defines a set of goals, capitalism generates a set of interests...Fourthly, just as the possibility of winning or maximizing one's utility makes a game seductive, so the possibility of realizing one's interests, of satisfying one's needs...is the very means of generating consent to the rules and relations, presenting them as natural and inevitable. (Burawoy, 1982, pp.91-92)

Burawoy is saying that workers consent by playing the game of making out, linking their rationality with that of the capitalist system.

Aside from the concept of the game of 'making out' as a way of manufacturing consent in the workplace Burawoy also develops the "idea of 'rituals of affirmation' – particularly the productivity meetings – which establish a similar hegemony within 'bureaucratic despotic' factory regimes of 'state socialism.'" Burawoy recalls an incident during his time as a worker at the Lenin Steel Works in Hungary where they were given paintbrushes to gloss over the grime of production. He later found out that the Prime Minister was visiting the plant and the order was given to impress him.

It is in both management and workers' interest to conspire in 'rituals of affirmation' which make it appear that the system is working. They were 'painting socialism' in the ritual of affirmation to the ideology of the regime obscuring the reality of that regime. (Tuckman & Whitehall, 2002)

In Burawoy's investigation, consent in the workplace is generated through the game of "making out" and rituals of affirmation and these answer his question of why workers work as hard as they do under a system that exploits them. Another Marxist scholar Louis Althusser provided a structural explanation of consent generation and his views are discussed in the subsequent section.

### ***Althusserian perspective on consent generation***

Structuralist Marxist Louis Althusser sought to answer the questions of why capitalism has endured despite its crisis and how it reproduces itself. He argues that capitalism endured and survived due to its ability not only to reproduce material production but production relations as well.

The reproduction of productive forces according to Althusser is ensured through the system that pays a minimum wage to the working class so that they may have to work every day, raise their children, and send them to school, but the amount is not enough for them to experience mobility and rise above their economic status. The reproduction of labor power for Althusser necessitates the reproduction of diversified skills for labor power to be competent and this is achieved through the capitalist education system. Althusser,

however, sees that “the production of labor power requires not only a reproduction of its skills but at the same time, a reproduction of submission to the rules of the established order” (1971, p.5).

How does the capitalist class reproduce this submission to the status quo? Using the Marxian notion of infrastructure and superstructure, Althusser develops his concept of Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA). The infrastructure is the economic base and the superstructure “contains two ‘levels or ‘instances’: politico-legal (law and State) and ideology (different ideologies, religious, ethical, legal, political, etc)” (Althusser, 1971, p.6). Both the RSA and ISA reside in the superstructure.

Drawing from the Marxian notion of the State as a “machine of repression which enables the ruling classes to ensure their domination over the working class,” (1971, p. 8) the RSAs for Althusser constitute the government, army, police, courts, prisons, the administration among others. ISA, on the other hand, according to Althusser represents a “certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions” (1971, p.13). He identifies the school, religion, the family, legal, political, trade union, communication culture among others as ISA. The difference between the RSA and ISA according to Althusser is “the Repressive State Apparatuses functions by violence; whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function by ideology” (1971, p.14). For Althusser ideology “represents an imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (1971, p.26).

Among the ISAs, the educational institution is the core ideological state apparatus. Only schools according to Althusser have “the obligatory (not the least free) audience of the totality of children in the capitalist social formation, eight hours a day for five or six days out of seven” (1971, p.22). In the past this role fell on the Church but in modern times, it has been replaced by the school.

From the point of view of Althusser, consent is generated through the ISAs. Through the ISAs, individuals are interpellated through everyday activities. Interpellation for Althusser is the process by which the ideology constitutes individual persons as subjects. Consent is therefore generated through ideological interpellation of individuals by the ISAs, particularly the school.

This paper so far has presented the Marxist perspective on consent. The subsequent section presents consent as co-production from the position of relational sociology.



### **Consent as co-production: The Relational Sociology Perspective**

Before discussing the relational approach to consent, first a brief introduction to relational sociology. The relational turn in sociology is a recent development. While social relations as a unit of analysis in sociology can be traced back to the Durkheim-Tarde debate (Toews 2018) and the work of Georg Simmel (Papilloud, 2018), the emergence of relational sociology in the discipline occurred in the last three decades. In 1983, Pierpaolo Donati published his *Introduction to Relational Sociology*, announcing his brand of relational sociology. More than a decade later, the relational twist in sociology became more evident when Mustafa Emirbayer published his “*Manifesto For a Relational Sociology*” in 1997.

The relational turn in sociology made its presence felt in the discipline with the publication of Emirbayer’s *Manifesto*. The New York School of Relational Sociology emerged from some New York universities where cultural sociology and social network analysis became the focus of several conferences and workshops. Leading these activities were prominent sociologists like Charles Tilly, Harrison White, Mustafa Emirbayer, Jeff Goodwin, and Anne Mische. The Canadian School developed with the creation of the relational sociology research cluster of the Canadian Sociological Association (CSA).

What is relational sociology? For Depelteau “at its broadest sense, relational sociology investigates social life by studying social relations” (2018, p.9) and it is an “attempt to perceive, define, study and so on social phenomena as fluid social processes rather than solid, determining social substances” (2018, p.10).

Relational sociology Depelteau argues offers three promises. The first is “we can improve our understanding of social life by studying relations between interactants;” second, “whatever happens in our social life comes from our interactions while presuming that this relational consciousness can improve our social life;” and third, it offers “is a new space of ‘scientific’ deliberations and creativity where, broadly speaking, we are invited to discuss, re-evaluate and reformulate our basic views of the social universe; and where, sociologically speaking, the basic principles, ideas and practices of the discipline are discussed, reaffirmed, challenged, reformulated” (Depelteau, 2018, pp.3-5).

He identified five core principles of relational sociology which are: rejection of modern dualism; processual thinking; rejection of substances; interdependency; and co-production. Entities are defined by their relations and the relations occur in a specific network and social field which they co-produce. Outside of their relations, entities cannot be defined hence they do not act as independent “substances” or “essences.” (Depelteau, 2018, pp.17-18).

“The universe is dynamic and fluid because it is a vast process composed of sub-processes, sub-sub processes and so on, emerging and evolving through relations between interdependent ‘entities’” (Depelteau, 2018, p. 18) relational sociology contends. It rejects dualism - body-mind, individuals–society and objectivity–subjectivity and instead stresses interactions between various ‘entities’ interacting in specific fields (Depelteau, 2018, p. 18). Relational sociology finally considers “any natural or social phenomenon is constituted through interactions between various human and non-human interactants. The same principle is valid for the co-production of knowledge” (Depelteau, 2018, p.18).

Since its appearance as an approach to study social reality, relational sociology has been utilized by various sociologists to investigate social phenomena, from social movements to social network analysis. Given the wide range of applications of relational sociology, this approach and its methods can be deployed to understand the notion of consent. If social life is primarily social relations, consent can be relational. Looking at consent as relational offers a new way of understanding its generation and reproduction.

This paper looks into the works sociologists identified with the relational turn in sociology. Among them are Charles Tilly, Pierre Bourdieu, and Nick Crossley.

One of the world’s preeminent sociologists in recent times, Charles Tilly focused on the relationship between politics and society. He was one of the key figures in the relational turn in sociology particularly the New York school. His work covered a wide range of topics including urban sociology, social movements and contentious politics, state formation, democracy and democratization, and social inequality. In his lifetime, Tilly published more than 600 articles and monographs and 51 books.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was a leading public intellectual in the world who used his position to advocate for the marginalized – the unemployed, migrants, homeless, and workers. He viewed sociology as a weapon against injustice and social oppression and was a fierce critic of globalization and neoliberalism. Bourdieu is best known for his influential concepts like habitus, doxa, misrecognition, cultural reproduction, field, and symbolic violence. His sociology wrestles with the question of agency and structure, subjectivism and objectivism, and methodological individualism and methodological holism.

Nick Crossley is a British sociologist involved in social network analysis. He is currently a sociology professor at the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. Apart from social network analysis, his research interest includes the sociology of music, social theory, and relational sociology. The relational conception of social structure is one of the projects he is working on which reflects his interest in social structure.

Discussed in the next section is Tilly’s relational approach in explaining the existence of inequality and why it endured.

### **Durable inequality**

Among the perspectives in relational sociology, that of Charles Tilly is useful in unpacking consent. Despite being considered one of the contemporary relational sociologists, Tilly's role in the discipline is contentious since he did not explicitly declare he is one. Demetriou (2018, p. 307) pointed out that Tilly "did not set out to develop relational sociology" and Hobden noted he "did not demonstrate a commitment to a relational sociology" (Hobden, 2001, p. 285). Both however agree that there is relational sociology in the works of Tilly.

Diani said there is a relational element in Tilly's thinking and Demetriou observed that "relationalism is a conceptual pivot in his rich and multifaceted body of work." This is demonstrated in Tilly's take on inequality which he elaborated in "*Durable Inequality*." Tilly defined durable inequalities as "those that last from one social interaction to next, with special attention to those that persist over whole careers, lifetimes, and organizational histories" (1999, p.71).

In explaining inequality, Tilly veered away from the individualist approach. He rejected the notion that inequality is due to the difference in the attributes of individuals. Instead, he proposed that inequality exists due to categorical differences.

"Large, significant difference inequalities among human beings correspond mainly to categorical differences such as black/white, male/female, citizen/foreigner, or Muslim/Jew rather than to individual differences in attributes or propensities" (Tilly, 1999, p.72). Tilly further contends that the explanation of inequality is social relational. He identifies five types of social relations and the mechanisms that produce inequality in social relations. The five social relations are the chain, the hierarchy, the triad, the organization, and the categorical pair. The mechanisms that generate inequality according to Tilly are exploitation and opportunity hoarding as well as emulation and adaptation (1999, pp.74-75).

Within a social relationship, for example in an organization, people compete for scarce resources (both material and non-material). Through exploitation and opportunity hoarding people gain access or are denied access to resources by those who control them.

"Durable inequality among categories arises because people who hold power in reward - and punishment—allocating organizations solve pressing organizational problems using categorical distinctions. Inadvertently or otherwise, these people set up systems of social closure, exclusion, and control. Multiple parties - not all of them powerful, some of them even victims of exploitation - acquire stakes in those solutions. Variations in the form and durability of inequality, therefore, depend chiefly on the nature of the organization(s) involved, previous

social locations of the categories, character of the organizational problems, and configurations of interested parties” (Tilly, 1999, p.72).

Tilly argues that even victims of exploitation acquire a stake in an unequal relation or system and even participate in actions, solutions, procedures, or set-ups that perpetuate inequality. Having a stake in an unequal arrangement, the victims in a way accept and willingly take part in such configuration. From this view, consent is co-produced by the relationship between the dominant and the dominant.

### ***Social practice***

Another influential figure in relational sociology is Pierre Bourdieu. “The real is relational,” he declared. What Bourdieu meant explained by Papilloud and Shultze is that “the reality that matters to sociologists is the sum of relationships between individuals, groups, and societies because this enables us to identify the social position of each (individual and collective) actors based on their differences. At the same time, they enable us to understand how they are distinguishing themselves from any other based on their identity” (2018, p.344).

Bourdieu’s relational sociology is defined and embodied by his theory of social practice. The theory is summarized by Papilloud and Shultze in a Bourdieusian formula “[HxC] + F = P, where H means Habitus, C capital(s), F field(s) and P practice” (2018, p.345). “Habitus is a Bourdieusian concept which “is both a structured and structuring ensemble of relations, which actors spontaneously develop to other actors” and “a kind of stock resources at the disposal of each actor” (Papilloud & Shultze, 2018, p.245). Schinkel held that “it consists of ‘durable, transposable disposition, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures. The habitus is a system of dispositions that is acquired through socialization” (2007, p.709).

Extending the concept of capital beyond economics, Bourdieu distinguishes four capitals: economic is economic wealth; cultural are personal assets such as skills, competencies, qualifications, etc.; social is “networks of friends, relatives, and others who support the actors;” and symbolic which “can be best portrayed as the prestige that the actor gather in his life by occupying a dominating position in society” (Papilloud & Shultze, 2018, p. 245). Capital comprises social resources and “each habitus implies a precise volume and structure of capital” (Papilloud & Shultze 2018, p.246).

Field, on the other hand, is a social space that is “a set of social relationships (or social locations) that are organized according to a shared understanding about the meaning of what goes on inside the field” (2013,p.110) according to Mohr. For Bourdieu, actors are related in the field not in terms of interaction but in terms of position. Fields for Bourdieu are arenas of conflict where people compete for different kinds of capital.

“Individuals and groups struggle for objective locations within the field that enable them to determine which meanings will be recognized as legitimate” (Mohr, 2013, p.111).

Practice on the other hand is the striving of the actor “for recognition of his social position” through the process of attribution and Papilloud and Schultze considered “this attribution of legitimacy is in itself the practice of power in the social relations” (2018, p.347).

Among the elements in the Bourdieusian formula, it is in habitus and field where the relational aspect of Bourdieu’s theory is manifested. Habitus identifies what capital is important in the field. Since Bourdieu is interested in relations of objective positions and not between ties, he maps people based on their capital.

Bourdieu’s relational sociology is useful in understanding consent generation and consent in general by locating the field where it occurs, the positions of the actors in the structure, and by looking at the habitus of the actors and their capital. The field or the set social relationship can be that of landlord-peasant, capitalist-worker, manager-staff, teacher-student, “*amo-kasambahay*”, parent-child, husband-wife, or boyfriend-girlfriend (traditional), etc. In these hierarchical or asymmetrical relations, the coercive element can be easily identified but untying or unraveling the consent component is a challenge. From a Bourdieusian perspective, consent can be understood by looking at the dynamic interplay between the actors, how they use their capital in such interaction, and how their habitus affects such relations. In this interplay, the actors co-produce consent.

Studying the practices of the actors is also useful in capturing the co-production of consent. Practices of the dominated or exploited actors particularly how they maneuver or strive for recognition and legitimacy in the power relations with the dominant actors make them co-producers of consent.

### ***Networks, interactions, and relations***

One variety of relational sociology is offered by Nick Crossley. He proposes a relational ontology, a processual ontology that defines his brand of relational sociology. In Crossley’s version, “relational sociology conceives of the social world as a network of interaction between (in the first instance) human actors (2018, p.481). Furthermore, Crossley conceives of the relation as a tie. “A tie or relation is a lived history or interaction between two actors, coupled with mutual anticipation of future interaction, which affects current interaction between them” (Crossley, 2018, p.481).

Crossley, however, does not subscribe to the radical relational sociology of Depelteau that espouses a flat ontology. He remained with the social actors and for him,

they were not lost in the transactions or the relations. His relational sociology is focused on the actors and rejects non-human interactants in the relations. Crossley “prioritized interaction between human actors” and he did not “conceptualize non-human objects as actors” (2018, p.482).

While Crossley is focused on the actors, he rejects methodological individualism which he finds incompatible with his relational sociology. His objection to individualism is it “ignores emergence” and the “culture which exists between actors, connecting them” (2018, p.482). He also criticized individualism for taking “the individual actors as a given upon which all else is built: a prime mover” (2018, p.483).

Though Crossley acknowledges the existence of structures he also discards holism. He criticizes holism’s “tendency to hypostasize ‘the system,’ attributing it with pre-requisites or a historical telos and the means and agency to achieve such ends” (2018,p.483). His second objection to holism is its “tendency to exclude flesh-and-blood human actors from their inventories of the parts of the systems” (2018, p.483).

In “*Towards Relational Sociology*” Crossley explains his objections to holism.

“Holist envisages society as a given, a pre-constituted entity or ‘substance’ with an underlying and determinate essence which can be invoked to explain what happens within it. They treat ‘society’, ‘capitalism’ or whatever as something which somehow lies beyond or behind the relations and interactions which instantiate it and which explains those relations and interactions” (2010, p.13).

Crossley in the same work also clarifies relational sociology’s position vis-à-vis structure.

“Relational sociology challenges this substantialism, refusing to treat society as a solid object with fixed properties. It focuses on the relational dynamics that make and remake societies continually. Society is not a ‘thing’ for the relationist but rather a state of play within a vast web of ongoing interactions” (2010, p.13).

Going beyond individualism and holism is what Crossley proposes in his relational sociology since ‘the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.’ “The relationalism that I am advocating, by contrast,” he says, “posits that individuals, or rather actors, are formed and continually re-formed in and through interaction” (2010, p.15). His unit of analysis is the relations. “Relations are important because they enable and constrain action... Relations are more important than individuals who stand in relation, on this account” (Crossley, 2010, p.16). It is the relation that defines the actors in the interactions. “The identity of each is dependent upon both that of the other and the nature of the relation between them” (Crossley, 2010, p.16). Crossley gives primacy to the emergence or the emergent in the interaction.

The actor for Crossley is an emergent property. “Many properties exist between individuals, in relations” and argues that “social actors are formed, maintained and transformed in interaction” (Crossley, 2010, p.18). For Crossley the ‘private self’ is “an emergent product of earlier interactions and intersubjective relations” (2018, p.488). He concludes that selfhood “is an emergent property of interaction, social relations, and networks. Social life is not the effect of coming together of individual selves. Rather selves take shape in the hurly-burly of social life (that is, interaction)” (2018, p.488).

What is the social relation from which the property of the actor emerges? Social relationship for Crossley “is the lived trajectory of iterated bouts of interactions between actors. It comprises the sedimented past and projected future of the stream of interaction” (2010, p.35). He also identified five key dimensions of interactions: symbolic, affective, convention-improvisation, strategic and exchange power dimension.

Applying Crossley’s relational sociology in explaining consent, domination, and exploitation are rooted in social relationships. Interaction between actors in the relationship Crossley contends is strategic “to the extent that actors (1) reflexively manage their relations, (2) weighing one another up, albeit perhaps in a pre-reflective way; (3) projecting their future; (4) anticipating possibilities, positive and negative, about the other; and (5) orienting to those possibilities with a view (6) to seeking advantage. Moreover, interactions invariably entail, at some points, (7) conflicts of interest which partners to them will seek to resolve in ways which are, at the very least, not disadvantageous to them” (2010, p. 34). Dominant and dominated groups or parties in the relations are “interdependent. Each gain from the relationship and each, therefore, has a lever” (Crossley, 2010, p.35). From Crossley’s relational perspective, consent in an asymmetrical relation emerges from the interactions and the actors are its co-producers. This is because Crossley explains that “relations have value for actors” (2010. p.35).

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper aims to acquaint the audience with the debate surrounding consent and invites further discussion and exploration on the subject. It also presents two major points of view on consent. One is on the generation of consent from the Marxist perspective. The other is consent as co-production from the standpoint of relational sociology.

The Marxist perspective is presented through the lenses of Antonio Gramsci, Michael Burawoy, and Louis Althusser. Gramsci developed the notion of hegemony which has two components, coercion and consent. While Gramsci did not deepen his discussion on consent generation, he mentioned that it could be within the domain of the school and civil society. Burawoy’s ethnography in the workplace found that consent is generated through the game of “making out” and rituals of affirmations. Althusser argues that consent is produced and reproduced by Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs).

Relational sociology on the other hand views consent as co-production which is one of its core principles. Works of Charles Tilly, Pierre Bourdieu, and Nick Crossley explain the co-production of consent. Tilly has shown that inequality is durable because even the exploited and the dominated have acquired stakes in the asymmetrical relations thus becoming co-producers of consent of the imbalance arrangement. In Bourdieu's field, the actors interact based on their positions in the structure using their habitus and capitals, making the actors co-producers of the consent of the existing social structure. Crossley's relational sociology which focuses on the actors makes them co-producers of whatever emerges from the social relations. One of the things that emerge in the interaction is consent and the actors are co-producing it.

This paper has shown that consent, particularly its generation and production can be understood through the perspectives of Marxism and relational sociology.

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