

Re-mapping Power for Critical Marketing and Consumer Research

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## Introduction

Power has a prominent role in the organisation and legitimacy of marketing theory and practice (Denegri-Knott, Zwick & Schroeder, 2006; Smith 1987). Most notably, power underpins notions of consumer sovereignty which frame and legitimise the marketing function. It has also gained analytical purchase as a conceptual vehicle through which, critically inclined marketing and consumer researchers, can expose inequalities produced and maintained by marketing and markets more generally. That prominence has not always been adequately matched with an effort to come to terms with the various intellectual bases that inform its study. Mostly, power continues to be reduced to heuristic simplifications and ambiguous epithets. This makes any attempts to draw comparisons difficult. Even more challenging is undertaking the kind of theoretical development required to elevate the study of power in marketing into a programmatic area of research. In a remedial effort, this chapter re-visits an integrative framework of consumer power proposed by Denegri-Knott, Zwick and Schroder (2006) published in the *European Journal of Marketing* for the purpose of redefining boundaries in the study of power for marketing and consumer research, surveying the state of research to date and suggest new directions for research. The chapter offers an entrée for those new to the study of power and for the more familiarised reader, it provides a hopefully useful point of reference and departure.

Drawing from political and social theory, the original map focused on sovereign, cultural and discursive models of power and was used to establish familial relationships between power concepts and consumer and marketing research. It based its delimitation of sovereign type approaches to power on a Dahlian conception of

power as a zero sum, quantitative capacity, where market agents with the most individual or collective resources and skills were deemed powerful. The map also located cultural power at the level of strategic operations carried out by resource rich businesses that have the most say in how market and consumer reality are to be ordered. Making a break with these negative conceptualisations of power as both destructive and repressive, discursive power, was introduced, defining power as productive, relational and exercised across all members of a field.

Like its predecessor, the new proposed cartography described in this chapter also reflects the term's complex theoretical roots, not in the spirit of forcing convergences, but rather to help critical marketing and consumer researchers, engage with the study of power more rigorously. Cognizant that power is variously defined according to its theoretical roots (Dowding, 2012; Clegg, 1989; Haugaard, 2002), the formulation of an exact definition of power is omitted in favour of carrying out a comparative analysis of theories of power and discussing their implications for critical marketing and consumer research. The result of this exercise is a conceptual map that provides a contextualized and applied understanding of power. The framework is updated in two significant ways.

To begin with, the power territories mapped out in the original cartography have been repopulated to reflect research carried out since the first map was published. Secondly, in order to achieve greater distinction between cultural and discursive models of power and be consistent with theories of power in use in our field, cultural power is now replaced by hegemonic power. This provides a clearer demarcation between the theoretical traditions that inform these two models and

enables a more precise articulation and differentiation of agendas, including a clearer identification of steering concepts and preferred methodological approaches.

### **Reading the Map**

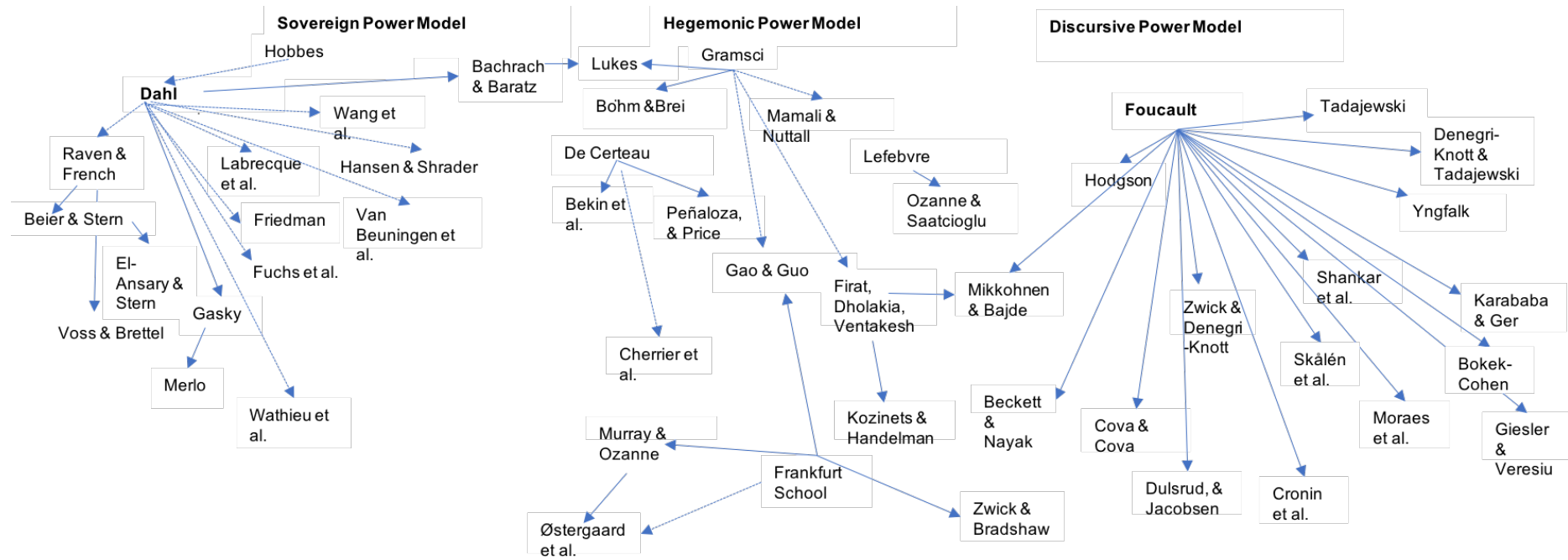
There are still only a handful of comprehensive studies of power in consumer and marketing research (e.g. Denegri-Knott et al. 2006; Desmond, 2003; Hopkinson & Blois, 2013). More generally, the term appears tangentially linked to other related concepts such as consumer resistance, empowerment, sovereignty or agency. In revisiting the map, Haugaard's (2002) conceptual map to power is once again borrowed. The starting point is the partitioning of two broad territories depending of their theoretical origins either in social and political theory. In the social theory tradition, definitions of power are dependent on broader explanations of how society works. Historically, social theories of power have dealt with structural inequalities embedded in society, and sought to expose the ways in which these are reproduced and how they may be subverted. Political theory, in turn has pursued the development of more precise and scientifically grounded way to measuring power. From these two branches, and in order to provide a more useful guide to critical marketing and consumer researchers, three further distinct models have been identified.

1. Sovereign power (political theory)
2. Hegemonic power (social theory)
3. Discursive power (social theory)

This revised map, as its precursor did, provides a necessarily selective overview of some key literature. The map is not a comprehensive survey of all work that alludes to the study of power in marketing and consumer research, nor does it provide a synthesis of all power theories. Instead, it offers an impression of what the field looks

like, and draws on some illustrative examples to indicate how concepts have been used. Thus, the relationships that are presented for each stream are selective and by no means complete. The filial bonds are of first degree, for example between de Certeau and wide range of consumer researchers who have found his distinctions between strategy and tactics of important analytical and theoretical value when approaching consumer power and resistance. A bold arrow links such first order affiliations. Dotted lines are used to show weaker relationships. This is the case for many marketing studies located in the sovereign power model, where power, whilst not defined, appears to adhere to a quantitative definition of power typical of the political tradition (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Conceptual Map of Power



### **Sovereign Power Model**

Sovereign power is the first and most enduring model of power in the field of marketing. Power in the sovereign tradition is simply expressed as a force exerted *over* others. In this sense, social or political power is no different to the mechanical power of a machine. More wattage will yield a stronger tool for example, as much as a more resource rich individual, will be able outflank a less powerful one. In political theory, this thinking can be traced back to Thomas Hobbes's (1651) account of sovereign power. Hobbes provided the first modern theory of power as an aggregate of individuals' power into a power greater than any of them individually. His power theoretic introduced a first model of power as a quantity capacity deployed to attain a personal advantage as well as distinguishing those powers that are innate to people, like their physical strength or talents, and those that are instrumentally obtained, such as riches and reputation. Importantly, Hobbes also conferred legitimacy to the sovereign as the rightful owner of power. For Hobbes, the collective power of people was consensually transferred to a sovereign by a Covenant to preserve peace and avoid war.

Some of these ideas endure in more contemporary theories of power within political theory and in the marketing field persist in the liberal concept of consumer sovereignty. By consumer sovereignty, as Slater (1997) explains, two key things are meant. First, that consumer needs are private and endogenous. They are immune to external manipulation and thereby consumer choices in the marketplace are genuine manifestations of free agency. Secondly, consumer sovereignty can only be fully realised in a competitive market society where producers, vying for consumers' 'dollar votes' (Dixon, 1992), can best respond to their preferences. This is a truly

collective achievement made possible through the coordinated action emerging from the anarchic coalescence of individual desires and needs. Just as Hobbes's sovereign, sovereign consumers, as a block, are more powerful than individual producers because they amass more individual powers. However, this is also a power that is legitimated by way of agreement. Such agreement is granted by liberalism, which elevates free choice as the highest expression of personal freedom (Friedman & Friedman, 1990; Slater, 1997).

It follows that when looking for power in market relations, power is assumed rightfully resides in the aggregate, free choices made by autonomous and self-interested consumers directing the market's invisible hand. This assumption is of course wedded to liberal and neoliberal views of markets as optimal (and morally superior) allocation mechanisms of goods, services and societal wellbeing (Friedman & Friedman, 1990; von Mises, 1949). The doctrine of consumer sovereignty is product of a market constructed in these political and moral terms and in awarding power to the consumer, without questioning his authority, legitimises the market as highly democratic and participative. Yet, it also provides a convenient ideological smokescreen to cover all sorts of corporate ill doings (Hansen & Schrader, 1997; Shaw 2010; Smith, 1987;). Despite being much maligned (see Tadajewski in this volume for a comprehensive review), consumer sovereignty makes possible a study of power for marketing research that can bypass any serious consideration or theoretical discussion of power. Symptomatic of this, is also our methodological response- the belief that consumers are *de facto* rightful owners of power and that whatever allows for improved choice making, means increased power. This has meant that all too



often, consumer sovereignty has been too quickly used as a heuristic to assign power to consumers.

With very few exceptions, most studies operate with an implicit and taken-for-granted definition of power as an ability to enforce change in the marketplace through sovereign consumer agency. Generally, we find cases studies of consumer boycotting activity (Friedman, 1996; Friedman, 1991; Smith, 1987), collective purchasing to reduce market asymmetries (Wang, Zhao, & Li, 2011) enhanced decision-making (Broniarczyk & Griffin, 2014; van Beuningen, de Ruyter, Wetzels & Streukens, 2011), increased control in the choice environment (Fuchs, Prandelli & Schreier, 2010; Wathieu, Brenner, Carmon, Chattopadhyay, Wertenbroch, Drolet, Gourville, Muthukrishnan, Novemsky, Ratner, & Wu, 2002) and collective protest on social media (Yuksel, Milne & Milner, 2016). Frequently, power appears only as a footnote in these works, or simply equated to consumer empowerment. A good illustration of this treatment can be found in the following definition: ‘Consumer empowerment results from products, services and practices that expand consumers’ freedom of and control over the choice and action to shape their consumption experiences’ (Yuksel et al. 2016, p. 111). In other words, empowerment is the measure to which consumer sovereignty can be carried out. Methodologically this has meant that empowerment is measured in function of concepts such as self-efficacy, involvement, and autonomy in choice making (for examples see Fuchs et al. 2010; Harrison & White, 2015). Indeed, power is not the subject of study, but rather seen only in relation to other empirical market-related phenomena like boycotts, decision-making and reduction of market asymmetries.

While often unacknowledged, the model of power alluded to in these studies, is a zero sum, quantity capacity definition, most often associated with the work of political pluralist, Robert Dahl (1957). In this model, power is defined as a quantifiable and accumulative essence that is distributed asymmetrically in any given system (Dahl, 1957; Clegg, 1989; Hindess, 1996) where A has the ability to make B do something that he/she would otherwise not do (Dahl, 1957). In theory, the measurement of power is empirically possible and can be done analytically. Within this framework, power is very specific and can be brought into sharp focus in key decision-making moments or episodes where outcomes can be determined. The implication of this being, that we must rigorously test for causality in very specific contexts where powerful and less powerful actors are identified and decision-making outcomes ascertained. For example, in his famous study of community power in New Haven, Connecticut, Dahl identified who initiated and vetoed key decision-making in public education, urban development and public nominations for office. This allowed him conclude that there wasn't one ruling elite in New Haven, but rather a plurality of elites.

In consumer and marketing research, this model of power continues to be popular, although progress towards more empirically focused and rigorous studies as envisioned by Dahl, has been uneven. There have been some positive developments since the publication of the first map in 2006, with many studies now disclosing definitions of power informing their work. Labrecque, von dem Esche, Mathwick, Novak and Hofaker (2013, p. 257), for instance, provide a clear definition of power- as an asymmetric ability to control resources and people- that is then used to offer a framework to link 'consumer digital participation with evolving sources of power'.

Merlo's (Merlo, Whitwell & Lukas, 2004; Merlo, 2011) studies of marketing's influence within organizations is also based on a definition of power as the 'capacity of one actor to make another do something that the other would not otherwise do' (2009, p.1153). A similar concept is used by Voss and Brettel (2013) and others in a specialized manner to consider how the marketing department's power may be affected by the availability of alternatives within the firm to provide a customer connection for example, whether the firm has a marketing orientation or the political acumen of those leading the marketing department. In this marketing management literature in particular, we find a more robust measurement of power. Here, the Dahlian framework has been used to inform an influential bases of power approach (see Hopkinson & Blois, 2014 for a comprehensive review) devoted to the measurement of five sources or bases of power: coercive, reward, referent, legitimate and expert within organizational contexts. This approach was introduced in 1969 with the publication of a study by Beier and Stern, who transposed work originally used to explain power between individuals to an organisational context. Those ideas were subsequently tested by El-Ansary and Stern (1972) in a paper measuring power in distribution channels. In other studies, the focus is on strategies of power acquisition and maintenance, like those we first proposed in the 2006 paper, based on quantity capacity principles of power and subsequently tested by Kerr, Mortimera, Dickinson, & Waller, (2012) in their study of Australian bloggers. There are a handful of variations of the above work, with many studies latching upon related concepts of empowerment to measure distribution of power in consumer-producer dyads (Pires, Stanton & Rita, 2006) or as resulting in greater feelings of control and acquisition of choice-making skills (Harrison & Waite, 2015; Harrison, Waite & Hunter, 2006; Labrecque et al. 2013; Wathieu et al. 2002). What is consistent across these

investigations, is the overall aim of cataloguing sources of power and strategies through which power can be either measured and increased.

### **New Research Directions**

Given that a key goal of this model is the precise measurement of power, there are opportunities for further conceptual and methodological refinement. To begin with, the principle of causality which requires a cause-effect assessment, needs to be more clearly expressed in our research designs. This means that more work needs to assess its distribution across a range stakeholders, beyond that which is assumed legitimately belongs to consumers as sovereign agents. That is, we must approach the study of power, freed from the underlying assumption that power is possessed by consumers *only*. This will see the horizon of our empirical contexts substantially expanded to consider power distribution among a range of actors, including, but not limited to, businesses, government agencies, environmentalists, local governments, charities, consumer defence leagues, experts, consumers, and volunteer groups.

This means, that going forward we should supplement emphasis placed on consumer-company dyadic relationships (even when studying collective actions like boycotts and class action-suits) to include a broader range of agents. Consider the case of decisions made about the privatization of health or education, governmental legislation banning diesel cars, or disputes over copyright resulting in products being withdrawn from the market. In all of these different scenarios power is distributed in various locations. Likewise, we find campaigns aiming to change a company's position will often involve a range of different actors. In the 2001-03 Stop Esso campaign, a coalition against Exxon, included a number of stakeholders like

Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, high profile celebrities, journalists and consumers who wanted to change the company's policy on climate change. Even the service dominant logic (S-D Logic) paradigm where value in co-creation is generally described as resulting from the harmonious collaboration between multiple actors operating in a marketing system or service ecosystem (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) has evolved into a consideration of disruption produced by conflict between different actors. For example, Coverllec and Hultman's (2014) study of the politics of value in a Swedish Waste Management service system is a good illustration of how competing actors operating in a market context (households, companies producing waste, municipalities) are said to draw from different institutionalised regimes of value to express and communicate value. In this work, the act of valuation itself is construed as political because it creates conflict among actors (given their different ways of appraising what is valuable and good). This kind dynamic can be re-appraised by a closer examination of power distribution in specific value co-creation systems.

In better understanding power distribution, we return to Dahl's (1961) studies of New Haven politics involving decision-making in areas like public education, urban redevelopment and local elections, for guidance. Our empirical focus should be on the consequences of decision-making. This is best done by observing decision-making events as it is 'in cases involving key political decisions in which the preferences of the hypothetical ruling elite run counter to those of any other likely group that might be suggested' (Dahl, 1958, p.466). For instance, in the UK, opposition to the opening of a new McDonalds restaurant, could aggregate small business owners, anti-McDonalds activist groups, council members, consumers, the

parish council and neighbourhood associations around a council's decision to grant permission for operating.

Such work can be organized according to Dahl's descriptive (magnitude, distribution, scope and domain) and exploratory characteristics (resources, skill, motivations and cost). First, *magnitude* must be established. We must answer, who has more power? Going back to our example of McDonalds opening a new outlet; does McDonalds, the councillors, the parish council, or the local neighbourhood association have more power in determining the outcome of the application? Secondly, we must determine how power is *distributed* among stakeholders. What are each group's defining characteristics? Is it a Conservative council? Is it a low-income neighbourhood? We also need to qualify power further by studying its *scope*, meaning what specific behaviours or aspects are affected? For example, a company may exert power when fixing high prices for pharmaceuticals, but cannot determine their classification as over-the counter medication. An individual consumer can boycott McDonalds, but they cannot impede the opening of its new outlet if permission by the council is granted. Market actors will have a specific *domain* over which they can exercise power, by that what is meant is the question of who is being affected by power. Is it consumers, marketing professionals, local communities, city planners, local businesses or a selection of these?

Upon this initial determination of the system where power operates, a more granular analysis of power can be performed by looking at Dahl's explanatory characteristics made up of *resources*, *skills*, *motivations* and *costs*. The characteristics of *motivations* and *cost* in particular can help enrich existing focus on *resources* and *skills*. By looking into motivations, we can better account for intentionality to act

upon power, this means that the motivations of powerful and less powerful market actors need to be determined or measured. What is the neighbourhood association's motivation to oppose the opening of a McDonalds? Why is this issue of importance to the parish council and small businesses opposing the application? The question of who has more resources is one of importance too, as it is expected that those with more resources are more likely to be more powerful. A group opposing the expansion of McDonalds may find it difficult to win over hearts of undecided stakeholder groups, the neighbourhood, parish council or councillors if they can't afford to fund their campaign, or if they don't have the political skills. In order to provide a clearer picture of power, future research could map out the different resources and skills available across different stakeholder groups. Lastly, opportunity costs can be factored in order to assess a powerful agent's likelihood to act over a weaker one, or likewise, the opportunities less powerful actors have to resist. How far is McDonalds likely to go, or invest in this new restaurant, taking into account the general animosity the plan is generating among their desired potential market?

### **Hegemonic Power Model**

The hegemonic model of power is informed by critiques of the market as a culturally authoritarian force systematically corroding communal embeddedness and encouraging excessive individualism (Murray & Ozanne, 1991; Ozanne & Murray, 1995; Peñaloza & Price, 1993). In this model, consumer sovereignty is not a means to exercise individual or collective power in the marketplace, but rather a chimerical and ideologically potent myth that free choice is a self-determined act of autonomy and power (Carrington, Zwick & Neville, 2016). In this model power is a *power to* that creates optimal opportunities for A, who has the power to make X happen (Pansardi,

2012). This means that power is not observable or quantifiable as in the sovereign power model, but rather is a latent capability to implant ‘enabling or disabling strategies vis á vis protagonists’ (Clegg, 2002, p. 89).

In critical marketing and consumer research, our understanding of hegemonic power is largely framed by concepts derived from Antonio Gramsci and Frankfurt School theorists including Adorno, Horkheimer, Althusser, Marcuse and Fromm (see Izberk-Bilgin, 2010 for a comprehensive overview) and more recently de Certeau and Lefebvre. Gramsci (1971) provides us with a definition of hegemony as the permeation of an entire system of values and morality through societal structures like schools, churches, family and trade unions, which allow for the domination of a class over another. When fully internalized, hegemony is accepted as a ‘common sense’ directing people towards desired behaviours, even when these run counter to what is good for them. In this model, power operates through a culture industry, including the media and advertising, tasked with inculcating a sense of individualism via consumption choices (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997), elevating ‘having’ rather than ‘being’ as a meaningful mode of existing (Fromm, 1976/2007) and creating false needs, so that unequal participation in capitalist relations of production can be maintained (Marcuse, 1964/1991). Simply put, power inhibits the identification and realisation of real needs, and instead implants desires and thoughts which serve the long-term interests of a ruling class.

Power is given more material force in the writings of Lefebvre (1991) and de Certeau (1984). In Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) *The Production of Space*, space is defined as a unitary body which brings in together place, abstraction and social action. In this modality, the mental components, the ideational nature of markets as they are



thought of and planned by entrepreneurs, the built environments through which exchange may take place as well as the social action within that domain, would be distinguishable, but not separable dimensions of market space. In order to account for the complex production of space he drew up a conceptual triad. His spatial project thereafter unfolds in the intertwining of the physical space (nature), mental space (abstraction) and social space (human action). For Lefebvre, the first dimensions, the abstract space and that of the built environment, are products of power. These spaces were for Lefebvre the spaces of commodities and capital. These dimensions cohere with De Certeau's (1984) concept of power as strategy. Strategy, he wrote was an expression of will and power of subjects such as an enterprise or proprietor who postulate a place as his own, and from which relations with exterior others (consumers, competitors, clients) can be managed. Places are designed and controlled by a ruling class for the purpose of steering individuals to belief that acquisitiveness and consumption are the paths to a good life, in this way hindering their ability to make critical and progressive choices (Murray & Ozanne, 1991; Ozanne & Murray, 1995).

These ideas have shaped criticisms against markets as a cultural authority in the marketing academe with Ozanne and Murray (1995) having been most vocal with charging the market with restricting communicative openness and semiotic diversity. Here, hegemonic power is seen as operating in the articulation of research problems such as the ethical consumption attitude-behaviour gap popular in the business scholarship (Carrington, Zwick & Neville, 2016), the commodification of historic sites (Gao & Guo, 2017), and in the perpetuation of discourses that benefit owners of capital (Böhm & Brei, 2008).

Generally, these critiques have been short of disclosing the kind of power theory that is driving analysis, opting to use Marx's concept of class struggle to explain how owners of capital are able to retain their position of power and influence. In that relationship, it is the ruling class, who is presented as powerful and actively pursuing the protection of that position through a series of strategies designed to maintain the status quo. That is, class struggle incorporates aspects of domination, meaning strategies used by a ruling class such as coaxing, persuasion, violence or prohibition to maintain and enhance its privileged position as well as to prevent resistance. Such descriptors bring to mind a power-resistance couplet, where power is something that is 'owned' by a ruling class and utilised to maintain an existing social order and resistance is what an oppressed, subaltern class does in order to resist existing social arrangements.

In Gramscian theory resistance is possible through the creation of a counter-hegemony to challenge the false world of established appearances embedded in the dominant belief systems. This task is delegated to organic intellectuals (Gramsci, 1971), who must 'incite critical reflection in subaltern groups, and develop an alternative hegemony' (Boggs, 1976, p. 42). Resistance also requires critical reflection. Ozanne and Murray (1995) see this in a reflexively defiant consumer, capable of challenging existing structures to assert her or his independence from the marketplace in defining and meeting needs. Such aspiration is seen present in consumer resistance movements described by Kozinets and Handelman (2004) or Canadian-based Adbusters (Østergaard, Hermansen, & Fitchett, 2015), which aim to denaturalise consumer culture and create more humane socio-economic systems. Resistance can also be parodic in nature. Parodies can be powerful vehicles to help

people imagine other ways of being that run contrary to dominant consumer culture expectations (Mikkonen & Bajde, 2013).

For Lefebvre (1991) resistance should culminate not only with ideological changes to existing superstructures, but produce new spaces to realise its full potential. These ideas are taken by Saatcioglu and Ozanne (2013) to envision the production of counter-spaces of hope that can be more democratic and counter marketplace exclusion. More specifically, they invite policy makers to adopt a more humane approach that incorporates input from marginalized groups when designing fair housing policies for example. In a more extreme vision of resistance found in the writings of Firat and Venkatesh (1995), emancipation requires stepping outside the market altogether so that alternative life-worlds can be built. As Izberg-Bilgin (2010 p. 311) explains, resistance understood in these terms 'is achievable only if the consumer, rather than mastering the code, breaks away from it'.

In de Certeau (1984) resistance is much more prosaic in scope. Where power is strategic, resistance is tactical. As de Certeau explains, resistance is present in mundane consumption practices, through which consumers *make do* with 'products imposed by a dominant economic order' (1984, p xix). So, while consumers may have limited opportunities to change a market and the capitalist system that sustains it, they can subvert intended product uses by incorporating them in their own idiosyncratic ways. These tactics of resistance are indeed not radical and do not need to amount to a frontal challenge to power. Thus, although tactics remain inscribed in the territory of power, these allow consumers to transverse it, imposing their own interests and desires. Resistance as Peñaloza and Price (1993) describe can be found in mundane everyday acts like using a refrigerator as a communal bulletin board. These small acts

of subterfuge alter meanings and objects, transforming them into singular possessions or experiences. In critical marketing and consumer research this has also shaped a liberatory agenda (e.g. Ozanne & Murray, 1995, 2006; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995), where resistance, is emancipatory in its rejection of the market's cultural authority. In particular, Dholakia and his colleagues' (Firat & Dholakia, 1998; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995) postmodern agenda for consumer and marketing research rendered consumers as agentic users of commodities signs, and not powerless victims of marketing. Resistance, here does not have a strategic intent, but rather hijacks power through playful, irreverent behaviours. However, they can be more purposeful too. For example, inspired by De Certeau (1984), Bekin, Carrigan and Szmigin (2005) detail the micro-level 'simplifier strategies' in New Consumption Communities - such as buying second hand goods, recycling products, avoiding processed or non-organic food, growing their own fruit and vegetables and sharing one car - that allow members to restructure their production systems so as to redefine their position in the marketplace.

We see such ideas present in descriptions of consumers purposefully distancing themselves away of the market to experience other forms of exchange and more authentic ways of being like those offered by the Burning Man festival (Kozinets, 2002) or in simplifier strategies such as buying second hand goods, avoiding non-organic food, (Bekin et al. 2005), non-consumption for sustainability (Cherrier, Black, & Lee, 2010), downshifting (Cherrier & Murray, 2009), culture jamming and anti-branding (Østergaard et al., 2015), deviant behaviours (Amine & Gicquel, 2011), purification and transformation of hegemonic practices by resisting

organisations (Mamali & Nutall, 2016) or through consumer cynicism (Mikkonen & Bajde, 2013; Odou & Pechpeyrou, 2011).

### **New Research Directions**

As Tadjewski (2010) concludes in his assessment of the state of critical theory as a paradigm for marketing, the hegemonic model of power continues to be underutilized. While no doubt, this model has resulted in rich empirical accounts of consumer resistance in particular and arresting critiques of marketplace inequalities, power defined in these terms, (Hindess, 1996), has a somewhat opaque explanatory value. This is because, in privileging class and ideology as taken for granted motives for power, power become empirically opaque. The reduction of hegemonic power to the study of resistance has meant a reduction of our field of study to adversarial or reactive consumer actions. Such problem is present in studies that in focusing on resistance say very little about the hegemonic powers that provokes it. The problem here may be that we are left with moralizing condemnations devoid of analysis. That is, we enter the field looking for evidence of pre-established assumptions as to where power is located and we find it.

There are however, some encouraging developments in our field that we can take as useful footings for further work. To begin with, in order to get a more precise articulation of the functioning of hegemonic power, studies could refine their conceptual tools by way of theoretical integration. Such work has been carried effectively by Carrington et al. (2016) in their joint use of Althusser and Zizek, which they use to challenge the status of ethical consumption as a means to resist or negate global capitalism, to reveal it instead, as producing a hysterical consumer subject that

sustains global capitalism in their ethically led consumption choices. Likewise, in their study of Red tourism to the birthplace of the Chinese Communist revolution in the Jiangang Mountains, Gao and Guo (2017) draw from both Althusser and Williams to provide a measured account of the complex constitution of hegemonic power, not as a homogenous ideological form but rather a hybrid of emergent and dominant ideologies. They illustrate how competing ideologies such as Confucianism, capitalism, communism exert influence in shaping of consumption practices. As they explain ‘some local consumer practices may be oppositional to capitalism and globalization but, by mobilizing various forms of nationalism... they also take on the ideological baggage of nationalism, which may facilitate, rather than resist, the rule of the state’ (Gao & Guo, 2017, p. 252). In furthering our understanding of resistance, longitudinal studies that shed light on how hegemonic power is contested could be pursued. Such work could, as Mamali and Nuttal (2016) have done in their study of a community cinema, focus on how hegemonic practices are appropriated and purified in order to be congruent with the anti-consumption space they enter. This allows us to better understand how practices of resistance themselves are transformed through the integration of hegemonic practices.

If the focus is to be power, future work could change its secondary role, to one that is more methodologically meaningful. A way of doing this is work is to engage with Stephen Lukes’s radical vision for the study of power. Lukes’s (1974, p.22) radical and three-dimensional view of power folds in the empiricism of the Dahlian approach with a critical predisposition to expose structural inequalities through which power is deployed without ‘being recognized by those who are subject to its effects’. In Lukes’s three- dimensional view of power, Dahl’s empirical-causal model of

power makes up the first dimension. The second one, incorporates Bachrach and Baratz's (1962) corrective to expose the institutional biases that limits agents' participation in the political process through agenda setting. Lukes (1974/2005, p. 25) adds a third radical dimension to deal with the cultural structuration of power relations, where power is exercised in 'influencing, shaping...determining wants'. This means bringing to the fore latent conflicts and discerning between the real interests of those who don't exercise power and those who do. Power here is not simply exercised covertly by a powerful individual but rather resides in 'socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour' (Lukes, 1974, p.22). This position is commensurate with explanations articulated by Gramsci and the Frankfurt School, as it argues that the working classes (powerless) internalize values that are contrary to their long-term wellbeing. Empirical cases could include contentious areas involving a range of different stakeholders, like the future of diesel cars or privatization of public services. Based on this first-dimension assessment, analysis would progress to expose overt conflicts, items for example that a stakeholder group considers important, and which are not timetabled for discussion. A third-dimension analysis would move onto the more challenging differentiation between real and false needs from those who are deemed powerless and affected by decision-making outcomes.

### **Discursive Power Model**

In the last decade, Michel Foucault's concepts, histories and methodologies have provided the most productive framework for critical marketing and consumer research (cf. Denegri-Knott et al., 2006; Shankar, Cherrier & Canniford 2006;

Denegri-Knott 2004; Tadajewski, 2006). Together, this work has focused our attention on power as channelling our way of thinking about consumers, producers, markets and marketing. This critical attitude has also sensitized researchers in the field about the operation of power relations in enabling and denying forms of thinking and being as well as the spaces of resistance they open (e.g. Denegri-Knott & Tadajewski, 2017; Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Skålén, Fellesson & Fougere, 2006; Tadajewski 2006, 2011). These papers have done so by subscribing to a productive and relational understanding of power. Power is not, as the sovereign or hegemonic model of power would have us believe, a destructive force that can be held and lost by a sovereign or ruling elite. It can't be measured or located in one site. Causal relationships between those who have power and those who don't can't be empirically determined, or inferred simply from coercive actions. Rather, what makes power effective is its productive and creative quality (Foucault, 1994). Its study requires a general suspicion towards what is believed to be a universal truth to expose the power relations that at a particular time legitimated ways of understanding and acting upon the world and ourselves.

For Foucault (1976/1998, 1994), power is creative in that it directs practices, desires, norms and morals through the production of discourse. These, he defined as a collection of identifiable utterances bound by rules of construction and evaluation, which make it possible to say and do within a particular field of action (Foucault, 1982). That is, behaviour is not guided by an internal moral compass, but rather an external code that has been internalized. Such effects are achieved by ongoing administration of discipline across a range of institutions and by the subject himself, with the aim of producing a certain type of person (Foucault, 1976/1998, 1977/1994). Discourses themselves are products of power, inasmuch as only certain knowledges



gain legitimacy as truthful, and the way in which they attain this status is politically motivated and enacted (Foucault, 1978/1994, 1979, 1980a,). Marketing discourses, as epistemologically linked to those which arouse greatest suspicion from Foucault-medicine, economics, and the social sciences (Tadajewski, 2011), have a considerable effect on shaping how we come to understand and act upon ourselves, and thus demand our attention.

This model's popularity coincides with the growing prominence of S-D Logic studies and other systemic perspectives, like Actor Network Theory in the marketing field that flatten distinctions between producers and consumers and positions them rather as co-creators of value in market processes. Such narrative runs counter to binary oppositions pitting marketers against consumers, and is more amenable to an inclusive and productive vision of power. The model encourages a view of power as creating the very conceptual categories through which distinctions between consumers, producers and market practices can be made. This model of power also rejects any definition of power as a fixed quantity held by a powerful sovereign. Instead, power is conceived as relational and distributed across the social body in a network-like way. It can only be exercised by means of securing alignments between the actions of network actors (Foucault, 1976/1998). This meaning that the actions of a dominant actor are constrained by the need to sustain that alignment in the future, but at the same time are resisted by agents challenging that alignment. Power thus is co-constituted by those who support and resist it (Foucault, 1976/1998).

One way of studying power has been to bring to the fore the historic conditions that enabled certain knowledges to emerge and gain currency, as well as the various disciplinary mechanisms through which these truths operate across populations to produce desired subjects and practices. Rather than passively accepting

claims to truths like the universality of consumer sovereignty, or service excellence, for example, studies within this model have drawn attention to the power infused processes through which certain knowledges gained their discursive legitimacy (cf. Cova & Cova, 2009; Denegri-Knott & Tadajewski, 2017; Tadajewski, 2006; Skålén et al. 2006; Skålén 2009; Tadajewski & Jones, 2016).

This kind of sensitivity has generated work that reimagines developments in theory and practice as being discontinuous, rather than evolutionary (Denegri-Knott and Tadajewski, 2010; Tadajewski & Jones, 2016). For example, Denegri-Knott and Tadajewski (2010) have shown in their critical history of MP3 technology, that new products are discontinuous and respond to ‘certain moments and certain orders of knowledge’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 302) and do not naturally follow, an organised or logical development. This and other work in this model, see marketing as a form of government that mobilises reflexive capabilities in both consumer and market employees by encouraging agency in line to consumption opportunities. To illuminate this, there are now various theoretical and empirical accounts of how consumers (Beckett, 2012; Beckett & Nayak, 2008; Bokek-Cohen, 2016; Moraes, Shaw & Carrigan, 2011; Shankar et al. 2006; Zwick & Denegri-Knott, 2006) and market workers (Tadajewski & Jones, 2016; Skålén et al. 2006; Skålén 2009) are governed and self-managed through marketing discourse.

We have also increased our commitment to deal with discursive power more generally- to focus on how normality operates through market sanctioned discourses in the family, the media, branding, and other institutions. In contemporary consumer cultures, people are subject to neoliberal ideals which are perpetuated across societal institutions, including advertising and marketing, which govern people as consuming, self-enterprising subjects (Rose, 1999). By govern, Foucault (1991), referred to those

calculated efforts to control and regulate people's conduct through technologies of domination and technologies of the self. From this vantage point, consumer sovereignty is a condition to power, where individuals are invited to act in self-enterprising ways to maximize the quality of their own lives through choices they make in the marketplace (Rose, 1999; Shankar et al., 2006). This requires a continual exercise over ourselves, a form of self-elaboration which is increasingly reliant on promotional discourses that provide us with morally viable ways of being. Ideal standards of what we can be are present in a steady supply of possible lifestyles, glamorized through advertising and other promotional discourses. Thus, to know ourselves, becomes a practice mediated by a range of market resources- the kinds of lives we want to lead will therefore require purchasing products and brands that help actualize desired ideals. In this modality, power operates through a discourse of consumer sovereignty, where one is given a degree of autonomy so that human potentiality and self-actualisation can be reached through self-determined acts of choice (Rose, 1999). Consumer subjects defined in these terms are subject to a range of marketing technologies such as branding, advertising, sales, database and behavioural marketing techniques, and self-governing via free exercise of choice in the marketplace. Together these power technologies have colonised everyday life in ways that encourage people to see themselves as consumers when dealing, not only with their purchasing decisions in the marketplace, but also their medical care, politics and education (Shankar et al., 2006).

In critical marketing and consumer research these ideas have steered studies into the emergence of consumer subjects and practices (Karababa & Ger, 2011), self-governing in choice making (Cronin, McCarthy & Delaney, 2015; Moraes et al., 2011), governing through marketing technologies like club cards (Beckett & Nayak,

2008) databases (Zwick & Denegri-Knott, 2018) and in-store surveillance (Dulsrud, & Jacobsen, 2009). Consumers are, as Becket and Nayak (2008) as well Zwick and Denegri-Knott (2018) have shown, subjected to disciplinary marketing technologies such as databases and CRM which govern by way of increased objectivization of the consumer by ever more precise behavioural profiling, but also in subjectivizing the consumer with identity forms they are encouraged to appropriate and internalize. More recently a number of studies have provided a more nuanced understanding of how whole populations of consumers are governed by drawing on Foucault's concept of bio-power (see Zwick & Bradshaw, 2016; Yngfalk, 2016). The concept covers the various ways in which populations are acted upon, including visualization, discipline and manipulation and the direct regulation of health and life expectancy. An effective application of the concept in marketing is provided by Zwick and Bradshaw (2016). They use the term to develop their own definition of biopolitical marketing, which they describe as strategies seeking to capture and manage consumers in intensive networks of production, consumption, surveillance and entertainment. They show how biopolitical marketing functions within the context of online communities, by 'inserting the object for sale directly into the social fabric and, thus, renders the production of consumer subjectivity as contributive to the continuous dynamic reproduction of value competitive' (Zwick & Bradshaw, 2016, p. 96).

### **New Research Directions**

Foucault is best approached as providing a tool box or scaffolding for undertaking studies of power. In that spirit, new directions for research could include studies that 1) problematize or challenge taken for granted assumptions, 2) comprehensive studies into the different technologies of power and 3) legitimization of value creating processes.

Archaeology and genealogy are two means to problematize existing assumptions in marketing knowledge. To do this, requires that an archaeological level we pay attention to the 'conditions under which certain relations between subject and objects are formed or modified, to the extent that these relations are constitutive of a possible knowledge' (Foucault, 1994, p. 314). We must draw more careful attention, as has Tadjewski (2006), to the historic conditions enabling the emergence of discourse, to include an account of political, economic, social factors, accepted means of generating knowledge, and available institutional frameworks for the provision of marketing education, which enabled the emergence of marketing as a field of knowledge. In sharpening our study of discursive power, we must demonstrate commitment to undertake genealogical work. Without revealing the histories of embattlements which led to the production of what counts as truth, our work will lack critical edge. This means that we must be suspicious of any universal and essentialist claims about marketing concepts, objects, practices and subjects. Instead we should view them as political products, bound to their own historical milieu and legitimated within domains of normality within power-relations. This can be done by unearthing the conditions that made the production of knowledge and their accompanying artefacts possible and by considering the whole range of mechanisms that are brought to bear upon individuals in order to produce docile consumers and disciplined marketing workers.

This means that in radicalising our senses towards deeply held assumptions about what marketing is and does, we must examine those knowledges that had been actively filtered out and historically buried for being located 'beneath the required level of cognition and scientificity' (Foucault, 1980a, p.82). Subjugated, naïve knowledges are underused, but vital resources for understanding discursive power, as

they have the ability to disrupt the dynamic flow between power and knowledge, and expose the 'ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the order imposed by functionalist and systematising thought is designed to mask' (Foucault, 1980a, p. 82). What Foucault means is that we must unravel why certain discourse and not others attains analytic purchase by drawing attention to the denials of validity, and challenges or appropriateness within an established order of marketing discourse.

Such subjugated knowledges in marketing could include failed theoretical developments, in the shape of work that has been excluded from entering the marketing cannon, these could be for example new steering concepts or more process-based accounts of how marketing is to be performed that were dismissed as unscientific, or not relevant (see Denegri-Knott & Tadajewski, 2016 for an example). They could also be the popular knowledge of marketing held by consumers themselves or people who have not received a formal education in marketing. The aim is to unsettle the sedimented taken for granted truths that have currency in present scholarship- as a means to draw a baseline for further critique, reflection, and ultimately re-development. These types of studies continue to be limited. This task is more pressing when we consider how new marketing knowledge like value co-creation which celebrates participatory consumer engagement, seeks to redefine marketplace relations in terms of sharing and equality (see Zwick & Bradshaw, 2016). There is therefore plenty of scope to question how a range of marketing concepts and practices such as co-creation, relationship making and branding emerge and take hold on our imagination and become taken for granted aspects of what counts as marketing.

More specifically, the emergence of co-creation of value as participatory can be challenged in ways that extends work already undertaken by Zwick and Bradshaw

(2016) and Tadjewski and Denegri-Knott (2017). S-D Logic's new emphasis on operant, or knowledge based resources in co-creation, should be matched with studies that deal with the power relations through which legitimacy is constructed and maintained. In the case of the S-D Logic paradigm, practices, it is claimed, add value by making certain actions reproducible and repeatable. For example, Schau, Muñoz Jr. and Arnould (2009) illustrate the various practice-based processes undertaken by brand community members that may constitute means of collective value co-creation. This means that the more a practice is sedimented in a meso context like a brand community, the more a greater number of consumers can derive value from that brand. How legitimate value creating consumer practices attain their legitimacy is ill defined. Practices described by Schau et al. (2009) like championing a brand, showing Mini owners how to best look after their car, as well as those practices through which communities themselves are maintained (greeting, motivating participation) are assumed as legitimate. Thus, work so far has been politically conservative. Explicit attention could be placed on the discursive arrangements enabling the uttering and justifications needed to distinguish between practices that can create or destroy value, and those that are deemed unacceptable altogether. Without understanding the kind of conditions that underwrite legitimate co-creating practices we cannot understand their political relevance. Doing this requires questioning the taken for granted legitimacy warranted to them and focusing instead on the power relations leading to their emergence and legitimation.

Discursive studies of power could also be extended to include work appraising the currency of marketing's own explanatory power in relation to other fields of knowledge. This translates into critical enquiries that show how certain discourses

impose their legitimacy as appropriate vehicles to describe and justify ways of thinking and doing, in various contexts. In their study of the legitimation of digital music consumption, Denegri-Knott and Tadajewski (2017) show how in determining the legitimacy of file-sharing and as source of value, competing communal discourses were denied any currency, allowing for an articulation of legality to be established by an interpolation of digital libertarianism and market conservatism. The power of market conservatism can be exposed by showing the ease with which it is accepted as the reasonable and truthful justification for why file sharing should be treated as a deviant practice.

There is also an acute need for studies dealing with the intersection of sometimes competing discourses acting upon consumption practices. Often, consumer sovereignty is mobilized as totalizing, denying the operation of other discourses, thus reducing the complexity of the knowledges systems in operation. A good example of work that is beginning to address this, is Yngfalk's (2016) study of how the intersection of marketing and state discourses shape food consumption choices through food labelling. That work shows there is an enmeshing of state and marketing discourses in driving consumption choices that is not only meant to be individualized as per a neoliberal marketing discourse, but also to bio-politicize consumption at a macro, population level. That bio-politicisation is achieved by the authority of the label that dictates when produce must be sold and consumed by. As Yngfalk (2016, p. 283) explains: 'date labelling actualizes an anatomo-politics that manipulates and utilizes individual bodies in food consumption and it provides companies with the means by which to govern, in detail, the pace of food consumption and production in the market.'



Likewise, new research directions can catalogue the multitude of technologies that are deployed (and to what effect) as well as the forms of self-governing required from people subjecting themselves as consumers or market employees. Such shift will also allow us to consider the range of technologies of domination and of the self which are deployed, beyond those already identified like in store-surveillance (Dulsrud, & Jacobsen, 2009), loyalty cards (Becket, 2012), databases (Zwick & Denegri-Knott, 2006), food labelling (Yngfalk, 2016), online customer communities (Zwick & Brandshaw, 2016) and how they work together in dispensing power. Here Foucault's concept of the dispositive – 'heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions which are mobilized to produce and maintain power' (Foucault, 1980b, p.194-5), can provide a useful framework for further work. Such work could locate the different legal, disciplinary and security dispositive modulating power in a given field of market action (see Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer & Thaning, 2016). So, research could ask what rules and regulation shape market practices, what are the systems of legal mechanisms that can be enforced to produce desired practices? What disciplinary dispositives- education, timetabling of activity, examination, surveillance, training, pedagogy are in place? What are the dispositives of security such as self-regulation, bio-power, technologies of self and pastoral power in operation?

## **Conclusions**

This chapter provides a revised edition of a cartography of power models for marketing and consumer research first published in 2006. The key reason for doing this was to offer some definitional clarity and identify various entry points from

which to navigate the complex political and social theory on power and to show how these ideas had shaped, or could shape still, our research priorities.

In returning to the field, the need to redefine power territories, in light of developments since its publication, was made apparent. The first realization was that the cultural power heading initially utilized was not sufficiently distinct from the discursive model of power, and that definitions of power were not sufficiently clear or anchored in political and social theory. This was evident in the boundary spanning theories of de Certeau and Foucault which could be to lesser or greater degree connected to worked assigned to cultural and discursive models of power included in the 2006 map. A second observation is that the first framework was too narrowly focused on the question of consumer empowerment, and this told an incomplete picture of power. A re-reading of classical texts of power across the three domains, suggested that even in situations where power could be reduced to a quantity capacity definition demanded a consideration of greater number of actors beyond consumers and businesses. This broadening coheres with present concerns in the marketing discipline- in particular those emerging from the S-D Logic tradition, and Actor Network Theory and Practice Theory interventions in marketing and consumer research. A common complaint in those works, has been a previous our disciplines' emphasis on producer or consumer agency which is seen as eclipsing the role of other actors. A point not missed by Vargo and Lusch (2015), who have argued recently that the more important extension of S-D Logic has been a zooming out from its original narrow focus on dyadic interactions between firms and consumers to produce a more realistic, dynamic and holistic perspective of how value is created across a range of over agents. Not all collectively enacted practices will acquire sufficient legitimacy to enter value co-creation interactions. Only certain practices are seen as legitimate

vehicles for co-creating value. The centrality of practices as mechanisms for value creation accorded by both managerially orientated studies and consumer culture theory should invite, not preclude, a more politically, or power sensitive intervention. One more likely to expose the power infused processes through which certain practices attain the required legitimacy to be recognised as contributing to value creation processes. Another realisation, was that by enlarging the domain of power beyond the consumer, marketing management literature initially overlooked in the first map, showed how since the 1970s a rigorous measurement of marketing power within organisations had been flourishing.

A last observation was that progress across models had been patchy. Changes in the landscape have not been uniform. Areas of interest over time had shifted towards the discursive model where research has tended to dominate. The hegemonic model, hampered by apparent waning of the postmodern project, has lost some of its vitality and momentum, with little theoretical or empirical development. The spectre of sovereign power still looms large. It is by and large the idea of power that dominates and is invoked to demonstrate who has power in the marketplace.

The chapter also outlines directions for future research. These should be taken as suggestions or openings for future work. Over time the hope is that, based on a sturdier edifice for the study of power, we collectively, will be willing and able to adopt a more courageous, less prescriptive attitude towards how we go about framing our projects and justifying their importance. An unintended consequence of embracing models in overly prescriptive ways is the limiting of our imagination by importing programmatic research agendas from social and political theory into the domain of marketing. Our own critical ambition becomes secondary or subject to a

ready-made perspective with stock questions, methods, and modes of interpretation.

As this re-mapping exercise has also revealed, that ambition, is beginning to be realised. That map however is yet to be drawn.

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