Concept of Habitus in Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias

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Summary

Human behavior is something fascinating and enigmatic at the same time, being an object of study in various areas of knowledge, including psychoanalysis, psychology, anthropology and sociology. This article is a qualitative exploratory research and aims the understanding of a concept Rico for the social sciences from the thought of two major authors Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu. The study was conducted through a literature search that brought together important works of the authors cited above, as well as scientific articles that discuss the authors worked. Elias and Bourdieu at first may seem very authors away from each other, however when you understand more of the authors, one realizes that despite their differences the two meet in some theoretical points, so you might want to understand better the concept of habitus that is so fundamental to the understanding of the two important authors.

Key words: Habitus. Society. Individual.

INTRODUCTION

As an area of scientific knowledge sociology was institutionalised only in the 20th century. In addition to classical authors such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim sociology of the last century has received contributions from several authors like North American Talcott Parsons, the German Norbert Elias and most recently the French Pierre Bourdieu. (CHARLES, 2012).

It can be said that throughout the history of sociology, this science was marked by dualities or theoretical polarities, where two or more authors discuss the same subject, but under different perspectives. Scientists in General, but especially the humanities and related social sciences tend to interpret the world from his theoretical, because of this these polarities inherent to a theoretical science which has a strong theoretical character. (ALTMANN, 2005).

During the 19th century and throughout the 20th century, concepts and dualities stood out in scientific literature covering not only sociological sociology, but the social sciences in General. Being able to quote so the debates about structuralism and post-structuralism, yet the debates about the relationship between the individual and society or between social structures. The idea of habitus in a way was present in all these debates. (CHARLES, 2012).

The first notion of habitus is much older than most people know, comes from the philosophy of Aristotle in ancient Greece. The root of the concept of habitus is the Aristotelian notion of hexis, drawn from the
concept of virtue. The *hexis* consists of a State reached and firmly established for the moral character, which guides the conduct of individuals. (LOIC WACQUANT, 2007).

Contemporary sociological theory no exception and if faced again with the theoretic duality between individual and society. Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu have been authors who contributed most in the study of the concept of *habitus* and that more investigated the *habitus* of empirical and theoretical form in their careers. Because of this their approaches regarding the concept of *habitus*, were chosen to be analyzed. (LANDINI; PASSANI, 2007).

Both authors work a sociology where the objective and subjective social structures meet and complement each other, therefore if you have then the assumption that the individual does not insulate this process, being that he suffers strong influences of its context,

Is valid to note that both authors more recognised as sociologists have their academic training in philosophy and later migrated to sociology. The two authors have attributed this change to personal issues, like the horrors caused by the wars and the distance to them the philosophy had the concrete social reality. (SILVA; CERRI, 2013).

Elias, who came from a wealthy Jewish family served in Germany during the first world war, his mother was a victim of the Nazis and murdered in Auschwitz. Bourdieu already came from a humble family, found in the sport the opportunity to join the academia, served France during the war of Algeria. Both followed different theoretical paths and came from different paths, however, the two authors became great global references not only to the social sciences, and the humanities in General, becoming two of the most influential intellectuals of the last century. (SILVA; CERRI, 2013).

**NORBERT ELIAS AND THE CONCEPT OF HABITUS**

Norbert Elias (1887-1990) was an intellectual with a curious life, German, but of Jewish origin was persecuted by Nazism. Before Sociology studied philosophy and medicine. (LAMB, 2005). The most recognized of the career of Norbert Elias's the Civilizing Process, first published in 1939. However, Elias only became recognized at world level almost four decades later. (LANDINI, 2006).

For the conceptual study of Elias, it is essential to know the theoretical starting point that the concept of social setting. Elias argues that society is formed from social relationships formed between the "I", "you", "we", "they" etc. that is, it is made up of interdependent individuals, different individuals, but which become equal as depend on each other. (Sands; MARQUES, 2012).

This social configuration acts to shape individuals, this interdependent relationship between the individual and society, if has the *habitus*. This way to Elias:

This *habitus*, the social composition of individuals, as that is the soil that sprout personal characteristics by which an individual differs from the other members of their society. In this way, something common language that sprout like individual shares with others and that is certainly a component of the social *habitus* (ELIAS, 1994).

In short for the author, the individual is presented as a complex synthesis of its historical socio, gifted, so
a social setting outside it and an interiority. In this way the habitus from the sociology of configurational
Elias, is seen as a space of interactions and intercom networks, where relations between individuals occur
always interdependent manner, where the identities of the individuals become personal and social.
(KOURY, 2013).

On the distinction between individual and society the author States:

The concepts of "individual" and "society" are often used as if to say about the two distinct and stable
substances. For this usage of the words, it's easy to get the impression that they designate objects not only
distinct, but absolutely independent in its existence. But in reality are called processes. These are
processes that actually differ, but not separable. (ELIAS, 2001).

Note that for Elias, the relationship between the individual and society has a dynamic character, different
sociological currents earlier and not static. As mentioned this relationship has a procedural character,
interdependent way individuals live always influencing, thereby changing the individual habitus
unconsciously. (SILVA; CERRI, 2013).

Elias in works such as the Court Society (2001) and the society of Individuals (1994), investigates the
emergence of common individuals habitus modern and contemporary society, such as the habitus of
European Junior individuals influenced cuts. This investigation of Elias begins already in his first work,
the Civilizing Process (1994), where the author investigates the ontology of the words civilization and
culture, showing how through the European imperialism of Africa's life model began to be enforced. This
enforcement occurs on own habitus of individuals.

The author to explain their understanding of the habitus utilizes didactic metaphors, he uses the idea of
group dance to demonstrate that this type of dance each Member performs the gestures and movements in
combination and synchronized with the other members, if a member late or the point of his movements he
modifies the dance, that way they act interdependently because depend on each other. (ELIAS, 1994).

For the dance and his choreography to understand Members should not be seen in isolation, but rather as
parts of the same whole, although having distinct characteristics. The manner in which a member of
dance behaves is determined by the other that are in your same social setting, even a member of the dance
group having autonomy to change the routine he doesn't. (ELIAS, 1994).

The same occurs with individuals in their social and historical context, is he being as friends, enemies,
parents, children, husband, wife, servant, King, worker, Manager, etc. the way individuals behave is
shaped by their previous and current social relations. So even if an individual step away from the others,
in such a way that isolates, he will still have a little of itself too much, because as an individual he always
has its habitus influenced by the other. (ELIAS, 1994).

CONCEPT OF HABITUS IN PIERRE BOURDIEU

Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) is considered one of the most important intellectuals of the 20th century, he
was a professor at the universities of France's most respected, such as the École des hautes études en
Sciences Sociales, where he was Director and also in the famous Colége de France. (MATTHEWS,
2007).
Bourdieu was able to reconcile effectively his political engagement to the intellectual work, though he is seen today as the founder of the bourdieusiana school. Soon after graduating, Bourdieu was obligated to provide military service, because France was going through the war of Algeria, thanks to this experience that the author wrote his first works and began his research into one of the most relevant concepts of his work, the concept of *habitus*. (VASCONCELLOS, 2002).

However, for a real understanding of the concept of *habitus* is necessary we know the bourdieusiano concept of fields, because the two concepts are closely linked. The fields are delimited spaces where relationships and power struggles, composed of dominant and dominated subjects that compete with each other for greater recognition and for obtaining capital. We can cite from this theory, the scientific field, political, religion, arts and others. (AHMAD; ADAM; CRUZ, 2009).

The relationship of the concepts of *habitus* and field is in the very focus of *habitus*. The *habitus* would be to the author:

A system of durable and insurmountable provisions that expresses, in the form of systematic preferences, the objective needs of which he is a product. (...) constituted a particular type of material conditions of existence, this system of generating schemas, ethical or aesthetic inseparably, expresses his own logic the need of these conditions on systems of preferences whose opposition reproduce, under a transfigured way and often unrecognizable, the differences linked to the position in the structure of the distribution of ownership, transmuted, so in symbolic distinctions. (BOURDIEU; SAINT-MARTIN, 1976).

Thus, for the French author the *habitus* is linked to social class or position occupied by the individual, however, the social class it is a broader concept than the traditional perspective. Social class would not be the only economic capital resulting, on the contrary, but also social capital and cultural capital, therefore, which determines a class or the *habitus* of a class would not only its economic power, but rather the resulting between the economic capital, social capital and cultural capital, too. (SCOTT, 1995).

The *habitus* is all about:

Are principles generators that the man carries within himself, and that were given by the social environment. The *habitus* is individual, but he builds in the process of socialization. (...) the social capital is the capital of *habitus* in Bourdieu, are symbolic goods, what an individual acquires throughout his life, as tradition, the taste for the arts, etc. (SCOTT, 2001).

In this way, the *habitus* is understood as a system of individual schemes, socially constructed, being socially constructed exists through structured social provisions, and structural provisions, formed in the mind of the individual, through their past experiences, also a symbolic character. So, if you think about the relationship of the individual and society from the perspective of the habitus, one realizes that the individual and the social are orchestrated simultaneously, and two closely linked and both influencing. (SETTON, 2002).

On account of the relationship between past experiences and present conditions the *habitus* to Bourdieu produces and reproduces practices actions, because the symbolic schema built historically certifies its presence in the future, either through the tastes people, or the way you think, feel, do. In this sense, the *habitus* is incorporated in the practices of individuals, and is shaped historically. (MARTINEZ;
Fields, 2015).

On account of this single character, but at the same time, social individuals who are equipped with the *same* type of habitus tend to act from the expectations on them. For example, someone who drinks a wine of a crop specifies, probably has a different habitus who drinks a soda without a symbolic distinction. (SILVEIRA, 2006).

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

By analyzing the concept of *habitus* to the two authors, it is possible to notice similarities in sociological thought of both; for example, the two authors seek to somehow a breakup with classical sociology, epistemological they depart from classical authors the having as a theoretical reference, but are not limited in any way the classical approaches of Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim.

Both authors consider and analyze the influences that the individual suffers from other individuals, as well as its historical socio, however Bourdieu has a more materialistic, with the conditions of the individual as a factor that has a lot of importance on molding their habitus. Elias argues that social relations are the most important factor on the interdependent relationship that human life tariff.

Concepts such as the field of Bourdieu and social setting, or social figuration of Elijah are similar. In Bourdieu's field as a space of social and symbolic relations of power, such as religious, scientific, political, economic, etc. from that field and the interaction between the fields has the *habitus* of individuals which make up these fields. In the work of Elijah has present the idea of social figuration, where social relationships that the individual has in your family, in your job, in your school, etc. influence in their *habitus*.

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