

The Sociology of Habit: The Perspective of Pierre Bourdieu

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Key words: habit • habitus • Bourdieu • theory of action • intervention

ABSTRACT

The work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has stimulated new interest in habituated forms of conduct. His concept of habitus has become a leading reference in the growing sociological literature on theories of human action as practices. This article presents Bourdieu's concept of habitus by calling attention to its intellectual context and identifying the features that relate to the sociology of habit. The article identifies common characteristics of action regulated by habit and offers four programmatic implications for occupational therapy interventions.

A cursory survey of major college textbooks in sociology today shows that very few even mention habit as a socially significant form of human behavior, and none discuss it extensively. Even the professional sociological literature gives little attention to it (Camic, 1986).¹ This has not always been the case. The founders of modern sociology, both European and American, acknowledged the importance of habit and integrated that idea into their conceptual frameworks.² The term, however, was excised from sociological vocabulary in the early 20th century because of efforts to institutionalize sociology as an academic discipline distinct from behaviorist psychology. Behaviorism depicted the notion of habit as largely a biological reflex.³

The importance of habit in human action has not been completely lost, though, particularly by a few social theorists familiar with the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. In sociology in recent years, these few voices have resurrected habit as worthy of

special consideration (Baldwin, 1988a, 1988b; Camic, 1986; Giddens, 1991; Mixon, 1980; Ostrow, 1981, 1987; Turner, 1994). Most notably the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has stimulated new interest in habituated forms of conduct. His concept of habitus has become a leading reference in the growing sociological literature on theories of human action as practices.

This article presents Bourdieu's concept of habitus and gives special attention to the features that relate to a sociology of habit. The article concludes with a few implications for occupational therapists interested in making habits a point of therapeutic intervention.

Bourdieu's Concept of Habitus

The term *habitus* derives from the Latin verb *habere* meaning "to have" or "to hold." The concept grows out of Bourdieu's attempt to address the question, how is human action regulated? More precisely, How does human action follow regular statistical patterns without being the product of obedience to some external structure, such as income or cultural norms, or to some subjective, conscious intention, such as rational calculation?⁴ Bourdieu's concept of habitus, therefore, is embedded in a theory of action.

Intellectual Origins of Habitus

The origins of the concept of habitus are directly linked to Bourdieu's strategy of situating himself in

¹Habit is not listed in the current issue of the *Encyclopedia of Sociology* (Borgatta, 2000).

²Among the founders of modern sociology is Max Weber (1921/1978), who wrote at the turn of the century, "In most cases . . . action is governed by impulse or habit" (p. 21).

³See Camic (1986) for the best discussion of the history of the concept of habit in American sociology.

⁴Bourdieu (1990a) declares, "I can say that all of my thinking started from this point: how can behaviour be regulated without being the product of obedience to rules?" (p. 65).

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the French intellectual world in the 1950s and early 1960s, when he tried to develop a critical distance vis-a-vis both Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism and Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism (Bourdieu, 1990b).⁵ On the one hand, the concept of habitus grows out of Bourdieu's criticism of Lévi-Strauss's structuralism but can be expanded to include all explanations that rely on some form of external determinant of individual action. Lévi-Strauss relies on this type of external explanation when he argues that rules of matrimonial exchange organize around the incest taboo. Lévi-Strauss posits that normative rules specify what actors should do in particular situations. Bourdieu examines some of the evidence and finds that compliance to official marriage rules is far from perfect. In his own fieldwork on kinship structures in North Africa, Bourdieu found that actors often bent or even broke the official kinship rules in socially recognized ways. Structuralist explanation gives the official picture of social relations, but in reality, people negotiate, bargain, violate, and compromise official rules in ways that reflect their interests, desires, and contingencies. Structuralist explanation lacks agency, and Bourdieu's concept of habitus builds on the idea that actors act strategically and practically rather than as conformists to external sets of formal rules. Actors are not usually simple conformists to cultural norms or external constraints, such as income. Rather, they are strategic improvisers who respond in terms of deeply ingrained past experiences to the opportunities and the constraints offered by present situations. Bourdieu's concept of habitus, therefore, stems from a theory of human action rejecting all objectivist views that depict individual behavior as a directly determined response to some kind of external condition, be it cultural or material.

On the other hand, Bourdieu argues against the subjectivism of Sartre's philosophical existentialism. Bourdieu rejects equally all internal, subjectivist, or voluntarist views of human action that would depict individual choice arising from some form of human subjectivity, quite independent of any social influence. Included here are not only Sartre's existentialism but also the Freudian unconscious, moral philosophy, and, in particular, the increasingly popular rational choice theory.

What comes out of Bourdieu's critical assessment of structuralist and subjectivist views of human

action is a conception of human action (Bourdieu uses the term *practice*) that avoids reducing human action to either external constraints or subjective whim.

Behaviorism, Rational Choice, and Cultural Norms

Perhaps it would help clarify what Bourdieu rejects by singling out three familiar schools of thought in the American context that Bourdieu criticizes. First is behaviorism (Skinner, 1953; Watson, 1930). For Bourdieu, individual action does not reduce to some stimulus-response sequence in operant conditioning. Rather, behavior is fundamentally cultural and is motivated by a dynamic reenactment of past learning that is *constitutive* of as well as adaptive to external structures.

Second is rational choice (Coleman, 1990; Homans, 1950). Bourdieu sees very little conduct that is governed by conscious, purposive goal orientation or rational calculation. Rather, human action is for the most part "practical," since it is carried out with a tacit, informal, and taken-for-granted degree of awareness.⁶

Third is conformity to cultural roles, norms, or rules (Parsons, 1951). Bourdieu does not think of human action as fundamentally a matter of cultural conformity. It is adaptive, to be sure, but also strategic, constitutive of cultural standards as well as adaptive to them.

Habitus and Habitus-Governed Action

Bourdieu (1990b) defines habitus as a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (p. 53)

I will unpack the various components of that complex formulation. The habitus consists of deeply internalized dispositions, schemas, and forms of know-how and competence, both mental and corporeal, first acquired by the individual through early childhood socialization. Children brought up in a family of athletes, for example, are far more likely to develop their own sports abilities and acquire the dispositions and the know-how to appreciate good

⁵This discussion of the concept of habitus draws principally on Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1990b) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992).

⁶Bourdieu's view of human action as practice stands in contrast to the prevailing view in American sociology that tends to see action as "purposive, rational, voluntaristic, or decisional" (Camic, 1986, p. 1040).

athletic performances, than if they were raised in a family of professional musicians. Likewise, a child raised in an artistic family is likely to develop an appreciation for art and will acquire the know-how to interpret, criticize, and appreciate works of art. By internalizing the dispositions of these family contexts, habitus consists of "structured structures."

Bourdieu (2000) understands the internalization process by which habitus is formed in terms similar to those used by George Herbert Mead (1934) and the symbolic interactionist tradition to describe (Blumer, 1969) the formation of self-identity. The dispositions of habitus are acquired informally through the experience of social interactions by processes of imitation, repetition, role-play, and game participation.

These same internalized dispositions, however, also predispose their holders to generate new forms of action that reflect the original socialization experiences. Children who learn athletic ability or artistic appreciation at an early age are likely to go on in later life to become athletes or sports enthusiasts, or artists or artistic connoisseurs, and thereby actively constitute and reproduce the worlds of sports and art. In this respect, habitus consists of "structuring structures." Habitus generates perceptions, expectations, and practices that correspond to the structuring properties of earlier socialization. An individual's habitus is an active residue of his or her past that functions within the present to shape his or her perceptions, thought, and bodily comportment.

This somewhat awkward language of "structured structures" and "structuring structures" representing the two faces of habitus revisits the classic question of the relationship between individual and society. The idea of habitus holds that society shapes individuals through socialization but that the very continuity and existence of society depend on the ongoing actions of individuals. Bourdieu is careful to stress both the inherited and the innovative aspects of this complex relationship. He often draws an analogy to language and games to illustrate. The dispositions of habitus function like an underlying grammar that both structures language use and permits virtually unlimited forms of innovative expression. Games, likewise, order play through rules but permit players to strategize with varying competence and outcome. These analogies serve to bring out both the strategic improvisation of action and its grounding in past performance.

The concept of habitus invites one to think of human practices in dispositional terms—that is, to think of social practices as engendered and regulated by incorporated, generalized, transposable dispositions rather than by cultural roles, rules, or

norms or by conscious intentions, meanings, or calculations. The term *dispositions* is key for Bourdieu, for it suggests a way of thinking about habit that is clearly different (more active) from the more popular idea of sheer repetition or routine. If repetition is one dynamic that instills dispositions as structured structures, he thinks of the active side of habitus, the structuring structures, as much more than simply routine repetition of past experience. Disposition suggests "capability" and "reliability," not frequency or repetition. Habitus holds latent potential that shapes action not by its frequency of use but by its reliability when evoked.

Habitus gives practices a particular manner or style. The disposition of habitus identifies certain individuals as risk takers, others as cautious; some as bold, others as timid; some as balanced, others as awkward. Individuals do not simply conform to the external constraints and opportunities given them. They adapt to or resist, seize the moment or miss the chance, in characteristic manners. They bring the past into the present in ways that go unacknowledged in structuralist or subjectivist accounts of human action.

Moreover, the idea of disposition suggests that past socialization "predisposes" individuals to act out what they have internalized from past experience but does not "determine" them to do so. The dispositions of habitus shape and orient human action; they do not determine it.

The dispositions of habitus represent informal and practical rather than discursive or conscious forms of knowledge. The practical evaluation and informal mastery of opportunities and constraints occur unconsciously (Bourdieu, 1984). Bourdieu's concept of habitus suggests that habitus-shaped behavior occurs, for the most part, at a practical, informal, and tacit level. Habitus-generated action is generally not consciously reflective.

Bourdieu admits that humans have in varying degrees the capacity for critical reflexivity—that is, the ability to reflect rationally and critically on their taken-for-granted ways of acting. But Bourdieu believes that critical reflection is quite the exception rather than the rule in most human conduct. Indeed, one of the central purposes of developing a social-scientific habitus is precisely to foster a critical and conscious examination of the social relations of power in everyday life (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1991).

There also can be forms of rational reflection that carry the mark of habitus. Consider the way in which an experienced mathematician goes about solving an algebraic equation or a seasoned researcher analyzes a data set. Or think of the way

an experienced writer produces a manuscript. Writing a paper involves both mental habits (outlining, revising, etc.) and bodily habits (posture, organization of work space, etc.) that the writer routinely brings into play while carrying out the task. Bourdieu believes that people can have habits of rationality, but once they have formed as mental dispositions, they too will operate for the most part in practical, informal, and tacit ways. In other words, habitus, for the most part, does not produce behavior guided by self-conscious reflection.⁷

Bourdieu's (1990b) concept of habitus suggests that, through analogical transfers, habits have the capacity to generalize their fundamental forms, their "generative schemes" (p. 94), to all areas of life. A way in which Bourdieu sees this occurring is in deeply structured patterns of conduct that appear across a wide variety of domains.

Marriage strategies are inseparable from inheritance strategies, fertility strategies, and even educational strategies, in other words from the whole set of strategies for biological, cultural and social reproduction that every group implements in order to transmit the inherited powers and privileges, maintained or enhanced, to the next generation. (pp. 160–161)

Bourdieu (1996) suggests an analogy to handwriting, which embodies a "stylistic affinity" for each individual regardless of form attempted or material used (p. 273). This key feature of habitus permits Bourdieu, for example, to identify parallel styles of action in arenas as different as family planning, dress, choice of sport, and diet.⁸

No two individuals are the same, and their respective biographies yield different habituses. Although Bourdieu acknowledges individual biographical differences, he stresses the *collective* nature of habitus. The individual habitus tends to exhibit many group-specific characteristics. Indeed, the individual is "never more than a deviation" from his or her collective reference, which remains paramount for Bourdieu (1990b, p. 60). Habitus offers the image of "conductorless orchestration" to emphasize the "regularity, unity and systematicity to practices" without conscious coordination (p. 59).

What group characteristics does the habitus incorporate? The characteristic that Bourdieu has stressed most is a sense of place in the social order, an understanding of inclusion and exclusion in the various social hierarchies. From the immediate

⁷It is instructive to note how Bourdieu thinks the social-scientific habitus can be acquired. He recommends a student-apprentice relationship with the seasoned social science researcher, rather than formal classroom instruction (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

⁸See in particular *Distinction* (1984) for Bourdieu's demonstration of this generalizing property of habitus.

social environment, people internalize basic life chances available to their social milieu—what is possible, impossible, and probable for people of their kind. Chances of success or failure are internalized and then transformed into individual aspirations or expectations. Bourdieu (1984) writes that

objective limits become a sense of limits, a practical anticipation of objective limits acquired by experience of objective limits, a "sense of one's place" which leads one to exclude oneself from the goods, persons, places and so forth from which one is excluded. (p. 471)

Habitus derives from the predominately unconscious internalization—particularly during early childhood—of opportunities and constraints that are common to members of a social class or status group. There are different kinds of habitus for different social classes and status groups, such as gender, racial, ethnic, and generational cohorts. Habitus, then, adjusts aspirations and expectations according to the objective probabilities for success or failure common to the members of the same class for a particular behavior. The dispositions of habitus predispose actors to select forms of conduct that are most likely to succeed in light of their resources and past experience. Habitus orients action according to anticipated consequences. In other words, much of people's everyday practices, Bourdieu suggests, are self-fulfilling prophecies in which they chance no more—or no less—than they expect to succeed. People operate through a lot of self-selection. This self-selection has the effect of reproducing the social stratification order.

Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus, for example, to explain why inegalitarian social arrangements make sense to dominated groups. If French working-class youth did not appear to aspire to high levels of educational attainment during the rapid educational expansion of the 1960s—and according to Bourdieu, they did not—this was because they had internalized and resigned themselves to the limited educational opportunities that previously existed for their class. Habitus, therefore, generates self-fulfilling prophecies according to different class opportunities. This puts power at the heart of the functioning and the structure of habitus, since habitus involves an unconscious calculation of what is possible, impossible, and probable for people in their specific locations in a stratified social order. "The relation to what is possible is a relation to power" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 4).

This example illustrates the lag time, or what Bourdieu calls the *hysteresis effect*, of habitus.⁹

⁹The term, which comes from physical science, refers to magnetic effects lagging behind their causes.

Habitus implies that actors attend to the present and anticipate the future in terms of previous experience. It helps explain why gradual improvements over several years in educational opportunity for French working-class youth could go largely unperceived in and not acted on by working-class families (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). The example also illustrates Bourdieu's criticism of rational cost-benefit models of human action. Cultural habits, not formal rational choice, are the most important resources governing human action.

Some Examples of Habitus

In his research Bourdieu has identified a number of examples of habitus: class habitus, status-group habitus, gender habitus, and more specialized types of professional habitus. In his most widely recognized work, *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu explores how habitus accounts for class differences across a broad range of aesthetic tastes and lifestyles. In the struggle for social distinction in France, tastes and lifestyles correspond to four distinct class habituses: ostentatious indulgence and ease within the upper class, aristocratic asceticism among intellectuals, awkward pretension by middle-class strivers, and antipretentious ignorance and conformity within the working class. Bourdieu traces manifestations of each of these four sets of dispositions across a gamut of lifestyle indicators. For example, within the French dominant class, Bourdieu identifies two opposing types of habitus that correspond to their respective configurations of economic and cultural capital: an aristocratic asceticism, or a disposition for austerity and purity, among teachers; and a hedonistic taste for luxury, ornament, and ostentation among professionals. Habitus helps explain why French university teachers display cultivated restraint in sports, diet, entertainment, and bodily care. Bourdieu makes the colorful observation that

The aristocratic asceticism of the teachers finds an exemplary expression in mountaineering, which, even more than rambling, with its reserved paths (one thinks of Heidegger) or cycle-touring, with its Romanesque churches, offers for minimum economic costs the maximum distinction, distance, height, spiritual elevation, through the sense of simultaneously mastering one's own body and a nature inaccessible to the many. (p. 219)

This kind of habitus stands in sharp contrast to the health-oriented hedonism of doctors and modern executives who have the material and cultural means of access to the most prestigious activities, far from vulgar crowds, [and] is expressed in yachting, open-sea swimming, cross-country skiing or underwater fishing. (p. 219)

These differences in habitus are rooted in underlying

differences in relative amounts of cultural capital and economic capital. Teachers, in particular, hardly ever have the means to match their tastes, and this disparity between cultural and economic capital condemns them to an ascetic aestheticism (a more austere variant of the "artist" lifestyle that "makes the most" of what it has—Bourdieu, 1984, p. 287).

Although these differences are rooted in underlying material conditions of existence, they are experienced, represented, and constituted dispositionally as cultural distinctions. This is the work of habitus.

Habitus, Capital, and Field

Bourdieu does not see human action emanating from habitus alone. There is more to human action than dispositions formed in the past. Bourdieu employs two additional concepts to complete his model of human practices: capital and field. Dispositions require resources; individuals are motivated by valued resources, or what Bourdieu calls forms of *capital*. The dispositions of habitus draw on types of power resources, or capitals, to enact practices. Bourdieu has identified different kinds of capitals—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic being the principal ones—that are unequally distributed across the social classes. Habituses are formed with particular types and amounts of capital. An aesthetic disposition for the love of art for its own sake is more likely to appear in families with considerable cultural capital, for example. Types and volume of capital available alongside dispositions shape possibilities for action. Expectations generated by habitus depend on capital holdings, either inherited from the family or accumulated in a career. On average, people with greater capital holdings will have higher expectations for career outcomes than those with less capital. Those with considerable financial capital but little cultural capital are unlikely to develop strong cultural expectations without converting some financial resources into cultural investments, such as higher education. Thus the dispositions of habitus are formed by the types and the amounts of capital available in the family. But they also are power resources available to habitus as it generates responses to situations.

Habitus generates action not in a social vacuum but in structured social contexts Bourdieu calls *fields*. Fields are competitive arenas of struggle over different kinds of capital. Bourdieu thinks of society as a complex arrangement of many fields, such as the economic field, the artistic field, the religious field, the legal field, and the political field. The concept of field posits that social situations are structured spaces in which actors com-

pete against one another for valued resources. Fields offer constraints and opportunities independent of the resources brought by actors to situations. The driving force of habitus is mediated by fields, and the constraints and the opportunities imposed by fields are mediated through the dispositions of habitus.

The accompanying concepts of capital and field enter into Bourdieu's framework because they indicate that human actions do not stem from habitus alone. Habits are a driving force of human conduct, according to Bourdieu, but not the exclusive factor. Human practices emerge from the encounter of individual biological units with certain types and amounts of capital, certain dispositions, and certain fields.

Bourdieu's complete model of practices conceptualizes human action as the outcome of a complex relationship between habitus, capital, and field. For Bourdieu, neither habitus, capital, nor field alone can explain human conduct. Rather, it is the complex intersection of the three that gives both the regularity of much human conduct and the unpredictability of some.

Continuity and Change

Once established, habits endure; they are not easily changed. Primary socialization, in Bourdieu's view, is more formative of internal dispositions than subsequent socialization experiences are. Nonetheless, Bourdieu argues, ongoing adaptation occurs as habitus encounters new situations. This process tends to be slow and unconscious, however, and to elaborate rather than fundamentally alter the primary dispositions.

Yet habits can change as individuals enter fields in which a certain manner of behavior does not work. Indeed, Bourdieu believes, precisely those kinds of situations—ones in which the dispositions of habitus do not fit well with the constraints and the opportunities of fields (situations)—are most likely to provoke change.

The dispositions of habitus can be a force for change as well as for continuity. The dispositions of habitus will tend to reproduce past behavior successfully only in fields where the constraints and the opportunities are similar to those present during the formative period of the habitus. Since the fit between the dispositions of habitus and the structures of situations is seldom perfect, habitus is usually undergoing some adjustment to the new conditions it encounters. This gives continuity amid apparent change. But where the gap between field opportunities and habitus expectations is considerable, this sets the stage for retreat (or exit) as the

habitus self-selects out of those fields, or crisis as the habitus stays and protests.¹⁰

Implications for Understanding Habit: Common Characteristics of Action Regulated by Habitus

In this section I outline several key characteristics of habitus-regulated behavior to draw some implications for what might be a contemporary sociology of habit.

Predictability and Regularity of Behavior

Regularity and predictability are the most obvious characteristics. For Bourdieu, habitus helps explain why behavior is so regular and predictable, even when external structures do not mechanically constrain it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). But it is a mistake to think of this characteristic as suggesting that habit is simply routinized, repeated behavior from the past, or routinized conformity to the demands of the present. Nothing is further from the emphasis Bourdieu wants to make. To rely on habitus means to call for reliability, a kind of technical skill which can be counted on. This point is made perhaps better in the second common characteristic.

Habits are not only constituted by past experiences of socialization but also *constitutive* of ongoing practices. Indeed, Bourdieu says this is the reason he prefers the terminology of *habitus* to that of *habit*: "I said habitus so as *not* to say habit," to stress the "generative (if not creative) capacity inscribed in the system of dispositions as an *art*" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 122). He sees the term *habit* as too invested with the idea of a mechanical response to external conditions. Following Bourdieu's concept of habitus, it is meaningful to speak of the "force of habit." Habits have their own particular dynamic,

¹⁰Some critics (Camic, 1986; Ostrow, 1981) have noted a striking similarity between Bourdieu's concept of habitus and John Dewey's view of the role of habit in human action. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) has become aware of that similarity in recent years but apparently did not read Dewey and other works generated by American pragmatists during his intellectually formative years.

Dewey (1922) thought of habit as an acquired predisposition to respond to situations in a particular way. As such, habit provides an economy of thought and action in dealing with problems. As long as problems remain similar, habit will provide responses in fairly unchanged and automated ways. But when new problem situations are encountered, habit loses its utility, its pragmatic quality, and needs changing, which can occur through rational deliberation. This seems similar to Bourdieu's way of thinking about habitus.

their own propulsion that in a sense drives but does not determine behavior. Habits push people toward a certain course of action.

Habits as a Unifying Force

Bourdieu thinks of the generative capacity of habitus as expressing an underlying unity or master design to various forms of human activity, whether they be cognitive, corporeal, attitudinal, or emotional. The process of internalization of objective chances is not only a mental process but a corporeal one. The chances for success and failure common to a class are incorporated in bodily form as well as in cognitive dispositions. They show up in physical manner and style (e.g., posture and stride) as well as in discursive expression. Yet Bourdieu stresses that both physical and mental dispositions are integrally related, being the effects of deeper master dispositions that cut across cognitive, corporeal, and emotional dimensions of human action. It would be wrong to think of habitus as simply a cluster of dispositions. Rather, it is an array of systematically connected yet distinct capacities. Habitus refers to an integrated whole of dispositions that compose a living presence both actual and potential. Habitus is a constellation of capacities that operate as a dynamic unity. According to the concept of habitus, distinct habits are but fragments of one's overall manner of existence. They constitute the basis of character, which needs to be grasped holistically.

The Collective Dimension of Habit

Bourdieu stresses that habitus is not an individualistic quality, though he does allow for some degree of difference in individual style. The unitary style that he wishes to capture, however, is social. Although habitus is attached to the individual as a biological unit, habits stems from socialization processes (internalization) that are collective (family, class, status group, gender, etc.). This suggests that researchers should not artificially restrict their attention to so-called individual habits. Rather, Bourdieu's habitus perspective encourages researchers to look for ways in which ostensibly individual habits have some collective dimension, particularly class or status-group characteristics that situate individuals in social hierarchies.

Habit and Power

Bourdieu's concept of habitus brings a power dimension to the discussion of habit. Since habitus involves an unconscious calculation of what is pos-

sible, impossible, and probable for individuals in given sets of conditions of existence, habitus conveys the sense of place in the social order. It is both constituted by and constitutive of social hierarchy. Habit suggests a style or a manner of living that reflects the sense of capacity to carry out particular kinds of actions in particular settings but not others. This puts power at the center of habit-directed behavior since habitus generates strategies on the basis of an unconscious calculation of what is possible, likely, or unlikely for people of a certain standing (Bourdieu, 1990b).

Habit as a Conservative Force

Bourdieu's concept of habitus suggests that habit-formed behavior tends to sustain and reproduce the social order. Habitus tends to produce actions consistent with previous experience. It tends to generate practices whose consequences it anticipates from previous experience rather than those it believes will best correspond to the opportunities and the constraints imposed by the situation in which it operates. This gives to habitus a conservative force. It is the central ordering mechanism in social life. It provides continuity between the past and the present; indeed, this property leads one to look for designs of the past in the present.

Implications for Occupational Therapy

In conclusion I suggest four programmatic implications for occupational therapy interventions.

Look for the Macro in the Micro

The concept of habitus suggests that habits are collective as well as individual; they can represent the aspirations and the expectations characteristic of groups—particularly class and status groups—in specific positions in social hierarchies. Bourdieu, therefore, would encourage occupational therapists to look more for macro patterns in micro behavioral forms.

Emphasize Habit, not Rational Choice, in Therapeutic Interventions

One implication for students of habit and for those who are thinking about habit-engendered forms of occupational therapy is that a highly rational model will not work. One would expect limited results from therapy that presents clients with consciously defined goals and sets of costs and benefits as motivating triggers for orienting action toward those goals. From Bourdieu's perspective, this would be an altogether too rationalistic model

that very few people employ as active dispositions in their habitus. The successful modification of behavior, whether in forming new habits or discarding old ones, will require relatively long periods of practical training to internalize particular dispositions.¹¹

Search out the Broad Patterns

An implication of Bourdieu's concept of habitus would be to look for broad underlying patterns of habit rather than focusing attention on limited domains. This is not to suggest that detailed observation of micro behaviors should be overlooked. It is, after all, the genius of Bourdieu's employment of ethnographic observation to see the macro in the micro. A more holistic approach to the study of habit might reveal less-obvious master patterns of habit that generate action across a whole variety of dimensions.

Change Both Personal Habits and Their Environments

Bourdieu's view of human action, which sees practices as generated from the *intersection* of dispositions, resources, and fields, suggests the need for a global therapeutic strategy. Strategies that focus exclusively on changing the habits of individuals or changing the conditions of their living and work environments are doomed to failure. Successful therapeutic strategies will come from a coordinated approach that first seeks to understand how undesirable behavior reflects the intersection between habits and the situations in which they are expressed, and then devises a coordinated strategy of altering both. Simply altering the work environment, no matter how radically done, will not contribute significantly to a lasting change in work

behavior. Nor will radically changing the individual without corresponding alteration of the environment.¹²

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¹¹Joan C. Rogers (2000) comes to a similar conclusion when she distinguishes between "skill training" and "habit training" and recommends to "habit-changing professionals" that they "be careful to follow skill training with habits training" (p. 121S). Florence A. Clark (2000) seems to agree when she draws on John Dewey to say that professional interventions might be more successful by "creating situations in which the consumer has the opportunity to practice skills until they become automatic—the process of habit formation" (p. 134S).

¹²This suggests that from Bourdieu's perspective, Joan C. Rogers (2000) is right on target when she says, "Recognizing that habits occur in a context, professionals must attend to the context as well as the person" (pp. 121S). The best way to incorporate a skill as an enduring disposition is "to make the training environment as similar as possible to the environment in which the skill is to be used" (p. 122S). In certain types of occupational therapy, this would mean giving preference to "home health care, school-based practice, and work-site service delivery" over formal consultation at the therapist's office (p. 122S).

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