

# NEOINSTITUTIONALISM AND THE APPROPRIATION OF BOURDIEU'S WORK: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

NEOINSTITUCIONALISMO E A APROPRIAÇÃO DA OBRA DE BOURDIEU: UMA ANÁLISE CRÍTICA

## ABSTRACT

*Despite the still present hegemony of the structural-functionalist orthodoxy, the mid 1980's witnesses the insurgence of new philosophical approaches. This body of work had become a vital intellectual and ideological resource for those who wanted to confront the functionalist dominance in organization studies, such as structuration theory, labour process theory and neoinstitutionalist theory. The purpose of this paper is to review the incorporation of Bourdieu's work into neoinstitutionalism. I argue that this appropriation has resulted in a significant loss of theoretical strength. By giving place to the cognitivist metaphors of mental models, "scripts" and "schemas", instead of adopting the notion of habitus, neoinstitutionalism reinforces some of the ever-present dichotomies in social sciences, especially those of agency/structure and individual/society. While neoinstitutionalism was refining the cognitive approach in the 1990's, Bourdieu was moving towards psychoanalysis. Some indications for future research are provided in the concluding notes.*

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**RESUMO** Apesar da presença ainda hegemônica da ortodoxia estrutural-funcionalista, em meados dos anos 1980 surgem novas perspectivas filosóficas. Esse corpo teórico tornou-se um recurso intelectual e ideológico vital para aqueles que desejavam confrontar a dominância funcionalista nos estudos organizacionais, tais como a teoria da estruturação, teoria do processo de trabalho e a teoria neoinstitucional. O objetivo deste artigo é revisar a incorporação da obra de Bourdieu no neoinstitucionalismo. Argumento que essa apropriação resultou numa perda significativa de potencial teórico. Ao dar espaço para as metáforas cognitivistas dos modelos mentais, "scripts" e "schemas", ao invés de adotar a noção de *habitus*, o neoinstitucionalismo reforça algumas das eternas dicotomias das ciências sociais, especialmente as de agência/estrutura e indivíduo/sociedade. Enquanto o neoinstitucionalismo estava refinando a abordagem cognitivista nos anos 1990, Bourdieu movimentava-se em direção à psicanálise. Algumas indicações para pesquisas futuras são fornecidas nas notas de conclusão.

**KEYWORDS** *Neoinstitutionalism, Bourdieu, critique, sociology, psychoanalysis.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** Neoinstitucionalismo, Bourdieu, crítica, sociologia, psicanálise.

## INTRODUCTION

According to several analysis of our scholarship production, we have seen a remarkable growth in the field of organization studies in Brazil since 1980 (BERTERO and KEINERT, 1994; BERTERO, CALDAS and WOOD JR., 1998; MACHADO-DA-SILVA, CUNHA and AMBONI, 1990). Despite the still present hegemony of the structural-functionalist orthodoxy, the mid 1980's witnesses the insurgence of new philosophical approaches and theoretical perspectives determined to revisit and revitalize structural-functionalism in a much broader political and theoretical agenda (CALDAS and FACHIN, 2005; FACHIN, 2003; VIEIRA and CALDAS, 2006). This body of work had become a vital intellectual and ideological resource for those who wanted to confront the functionalist dominance in organization studies and to redefine the field's core paradigm and practices, such as structuration theory, labour process theory and the neoinstitutionalist theory.

Neoinstitutionalist theory, in particular, has achieved great popularity in Brazil thankful to the work of Clóvis Luiz Machado-da-Silva in the early 1980's who has inspired generations of scholars over the last decades (CALDAS and FACHIN, 2005), helping to establish research centers in some of the most important universities in the country. This scenario has not changed dramatically during the 1990's even with the important paradigm shift brought by the adoption of new perspectives in the field such as hermeneutics, ethnomethodology, critical approaches, and more recently, postmodernist perspectives: recent bibliometric analysis of our academic production still points to a continuing growth of neoinstitutionalist theory among our research community (COSER and ROSA, 2004).

Neoinstitutionalism in organizational analysis has a distinct sociological flavor. In a highly influential and now classic essay, DiMaggio and Powell (1991) contend that is not simply the old sociology renewed since it diverges in systematic ways from early sociological approaches to organizations and institutions. The authors distinguished "new" from "old" Institutionalism in organizational sociology picking out Philip Selznick as their archetype for "old", an approach which viewed institutions normatively in terms of values emphasizing socialization as the fundamental mechanism of institutionalization. By doing so, DiMaggio and Powell were largely reading Selznick as a Parsonian structural-functionalist, whereas their "new" institutionalism would follow the path of post-structuralists like Giddens and Bourdieu (SWARTZ, 1997a).

The purpose of this paper is to review the incorporation of Bourdieu's work into neoinstitutionalism. I argue that this appropriation has resulted in a significant loss of theoretical strength. In contrast with the neoinstitutionalist view which emphasizes the salience of symbolic systems, cultural scripts, and mental models in shaping institutional effect and constraining organization choices (DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1983, 1991), Bourdieu approaches the social world as an ongoing interplay of struggle, and conceptualizes modern society as an array of relatively autonomous but structurally homologous fields of production, circulation, and consumption of various forms of cultural and material resources (BOURDIEU and WACQUANT, 1992). This paper is divided in four sections besides this Introduction. First, I will provide an overview of the sources of neoinstitutionalism in organizational analysis and of the more recent developments on this perspective. Then, I will review Bourdieu's theoretical project and the main ideas behind his theory of practice. Special attention will be given to the interconnectedness of his concepts and his distinct view of the formation of the subject. In the following section, I will analyse the different theoretical paths taken by neoinstitutionalism and Bourdieu's sociology, especially after the 1980's. I finish with a conclusion section with some insights and recommendations for future research.

## SOURCES OF NEOINSTITUTIONALISM IN ORGANIZATION ANALYSIS

The study of institutions is still very active among scholars in the organization studies field. Over the last 20 years, there is an increasing interest in explaining how institutions come into existence, remain stable, and are transformed (CARVALHO and VIEIRA, 2003; CLEGG, HARDY and NORD, 1999; MARCH and OLSEN, 1989; MEYER and ROWAN, 1991; POWELL and DIMAGGIO, 1991; RODRIGUES and CUNHA, 2000; SCOTT, 2001; VIEIRA and CARVALHO, 2003, 1999).

Early neoinstitutionalist studies gave valuable contributions to the agency *versus* structure debate by suggesting that patterns of action and organization were shaped by institutions rather than only by instrumental calculations (DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1983; MEYER and ROWAN, 1991). These studies emphasized ways in which institutions constrained organizational structures and practices, and thus explained the convergence of organizational action within the same institutional environment. A great deal of this initial research on

institutions treated them as constraints on organizational behavior. The predominant view was that institutional effects forced organizations to conform to the expectations of the fields in which they were members.

Initially, the arguments emphasized the importance of symbolic systems, cultural scripts, and mental models in shaping institutional effects, but were relatively vague and obscure with regard to the mechanisms by which culture and history helped to build the social order and constrain organizational choices. Early accounts identified institutional effects as concerned mainly with social stability, drawing attention to reproductive processes that function as stable patterns for sequences of activities routinely enacted (JEPPERSON, 1991, p.144-145). Institutionalization was defined with respect to the processes by which such patterns achieve normative and cognitive stability, and become taken for granted.

One important insight at this time was the emergence of the concept of “organizational fields”, conceived as arenas of action where organizations took one another into account in their behaviors (DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1983; SCOTT and MEYER, 1983). An important concept for DiMaggio and Powell’s argument, “organizational field” is defined by the authors as “those organizations that, in aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life” (1983, p. 148), with special attention to the “totality of relevant actors” rather than those that may actually interact directly. An expectation in institutional theory is that these fields will have institutional logics that justify the organizing principles for the organizations within them. These logics would provide the basis of taken-for-granted rules and “refer to the belief systems and related practices that predominate in an organizational field” (SCOTT, 2001, p. 139). The major empirical prediction made by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) is that due to uncertainty organizations in fields tend to become isomorphic in response to mimetic, coercion, or normative pressures (DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1983). The more mature an “organizational field”, the more likely it is to be heavily “structured” by institutional norms and rules (DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1991).

However, the idea that homogenizing pressures wielded similar influences throughout an “organizational field” was (and still is) a matter of intense debate, raising doubts over the sources of institutional pressures, particularly where do rational myths come from, how do practices spread, and what would be the primary sources of legitimacy.

Subsequent work focused on the extent to which organizational fields were fragmented to accommodate

multiple institutional influences, and therefore were subject to ambiguous requirements. Of note is a productive line of research developed on government regulation of the work place (DOBBIN and SUTTON, 1998; EDELMAN, 1992; EDELMAN, UGGEN and ERLANGER, 1999). Rather than viewing the state as a powerful actor imposing common practices across organizations, this research demonstrated that regulation and legal mandates functions at the same time as an endogenous force and as an exogenous constraint. Overcoming narrow theoretical positions which viewed actors in organizational fields as subject to a common set of pressures and behaving in a relatively homogeneous fashion, these scholars identified that organizational responses to the law are both complex and multiple, and pointed out the extent to which professionals in organizations contributed to create the law and the regulations that shaped the “best practices” in the field of workplace rights and employment regulation. The focus on internal influences and on the heterogeneity of organizational responses led to an increasing concern with the role of agency in institutionalization, and to the recognition that institutionalization is fundamentally a political process: whatever form it can take, regardless if it would be or not successful, depend on the relative power of the actors involved.

Indeed, since the late 1980’s, neoinstitutionalist scholars have emphasized the role that organizations and/or individuals play in institutional change (BECKERT, 1999; DIMAGGIO, 1988; FLIGSTEIN, 1997; HOFFMAN, 1999; HOLM, 1995; MAGUIRE, HARDY and LAWRENCE, 2004; MARQUIS and LOUNSBURY, 2007). These studies attempted to incorporate the role of interests and agency into neoinstitutionalism by relying on the notion of institutional entrepreneurship. According to DiMaggio (1988), institutional entrepreneurs are actors who have interest in particular institutional arrangements and who mobilize resources to transform them or to create new ones. Despite of being a promising way to account for institutional change endogenously, institutional entrepreneurship is also a source of controversy among neoinstitutionalists around the ability of actors to prevail against institutional forces and act strategically: how can organizations or individuals engage in institutional change if their beliefs and actions are determined or constrained by the very environment they seek to change? Also striking is the fact that a great deal of these studies focus on the organizational and organizational field levels of analysis, and hardly account for what happens in the level of the individual. To this extent, how individuals are enabled or enacted to conduct divergent organizational

changes is a question that remains largely unanswered.

Since 1980, neoinstitutionalism has been constantly adopted in Brazil as a theoretical framework for several empirical investigations by scholars and research groups throughout the country. Carvalho, Goulart and Vieira (2004) affirm that notwithstanding the amount of publications and the relatively diversity of contexts, these studies seem to converge to a rather modest set of themes: the investigation of isomorphic processes (CALDAS and VASCONCELOS, 2002; CARVALHO and GOULART, 2003; MACHADO-DA-SILVA and FONSECA, 1993), of legitimation strategies used by organizations in various sectors (MACHADO-DA-SILVA and FERNANDES, 1998, 1999; PACHECO, 2001), and of institutionalization in organizational fields (CARVALHO and LOPES, 2001; LEÃO JUNIOR, 2001, 2003). Albeit the important contributions for the understanding of core concepts of the neoinstitutionalism, most of these works have evident signs of the influence of the cognitive theory, and therefore shows little attention to issues of power (CARVALHO, GOULART and VIEIRA, 2004). This limitation was object of interest work developed by Vieira and Misoczky (MISOCZKY, 2001, 2003, 2004; VIEIRA and MISOCZKY, 2003) which explored from a critical perspective the possibilities of cross-paradigmatic interaction between neoinstitutionalism and some conceptualizations of power, with particular attention to the contributions of Bourdieu's sociology. Indeed, one of most challenging and problematic issues facing neoinstitutionalism is the relationship between agency and structure. How to relate actions of individual agents to the structural features of contemporary society? How are actions structured in everyday contexts and how are the structured features of actions reproduced? The duality of structure is among the most pervasive and difficult issues in social theory. In this regard, it is worth to note some studies developed in Brazil trying to incorporate Giddens's structuration theory into the neoinstitutionalist analysis to review the notion of "organizational fields" through more critical and multi-paradigmatic lens where structure and agency are seen as recursively entangled (MACHADO-DA-SILVA and ROSSONI, 2007; MACHADO-DA-SILVA, FONSECA and CRUBELLATTE, 2005; ROSSONI and MACHADO-DA-SILVA, 2007). Giddens deeply reformulated the notions of structure and agency emphasizing that while action has strongly routinized aspects, it creates and recreates existing cultural structures and is simultaneously conditioned by them. However, as DiMaggio and Powell (1991, p. 23) stress: "Giddens's account, however, does

little to explain why some interactions go better than others or why routines create particular stable patterns." Later, they justify their claim affirming that:

Rules are typically constructed by a process of conflict and contestation (...). Thus, although we stress that rules and routines bring order and minimize uncertainty, we must add that the creation and implementation of institutional arrangements are rife with conflict, contradiction, and ambiguity. (DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1991, p. 28)

From a general perspective, neoinstitutionalism more often bends toward organizational field as the level of analysis. One of the advantages of a field perspective is surely to encourage social scientists not to narrow prematurely the range of their investigation. Field analysis have considerably enriched organizational theory and our understanding of organizations. The endeavor carried out by DiMaggio and his colleagues and followers has as the fundamental programmatic statement an emphasis upon interorganizational contexts, and drew explicitly from Bourdieu's concept of field (DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1991).

## THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF BOURDIEU'S CONCEPTS

Interest in the work of French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu has not diminished since his death in 2002. Bourdieu continues to attract attention and inform scholarly research, education, and practice across all social sciences. Besides valuable attempts of some of his closer collaborators to identify a systematic unity throughout his body of work (CALHOUN, 2003; JENKINS, 2002; MICELI, 2005; ROBBINS, 1991, 2000; SWARTZ, 1997b; WACQUANT, 1992) it is hard to summarize the rich complexity of Bourdieu's conceptual world. According to Calhoun, Lipuma and Postone (1993, p.12), "Bourdieu's work resists a simple ordering of priority of concepts or themes". For Brubaker (1993, p. 217), Bourdieu's work "is particularly ill-suited to a conceptualist, theoretical logocentric reading, one that treats it as the bearer of a set of logically interconnected propositions framed in terms of precise, unambiguous concepts".

One should not try to understand his concepts as fully and intentionally designed to attend the formal canons of scientific method but as concepts pragmatically forged out of empirical research and confrontation with the very opposing intellectual

viewpoints they address. Nevertheless, his theoretical framework reveals a reasonably consistent set of underlying metasociological principles that guide all of his research (SWARTZ, 1997a). Rather than indicators of specific empirical phenomena or building blocks of systematic theory, his concepts are better understood as heuristic devices for communicating a general approach to the study of the social world (CALHOUN, LIPUMA and POSTONE, 1993): a fundamentally *agonistic* vision where society is seen after all as a site of endless and relentless competition which gives rise to “differences” that are simultaneously the essence and the stake of social life, differences that lay down the foundations of a perpetual dialectic of distinction and pretention, recognition and misrecognition, domination and resistance.

In order to find a scientific language that could handle these conceptual dilemmas Bourdieu forges four fundamental concepts in his theory of practice: *habitus*, strategies, field and capital. Bourdieu’s theory of practice may be seen as a critical reflection on one of the oldest problems in the Western intellectual tradition: the relationship between individual and society. Indeed he sees his approach as transcending this classic dualism by stressing the dual character of social life, and insisting that social reality exists both inside and outside individuals, both in our minds and in things. His theory of practice is also a reaction not only to Althusserian Marxism but also to the French structuralism of Lévi-Strauss. By extending the notion of economic interest to admittedly noneconomic realms (such as culture) and by adopting the notion of “strategy”, Bourdieu sought to reintroduce the idea of agency into structuralist analysis and point out the differences between everyday practices and their formalized models without recurring to the kind of voluntarism found at Sartre’s existentialism. While he was distancing himself from strict forms of structuralism, Bourdieu was also assuming a distinct yet political position in the highly competitive French intellectual scene.

Bourdieu’s intent with the idea of strategy is not to suggest the existence of particular types of conduct outside the constraints of normative sets. Rather, he wants to stress that even in normative situations actions involve uncertainty and produce results which may be not necessarily clear or predictable for actors involved; to some extent, strategies are available still under the most ritualized forms of conduct. Whether or not actors conform to norms or follow prescribed rituals depends on their interests. For Bourdieu, there is no innocence in the social world: all action is interested.

The idea that actors are “practical strategists” is linked to social structures through the concept of *habitus*, carefully designed by Bourdieu to transcend the classical individual/society dualism. *Habitus* functions as mediation between social structures and practice, between past influences and present stimuli, a principle at once practice-unifying and practice-generating, engendering conducts which take the form of either regulated improvisations or conductorless orchestration, a principle of both social continuity and discontinuity (WACQUANT, 2005). The concept was object of constant attention and continuous elaboration by Bourdieu and has been refined both empirically and theoretically in each of his major works. One of the initial definitions of the concept, still showing a strong cognitivist accent, appears in his early works in the late 1960’s and was often cited in subsequent works during the 1970’s :

A system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly but shaped problems. (BOURDIEU, 1969, p. 83)

Later, in the 1980 publication of *Le Sens Pratique*, Bourdieu advanced in his theoretizations around dispositions and *habitus*:

The dispositions durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions (which science apprehends through statistical regularities such as the probabilities objectively attached to a group or class) generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands (BOURDIEU, 1990b, p. 54).

The most sophisticated elaborations notwithstanding, would appear in *Méditations Pascaliennes*, originally published in 1997, a mature and comprehensive work that shows the robustness and thickness of his theorizations about the social world.

One of the major functions of the notion of *habitus* is to dispel two complementary fallacies each of which originates from the scholastic vision: on the one hand, mechanism, which holds that action is the mechanical effect of the constraint of external causes; and, on the other, finalism, which, with rational action theory, holds that the agent acts freely, consciously, and, as some of the utilitarians say, ‘with full understanding’, the action being

the product of a calculation of chances and profits. Against both of these theories, it has to be posited that social agents are endowed with *habitus*, inscribed in their bodies by past experiences. These systems of schemes of perception, appreciation and action enable them to perform acts of practical knowledge, based on the identification and recognition of conditional, conventional stimuli to which they are predisposed to react; and, without any explicit definition of ends or rational calculation of means, to generate appropriate and endlessly renewed strategies, but within the limits of the structural constraints of which they are the product and which define them. (BOURDIEU, 2001, p. 169, our translation)

The several definitions offered by Bourdieu, however, seem to converge to the common assumption that action is a product of deeply ingrained dispositions. Swartz (1997a, p. 101) is right when he affirms that Bourdieu's permanent efforts to (re)conceptualize *habitus*:

point toward a theory of action that is practical rather than discursive, prereflexive rather than conscious, embodied as well as cognitive, durable though adaptive, reproductive though generative and inventive, and the product of particular social conditions though transposable to others.

Thus, *habitus* results from early socialization experiences in which external structures are internalized in the form dispositions which inform broad criteria of what is possible or unlikely, familiar or odd, for a particular group in a stratified social world. On one hand, *habitus* sets structural limits for action; on the other hand, *habitus* generates perceptions, aspirations, and practices that correspond to the structuring properties of earlier socialization. Hence, Bourdieu's use of the language of "structured structures" and "structuring structures" seem to be fairly suited to capture these two central features of *habitus*. Over time, the concept was broadened in scope to stress the bodily basis of action, evolving from a normative and cognitive emphasis to a more dispositional and practical understanding of action (BOURDIEU, 1994a).

Another central concept in Bourdieu's sociology is the notion of field. For Bourdieu, fields denote a structured arena of conflict where practices occur, and connects the action of *habitus* to the stratifying structures of power in modern society. He conceptualizes modern society as an array of relatively autonomous but structurally homologous fields of production, circulation, and appropriation of goods, services, knowledge, or status.

Fields mediate the relationship between social structure and cultural practice, and may be thought of as structured spaces that are organized around specific types of capital or combinations of capital. Bourdieu's notion of capital, along with his emphasis on culture as a form of domination and social reproduction, marks an important dismissal from orthodox Marxism in his oeuvre. He extends the idea of capital as an economic resource to all forms of power, whether they be material, cultural, social, or symbolic. Individuals or groups draw upon a variety of forms of capital to keep, change or enhance their relative position within the social order. Capital functions as the "social energy" that empower agents in their competition in field struggles; it is the "fuel" of social change.

The social world is accumulated history, and if it is not to be reduced to a discontinuous series of instantaneous mechanical equilibria between agents who are treated as interchangeable particles, one must reintroduce into it the notion of capital and with it, accumulation and all its effects. Capital is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated', embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is a *vis insita*, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a *lex insita*, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. It is what makes the games of society-not least, the economic game-something other than simple games of chance offering at every moment the possibility of a miracle. (BOURDIEU, 1986, p. 241)

Bourdieu's concept of field was developed later than his concepts of cultural capital, *habitus*, strategies, and practices. His debates in the 1960's and 1970's with Marxism and structuralism, when he developed these concepts, gave way gradually to an increasing concern with fields and the relational method, a shift in his work that occurred during the 1970's and 1980's.

Field functions as a key spatial metaphor (SWARTZ, 1997a) in Bourdieu's framework. It defines the structure of the social setting in which *habitus* operates.

a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to



other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (BOURDIEU and WACQUANT, 1992, p. 97)

As is the case with all of his concepts, the concept of field reflects the metatheoretical dimension of Bourdieu's thought: he sees it as an "open concept" designed to correct the various forms of subjectivism and objectivism he criticizes in other prevailing ways of conceptualizing the relationship between social and cultural structures and practices. Indeed, he suggests that it "offers a coherent system of recurrent questions that saves us from the theoretical vacuum of positivist empiricism and from the empirical void of theoreticist discourse" (BOURDIEU and WACQUANT, 1992, p. 110). For Bourdieu, the chief merit of the notion of field is that it allows us to transcend a whole series of methodological and theoretical antinomies.

As stated by Swartz (1997a), Bourdieu designed the concept of field in opposition to consensual views of the social world, and distinct from other perspectives that stress total domination. Unlike Goffman's "total institutions", Althusser's "ideological state *apparati*" or Foucault's "orders of discipline", Bourdieu's fields are "fields of struggle", sites of resistance as well as domination, both being relationally linked to each other. It follows that fields are historical constellations that arise, grow, change in shape, and sometimes shrink or even perish over time. Fields have a degree of autonomy, a capacity gained in the course of its development that allows it to isolate itself from external pressures and to support its own criteria of evaluation over and against others' criteria, be it from neighboring or intruding fields. In other words, fields are arenas of struggle for legitimation, or, in Bourdieu's language, for the right to monopolize the exercise of symbolic violence.

Every field presupposes and produces a particular type of *illusio* which Bourdieu defines as a belief or acceptance of the worth of the game of a field. His basic point here is that behaviors in fields are interest driven: he wants to stress that actors, regardless of their positions, are complicit in accepting the rules of the game in which they interact and play, and this acceptance often goes unacknowledged or misrecognized. Entry in a field, thus, requires the tacit acceptance of the rules of the game which implies that specific forms of struggle are legitimated although others are dismissed.

Field analysis, therefore, directs attention to a level of analysis capable of revealing the integrating logic of competition between antagonistic world views as long as it encourages researchers to look for sources of conflict in a given domain, and relate that conflict to broader scopes

of social life in order to identify underlying assumptions shared by opposing parties (SWARTZ, 1997a). For fields to be able to operate or exist, they need to have agents with the appropriate *habitus* willing to invest in them (fields). Newcomers must pay the price to enter the field - an "admission fee" - which involves recognition of the value of the game as well as the practical knowledge of how to play it: in order to have right to dominant positions in the field agents must fully master the rules of the game.

Each field is the institutionalization of a specific viewpoint in things and in *habitus*. The specific *habitus*, which is demanded of the new entrants as condition of entry, is nothing other than a specific mode of thought (an *eidos*), the principle of a specific construction of reality, grounded in pre-reflexive belief in the undisputed value of the instruments of construction and of the objects thus constructed (an *ethos*). (BOURDIEU, 2001, p. 121, our translation)

The concepts of *habitus*, capital, and field must be seen as internally linked to each other in order for them to achieve their full analytical potential. Working together this conceptual triad allows Bourdieu to sociologize Husserl's notion of *doxa*. First, they suggest that the "natural attitude of everyday life" which is behind the taken-for-granted views of social reality is not an "existential constant" as claimed by phenomenologists. Rather, it depends on the confluence of the subjective categories of *habitus* and the objective structures of fields. Second, each relatively autonomous universe, which Bourdieu named as fields, develops its own *doxa* as a set of shared understandings and undisputed beliefs that link agents to one another. As shown in Bourdieu's early ethnographic research in Algeria and Béarn (WACQUANT, 2003), and in his major works *Distinction* (BOURDIEU, 1984) and *Homo Academicus* (BOURDIEU, 1988a), this conceptual framework allows us to explain cases of both social reproduction, expressed in situations where social and mental structures are in accordance and reinforce each other, and social change, when disputes originated between *habitus* and field give rise to crisis, innovations, and structural changes.

## THE LEGACY OF THE "COGNITIVE REVOLUTION" IN NEOINSTITUTIONALISM AND THE PSYCHOANALYTIC SHIFT IN BOURDIEU'S SOCIOLOGY

In a seminal essay introducing the neoinstitutionalist analysis in organization studies, DiMaggio and Powell

(1991) calls attention to the cognitive turn in social theory that has happened since the 1980's, a change comparable to the rejection of utilitarianism promoted by Parsons in the early 20th century. The developments in the neoinstitutionalist tradition represent "a shift from Parsonian action theory, rooted in Freudian ego psychology, to a theory of practical action based in ethnomethodology and in psychology's 'cognitive revolution'" (DIMAGGIO and POWELL, 1991, p. 15). For DiMaggio and Powell, the cognitive turn represents a shift in emphasis from the social psychology of values, norms, and attitudes, to classifications, routines, scripts and *schemata*; from commitment as the cognitive basis of social order to habitual and unconscious practices; and from metaphors borrowed from psychoanalysis such as "drive", "cathexis", and "internalization" to a language akin to cognitivism and to the contributions of the Carnegie School. Indeed, early developments in neoinstitutionalism in organization theory were strongly influenced by Hebert Simon's rich discussion of the role of premises in structuring perceptions and practices in organizational behavior (SIMON, 1945), and by subsequent work on the "garbage-can" model developed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), where organization behavior, particularly decision making processes, was viewed as involving rule following more than rational calculation of ends. By the 1997 publication of DiMaggio's *Culture and Cognition* (DIMAGGIO, 1997), it became explicit that psychoanalysis has been dropped from the program in favor of a "perspective that privileges schemata and related constructs as units of analysis, and attends to mechanisms by which physical, social, and cultural environments differentially activate these schemata" (DIMAGGIO, 1997, p. 282).

As indicated by Widick (2005), in taking stock of this cognitive turn, it is necessary to get back to the origins of cognitive science and its struggle to break with a more deterministic version of behaviorism. This movement represents a refusal of the philosophical categories of consciousness and the symbolic power of imagery, and affirms the prevalence of computational models in setting up artificial limits on the definition of mind, a model that assumes the underlying assumption that mind can be scrutinized using formal logic alone. Hence, it is fair to say that this cognitive turn points toward a rather prescriptive account of social phenomena which signals an attitude typical of natural science. The well known resistances to psychoanalysis among American sociologists, along with a historical inclination to positivism, may explain the popularity of the more cognitivist works of the "first"

Bourdieu among American sociologists, particularly those linked to the neoinstitutionalist tradition.

While Bourdieu's notion of field seemed to be well suited for the neoinstitutionalist project, *habitus* has always been seen with suspicious and barely employed. Thus familiar to many scholars in social sciences, *habitus* is far from being well understood and applied in its full potentiality, and, for that reason, it is still object of intense debate (BRUBAKER, 1993; CALHOUN, 1993; EVERETT, 2002; FUCHS, 2003; LAU, 2004; LIZARDO, 2004; MUTCH, 2003; SEWELL, 1992; SWARTZ, 2002; WARDE, 2004). In a review essay on Bourdieu, DiMaggio (1979, p. 1464) describes *habitus* as "a kind of theoretical *deus ex machina* by means of which Bourdieu relates objective structure and individual activity". Indeed, as noted by Swartz (1997a), the problems in the assimilation of the concept derive from two basic issues: first, the concept bears too much theoretical weight making it difficult for operationalization and empirical test; second, as pointed in Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), critics have systematically misunderstood Bourdieu's theoretical project by "unwittingly projecting variations of the subjective/objective dichotomy onto the very concept that Bourdieu employs to transcend that antinomy" (SWARTZ, 1997a, p. 16). The tendency in the American appropriation of Bourdieu's sociology is to pick up single concepts - "fields" or "culture capital" in most cases - from the overall framework and put it to be tested empirically. The problem with this piecemeal approach is that in Bourdieu's world, concepts are forged to work together in a relational and interactive fashion: to adequately account for practices in social life, the dynamic of fields necessarily calls for the use of his other concepts, particularly *habitus*, strategy and capital. The absence of a conceptual device to link social structures to the "individual experience of the social" leads to a kind of naive psychologism and to an oversimplistic view of action: it fails to address the issue of embedded agency, that is, how actors become socially situated in a field and how they balance different conceptions of identity and heterogeneous interests that invariably come into play. Actors, whether under stable or unstable institutional conditions, are not just captured and/or constrained by shared meanings in a field. Instead, they operate with a certain amount of resources (or capital) to produce, reproduce, or contest systems of power and privilege.

By giving place to the cognitivist metaphors of mental models, "scripts" and "schemas", instead of adopting the notion of *habitus*, neoinstitutionalism reinforces some of the ever-present dichotomies in social sciences, especially



those of agency/structure and individual/society. While neoinstitutionalism was refining the cognitive approach in the 1990's, Bourdieu was moving in the opposite direction. The early works of the 1960's and 70's, still influenced by structural anthropology, gave way to a growing emphasis toward a more bodily character of human conduct manifested in the gradual changes of Bourdieu's terminology (FOURNY and EMERY, 2000; WIDICK, 2005). The term *ethic* often used in early works gave room to *ethos* which finally became incorporated in the notion of *habitus*, a transition acknowledged by Bourdieu himself:

I've used the word *ethos*, after many others, in opposition to *ethic*, to designate an objectively systematic set of dispositions with an ethical dimension, a set of practical principles ... The notion of *habitus* encompasses the notion of *ethos*, and that's why I use the latter word less and less. The practical principles of classification which constitute the *habitus* are *inseparably* logical and axiological, theoretical and practical. Because practical logic is turned towards practice, it inevitably implements values ... all the principles of choice are 'embodied', turned into postures, dispositions of the body. Values are postures, gestures, ways of standing, walking, speaking. The strength of the *ethos* is that it is a morality made flesh (BOURDIEU, 1994b, p. 86).

Also, the increasing use of the language of "dispositions" suggests a shift from a linguistic analogy to a perspective centered on socialization and body language. The term "disposition" is of paramount importance for Bourdieu since it implies two essential components he wishes to communicate with the idea of *habitus*: structure and propensity.

The word *disposition* seems particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of *habitus* (defined as a system of dispositions). It expresses first the *result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a *way of being*, a *habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition*, *tendency*, *propensity*, or *inclination*. (BOURDIEU, 1977, p. 214)

Along with the use of the term dispositions it is worthy of note that Bourdieu's rejection to psychoanalysis in his early works during the 1960's and 1970's – in his *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (originally published in 1972), for instance, psychoanalysis is reduced to a biological reductionism (BOURDIEU, 1977, p. 92-93) – gave away increasingly to a growing and ever more

sophisticated psychoanalytic vocabulary. Especially with the elaboration of the notions of *socioanalysis* (BOURDIEU and WACQUANT, 1992; BOURDIEU, 2003; BOURDIEU, CHAMBOREDON and PASSERON, 2004), *illusio* (BOURDIEU and WACQUANT, 1992; BOURDIEU, 1988b, 1990a, 1990b, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005), and *libido* (BOURDIEU and WACQUANT, 1992; BOURDIEU, 1990b, 2001, 2003, 2005), we see Bourdieu's initial cognitive approach for the logic of practice moving towards psychoanalysis (FOURNY and EMERY, 2000; HILLIER and ROOKSBY, 2005a, 2005b; STEINMETZ, 2006; WIDICK, 2005).

Steinmetz (2006) affirms that the concept of *habitus* can be seen as Bourdieu's most important attempt to formulate a theory of subject. Indeed *habitus* is a promising concept because of its integrative power: given the wide range of fields of practice in which individuals engage, and the historical accumulation of diverse experiences acquired through socialization, the integration of the corporeal and psychic domains should be understood as work in progress. At a more general level, Bourdieu's theory of subject emphasizes the internalization and embodiment of hierarchical social relations, and how they become actively reproduced by socialized individuals. According to Steinmetz (2006), this model comes close to the psychoanalytic concern with the individual's interiorization of social history (as found in Freud's structural model of the mind) and its incorporation into the symbolic order (following Lacan's formulations of subject formation and the symbolic-real-imaginary orders).

Bourdieu's relationship with psychoanalysis, however, has always been troubled (FOURNY and EMERY, 2000; HILLIER and ROOKSBY, 2005a, 2005b; STEINMETZ, 2006; WIDICK, 2005). Besides admitting Freudian terminology and even laying hold of some psychoanalytic arguments into his texts, it has never happened without constant recourse to rhetorical strategies to ward off the possibility of seeing psychoanalysis as intrinsic or internal to sociology. This becomes clear in the following passage of "*La Misère du monde*":

This is not the place to question the relation between the mode of exploring subjectivity proposed here and that practiced by psychoanalysis. But, at the very least, it is necessary to guard against thinking of these relationships as alternatives to each other. Sociology does not claim to substitute its mode of explanation for that of psychoanalysis; it is concerned only to construct differently certain givens that psychoanalysis also takes as its object, and to do so by focusing on aspects of reality that

psychoanalysis pushes aside as secondary or insignificant, or else treats as defenses that have to be breached to get to the essential element. ... In fact, these defenses can contain information that is relevant to things that psychoanalysis also considers. (BOURDIEU and others, 1999, p. 512)

Notwithstanding, there is no fundamental difference between Freud's and Bourdieu's reading of the unconscious: once confronted with the relatively unconscious action generated by the dispositions inherent from *habitus*, it is possible to note resistances, displacements, repression, sublimations, and negations (STEINMETZ, 2006). This becomes evident in the passage below that could be easily associated with a typical psychoanalyst speech:

Such limitation of aspirations shows up in cases where the father has been very successful (children of celebrity parents would be worth special analysis). But it assumes all its force when the father occupies a dominated position, whether economically, socially (such as a manual laborer or lower-level employee), or symbolically (as a member of a stigmatized group), and is therefore inclined to be ambivalent about his son's success as well as about himself (divided as he is between pride in his son and the shame in himself that is implied by the internalization of other people's views of him). At one and the same time he says: be like me, act like me, but be different, go away. His entire existence is carried in a dual injunction: succeed, change, and move into the middle class; and stay simple, don't be proud, stick close to the little guys (to me). He cannot want his son to identify with his own position and dispositions, and yet all his behavior works continuously to produce that identification, in particular the body language that continues so powerfully to fashioning the whole manner of being, that is, the *habitus* (BOURDIEU, 1999, p. 510).

Analogously, in *La domination masculine*, Bourdieu clearly reveals his debt to Freudian theory right from the start, when he introduces the objectives of his present work:

This will consist in treating ethnographic analysis of the objective structures and cognitive forms of a particular historical society, at once exotic and very close to us, both strange and familiar, that of the Berbers of Kabylia, as the instrument of a socioanalysis of the androcentric unconscious that is capable of objectifying the categories of that unconscious (BOURDIEU, 2003, p. 13, our translation).

Whereas Freud drew on ancient Greek myth, Bourdieu focus on the "the highland peasants of

Kabylia" (BOURDIEU, 2003, p. 14) which "represent a paradigmatic form of the 'phallogocentric' vision and the androcentric cosmology which are common to all Mediterranean societies" (BOURDIEU, 2003, p. 14). He understands masculine domination as rooted in unconscious structures centered on phallogocentrism. The approach to a more psychoanalytic tone becomes explicitly when Bourdieu asserts that:

It is also through the mediation of the sexual division of the legitimate uses of the body that the link (asserted by psychoanalysis) between phallus and logos is established (BOURDIEU, 2003, p. 26, our translation).

The work of symbolic construction is far more than a strictly performative operation of naming which orients and structures representations, starting with representations of the body (which is itself not negligible); it is brought about and culminates in a profound and durable transformation of bodies (and minds), that is to say, in and through a process of practical construction imposing a differentiated definition of the legitimate uses of the body, in particular sexual ones, which tends to exclude from the universe of feasible and thinkable everything that marks membership of the other gender- and in particular all the potentialities biologically implied in the 'polymorphous perversity', as Freud puts it, of every infant - to produce the social artifact of the manly man or the womanly woman. (BOURDIEU, 2003, p. 33, our translation)

The psychoanalytic shift in Bourdieu's sociology appears to have achieved his majority in *Méditations Pascaliennes*. Here, we can find the most noticeable evidence of Bourdieu's adoption not only of psychoanalytic language, as seen in some of his previous works, but, most important, of its intrinsic logic. By forging the expressions "socialization of the sexual" and "sexualization of the social", Bourdieu suggests a theory of the genesis of the subject carefully built upon his notion of *habitus*.

The initial form of *illusio* is investment in the domestic space, the site of a complex process of socialization of the sexual and sexualization of the social. And sociology and psychology should combine their efforts (but this would require them to overcome their mutual suspicion) to analyse the genesis of investment in a field of social relations, thus constituted as an object of interest and preoccupation, in which the child is increasingly implicated and which constitutes the paradigm and also the principle of investment in the social game. How does the transition, described by Freud, occur, leading from a narcissistic organization of the libido, in which the child

takes himself (or his own body) as an object of desire, to another state in which he orients himself towards another person, thus entering the world of 'object relations', in the form of the original microcosm and the protagonists of the drama that is played out there? One may suppose that, to obtain the sacrifice of 'self-love' in favour of a quite other object of investment and so to inculcate the durable disposition to invest in the social game which is one of the prerequisites of all learning, pedagogic work in its elementary form relies on one of the motors which will be at the origin of all subsequent investments: the *search for recognition*. (BOURDIEU, 2001, p. 201, our translation)

## CONCLUSION

This paper was a preliminary attempt to address the appropriation of Bourdieu's sociology into neoinstitutionalist theory, and to point out some promising lines of research that suggest the possibility of integration of Bourdieu's conceptual framework with psychoanalysis.

Most versions of neoinstitutionalism in sociology lack a theory of power, and therefore, raises a problem intrinsic related with the theory of action. As per what I tried to describe in this paper, what appears to be missing in neoinstitutionalism is an effective, clear sociological conception of action, one that could take seriously the problem of how actors are socially situated in a group and how their strategic actions are framed by the challenges posed by everyday practices. The question of why fields should exist and in whose interest they exist is seldom addressed appropriately by neoinstitutionalist theory. Field dynamics depend on actors, culture, and power. It is a "social game" about who is "in charge", who is being dominated without conscious resistance, and who is acting strategically towards change. This certainly poses an important role for scholars in trying to identify and explain what mechanisms are in place to enforce or contest the existing order. Making sense of the behavior of actors in fields where ongoing struggles for prominent positions take place becomes ambiguous as the meaning of their actions is not easy to depict.

Neoinstitutionalism's debt to Bourdieu's sociology has been widely acknowledged but is rare to find his full conceptual framework employed in a single study. While the concept of fields has achieved great popularity under the guise of the neoinstitutionalist notion of "organizational field", *habitus* remains forgotten or sometimes underused

Bourdieu's dynamics of fields are only partially understood if the dispositions of the *habitus* of actors involved are not called for. Neoinstitutionalism's emphasis on cognitive structures privileges the dispositional character of *habitus* whereas overlooking the bodily dimension. Bourdieu does not offer stand-alone conceptual devices to account for the complexity of the social world, instead, all his master concepts are linked relationally to connect micro and macro levels of analysis, a fundamental concern that should inform all of our efforts in organizational research.

To this extent, Bourdieu's appropriation of psychoanalysis is an important shift in his oeuvre, and represents a bold attempt to enrich his notion of *habitus* to better deal with the complex issues related with transcending some of the ever-present dualisms in social science, particularly that of individual/society and subjectivism/objectivism.

For sure, the wide range of Bourdieu's work can be mined for a variety of theoretical influences. But I believe that the connections with psychoanalysis may underscore in a more vivid, profound and productive way the complex mechanism by which dispositions become ingrained in *habitus*, the ways in which individual history and social context are constantly being "actualized" within the unconscious. After all, psychoanalytic theory has long been concerned with the very problems Bourdieu sought to explain throughout his life.

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