

Growing Up in Society - a Historical Social Psychology of Childhood

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Gabriel, N. (2017). Growing Up in Society - a Historical Social Psychology of Childhood. *Historical Social Research*, 42(4), 207-226. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.42.2017.4.207-226>

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Historical Social Research Historische Sozialforschung

Norman Gabriel:

Growing Up in Society -
A Historical Social Psychology of Childhood.

doi: 10.12759/hsr.42.2017.4.207-226

Published in:

Historical Social Research 42 (2017) 4

Cite as:

Gabriel, Norman. 2017. Growing Up in Society - A Historical Social Psychology of Childhood. *Historical Social Research* 42 (4): 207-226.
doi: 10.12759/hsr.42.2017.4.207-226.

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Norman Gabriel

Growing Up in Society. A Historical Social Psychology of Childhood.

doi: [10.12759/hsr.42.2017.4.207-226](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.42.2017.4.207-226)

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doi: [10.12759/hsr.42.2017.4.227-249](https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.42.2017.4.227-249)

Growing Up in Society – A Historical Social Psychology of Childhood

Norman Gabriel*

Abstract: »Aufwachsen in (der) Gesellschaft. Eine historische Psychologie der Kindheit«. This paper develops a historical social psychology that can be used to understand young children's social development. It compares the theoretical frameworks of three of the most important relational thinkers in the 20th century – Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, and Erich Fromm – to shed light on their attempts to integrate the insights of psychoanalysis into their sociological perspectives. I begin by exploring Bourdieu's "uneasy" relationship with psychoanalysis, arguing that this has led to a less than successful quest by his followers for bridging concepts that can further develop the concept of social habitus. Fromm, one of the foremost but relatively neglected psychoanalysts of his generation, developed a relational psychoanalysis to explain the social relatedness of individuals in society. However, although his key concept of social character is a bold attempt to make sense of the historical forces that shape our individual and collective lives, it is still too heavily tied to the influence of economic structures in society. I argue that Elias is a more consistent, relational sociologist, able to develop highly nuanced concepts that can fully explain the social habitus of young children, focusing on his concept of "love and learning relationships" to explain how they grow up in society.

Keywords: Elias, Bourdieu, habitus, social character, social psychology, relational sociology, childhood.

1. Introduction¹

This paper focuses on how relational sociologists can develop a historical social psychology, one that can best integrate the findings of psychoanalysis in a way that is suitable for explaining young children's development in contemporary society. It begins by exploring the work of Pierre Bourdieu who provides a set of relational conceptual tools, capitals, habitus and field, to overcome the traditional micro-macro divisions in sociology – these relational tools can be

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¹ To My Dad, Henry Gabriel (1922-2014), who inspired me to read the great thinkers of psychoanalysis.

used to locate and understand children's relationships within broader institutional structures. However, although his concept of habitus is an important attempt to explain the durable structures characteristic of social groups and their dominant practices, I will argue that it is developed in relative disciplinary isolation, without fully integrating the findings of psychoanalysis. As a result, there remains a conceptual impasse in recent Bourdieusian scholarship over the meaning of habitus and the best way forward to fully develop and integrate the "psycho-social" aspects of his theory.

According to Durkin (2015) this failure to try to understand the role of psychodynamic factors has left contemporary sociological analysis incomplete – since the mid-part of the twentieth century a great deal of sociological theory has advanced very little. He argues that a return to Erich Fromm, therefore, offers the chance to deepen and broaden sociological thinking, to draw out some of the important differences between Fromm's social psychology and Bourdieu's sociology. In the 1930s Fromm had already developed a distinctive psychoanalytic approach, one which was interpreted 50 years later in relational and inter-subjective psychoanalysis as a great paradigm shift.

Fromm's work is an important attempt to bring psychological depth to sociological analysis by developing a relational psychoanalysis that can explain the social relatedness of individuals in society. His key concept of social character tries to explain the historical forces that shape our individual and collective lives. In his early descriptions of different social character structures, Fromm used the Freudian terminology of oral, anal, and genital – for instance, calling the capitalist character structure anal because it expressed instrumental rationality, possessiveness and orderliness while different character traits would be common in other societies. In later studies his terminology is less directly Freudian, specifying productive and non-productive social characters and subdividing the latter even further. Nevertheless his analysis of social character is to a large extent still too heavily tied to the influence of economic structures in society, especially social class, and therefore insufficiently attuned to explaining processes of change in different social groups in society.

I then turn to Norbert Elias's version of social habitus, arguing that it enables sociologists to focus on how social-psychological processes change over time. It provides a much needed conceptual breakthrough that moves beyond the "psychologistic" overtones of Fromm's concept of social character and Bourdieu's unresolved and uneasy relationship with psychoanalysis. Although critical of traditional Freudian psychoanalytic concepts, Elias integrated and synthesised them in a highly original fashion, developing a network language to explain how individuals are intertwined in a *web of interweaving, intermeshing* relationships (Lavie 2011). Individuality is therefore a process embedded in society with a specific history so that every process of *socialisation* – through which the social standards of behaviour and feeling that are transmitted to individuals – is also a process of *individualisation*, where each individual child

makes his/ her own subtle adaptations to these standards. To further develop my argument I focus on Elias's concept of "love and learning relationships" which explores the significance of social learning as young children grow up in society.

2. Bourdieu's Relational Concepts

Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical concepts of field, habitus and capital are an important part of his attempt to overcome the traditional micro-macro divisions in sociology. Although Bourdieu mainly focused on school-age children and adults, his concepts can easily be adapted to study the lives of infants, toddlers, and pre-school children, as well as those just entering school. His theoretical framework is important for providing a set of relational conceptual tools that can be finely tuned to explain the shifting fields of power that affect the lives of young children in changing institutions. In a recent book on *Childhood with Bourdieu* there are four chapters that apply his theoretical perspective to early childhood (Alanen et al. 2015), reflecting a growing interest in the way that sociologists of childhood can apply this perspective to understand the interdependent relationships between young children, their peers and adults in changing institutional arrangements (Gabriel 2017).

According to Bourdieu (1990), we can best understand social development and change as taking place through the ongoing struggles that exist over a range of scarce goods and resources, which are not simply economic but also take on social and cultural forms. He conceived of four different types of capital which are often deeply inter-related and partly transposable. Economic capital, "which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights" (Bourdieu 1986, 243); cultural capital which consists primarily of what is to be perceived to be legitimate knowledge and behaviour and may be institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; social capital which relates to the prestige and influence gained through relationships and connections with powerful others; and symbolic capital which represents the status and honour that is associated with the acquisition of one or more forms of capital once they have been perceived and recognised as legitimate by others. The social habitus can be understood as a set of predispositions to ways of thinking and behaving that have been acquired over time through experience. In early childhood, it refers to the internalization of wider structures and processes manifested through the routines and taken-for-granted actions of young children: the longer a young child is located within a particular set of relationships the more likely they are to develop a practical sense of how to behave and act in certain ways.

Central to the concept of capital is its exchange value and its capacity through investment of time and effort to be converted from economic capital

into both social and cultural capital. This was outlined in Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) early work on education where for example economic capital enables parents to send their young children to private schools to learn and appropriate certain valued forms of cultural capital. The acquisition of both economic and cultural capital enables a young child to develop valued relationships with powerful people and acquire certain positions within society. Cultural capital has particular currency in the field of education, comprising embodied (dispositions, sets of meaning, and modes of thinking), objectified (access to cultural goods such as art, literature) and institutionalised forms (educational or academic qualifications) which are given recognition by those already dominant within a particular field. Those with the recognised cultural capital are deemed competent in their knowledge and confident in their capacity to generate long-term benefits from their investment in education.

In an important article Serre and Wagner (2015) offer an approach to cultural capital that emphasises its relational dimension. They argue that there is more at stake in Pierre Bourdieu's differentiation between kinds of capital than merely conceiving of social space as multi-dimensional by taking the variety of available resources behind their accumulation into account. The concept of cultural capital is mainly intended to make us think about mechanisms for legitimation. Contrary to what the most common uses of the notion of capital might lead us to think, capital is not a simple quantity of symbolic or material goods, defined once and for all, leaving only its unequal distribution to be measured: it is mainly a social relationship of domination that has important consequences within a specific field.

Serre and Wagner (2015) therefore claim that sites of cultural production (especially schools) have the function of legitimating power and keeping social order. The cultural capital that Bourdieu identified is less defined by its content (legitimate practices, educational qualifications) than by how it is acquired, which naturalizes domination and makes it invisible. This is why it is so important to explain all the different aspects of cultural capital – incorporation, institutionalization, objectification – as they relate to distinct and complementary mechanisms of domination. Incorporation presupposes a long period of invisible inculcation work from the youngest age, characteristic of incorporated cultural capital as it appears in language, knowledge and habits. Institutionalization is tied to the power of guarantee vested in institutions of learning. Objectification, by the ownership of cultural goods, manifests capital's patrimonial dimension. These mechanisms guarantee cultural capital's effectiveness when it is "used as a weapon and as a stake in struggles" (Bourdieu 1979, 5).

However this process of institutionalized education, as Bourdieu has argued, only represents one of the ways in which the distribution of power across social groups is achieved. Alongside the school, young children will come to learn and internalize a particular way of thinking and behaving through their family relationships as well as through the broader experiences gained through the

wider community. Connolly and Healy's (2004) ethnographic case study of two groups of 7-8 year old working-class girls living in Belfast, Northern Ireland, for example, showed that the school itself played only a partial role in influencing their educational and career aspirations. Of equal significance was the influence of the local neighbourhoods within which the young girls lived. Their emerging gendered habitus was constructed through discourses on romance, marriage, motherhood and childhood rather than a concern with their education and future careers. To explain this influence, they used Bourdieu's (1990) concept of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence is a process whereby individuals can contribute toward their own subordination by gradually accepting and internalizing those very ideas and structures that tend to subordinate them.

3. 'Primary' and 'Secondary' Habitus

Wacquant (2014) has brought another important nuance to this concept of habitus by drawing our attention to Bourdieu's (2000, 161) later emphasis on its malleability, "Habitus change constantly as a function of new experiences." A key aspect of the concept of habitus is that it incorporates past experiences which are modified by present ones, as well as a sense of a probable future (Bourdieu 1990), although early influences always bear more weight. Relations between socialization and social position remain central in more pliable notions of habitus, emphasising both its layered nature and its restructuring as an ongoing process.

Wacquant (2014) argues that we need to elaborate on Bourdieu's distinction between primary and secondary habitus, introduced in his work on education and underlying his analysis of the nexus of class and taste in *Distinction*. The primary habitus is the set of dispositions one acquires in early childhood, slowly and imperceptibly, through familial immersion; the schemes of action and perception that have been transferred during childhood are an education that is linked to the parents' social position in the social space. Therefore, the primary habitus is about internalizing the external as the parents' modes of thinking, feeling and behaving that are linked to their position in the social space are internalized in the children's own habitus. The family is the "primary habitus" or main institution where young children initially internalise ways of thinking and types of dispositions from their parents or carers. Although families are still important in the shaping of young children's lives, young children are not mere receptors of family socialisation, but active generators of their own social and cultural capital in early years settings. These settings can usefully be viewed within the concept of a shifting and competitive field, one that enables us to develop an understanding of when and where particular forms of capital become valued or diminish in importance and eventually decline.

We can further develop the concept of the primary habitus by exploring how young children are able to accumulate their own stocks of social capital through strategic use of networks. Devine (2009), for example, considered how migrant children in Irish primary schools were not merely receptors of their family's capitals but active generators, contributing to processes of capital accumulation through their negotiation and positioning between home and school.

She particularly noticed that friendships were important sources of social capital, facilitating access to networks that provided relief from the demands of formal learning, as well as support and knowledge when challenges emerge. These friendships gave young children a feeling of belonging and 'getting on' in their everyday lives in school. The "durable obligations" (Bourdieu 1986, 249) built up through these social networks ensured that they could draw on their friends to help them with school work, especially homework, as well as defend them if they were being racially abused. It therefore seems that in young children's peer groups, especially where economic capital is not directly used, the importance of social capital is emphasised.

The primary habitus is also fashioned by tacit and diffuse "pedagogical labour with no precedent"; it constitutes our social personality as well as "the basis for the ulterior constitution of any other habitus" (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 42-6). Pedagogical labour is about transformation, who defines what shape it will take and how it is experienced in practice by young children. Bourdieu captures these tensions when he speaks of social spaces as fields of struggle, caught between forces of transformation and preservation depending on access to power and resources. His relational understanding of the organization of the social is presented through field theory, where the position of an agent in a field can only be understood in relation to other positions in that field. Practices are relational, causes are always interdependent, and no investigator's pre-conceived assertion of hierarchical relations of causal dependency informs the relational organization of the social (Crossley 2011). When placing themselves and objects within a field, agents follow an ordering of relations that is structural and objective. Individuals are positioned independently of their will and intentions, even though their choices *modify* their original placement.

Wacquant (2014) argues that the primary habitus is a springboard for the subsequent acquisition of a secondary habitus, an organisational system of transposable schemata which bear the mark of much effort and self-discipline. The *secondary habitus* is built on the primary habitus and especially results from one's education at school and university, but also from other life experiences. This important distinction between primary and secondary habitus is similar to the contrast made by Bourdieu (1984, 65-8) between "the two modes of acquisition of culture," the familial and the academic, the experiential and the didactic, which indelibly stamp one's relation to cultural capital. Lizardo

(2004) offers a very helpful way of illuminating the subtlety of the concept of habitus and its important application for understanding the lives of young children. He explores the little recognised influence of Jean Piaget on Bourdieu's thinking, arguing that a great deal of the conceptual apparatus of the *habitus* can be traced back to his distinctive blend of structuralism and developmental cognitive psychology.

For Piaget (1954), the child's cognitive development is driven by a constant process of assimilation of new information and accommodation of pre-existing structures to fit recurring but not necessarily identical situations in the material and social world. The concepts of assimilation and accommodation were at the heart of his relational perspective. Young children are inherently incomplete: they need nourishment in relation to the environment in order to move toward equilibration. Since no form of nourishment is itself complete, they must accept it, changing the form of nourishment whilst at the same time changing themselves. In the dynamics of this relationship, both young children and their environment change in relation to each other. Piaget's theory is therefore best understood as a relational-historical process (Fogel et al. 2006).

Lizardo (2004) argues that Piaget's major influence on Bourdieu's conception of *habitus* is his emphasis that knowledge and higher levels of symbolic thought arises from these bodily schemas and practices which consist primarily of *internalized structures* that correspond with reality. He suggests that we can identify two principal themes in Bourdieu's thinking about *habitus* and the origins of practical action: first, belief, both in the sense of subjective harmony and objective coordination between the internal and the external, is a bodily phenomenon and second, practical action arises out of the operation of motor and operational schemes. The key idea borrowed by Bourdieu from Piaget consists of the notion that the body itself can be both the site and the primary source of operations that come to acquire increasing generality and flexibility through experience, but which can also become conserved through sustained repetition. For example, a young child might begin with a simple set of behavioural responses, grasping or sucking that after continual attunement to the environment come to be deployed in a wider class of situations and thus become a generalized bodily schema. It is therefore important to explore how embodied dispositions in early childhood are acquired in the primary habitus, focusing on how they can be related to affective dispositions and explained through the lens of psychoanalysis. The primary habitus as "embodied history, internalized as second nature and so forgotten as history" (Bourdieu 1990, 56) never loses its impact and always influences the development of the secondary habitus.

4. Psychoanalysis in Bourdieu's Work

Fourny and Emery (2000) have suggested that Bourdieu's early disavowals of psychoanalysis in the 1960s and 1970s gave way to the increasing importation of psychoanalytic concepts into his texts. For example, in relation to his explanation on an embodied habitus, he links human behaviour to the "bodily emotions" of shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety and guilt (Bourdieu 2001), or to an innate, nonmaterial desire to negate the ultimate absurdity of existence by attaining distinction and recognition from others (Wacquant 2006). Next, he uses such concepts as "libido," "misrecognition," "illusion," "sublimation," "denial," "projection," "identification," "ego splitting," and "phallonaissance," not to mention the ever-present psychoanalytic resonances of "habitus" and "dispositions" (see Bourdieu 1993). However, despite Bourdieu's rapprochement with psychoanalysis in some of his language and occasionally at a more systematic theoretical level, he never fully acknowledged the implications of Freudian theory for his own approach:

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. (Bourdieu 1999, 512)

Steinmetz (2006) argues that if Bourdieu had explored this relationship in more depth he might have seen that they were not alternatives, but that psychoanalysis filled some of the lacunae in his own theoretical approach. His treatment of Freudian psychoanalysis more often takes the form of admitting Freudian terminology and even some psychoanalytic arguments into his texts while surrounding these passages with rhetorical devices that seem to condemn it. According to Steinmetz (2006) Bourdieu's continual return to and disavowal of psychoanalysis has an obsessive quality, suggesting that he knows, but does not want to know, how it might inform and transform his own theory.

However, despite the uneasy relationship Bourdieu had with psychoanalysis and his refusal to recognise the ways in which both disciplines informed his concepts, in particular those of habitus, misrecognition and symbolic violence, a close reading of his texts reveals the many psychological and psychoanalytic terms increasingly appearing in his work over time (Steinmetz 2006). In *Pascalian Meditations* he argues that

Sociology and psychoanalysis should unite their strengths (but to do so they would need to overcome their prejudices against each other) to analyze the genesis of investment in a field of social relations. (Bourdieu 2000, 198-9)

Reay (2015) argues that it is this fusion of both psychological and psychoanalytic insights with a sociological understanding of habitus that has the potential to be useful. She suggests that such "generative possibilities" are most apparent in Bourdieu's own work when he writes about the divided or cleft habitus (Bourdieu 1999, 2000). Bourdieu asserts a number of times in his texts that

habitus is fundamentally about the integration or the lack of integration of the disparate experiences that make up a biography (Bourdieu 1984), but it is particularly when there is a lack of integration that (Bourdieu 1990) begins to write about internal conflicts and powerful emotions. Emotions can be regarded as resources which can be circulated, accumulated and exchanged for other forms of capital within a particular field that allows those resources to count. As a type of capital it can be defined “as the stock of emotional resources built up over time within families and which children could draw upon” (Reay 2004, 61). Feminist theorists have also extended Bourdieu’s notion of capital so as to be able to capture investment in non-convertible goods like love and well-being (Skeggs 2004; Illouz 2007).

Reay (2015) believes that we can shed light on the development of the “psychosocial” when we extend notions of habitus to include affective dispositions, consisting, in part, of bodily beliefs that are passions and drives, where the confrontation between the habitus and the field is always marked by affectivity. While Bourdieu does not focus on what it is that holds together and drives affective engagements with interpretations of the world, in his later writings he increasingly addresses such subjective emotional processes (see Atkinson 2012; and [Matthäus 2017](#), in this HSR Special Issue). This is most evident in the introduction of the concept of “a socialized libido” (Bourdieu 1998, 78) that energizes agents’ investments in a field (Green 2008). In accounting for these emotional drives, Bourdieu makes extensive use of psychoanalytic vocabulary such as energies, drives, and desire (Fourny and Emery 2000). Atkinson (2016, 58-9) argues that we can build upon Bourdieu’s suggestions to open up new avenues of research, viewing love and care as a relatively autonomous form of capital that is struggled for within the familial field. This capital sought within the family is a primal one – to love and be loved is one of the earliest and most pervasive of human desires. Once the child’s libido has been channelled towards the attainment of recognition within the domestic field, it is directed towards the accumulation of specific economic and cultural capital.

Nevertheless, despite these recent attempts by Reay and other followers of Bourdieu to refine the psychoanalytic aspects of Bourdieu’s thought by subtly redefining it in a more sociological direction (see, for example, Darmon 2016), or by explaining processes of change within the habitus across generations by drawing on post-Freudian psychoanalytic concepts (Aarseth et al. 2016), there still remains an important conceptual impasse and disagreement in recent Bourdieusian scholarship over the meaning of “habitus” and the best way forward to fully develop and integrate the “psycho-social” aspects of his theory. Lahire (2003), for example, suggests that the notion of “disposition,” which is central to Bourdieu’s theory of the habitus, is based upon tacit and problematic assumptions which have never been tested empirically. By universalizing the accomplishments of the psychology of his time Bourdieu committed psychology to a set of concepts which have become petrified and have hardly changed

in 30 years, even though they represented a summary of some of the most advanced psychological research into the development of children. He argues that a sociology at the level of the individual should fill the gap left by theories of socialisation which rhetorically refer to “the internalization of what is external” and “the embodiment of objective structures.” Lahire’s work (see, for example, Lahire 1998, 2002) focuses on the plurality of dispositions and on the variety of situations in which they manifest themselves: the relative coherence of habits, schemes, or dispositions that individuals may have internalised depends on the coherence of the principles of socialisation to which they were exposed. The more individuals have found themselves simultaneously in a variety of non-homogenous, sometimes even contradictory situations, and the more such situations were experienced at an early stage in life, the more such individuals will show a heritage of non-unified dispositions, habits and abilities varying across the social contexts in which their personal development took place. We will now consider Erich Fromm’s relational psychoanalysis, which will be used as a helpful counterpoint to Bourdieu’s sociological perspective. In direct contrast to Bourdieu, Fromm was a trained psychoanalyst very familiar with Freudian concepts – his social psychology was an important attempt to develop a more adequate sociological starting point for psychoanalytic theory.

5. Erich Fromm and Relational Psychoanalysis

A distinctive school of relational psychoanalysis developed from the early 1980s in the work of Greenberg and Mitchell (1983), who posited a relational model in opposition to classical Freudian drive theory. This “new tradition” draws on three long-standing bodies of thinking in psychoanalysis: the American interpersonal tradition (see, for example, Sullivan 1953), which emphasised the importance of understanding the network of relationships within which individuals exist; the British object relations tradition (Bowlby 1969; Winnicott 1965); and the more recent work of American psychoanalytic feminists (Benjamin 1998; Chodorow 1999; Dimen 2003). According to Roseneil and Ketokivi (2016) each of these lineages of theory posed its own challenges to the monadic model of drive theory, with its primary focus on intra-psyche processes, on the quest for rational control by the ego and the developmental goal of separation and autonomy. Their shared orientation conceptualises the self as relationally constituted, where the matrix of mother or caregiver-child relations provides the very conditions of possibility of existence for the young, dependent child. Hence, from the beginning, the self is intrinsically social, our sense of autonomy and agency inherently relational.

Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) distinguish between drive and relational models in psychoanalysis. They place Erich Fromm firmly within the relational model and characterize his approach as “humanistic psychoanalysis.” Accord-

ing to Cortina (2015), Fromm's work can best be seen as an application of humanistic principles to a variety of topics, beginning with his revision of Freud's libido theory based on a socio-psychoanalytic theory of character development (Fromm 1932, 1980). Funk (2015) has argued that one of the important influences on the development of Fromm's social-psychoanalytic theory was his intense exchange with Harry Stack Sullivan, who saw the person not in terms of drives, but in his or her relatedness to reality. Sullivan's focus on the question of interpersonal relatedness encouraged Fromm to understand a person's need for relatedness as the main psychological problem and to revise Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

In the 1930s Fromm was at the vanguard of the social-psychological attempt to make sense of the social and historical forces that shape our individual and collective lives. Fromm and the other Freudian-Marxists (see in particular Reich's *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis*, which appeared in 1929) sought to bring the critique of mechanical Marxism into distinctive psychoanalytical territory. What psychoanalysis could bring to historical materialism was the knowledge of the human personality as a factor in the social process, considered in connection with economic, financial and cultural factors.

Fromm elaborated these thoughts in an essay completed in the summer of 1937, which was received unfavourably by his colleagues at the Institute for Social Research and therefore remained unpublished (Funk found this essay, thought lost, in 1990 in the part of Fromm's estate deposited at the New York Public Library). In this essay he writes

The most important elements of the psychic structure are the *attitude* of the individual to others or to himself, or, as we should like to say, the *basic human relation*, and the fears and impulses which, in part directly, in part indirectly, arise out of this behaviour (Fromm 2010 [1937], 44).

Fromm refers here to relatedness as the "basic human relation" to emphasise that the person does not exist other than as a relational being, where the concrete manner of his or her relatedness arises from a social process. Fromm later on in this paper (2010 [1937], 58) writes that

Society and the individual are not 'opposite' to each other. *Society is nothing but living, concrete individuals, and the individual can live only as a social human being.* [original emphasis]

What is distinctive in Fromm's psychoanalytic approach is that he understands the person as always related to others. Funk (2015) argues that this primary sociality should not only be understood in the sense of interactive sociality but as a social relatedness that precedes all other perceptions of relatedness, one that can be explained by the concept of social character.

Social character theory (Fromm 1941, 1947) was an attempt to bridge a missing link in Marxist thought. How are shared ideologies that reflect economic modes of production created and reproduced? Operating as a reciprocal mediator between the economic superstructure and the narcissistic needs of the

individual, social character encourages ideological incorporation by playing a key role in the maintenance of an unjust society and its economic foundations (Fromm, 1962). Fromm (1947, 68) pointed out that the family and social institutions act as “psychic agents of society,” which inculcate shared social values and beliefs beginning early in childhood. Shared values and beliefs become internalized as emotionally based character traits that operate automatically, so that people will “want to do what they have to do” in order to adapt to society (Fromm and Maccoby 1970, 18). Once created, social character functions as a social glue that helps group members identify with each other and bond together. This alignment requires that socialisation misguides people into actively accepting the legitimacy of the desires and pursuits prescribed for them by

[shaping] the energies of the members of society in such a way that their behaviour is not a matter of conscious decision as to whether or not to follow the social pattern, but one of *wanting to act as they have to act* and at the same time finding gratification in acting according to the requirements of the culture. (Fromm 1955, 77; original emphasis)

Fromm’s development of the concept of social character therefore involved a significant theoretical move. With this concept he explained how society and the individual were mutually determined, producing and reproducing each other. Social character emerges from a process that channels human desires and drives into patterned dispositions which are adjusted to existing social and economic conditions. The formation of social character thus reflects how social class structures and divides society, shaping early socialisation experiences within different family groupings.

6. Norbert Elias’s Conceptual Breakthrough

Elias’s conceptual breakthrough is first evident in the development of innovative relational concepts in the *Society of Individuals*, Part 1, 1939. Elias’s vision was a challenge to Freud, yet its aim was not to place society or groups as alternatives to the human individual, but to study individuality more deeply. Elias indicates how individuality is a process embedded in society with a specific history and therefore every young child in society is “thoroughly individualized and socialized at the same time” (quoted in Brown 1997). He developed, integrated and synthesised concepts in a highly original fashion, using a network language of interweaving, intermeshing relationships:

But what we have here characterised as ‘interweaving’ to denote the whole relationship of individual and society can never be understood as long as ‘society’ is imagined, as is so often the case, essentially as a society of ‘finished’ individuals who were never children and never die. One can only gain a clear understanding of the relation of individual and society if one includes in it the perpetual maturation of individuals within a society, if one includes the process of individualisation in the theory of society. The historicity of each indi-

vidual, the phenomenon of growing up to adulthood, is the key to understanding what 'society' is. The sociality integral to human beings only becomes apparent if one is aware what relations to other people mean for the small child. (Elias 2010, 28-9)

According to Kilminster (2007) Norbert Elias is at once less "economistic" than Marx and more sociological than Freud. He argues that Elias profoundly sociologises Freud by providing a multi-levelled model of the embodied human personality that derives its specific character from the complex self-steering activities of people. The modern personality is one in which ego and super-ego functions have become increasingly differentiated from drives; that is, less accessible to them – something that is the result of a long social and historical process that is reinforced through high thresholds of shame, embarrassment and repugnance in relation to dealing with natural functions and with bodily violence, meat preparation and eating. This capacity for developing forms of self-restraint is central to Elias's argument in *On the Process of Civilisation* (2012): the increasing social constraint towards self-constraint is related to more demanding standards of self-control. Social pressures lead to more self-control, with the behaviour of individual people being regulated "in an increasingly differentiated, more even and more stable manner" (Elias 2012, 406).

An integral aspect of this civilizing process is that young children should eventually grow up through their own self-regulation. Elias mentions a unique human capacity "for controlling and modifying drives and affects in a great variety of ways as part of a learning process" (Elias 2007, 125). He argues that though there is a great deal of psychological and physiological literature on learning there is very little on the structuring of the habitus through learning (Elias 2008, 93). What remains unexplored is the establishment of controlling impulses which interpose themselves between the recurrent upsurge of drives from lower biological levels and skeletal apparatus towards which they are directed. For small children, feeling and acting, moving one's skeletal muscles, one's arms and legs and one's whole body are not yet divorced: it only later appears in adults as a "feeling state" (usually referred to as emotions) when they gradually learn to do what small children are never able to do, not to move their muscles, not to act in accordance with their emotional impulses. But this process is largely forgotten as adults, where a high level of civilizing restraint forms part of their social habitus. This restraint appears to grown-ups as "automatic," a part of their "second nature" which is treated as something with which they were born.

Elias (2011) argued that the capacity of young human beings to steer their conduct by means of learned knowledge gave them a great evolutionary advantage over other species that were unable to accomplish this at all or only to a very limited extent. He refers to this process as humankind's "symbol emancipation." In the evolutionary process, the biological propensity for learning is one of the main differences between animal and human societies, providing a

framework for social development to take place without any biological changes. In the development of language, for example, a young child develops into a human being and is integrated into a particular society by learning to produce words and sentences which are understood by others. For Elias (2009a, 147), there are “natural human structures which remain dispositions and cannot fully function unless they are stimulated by a person’s ‘love and learning’ relationship with other persons.” This important relational concept of love and learning aptly summarises a great deal of previous psychological research on young children’s development, bringing together specialised areas within psychology (particularly the separation between cognitive, social and developmental psychology).

To highlight the strong, affective ties that link people with one another, Elias also used the notion of *valency* to refer to the relational way in which people are directed toward other people: some are already firmly connected with certain people, while others are free and open, and search for people with whom to form bonds. He argued that the concept of valencies is more suitable than the term libido because it draws attention to the group character of emotional bonds. Elias therefore emphasises the importance of personal interdependencies and emotional bonds which binds society together: human beings are social beings embedded in figurations which are interdependent webs and networks that are always moving, changing and developing.

Important points of connection can be made between Elias’s concept of “love and learning relationships” and the relational turn in developmental psychology. The work of Colwyn Trevarthen (2005) is a good starting point for developing this relational approach to young children’s development because he synthesizes a great deal of recent neurological, biological and psychological research to highlight the unique biological equipment of human beings that prepares babies, infants and young children to enjoy and share companionship with others. Trevarthen (2005, 60-1) emphasizes how the “human body and brain” are adapted for communication: momentary shifts of gaze and “gazing reverie” are made possible by the distinctive white sclera of human eyes and the versatility of human vocalization achieved by the “uniquely adapted human respiratory system.” Moving selves regulate contact with one another by “felt immediacy” (Braten 2009) with emotions that direct an awareness of one another with different degrees of intimacy. The development of a young child’s emotional health and future well-being in society depends on these unique human gifts for interpersonal life and sympathetic emotions (Trevarthen 2011).

Stern (1985, 6) also begins in the pre-verbal realm, suggesting that “several senses of the self do exist long prior to self-awareness and language.” Pre-verbal awareness is linked by Stern to direct experience, which takes place not in the subject or the object, but in the relation itself. During very early development, the infant is endowed with an innate capacity of subject-subject engagements, in a game of bi-directional communication that enables the infant to

possess direct “alter-centred participation.” He treats the relation as the node of creative interpersonal potential, shifting away from an individualistic self-self model of interaction, toward a radically empirical notion of immanent relationality. According to Stern, events in early infancy lead to the creation of modes of organisation which do not pre-exist experience – they are immanent and part of the field of relations. He questions

the entire notion of phases of development devoted to specific clinical issues such as orality, attachment, autonomy, independence, and trust. [...] The quantum shifts in the social ‘presence’ and ‘feel’ of the infant can [...] no longer be attributed to the departure from one specific developmental task-phase and the entrance into the next. (Stern 1985, 10)

This new perspective in developmental psychology represents a breaking point with the Freudian and Piagetian legacy anchored to egocentric assumptions (Ferrari and Gallese 2007). Stern (1985) moves beyond the limiting concept of the sensory-motor schema by developing the idea of “vitality affects,” which are characterised by personal feelings as well as dynamics of movements – they are usually understood as the pre-verbal force of what will become emotions. He was well aware of the complexity of the concept of vitality affects, so he defined its meaning as “elusive qualities [which] are better captured by dynamic, kinetic terms” (Stern 1985, 54). While humans are accustomed to experiencing discrete affects, from joy to distress and disgust to wonder, they appear very early in life when infants begin to experience pleasure and displeasure that is connected to somatic states. What is typical of vitality affects is the close connection with the vital processes of the body, such as breathing, sleeping and the rising and declining of emotions. Infants, in their early stages of development, begin to recognise and give meanings to all these processes.

McCarthy and Prokhorovnik (2014) have also explored the relational aspects of embodiment that encompass actively enfolded beings, incorporating the felt and sensory qualities of experience and its everyday practices. They view Blackman and Venn’s (2010, 14) idea that “bodies should be defined by their capacities to affect and be affected” as a radical form of relationality, drawing attention to “entanglements” of relationality which subvert ideas of relationships as an “interaction effect between pre-existing entities” (Blackman and Venn 2010, 10). This embodied relationality allows us to consider a close, enfolded, relationship as generating an “us” that helps to shape the “me” and “you,” constructed through diverse cultural and personal resources. While “you” and “I” potentially have multiple identities, “us” is a field of emotional intensity between “me” and “you,” expressed in an embodied orientation which includes but is not reducible to an affective attunement.

7. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that we should see Bourdieu and Fromm's sociological attempts to grapple with and overcome some of the underlying assumptions that lie behind the Freudian model of society as bold but largely unsuccessful. When ideas of "emotional energies," "libidinal drives," and "socialized drive" are introduced from psychoanalysis into Bourdieu's theoretical framework, an impasse emerges – instead of further developing the underpinnings of his theory to include emotional dimensions and gain better insights into what it is that drives different figurations of socialized desire, we end up with a limited analysis of how affects boost and impede the optimization of capital (More 2013). His concept about the socialisation of subjective drives is insufficiently developed: even when drawing on a psychoanalytic vocabulary Bourdieu continues to portray socialization in terms of processes that are "based in training and conditioning – metaphors inescapably linked to behaviourism" (Widick 2003, 687). I have also suggested that there remains a conceptual impasse in recent Bourdieusian scholarship over the meaning of "habitus" and the best way forward to fully develop and integrate the "psycho-social" aspects of his theory.

In direct contrast, Fromm's development of the concept of social character involved a significant theoretical step in integrating the insights of psychoanalysis into a sociological perspective. With this concept he explained how society and the individual were mutually determined, producing and reproducing each other. The formation of social character reflects how social class relations structure and divide society. But greatly influenced by Marx, Fromm over-emphasised the economic determinants of character structure, especially social class. He proposed that the content of a group's or a person's social character is largely determined by the economic structure of a society because specific familial relations of socialisation are strongly influenced by social class. More specifically, Fromm saw social character as the result of the dominant patterns of socialisation within a social class or group as these are formed by history and the economic conditions of society.

I have argued that because Elias is less tied to integrating economic categories based on Marx and more adept at developing the sociological implications of Freud, he is a more consistent, relational sociologist than Bourdieu and Fromm. In the *Society of Individuals* and *On The Civilising Process* Elias carried out one of the earliest interdisciplinary studies of the 20th century, trying to overcome the old paradigm which studied the individual (psychology) and the social (sociology) separately, divorced from the generational and historically specific conditions in which they evolved. He uses highly nuanced concepts that can more fully explain the development of socio-psychological processes in society, emphasising the strong, affective ties that link people with one another across generations in different societies. To illustrate my argument I drew

attention to the great potential of Elias's concept of "love and learning relationships" for explaining the social development of young children. The relation between love and learning was used as a sensitising concept to focus on the way in which young children's development is both a cognitive and affective process, one that enables us to integrate the findings from other disciplines apart from sociology, especially in developmental psychology. It also provides a much needed tool to develop "a theoretical scheme for the formulation and study of problems concerning the individual and group level of human beings" (Elias 2009b, 172).

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