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Dewey's Broad Account of Habit and its Relevance for Change Management: A Conceptual Clarification with Pragmatic Illustrations

ABSTRACT

The narrow view of habits predominant within behavioral approaches to change management conceptualizes them as passive transition points between stimuli and responses. John Dewey's broad view of habit, by contrast, conceptualizes habits as the very basis for how individuals interact with their environments, one another, *and* themselves. We highlight the renewed relevance of Dewey's conceptualization of habit by clarifying it as 1) a *function* between individuals and environments; 2) a *custom* produced within social settings; 3) a *process* intertwined with inquiries and impulses. We illustrate each of these characteristics through the example of a French factory, within which we claim that the narrow view prevails, and a Danish IT company, within which we claim the presence of a broader view. We proceed to discuss consequences of the broad view to change management research. In particular, we focus on how it can contribute to understanding the relationship between individual dispositions towards change and the organizational change context that inform such dispositions. In our conclusion, we shortly touch upon the limitations of our paper and what future research might engage with. We close with a summary table, the acknowledgment of study limitations and proposals for further research.

Keywords

Habit, Change Management, Behaviorism; Pragmatism, John Dewey.

MAD Statement

This paper Make a Difference (MAD) by pointing to the relevance of looking at habit in understanding the microdynamics of change. Rather than understanding habit in a narrow sense as automatic behavior triggers by environmental clues, the paper presents a broad conceptions of habit that understands habit as a social and materially disposition that both make change recipients resist and receptive towards change. This conception of habit is based on the work of the pragmatist philosophy and psychology of John Dewey, applied to two empirical cases and discussed in light of change management literature

Introduction

While change is essential to organizational survival (e.g. Kanter 2008, Burns 2014), it seems, organizational change initiatives fail (Beer & Nohria 2000, Burnes 2011, 2014). Although the reported failure rate of 70 percent have been challenged (Hughes 2011, By 2020), change management literature and practitioners are in general agreement that too many change initiatives fail. Shortcomings in the planning process or the leadership personnel explain some of these failings but employee readiness to change is referred to as the main culprit (see Burnes 2014 and Vakola 2013 for an overview; see also Kotter 2012). While the importance of employee's own willingness to change has scarcely been neglected by change management scholars (e.g., Bartunek et al., 2006), there remains much that we do not know about the dynamics of receptivity and resistance to change, both individually and collectively (Burnes 2014, Vakola 2013, Oreg et al 2013). In this paper, we demonstrate how the work of John Dewey can inform conceptual and empirical reorientations towards the pragmatics of change management.

Research on employee's receptivity to change has traditionally emphasized *either* the role played by affective, cognitive and behavioral variables, on the one hand, *or* the role played by situational variables, on the other (see Oreg et al 2011). Recent work has moved beyond this structure/agency dualism, instead treating receptivity to change as a "malleable trait...based on certain dispositional characteristics...shaped and influenced by specific organizational and change context." (Vakola, 2013 p. 106). This recognition that it is *both* many wills *and* a shared environment that effects the receptivity to change represents an important advance. The precise manner of their interaction remains unclear, however, and it is our main contention, developed throughout, that the work of John Dewey provides a way of thinking beyond the false dichotomy between individual/psychological agents and collective/organizational structures.

The specificity of Dewey's contribution resides in his prioritization of habit. It is through our habits, Dewey demonstrates, that we become both resistant to and ready for change (see also Duhigg 2012, Neal et al, 2006). While Dewey's account of habit differs from behavioral psychology by preserving both the will and the work of personal subjectivity, it also differs from the proposals made by Vakola (2003) through its prioritization of the foundations of change and not the many levels at which it occurs. Our primary contribution consists in demonstrating how Dewey's broad conceptualization of habit applies to contemporary organizational analysis. Our secondary contribution consists in advancing recent pragmatist analyses of the relationship between individuals and organizations (Cohen 2007, Turner and Cacciatori 2016; Simpson, 2018). Dewey was not a theorist of organizational change but his work 'can be brought to bear on specific organizational problems and phenomena' (Farjou et al 2015, p. 1789). This paper provides cases in point.

We begin by distinguishing between 'narrow' and 'broad' accounts of habit. The 'narrow' account predominates within organizational change management, treating habit as a 'behavior that is frequently repeated, has acquired a high degree of automaticity, and is cued in stable contexts' (Orbell and Verplanken, 2010, p. 374). This 'narrow' conceptualization treats habits as idiosyncratic, automatic and reactive modes of behavioral resistances to change. Explanations of failed change processes undertaken with recourse to this 'narrow' conceptualization of habit neglect the role played by individual subjects. A 'broad' conceptualization of habits, by contrast, treats subjects as both individual and collective, as both automatic and open-ended, and as both reactive and responsive (Sparrow and Hutchinson, 2013). We locate such an account of habit within the work of John Dewey. We then discuss three dimensions of habit that Dewey identified along exegetical lines, namely that:

- 1) Habit is a function between individuals and environments
- 2) Habit is socially produced
- 3) Habit is intertwined with inquiries and impulses.

We discuss each of these dimensions in the light of two discrete change management examples. The breakdown of an assembly line recently discussed by Simpson and Lorino (2018) allows us to illustrate pragmatic problems in denigrating habits to the narrow view. The implementation of a time management routine that we recently studied, by contrast, allows us to illustrate the pragmatic benefits of elevating habits to the broad view. We conclude by acknowledging limitations of our argument and by proposing avenues for further research.

Two Concepts of Habit

[H]abits are commonly sensed as barriers to change...

the inner defense against change.

(Busse and Doganer 2018, p. 335).

Habit has occupied a central position across a variety of disciplines and the accounts given of it have tended to be either 'narrow' or 'broad' (e.g. Camic, 1986; 2015; Barandiaran and Di Paolo, 2014; Carlisle, 2014; Sparrow and Hutchison 2013). We propose to both clarify and defend Dewey's broad

view against the narrow view predominant within behavioral analyses of organizational phenomena and processes.

The Narrow Concept of Habit

The ‘narrow’ account of habit finds philosophical predication within the work of Descartes, Kant, and Kierkegaard (see Carlisle 2014) who each found in it a stale, lifeless imitation of intelligent action. Behavioral psychology later ‘claimed the realm of habit as its core topic of investigations’ (Camic, 2016, p. 478; see also Lorino 2018; Pedersen & Dunne 2020). Organizational behaviorism similarly reduced habit to a phenomenon that manifests within observable stimulus: response chains, a matter of ‘fairly simple and automatic actions’ (Turner and Cacciatori, 2016, p. 76; see also Knudsen, 2009; and Parmigiani and Howard-Grenville, 2011). Feldman and Pentland’s seminal account puts the matter even more directly. For them, habits ‘require no thought: they are automatic’ (2003: 95; see also Feldman et al 2016). Behaviorally informed theorists and analysts treat habits as a series of learned responses ‘activated automatically by the context cues that co-occurred’ (Neal et al., 2006, p. 198; see also van’t Riet et al, 2011). The behavioral tendency to conceptualize habit in a ‘narrow’ sense delimits it to a series of automatic, mindless, repetitive and fixed responses to distinct stimuli.

The narrow account also features within practitioner accounts of change management. The very automatic, mindless, repetitive and fixed responses to stimuli recognized by organizational theorists and analysts alike, we repeatedly read it claimed, are barriers to change. Mirvis (1996), for example, suggested that the spurring of creative action requires employees to ‘collectively unlearn old habits’.

Heifetz and Linsky likewise warned that employees ‘will naturally, even unconsciously, defend their habits and ways of thinking’ (2002, p. 67). Garvin and Roberto similarly suggested that the ‘toughest challenge’ for any change management project is ‘the habitual patterns of negative behavior by individuals and groups that are triggered automatically and unconsciously by familiar circumstances or stimuli’ (2005, p. 21). We repeatedly encounter the belief that the alteration of ‘people’s attitudes or behaviour’ is ‘tantamount to trying to break a well-established custom or social habit of people’ (Burnes & Bargal, 2017, p. 94). The habit of conceptualizing habits as mere barriers to change is one that Dewey helps us overcome.

The Broad Concept of Habit

The ‘broad’ conceptualization of habit that we will associate with Dewey, by contrast, deems habit as both the explanatory basis for resistance to change and the very means through which any change initiative – individual or collective – succeeds or fails. To imagine change, according to this ‘broad’ conceptualization, is not to think about changing passive habits with something active (e.g. a good plan, a great leader, strong incentives, seamless technology, etc.). To imagine change, according to this ‘broad’ conceptualization, is rather to initiate change *through* habits, to understand the process of changing habits as a process undertaken with habits. Philosophical predication resides in Aristotle, Hegel and Merleau-Ponty. Within such work, human beings are creatures of habit not because they can be observed performing steady routines but because they enact and transform themselves within and throughout their habituated performances of themselves (see Carlisle, 2014; Sparrow and Hutchison, 2013; Kolb et al, 2003; Barandiaran and Di Paolo, 2014).

This 'broad' conceptualization of habit is in the minority throughout organizational scholarship but those working with resources from the pragmatist tradition, in general, and with the resources provided by John Dewey, in particular, have provided instructive precedents. Cohen (2007) pointed to Dewey's work on habit as essential for understanding organizational routines as bearers of both change and stability, Elkjaer and Simpson (2011) has discussed the relevance of a pragmatist notion of habit as a medium for organizational learning, Winter (2012) has turned to Dewey to discuss the micro-foundations of organizational routines, Turner and Cacciatori (2016) has used Dewey's work on habit to develop an typology of habits and their relevance for understanding organizational capabilities and routines, while Lorino and Simpson (2016) has pointed to Dewey's conception in habit for understanding how organizational routines breakdown and get's reconstituted, and Pedersen (2018) has pointed to the relevance of Dewey's habit for understanding employee resilience as a temporal and relational phenomenon.

In this broad view of habit that Dewey represent habit is considered an 'acquired dispositions (or propensities) to respond in certain ways in certain circumstances' that 'may or may not become manifest in observable behavior' (Faujon et al., 2015, p. 1791). Habit, in this 'broad' conceptualization, is pre-cognitive though not reducible to the stimulus and response chains normalized by the 'narrow' conceptualization. Habits here are not mere 'automatic reflexes', nor are they to be 'seen as a purely 'mechanical, recurrent and predictable pattern of behavior' (Simpson, 2018: 60). Habit, instead are ways we makes us familiar with our environment, navigates in it and anticipates it's fluctuations. Habit here is not so much what stifle thinking and actions as they lay out the paths through which it can move. Habit, as Dewey writes, 'filters all the material that reaches our perception and thought'. This filter, he continues, is not 'chemically pure' but a 'reagent which adds

new qualities and rearranges what is received' (1922, p 33). Habit, as Lorino (2018) puts it mediate our actions and thoughts. They give meaning, continuity and leverage to new actions and thoughts.

In this broad take on habit that Dewey also represent habit is much more than the narrow automatic mindless repetition of behavior. This means that habits in both theoretical and practical terms are best understood not as rote behavior but rather as acquired dispositions to modes of responses to varied situations (Dewey, 1922). Human beings are always in situations where they are responding through either former habits or by developing new habits on the basis of former habits. For Dewey any 'situated activity' (Lorino 2018: 75) 'does not start from scratch, but from normal or abnormal uses' of current habits. And such habits are 'both formed and exercised in situations that are always already social' (Simpson 2018: 8) our habits are also already informed not only by our former choices but also the social environments in which we find ourselves.

The Three Elements of Dewey's Broad Concept of Habit

This section elaborates upon three distinctive elements of Dewey's account of habit. In each case, we bring Dewey's own insights to bear upon two separate empirical examples of organizational change processes. We then connect our discussion of the pragmatic relevance of Dewey's account of habit to organizational change management scholarship. We conclude by summarizing our reasons and evidence for supporting Dewey's broad account of habit both as such and in the context of organizational change management.

Element One: Habits are Functions

For Dewey, habits are not mechanistic phenomena occurring within a discrete self. The habituated and habituating self itself rather bobs upon and within the sea of a material and social environment. It is through our habits, Dewey thinks, that we each modulate our own calibrations within and dispositions towards each of our worlds. Dewey writes of the reciprocally functional relationship between habit and its environment, in that, the inner and outer selves are co-constitutive: ‘breathing is an affair of the air as truly as of the lungs’ and ‘walking implicates the ground as well as the legs’ (Dewey, 1922: 15). Just as one cannot understand human breathing and walking through organic measures alone, so too, individual habits cannot be divorced from their environments.

Our habits provide ways ‘of using and incorporating the environment in which the latter has its say as surely as the former’ (Dewey, 1922: 15). Our habits are not mere ‘marbles in in jar’: they are rather the very dispositions through which ‘humans functionally inhabit our world’ (Garrison, 2002: 125). The environment moves through individuals via habits and individuals move through their environment via habits. To use one of Dewey’s own examples: It is not enough to tell somebody with a bad posture to stand up straight. Will and inclination need to be accommodated by social and material conditions. Moreover, such readjustments of conditions involve a ‘selecting and weighting of the objects which engage attention and which influence the fulfillment of desires’ (Dewey, 1922: 20). We will now apply this insight to two separate organizational contexts and illustrate it accordingly.

Process Management Breakdown

Simpson and Lorino (2016) illustrate the functionality of habit through their analysis of a fully automated manufacturing system. In a French Factory, a large change process was initiated for the sake of automating production. During the interim period a ‘few manually operated workstations’ (Simpson and Lorino, 2016, p. 57) were manned by human operators with Total Quality Management training. One day, the whole system broke down and, after a long process of inquiry, it turned out that one of the human operators had noticed a broken and twisted plastic tray in the assembly line and so replaced it with another. Within the context of the new system, however, this seemingly sensible action was to prove detrimental. The newly automated process could not register the rogue tray and so it shut it down. Engineers subsequently initiated another longer process of inquiry. Their old habits did not enable them to recognize the new problem. For the operator, trained and experienced in the habits of Total Quality Management to respond to production problems on sight, the tray was a physical object that had to be replaced. For the engineers, it was ‘an informational object that conveys vital systems information in the form of a bar-code’ (Simpson and Lorino, 2016, p. 58). The question asked by a pragmatist does not concern which group of professionals were ‘right’. The pragmatic question rather always concerns which mode of action is most in keeping with the specificity of the problem, in this case the problem of systems failure.

The manual replacement of the plastic tray is one habit within a broader environment of dynamic habituation. The human operator at the factory encountered an unfamiliar environment and responded to it in the way his habits had always led him. Rather than pressing the emergency bottom and solving the problem indirectly, he intervened directly: therein the reasons for the breakdown lie. (Simpson and Lorino, 2016). His habits formed a ‘special sensitiveness or accessibility to certain classes of stimuli’ (Dewey, 1922, p. 42) that filtered what was familiar in the situation (assembly line, broken physical tray), thus letting his body and mind respond to the situation (replace the tray). While the

environment thus was unfamiliar in certain ways (robots as colleagues) the objects which in Dewey's words (1922, p. 20) engaged his 'attention' (broken tray) and fulfilled his 'desires' (ensuring the flow of production) was informed by his disposition to modes of responses. Both habits and the possibility of changing them are in functional relationship to problems presented within specific environments.

Time Management Engineering

Since 2017 we have been conducting fieldwork at 'Blue', a case study digital marketing organization that, in 2015, initiated a strategic move towards a four-day week. From February 2017, after a series of change management initiatives, Fridays became a day off for all staff, without any negative remuneration repercussions. What we are interested here is the importance of how the change managers – and more so the change managed – conceptualized their habits insofar as these bore upon the change management process itself. The so-called 'Pomodoro' technique was an indispensable feature of the success of the 'Blue' change management process. An efficiency principle originally developed by Francesco Cirillo in the 1980s (Cirillo, 2018), Pomodoro time involves working for 25 minutes on a task, then taking a 5 minute break, then repeating. During the 25-minute period, individuals should block out all potential distractions - phones, emails and social media in particular – and put on noise-cancelling headphones. A generally available digital interface ensures everyone is observing these norms and a red light beside the screen of each individual signals that a session is in play (i.e. no disruptions). For everybody, the norm of 25 minutes per task became a mode of environmental, other and self- orientation.

Blue's executives could not just assume that individuals, through force of will, reason, and/or incentive, would naturally set to their newly assigned asks. They intervened neither at the level of the individual nor the environment but rather at the point at which these interacted. They did this by normalizing a digital dashboard (available for all to see), an automated system (a light on the top of their workstation when from green to red when they started a Pomodoro) *and* a self-normalizing procedure (putting on headphones, pressing the start button, looking at one work-task at the time). The Pomodoro process standardizes the working week and the sense of whether and to what extent interruptions are justified.

As Dewey might have suggested, Blue did not so much announce a new series of work processes as enact material conditions within which individuals self-habituated. Interruptions became normalized away. The headphones, the red light and the physical environment of the open office were all props through which an ever-emergent moral economy concerning interruptions was both envisaged and enacted within and between individuals. The juxtaposition of these two examples illustrates the pragmatic importance of a narrow conceptualization of habit's causality, on the one hand, and a broad conceptualization of habit's functionality, on the other hand.

The Pragmatic Relevance of Habit as a Function

Dewey agrees that individual and psychological phenomena are crucial for understanding the micro-dynamics of change. However, Dewey encourages us to consider the relationship between individuals and their environment, rather than prioritizing the relationships within the individual. Habitual responses to the pomodoro process were themselves mediated by the already embodied habits of the individual employees at Blue. Dewey thus anticipates the claim made by Vakolas (2013, p 106) that any individual's readiness for change in organizational settings is a 'malleable trait... based on certain

dispositional characteristics, but is shaped and influenced by specific organizational and change context.’ Dispositions and context thus intertwine through habit. Changing habit is changing this relationship. The insight Dewey gives to understanding the micro-dynamics of change is thus how habit mediates the relationship between individuals and their environment. Changing such dispositions Dewey would add is not working directly on the minds of the individuals because as habit are function between the individual and the environment ‘we cannot change habit directly, that notion is magic. But we can change it indirectly by modifying conditions’ (Dewey, 1922, p. 18). What Blue did with their pomodoros testifies to this claim. To redesign environments is to enact and enable habits. For Dewey there are two steps in the success of such a reworking (1916). First, as habit are individuals prime mode of response to changes reworking the conditions in the environment that trigger such responses are key. As Dewey put it:

“No amount of preaching good will or the golden rule of cultivation of sentiments of love and equity will accomplish the results. There must be a change in objective arrangement and institutions. We must work on the environment and not merely the hearts of men’ (1922 p. 13)

What feeds habits must be changed first. Secondly, for this reworking to success the change recipient also need to understand the importance of the new social conduct and identify with it. Which means readapting and customizing the new habit in light of their old habit to make sense of it. Both steps seem to have succeed in Blue. They both redesign of the environment to ensure that interruptions became more difficult, and created a new pomodoro habit that was not only easy to start doing but that the employees understood and identified with as important for achieving the 4 day work week. At the factory these steps seem to fail. The human operator perhaps didn’t identify with the new work process nor did they new automated work process indicate that he should not have used his TQM

habit in the broken tray situation. So the change process failed not because of direct obstruction or resistance but because his habits was still geared towards TQM responses.

Element Two: Habits are Customs

Individual habits are formed within *and* between environments, ‘natural, and social’ according to Dewey (1922, p. 9). Dewey’s term for the calcification of any materialization of one’s self(s), into a greater conglomeration of individuals, through the very means of one’s own habit(s), is ‘custom’. Customs, as Dewey’s ‘broad’ conceptualization of habit has it, are all those observably shared habits that demark one groups’ modes of transactions with its environment, from those of any other group. To act in accordance with a custom is to have adapted one’s own ‘current habits’ insofar as they are held commensurate with the passing etiquette (Dewey, 1922, p. 64). Customs, Dewey thinks, become reinforced, adopted, undermined and/or ignored through countless processes of individual de and re habituation.

Process Management Breakdown

The worker that introduced the rouge plastic tray considered the tray a physical object that was broken and could create problems for the operators downstream of the conveyor belt. His response was part of a habit he was trained in build from the customs of the TQM tradition. However, this collided with the customs of engineers, as they understood the rouge tray as an informational object. Not only does this example underline the need to bring old individual habits into line with organizational prerogatives, it also illustrates how old individual habits are not so much particular to individuals as normalized between groups. Just as the habits inculcated by TQM experience, by engineering training

and experience and by managerial prerogative are not necessarily incompatible, they should not be assumed automatically harmonious either.

Time Management Engineering

The Pomodoro work process presented itself to Blue's employees as a series of adoptable and adaptable customs. Before Pomodoros, a request for interruption ('got a second?') would have disrupted the workflow. Now, if one seeks to interrupt a colleague, it is the responsibility of would-be interrupters to orient themselves towards the dashboard. The new custom did not eliminate interruptions. However, it did create the custom of reflecting upon the custom of interruption. Repeatedly, we heard of the abstract imperatives of Pomodoro Time, on the one hand, and the specific demands made by concrete situations, on the other. This is precisely what Dewey (1922, p. 170) was alluding to when he wrote of cracks in 'the crust of the cake of custom'. Habituated agents recognize that behavioral axioms can never quite guide all action. Problems do not present themselves as issues already solved.

The gradual achievement and subsequent maintenance of the 4 Day Working Week produced an ever-evolving sense of both the individual and collective habits underpinning Pomodoro. While newcomers struggled to correctly read the implicit cues, it was through their continued interaction with the customs that they learned to discern whether and how to interrupt others, as well as whether and how to allow others to interrupt them. The digital dashboard rendered ever-emergent customs both visible to others and personal to each. It rendered implicit customs explicit and in so doing

converted them from features of interaction into problems of interaction requiring ongoing negotiation.

The Pragmatic Relevance of Habit as a Custom

Fajoun et al (2015) outline three consequences of Dewey's account of the relationship between habits and customs that are important insofar as organizational change management is concerned. Firstly, we should recognize that customs can never 'cover all cases they are meant to govern' (Farjoun et al, 2015, p. 1793). Collective change initiatives, that is to say, should not be guided by the norms provided by abstract wisdom and/or deductive science. They should instead be governed by the norms of practical wisdom and/or craft. The suspicion – the realization, indeed – that the change process is not quite working must give rise to reorientation in the light of the unanticipated, or else it will fail. Secondly, we should recognize that both habits and customs necessarily and sufficiently condition any understanding and realization of change. Finally, configurations of customs and habits are never static but are always and forever combined and recombined within and between individuals. This means that customs and habits can adjust to one another as well as collide.

This understanding of individual habits and social customs relates well to Burns' recent (2014) re-reading with Coch and French seminal work on resistance to change. This connects nicely with for instance Burns (2014) recent suggestion that resistance to change should not necessarily be understood at the level of the individual alone. By rereading Coch and French seminal work on resistance to change Burns (2014) argues that resistance and readiness towards changing behavior demands focusing on two aspects in particular. First understanding that resistance and readiness did not arise from the individual alone but from the contexts within which the change took place.

Secondly, that to ensure change imposing it was not the way forward participative decision-making was. Both insights has clear connections to Dewey notion of habits. For Dewey habits are functional transactions between the individual and the social and material environment. Changes for Dewey like for Coch and French demands changing the aspects in the environment that afford certain kind of behavior. Something that is also clear in the way the pomodoros emerged in Blue. Secondly, this change is, as Dewey would also affirm best achieve by taking into account the particular habits in the group supposed to change. Taking into account, their various network of habits and customs. Something we saw in Blue but not in the Factory. In a Deweyan take on organizational change, the predispositions to change are habits that are situated in social customs.

Element Three: Habits are Processes Intertwining Inquiries and Impulses

Crucially, for Dewey, habit is not the opposite of cognition and emotion. It is always to be understood as in dynamic relationship with each. Our habits are not only ‘deeply intertwined with cognition and emotion, but they have a primary role as basic building blocks for all our actions’ as Cohen (2007, p. 775) explains. A key problem in any change agenda is how to change the daily behaviour of employees. How does one motivate behavioural changes and, perhaps more importantly, make such changes stick. Thus, according to Dewey, questions of individual and social change do not solely depend on rational argument or, say, rational instructions on particular desirable imperatives, such as a new vision, a different strategy or a burning platform for that matter. Dewey would probably argue that employees could only understand such instructions in the abstract, their having no idea how to respond to the new challenges changes bring unless they can see how they relate to their daily work. In his view rational intent alone cannot move daily behaviour (1922, p. 67) because ‘thought which

does not exist within ordinary habits lacks means of execution'. In other words, no matter how good or important, the ideas for change formulated in strategy papers and at executive meetings remain nothing but ideas unless one also works with change at the habit level.

Just as rational intent can spur change but not materialize it without habit emotions and impulse might be what ignite change but not what grounds it. While impulse as Dewey envisions it might serve to shake up our habits or create what Lewin (1947, p. 31) once called an 'emotional stir-up', it is habit 'which converts a blind physical discharge into a significant anger' (Dewey, 1922, p. 65). Habit is what stabilizes and directs our emotional outbursts, and for Dewey habits 'stimulate, inhibit, weaken, select, concentrate and organize the later [IMPULSE] into their own likeness. They create out of the formless void of impulse a world made in their own image' (Dewey, 1922, p. 85). So, although affects can surely create the emotional stir-up that 'unfreezes' as Lewin says, only by working through our habits can we ensure that the stir-up manifests itself as something other than 'irritation and confused hesitation' (Dewey, 1922, p. 180). Thus, like rational intent 'impulse is a source, an indispensable source of liberation', but as Dewey insists that this is so 'only as it is employed in giving habit pertinence and freshness does it liberate' (1922, p. 75). Change, for Dewey, can only transpire through the expansion and contraction of already established habits.

Habit organize thoughts and impulses but impulses and thoughts also direct habits according to Dewey. When our habits become out of sync with their environment, we are often confronted with uneasiness, doubt, hesitation and feelings of inadequacy according to Dewey. Such impulses, (Dewey 1922, p. 94) create 'pivot points' through which the ongoing negotiation of change cannot but pass through. Such tension between habits and impulses on their part creates what Dewey calls a process of inquiry (Lorino, 2018). As habits are plastic in nature they can adapt to novel circumstance but

now on their own. According to Lorino (2018) we have to acknowledge that if one side to action for Dewey is habit the other side is inquiry. For Dewey

‘inquiry is the controlled and directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole’ (Dewey 1938: 108).

Indeterminate situations occur when there is tension in the habitual way of doing something. In such situations, the failure of habits creates doubt and inadequacy. The impulse of hesitation and uneasiness are through the inquiry structured from something problematic into a problem that can be responded to through action. Therefore, when habits break down an inquiry tries to reassemble the situation by reframing what the problem that it arose from was. Nevertheless, such a repair work only occurs through drawing on our repertoire of past habits as a resource. Inquiry starts this process but as Simpson (2018: 61) explains it habit ‘function both as a resource and outcome of the process’ of inquiry. It is a habit that help translate the situated actions into a ‘series of “what nexts”’ (Dewey 1922, p. 56)

Process Management Breakdown

For the operator, the replacement of the tray made sense. He was trained in Total Quality Management and had, over the years, developed the habit of amending errors immediately. We would say intuitively were it not for the fact that this sense of intuition is developed over time, habituated. The broken tray created problems for the habitual way of production and so a quick process of inquiry

suggested that what he would usually do in such a situation provided a solution. He experienced an indeterminate situation in the form of unease and proceeded to convert this ‘existential unease into a structured problem: the broken tray on the production line; the assembly line stops working’ (Simpson and Lorino, 2016, p. 60). The engineers dwelled longer in the process of inquiry. The unease they felt could not be resolved through a previous repertoire because this was all quite new to them. Even in such a simple situation, we can recognize both the practical relevance and the explanatory value of Dewey’s broad conceptualization of habit.

Time Management Engineering

Pomodoro sessions demand deep work. They enact the sorts of task that have been procrastinated over; they provide a means of delimiting difficult tasks. Nevertheless, a working process can become a dead routine if unreflectively applied to all work tasks. Too rigorously observed, the Pomodoro process isolates individuals from one another, it prioritizes concentration over communication. Therefore, individuals had to find ways around this overly literal interpretation and application of the work process. They had to find justifiable exceptions to the rules of the processes, through the enactment of the processes. In Deweyan terms, Blue’s routinization of Pomodoros provides a case study of how individuals readjust both themselves and their environments, through the means of their habits.

As the Pomodoro habit was confronted with more and more complex problems, repetition gave way to improvisation. Throughout our fieldwork, we witnessed individual employees personalizing their modes of actions, both with and without Pomodoro. Everybody, managers included, devoted

Pomodoro sessions to the tasks to which they believed them most conducive. Everybody thus formed a disposition towards their workload, mediated by the affordances of Pomodoro that was subject to change. Individual sessions, moreover, were always subject to contingency (interruptions were still always possible) and customization (duration might be either extended or contracted). Pomodoro therefore provided individuals with concrete occasions for reorganizing their habits and for intelligently adapting the organizational routine to how they believe themselves to function best.

The Pragmatic Relevance of Habits as Intelligent Processes

As Vakola (2013, p. 98) has pointed out ‘individual readiness to change is based on the interaction of enduring predispositions and situationally induced responses, which are affected by individual’s cognitive and affective processes’. What Dewey’s notion of habit brings to this insight is a way of grounding these relationships in a foundation. His broad conceptualization of habit as foundational throughout clarifies how affective, behavioural and cognitive processes are intertwined with organizational contexts. As Vakola (2013, p. 98) has pointed out ‘individual readiness to change is based on the interaction of enduring predispositions and situationally induced responses, which are affected by individual’s cognitive and affective processes’. What Dewey notion of habit brings to this is a way into understanding how such cognitive and affective processes of individuals are not only intertwined through habit, but also are inherently social though conveyed through individuals. Put otherwise Dewey’s model of habit offers foundations for understanding how affective, behavioural and cognitive processes intertwined with the organizational context. Dewey supports a embodied social view of habit that help understand how resistance and receptivity for change depend on a complex and relational understanding of how individual respond to situations of change through a

relationship between processes of inquiries, impulses and habit. When habit are disrupted affections and impulses emerged that triggers inquiries which readjust habits in turn produces the possibility of change. It is as Elkjaer and Simpson (2011) points what links inquiry to habit is habit's plastic nature (on which see Pedersen and Dunne 2020). Furthermore, the relationship between inquiry, impulse and habit are continuously adapting to one another in light of the social context there are part of. Moreover, understanding whether individuals are ready for change or resistance towards them demands understanding the particular ways this complex relationship plays out. In sum, Dewey version of the micro-dynamics of change starts from an understanding of individuals and organizations as consist of certain habits that are acquired by inquiring into social and material situations.

Discussion

Through a combination of textual exegesis and empirical examples, we have both illustrated how three distinctive aspects of Dewey's broad account of habit enable us to explain organizational change phenomena in ways that the predominant narrow account cannot. In this penultimate section, we discuss three specific contributions that Dewey's work might make to the literature, in addition to the general point that his broad conceptualization of habit warrants renewed attention.

Firstly, insofar as *the relationship between time and change* is concerned, the narrow account of habit understands change as a moment triggered by previous exogenous forces from which it follows e.g. Oreg et al (2011). Dewey, as we have seen, prioritizes not the rare trigger but the perennial process. For him, individuals are forever malleable, forever changing themselves within environments that oblige them to adapt and environments that reciprocally adapt to them. Rather than essentializing a

temporal dualism between stability and change, Dewey foregrounds a processual conceptualization of change as that which is always occurring, albeit at different rhythms and intensities. Even the ambidexterity model of organizational change is insufficiently processual (see Farjoun et al, 2015) since for Dewey, both exploration and exploitation should be understood not as discrete moments but as processes interwoven throughout organizational life. Echoes of such claims within Burn's (2017) suggestion that change management is not about sudden breaks but continuous change. For just as Dewey's work encourages us to dispense with the dualism between individuals and organization, it also encourages us to dispense with the dualism between change and stability.

In this view change is a fundamental ontological category meaning organizational change is natural rather than exceptional. Such a reversal of the ontological priority of change and stability is said to be helpful for a number of reasons, including for acquiring a better understanding of the micro-processes of change in organizations and of how change is accomplished or implemented on the ground. In fact, as Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 567) themselves suggest, if organizational change at a micro-level takes place daily, then this will involve a constant “reweaving of actors’ webs of beliefs and habits of action to accommodate new experiences obtained through interactions’. By suggesting that change is something constantly obtained through such a reweaving of individuals’ webs of habits, Tsoukas and Chia’s view seems to resonate with the Deweyan notion of habit, at least insofar as this reweaving of new experiences over time is understood as an ongoing process that depends on the alteration of existing habit. Reading Tsoukas and Chia together with Dewey seems to suggest that in the micro-processes of change, habits must be understood as bedrocks of both stability and change. Drawing on Dewey’s thinking on habit we have thus developed an argument can be considered a further step in this process understanding of organizations and change. We see the dynamics of

change as embedded in inseparable dynamics of habit, social and material environments and processes of inquiry

Secondly, insofar as *the relationship between constraints and enablers of change* is concerned, Dewey refuses to conceptualise habits as mere barriers to or constraints upon collective change programs and prerogatives. He does not oppose habits to change at all and rather describes habits as the conditions of change. It is through habits, for Dewey, that all change is forever in the process of realization, to greater and lesser extents. By reimagining how individual dispositions and organizational context interrelate through habit Dewey's ideas thus also suggest that patterns of habit doesn't necessary promote resistance to change. Rather habit can must also be viewed as flexible and receptive to change. In fact, Dewey's ideas on habit invites change agents to see habits not as enemies of explorations and new inquiries but resources that can be used as building blocks for eventualities

Having an eye for habit role in structuring employee resistance and receptivity for change can help change agents better understand the interlocked aspects of individual disposition and organizational context suggested by Vakola (2013) and Oreg et al (2011) As Fajoun et al (2015) has pointed the Dewey model of habit helps transcend the dualism between individual characteristics and organizational context by these as plastic and mutually embedded in one another, affecting one another recursively and over time. Deweyan habit are thus particular relevant for dealing with the challenge of analysing the complexity of change across multiple levels. For instance by focusing on actions as socially informed rather than the individual change recipientants as actors, Dewey model of habit offers a more holistic view that is not restricted to any specific level of analysis. It help offer foundations for Vakola's (2013) call for a multilevel theorizing about readiness and resistance to

change by introducing habit as a key concept for understanding individual and organizational interaction.

Thirdly, insofar as *the relationship between design and execution* is concerned, Dewey's account of habit enables participants in organizational change and observers of organizational change alike to appreciate why habits fall into and out of alignment with pragmatic problems. For Dewey, 'frameworks that represent change as a programmatic, step-by-step process with a clear beginning, middle and end' (Graetz & Smith, 2010, p. 150) fail both pragmatically and intellectually. They fail, that is to say, to understand the problem of organizational change just as they will fail to understand the nature of organizational change. Whereas the Taylorist prerogative endorses the separation of the thinking mind of the executive from the acting body of the worker, Dewey encourages that separation's undoing in a way reminiscent of recent work on mindfulness in organizational change management (Gärtner 2013; Gondo, Patterson, and Palacios 2013)

Dewey conception of habit can especially contribute to of how being attentive to how routine behaviours are out sync with a change initiative impacts individual readiness to change (Gondo, Patterson, and Palacios 2013). As both Gärtner and Godon, Patterson and Palacios suggest has suggested readiness for change demands identifying and being mindful to the routine behavior and habits that are hard to recognize but still inform implicit assumption about change initiatives that are hard to influence through traditional change strategies. Dewey broad notion of habit with its sense of how habit inform our patterns of thought, actions and sense of identity not only confirm Godan, Patterson and Palacios (2013) that being mindful to habitual behavior are important for readiness to change. It can help us identify and inquire into how such behaviors resist and can be receptive to change. In Dewey perspective, organizations can produce change through being mindful to relatively

gradual micro-processes on the daily level something which our example concerning Pomodoros in Blue illustrated. Dewey adds nuance to such work by understanding the recomposition of habits as ongoing, at all levels, throughout as well as within all actors. Rather than reversing the priority between particular actors, Dewey complicates our sense of the relationship between action and intention.

Conclusion

Our central aim in this paper was to clarify Dewey’s broad account of habit and to illustrate its application by means of examples. Against the ‘narrow’ conceptualization of habit that considered it as the anti-thesis of change, we have argued that John Dewey’s ‘broad’ conceptualization provides a pragmatically oriented account of the micro-processes of organizational change. Through the uses of two empirical illustrations, we explored three dimension of Dewey’s framework are particularly instructive for informing debates on the micro-dynamics of change: habits as functions, habit as customs and habits as inquisitive and instinctive processes. We also underlined three consequences of Dewey’s broad conceptualization of habit - for the practices of organizational change management researchers and practitioners alike. In this regard we claimed Dewey’s work makes important interventions in terms of how we think about time, about outcomes and about agents. Our main claims can be summarized as follows:

Narrow Account of Habit	Broad Account of Habit	Consequences for Organisational Change Management
Habits Cause Behaviours	Habits are Functions between Individuals and Environments	<u>Temporal</u>

		Organisational change does not occur in discrete increments: it occurs through an ongoing process of habituation in greater or lesser intensities
Habits are Properties of Individuals	Habits are Customs negotiated between Individuals	<u>Teleological</u>
Habits are Triggered by Environments	Habits are Inquisitive and Instinctive Negotiations	Organisational change isn't constrained by habits: it is realised and resisted through habits <u>Agential</u> Organisational change management does not produce new habits: it produces new problems for individual and collective processes of habituation

Figure One: Summary Table

Our proposals are far from unproblematic. Other than the peculiar fact of Dewey's minority status within contemporary organizational research - a fact that that we, like others, have struggled to explain - we should also recognise the obvious limitations in merely translating Dewey's work into an organizational change management register. While we have focused on three of the characteristics of Dewey's account of habit, it would be entirely disingenuous of us to claim that there is no more to his work for the present purposes than that. There are limitations to this paper's claims that need further research. First, a clear theoretical limitation to Dewey's notion of habit is translating its philosophical foundations to change management. We tried to start such a translation in this paper but Dewey's notion of habit is vast and complex and requires further readaptation and reworkings in light of change management discussions. Secondly, further empirical research need to be conducted to assess the three dimensions of habit and their dynamics of their interrelationship. For instance how does habit change over time in various tempos. And in which empirical instances can lack of taking into account habit explain the potential failure in change implementation? Thirdly, how is habit best as a complex relational concept operationalize for empirical research? As habit is not reducible to

repetition of the same behavior how does one “see” habits? Fourthly, in practice the dualism between stability and change and individuals and environment are entrenched in our language and representations making it difficult to reflect upon habit’s dynamic and relational character in everyday change situations. What is needed in the future then is overall more inquiry into how Dewey’s rich and inspirational model of habit can better inform theoretical, methodological and practical elaboration and exploration in the field of change management.

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