The Affective Basis of Sense of Position in Social Space: An Interactionist Account of Habitus Transformation in Public Speaking Practices

By

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Abstract

The idea that habitus formed through early socialization is amenable to transformation, is presented in Bourdieu's later works and is supported by a good number of empirical studies now. However, I highlight that there are identified gaps related to the conditions in which this change happens, the processes through which it happens and whether it is guided by an orientation that may affect this change. Through enactive ethnography and interviewing, I study the practices of members of a public speaking club and inquire how the social conditions at the club create a possibility for the members to experience a transformation from being shy in their practices to becoming a confident public speaker. I find that the sense of position, which otherwise remains affect-neutral in Bourdieu's account, is marked by an affective grip in the case of club members, especially my interviewees. I find this affect to be located on a continuum that ranges from shyness to confidence and driven by a categorical difference in the nature of fear that drives their practices. The genesis of habitus transformation on this continuum takes place at the point where these members begin to see the fear of failure as a fear that is limited to and directed toward an activity as against a fear that is related to the presence of other members and encompassing the failure of their whole self. I find an interactionist approach and Meadian concept of the 'Generalized Other' instructive in explaining the mechanism of this transformation.

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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

Following a Bourdieusian framework, a good number of studies now explore and support the idea of transformation in habitus. Arguing against the 'widespread criticism of latent determinism' (Reay 2004) about Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus, these studies see the possibility for habitus transformation in various contexts such as migration (Nowicka 2015; Jo 2013), occupational mobility (Friedman 2016), student mobility (Lehmann 2014; Reay, Crozier, and Clayton 2009; Li 2015) and non-totalizing institutions (Horvat and Davis 2011). Through provision of empirical data and findings, these studies support Bourdieu's (2000) claims, highlighted in his later work, about the dynamic nature of habitus and its openness to modifications under new experiences; a claim which is significant for the advancement of Bourdieu's theory of practice but for which, I argue that neither did he provide an adequate theoretical framework nor sufficient empirical support. Still, this scholarly attention on the idea of transformation in habitus is continuation of a revised presentation of the concept, whereby Bourdieu, in another attempt to refute the charges of a deterministic design, highlights that habitus is not necessarily a coherent structure and has different degrees of flexibility or rigidity (160-161). This non-harmonious conceptualization of habitus also sets further directions for explorations in theory of practice. Aarseth, Layton and Nielsen (2016) propose that Bourdieu's later work points toward 'familial socialization as a source of conflict in habitus' and opens up space for inquiring about agentic drives toward a transformational experience. Friedman (2016) also observes that the modifications in habitus that Bourdieu discussed in the revised conceptualization are more at a personal level as opposed to the 'large-scale changes in field conditions' he traced in his earlier work.

Research gaps have been identified in the studies and literature available about habitus transformation. Friedman highlights the empirical gaps related to the 'precise conditions under which the habitus is likely to be altered, adjusted and/or disrupted' (2016, 144) because transformation is not an inevitable or predestined response to entry in a new cultural or economic field (Bauder 2005). Then, not much is known about how habitus actually goes through this change (Horvat and Davis 2011) and Jo (2013) mentions that studies are lacking in terms of how transformation happens in everyday life. In fact, while transformation in a coherent or unified habitus is relatively easier to comprehend, the idea becomes more complex and problematic for a habitus that is inherently considered dynamic because it is 'continually being reformulated through incorporation of new experiences' (Horvat and Davis 2011, 144). A more nuanced understanding of the concept is required to differentiate transformation from a dynamic acquisition of dispositions under 'multiple, layered, intersecting and at times conflicting social processes' (Akram and Hogan 2015, 608).

In this study, I have taken a dialectical and relational approach to provide a sociological account of how some members of Budapest Toastmasters club have gone through a transformation in habitus through practicing public speaking at the club. The club is part of Toastmasters International, an educational organization offering training in oral communication and leadership skills. Weekly meetings are held at the club where members have the opportunity to play different roles and exercise public speaking through various activities that are designed for the development of targeted skills. Often, those who join the club have a fear of public speaking which is expected to subside as they begin to take part in the activities of the club.

I find public speaking an appropriate site for investigating the habitus transformation process for the activity is commonly referred to as a 'paralyzing matter' in the self-development books (Carnegie 1956). It is different from an everyday conversation by virtue of being highly structured, requiring more formal language and a different method of delivery but often what makes things enormously challenging for the concerned person is the stage fright (Lucas 2015). The self-help literature focuses on the anxiety or fear surrounding public speaking experiences. Be it anxiety or fear, and any differentiation between them may not be ultimately sustainable (Hunt 1999), what it may result in extreme cases is the affected speaker losing control of his physical movements (Esposito 2013) and becoming overly self-conscious, thereby losing confidence, poise and forgetting what he intended to say (Carnegie 1956). At the club, I observed that overcoming such difficulties required members to modify their habits and develop a new outlook on life. Jakab (2017) who did her research at the same club finds that public speaking practices have positive implications for the well-being of practicing members. I find the mechanisms underlying such changes and achievements pertinent to the study of transformation in habitus.

My conceptual framework is based upon an integration of Bourdieu's theory of practice with the interactionist approach. By taking such an approach, I contribute toward an understanding of the affective nature of the 'sense of position' (Bourdieu 1985) that his agents use in making sense of the possibilities and limitations in the social structure that surrounds them, and which otherwise remains affect-neutral in his account. In the field of public speaking, I find the affect to be located on a continuum that ranges from shyness to confidence. I assert that the conditions offered by the club, especially its social organization, facilitate some of the members in covering

a far-reaching distance on this continuum and hence experiencing a transformation in their habitus. My argument is that a genesis of transformation on this continuum takes place at the point where these members begin to relate to the fear of failure in public speaking in a manner that was not known to them prior to their participation in the activities of the club, i.e. they begin to see it as a fear that is limited to and directed toward an activity as against a fear that encompasses the failure of their whole self. This transformation is brought about through a change in the perception of the 'Generalized Other' (Mead and Morris 1934) and instead of having a hostile view of this imagined entity, they begin to view it positively. The transformation is visible in the formation of new habits and the strategies that ensue through these habits subsequently.

In presenting a sociological account of public speaking practices, my approach concurs with Illouz's (2008) stance on suspending the 'epistemology of suspicion' and not holding any a priori political assumptions about the nature of practices that I study. I am aware of the cultural pressures on the individual to give up a shy mode of being (Scott 2007) and do not go all against the possibility of the shaping of self for governmental purposes (Rose 1999) but as Illouz says about researching the therapy culture, such concerns do not pre-occupy me.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My research investigates the transformative experience happening at this public speaking club. This transformative experience is about the upward mobility of some of the club members in the field of public speaking whereby from being shy in the act of facing an audience, they become confident public speakers. The club's mission is aligned along the lines of the creation of the possibility for members to have this experience. My research questions are: how does the social

organization of the club, including the significant aspects of its culture, offer conditions of possibility for bringing modifications in the habitual ways in which members approach and practice public speaking?; how do these modified practices differ from the original practices and whether the contrasts are significant enough to support a claim of transformation in the habitus of the practicing members?; lastly, what are the underlying affective mechanisms through which the socialized agents move toward or resist this process of transformation?

Answering these questions requires me to: one, identify the social conditions at the club which are conducive to the practice of public speaking; two, describe the nature of any change being observed in the habits of these members over the course of their participation at the club and the significance of this difference for their habitus; three, explain how exposure to the new conditions and practices at the club results in or escapes the formation of a new sense of position.

OUTLINE OF THESIS

I take the background section that follows this introduction as an opportunity to lay out my theoretical construction on the idea of habitus transformation in detail. I discuss why I see Bourdieu presenting a possibility of transformation in his writings, especially the later ones, but with serious shortcomings in his framework. I bring in the pragmatist approach taken by John Dewey, especially his insights about the effect of social interactions in the development of habits to compare, complement and question the absence of these micro level interactions in Bourdieu's otherwise remarkable conceptualization of habitus. I establish the case for habitus having a deep orientation right from its early formation which gives direction to the development of individual habits and marks the affective nature of agent's sense of position in the social space; I turn towards G. H. Mead to build this depth in the idea of habitus and claim that a transformation can

only be explained through a change in its orientation. Moving forward, I present my analysis in three parts. In the first part, I present the club as a bounded social space that is structured upon the relations of 'cooperation by rotation'. This cooperative nature of practicing relationships is maintained by a process of self-selection through which new visitors to the club and the club, choose each other. A culture of positive feedback emerges that provides the background for the club becoming a 'safe place to fail'. In the second part of analysis, I discuss how new members begin to develop a subjective account of the objective relations of cooperation. However, unlike Bourdieu, I question the ability of the agents to see the social world as structured and argue that this is one of the first skills they develop at the club. I highlight the habitual ways of practicing for members who are shy in their participation as well as members who are confident. This comparison allows me to further develop an understanding of the affective grips that underlie their differing sense of positions. I conceptualize shyness as driven by a fear of failure of the whole self as against the idea of confidence in which I find the fear to be directed toward the activity only. In the final section of analysis, I explain how this transformation in the affective nature of the sense of position is brought about by a changed perception of the Meadian concept of "Generalized Other". I conclude with a summary.

2.1 BACKGROUND

A CRITIQUE OF BOURDIEU'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF HABITUS

While the concept of habitus has its historic significance (Sparrow and Hutchinson 2013), Bourdieu works out a distinct formulation along with the two other conceptualizations of field and capital to develop his theory of practice. Thanks to him, habitus is now an everyday word in sociology (Crossley 2013). Bourdieu (1990) conceptualizes habitus as an explanation for why any variations in agents' practices, which subjectivism attributes to an intrinsic will and motivation of agents, shall not be seen as such because this will ignore the role of objective relations in bringing about such regulated drives in the agents. At the same time, he asserts that regularities in social practices shall not be attributed solely to any structures that are disconnected from the human individual because this objectivism deprives the individual of her agency. According to his theory of practice, under the influence of external conditions of existence, structures of habitus are developed through an 'internalization of externality' by the agent and these structures in turn are responsible for the way an agent perceives and appreciates her experiences further on.

Foreseeing some of the critiques that his conceptualization could provoke, Bourdieu asserts that the genesis of practices generated by the habitus shall not be considered an autonomous development of an essence because a practice arises from the unpredictable confrontation between the habitus and an event. Now an event is important only if the habitus sees it as such, i.e. as a problem to be tackled, and applies to it the principles embodied in the habitus for the solution of this problem. This is why, he claims that each habitus marks a personal stamp and has a unique trajectory based upon chronologically ordered determinations. Though it remains a structural variant of other habitus from the same class of conditions, it is nevertheless a different

kind of integration that generates thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions in an improvised fashion within a range of possibilities. Bourdieu claims for the primacy of earlier experiences because habitus tends to ensure its constancy through applying various selections in the situations and environment that it encounters; these choices help the habitus to reinforce itself rather than transforming its structures.

I see two problems with Bourdieu's account. Firstly, I argue that the 'constancy drive of habitus' in the relatively earlier work of Bourdieu is one of the reasons that generates repetitive criticisms about his work; Wacquant (2014) believes these similar complaints are being recited for the last three decades or so. Underlying this constancy drive is the synthetic unity of habitus, i.e. the overall systematicity in agent's whole set of practices that Bourdieu (1984) keeps referring to in his famous work 'Distinction'. In an insightful manner, he establishes the stylistic affinity and the objective harmony across all the practices of the agents of the same social class and how they differ from the lifestyle of agents of a different class. For example, he opts for a systematic comparison of the working class and bourgeois ways of treating food, of serving, presenting and offering it, which demonstrates the uniformity of expressive intention in these practices.

Secondly, even though his earlier conceptualization makes references to ideas like the presence of 'strategic intentions of adults grown in similar conditions' (Bourdieu 1990, 61), they are brief references and he hardly explores this side. In an attempt to challenge the interactionist perspective which Bourdieu finds to be blind to the structural context of human practice, his account actually misses out exploring the potential effects that social interactions may have on the development of habitus. He maintains that habitus forms through 'conditionings associated

with a particular class of conditions of existence' (1990, 53) and I agree that through a well-elaborated conceptualization of a relational social space, encompassing different fields and various forms of capital, he is successful in demonstrating that his idea of a social class is not bound to an economic model of class (Bourdieu 1987); still, the objective conditions in his account are all about the macro forces acting upon the social groups:

> "Through the economic and social necessity that they bring to bear on the relatively autonomous world of the domestic economy and family relations, or more precisely, through the specifically familial manifestations of this external necessity (forms of the division of labour between the sexes, household objects, modes of consumption, parent-child relations, etc.), the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the *habitus*, which in turn are the basis of the perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences." (Bourdieu 1990, 54)

That is, while Bourdieu mentions the familial manifestation of this external necessity, he gives not only a disproportionate weight but the monopoly of habitus production to this external necessity, i.e. the objective conditions at the macro level. It is surprising to note the suggested passiveness of this *relatively autonomous world of domestic economy and family relations.* As if this intimate sphere of human social interactions, on its own, has nothing to contribute in the inscription of possibilities and impossibilities through which dispositions are formed. I find it problematic that the success of familial interactions in the communication of 'necessity as virtue' is taken for granted by Bourdieu.

King (2000) criticizes that intersubjectivity is lost as he does not see any mediation of social interactions in the development of the structures of habitus; this he finds contrary to the propositions of 'practical theory', another strand he identifies in the work of Bourdieu. He has reservations on the way society inscribes itself on the human body in Bourdieu's formulation, which he finds to be objectivist and determinist. Jenkins (1982) also claims that Bourdieu fails to operationalize the subjective part of habitus that opens space for a more refined formulation of habitus. However, unlike King and Jenkins, I am of the view that one does not have to go outside the theory of practice to address these shortcomings. In his later work, Bourdieu himself moves toward this direction.

Firstly, Bourdieu (2000), in *Pascalian Meditations*, refers his readers and critics back to the earlier stated but often ignored idea that the 'internalization of externality' is not a mechanical process. He does so by highlighting the mediating role that the specific logic of the organism plays in this incorporation of the social conditions. While still short of an elaborate description of this specific logic, he states that it is 'a structure based on the integration of increasingly complex levels of organization' that accounts for 'some of the most characteristic properties of habitus, like the tendency towards the generalization and systematicity of its dispositions' (157). I argue that this is where the deep orientation of habitus lies that Crossley (2013) questions when trying to differentiate habitus from habits, especially when the latter are thought of as intelligent mechanisms.

Bourdieu (2000) builds upon the subjective side by highlighting the affective nature of parent-child exchanges through which the initial pedagogic action proceeds and develops socialized desires to be deposited 'in the deepest level of the body' (167). I take this familial pedagogy to be the key in the development of the specific logic, i.e. the structures of social in the habitus.

Secondly, at the same time, Bourdieu moves away from the highly coherent model of habitus he presented in his earlier work. Having established earlier the particular case of similarity of conditions at the time of production and actualization of dispositions, he now focuses more on the diversity of these conditions and the intra- and intergenerational mobility that calls for habitus to actualize in conditions that are different from those in which it was produced. He talks about the different 'degrees of integration' that different habitus characterize. For him, on the one side, there could be a rigid, over-integrated habitus and on the other side, a habitus could lapse into a kind of opportunism that would not allow it to build any integrated sense of self.

I highlight that it is the emphasis on these two characteristics of habitus in Bourdieu's later writings, i.e. the different degrees of integration of habitus and its subjective side, that open the concept for a better sociological imagination about the possibilities for its transformation. However, what is still missing in explaining the enigmatic mechanism is to break the structure of habitus down to its constituent elements. It is with this purpose that I turn toward the pragmatic and interactionist perspective.

INTEGRATING THEORY OF PRACTICE WITH A 'PRAGMATIC AND INTERACTIONIST' PERSPECTIVE

Dewey (1930) conceptualizes habit as intelligent a mechanism as Bourdieu's formulation of the practical sense embodied in habitus. He does that during a period in which the concept had

basically lost its currency (Camic 1986). For Dewey, there's a difference between intelligent and routine habits (1930, 71) and he mainly writes about the former. It is through this incorporation of thought within intelligent habits that he gets the concept exonerated from the notorious charge of being involved in perpetuating conservativeness. He rightly asserts that conservativeness is not an essential attribute of habit and in fact only prevails in societies "dominated by modes of belief and admiration fixed by past custom" (66). To the point that he concludes: "Thought which does not exist within ordinary habits of action lacks means of execution" (67) or "If it is not a part of ordinary habits, then it is a separate habit" (69).

Dewey asserts that habits are skills and 'eventuate in command of environment' (1930, 15). Each progressive stage of acquisition allows for an increased conversion of the objective forces in the environment to one's active use. This shall not lead a reader to think that Dewey's agent has a free will. Habits are not only allowing the agent a command over the environment but are also shaped through the conditions experienced in that environment; skills for gardening and plantation allow an agent to grow a beautifully shaped garden but the 'desire for flowers comes after actual enjoyment of flowers' (22). If the agent has any will, it is in the habits she holds because all habits have projectile power; they constitute the self.

Dewey thus has a powerful conceptualization of habits and precedes Bourdieu in highlighting the role that objective environmental forces play in their formation. Though his account of these objective forces falls short of the elaborated relational framework developed by Bourdieu, for my purposes, going back to Dewey allows me to take into account the presence of social interactions happening at the micro level as part of these objective forces. Dewey talks about how the

formation of habits is dependent upon the reaction of other humans, whether they 'approve, disapprove, protest, encourage, share and resist' (1930, 17). He is more concerned with the plasticity of the young and how it is moulded by the activities and habits of other humans in the surroundings. I argue that what is useful in thinking in terms of habit, especially the way it has been conceptualized by Dewey, is that our understanding of practices does not get trapped within structures. A habit on its own is not a structure.

Where Dewey's account also falls short is in explaining the genesis of any orientation for habits. Dewey talks about the interpenetration of habits which results in the formation of a character. Now this character could be weak or strong depending upon how much the individual has worked upon the integration of various habits. For Dewey, since exposure to different environments may result in the development of habits that are in conflict with each other, effort is required "to bring competing tendencies into a unity" (1930, 39). In case the individual doesn't spend this energy, he will end up having compartmentalized habits of action, building "barriers between different systems of likes and dislikes" (ibid). On the contrary, he also highlights the possibility that certain habits may reinforce each other. For him it is not advisable for the individual to be always conscious of the way her habits are interacting and he gives the example of centipede that is paralyzed by the constant monitoring of the impact of movement of one leg on the others.

On the one hand, Dewey is suggesting a conscious reworking of habits that are in conflict with each other to form or keep a unity and on the other hand, he wants the individual to escape this situation of being always on the lookout for the total interaction of habits. I find his account

problematic on the ground that it doesn't explain 'the unity' that the self is trying to achieve or maintain. Within his framework, the self has been constituted by habits and all habits have projectile power. So before any conscious effort is required or which paralyzes the individual, the projective force of habits that are primal in the constitution of the self must be explained. It is the projective force of these habits that orients the self toward the development of further habits that reinforce the original ones. The idea of a competing tendency only makes sense when it challenges the general orientation of the self. Otherwise, it is just one more habit to be interpenetrated with other habits, adding to the complexity of the self.

Bourdieu also does not say anything about the orientation of a habitus; that is, if there's any specific manner in which it begins to organize the experience of the social world? To counter an intellectualist theory of knowledge, he goes on to say that this experience "takes place in practice below the level of explicit representation and verbal expression" and that the sense of position that the agent occupies in social space is based upon a "practical mastery of the social structure as a whole" (Bourdieu 1985, 728). Now for him, the categories of perception that agents make use of in the construction of the social world have been developed in the process of internalization of objective conditions and structures. The problem that I see in his account pertains precisely to this internalization; his framework is built as if the conditions of existence at the macro level could only be translated at the micro level in one possible way. As if there is no other possibility but the agent in full adjustment with the position; and that through an impassive sense of place. That is, neither the agent has any confidence in occupying this place nor any fear of losing it. All what the practical mastery suggests is that the agent has a dispassionate sense of his limits.

It is with these shortfalls in the work of Bourdieu and Dewey, mainly their inability to explain the genesis or orientation of habitus or interpenetration of habits respectively that I turn toward the insights provided about the process of formation of self by Herbert Mead.

For Mead, the unity of the self, is driven by the organization of the attitude of the 'Generalized Other' (1934, 154). The self reaches this generalized other, or in Mead's words, its full development, in two stages. In the first stage, it generalizes the attitude of particular individuals toward itself and toward each other in the social acts in which it participates with them. In the second stage, the self further organizes and generalizes these particular attitudes into the attitudes of the whole social group to which it belongs (158). What Mead is saying, and this has been rightly termed as 'the conceptual axis of his theoretical system' (Silva 2007, 40), is that by taking in these attitudes and organizing them as a generalized other, the self becomes an object to itself and develops a personality structure that controls over how it responds to different situations.

It is worthwhile to have a very clear idea of how Mead thinks this process happens in the life of a child. The child begins to take in the attitude of others surrounding him but without any understanding of whom it is directed to; the child does not have a sense of self or others yet. This is also the reason why the child does not have a rigid personality or character yet. The wider context of the social life is too abstract and beyond the immediate experience of the child to be able to understand how it is organized. It is only when the child begins to play organized games involving other players and rules that he begins to perceive how social activities are organized and directed toward something. By understanding the rules of the games, the nature of other

players, whether they are in his team or the opponent team, he begins to anticipate their moves and understands that his response is contingent upon the moves they make and vice versa. It is through the organization of actions and attitudes of this 'generalized other' that he begins to have a sense of self.

I would like to emphasize that the game can only provide an understanding of the form of this generalized other. For its content, the child must go back to his family, institutions and community and start taking in their attitudes, this time with a clear understanding of whom those attitudes are directed to. My understanding is that Mead does not use the idea of game as a metaphor; interestingly Bourdieu does that. What Bourdieu refers to as the 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu 1990, 66), is basically the gamification of the wider social life by the child that Mead is talking about. It is through seeing the otherwise abstract social life in this practical form that the child extracts the content of the generalized other from the social world that surrounds him. This content affects him, a rigid self-understanding begins to build within and I argue that it is here that a deep and formative orientation of habitus, a sense of position shapes up.

By focusing on games, Mead's conceptualization is limited to a social organization which is somewhat coordinated and harmonious. This limitation is also witnessed in his references to 'attitudes which are common to the group', 'response which is common to all' (Mead 1934, 162). While this coordination and harmony suits my purpose, for the club where I conduct my research is such an organization that promotes a common attitude, in Mead's writings, it is not clear what the case would be where owing to many or significant conflicts within the accessible social group, it is hard to ascertain any common attitude or response; a family with parents in a

perpetual conflict could be a prime example and other possibilities for such cases is only limited by one's imagination. The ramification of this limitation is thus a serious one. Either a self never emerges in such cases or it is a self divided against itself from the very beginning; this is what Bourdieu (1999, 507–13) refers to as habitus clivé.

I find Silva's (2007, 50) interpretation of Mead that for the self, 'there are as many generalized others in society as there are social groups' problematic because in my understanding there's only one generalized other, the content of which is passed to the habitus as its affective orientation. What comes out along with the development of other habits is the habit of generalizing others. The level at which the individual generalizes others and the feelings with which he does so are the prominent elements of this habit. Regarding the level at which one generalizes others, Mead highlights that the social groups may be in the form of 'concrete social classes or subgroups' where members are directly related to each other or in the form of 'abstract social classes or subgroups' where members are only indirectly related to each other (1934, 157). As for the feelings with which one generalizes others, the self may perceive this generalized other as positive i.e. friendly, warm, cordial or negative, i.e. unfriendly, cold, hostile and this will play an important role in how one continues to see himself and his social surroundings and feels about what Bourdieu calls the sense of his position.

RESEARCH METHODS

I have pursued an 'enactive approach' to ethnography (Wacquant 2015) at Budapest Toastmasters club; therefore, in addition to participant observation and semi-structured interviewing, I also took an observing-participant position and gained an embodied practical knowledge of the processes involved in the learning of public speaking, making use of habitus

both as a 'topic and tool' for inquiry (Wacquant 2011). I became a member of the club and started participating in the weekly meetings. I gave speeches at the club and played different roles on multiple occasions, practicing for about six months in total. I made ethnographic records related to the meetings of the club and also reflected upon my experience and feelings in my field notes. These ethnographic notes and reflexive thoughts allowed me to develop a better understanding of the processes related to my 'research concerns' (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003) and also helped me in narrowing down the focus of my inquiry.

Enactive ethnography also allowed me to include the thoughts and voices of interviewees that were empathetic to my queries. This was visible in some of their responses in which they related or referred to my practices at the club or included me in their definition of 'we' or 'us'. I assert that this feeling arises because by practicing the same phenomenon at the club, I confronted challenges that were similar in nature to the difficulties that some of them were facing. I conducted eight interviews in total with each interview lasting for about an hour on average. I designed an interview guide but continued to modify it based upon the responses I was receiving during successive interviews. I followed a semi-structured interviewing approach with an increasing number of improvised questions as I began to feel more comfortable with the process. While the sample was based upon convenience, it captured the gender and cultural diversity of the club. It consisted of four females and four males, half of which belonged to Hungary and the rest came from other countries. In writing my analysis, I have made a conscious attempt to maintain complete confidentiality of my interviewees. None of the pseudonyms used reflect the nationality of the member; biographical details and other information that may giveaway the identity of an interviewee have also not been mentioned for maintaining anonymity.

I transcribed each interview after conducting it and began my analysis by exploring the storylines and developing a broader narrative (Bazeley 2013) of each successive case which outlined: member's motivations in joining the club; challenges and trajectory at the club; the outcomes she had achieved and her interpretation of the various processes involved in this journey. From the similarities and contrasts in these storylines, I compared how the experience of shy members and their habitual ways of practicing at the club differed from the experience and practices of confident members. Also, how some members had experienced a transformation in their practices between these two affects. I moved on to the coding of my data and followed an 'eclectic coding' (Saldana 2009) approach. I mainly coded for processes and values but I also captured descriptive, In-vivo and thematic codes where I found it appropriate to do so. My initial exploration with storylines had allowed me to develop a processual understanding of the habitus transformation process at the club, which I used to compare and relate the emerging categories.

2.2 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE CLUB AS A 'SAFE PLACE TO FAIL'

In this section, I introduce the elements that are significant in the social organization of the club. I take a relational approach to the social organization of the club and assert that first and foremost it is in the nature of relationships in which the club members are embedded (Porpora 1989) that a space of possibility for habitus transformation arises. This possibility is irreducible to the practices of an individual member. My argument is that the club is a bounded social space where relations are structured within a framework of 'cooperation by rotation'; where the dominant motive for participation is not competing for the scarce goods but cooperating for the development of interaction capital, an accumulation that depends upon the skill set of other partners in practice. A process of self-selection takes place through which not only a new visitor to the club decides whether to join it or not but the club also, as a collective organization, filters out the undesired individuals. Club activities are designed in a way to assist and encourage a shy member in experiencing an upward mobility as she rotates from one position to the other, developing multiple points of view and delivers performances that move from simple to complex along the various dimensions, in a step by step manner that limits her exposure to the risk of a failed performance. The rotational nature of social positions, cooperative nature of practicing and dependence upon the skill set of others in the process of capital accumulation, generates a culture of positive feedback that helps the member in achieving this upward mobility in the practices of public speaking. It does so in two ways: first, by providing the affective basis of support for an emotional experience that may otherwise engender feelings of insecurity and an internal self-doubt (Friedman 2016); second, by breaking down the performance in its constituent elements and offering a critique of practice that can aid the member in improving her techniques of delivery and performance. This culture is central to the reproduction of the overall cooperative

environment that members consider as ‘a safe place to fail’ and is conducive to the practicing of public speaking.

THE SELF-SELECTION PROCESS

My interviewees highlight that there is something in common between them and other members at the club that makes it easier for them to engage in conversations with each other and build friendships. They believe that other members are welcoming and open-minded, look at the bright side of life, possess high standards and intellect, and are authentic. I argue that this positive perception of other people results from a process of self-selection in which like-minded people attract each other and constitute the majority at the club with relations of cooperative practicing.

These relations are based upon a mutual interest in the in the idea of self-development. Club attracts members who are motivated to improve their communication and interaction skills. Members are thus interested in speaking about and listening to topics related to such goals of self improvement. They find other each other more authentic as they share content in speeches that is often based upon personal experiences and also find it easier to be more open to the environment through this gradual revealing of the self (Manning and Ray 1993).

The club mainly attracts and retains only those members who see shortcomings in themselves and acknowledge their fears. While shy about speaking in public, they are not shy of accepting their weaknesses and vulnerabilities in this domain. Their reason to join the club goes back to a motive that is directed toward either the fear of talking to others or a need to master the techniques of public speaking; and accepting their shortcomings is a necessary condition to find any of these motives significant enough to move toward a new venture in life. For those who do

not see shortcomings in themselves, will have a hard time complying with the demands of cooperation that arise in the process of maintaining this overly supportive environment.

ORGANIZATION OF ACTIVITIES AND ROTATION OF POSITIONS AT THE CLUB

A vast majority of the members join the club for overcoming their fear of public speaking. Overcoming this fear requires practicing various activities at the club. However, the ability to practice is not what these members bring with them because what they see others engaged in is not the practicing of public speaking but the real act of speaking in public. New members feel that club activities bring them under the spotlight where they find all eyes to be focused on them. In addition, the fact that this is a new social surrounding where they are being evaluated for their performance is expected to increase their communication apprehension in general (Daly and McCroskey 1984). It is only with the recognition, that club activities are a kind of practicing under the cooperative nature of relationships, in the form of a body knowledge or know-how (Ryle 1949) that members find the push and pull necessary for participating on a regular basis.

Club activities are structured in a way that with minimal effort, a new member can gain a sense of personal achievement and a feeling of being appreciated by others. For example, the warm-up round, which takes place after the host has introduced herself and other role takers of that meeting, ensures that every person who is present is made to say something in response to the question posed by the host, be heard, recognized and receive a round of applause from all others, irrespective of the quality of response. The warm-up round is also a way to get all participants involved in the meeting. The activities are also designed in a way that while a new member can begin participating without depending much upon the involvement of others, gradually she is

brought into a circle of cooperative relations that demand increasing and deepening interactions with others.

A step up from the warm-up session is playing one of the meeting roles which require a level of participation higher than one's mere presence. The roles differ in terms of the requirement for scripted vs improvised performance, the volume of others' activity required to be monitored and reported during the meeting, the depth of interaction necessary with other role takers and the duration for which the role taker is under spotlight. Beginner friendly roles include: time-keeper, who keeps a check on time and reports because all activities in the meeting are timed; ballot counter, who counts the votes and announces results for the best prepared speech, improvised speech and evaluation presented during the meeting; ah-counter, who makes sound with a clicker anytime someone speaking to the audience uses a filler word like ah, um and similar; and table topics master, who prepares the topics for short improvised speeches and invites the meeting attendees for the improvised performance. These are easier for the novice to begin participating with as the their performance aspects are mostly scripted; they demand capturing of a lower volume of activity data, interactions with others are relatively at a surface level and the role taker is under the spotlight for a shorter duration of time as compared with other roles. Advanced roles include: grammarian, who has to pay attention to the use of language during the whole meeting and report on the impressive and improper usage; general evaluator, who provides an overall evaluation of the meeting including the performance of other role takers and meeting; and the toastmaster, who hosts the whole meeting and keep all activities tied together. These roles fall on the complex side by demanding more in terms of the criteria for which I find the earlier

mentioned roles beginner friendly. These complex roles build the momentum towards the increasing and deepening of interactions.

Moving further up the hierarchy, there are main activities and roles of: speaker, who prepares a speech in advance and performs it during the meeting; table topics speaker, who delivers an impromptu speech during the meeting; and evaluator, who reviews the prepared speech and the performance of speaker in terms of presenting it. The main activities demand striking an even more complicated balance between the scripted and improvised parts of performance, considering more goals related to the performance, connecting with other role takers and the general audience at a deeper level and spending more time under the limelight. This step by step approach that limits exposure of the new comer to the risk of a failed performance, allows her to select a level of participation with which he is comfortable at the moment and then grow further by building upon the achievements of each successive participation and thereby taking higher risks.

While the activities are referred to as 'roles' in club's terminology, I see these as positions in this bounded space. A position allows for the development of a point of view (Bourdieu 1989) but it only allows for the development of one point of view which is taken as granted for Bourdieu's agent. The taking up of a meeting position allows the member to develop a point of view of the whole meeting from that position but what is interesting to the organization of the club is the rotation of these positions. This rotation allows a member to see through the relationality. While she perceives the social world through the position of a speaker this week, the next week she has

the possibility to see and feel it from the position of an evaluator, gaining a better understanding of both positions.

A rolling membership also supports the taking up of positions in the social organization of the club. For example, since the beginner roles do not demand that much from the participant, a 'role-distancing' (Goffman 1961) enters into the self-selection of roles for participation. It is the gradual induction of new members that these roles and positions have a demand and are taken up with ease. Also, the possibility to become an evaluator, for members who have delivered a few speeches only at the club and are not very experienced, often arises as the members who joined after them reach the point of delivering their first speech.

EMERGENCE OF A CULTURE OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK

A 'culture of positive feedback' emerges through the rotation of positions that supports the upward mobility of members; this mobility entails a move from basic to complex. The member, however, not only moves from one role or group of roles to the higher ones but also gains complexity within each role. Through the feedback received after each successive participation, a member is able to improve or maintain his performance each time he re-plays a role and take better control of performance-related factors. This closed-loop, giving and receiving of feedback is central to the social organization of the club, especially for making available a supportive group of actors that help one in achieving more through each activity.

I highlight three aspects of this culture. First is the principle of recognition. The cooperative nature of practicing demands that members continue to recognize each other. There is an almost on-the-spot feedback on everything that a member says or does at the club. The intensity of this

feedback can range from a light response in the form of clapping to an intense one-to-one evaluation of performance but there is feedback for all acts performed. The prime activity at the club is delivering a prepared speech; multiple role takers provide feedback to the speaker such as the ah-counter, timekeeper, grammarian and evaluator in addition to the general audience. But even these role takers are given feedback on their performance through other role takers, mentors or members. New members often have to go through a learning process in adapting to this heightened mode of recognition, giving and receiving feedback on each activity performed. Though there is an element of explicit instruction about improving the quality of the feedback especially as the member progresses through the training program, most of the learning happens as the member 'takes in the attitude of others' (Mead 1934) toward her and also the attitudes that other members portray toward each other. For example, for every speech that is delivered in the meeting, there is a practice of audience providing a brief feedback to the speaker by writing on a tear-off chit provided at the beginning of the meeting. A new member who has not yet given a speech and hence received this kind of feedback from the audience does not have a clear idea about what kind of feedback to provide and learns about this through the tone and content of feedback she receives from others as she begins to give speeches at the club.

Second is the active incorporation of positive gestures and use of a language of appreciation. Feedback is not limited to identifying the scope of improvement in a member's performance and is not packaged in terms of 'what went wrong' but in fact has a positive bias toward highlighting what was good and appropriate in the performance. Many acts of the performer, which may go unnoticed in the absence of this positive approach to feedback are recalled in the evaluation and

hence get recognized in front of an audience that includes new members and guests, who are gradually taking in the attitude of evaluators toward the speakers.

The positivity of the feedback is one of the cultural shocks that most of the interviewees spoke about. They found it striking that speech evaluators were able to point out the positive aspects of speeches that were otherwise not that impressive and I highlight that this remains true even for cases where the performer, in an act of 'flooding out' (Goffman 1972, 50), had given away all the impression of a performance. I argue that this 'tactful' response of the evaluator and the repair work done by others (Goffman 1959) arises out an empathy with the position of the speaker and highlights the cooperative nature of the relations at the club. Interviewees also spoke about 'discovering' the overly positive tone of feedback they received through their evaluator and audience upon delivering their first speech, which they had begun to reciprocate when giving feedback to others subsequently.

I argue that this positive feedback is not only given in written or spoken form but also conveyed through facial expressions and body language. Eye contacts, handshakes and claps are some of the gestures that contribute towards the generation of this positive tone of the environment. I had personally forgotten the concluding part of my second speech and could not recall it despite my best efforts. I finally had to resort to taking the script out of my pocket, an act that I was avoiding all this while. I knew that I was not successful in making the impact that I intended to and that I could have easily made if it was not for the forgotten part, yet I did not feel as bad as I normally would on any other occasion and in another setting. I highlight that the host had actually called me back to the stage when I had hurried back to my seat in despair after the unceremonious

finishing of my speech. The host informed me that my part had not finished as I had not shaken hands with him and with that piece of announcement he offered a firm handshake with glittering eyes amid a round of applause from the audience. While there are other factors besides his act for me not feeling that bad, including the positive messages I received through my evaluator and the audience, and the fact that I was performing as a researcher, nevertheless, the act of the host had immediately repaired the situation.

The positive evaluation that follows the speech emphasizes what the speaker is able to accomplish. This assures the speaker that she has a number of points to her credit and also informs the audience that performances are being evaluated in a non-judgmental environment. It also distances the speaker from thinking about the overall impact of her speech, which might be disappointing and generative of negative emotions especially in the beginning phase and prepares the speaker for receiving the constructive part of the feedback with an open-mind.

The final aspect of this feedback culture is its constructive part, which offers a solution to the question of how to improve performance. It is limited to the level at which the speaker is practicing. For the beginners, it could be about basic things like the structuring of speech and making eye contacts with the audience. As one progresses, it begins to incorporate advanced elements like vocal variety, body movements on the stage and the kind of emotions the speaker should be able to arouse in the audience. The constructive part acknowledges that mastering the techniques is an ongoing process and what is more beneficial for the member is to improve her current level of practice and not to worry about achieving perfection.

THE WARM ENVIRONMENT

The emergence of a positive and constructive approach to feedback amid the co-presence of members, who have come through a process of self-selection, triggers a number of mechanisms that facilitate the move toward the transformation of habitus. The welcoming attitude of others and the sharing of interests, encourages the members for actively participating in the activities of the club by anticipating a positive response of others; the constructive feedback sensitizes them to learning through others as they move up from passively watching other members to actively observing and evaluating them, thereby generating a positive vibe and feeling of happiness which results in the development of a warm, encouraging and friendly environment that is conducive to the practicing of public speaking.

In the words of my interviewees, the club is 'like an incubator' and a 'safe place to fail'. I highlight that this is because at any time, the majority of the club members are people who have taken in this attitude of positively evaluating each other and are well trained to give positive vibes to the new comers who are less in number. I argue that being acculturated in this culture of positive feedback, the experienced members have developed interaction and communication skills at a more empathetic level and are more prone to accepting new comers than rejecting them.

There are a number of ways in which the experienced members have developed and demonstrate their empathy in interaction, which contributes to this feeling of warm environment. Firstly, these members have been exposed to a language that emphasizes appreciation and recognition of others for a longer period of time. Their use of this language is not limited to the structured activities of the club but all formal and informal communication. Secondly, they have learnt to

accept the evaluation of others and act upon it, thereby forming a group that is highly sensible and responsive toward the needs of others. Thirdly, especially through the leadership and mentoring program and by accepting the slow pace with which many members can continue to practice at the club, these experienced members have learnt how to be more patient. They are also capable of holding on critical feedback to a point in time when the new member is emotionally prepared for receiving such information and remarks.

2.3 THE STRUCTURING OF THE SOCIAL REALITY

Shifting my attention from the structure to the agent, I develop the argument that some of the club members have developed a new sense of position at the club by letting go of the social distance between them and the public speaking activities. They were able to do so only after experiencing a transformation in the affective pattern that had been guiding their actions and strategies all this while and continues to do so. This internal structuring of the agent has become available to my empirical investigation for it is in a change or disappearance of an affective pattern that it is most likely to become evident (Wetherell 2012, 104). I find that the affective pattern entails a continuum that ranges from shyness to confidence in public speaking, is driven by an interpenetration of habits and fears, and has a significant bearing on the trajectory of these members within the social space of the club.

THE ABILITY TO SEE THE SOCIAL WORLD AS STRUCTURED

Bourdieu (1989) postulates that the agent neither sees the social world as chaotic nor views it as totally structured. There is indeterminacy and vagueness in the presentation of this world. He puts forwards the issues of semantic elasticity, temporality and reinforcement by categorization as plausible reasons for this objective element of uncertainty. I argue that the indeterminacy is not only because of the reasons cited by him but also for the differing ability of agents to see the social world as structured in the first place.

One of the earliest things that members learn at the club is that leaving aspects of the activity unplanned or unstructured is risky. George, who joined the club with a view to learn how to manage the anxiety of public speaking as well as the unpredictability of his own performance, highlights that he finds improvisation within a prepared speech to be a ‘recipe for nobody

understanding him'. With improvisation, he ends up interrupting his prepared topic and message by his own thoughts and thereby is not able to connect deeply with the audience in this short period of time. Isla, who has been practicing at the club for a few years now, also agreed that in the beginning she preferred to improvise but that resulted in her not being able to plan other elements of performance. Personally, in my second speech, I left a small part of my speech in the shape of jotted ideas in the draft, thinking I will improvise with ease; given the short duration of time, it placed an unnecessary pressure on the rest of the structure.

But scripting is an intermediate phase between an 'unstructured improvisation' and a 'structured improvisation' that allows a member to let go of one and embrace the other. I argue that it allows members, who do not see the social world as sufficiently structured for participation, to be able to see it as such in a more sensuous and practical manner. A member begins to prepare and structure her participation and makes an attempt to stay as close to this structure as possible. The role of an evaluator, for example, requires a member to provide a feedback on a speech she had not heard before coming to the meeting. She has to listen to the content of the speech, pay attention to the body language, vocal variety, movement on stage, other factors depending upon the level at which the speaker is practicing and report through enacting a performance of her own. The beginner evaluators have a hard time deciding which element to report on and which not. It is only by acquiring the ability to see the structure of performance hiding within the presentation of speaker and deploying a framework of his own for reporting that a member begins to feel confident when giving evaluation. I also noted that interviewees, who were confident in their practices at the club, also demonstrated a discursive consciousness of the structure of their response to my interview questions.

The move toward a totally unscripted performance requires a member to be a keen observer of hidden structures. This becomes very clear in the improvised speech round which on the surface is totally unstructured. While this activity merely requires participation of one to two minutes, a significant number of interviewees were reluctant to participate for differing reasons and even mentioned their strategies for avoiding it. Elias, who does not have such reservations, shares his approach:

> "Like even before going into the speech you can spend twenty seconds about why this is a relevant question or you can refer back to other speeches before you or if you have some other type of structure where you, ok ... 'what is it that you want to achieve, why we should do that and how we are going to reach it'. If you have some kind of structure, anything that can raise your confidence level, it helps."

What I also find here in the development of this structuring ability, that is in this move from a content-based and scripted performance to a self-structuring improvised performance in public speaking, is a turnover that Simmel finds pivotal to the development of sociability: "from the determination of the forms by the materials of life to the determination of its materials by forms that have become supreme values" (Wolff 1950).

THE HABITUAL WAYS OF PRACTICING

With respect to the habitual ways in which members practice at the club, my analysis suggests two points. First, members who are shy and members who are confident both have distinguishing

ways of practicing at the club. Second, for some members, there has been a transition from the shy mode of practicing to a confident one.

I begin with the attitude of club members toward the preparation of an activity. The lengthiest uninterrupted activity that one may perform at the club is a seven minutes speech. Before delivering a speech, a member needs to distribute the preparation time among different activities like selecting a topic, finding content related to the topic, structuring a speech, practicing it and getting some feedback prior to the actual delivery of the speech. Shy members spend more time on activities that can be undertaken in isolation, for example they take a long time to decide what to talk about or keep on collecting information that is more than necessary for such a short speech. Isla, shares her attitude toward the preparation of speech:

> "I am a bit analytical. I like to have a lot of material. Sometimes, I am over-prepared when I collect the material. I have to improve with this part because it causes that I hardly ever give a good speech because I want to give a very good speech. I collect a lot of material which sometimes I faced the thing that people are not open to this depth of information."

Paul, who joined the club specifically for improving techniques, has something different to say:

> "So one thing I had to realize after my second speech or maybe the first I can't remember that I did not prepare enough and I had to make a mind settings there because I never really prepared for speech in terms of rehearsing."

What he means by preparation is not collecting more information but actually rehearsing the act of delivering it. He is already seeing the connection between speech and evaluation activities and believes that practicing evaluation a couple of times will help him improve his speech. I find that when confident members talk about preparation, it is more about the doing part. For them it is important that they obtain some feedback either through self, by recording the rehearsal, or through performing in front of a mentor or by sharing the recording with her.

I argue that collecting more information is an attempt to make up for the lack of skill in reading the structure of social reality. Isla's above quote also highlights her perfectionist tendency which demands from herself that she delivers the very best in all of her activities. She is not alone; other interviewees highlight that they keep on remembering what they could not say during a performance and how apt it could have been. To keep thinking about it, to an extent, paints the memory of that experience with a negative shade. Confident members, on the other hand, have a 'do what you can at this moment' attitude. They have a better understanding of the quality requirements of the level at which they are practicing and are content with the feeling that it will improve with further practice. Sofia, talks about club's mentoring program:

> "Actually it's a very nice thing when you've passed your sixth speech and you feel that you are ready to help somebody. You may not feel fully confident but you can tell them about the club, you can give them tips, you can hear them up, you can give them constructive feedback, that's helpful enough."

Sofia has learnt to be patient with others. She says that becoming a mentor and understanding that others who are practicing at the club are not doing it as a full time job, has been useful in taming her expectations from them. The above quote highlights that she makes it easier for a person to think about becoming a mentor and start helping others, which may sound like a big responsibility for someone disposed to a perfectionist tendency. In the context of his attitude toward practicing at the club, Milan relates it to his experience of learning Hungarian. It is important to note that this language learning happened in his life after he had become confident in practicing public speaking at the club.

> "The way I approach it is, when I came here the only thing I could say was I want a beer, please. I got a beer and then they asked me how I would like to pay or if I would like something else and I was like 'what are you talking about, I don't understand you'. I asked the person to speak to me in English but next time I came again asking in Hungarian 'please give me one beer' and then again didn't understand, like it's constant failure; and then one week later, I knew if he was asking me if I want to pay by card or by cash. I learnt this, I could reply to that."

It is not that the confident member does not make mistakes or is not aware of mistakes but he finds it worse not to use the limited knowledge he has gained in the process. On the contrary, the perfectionist tendency does not allow shy members to see club activities as a form of practice only; their focus remains on the final impact of the performance.

Another disposition that is actually a hindrance to frequent participation at the club is having preferred topics to talk about. While, in a way, the club does make it easier to talk about these selected topics through the availability of an audience that shares these interests, the topic of self-development for example, in the long run what helps these members is to acquire the ability to speak about many other topics with which they do not necessarily have a personal experience. This is because the search for an 'interesting topic' takes significant energy and limits participation in the two main activities. First, the member has fewer topics available for preparing speeches. Second, the member is more hesitant to volunteer for the improvised speeches because here the topic is chosen by the host. I would like to bring in a quote from Emma to further clarify what I mean by 'having preferred topics':

> "I usually talk about my background … my past and it's always something related to my country. Even if something happens now, it has a relation. You know, we cannot leave our background … so, even, I remember someone gave me a feedback that 'again, another story about {country name removed}' in a very bad way and I was like 'come on, it was my favorite topic', why not?"

It is understandable that Emma would like to talk about topics she is passionate about. However, for the purposes of practicing, having a limited range of topics is not healthy for the reasons given above. Isla, also talks about the same hurdle she encounters in the selection of a speech topic and here she is already suggesting a change in this habitual way of hers.

> "My issue is when I see something very very interesting, for example I visit a very interesting exhibition that's what one of my speeches was. Two of my speeches were about books I was reading and the environment what the book was related to; for example, the computerization, the damages, the sad things because of the computerization. So I always, ok not always, choose topic I can really relate to because they make it easier to speak about and speak with more enthusiasm and maybe it would be an interesting experiment to speak about something that I don't really relate to."

I find this 'having preferred topics' as a disposition that is reflective of the aversion to superficial encounters and casual acquaintances by shy people that Scott (2007) refers to in her sociological work on shyness. Referring back to the social organization of the club, it is also by shifting their position through taking up of different roles at the club which are not necessarily related to the topics they are passionate about, that members have a possibility to break the inertia of this habit.

THE AFFECTIVE GRIPS OF SHYNESS AND CONFIDENCE

Dewey (1930) highlights that habits have a projective force. However, while laying out my theoretical framework in the background section, I questioned the source of this projective force. Here, I argue that the above habits of club members are oriented and guided by a sense of position, which is in turn driven by the opposing grips of shyness and confidence. I will first discuss the case of shyness.

> "To seem dumb in front of other people you know or you don't know. I always fear that they will judge me that I am dumb, I'm not talented enough to be given

> such a minor role or a speech, which is not very comfortable. How terrible my language is and they will judge, they will look down, they will find me weird."

I select this quote to begin with, for Isla shares the plight of the shy public speaker with intimate details. It is obvious that the fear is in relation to other people. It comprises a negative evaluation of the self and with use of abstract words like 'dumb' and 'weird' that characterize the whole personality, the quote brings to light an apprehension that is not limited to speaker's performance but encompasses her whole being and self; as if what is at stake is the survival of self.

Isla has been practicing at the club for a number of years now and while it has been an experience that she cherishes for it allowed her to make new friends and become a more social person even outside the club, she continues to have trouble with the idea of facing an audience. At times, my interviewees express it loud and clear, other times it is expressed in subtle ways like mentioning the fear of 'going to stage', 'facing the audience', 'talking to people' 'making the first contact', 'looking weak and naive' but in all contexts, it is about the Other - a hostile other.

> "I noticed that when I talk to people that I know, I don't have the fear of talking if there are multiple people but it is something when you stand up and there are strangers in a group facing me, then this fear. But if I speak in front of lot of people that I know and even if I feel that I'm not very best, but they are nodding or they are smiling then it kind of takes away big part of the fear and anxiety."

Elias had been practicing at the club for a few months when I interviewed him. During this time, I observed him taking a keen interest in all kind of activities at the club including the improvised speech round that many find challenging. The above quote highlights his self-awareness for he can draw a boundary between situations where he finds it difficult to face the audience and where he does not. He also mentioned that even with strangers, it is only in the context of a performance where he is under the spotlight for an uninterrupted period that fear shows up; otherwise he is fine discussing his ideas even with a group of strangers.

It is comparisons like these that inform me that shyness is an affective grip, marking one's sense of position in the field that makes it uncomfortable for a shy member to participate in the activities of the club, activities that can help him break out from this grip. I see shyness in public speaking as an affective pattern that is driven by a fear of the failure of self and is enacted, maintained and strengthened by the particular interpenetration of habits described earlier. Members in this group are primarily uncomfortable with the idea of speaking in public. Shyness is about ambivalence, it marks a 'frustrated sociability' (Scott 2007). There is a strong desire to take part in the social activity but accompanied with a severe feeling of unpreparedness that manifests in the shy member avoiding contact with others even at the cost of foregoing the opportunity to practice. It could be as simple as avoiding eye contact with others, sitting consistently in the back rows, coming up late to miss the warm-up round, not signing-up for roles, but in any case will result in a significant loss of opportunity for further interactions and chances to perform. In extreme cases, one can forego the opportunity to avail benefits of the mentoring program or may not spend time with others beyond the meeting, missing the chance to improve her sociability.

Even though the self-selection process ensures that all club members see shortcomings in themselves, it is the way shy members relate to these shortcomings and their fear of giving off (Goffman 1970; Scott 2007) undesired information to other members that makes it harder to practice. This fear is one of the reasons for having a perfectionist tendency.

I highlight that under the culture of positive feedback, members begin to limit and qualify this fear of failure of self. Emma mentions that in the beginning, she did not want to look 'naive or weak' in front of others. Even though she had an early success with the act of public speaking, she found herself lacking in terms of sociability and pushed herself out in the social corridors of the club before she could begin to feel comfortable with small talks, exhibiting the 'frustrated sociability' (Scott 2007)

I argue that what has especially been helpful in Emma feeling confident about her speeches at the club is her beginning to qualify her fear of self. The way she expresses it - "So yeah, when you are not comfortable because you think that you are wrong, your grammar is not correct, your idea is not good and your knowledge is not enough, like either of these reasons" - indicates that even though she still feels insecure about herself but this is not in a vague manner or encompassing whole of it but rather in a specific and limited way. Similarly, George shares a strategy whereby he is able to curtail the feeling of fear to the next step in practice. For example, when signing up for a speech, he would only worry about the drafting part first. Once drafted, he would only worry about the rehearsal part and not the actual delivery. His 'breaking it down into pieces' approach is very similar to the step by step framework in which the social organization of the

club is successful in limiting the exposure of a new member to the risk of a failed performance. At the same time, George has not only been able to limit his fear but what this fear is related to.

Paul had specifically joined the club to master the techniques of public speaking and when asked if he has any reservations about the improvised speech round, he does acknowledge a fear of failure but his response hints toward something different. He says that it is exciting in a way to think whether he will be able to come up with a story for the improvised speech or not, which I find to be categorically different from one being afraid of other people's judgment, for example about finding himself boring. Paul's fear is not originating from other people but is directed toward the activity; this is also visible in the practices of other members who have gone through this transformation. I assert that this is the key difference. This difference is also reflected in Paul's statement that he was comfortable with the idea of speaking in public even before joining the club; what he found lacking was the ability to arouse different emotions in the audience. I argue that a habitus that relates to the fear of failure in public speaking as a fear of failure in an activity is actually indicative of a confident self. It liberates the self from constantly worrying about a threat to its integrity and foundations. Being relieved from the burden of fighting for its survival, the self is able to look toward the external conditions in the social space with a stability that allows for a much more command over the environmental variables. In terms of other people, this 'sense of security' allows one to develop an instrumental or a synergistic view, that is one begins to think how she can grow together with others or how she can help or impress others.

Paul is not the only one among the interviewees to begin with a sense of security, Sofia demonstrated a secure outlook from the beginning as well. She was mainly interested in the social aspects of the club, the opportunity to make new friends but without lacking in any aspect of sociability. I highlight that it is not only in their motivation to join and the expressions of fear but in their learning outcomes also that they differ from other interviewees. While the others had initially struggled to become comfortable with the presence of other people, Paul and Sofia whom I find to be starting their journey being less skilled in public speaking but still confident, did not have to go through that stage and could begin with learning the techniques directly; such as how to structure their speech, what kind of hooks to create, how to move about for maximum impact. Again, it is not that they do not have any apprehensions but that their reservations are different and related to the activity. For example, Sofia like Paul, does not claim competency in giving an improvised talk but is of the view that having a lot of general knowledge and being aware of the current events can help; this supports my inference that a secure self is able to focus on improving the performance-related aspects of the act as against an insecure self that continues to look for ways to feel better and comfortable in the situation. I end this section with a quote by Milan, who shares that by knowing people who are experts in their domains and who are extremely helpful and considerate, he has begun to have a different outlook not only for activities at the club but for other opportunities in life also:

> "With Toastmasters, I gained more confidence at different level and this is the main change. Everything else that happens is because of this sense of security. I can try things, I can fail; by failing I can grow and if you don't have this security that you can fail, in my opinion you will not try. So you stay where you are and

this absolutely is the main thing that changed my life and this is number one thing. Everything else changed afterwards."

2.4 THE RE-FORMATION OF THE GENERALIZED OTHER

I highlight that transformation of habitus is one of the outcomes of participating at the club, which is contingent upon a re-formation of the 'Generalized Other' (Mead 1934). I argue that only by bringing in the vague and often unidentified generalized other under the immediate experience of the self, whereby the member is able to connect with the audience to the point that what he sees in front of him is not a crowd but the individual faces, the club offers conditions of possibility for a transformation of habitus. It is because the affect with which the other has been generalized, generates the orientation of habitus that continues to guide the interpenetration of habits and their interaction with the external environment. Mainly this re-formation happens through other people but my analysis also finds a possibility of participation in activities having a similar effect.

RE-FORMATION THROUGH PEOPLE

The positive feedback from other people, especially the routinized repairing of the adverse situations, offer a chance to modify a habit of generalizing others and for the self to move away from anticipating negative reactions from others to expecting positive ones. Members take in the positive manner in which evaluators are giving feedback to speakers. As I described earlier, this positive packaging of feedback is rather new and appealing for many and is not only done through words but gestures and body language as well. Witnessing this positive feedback informs them that generally members are cordial toward each other, that they are not only observing the weaknesses of a speaker but also recall her strengths. They even see evaluators rescuing some of the speakers from the trauma of a bad performance, which develops a confidence that should there be a need, they will also be rescued by a positive evaluator.

Milan, whom I find to be a classic case of transformation through practicing of public speaking, appreciates the assurance he received through other members:

> "I gave some speeches, I really messed them up. I was absolutely unprepared. I forgot, I was not even on time or whatever you know and that's not necessarily a good thing but I had this feeling that I can try it out and I will get a feedback that tells me that ok you were not prepared, you didn't do this and that whatever but still I felt appreciated in a way."

I highlight that such appreciation can not only help the speaker in reducing his perfectionist tendencies but it is also helpful for others who have this disposition. By taking in the positive attitude of evaluator toward the rather unprepared speaker a shy member can become more comfortable with the idea of delivering a not so perfect speech. I would like to quote another statement by Milan that makes it even clearer:

> "It depends on what people expect from you. If you need to be perfect, you probably will not tolerate your own mistakes because everything you do wrong is a mistake and you can't take it because of negative consequences."

But this re-imagining of the generalized other is not possible without the shy member beginning to develop trust in the feedback he is receiving. I note that members also have different ways of relating to the evaluation of others. I see that some of the shy members as compared with the confident ones are rather engaged in a blanket rejection of others' opinions, whereas the latter

pick and choose by applying criteria toward the evaluation and seeing it in the context of the whole situation. Also, the confident members not only trust the feedback they are receiving but actively seek more feedback, particularly before delivering a performance to generate more confidence in their act.

In addition to the positive feedback, another development is pertinent to this development of trust. Through the many interactions going on at the club, the size of a shy member's generalized other shrinks; especially if the member's generalized other is based upon stereotyping of a large group of population. This is because the members find themselves in the company of a smaller Significant Other (Mead 1934) and are then able to sharply observe the actions and behavior of this significant other. Instead of sweeping statements which generalize the members of a whole nation, I observe more confident members generalizing about smaller groups of people like when Milan wanted to give an example of people generally having good knowledge but inadequate skills in communicating, particularly referred to a group of scientists talking about climate change. He has also begun to qualify his generalizing statements, for example when talking about how companies advertise jobs, he first gave a generalizing statement that "they really know how to address your interest" and then qualified it by adding "or some know". The smaller the generalized other gets, the easier it is to actually observe its behavior and think differently about it.

RE-FORMATION THROUGH ACTIVITIES

I argue that there is a possibility that the main drive in this re-formation for some members may come not from other people but the activities. It is through a combination of environmental

factors and strategies, which members are learning at the club that they begin to develop a sense of positive anticipation and predictability in club encounters and their own performances.

Earlier I highlighted the effect of learning how to see the reality in a structured way and the role of preparation in forcing a structure on the member. Members generally remember their speech by heart, line by line and word for word. The speech has been timed for making sure that it is delivered within a safe interval of the timekeeper marking the red signal. Having this much control over the content of the performance allows a member to enter the free play of form or at least improve performance in that respect.

There is also an effect of routinization of meeting roles, whereby with each successive participation the member begins to feel more comfortable in the delivery of meeting roles and is able to add more complexity to the performance. Alice, for example surprised me in the role of ah-counter. Normally the report of ah-counter is simple, which is about the usage of filler words by different performers; majority of the role-players remain limited to reporting in terms of the frequency or intensity of filler words. What Alice reported was not the usage but a detailed scrutiny of how different speakers in that meeting, who happened to be at an advanced level, had actually avoided the use of filler words. When I asked her how did she manage to pick up so much of details, she highlighted two things: one, that she wanted to contribute something to the meeting; second, that it came to her mind that in the absence of filler words, she could focus on the positive strategies of the speakers.

The re-formation of generalized other in this case is driven by a self-feedback mechanism which in turn develops through exposure to the heightened mode of feedback activity at the club. Talking about this difference he feels in himself, Elias highlights:

> "It's more that I noticed myself to be more aware of myself when I speak, and I subconsciously analyze myself. When I speak, I analyze 'oh, how's my tone, maybe I should vary a little bit' or I'm just standing here, maybe I shall walk and play with the stage and I also do that, notice that when I see other people, sometimes I, when there's a presentation, I look at 'yeah, he's moving'."

This self-feedback is not about how the self feels with respect to the judgment of others but again, like the difference in fears between shy and confident people, is directed toward the activity. Giving a detailed account of how she has learnt to structure her thoughts and explain things in the simplest way possible, Alice highlights the emergence and importance of this self-feedback mechanism:

> "I think the most important for me, or in general I would say, is not exactly what the others are telling; you should do this and this so you'll learn this and this. This learning by doing, I feel it changes you because you do some things and you become aware of what you do and then you reflect upon it. The feedback of others matters obviously, but at a certain point I realized that I can give feedback to myself and I see myself different then I saw myself six months ago before joining. The most important, it clarified my thoughts and my structure of thoughts."

3. CONCLUSION

> "He could have sat in his chair and talked about this subject all night to the man seated on his right or left. But to get up and say the same things to even a small audience - that was another matter. That was a paralyzing matter." (Carnegie 1956, 3)

In this thesis, I have taken up this paralyzing matter, also known as 'the fear of public speaking', as an object of sociological inquiry. By pursuing an enactive ethnography and conducting interviews, I have studied how practices differ between members who are shy in public speaking activities at the club and those who are rather confident. I have also studied the process of this upward mobility and transformation from shyness to confidence that some of the club members have experienced and explained the social conditions as well as agentic drives that interact to give rise to the possibility for this transformation. In this transformation, I see members moving from a fear of failure that is in relation to others and encompasses the whole of their self toward a fear that is limited and related to the activity only.

The club, through a structuring of objective relations in the form of cooperation by rotation, allows for the emergence of opportunities that are irreducible to the practices of an individual member. It engages in the social construction of a positive and warm environment, which in the words of a member becomes a 'safe place to fail'. The activities are designed in a way that one cannot stay inactive or not interact with others for long. I highlight that it is through this combination of various activities that are designed and structured in a way to help the members open-up to a sphere of ever increasing and deepening interactions, and the presence of a supportive group composed of actors that are not only pre-selected for maximum fun in club

encounters (Goffman 1972) but also further socialized in a 'culture of positive feedback' that allows majority of the joiners to begin to feel that the club might work for them and hence progress toward the development of a positive anticipation and assurance in social encounters. The 'taking in' of this positive attitude with a reformulation of their 'Generalized Other' (Mead 1934) is important for it is in this process that the cooperative nature of the objective relations at the club are perceived as such by the agents in the form of a body knowledge before any modifications in practices may take place.

Bourdieu (1990, 55) highlights that the "the internal dispositions - the internalization of externality - enable the external forces to exert themselves, but in accordance with the specific logic of the organisms in which they are incorporated"; and in addition to the conditionings of a class inherent in habitus, his agent has a sense of position in social space, which is 'practical mastery of the social structure as a whole' but from the point of view of her position (Bourdieu 1985). By engaging theoretically and empirically throughout my study, I have demonstrated the shortcomings in his framework. His agent possesses an affect-neutral sense of position. It is affect-neutral in the sense that Bourdieu does not investigate the possibility of agent having a feeling of dislike for the conditions in which she finds herself or for developing any fears in related to this position. By assuming a simple compatibility between the possessions of capital (in an equal composition) with similarity of practices, Bourdieu (1989) grants no other possibility to the agent than taking the objective condition as a taken-for-granted reality.

I have taken an interactionist approach, which informs about the significance of intersubjective relations in the formation and transformation of habitus. Mead's conceptualization of generalized

other explains how the objective world of social relations, including the attitudes that are generated from these relations, are internalized by the self in the sense of an orientation that continues to affect the acquisition and interpenetration of further habits. By appropriating this important but unfortunately 'not widely used within social enquiry' (Holdsworth and Morgan 2007) Meadian insight and using it to address the shortcomings of an otherwise well-elaborated framework for the study of practices, I have attempted to make it more useful for the 'broader conduct-of-life perspective' (Gronow 2012).

The study, however, is not without its limitations and scope for further research. As for limitations, the study has been conducted in one club only and also that the parent organization of this club is but one type of training organization for public speaking. Not only are there other types of training organizations but modes of pedagogy as well. People also learn public speaking through self-study and what kind of transformation do they experience in that case can be a useful inquiry to compare with the findings of my study that takes the relational mechanisms of the club as the backdrop.

I have a couple of suggestions for the extension of this study. The affective nature of sense of position comes to light in the context of public speaking; would this remain the same and as important in the context of other fields? I have studied the club from an overall perspective but there are many elements that on their own can be the focus of further research; interaction capital can be one such object. I highlight that it is intrinsically different from other capitals because it arises in the context of sociability, a form, which Simmel insists, has democratic virtues and the principle of including the other in a way that is not available to other forms (Wolff 1950). That

is, accumulation of interaction capital depends upon the volume of this capital that the other participants in interaction possess. An inquiry pertaining to the relation of interaction capital to the field of power sounds promising.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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