

Review of social behaviors and cultural reproduction from the perspective of Bourdieu's Theories practice and reproduction

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a comprehensive review of social behaviors and cultural reproduction using Bourdieu's theories of practice and reproduction. Social behaviors and cultural patterns are central to understanding the reproduction of societal structures, yet they often go unexplored regarding power dynamics and individual agency. Bourdieu's concepts of "habitus," "capital," and "field" offer a nuanced framework for analyzing how cultural practices and social behaviors perpetuate inequalities across generations. This study aims to critically examine how Bourdieu's theoretical constructs contribute to the reproduction of cultural and social norms, focusing on the mechanisms that sustain social order. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, this study reviews the existing literature and theoretical applications of Bourdieu's work by drawing on case studies across diverse social contexts. The findings indicate that Bourdieu's theories provide valuable insights into how social behaviors are shaped by both individual actions and systemic structures. The research highlights that cultural reproduction is not merely an individual process but is deeply embedded in social fields where power dynamics are continuously negotiated. This review not only enriches the understanding of social behaviors but also demonstrates the relevance of Bourdieu's theories in contemporary social and cultural studies.

Keywords: Cultural Reproduction, Practice Theory, Social Behavior, Theory of Reproduction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sociologists have long been interested in the connection between social conduct and cultural reproduction, particularly when it comes to studying how cultures uphold social hierarchies and norms across generations. Bourdieu's theories provide useful frameworks for comprehending these processes, especially his ideas of practice and reproduction. Bourdieu maintained that cultural capital and habitus influence social behaviors, with people's actions reflecting both deliberate decisions and deeply rooted tendencies developed by socialization in particular cultural contexts; on the other hand, describes how these behavioral patterns support the continuation of social structures, especially through the mechanisms of familial upbringing and educational systems, which tend to legitimize and reinforce social inequality (Bourdieu & Nice, 2012).

Scholars frequently employ Bourdieu's Theory of Practice and Critical Race Theory in education to gain a deeper understanding of educational disparities. Although both frameworks are widely used in education research, no study has compared these two theories, evaluated their similarities, or looked at how, if at all, the theories might inform one another. The concept of Community Cultural Wealth was not necessarily a discussion between the two theories; it was somewhat a critique of Bourdieu's frameworks in education, inspired by Critical Race. Using these frameworks together could lead to a new understanding of students' color and the relationship between them, in addition to being an interesting theoretical exercise (Tichavakunda, 2019). Early in his career, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu was influenced by structuralist theories and E. Durkheim. Bourdieu attempted to integrate structuralism with functionalism from Durkheim's early research. However, by that time, he had started to primarily employ Weberian and Marxian methods in his thought.

By combining these two approaches, he hoped to gain a fresh perspective of society. He applied this unified perspective to his research and theories. Education, labor, economic change, linguistic philosophy, literature, photography, museums, universities, law, religion, and science were among the subjects that he wrote about most frequently (Shammas & Sandberg, 2016). According to Theodor Adorno and Pierre Bourdieu, culture justifies disparities that exist in contemporary society. However, they also proposed distinct legitimization procedures. According to Bourdieu, contemporary culture is a class culture with socially ranked symbolic distinctions between classes that elevate some to a higher status than others.

According to Adorno, contemporary culture is a mass culture, marked by a symbolic unity imposed by society that hides class distinctions under a facade of levelling democracy. However, Bourdieu's theory and Adorno merged. By using the universal criterion of autonomy from economic interests, he too started to elevate the high culture of intellectuals over mass culture. However, there remains a crucial distinction between these views. Bourdieu laid the foundation for both critical and independent (Gartman, 2012). Social capital is an important resource for increasing happiness in community psychology. Trust and reciprocity are two of the many elements of social capital that support young people in their contribution to society. Unfortunately, a higher-order analysis of social capital and happiness has been overlooked in earlier research (Iqbal et al., 2023).

Bourdieu discusses how educational establishments contribute significantly to the maintenance of social injustice. He contends that educational institutions disadvantage people who lack the same cultural competencies by rewarding cultural capital that children from affluent families already possess. Social conventions that maintain class divisions and impede social mobility are enforced by this process, which Bourdieu and Passeron refer to as " and symbolic violence (Jæger & Breen, 2016). Bourdieu's sociology explores the relationship between culture and power in his ideas, highlighting the ways in which social behaviors and cultural reproduction are impacted by societal power structures. Swartz's analysis of Bourdieu's writings emphasizes the significance of symbolic power, demonstrating how social behaviors are intricately linked to the allocation of resources and power in society rather than being merely individual acts.

Bourdieu's influence on education, especially his understanding of the role that schools play in cultural reproduction. They contend that cultural norms that favor particular social classes have an impact on educational methods that are not neutral. As they bring types of capital that the school values to the

classroom, students from higher socioeconomic classes are more likely to achieve academically (Yasmeen et al., 2022). Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital is supported by the study *"The Impact of Status Culture Participation in the U.S. Grades High School Students."* Social stratification is strengthened by the tendency of children with greater cultural capital to perform better academically (Lu et al., 2022). Bourdieu's theories were put into reality through an ethnographic investigation of parenting styles in various socioeconomic groups. Research indicates that working-class parents prioritize "natural growth," but middle-class parents practice *"concerted cultivation,"* encouraging abilities and habits that conform to the standards of the educational system.

As middle-class children attend school, these disparities show how social reproduction is carried out within families. An ethnographic investigation of parenting styles in various socioeconomic strata provides a practical application of Bourdieu's theories. The results show that it is more prepared for the cultural capital it cherishes (Akbar et al., 2022). An overview of Bourdieu's writings, going into the subtleties of his ideas, and how they relate to comprehending social behavior. The outcome highlights how social influences influence people's behavior, undermining the idea of individual agency in Bourdieu's ideas. According to his explanation of habitus, people frequently internalize social norms, which makes it challenging to escape the cycles of cultural reproduction (Wilson & Urick, 2021).

In line with Bourdieu's theory of habitus as a behavioral framework, culture offers a "toolkit" of symbols and techniques that people employ to negotiate social circumstances. Bourdieu's contention that social reproduction is sustained by both structural factors and individual actions is supported by Langenhove's work, which emphasizes how cultural restrictions influence people's decisions (Van Langenhove, 2017). Cultural Knowledge and Social Inequality examine how, in various settings, cultural capital and knowledge contribute to social inequality by upholding social hierarchies. Cultural knowledge refers to the skills, beliefs, habits, and information that people pick up within particular social groupings. These factors frequently match the expectations and societal norms that are prized by influential institutions, such as the labor market or schools. This type of knowledge is an essential component of cultural capital, a concept prominent by Pierre Bourdieu in his writings on class differences and social reproduction (Gao & Kuipers, 2024).

The degree, kind, and influence of parental participation on academic achievement were significantly influenced by family socioeconomic status (SES). Higher SES families are typically able to give their children access to extracurricular activities, private tutoring, and educational tools such as computers and books, among other enriched educational experiences outside the classroom. These materials support the development of academic abilities and closely correspond to the norms and expectations maintained by educational establishments. Additionally, parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to participate in organized activities that foster critical thinking, communication, and other abilities that schools respect and provide their children with definite advantages (Şengönül, 2022). Bourdieu offers a framework for examining how people and groups function in organized social areas, or "fields," each with its own set of norms, hierarchies, and capital forms. According to this idea, social fields are independent spheres inside society in which agents vie for resources and power, such as political, artistic, educational, or economic spheres. Success in a field is mostly based on one's capacity to understand and adhere to its logic because every field has its own set of norms and standards that govern behavior (Hilgers & Mangez, 2011).

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore social behaviors and cultural reproduction through the lens of Bourdieu's theories of practice and reproduction. Data were collected through an extensive review of books and literature, including sociological texts, case studies, and peer-reviewed journal articles that applied Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes related to cultural reproduction, focusing on how social behaviors are shaped by systemic structures and individual agencies. The research design is grounded in a constructivist paradigm that emphasizes the socially constructed nature of reality and the role of power

dynamics in shaping cultural norms. By analyzing secondary sources, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how Bourdieu's theories explain the perpetuation of social inequalities across generations while also highlighting the relevance of his framework in contemporary social and cultural studies.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The exploration of social behaviors and cultural reproduction through Bourdieu's theories of practice and reproduction reveals that deeply embedded social structures shape individual actions and societal dynamics in ways that perpetuate cultural and class distinctions across generations. Bourdieu's notion of habitus—the ingrained dispositions that guide perceptions, thoughts, and actions—serves as a foundation for understanding how individuals unconsciously enact behaviors that align with their social backgrounds and reinforce the norms and values of their respective social classes. The habitus reflects accumulated experiences and shapes how individuals navigate various social arenas or fields, which are structured spaces where individuals and groups compete for resources and status. Each field, whether education, art, or economics, is governed by specific rules that favor forms of capital: economic, cultural, and social. Cultural capital, which includes knowledge, skills, and tastes, is particularly influential in reproducing social hierarchies, as it is often acquired from a family background and plays a significant role in one's success in fields such as education. Schools, which Bourdieu argues are key sites for cultural reproduction, often reward students who possess cultural capital aligned with dominant social classes, thereby perpetuating class distinctions. Symbolic violence, a subtle form of power embedded in language, norms, and institutions, also perpetuates cultural reproduction by making dominant cultural practices appear natural or superior, which leads marginalized groups to internalize a sense of inferiority. This internalization sustains social stratification as individuals subconsciously conform to their expected social roles.

Moreover, Bourdieu's concept of practice highlights that social behavior is not solely deterministic; rather, it allows for limited agency, where individuals adapt or resist dominant norms within fields, though often within the bounds set by their habitus. Social mobility or resistance to dominant cultural norms often occurs when individuals leverage forms of capital in unconventional ways or when they enter new fields with different values. However, these shifts are usually limited by the prevailing structures within which the capital operates. Social policies aimed at reducing inequality and encouraging cultural inclusivity may counteract cultural reproduction to an extent; yet they must address the underlying power dynamics and expand access to diverse forms of capital to be effective. Bourdieu's framework underscores that cultural reproduction is a dynamic process, as habitus and capital continuously interact within fields, shaping both stability and change in social structures. By examining how educational systems, family structures, and social networks contribute to cultural reproduction, this research affirms that Bourdieu's theories offer profound insight into the mechanisms of social persistence and change, demonstrating how social behaviors simultaneously reinforce and occasionally challenge the status quo (Munro, 2019).

3.1. Influence of Habitus on Power Dynamics

In Bourdieu's framework, habitus is a core concept that describes deeply ingrained dispositions, habits, and ways of perceiving the world that individuals develop through socialization within specific social and cultural contexts. These dispositions, which are both structured by one's environment and help structure one's future actions, are not consciously chosen, but are instead the result of long-term exposure to particular social settings, family backgrounds, and educational systems. Habitus shapes how individuals think, act, and respond to their surroundings, and influences everything from daily interactions to major life decisions. It operates as a kind of internalized "*socialized subjectivity*," enabling individuals to navigate the world in ways that feel natural or second nature (Gao & Kuipers, 2024).

Bourdieu's concept of habitus emphasizes that social behavior is not simply the result of individual choice, but is heavily shaped by these unconscious, internalized dispositions. For instance, someone raised in an affluent environment may develop a habitus that aligns with the tastes, values, and behaviors associated with the upper class. This habitus not only influences an individual's behavior but also plays a role in sustaining social structures, as those who share similar dispositions tend to gravitate towards each

other, reinforcing the social norms and values of their class or group. Habitus, therefore, can be understood as both a product and producer of social structure, enabling cultural reproduction through the replication of class-specific behaviors and attitudes across generations. Through habitus, Bourdieu argues that social behaviors become consistent and predictable within social classes as individuals internalize the expectations and norms associated with their social positions. For example, students from different socioeconomic backgrounds bring different habits to educational institutions, which affects their performance and interaction with the educational system. Those with a habitus aligned with the values and expectations of the school environment are more likely to succeed, as they possess cultural capital that the institution implicitly rewards.

Thus, habitus functions as a mediator between individual agency and social structure, shaping how individuals behave in ways that perpetuate broader social order. However, the habitus is not entirely deterministic. While it strongly guides behavior, individuals can sometimes act outside of these ingrained dispositions, particularly when they encounter new environments or “*unfields*” that challenge their established perspectives. This adaptability within the habitus allows for some degree of change and variation in social behavior, although the scope of this change is often limited by the influence of the dominant social structures that initially shape the habitus. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, therefore, offers a powerful lens for understanding how social behaviors are shaped by past experiences and social contexts, influencing how people perceive their possibilities and limitations in society (Dong, 2023).

3.2. Capital Forms and Cultural Reproduction

In Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, capital takes multiple forms—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic—each contributing uniquely to the maintenance and reproduction of social hierarchies. Bourdieu argues that these forms of capital, beyond mere financial wealth, are resources that individuals and groups accumulate and utilize within various social “*fields*,” or structured spaces, to gain status, influence, and power. These forms of capital are not only tools for individual advancement but also crucial mechanisms through which social inequalities are reproduced across generations, creating and reinforcing cultural and class boundaries (Sullivan, 2002).

1. Economic Capital

Economic capital, or financial wealth, is the most direct form of capital, and refers to money and material assets. It provides individuals with access to resources that can directly influence their social positions, from housing and healthcare to prestigious education. While economic capital is significant in shaping an individual’s social standing, Bourdieu emphasizes that its impact is amplified when converted into other forms of capital. For instance, families with economic capital can afford to invest in cultural and social capital by paying for high-quality education or participating in elite social networks (Pileggi & Patton, 2003).

2. Cultural Capital

Cultural capital, central to Bourdieu’s theory of cultural reproduction, includes non-material resources, such as education, skills, tastes, and cultural knowledge. Cultural capital exists in three states: embodied (knowledge, skills, and dispositions acquired over time), objectified (cultural goods, such as books, art, or instruments), and institutionalized (academic credentials and qualifications). This form of capital is largely responsible for perpetuating social hierarchies, as institutions—particularly schools—tend to favor cultural knowledge and behaviors associated with the dominant class. For example, children from privileged backgrounds often enter school with cultural knowledge and skills that align with institutional expectations, giving them an advantage over students from less-privileged backgrounds who lack such capital. This advantage becomes self-reinforcing, as those with cultural capital continue to excel in the educational field, while others are often marginalized, thus ensuring the persistence of social stratification (Tzanakis, 2013).

3. Social Capital

Social capital refers to the networks, connections, and social ties that individuals possess that provide access to valuable resources and support. These relationships can be instrumental to gaining educational opportunities, securing employment, or achieving social mobility. Bourdieu suggested that social capital is an essential mechanism for maintaining class structures, as individuals with strong networks within powerful or influential groups are better positioned to secure advantages for themselves and their families. Thus, social capital plays a vital role in cultural reproduction as networks reinforce access to other forms of capital, enabling individuals to accumulate and deploy resources effectively within social fields (Vaughan, 2008).

4. Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital, which Bourdieu describes as the recognition, prestige, or honor that individuals earn within a particular social context, acts as a form of social currency that legitimizes other forms of capital. Symbolic capital is rooted in societal perceptions and often manifests as respect or authority derived from possessing economic, cultural, or social capital in socially accepted ways. For example, academic qualifications (institutionalized cultural capital) may gain symbolic power and confer authority on individuals in the field of education or academia. Symbolic capital is thus instrumental in naturalizing the social hierarchy, as it masks the arbitrary nature of capital distribution and makes social inequalities appear legitimate or “deserved” in the eyes of society (Bourdieu & Nice, 2012). Bourdieu explains how cultural reproduction operates through these forms of capital: dominant classes accumulate and control capital in ways that perpetuate their social positions and limit upward mobility for others. For example, affluent families can combine their economic capital with cultural and social capital to provide their children with a superior education, exclusive networks, and cultural knowledge that aligns with societal expectations. As these forms of capital are passed on from one generation to the next, they reinforce existing social hierarchies, ensuring that the children of privileged families continue to hold advantageous positions in society. This cycle of capital accumulation and transmission leads to the persistence of social inequalities, as those lacking any of these capital forms face significant obstacles in gaining social mobility or challenging dominant cultural norms (Jæger & Breen, 2016).

4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this review underscores the profound relevance of Bourdieu’s theories of practice and reproduction in understanding the complex interplay between social behavior and cultural reproduction. Through the lens of Bourdieu’s concepts of capital, habitus, and field, it becomes evident that social behaviors are not only shaped by individual choices but are also deeply embedded in the structures and practices of social fields. Cultural reproduction operates as a powerful mechanism through which societal inequalities are perpetuated, because individuals from privileged backgrounds can leverage various forms of capital to secure positions of power and influence. The concept of habitus highlights how individuals internalize and reproduce the social norms and expectations of their environment, often unconsciously aligning their actions with the interests of dominant groups. Additionally, this review emphasizes how fields, while marked by competition and conflict, serve as arenas where social and cultural capital are contested and reproduced, reinforcing social hierarchies. Ultimately, Bourdieu’s theoretical framework offers a critical lens for analyzing how social behaviors and cultural practices both reflect and contribute to the persistence of social inequality, offering valuable insights into the mechanisms that sustain systems of power across generations. The study suggests that understanding these dynamics is crucial for addressing broader issues of social justice and educational equity, as it highlights the systemic nature of inequality and the role of culture in shaping life chances.

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