

Conceptualising *Habitus* in Relation to Student's Educational Experience

A Critical Review of Empirical Studies

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Abstract

Education is a part of the larger social system, and recent researches have shown how inequalities and social stratification are replicated within schools. This critical review examines key empirical studies related to habitus, analysing the link between family, social class, teachers, schools and student's educational experience drawing from Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory. Bourdieu, in his argument, related scholastic development to nurture rather than nature. He stated that the ability and talent of an individual is determined by the time and cultural capital invested in them by their parents. According to Bourdieu, habitus is acquired in this way by internalising the external through primary and secondary socialisation. Bourdieu's habitus as an analytic category holds relevance in educational research, and recent empirical studies have been built on the same. The present paper draws from recent findings of empirical studies, analysing the application of Bourdieu's theorisation to highlight not only the ways in which individuals are shaped by their habitus, but also states that they are agents within their institutional environments—instead of simply replicating it, individuals contest, modify and negotiate while navigating through them.

INTRODUCTION

Bourdieu's Theory of Social Reproduction has explained the ways in which one's socio-cultural background leads to prolonged inequalities in educational

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stratification, despite the State's efforts to equalise educational opportunities for all. Bourdieu argues that the differences in educational attainment and experiences depend on the nature of family-linked endowment, which is transmitted to the offspring through the process of socialisation. Bourdieu termed this family-based endowment as the primary *habitus*. As individuals move beyond one's family, to schools and colleges, and encounter other life experiences, the secondary *habitus* is constructed on the primary *habitus*. Bourdieu asserts that the middle classes are at an advantage in educational institutions as the culture of one's family replicates the expectations that schools have of them. Therefore, children from the middle and upper middle classes find the transition from home to school smooth, as the schools and teachers reward their cultural capital. Doing well academically is effortless for students from the middle classes as school standards are set in accordance with the social and familial values of the elites. This excludes other children whose culture stands in opposition to the elite culture within educational institutions. Paul Willis (1981), in his study of the British working class youth, shows the ways in which working class boys feel put down at school and are labelled as uncultured, rough and rude. In response, the boys reject school work and success as 'effeminate' and 'unmanly'. Conforming to the school rules and

doing mental work is equated with selling out their working class way of life. Working class boys deny agreeing to the school culture as inferior and deficient. Willis demonstrates the working class boys' academic resistance as a reaction against the necessity to conform to an oppressive cultural system. He portrays the working class boys as heroic and proud radicals who preserve the honour of their class. In the end, he claims that they proudly accept working class jobs. The working class boys in Willis's study do not desire an education that guarantees upward mobility. In order to retain their working class identities, they prefer not conforming to the rules.

According to Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Reproduction, children from middle class families are at an advantage in gaining educational credentials due to their possession of cultural capital. The term cultural capital represents the collection of non-economic forces such as family background, social class, varying investments in and commitment to education, different resources, etc. which influence academic success. Unlike Willis, Bourdieu believed that people from all classes are desirous of education and upward mobility. However, the education system only rewards the cultural capital of the dominant group and thus, the non-dominant groups are disadvantaged, which creates systematic and institutional reproduction of inequalities.

The present paper tries to understand the way in which Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is a crucial analytical category for understanding the relationship between children's social contexts and their educational experiences. Bourdieu's *habitus* is not so much a measurable thing, but a set of processes and practices that individuals embody within their social contexts that enables them to acquire qualifications, skills and group membership. The present paper critically reviews the empirical studies that use Bourdieu's conceptualisation of *habitus* to understand educational experiences of students from low socio-economic status groups. Through recent studies, the paper highlights how a mismatch between a child's familial *habitus* and institutional *habitus* of the schools and colleges can impact children's mental and emotional well-being. Bourdieu's theorisation on *habitus* further helps to analyse how individuals within one's educational *habitus*, such as teachers and school authorities are habituated towards certain practices that reproduce social inequalities. The present paper also develops further Bourdieu's analytical conceptualisation of *habitus* and points that external structures and social endowments are not simply to be replicated and reproduced but, individuals are self-reflective agents within their institutional *habitus* who contest, negotiate and modify—

external structures in their everyday practices.

HABITUS AND EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In its literal sense, *habitus* is derived from Latin and means 'habitual or typical condition, state or appearance, particularly of the body' (Jenkins 1992, p. 74). *Habitus* is a concept that was first clearly defined and utilised by Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990).

Bourdieu defines *habitus* as 'a structuring structure, which organises practices and the perception of practices' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 170). *Habitus* is the cognitive or mental system of structures ingrained within an individual (and/or a collective consciousness), which are the deep seated replicas of external structures. By *habitus*, Bourdieu understands the 'ensemble of schemata of perception, thinking, feeling, evaluating, speaking and acting that structures all expressive, verbal, and practical manifestations and utterances of a person', similar to the grammar in the language (Krais 1993). The *habitus* is acquired during primary and secondary socialisation. Primary socialisation is the one that takes place in the family during childhood. Parents' social position and context play a significant role in educating children, wherein they internalise schemas to act and perceive. Therefore, the primary *habitus* is about 'internalising the external' as the parents' modes of thinking,

feeling and behaving that are linked to their position in the social space and are internalised in the children's own *habitus*. This is what Bourdieu (1977) also calls class *habitus* that reflects the different positions people have in society, leading to different lifestyles, tastes and interests among social classes (Bourdieu 1984). The secondary *habitus* is constructed on the primary *habitus* and especially results from one's education at school and university, and also from other life experiences. The primary *habitus* is defined as 'embodied history, internalised as second nature and so forgotten as history' (Bourdieu 1990a, p. 56); it never loses its significance and always impacts the development of the secondary *habitus*. Therefore, the primary and secondary *habitus* can also be summed together into a single entity or one *habitus*, that is constantly thickened and altered by life experiences, adding dynamism and flexibility. *Habitus* consists of our thoughts, tastes, beliefs, interests and the way we comprehend the world around us and is created through primary socialisation through family, culture and the milieu of education. *Habitus* is therefore, a part of the socialisation process, where everything that we experience is understood and categorised according to what we have experienced in the past, and events that we go through in childhood are particularly important in developing a 'matrix of perceptions' that provides the know-how to interpret our surroundings

and determine one's reaction in different contexts (Swartz 1997). According to Bourdieu, *habitus* constructs one's dispositions. Dispositions include habits, beliefs, values, tastes, bodily postures, feelings, and thoughts, that Bourdieu argued were socially produced. The inculcation of dispositions happens throughout childhood, as children watch and listen; therefore, the cultural capital of those they are surrounded by (predominantly their family) becomes part of their *habitus*. The cultural capital found in the *habitus* of their family and class becomes their cultural capital also, according to Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1977) stresses the dialectic relationship between structure and agency that is manifest in the *habitus*. On the one hand, the *habitus* is the result of social structures. On the other hand, the *habitus* also structures practices and reproduces social fields (Bourdieu and Passeron 2000), since individual strategies and practices as products of positions and rules, inevitably assure the economic and social conditions for reproduction. By acting in conformity with the structure, the structure is confirmed and reproduced. The possibility of strategising, by acquiring capital by individuals, suggests that agents are not so passive that their actions be fully determined by external field forces. Fields are the contexts within which the *habitus* functions. Swartz (2013) would define these fields as 'power arenas' because for him, it is

essential to comprehend the power relations operating within these fields. These are, for example, the field of politics, education, economy and various other social institutions, where there is a habitual struggle for position and the power to maintain *status quo*. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 108), agents are 'bearers of capitals and, depending on their trajectory and on the position they occupy on the field (...), they have a propensity to orient themselves actively either toward the preservation of the distribution of capital or toward the subversion of this distribution'. As a result, Bourdieu suggests that agents have a certain degree of freedom in their choice of strategies and practices, or in other words, they have a certain degree of agency in their contest for positions in the social field. However, agents always act intentionally, without intentions in accordance with the rules of the game with regard to their positioning within the field (structure). This is why Wacquant (1989, p. 45) also states that 'individuals make choices, but do not choose the principles of these choices', and are therefore strongly affected by structure (Ozbilgin and Tatli 2005). Recent research studies have confirmed the ways in which Bourdieu's theorisation of *habitus* is useful in understanding student's experiences in education. Empirical studies conducted recently show that there were more factors inhibiting progress for students from

socio-economically deprived groups in educational institutions than facilitating the same. As they compete with peers from socio-economically affluent sections, there is often a desire to match in terms of linguistic and personal abilities for meaningful participation in their educational institutions. The factors that create hindrance for students from the socio-economically deprived groups influence their life chances (Weber 1978), educational experiences being an integral part of this. DuBoes (2001) finds that academic achievement of students belonging to low socio-economic status strongly correlates to the images of themselves. Thus, a strong interrelationship between children's *habitus* and their educational trajectories were found in recent research studies. Although Bourdieu's theorisation on *habitus* has enabled an analysis of the ways in which social inequalities are reproduced through educational institutions (Bowles and Gintis 1976; Apple 1995 and Giroux 1997), one critique of Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is that it limits an individual to only reproduce what they know—reproduction being confined to one's ability to act in the world predetermined in terms of its rules and organisation.

Habitus as a concept, therefore, has been critiqued as being deterministic. Reay (2004) critiqued Bourdieu's *habitus* and pointed that while *habitus* reflects the social position in which it was constructed,

it also includes within it the source of new originative responses that are capable of transforming the social conditions in which it was created (pp. 434–435). Webb et al. (2002) conceptualised agency as ‘the idea that individuals are equipped with the ability to understand and control their own actions, regardless of the circumstances of their lives’ (p. 9). This moves beyond Bourdeausian conceptualisation of *habitus*.

The present paper attempts at an in-depth and advanced understanding of the Bourdieusian conceptualisation of *habitus*. Key empirical studies are used to show how past conditions of socialisation can produce and reproduce *habitus* and how *habitus* impacts a student’s educational experience. This also helps to understand *habitus* as a relational concept; that is, it cannot be viewed in isolation but must be viewed in relation to the diverse contexts or fields in which it operates, thereby enabling an understanding of educational experiences within the larger microcosm of society. The article further critically reviews the recent researches that move beyond Bourdieusian conceptualisation of *habitus*, to theoretically explain the transitional nature of *habitus* due to encountering of experiences, specifically educational experiences that challenge an individual’s pre-conceived dispositions.

HABITUS AND THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION

Researchers have shown that children gain awareness related to one’s socio-economic status while growing up in their families. Consciousness related to one’s socio-economic status gets ingrained in individuals at an early age through acculturation. This is what Bourdieu (1977) also calls class *habitus* that reflects the different positions people have in society, and that leads to different lifestyles, tastes and interests among the social classes (Bourdieu 1984). Most of the participants grew up under financial constraints experienced within the family. Financial struggles witnessed within their families to make ends meet on a day to day basis shaped their primary *habitus* prior to attending school and college (Luzeckyj, Graham, McCann, 2015; Chor 2014). Empirical studies have shown that financial constraints shaped the development of children wherein they internalised and became aware of their socio-economic status vis-à-vis others (Radmacher and Azmitia 2013). Also, it was found that gender, caste, class and race jointly operated to shape children’s educational experiences. Therefore, in the recent research studies, a framework of intersectionality has been used as a lens to analyse multiple dimensions of identities that affect experiences, opportunities and outcomes, wherein in the present review of literature, class, caste and gender do not operate

as distinct categories of experience but are lined conjointly (Bettie 2002, Wilkins 2014). Students' subjective experience of their social positioning was determined by their perception of their family's financial security, their access to needs and opportunities and the extent to which they lived a life of ease (Ostrove and Long 2007). Along with this, the place of residence informed individuals about their socio-economic status. As children moved across the multiple worlds of their homes, schools and colleges, they realised their socio-economic status vis-à-vis others. Researchers have shown that students constantly compared their households with the localities where residents from high socio-economic status lived. This made them feel that they were at a disadvantage in terms of amenities and social network when compared to their peers in schools and colleges. They also felt that the people belonging to higher socio-economic status lived in better localities and had lifestyles and life chances more sought after than theirs. Awareness about socio-economic status emerged as students moved through mixed class environments, including their schools and neighbourhood (Stuber 2006).

Recent research studies also show that the socio-economic status shaped parenting styles and values and played an important role in determining students' work ethic and educational orientation. The parenting style that students witnessed was what

is called strict adherence to values of hard work, pragmatism and an orientation towards what is required to be successful. Communication between parents and children was functional and direct. Mostly, parents socialised children to work hard and make use of the opportunities related to education to get secure jobs. Seeing parents struggle to make ends meet, children were motivated to work hard and improve the status of their families by attaining good jobs. Researchers have also shown that students felt that although their parents cared for them, but they experienced lesser involvement on the part of their parents in matters of day-to-day life. Students felt that they were left free to decide for themselves in the matters related to subject choice, decisions related to pursuit of higher education, choice of college and career choice. Students, therefore, felt that they were left to work out many dimensions of their social and academic development on their own in their transition from school to college. Studies show that parents with a low socio-economic status (SES) were supportive but not proactive about their education, which students felt, created an educational disadvantage for them when compared to their high SES peers (Wilkins 2014). Another disadvantage was evident in researches which stated that less affluent parents were less informed about admissions and financial aid and less actively involved in their child's navigation of these processes.

This lack of involvement on the part of their parents further intensified due to their exposure to the educational institutions as students felt that parents of students belonging to high socio-economic groups already possessed the cultural and social capital which they transmitted to their children ensuring their college success.

Research studies therefore, imply that a low socio-economic status results in instrumental views toward education. Students and their parents see the school and college as a means to get a job. All the participants and their families see education as a route to upward mobility (Luzecy, Graham and McCann 2015; Lehmann 2009; Lehmann 2007, Archer and Hutchings 2000).

The socio-economic status of students' families, therefore, links education to jobs, financial security and upward social mobility. Studies show that the choice of subjects at the senior secondary level is influenced by prospects of employability in future. Moreover, the choice of university, colleges and courses made by students is largely influenced by future prospects of a government job (Radmacher and Azmitia 2013)

HABITUS AND EARLY ACADEMICS

According to Bourdieu, *habitus* is capable of securing a return to its possessors. The individual inherits *habitus* culturally which is affected by one's class and socio-economic status, perpetuating the already established

structures of dominance (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, pp. 204–205). As family *habitus* is dependent on one's class positioning, middle class and elite cultural endowments are generally valued in society. Knowledge and possession of 'highbrow' culture, according to Bourdieu, is unequally distributed according to social class; and education is institutionalised as legitimate to provide distinction and privilege to those who possess and deploy it. Cultural capital thus reproduces class inequalities. This 'highbrow' culture is recognised and rewarded by schools unevenly (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Children embodying elite culture through their families are likely to perform well in schools as teachers recognise their cultural capital. This pedagogic action subjects the working class or minority pupils to a form of 'symbolic violence' forcing them into a competitive mechanism that rewards only the dominant cultural capital. However, this pedagogic action is identified as meritocratic and legitimate (Bourdieu 1974, p. 32; 1977). Researchers have shown that a bias is often found in assessment processes towards the cultural endowments and competencies of students from elite backgrounds. Schools are, therefore, found to be biased towards the culture of the elites and thus, perpetuate stratification and inequality.

Evidence suggests that parental cultural capital and family *habitus* affected children's early and later

educational attainment (DiMaggio 1982, DiMaggio and Mohr 1985). Research studies have shown that the academic performance of students with a higher socio-economic status (SES) is better than the lower SES students (Müller and Karle 1993, Goldthorpe 1996). Research also points to the fact that educational attainment of children is affected by their own ability as well as the cultural endowments of their parents. However, a family's possession of cultural capital certainly has a bearing on the child's educational attainment. (Goldthorpe 2007, Sullivan 2007).

Similarly, in the case of minority ethnic groups, exclusion practices have been identified in schools. Studies reinstate the disadvantage that parents have in terms of contact with school personnel (Lamont and Lareau 1988, Levinson and Holland 1996, Stanton-Salazar 2001). Lareau (1987) argued that both working class and middle class parents promoted independence among their children. However, middle class parental involvement in family-school relationship yielded a form of profit that the working class families did not have. Lareau argues that these family-endowed inequalities based on one's class made middle class parents voice their children's concerns and mediate with school authorities in a better manner which created an advantage for them. However, no evidence exists to show that schools were discriminating against working

class parents. On the other hand, Goldthorpe (2007) advocated that due to educational expansion in Europe, upward mobility has been found among the children from working classes, and hence, the role of teachers and schools as advocated by Bourdieu stands rejected. Far from reproducing inequality, schools are argued to 'complement, compensate for or indeed counter family influences' (Goldthorpe 2007, p. 14). He points that pedagogic action does not favour the dominant group and Bourdieu's theorisation therefore should be used with caution.

HABITUS AND HIGHER ACADEMICS

There are three main forms of capital—economic, cultural and social. For Bourdieu (1986, p. 242), the distribution of capitals among individuals determines the chances of success. Money, physical assets and property are the forms of economic capital. Social capital consists of the social characteristics that individuals possess and the value of their social networks. Cultural capital is the education, skills and attitudes that advantage individuals and society at large. Although cultural capital may be acquired, it flows from the *habitus* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 94), which Bourdieu defines as a complex interplay between the past and the present. He writes that *habitus* 'refers to something historical, it is linked to individual history' (1993, p. 86).

Research studies show how the lower income students felt the

difference in economic capital on their arrival in the prestigious university. The participants in the study spoke about many structural disadvantages rooted in economic, social and cultural capital deficits (Aries and Seider 2007). A common concern in all research studies was a feeling of independency and insufficiency due to lack of cultural capital within the higher educational fields. Dress was a notable issue in this realm and research studies show how students felt that their styles of dressing prior to college were considered inappropriate by others within the college campus. Lower income students worried about their self presentation and focused on inadequacy of particular competence (Aries and Seider 2007). Also, studies reported the students with low socio-economic status witnessing negative remarks about their styles of dressing by the students belonging to higher socio-economic status groups, reinstating what was held by the dominant group as the appropriate culture and style within higher educational institutions.

Researchers reported that students from low socio-economic status groups spend less time within college engaging in co-curricular activities, student's organisations and volunteering for community; thus limiting opportunities to themselves and making them available to other students. Studies also show how most of the students lacked resources; so, they had to seek employment along with their

studies for financial support. This impacted their academic studies and social integration within the college (Lehmann 2009). Long hours of work required to support themselves along with long hours involved in travelling to college, left students with very less time for self study and participation in co-curricular activities. Although students understood the benefits of such opportunities for their self and academic development, and wanted to pursue them but were unable to manage the time to do so.

Recent studies also reported how students from a low SES experience a lower sense of belonging, perceive a less welcoming campus climate, and pursue fewer social engagements than their peers from high SES status (Soria and Bultman 2014; Granfield, 1991). According to the recent research studies, students experienced being looked down upon through interactional cues such as not engaging in conversation or offering only the shortest of replies (Stuber 2006) and low SES students had few non-academic conversations with others. Studies further reinstate the ambivalence to cultured *habitus* of an elite college and the students' out of place experience wherein they felt lost, confused, traumatised and alienated (Chor 2014, Lehmann 2007, Archer and Hutchings 2000). Research studies also report students experiencing financial challenges, feel being discriminated and voiced dissatisfaction regarding campus

climate (Salas, Aragon, Alandejani and Timpson 2014).

Studies further report that students felt that more than them, it was their socio-economic background that stopped them from doing well (Tat-Heung Chor 2014, Granfield 1991). Students with a low SES noted that they felt invisible to their peers and university personnel. On one hand middle class respondents entered college with an ease and engaged with adults within college environments; the low SES and doubly disadvantaged students felt uneasy at the prospect of engaging with authority figures (Soria and Bultman 2014, Jack 2015). Students experienced difficulty in following classroom instructions as the medium of instruction was predominantly English. All researches stated that classroom notes, readings and lectures being delivered in English placed low SES students at a disadvantage in terms of understanding and scoring in comparison to students belonging to a higher SES background. Also students were silent due to the fear of speaking wrong and had difficulties and embarrassment using elaborate speech codes (Granfield 1991, Ovichagan 2015, Loveday 2015). Research studies reinstate how low SES students are forced into positions of cultural outsiders with problems in connecting to their well-off peers and integrating into university culture academically and socially, which ultimately leads to self-doubt related to one's competency, belongingness

and fear of not doing well academically (Lehmann 2007, Reay, Crozier, Clayton 2009; Wentworth and Peterson 2001).

HABITUS TRANSFORMATION AND STUDENTS AS AGENTS

Studies, therefore, argued that students' agency could transform the social reproduction process by impacting their school-based cultural capital (Olneck 2000) and that teachers could promote both dominant and minority cultural capital in a non-conflictual manner (Monkman et al., 2005). Further research studies conducted on similar lines show how working class students in elite institutions not only face academic challenges but also considerable identity work is undertaken and discomfort gets generated when *habitus* confronts a starkly unfamiliar field. Studies show how respondents worked on their own selves that helped them to act as agents in trying to become a part of the college (Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2009). A crisis of *habitus* disruption becomes a necessary occasion for self-reflexive adjustments in behaviour and self-identity (Tat-Heung Chor 2014). Studies show how students found ways to manage the dislocation and disjuncture in their identity, circumstances, and social relations. They expressed a strong desire to work hard and become self-disciplined in order to perform well. Students, therefore, spoke about working hard to achieve success and

motivating their own selves in times of doubts (Luzeckyj, Graham and McCann 2015, Reay, Crozier, Clayton 2009) and expressed an inner drive to succeed (Gardner and Holley 2001). Current research studies reveal the ways in which students are able to resolve the differences that marks university life with harmonisation between *habitus* and field to become independent, critical and cultural individuals through creative empowerment. Research studies point that reflexivity forms the basis of resilience. The learner's identity becomes negotiable, improved and self sustained by determination to succeed through self regulation and reflexivity (Tat-Heung Chor 2014). Research studies related to this point towards students experiencing many changes in themselves due to college exposure (Luzeckyj, Graham and McCann 2015, Aries and Seider 2007). Students claim that they value the challenges that an elite higher education institution has to offer even if they have to face the social bias that exists; as on one hand they felt that they should avoid being out of place in elite universities, but on the other hand see this decision impinging on their future prospects (Reay, Davies, David and Ball 2001). College experiences expose students to a wide array of cultural diversity which fosters eye opening interactions which transform 'felt identities' in college. Research studies in this realm show how students had started feeling that college experience

had impacted them positively and if they did not get the opportunity they would miss out on charting a better future for themselves (Kaufman and Feldman 2004). Although students' families had less means, they aspired to hold professional and managerial jobs such as physician, lawyer, etc. Therefore, students felt that the changes they experienced due to college exposure are integral to their identity. Although college experience initially felt daunting, students felt that it taught them to face real life (Carter 2003).

DISCUSSION

Research studies in recent times have shown how educational experiences of students are shaped by the world in which they live. Social, political and economic factors determine a student's chances of success. Teaching practice that delinks learner's behaviour from the milieu in which they grow up will give rise to pedagogic practices that are devoid of the complex relationship between schools and larger social order. For instance, a student not paying adequate attention in class may be interpreted as having a problem related to classroom discipline and management. However, this could also result from the students economic or social condition at home wherein they might have to do household chores or work on part time jobs in addition to attending school or college.

Therefore, there is a need to define teaching through a vision,

interlinking educational experience to social and economic conditions outside of schools. Not doing so, may give rise to a situation wherein schools and colleges become a means to provide jobs, and attending to diversity, equity, community and social justice remains outside the purview of school curriculum. Problems related to schooling and curriculum must therefore be placed along with the problems of the larger society.

Bourdieu's conceptualisation of *habitus* provides an analytical lens to link school processes to the larger society. Students' lives are intricately linked to their family, social class, schools, teachers and peers. As children inhabit their multiple worlds, they are socialised in each one separately. Primary socialisation followed by secondary socialisation constitutes individual *habitus*. According to Bourdieu's conceptualisation, *habitus* provides an individual the disposition to think and act; therefore, it is integral to one's educational experience.

The present review argues for the development of *habitus* as an analytically useful concept that goes beyond the confines of social class. In the present review, *habitus* constructed through caste, class, race, gender and ethnicity have been identified. The study reveals that students are constrained within their institutional environment in case of a mismatch between primary and secondary *habitus*. However, the

review reveals that individuals are not passively internalising the external structures. Rather, individuals are agents who reconstruct their pasts in order to negotiate, contest and modify their external structures. Persistent inequalities in educational attainment can be understood through these struggles and negotiations. A new theorisation is, therefore, needed to accommodate and broaden Bourdieu's theorisation of *habitus* to enable research that will provide a nuanced understanding of students' educational experiences as a part of their lived realities.

This paper critically reviews empirical studies that link Bourdieu's conceptualisation of *habitus* to study students' educational experiences as they navigate through the worlds of their homes, schools and colleges. Research studies reveal that students' experiences are largely influenced by their social backgrounds. This prevents the isolated ways in which school experiences have been studied by researchers in the past. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of *habitus* informs that individual biographies are not the products of their making. Theoretically, the concept of *habitus* in the context of education related research has the potential to be useful because it links micro social behaviour of individuals to macro social structural factors and analyses these within social relationships, social interactions at one's home, neighbourhood, schools and colleges.

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