

# Pierre bourdieu essay essay sample

[Politics](#), [Marxism](#)



Drawing upon the work of Pierre Bourdieu, discuss how one's cultural capital and habitus may affect one's life. 1st August 1930, Pierre Bourdieu was born into a working-class family in Southern France and passed on in 2002.

However, he became a well-known, reputable and very influential French social theorist whom saw the importance of moving sociology towards science by incorporating empirical research with theory. (Grenfell, 2005)

Similarly to Marx, Bourdieu believed that individual's identity and the choices that they make are based on the class structure they are in. Marx has stated that class referred to the economic capital, in terms of money, property and other assets. However, Bourdieu goes beyond the economism of Marx's concept of capital, which believed in exploitation, by having a wider perspective of the term 'capital'. (Swartz, 2012) Cultural Capital

Bourdieu transcend the concept of capital into a more symbolic realm of culture. Cultural capital is the possession of the various symbolic elements such as knowledge, skills, preference, material and experiences when participating in social life. (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, the social class that we belong to is brought down to the 'taste' we have etc. Therefore, individuals that possess or 'taste' or culture capital is said to have obtained a 'high-class' status in society. Bourdieu stated that the cultural capital is an important asset for a group to stay dominant or to increase their status.

There are three forms of cultural capital namely: the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalised state (Bourdieu, 1986) Embodied state

The embodied state is the first form and the most important of the cultural capital. It is the internalization of the body and mind which represents what

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the individual knows and what he can do. Putting more time into self-change and improvement allows the increase in the embodied state. If the embodied state is learned, it can alter and affect an individual's habitus which I will further explain later in the essay (Farrell, 2010)

### Objectified State

The objectified state of the cultural capital refers to the cultural and material objects such as instruments, books, paintings etc. The cultural object can be obtained through money and/or the embodied through the appreciation of the cultural object. For the cultural object to be possessed materially, the individual has to have the assumption of economic capital. (Longhofer, 2013) However, by “ consuming” the object symbolically, it has to be taken into account that the individual has the assumption of cultural capital where the individual has already been educated on the norms that makes the cultural object important. (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, to use the objectified state appropriately, the individual has to have the embodied cultural capital. Institutionalized State

The third form of cultural capital is the institutionalized state where it refers to the embodiment of culture capital in the form of the scholastic capability, or in other words, the academic qualification. Thus, the result of an individual converting the embodied state into the educational system will develop the institutionalized state. Individual has to perform well in school first in order to successfully obtain the institutionalized state (Longhofer, 2013). The academic success relies heavily on the embodiment of cultural capital as one has to possess the normative behaviours such as the languages being used,

how they are being dressed or abiding the ‘ correct’ rules for behaving in school. The qualification certificate acts as a “ certificate of cultural competence which confers on its holders a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to power” (Szeman, 2011, pp. 86). It can thus, be used in the labour market as a rate of conversion between economic capital and cultural capital Habitus

In Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, habitus which is closely related to the cultural capital, was one of the concepts he talked about where it is the unconscious and embodied habits such as the posture, accents, values etc. which are determined and shaped by external factors around an individual. (Reay, 2004) However, “ is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period”. (Navarro, 2006, pp. 16) Habitus opens up and create a great range of actions but at the same time, limits the amount of possible actions.

This opportunity and constraints are based on the embodied social structure of the environment such as gender, age and the social hierarchy the individual is in thus creating expectations that will eventually shape his or her behaviour and life (Bourdieu, 1984) For example, when an adult grows up in a particular village, he or she will embody the assumptions of age, gender and social hierarchy of that village. This will build the homology between the adult’s personality and the adult’s social grouping. (Dirks, 1994) Just because the values and beliefs that the adult has based on their social encounters, it does not necessarily means that habitus is the aftereffect of free will or driven by the structure. It is actually shaped by the interaction

between both of them over time. In other words, it is shaped by all past events, structures, practises and at the same time the individual's perception of it all (Bourdieu, 1984) Relationship between Habitus and Cultural Capital

Given this example, youths that come from a disadvantage background and lack the cultural capital will unfavourably shapes the deposition and the outlook of the youths. Hence, this will cause them to have a negative attitude towards their studies or in other words, lacking the habitus. This will eventually cause a negative chain reaction to their academic results and progress. (Dumais, 2002) This shows that an individual underprivileged of cultural will be in most cases, inclined to make decisions that is based on the recreated underprivileged circumstances in accordance with an underprivileged habitus. Therefore, in order to attain success, the individual has to utilize the cultural capital that they have learnt from their families, groups or any experiences that has happened before. This will then cause an effect to gaining confidence from the good and productive feedback from e. g. Teachers or bosses which will subsequently alter or change their habitus (Gaddis, 2013) Conclusion

The social class that an individual will belong to is based on the dominant culture they are in which is an indication if they are at a social advantage or disadvantage. The level of advantage depends on how much cultural capital an individual possess and the habitus that is ingrained in their daily interactions. An individual with the advantage will have an attitude that puts them in culture superiority and hence, an upper social class in that particular

class structure (Dumais, 2002) The result of an individual within a particular social class due to their cultural capital and habitus will affect their life chances which will help enhance their quality of life. This is because the potential opportunities that the individual has will be in accordance to the social class they are in. Therefore, for individual to have a better quality in life, it is dependent on how they utilized their cultural capital in order to alter their habitus which will then give them a social advantage in class structure they are in, in order to open up to more opportunities and eventually improve and affect their life.

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