

Cultural Capital and Educational Success: A Systematic Review of Bourdieu's Theory in Contemporary Educational Sociology

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Abstract

This article presents a systematic review of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital in relation to contemporary educational success. The study aims to synthesize and critically evaluate the existing body of literature that applies Bourdieu's framework to educational sociology. A literature review method was employed, focusing on peer-reviewed articles published in leading journals across sociology and education. The analysis highlights how cultural capital, manifested through language proficiency, cultural practices, and family background, continues to shape academic achievement. Findings reveal that the reproduction of social inequalities within schools remains strongly influenced by differences in cultural resources among students. Moreover, the review identifies variations in the interpretation of cultural capital across diverse socio-cultural contexts, particularly in non-Western educational systems. Several studies emphasize the adaptability of Bourdieu's framework in explaining new forms of educational stratification in the era of globalization. At the same time, critical scholarship challenges the deterministic aspects of Bourdieu's theory and calls for a more dynamic understanding of cultural practices. This review underscores the importance of integrating cultural capital with broader structural and policy considerations to foster equitable education. The article concludes that while Bourdieu's theory remains highly relevant, it requires contextual reinterpretation to address contemporary educational challenges.

Keywords: Cultural Capital, Educational Success, Bourdieu's Theory, Sociology of Education, Social Inequality.

A. INTRODUCTION

Pierre Bourdieu, the French sociologist, developed the concept of cultural capital to illuminate how non-economic resources contribute to social stratification and educational inequality (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). His early collaboration with Jean-Claude Passeron in *Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction* argued that schools legitimize and reproduce class advantages through hidden cultural codes (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu later refined the concept in his essay *The Forms of Capital*, situating cultural capital alongside economic and social capital as key dimensions of inequality (Bourdieu, 1986). He defined cultural capital in three forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized, each shaping students' capacity to succeed academically (Bourdieu, 1986). Embodied cultural capital refers to deeply ingrained dispositions, tastes, and linguistic competence that are acquired through socialization (Lareau, 2011). Objectified cultural capital, by contrast, encompasses material cultural goods such as books, instruments, and artworks that transmit symbolic value (DiMaggio, 1982). Institutionalized cultural capital includes formal educational credentials that validate cultural competence and signal legitimacy in academic settings (Sullivan, 2001). In parallel, Bourdieu introduced the concept of habitus, a system of durable dispositions through which individuals perceive and act

within the social world (Bourdieu, 1990). Habitus interacts with cultural capital by guiding how individuals mobilize their cultural resources in specific institutional contexts (Swartz, 1997). The concept of cultural reproduction further explains how schools perpetuate class hierarchies by privileging dominant cultural forms and disguising them as meritocratic standards (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Empirical studies reinforce this theory: DiMaggio (1982) demonstrated that participation in high-status cultural activities positively influences student grades independent of family income. Similarly, Jæger and Breinholt (2017) showed that cultural capital functions both as a skill and a signal, shaping teacher evaluations and academic outcomes. These insights highlight Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, where the dominant culture imposes itself as legitimate and subordinated groups internalize this hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1991). Bourdieu's theoretical apparatus offers a sophisticated lens to analyze how cultural capital, habitus, and symbolic systems reproduce educational inequality while appearing neutral (Grenfell, 2012). Understanding the origins and elaborations of cultural capital is therefore crucial for situating systematic reviews on its role in contemporary educational sociology.

Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital remains highly relevant in explaining educational success because it emphasizes how symbolic resources shape academic outcomes across diverse contexts. DiMaggio (1982) provided early evidence that participation in high-status cultural activities significantly influences grades independently of family income, highlighting the formative role of cultural engagement. Sullivan (2001) further demonstrated that reading habits, language use, and parental education forms of cultural capital contribute to variations in educational attainment beyond cognitive ability. Jæger and Breinholt (2017) confirmed that cultural capital operates both as a skill, equipping students with communication competencies, and as a signal, influencing teachers' perceptions of student potential. Breinholt and Jæger (2020) expanded this perspective by distinguishing the dual mechanisms of skills and signals, showing that cultural capital enhances both learning processes and evaluation outcomes. Tramonte and Willms (2010) argued that dynamic forms of cultural capital, such as parental communication and cultural participation, predict stronger educational outcomes compared to static indicators like highbrow tastes. These findings collectively illustrate that cultural capital serves not only as an internalized resource but also as an externally validated credential in academic contexts. Cross-national studies, including those by Barone (2006), revealed that the effects of cultural capital are observable across different educational systems, confirming its global explanatory power. In addition, Sullivan (2002) observed that cultural capital impacts not only student performance but also access to higher education, reinforcing its long-term significance. More recent scholarship by Jin (2024) identified that cultural capital mediates intergenerational transmission of advantage, ensuring that children from educated families achieve higher educational attainment. This suggests that cultural capital acts as both a mechanism of social reproduction and a pathway for social mobility. Teachers' reliance on cultural markers when assessing ability perpetuates inequality, yet also highlights cultural capital's direct role in

structuring academic success (Jæger & Breinholt, 2017). These insights confirm that cultural capital influences both micro-level interactions and macro-level educational outcomes. The persistence of these findings underscores the necessity of integrating cultural capital into sociological analyses of education. The accumulated body of empirical evidence demonstrates that cultural capital remains indispensable for explaining how students achieve success within educational systems.

Bourdieu's framework of cultural capital provides a powerful explanation for the persistence of educational inequality across generations. DiMaggio (1982) showed that participation in cultural activities produces advantages in schooling outcomes, reinforcing differences between students from privileged and disadvantaged backgrounds. Sullivan (2001) confirmed that cultural resources accumulated in the family home continue to shape achievement gaps even after controlling for cognitive ability. Jæger (2009) argued that schools institutionalize class-specific forms of cultural capital, thereby legitimizing inequalities as differences in talent rather than social background. Tramonte and Willms (2010) emphasized that cultural capital operates dynamically through family communication and parental expectations, both of which sustain disparities in performance. Barone (2006) found that cross-national data confirm the same patterns, with students from high-status families consistently outperforming peers despite similar cognitive capacities. Breinholt and Jæger (2020) clarified that teachers often interpret cultural signals as evidence of ability, which results in systematic bias against students lacking dominant forms of cultural capital. This bias compounds existing disadvantages, ensuring that inequality is transmitted through teacher evaluations and school placements. Sullivan (2002) observed that educational inequality persists because cultural capital not only influences achievement but also determines access to higher education opportunities. Lareau (2011) provided ethnographic evidence that middle-class families cultivate children's cultural skills through concerted cultivation, creating lasting advantages over working-class peers. Jin (2024) demonstrated that intergenerational transmission of cultural capital remains a central mechanism for explaining how inequality persists in the era of globalization. Studies such as those by Boliver (2011) confirm that educational systems reproduce advantage by privileging students who embody institutional norms. Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) explained that rational action theory complements Bourdieu's account, showing that families strategically invest in cultural capital to secure children's mobility. Research by Yamamoto and Brinton (2010) illustrates that these mechanisms are not confined to Western societies but also operate in East Asian educational systems. The accumulation of findings across different contexts underscores that inequality in education persists because cultural capital continues to function as both a resource and a signal.

Contemporary applications of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital in educational sociology reveal both its enduring relevance and its contested interpretations. Lamont and Lareau (1988) demonstrated that cultural capital provides explanatory power in understanding class-based educational inequality but requires refinement to capture cultural diversity. Sullivan (2001) argued that Bourdieu's

framework remains useful but must be empirically adapted to contexts beyond France, particularly within the United Kingdom. Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) highlighted that cultural capital influences not only academic achievement but also the negotiation of institutional boundaries, especially for minority students. Dumais (2002) examined gender differences in cultural capital acquisition and found that its impact on achievement varies significantly between male and female students. Barone (2006) extended the discussion to cross-national comparisons, emphasizing that cultural capital's effects are evident in both stratified and relatively egalitarian educational systems. Kingston (2001) criticized Bourdieu's approach, claiming that cultural capital is less deterministic than often assumed and may operate differently depending on institutional environments. Carter (2003) developed the concept of "black cultural capital" to address how marginalized groups deploy alternative cultural resources to achieve educational success. Lareau and Weininger (2003) further critiqued simplistic readings of Bourdieu and argued for recognizing the interaction between cultural signals and institutional recognition. Jæger and Breinholt (2017) provided new empirical evidence that cultural capital functions through both skills and signals, updating Bourdieu's framework for modern educational analysis. Breinholt and Jæger (2020) confirmed that teachers interpret cultural markers as signs of ability, reinforcing debates on whether cultural capital is primarily a signal or a substantive skill. Yamamoto and Brinton (2010) demonstrated the applicability of Bourdieu's theory in East Asian contexts, illustrating its adaptability across cultural boundaries. Stahl (2014) contributed by showing how working-class boys develop resistant identities that challenge dominant forms of cultural capital, complicating deterministic interpretations. Rollock, Vincent, and Gillborn (2015) revealed that middle-class black parents in the UK strategically deploy cultural resources to counteract racialized disadvantage, reshaping the debate on cultural capital's flexibility. These contributions illustrate that contemporary scholarship simultaneously applies, critiques, and reinterprets Bourdieu's theory to better explain diverse educational outcomes. The ongoing debates highlight that cultural capital must be understood as a dynamic and contested concept rather than a static determinant of educational inequality.

Despite extensive applications of Bourdieu's theory, significant research gaps remain in understanding the role of cultural capital in contemporary educational contexts. DiMaggio (1982) demonstrated the influence of cultural participation on grades, yet this early work did not fully explain how evolving cultural forms shape modern educational systems. Sullivan (2001) provided evidence that cultural resources matter for attainment, but her analysis was limited to the United Kingdom and may not capture variations in non-Western societies. Barone (2006) expanded the framework cross-nationally but emphasized that much of the evidence comes from European contexts, leaving limited exploration of the Global South. Jæger (2009) highlighted the institutionalization of cultural capital in schooling, yet further studies are required to examine how these mechanisms function under neoliberal education reforms. Tramonte and Willms (2010) distinguished between static and dynamic

cultural capital, but their study lacked detailed analysis of digital cultural practices that increasingly define academic success. Breinholt and Jæger (2020) advanced debates by identifying signals and skills, although research still needs to clarify how teachers interpret cultural signals in diverse cultural and linguistic environments. Carter (2003) proposed the idea of black cultural capital to highlight alternative resources among marginalized groups, but the broader applicability of this concept across ethnic and cultural settings remains understudied. Rollock, Vincent, and Gillborn (2015) examined race and class interactions in Britain, yet more scholarship is necessary to investigate similar dynamics in Asian, African, and Latin American contexts. Yamamoto and Brinton (2010) illustrated cultural capital in Japan, but comparative work across East Asia remains scarce. Jin (2024) emphasized the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital, yet rapid globalization and digitalization may be transforming these processes in ways that are not yet systematically captured. Stahl (2014) showed resistant working-class masculinities, yet gendered expressions of cultural capital in non-Western societies require more focused attention. Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) argued that rational action complements Bourdieu's framework, but little research integrates cultural capital with contemporary choice theories. Lareau (2011) provided ethnographic insights into class differences in family practices, yet such in-depth qualitative studies remain limited outside North America. The cumulative evidence suggests that current scholarship has not sufficiently addressed cultural capital in contexts shaped by globalization, digitalization, and intersectionality. Identifying these gaps underscores the need for systematic reviews that reassess Bourdieu's framework and propose new theoretical directions.

The objective of this study is to systematically review how Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital explains educational success in contemporary sociology while identifying its relevance for policy and practice. DiMaggio (1982) showed that cultural participation significantly improves academic performance, which justifies a review that connects early foundational work with more recent developments. Sullivan (2001) highlighted that cultural resources explain attainment gaps, establishing the importance of synthesizing multiple strands of research into a coherent framework. Jæger (2009) emphasized that meritocratic systems still reproduce inequality through cultural capital, underscoring the significance of re-examining this process within modern contexts. Barone (2006) demonstrated that cross-national analyses can reveal the universality of cultural capital, which supports the objective of situating this review within a global perspective. Tramonte and Willms (2010) distinguished dynamic forms of cultural capital that predict stronger outcomes, suggesting that a systematic review should evaluate these nuances in light of diverse evidence. Carter (2003) provided the concept of black cultural capital, which expands the theoretical lens and validates the objective of including minority perspectives in the review. Rollock, Vincent, and Gillborn (2015) examined race and class together, reinforcing the importance of this review in addressing intersectionality within educational inequality. Breinholt and Jæger (2020) revealed that cultural capital functions as both

signals and skills, making it essential to clarify these mechanisms in a structured synthesis. Yamamoto and Brinton (2010) showed how cultural capital operates in Japan, demonstrating that the significance of this study includes understanding regional specificities beyond Western contexts. Jin (2024) identified the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital, which makes the review valuable for examining long-term patterns of inequality. Stahl (2014) demonstrated resistant working-class masculinities, providing a rationale for including discussions of agency and counter-cultural strategies. Lareau (2011) revealed how parenting practices reproduce inequality, highlighting the importance of situating cultural capital in everyday life for comprehensive analysis. Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) argued for integrating rational action theory with cultural capital, which strengthens the objective of bridging theoretical traditions in this review. The significance of this study lies in offering an updated synthesis that addresses historical insights, contemporary applications, and emerging challenges within the sociology of education.

B. METHOD

This study adopts a systematic literature review approach to investigate the relevance of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital in explaining educational success within contemporary sociology. The method emphasizes the comprehensive collection, organization, and synthesis of scholarly works that directly address the interplay between cultural capital and educational outcomes. The review process began with the formulation of a clear research question that guided the search strategy and determined the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The databases selected for the search were chosen for their relevance to sociology, education, and interdisciplinary studies, ensuring access to a broad range of peer-reviewed journals. Keywords were carefully identified to capture the multidimensional aspects of cultural capital, educational success, and sociological frameworks. The search strategy prioritized articles that provide empirical evidence as well as theoretical discussions to ensure a balanced understanding of the topic. Studies published in the last three decades were considered, reflecting both the foundational contributions and the latest debates in the field. The inclusion criteria focused on works that explicitly applied, tested, or critiqued Bourdieu's theory in the context of education. Exclusion criteria removed articles that only mentioned cultural capital superficially without substantial engagement with its mechanisms. Each selected article was subjected to a process of coding and categorization, allowing identification of recurring themes, methodological approaches, and theoretical developments. The review also examined differences in findings across geographic regions, institutional settings, and levels of education. A critical comparative approach was applied to highlight not only convergences in the literature but also divergences that point to contextual variations. The analysis placed particular attention on how cultural capital has been operationalized across studies and how these operationalizations influence the interpretation of results. The process further involved mapping the evolution of debates around cultural capital, from deterministic interpretations to more dynamic

and critical perspectives. This research contextualizes broader educational transformations by referencing national developments in Indonesia, where the transition toward Society 5.0 has propelled the adoption of digital and remote learning infrastructures (Hikmat, 2022). The reliability of the review was strengthened by using transparent procedures for article selection and analysis. The method sought to avoid overrepresentation of particular regions by deliberately incorporating studies from both Western and non-Western contexts. The ultimate goal of this methodological approach was to provide a coherent synthesis that bridges theoretical and empirical strands of research. The review also aimed to capture emerging themes such as globalization, digitalization, and intersectionality in relation to cultural capital. The systematic nature of this method ensures that conclusions are not based on isolated findings but rather on a comprehensive body of scholarship. This approach provides a robust foundation for understanding how cultural capital continues to shape educational success in diverse and evolving social environments.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that cultural capital consistently emerges as a strong predictor of academic achievement across diverse educational systems. Students who possess linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and familiarity with dominant norms consistently secure higher levels of performance. Teachers actively recognize these cultural signals and evaluate students more favorably when they demonstrate such competencies. Schools reward cultural familiarity by aligning curriculum and pedagogy with the expectations of dominant groups. Families transmit cultural resources to children in ways that directly prepare them for success within formal education. Children who receive early exposure to books, structured activities, and enriched communication practices actively translate these experiences into measurable achievement. Students with institutionalized cultural capital such as certificates and qualifications navigate academic pathways with greater ease. The possession of objectified cultural capital, including cultural goods and artifacts, strengthens learning outcomes and provides visible advantages in classroom settings. Educational institutions continue to embed cultural assumptions into assessment practices that privilege students who embody dominant values. The consistent translation of cultural capital into higher performance demonstrates that academic success is not merely a reflection of individual talent. Students actively use cultural competencies as resources to negotiate teacher expectations and institutional standards. The reproduction of advantage occurs when those with greater cultural capital access more opportunities and recognition. Learners without these resources struggle to meet institutional demands even when they display cognitive ability. The persistence of these dynamics confirms that cultural capital remains a crucial lens for understanding disparities in academic achievement. This finding highlights that cultural resources actively shape trajectories of success across all levels of education.

The analysis shows that educational institutions actively reinforce inequality by legitimizing certain forms of cultural capital as markers of ability. Schools design curricula and assessment systems that align with the cultural knowledge of privileged groups. Teachers reward students who demonstrate familiarity with dominant language styles and cultural practices. Administrators shape policies that unintentionally prioritize students with access to enriched cultural environments. Families with higher cultural resources prepare their children to meet these institutional standards more effectively. Students who possess dominant cultural traits gain recognition and opportunities that accelerate their academic progress. Those who lack such traits encounter barriers that diminish their potential to succeed. The system reinforces privilege by embedding cultural expectations into examinations, interviews, and selection processes. Educators consciously or unconsciously value behaviors, attitudes, and communication styles that reflect middle-class norms. Learners with alternative cultural backgrounds struggle because their knowledge is often disregarded or undervalued. The institutional environment converts cultural advantage into academic credentials that carry long-term consequences. Students actively internalize these expectations and modify their behavior to align with what schools reward. Inequality persists because institutions continue to act as gatekeepers of valued cultural forms. The reproduction of hierarchy occurs when access to opportunities depends on possession of specific cultural resources. The findings demonstrate that schools and universities are not neutral spaces but active agents in the reinforcement of social inequality.

The analysis identifies that the effects of cultural capital vary significantly across different social and cultural contexts. Students in Western education systems benefit from forms of cultural capital that emphasize individual expression, critical thinking, and standardized language use. Learners in non-Western settings often experience different expectations where respect for authority, communal values, and collective identity carry more weight. Gender differences also shape how cultural capital influences achievement, with boys and girls translating resources into success in distinct ways. Ethnic and racial backgrounds further condition the impact of cultural capital on educational trajectories. Migrant students frequently face challenges because their cultural resources do not match the institutional expectations of the host society. Teachers interpret cultural signals differently depending on their own cultural orientation and training. Families adapt their strategies for transmitting cultural resources based on social environment and available opportunities. Schools in urban areas often reward forms of cultural capital that differ from those valued in rural settings. Economic context also influences the strength of cultural capital, as wealthier families reinforce advantages with additional resources. Learners from disadvantaged groups sometimes develop alternative forms of cultural capital that help them resist exclusion. Comparative studies reveal that some education systems amplify inequality more than others by heavily institutionalizing dominant cultural norms. Students in more flexible systems translate diverse forms of cultural resources into success more easily. The variation across contexts highlights the importance of

understanding cultural capital as a dynamic rather than universal mechanism. This finding emphasizes that educational success depends not only on possession of cultural capital but also on the institutional and cultural environment in which it operates.

The analysis demonstrates that cultural capital evolves dynamically in response to changes in society and education. Students increasingly draw on digital literacy, online communication, and technological fluency as new forms of cultural resources. Schools recognize these competencies and incorporate them into learning and evaluation processes. Learners actively integrate global perspectives, intercultural skills, and multilingual abilities as valuable markers of success. Teachers encourage the use of creative digital tools and reward students who demonstrate innovation through technology. Families invest in extracurricular activities, cultural experiences, and digital access to strengthen their children's cultural competencies. Young people translate engagement with social media and digital networks into academic and social capital within educational institutions. Cultural capital adapts to globalization by prioritizing cross-cultural understanding and international awareness. Students in multicultural societies navigate multiple cultural repertoires and actively blend them to achieve recognition. Educational systems increasingly value soft skills such as collaboration, adaptability, and creativity alongside traditional cultural assets. Learners use artistic expression, sports, and community involvement to expand the definition of valuable cultural capital. Institutions acknowledge these evolving resources but still privilege dominant cultural norms in many contexts. Students demonstrate agency by transforming emerging practices into recognized forms of advantage. The dynamic evolution of cultural capital highlights that its meaning is not fixed but constantly redefined by societal and technological developments. This finding affirms that educational success depends on how students mobilize both traditional and emerging forms of cultural capital.

The analysis reveals that contemporary scholarship actively debates and expands Bourdieu's original framework of cultural capital. Researchers reinterpret cultural capital to capture new dimensions of inequality in modern education. Scholars argue that cultural capital functions not only as a determinant of achievement but also as a contested and flexible resource. Academics develop alternative concepts that highlight how marginalized groups create distinctive cultural repertoires to achieve success. Researchers examine the intersection of cultural capital with race, gender, and class to better explain educational disparities. Scholars emphasize that agency plays a role in how students mobilize cultural capital within restrictive institutional environments. Analysts propose integrating cultural capital with rational choice theories to enrich explanations of educational decision-making. Researchers debate whether cultural capital should be seen as a skill-based resource or as a symbolic signal that shapes teacher perceptions. Scholars critique deterministic interpretations and highlight the need for more dynamic models. Academics introduce the idea of resistant cultural practices that challenge dominant expectations within schools. Researchers also expand the framework by incorporating

globalization, digitalization, and transnational mobility as forces that transform cultural capital. Scholars apply the concept across different cultural contexts and identify variations in its operation. Analysts argue that the adaptability of cultural capital strengthens its value as a theoretical lens. Academics conclude that cultural capital remains essential for understanding educational inequality but requires continual refinement. This finding highlights that theoretical debates and expansions ensure the ongoing relevance of Bourdieu's ideas in contemporary sociology of education.

This analysis shows that cultural capital remains a consistent predictor of academic achievement, and this finding aligns with evidence from multiple previous studies. Jin (2024) highlights that embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital significantly promote academic attainment through intergenerational transmission, confirming the long-term influence of these resources. Jheng (2023) strengthens this conclusion by presenting a meta-analysis that demonstrates a positive correlation between cultural capital and reading performance, while also noting that contextual moderators shape the strength of this relationship. Tan (2023) provides large-scale empirical support from China, showing that family cultural capital is positively associated with educational effort even when social capital is controlled, which illustrates that cultural assets operate independently as drivers of achievement. Pishghadam et al. (2023) expand this perspective by showing that cultural capital and social capital jointly predict student performance, suggesting that these forms of capital interact dynamically rather than functioning in isolation. Jæger (2018) also confirms that students with greater cultural capital consistently achieve better educational outcomes, reinforcing the persistence of this effect across diverse contexts. Our analysis diverges slightly from these works by emphasizing not only the correlation but also the mechanism through which students and institutions actively transform cultural resources into measurable academic gains. Prior research often interprets cultural capital as a static inheritance, while our interpretation stresses its enactment and recognition within educational environments. This comparison clarifies that cultural capital functions as both a resource and a process, actively shaping trajectories of academic success.

This analysis shows that educational institutions reinforce inequality by privileging certain forms of cultural capital as legitimate markers of ability. DiMaggio (1982) demonstrated that participation in high-status cultural activities improves grades, which highlights how schools reward cultural familiarity. Sullivan (2001) provided evidence that reading habits and cultural resources strongly affect attainment, confirming that institutions privilege students with advantaged family backgrounds. Jæger (2009) revealed that meritocratic systems still institutionalize cultural capital, ensuring that social reproduction continues under the guise of fairness. Barone (2006) showed that even in different national contexts, schools maintain structural inequalities by validating dominant cultural norms. Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) argued that families strategically invest in cultural capital to maximize educational opportunities, which institutions then recognize as merit.

Tramonte and Willms (2010) found that parental communication and expectations serve as dynamic forms of cultural capital, indicating that schools interpret these resources as signs of ability. Boliver (2011) confirmed that expansion in higher education has not eliminated class inequalities because universities continue to privilege middle-class cultural forms. Rollock, Vincent, and Gillborn (2015) observed that race and class intersect in the institutional reproduction of advantage, showing that schools reward some identities while marginalizing others. The comparison of these findings with our research confirms that institutions actively transform cultural differences into hierarchical educational outcomes.

This analysis indicates that the effects of cultural capital vary considerably across social, cultural, and national contexts. Yamamoto and Brinton (2010) demonstrated that cultural capital strongly influences student outcomes in Japan, highlighting that East Asian systems also reproduce inequality. Lareau (2011) provided ethnographic evidence from the United States showing that middle-class families cultivate children's cultural skills differently than working-class families, leading to divergent educational trajectories. The rise of social media has reshaped how cultural capital manifests among adolescents, especially through narcissistic behaviors that reflect new forms of symbolic engagement and recognition (Engkus, Hikmat, & Saminnurahmat, 2017). Carter (2003) introduced the notion of black cultural capital, emphasizing that marginalized groups construct alternative resources to navigate schools, which challenges universal interpretations of Bourdieu's framework. Rollock, Vincent, and Gillborn (2015) examined British contexts and showed that race and class intersect to shape how cultural capital is recognized in schools. Barone (2006) conducted cross-national analysis and found that educational inequality persists even in more egalitarian systems, reinforcing that cultural capital effects are context-dependent. Jæger (2009) confirmed that meritocratic systems still produce unequal outcomes because institutions interpret cultural resources unevenly across social groups. Dumais (2002) revealed gender differences in the acquisition and use of cultural capital, suggesting that its effects are not homogeneous even within the same educational system. Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) highlighted that cultural capital also determines the quality of parent-school relationships, which vary significantly across class and ethnic lines. Breen and Goldthorpe (1997) suggested that rational action complements cultural explanations, reinforcing that variations emerge when families strategically invest in different forms of cultural resources. The comparison of these studies with our finding shows that cultural capital does not function as a universal determinant but instead operates differently depending on context, culture, and identity.

This analysis confirms that the effects of cultural capital differ significantly across social and cultural contexts, and this observation aligns with diverse prior studies. Lamont and Lareau (1988) argued that cultural capital operates differently across societies and requires contextual refinement to capture local variations. Kingston (2001) critiqued the deterministic use of Bourdieu's framework and stressed that institutions interpret cultural signals unevenly depending on national traditions.

De Graaf, De Graaf, and Kraaykamp (2000) provided cross-national evidence that family background and parental cultural resources affect attainment differently across Western and non-Western systems. Kraaykamp and Van Eijck (2010) highlighted that leisure activities as forms of cultural capital vary in impact depending on national culture, confirming that not all resources hold the same weight in different contexts. Espinoza (2011) examined Chile and demonstrated that cultural capital contributes to stratification even in societies with strong public education systems. Lehmann (2013) emphasized that working-class students in Canada reinterpret cultural capital in ways that challenge elite assumptions, showing variation within a single country. De Graaf and Ganzeboom (1993) observed that Dutch education systems amplify inequalities by privileging certain cultural resources that differ from those valued elsewhere. Sullivan (2007) showed that cultural participation interacts with structural features of schools to shape outcomes unevenly across institutional contexts. These studies demonstrate that cultural capital cannot be applied as a universal mechanism because its effects depend on national, institutional, and cultural circumstances. Our finding reinforces this by highlighting that cultural capital's influence is contextually mediated rather than uniform.

This analysis highlights that cultural capital evolves dynamically in response to globalization, digitalization, and changing educational demands. Prieur and Savage (2013) argued that contemporary societies generate new cultural repertoires, where digital literacy and cosmopolitan tastes increasingly function as markers of distinction. Savage, Devine, Cunningham, Taylor, Li, Hjellbrekke, Le Roux, Friedman, and Miles (2013) demonstrated in the Great British Class Survey that emerging cultural practices, such as digital engagement, reshape how cultural capital operates in modern stratification systems. The digitalization of education further illustrates evolving cultural capital, since online learning tools such as Zoom and WhatsApp created both opportunities and barriers for students, reflecting how technology mediates access to educational success (Hikmat, Hermawan, Aldim, & Irwandi, 2020). Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal, and Wright (2009) emphasized that everyday consumption practices and cultural participation diversify the meaning of capital in post-industrial societies. Gewirtz (2001) noted that educational policy reforms and marketization of schooling require students and families to mobilize new skills and cultural competencies, showing that cultural capital adapts to neoliberal conditions. Khan (2011) revealed that elite schools increasingly value global awareness, extracurricular activities, and cosmopolitan practices as key forms of cultural advantage. Atkinson (2011) stressed that traditional cultural forms like highbrow art still matter but coexist with new symbolic markers tied to lifestyle and technology. Savage and Gayo (2011) found that contemporary cultural participation is fragmented and stratified, meaning that capital now reflects hybrid identities rather than singular class-based codes. Edgerton and Roberts (2014) showed that digital forms of cultural capital predict educational performance among youth, underlining the importance of technological competence in shaping success. Warde, Wright, and Gayo-Cal (2008) added that tastes in food, leisure, and media

have become central indicators of cultural differentiation, reinforcing that capital evolves with consumption practices. These findings collectively confirm that cultural capital is no longer a fixed entity but a dynamic resource constantly reshaped by social, technological, and policy changes.

This analysis confirms that contemporary scholarship actively debates and expands Bourdieu's framework to address its limitations and extend its relevance. Lamont and Lareau (1988) argued that cultural capital must be redefined to account for diverse cultural practices, emphasizing that Bourdieu's original theory requires contextual refinement. Kingston (2001) challenged the deterministic interpretation of cultural capital and proposed that institutions and social actors mediate its effects in ways more complex than Bourdieu anticipated. Lareau and Weininger (2003) critically assessed educational research and concluded that scholars often misapply Bourdieu's ideas without recognizing the importance of institutional recognition in validating cultural resources. Carter (2003) expanded the theory by introducing the concept of black cultural capital, showing how marginalized groups strategically mobilize cultural repertoires to challenge dominant norms. Stahl (2014) demonstrated that working-class boys develop resistant identities that complicate simplistic notions of cultural reproduction, illustrating that agency plays a stronger role than Bourdieu described. Rollock, Vincent, and Gillborn (2015) revealed that race and class intersect to reshape the operation of cultural capital, demanding a more intersectional framework. Atkinson (2011) emphasized that omnivorous consumption practices redefine the boundaries of distinction, suggesting that cultural capital operates in hybrid rather than fixed forms. Savage, Devine, Cunningham, Taylor, Li, Hjellbrekke, Le Roux, Friedman, and Miles (2013) argued that class analysis must integrate emerging forms of cultural capital identified in large-scale surveys. These perspectives collectively demonstrate that cultural capital remains a vital theoretical tool but must evolve to capture new dynamics of education, identity, and inequality.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the hidden curriculum remains a powerful analytical lens for understanding the complex dynamics of education. The findings show that the theoretical foundations of the hidden curriculum continue to provide valuable insights while evolving to address contemporary challenges. The concept has retained its relevance because it bridges classical perspectives with critical and modern educational theories. Power relations emerge as a central mechanism that shapes student behavior and reinforces institutional authority. The analysis demonstrates that authority structures embedded in daily school practices transmit implicit lessons that influence how learners view hierarchy and control. Ideological reproduction through education ensures that dominant cultural values and political assumptions are internalized as natural truths. Students absorb these ideologies through curricular content, assessment practices, and institutional routines that mask their political nature. Social reproduction remains evident as educational systems transmit privilege unevenly, reinforcing structural inequalities across class, race, and gender. The hidden

curriculum sustains intergenerational cycles of advantage and disadvantage by legitimizing cultural capital associated with dominant groups. Inequality is thus perpetuated not only through explicit policies but also through implicit norms and expectations. Emerging transformations demonstrate that hidden curricula extend beyond traditional classrooms into digital platforms and globalized education. These shifts create new forms of implicit socialization that align with neoliberal reforms and technological changes. Students now encounter hidden lessons about competition, consumerism, and adaptability within modern learning environments. The hidden curriculum proves to be dynamic, continually adapting to societal and institutional changes. Its resilience underscores its significance as a conceptual tool for analyzing education across time and context. The findings highlight that education is never neutral but always a site of ideological negotiation and power. The hidden curriculum simultaneously constrains and empowers learners, shaping both their identities and opportunities. Recognizing its operation allows educators and policymakers to uncover implicit mechanisms that reproduce inequality. The study provides a comprehensive synthesis that repositions the hidden curriculum as essential for critical engagement with education. The conclusion emphasizes the need to rethink education not only as a vehicle for knowledge but also as a space for challenging and transforming social realities.

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