Accepted Manuscript (AM) Citation: Green, Elizabeth. "Research in Christian Academies: Perspectives from Bourdieu." (2022): 1-43.

This is a pre-copyrighted, author-produced, peer-reviewed version of the book-chapter accepted for publication in *Social Theory and Education Research: Understanding Foucault, Habermas, Bourdieu and Derrida*, edited by Mark Murphy. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Version of Record (VOR) Citation. Green, Elizabeth. "Research in the New Christian Academies: Perspectives from Bourdieu," In *Social Theory and Education Research: Understanding Foucault, Habermas, Bourdieu and Derrida*, edited by Mark Murphy, Pages 138-152. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Research in Christian Academies: Perspectives from Bourdieu

Elizabeth Green

Introduction

I first encountered Bourdieu on an MA Education degree course. When I enrolled for the degree I was a secondary school teacher in England and my intention was to get an edge in the promotions game and not to get hooked on research, although that is ultimately what happened. Unwittingly in that decision I was enacting one of Bourdieu's critical concepts: cultural capital. Education conferred on me a distinction or a material advantage; the MA opened the door to a PhD and the rest as they say 'is history'. In fact Bourdieu (1986) would say that the whole of the social world is 'accumulated history' (p. 46). This means that there is no way out of the cultural assumptions and habits which we have inherited and which we will reproduce in the ways we interact with society. This chapter will argue that Bourdieu's theory of education, reproduction and distinction is a powerful tool for the analysis of

education, particularly in faith-based settings which is the context in which I work.

Bourdieu's writings are complex; first encounters with his work are stretching and sometimes off putting for new researchers. The first thing by Bourdieu which I read was *The forms of capital* re-printed in A. H. Halsey *et al*'s (2001) edited collection called *Education, culture and society*. I was drawn to Bourdieu's analysis of the social world and won over by his determination not to reduce it to a series of mechanical interactions between people, groups and social structures.

> The social world is accumulated history, and if it is not to be reduced to a discontinued series of instantaneous mechanical equilibria between agents, who are treated as interchangeable particles, one must reintroduce into it the notion of capital and with it, accumulation and all its effects (Bourdieu 1986, 46).

This quotation illustrates why it is sometimes necessary to persevere with Bourdieu. I did not on first reading understand everything in *The forms of capital* but I got a sense of the scale of Bourdieu's contribution to the theory and practice of sociology and of his commitment to critical and systematic empirical research. The second section of this chapter will explore the nature

of that contribution in the context of Bourdieu's own history by introducing him as an academic and sketching in the trajectory of his research. I will introduce four key concepts which underpin Bourdieu's work: field, habitus, symbolic violence and cultural capital. Bourdieu remains a controversial figure and the section will conclude with a brief summary of some of the main criticisms of his theoretical work.

In order to get a handle on Bourdieu I find it helpful to read empirical research which applies his concepts to education. My MA introduced me to the work of Grace (1978, 2002) who applies Bourdieu's concepts to urban education and to Catholic education. I read avidly the work of Ball (2003) and Reay (1998) who draw on Bourdieu to analyse education reform and school choice in relation to class and to gender. This experience has led me to conclude that one of the most effective ways to introduce Bourdieu's theory and method to a new audience is through a case-study of research. In UK sociology of education research Bourdieu has chiefly been applied to the study of social class. My work broadens this to study the impact of religious faith in education. In the third section of this chapter I present a case study from my own research carried out in English Academies sponsored by a Christian foundation. In the fourth section I illustrate how I've built on Bourdieu's theory by integrating concepts from other thinkers into my research designs. This will illustrate what Bourdieu's work offers to education researchers. The

chapter will conclude that the loose definitions, the evolution of concepts and their application make Bourdieu's social theory a very adaptable tool for analysing contemporary religious culture and the impact of faith-based education.

Bourdieu and his concepts

In *Sketch for a self analysis* Bourdieu (2007) wrote that 'to understand is first to understand the field with which and against which one has been formed' (p.4). The aim of this section is to introduce some of the primary concepts in Bourdieu's work set against the backdrop of Bourdieu's own formative experiences and early career history. *Sketch for a self analysis* was born out of the final lecture which Bourdieu gave at the Collège de France. Bourdieu was adamant that the text was not an auto-biography but rather an attempt to analyse himself 'from the point of view of sociology' (Bourdieu 2007, 1). By analysing himself as the sociological object Bourdieu was putting into practice what is arguably one of his most important legacies for research: the exercise of reflexivity.

Throughout his work Bourdieu consistently challenged the assumption that the production of academic knowledge was a neutral activity. Bourdieu insisted that the researcher needed to submit themselves to the same rigorous

critique that they would apply to the object of their research. This would include reflecting on things like their own history and academic formation and requires a kind of 'double-distancing' which Bourdieu termed 'objectification of objectification' (Jenkins 2002, xvi). Objectification of objectification requires two steps. Most of us will be familiar with the first step and it represents stepping back or distancing ourselves from the object of our research. For example when researching classroom interaction many researchers would initially assume a position of distance so that they can observe and analyse the interaction. Bourdieu calls that 'objectifying' and advocates that the researcher needs to go further than this and reflect on the nature of the distance they have created. The second step is to put under the same reflective microscope the relationship that the researcher has to the researched when they are carrying out fieldwork. In the case of our example this would mean 'objectifying' the relationship that the researcher has to the class and to the classroom interaction. Bourdieu was an active empirical researcher himself, he essentially provides the researcher with a toolkit of concepts to support their reflexive analysis of the social world. These concepts are both theoretical and analytical but they are also allied closely to the practice of research, in other words they are also methodological. My argument is that these concepts are highly practical and of direct relevance to the daily practice of fieldwork; thus it is worth persisting through Bourdieu's dense and at times verbose articulation of how they work. I'm going to use

the history of Bourdieu's own academic formation to introduce the following key concepts: habitus, field, symbolic violence and cultural capital.

Bourdieu was born in 1930; he grew up in Béarn, a rural village in South-Eastern France. His grandfather had been a peasant sharecropper, but his mother came from a wealthier peasant family and his father was a minor civil servant. Bourdieu describes himself as separated from his classmates at primary school because of his father's white collar education and separated from his peers at the boarding school he subsequently attended because of his rural accent and provincial ways. One of the things that characterises Bourdieu's early education is a feeling of not belonging and an awareness that his relationship with his peer group didn't match the lofty ideals proclaimed in the rhetoric of the classroom. He described this acute awareness of social difference as 'a terrible education in social realism' (Bourdieu, 2007, 91). When Bourdieu died in 2002 he held the high honour of a Chair at the Collège de France and was a famous public intellectual. There may well be an element of mythologising in the story of the peasant boy made good but as Bourdieu reflects on his early experiences in *Sketch for self analysis* he illustrates how attitudes, assumptions and dispositions are unconsciously formed; in this he is offering an explanation of what habitus is and how it can be applied in research.

The concept of habitus dates back to the time of Aristotle, it was a moral concept associated with virtue ethics. This is the belief that good or virtuous dispositions can be acquired which will form moral character and regulate our actions through good practice or 'habit'. Bourdieu uses habitus to refer to the deeply rooted assumptions, not explicitly reflected upon but held almost subconsciously, which we all inherit. These assumptions regulate both individual and collective action in the social world. Bourdieu (2007) wrote that his history and cultural formation in Béarn shaped his habitus giving him 'a marked taste for disputation' (p.89). Robbins (2000) writes that Bourdieu first applied the concept in relation to dancing when in 1962 he published an account of peasant life in Béarn. Bourdieu described the country dances held in the village as being 'occasions of a clash of civilisation' between rural and urban habitus (Robbins 2000, 28). Bourdieu was also trying to get away from the separation of mind and body, or of theory and practice, in his understanding of the social world. For Bourdieu habitus isn't something which happens just in the mind but is physical, for example in the dancing; it isn't something which people consciously reflect on but nor is it simply mechanical, nor was Bourdieu saying that habitus is identical for all people. Bourdieu took seriously the fact that society is comprised of people, classes and groups who occupy positions relative to each other and to society as a whole. This way of conceptualising society is called structuralism. Structuralism was very popular when Bourdieu took up his academic posts in

the late 1950s. After Bourdieu had graduated and taught for a year in a provincial school he was conscripted into the army and served two years in Algeria (1956-58). His fieldwork during the time of revolution and agricultural crisis in Algeria was to prove formative. He produced a structuralist analysis of the culture of the Kabyle, the largest cultural and linguistic community in Algeria (Bourdieu 1979). Bourdieu's study of this group led him to reject one of structuralism's key assumptions which is that different societies adopt intrinsically different functions, this is referred to as functionalism. Bourdieu found that *within* the Kabyle people constructed differences and took up different positions and roles regulated by the habitus. Later in his work he accounted for the nature and impact of position taking using the concepts of symbolic violence and cultural capital. We will consider these concepts after first picking up the thread of Bourdieu's history in order to get a handle on his concept of field.

In 1960 Bourdieu returned to France to take up a position as assistant at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Paris. The dominant intellectual discipline of the Paris Academe had been philosophy. Bourdieu was well acquainted with the legacy of Jean-Paul Sartre whose existentialism he rejected. Jenkins (2002) writes that Bourdieu believed there was more to the social life 'than the subjective consciousness' of the individuals 'who move within it and produce it' (p.17). Bourdieu argued that there was a real or objective social

world beyond the interaction and self-awareness of individuals. Field is a concept used to define the dimensions of this social space. So for example when Bourdieu joined the Faculty of Arts the field of philosophy was being threatened by the rise in popularity of the field of social sciences. This also helps to illustrates Bourdieu's argument that habitus can only operate 'in relation to the social field' (Jenkins 2002, 82). Bourdieu believed that different groups compete for recognition or cultural validation within a social field and thus it is always an arena of struggle and competition. Bourdieu experienced this struggle first hand. In 1968, the same year in which he founded his research centre the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, there were violent student protests in Paris. Bourdieu (2007) interpreted the student movement as a reaction to the threat that the rise of the social sciences represented to the traditional dominance of philosophy. The late 1960's marked the beginning of a prolific period of research and publications, Bourdieu turned education itself into the object of his sociological analysis. By investigating the habitus of students (see Bourdieu & Passeron 1979, *The inheritors)* and exploring where power lay within the structure of the university field he called into question its apparent meritocratic values and the dominance of particular disciplines. Bourdieu concluded that education is one of the key ways in which social reproduction takes place.

It is primarily within the field of education that Bourdieu developed his theory of social reproduction. The key text which sets out this theory is *Reproduction in education, society and culture* first published by Bourdieu and Passeron in 1970. *Reproduction*, as I'll refer to it for short, is probably one of the best known and well used of Bourdieu's texts in sociology of education. Its arguments underpin the work done on school choice, class and gender that I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. Unfortunately it is also one of the least accessible texts in terms of language and construction partly because Bourdieu presents his theory as a series of propositions and glosses. This is a stylistic device in which a proposition is a statement proposing a definition or thesis and a gloss provides further explanation or description for clarity. A central concept in *Reproduction* is symbolic violence. This refers to the way in which culture is imposed upon people or groups, this is experienced by society as legitimate but, Bourdieu argued that it conceals the power relationships which make it possible.

O. Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations (Bourdieu 1977, 4).

Symbolic violence is often exercised via social structures such as education or religion. The concept of symbolic violence can be used to track the exercise of power and explore how particular cultural practices, for example passing an examination or submitting a thesis, are recognised and legitimated to validate and preserve control in the social field. As a form of protest Bourdieu refused to submit a thesis when he graduated from the École normale supérieure in Paris. If you share the habitus of the dominant cultural elite; so in Bourdieu's context if you are a philosopher and a sophisticated Parisian intellectual, you will inherit and reproduce a set of cultural assumptions and expectations which will preserve the existing social order and the dominance of Parisian intellectuals. Similarly, if you are a rural peasant from Béarn your cultural assumptions and expectations stem from a cultural habitus, one which is not recognised in the elite French university, but which reproduces the cultural practices of rural life in South-East France. Whilst one or two bright exceptions might become French public intellectuals the exercise of symbolic violence means that one cannot do so without participating and, therefore, reproducing the cultural practices of the dominant social group. There are clearly some problems with this theory, not least the very real criticism to which Bourdieu's work is often subjected that this is a deterministic view of culture which does not take into account individual action or agency. Criticisms of Bourdieu's concepts will be discussed at the end of this section; there is one more key concept to explore first, that of cultural capital.

Bourdieu posited his concept of cultural capital directly against the philosopher Kant's notion that the pursuit of the aesthetic is pure and somehow morally neutral, or at least disinterested (Jenkins 2002). The title of Bourdieu's (1984) publication *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste* is a direct reference to Kant who published *Critique of judgement* in 1790. Bourdieu (1984) challenged the notion that 'culture' had an intrinsic value and that the appreciation and the quest for culture was thus untainted by such base extrinsic rewards as economic value. With the concept of cultural capital Bourdieu extended the meaning of 'capital' beyond its typical use in economic exchange theory where it primarily denotes monetary profit (Moore 2004). Bourdieu argued that the acquisition of cultural capital primarily through the social institution of education can confer distinction upon an individual and therefore material advantage (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, proposition 3.1.3., 35). In his introduction to the first edition of *Distinction* Bourdieu (1984) writes that sociology endeavours to understand how culture and cultural tastes are produced. He argues, however, that cultural practices such as the appreciation of fine art or music, can't be fully understood unless they are situated back into the wider context of social relationships, particularly class, and then analysed. Jenkins (2002) writes that Bourdieu is applying reflexivity here; the double distancing or 'objectification of objectification' which insists that we reflect both on culture

as a product and on our definition of culture as a process. Bourdieu is reminding us to ask this question: what has produced the classifications which we use to define art or music etc. as 'culture'? He argues strongly in *Distinction* that all cultural practices are linked to educational level and social origin, in other words cultural taste functions as 'a marker of class' (Bourdieu 1984, xxv).

There are a series of critiques of Bourdieu's work not least of which is that he fell short of the overarching grand sociological theory he sought to produce. As a public intellectual in his later career Bourdieu extended his 'objectification of objectification' to comment on French politics, society and culture. His critics point out that he never really dealt with the question of what makes the sociological perspective authoritative in its account of the social world as opposed to the philosophical and structuralist perspectives which Bourdieu sought to refute. Indeed Bourdieu's theory remained heavily influenced by structuralism as he sought a more 'scientific' account of socialisation and social reproduction. This leads us to perhaps the major criticism of Bourdieu's work which is that his theory is essentially deterministic. Critics argue that Bourdieu's assertion that there is 'no way out of the game of culture' suggests 'a self perpetuating and mechanical model of society' (Jenkins 2002, 118). Bourdieu pays little attention to the capacity of individuals to act in the world; this is referred to in philosophy and

sociology as agency. Connell (1983) argues that Bourdieu does not really explain what habitus is or how it interacts with agency and that he is vague about how institutions work. He also argues that Bourdieu's theory doesn't account for the way institutions and social systems change, especially over a period of time. Despite these significant flaws, many of Bourdieu's critics do accept that his theoretical work has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the social world and has equipped research with 'a way of talking about what living in the world is really like' (Connell 1983, 153).

Applying Bourdieu's concepts to research

In this section of the chapter I intend to illustrate how I applied Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, symbolic violence and cultural capital to my own research in an Academy sponsored by a Christian foundation. As I indicated in my introduction one of the ways to get a handle on Bourdieu's social theory is to see it applied in practice. I begin by setting the scene and contextualising the 'field' of the new academies as well as explaining how central the interaction between theory and methodology was for my research design. I take Bourdieu's concepts in turn, demonstrating how they were applied and giving examples of what kinds of things they revealed in my data. I have found that Bourdieu's concepts provide a helpful framework in which to analyse the impact of religion on school culture. This is important because,

as Grace (2004) has argued, religion, as opposed to class, race and gender, is often left out when researchers in the West analyse education.

The Academies Policy

To set the scene it is important to outline the history of the policy before I explain why I conceptualised Academies as a field within my own research. Academies are 'publicly-funded independent schools' freed up from local education authority control (DfE 2012). Under successive governments their number has increased dramatically; at the time of writing Academies and their newer counter-part Free Schools make up 32% of primary schools and 75% of secondary schools in England accounting for an enrolment of over 4.1. million pupils (DfE 2019).

Academies were originally a central part of the New Labour Government's education policy. The initiative extended a Conservative government policy of the 1980s which had established City Technology Colleges (CTC) in areas of urban deprivation. My research was carried out in a CTC and two Academies sponsored by a Christian Foundation who have been a provider throughout all the various iterations of the policy. CTCs, Academies and Free Schools have greater freedom to set their own curriculum, pay and conditions because they are free from local education authority control. Under New Labour the Academies had to have a sponsor, these were drawn from

business, private philanthropists, Christian churches and Christian charitable foundations. About a quarter of the first wave of Academies had a Christian sponsor (these are referred to as 'sponsored Academies'). The Academies Act of 2010, passed by the Liberal Conservative coalition government actively encouraged schools previously maintained by local authorities to convert to Academy status (these are referred to as 'converter Academies').   In 2016 the Conservative government declared its intent to ensure all state funded government schools converted to Academy status by 2022 (DfE 2016a). The creation of Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) have become the preferred model of governance and a key factor in accelerating the growth of Academies (DfE 2016b). MATs contract separately with the Secretary of State for Education to run groups of Academies and in 2019 there were 1,170 MATs in England managing at least two Academies. The Church of England is the biggest sponsor of Academies in England with 250 sponsored Academies and over 650 convertor Academies (The Church of England, 2020). This means, in effect, that all iterations of the Academy policy have supported the influence of Christian faith in the provision of publicly funded education in England.

Research Design

The overall aim of my research was to undertake an ethnographic study. In contradiction to the way research methods are often taught, I did not identify a site, create research questions and subsequently choose a methodology that

would best answer them. The ethnographic nature of the study was a central part of the theoretical rationale for the entire project. In this section I define ethnography and explain why Bourdieu's theoretical concepts can be deployed as methodological tools within it. I provide examples of the interaction between theory and methodology in my research design before taking each of Bourdieu's concepts in turn and illustrating how they were deployed in the research.

Bourdieu argued that most research accounts are remote; separate to what is really going on in the social world. He therefore saw his familiarity with the rural settings in which he carried out his early work as an aid to reflexivity because he was not positioned entirely outside of the field. I too am familiar with my research setting. Although I had no prior association with the CTC or Academies where I did my fieldwork, I attended an independent Christian school up until the age of 16 and I taught history in Church of England and Roman Catholic secondary schools before commencing my research. As with Bourdieu's early fieldwork, my study was an ethnography. I came to this research topic as a person of religious faith and a teacher with practical experience of teaching in faith schools. In other words, I was a partial insider of the faith school culture I wanted to investigate.

I was aware that separating theory from method is artificial; so too is failing to take account of the philosophical assumptions that interact with research design. Ethnography is a research method closely associated with anthropology. It is essentially a study of culture in which the researcher is a participant in the social world asking questions with a view to explaining it to the outsider and clarifying it for the insider (Green 2009a). Bourdieu was an ethnographer, his account of the interaction between structure, practice and agency is designed to be applied to the social world. His key concepts of field, habitus, symbolic violence and cultural capital are as much methodological tools as they are analytic and theoretical.

Framing analytical questions is a key technique in my research methodology and analysis. I've modelled this approach on Grace's (2002) work in Catholic education. Grace conceptualised Catholic education as a field and framed a set of questions using Bourdieu's concepts to trace the nature and impact of power and cultural assumptions in the field; this is a form of reflexivity. The practice of research always starts with a question and mine was: how does the Christian ethos of the sponsor show itself in the social and academic experiences of the students and staff? Following Grace (2002) I developed a whole suite of questions build around Bourdieu's key concepts of field, habitus, symbolic violence and cultural capital, these are explored below. Arriving at these questions didn't follow a nice neat sequential pattern. Nor

did the questions remain 'formal research questions' to be investigated as per an experimental research design. Some questions became observation or interview prompts when I was collecting data. Other questions became categories and codes in my processes of data analysis and some were the subject of personal reflections. I wrote reflective memos alongside my field notes to keep track of my mood and motivation throughout the research. I found that new questions arose from data collection, analysis and/or reflection. In some cases, questions which had seemed important at the start of my research became less of a priority or got dropped all together. Research in the real world is messy and I found that I needed to take account of this in my research design.

I attempted to build the kind of 'objectification of objectification' that Bourdieu described into my research design by dividing my field work into three and four week blocks. In total I spent six months at my research site. When I was at the school I carried out ethnographic observations of formal and informal settings, conducting a series of in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of 18 members of staff in key roles and 30 year ten (15 & 16 years old) students and doing documentary analysis. I was typically on site five days a week from 8am to 5pm and I also attended after school events and meetings during the evenings and weekends. The pattern of blocking time this way turned out to be very significant for my use of theory in the research

design. During the blocks when I was away from the site I revisited my analytical questions and invited others to explore them with me. Critical friends challenged me to expand and develop my use of Bourdieu's concepts. My early field notes and descriptive accounts held rather slavishly to the definitions of Bourdieu's concepts I had found in the literature. This produced a very clinical rendering of the culture I was analysing. You could argue that my early research was falling prey to the same determinism of which Bourdieu is accused. Data that didn't fit my a priori theoretical categories was in danger of going unexplained or omitted completely. I revised my approach and made space for noticing empirical questions. In this regard the practice of the objectification of objectification served my research design well.

Field

In my research I conceptualise the Academies sector as a field. Bourdieu's use of field denotes a site of competing interests where there is struggle for recognition. I applied the concept to Academies for two main reasons. First, at policy level the creation and expansion of the Academies has generated fierce debate. The existence of Academies outside of local-authority provision initiates a set of questions about equity, funding and competition in relation to existing state provision in common schools (for a more in-depth discussion of this see Gorard 2005 & 2014). The sponsorship of Academies by businesses, philanthropists and religious organisations sets up a second set

of questions about the ideologies and/or religious beliefs gaining influence within the education system as a whole (for a more in-depth discussion of this see Ball 2007 and Ball & Junemann 2011). I applied the concept of field in my research as a way to keep me mindful of the wider context in which Academies are located. Reflecting back on this enabled me to relate my data to the ongoing emergence of Academies as the new 'norm' in institutional provision. When I began my fieldwork in 2007 Academies were still fairly new, now they are ubiquitous. Bourdieu's concept of field helps researchers to reflect on the nature of the model for education that became dominant in the social world. Bourdieu prompts us to ask what kind of knowledge is valued in the field, what groups hold power in the system and what do they assume education is for? This leads to the second reason I applied the concept of field in my research. I wanted to focus in particular on the impact of a Christian sponsor competing for recognition in the field. The types of analytical questions I reflected on included: was the sponsor a powerful influence, what kind of knowledge did they value and what did they believe about the purpose of education?

Habitus

The CTC and Academies in which I carried out my research were non-denominational and it was not necessary to be a Christian either to work there or attend as a student. Unlike many church sponsored Academies no places

were reserved for the children of Christian families. Nevertheless I did find that the sponsors and the senior staff shared a set of religious beliefs and assumptions which I conceptualised in my research as a habitus. A key finding of the research was that the habitus was embedded in institutional structures such as the order of the school day, assemblies and tutor times. I concluded that the habitus did regulate certain aspects of cultural practice. The sponsors and members of the senior team attended the same local churches and often met to pray and study the Bible together during their leisure time. The exceptions to this were three members of senior staff at the Academies recruited from predecessor schools who did not identify as Christians. In theological terms the shared religious beliefs are best described as reformed or conservative Protestant Christian. Evidence from interviews with the sponsors and senior staff, analysis of policy documents and observation of meetings and assemblies conducted by senior staff demonstrated a highly unified and regulated Christian discourse (Green 2012). My research found that this was characterised by a high view of the authority of the Bible, a belief in the physical death and resurrection of Jesus, personal conversion, an emphasis on personal morality and an imperative to teach and proclaim the 'gospel' or good news about Jesus in the world (Green 2012).

Habitus was a central tool in my analysis because it enabled me to explore the extent to which the sponsor and senior team's habitus influenced practice in the Academy even though Christian beliefs were not universally shared by the rest of the staff and students. In his essay *Genesis and structure of the religious field* Bourdieu (1971) conceptualised religion as a field within the social world; he argued that religious habitus imposes particular practices and meanings which regulate the structures of society. He had observed this in his earlier fieldwork and he wrote about the significance of Islam for Algerian culture and of Puritanism for European culture in his first book *Sociologie de l'Algerie* (1958). The problem with Bourdieu's account of religious habitus is that he seems unwilling to allow that it might contribute anything good and he doesn't really acknowledge that spiritual and/or mystical encounters are widespread in human experience (Rey 2007). This is another example of Bourdieu's tendency towards determinism. Cannell (2006) has argued that religion should be taken seriously as a cultural fact; she believes that it is often marginalised in ethnographic accounts as if the religious experience of others can always be explained away by other structures such as politics or the economy. Bourdieu did, however, criticise religious scholars for not paying enough attention to the ways in which religious assumptions and practice are physically embodied in the social world (Rey 2007). I believe this is why sociologists and students of religion persist in using his concepts. They offer a set of tools which are flexible enough to probe the complex relationship

between institutional structures, religious practices and individual agency. This is where legitimate questions about the nature and impact of religious faith and experiences are located. I wanted to take seriously the religious beliefs of my research participants; I also wanted to acknowledge that they were not held by everybody in the institution and to be realistic about where power and influence lay. To that end I will provide a brief example of one way in which the religious habitus impacted organisational structure, in this case the physical ordering of the school day (this is discussed in more depth elsewhere see Green 2009b). This example will lead into a discussion of the concept of symbolic violence and its application in my research.

In the CTC and Academies every day began with an act of collective worship, either in the form of an assembly or during tutor time which was known as tutor prayers. Such occasions were deliberately formal. Quiet movement around the building, an emphasis on correct uniform and high standards of conduct and behaviour were all features for which the Foundation has received both praise and criticism (see Green 2009a). The CTC and Academies were deliberately modelled on a traditional educational pedagogy such as one might associate with post-war grammar school education in England. The approach is also driven by the habitus of the sponsors whose objective is to provide a 'Christian religious education with a daily Christian Assembly and the teaching of biblical values and morality' (Mission

Statement 2005). The sponsors fear that society is becoming increasingly more secularised and that as a consequence a sense of public morality and familiarity with the Bible's teaching may be lost. Students attended three assemblies a week and two tutor prayer sessions. I found that assemblies and tutor prayers were key motifs in school life for the religious habitus and its expression in corporate identity. Themes for assemblies and tutor prayers were all planned on a rolling cycle to provide students with an overview of the Bible's narrative. This would encompass what conservative Protestants regard as the key 'turning points' of the narrative, namely the stories of creation, fall, Old Testament history, the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus (Carson 2008, 44). There was less emphasis on teaching about corporate holiness or social justice as one might find within Catholic theology for example. Worship was structured around the written word of the Bible rather than around meditation or reflection which are practices one might associate with other Christian or alternate faith traditions. During assemblies and in tutor time students kept silent as a passage from the Bible was read. In the assemblies an explanation of the passage was given in the form of an address or short sermon and a Christian hymn would be sung. During tutor prayers students were given comprehension questions about the passage to discuss. Students had all been given a copy of the Bible which they were expected to have with them as part of their basic school equipment. Bibles were bound in corporate colours identical to the students' uniform and stored

in classrooms on specially constructed shelving. The impact of these routines and practices on staff and students will be considered in the next sections as I reflect on Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic violence and cultural capital. For the moment this example serves as an illustration of how belief in the authority of the Bible impacted the physical ordering of the school day. I argued in my research that the formal presentation of 'Christian ethos' within the CTC and Academies rested upon a particular biblical interpretation which could be conceptualised as the religious habitus of the sponsors and senior staff. This habitus ensured that biblical teaching and the presentation of Christian ethos in the institutions stemmed from a consistent framework which staff and students primarily encountered as form of 'symbolic violence'.

Symbolic Violence

One of the key findings of the study was that teaching the Bible was a high status activity. Only those who shared the religious habitus of the sponsors taught the Bible in RE and in assemblies. These staff members were therefore much more visible in the formal or public life of the CTC and Academies. This placed them in a symbolically powerful relationship to the Bible because they were seen as the spokespersons authorised to interpret the text; they embodied the Christian ethos of the school and as such they regulated it. Bourdieu (1992) described symbolic violence as the 'the power to constitute

the given by stating it' (p.1478). In *Language and symbolic power* Bourdieu uses the Catholic Church in France as an example of how sacred rites, routines and practices carried out by the clergy could regulate assumptions in society. In his example the clergy embodied in their practice a message about what kind of relationships between groups in society were legitimate and what kind of behaviours were approved and which were not. In so doing, Bourdieu argued that the clergy imposed and preserved their own status and hierarchy which he described as a form of symbolic violence. I used the concept of symbolic violence in my research to delineate which groups were powerful in the CTC and Academies. I found that a kind of theological hierarchy had emerged within staff culture. The hierarchy ranged from those who shared the religious habitus at the top, through to those who identified as Christians but were members of other church denominations, down to those of other faiths and those who identified with no religious faith at the bottom of the hierarchy. There were, therefore a whole range of voices absent from the formal occasions and structures that I had identified as 'key motifs' for the religious habitus and its expression in corporate identity.

The theological hierarchy is well illustrated through the tutor prayer system. Most members of the teaching staff were form tutors and thus required to deliver tutor prayers whether or not they identified as Christians so this example very effectively demonstrates two key elements of symbolic

violence. First, it demonstrates how an authorised interpretation of biblical text was secured and second, it demonstrates a gap between the perceived effectiveness of those staff members who shared the religious habitus compared to those who did not. A tutor prayers booklet had been prepared by a senior teacher and was used by all of the tutor groups at the CTC and Academies. The booklet specified the Bible reading for the day, together with some comprehension style questions and provided background context for the passage to prompt tutors who were not familiar with the Bible. Tutors who did not identify as Christians lacked confidence in taking tutor prayers. One form tutor said to me that it was like having to teach history at advanced level when your specialism was in languages (Interview Transcript, 02/05/2007). Another said that she sometimes felt under additional pressure to push a particular moral or theological perspective which she may not personally agree with such as a conservative view of marriage (Interview Transcript, 03/05/2007). This contrasted with my observations of the tutors who shared the religious habitus. Having prior knowledge of the Bible and an experience of its teaching in their churches meant that these tutors were far more familiar with the biblical content included in the tutor prayer programme and how to situate and teach Bible passages. The students also gave me the impression that, even if they ultimately considered tutor prayers to be boring and irrelevant, it was the Christian tutors who did them 'correctly'. One of the conclusions of the research was that being able to teach the Bible together

with possessing a good level of biblical literacy functioned as a form of cultural capital. The concept of cultural capital helped me to answer two key questions. First, what were the assumptions and practices legitimated through symbolic violence and second, how effectively did they shape student culture?

Cultural Capital

Applying the concept of cultural capital to my data helped to account for one of the most significant findings of the research. I found that the religious habitus of the sponsors did have an impact upon student culture but that it was limited and I found that the values and assumptions of the habitus had been re-appropriated by the students in ways that were quite different to the sponsors' intentions. Bourdieu's concept of habitus encompasses the idea that assumptions can be appropriated and re-appropriated, hence old beliefs can persist and continue to have currency, or cultural capital, in alternate settings where you might not expect them to be widely shared (Robbins 2000). Students did value being knowledgeable about religion and they were biblically literate, these were forms of cultural capital. Being able to discuss, affirm or refute biblical claims was seen by them as one of the marks of being a good and successful student; but within student culture this was not dependent on sharing the religious habitus of the sponsors. As Julie, aged 15 explained it to me:

I think some people who are atheists just say they don't believe but they don't know what they don't believe…I know what I don't believe (Interview Transcript, 29/03/2007)

Julie is rehearsing here one of the key assumptions of the sponsors' habitus which is that the students should be presented with the Bible's narrative so that they can decide for themselves whether or not its claims about Jesus are true. This assumption had been re-enforced for students by their daily encounter with Bible teaching in an approved format regulated through symbolic violence. I argued in my research that in weighing up the claims of the Bible and deciding whether to accept or, as in most cases, reject them students were doing precisely what was being asked of them. I found in my research that, with the exception of RE, the religious habitus of the sponsors had no discernible impact on the curriculum or on teaching and learning. The students only encountered the Bible and the religious habitus of the sponsors in tightly regulated spaces in the life of the CTC and Academies. I concluded that this served to re-enforce the commonly held view that religion was not really relevant to the rest of their lives. This stands in opposition to the sponsors' desire to counter the marginalisation of religion in an increasingly secular society. This finding also highlights an important point which Bourdieu's social theory does not address fully. It suggests that the habitus of

the dominant cultural group does not by definition render other groups in the culture passive and without agency.

Building on Bourdieu: related theoretical concepts for research design in faith-based education.

I have noticed a greater awareness and appreciation for social theory and community of practice methodology in the fields of educational sociology and faith-based pedagogy. This may reflect a desire on the part of educational researchers to counter the dominance of scientific rationalism and neo-liberal policy trends in education. When evidence of learning or of educational attainment is equated solely with quantitative data, we are left with accounts of human and educational experience which feel woefully small. Ethnographic methodologies are an attempt to grapple with the human person suspended, as Geertz (1973) would put it, within 'webs of significance' (p. 5). In opposition to scientific rationalism these approaches rest on constructivist philosophical assumptions. As Cooling (2016) explains this is a contest over the status of different forms of knowledge. This would be familiar territory to Bourdieu. In this section I will briefly illustrate how I built on Bourdieu's theory using related concepts drawn from the work of Charles Taylor, Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger and J.K.A. Smith.

Intrigued by my finding that the religious habitus of the Academies I researched had limited impact on the culture of pupils I joined a team of researchers at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK who were interested in church school pedagogy (Cooling *et al*, 2016). Our questions were about the teaching and learning happening in church schools in England. To put the research question into the language of Bourdieu: did religious habitus form the practice of teaching and learning in distinctive ways in church schools?

I designed the methodology for a multiple-case study project researching the influence of Christian ethos on teaching and learning with fourteen teachers in three English church schools (Cooling *et al*, 2016). Language as a signifier of our assumptions about the status of knowledge and the nature of influence became important in this project. When I shared my first draft of the methodology with a critical friend they commented on the mismatch between our theoretical assumptions and the language I had used in the design about measuring impact. I was much more interested in the interaction between teachers' own beliefs, the church school ethos and practice in the classroom than empirically measuring the impact of religious ethos. Tightening up my conceptual language enabled us to frame the research as a conversation with teachers about the shared imagination around teaching and learning in a church school.

The language of imagination as we used it in our research design comes from the philosophical work of Charles Taylor. He uses the concept of the 'social imaginary' to explain the shared sets of virtues, symbols, laws and institutions that make up the social world (Taylor, 2004). As with 'habitus' the 'social imaginary' conceptualises the formation of assumptions, beliefs and practices at the pre-conscious level. I find it to be a more expansive concept than Bourdieu's habitus because of its relationship to time and to the transcendent. Taylor locates the 'social imaginary' in the contemporary western reality of multiple forms of secularism. Taylor also traces in his work the historical echoes of a time when meaning and significance operated in relation to belief in the transcendent, or God; Taylor refers to this as 'higher time' (Taylor, 2004). It is not my perspective that faith-based education is an anachronism left over from 'higher time'. I have consistently found in my research that Christian Academies and church schools are products of their 'secular time' influenced by the shared contemporary social imaginary and competing interests in the field. In this sense Taylor's concepts neatly fit with Bourdieu's conceptual tools: habitus, field, symbolic violence and cultural capital.

Our question in the church school project was whether it was possible to be intentional about framing teaching and learning with a distinctively Christian social imaginary. The practical consequences of this framing can be seen in the decision to make individual teachers the cases in our research, to ask them

to keep reflective journals and to work with the research team to design, teach, watch and re-evaluate sequences of lessons designed using a pedagogical approach called *What If Learning* (Cooling *et al*, 2016).

What If Learning (WIL) was developed to help teachers make connections between Christian faith and teaching and learning in the classroom. It is not a curricular scheme, nor is it a bible course, WIL is a pedagogical approach that can be applied to all subjects and grade levels. WIL assumes that we learn with our minds and our bodies as we participate in the cultural practices of our classrooms. Lave and Wenger (1991) would conceptualise this as participation in a community of practice and J.K.A. Smith describes the rituals and symbols in which we all participate as cultural liturgies (Smith, 2009).

Lave and Wenger (1991) explored how people learn in communities of practice by studying situated learning in apprenticeships. One of their key contributions is a model of how shared habits and routines become reified into practices that are authoritative and meaningful for participants (Wenger, 1999). Traditional institutions such as the church which were associated with Taylor's 'higher time' are losing their influence and authority to adjudicate and impose cultural meaning in secular societies. Smith (2009) explicitly weaves together Lave and Wenger's model with Bourdieu's concepts to argue

that our participation in alternate communities of practice such as consumer choice, political and identity groups form our imaginary in powerful ways. In other words, it is not only the church that has liturgies.

My experience of working with the concepts of social imaginary, communities of practice and cultural liturgies is that they round out the more clinical and deterministic characteristics of Bourdieu's concepts. This has important consequences for research design since it widens the scope for accounting for individual agency whilst still recognising symbolic violence as it manifests in community and cultural practice. These concepts also build on Bourdieu's argument that context always matters in research design because culture is not a neutral or innate background against which religious faith, education policy, pedagogy and curriculum play out. Theoretical and methodological tools which can grapple with nuance, with our bodies, mind and spirit, with individual agency and with community participation are needed in educational research.

Conclusion

Bourdieu's concepts are applied extensively in UK education research often to analyse the impact of class on social reproduction. I have argued in this chapter that a significant legacy of Bourdieu's work is his development of a

set of conceptual tools capable of integrating theory and analysis with methodology. By setting the development of Bourdieu's social theory against the backdrop of his biography I have exemplified another significant contribution of Bourdieu's work which is reflexivity. Bourdieu challenges us to take account of the relationship of the researcher to the researched and to the social world. I have argued that his tools equip the researcher with practical ways in which to do this. In my research I apply Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, symbolic violence and cultural capital to the study of religion in Christian Academies and church schools. Within this chapter I've used the examples from my research to do three things. First, I have illustrated a way of applying Bourdieu's theory in a real research setting. Reading how other researchers make use of Bourdieu's conceptual tools is a helpful way for new researchers to access Bourdieu's writings. Second, I have illustrated how current research is broadening the traditional application of Bourdieu's social theory beyond the study of class, in this case to the analysis of religion. Third, I have illustrated how other theoretical concepts interact helpfully with Bourdieu to enhance research in the field of faith-based education and pedagogy. The flexibility of such concepts and their application make Bourdieu's social theory a very adaptable tool for analysing contemporary culture and education. New researchers should be encouraged to take on the vigorous debate that surrounds Bourdieu's work and make his tools for analysis their own.

References

Ball, S. J. 2003. *Class strategies and the education market: The middle classes and social advantage.* London: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. 2007. *Education plc: Understanding private sector participation in public sector education.* London: Routledge.

Ball, S. and Junemann, C. (2011) Education policy and philanthropy: The changing landscape of English educational governance. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 34: 646-661.

Bourdieu, P. 1958. *Sociologie de l'Alge.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Bourdieu, P. 1971. Genèse et structure du champ religieux. *Revue française de sociologie*, XII, no. 3: 295-334.

Bourdieu, P. 1979. *Algeria 1960.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge Kegan Paul.

Bourdieu, P. 1986. The forms of capital. Reproduced in *Education: Culture, economy and society* (2001), ed. A.H. Halsey, H. Lauder, P. Brown & A. Stuart Wells, 46-58. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. 1992. *Language & symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. 2007. *Sketch for a self analysis*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. and J. C. Passeron. 1970. *La reproduction. Éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Bourdieu, P. and J. C. Passeron. 1977. *Reproduction in education and society*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. and J. C. Passeron. 1979. *The inheritors: French students and their relation to culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cannell, F. ed. 2006. *The anthropology of Christianity*. London: Duke University Press.

Carson, D. 2008. *Christ and culture revisited.* Nottingham: Apollos.

Connell, R. W. 1983. *Which way is up?* Australia: Sydney, George Allen & Unwin.

Cooling, T. 2016. Who was the brain in that jar? Sometimes all good teaching needs is the right framing. *Comment Magazine*, 26th September. Available at: www.cardus.ca/comment/article/who-was-the-brain-in-that-jar/ (accessed 30 December, 2020).

Cooling, T., Green, B., Morris, A. & Revell, L. 2016. *Christian Faith in English Church Schools: Research Conversations with Classroom Teachers.* Oxford: Peter Lang.

DfE, 2019. *Schools, pupils, and their characteristics.*
Available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2019 (accessed 28 December, 2020).

DfE, 2016a. *White Paper: Educational Excellence Everywhere.*
Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/educational-excellence-everywhere (accessed 28 December, 2020).

DfE, 2016b. *Multi Academy Trusts: establishing and developing your trust.*
Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-academy-trusts-
establishing-and-developing-your-trust (accessed 28 December, 2020).

DfE. 2012. *About academies.* Available at:
www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/b0061
252/about-academies (accessed 11 April 2012).

Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books.

Gorard, S. 2014. The link between Academies in England, pupil outcomes
and local patterns of socio-economic segregation between schools. *Research
papers in education* 29, no. 3: 268-284.

Gorard, S. 2005. Academies as the 'future of schooling': Is this an evidence-
based policy? *Journal of Education Policy* 3, no. 20: 369–77.

Grace, G. 1978 *Teachers, ideology and control: A study in urban education.*
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Grace, G. 2002. *Catholic schools: Missions, markets and morality*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Grace, G. 2004. Making connections for future directions: Taking religion seriously in the sociology of education. *International Studies in Sociology of Education,* 14, no. 1: 47-56.

Green, E. H. 2009a. *An ethnographic study of a city technology college with a bible-based ethos*. Unpublished DPhil Thesis. University of Oxford.

Green, E. H. 2009b. Speaking in parables: The responses of students to a bible-based ethos in a Christian city technology college. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 39, no. 4: 443–56.

Green, E. H. 2012. Analysing religion and education in Christian academies. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 1-17 iFirst article. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2012.659456 (accessed 11 April 2012).

Halsey, A. H., H. Lauder, P. Brown and A. Stuart Wells. 2001. *Education: Culture, economy and society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jenkins, R. 2002. *Pierre Bourdieu*. Revised Edition. London: Routledge.

Lave, J. and Wenger, E. 1991. *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, R. 2004. Cultural capital: Objective probability and the cultural arbitrary. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 25, no. 4: 445-456.

Reay, D. 1998. *Class work: Mothers' involvement in children's schooling London:* University College Press.

Rey, T. 2007. *Bourdieu on religion: Imposing faith and legitimacy*. London: Equinox Publishing.

Robbins, D. 2000. *Bourdieu and culture*. London: Sage.

Smith, J.K.A. 2009. *Desiring the kingdom: Worship, worldview and cultural formation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Taylor, C. 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

The Church of England. 2020. *Church schools and academies.* Available at:

www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies (accessed 28 December 2020).

Wenger, E. 1999. *Communities of Practice: Learning meaning and identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

What If Learning. 2020. Available at: www.whatiflearning.com/ (accessed 30 December, 2020).