

CHAPTER ONE¹
FAMILY, SCHOOLING, AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

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ABSTRACT

School-related cultural capital refers to the skills, habits, identities, worldviews, preferences or values that students enact in schools, and that affect their school success. This chapter describes how Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital explains social reproduction – the fact that, as adults, children tend to replicate the social class status of their parents. This is largely because academic performance and school success are strongly and positively correlated with parental social class. We examine social class differences in parenting and how these affect the *habitus*, or underlying skills and dispositions toward schooling of children from different social classes. These differential skills and dispositions in turn give rise to differential academic skills, work habits, and related school behaviors which are judged by teachers when they assign course grades on the report cards of students. As students move up through the levels of schooling, social class differences in course grades lead to social class differences in curriculum selection and high school graduation. Then, high school grades, teacher's recommendations, and standardized test scores affect post-secondary enrollment and degree attainment. These in turn

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lead to differences in occupational employment and earnings favoring children from higher social class backgrounds.

Keywords: Pierre Bourdieu, cultural capital, habitus, social reproduction, academic skills, academic work habits, course grades, educational attainment.

“Bourdieu writes extensively about effects of social class background, arguing that early socialization, combined with later experiences, lead to personal characteristics that lessen the odds of upward or downward class mobility...By personal characteristics I refer to things individuals carry across situations, such as skills, habits, identities, worldviews, preferences or values.” England (2016: 6)

1.1 Introduction

Social reproduction – the fact that, as adults, children tend to replicate the social class status of their parents – is one of the central empirical findings in the sociology of inequality. A primary determinant of this outcome is that, beginning in kindergarten, children’s academic performance is strongly and positively related to the social class background of their parents. One result of this is the existence of a strong positive relationship between parental socioeconomic status (SES) and the years of school completed by their children. Since, in modern industrialized societies, educational attainment determines occupational attainment, which in turn is strongly related to earnings, the sequence of events leading to social reproduction is relatively clear. But what causal mechanisms underlie and determine these events? In particular, what determines the strong relationship between parental social class background and the academic performance of their children, beginning as early as kindergarten?

Two proximal social institutions are likely to play important roles – the family and the school. We know that children from lower social class backgrounds tend to have less salutary family situations (more single parents, fewer resources, less preparation for school, greater inter-

personal conflict, lesser parental involvement with the child's schooling), as well as attend lower quality schools (less experienced teachers, lower performing peers, greater disorder). But what is the relative influence of these two institutions – family and school – in social reproduction? Since the Coleman Report (1966) we have known that variation in children's academic performance is most strongly associated with variation in the characteristics of their families, rather than in the schools they attend. Only approximately 20 percent of the variance in test scores occurs between schools; fully 80 percent is within schools (Rumberger and Palardy 2004), a finding that has been replicated countless times.

How does the family do it? How is it that at kindergarten entry, only five years after birth, children from families in the bottom quintile of the socioeconomic status (SES) distribution score 1.3 standard deviations lower in early math knowledge than those from families in the top quintile of the SES distribution, a social class achievement gap that persists relatively unchanged to 5th grade, and continues to be observed in 8th and 12th grade (Duncan and Magnuson 2011; Farkas 2011)? To examine this seriously, one must consider theories and findings from the nature/nurture debate. Certainly the evidence suggests that there is a significant positive heritability for cognitive skills (Duncan et al., 2005), which may explain about half or more of the variance in these skills, and cognitive skill differences no doubt play a role in the higher academic performance of children from higher SES families. However, although genetic effects may limit the residual role of family and school influences, they are not our concern here. (For discussion of genetic effects, see the chapter by Schneider and Saw.) Instead, we are concerned with social class differences in parenting and parenting resources, and the role these differences play in the differential academic performance and school success of students from different SES backgrounds.

The theory of *cultural capital*, developed by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and employed by researchers throughout the world, although with the greatest energy and impact by American² sociologists, is the leading explanation of how middle-class parents provide schooling advantages to their children, advantages that are not provided by working-class parents. But explicating and correctly operationalizing this theory is not a simple matter, since Bourdieu was not clear or explicit about how this should be done, leading to significant controversy, and much variation in the studies that have been undertaken. As a result, the research literature in this area is a tangled web, with many competing claims, critiques, and much confusion. However, in this chapter I present a clear pathway through this literature, leading to a consensus view that is both faithful to Bourdieu's intentions and offers the greatest opportunity to explain (be a mediator for) the strong relationship between parental social class background and both school success and educational attainment. As shown below, Bourdieu explicitly states that he invented the cultural capital concept *in order* to explain social class reproduction. With an appropriate understanding of how the concept should be operationalized and measured, I will be able to review those empirical studies that estimate the theory's success in explaining how families and schools combine to reproduce the social class structure.

This chapter is organized as follows. Section 1.2 briefly situates cultural capital theory alongside human and social capital theories, which it was designed to either complement or replace. Then I trace a series of descriptions by different authors who focused on differences in class cultures and how these differences explain the differential educational success of students from the working- and middle- classes. In this section I show that a variety of sociologists have

² Over time, sociologists in many additional countries, notably England, the Netherlands, and France, have contributed to the literature on cultural capital. However, the U.S. has dominated, not only in the quantity of publications, but also because the most influential researchers, including Paul DiMaggio, Annette Lareau, Ann Swidler, and Loic Wacquant are based at American universities.

come up with similar notions of the cultural capital that students from different social classes are provided with by their families, and that lead to their differential school success. Bourdieu referred to these as *long lasting dispositions of the mind and body*, which these scholars have taken, and in some cases expanded to include the *skills, habits, and styles* that children in different social classes are socialized into and learn from their families and peer groups. Other names for these dispositions and skills include *informal know-how, cultured capacities, practices, repertoires, orientations, tools, and procedural knowledge*. Bourdieu's theory posits that socialization in the family leads a child to possess an underlying habitus, which differs across social classes. When these habitus, or dispositions and skills,³ are called upon for school-related decision-making, they cause students from different social classes to enact the possession of differential cultural capital (behaviors and performance) with regard to their schoolwork, both inside and outside the classroom. These are in turn judged by the teacher, who is likely to give more positive feedback to behaviors typical of middle-class rather than working-class youth.

With this relatively unambiguous understanding of the cultural capital concept, Section 1.3 summarizes three prominent critiques of the empirical work on cultural capital. I find that much of the problem with prior research and these critiques is that they employed an overly

³ Like many of Bourdieu's concepts, the precise meaning of habitus has been much debated. Bourdieu often referred to it as an individual's "dispositions," so that many researchers concluded that it encompasses tastes, preferences, attitudes and related characteristics, but does not include skills. However, Loic Wacquant, a student and co-author of Bourdieu, has forcefully argued that it does include skills, since it is often created in apprentice-like situations in which an individual is learning, through iterative engagement with others, practical knowledge that can be deployed within a particular "field" or setting of action. Thus, in a debate on the meaning of habitus, Wacquant cites Bourdieu to argue that "settings that inculcate, cultivate, and reward distinct but transposable sets of categories, *skills*, and desires among their participants can be fruitfully analyzed as sites of production and operation of habitus" (Wacquant 2014, p. 120, emphasis added). It is this understanding of habitus, including both skills and dispositions, which I employ in this chapter. This logic, in which an individual's position within a field of action leads to her habitus, which in turn leads to the cultural capital she enacts within this field of action, is central to cultural capital theory, and will be discussed at greater length later in the chapter. Economists may say, "skills are just human capital." But their discussions of the determinants and consequences of skill development do not typically include the complex social psychological issues examined by Wacquant and others working in the cultural capital tradition.

narrow notion of cultural capital, one restricted to elite, “highbrow” beaux-arts activities (e.g. classical music, fine arts). Not surprisingly, these are typically found to be incapable of explaining the relative schooling success and attainment of children from working- and middle-class families. By contrast, the broader category of more general skills, habits, and styles, where teachers report their judgment of these on the report cards sent home to parents, are more likely than elite cultural activities to be able to explain a significant portion of the greater school success of middle-class than working-class children.

Section 1.4 brings together the discussion in the previous two sections, to present a theory of cultural capital that is both consistent with the themes and approaches that have guided this theory since its inception, is integrative of a wide range of studies by sociologists, psychologists, and economists, and while being consistent with the work of qualitative researchers can also be operationalized and tested with quantitative data. Central to this theory are the actions of teacher-gatekeepers in judging student skills and behaviors. These judgments are transmitted to parents on report cards, so that, by examining the skills and behaviors listed there, we can infer the cultural capital items determining school success. These tend to be the same items focused on by earlier schooling researchers, the sociologists Jencks et al (1979) and the economists Bowles and Gintis (1976), as well as by more recent cultural capital researchers such as Farkas et al. (1990), namely reading, math, and other subject proficiencies, as well as behaviors including following rules, working independently, showing effort, and not disturbing other students, behaviors that can be summarized by the word, conscientiousness. Schematically, this leads to the following causal chain to explain social class reproduction: differences in family social class status lead to differences in parenting, which lead to differences in school-related habitus, which lead to differences in the cultural capital skills and behaviors manifested by students which are then

judged and graded by teacher-gatekeepers. The over-time trajectory of these grades powerfully affects the student's educational attainment, which in turn determines occupational employment and earnings.

Section 1.5 reviews the empirical studies that have tested portions of this model. I begin with the evidence for the positive relationship between parental social class and student school-related cultural capital represented by academic skills and work habits at kindergarten entry. Studies repeatedly show very large social class gaps in these skills and work habits at this time point. Comparing students from the highest and lowest SES quintiles, the cognitive gap is about 1.3 SD (standard deviations), and the academic work habits gap is about 0.6 SD. These school readiness gaps appear to be the central mechanism underlying the correlation between parental social class and student educational success. Section 1.5.2 examines the evidence on the extent to which cognitive skills and academic work habits determine course grades. Perhaps the most convincing correlational evidence comes from a study (Farkas 1996) estimating a model in which basic cognitive skills and academic work habits determine students' performance in learning the course material, after which all three of these variables affect the course grade. As we shall see, Figure 1 shows the estimated model in schematic form, while Figure 2 shows the results of this model when applied to predicting 7th and 8th grade social studies grades in one large, diverse school district. The strongest determinants of grades are the student's academic work habits, followed in importance by the student's basic cognitive skills. Each of these predicts the student's mastery of the course material, which in turn predicts the teacher-assigned grade they receive in the course, but additionally, each has an independent direct effect on the student's grade. These independent associations are relatively large, particularly that of work habits on the course grade. It is this large standardized coefficient (.53SD for the direct effect of

work habits on the course grade) that suggests the importance of student cultural capital in influencing the decision-making of teacher-gatekeepers within the educational stratification system.

Section 1.5.3 examines empirical studies of the role of parenting as a mediator of the relationship between family social class background and the course grades received by students. Results show that family SES is positively associated with parenting quality, and that parenting quality partially mediates the relationship between family SES and student's school-related work habits and cognitive skills. Overall, parenting mediates a portion of the relationship between family SES and both students' cultural capital and course grades.

The family is not the only aspect of social organization shaping the habitus and cultural capital of children. Preschool attendance, the child's peer group, and the child's biological endowment and health also play significant roles. However, because of space limitations, Sections 1.5.4 - 1.5.6 provide only brief introductions to the extensive and growing research literature on these topics.

Section 1.6 examines overlap and similarities between the student behaviors we have included under cultural capital and a new synthesis of psychology and economics that has been promoted by James Heckman and colleagues (Borghans et al., 2008). We see that a focus on these student behaviors not only continues the research tradition begun by Bowles and Gintis (1976) and Jencks et al (1979), but also provides a unifying umbrella over research occurring in disparate social science disciplines.

Section 1.7 concludes the chapter with a discussion of policy implications. The central importance of cultural capital to stratification outcomes is shown by the fact that the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), the charter school network showing the best documented success in

raising the school performance of low income children, is largely based on a “contract” with students and their parents to act in ways that maximize the positive cultural capital behaviors discussed here. Focus on these behaviors is likely to play a central role in future efforts to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged children.

1.2 Human, Social and Cultural Capital

Note: Because there has been extensive criticism of the notions of social and cultural capital as being vaguely defined and widely misunderstood, and because there is continuing controversy over variable definitions and operationalization, I make unusually extensive use of direct quotations to reduce ambiguity in this section.

1.2.1 Human Capital

Three theoretical perspectives have been advanced to describe and explain social reproduction. Economists Mincer (1958, 1974), Becker (1964), and Schultz (1960, 1981) introduced the first of these -- human capital (productive human skills and abilities) – in order to better understand how human labor and physical capital are combined in the economic production process. Their ideas extended economists’ long-standing focus on physical capital (land, factories, machines), which combines with the efforts of workers to produce market goods and services. Human capital was conceived as the skills, knowledge, experience and other characteristics that workers come to possess which allow them to be productive and add economic value. The analogy with physical capital was purposeful since both share the following characteristics – they are created through investment, they are relatively durable and long-lasting, and their creation involves forgoing other investments which might have been made instead (opportunity cost).

This economic viewpoint sees individuals, families and other groups making decisions regarding human capital investment after considering the benefits and costs of alternative lines of

action, thereby seeking to achieve optimization of outcomes under resource and other constraints. Defined broadly to include every possible mode of learning and education, as well as mental and physical health, abilities, and habits, the human capital concept has encouraged the application of economic analysis to essentially every area of human behavior. It has also come to be one of the most widely used concepts in all of social science, as well as throughout government and the economy⁴.

Human capital theory explains social reproduction as a natural consequence of the fact that higher social class parents decide, and, with their greater resources are enabled to make greater investments in the human capital (cognitive and behavioral skills) of their children, leading to the higher academic performance of these children. Of course, this “rational” explanation of social reproduction is far from the causal explanation accepted by most sociologists. Nor were sociologists happy with the encroachment of economic reasoning into so many other areas of sociological study. Thus, it is not surprising that sociologists sought to develop analogous concepts that could be deployed alongside or in place of the human capital concept to explain social reproduction as well as to enable the continued importance of sociological analysis to areas such as the family, organizations, occupations, earnings, law, crime, sex, religion, immigration and many other topics. Two prominent sociologists of education -- James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu – independently rose to the challenge by creating, respectively, the concepts of social and cultural capital.

1.2.2 Social Capital

Coleman contrasted human and social capital as follows.

⁴ Human Capital was even the title of a movie released in 2013.

If physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital is less tangible yet, for it exists in the *relations* between persons. Just as physical capital and human capital facilitate productive activity, social capital does as well. For example, trust is a form of social capital. A group within which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust. (Coleman, 1987: 221)

Coleman goes on to define the social capital of the family as the “relations between children and parents (and when families include other members, relationships with them as well),” but notes that this will benefit the children only if parents employ it for this purpose. Coleman extends the social capital concept beyond the family to religious and other private schools where the parents have strong social relationships among themselves and with the institution (Coleman and Hoffer 1987). An important concept here is intergenerational closure, defined as the extent to which meaningful social relationships exist between children and their friends’ parents and among parents whose children are friends.

1.2.3 Cultural Capital

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu also posited that social capital consists of resources available to an individual as a result of their social ties and/or group memberships. But Bourdieu offered a third form of capital that he believed to be particularly valuable for explaining social reproduction.

The notion of cultural capital initially presented itself to me...as a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes. Bourdieu (1986: 243)

As was the case with social capital, Bourdieu introduced the concept of cultural capital to refer to sociological mechanisms existing alongside human capital theory as explanations of human skill and behavioral development. Indeed, he insisted that family cultural capital is essential to the development of children’s human capital (Bourdieu 1986: 244). However, by

contrast with Coleman, who believed in the economists' view of free markets modified by social structure, Bourdieu was influenced by the Marxian view of class conflict, with the upper class always in an advantaged position.

But what is cultural capital? Bourdieu (1986: 243) suggested that cultural capital exists in three forms: "in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods...and in the *institutionalized* state." While an individual's ownership of status-conferring cultural goods such as expensive automobiles as well as particular styles of speech, dress, and home décor will be easily understood by others operating within the same cultural milieu (whether that be the subculture of corporate executives, university faculty, hip hop music performers, or other subgroups), and "institutionalized" employment-related credentials and certificates confer obvious advantages, attempts to utilize the cultural capital concept in empirical work have struggled to specify exactly which "long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" Bourdieu was referring to. However, one particular formulation has been most successful. This is cultural sociologist Anne Swidler's (1986) discussion of a "toolkit of skills" employed in the furtherance of individual strategies of action.

Culture...is more like a style or a set of skills and habits than a set of preferences or wants. If one asked a slum youth why he did not take steps to pursue a middle-class path to success...the answer might well be not 'I don't want that life,' but instead, 'Who, me?' One can hardly pursue success in a world where the accepted skills, styles and informal know-how are unfamiliar. One does better to look for a line of action for which one already has the cultural equipment. (Swidler 1986)

Or, as Swidler stated more recently:

"skills" (or, more subtly, skills, habits, practices, and other 'cultured capacities,' such as intuitive capacities for perception and judgment, that have to be learned and that people can't perform with confidence unless they get reasonably good at them) provide the major link between culture and action. Whether, like Bourdieu, one sees those skills as a more or less unitary "habitus," or whether one sees them as part of a repertoire, the causal claim is that people are more likely to

act in ways that utilize their skills than in ways that enhance their values. Swidler (2008: 615-616).

Bourdieu uses “habitus” to refer to the underlying dispositions possessed (he says “embodied”) in an individual, which in turn lead to the cultural capital (skills, habits, and styles) visibly enacted by this individual. This habitus is created, exists, and may evolve within a “field” or “social arena within which struggles or manoeuvres take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them” (Jenkins 1992: 84). The individual’s structural position within the field helps determine her habitus which in turn helps determine the cultural capital she can deploy within this field. Thus, for example, the social class status of a student’s family helps determine her school-related habitus, which in turn helps determine the cultural capital she can deploy within the field defined by her classroom, teacher, other students, school, and the larger structures of formal education.

A field, therefore, is a structured system of social positions – occupied either by individuals or institutions – the nature of which defines the situation for their occupants...a field is structured internally in terms of power relations. Positions stand in relationships of domination, subordination or equivalence. (Jenkins 1992: 85)

We cannot, in general, directly observe the habitus. Rather, we observe the student’s enacted cultural capital, the actions resulting from the individual’s habitus and in particular the characteristics of these actions. As judged by the teacher, do the student’s actions demonstrate high (or perhaps low) cognitive skill in speech, writing, and on tests? Do these actions disrupt the daily work of the classroom? Does the student display work-related discipline and a positive attitude toward schoolwork? As explained by Jenkins (p. 78):

The habitus disposes actors to do certain things, it provides a basis for the generation of practices. Practices are produced in and by the encounter between the habitus and its dispositions, on the one hand, and the constraints, demands, and opportunities of the social field or market to which the habitus is appropriate or within which the actor is moving, on the other. This is achieved by a less than conscious process of adjustment of the habitus and practices of individuals to the objective and external constraints of the social world.

Jenkins (p. 72) summarizes Bourdieu's theory of action as follows:

He [Bourdieu] describes the interplay of culturally 'given' dispositions, interests and ways of proceeding, on the one hand, and, on the other, individual skills and social competences, the constraints of resource limitations, the unintended consequences which intrude into any ongoing chain of transactions, personal idiosyncrasies and failings, and the weight of the history of relationships between the individuals concerned and the groups in which they claim membership.

In postulating this model of strategy and strategizing, Bourdieu hopes to move away from two separate, if intimately related dualisms. In the first place he is attempting adequately to communicate the mixture of freedom *and* constraint which characterizes social interaction. In the second, he presents practice as the product of processes which are neither wholly conscious nor wholly unconscious, rooted in an ongoing process of learning which begins in childhood, and through which actors know – without knowing – the right thing to do. Taking these two points together, Bourdieu describes the practical accomplishment of successful interaction as 'second nature.'

This is a theory of iterative individual action with feedback, where the individual pursues strategies within a social structural field of opportunities and constraints, based on the resources she possesses. Wacquant (2004, 2011, 2014) conducted participant observation within a boxing gym and based his analysis on how the habitus of a boxer is developed through apprenticeship in this activity. He explains his study as seeking to answer the following questions:

What is it that thrills boxers? Why do they commit themselves to this harshest and most destructive of all trades? How do they acquire the desire and the skills necessary to last in it? What is the role of the gym, the street, the surrounding violence and racial contempt, of self-interest and pleasure, and of the collective belief in personal transcendence in all this? How does one create a social competency that is an embodied competency, transmitted through a silent pedagogy of organisms in action? In short, how is the *pugilistic habitus* fabricated and deployed? Wacquant (2011: 85)

These same questions could be asked about the process of becoming an A student, a cheerleader, a gang member, a homeless person, a steelworker, a mental patient⁵, a union organizer, or a stay-at-home mother. Within a field of social play, skills (or their absence) and dispositions (or their absence) affect the individual's actions, which, in interaction with other individuals within this social field, lead to the individual's upward, downward, or static

⁵ See Erving Goffman's "The Moral Career of the Mental Patient" (Goffman 1961).

trajectory of positions as well as the evolution of her habitus. A generalized notion of apprenticeship often applies to these occurrences, and their trajectory bears a resemblance to the economist's notion of "learning by doing."

This theory of individual action seems to naturally include elements of rational choice strategizing, but always within the constraints imposed by the social structural location the individual is born into and/or occupies as a result of her personal history. The theory thus permits an extension of human capital reasoning, where rationality is not denied, but is realistically complicated with cultural, social, and psychological capacities and processes. This formulation of subgroup culture focused on the concepts of "repertoires of behavior" and "habitual behavior" instead of differential values appears to have been first suggested by Ulf Hannerz (1969), based on his fieldwork in an African-American area of Washington, D.C.

When people draw on their *repertoires* to establish idioms for interaction with more or less specified others, they enter to some extent into the control of these others as they orient their behavior toward that of the others. This is not a case of explicitly recognized norms and sanctions. The basic fact is simply that in order to achieve efficient and satisfying interaction with significant others one is constrained not to deviate too far from the culture one shares with them, as imputed from their *habitual overt behavior*. (p. 194, emphases added)

Greenstone (1991) expanded on the notion that tools and repertoires useful for rational and purposive behavior are central to a correct understanding of "culture":

Among the many aspects of 'culture' are a community's fundamental beliefs, ethical and esthetic values, revered rituals, and material preferences. But culture also includes the tools – material and linguistic, practical and theoretical – that people employ in their purposive and reflective activities. Again, the instrumental side of 'rationality' specifies those actions, techniques, and skills necessary to achieve specific goals, but rationality also includes the capacity to make human experience bearable by rendering it intelligible. Once these more complex meanings are recognized, a sharp distinction between culture and rationality becomes untenable.

Similarly, in a chapter on "ghetto related behavior and the structure of opportunity," Wilson (2011) pointed out that individual behaviors, habits, skills, and styles exist within the structural constraints and opportunities experienced by the people living within the culture:

The social action—including behavior, habits, skills, styles, orientations, attitudes—discussed in this chapter and in the next chapter ought not to be analyzed as if it were unrelated to the broader structure of opportunities and constraints that have evolved over time. This is not to argue that individuals and groups lack the freedom to make their own choices, engage in certain conduct, and develop certain styles and orientations, but it is to say that these decisions and actions occur within a context of constraints and opportunities that are drastically different from those present in middle-class society.

Wilson goes on to discuss causal mechanisms in which the social capital arising from neighborhood social controls interacts with the cultural capital – skills, styles, orientations, and habits – of adults and youngsters in the neighborhood:

In such areas, not only are children at risk because of the lack of informal social controls, they are also disadvantaged because the social interaction among neighbors tends to be confined to those whose skills, styles, orientations, and habits are not as conducive to promoting positive social outcomes (academic success, pro-social behavior, etc.) as are those in more stable neighborhoods. Although the close interaction among neighbors in such areas may be useful in devising strategies, disseminating information, and developing styles of behavior that are helpful in a ghetto milieu... they may be less effective in promoting the welfare of children in the society at large.

Patterson (2015) references the same idea when he talks about the importance of *procedural knowledge* in cultural processes:

Bourdieu's widely acclaimed concepts of 'habitus' and 'cultural capital' are grounded on the principle of procedural knowledge acquisition, as he himself recognizes. 'The essential part of the modus operandi which defines practical mastery is transmitted in practice, in its practical state, without attaining the level of discourse.' (p. 29)

Patterson observes that procedural knowledge is acquired primarily through interaction, observation, and practice. He describes groups and their situations, for example Black middle-class parents, in which the procedural knowledge valued by their children's peer group competes with that valued by the school and the parents themselves. Thus, the peer group can also function as a gatekeeper, competing with the teacher in placing a value on and providing a reward for the behaviors flowing from an individual's habitus. Patterson says that when the peer group wins, the child is likely to fall to a social class that is lower than that of his parents. A similar point was made by Anderson (1999) in his discussion of the "code of the street" and its

potential to penetrate and dominate the classroom in ghetto communities. In other words, different fields of social activity may have different habitus and cultural capital needed to succeed within them, and when their actors inhabit the same physical space the fields may compete for allegiance and dominance.

A related description of social class differences in the creation and enactment of repertoires of skills, habits, and styles has been presented in an influential book by Lareau (2011). Here she distinguishes between the child rearing styles of working-class parents, which she calls “the accomplishment of natural growth,” and that of middle-class parents, which she refers to as “concerted cultivation.” According to Lareau, middle-class parents work hard, albeit often unconsciously, to give their children the tools needed to maintain their social class status, thereby helping to reproduce the social class structure. In a follow-up study, Lareau found that these social class differences extended far beyond childhood, and continued even as children reached adulthood.

The results of the follow-up study provide further support for the argument that a pattern of social inequality is being reproduced. Parents’ cultural practices play a role. The commitment to concerted cultivation, whereby parents actively fostered and developed children’s talents and skills did not, it turns out, wane over time. Even as children became autonomous adolescents with driver’s licenses, jobs, and dorm rooms, the middle-class parents closely monitored and intervened in their lives. (p. 305)

In an Appendix, Lareau explicitly ties her observations to Bourdieu’s theory.

To make this book more readable, I refrained from burdening it with Bourdieu’s terminology. Still, the book is a reasonably straightforward, if *partial*, empirical application of Bourdieu’s broader theoretical model. For example, in *Distinction: A Social Critique on the Judgment of Taste*, as well as other works, Bourdieu clearly intends for habitus to be a set of internalized dispositions that operate in a large number of social spheres. In his discussion of habitus, Bourdieu includes the preferences in food, furniture, music, makeup, books, and movies. The focus of *Unequal Childhoods* is much narrower, looking primarily at time use for children’s leisure activities, language use in the home, and interventions of adults in children’s institutional lives. Still, it is reasonable to assert that the elements discussed in this book, taken together, do constitute a set of dispositions that children learn, or habitus. Concerted cultivation and the

accomplishment of natural growth are aspects of the habitus of the families discussed in this book. (p. 362)

As pointed out by Lareau and Weininger (2003), there is another aspect of Bourdieu's theory that is often neglected. This is the role of institutional gatekeepers in judging and valuing the cultural capital (skills, habits, and styles) of the individuals who appear before them. An example is found in the play *Pygmalion*, where Liza could not enter upper class society until Henry Higgins had taught her to speak "properly," and importantly, her speech patterns had passed the tests informally administered by the members of this society as they conversed with her. It is in the judgment conferred by gatekeepers on the skills, habits, and styles of those appearing before them that stratification outcomes are determined. Thus, Lareau and Weininger (2003: 568) argue that the most accurate theory of the role of cultural capital in status attainment "stresses the micro-interactional processes through which individuals comply (or fail to comply) with the evaluative standards of dominant institutions such as schools."

Teachers are the school's primary gatekeepers⁶. They express their judgments in the grades they assign, which are sent home to parents in a report card so that they can see how their child is doing. In elementary school these report cards typically provide a grade (e.g., outstanding, satisfactory or needs improvement) in reading, math, and other academic skills, as well as in behaviors, including examples such as the following (taken from the form used by one district): completes homework on time, effort, makes good use of time, is cooperative and gets along with peers, is courteous in speech and actions, controls unnecessary talking, listens and follows directions, respects personal and school property, seeks help when needed. These

⁶ This is an important point, which is often missed by cultural capital researchers who use standardized test scores rather than course grades as outcome variables. Central to cultural capital theory is the interaction between individuals and gatekeepers, and the judgment that the latter render on the former's suitability and standing in the field of play. In K-12 education this interaction is largely between students and their teachers. Course grades are the result.

elementary school reports transform into letter grades in each subject as the student moves up through middle and high school. A sequence of high grades typically leads to enrollment in more advanced courses, and eventually college attendance and graduation. A sequence of low grades and poor behavior typically leads to dropout, or perhaps a terminal high school diploma or GED.

Farkas et al (1990) and Farkas (1996) applied the cultural capital framework to this situation by positing that the student's school-related habitus was best defined by the skills and behaviors that are rated by teachers on the report card. As noted in the paragraph above, these importantly include academic performance and academic-related work habits. Using data from the Dallas School District, Farkas and colleagues empirically estimated a causal flow model in which student and teacher sociodemographic background characteristics lead to student skills, habits, and styles, which lead to student coursework mastery, which lead to the teacher-assigned course grade. Indirect effects in which, for example, student background characteristics lead to student academic work habits which directly affect the course grade (after controlling the effect via coursework mastery) were also estimated. The resulting calculations appear to be one of the few times that teacher's grading responses to students' skills, habits and styles have been empirically evaluated. (For other examples see Bodovski and Farkas 2008 and Dumais, Kessinger, and Ghosh 2012.) The findings from this and related research will be examined in a later section of this chapter. For now, we turn to the extensive controversies that have surrounded the cultural capital concept and its empirical implementation.

1.3 Critiques of Cultural Capital

As noted above, Bourdieu's writings on cultural capital are often vague and suggestive rather than clear and explicit. This has led to a number of critiques of the concept and how it has

been used in empirical research. Three of these critiques have received the most attention – those by Kingston (2001), Lareau and Weininger (2003), and Goldthorpe (2007).

1.3.1 Critique by Kingston

Kingston sets out to review empirical studies that have used the cultural capital concept to explain why children from more socially privileged homes typically receive higher grades in school and have greater educational attainment. He sets the stage for this review by following Lamont and Lareau (1988) in defining cultural capital as “institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goals, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion.” The claim is that high status knowledge and activities – fine arts knowledge and museum attendance, classical musical knowledge and attendance at concerts, knowledge of literature and visits to the library or bookstores – are the elements of the enacted student’s cultural capital that are rewarded by teachers and that explain the greater schooling success of children from higher social classes. Teachers supposedly favor these students by the use of “exclusionary practices” that enable the children to attain greater school success.

That teachers favor children who are knowledgeable about “highbrow” aesthetic culture (e.g., classical music and art), and do so pervasively enough to account for the reproduction of social classes in America may seem unlikely. Yet it is exactly such high status activities indulged in by the parents and children of higher social classes that have been widely used to operationalize cultural capital in empirical work⁷.

⁷Of course, exposure to highbrow culture may result in improved language use and presentation of self which might positively impress teachers. However empirical estimates of this effect including a full range of controls including test scores have typically found at best a very weak relationship between elite cultural activities and course grades. For example, see Dumais, Kessinger, and Ghosh (2012).

Why this particular operationalization of cultural capital? DiMaggio (1982) first used this definition of cultural capital in empirical work, and his operationalization of cultural capital has been enormously influential. This usage was further supported in the paper by Lamont and Lareau (1988). Since Bourdieu's own writings lack clarity on the subject, it is not surprising that subsequent researchers have followed the path marked out by these American scholars.

Kingston is aware that teacher discrimination in favor of children involved in elite cultural activities seems unlikely by itself to explain the society-wide reproduction of the social class structure. Indeed, he attacks this notion both with evidence showing that elite cultural activities are not that widely engaged in by an upper class defined by professionals and managers, as well as findings by Lamont herself that Americans strongly oppose giving social preferment to individuals engaged in elite activities. Nevertheless, we should look at the empirical evidence. He does so, reviewing a number of papers providing estimates of the effects of elite culture participation on student educational outcomes. Overall, he finds these to be modest in magnitude. (I will review the detailed findings on the effects of cultural capital in the following section.) He then repeats his argument that because elite culture is not widely distributed among the professional and managerial classes, even should it have an effect on school success, this mechanism would not meet what he regards as Bourdieu's theoretical claim that cultural capital can only be gained in upper-class homes, and thus represents "exclusionary practices that are valued for their connection to a social group." Instead, he says, elite cultural activities are available in the homes of some working-class students and not in the homes of some middle- and upper-class students. So they don't meet the test of "exclusionary practices." Further, he says, any positive effects of these variables on school success may be due not to

exclusionary practices, but instead simply that such participation is associated with other variables such as intellectual curiosity and perseverance which themselves aid school success.

1.3.2 Critique by Lareau and Weininger

A second critique was published by Lareau and Weininger (2003). These authors seek to understand how the concept of cultural capital has been employed by English language sociologists of education. In the first part of their paper they do so by reviewing 15 papers that used the concept in empirical work. They conclude that almost all of these papers follow DiMaggio (1982) in measuring cultural capital by participation in and knowledge of elite (“highbrow”) arts activities. They also note that most of these papers make a point of differentiating the cultural capital concept from that of skills or technical ability (typically measured by test scores).

The second part of the paper by Lareau and Weininger closely examines Bourdieu’s writings on this subject. They demonstrate that he did not intend the cultural capital concept to be confined to “highbrow” cultural activities, although he may have thought that it played an important role within the French educational system. Instead, he states that “in highly generic terms, (that) any given ‘competence’ functions as cultural capital if it enables appropriation ‘of the cultural heritage’ of a society, but is unequally distributed among its members, thereby engendering the possibility of ‘exclusive advantages.’” (p. 579)

Further, Lareau and Weininger report that no-where in Bourdieu’s writing does he imply a distinction between cultural capital on the one hand, and technical knowledge or ability on the other. Indeed, as I have quoted earlier, Bourdieu invented the cultural capital concept in response to economists’ concept of human capital, and asserted that family cultural capital was essential to the creation of human capital conceived as ability or talent. Thus, as stated by Lareau and

Weininger, the “effects of ‘status,’ for Bourdieu, are not distinct from those of ‘skill’ (or by extension, ‘ability’). Cultural capital amounts to an irreducible amalgamation of the two.”

Thus, in place of elite, “highbrow” culture, Lareau and Weininger offer their own definition of cultural capital. As applied to schooling it has two parts.

First, studies of cultural capital in school settings must identify the particular expectations – both formal and, especially, informal – by means of which school personnel appraise students. Secondly, as a result of their location in the stratification system, students and their parents enter the educational system with dispositional skills and knowledge that differentially facilitate or impede their ability to conform to institutionalized expectations. ...In addition...we believe that technical skills, including academic skills, should not be excluded from any discussion of cultural capital. (p. 588)

Teachers’ appraisals of their students are recorded on the students’ report cards. As we shall see, they are largely based on the teacher’s judgments of her students’ academic skills and work habits. *These* appear to constitute the observable indicators of a student’s cultural capital that teachers are judging in a form that is consequential for the student’s later educational trajectory.

1.3.3 Critique by Goldthorpe

Goldthorpe (2007) presents a very negative view of cultural capital theory. To begin with, he denies the fundamental claim of social reproduction theory, that working-class children are constrained to remain in their class, and that middle-class children do not suffer downward mobility into the working class. He instead references empirical studies showing that during the 20th century expansion of secondary education in Britain, “substantial and primarily upward educational mobility did in fact occur between generations.” (p. 8) He then cites additional studies finding that, for example, “as of the early 1970s, over two-thirds of the individuals surveyed who had attended a selective secondary school were ‘first generation’ – i.e. their parents had not received any education at this level; and while children of working-class background were under-represented in this group, they were far from being excluded.”

Goldthorpe then cites more recent findings that the same pattern has occurred with the expansion of higher education. He notes that children from all social classes have taken up the expanded opportunities for a university education, so that the *relative* chances of such attainment from different social class origins is a debated issue. However, he cites evidence that among those French children born into the working class in the 1960s and early 1970s, 40% of the children of skilled workers and 25% of the children of unskilled workers gained the baccalaureat or a higher qualification. Thus, says Goldthorpe, Bourdieu's claim of social reproduction just doesn't fit the facts. Instead, there has been widespread upward social mobility for the working class children⁸.

Goldthorpe, like Lareau and Weininger, argues that defining cultural capital as elite cultural activities, totally separate from cognitive skills, was never intended by Bourdieu. Thus, he follows Lareau and Weininger in judging all the empirical literature that followed DiMaggio by operationalizing cultural capital as high culture to be misguided. Instead, he argues for a more inclusive definition of "cultural resources," including such mundane activities as reading to the child, and notes that, not surprisingly, family reading behavior is more predictive of student educational success than is *beaux arts* involvement. He goes on to state that as an empirical matter, Bourdieu's cultural capital theory is simply wrong. Facts contradict the theory,

Goldthorpe (p. 14) says, because

differing class conditions do not give rise to such distinctive and abiding forms of *habitus* as Bourdieu would suppose; because even within more disadvantaged classes, with little access to high culture, values favoring education may still prevail and perhaps some relevant cultural resources exist; and because, therefore, schools and other educational institutions can function as

⁸ Of course institutions of higher learning themselves have a prestige hierarchy, and doubtless the children of unskilled workers were more likely to attend the less prestigious institutions. For theories of "maximally maintained inequality" and "effectively maintained inequality" arguing that upper class parents strive to, and will always manage to maintain their children's advantages over those of children from lower classes, see Raftery and Hout (1993) and Lucas (2001).

important agencies of re-socialisation – that is, can not only underwrite but also in various respects, *compensate for or indeed counter* family influences in the creation and transmission of ‘cultural capital.’

Goldthorpe follows these arguments with a more general attack on the premises of cultural capital theory. He asserts that the student’s habitus is not formed once and for all in the family, subsequently remaining immutable. Rather, he suggests, the school also molds the student’s habitus, which can evolve during an individual’s educational career. He asserts that there is little empirical support for social reproduction (because there has been so much upward educational mobility out of the working class) or for a set of dispositions that upper class parents transmit to their children, that are immutable, that lower class children are unable to attain, and that the schools employ as an exclusionary device to keep lower class children in their place.

Instead, Goldthorpe advises rejecting cultural capital theory and replacing it with a more eclectic notion of cultural resources that can be acquired from the family and the school, as well as other sources (such as peers and neighborhoods). His emphasis is more on those variables that can be empirically demonstrated to affect educational attainment than on a theory that says that such attainment by working class youth is improbable.

1.4 An Approach That Works

A viable empirical approach to these issues has long been available, but little taken advantage of.⁹ Central to Bourdieu’s theory, and recommended as the key to the cultural capital concept by Lareau and Weininger (2003) is the idea of teachers as gatekeepers, judging the outward behavioral manifestations of each student’s habitus, that is, the student’s enacted cultural capital in school, with these judgments favoring children from middle- and upper-class homes. So what

⁹ This may be partly because some researchers misunderstand the theory. But it is also the case that access to students’ records is often difficult to obtain.

is the mechanism through which these judgments are made known and recorded in K-12 education? The answer is simple – the report card. *This* is where teachers report their judgments of each student, on both academics and behavior, these are the judgments that become part of the student’s record, and *this* is the mechanism by which these judgments affect student educational careers. Students with strong positive report cards on both academics and behavior are likely to attend college and perhaps go further; those with constantly failing report cards are likely to never complete high school.¹⁰

What academics and behaviors are graded on these cards? Using the internet, I selected grade 2 – 5 report cards from three randomly chosen school districts, in, respectively Sarasota, Florida, Richland, Washington, and Montgomery County, Maryland. All of the report cards have a place for the teacher to mark the student’s grade on each of the academic subjects – math, language arts, science, social studies, art, music, and physical education. However, there is also a place for the teachers to grade the behaviors and attitudes described below.

1.4.1 Items Graded on Elementary School Report Cards in Three Districts

Sarasota, Florida For each academic subject, the teacher can select from a list of 18 possible comments. These basically fall into two sets. The first involves student behavior and includes

- Works well in class, is courteous, respectful and cooperative
- Interacts well with peers
- Works independently, without disturbing others, and with little assistance from the teacher
- Has made good overall improvement in his/her effort this quarter.
- Has difficulty following school/classroom rules and/or directions.
- Needs frequent assistance from the teacher
- Often disturbs others during class.
- Has difficulty completing classwork.
- Has difficulty playing with others

A second set involves actions that involve parents, including

¹⁰ In addition, course grades are not the only determinant of school success. Standardized test scores also play an important role in college access. *Why* colleges place such great weight on test scores is a subject worthy of additional investigation.

- Would benefit from additional reading practice at home
- Would benefit from additional writing practice at home
- Would benefit from additional math practice at home
- Would benefit from having homework reviewed at home
- Would benefit from attending school regularly as frequent absences have a negative impact on his/her academic performance.

Montgomery County, Maryland The report card has separate sections for grading each of the academic subjects, plus one for grading what are called *Learning Skills*. This is divided into two sets of items. The first, called Work Habits contains the following:

- Rules and Procedures
- Task Completion

The second, called Thinking and Academic Success Skills contains the following:

- Analysis
- Collaboration
- Effort/Motivation/Persistence
- Fluency
- Intellectual Risk Taking
- Metacognition
- Originality
- Synthesis

Richland, Washington The report card, in addition to grades for the separate academic subjects, also has grades for what are called *Social and Learning Skills*. These are the following:

- Engages effectively with others
- Understands effort and perseverance directly impact learning
- Listens attentively in different learning situations
- Respects individual differences/rights of others
- Takes responsibility for choices and actions
- Manages materials and time
- Advocates for self

All of these districts give grades in each of the academic subjects. But what sets of behaviors, explicitly identified for grading, do these districts have in common? The answer is -- *habitual behaviors that facilitate learning in the American classroom*. In Sarasota these include “works well in class, is courteous, respectful and cooperative; works independently, without disturbing others.” In Montgomery County these include rules and procedures, task completion, and

effort/motivation/persistence.” In Richland they include that the student “understands effort and perseverance directly impact learning, listens attentively in different learning situations, and manages materials and time.” What these have in common is that they all describe aspects of *good academic work habits*. They are the traits needed to be academically successful while not reducing the success of the other students in the class. *These* are the behaviors that teachers are most focused on rewarding, not knowledge of classical music or fine arts. Teacher “gatekeeping” rewards effective and cooperative¹¹ academic work habits, and punishes their opposite – low effort, poor organization, inattention, sloppiness, disrespect, and disruptiveness. A quick perusal of a larger number of district report card formats available online suggests that teacher judgment of these aspects of students’ academic work habits is widespread.¹²

1.4.2 Putting It All Together

A focus on academic skills and work habits was the basis for the empirical study of cultural capital undertaken by Farkas and colleagues more than 25 years ago (Farkas et al., 1990; Farkas, 1996). In this work, a representative sample of Dallas Independent School District (DISD) 7th and 8th grade social studies teachers responded to a “student work-ethic characteristics questionnaire” regarding up to six of their students selected by stratified random sampling. The teachers rated the students on homework, class participation, effort, organization, disruptiveness, assertiveness, and appearance and dress. The first four of these had correlations between .80 and .95, and were combined into a scale of work habits. One of the variables – assertiveness – showed little relationship with the other (independent or dependent) variables and was omitted from the study. A student’s days absent as recorded by the district was also included

¹¹ But note that Richland also judges whether the student “advocates for self.”

¹² And these teachers’ values likely benefit females more than males. See Dumais (2002), Morris E.W (2008).

as a behavioral variable, as were disruptiveness and appearance and dress. Basic skills were measured by student scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), which includes both Language and Mathematics totals, as well as subskill scores for each of these variables. Farkas and colleagues operationalized student skills, habits, and styles as the student's ITBS score, work habits, days absent, disruptiveness, and appearance and dress.

This research was also able to profit from an unusual initiative undertaken by the DISD in response to the Texas Education Reform Act of 1984. Groups of teachers in each of the subject matter areas were assembled over the summer to create test items representative of the course subject matter. These curriculum-referenced tests were then administered uniformly to DISD students at the end of the appropriate semester. The resulting scores provide an objective measure of each student's coursework mastery in the subject.

The authors then estimated a causal model in which student and teacher sociodemographics are regarded as determining the student's basic skills and the teacher's judgment of the student's habits and styles, and these in turn are related to the student's actual coursework mastery. All of these variables together are then related to the teacher-assigned course grade. This model is summarized in Figure 1. It shows the key relationships involved as students from different social backgrounds interact with teachers from different social backgrounds, resulting in the teacher-gatekeeper's final judgment on the student for the semester – the course grade. This is the closest that empirical research has come to implementing a quantitative and testable version of Lareau and Weininger's (2003) suggestion that cultural capital studies focus on the interaction of students with their teacher-gatekeepers, and how this interaction results in different schooling outcomes for students from different social backgrounds.

Figure 1 about here

I will defer discussion of the empirical findings from this work until the following section, where the detailed findings from prior empirical work are reviewed. However, the question arises, what has been done since this work by Farkas and colleagues to implement and test this version of cultural capital theory, in which the student's habitus, strongly influenced by parents and peers in the home and neighborhood, and by the child's preschool experiences before kindergarten entry, then evolves via the student's interaction with family, peers and teachers as the student moves up the grade-levels?

Farkas (2003) reviewed the literature on cognitive and noncognitive skills developed by economists and sociologists and related it to the "skills, habits, and styles" version of cultural capital theory discussed above. Economists' research in this area can be traced back to the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976), whereas related work by sociologists dates from the book by Jencks and colleagues (Jencks et al., 1979).

Bowles and Gintis argued that "in capitalist America" variation in the design and management of schools exists to create those worker personality traits needed by different jobs in the industrial system, largely based on the jobs held by the student's parents, thereby leading to social reproduction. Thus, the children of working class parents typically obtained no more than a high school degree, perhaps with an emphasis on vocational training, and became factory workers whose obedience to authority was their most desired trait. Accordingly, such obedience was emphasized by K-12 teachers. By comparison, the children of middle and upper class parents went on to college, where creativity and independence received greater rewards, since these are the skills needed for middle class management and professional employment.

To provide evidence for these assertions, Bowles and Gintis empirically tested their assertion that the personality trait they labeled “submission to authority” was, along with cognitive skills, the principal determinant of course grades in high school. Their empirical work supported this assertion, but crucially, they defined such submission as including the following characteristics of a student’s academic work habits: perseverance, dependability, consistency, identifies with school, empathizes orders, punctuality, and defers gratification. As we shall see throughout this review, these are indeed the habits and behaviors graded positively by K-12 teachers. However, for most teachers and many other researchers, myself included, these traits do not deserve the pejorative label “submission to authority.” Instead, they simply constitute “good work habits” whose effects are to be measured empirically, and which may be desirable at all levels of the occupational structure.

This is the approach taken by Jencks et al. (1979), who conducted extensive analyses of the roles played by individual cognitive skills and non-cognitive (personality) traits on school and employment success. Using multiple datasets they measured the effects of self-assessed personality traits as well as what they considered to be indirect personality measures involving self-reports of various behaviors possibly reflecting underlying personality. A principle components analysis of 14 questions identified a construct they referred to as “study habits.” They also analyzed data in which teachers rated students on each of nine personality traits. Results of these analyses are summarized in the following section.

Other researchers continued the analysis of the effects of cognitive and noncognitive skills on school success. Within sociology, Lareau (2011) echoed the distinction between working class and middle class parenting orientations discussed by Bowles and Gintis, referring to the working class style as “the accomplishment of natural growth” and the middle class style

as “concerted cultivation.” She repeats the Bowles and Gintis observation that working class parents tend to want their children to follow directives, while middle class parents tend to encourage their children to ask questions and to reason. Rather than emphasizing the social class differences in academic work habits likely resulting from these parenting differences, Lareau instead emphasized that the middle class parenting style teaches the child to develop an individualized sense of self, including a sense of comfort, entitlement and agency when dealing with adult organizations such as the school, where they learn to present themselves and perform (Lareau 2011:242-43). Lareau asserts that by contrast, the working class parenting style leaves children feeling uncomfortable and constrained when dealing with these same institutions. These social class differences are replicated, says Lareau, when parents interact with teachers. In such situations she describes working-class and poor parents as “baffled, intimidated, and subdued.”

Other sociologists have undertaken related analyses, both quantitative and qualitative, seeking to discover which parent and student behaviors are most strongly associated with student success. At the same time, economists have produced a quantitative literature on the effects of cognitive and non-cognitive skills on school and employment success. Prominent here is a paper by Heckman and Kautz (2014) seeking to estimate the empirical importance of cognitive skills and non-cognitive traits in determining schooling outcomes. Findings from these literatures will be reviewed in the following section.

To summarize, the “skills, habits, and styles” paradigm has been widely used to investigate how the actions of parents, children, and teachers lead to the differential school success of children from middle- and upper-class children, compared to those from the working class. It seems to reasonably capture Bourdieu’s intentions for the habitus (underlying) and cultural capital (enacted) concepts to serve as mediators between family background and

schooling success. Indeed, after the dominance of this research area by cultural sociologists focused on elite cultural activities, this research approach brings back an emphasis on the daily actions and interactions involving students and teachers that ultimately determine the schooling and social class attainment of the students. It also brings back the concern with finding a sociological equivalent of the human capital paradigm advanced by economists, and employed so successfully to apply economic reasoning to almost every field of human endeavor. Both James Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu were explicitly in interaction with economists, and were inspired to create their formulations by the world-wide success of the human capital paradigm. Bringing this research area back to a place where economists and sociologists speak to one another, and empirically test their theories, simply puts this research area back on a developmental trajectory consistent with its beginning.

1.5 Empirical Findings

A schematic model of cultural capital's causal effects was presented in Figure 1. This is a mediation model, in which parenting, habitus, and academic skills and habits mediate the relationship between SES and course grades. The SES of each student implies the parenting they receive. This parenting helps determine the student's habitus, his/her disposition (including skills) toward various behaviors and strategies of action. These dispositions then lead to the academic skills and work habits that the student presents to the teacher in the classroom. These skills and habits are then employed by the teacher to assign a course grade to the student. Where quantitative empirical work is concerned, researchers are able to find measures of SES, parenting, academic skills, work habits, and course grades (or teacher's judgments of students' skills) on many of the large, nationally representative data sets collected by the National Center for Education Statistics and that are widely available to researchers (these include the ECLS-K,

the ECLS: 2011, the NELS and ELS). Other data sets, including the 28-nation PISA, have also been used in empirical studies.

The habitus, conceived as a collection of underlying dispositions, including skills, habits, identities, worldviews, preferences or values can typically not be measured directly, so that its characteristics are inferred by the academic skills and habits it gives rise to. (However, as we shall see, Gaddis (2014) seeks to measure it by using two attitudinal scales.) Thus, empirical work has typically included some subset (or all) of the variables SES, parenting, academic skills and work habits, and course grades shown in Figure 1. The result has been empirical studies in which parenting is regressed on SES, skills and work habits are regressed on SES and parenting, and course grades are regressed on some or all of SES, parenting, and skills and work habits. Empirical studies of these types are the ones reviewed here.¹³

1.5.1 Social Class Differences in Parenting and Their Consequences

Duncan and Magnuson (2011: Figure 3.1) provide a schematic model of how genes, families, schools, and peer groups combine to determine the trajectories of children's cognitive skills and behaviors from birth to grade 12, which in turn determine the individual's subsequent educational and labor market attainment. For a variable to play a role in creating social class differences in children's school success, two conditions must be met. First, it must significantly differ across social class groupings. And second, it must significantly affect schooling outcomes, such that when it is controlled, the relationship between parental social class and student success

¹³ A subset of studies use standardized test scores as their ultimate outcome measures. But it would be more appropriate to use teacher-assigned course grades, because only these represent the teacher-gatekeeper judgments that are so central to cultural capital theory. (Of course standardized test scores should be one of the predictors of the teacher-assigned course grade, since test scores measure the academic knowledge and skills that the student displays to the teacher.)

in school is reduced or eliminated. In this section we examine empirical tests of the extent to which parenting meets these conditions.

Measuring Parenting: The HOME Score That working class parents have different parenting styles from middle and upper class parents is a perennial finding of sociologists, psychologists, and economists. These differences have been conceptualized and measured in a number of ways.

Particularly widely used is the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment (HOME). Separate versions of this measurement instrument have been created to measure parenting quality for children of different ages, but all versions are similarly structured. As modified for use in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) the HOME produces two parenting measures – one for cognitive stimulation and the other for emotional support. It is useful to examine the behavioral items typically included in these scales in order to understand which parental behaviors researchers consider most important for children’s development. To take one example, for children aged 3 – 5, the following items are used to measure parental cognitive stimulation and emotional support:

Cognitive Stimulation Scale:

- How often read stories to child?
- How many children’s books does child have?
- How many magazines family gets regularly?
- Child has use of CD player?
- Do you help child with numbers?
- Do you help child with alphabet?
- Do you help child with colors?
- Do you help with shapes and sizes?
- How often is child taken on any kind of outing?
- How often is child taken to museum?
- Child’s play environment is safe?
- Interior of the home is dark or perceptually monotonous?
- All visible rooms of the home are reasonably clean?
- All visible rooms of the home are minimally cluttered?

Emotional Support Scale:

- If child got so angry that s/he hit you, what would you do? Respondent is offered multiple responses. If either “hit him/her back” or “spank child,” item is scored “not emotionally supportive.”
- How much choice is child allowed in deciding foods s/he eats at breakfast & lunch?
- About how many hours is the TV on in your home each day? >4 is scored “not emotionally supportive.”
- How often does child eat a meal with you and his/her father/stepfather/father-figure?
- About how many times, if any, have you had to spank child in the past week? >1 is scored “not emotionally supportive.”
- Interviewer observed:
- Mother conversed w/child >1 time (no scolding or suspicious comments)?
- Mother caressed, kissed, or hugged child at least once?
- Mother introduced interviewer to child by name?
- Mother physically restricted or (shook/grabbed) child? Coded non-supportive
- Mother slapped or spanked child at least once? Coded non-supportive
- Mother’s voice conveyed positive feeling about child?

We see that the cognitive stimulation scale is focused on direct parental instruction and the materials useful for learning. That is, this scale emphasizes parental actions that foster cognitive readiness for school. The emotional responsiveness scale focuses on warm positive parent-child interaction, and gives a lower when the parent employs physical punishment. The elements of the HOME score listed above encompass many of the items that quantitative studies have used to measure parenting. However, some studies, particularly those associated with the original notion of cultural capital defined as knowledge of and participation in high (elite) cultural activities (e.g., classical music and museum quality art) advanced by DiMaggio (1982) and of “concerted cultivation” (e.g. scheduled activities including sports, music and dance classes) advanced by Lareau (2011) have added or substituted these activities for the items in the HOME above.

Social Class Differences in HOME Parenting Measures Reeves and Howard (2003) used longitudinal HOME scores from the Children of the NLSY to create measures of “strong versus weak parenting.” That is, for each child they measured whether the HOME score was in the bottom or top 25% of parents at each of the three stages – infancy (age 0 – 2), early childhood

(age 3 – 5), and middle childhood (age 10 – 15). Parents scoring in the bottom 25% during at least two of these stages were considered to be the weakest parents; those scoring in the top 25% during at least two of these stages were considered to be the strongest parents. (This resulted in 20.9 percent of parents being categorized as weakest and 17.6 percent as strongest.) The researchers then computed the percent of each type of parent among families in either the bottom or the top quintile on family income. They found that, for families in the bottom income quintile, almost 50% were among the weakest parents whereas fewer than 5% were among the strongest parents. By contrast, for families in the top income quintile, about 35% were among the strongest parents, whereas only about 5% were among the weakest. Thus, parenting quality as measured by the HOME scale varies strongly and significantly across social classes. But to what extent do these social class differences in parenting quality account for social class differences in children's cognitive and behavioral outcomes?

HOME Parenting Affects Cognitive and Behavioral Outcomes This question has been addressed by a number of empirical studies. Morgan et al. (2009) replicated the findings of Reeves and Howard, reporting that mothers in the lowest educational quintile displayed HOME scores approximately one standard deviation lower than those in the highest educational quintile. They also found that these parenting scores significantly affected children's learning-related behaviors, and explained a significant portion of the social class differences in these behaviors. Hoff (2003) followed up on work by Hart and Risley (1995), showing that social class differences in mothers' speech to their two-year olds fully explained social class differences in these children's vocabularies. Farkas and Beron (2004) found that parenting measures partially explained social class differences in the oral language skills of children. Bradley (2001) showed the significant effects of HOME parenting scores on children's cognitive and behavioral

development. Smith et al (2006) showed that maternal responsiveness to the child positively affected cognitive development. In sum, the cognitive stimulation and emotional support activities measured by the HOME are significantly and positively associated with the skills and habits of children, and explain a portion, but not all, of the social class differences in these skills and habits when children enter kindergarten.¹⁴

Concerted Cultivation In a widely discussed study, Lareau (2011) focused on a somewhat different set of parenting behaviors on which working class and middle class parents differ. These are the formalized out-of-home activities that middle class parents typically schedule for their children, contrasted with the more around the home and neighborhood, self-organized activities of working class children. Lareau referred to the latter as “the accomplishment of natural growth” and the former as “concerted cultivation.” As described by Lareau (2011: 238-39), in middle class families

parents actively fostered and assessed their children’s talents, opinions, and skills. They scheduled their children for activities. They reasoned with them. They hovered over them and outside the home they did not hesitate to intervene on the children’s behalf. They made a deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate children’s development and cultivate their cognitive and social skills.

By contrast, Lareau says,

working-class and poor parents viewed children’s development as unfolding spontaneously, as long as they were provided with comfort, food, shelter, and other basic support...Parents who relied on natural growth generally organized their children’s lives so they spent time in and around home, in informal play with peers, siblings, and cousins...Instead of the relentless focus on reasoning and negotiation that took place in middle-class families, there was less speech (including less whining and badgering) in working-class and poor homes...Directives were common. In their institutional encounters, working-class and poor parents turned over responsibility to professionals; when they did try to intervene, they felt they were less capable and less efficacious than they would have liked.

¹⁴ There is a large literature on parental involvement with their child’s school work, teacher, and school activities more generally, and how this involvement is related to student achievement. For examples, see Van Voorhis et al. (2013) and Nunez et al. (2015).

Lareau's mention of middle class parents actively fostering their children's "talents, opinions, and skills" is reminiscent of Swidler's "skills, habits, and styles." Yet in Lareau's discussion of the consequences of these social class differences in parenting, she emphasizes the organized activities that middle class children experience – for example, sports and summer camps -- and the way these help the child to develop an "individualized sense of self." She goes on to describe these experiences as assisting middle class children to develop a sense of entitlement and agency when dealing with adults and their institutions, such as teachers and schools. By contrast, she says, the working class child rearing style does not foster such a sense of self (Lareau, pp. 241 – 43). Lareau's emphasis on scheduled activities and the development of a sense of entitlement in middle class children tends de-emphasize the importance of those direct, academic skill building activities that middle class parents also devote time to fostering (although she does mention language use as a key component of concerted cultivation). While it is no doubt true that middle and upper class parents provide their children with both a sense of entitlement and agency and with the concrete skills and behaviors needed to succeed in school, it is important to know which of these plays the larger role in the greater school success of middle class students compared with those from the working class. Thus, although the report cards I sampled emphasized academic work habits, at least one, from Richland WA, included an item about the student's agency, namely "advocates effectively for self."

Determinants and Consequences of Concerted Cultivation Quantitative studies of the determinants and consequences of concerted cultivation have yielded mixed results. Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) found a relatively strong positive relationship between SES and each of cultural trips, cultural classes, and household educational resources. However, when they employed these parenting variables to predict course grades, either with or without controlling

prior grades and test scores, they found insignificant or small effects. By contrast, they found much larger effects for student academic work habits and prior achievement. Sticking relatively closely with Lareau's definition of concerted cultivation, Dumais et. al. (2012) found no positive significant relationship between (a) parents' cultural activities with their child and/or parents' school involvement and (b) teachers' evaluations of student's language and literacy skills, academic work habits, or interpersonal skills. Similar results were reported by De Graaf et al. (2000). They used both elite cultural activities and parental reading to their children to predict the child's ultimate educational attainment. They found that reading to the child, but not elite cultural activities significantly predicted educational attainment.

Bodovski and Farkas (2008) used ECLS-K data for first grade to estimate the association between both social class and parenting quality (with an emphasis on the concerted cultivation parenting style) on the one hand and students' academic work habits, academic performance, and the teacher's judgment of the student's performance on the other. The authors employed a more general definition of concerted cultivation that added parental instructional and interactional activities to the measures of participation in organized activities and parental involvement with the schools. The result was three dimensions of parental activities for first graders, measured in three separate scales and then combined into a single scale. The first dimension is *parental perceptions of their responsibilities towards their child*, with a particular focus on instruction and interaction. The following variables were used to construct this scale: tell a child stories, sing songs, do art, play games, teach about nature, build blocks, do sports, practice numbers and letters, read to a child, listen to a child even if busy, foster the child's opinion, help with homework.

The second dimension is how children spend their *leisure time, particularly their participation in organized activities*. These were measured as music, arts and crafts, dance lessons, clubs, organized performing arts and athletic activities, educational trips to the library, museum, zoo, concert, or live show.

The third dimension was conceptualized as *parents' relationships with social institutions, particularly schools*. This was measured as participation in parent-teacher conferences, attending open house or back to school night, participating in PTA, attending a school event, volunteering at school, and participating in fundraising. The authors also added another variable – number of children's books in the home – providing an additional measure of parental efforts to enrich their children's lives and understanding, as well as assist with pre-reading and reading skills.

Bodovski and Farkas restricted their analysis sample to white children in order to avoid controversies regarding whether or not race functions as a stratifying factor in addition to SES. They first ran regressions using SES and other demographics to predict the concerted cultivation measure. They found a medium standardized coefficient of 0.40 for the path from SES to concerted cultivation. This validates the observations of Lareau and others regarding strong social class differentials in the parenting activities measured by this variable.

Next, Bodovski and Farkas used SES and concerted cultivation in sequential regressions to predict the student's teacher-judged academic work habits – persistence at tasks, eagerness to learn, attentiveness, learning independence, flexibility, and organization. With only SES and demographics as predictors, the authors found that SES had a standardized coefficient of .19 with academic work habits. When parental expectations for the child's educational attainment and concerted cultivation were added to the equation, the coefficient of SES declined 26% to .14; the direct effect of concerted cultivation was .07. This shows once again that direct measures of

parenting activities are able to explain a portion, but only a portion of the effect of SES on the child's academic work habits.

Following this, Bodovski and Farkas used SES, demographics, parental educational expectations for the child, concerted cultivation and academic work habits in sequential regressions to predict the student's reading test score. With only demographics controlled, the standardized coefficient of SES on reading test scores was .31. Adding parental expectations and concerted cultivation reduced this by 26% to .23, showing that concerted cultivation can explain at most a portion of SES differentials in cognitive performance. The direct effect of concerted cultivation on reading test scores was .09. Finally, academic work habits were added to the equation. This reduced the SES effect to .18, slightly more than half of its total effect. The direct effect of academic work habits on reading test scores was a very substantial .38, showing once again that these behaviors appear to strongly affect learning.

Finally, these variables were used in sequential regressions to predict the teacher's judgment of the student's language and literacy skills. In the first regression, with only SES and demographics controlled, the total effect of SES was .24. As the variables were added sequentially, by far the strongest predictors of the teacher's judgment were academic work habits and reading test scores. By the final regression, with all predictors in the equation, the effect of the reading test score was .62, that of academic work habits was .32, and the SES effect on the teacher's judgment of the student's language and literacy skills had been fully explained. I conclude that, at least in this nationally representative data set of first grade students, the teacher-assigned course grade is determined about 2/3 by actual performance and 1/3 by student work habits. This gives a smaller role to work habits than was found by Farkas (1996) for the Dallas schools (see Figure 2). However, this may be accounted for by differences in the subjects

examined and the available data. In particular, the 1996 Farkas study predicted the actual grade assigned for 7th and 8th grade social studies, whereas the 2008 Bodovski and Farkas study predicted the teacher's judgment of first grade student's language and literacy skills. The latter study likely showed a stronger effect of test scores since it was the skills tested that the teacher was asked to judge. The fact that even in this case, with standardized test scores controlled, student work habits had an effect size as large as .32 in predicting student skills demonstrates the importance of these work habits in the teacher's judgment of student performance.

Several additional studies have employed quantitative measures of concerted cultivation, typically testing for its role as a mediator in explaining the relationship between SES and achievement measured by test scores, but without attention to either the academic work habits of students or to teacher's judgment of these and the role of this judgment in the assignment of a grade for the course. An example is Cheadle (2008), who uses ECLS-K data to test the role of concerted cultivation as a mediator between SES and math and reading test score trajectories from kindergarten through third grade. Cheadle uses many of the same variables as Bodovski and Farkas to measure concerted cultivation. These comprised elite cultural activities, participation in school activities such as parent-teacher conferences, and the number of the child's books, but omitted the direct instructional activities included by Bodovski and Farkas, such as time spent reading to a child or helping with homework. Cheadle finds that concerted cultivation explains about 20 percent of the effect of SES on test scores. He also finds that concerted cultivation is most strongly associated with race gaps in achievement at kindergarten entry, and appears to play a smaller role in achievement growth as children move up to first and third grade. Overall, the conclusion is that the concerted cultivation parenting style plays a modest role in mediating the effect of SES on achievement. Cheadle might have found larger

effects if he had included direct instructional activities in his measure of concerted cultivation. However, since this study employs test scores rather than course grades as the outcome, it does not test for the determinants of teacher judgments which are so central to cultural capital theory.

Other studies have used concerted cultivation measures that partially overlap with those used by Bodovski/Farkas and Cheadle. Bodovski (2010) found that, contrary to Lareau, even after controlling SES, Black parents were less supportive of their children's school success than Whites. Lee and Bowen (2006) used measures of the parent physically visiting the school, discussing educational topics with the child, helping with homework, managing the child's time on literacy and nonliteracy activities, and the parent's educational expectations for the child. (Note that Bodovski and Farkas included this last measure in their analyses, but did not consider it to be part of concerted cultivation.) The dependent variable was academic achievement, measured as a composite including the teacher-assigned grades in reading and math as well as teacher reports of whether the child was above or below grade level in reading and math. This use of grades and teacher judgments as outcomes puts the study more directly in the cultural capital field.

The authors found a positive relationship between parental social class and concerted cultivation. Lee and Bowen also found that parental involvement at school and expectations for the child's educational attainment were positively associated with achievement, and partially mediated the effect of social class on this outcome. These findings are generally consistent with those of other researchers. This study also found some significant interactions (moderation) between elements of their measure of concerted cultivation and some of the demographic measures. However, these did not follow any meaningful pattern.

Gaddis (2013) uses data from youth who participated in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America program to test whether a measure of habitus mediates the relationship between a concerted cultivation parenting style and course grades. He operationalizes cultural capital using three measures of elite cultural participation plus weekly hours spent reading. This paper is one of the few to claim to quantitatively measure habitus, which Gaddis does using two scales – a youth’s belief that she/he can succeed in school and a scale measuring the youth’s belief that education is valuable to her/his success in life. Using first difference models, he first regresses change in grades on change in each of his four elements of cultural capital (museum visits, play attendance, cultural lessons, and time spent reading). Two of these (museum visits and time spent reading) show significant positive effects on GPA. Second, he adds change in the habitus variables (the two attitude measures) to the equation. They are both significantly associated with GPA, and with these variables controlled the effects of the cultural capital variables become smaller and lose significance. Gaddis concludes that habitus mediates the effect of cultural capital on GPA. He finds that museum and reading both have effect sizes of .05; the habitus attitude variables both have effect sizes of .15. These are small to modest in size.

How can we compare Gaddis’ work where habitus is measured by two schooling attitude scales with that of Farkas (1996) or Bodovski and Farkas (2008) where habitus is not explicitly measured, but academic work habits and test scores measuring cultural capital are taken to be the variables that teachers consider when assigning course grades? Clarification is attained by looking at the items comprising each of Gaddis’ scales. The “I can succeed at school” scale may measure habitus, since it shows how the student sees herself in the school setting. But it is likely also measuring the student’s actual success at schoolwork. It is not surprising that positive changes in school performance would be associated with positive changes in the student’s

reports of her school performance. However there is a danger of reverse causality, where school performance is driving attitudes rather than the other way around.

As for the second scale, described by Gaddis as a measure of “the youth’s belief that education is valuable to her success in life,” it *does* contain items such as “how valuable do you think your education will be in getting the job you want?” However, it also contains items such as the following: Do you think your school work is boring? Do you think your homework is fun to do? Do you think the things you learn in school are worthless? Do you care about doing your best in school? How upset would you be if you got a low grade for one of your subjects? Change in these items could also be expected to be positively correlated with changes in grades, but once again, there may be reverse causality, where positive change in grades leads to positive change in these measures of feelings toward school. Further, these items are likely correlated with the academic work habits that teachers use in determining course grades. Indeed, when assigning course grades, teachers had no knowledge of the student’s scores on these attitude scales. Their only opportunity to observe differences in these attitudes across students was due to their observation of the student’s academic work habits.

Comparing the way Gaddis operationalized the cultural capital theory with the way it was operationalized by Farkas (1996) and Bodovski and Farkas (2008) is instructive. Gaddis operationalized the habitus with two attitudinal scales closely related to the student’s positive feelings about her/his schoolwork, and used these as mediators between concerted cultivation and course grades. He did not use a measure of actual student academic performance. Farkas (1996) did not seek to measure the habitus, which is theorized to be dispositions and skills internal to the student. Instead, he measured the academic work habits partially determined by the student’s habitus, and estimated how the teacher-assigned course grade was affected by the

student's academic performance (measured by both basic skills and curriculum referenced tests) and the student's academic work habits. Similarly, Bodovski and Farkas (2008) did not attempt to measure the habitus, but again tested the extent to which academic work habits and test score performance affected the teacher's assessment of the student's competency at the subject. They also tested the extent to which these work habits and test scores mediated the relationship between concerted cultivation and the teacher's judgment of the student. Gaddis used many of the same parenting variables used by others, but chose to refer to these as "cultural capital." Bodovski and Farkas employed similar variables (although containing more about the parent's direct instruction of the child) and, instead of viewing these as measures of habitus, tested for the effects of work habits and test scores as mediators between parenting and the teacher's judgment of the child. The largest difference between the two research approaches is that Gaddis uses survey questions about attitudes toward school to measure habitus and tests for it as a mediator without controlling test scores. By contrast, Bodovski and Farkas use academic work habits as expressions of the student's cultural capital, and employ both work habits and test scores as mediators. Since Gaddis' survey questions appear to be closely related to work habits, the most consequential difference between the two studies may be that Gaddis does not control test scores.

Using ECLS-K data, Bodovski (2014) operationalized students' emerging habitus using 8th grade students' educational expectations, internal locus of control, and general and area-specific self-concepts. She examined how early parental practices and educational expectations (measured during kindergarten and first-grade years) affect students' emerging habitus and academic achievement when they reach adolescence (measured in eighth grade). The findings revealed that students from higher-SES families had more positive general and area-specific self-concepts, higher educational expectations, internal locus of control, and higher academic

achievement. Higher parental educational expectations were positively associated with all studied outcomes. The findings provided only partial support for the effects of early parental practices and highlighted the role of gender and race/ethnicity in shaping adolescents' habitus.

Potter and Roksa (2013) also analyzed the ECLS-K, emphasizing the over-time nature of concerted cultivation, and the effects of contemporaneous and cumulative concerted cultivation on student test scores in reading and math, estimated with growth curve models. Their measure of concerted cultivation combines child activities (e.g., dance, music, athletics), parental school involvement, parental educational expectations, the number of books in the household, and parent-to-parent contact. They find that the mother's education is positively associated with each of these parenting behaviors, and that, with the exception of parent-to-parent contact, cumulative measures of each of these behaviors are positively associated with increasing social class gaps in both reading and math test scores as children move up the grade levels. When entered as controls, these behaviors explain about 23% of the effect of mother's education on reading test scores, and about 18% of the mother's education effect on math test scores. This is generally consistent with prior work, although the use of test scores rather than grades makes these results less of a true test of the cultural capital theory. It appears that, in general, explicitly measured parenting activities of the type available on large nationally representative data sets can explain about ¼ of the relationship between parental social class and student grades or test scores. This estimate is quite similar to the findings reported by Bodovski and Farkas (2008) and Cheadle (2008).

Tramonte and Willms (2009) take a similar approach, but analyze PISA data containing information on more than 200,000 students across 28 OECD countries. They operationalize cultural capital along two dimensions. They measure "static cultural capital" by combining

responses to nine questions about elite (“highbrow”) cultural activities. They measure “relational cultural capital” by responses to six items concerning conversations between parents and the child covering topics such as social issues, books, films, television programs, how well doing at school, as well as whether the child herself enjoys talking with other people about books or going to the bookstore or library. The authors run regressions, separately for each country, estimating the effects of relational and cultural capital on the student’s reading test score and sense of belonging at school, controlling parental education, occupation, and sex. They find that both cultural capital measures are positively and significantly associated with reading test scores for each of the 28 countries, with the relational measure association slightly stronger than that of the static measure for a majority of the countries. The associations of these variables with sense of belonging is also generally positive, more consistently so for the relational cultural capital measure. However, once again, this study used test scores rather than grades as the outcome. For a related study focused on the countries of Eastern Europe see Bodovski, Jeon, and Byun (2016).

1.5.2 Social Class Differences in Cognitive Skills and Academic Work Habits

Studies reviewed in the previous section focused on the role of parenting as a mediator of the relationship between SES and educational outcomes, perhaps involving cognitive skills and work habits as additional mediators. In this section we focus on studies that do not consider parenting, but simply consider cognitive skills and work habits as mediators between social class background and schooling success.

If cognitive skills and academic work habits are to mediate the relationship between SES and course grades, they must first be shown to differ across social classes, with middle and upper class students showing greater cognitive skills and academic work habits than students from the working and lower classes. I now turn to the empirical evidence on these issues.

Cognitive Skills A relatively large body of empirical research has demonstrated that social class differences in cognitive skills begin very early in life, are of relatively large magnitudes at kindergarten entry and are, in general, maintained through to high school education. Fernald, Marchman, and Weisleder (2013) found that significant disparities in vocabulary and language processing efficiency were already evident at 18 months between infants from higher- and lower-SES families, and that by 24 months there was a six-month gap between SES groups in processing skills critical to language development. That is, it was not until 24 months of age that the less advantaged children reached the same level of processing speed and accuracy displayed by the more advantaged children at 18 months. Hart and Risley (1995) and Hoff (2003) showed that higher social class parents speak a very much greater number and variety of words to their infants and toddlers than do working class parents, and these differences partially explain the larger vocabularies of middle and upper class children. Farkas and Beron (2004) found large SES oral vocabulary gaps at 36 months of age, and subsequent vocabulary growth rates that were similar across different SES groups, so that the magnitude of the 36 month SES gap persists at least through to 13 years of age. As discussed earlier, large social class gaps in cognitive performance are found at kindergarten entry, and persist as children move up through the grades. These school readiness and persistent social class differences in children's cognitive performance are likely due to combinations of parenting, environmental, and biological differences between children from lower and higher SES families.

Academic Work Habits As with cognitive skills, social class differences in task-related work habits are observed very early in children's development. Morgan, Farkas, Hillemeier, and Maczuga (2009) estimated SES differences in behaviors at 24 months of age, using data collected from administration of the Bayley Scales of Infant Development. They found that when

mother and child were given simple tasks to do, children from mothers in the lowest education quintile were more than twice as likely as those from mothers in the highest education quintile to not persist at tasks, to be inattentive, to show no interest, to be uncooperative and to be frustrated. Since mother and child performed as a dyad, these outcomes are suggestive of mother-child interaction differences across social classes.

By kindergarten entry, the academic work habits of children in the top SES quintile are 0.6 standard deviation above those of children from the bottom SES quintile (Duncan and Magnuson, 2011: 56). By 5th grade this behavior gap has widened slightly. By 8th grade these gaps have decreased to about 0.4 standard deviation, and by 12th grade to 0.3 standard deviation (Farkas, 2011: 79). In kindergarten, children from the lowest SES quintile show antisocial behaviors (externalizing problem behaviors) that are 0.3 standard deviation worse than those from the highest SES quintile. By 5th grade this gap has increased to 0.5 standard deviation but it decreases thereafter, to 0.3 SD in 12th grade. However, this may be at least partly due to the higher school dropout rate among students with the worst behaviors, particularly those from lower and working class homes.

In sum, there is ample evidence showing that family social class background is a powerful determinant of academic skills and work habits. If these are found to strongly determine the course grades a student receives, then the basic tenets of the cultural capital theory presented here will have been supported.

1.5.3 Skills and Habits Determine Course Grades

Farkas et al. (1990) and Farkas (1996) used data collected from the Dallas School District to estimate portions of the model presented in Figure 1. These studies contained measures of poverty, academic skills and work habits, and course grades. They lacked measures of parenting,

but they did have separate measures of basic academic skills (measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills) and of the actual coursework mastery of the students in the 7th and 8th social studies classes from which the study sample was drawn (this measure is drawn from a curriculum referenced test administered uniformly within the Dallas schools).

These researchers found that when it comes to predicting social studies course grades assigned in 7th and 8th grade, the direct effect of coursework mastery had an effect size of .27, and the direct effect of basic skills (measured by language arts and math scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills) was .22. The largest direct effect was that of academic work habits, with a standardized coefficient of .53. Absenteeism, disruptiveness, and appearance and dress also had significant direct effects, but of much smaller magnitude. The striking finding is that despite controls for two types of cognitive skills, work habits still had such a large effect size, even as late as middle school, when you might expect cognitive performance to have become much more important than the student's work habits.

These are direct effects, with all variables controlled. But in addition, there are indirect effects in which causally prior variables affect course grades through their effects on mediators. One such mediator is coursework mastery. This is most strongly determined by Basic Skills and Work Habits. The path model in Figure 2 shows the results of putting these effect estimates together into a single model. Basic skills has a direct effect of .22 on course grades plus an indirect effect of $.38 \times .27 = .10$ via coursework mastery, for a total effect of .32. Work habits has a direct effect of .53 on course grades plus an indirect effect $.32 \times .27 = .09$, for a total effect of .62. Coursework mastery itself has a direct effect of .27. Other effects are much smaller, with the largest of these being days absent, with a direct effect of -.15. In sum, academic work habits exert the strongest effect on teacher-assigned course grades in 7th and 8th grade social studies,

with a total effect size of .62. That is, increasing these work habits by 1 standard deviation would lead to a course grade increase of .62 of a standard deviation. By contrast, basic skills have an effect only about half this size, and the effect of coursework mastery is smaller still.

Figure 2 about here

Group differences in work habits also accounted for large portions of race gaps in academic achievement. For example, other findings included the fact that Asian children, scoring high on academic work habits, received a double benefit from these behaviors. First, these work habits strongly and positively affected coursework mastery, which raised their grades. However, over and above this effect via coursework mastery, Asians' good work habits earn an extra reward by further raising their grades.

These are striking findings. It has been widely believed that during the early elementary grades, when children are being trained to have good academic learning habits, these habits form a significant portion of the teacher-assigned course grade. But it has also been believed that in middle and high school, where students have different teachers for different academic subjects, and the focus is on learning the assigned material, tests and other objective measures of such learning play the largest role in course grade assignment. Yet, this is not what we have found for 7th and 8th grade social studies. Of course these data are from the late 1980s, in only one city. It would be valuable to have research updating these findings to a more recent time period and to the nation as a whole. More generally, a structural equation model could be estimated in which the habitus is a latent variable, with test scores and academic work habits as indicators. Or, perhaps a better model would involve two latent habitus variables, one for cognitive ability and the other for habits and behaviors. Then test scores would be the indicators of cognitive skills, and teacher reported judgments of student work habits and other behaviors as the indicators of

the latent habits and behaviors variable. This would seem to be the appropriate operationalization of a model in which the student's habitus is not directly observed.

Research by Blanchard and Muller (2015) further supports the importance of academic work habits in determining the teacher-assigned course grade. This study analyzes ELS 2002 data to test whether teacher perceived student work habits mediate the relationship between being an immigrant student and the course grade received in 10th grade math. The authors find that the teacher's perception that the student "works hard" is positively related to the student's course grade, with (after controls) an effect size of .62SD. This is a very strong effect, which is likely at least partly inflated by the authors' failure to control test scores in the analysis.

1.5.4 Child Care

Parenting activities are not the only way that children's school-related habitus and cultural capital may be shaped. Federal and state preschool programs for low-income children were designed to compensate for SES differences in the stimulating, nurturing and healthful aspects of home environments. Head Start, and most recently state-run preschool programs serve many, but not all, low-income children, since Head Start is not fully funded. The best of these programs operate in child care centers utilizing a "whole child" model of comprehensive service provision, including health- and family-related services. Research has shown that these programs do increase cognitive performance, although unfortunately the effect sizes are small, and fade out by second grade (Puma et al. 2010). In addition, many higher income families also send their children to child care centers, which are often of higher quality than those utilized by low-income families, thereby exacerbating rather than reducing SES differentials in the cognitive stimulation and support provided to preschoolers. Further, research has shown that longer time periods in out-of-home child care tend to be associated with more conflictual relationships

between the child and both teachers and the child's mother, although this effect is reduced when the care is of higher quality (Early Child Care Research Network, 2005). Overall, and particularly for cognitive skills, preschool programs can play a role in complementing or even substituting for the efforts of parents to prepare children for kindergarten entry. There is a very large research literature on this, which I do not have the space to consider here. For a useful starting point, see the meta-analysis by Duncan and Magnuson (2013).

1.5.5 Peer Effects

In addition to the family and teachers, the peer group has been found to exert significant effects on the educational success of students. That working and lower class peer groups, particularly among males, can create a culture antithetical to school achievement has long been reported by ethnographic studies. This has been reported within both White and Black low income peer groups (Ogbu 1978, 2003; Willis 1977; Macleod 1995; Anderson 1999; Tyson, Darity, and Castellino 2005) and has led to a spirited controversy regarding the existence of an "oppositional culture," in which, among both male and female African American students, striving for academic achievement is denigrated as "acting White" (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998, Downey and Ainsworth-Darnell 2002; Farkas, Lleras, and Maczuga 2002; Carter 2005; Fryer 2010). The reality of this effect may be inferred from the well-established finding that, all other things equal, the higher the percentage of African American students in a school, the lower the average academic achievement of students in the school (Mickelson, Bottia, and Lambert 2013). Of course other explanations, including lower quality teachers, are also possible.

But what about peer effects of having a high percentage of working- and lower-class students in a school? Palardy (2013) found that even among otherwise similar students,

attending a school where the average student comes from a high SES family significantly increases the probability of high school graduation and college enrollment. He concludes that these effects are largely explained by peer effects, which tend to be negative in low SES schools. Once again, the likely mediating mechanism is lower levels of academic work habits where the student peer group comes largely from working- and lower-class homes. Similar findings have been reported by Anderson (1999), Carell and Hoekstra (2010), Hanushek et al. (2003), Morris (2008) and Willis (1977) among others.

1.5.6 Biological Make-Up and Health

Beginning even before birth, children from low SES households experience lower quality health than higher SES children. Low SES children are more likely to experience growth retardation and inadequate neurobehavioral development in utero. These children are also more likely to be born prematurely, at low birth weight, with a disability, or with fetal alcohol syndrome or AIDS. These outcomes are typically due to poor prenatal care, poor nutrition and maternal substance use during pregnancy, and living in an environment where violence is common and containing toxins such as lead and airborne pollutants. Further, when low income children experience a health problem or disability they are less likely than higher SES children to receive adequate health care (Bradley and Corwin 2002). There is insufficient space here to review this very large literature. But there is little doubt that the biological and health differences between children from low and middle social class backgrounds play a significant role in the development of social class differences in the school-related habitus of these children. (For additional reading see Currie and Reichman, 2015, and the literature cited there.)

1.6 Academic Work Habits as Personality Traits

Once we moved past studies restricting cultural capital to behaviors and skills associated with elite “high culture” we found a great commonality among the skills and habits reported by ethnographers as being central to different subcultural repertoires, those included by psychologists in scales of quality parenting such as the HOME, those explicitly listed on report cards to be graded by teachers, and those work habits that are empirically found to join cognitive performance as being most predictive of the grades assigned by teachers. As noted by Farkas (2003), these are the same characteristics included in the concept of “conscientiousness” that industrial psychologists find to be the only one of the “big five” personality characteristics to predict job performance and wages. These are the same characteristics that the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) schools, the charter school network with the most well documented positive effects, use as the basis of their “contract” with students.

These conscientious academic work habits have been somewhat neglected by sociologists of education, even as economists and psychologists have concentrated on them, in some cases claiming that they hold the key to improving the schooling and life outcomes of children from low income households. Thus, Borgans et al. (2008) and Heckman and Kautz (2014) emphasize personality traits, particularly conscientiousness, as the key to success in school and life. These authors refer to the work of psychologist Roberts (2009), who states that “conscientiousness is a personality trait, which is defined as a ‘tendency to respond in certain ways under certain circumstances,’ ...the tendency to think, feel, and behave in a relatively enduring and consistent fashion across time in trait-affording situations.”

Note that this is very close to the definition of habitus discussed earlier. Heckman and Kautz go on to list the American Psychology Dictionary description of conscientiousness, its facets, related skills, and analogous childhood temperament skills. The word is defined as the

tendency to be organized, responsible, and hardworking. It includes competence (efficient), order (organized) dutifulness (not careless), achievement striving (ambitious), self-discipline (not lazy), and deliberation (not impulsive) Related skills are grit, perseverance, delay of gratification, impulse control, achievement striving, ambition, and work ethic. Analogous childhood temperament skills are attention/ (lack of) distractibility, effortful control, impulse control/delay of gratification, persistence, activity.

These traits and behaviors are similar to the academic work habits we have emphasized throughout this chapter. Almlund et al (2011) report effect sizes for intelligence and each of the big five personality traits in their effects on years of education attained. The largest effect is for conscientiousness, with an effect size of .25. The next largest effect is for intelligence. The other personality traits either have no or much smaller effects. This finding, in which academic work habits have even stronger effects on educational attainment than test scores, is reminiscent of Farkas' (1996) findings on the relative strength of effect of test scores and work habits on course grades. For a wide-ranging discussion of the importance of grit in life success see Duckworth (2016). Here we see another example of the convergence of viewpoints in sociology, economics, and psychology.

1.7 Policy Implications

What are the policy implications of the finding that teacher-judged academic work habits are a major mediating factor for the strong positive relationship between family social class background and student success in school? Can this finding be employed to increase the school success of children from lower- and working-class families?

The Knowledge is Power (KIPP) charter schools appear to have done just that. First developed by two Teach for America teachers in 1994, this network of charter schools now

numbers more than 180 schools across the country. Their highly structured program for children from low income households includes commitment statements that must be agreed to by teachers, parents, and students. That for students reads as follows:

- I will always work, think, and behave in the best way I know how, and I will do whatever it takes for me and my fellow students to learn. This also means that I will complete all my homework every night, I will call my teachers if I have a problem with the homework or a problem with coming to school, and I will raise my hand and ask questions in class if I do not understand something.
- I will always behave so as to protect the safety, interests, and rights of all individuals in the classroom. This also means that I will always listen to all my KIPP teammates and give everyone my respect.
- I am responsible for my own behavior, and I will follow the teachers' directions.

This is nothing other than the academic work habits discussed throughout this chapter.

Similarly, the pledge that must be signed by parents reads as follows:

We will make sure our child arrives at KIPP every day by 7:25 a.m. (Monday-Friday) or boards a KIPP bus at the scheduled time. We will always help our child in the best way we know how and we will do whatever it takes for him/her to learn. This also means that we will check our child's homework every night, let him/her call the teacher if there is a problem with the homework, and try to read with him/her every night. We will always make ourselves available to our children and the school, and address any concerns they might have. This also means that if our child is going to miss school, we will notify the teacher as soon as possible, and we will carefully read any and all papers that the school sends home to us.

Here the emphasis on checking homework and reading with the student every night reflects the kinds of good parenting behaviors embodied in the HOME score instrument.

What has been the impact of KIPP schools on the students attending them? The answer is that they have shown significant positive effects on reading and math achievement at elementary, middle and high school levels (Angrist et al., 2010, 2012; Tuttle et al. 2015). These results appear to be the brightest spot in a great variety of school structure experiments that have been unleashed by the charter schools movement. This is perhaps the strongest evidence yet for the overwhelming importance of student skills, habits, and styles in the determination of student outcomes, and the possibility of fostering increased school success for students from low-income

and working-class families by creating a schooling environment within which these students can improve these skills, habits, and styles.

1.8 Summary and Discussion

I began this chapter by discussing social reproduction, arguably the most important empirical finding in the sociology of education. Seeking to understand the mechanisms by which the children of middle- and upper-class parents attain greater school success than lower- and working-class children, I explicated Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, which supposes that parents from different social classes imbue children with different sorts of *habitus*, or dispositions (including skills) toward action. The resulting habitus differs across social classes, so that children from middle and higher social class families tend to present the cultural capital (cognitive skills and academic work habits enacted in the classroom and homework) that are pleasing to, and rewarded by teachers, whereas this is less common among children from lower- and working-class families. Teachers respond by giving higher report card grades to the middle and upper class students, leading them to experience more successful academic trajectories and to attain greater academic skills and knowledge as they progress up through the elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. These more successful K – 12 trajectories then translate into more successful postsecondary enrollment and completion, leading to more rewarding (in both the pecuniary and non-pecuniary sense) employment careers.

I consider this narrative to be consistent with the work of economist Gary Becker who brought great attention to the development and output from human skills and of sociologist James Coleman who emphasized the importance of social networks, trust, and the individual's position within a social structure as determinants of human capital development and deployment. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu added a focus on how the individual's position in the social structure

affects her habitus, which helps determine the individual's enacted educational cultural capital (skills and behaviors) that are judged by teacher-gatekeepers whose feedback and assigned grades help determine the student's educational attainment and thus subsequent occupational employment and earnings. In this chapter I have tried to show that cultural capital theory, by introducing student strategies of action constrained by their habitus, producing classroom cultural capital (skills and work habits) judged by teachers, offers an integrative focus in which the study of educational stratification can be advanced in a way consistent with the visions of Becker, Coleman and Bourdieu, as well as many other sociologists, economists, and psychologists working on these issues today.

The epigraph was a quotation from Paula England's ASA Presidential Address (2016), where she defined personal characteristics as "things individuals carry across situations, such as skills, habits, identities, worldviews, preferences or values." England is a gender scholar, and does not generally undertake research in the sociology of education. She writes about skills and habits because she is treating them as central to the "social structure and personality" theorizing that, she argues, offers an important vantage point for understanding a very wide variety of outcomes across the social world. She concentrates on two examples. One is the finding that more women than men report being bisexual. The second is that disadvantaged women use contraception less consistently than more advantaged women, even when they do not want to get pregnant. She argues that in each case, the structurally disadvantaged position of the members of a group, gay men in the first case, disadvantaged women in the second, has caused them to internalize particular skills, habits, identities, worldviews, preferences or values. For a gay man, this is a straight identity, which he feels constrained to present because of the stigma attached to gayness. For the disadvantaged woman, this is a lesser sense of efficacy – the ability to align

your identity with your goals – which is the result of the constrained resources available at her place in the social structure. A principal point of England’s paper is to argue against the long held view that any study involving the personal characteristics of a group that is disadvantaged by the social structure involves “blaming the victim” (Ryan 1971), a point of view arguing that focusing on the personal characteristics of disadvantaged groups shifts the discussion away from the social structure and instead makes the individual’s situation “their own fault.” But instead, England argues, examining the personal characteristics of disadvantaged groups needn’t direct attention away from the social structure. Instead, it merely shifts the social structure one step back in the causal chain, from which it leads to the creation of the personal characteristics (habitus) which in turn lead to less than desirable (constrained) behaviors. That is, the social structure constrains the individual to become a person who produces less than desirable behaviors. As England quotes Wacquant (2005:316), “the society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them.” Thus, the vision of cultural capital theory presented here is built upon the now well-demonstrated notion that to understand the lower academic performance of working- and lower-class students we need to understand the social psychology of both the academic performance and the academic work habits they bring to the school, as well as the student-teacher interactions and course grades that result from these interactions.

There are many promising directions for future research in these areas. One is to seek improved understanding of those portions of working- and lower-class family and neighborhood life that are most determinative of student academic skills and work habits. We have already seen that the hypothesis that elite cultural activities are central to the school success of middle class

children has been empirically rejected. We have also seen that the parenting activities measured by instruments such as the HOME explain only a modest portion of the better academic skills and work habits of middle- and upper-class children. We expect that children's academic work habits evolve continuously over time, so that behavior in kindergarten likely reflects preschool behavior. And we have also learned that greater time in lower quality preschool is associated with lower attention skills and greater externalizing behavior (McCartney et. al. 2010). Yet research is only beginning on how parenting, social structure, and peers shape preschool behavior, and the four together shape student behaviors in kindergarten. (For examples of this work see Henry and Rickman, 2007; Neidell and Waldfogel, 2010.) This is just one of many areas where it would be useful to learn more about parenting, peers, skills, and behaviors and their joint variation across the social structure. In this regard, recent research has suggested that the test score achievement gap between children from families in the top and bottom income quintile increased significantly in the 1970s and 1980s (Reardon, 2011), but appears to have modestly narrowed between 1998 and 2010 (Reardon and Portilla 2015), and these most recent changes may be at least partly due to narrowing of the income-parenting gap (Bassok et. al. 2016). Such over-time change in social class differences in parenting and test scores indicate that social reproduction is dynamic rather than static, and should be studied as a dynamic system subject to a wide variety of forces, importantly including government policy and public media dissemination of information about families and parenting.

Another area ripe for investigation is social class differences in the detailed patterns of academic work habits within each grade level, and as students move up the grade levels. Our current measures of student academic work habits are typically restricted to a few questions asked of the teacher at a single point in time. More detailed data might provide insights that

could be used to develop interventions, programs, or policies to improve the academic work habits of working- and lower-class children. Other promising research areas include greater attention to how student course grades evolve over time, and how these are related to outcomes such as dropout, high school graduation, college enrollment, and employment. To the greatest extent possible these studies should attempt to move beyond merely correlational evidence, and incorporate evidence from experimental or quasi-experimental research designs. If non-experimental data (such as those in large national datasets such as the ECLS-K) are used, researchers should at least attempt to use methods such as teacher fixed effects that at least partially control for possible selection bias.

Also worthy of investigation is the way that cognitive skills and academic work habits provide an advantage to children from higher social class backgrounds in higher education and the labor market. Empirical research has established that positive attitudinal/behavioral traits have effects on wages that are at least as large as those of cognitive skills (see Hall and Farkas (2011) and the studies cited there). But the detailed mechanisms of these effects across varied occupations and industries are unknown. There is much to study here.

I began with the question – what are the mechanisms by which children from middle- and higher social class parents tend to achieve greater school success than those from lower- and working-class parents? The evidence shows that the greater school success of middle and upper class children is due to their stronger cognitive skills and academic work habits. These are in turn strongly affected by parenting, peers, and genetics, as well as teachers and school climate. Fortunately, schools such as KIPP have demonstrated that by creating a culture focused on developing positive academic work habits and related values, with buy-in from both teachers and parents, children from lower- and working-class schools can succeed at school to a greater extent

than has heretofore been demonstrated by other programs, policies, or interventions. Efforts to better understand the detailed mechanisms by which student skills and habits determine educational attainment, and how schools can be managed so as to increase all three for children from working- and lower class households, should be high on the research agenda of sociologists of education for many years to come.

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Fig. 1: Cultural Capital Conceptual Model

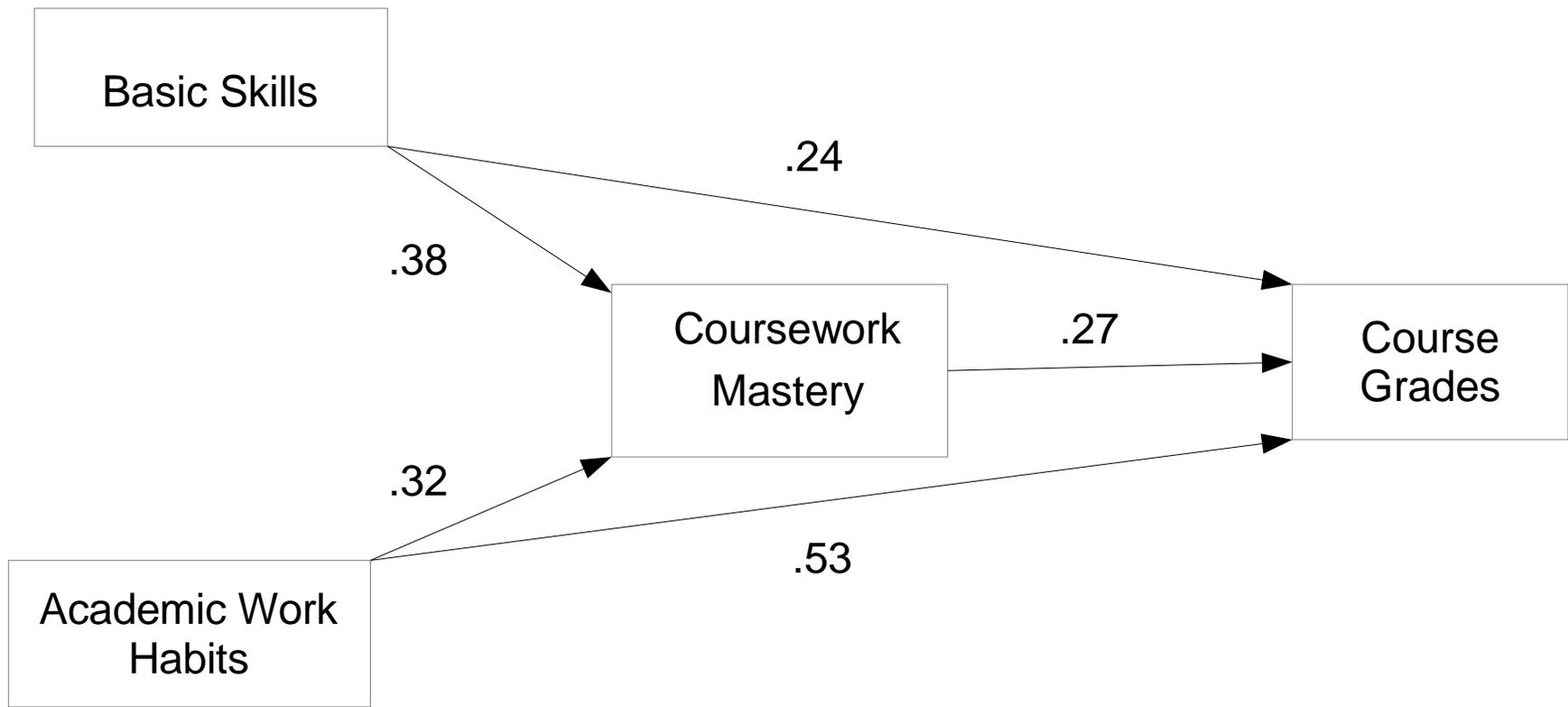


Figure 2: Effect Sizes in a Simplified Model
Of Course Grade Determination, 7th and 8th Grade
Social Studies Classes
Source: Farkas (1996)