

Field Transitions and Symbolic Violence in Educational Mobility: A Bourdieusian Analysis of Educated

¹Muna Yastuti Madrah*, ²Nailil Muna, ³Diana Dewi Sartika, ⁴Siti Salwa md Sawari, ⁵Duna Izfanna

¹Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung, Indonesia

²Graduate School of Global Studies, Doshisha University, Japan

³Departemant of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Sriwijaya, Indonesia

⁴Department of Tourism Kulliyyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages, International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia

⁵Department of Islamic Education Management, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Darunnajah, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author

Email: munamadrah@unissula.ac.id

Abstract

This article contributes to the sociology of education by reading Tara Westover's memoir, Educated (2018), as a sociological case of habitus reconfiguration across competing fields. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, habitus, field, capital, and symbolic violence, the study examines how educational mobility entails both emancipation and symbolic displacement as learners move from religiously bounded familial fields into academic fields structured by unequal distributions of cultural and symbolic capital. Through a theoretically informed close reading of key narrative episodes, the article identifies processes of hysteresis, capital conversion, and field negotiation, including gendered dimensions of epistemic authority and misrecognition. The findings demonstrate that learning is not merely cognitive acquisition but a field transition that reorganises belonging, identity, and recognition. By conceptualising memoir as sociological inquiry, the article advances critical debates on educational mobility, symbolic violence, and habitus transformation within stratified fields of power.

Keywords: sociology of education; habitus; field; educational mobility; symbolic violence; memoir

INTRODUCTION

Education, as both an institution and an idea, has long been celebrated as a pathway to emancipation and social mobility (Freire, 1970; Madrah, Muflihini, et al., 2021; Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993). Yet, as Tara Westover's memoir *Educated* (2018) vividly reveals, entry into formal schooling does not simply expand intellectual horizons. It reclassifies what counts as credible knowledge, reorganises subjects within hierarchies of cultural and symbolic capital, and disrupts the very fields of belonging from which learners emerge. The memoir chronicles Westover's journey

from an isolated, fundamentalist Mormon household in rural Idaho to the intellectual spaces of Cambridge and Harvard, exposing education not merely as the transmission of knowledge (M. F. D. Young, 1971), but as an arena of cultural struggle, symbolic violence, and moral negotiation. This paradox renders *Educated* a powerful sociological text, one that demands analysis beyond the psychological and the personal.

Scholarly discussions on *Educated* have primarily approached the text through the lenses of psychology and educational transformation. Bae (2025) situates Tara's development within child and adolescent psychiatry, focusing on trauma and the reconstruction of selfhood after abuse. Wang and Tan (2024) and Ishaq et al. (2024) interpret the memoir through Erikson's psychosocial theory (1968) and Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning, emphasising education as a catalyst for self-reflection and identity change. These perspectives illuminate the psychological dimensions of Tara's growth but tend to overlook the structural and cultural forces that shape her trajectory. From a sociological standpoint, education in *Educated* is not only a process of personal awakening but also an encounter with dominant cultural capital and institutional power (Bourdieu, 1984).

A few comparative studies have begun to situate *Educated* within broader discourses of literacy and social mobility. Blumberg (2021) juxtaposes *Educated* with Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*, arguing that higher education simultaneously empowers and alienates individuals from their communities of origin. Others have read the memoir through the lenses of philosophy of education and teacher preparation, underscoring its implications for understanding students from marginalised or non-traditional backgrounds (Gregory & Botello, 2020; Warnick, 2021). Despite this growing body of scholarship, little attention has been given to the sociological dynamics of habitus, field, and capital, concepts introduced by Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; 1990)—that underpin Tara's negotiation of faith, identity, and belonging. There remains limited engagement with how educational mobility operates as a process of field transition and symbolic violence within the sociology of education tradition.

This article addresses that gap by mobilising Bourdieu's theory of practice to conceptualise *Educated* as a sociological case of habitus reconfiguration across competing fields of power. Bourdieu's framework provides a productive lens for understanding Tara's educational journey as a form of habitus clash. Her early socialisation in a fundamentalist family instilled a habitus structured by religious authority, gender hierarchy, and distrust of state institutions. When she enters the academic field, she confronts norms rationality, meritocracy, secular knowledge that valorise forms of cultural and symbolic capital foreign to her upbringing (Brown & Tannock, 2009; Themelis, 2008; M. D. Young, 1994). The tension between these two worlds manifests not only as intellectual dissonance but as moral and emotional rupture, revealing how education, while emancipatory, can simultaneously reproduce domination by privileging certain forms of knowledge over others (Apple, 2004).

This study argues that Tara Westover's transformation cannot be understood merely as individual resilience or personal enlightenment, but as a sociocultural process of re-habitation, a reconfiguration of identity within competing fields structured by unequal capital (Bourdieu, 1990). By reading *Educated* through the

concepts of habitus, field, capital, hysteresis (Grenfell, 2014), and symbolic violence, the article contributes to critical debates on educational mobility, misrecognition (Bourdieu, 1977), and the politics of knowledge within stratified educational systems. In doing so, it also advances the methodological case for memoir as a legitimate site of sociological inquiry (Stanley, 1993).

Accordingly, this article challenges the view of educational mobility as a linear narrative of emancipation, reconceptualising it instead as a process of positional restructuring shaped by tension, negotiation, and symbolic violence.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a theoretically informed close reading of Tara Westover's memoir *Educated* (2018), mobilising Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice as its primary analytical framework. Rather than treating the memoir as a purely literary artifact or psychological narrative, the analysis positions it as a sociological case study (Stanley, 1993), a textual site in which the dynamics of habitus reconfiguration, field transition, and symbolic violence can be traced and theorised. Key narrative episodes are selected and examined for what they reveal about the structural conditions and unequal capital distributions governing Westover's educational trajectory. This approach builds on the established use of literary and autobiographical texts as sociological evidence within the Bourdieusian tradition (Grenfell, 2014; Reay, 2004), and on recent methodological arguments for memoir as a legitimate site of sociological inquiry into class, gender, and educational mobility.

The analytical framework draws on four interconnected Bourdieusian concepts. Habitus refers to the durable, embodied dispositions acquired through socialisation that structure perception and practice (Bourdieu, 1990). Field designates the structured social space, familial, religious, academic, in which agents are positioned and compete for recognition and capital. Capital encompasses the economic, cultural, and symbolic resources whose relative value differs across fields. Symbolic violence names the process by which dominant social arrangements are naturalised and misrecognised as legitimate, such that subordination is experienced as choice rather than constraint (Bourdieu, 1977). These four concepts operate relationally: Westover's educational trajectory is analysed as a movement across fields, in which habitus formed within one field encounters the logics and capital requirements of another, producing the condition Bourdieu (1977) terms hysteresis—a structural lag between inherited dispositions and present field demands. The analysis attends to how this tension manifests in Westover's narrative as moral disorientation, emotional rupture, and the gradual reconfiguration of identity and epistemic authority.

Analytically, the reading proceeds in three stages corresponding to the major movements of Westover's narrative. The first stage identifies and maps the familial habitus, attending to its doxa, its gendered divisions of capital, and the forms of symbolic violence it sustains. The second stage traces the encounter between this habitus and the academic field, examining episodes of capital mismatch, epistemic disruption, and the negotiation of new symbolic authority. The third stage analyses the processes of partial re-habitation through which Westover constructs a modified, reflexive habitus capable of inhabiting plural fields without total captivity to any one (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Sweetman, 2003). Throughout, close

attention is paid to the gendered dimensions of these processes, following McNay's (1999) argument that habitus transformation is not uniform but is shaped by the specific contradictions of gender within religious and institutional fields. Ricoeur's (2016) concept of narrative identity is drawn upon in a supplementary capacity, as a reading resource that illuminates how Westover's act of self-narration performs the reflexive reconstruction of habitus—the memoir functioning as sociological evidence of field negotiation rather than merely as autobiography.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Faith and Family Habitus

Before turning to the empirical reading of Westover's narrative, it is useful to clarify how Bourdieu's triad of doxa–orthodoxy–heterodoxy frames this analysis. In every social field, doxa refers to what is taken for granted, the unquestioned common sense that structures perception and conduct. It is the realm of what “goes without saying because it comes without saying” (Bourdieu, 1977). Orthodoxy emerges when that doxic order is consciously defended through explicit discourse and moral justification, while heterodoxy names the moment when the taken-for-granted becomes contestable and alternative interpretations of truth appear. These three positions form a dynamic cycle of social reproduction and transformation: crisis or displacement exposes the arbitrariness of doxa, inviting either restoration (orthodoxy) or re-signification (heterodoxy).

In *Educated*, this progression is dramatized through Tara's movement from an inherited religious habitus, where paternal authority and revelation function as doxic certainties—toward an academic field that compels reflexive questioning. Her education thus enacts the shift from doxa to heterodoxy, while the family's defensive reaction embodies orthodoxy. Reading the memoir through this triad illuminates how faith and learning collide not as opposites but as competing claims to legitimate truth within different fields.

The dialectical relation among doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy in Westover's narrative can be summarized schematically to clarify the epistemic and moral transitions that underpin her journey. Table 1 maps this movement across three phases, showing how shifts in belief correspond to changes in field dynamics and identity formation.

Table 1. The Dialectical Movement of Faith and Knowledge in Tara Westover's Narrative: Doxa–Orthodoxy–Heterodoxy

Phase	Epistemic Position	Field Dynamic	Illustration in <i>Educated</i>
Doxa	Taken-for-granted belief; truth as unquestioned revelation	Stable familial habitus; symbolic authority of father as divine mediator	“School is evil; faith keeps us pure.” Education viewed as contamination.
Orthodoxy	Conscious defense of the doxic order through moral justification	Crisis triggers reassertion of boundaries; rejection of external knowledge	Burning of history books, refusal of hospitals, labeling dissent as sin.
Heterodoxy	Critical reinterpretation of truth; emergence of reflexive habitus	Cross-field negotiation; new habitus integrating doubt and learning	Tara studies history, questions violence, reframes faith as moral inquiry.

Westover's upbringing is saturated with a religiously inflected familial habitus that organizes authority, knowledge, and gender into a coherent moral order. Within this order, paternal charisma functions as symbolic capital that legitimizes decisions about health, schooling, and work; obedience is framed as an index of faithfulness (Bourdieu, 1992). The family's distrust of the state (schools, hospitals, law) and preference for self-reliance naturalize a boundary between "us" and "them," producing a moral economy in which risk, sacrifice, and purity operate as everyday virtues. What Bourdieu calls *doxa*, the taken-for-granted rules of the game—appears as divinely sanctioned common sense: to doubt it is not merely to disagree but to defect.

This religious habitus structures gendered divisions of labor and emotion. Care, endurance, and modesty are valorized as feminine virtues; dissent, particularly in epistemic matters, is read as spiritual danger (Kandiyoti, 1988; Mahmood, 2011; Sankar & Banerjee, 2025). Symbolic violence occurs not primarily through overt force but through misrecognition: devaluing formal credentials as "worldly," discrediting external expertise, and reclassifying pain as moral testing. In this world, "education" already exists, but as catechesis and apprenticeship within the family's field. Its aim is not social mobility but spiritual integrity (Bourdieu, 1977).

Yet habitus is never fully closed. Small fissures open through materials and interactions that exceed familial control (books, music, casual conversations) (Wacquant, 2004). These micro-encounters accumulate as embodied dissonance—what Westover experiences as confusion, curiosity, and, eventually, doubt. Theologically, the turning point is not a rejection of faith but a shift in how faith authorizes knowledge: revelation expands to include disciplined inquiry. Sociologically, this is the prelude to hysteresis (Grenfell, 2014): the lag between dispositions formed in one field and the demands of another. The family's bounded solidarity, once protective, becomes constraining when Tara's emergent dispositions require different forms of capital (time for study, institutional recognition, peer networks). Read this way, *Educated* is less a story of escape than of reclassification: the same acts (reading, arguing, leaving) slide from disloyalty to vocation as Tara moves across fields.

In Bourdieu's terms, this passage describes a moment of hysteresis—the temporal and emotional lag between dispositions formed within one field and the expectations of another. Tara's religious habitus, shaped by obedience, endurance, and distrust of worldly institutions, becomes misaligned when she enters the academic field, where autonomy, reflexivity, and institutional recognition are valued. The family's bounded solidarity, once a form of protection, turns restrictive as Tara's emergent dispositions demand new forms of capital, time for study, peer networks, and symbolic legitimacy. What her family reads as rebellion is, in sociological terms, a reconfiguration of habitus in response to a shifting field.

Read this way, *Educated* is not merely a story of escape but of reclassification: the same acts—reading, arguing, leaving—migrate in meaning across fields, from disobedience to vocation, from sin to inquiry. Through this hysteresis, Westover's narrative illuminates how transformation unfolds not in the rejection of faith but in the expansion of epistemic space where faith and knowledge are renegotiated.

Bourdieu, (1977) describes the hysteresis effect as the temporal dislocation that arises when a habitus formed within one field no longer fits the changing logic of another. This misalignment—what he later terms habitus clivé—produces a state of divided consciousness, where past dispositions persist amid new social demands.

Learning as Disruption: Negotiating New Fields

If faith and familial habitus form the ground from which Tara's identity emerges, learning becomes the tremor that unsettles it. Entry into academia does not merely expand her knowledge but destabilizes her belonging. In Bourdieu's terms, the move from a religious to an academic field entails both the acquisition of new capital and the risk of symbolic displacement. University classrooms reward forms of cultural capital that Tara does not initially possess: a shared canon, argumentative style, reference frames, and dispositions toward doubt (Bourdieu, 1984; Reay, 2004). The first shocks—basic historical gaps, unfamiliar vocabulary, classroom protocols—mark her encounter with a new field governed by peer competition, evaluative rituals, and the promise of institutionalized capital (grades, degrees, recommendations).

A striking example occurs when Tara first hears the term Holocaust in a university lecture and realizes she has never encountered it before (Westover, 2018 ch 18). Her classmates stare in disbelief, and the professor is stunned by her ignorance of one of the most documented tragedies in modern history. What to others was common knowledge—part of collective moral memory—was, for Tara, an epistemic void. This moment exposes the collision between two epistemic worlds: the familial field, where knowledge is transmitted through testimony and scripture, and the academic field, where legitimacy depends on textual evidence and shared historical reference. Tara's shame and confusion register what Bourdieu would call symbolic violence—not overt humiliation, but the subtle normativity that renders certain knowledges invisible until one is judged for not possessing them.

To survive this new field, Tara develops three strategies of negotiation. First, acquisition—an accelerated accumulation of embodied and objectified cultural capital through relentless reading, note-taking, and consultation. Gatekeepers (lecturers, supervisors) function as brokers who translate tacit academic codes: how to cite, how to question, how to disagree without defiance (Bernstein, 2003; Grenfell, 2014; Wacquant, 2004). Second, conversion—the reframing of religious capital as moral seriousness, discipline, and humility. What once signified sectarian isolation now appears as intellectual integrity and scholarly persistence. Third, code-switching, the capacity to move between registers, from family idiom to academic discourse, without dissolving either. This repertoire softens hysteresis but cannot eliminate it; each academic success risks deepening estrangement from home.

The costs are not incidental. Learning disrupts affective bonds: loyalty is tested, memory re-edited, narratives renegotiated (Bourdieu, 1990). The *illusio* of the academic game (its belief in the value of critique and credential) competes with the family's *illusio* (its belief in obedience and testimony). Westover's ambivalence caught between gratitude and grievance, exposes the double movement of education: emancipation through recognition and alienation through reclassification. Prior literature notes transformation and trauma; the Bourdieusian reading clarifies the mechanism, field transition under conditions of unequal capital and explains why progress feels like betrayal.

At a deeper level, learning for Tara enacts what Bourdieu (1990) describes as a transformation of the *illusio*—the practical belief in the value of the game being played. The familial field’s *illusio* (obedience, testimony, revelation) and the academic field’s *illusio* (critique, credential, rational inquiry) are structurally incommensurable: investment in one risks disinvestment from the other. Each capital gain Tara achieves within the academic field registers as symbolic loss within the familial field, producing the affective dissonance, loyalty, guilt, estrangement—that punctuates her narrative. This is not a psychological conflict but a structural one: the cost of field entry is paid in the currency of prior belonging.

Seen through this Bourdieusian lens, learning is not simply cognitive acquisition but a positional restructuring of *habitus* under conditions of capital asymmetry. Tara’s trajectory exposes a fundamental tension within educational mobility: the very process that generates symbolic recognition within one field simultaneously devalues the dispositions formed in another. This double movement, emancipation through reclassification, alienation through repositioning, constitutes the sociological mechanism that prior psychological readings of Educated have left undertheorised.

To further clarify the sociological mechanism underlying Tara’s transformation, the diagram below maps her movement across fields through Bourdieu’s spatial logic of capital. Rather than an abstract awakening, learning here is a positional shift within social space—a concrete reorientation of *habitus* as one form of capital is devalued and another gains legitimacy. The diagram traces how Tara’s educational trajectory traverses the unequal distribution of religious, cultural, and economic capital, revealing her journey as both upward mobility and structural displacement: a conversion of moral energy into symbolic recognition, yet simultaneously a repositioning away from her field of origin.

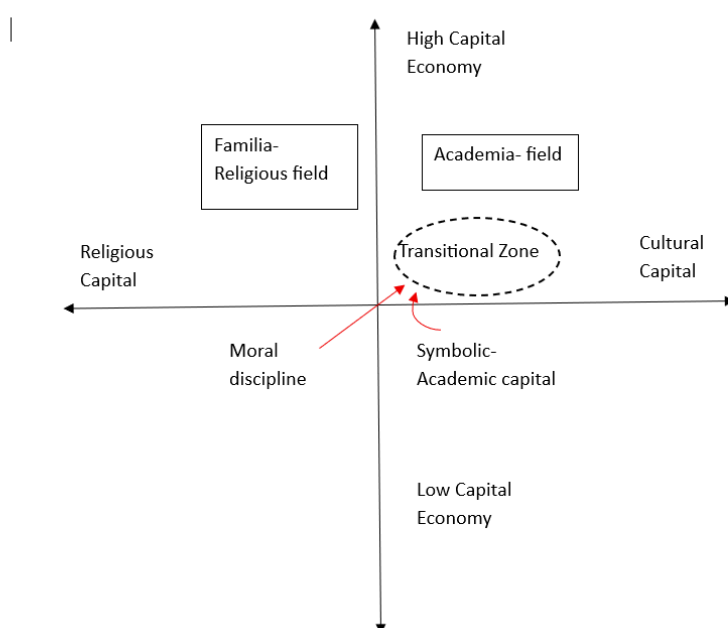


Image 1. Field Transition and Capital Conversion in Tara Westover's Educational Trajectory (adapted from Bourdieu concept of field and capital).

Re-habitation and Field Negotiation

Re-habitation, in Bourdieusian terms, is not a sudden conversion but a gradual and contested restructuring of dispositions as agents move across fields with divergent logics and capital requirements. For Westover, the process begins not with conscious decision but with accumulated exposure: repeated encounters with academic norms, evaluative rituals, and epistemic standards that her familial habitus had neither anticipated nor equipped her to navigate. Bourdieu, (1990) insists that habitus changes slowly, through sustained engagement with new field conditions rather than through deliberate self-reinvention. Re-habitation is thus less a matter of choice than of structural pressure—the gradual imposition of new perceptual schemes upon a habitus still carrying the weight of prior field formation.

Central to this process is capital conversion—the revaluation of resources as Tara moves from one field to another. Within the familial field, her moral seriousness, endurance, and capacity for sacrifice constituted a form of symbolic capital that conferred recognition and belonging. Upon entering the academic field, these same dispositions are neither legible nor valorised in their original form; they must be translated into academic virtues—intellectual rigour, critical persistence, scholarly discipline—before they can generate recognition within the new field's economy of symbolic exchange (Bourdieu, 1984b; Reay, 2004). This conversion is never lossless: what is gained in academic symbolic capital is simultaneously subtracted from the relational capital that sustained her within the familial field (Portes, 1998). Capital conversion, therefore, is not accumulation but reallocation a structural repositioning that reshapes both identity and belonging.

The outcome of sustained re-habitation is what Bourdieu & Wacquant, (1992) term the reflexive habitus—a disposition that has acquired the capacity to perceive, and partially problematise, its own conditions of formation. Westover's trajectory moves toward this reflexive position not through therapeutic introspection but through the structural experience of inhabiting two incommensurable fields simultaneously. The tension of hysteresis, sustained over time, generates a kind of double vision: the capacity to operate within the academic field's logic while retaining an embodied memory of the familial field's demands. Sweetman (2003) argues that such reflexivity does not dissolve habitus but modifies it producing an agent capable of selective participation across plural fields without total capture by any single one. For Westover, this means neither full assimilation into the academic field nor retreat into the familial one, but the difficult negotiation of a position that holds both in tension.

This process of field negotiation is also inscribed in the memoir itself as a textual practice. The act of narrating (Stanley, 1993) of retrospectively ordering experience into coherent form—performs the reflexive reconstruction of habitus that Bourdieu's later sociology identifies as the condition of genuine self-understanding (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In this supplementary sense, Ricoeur's (2016) concept of narrative identity illuminates how Westover's memoir functions not merely as autobiography but as sociological evidence: the text enacts the very field negotiation it describes, rendering visible the structural conditions of re-habitation that are otherwise lived as private disorientation.

Toward Moral and Spiritual Reconciliation

If the first movement is rupture and the second is negotiation, the third concerns the structural question of what counts as reconciliation when fields remain in tension and hysteresis persists as a permanent condition. In Bourdieusian terms, reconciliation does not signify the resolution of field conflict but rather the stabilisation of a modified habitus capable of selective participation across incommensurable fields (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Westover does not transcend the tension between familial and academic fields; she learns to inhabit it without being immobilised by it. The reflexive habitus she develops is precisely the product of sustained exposure to contradictory field logics, a structural achievement, not a psychological resolution. What appears as personal equanimity is, sociologically, the outcome of a habitus that has incorporated the capacity to negotiate competing capital regimes without collapsing into either (Bourdieu, 1990).

Three structural markers characterise this reconciliatory position, each reframed within Bourdieu's conceptual vocabulary. First, what might be described as narrative honesty operates, in Bourdieusian terms, as reflexive capital: the accumulated capacity to objectify one's own field formation, to name the conditions of one's own misrecognition without disavowal (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Second, bounded belonging functions as selective field participation (Militante, 2019): the practical ability to maintain proximity to the familial field without surrendering to its symbolic authority, and to inhabit the academic field without submitting entirely to its logic of distinction (Bourdieu, 1984). Third, what appears as teleological reorientation is best understood as a redefinition of *illusio*: Westover reconstructs her investment in education not as mere capital accumulation but as a legitimate stake in a field that now encompasses both critical inquiry and ethical responsibility (Bourdieu, 1990b). Together, these three elements constitute not a moral resolution but a structural repositioning, a durable reconfiguration of the habitus under conditions of sustained field tension.

This structural reconciliation carries permanent costs. Hysteresis, as Bourdieu (1990) insists, does not dissolve once the agent achieves reflexive awareness; it leaves a lasting imprint in the body, in dispositions that were formed under one field logic and can never be entirely re-formed under another. Westover's habitus bears the traces of both fields simultaneously, the endurance and moral seriousness of the familial field co-existing uneasily with the critical dispositions of the academic field. Reconciliation, in this sense, is measured not by the restoration of symbolic wholeness but by the habitus's capacity to sustain field tension without structural collapse. What the narrative frames as equanimity is, sociologically, the hard-won ability to function across fields whose capitals remain partially incommensurable (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Sweetman, 2003).

Taken together, the three stages of Westover's trajectory; field disruption, re-habitation, and structural reconciliation, constitute a Bourdieusian account of educational mobility as habitus reconfiguration under conditions of capital asymmetry and sustained field tension. Educated, read in this light, is not a story of individual emancipation but of positional restructuring: the memoir documents how a subject formed within one field comes to inhabit another without fully abandoning the first, navigating the permanent double bind of the reflexive habitus. In a supplementary register, Ricoeur's (2016) concept of narrative identity

illuminates how the memoir itself enacts this negotiation. The act of self-narration performing the reflexive work that Bourdieu's structural analysis identifies but does not itself narrate. Together, the two lenses confirm that educational transformation is not merely cognitive or moral but structural: a reorganisation of the agent's position within overlapping fields of power, recognition, and capital.

This trajectory of field transition, re-habitation, and structural reconciliation can be mapped as a sequential analytical process. Each stage corresponds to a distinct configuration of habitus, field, and capital, tracing how Westover's dispositions are formed, disrupted, converted, and partially stabilised across incommensurable social fields. The five stages of this process are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Stages of Reflexive Process in Tara Westover's *Educated*

Stage	Description
1. Faith and Familial Habitus	The process begins within a religiously bound family habitus, where truth is defined through paternal authority and moral obedience. Tara's early life fuses belief with duty, turning silence and submission into moral capital. This stage represents the doxic foundation of her worldview, where religion and authority coexist as an unquestioned moral order.
2. Learning as Disruption	Tara's entry into formal education triggers hysteresis—a gap between inherited dispositions and new academic structures. Exposure to different epistemologies destabilizes her faith-based worldview, generating epistemic dissonance that fosters reflexivity. Learning here becomes both disruption and discovery, revealing the tension between knowledge and belief.
3. Re-habitation and Field Negotiation	Sustained exposure to the academic field generates structural pressure toward re-habitation: a gradual restructuring of dispositions through repeated engagement with new field norms, evaluative rituals, and capital logics (Bourdieu, 1990). Central to this process is capital conversion—the reallocation of moral seriousness and endurance from familial symbolic capital into academic virtues of rigour and critical persistence (Bourdieu, 1984; Reay, 2004). The outcome is a reflexive habitus: capable of double vision, of inhabiting plural fields without total capture by any single one (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Sweetman, 2003).
4. Gendered Habitus and Epistemic Dissent	Tara's reflexivity extends into the embodied dimension of gender. The virtues of endurance and modesty, once framed as piety, evolve into critical virtues of reflection and agency. Her act of questioning patriarchal authority enacts epistemic dissent (Fricker, 2007) transforming moral obedience into interpretive autonomy. Education thus becomes a gendered negotiation between faith and reason.
5. Moral and Spiritual Reconciliation	The process culminates in the stabilisation of a reflexive habitus capable of selective participation across competing fields without structural collapse. Reconciliation is not doctrinal synthesis but the practical achievement of an agent who can maintain partial investment in both familial and academic fields, converting the permanent tension of hysteresis into a durable, if contested, mode of social existence (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1990). The process remains open: field positions shift, capital valuations change, and the habitus continues to negotiate the asymmetries it can never fully resolve.

The analytical stages mapped above do not unfold in a clean linear sequence but through recursive movements of field pressure, habitual adjustment, and partial stabilisation. Each stage represents a distinct configuration of the relationship between habitus, field, and capital—not a narrative arc of growth but a structural account of how competing field logics produce, sustain, and partially resolve the condition of hysteresis. Read together, the stages demonstrate that

educational mobility, when theorised through Bourdieu's framework, is neither simple emancipation nor straightforward reproduction: it is a process of positional restructuring in which the costs and gains of capital conversion accumulate unevenly across fields, and in which the agent who emerges is always already marked by the fields she has traversed.

CONCLUSION

Reading *Educated* through a Bourdieusian framework reveals educational mobility as a process of habitus reconfiguration across structurally incommensurable fields—not as individual emancipation, but as a contested repositioning within unequal distributions of capital and symbolic power. Westover's trajectory maps the full sequence of this process: the formation of a religiously bounded familial habitus, its encounter with the capital logics of the academic field, the condition of hysteresis produced by that encounter, the gradual conversion and reallocation of capital across fields, and the partial stabilisation of a reflexive habitus capable of plural field participation without total capture. Throughout, symbolic violence operates not as overt coercion but as the misrecognition of field-specific capital hierarchies as natural and legitimate. The analysis also attends to the gendered dimensions of this process, following McNay's (1999) argument that habitus transformation is structured by the specific contradictions of gender within religious and institutional fields. In a supplementary capacity, Ricoeur's (2016) concept of narrative identity illuminates how the memoir itself performs the reflexive reconstruction it describes the act of narration functioning as textual evidence of field negotiation rather than merely as autobiography.

The study advances three contributions to the sociology of education. First, it establishes memoir as a legitimate site of Bourdieusian inquiry, demonstrating that autobiographical narrative yields structural insight into habitus, field, and capital that supplements empirical methods. Second, it extends field theory to faith-based educational contexts, theorising how the encounter between religious and academic fields produces capital mismatch, epistemic disruption, and hysteresis that existing accounts of educational mobility have undertheorised. Third, it contributes to feminist extensions of Bourdieu's sociology by showing that field transitions are not gender-neutral: feminine dispositions are valorised, devalued, and reconfigured differently as agents move across competing field logics.

This study is necessarily limited by its single-text, theoretically informed close reading a methodological choice that prioritises analytical depth over empirical breadth, consistent with the Bourdieusian tradition of using exemplary cases to illuminate structural mechanisms. The findings describe and theorise a specific configuration of field transition and habitus reconfiguration; they do not claim universal applicability across all contexts of educational mobility. The analysis also remains partial in two further respects: the intersectional dimensions of Westover's trajectory, including race, class origin, and regional location are not fully developed within the present framework, and the role of Ricoeur's narrative theory, drawn upon here as a supplementary reading resource, invites more sustained theoretical elaboration in future work.

Future research may extend this Bourdieusian framework in several directions. Comparative studies could examine how analogous processes of field transition, capital conversion, and habitus reconfiguration operate across different

educational contexts, particularly among learners navigating the intersection of religious fields, gendered habitus, and academic institutions within Islamic, Southeast Asian, or other non-Western educational systems where the dynamics of faith and formal schooling remain undertheorised within field theory. Empirical and ethnographic research could test and refine the analytical stages proposed here, moving from textual evidence to longitudinal or interview-based data on educational mobility and habitus transformation. At the level of practice, the framework suggests that pedagogies attentive to capital asymmetry, field mismatch, and the structural costs of educational transitions may better support learners whose habitus formations are most exposed to the violence of field entry those for whom the price of academic recognition is paid in the currency of prior belonging.

FUNDING

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and Curriculum*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203487563>
- Bae, S. M. (2025). The Making of the Self: Temperament, Environment, Education, and the History of Abuse in Tara Westover's "Educated". *Journal of the Korean Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 36(2), 83–85. <https://doi.org/10.5765/jkacap.250013>
- Bernstein, B. (2003). *Class, Codes and Control: Towards a theory of educational transmission* (Issue v. 3). Routledge.
- Blumberg, I. M. (2021). "The Distance ... That Had Been Traversed": Education, Identity, and Public Literacy in Tara Westover's *Educated* and Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*. *Auto/Biography Studies*, 36(3), 603–627. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989575.2021.2045733>
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. *Cambridge Studies in Social Anthropology*, 16(16), 248. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-20702013000100001>
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1992). *Language and Symbolic Power*. In Polity Press. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01816605>
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. L. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. In *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Vol. 22, Issue 3). <https://doi.org/10.2307/2074573>
- Brown, P., & Tannock, S. (2009). Education, meritocracy and the global war for talent. *Journal of Education Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930802669938>
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203499627>

- Code, L. (1991). *What Can She Know?* Cornell University Press.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv5qdg81>
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity Youth and Crisis*. W. W. Norton.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum.
- Fricker, M. (2007). *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001>
- Gregory, B. L., & Botello, J. (2020). Educated: A Memoir and the Impact on Teacher Preparation Programs. *National Youth at Risk Journal*, 4(1), 62–69.
<https://doi.org/10.20429/nyarj.2020.040107>
- Grenfell, M. (Ed.). (2014). *Pierre Bourdieu Key Concepts*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315729923>
- Ishaq, A., Jamal, H., Idrees, S., & Zaheer, H. (2024). Shaping Identity Through Crisis: An Eriksonian Investigation in Educated by Tara Westover. *Wah Academia Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(2), 343–354. <https://doi.org/10.63954/wajss.3.2.19.2024>
- Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society*, 2(3), 274–290.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/190357>
- Madrah, M. Y., Muflihin, A., & Warsiyah, W. (2021). Migrant Workers and Higher Education : Paradoxes of Democratization of Higher Education. *Empirika*, 6(1).
- Madrah, M. Y., Suharko, S., & Sartika, D. D. (2021). Dialectics of Transnational Mobility, Class, and Cultural-Intermediary among Indonesian Student-Migrant Workers in South Korea. *JSW (Jurnal Sosiologi Walisongo)*, 5(1), 31–46.
<https://doi.org/10.21580/jsw.2021.5.1.6842>
- Mahmood, S. (2011). *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and The Feminist Subject*. Princetown University Press.
- McNay, L. (1999). Gender, Habitus and the Field. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16(1), 95–117.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/026327699016001007>
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. Wiley.
- Militante, C. V. (2019). How New Research Tests , Challenges , and Creates Discourse on Feminism. *Asia-Pasific Social Science Review*, 19(1).
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.59588/2350-8329.1215>
- Portes, A. (1998). Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1–24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/223472>
- Reay, D. (2004). “It’s All Becoming a Habitus”: Beyond the Habitual Use of Habitus in Educational Research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(4), 431–444.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128669>
- Ricoeur, P. (2016). *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (J. B. Thompson (Ed.)). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316534984>
- Sankar, D. V., & Banerjee, S. (2025). (Gendered) Transcultural Capital and Memory in Zahid Hussain ’ s *The Curry Mile* (2006). *Asia-Pacific Science Review*, 25(3).
- Shavit, Y., & Blossfeld, H.-P. (1993). *Persistent Inequality: Changing Educational Attainment in Thirteen Countries*. Social Inequality Series. Westview.
- Stanley, L. (1993). *The Auto/biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography*. Manchester University Press.



- Sweetman, P. (2003). Twenty-First Century Dis-Ease? Habitual Reflexivity Or the Reflexive Habitus. *The Sociological Review*, 51, 528–549. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2003.00434.x>
- Themelis, S. (2008). Meritocracy through education and social mobility in post-war Britain: A critical examination. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29(5), 427–438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425690802263601>
- Wacquant, L. (2004). Following Pierre Bourdieu into the field. *Ethnography*, 5(4), 387–414. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138104052259>
- Wang, R., & Tan, R. (2024). Growth and Education in *Educated: A Memoir*. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, 15(3), 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.54097/4ckkfx13>
- Warnick, B. R. (2021). *Educated* by Tara Westover, New York: Random House, 2018. *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, 27(2), 188. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1074048ar>
- Westover, T. (2018). *Educated*. Second Sally Ltd.
- Young, M. D. (1994). *The Rise of the Meritocracy*. Transaction Publishers.
- Young, M. F. D. (1971). *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*. Michael F. D. Young.