

Chapter 1

Bourdieu's Habitus for Academicians: Is Social Justice for Academicians Only a Fancy Phrase in the 21st Century?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to initiate a discussion on academicians' habitus to explore the life space of academicians based on Bourdieu's habitus theory along with the career construction theory. The conceptual review of Bourdieu's habitus theory sheds light on aspects that might help institutions to enhance the concept of social justice at institutional levels to increase academicians' labor effective and positive work surroundings. Within the scope of this study, the life space assessment technique is used to conceptually review studies on academicians' interpretation of their habitus. This chapter suggests that promoting the intellectual wellbeing of societies depend on how universities are represented in a society by creating free and liberal life spaces for academicians.

INTRODUCTION

In civilized societies, where separation of power is controlled by independent lawmakers along with an established democracy, academicians are considered as the leaders of new knowledge, scientific information and scholarship. Academicians are in need of making their work life meaningful regardless of their socially recognized and praised high status. Even though what's expected from a specific and well-defined career is identical within the same working environment, meaningful work practices vary from one individual to another regardless of the profession in question. There is no doubt that recent research on career construction theory proposed that today's professionals are in need to foster their own meaning of work to be efficient, productive and happy in their work environments (Bourdieu, 1992; Super, 1953; Savickas, 1996, 2002, 2013).

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It is obvious that academicians like other human beings inherit distinctive genetic components that provide each individual unique characteristics. On the other hand, there are typical social traits that bring individuals together because of their common life experiences as a result of their shared beliefs within a specific society. Perhaps the most obvious example of this idea is the habitus for academicians, which includes universities as institutions. Each educational institution represents a set of perimeters that set forth a mission that's tied up to a certain social and political era, and universities are not exceptions to this rule. This is not to deny that the very same principles in the same setting could be totally pointless in another society. To this end, it is necessary to look at Bourdieu's theory (1992) on habitus to emphasize the unsettling fact on whether certain characteristics represent certain personality types, which are favored over others at work places or whether the habitus of work environments push people to become industrious stereotypes rather than being creative and constructive employees.

While the habitus of a specific social and political era may represent some ideologies as desired, Bourdieu's ground-breaking social theory (1992) indicates the crucial aspect of unwritten and abstract social rules, which define certain group of people of having the capacity of some specific traits that other groups of people do not possess. In the light of Bourdieu's social theory and career construction theory, the purpose of this study is to understand the delicate nature of academicians' habitus in order to conceptually review the crucial components that are needed to foster the upbringing of brighter and smarter generations, who appreciate intellectual differences that would promote freedom, justice and equality in work places. This idea maps out that universities are also institutions with certain missions, and each university has its own habitus that impact how academicians function in their own habitus.

This consequence draws the attention to the fact that universities' agendas must be under investigation to understand how academic careers are affected because the ideology of constructing universities derives from the fact that universities should be liberal institutions spreading social justice. The best and easiest way to observe the level social justice at universities is to observe academicians' habitus, which refers to entire life-long practices of an academician. Even though it is equally hard and complicated to define a concept that refers to a person's life-long vocational attitudes that are free from past historical or cultural variables, it is necessary to look at academicians' life stories in order to shed light on academicians' lived practices through the lens of social justice. To be more specific, what does it mean to promote social justice for any academician? How about brainstorming the following questions regarding the "social justice" that The National Career Development Association (NCDA) claims to be promoting for academicians?

- What does "social justice" mean for academicians?
- Is being able to participate in meaningful research part of social justice for academicians?
- Is having the right to live a meaningful and productive life part of "social justice" for academicians?
- Is the ethical code in academia clear enough to refer what and what not to do when an academician witnesses lack of social justice?
- Is "social justice" all of the above and much more for academicians?

To explore answers for these questions, it is crucial to internalize how academicians and their professional and personal practices conform the career construction theory in principle.

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