

EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH PRACTICE IN SOUTHERN CONTEXTS

Recentring, Reframing and
Reimagining Methodological Canons

*Edited by Sharlene Swartz, Nidhi Singal
and Madeleine Arnot*

First published 2024

ISBN: 978-1-032-40933-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-40930-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-35539-7 (ebk)

Chapter 17

**RESEARCHING FAMILY LIVES,
SCHOOLING AND STRUCTURAL
INEQUALITY IN RURAL PUNJAB: THE
POWER OF A *HABITUS* LISTENING GUIDE**

Arif Naveed

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003355397-20

The funder for this chapter is Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)



Routledge

Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

17

RESEARCHING FAMILY LIVES, SCHOOLING AND STRUCTURAL INEQUALITY IN RURAL PUNJAB

The power of a *Habitus Listening Guide*

Arif Naveed

Within the intimate relational environment of the home there is not one family voice, nor just one person's view. Families and their individual members are polyphonic, variably speaking the languages of their class, caste, culture, religion, gender, and as able and disabled bodies. Employing a range of discourses, families make sense of the economic and social change associated, for example, with the rise of mass schooling and its uptake in traditional communities. Formal schooling is 'read' by families in different ways, depending on their opportunities to exploit this institutionalised space (Arnot & Naveed, 2014).

Using a postcolonial approach, this chapter aims to demonstrate how family-focused data collection and a richer analysis of the voices of those living in rural communities in the Global South can help shift the homogenised, individualised, and often urban-derived models implicated in many metropolitan social scientific methodologies (Gyekye, 2003). This methodological shift makes audible the domestic, inner, deeper-seated workings of social inequality that challenge, and are challenged by, educational expansion in the push to Education for All (Naveed, 2021). Although researching poverty in Southern contexts through voice-based methods is valued because it challenges the artificial homogenising of the rural poor (World Bank, 2000), Hulme (2004) argued that researchers still need to address the complex family dynamics *within* households. For example, the dynamics surrounding age, gender, and disability create diverse understandings and experiences. Similarly, a postcolonial approach necessitates a relational methodological way of situating, rather than extracting, young people from their family relations where their social identities, subjectivities, and futures are shaped.

A postcolonial approach also requires, according to Spivak (1988), speaking to and listening to the ‘Subaltern’ thus escaping what Foucault (cited in Kay, 2006, unnumbered) called the “indignity of speaking for others”. Rather than looking for a family ‘representative’, a relational research design needs to hear first-hand the views of a range of different family members. However, this creates methodological challenges since it involves hearing individual and collective narratives simultaneously and equally recognising what Brown and Gilligan (1991, p. 44) usefully called the “harmonics of voice”, the tempos, contrapuntal rhythms, and acoustics, and the cultural influences on these voices (Haste, 2014). Brown and Gilligan’s *Listening Guide*, although designed to explore urban youth identity in the United States, if sensitively adapted to Southern rural contexts offers a powerful methodological tool with which to ‘hear’ the complex polyvocal voices of families. But critical too is the application of Bourdieu’s (1979) theory of social reproduction which moves Brown and Gilligan’s *Listening Guide* away from its individualistic emphasis towards an analysis of the social structural relations of cultural and economic power, the social and educational inequalities and the relational worlds of age, gender, and generation, so significant, for example, within rural Muslim families in Pakistan such as those in the study I describe below.

The development of a *Habitus Listening Guide* with four ‘listenings’ provided an opportunity to hear the many voices of rural family members in a village in the Punjab (Naveed & Arnot, 2019). The aim of the current chapter is to show how using a relational method and the *Habitus Listening Guide* to analyse family narratives allows a better understanding of what it means to participate and/or succeed, in this case, in an educational system based initially on British colonial structures, reshaped later by Islamic ideals and appropriated by national elites (see Naveed, 2019, for further details). It shows how family members living in poverty, each not only in their own way but also in relation to each other, negotiate the education system, the hierarchical socio-structural scape of the village and its elites, and the experience of social exclusion.

The *Habitus Listening Guide*: from theory to practice

The *Habitus Listening Guide* distinguishes between four distinctive rounds of listening described in Table 17.1 (Naveed & Arnot, 2019). By working on the same interview transcripts, the *Guide* encourages us to listen to each of four family members on a range of themes. Together they create a collage of information about where schooling sits in a family’s life and social location, illustrating the challenge of using education as a transformative tool to confirm their values, or even to better their lives.

An empirical study in a Punjab village, 30 km from a main city was conducted in 2010 with the intention of employing a culturally relevant, sensitive approach to the study of traditional rural communities in a Muslim country.

TABLE 17.1 Listenings, methods, and objectives

<i>Listenings</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
1 Social Structural Listening	<p>Here we seek to understand the historical and contemporary structures and objective conditions that surround family members' lives in their community, and their relation to the education system.</p> <p>The four interlinked cross-generational educational biographies are brought together to construct a family biography situated in the rural social order.</p>
2 Horizontal Intergenerational Listening	<p>A closer listening to the narratives uncovers the dialogical relationship between social disadvantage and educational aspirations, successes, and defeats to shed light on the place of schooling within the culturally shaped family dynamics.</p> <p><i>Inter-narrativity</i> is generated through the repeated paired intergenerational listenings of father-mother and son-daughter narratives. We hear how the parental and children's accounts are differentially enabled and constrained in different eras, conditions, and place.</p>
3 Vertical Gender Listening	<p>A deeper listening to the intra-family masculine and feminine narratives reveals the potentially tacit acceptance of family and social gender controls by youth, their submissive and transformative agentic tendencies, and the material conditions producing both tendencies which impact on their educational trajectories.</p> <p><i>Inter-narrativity</i> is generated through the paired gendered listenings of father-son and mother-daughter narratives. Comparisons within and across the paired narratives reveal the impact of the gender order over generations on educational aspirations, strategies, and outcomes.</p>
4 Mythic-ritual Listening	<p>The final listening makes audible how religious beliefs are called into play, either contributing to the maintenance of poverty and social inequality, or inspiring strategies to disrupt power structures through education as a religious duty.</p> <p>By identifying a 'spiritual poem' in the transcripts, we hear generational shifts in the use of mythic-ritual beliefs (in comparison with secular legitimations) to explain, for example, their notions of luck, duty, fate, and prospects, and how these beliefs affect poverty and/or progress.</p>

Source: Developed from Naveed and Arnot (2019).

The village is one of many 'Canal Colonies' set up by the British colonial government in the late 19th to early 20th century to boost agricultural production in Punjab's newly irrigated areas. Agricultural land was granted to those migrating from India based on the prior family background and social status (Douie, 1914). Whilst cross-border migration at independence in 1947 altered

the demographic, the village continued to reflect the colonial normalisation of the class-caste hierarchy. The village now included a few large landowners, small farmers landless agricultural workers, small businessmen and traders, and a few government employees. Girls could study up to Grade 12 within the village whereas boys had to travel elsewhere to study after Grade 10. A small number of seminaries provided religious education. This study involved tape recorded semi-structured 90-minute interviews with the father, mother, and one son and one daughter (aged between 15 and 25) in 10 village families. The interviews were conducted in Punjabi, transcribed and translated into English. For a deeper understanding and to respect cultural expressions and idioms, both Punjabi and translated English transcripts were used in the analysis.

The following section describes how the *Habitus Listening Guide* was used in the analysis of the transcripts of four members of Munawar Hussain's (pseudonym) family, and its value for such Southern contexts.

Listening to the social structure: educational biographies in a field of power

The *social structural listening* aims to understand the structure of relative social positions – what Bourdieu (1979) calls 'a field of power' – within which families are situated. This critical listening hears the overlapping, yet distinctly different, descriptions of local educational provision and community life, political and educational events, and the relationship of such events to narrators' values and experiences. It uncovers family members' discursive narratives about the plots connecting their biographies, offering a temporal sequence of family life events (Horsdal, 2011). They reveal the (in)formal institutions, material pressures, the socio-political/cultural organisation of the community and the economic power of local elites' control over poor families. These shape the family's social and educational trajectory, its insecurity and eventually the choices it makes to stabilise itself.

In the case of Munawar, the local field of power is his village and the social structure within which family members take relative positions by virtue of the forms and volume of their economic, social, and cultural capital (Hilgers & Manges, 2015). The constellation of landlessness, poverty, and caste identity formed a social-scape with implications for what was achievable *in* and *through* education. These objective conditions and material realities are embodied in the family's own *symbolic order* which can be heard in the subsequent listenings (Bourdieu, 1979).

This first listening of 52-year-old Munawar revealed that, like his parents, he had never been to school; he had been a brick-kiln worker for 30 years yet three decades of such hard labour had not earned him economic security in old age. His 50-year-old wife Tabinda had been the first girl in her extended family to attend school. To survive poverty and to *protect the honour* of her kinship, her

widowed mother married her off to her cousin Munawar at the age of 12, ending her schooling after Grade 4. The couple had six daughters and five sons.

A close listening uncovered the critical working of the local social hierarchy. The family had been allocated residential land in a public housing scheme. But being nervous, Munawar took possession sooner than others providing rival factions an opportunity to register a formal complaint. Munawar was arrested but later released, having had his right over the land recognised. However, he had to pay huge bribes and legal expenses that far exceeded the land's market value. The family borrowed from his employer, a rich brick-kiln owner, falling into the same trap as millions of bonded labourers in the country. This experience had a deep effect on the family's educational and economic trajectory.

Despite such experience, Munawar and Tabinda were predisposed to believe in education as a route out of their poverty. Their sons were intelligent and performed well at school but sadly, because of poverty, the first two sons left school to work as labourers just before obtaining their secondary school certificate. The teenage sons studying in Grade 6 and 7 were taken out of school when the family became indebted due to the land dispute and were sent to work. The youngest son completed primary schooling and planned to continue his studies. Munawar's daughters were better schooled than their brothers with two daughters managing to complete Grade 12 – the highest level available in the village – and one later teaching at a private school. Laiba, the daughter we interviewed, left school when she had just started Grade 6 – three other daughters left school at Grades 7 and 8. Despite such educational ambitions and several years of schooling, none of Munawar's 11 children succeeded in securing any salaried employment. Getting jobs required "political connections" or "paying bribes" that they did not have.

Revealing strong political views, Munawar voiced great interest in village politics and mobilised people of his *biradree* (kinship), the majority of whom were poor like him, to have their own representative in the village council against the wishes of the dominant groups. This political participation had provoked a personal vendetta against him:

We took part in politics, but it caused us losses because *we do not have the feathers to take the political flight*. The landlords try to keep people suppressed ... Even if we take part in politics, a political leader from the top would ask us not to contest against him or his people. Then what will happen to our politics? It is finished there.

Munawar saw no end to his hardship and continued to work as a labourer because his sons' earnings were irregular. The persistence of these intergenerational occupational hazards demonstrates how, for the young, the past survives the present and perpetuates the future (Bourdieu, 1979). The economic possibilities determined by social locations meant that he understood there

were no jobs or business prospects for “people like them”, no matter how much education they gained. Munawar recognised the limits imposed by the oppressive social conditions, noting that “the poor rarely succeed”. Using the language of rights and social justice, Munawar articulated the nexus between power, schooling, employment, and poverty:

The son of the poor does not get job even when he is highly educated. Therefore, the poor question the usefulness of such education. They begin learning some skills at the earliest. The political parties are bound to do injustice to the poor.

The structuring of the family’s collective biography makes explicit the educational interruptions and employment vulnerabilities, and uncovered the consequences of how low social status deprives families of rights, trapping them in poverty. Yet, paradoxically, it also revealed the continued ‘capacity to aspire’ that Munawar and Tabinda encouraged in their children (Naveed, 2021) – a theme revealed in the second listening.

Horizontal intergenerational listening: chronological educational narratives

Next, the *Habitus Listening Guide* recommends a *horizontal intergenerational listening* which examines how parents and children use education to engage with the inequalities in the local social structure and talk about it. It exhibits the social conditioning of aspirations and everyday practices in ways that reproduce and, at times, subtly transform these very conditions of production (Bourdieu, 1979). Here, the discursive frames that each generation uses to make sense of their educational trajectories – the commonalities *within* and *across* the paired interviews of (a) husband and wife and (b) son and daughter give us access to generational shifts about family life, education, and inequality/poverty.

Pairing the narratives of the father/mother and of the sons/daughters generates *inter-narrativity*. At a practical level, the content of the parents’ and their children’s speech, the events they describe, and the educational motifs embedded in their values, perceptions, aspirations, and strategies are compared. Treating these data as temporally situated interpretations of life and experience, we hear attitudes to the persistence or change in generational cultures and the outcomes of education for life chances. Some of these paired generational narratives are given below.

Voicing parental aspirations: Munawar (father) and Tabinda (mother)

This listening exposed how Munawar’s greatest regret about being uneducated and Tabinda’s high sense of accomplishment for being the first educated

women in her extended family came together to shape their aspirations to school their children. Munawar saw himself as dependent, vulnerable to exploitation, and at the disposal of others, “like an animal in the herd, at the mercy of the shepherd” – voicing as it were the ‘symbolic violence’ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) caused by the massification of a schooling system that made the unschooled discredit themselves and feel worthless. In contrast, Tabinda’s small amount of schooling helped her become self-confident and consider herself a life-long learner. Despite such differences, together they assumed that education was a meritocratic route for social mobility, albeit with gender-differentiated pathways. Both realised that parental education represented economic, social, and cultural capital, central to children’s education. Munawar thought “If I were educated, I would have pushed my children to study further ... and secured them a proper job”. Meanwhile, Tabinda had an appreciation of the importance of education: “by educating my children, I have multiplied the light of *ilm* [knowledge] ... helped them how to read, write, and count”.

Both parents saw a son’s schooling as linked to economic gain. Tabinda thought her sons could have achieved better employment only if they were “more educated” whilst Munawar believed that the lack of salaried jobs was a product of the wider structures of inequality, since sons of the poor did not find jobs even when highly educated. Knowing the ‘rules of the game’ enabled him to ‘penetrate’, to use Willis’ (1977) term, the illusory meritocratic promise of schooling in an unequal social order and recognise injustice in the distribution of scarce economic opportunities through patronage-based local networks. Educational transitions and investments over two generations, despite being significant, had not yielded any economic gain in these parents’ view, as all their sons were doing manual labour and “barely surviving”.

This listening revealed that the daughters’ schooling was talked about primarily in relation to the “increased prospects for the future generation” – metaphorically and instrumentally situating female schooling at the core of long-term intergenerational transitions. Linked to motherhood and domesticity, daughters’ educational gains were seen in terms of achieving the right dispositions to boost their marriageability. Overwhelmed by the sense of duty, Munawar hoped for a ‘matrimonial dividend’ that would bring better lives for their daughters (Arnot & Naveed, 2014): “I am trying to marry them off ... they will go to their homes ... with the blessing of Allah, their future generation will also be good”. Educating daughters could “create a good environment at home”, and they would also be disposed to “give good advice”. Further, “education would give children *tameez*”, a notion encompassing moral behaviour, respectful bodily manners, and the ability to judge, classify, and distinguish between good and bad, and the worthy and unworthy.

This second listening also uncovered the ways parents talked about the physical embodiment of cultural values and capital – the ‘body hexis’ (Bourdieu,

1979) – which they wanted youth to acquire through their schooling. In Tabinda’s view, educated people had a “distinct style”, and Munawar observed “when an educated [person] is walking, he [sic] can be recognised”; “an educated person, when [he] speaks, his [sic] manners reveal that he is educated”. Educated could do *achee baat*, representing a set of conversational dispositions and manners, including reasoning, articulation, communication and convincing others. Tabinda linked educational dispositions to speaking the ‘superior’ language of the public sphere, Urdu, instead of Punjabi.

Voicing agency: Najam (son) and Laiba (daughter)

In comparison to their parents, Najam and Laiba’s narratives offered glimpses into important other spaces in which schooling offers cultural capital including the internalisation and personalisation of failure. Najam, for example, saw social privilege in schools’ use of academic ability and its violent consequences: “those who were *laaik* (capable) used to study [better]”. But this capability depended on having prior cultural capital; “those children whose parents are educated are also *laaik* in the classrooms”. This was an implicit recognition of rural schools’ built-in processes of exclusion which selectively facilitated some, and pushed away the ‘undesirable’: “teachers used to beat only those students who made mistakes ... some children would make a plan and run away together”. Such daily classifications, allied discourses, and abusive practices within classrooms had an adverse impact on the motivation of socially disadvantaged students. Personal favours were demanded by teachers who “used to ask pupils to do their personal stuff; sometimes they would ask you to fetch water to their cattle and sometimes to get their fodder”. Laiba observed: “teachers used to ask students to wash [the teacher’s] dishes”. The burden of such practices fell heavily on poorer children. In such crude ways, schools socialised pupils into the social order, deepening hierarchy, and potentially producing resigned personality types that matched the stratification of society.

This generational listening demonstrates how, despite her parents’ aspirations, Laiba could not cope with the change in social relations from the primary to the high school and dropped out: “I was very intelligent. Had a great interest in studies ... when I moved to high school, the environment was changed, I lost interest. I just could not understand what happened to me. I couldn’t study at this new school”. She described the systematic processes in which even smart students with little cultural capital, felt like fish out of water, and this tightly circumscribed their autonomous choices: “my parents asked me to continue my studies but I had lost interest so left the school”. Laiba regretted giving up: “it was a wrong decision ... Now I don’t make any decisions”. But she wanted to help her siblings’ study by doing “their share of

household chores". She had recently got engaged and was looking forward to her wedding in a year or so.

Her brother, Najam had left school after Grade 5 and had worked with his father at the brick-kiln for 14 years. He was married and had a daughter. His decision to drop out revealed the code of honour and gendered expectations for sons to undertake economic responsibilities in the wake of poverty: "I had grown-up sisters, and my father was the only one working in the family. I didn't consider it appropriate to study further". The parents "insisted upon continuation of my studies. But I felt embarrassed that father is the only one working in the family". Najam saw poverty and a lack of parental cultural capital as inter-locking, shaping the reproduction of generational occupations: "I am spending my life like my father ... I am doing the same labour like him". With five years of schooling, he internalised his failure and considered himself responsible for this intergenerational pattern "since I did not get enough education, there is no change".

Listening to this generation's accounts revealed the role of 'respect' and agency. For Najam as a man, education was a means to *get* respect, whereas for Laiba, it taught her to *give* respect – an attribute for a marriageable daughter. But girls' schooling also induced subtle changes in this gender order. Laiba's description of the need to hold conversations demonstrated a great sense of agency about what girls could acquire through education – the ability to judge, courage to stand for what was right, and the dispositions to articulate and convince others:

One has to raise voice against something which is wrong. Educated girls raise voice often because they have learnt the ways to speak as compared to the uneducated girls. Also, if they have to say anything, they can make the other person understand them.

Najam and Laiba's parents and their schooling had taught them the need to educate their own children "as much as they wanted". However, when asked whose education would be preferred if they faced any economic crisis, their voices diverged. Najam saw there were no jobs for men anyway, so sons' schooling had little economic value but "if a girl is educated her future will be better ... her future generation will be better off ... I'll provide education to my daughter". In contrast, and like her mother, Laiba's response reflected her agency and ability to strategise for all her children: "If I ran short of money in the meanwhile, even then I shall educate [sons and daughters] by all means, like, by stitching clothes".

The generational continuities around the value of education and realisation of its power were tempered with suggestions of conserving strategic traditional gender divisions. The third reading explores this complex story in more depth.

Vertical gendered listenings: the internalisation of male domination

By pairing father/son interviews and mother/daughter interviews, the *vertical gender listening* offers a deeper structural and dialogic analysis of the intra-family gender power relations as embodied, enacted, reproduced, and/or transformed over generations. It involves hearing (a) male identities and duties as parents or siblings; (b) women's position, duties, and their negotiating power *vis-a-vis* husbands and brothers; and (c) gendered boundaries and differential goals for sons and daughters within the family.

The negotiations between the gendered pairs uncover the deep cognitive structures of the men and women in this family which shape their values, perceptions, and practices. They also expose forms of symbolic violence through the structure of speech and contextual information. The internalisation of 'masculine domination' (Bourdieu, 2001) shapes understandings, and an acceptance of gender power relations using duty and devotion, as well as love, admiration, and respect. But such close gender listenings also reveal emergent forms of women's agency around schooling.

Father and son: reworking male honour

Although Munawar and his son Najam seemed initially to agree on how the socio-political structure works, their place within these power relations, and the importance of education, key differences around male honour emerged. Munawar's experience and *practical knowledge* led him, as a father, to *adjust* his high aspirations for social mobility for both his sons and daughters to what was normal for *people like him*. He saw the *reproductive* nature of education at the community level through the growing inequality caused by education itself:

If you give balance in the hands [of the educated], they will favour the heavier side. If there is any decision against the poor, everyone says rich is right. Educated people don't support the truth. They also favour the rich, who are politically strong.

Najam seemed to accept the status quo but did not see structural inequality as being so extreme: "I have never understood/recognised richness or poverty ... *Jaat, Gujjar* or *Kumbhiyar*, no [caste] is above or below ... whether one is rich or poor, everyone works for oneself, none gives to others". He saw education as neutral in relation to social hierarchies: "there was no inequality before education, neither is there now". His perception of political organisation also appeared to be inclusive and egalitarian. Since he 'escaped' from the structure of inequality by misrecognising its effects, his level of contentment

and his faith depended on destiny and luck: “the *rizq* (sustenance) that Allah has written in your fate, will reach you anyway”. Najam surrendered his aspirations – as a man, all he needed was a “menial job”, an “obedient wife” and “obedient relationship” with his father, trading his agency in favour of strong masculine tendencies.

Hence, when it came to their educational biographies, both father and son interpreted the event of Najam leaving school differently. Munawar spoke it only in light of the economic crisis: “my son left his school due to my indebtedness. He put his school bag at home and said, ‘I shall also work at brick-kiln and pay back the debt’”. Whereas, for Najam, it was a matter of his male honour to take up economic responsibilities with “grown-up sisters” at home, and his father being the “only one working in the family”, he “felt embarrassed”, and “didn’t consider it appropriate to study further”. These divergent voices pointed towards gendered dispositions differentiated by age, generation, and schooling, where masculine strategies justified an early transition from school into male manual work.

Further, as a young man, Najam’s commitment to a stringent code of honour meant he downplayed female educational attainments: “We don’t let the adult girls go outside home and keep her in the veil ... girls’ study only up to 8th [Grade] ... girls are not allowed to go outside home ... it is not due to poverty, they already studied under poverty”. Whilst his parents took pride in a daughter completing Grade 12, Najam insisted that girls in his family were not allowed to study beyond Grade 8. He spoke of girls’ early transition into adulthood at the age of 10 implying the need for early marriage and offering religious authority in support: “Girls’ [marriage] should not be delayed. *Maulvi Sb* [a cleric] decreed that the prayers of those who have adult daughters at home are not accepted”.

One might expect the unschooled father to hold conservative gender values, and the young and schooled son to hold more democratic values. However, as we saw earlier, sounding like a *father*, Munawar took pride in the accomplishments of his daughters, considering them as contributing to his own social mobility. Najam spoke as a *man* with a traditional patriarchal set of values, attitudes, and responsibilities. The honour of the brother sounded stronger and louder than the father’s pride. Bourdieu (2001) associates this phenomenon with the ways in which male domination persists and perpetuates in the internalisation of the “sexually ordered social order” through “schemes of perceptions and appreciation” which are internalised subconsciously, accepting this social order to be “normal or even natural” (p. 95).

Negotiating a gendered habitus: mother and daughter

In contrast, the listening of mother-daughter voices not only offered support for the patriarchal structure but also revealed a tentative modern femininity. At

one level, mother's and daughter's female identities differed greatly. Tabinda, the mother, was the trend-setter, the first-ever girl in her generation in her extended family to be schooled, whereas Laiba was the least educated amongst her sisters. Embodied in her style, articulation, and conversational manners, Tabinda possessed a strong sense of self-confidence which helped her make family decisions when strategising under difficult circumstances: "It was because of [my schooling] that I have educated [my daughters] until Grade 12 ... I myself make family decisions".

However, Tabinda's freedom to study was "conditional" upon her "appropriate behaviour", such as not taking too much interest in others, and "covering her head properly". Consequently, her sense of equality was not strong enough to question male dominance: "in my view, men have a higher status. Wife should not interfere in the matters of husband. Wife is lower. Women have to accept whatever men say. Women are lower than men". An unconditional submission to male authority lies at the core of Tabinda's conception of a good life. Whilst schooling her 11 children she was not allowed to interfere with these power relations – thus, whilst taking pride in her daughters' education, their schooling must "not [have] spoiled" them. Her interview transcript revealed that conformity to family values needed to be demonstrated if her schooling decisions were not to be threatened: "when we sent girls to school, we made sure they were observing veil".

Yet within these paired narratives, Tabinda voiced the art of negotiation. She described how her schooling experience widened her "set of possibilities" beyond her economic means. Thus, when Laiba's sister wanted to study further, Tabinda approached the schoolteacher and convinced her to help: "This is how we educated our children". She avoided early marriages for her children: "children can take family responsibilities only if they are *sianay* (wise)". She saw daughters' education beyond its marital gains: "I wish my daughters get some job. But who will give job ... they can't become schoolteachers either as that involves bribes".

In Laiba's voice, we can hear a similar emergent sense of self-hood, demonstrating her cognitive development, and self-confidence. This third listening uncovered the story about how leaving school had placed Laiba at the bottom of the rank amongst her siblings: "I lack confidence because I left school ... It was a wrong decision to quit the school. Now I don't make any decisions". Nevertheless, schooling gave Laiba the ability to communicate and the courage to take a stand, "to raise [her] voice against something which is wrong... because educated girls raise their voices often because they have learned the ways to speak ... to make the other person understand" as quoted earlier.

Such transformative views challenged any unconditional submission to the social order. Education would provide girls with an opportunity for economic

participation “when one faces any hardship”. Laiba argued that “if the girls are educated, they should work like men”, implying that work allowed them to claim equality with men.

Yet this listening also revealed a somewhat contradictory contrapuntal voice. Laiba was very optimistic about her future. In a context where girls are seen to be wedded off as a ‘responsibility’, a ‘burden’, and a ‘duty’ by their families and where their education is meant primarily to raise their marital prospects, the fact that she was engaged to be married brought Laiba a sense of reaching her destination. Plans to marry into a relatively better off family added to her satisfaction. “In my view, our life would be easy. One should keep good hopes. In my opinion, I shall not need to work that hard in my life because the person I am engaged with is the only son, has no sister either”. She was largely content with her current circumstances: “I am spending a good life. I am satisfied. I don’t lack anything ... I see myself after 5 years ... in good circumstances. I shall be a housewife then”.

By dropping out of school, Laiba and Najam, driven by their gendered dispositions of honour and sacrifice, limited their ‘free will’ by ‘voluntarily’ making educational choices against their individual interests. They illustrated what Bourdieu (2001, p. 39) calls “the passion of the dominated habitus”. In the final listening, we hear another underlying contrapuntal voice.

Mythic-ritual listening: a spiritual poem of fate and duty

This fourth unique listening offers a way of exploring the religious shaping of the family’s understanding of inequality, schooling, and its outcomes (Naveed & Arnot, 2019) – an element that is often absent in educational research, yet which is so vital in theocratically shaped countries in Southern contexts. The assumption that all research subjects are secular agents is damaging to religious postcolonial cultures not least since they ignore the complex conditionalities of living. It is vital to explore whether, and if so how, religion and religious identity shape individuals’ understanding of their world and the contribution that education can make to that. Social scientific research in Southern contexts needs to attend methodologically to the instances when religious beliefs are called into play, supporting a particular form of structuration of the perception and thinking of the world (Bourdieu, 1979). Such beliefs can contribute to, maintain, or challenge the maintenance of poverty and social inequality, or inspire strategies to disrupt power structures as a religious duty (Naveed & Arnot, 2019).

Schooling in religious values can inculcate the relations of the social order (Bourdieu, 1991) but mass schooling with its expectations of individual academic success can have an impact on the different explanatory/legitimatory frameworks used by the poor. The challenge for social scientists is to hear the

voices of the family members which, even if not religiously active, may position themselves in relation to a socially and spiritually ordered world. This could help differentiate between those who explain the possibilities and the limitations they face in their lives using the moral-spiritual order, and those who seek explanations in individualised secularised agency and practice. This listening uncovers the existence of another, this time religious, contrapuntal voice underlying the family narratives.

A spiritual poem

The method used in this fourth listening involves extracting each interviewee's 'spiritual poem' – in other words all the sentences that refer to religious identities, spiritual beliefs, symbols, and arguments that refer to the 'divine', 'fate', and 'duty'. These poems include the mythic discourses that shape family explanations of their position in the social order, their perceived successes and failures and the intergenerational shifts in the dispositional worlds of parents and their children. The poems also reveal the socio-psychological/emotional subjectivities and outcomes of schooling which religion is drawn upon to legitimise or question.

For example, a feeling of resignation and renouncement can immediately be heard in Munawar and Tabinda's poems. As we have seen, Munawar aspired for his children, albeit with little control over their future: "I have tried to give education to my children ... May Allah help and [if my youngest son] gets admission in Grade 6 ... By the will of Allah, we shall do some business ... But the thing is, the poor rarely succeed".

The implication in Munawar's reference to Allah's will is that it determines the fulfilment of aspirations, but it also offers hope that, amidst the unfavourable conditions faced by the poor in his community, it could lead to some opportunities. The success of all his strategies around daughters' schooling depended upon Allah's will that also obligated prioritising their marriage:

Allah will do good ... We have educated our daughters up to Grade 12 and got them engaged. Allah will improve our earnings and we shall marry them off. We hear that it is in the Quran that you shouldn't keep the girls at home [unmarried] for long. My children have received Quranic education as well as the Urdu [formal] education. Whoever we discuss with, they say to marry off the girls very soon. This is Allah's discretion.

Further listening to Munawar's account shows that religion's sphere of influence appeared very wide – covering all aspects of Munawar's life. He voiced a great deal of helplessness against oppressive power structures with a dwindling faith in his own agency: "at the higher level, nobody listens to us. Here,

Chauhdary (village elites) doesn't let us rise. Nobody takes care of us at the top. Then why shouldn't we be beaten up?" Munawar believed there was little that the government would do for his family. Their survival and security required them to be "physically well" to be self-sufficient, but this depended on the will of Allah rather than a healthcare system. Divine intervention might turn things around and address all the wider political problems:

May Allah do something better in the election. This system can improve if Allah brings a good ruler ... We just pray to Allah to do good for us. May Allah give us a ruler who brings in peace and stability ... There should come Allah's man who improves things ... government has its own problems, and the poor are getting worse further.

The strategy for political change was to pray, as there was little else to do. Munawar described how unequal access to education was playing into increasing inequalities: "if the situation remains the same ... the rich will get education, but the poor will not. We can only pray that Allah gives progress to the village ... We pray that this government goes today instead of tomorrow".

Tabinda, in contrast, saw participating in the political process as a religious obligation, irrespective of its role in preserving elite structures and poverty: "We never wasted our votes. Vote is *amanah* (trust/obligation) ... This is also the order of Allah". She admitted there were dangers that the family would be neglected, but considered poverty to be justifiable, given the experience of the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him):

I read that Allah's Prophet slept on the carpet made of date leaves which left imprints on his back and his companion Omar asked, 'You sleep on this carpet being Allah's Prophet whereas infidels sleep on soft beds?' The Prophet replied, 'You don't know we shall be rewarded in the life hereafter' ... Thanks to Allah, whatever he has given is enough.

This religious orientation offered Tabinda contentment with the adverse conditions of her existence which could, after all, be worse and inspired her to adopt a strong commitment to educate her daughters. "Only Allah knows we had nothing to get my daughter admitted ... Education is like a light fragrance, it spreads if you open it and vanishes if you close it. Allah has elevated the status of the teacher".

This mythic-ritual listening exposed the bonding associated with religious consent intergenerationally. Making fewer references to religion in their narratives, Laiba and Najam felt equally blessed. Laiba commented: "I always thank Allah that I am in better circumstances than many people". Whilst Najam commented on the harsh life and their strata in the village: "Thanks to Allah I spend my day by doing labour". With gratitude for life not being worse, he yet

had hopes for his own children: “Allah will help and if I and my daughter have the life, I’ll give her education up to Grade 10”. Accepting fate helped Najam overlook deprivation and discrimination: “I shall get the *rizk* (sustenance) that Allah has written for me. We are neither too rich nor too poor, we are in the middle ... People don’t discriminate against us, thanks to Allah ... because we are poor, nor because of our caste”. This symbolic interpretation of the political world and the predominant ethos of resignation and renouncement is noteworthy. Of significance too is the family’s fate – its association with the unequal social relations within rural communities, legitimised less through schooling and more through the socially differentiated functions fulfilled by religion (Bourdieu, 1991). Differently located within the social structure, such families are also variously positioned within “the division of religious labour” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 17). Religious representations and practices bore down on educational dispositions which, whilst aspirational, potentially, can also contribute to the acceptance and the reproduction of an unequal social order.

Bourdieu warned that systems of religious representations and practices, when invisible and official, can justify the existence of the dominance of certain classes and practices, and representations that impose a legitimacy on the dominated – they can imply that the power of the elite is not arbitrary. Such narratives require us to recognise, particularly in theocratic countries, this complex symbolic shaping of aspirations.

The power of the *Habitus Listening Guide*

The relational family-centred method and the methodological power of the *Habitus Listening Guide*, when used in postcolonial contexts such as rural Pakistan, brings to light the subtly different reproductive and socially transformative roles of education in society. First, it enables hearing the socially conditioned meanings, aspirations, and strategies of Munawar’s family as they struggled to achieve education, social mobility, and a valued life. It makes audible the effects of age and, importantly, social change occasioned by the rise of schooling in the community. Further, its use reveals the play of masculinity and femininity, and age and religion, in family members’ lives, uncovering how deeper cognitive structures influence educational aspirations. The four listenings reveal how the local gender culture strengthens mother-daughter relations and selfhood, and how gender values can divide father and son, with the latter even keener to reproduce patriarchal relations than his father. The cultural domain (in the form of manners, language, self-confidence, and agency) appeared to be as important a form of capital as employment. Politically, there are nuanced divisions between family members about what is possible for families like theirs, where change can enter, and what role education can play. These tensions between reproductive *and* transformative dispositions can also be heard in individual subjectivity about duty, fate, and acceptance,

albeit peppered with the hope that luck will change. In Munawar's family, social mobility through education simultaneously appears possible but doubtful, and impossible but understood.

Second, in Southern postcolonial contexts, such as rural Pakistan where family relations are pivotal, the *Guide* offers a methodological tool with which to identify social change and not just continuity (Bourdieu is often accused of the latter). Conventional social scientific methodologies proffer a somewhat linear, *factual* collective biography narrative usually gleaned from the household head. These risk continuing to see the poor as captured in a prison of deprivation and disadvantage, without agency, capital or resilience. Deconstructing family voices and listening to them through a relational, dialogic method validates rather than denigrates such collective cultures. The methodological approach operationalised in this case study attempts to do justice to families by capturing the durable dispositions of individuals, and their complex 'practical knowledge' – it challenges their assumed homogeneity and submissive passivity. By listening with compassion to the voices of the poor in such a Southern context, it is possible to avoid 'readmitting the Subaltern through the backdoor' or what O'Hanlon (1988) described as a "self-originating, self-determining individual, who is at once a subject in his possession of a sovereign consciousness whose defining quality is reason, and an agent in his power of freedom" (p. 191). In contrast, the approach offered here enables us to hear the localised social structuring of individual and collective subjectivities, rationalities, values, and meanings, and the agentic strategies which the disadvantaged use to better their lives (Naveed, 2021).

Third, as an innovative method of data analysis, the *Habitus Listening Guide* offers a new way of 'hearing' the impact of mass schooling when embedded in colonialist structures and situated within an unequal religious and caste system. It illustrates the erratic, resisted, and negotiated social changes associated with schooling which are both internalised and embodied within poor families progressing without disrupting the social order (Naveed & Arnot, 2019). By reworking Brown and Gilligan's listening guidance to address both the structures of poverty and the realities of a different cultural/religious environment such as the Punjab, it was possible to challenge the assumptions of individualism and secularity, and to deconstruct the universal notions of family homogeneity amongst the poor, especially in Southern contexts.

Fourth, a deeper listening of family narratives also challenges the stereotypes about how negatively girls' schooling is thought to be viewed by families living in rural poverty, particularly by fathers. It therefore challenges simplistic explanations for the low take up of girls' schooling which fail to locate schooling within local gender and social structural inequalities. The conditions in which families find themselves economically poor are characterised by their internal collaborative strength – a collectivity that can generate conditions for its members to progress socially or be held back.

From a postcolonial perspective, young people living in rural Southern cultures need to be represented methodologically – they need to participate in research that works with intergenerational relations. This relational polyvocal case study demonstrates how, as social scientists, we can move closer to uncovering and understanding the ways poverty controls lives and is internalised by members of the community, and to reveal the legitimacy discourses used by families to explain their inability to exploit the educational opportunities provided by schooling or their success in so doing. This methodological approach generates insights which suggest that the expectations around mass schooling can only be met, if such nuanced elements are addressed.

Acknowledgements

This chapter has benefitted greatly from discussions with Madeleine Arnot. I am grateful to Munawar Hussain and his family for sharing their life histories. My thanks also go to the research team at the Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre, Islamabad, and especially to Fareeha Ali, Tauseef Ahmad, Noorulain Ali, and Ghulam Mustafa for conducting the fieldwork.

References

- Arnot, M., & Naveed, A. (2014). Educational outcomes across the generational and gender divide: The rural family habitus of Pakistani families living in poverty. *Gender and Education*, 26(5), 505–523.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). Genesis and structure of the religious field. *Comparative Social Research*, 13, 1–44.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London, England: Sage.
- Brown, L. M., & Gilligan, C. (1991). Listening for voice in narratives of relationship. *New Directions for Child Development*, 54, 43–61.
- Douie, J. M. (1914). The Punjab Canal Colonies. *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 62(3210), 611–623.
- Gyekye, K. (2003). Person and community in African thought. In P. H. Coetzee & A. P. J. Roux (Eds.), *The African philosophy reader* (pp. 348–366). London, England: Routledge.
- Haste, H. (2014). Culture, tools, and subjectivity: The (re)construction of self. In T. Magioglou (Ed.), *Culture and political psychology: A societal perspective* (pp. 27–48). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Hilgers, M., & Manges, E. (Eds.). (2015). *Bourdieu's theory of social fields: Concepts and applications*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Horsdal, M. (2011). *Telling lives: Exploring dimensions of narratives*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Hulme, D. (2004). Thinking 'small' and the understanding of poverty: Maymana and Mofizul's story. *Journal of Human Development*, 5(2), 161–176.
- Kay, J. (2006, September 9). Intellectuals and power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. *Libcom.org*. Retrieved from <https://libcom.org/library/intellectuals-power-a-conversation-between-michel-foucault-and-gilles-deleuze>
- Naveed, A., & Arnot, M. (2019). Exploring educational and social inequality through the polyphonic voices of the poor: A habitus listening guide for the analysis of family-schooling relations. *Comparative Education*, 55(2), 175–196.
- Naveed, A. (2021). Overriding social inequality? Educational aspirations versus the material realities of the rural families in Pakistan. In P. Rose, M. Arnot, R. Jeffery, & N. Singal (Eds.), *Reforming education and challenging inequalities in Southern contexts: Research and policy in international development* (pp. 123–143). London, England: Routledge.
- Naveed, M. A. (2019). *Reconceptualising the role of schooling in intergenerational social mobility: Patterns, perspectives and experiences from rural Pakistan*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.41890>
- O'Hanlon, R. (1988). Recovering the subject Subaltern studies and histories of resistance in colonial South Asia. *Modern Asian Studies*, 22(1), 189–224.
- Spivak, G. (1988). Can the subaltern speak. In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–316). London, England: Macmillan.
- Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labour: How working class kids get working class jobs*. Westmead, England: Saxon House.
- World Bank. (2000). *Voices of the poor: Can anyone hear us?* Washington, DC: Oxford University Press.