

Department of Sociology public discussion

New Forms of Cultural Capital

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The logo for LSE events, with 'LSE' in white on a red square and 'events' in a red sans-serif font.

Suggested hashtag for Twitter users: **#LSEculture**

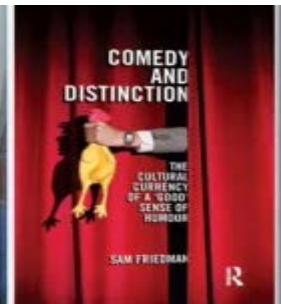
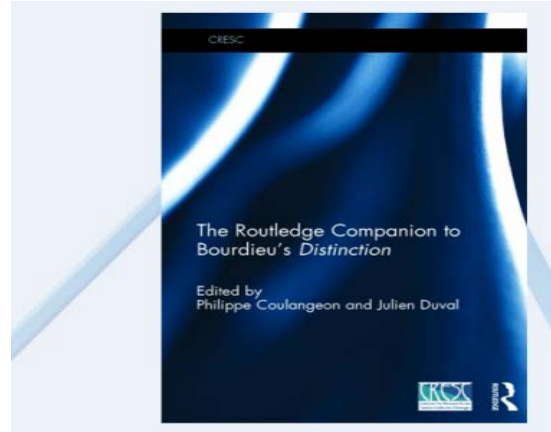


New forms of cultural capital

A reflection and discussion

Mike Savage, Philippe Coulangeon, Sam
Friedman, Laurie Hanquinet,

New debates in cultural sociology



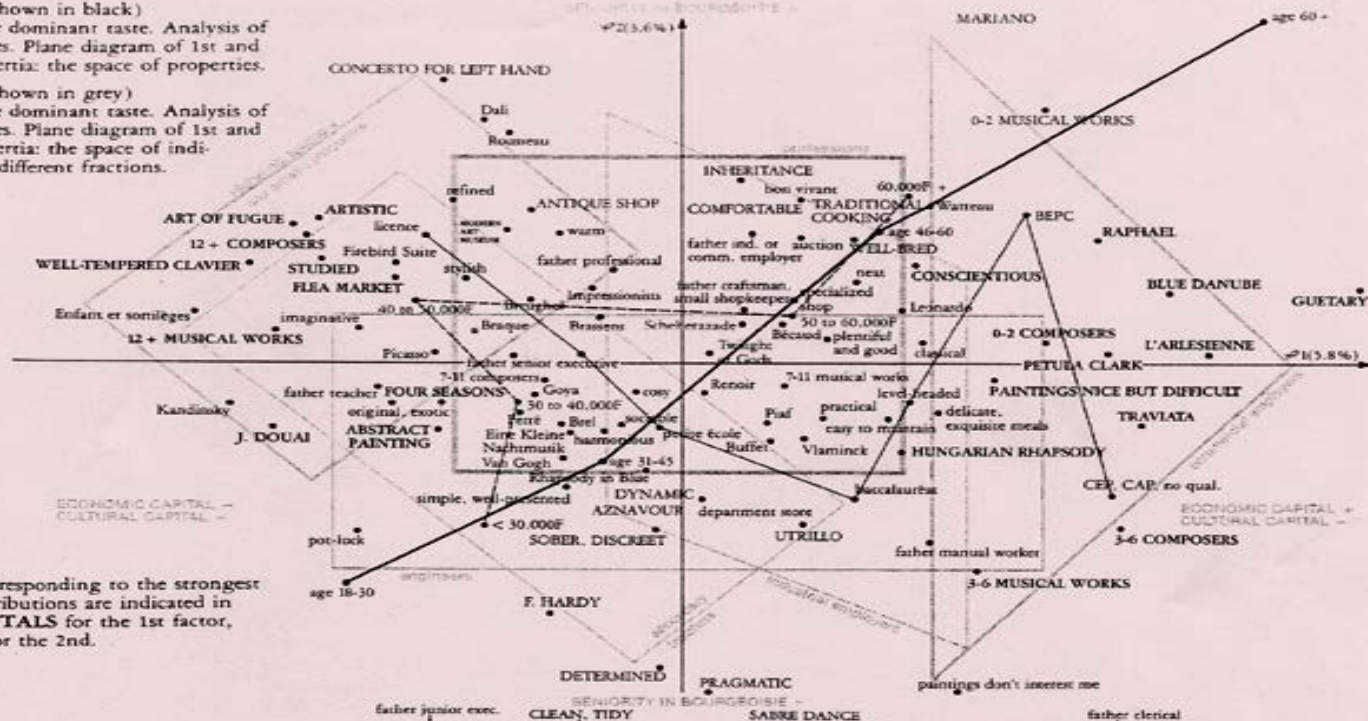
Can we still talk of 'cultural capital'

Bourdieu's influential account was developed in the 1960s and emphasises

- The historical cultural canon as key reference point
- The Kantian aesthetic (with its 'modernist' assumptions about the 'avant garde', 'abstraction')
- The 'capital composition' principle separating economic from cultural capital
- Age and gender seen as 'secondary' dimensions
- Assumptions of 'national' culture

Figure 11 (shown in black)
Variants of the dominant taste. Analysis of correspondences. Plane diagram of 1st and 2nd axes of inertia: the space of properties.

Figure 12 (shown in grey)
Variants of the dominant taste. Analysis of correspondences. Plane diagram of 1st and 2nd axes of inertia: the space of individuals of the different fractions.



The items corresponding to the strongest absolute contributions are indicated in **BOLD CAPITALS** for the 1st factor, **CAPITALS** for the 2nd.

Challenges to Bourdieu's model

Whilst the broad conception of cultural capital may be useful, a number of issues have been posed to this specific account of cultural capital, e.g.

- The loss of historical canon and rise of stakes around 'contemporary' culture
- Changing role of ethnicity, gender and age
- The rise of 'cosmopolitan' tastes which cross 'national' borders

Emerging cultural capital

This concept deals with these challenges by foregrounding three issues

- Role of age and generation in structuring cultural tastes and practices
 - The prime value of cultural ‘detachment’ is replaced by forms of ‘engagement’ and ‘activity’ and has a greater visual and physical component
 - Elite culture is no longer defined by highbrow tastes and being remade along more contemporary lines
- But more work needs to be done to assess its analytical value

MORE OR LESS UNEQUAL?

EMERGING FORMS OF CULTURAL CAPITAL IN
FRANCE

Philippe Coulangeon
SciencesPo/CNRS - Paris

- Evidence of the emerging forms of cultural capital
 - Focus on cosmopolitan resources
- Questionable impact on inequality
 - Are the emerging forms more equally distributed?

1. Emerging forms of cultural capital

- MCA on the 2008 survey on French Cultural Practices (FCP2008)
 - 3 groups of active variables:
 - Participation in « highbrow culture »: books owning and reading, theatre, opera, museums, art exhibitions, etc.
 - Participation in media culture: Time spent on TV, preferred TV channels, etc.
 - Participation in cosmopolitan culture: foreign books, Foreign TV channels, Travels, etc.

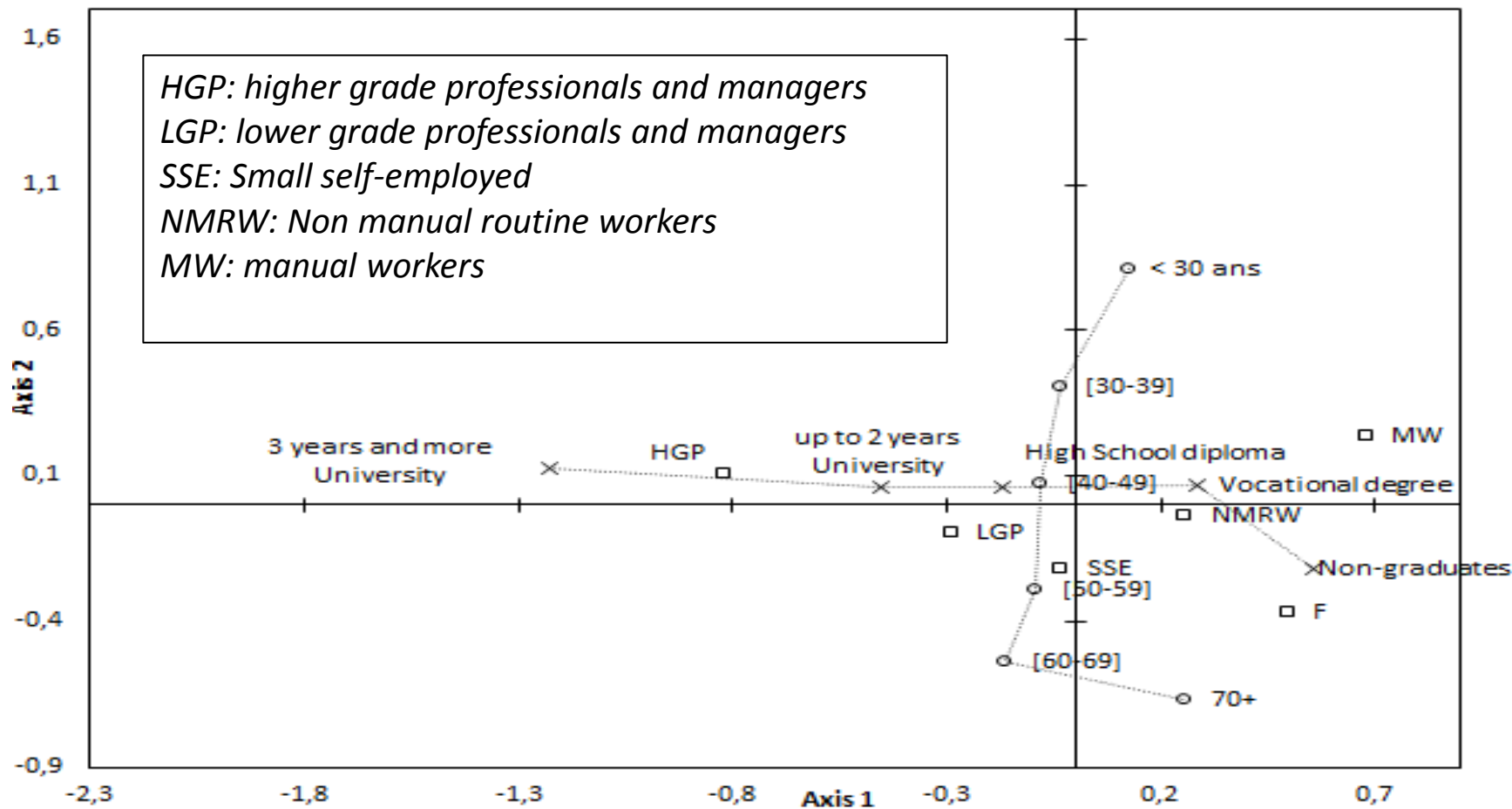


Fig 2: Map of the first two axes – illustrative variables (Class, Education, Age)

2. More or less unequal?

- Emerging forms of cultural capital more difficult to transmit than more conventional ones;
 - More generationally differentiated;
 - More uncertain and changing;
 - Less strongly related to established cultural and educational institutions.
- BUT these emerging forms of symbolic domination may be even more difficult to challenge
 - Irrelevance of educational and/or cultural “goodwill”

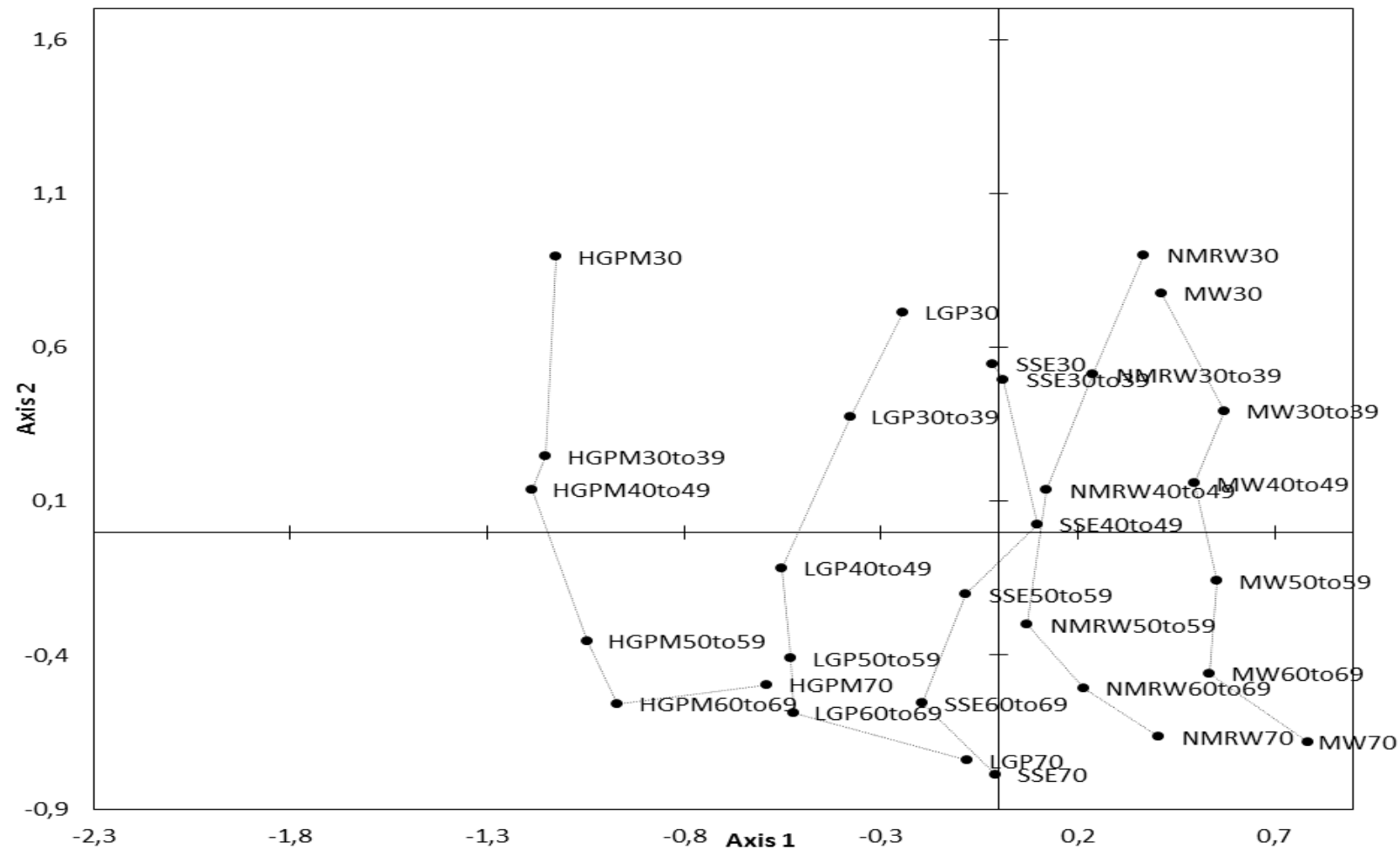


Fig 3: Map of the first two axes – illustrative variables, class × age

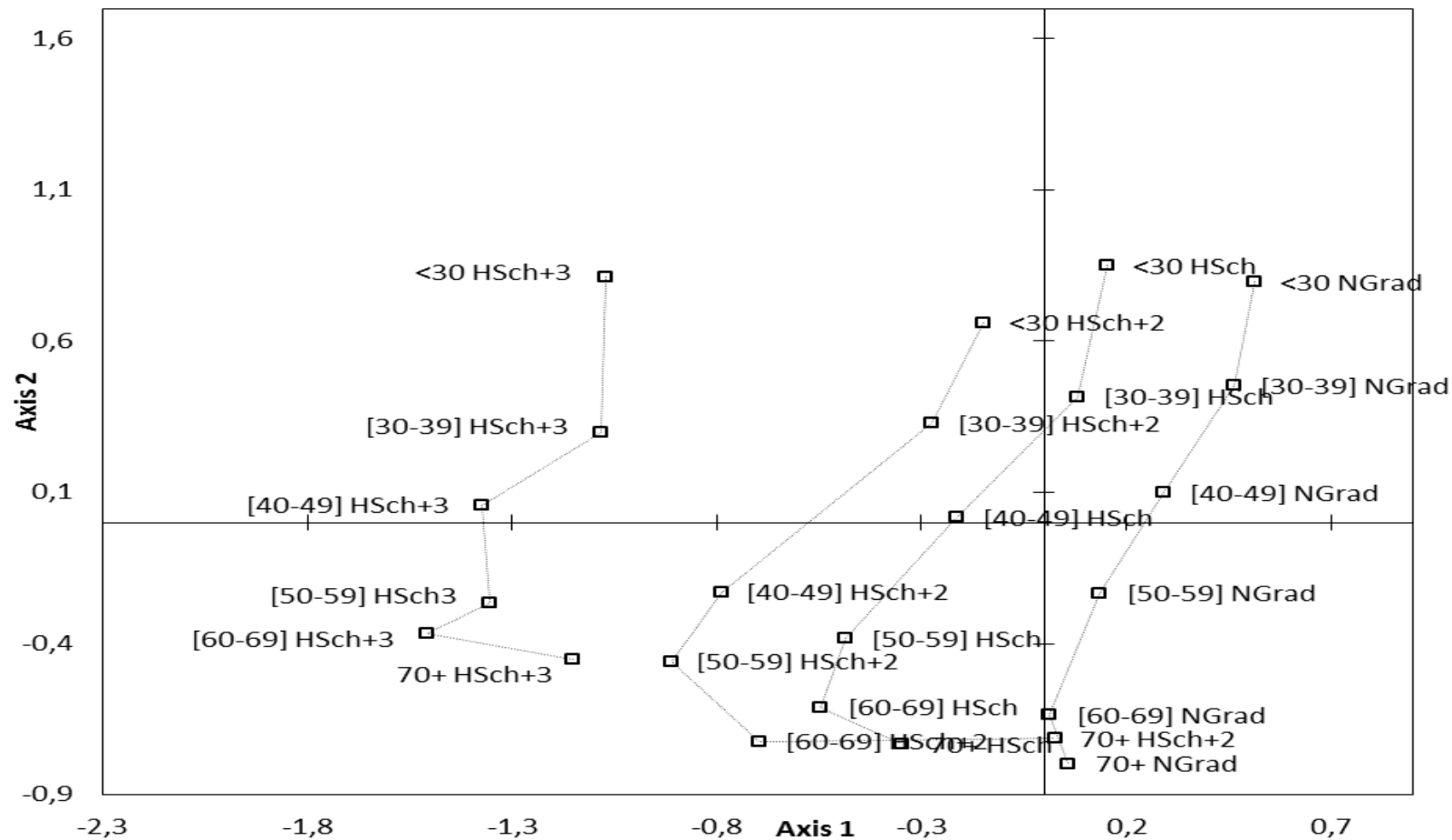


Fig 4: Map of the first two axes – illustrative variables, education × age

Concluding Remarks

- Things that need to be investigated:
 - Need to investigate transmission and conversion;
 - Need to investigate the relation between emerging cultural capital and education (where the notion of cultural capital was originally coined);
 - Need to investigate these emerging forms of cultural capital in comparative perspective;

Comedy and The Expression of (Emerging) Cultural Capital in Everyday Life

Sam Friedman, LSE

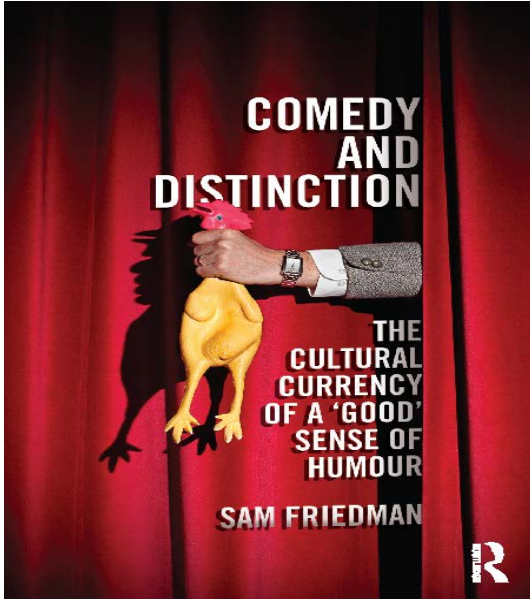
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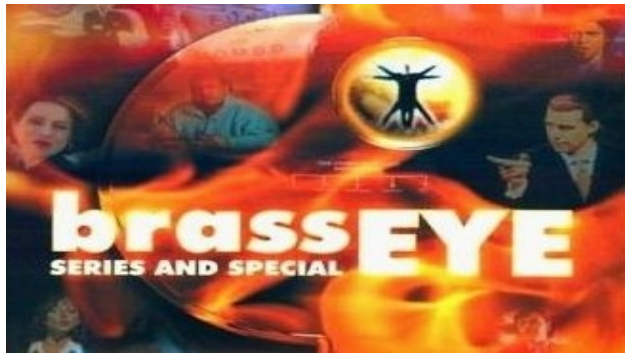


Comedy and Distinction

(2014) Routledge



- Comedy traditionally 'lowbrow' but re-evaluated after '80s Alt Comedy Movement
- First sociological study of British comedy field 2008-2013
- Conducted at Edinburgh Festival Fringe
- Mixed methods:
 - Survey of comedy taste (n=901)
 - 24 follow-up interviews
 - Go-along ethnography with 9 comedy television scouts
 - Textual analysis of comedy reviews



Liking the 'Right' Comedy

- Survey data analysed using Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA)
- Certain critically-acclaimed comedians **markers** of cultural capital
- Stewart Lee: *'Like sitting a comedy exam'* (Dale, 32, lawyer)
- Working-class respondents report such humour as *'going over their head'* or *'beyond them'*



‘Working’ for Your Laughter

- Most comedy is ‘crossover’
- Distinction activated less through taste ‘objects’ and more via **styles of comic appreciation**
- Cultural currency of **‘getting’** the joke
- For upper middle-class comedy should never be ***just funny***
- Enduring sense of being able to **‘get’ more**, to extract a ‘whole other level’ (Melanie, actor)



But How is Emerging CC Deployed in Social Life?

We need to push further on:

- The expression of the ***dominant aesthetic*** in Emerging CC
- The complexities of expressing Emerging CC in ***everyday life***

Distinction in Action

- Benedict, 38, senior IT Consultant:
- Unapologetic about ‘pop sensibility’ but looking for ‘combination of originality *and* familiarity’, something ‘conventional but a little unhinged’.
- On American synthpop band Future Islands:

‘It’s fairly conventional, but the singer’s got a very unusual vocal style, he’s really odd. He’s got these two registers, falsetto and quite deep, but at the same time just enough of a normal pop sensibility.’

Distinction in Action

- Applied his aesthetic across cultural spectrum:

'I suppose it's about the choices you make in almost any situation. Whenever the opportunity is there to make a choice between doing one thing or another, eating some sort of food or the other, there tends to be thought behind it. Operating principles. It's not arbitrary, it's thought about. For example, [laughs] we don't like McDonald's, that kind of fast food, but we would choose Burger King over McDonald's [laughs]. So everything, the bands, everything, you know, there's nothing that escapes scrutiny.'

Snobbery and The Presentation of Self

*Benedict: But some people do find it annoying. And I do want to retain that connection, because you work in an organisation with people, from cleaners to the principal, and **some people are very good at talking vertically or communicating vertically...***

Q: Do you think you're good at that?

*Benedict: **I'm not as good as I used to be, but I try...** I mean it's how you appear to others isn't it. So I think it's partly about the **performative**, yeah, wanting to establish a sort of zero base, so there's a persona that I want to project which is more, you know, I've got it quite well. You experiment with different approaches, but it is ultimately performative.*

So...does 'knowingness' of Emerging CC also incorporate capacity to 'read' social life and accentuate or downplay difference accordingly?

New forms of cultural capital & Highbrow culture

Laurie Hanquinet
University of York

Main questions

- Does (embodied) cultural capital still need highbrow culture?
- What does highbrow culture mean in our current cultural context which is arguably 'more omnivorous'?
- What is the theoretical value of the figure of the omnivore and of the idea of 'emerging cultural capital'?

Does cultural capital (still) need highbrow aesthetic culture to be defined?

- **Yes**, cultural capital is based on the idea of accumulation of resources , which was, in Bourdieu's mind, led by different aesthetic principles
- **But** highbrow culture cannot anymore be only related to a highbrow aesthetic *à la Bourdieu* that valorises form over content and a distanced relationship to art
 - < new aesthetic criteria
 - < changes in the field of cultural production: what is aesthetically refined has changed

What does highbrow culture mean in our current cultural context which is arguably 'more omnivorous'?

- *Omnivorous: how to draw and cross boundaries at the same time*

The 'omnivores' draw new social boundaries by crossing cultural boundaries (that still need to remain in place)

- *A more inclusive highbrow culture?*

→ New forms of aesthetic refinement (e.g. Young British Artists)

→ Highbrow by-products' of popular culture: a hierarchy *within* cultural genres between the 'good' popular culture versus the 'bad' popular culture E.g. the 'Gourmet' Burger (Johnston and Baumann), the 'serious' rock music (Regev)

- *Distinctive ways to be omnivorous*

In some cultural areas, people don't differ much by what they like but how they like/ appreciate it
E.g. Comedy (Friedman)

What is the theoretical value of the figure of the omnivore and of the idea of ‘emerging cultural capital’?

- The ‘omnivore’ not a real challenger

Omnivorousness appears to be simply the empirical manifestation of a more inclusive but still distinctive highbrow culture rather than the cause

- Interest in ‘emerging cultural capital’ as a way to outline its ‘floating’ character // B’s relational approach and historical nature of habitus

→ Re-configuration of cultural capital

‘Emerging forms of cultural capital’ show that new cultural items and aesthetic criteria have progressively become valorised in the society while being not symbolically accessible to everyone.

Yet, these new resources have not seriously questioned the link between cultural capital and highbrow culture but their close examination suggest that there are now *different ‘kinds’ of highbrow culture*, which can for instance take a more classic or contemporary outlook

In short

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