

The Launch Workshop of the Stratification and Culture Research Network

Emerging Cultural Capital and New Forms of Distinction

Organisers: Sam Friedman, Mike Savage, Laurie Hanquinet, Andy Miles

Introduction

Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital has become one of the most widely deployed concepts in the social sciences. However, in recent years the idea has come under sustained attack. Many (Warde et al, 1999; Coulangeon, 2005) have argued that the status of 'high' cultural goods has weakened significantly, while others have noted that this shift has been matched by changing patterns of cultural consumption, with contemporary elites shunning 'snobbery' in favour of a new form of cultural omnivorousness (Peterson, 1996; Bennett et al 2009; Warde, 2011). Such developments have obvious implications for cultural capital. If high culture has lost its signifying power and elites are now happy to consume 'popular' culture, it follows that traditionally legitimate cultural tastes have lost their currency. However, increasingly, another explanation is forming among cultural sociologists. These authors counter-argue that the eclectic taste reported in omnivore studies does not presuppose that elites are now indifferent to aesthetic hierarchies. Indeed, the problem with such studies, they argue, is that they tend to obscure the fact that hierarchies of legitimacy may exist *within* categories of high or low culture (Atkinson, 2011; Friedman, 2011) and, furthermore, that the pursuit of distinction may not just be a matter of what objects are consumed, but the *way* they are consumed (Hennion, 2001; Holt, 1997; Savage and Prieur, 2012; Lizardo, 2012). Such an intellectual current has been further fuelled by the recent findings of the BBC Great British Class Survey (n = 161,000), which indicates that there may now be two main types of cultural capital: that associated with highbrow taste, and that which the BBC team provocatively term 'emerging' cultural capital – based on engagement with video games, gyms, rap and rock music, among others (Savage et al, 2013). Reflecting on these developments, this workshop aims to explore whether the concept of cultural capital has moved on and asks whether its contemporary power as a structuring force in social stratification demands new strands of enquiry. In particular, we want to encourage new ways of thinking about divisions in the consumption of popular culture, critical

engagements with Bourdieu's formulation of cultural capital, empirical engagement with the cultural omnivore thesis, the notion of embodied cultural capital, and how we might discern the precise social advantage – in terms of convertibility and transmissibility - conferred by 'emerging' notions of cultural capital.

Workshop at a Glance

8.45-9.15am - Registration

9.15-9.30am - Welcome and Introduction from Sam Friedman (City)

9.30-10.45am Session 1: New Forms of Distinction – Mike Savage (LSE) & Laurie Hanquinet (York), Andy Miles (CRESC, Manchester)

Discussant: Vergard Jarness (Bergen)

10.45-11.15am - coffee

11.15am-1pm Session 2: Theoretical Reassessments – Will Atkinson (Bristol), Omar Lizardo (Notre Dame), Alan Warde (Manchester)

Discussant: Craig Calhoun (LSE)

1-1.45pm – Lunch

1.45-3pm – Session 3: Cultural Capital in National Contexts – Henk Roose (Ghent), Philippe Coulangeon (CNRS/Sciences Po),

Discussant: Alice Sullivan (Institute of Education, London)

3-3.30pm – coffee

3.30-4.45pm – Session 4: Cultural Capital in National Contexts 2 – Guiselinde Kuipers & Michael Deinema (Amsterdam), Annick Prieur (Aalborg)

Discussant: Dieter Vandebroek (Vrije)

4.45-5.15pm – Closing remarks and plan for next Workshop

Full Programme and Abstracts

9.15-9.30am - Welcome and Introduction from Sam Friedman

9.30-10.45am Session 1: New Forms of Distinction (Discussant: Vegard Jarness)

Urban Cultural Capital

Mike Savage & Laurie Hanquinet

LSE & University of York

This paper argues that a mode of 'emerging cultural capital' can be differentiated from more traditional forms of 'highbrow' cultural capital associated with the 'Kantian aesthetic'. We argue that emerging cultural capital has a close affinity with the contemporary metropolis, and that its circuits of reproduction are more spatially focused than those of highbrow cultural capital which were organized on a predominantly anti-urban and nationally oriented frame. We examine how emerging cultural capital is associated with the increasing dominance of urban universities, major sporting and cultural venues, and the development of distinctive youthful cultural audiences which tend to be located in cities.

Spaces and places of cultural capital

Andrew Miles

CRESC, University of Manchester

Interest in the cultural formation and dynamics of places is long-standing. A prominent concentration of recent work in this area has focused on the delineation of the 'creative city', articulated by a new class of cultural workers (Bianchini and Landry 1995, Florida 2002). Amongst various critiques of creative class concept is the way in which it imposes relational place attributes that obscure forms of 'vernacular' creativity (Waitt and Gibson 2013, Edensor et al eds 2009). In this paper I want to explore the implied but unspecified domain of 'vernacular' cultural capital and its role, alongside 'snob' and 'emergent' cultural capital (Savage et al 2013), in marking out the territories of urban space. Drawing on Savage's rediscovery of Bourdieu's interest in the relationship between physical and social space in the making of urban inequalities (2011), I will do this with a particular focus on Manchester, using both survey data and participation narratives to examine the socio-spatial distribution and characteristics of cultural capital in the city.

10.45-11.15am coffee (room NAB 1.07)

11.15am-1pm Session 2: Theoretical Reassessments (Discussant: Craig Calhoun)

Omnivorousness Debunked, Bourdieu Buttressed – Again

Will Atkinson

University of Bristol

This paper develops concerns previously registered over the 'omnivore thesis' and its ramifications for the conceptualisation of cultural capital, namely the fact that it may be more of an artefact of method than reality. The main problems of the pertinent research are (i) the reliance on genre categories – of music, of television, of film, etc. – and (ii) use of questionable measures of 'class', both of which work together to mask the fact that taste remains a product of familiar dispositions born of symbolic mastery, economic capital and trajectory, all of which vary by class fraction as well as class, rather than a desire for variety per se. A reanalysis of the Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion survey data proceeding more as Bourdieu himself did – i.e. using a model of the multidimensional social space of classes (taking into account capital composition as well as capital volume), steering clear of genre categories, patching together several multiple correspondence analyses rather than undertaking one and drawing in data from elsewhere to offset the imbalances of the survey – will be presented. Omnivorousness, it will be shown, disappears out of view in the wake of a much more familiar pattern.

Hopefully there will also be time to close with some reflections on the notion of 'emergent cultural capital' and whether it represents a case of old wine in new bottles.

Generational patterns of distinction in American musical tastes 1993 – 2012

Omar Lizardo

University of Notre Dame

In this paper, we use a new survey data set on the musical likes and dislikes from a representative sample of the American population collected in 2012 (meant to replicate a similar effort by the General Social Survey in 1993) to evaluate the extent to which we can detect generational dynamics in the cultural positioning of college educated and non-college educated Americans. We depart from a field theoretic conceptualization of the way that generational location interacts with social position in modulating patterns of cultural choice, whereby a mechanism of *generational distinction* induces younger members to accept certain genres as part of their cultural repertoire, while rejecting other genres. We predict that

new entrants into the rank of the educated will be more likely to (a) adopt an enthusiastic stance towards "newly consecrated" genres (e.g. folk music, jazz, contemporary rock), (b) have middling feelings towards traditionally consecrated genres, and (b) retain the pattern of "selective tolerance" of their older counterparts by directing strong dislikes towards a small set of low status genres.

Re-assessing Cultural Capital

Alan Warde

University of Manchester

In this paper I seek to assess the value of recent applications of the concept of cultural capital to the study of consumption. Probably the most widely used of Bourdieu's key concepts, it has been deployed increasingly frequently in different contexts and for different purposes. Pursuing the hypothesis that it is more readily applicable to some practices than others, its various current definitions and modes of operationalisation will be subjected to critical evaluation. The argument will be developed in relation to two domains of study. First, I will review recent empirical studies of cultural consumption, especially in relation to issues of cultural omnivorousness and social distinction. Second, I will consider analyses of eating, regarding which some new empirical evidence from a study of food habits in the UK will be introduced. I will conclude by considering the wider theoretical implications of my review.

1-1.45pm – Lunch (room NAB 1.07)

1.45-3pm Session 3: Cultural Capital in National Contexts (Discussant: Alice Sullivan)

The various guises of cultural capital: The monopoly of highbrow arts as status marker challenged

Henk Roose

Ghent University

There is considerable debate about the status of highbrow cultural products as a means of ensuring and proclaiming a dominant social position. Do attending the opera and visiting museums for example, still function as status markers? Or has the monopoly and legitimacy of the *beaux arts* dwindled in view of recent societal developments, such as the rise of the entertainment industry, Internet's boom or the advent of the omnivorous consumer? Central focus in this paper is to analyse empirically whether and how the monopoly and legitimacy of highbrow arts as a status marker varies across positions in the social space as well as within different age groups. Drawing on unique Flemish survey-data ($n = 2,846$) that include information on *what* cultural objects are consumed as well as on *how* these are

appropriated, we construct a three-dimensional social space that relates cultural practices to positions in the social hierarchy through Multiple Correspondence Analysis (see Roose *et al.*, 2012). Using Class-specific MCA we look into the structuring principles within a number of relevant clusters within the population and try to get at the ways in which the distinguishing status and legitimacy of highbrow arts varies between different groups in the social space.

Emerging forms of cultural capital in contemporary France. Theoretical concern and empirical evidences

Philippe Coulangeon

Observatoire sociologique du changement – CNRS/Sciences Po

Laboratoire de sociologie quantitative – Grecsta – CNRS/Genes

This paper focuses on three main issues. The first one relates to the extent to which the so-called omnivorous tendencies observed in France as well as in many other western countries challenge the classical concept of cultural distinction, as theorized by Bourdieu in his eponymous book [Bourdieu, 1984(1979)]. Relying on empirical examples from the fields of music and cinema, I argue that notwithstanding the blurring boundaries between highbrow and lowbrow culture associated with the omnivorization of cultural taste, a large part of the ‘structural’ process described by Bourdieu in *Distinction* remains relatively unchanged. [Holt, 1997; Atkinson, 2011; Friedman, 2012]. In that matter, my particular claim is that a large part of the controversies about the omnivorous paradigm comes from a certain misconception of the very notion of mass-culture and the disruption it creates in the definition of the frontier between the so-called highbrow and lowbrow repertoires. In my view, many contemporary cultural sociologists, whatever their position in the omnivore/univore vs. highbrow/lowbrow debate, probably fail to adequately identify this issue. On that matter, the Frankfurt School philosophers’ intuitions probably deserve to be taken into consideration, to the extent that a large amount of mass-produced and mass-consumed items are not clearly connected to the class divisions that they precisely contribute to hide [Gartman, .1991 & 2012]. In that sense, the taste for mass-culture can loosely be considered by itself as a social marker, although the exclusive access to and taste for it is statistically much more frequent in the lower classes than it is in the upper classes. The second focus of the paper is on the renewed forms of cultural distinction that go hand in hand with social mobility. On the basis of the musical tastes example, the paper examines the degree to which mobile – and especially upwardly mobile – people are more likely to display omnivorous dispositions than non-mobile people [Van Eijck, 1999; Lahire, 2010 (1998)]. It also examines the degree to which upwardly mobiles are less compliant with the traditional notion of cultural legitimacy than with its

omnivorous variant. More broadly, my claim is that the cultural attitudes of socially mobiles show how the traditional forms of cultural capital compete with emerging ones.

Finally, the last part of the paper highlights the growing social relevance of the ‘cosmopolitan’ cultural resources in modern class relations. This emerging form of cultural capital, which has already been identified in other contexts [Prieur and Savage, 2011; Calhoun, 2002], is of particular significance in the French context [Coulangeon, 2011]. First because until recently this kind of resources was not particularly enhanced in the French educational system. Second because the growing social relevance of cosmopolitan resources parallels the decreasing relevance of French cultural resources (especially the French language). This shifting cultural and linguistic context has political and geopolitical corollaries. It also implies a significant generational divide, that is particularly pronounced among cultural elites.

3-3.30pm – coffee (room NAB 1.07)

3.30-4.45pm – Session 4: Cultural Capital in National Contexts 2 (Discussant: Dieter Vandebroeck)

Distinction and physical style: looks as emerging cultural capital in post-industrial societies

Giselinde Kuipers & Michael Deinema

University of Amsterdam

This paper explores the relation between physical style – beauty, looks, dress, grooming – and cultural status and distinction in present-day European societies. Physical style is one of the main channels for the communication of taste, social identity, group affiliation, and thus: social status. Physical style signals distinction through taste, but also through lasting and deeply embodied ways, e.g. body size and shape or fitness. In many Western countries, overweight has become a marker of low social status. This paper discusses physical style as a form of ‘emerging cultural capital’. The cultural fields associated with physical style, like fashion, beauty, modeling and sports, have become increasingly ‘upwardly mobile’ in the past decades. This has not led to the disappearance of symbolic boundaries in these fields. Rather, like in popular music and film, it has led to the emergence of new boundaries cutting across these fields, and to the emergence of “middle brow” styles.

In the case of physical style, the emancipation of these cultural fields is related to a number of important social transformations: informalization; individualization; the rise of consumption culture; and finally the rise of the service economy, which means that most jobs today require a ‘representative

appearance'. Taken together, this leads us to expect that physical style is 1. An important means of distinguishing oneself, and placing others in the social landscape; and 2. That there are considerable difference in people's standards and preferences, which 3. Are linked specifically to differences in class position and global vs. local orientation – and less to gender or national background.

We investigate these hypotheses drawing on data from an ongoing study of the social shaping of beauty standards in six European countries (www.sociologyofbeauty.nl). In particular we discuss the results of in-depth interviews conducted in four (two more to go) European countries with a stratified sample of the population. The interviews were combined with a visual Q sort using images of faces and bodies of men and women, which allows for a systematic comparison of standards and repertoires of evaluation.

Contemporary Cultural Capital: Two New Tendencies

Annick Prieur

Aalborg University

Thirty years after *Distinction* was published in French, and almost fifty years after Bourdieu began to deploy the idea, the concept of cultural capital has become one of the most widely used in the social sciences. This paper argues for a sensibility for new tendencies and emerging forms of cultural capital. It is not given that the forms of cultural capital that Bourdieu pointed to will have the same value today. The very content of the concept needs to be revised in light of the very different conditions of the early 21st century. Based on my own empirical studies of cultural consumption in Denmark together with a reading of British, Norwegian and other European studies where the concept of cultural capital is used I will point to two tendencies I think deserve particular interest: The first is that a knowing mode of appropriation of culture may have become a more important distinguishing feature. The second is that a so-called cosmopolitan attitude within an array of cultural domains also seems to have become a more important as a marker of distinction. The paper will present these ideas; discuss how to name them as well as in which respects they can be seen as contemporary forms of cultural capital.

4.45-5pm – closing remarks and plan for next Workshop.