Cultural Capital and Inequality: Policy Issues and Contexts

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Introduction

In this special issue of *Cultural Trends* we report on selected and provisional findings of a large-scale research inquiry into cultural tastes, knowledge and forms of cultural participation in contemporary Britain, considered in their relations to some of the key indicators of social divisions and differences: class, gender, ethnicity, education, residence, income etc. The inquiry—Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: A Critical Investigation (CCSE)—was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), and was conducted via a rich mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods which we will discuss in more detail shortly[1] We begin, though, in the first two sections, with a review of some aspects of the histories of the concepts of cultural capital and social exclusion in order to identify the terms on which these have come together in the context of New Labour's policies for promoting access to culture as a means of combating or offsetting the effects of social exclusion. We then return to describe more fully how the research was conducted, and to outline the design of our research instruments and the basic analytical processes we have undertaken. The main findings and conclusions of the articles brought together in this issue are then reviewed.

Part 1: Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives

In 1968, shortly after Pierre Bourdieu had completed the fieldwork for his inquiry into the relations between culture and class, later published as *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Bourdieu, 1984), he urged that 'all the means have to be used, from nursery school, to give all children the experience that children from well-off social groups owe to their families—contact with cultural works, and with other aspects of modern society (organized visits to museums, famous sights, history and geography trips, theatre visits, slide shows and listening to records)' (Bourdieu, cited in Grenfell, 2004, p. 90). These were typical of the terms in which Bourdieu ushered the concept of cultural capital into the French cultural policy debates of the 1960s. If the dynamics that bound the consumption of high culture to the reproduction of class relationships were to be, at the least, impeded, or, more optimistically, brought to an end, Bourdieu argued, the operation of the education system as a mechanism for the selective transmission of cultural capital along class lines needed to be

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significantly transformed. His argument, briefly stated, was that the forms of examination then prevailing in the French education system favoured those who had acquired a familiarity with the forms and practices of high culture in their homes: that is, bourgeois children. The education system did so by awarding high marks to those who could demonstrate an effortless aptitude for cultural appreciation in preference to those whose capacities to analyse cultural works were too evidently scholarly and acquired (various petit-bourgeois strata) or, in the cases of the working classes, more or less totally lacking owing to the subordination of their leisure pursuits to the 'culture of the necessary'. The result was an education system in which children from lower-middle-class and working-class backgrounds eliminated themselves from the ladder of educational achievement—and its relationship to that of occupational advancement—by accepting that they did not have the gifts, seemingly naturally acquired by others, needed to benefit from the education offered to them. Theoretically open to all, Jacques Rancièreargues in summarizing Bourdieu's position, the exclusion effected by the school and the university was based on a logic of dissimulation:

> This, then, is how the case could be summarised: school makes the children of the common people believe that it welcomes them and their others with equal opportunities, that success and failure depend on personal gifts independent of social condition. This dissimulation is simulated in the games of cultural charisma in which the teacher pretends to exercise his [sic] students in an aesthetic vision transcending the routine of school exercise. He thus obliges them to expatiate on "the *je ne sais quoi* and litotes of classical passion of infinite, infinitesimal nuances of good taste" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979, p. 22). In doing so, of course, he attributes the charisma of gifts to those for whom culture has an existence beyond the walls of the school: those who own it by birthright and who are able to bring to the perception of the *je ne sais quoi*, the ease that characterises their manners or their clothing. (Rancière, 2004, p. 173)

The extent to which Bourdieu's analysis accurately described either educational practices in France or bourgeois culture is a moot one. Rancière argues that the scene Bourdieu and Passeron invoke in the passage he cites above entirely ignores the real nature of schooling, fabricating a scene in which the ability to cite Racinian litotes is granted an importance it never had in either educational practice or bourgeois conversation. In place of the experience of the student for whom the school is a regime of regulated time, rewards and punishments, Rancièreargues, Bourdieu substitutes the fantasy of a scene in which the school operates as a place of *schole*, of leisure, in which the capacity to respond to the requirement to engage in a free and disinterested exercise of cultural *savoire faire* is rewarded. While not conceding this point, Loïc Wacquant, a strong supporter of Bourdieu, has acknowledged that the emphasis placed on arts and humanities disciplines in the French education system was not paralleled in other countries—in Britain and the USA, for example—just as their role, both in France and internationally, has declined considerably as the changing requirements of the economic field have placed greater stress on a training in scientific, business or management disciplines as the most reliable routes to economic advancement in an increasingly corporatized economy (Grenfell, 2004, pp. 70–71).

Yet although in these ways, and others, the particulars of Bourdieu's arguments have been questioned, the contention that cultural capital, understood as a particular stock of cultural competencies, is an important mechanism in the processes through which relationships of class inequality are organized and reproduced in contemporary societies has proved to be

enduringly influential in the theoretical literature. It is a contention, however, that has been considerably modified in the context of debates centred on, first, the different forms that cultural capital takes, and, second, on the need for its analysis to take into account how it operates in the context of relations of race and ethnicity, which Bourdieu paid little attention to, as well as the intersections of class and gender which, although never entirely neglected by Bourdieu, were never adequately theorized either.[2]

The concept of cultural capital has also had a rich and varied career in a range of different policy fields. Its influence in Britain was initially greatest in the sphere of education policy debates, particularly those of the 1970s focused on the equalization of educational opportunities through the introduction of comprehensive education. The theoretical underpinnings of the concept have continued to provide much of the conceptual architecture of the literatures focused on the effects of academic selection at secondary level and, at the tertiary level, on the need to offset the consequences of the unequal distribution of cultural capital by the obligations that are placed on universities to increase the proportions of their intakes of students recruited from disadvantaged backgrounds. The concept of cultural capital can also be heard as a steady background hum to the debates surrounding New Labour's current education 'reform' agenda. These show an evident concern that the establishment of schools as private trusts, the weakening of the hold of local authorities on schools, and the development of individualized admissions criteria and procedures across different schools will only increase the already evident capacity of the middle classes to use the education system as a means of transmitting cultural capital to the next generation by converting this into educational accomplishments that lead into professional and management careers for their children.

The extent to which the concept of cultural capital has influenced cultural policy debates and practice is less clear even in France. Certainly, Bourdieu's view that cultural policies should work hand in hand with education policies to equalize the ability to understand and enjoy the forms of artistic and cultural activity associated with legitimate high culture was already, at the time Bourdieu completed his fieldwork for *Distinction*, falling out of favour in France when, after the student protests of May 1968, André Malraux left the Ministry of Culture. Malraux's concerns, focused on equalizing access to legitimate high culture (a status that some forms of cinema were also precariously granted), had provided a policy environment with which Bourdieu's own concerns sat quite well. In the range of 'cultural development' and 'cultural animation' policies that characterized French cultural administration in the 1970s and 1980s, however, the focus shifted to 'build on the diversity of leisure practices pursued by the population, and to raise the "level" of these practices rather than abruptly replacing them with something else' (Ahearne, 2004, p. 32). While remaining an active and engaged contributor to French cultural policy debates, Bourdieu never reconciled himself to this change of emphasis, seeing it as a form of populism—and, indeed, at times characterizing it as a form of 'class racism' (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 76)—which merely confirmed the subordination of the working classes. Lending state support and benediction to popular cultural practices like rap, Bourdieu contended, merely confined the inner-city poor to their class destinies since it did not affect the ways in which the relations between

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[2] See Bourdieu (2001) for Bourdieu's most extended discussions of relations of gender and power. For accounts which acknowledge the respects in which Bourdieu's work has contributed to feminist social theory while also taking issue with significant aspects of his legacy, see Adkins and Skeggs (2004) and Silva (2005a).

legitimate high culture and the education system served to lock them out of the mechanisms through which middle-class educational and occupational success sustain each other. Bourdieu consequently remained somewhat at odds with the directions of French cultural policies (Loosely, 1995, 2004) and, from the 1990s, was an outspoken critic in his assessment of the consequences of neoliberalism. The stand he took echoed his position in the 1960s in continuing to define the state's responsibility as that of supporting high culture in ways that would aim to universalize the conditions of access to the universal value he took to be embodied in such works (Bennett, 2005; Bourdieu, 1998; Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995).

In other contexts, the concept of cultural capital, in entering into arts and cultural policy debates, has usually been modified in at least one of four ways. First, Bourdieu's own tendency to accept the validity of conventional hierarchies of the arts by attributing universal value and significance to those forms of cultural activity which comprise their apex (visiting art galleries, reading or listening to the classics, going to the theatre or to art cinema etc.) has not been strongly supported. Instead, informed by work which demonstrates the existence of multiple and complexly overlapping hierarchies of the arts, especially when considered in their relations to gender and ethnicity as well as to class, research has tended to focus more pragmatically on the relations between the education system and legitimate culture to determine empirically both the extent to which participation in legitimate culture still serves as a marker of social distinction, and also how far this can be attributed to the role played by such activities in the selection and assessment practices of the school and university systems. There is now, in the United States (US) and in Europe, a wealth of studies dealing with these questions, assessing, for example, the extent to which arts participation is currently less important as a sign of cultural capital (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004), and the significance of new forms of arts and humanities assessment in the education system (Bevers, 2005), as well as their relative significance in relation to other disciplines (especially scientific and business) in educational success and elite recruitment.

A second way in which the concept of cultural capital has been modified concerns the attention that has been given to its relations with race and ethnicity. This has taken two forms. One has focused on attempts to identify the respects in which ethnicity has effects that can be disentangled from those of social class to identify the specifically 'ethnic deficit' that characterizes the relations of different ethnic groups to the forms of cultural capital associated with legitimate high culture (DiMaggio & Ostrower, 1992; Trinekens, 2002; van Wel, Couwenbergh-Soeterbock, Couwenbergh, ter Bogt, & Raaijmakers, 2006). The second, more recent, addition to the literature has sought to identify the distinctive forms that cultural capital takes when considered, in the context of ethnically plural societies, as an asset that is articulated to some ethnicities at the expense of others within the organization of national cultural or symbolic space. Ghassan Hage's concept of national cultural capital—developed in consultation with Bourdieu—has proved particularly suggestive here in pointing to the respects in which majority ethnic groups derive specific advantages, in both the economic and the political fields, from their familiarity and 'at homeness' with a national cultural canon that operates across conventional high/low distinctions (Hage, 1998).

The third and fourth modifications of the concept of cultural capital in cultural policy debates retain the central insights of Bourdieu's account of cultural capital but dilute it by proposing a more diffused way of applying its insights. The third, and, in English-speaking debates, most influential modification has been that of the omnivore thesis associated with the American sociologist Richard Peterson and his co-authors, according to which cultural capital is

manifested less in terms of a familiarity with a restricted field of high culture than in the ability to 'graze' across a wide range of cultural activities, both high and low (Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). The key policy issue, viewed from this perspective, concerns less the distribution of cultural interests and competencies for engagement in 'legitimate' culture than the distribution of 'omnivorousness' as itself a kind of cultural competence, which, as Peterson and others argue, is now the main way in which cultural capital manifests itself as a mechanism of middle-class reproduction. Viewed in policy terms, this perspective entails a break with Bourdieu's concern to replace popular leisure pursuits with something else—the works of legitimate culture—in suggesting, instead, the need to make it more possible for the members of all classes to 'graze' more freely across both high and legitimate and more popular forms of cultural activity. This still places the relations between education and the cultural field at the centre of policy calculations, for, in the omnivore literature, the capacity for omnivorousness correlates with level of education just as strongly as, in Bourdieu's work, the capacity for deciphering Racinian litotes does. However, the logic of that connection is significantly changed, for it is no longer the role of education in providing the conditions of access to the universal that is in question, but that of its ability to endow all citizens with the cultural capacities to exercise informed choice across a range of cultural options.

In the fourth modification that concerns us here, Bernard Lahire (2003, 2004) takes issue with both Bourdieu and Peterson for exaggerating the degree to which an individual's tastes add up to a unified set whose logic is explicable in terms of that individual's class position, or some other aspect of her or his social position, that is interpreted as the unifying principle of their habitus. In Lahire's estimation, Peterson treats omnivorousness much as Bourdieu treats disinterestedness: as a distinctive aesthetic ethos or lifestyle that operates as a unifying principle for the tastes of social elites. In both cases, moreover, this aesthetic ethos is constructed in relation to another aesthetic ethos—or, more accurately, the lack of one that serves as the negative antithesis in relation to which its own distinctive properties are defined: the working-class taste for the necessary, in the case of Bourdieu, and, in the case of Peterson, the 'univores' whose tastes—in the theoretically pure limit case—are restricted to 'low' or popular forms. By contrast, Lahire proceeds from the perspective of a sociology of individuals which, instead of looking for a set of unified tastes that might be explained as the expression of a unified habitus rooted in a particular social position, is more concerned to identify contradictory elements in the tastes of individuals, whether these are expressed in terms of stated preferences or in terms of actual patterns of participation in cultural activities of different kinds. He thus argues and, based on 1997 French data, shows that the bundles of tastes exhibited by individuals are more likely to be 'dissonant' than 'consonant', and to be so in many different ways, corresponding to the pluriform processes through which individuals are formed and shaped in the context of the often-conflicted nature of their social trajectories. This offers a more complex picture in which the taste profiles of individuals cannot be fitted into a spectrum organized as a series of points between the bipolar extremes of 'omnivorousness' and 'univorousness' (Silva, in press). And it suggests that, from a policy perspective, the important issues concern the different kinds of taste profiles that are present in the population, how these are related to different social positions, the grounds for determining the balance of such taste profiles within the population that might be desirable, and the policies and policy instruments through which the ratio of taste profiles and their social distribution might be altered.

These, then, are the main critical engagements with Bourdieu's account of cultural capital, and its role in processes of class formation, which have informed the ESRC *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* (CCSE) project. We look next at how the concept of cultural capital has entered into the concerns of British cultural policies and the difficulties that are occasioned by its conjunction with policy agendas defined in terms of the notion of social exclusion.

Part 2: Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion: The Policy Context

Our work in developing an application to the ESRC for funding to support this inquiry began shortly after the concept of cultural capital first began to enter into the official lexicon of British cultural policy concerns in the context of the Department for Culture,Media and Sport (DCMS)'s report on art and sport to the Social Exclusion Unit set up by the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott (DCMS, 1999). This is not to say that concerns with questions of culture and equity had not been posed in Britain before this time. They certainly had, most notably by the different post-war Labour governments, but in terms that did not rest on the conceptual underpinnings of cultural capital theory. In the Attlee andWilson governments, the social justice principles of the welfare state provided the theoretical rationale for state intervention calculated to promote more equitable patterns of cultural participation, albeit that this was often at odds with the aspirations of the modernist intellectual cadres who led the new arts bureaucracies of these periods with, as a consequence, significant differences of policy emphasis between, for example, the Arts Council and the more popularly rooted London City Council (Taylor, 1999, pp. 204–214). In the mid 1970s, however, some of the concerns of cultural capital theory did leach across from the education sphere into cultural policy debates, particularly those centred on the Greater London Council, leaving trails through into the 1980s in the proposals of leftleaning think tanks and cultural consultancy organizations like COMEDIA. Paul Willis's *Common Culture* (Willis, 1990) offers a good example of the intellectual syntheses developed during this period by grafting his earlier interest (Willis, 1977) in Bourdieu's account of the role of cultural capital in the relations between schooling and the labour market onto access and equity cultural policy formulations that owed more to Raymond Williams's social democratic conception of equal rights to a common culture than they did to Bourdieu's more abstract universalism.

So far as national policy agendas are concerned, however, the succession of Conservative administrations following Margaret Thatcher's election to office in the late 1970s did not accord questions of cultural access and equity any significant priority. The election of New Labour changed this, with an early flurry of initiatives designed to put a clearer social agenda back into arts, cultural and media policies. If this provided a national policy context within which the concerns of cultural capital theory could again find some purchase and relevance, that agenda was articulated in terms that were markedly different from the social democratic and welfarist conceptions of 'Old Labour'. This was most evident in the role played by the new vocabulary of 'social exclusion' in defining the terms in which arts, cultural and media policies were stated (Jeremyn, 2001, 2004). Critically examining the shift of policy emphasis and orientation that this entailed was one of the goals that we set ourselves in stating the aims of our research inquiry. We noted, in framing our application, two limitations of the links between the agendas of cultural policy and those of social exclusion as these were emerging in the early 2000s. It is worth quoting these in full:

First, there are no existing UK data sets which give an adequate cross-sectoral and national statistical picture of existing patterns of cultural knowledge, tastes, and activities of the population that correlate these with the standard social science variables of class, income, occupation, gender, ethnicity, age, etc. This results in difficulties in setting meaningful policy targets and a lack of clarity regarding the key variables that should be attended to in developing social inclusion policies in the cultural and media sectors.

Second, the language of social inclusion can—if not used carefully—obscure significant policy issues. The literature thus points to its capacity (i) to confuse questions concerning moral integration and social order with redistributive questions; (ii) to imply that the excluded are in some way responsible for their exclusion; and (iii) to elide the significance of the distinction between cultural entitlements based on principles of social justice and those related to the new civic agendas of cultural diversity. (Bennett, Savage, Silva, & Warde 2001)

The situation with regard to the first of these matters has changed somewhat over the intervening period, with a number of studies—by Arts Council England (Bridgwood et al., 2003; Skelton et al., 2002) and the British Film Institute (2000), for example— designed to explore the role played by ethnicity in the take up and use of cultural resources and opportunities. The provisions currently in hand for the DCMS's Omnibus Participation Survey will also make possible a more regular and systematic assessment of the effects of policy initiatives focused on the promotion of more socially widespread participation in the arts, cultural and media sectors than has hitherto been possible. Nonetheless, our study, in examining the distribution of cultural tastes, knowledge and participation simultaneously across the media (film and television), music, the visual arts, literature and reading, sports and other aspects of 'body culture', allows us to comment on tendencies within and across these different cultural sectors in ways that have not previously been possible in the UK.

With regard to the language of social exclusion, our initial hesitancy about its consequences for both analytical and policy purposes has increased considerably during the course of our research.[3] There are three main reasons for this. First, the ways in which the concept now functions in British cultural policy debates by and large confirm critical assessments of its effects by Ruth Levitas (1998, 2004) and others (Fairclough, 2000) regarding the respects in which it converts questions concerning inequalities in access to cultural resources and opportunities into ones concerning the social and moral integration of a range of deprived or marginalized constituencies into 'the mainstream'. This entails a displacement of earlier equity and access principles, based on social democratic notions of cultural entitlement, by concerns focused on the use of art and culture as a means of addressing social problems through what are variously construed as the ameliorative or integrative consequences that flow from involvement in art or culture more generally. The focus of the DCMS's *PAT10* report (DCMS, 1999) was, for instance, on the ways in which participation in the arts and sport could help to renew blighted and excluded communities by improving their

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[3] The research team was greatly assisted in this by the contributions to a workshop we organized to explore the relations between the concepts and literatures focused on the concepts of cultural capital and social exclusion. The papers presented at this workshop are collected in special issues of Cultural Trends (2000, 13(2)), and the British Journal of Sociology (2005, 56(1)), both edited by Tony Bennett and Mike Savage.

performance in relation to health, crime, education and employment. Most of the arts and cultural programmes organized in terms of the agendas of social exclusion have followed this logic, generating a concern with assessing their effectiveness in delivering outcomes ranging from neighbourhood renewal through arts participation to programmes oriented to the rehabilitation of prisoners or the inclusion of those identified as suffering from mental health difficulties (Belfiore, 2002; Cowling, 2004).

While these programmes might be valid in their own right, they are part of a conceptual-policy terrain to which that of cultural capital theory can be yoked only by means of a systematic inattention to the concerns and properties of both.[4] This includes, to come to our second reason, the sharply contrasting understandings of art and culture with which they operate. From the point of view of cultural capital theory, in all of its different forms, equalizing access to cultural resources and opportunities—whether just to those of the restricted field of high culture, or to a more pluralized range of cultural activities—counts as a public good in the context of democratic conceptions of citizenship rights. This is, however, a good that can only be secured by disconnecting such resources from the mechanisms through which, in the relations between the education system and the labour market, they operate as quasi private goods through the differential advantages they secure for some at the expense of others. Where art and culture are enlisted as a means of overcoming social exclusion, a quite different policy and civic calculus is in play, one which depends on assessing the benefits to society from making art available to citizens as a means of acting on the social to secure certain outcomes: neighbourhood renewal, reduced crime etc. As Michael McKinnie (2004) has noted, this involves a 'sentimental economy' for the arts which revives 18th-century conceptions of art as a vehicle for the promotion of social sympathy—part of a virtuous circle in which supporting the diffusion of art across classes serves both as an expression of social sympathy and as a means of securing the spread of sympathetic social relations through the social exchanges that it makes possible.

Third, and finally, where the socially excluded are defined in socio-economic terms they are typically construed as an underclass suffering from multiple deprivations: poor housing, high rates of unemployment or of unskilled work, high rates of crime, poor education facilities and poor health. It would take too long a detour to discuss how these conditions are converted into problems of character in the moral economies of New Labour (see, however, Clarke & Newman, 2004). Suffice it to note that this is in part made possible by detaching those who are defined as excluded in these ways from 'the mainstream' so that the conditions of poverty afflicting them can be represented as different in kind from the inequalities that are generated within the mainstream via the regular operation of labour markets. This is not where culturalcapital theory either starts from or ends up. As merely one aspect of a broader set of concerns focused on the ways in which different capitals—economic and social as well as cultural—interact to produce inequalities that are the result of the complex relations between them, the position of so-called 'underclasses' or the socially excluded has to be considered in relation to the more general forms of social stratification produced by the unequal distribution of these different capitals or assets (Savage, Warde, & Devine, 2005).

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[4] There are, however, a number of sophisticated attempts to do so, including the very detailed and thorough discussion by Jeanotte (2003) which, however, illustrates the difficulties rather than resolving them by trying to negotiate Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital onto the conceptual terrain of Putnam's concern with social capital as a resource for civic and social cohesion—an endeavour quite contrary to both the analytical and political orientations of Bourdieu's concerns.

And this, certainly, is one of the main implications of our findings. This is not to deny that cultural capital is most thinly distributed among specific sections of the population: most notably, those in unskilled or semi-skilled occupations, and those with no educational qualifications. But it is also equally clear that this does not occlude the significance of the differential distribution of cultural capital between other occupational classes or between those with different levels of educational accomplishment. To the contrary, as the articles in this issue show, differences between the cultural tastes and interests of higher-level managers on the one hand, and higher level professionals on the other, are equally important to an understanding of the part played by cultural capital in processes of social differentiation. Distinctions between those with university qualifications and those with vocational tertiary qualifications are equally consequential. And it is only when the position of those who most lack cultural capital is considered in relation to the more extended and often fine-grained divisions that are evident when its operation is considered across the full range of occupational class positions, levels of education, age, gender, and ethnicity that the implications of cultural capital theory for cultural policies can be adequately explored.

To pursue this line of reasoning more fully, however, we need first to describe the research conducted for the Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion inquiry and to summarize the main findings discussed in the articles that follow. It is to this task that we turn in the next section.

Part 3: The Study: Methods, Procedures and Analytical Processes

The *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* project was funded by the ESRC from March 2003 to March 2006. It critically engages with the notion of cultural capital on the basis of the four main ways in which it has been deployed, which we outlined above, aiming to assess how far the concept of cultural capital contributes to an understanding of the mechanisms of social exclusion in contemporary Britain. The project explores three main questions: (1) the composition of cultural capital and its role in the reproduction of class relationships; (2) the relative importance of cultural capital compared with economic and social capital in accounting for class differences; and (3) how far a cultural capital approach provides an adequate conceptual basis for cultural policies concerned to reduce social exclusion. In the three-year period, to address these questions, four stages of empirical investigation were carried out, enabling an interaction of multiple methods to be deployed.

We began with a nationwide programme of 25 focus group discussions conducted between March and July 2003 with groups recruited from a diversity of social backgrounds. The focus groups comprised between two and eight participants per group, involving a total of 143 participants, including 74 women and 69 men. Their composition was varied so as to achieve both middle-class and working-class groups within the African-Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and white sections of the population, as well as different groups of specific occupational statuses—professionals (male and female), managers, landowners and farm managers, agricultural workers, skilled and unskilled workers, and the unemployed, for example. Class groups were also differentiated in terms of age, with specific regard to both the young and the elderly, and separate groups were organized for gays and lesbians. The group discussions were conducted in six areas in the UK in order to take account of regional and national differences as well as differences between urban and rural areas and those between metropolitan and provincial cities. The groups were recruited and moderated by trained

academics.[5] Group formation involved a variety of processes of access negotiation, via community groups, businesses and professional organizations, and drew on established personal and professional networks.

Particular topics relating to cultural knowledge, taste and participation in cultural activities were put together for groups to discuss, ranging from leisure activities in and about the home, to views about good or bad taste and perceptions of barriers to broader cultural participation. A set of key themes was created for discussion by specific groups to explore engagements with domestic media, music, cinema, theatre, reading, museum, art galleries, art festivals, sports and preferred styles of domestic entertainment. Each group was allocated two of the themes for concentrated attention during the typical two-hour discussion. Moderators were encouraged to adopt a psychodynamic rather than a prescriptive approach to leading participants in their discussion in order to avoid the imposition of particular hierarchies of value, to allow for open discussion and to permit the legitimating of cultural activities in their broadest possible definition. This openness and sensitivity to questions of value created tensions within the conversations about inclusion and exclusion which have proved very significant for some of our understanding of questions of distinction and patterns of social exclusion (see Silva & Wright, 2005). Some of these tensions were also present in the qualitative interviews that we carried out with household members and with elite representatives, in the third and fourth stages of the inquiry respectively.

The analysis of the focus group material involved a number of procedures. Moderators produced a report about each group outlining the group composition (with reference to some socio-demographic data), recruitment process and the dynamics of the discussion, including reflection about their own roles, and those of particular participants in the discussion. Audio-tape recordings of discussions were transcribed and analysed, employing the computer software Nudi*ist. The transcribed material was indexed according to occupational classification, themes of discussion, and also to indicate specific aspects of the design of the questionnaire, such as preferred authors, artists or film directors. The core research team produced brief analyses of each group discussion, with a reference to the main concerns of the project: social distinctions, exclusion and cultural hierarchies. Discussions in the media (happening during one selected week while the survey was being carried out) about particular topics of reference—films, books, art exhibitions, music concerts and sports—were compiled from key magazines and newspapers to inform and compare with some of the contents of the focus group discussions, as well as with some of the information gathered in the survey.

Our knowledge of the forms of cultural engagement gathered from the focus groups informed the design of our survey questionnaire applied to a nationwide (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) representative sample of adults (aged 18þ) resident in Britain. This was administered between November 2003 and March 2004. The cross-sectional sample was a stratified, clustered random sample drawn from the Postcode Address File.[6] A total of 1,781 respondents were recruited, made up of a main sample of 1,564, supplemented by an ethnic

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[5] Focus groups were held in London (8), Birmingham (2), rural Scotland (3), Belfast, in Northern Ireland (2), Swansea, in Wales (3), and Nottingham (7). They were moderated by Karen Wells, Surinder Guru, Chris Archer, Ruth Jackson, Stephanie Adams and David Wright, respectively.

[6] The survey was conducted by the National Centre for Social Research. See Thomson (2004) for the technical report.

boost sample of 227 drawn, in roughly equal proportions, from Britain's three main minority ethnic groups: the Indian, Pakistani and Afro-Caribbean communities. Interviews lasted an average of 60 minutes.[7] In total, 181 interviewers were employed, all briefed by members of the research team in conjunction with staff from the agency leading the survey fieldwork. The questions we asked in this survey—grouped under 29 different headings of a 72-page document—were designed to explore the relations between the respondents' cultural tastes, the cultural activities they participated in, and their knowledge of selected cultural items on the one hand and, on the other, varied aspects of their social background: gender, occupation, class position and identifications, ethnicity, income, educational background etc.

Editing, coding and weighting of the data preceded various statistical analyses. We used the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for basic analysis and also Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA). Data entry was coded directly in the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) system employed, as part of the interview process done with a laptop. SPSS, being a particularly efficient method for analyses of multiple-choice questions, together with some logistic regression has informed the basic analysis of the statistical material derived from the survey, which is used in the articles in this special issue, soon to be detailed. MCA, a method extensively used by Bourdieu in Distinction, is derived from the French mathematician Benzecri, and it seeks to portray social position in social space by means of a series of co-ordinates in Euclidian space, formed by two major axes. A position is thus placed within a 'field'. The use of correspondence analysis for our CCSE survey identities a list of variables for each field of music, reading, visual art, eating out, sport, television and film. These are positioned in a fixed physical space, from which clusters emerge to indicate particular differentiated lifestyles. These also incorporate demographic variables allowing for an interpretation of social position that relates to participation and taste regarding cultural consumption. MCA is used in the penultimate article of this special issue. Logistic regressions are used to determine whether specific measurements are related to the presense of particular characteristics – for example, whether certain occupational group or educational level measures are predictive of having a taste for a particular musical genre.

The evidence we acquired from the survey was complemented by a follow-up investigation of 44 household interviews and participant observations carried out between September 2004 and March 2005, held with a selection of 28 respondents from the survey, two from the focus groups and, where relevant, their partners. This resulted in a group of 14 partnered interviewees. The selection of households was based on a theoretical sample which aimed to take account of the distribution of households in terms of (i) cultural capital composition, (ii) the presence or absence of dependent children, (iii) geographical location, (iv) a division between 'white' and minority ethnic composition and (v) types of households. In the selection of different regions we were concerned to include the four UK countries sampled in the survey—England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—as well as to tap into some of the diversity within England.[8] The interview schedule developed for the study turned out to be more structured than envisaged at first. This is because following the survey we realized the importance of exploring particular forms of engagement with the cultural field which

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[7] The research team's analysis of the data to date, however, has focused primarily on the main sample. Analyses of the ethnic boost sample are therefore not included in the articles collected in this issue.

[8] Interviews were conducted by David Wright, Stephanie Adams, Chris Archer, Ruth Jackson, Pippa Stevens, Mike Savage, Elizabeth Silva, Tony Bennett and Alan Warde.

needed to refer to the survey questionnaire in a direct manner for a qualitative exploration of the issues. We explored seven main themes: (1) housing; (2) kind of job/work; (3) cultural capital and leisure activities: television, films, books, music, eating out, sport or physical exercise, personal style of dress and attitude statements; (4) involvement in household activities; (5) ideals of style and appearance and desire for social position; (6) visual exploration of taste; and (7) engagement with a potentially embarrassing situation. Two interview schedule template were employed because while we possessed an SPSS profile of survey respondents, their partners were unknown to us.[9] Apart from the interviews, household observation and participation notes were made by interviewers. These aimed to provide a record of features of the location of the house, housing characteristics, garden, decoration details, collections, furniture, dress and comportment of the respondents, as well as rapport with the interviewer.

The fourth and final stage of our empirical investigation consisted of 'elite interviews'. In view of the significance of elite cultural interests and tastes from the point of view of the project's theoretical concerns, and given the notorious difficulty of recruiting elites via general sampling methods, we used a range of personal and institutional connections to interview, between April and July 2005, 11 people who had attained positions of particular prominence in business, politics or other professions. A template based on the household partner interview was used and observation and participation notes were written.[10]

The analysis of the interviews, both of those done with survey respondents and their partners and those done with elite members, has followed similar procedures. All interviews were tape recorded, debriefed, anonymized, transcribed and coded for use with N-vivo software, for implementation of thematic analyses.

Part 4: Introducing the Findings: The Papers in this Issue

The papers included in this special issue are mostly centred on the analysis of the survey material. Some use is made of focus group discussions and household interviews, but in an illustrative manner. The elite interviews had not been analysed at the time of putting this issue together and so are not considered here. Some of the discussion is based on statistical procedures that we consider still not definitive. Different tests and statistical methods are employed in the papers, chosen, in each case, because of their relevance to the data gathered and the aims of exploring significant relationships between variables within each field. A brief summary of the findings of the papers shows how the dynamics of specific fields relate to cultural policy issues in the context of the relations between culture and social inequality in contemporary Britain. Each field helps to classify people, because people are included or excluded from the social spaces of fields, because they are positioned in the field in different ways, and or because they are positioned in relation to other people and other spaces in particular ways. The papers in this issue consider three aspects of fields: (1) as areas of cultural interest clustered around a specific set of practices like sport, literature, visual art, music, leisure and the media; (2) as spaces of lifestyle where tastes across fields are patterned in particular ways; and (3) as a canvas enabling the identification of consonant and dissonant

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[9] See Silva (2005b) for the technical report.

[10] Interviews were carried out by Tony Bennett, Mike Savage, Elizabeth Silva and Alan Warde.

cultural practices as individuals are mapped in and out of specific activities and spaces of lifestyles.

The concept of field is significant in Bourdieu's work. He developed the concept in relation to the exploration of social microcosms which relate to, and reflect the dynamics of, the wider socio-cultural contexts in which they are embedded. Work on the theory of fields has been extensive (for an excellent review see Martin, 2003), and Bourdieu himself interpreted the concept differently at different times, seeing it as a structured 'system' or a space of positions' that may conform to local principles, in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), or as a 'cosmos' where general principles of rationality prevail, as in the 'economic field', in *The Social Structures of the Economy* (Bourdieu, 2005). The concept has been diversely applied to ritual practices, economic behaviours, education, art and literature, and to producers, products and consumers, and these practices, agents and objects have been investigated in relation to concerns about social interests, social trajectories and habitus.

As we report our findings in this issue, we define our own approach to fields within the sociology of cultural consumption. Fields signify the articulation of practices of consumption of items belonging to a particular area of culture, with which individuals engage in different ways. While this is a somewhat narrow approach which suggests a correspondence between the type of item—and its position in the social hierarchy— and the hierarchy of consumers, we attend to ethnic and gender differentiations of consumers and to their being in a pluralized world. Thus Bourdieu's implied homology between social position and taste is destabilized as we engage in our exploration of the various fields with debates about the omnivore thesis, ideas of dissonance, and the roles of ethnicity and gender in cultural capital theory.

A consideration of the field of sport allows an exploration of the role of embodied capital in contemporary British culture. Together with 'institutionalized' and 'objectified' capitals, embodied capital is one of the three types of cultural capital distinguished by Bourdieu. Alan Warde shows how the current culture of the body, explored as routine and organized physical activities as well as sport, is part of cultural life and how these activities relate to the accumulation and display of cultural capital. He finds that sport is not as strongly marked by class as Bourdieu suggested in *Distinction* (Bordieu, 1984), although he acknowledges that it might have been so in 1960s' France. However, the CCSE data show that the most privileged people in terms of occupational class and levels of education have a stronger preference for rare sports and also that men of higher occupational class place particular emphasis on the social aspects of sporting participation. Higher class position correlates strongly with higher frequency of engagement in sport or physical activity.

Warde finds that gender is highly important. Women participate extensively in sport, but in a narrower set of activities, and appear to exercise mostly for fitness and relaxation, which are purposes different from those of men. Women participate less in sport than men, but practice bodily maintenance much more. These differences seem to be linked to distinct versions of masculinity and femininity which, in the contemporary context, include a concern for diet and body management practices as ways of attributing value to self and to others. These sorts of value can be cashed in as 'capital' and thus can affect social position. Those who exercise most do so for fitness, are mostly in 'middle-class' occupational categories, are women and graduates, and feel guilt and regret at not participating more. In general, people do exercise or play sport regularly. They are also knowledgeable about the health implications of exercise and sport participation. They just do not do it. Thus the body remains a tool of social

classification because distinctions between bodies and bodily practices map onto hierarchical social positions. Is this paralleled in other fields?

In his exploration of the literary field David Wright has three chief concerns: (1) How are tastes for reading embedded in processes of distinction and reproduction of hierarchies of class and gender? (2) How is reading, as a cultural practice, located in contemporary British culture? (3) What is the meaning of owning books, or of tastes for particular literary genres and writers?

Wright's analysis distinguishes between book culture, which is a minority practice, and a more dominant reading practice connected to magazines and newspapers. He finds that class is important for participation in book culture, where hierarchies of literary value matter, and that it is linked to book ownership. It is notable, too, that minority ethnic groups are less engaged with such 'English' texts as *Pride and Prejudice* and *Harry Potter*. However, we hesitate to draw any firm conclusions from this. While findings of this kind are apparently relevant to concerns with the role of culture in promoting social cohesion, with a shared culture providing access to shared conversations and communities, the CCSE data suggest that books do not seem to be particularly important for this. Newspaper reading has a stronger role in creating critical engagement in the literary field. Our data have more to say about how cultural policies could avoid reinforcing social hierarchies of value linked to reading practices. Here, once again, the ideas of equalization of resources need to be probed for the different outcomes they may generate. If tastes for reading prestigious genres map onto relatively privileged socio-economic groups, so do taste, knowledge and participation in the field of visual art. Elizabeth Silva is concerned with the exploration of three main issues regarding the field of visual art: (1) How does appreciation for different sorts of paintings reflect class position? (2) What are the links between social position and appreciation of styles and particular painters? (3) How segmented is the taste of different groups of the British population?

Silva reports four significant findings. First, a widespread engagement with visual arts in terms of ownership of paintings, originals and reproductions is found among the British population. Second, particular marks of social divisions are found. While ownership of visual art is significant, higher levels of possession correlate with higher occupational groups. A gender dimension is also found, in which women appear more engaged with visual arts consumption. However, greater 'dis-engagement' is found among those with lower cultural and economic capital. Third, the favourite type of art found among CCSE respondents is landscape painting, which may be a choice connected with a particular sort of lifestyle typical of the contemporary urban environment. Fourth, preferences for particular named artists appear to differentiate taste more than preference for type of art. The strong social differentiation of tastes and practices that is evident in this field indicates a need to increase involvement by minority ethnic groups, and by those who in general lack economic and cultural capital. However, how far types of arts are reliable indicators of taste may be questioned, chiefly because of the problems of classification of types. For instance, should Van Gogh's *Starry Night* be classified as impressionism or landscape, or should some of Rothko's canvases be classified as landscapes, abstract or modern art? As in the case of the literary field, specific issues of this field require further exploration in order to devise relevant cultural policies.

Just as looking at visual material is a nearly universal practice, so is listening to music. Engagement with music is a most popular cultural activity and it has a central role in defining 'elite' and 'popular' culture. Mike Savage is concerned with how distinctive the 'communities' of musical taste are and how they are 'classified'. The exploration of this field produced three significant findings. First, and somewhat surprisingly, classical music is the most liked genre, while genres that are usually classified as 'popular'—like urban, world, jazz and electronic—are found by comparison to be liked less. Second, the major taste divide is age. Ethnicity and gender are also important dividers of taste groups. Those with higher education and occupational class express a taste for a larger number of genres. Third, genre of music is a less discerning classifier of taste than the more detailed exploration of preferences for particular musical works. Talking about musical genre encourages stereotyping, whereas talking about particular works of music leads to less polarization.

As the literary field and the fields of visual arts and music present particular engagements mapping onto clear social divisions, so do the engagements of our respondents with leisure activities. Modesto Gayo-Cal analyses participation and taste in a wide range of leisure pursuits. He examines the patterns of participation and the reasons for non-participation, the extent to which clear boundaries exist between different leisure practices, and the different social bases of diverse types of leisure. He finds strong links between levels of cultural capital and the leisure activities of respondents. But socio-demographic factors like ethnicity, gender, household type and, very strongly, age, affect leisure participation. A multi-dimensional approach is needed to deal with this field because while legitimate practices appear homologous with higher educational and occupational positions, distinctions are also found between the young and the old, and the white-English and the non-white, for example. This multi-dimensionality is also relevant for the media field.

Tony Bennett analyses the media field, in particular television.[11] Has television viewing made society less differentiated? How are the organization and marking of social distinctions played out in relation to television viewing for different social groups? Bennett's findings indicate that choices of genre, programme and channel are closely interconnected and are affected by social and economic positions. However, privatized consumption in the home makes such divisions less marked. Broadcasting is a space of 'more or less open access', where some genres, programmes and channels are differentiated in terms of education, age, gender and occupational class, with the 'low' genres most distinctly marked by class. Age is a very important factor of differentiation, followed by gender and then occupational class together with education.

The papers in each of the fields of sport, literature and reading, visual art, music, leisure and the media show specific ways in which taste, participation and knowledge connect with social divisions. These fields are analysed together, on the basis of multiple correspondence analysis, in the paper by Modesto Gayo-Cal, Mike Savage and Alan Warde. Preferences are mapped onto a 'field of lifestyles' showing patterns of tastes and engagements with cultural items in each field, for groups of the population, linked to socio-demographic variables, as discussed in the previous papers. It is found that social position is clearly mapped onto different quadrants of the cultural map, giving an understanding of the social structure of the

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[11] For a more detailed analysis of the media field, taking detailed account of the sections of our survey relating to film as well as television, and including analysis of the ethnic boost sample, see Bennett et al. (2006).

space of lifestyles. Dislikes and age are important characteristics in this mapping. There is affinity between tastes (likes and dislikes) across fields, confirming trends found by Bourdieu (1984) in *Distinction*, but taste and participation cluster differently, indicating the significance of new patterns of division and the salience of age in contemporary cultural engagements.

This informs some of the trends pointing to greater tolerance for a variety of cultural items and signals some degree of omnivorousness among the most engaged groups. The signs of cultural differentiation found through the multiple correspondence analyses suggest that cultural consumption is strongly related to social institutions and social connections. The finding that significant sections of the population are little engaged in the cultural items we investigated raises concern over issues of social inequality. Because significant divisions are noted among all spaces of lifestyles, including those respondents occupying 'mainstream' positions, the application of labels of 'marginal' or 'social excluded' to the groups least engaged does not appear an adequate conceptual basis for the development of cultural policies. These divisions need to be properly situated within debates on cultural entitlements: distinctions between tastes and interests within groups that are differently positioned in the social structure are highly consequential in processes of social differentiation derived from cultural capital, and are as significant as the divisions between groups. We note the need to consider how cultural capital relates to other forms of capital, chiefly the economic and social, to productively inform cultural policy debates.

Tony Bennett takes this discussion further in the postscript, returning to our doubts earlier in this paper as to whether the vocabulary of social exclusion provides an adequate means of engaging with these particular forms of inequality. As the CCSE analyses in this issue show, such exclusions are not an exception to rules that operate in varied ways within 'the mainstream'. They are particular, and in certain cases extreme, manifestations of the ways in which cultural and economic capital—notably educational qualification and occupational class—work to produce cultural inequalities that operate also within those groups classified as mainstream. By drawing on Lahire's work, Bennett suggests ways in which looking at the balance of individuals' tastes across different fields might suggest ways of refining the policy calculus so far as policies focused on the relations between economic and cultural capital and social inequality are concerned.

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