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# 30 Years after "Distinction"

November 4, 5 and 6, 2010

INHA – Galerie Colbert, 2 rue Vivienne, 75001 Paris – France

Organized by the *Observatory of Social Change* (Sciences Po/CNRS), the *European Centre for Sociology and Political Science* (Paris-1-EHESS-CNRS), the *Center for European Studies* (Sciences-Po) and the *Laboratory of Quantitative Sociology* (CREST/Insee), with the support of the Ministry of Culture and the *POLINE* research network

## **Call for Papers**

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Published in French in 1979 and translated into English in 1984, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* remains one of Pierre Bourdieu's most widely read and commented upon works, both in France and abroad, in addition to being one of the most frequently quoted reference works in all of social sciences. While strongly anchored in the Sociology of culture, the book has made contributions to fields and subjects well beyond those by which it is normally referenced: cultural practices and attitudes, aesthetic tastes and dispositions. By pointing out the importance of the symbolic and cultural dimensions of the social order, processes of domination and exclusion, *Distinction* first and foremost contributed to a profound renewal of the sociology of social stratification and class relations, by examining the multidimensionality of a social space structured by hierarchical levels of economic, social and cultural capital. The role assigned to cultural resources in the structuration of class relations in contemporary societies, from the perspective of both the upper classes and working classes, as well as from the point of view of the internal differentiation between different segments of the upper classes, has particularly held the attention of readers and commentators of *Distinction*. This, along with the hypothesis of structural homology and the argument of cultural legitimacy, is one of the most familiar elements of Pierre Bourdieu's work.

The conference "30 Years after *Distinction*" proposes to examine the current relevancy of a book that continues like no other to foment contemporary social science research on topics as diverse as food practices, political attitudes, housing conditions, forms of residential and geographic mobility, attitudes in the areas of mores and the family, educational styles, cultural practices, etc. The cultural questions, which have undoubtedly retained more than other topics the attention of present-day readers of *Distinction*, will obviously be particularly focused on during the conference. That being said, this thematic orientation is far from exclusive.

The organizers of this conference also intend to open the debate to the main controversies stemming from the book since its publication. To what extent did Bourdieu's arguments, formed based on data collected mainly in France in the 1960s and 1970s, make it possible to shed light on the reality of other historical and national contexts? To what extent did the *Distinction* model make it possible to account for the metamorphoses of cultural legitimacy, notably through the alleged substitution of the "omnivore/univore" divide, based on Richard Peterson's hypothesis, with the high-brow/low-brow (erudite/popular) divide? To what extent does the concept of structural homology make it possible to account for the sociography of lifestyles, political orientation, ethical and aesthetic dispositions, attitudes surrounding family and marital mores, social relationships between genders, etc.? Any and all empirical contributions to these questions, regardless of their topics or methods, are strongly encouraged.

The relevancy of *Distinction's* scientific project also raises a series of theoretical and methodological questions that will also be addressed at the conference. The questions of defining, measuring and operationalizing *Distinction's* key concepts (notably, habitus, field, cultural capital), which permeate all of Bourdieu's works also deserve to be addressed. Similarly, the structure of various types of empirical materials (texts, statistics, iconographic documents, archives), tools and heterogeneous analysis techniques (interviews, observations, data analysis), the style of displaying data and results, and even the book's stylistic refinements, are all points that could be revisited at the conference. Special emphasis will be placed on the connections that unite the methodological choices made in *Distinction* and the theoretical directions developed therein. In this regard, the use of "French" data analysis methods (correspondence analysis and multiple correspondence analysis), which *Distinction* greatly helped to popularize in the social sciences research world, seems indissociable from the "relational" analysis of the social world to which the concept of "field" refers. This aspect particularly deserves to be investigated in an international conference setting, as the book's reception abroad sometimes seems obscured by a tendency to confine its reading to a more "causalistic" reading. In this regard, *Distinction* underlines that the choice of methods cannot be neutral. From this perspective, the conference may make it possible to effectively make progress in updating the contradictions as well as the complementarities that may exist between the methods—regression analysis on the one hand and geometric analysis of data on the other—the choice of which involves different, if not diverging, ideas of the social world and sociology's scientific program.

The conference will take place on November 4, 5 and 6, 2010 at Sciences Po. Any and all contributions, especially those examining the following (**non-exhaustive**) themes, are welcome:

- Cultural legitimacy and its metamorphoses (erudite vs. popular, omnivore vs. univore, etc.)
- The sociocultural consequences of the educational expansion
- Voting and political attitudes (to what extent can the hypothesis of structural homology explain voting?)
- Cultural capital: definitions, measurements, operationalization
- Gender and cohorts
- Consumption and lifestyles (food consumption, capital goods, clothing, interior decoration, budget analyses, cars, etc.)
- Social mobility and lifestyles
- Social uses of time (leisure time, hobbies, travel, tourism)
- Social uses of information technology and communication
- Social classes and globalization
- Housing and the social stratification of residential space
- Data analysis and the language of variables
- Values
- Health
- Family

The selection committee will pay special attention to papers supported by empirical data, be it qualitative or quantitative, as well as those that examine the impact of the hypotheses developed in *Distinction*. However, selection will not be limited to those papers with empirical data. Contributions that are mainly theoretical in nature may be taken into consideration, depending on their quality and originality. The papers may be written in French or English. However, given the international nature of the event, submitting papers written in English is strongly encouraged. If the paper is in French, presenters will be required to provide a visual aid in English (e.g. a PowerPoint presentation) that will allow non-French speakers to participate in the debates.

The selection committee will select papers based on their abstracts (800 words maximum), including the paper's subject, methodology, empirical materials used (if necessary), hypotheses and primary results.

Abstracts must be submitted through the website of the conference before **April 30, 2010** (see "Conference Information" and "Proposal Submission"):

<http://balzac.sciences-po.fr/OCS/index.php/distinction/>

Any question or request must be emailed to:

[conf.distinction@gmail.com](mailto:conf.distinction@gmail.com)

Decisions of acceptance or rejection of the papers will be transmitted to the authors no later than July 1, 2010.

Further information on registration, accommodation and conference program will soon be added on the website.