

NEWCASTLE YOUTH STUDIES CENTRE

Bourdieu in a Digitalised and Financialised World

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Opportunities and Inequalities
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Abstract

Bourdieuian sociology has analysed the importance of cultural production and consumption practices in everyday life and its relations and resistances to the functions of late capitalism. But what if cultural practices and tastes are now embedded in digital social inequalities that extend beyond how cultural capital can theorise symbolic hierarchies? Datafication and financialisation have changed the world a great deal since Bourdieu's death in 2002. Rentier capitalism and the asset economy have further entrenched the economic capital aspects of class domination. Cultural capitals still lubricate successful education transitions, but these need to be buttressed even more today by financial support for gap years and internships and social capital to access the right networks. The culture and creative industries are particularly exclusionary with obvious ramifications for who gets to make the world in their own image via art, media, design, and popular culture. This presentation will draw upon recent research to speculate what the digitalisation and financialisation of everyday life means for Bourdieusian inspired sociological analysis. For instance, if music tastes are enrolled as data points for predictive AI to make judgements about financial, insurance and housing access, our tastes and affinities become automated inequalities that include or exclude in ways that we will not even feel while it is happening and only know about once it is too late. This has ramifications for understanding the dissemination of symbolic violence where it happens virtually via the digital, as much as emotionally via how we currently understand the transmission of affects. Bourdieu showed us how 'taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier', but what if the classifier is a machine that uses vaguely homologous data proxies for humans that can only make speculative predictions and dehumanise everyday relations?

Key Questions

- If cultural consumption is treated as raw data, what does this mean for the concept of cultural capital if it is disembodied from its owner in the form of 'entangled approximations' (Mackenzie 2023: 1) that only resemble their originators in a zombified form?
- How can someone experience symbolic violence when they neither see nor sense how or why they are being excluded?
- How do we classify these data gaze producing classification machines?
- Are we all now data zombies in a rentier machine?



Subjects of Value vs 'Low Hanging Fruit'

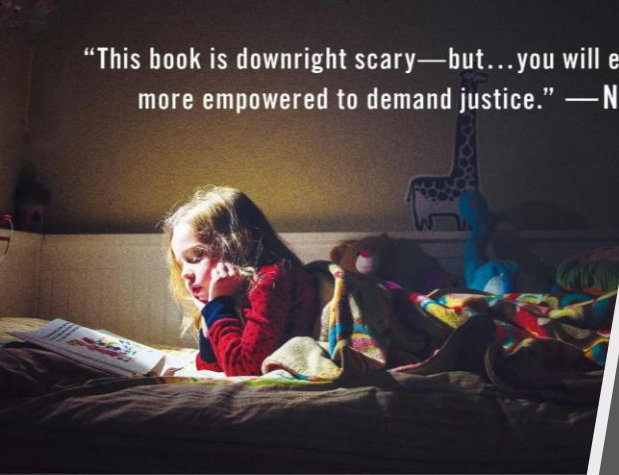
- The social position of the 'subject of value' is usually inherited as an accident of birth, where one learns how to perform their value and this disposition accumulates over time.
- This is the episteme of Bourdieu.
- When the digital and IRL co-constitute, the platforms track your data points the moment "you" engage with a browser, beginning as a child.
- For those like Laura , one of Skeggs and Yuill's participants, a quintessential modern subject of value who performs and promotes herself via Facebook, a high-profile and regular user, who had a dense and influential network, so she was tracked by Facebook over **twelve hours per day**.
- For those like Belle, participants in whom Facebook showed scant interest, her access to being a subject of value was continually constrained.
- She cannot perform what she is not: aggregated by age, welfare, consumption, finance, and health, she does not have propertised cultural, social or economic capital and as a result the algorithms have identified her as "waste" and fixed her firmly in place as 'low hanging fruit'.
- 'Waste' is sold on automated advertising exchanges to **debt companies and low budget supermarkets**.



Bourdieu works for the bank

- Bourdieu showed us how 'taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier'.
- But what if the classifier is a machine that does not understand the difference between genres, artists or sounds, and only 'sees' those things as **homologous data proxies** that can merely speculatively relate to the risks they are trying to minimise, or the stuff they are trying to sell, or to anything at all.
- Forms of distinction continue to include and exclude, but now also work as forms of prediction performed by machines that produce by a '**data gaze**' (Beer 2019).

"This book is downright scary—but...you will emerge more empowered to demand justice." —NAO



AUTOMAT INEQUA

HOW HIGH-TECH TECHNOLOGY
POLICE, AND PUNISHMENT



Automating Inequality?

- Our **taste affinities** become automated inequalities that include or exclude us in ways that we will not even feel while it is happening and only know about once it is too late.
- Will your music taste contribute to processes getting a rental, a mortgage, insurance or a job?
- This all complicates how inequality functions, automating and doubling down on existing inequalities, but also adding **haunting elements** and **recursive self-fulfilling prophecies**.

SPOTIFY CEO DANIEL EK BECOMES CHAIRMAN OF AI MILITARY START-UP FOLLOWING €600 MILLION INVESTMENT

Ek had previously invested €100 million in Helsing, a software specialist that produces drones, aircrafts and submarines for military use

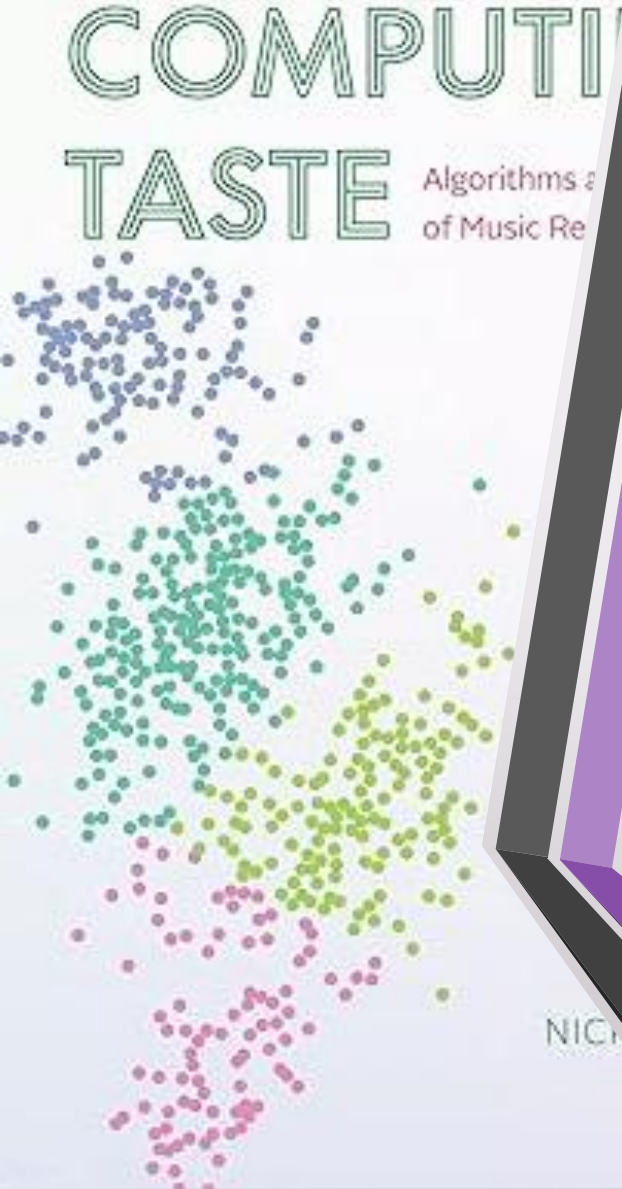
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Music taste now funds killing machines

- While multinational technical, creative and cultural corporations have always been vertically and horizontally integrated or had synergistic relations with the mechanisms of violence and war – IMB in World War 2 being the canonical example.
- Ek's private sponsorship of war technology abstracted from everyday music consumption feels decidedly more perniciously efficient.
- 'Certain legal forms, social relations, and cultural values embedded in music's governing institutions have shaped the possibilities and limits of this new socioeconomic regime' (Drott 2024: 5).

Digitalised Distinction is as much about 'how', 'when' and 'where' as about 'what'



- Webster (2019, 2023): how music **streaming shapes class distinctions**.
- 'Personalisation' undermines practices of social distinction by automating the 'labour of curation' while compressing the time needed 'to appreciate music for its own sake'.
- Those with cultural capital at stake - in Webster's study, mostly young, male cultural omnivores - experience this as a threat that contests their claims to distinction, they feel they have something to lose.
- Seaver (2022: 11) critically develops Bourdieu with other perspectives in his work on **computing taste**, where taste is not just something one possesses, but is something we do.
- Taste therefore is 'a set of techniques for interacting with the world, and the world it interacts with is full of technologies' (Seaver 2022: 12).
- Taste interacts and transforms with culture's technical dissemination over time – radio, records, tapes, CDs, downloading, streaming.
- As a result, we might anticipate that what it means to have musical taste will change in a world full of algorithmic recommender systems.
- **I really like this research, but we need to go further to understand the new implications of digitized and financialised culture.**

Mood Machine

the Rise of Spotify
and the Costs of the
Perfect Playlist



Mood Machine (Liz Pelly)

- It's an outrageous amount of data ... Even having worked with it, it's almost unfathomable. It's fair to assume that every click that you've made in the app has been logged somewhere, whether or not it's actively being used to make the recommendations. You should be under the assumption that any interaction you have within the Spotify app is going to be recorded (Industry insider in Pelly 2025)
- Maybe it turns out Spotify shares the information with a data broker, which is, in turn, absolutely happy to share this information with another actor to make a very detailed profile about me ... It's Spotify, it's dating apps, it's what I read online (Industry insider in Pelly 2025)

Mood Machine

the Rise of Spotify
and the Costs of the
Perfect Playlist



Mission/Function Creep

- Spotify has partnered with Facebook, Uber, Tesla, Tinder, and Virgin Airlines, as well as Ancestry.com and 23andMe, offering the last two companies “not only a new customer base but a new source of behavioral data, one that might profitably complement the genetic data they already possess” (Pelly 2025).
- Also marketers and ad-tech firms as well as “credit agencies, banks, health-care providers, insurers, governmental agencies, and finance companies” might want music-related data (Pelly 2025) .
- Examples of what is happening already:
 - There is start-up called Creditvidya which has used music streaming data as part of its algorithm for approving loans.
 - A microcredit start-up Lenddo uses concert ticket data as part of approving students for loans to buy textbooks.



'Seeing without Knowing' in an 'Ordinal Society'

- 'Seeing without knowing' (Annay & Crawford): no transparency means no accountability: "transparency" has become an unrealistic ideal today
- 'Categories all the way down', 'Ordinal Society' (Fourcade & Healy):
 - "In the words of a Silicon Valley insider ... **predictive analytics come dangerously close to alchemy**. Some uses go beyond even alchemy and cross over to the absurd. Perhaps **substantively meaningless correlations are taken at face value to determine important decisions**, or overfitted models are used in ways that would embarrass any well-trained analyst, or a method requiring any number of careful assumptions is put to work on terrible data."
- **AI/ML/LLM/NN all take association relationships (not even correlations) and makes them causal, creating self-fulfilling prophecies.**
- This turns what are clearly subjective associations into objective 'truths'.
- Takes a bastardised version of homophily to the nth degree, worst cases to absurd and downright violently discriminatory levels.

Mosaic Groups and Types

Group	Description	%	%	Type	Description	%	%
A	Alpha Territory	4.28	3.54	A01	Global Power Brokers	0.32	0.30
				A02	Voices of Authority	1.45	1.18
				A03	Business Class	1.83	1.50
				A04	Serious Money	0.68	0.56
B	Professional Rewards	9.54	8.23	B05	Mid-Career Climbers	2.90	2.30
				B06	Yesterday's Captains	1.80	1.84
				B07	Distinctive Success	0.48	0.48
				B08	Dormitory Villagers	1.81	1.29
				B09	Escape to the Country	1.41	1.31
				B10	Parish Guardians	1.14	1.00
C	Rural Solitude	4.84	4.40	C11	Squires Among Locals	1.01	0.85
				C12	Country Loving Elders	1.32	1.31
				C13	Modern Agribusiness	1.61	1.36
				C14	Farming Today	0.53	0.53
				C15	Upland Struggle	0.36	0.34
D	Small Town Diversity	9.21	8.75	D16	Side Street Singles	1.21	1.17
				D17	Jacks of All Trades	2.60	1.99
				D18	Hardworking Families	2.87	2.63
				D19	Innate Conservatives	2.53	2.96
E	Active Retirement	3.41	4.34	E20	Golden Retirement	0.52	0.67
				E21	Bungalow Quietude	1.42	1.79
				E22	Beachcombers	0.57	0.60
				E23	Balcony Downsizers	0.90	1.29
F	Suburban Mindsets	13.16	11.18	F24	Garden Suburbia	2.82	2.14
				F25	Production Managers	2.31	2.63
				F26	Mid-Market Families	3.75	2.70
				F27	Shop Floor Affluence	2.82	2.73
				F28	Asian Attainment	1.45	0.98
G	Careers and Kids	5.34	5.78	G29	Footloose Managers	1.11	1.67
				G30	Soccer Dads and Mums	1.34	1.34
				G31	Domestic Comfort	1.24	1.09
				G32	Childcare Years	1.46	1.52
				G33	Military Dependants	0.19	0.17

Group	Description	%	%	Type	Description	%	%
H	New Homemakers	3.99	5.91	H34	Buy-to-Let Territory	1.08	1.79
				H35	Brownfield Pioneers	1.13	1.38
				H36	Foot on the Ladder	1.48	2.37
				H37	First to Move In	0.30	0.37
I	Ex-Council Community	10.60	8.67	I38	Settled Ex-Tenants	2.08	2.06
				I39	Choice Right to Buy	1.90	1.72
				I40	Legacy of Labour	3.46	2.68
				I41	Stressed Borrowers	3.15	2.20
J	Claimant Cultures	4.52	5.16	J42	Worn-Out Workers	1.82	2.30
				J43	Streetwise Kids	0.90	1.05
				J44	New Parents in Need	1.80	1.80
K	Upper Floor Living	4.30	5.18	K45	Small Block Singles	1.26	1.77
				K46	Tenement Living	0.62	0.80
				K47	Deprived View	0.36	0.50
				K48	Multicultural Towers	1.09	1.11
				K49	Re-Housed Migrants	0.97	0.99
L	Elderly Needs	4.04	5.96	L50	Pensioners in Blocks	0.89	1.31
				L51	Sheltered Seniors	0.67	1.12
				L52	Meals on Wheels	0.51	0.86
				L53	Low Spending Elders	1.98	2.68
M	Industrial Heritage	7.39	7.40	M54	Clocking Off	2.18	2.25
				M55	Backyard Regeneration	2.40	2.06
				M56	Small Wage Owners	2.81	3.09
N	Terraced Melting Pot	6.54	7.02	N57	Back-to-Back Basics	2.50	1.97
				N58	Asian Identities	1.06	0.88
				N59	Low-Key Starters	1.60	2.72
				N60	Global Fusion	1.38	1.44
O	Liberal Opinions	8.84	8.48	O61	Convivial Homeowners	1.74	1.68
				O62	Crash Pad Professionals	1.41	1.09
				O63	Urban Cool	1.25	1.10
				O64	Bright Young Things	1.36	1.52
				O65	Anti-Materialists	1.12	1.03
				O66	University Fringe	1.10	0.93
				O67	Study Buddies	0.87	1.14

Postcode Professor sells up in Alpha Territory (and at £6million)
Bedsit Beneficiaries won't get a look in)

By EVE MCGOWAN
Updated: 11:52 18 Apr 2011



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0 comments

The man who categorised neighbourhoods leaves his in North London.

One of the perils of moving house is wondering whether you'll see eye to eye with the



Professor Postcode

- As new forms of commercial data emerged - loyalty card transactions, travel histories, lifestyle surveys and early digital footprints - classification systems were recalibrated.
- Cultural preferences, including musical taste, began to enter the systems - not as central indicators, but as one among many proxies for classed disposition.
- Preferences were treated not as expressions of identity, but as signals with predictive utility.
- Richard Webber, Mosaic's architect, initially developed the system with little reference to sociological theory.
- However, through collaboration with urban sociologists, he began to draw explicitly on ideas in Bourdieu's *Distinction*.
- His 2007 work on 'The Metropolitan Habitus' articulated how classification systems were shifting to capture aesthetic and moral repertoires.

Group A: **Alpha Territory**

Alasdair, Rosalind, Jack or Charlotte

Type A03: Business Class

Business leaders approaching retirement, living in large family homes in the most prestigious residential suburbs

1.66%  |  1.83%

Overview

Key Features

- 50s and 60s
- Comfortable
- Substantial incomes and investments
- Large homes
- Extensive gardens
- Sought after areas
- Carefree family life
- Hardworking
- Premium brands
- Heritage

Rankings

Age 50/67

Presence of Children <18 40/67

Household Income 3/67

Gross Financial Assets 3/67

Non-Mortgage Debt 8/67

Indebtedness Indicator 64/67

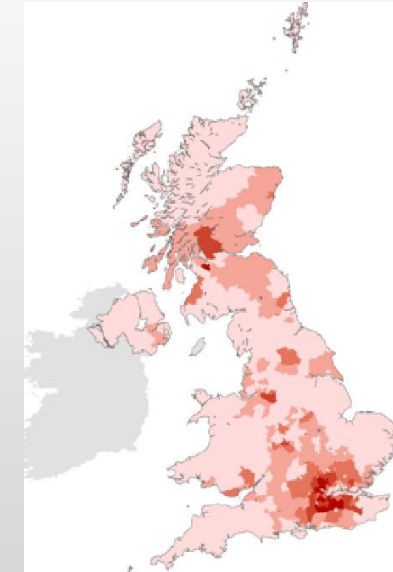
Level of Urbanisation 48/67



Typical Houses



Typical Cars



Top Postal Areas

- Kingston upon Thames KT
- Guildford GU
- Glasgow G
- Edinburgh EH
- Hemel Hempstead HP

The Predictive Postcode

- Roger Burrows' fieldwork in Australia at the time revealed a parallel development: staff working on the Australian version of Mosaic often had backgrounds in cultural studies and actively used Bourdieu to justify the clustering logic.
- Bourdieu was not applied as part of a structural analysis, but as a rhetorical resource to lend legitimacy to increasingly subtle forms of socio-cultural segmentation.
- This was the 'cultural turn' in geodemographics: a moment when lifestyle data was folded into the architecture of classification, **not to understand society, but to stratify it more precisely in search of profit**; a key instance of the processes that Thrift (2005) describes in *Knowing Capitalism*.
- The classificatory systems moved from **describing** socio-economic position to **modelling** behavioral tendencies.
- The aim was no longer to represent the social world, but to anticipate future actions.
- Music preferences, television genres, dining habits and holiday destinations were treated not as meaningful in themselves, but as parts of larger behavioral assemblages.
- What mattered was not what any single action revealed, but how combinations of data points correlated with outcomes of commercial or political interest.

Group/Type	Group/Type Name	Household (%)
A	First Class Life Wealthiest group in Australia, typically older middle-aged families with significant assets and income	5.51
	A01 Top of the Ladder	0.86
	A02 Luxury Living	1.51
	A03 Central Prosperity	0.96
	A04 Suburban Esteem	2.19

B	Comfortable Foundations Gen X families with school-aged children, working in white-collar professions and living in suburban areas	6.88
	B05 Successful Spending	1.67
	B06 Careers & Kids	2.36
	B07 Fruitful Families	2.85

C	Striving for Status Young, successful, career-driven professionals living in central city areas with high income and no children	4.92
	C08 Rooftops & Careers	1.69
	C09 Elite Alternatives	1.33
	C10 Power Couples	1.90

D	Secure Tranquility Affluent retirees living in higher valued properties in desirable areas	7.54
	D11 Scenic Connection	2.42
	D12 Journeyed Equity	2.47
	D13 Coastal Comfort	2.66

E	Family Fringes Middle-aged traditional families living on large outer-suburban plots, with comfortable incomes and long commutes	5.00
	E14 Spacious Traditions	2.06
	E15 Opulent Designs	1.18
	E16 Hardware & Acreage	1.77

F	Establishing Roots Millennial first home buyers, living 10km+ from the city centre with above average income	6.68
	F17 Determined Suburbans	2.32
	F18 Developing Domestics	2.24
	F19 Striving Scholars	2.13

G	Growing Independence Educated millennials at the start of their careers, renting apartments close to city centres	5.99
	G20 Youthful Ambition	2.25
	G21 Emerging Metros	1.31
	G22 Spirit Questers	1.64
	G23 Global Studies	0.79

Group/Type	Group/Type Name	Household (%)
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H	Middle Blue-Collars Younger blue-collar workers renting far from city centres, with below average income	8.35
	H24 Backyards & Mates	2.39
	H25 Prams & Trades	1.92
	H26 Earnest Internationals	1.32
	H27 Township Solos	2.71

I	Traditional Pursuits Average income traditional families & single parents with school-aged children living in outer suburban and regional locations	8.50
	I28 Schools & Bills	2.91
	I29 Middle of the Road	2.52
	I30 Regional Essentials	3.08

J	True Grit Blue-collar households in gainful employment, residing in locations across outer suburban, regional and mining towns	6.80
	J31 Minerals & Airports	0.93
	J32 Selfless & Hardworking	2.06
	J33 Life in the Slow Lane	2.27
	J34 Country Town Courage	1.54

K	Mature Freedom Gen X couples without children, renting apartments and terraces in high growth suburbs	8.27
	K35 Mature Modernites	1.96
	K36 Newfound Freedom	3.43
	K37 Realistic Horizons	2.87

L	Hardship & Perseverance Unemployed and blue-collar workers living in units and flats on low incomes	8.52
	L38 Reset Regionals	3.24
	L39 New-found Life	1.62
	L40 Satellite Battlers	2.22
	L41 Downtown Blues	0.50
	L42 Township Assistance	0.93

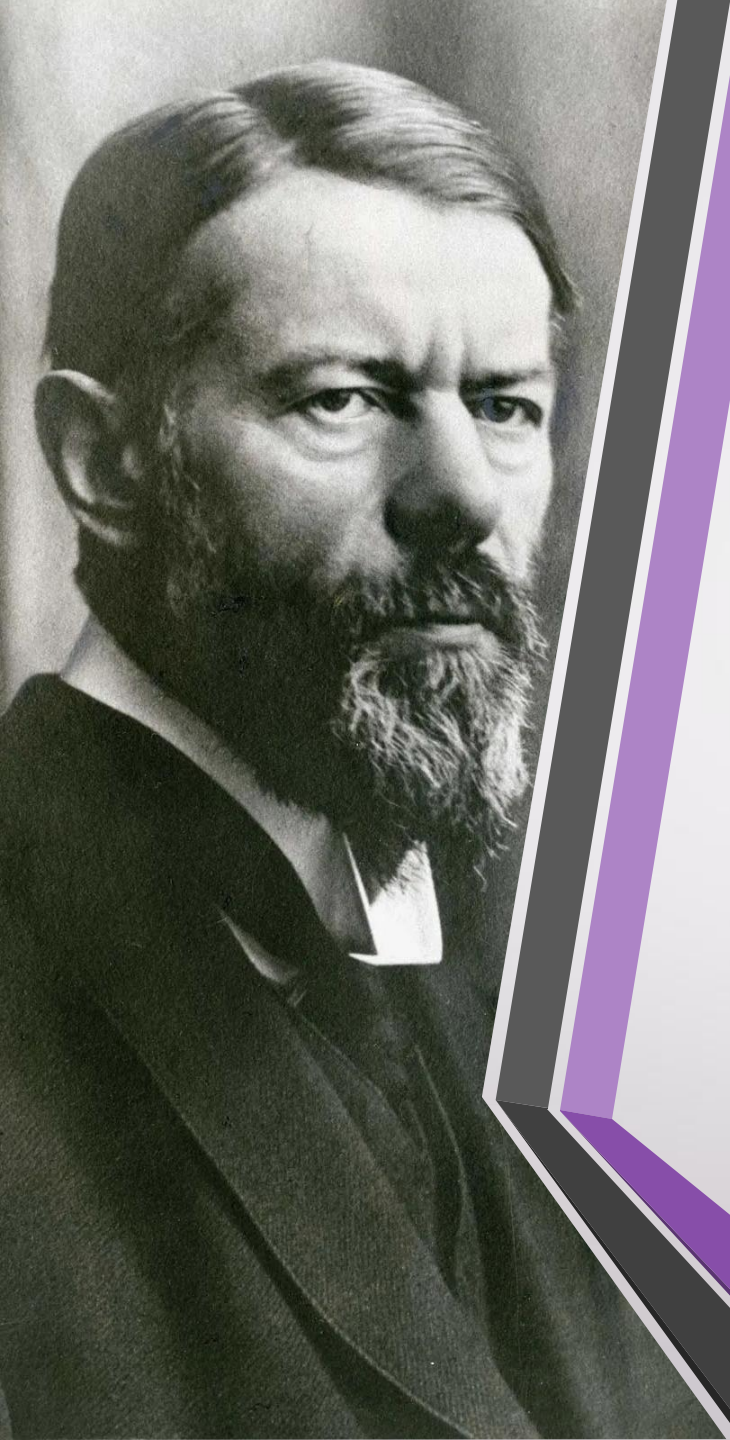
M	Graceful Ageing Older retirees with below average income, living in owned properties or retirement villages	10.65
	M43 Blue-Collar Retirees	1.75
	M44 Staying Put	2.89
	M45 Lonesome Elders	1.90
	M46 Retirement Village	1.70
	M47 Rural Retirement	2.40

N	Rural Commitment Rural people working in agriculture, living on large plots of land far from main roads and main towns	6.40
	N48 Farming Reliance	3.20
	N49 Outback Comfort	0.82
	N50 Soil & Toil	1.46
	N51 Rustic Isolation	0.91



Vulgar Bourdieusians & Machine Habitus

- Seaver points out that for what he calls the 'vulgar Bourdieusian', the object of preference doesn't matter at all, and the experience of taste in the moment is incidental to the force of social structure, which compels certain tastes in certain people' (Seaver 2022: 11).
- While this is an inaccurate portrait of Bourdieu's work, as Seaver points himself out, this 'vulgar Bourdieusian' position seems to be closer to what machine learning does.
- This is highlighted by Airoidi's (2022) concept of the 'machine habitus', which describes the socialisation processes of machine learning, what he describes as 'culture in the code' and 'code in the culture'.
- Machine learning 'learns' from the social – datafied, quantified and transformed into computationally processable information – and then they manipulate it, by drawing probabilistic relations among people, objects, and information (Airoidi 2022: 4).



From Market Situations to Classification Situations to Classification *Predictions*

- These shifts have given rise to a form of dynamic, situational profiling.
- Classificatory categories are now modulated according to time, place, activity and context.
- A subject may be scored differently at home, in transit or on holiday.
- This logic no longer belongs solely to marketing, it is increasingly deployed in finance, employment, health, insurance, education, housing and mental health screening (Smith, 2017; 2019; 2020).
- Classification becomes an environmental condition - latent, mobile and continuously recalibrated.

capital ✕

dead ✕

is ✕ this

something

worse?

mckenzie

wark ✕

A New Class System worse than capitalism?

- McKenzie Wark (2019) has asked what if the system we are living in is no longer capitalism, what if we have moved on to something worse?
- They proposed a new layer of means of production, the **vectorial layer** that exploits the production and control of information, had come to be as important as the previous layers that controlled the production of materials.
- Class system becomes **vectorialists vs hackers**
- Burrell and Fourcade in 'Society of Algorithms': **coding elite vs cybertariat**

TYPES OF SOCIOLOGY PAPER



Eigencapital

- Fourcade and Healy: new form of capital that has potential to help understand the new vectoral layer of inequalities as it does more than just name a specific kind of capital for a specific field or purpose, it develops the Bourdieusian notion of capital beyond the embodied, objectified and institutionalised.
- Eigencapital as forming from **data traces**, especially those made legible by algorithmic systems: online banking habits, transaction data, streaming activity — then scored and weighted like assets.
- In eigencapital, individuals are **ranked** rather than simply classified.
- Eigencapital essentially forms a **data proxy** of one's IRL self: in some instances, it will be actual data about the individual, in other circumstances, the individual is placed in a in a data profile or mosaic.
- As people manage their digital scores, solidarity may erode, with individuals prioritising personal advancement over collective well-being, placing everyone on what they call 'the road to selfdom'.
- Rewards will be for individuals whose data fits normative behavioural models, but penalises those whose profiles deviate or lack visibility.
- The '**lumpenscoretariat**' are those pushed to the bottom of the ordinal scale, excluded from access due to low-quality, insufficient or 'non-compliant' data.



Data Selves, Doubles, Doppelgangers: “Data Zombies”



- I see eigencapital as a **data zombie** that follows one around: not quite the living, breathing self, but not quite a complete distortion, ‘tethered’ to you and the result of your dead free labour.



“Spotify’s recommendation engine is great at understanding Rebecca and it has spent the last 12 months understanding Rebecca’s manifest musical DNA. And then on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly basis it will serve Rebecca recommendations based on Rebeccaness, which from a user experience point of view kind of feels good and that speaks to the DNA of a 21st-century service because services make Rebecca’s life better.”

- (Interview Senior Director, Major Record label, from Webster 2023)



Automating Middle-Class Surveillance

- I think one of the things that influences how there is so little public concern about data mining and manipulation is that most of us think that it will not really affect us in any material way, or worse, that it only really affects those below us who need to get welfare, or are in the criminal justice system, so they probably deserve it.
- The increased surveillance on them is probably keeping me safer and I therefore benefit.
- While that reflects how class relations poison how we relate to others, it is also not true anymore.
- Automation is now commonly intervening further up the class system.
- UK sociologists have shown how the rental market is being datafied and automated, where even getting to view an apartment is reliant upon giving up increasingly demanding array of data, including providing ongoing open access to your bank accounts (see *Code Encounters*).
- Job applications across many industry sectors are being read and sorted by AI.
- This sees the rise of businesses offering to teach how to write a CV and application that will be favourably read by these machines: **a new form of cultural capital?**



Automating Surveillance

- Middle class professions are increasingly being surveilled and managed through ordinal data systems that often bear no relation to the realities of their job and are deeply unfair.
- In the US for instance, effective teachers who are loved by students and their parents are being sacked based on automated evaluations of how those students are doing in standardised tests.
- These evaluations do not consider any social or institutional contexts.
- The teachers are sent automated scores with no information of how they are compiled or what they mean.
- School principals have no choice but to send the teachers who score poorly packing, even if they think they are good at their jobs and want to keep them on .
- Procedures such as this not only automate inequality but make it easier for people to treat other people badly and to do so with less awkwardness or confrontation (see 'Robodebt' in Australia).
- Inequality is therefore not only automated, but dehumanised.



Ordinal Education

- Journal metrics, impact factors, cite scores, etc.: Q1, Q2 etc
- Citation counts
- Turnitin/ Canvas/Blackboard all track and horde data
- The REF
- University ranking lists: QS, THE etc.
- LEO (longitudinal education outcomes data): measured by earnings and employment five years after graduation—and to estimate who pays for these degrees, the student or the taxpayer
- Informa has sold all our books to Chat-GPT

Durham	+£5,616	+£4,417
Edinburgh	No data	-£3,141
Essex	No data	+£540
Exeter	No data	+£1,190
Goldsmiths	-£9,493	-£130
Greenwich	-£2,302	-£2,089
Huddersfield	No data	+£361
Hull	+£2,419	-£1,949
Keele	-£2,587	-£629
Kent	-£2,070	-£470
Kingston	-£4,159	+£434
LSE	+£6,175	+£200
Lancaster	-£2,269	-£330
Leeds	-£1,451	-£883
Leeds Beckett	-£2,668	-£2,058
Leicester	-£1,731	+£99
Lincoln	-£2,269	-£2,216
Liverpool	-£3,260	-£60
Liverpool Hope	No data	-£5,401
Liverpool John Moores	-£111	-£3,830
London Metropolitan	No data	-£4,230
London South Bank	No data	+£4,287
Loughborough	-£1,932	+£1,237
Manchester	-£5,959	+£234
Manchester Metropolitan	-£2,293	-£3,061
Middlesex	No data	-£5,955
Newcastle	+£2,046	-£598
Northampton	No data	-£2,959
Northumbria	+£1,515	+£1,159
Nottingham	+£959	+£2,915
Nottingham Trent	-£2,536	+£824



“Data Zombies” in the “Rentier Machine”

- ‘This ‘rise of digital platforms is another expression of the broader trend toward monopolization and rent extraction’ (Drott 2024: 7).
- This is important here as it points to how the claims of innovation and disruption made by vested interests in the proliferation of the AI and machine learning mask the conservative and reproducing nature of their actual ends.
- Importantly, I take the position in this regard, as per McQuillan’s (2022), that algorithmic AI assemblages in their current formation and development, maintain fascistic tendencies that will not be able to be erased or eradicated by adding more of ‘better’ data.



Bourdieu in a Digitalised and Financialised World

- Bourdieu's concerns have not necessarily been eclipsed by these developments.
- The violence of classification, the symbolic power of misrecognition, and the enduring force of cultural capital remain critical to understanding this new landscape.
- What has changed is not the logic of distinction, but its operationalisation.
- It has been encoded, automated and streamed, circulates through infrastructures.
- These aspects need to be more seriously taken into account in cultural sociology.
- Bourdieu's conceptual toolbox is still up to the task for critical sociological encounters with these developments, but there needs to be an added emphasis on the brute power of economic capital that has fully coopted cultural consumption into a data machine that funnels immense wealth to the top while exploiting everyday life for the purposes of the creation of new data markets and their investment in advertising, nudging and other forms of deliberate political and commercial manipulation.
- How effective these manipulation methods are is an open empirical question that Bourdieu can also help address.
- Bourdieu may now work for the bank, but his concepts can still provide a vision for understanding how the constructions of haunting data zombies maintain and monetise inequalities.

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