Class, Education and Cultural Practices: What is going on?

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The project: Students, class and culture

- **DigiCult** - Democracy and the Digitisation of Audiovisual Culture - is a research group based in the Department of Information Science and Media Studies, University of Bergen.

- DigiCult aims to describe, analyse and evaluate developments in television and on the internet and their implications for the public sphere of different kinds.

- One of DigiCult’s projects is the one we present here, on class, education and cultural preferences and practices among the over 25,000 students at the university and other institutions of higher education in Bergen. The project replicates one conducted in the autumn of 1998 as part of the project Cultural Disorder.
Methodology and data

We conducted quantitative surveys of cultural tastes and practices of a random sample of students of all the major institutions of higher education in Bergen, Norway. 1998 N=1113, 2008 N=1223

Comprehensive questionnaires: 14 pages, 90 questions, >600 items, with an emphasis on:

1. social and cultural inheritance and their parents’ position in the Norwegian social space
2. cultural practices and tastes in music, film, artists, galleries, home furnishings, newspapers, magazines, books, travels abroad, cuisine, theatre, dance, clothes, pubs/restaurants etc.
3. cultural knowledge, incl. knowledge of authors, visual artists, film directors and musicians
4. educational career, attitudes towards studying etc.

We also, as in 1998, conducted 22 in-depth interviews and asked a photographer to document student life, on and off the campuses.
Q 93. “Two photos are reproduced on this page. Please write down your spontaneous thoughts..”

- Life was bloody awful in the past!
- Contrast, equilibrium, uninteresting.
- Reminds me of the entrance of my grandmother’s house. I am happy to be alive in the present. I want more, more, I can hardly wait for what the future brings. Poor miserable wretches who lived at that time. Bad photograph - lousy framing.
- A cold and humid room. A growling stomach, I have no shoes on. My toes are freezing cold and I feel dirty. The feeling of helplessness washes over me. Mother has just finished washing the house, but it is still unpleasant. Reminds me of a mental image I had when reading one of the books of Anne Karin Elstad.

Walker Evans: “Let us now praise famous men” (1965)
The 1998 study - some key results

- Social background (class) is a decisive influence on the choice of education and on cultural preferences and practices.

- Cultural capital appears more independent of economic and educational capital in Norway than in the France studied by Pierre Bourdieu, probably due to egalitarian institutions for the distribution of cultural resources in Norway, such as the public school system, broad "mass" movements promoting popular enlightenment and not least strong public service broadcasting.

- Students were less "intellectual" and cosmopolitan than some expected; very few read intellectual journals/magazines, only a small minority had travelled widely, exotic cuisines not popular.

- Gender differences, e.g.: Students in social élite studies (medicine, law, business school) had very resourceful social backgrounds, the women in particular – among men there were always daredevils crossing boundaries on their way up.
1998–2008: Transformation of the media system – and higher education

- **1998**: 10,000 DVD players and 164,000 VHS players sold. 2008: 400,000 DVD players/30,000 Blu-Ray.
- **2008**: Digital television near nation-wide coverage on all platforms and switch-off of the old terrestrial network is imminent.
- Increase in mobile phone sales of 2.5 times. By 2007, 100% of students had their own mobile phone.
- Students with computers at home increased from 57% to 90%; Internet access at home in the general population up from 22% to 85%.
- Developments of digital media have created a more complex situation as parallel use of different media, cross-media applications, reception of content from a multitude of platforms, new hierarchies of favourite media all mix with the surviving patterns of traditional use.
- The Bologna Process and the related (so-called) **Quality Reform** entail a tighter organisation of studies, more supervision, more papers to deliver, more frequent exams - i.e. less time for various extracurricular activities for students?
1998–2008: Stability and Changes

- High degree of stability in the influence of social class on choice of education and on cultural preferences and practices
- A marked decline in interest in and knowledge of all forms of legitimate and “advanced” culture not related to popular culture
- The rise of digital media use in general was a key change – while a digital divide confirmed the relative stability of class structures
The (social) space of Bergen students, 2008
(multiple correspondence analysis based on indicators for father’s capital)
Changes in preferences for selected musical genres 1998-2008

- Irish folk music
- Baroque
- Vienna classical
- Romance
- Opera
- Disco
- Funk
- Folk song / Chanson
- Traditional blues
- Classical music 18/19th
- Gospel
- Traditional jazz
- House / techno
- Roots
- Modern jazz
- Theatre musicals
- Synthesizer music
- Reggae
- Soul / motown
- Contemporary music
- Hardrock
- World Music
- 50s R&R
- 60/70s pop/rock
- Country
- Rap

Percentage points
Use of and interest in some institutions and their related forms of culture

- Interested in Baroque music
- Interested in Opera music
- Attended classical concert last 12 mnths
- Attended theatre last 12 mnths
- Interested in theatre classics
- Attended modern dance last 12 mnths
- Film society last 12 mnths
- Student culture event last 12 mnths
- Cinema “at least once a mnth”

Percentages

- 1998
- 2008

Year Range: 1998 to 2008
Interrail
Round-trip in several countries
Have been foreign exchange student
Can read French
Can read German
Have tasted Indian food
Have tasted Japanese food
Sometimes buy food at immigrant stores

Cosmopolitanism

Percentages

1998
2008
Like reading contemporary literature
Member of book club
Interested in book reviews in newspapers
Have written unpublished poems/fiction
Identify Kafka as the author of “The Process”

Percentages

1998
2008
Cultural knowledge

Authors identified (of 12)

Male
Female

Directors identified (of 14)

Male
Female

Average number correctly identified

1998
2008
Cultural knowledge

Music artists
“known”
(of 12)

Visual artists
“known”
(of 18)

Male
Female
Male
Female

Average number known

1998
2008

0 2 4 6 8
Music genres in the social space of Bergen students, 2008

- Rap/hip hop
- House
- Business management (BI)
- Business administration (NHH)
- Rap/hip hop
- Law
- Theater musicals
- Contemporary
- Classical 18/1900
- Baroque
- Opera
- Vienna classics
- Jazz
- Traditional blues
- Opera
- Funk
- Punk
- Danceband
- Singers/songwriters
- Irish folk
- Greek folk
- Norwegian folk music
- Gospel
- World music
- Roots
- Norw. folk music
- Arts Academy
- 50s Rock & Roll
- Medicine
The “digital divide”, 2008

Newspapers

Inherited capital volume +

-3h online newsp/wk

>6h newsp/wk

>3h online newsp/wk

>2h paper newsp/wk

<1h newspaper/wk

Bergen university college

<1h online newsp/wk

<1h newsp/wk

Arts Academy

Business management (BI)
Business administration (NHH)

Economic capital -
Cultural capital +
Political capital +

Economic capital +
Cultural capital -
Political capital -
The "digital divide", 2008

Broadcasting

Inherited capital volume +

NRK

WebTV:Foreign

WebRadio:Norw

WebTV:Norw

NRK

TVNorge

TV2

TV3

>13h television/wk

8-13h television/wk

4-7h television/wk

<4h television/wk

Psychology

Humanities

Natural science

Medicine

Law

Business management (BI)

Business administration (NHH)

Canal+

Viasat+

Arts Academy

"NOT privatize NRK"

"privatize NRK"

Economic capital -
Cultural capital +
Political capital +

Economic capital +
Cultural capital -
Political capital -

= television channel most watched
The “digital divide”, 2008
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What is next?

- Lots of work remains to be done ....
- Parallel survey to be conducted in Oslo in 2010
- Plans to replicate the survey in Bergen in 2018
- Anyone interested, anywhere in the world, please contact us!
  - www.digicult.uib.no