

## CULTURAL REPRODUCTION AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION

*Pierre Bourdieu*

The specific role of the sociology of education is assumed once it has established itself as the science of the relations between cultural reproduction and social reproduction. This occurs when it endeavors to determine the contribution made by the educational system to the reproduction of the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes, by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among these classes. The science of the reproduction of structures, understood as a system of objective relations which impart their relational properties to individuals whom they pre-exist and survive, has nothing in common with the analytical recording of relations existing within a given population, be it a question of the relations between the academic success of children and the social position of their family or of the relations between the positions filled by children and their parents. The substantialist mode of thought which stops short at directly accessible elements, that is to say individuals, claims a certain fidelity to reality by disregarding the structure of relations whence these elements derive all their sociologically relevant determinations, and thus finds itself having to analyze intra- or inter-generational mobility processes to the detriment of the study of mechanisms which tend to

ensure the reproduction of the structure of relations between classes; it is unaware that the controlled mobility of a limited category of individuals, carefully selected and modified by and for individual ascent, is not incompatible with the permanence of structures, and that it is even capable of contributing to social stability in the only way conceivable in societies based upon democratic ideals and thereby may help to perpetuate the structure of class relations.

Any break with substantialist atomism, even if it does not mean going as far as certain structuralists and seeing agents as the simple "supports" of structures invested with the mysterious power of determining other structures, implies taking as our theme the process of education. This means that our object becomes the production of the habitus, that system of dispositions which acts as a mediation between structures and practice; more specifically, it becomes necessary to study the laws that determine the tendency of structures to reproduce themselves by producing agents endowed with the system of predispositions which is capable of engendering practices adapted to the structures and thereby contributing to the reproduction of the structures. If it is conceived within a theoretical framework such as this, the sociology of educational institutions and, in particular, of institutions of higher education, is capable of making a decisive contribution to the science of the structural dynamics of class relations, which is an often neglected aspect of the sociology of power. Indeed, among all the solutions put forward throughout history to the problem of the transmission of power and privileges, there

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surely does not exist one that is better concealed, and therefore better adapted to societies which tend to refuse the most patent forms of the hereditary transmission of power and privileges, than that solution which the educational system provides by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of class relations and by concealing, by an apparently neutral attitude, the fact that it fills this function.

### The Role of the Educational System in the Reproduction of the Structure of the Distribution of Cultural Capital

By traditionally defining the educational system as the group of institutional or routine mechanisms by means of which is operated what Durkheim calls "the conservation of a culture inherited from the past," i.e., the transmission from generation to generation of accumulated information, classical theories tend to dissociate the function of cultural reproduction proper to all educational systems from their function of social reproduction. Transposing, as they do, the representation of culture and of cultural transmission, commonly accepted by the ethnologists, to the case of societies divided into classes, these theories are based upon the implicit assumption that the different pedagogic actions which are carried out within the framework of the social structure, that is to say, those which are carried out by families from the different social classes as well as that which is practiced by the school, work together in a harmonious way to transmit a cultural heritage which is considered as being the undivided property of the whole society.

In fact the statistics of theater, concert, and, above all, museum attendance (since, in the last case, the effect of economic obstacles is more or less nil) are sufficient reminder that the inheritance of cultural wealth which

has been accumulated and bequeathed by previous generations only really belongs (although it is *theoretically* offered to everyone) to those endowed with the means of appropriating it for themselves. In view of the fact that the apprehension and possession of cultural goods as symbolic goods (along with the symbolic satisfactions which accompany an appropriation of this kind) are possible only for those who hold the code making it possible to decipher them or, in other words, that the appropriation of symbolic goods presupposes the possession of the instruments of appropriation, it is sufficient to give free play to the laws of cultural transmission for cultural capital to be added to cultural capital and for the structure of the distribution of cultural capital between social classes to be thereby reproduced. By this is meant the structure of the distribution of instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed.

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The different classes or sections of a class are organized around three major positions: the lower position, occupied by the agricultural professions, workers, and small tradespeople, which are, in fact, categories excluded from participation in "high" culture; the intermediate position, occupied on the one hand by the heads and employees of industry and business and, on the other hand, by the intermediate office staff (who are just about as removed from the two other categories as these categories are from the lower categories); and, lastly, the higher position, which is occupied by higher office staff and professionals.

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The educational system reproduces all the more perfectly the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among classes (and sections of a class) in that the culture which it transmits is closer to the dominant culture

and that the mode of inculcation to which it has recourse is less removed from the mode of inculcation practiced by the family. Inasmuch as it operates in and through a relationship of communication, pedagogic action directed at inculcating the dominant culture can in fact escape (even if it is only in part) the general laws of cultural transmission, according to which the appropriation of the proposed culture (and, consequently, the success of the apprenticeship which is crowned by academic qualifications) depends upon the previous possession of the instruments of appropriation, to the extent and only to the extent that it explicitly and deliberately hands over, in the pedagogic communication itself, those instruments which are indispensable to the success of the communication and which, in a society divided into classes, are very unequally distributed among children from the different social classes. An educational system which puts into practice an implicit pedagogic action, requiring initial familiarity with the dominant culture, and which proceeds by imperceptible familiarization, offers information and training which can be received and acquired only by subjects endowed with the system of predispositions that is the condition for the success of the transmission and of the inculcation of the culture. By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture.

In short, an institution officially entrusted with the transmission of the instruments of appropriation of the dominant culture which neglects methodically to transmit the instruments indispensable to the success of its undertaking is bound to become the monopoly of those social classes capable of

transmitting by their own means, that is to say by that diffuse and implicit continuous educational action which operates within cultured families (often unknown to those responsible for it and to those who are subjected to it), the instruments necessary for the reception of its message, and thereby to confirm their monopoly of the instruments of appropriation of the dominant culture and thus their monopoly of that culture.<sup>1</sup> The closer that educational action gets to that limit, the more the value that the educational system attributes to the products of the educational work carried out by families of the different social classes is directly a function of the value as cultural capital which is attributed, on a market dominated by the products of the educational work of the families of the dominant classes, to the linguistic and cultural competence which the different classes or sections of a class are in a position to transmit, mainly in terms of the culture that they possess and of the time that they are able to devote to its explicit or implicit transmission. That is to say that the transmission of this competence is in direct relation to the distance between the linguistic and cultural competence implicitly demanded by the educational transmission of educational culture (which is itself quite unevenly removed from the dominant culture) and the linguistic and cultural competence inculcated by primary education in the different social classes.

The laws of the educational market may be read in the statistics which establish that, from the moment of entering into secondary education right up to the *grandes écoles*, the hierarchy of the educational establishments and even, within these establishments, the hierarchy of the sections and of the fields of study arranged according to their prestige and to the educational value they impart to their public, correspond exactly to the hierarchy of the institutions . . . according to the social structure of their public, on account of the fact that those classes or sections of a

class which are richest in cultural capital become more and more over-represented as there is an increase in the rarity and hence in the educational value and social yield of academic qualifications. If such is the case, the reason is that, by virtue of the small real autonomy of an educational system which is incapable of affirming the specificity of its principles of evaluation and of its own mode of production of cultured dispositions, the relationship between the pedagogic actions carried out by the dominated classes and by the dominant classes may be understood by analogy with the relationship which is set up, in the economic field, between modes of production of different epochs when for example, in a dualist economy, the products of a traditional local craft industry are submitted to the laws of a market dominated by the chain-produced products of a highly developed industry: the symbolic products of the educational work of the different social classes, i.e., apart from knowledge and know-how, styles of being, of speaking, or of doing, have less value on the educational market and, more widely, on the symbolic market (in matrimonial exchanges, for instance) and on the economic market (at least to the extent that its sanctions depend upon academic ratification) in that the mode of symbolic production of which they are the product is more removed from the dominant mode of production or, in other words, from the educational norms of those social classes capable of imposing the domination of criteria of evaluation which are the most favorable to their products. It is in terms of this logic that must be understood the prominent value accorded by the French educational system to such subtle modalities in the relationship to culture and language as affluence, elegance, naturalness, or distinction, all of which are ways of making use of the symbolic products whose role of representing excellence in the field of culture (to the detriment of the dispositions produced by the school and paradoxically devalued,

by the school itself, as being "academic") is due to the fact that they belong only to those who have acquired culture or, at least, the dispositions necessary for the acquisition of academic culture, by means of familiarization, i.e., imperceptible apprenticeships from the family upbringing, which is the mode of acquisition of the instruments of appropriation of the dominant culture of which the dominant classes hold the monopoly.

The sanctions of the academic market owe their specific effectiveness to the fact that they are brought to bear with every appearance of legitimacy: it is, in fact, as though the agents proportioned the investments that are placed in production for the academic market—investments of time and enthusiasm for education on the part of the pupils, investments of time, effort, and money on the part of families—to the profits which they may hope to obtain, over a more or less long term, on this market, as though the price that they attribute to the sanctions of the academic market were in direct relation to the price attributed to them by the sanctions of this market and to the extent to which their economic and symbolic value depends on the value which they are recognized to possess by the academic market. It follows from this that the negative predispositions toward the school which result in the self-elimination of most children from the most culturally unfavored classes and sections of a class—such as self-depreciation, devaluation of the school and its sanctions, or a resigned attitude to failure and exclusion—must be understood as an anticipation, based upon the unconscious estimation of the objective probabilities of success possessed by the whole category, of the sanctions objectively reserved by the school for those classes or sections of a class deprived of cultural capital. Owing to the fact that it is the product of the internalization of value that the academic market (anticipating by its formally neutral sanctions the sanctions of the symbolic or economic market) confers upon

the products of the family upbringing of the different social classes, and of the value which, by their objective sanctions, the economic and symbolic markets confer upon the products of educational action according to the social class from which they originate, the system of dispositions toward the school, understood as a propensity to consent to the investments in time, effort, and money necessary to conserve or increase cultural capital, tends to redouble the symbolic and economic effects of the uneven distribution of cultural capital, all the while concealing it and, at the same time, legitimating it. The functionalist sociologists who announce the brave new world when, at the conclusion of a longitudinal study of academic and social careers, they discover that, as though by a pre-established harmony, individuals have hoped for nothing that they have not obtained and obtained nothing that they have not hoped for, are simply the least forgivable victims of the ideological effect which is produced by the school when it cuts off from their social conditions of production all predispositions regarding the school such as "expectations," "aspirations," "inclinations," or "desire," and thus tends to cover up the fact that objective conditions—and in the individual case, the laws of the academic market—determine aspirations by determining the extent to which they can be satisfied.

This is the only one of the mechanisms by which the academic market succeeds in imposing upon those very persons who are its victims recognition of the existence of its sanctions by concealing from them the objective truth of the mechanisms and social motives that determine them. To the extent to which it is enough for it to be allowed to run its own course, that is to say to give free play to the laws of cultural transmission, in order to ensure the reproduction of the structure of distribution of cultural capital, the educational system which merely records im-

mediate or deferred self-elimination (in the form of the self-relegation of children from the underprivileged classes to the lower educational streams) or encourages elimination simply by the effectiveness of a non-existent pedagogical practice (able to conceal behind patently obvious procedures of selection the action of mechanisms tending to ensure in an almost automatic way—that is to say, in a way which conforms to the laws governing all forms of cultural transmission—the exclusion of certain categories of recipients of the pedagogic message), this educational system masks more thoroughly than any other legitimation mechanism (imagine for example what would be the social effects of an arbitrary limitation of the public carried out in the name of ethnic or social criteria) the arbitrary nature of the actual demarcation of its public, thereby imposing more subtly the legitimacy of its products and of its hierarchies.

### Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction

By making social hierarchies and the reproduction of these hierarchies appear to be based upon the hierarchy of "gifts," merits, or skills established and ratified by its sanctions, or, in a word, by converting social hierarchies into academic hierarchies, the educational system fulfills a function of legitimation which is more and more necessary to the perpetuation of the "social order" as the evolution of the power relationship between classes tends more completely to exclude the imposition of a hierarchy based upon the crude and ruthless affirmation of the power relationship. But does the continual increase, in most highly industrialized societies, in the proportion of the members of the ruling class who have passed through the university system and the best univer-

sities lead one to conclude that the transmission of cultural capital is tending to be substituted purely and simply for the transmission of economic capital and ownership of the means of production in the system of mechanisms of reproduction of the structure of class relationships?

Apart from the fact that the increase in the proportion of holders of the most prestigious academic qualifications among the members of the ruling classes may mean only that the need to call upon academic approval in order to legitimate the transmission of power and of privileges is being more and more felt, the effect is as though the cultural and educational mechanisms of transmission had merely strengthened or taken over from the traditional mechanisms such as the hereditary transmissions of economic capital, of a name, or of capital in terms of social relations; it is, in fact, as if the investments placed in the academic career of children had been integrated into *the system of strategies of reproduction*, which strategies are more or less compatible and more or less profitable depending on the type of capital to be transmitted, and by which each generation endeavors to transmit to the following generation the advantages it holds. Considering that, on the one hand, the ruling classes have at their disposal a much larger cultural capital than the other classes, even among those who constitute what are, relatively, the least well-off sections of the ruling classes and who, as has been seen, still practice cultural activities to at least as great an extent as the most favored sections of the middle class, and considering that, on the other hand, they also have at their disposal the means of ensuring for this capital the best academic placing for its investment (that is to say the best establishments and the best departments), their academic investments cannot fail to be extremely profitable, and the segregation that is established right at the beginning of secondary educa-

tion among students from different establishments and different departments cannot help but be reinforced the further one gets into the academic course by reason of the continual increase in the differences resulting from the fact that the most culturally privileged find their way into institutions capable of reinforcing their advantage. Institutions of higher education which ensure or legitimate access to the ruling classes, and, in particular, the *grandes écoles* (among which must be counted the *internat de médecine*) are therefore to all intents and purposes the monopoly of the ruling classes. The objective mechanisms which enable the ruling classes to keep the monopoly of the most prestigious educational establishments, while continually appearing at least to put the chance of possessing that monopoly into the hands of every generation, are concealed beneath the cloak of a perfectly democratic method of selection which takes into account only merit and talent, and these mechanisms are of a kind which converts to the virtues of the system the members of the dominated classes whom they eliminate in the same way as they convert those whom they elect, and which ensures that those who are "miraculously elected" may experience as "miraculous" an exceptional destiny which is the best testimony of academic democracy.

Owing to the fact, first, that the academic market tends to sanction and to reproduce the distribution of cultural capital by proportioning academic success to the amount of cultural capital bequeathed by the family (as is shown, for example, by the fact that, among the pupils of the *grandes écoles*, a very pronounced correlation may be observed between academic success and the family's cultural capital measured by the academic level of the forbears over two generations on both sides of the family), and, second, because the most privileged sections of the dominant classes from the point of view of economic capital and power are not

TABLE 6.1 The Distribution of Cultural Capital among Different Sections of the Dominant Classes

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Teachers	Public Adminis- tration	Profes- sionals	Engineers	Managers	Heads of Industry	Heads of Commerce
Readers of <i>Le Monde</i> (penetration index per 1000)	410	235	210	145	151	82	49
Readers of <i>Le Figaro</i> <i>Littéraire</i> (ditto)	168	132	131	68	100	64	24
Readers of non-professional books 15 hrs and more per week	21	18	18	16	16	10	10
Theater-goers (at least once every 2 or 3 months)	38	29	29	28	34	16	20
Listeners to classical music	83	89	86	89	89	75	73
Visitors to museums and exhibitions	75	66	68	58	69	47	52
Visitors to art galleries	58	54	57	45	47	37	34
Possessors of FM radio	59	54	57	56	53	48	48
Non-possessors of television	46	30	28	33	28	14	24

necessarily the most well-off in terms of cultural capital, it may be expected that the hierarchy of values attributed by the academic market to the products of the educational work of the families of the different sections will not correspond very closely to the hierarchy of these sections with regard to economic capital and power. Should it be concluded from this that the relative autonomy of the mechanisms of reproduction of the structure of cultural capital in relation to the mechanisms ensuring the reproduction of economic capital is of a kind to cause a profound transformation, if not in the structure of class relationships (despite the fact that the most culturally privileged sections of the middle class such as the sons of primary school and secondary school teachers are able triumphantly to hold their own on the academic market against the least culturally privileged sections of the upper class), at least in the structure of relationships between the sections of the dominant classes?

The structure of the distribution of cultural capital among the different sections of the dominant classes may be constructed on

the basis of the collection of convergent indices brought together in the following conspectus (see Table 6.1).<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of a few inversions in which is expressed the action of secondary variables such as place of residence, along with the objective possibilities of cultural practice which are closely linked to it, and income, along with the possibilities which it offers, it can be seen that the different sections are organized according to a single hierarchy with the differentiation of the cultural capital possessed in terms of the kind of training received being shown above all in the fact that engineers give proof of a greater interest in music (and in other leisure activities demanding the application of logical skills, such as bridge and chess) than in literary activities (reading of *Le Figaro Littéraire* or theater-going). If the proportion of individuals who do not possess television (and who are distinguished from the possessors of that instrument by the fact that they go in more often for activities commonly held to be the expression of an authentically "cultured" or refined disposition) varies ac-

TABLE 6.2 Reading Habits, Occupational Categories, and Levels of Education<sup>4</sup>

	Teachers	Top Civil Servants	Professionals	Engineers	Managers	Heads of Industry	Heads of Commerce
Detective novels	25 (6)	29 (1)	27 (4)	28 (3)	29 (1)	27 (4)	25 (6)
Adventure stories	16 (7)	20 (3)	18 (6)	24 (1)	22 (2)	19 (4)	19 (4)
Historical accounts	44 (4)	47 (2)	49 (1)	47 (2)	44 (4)	36 (6)	27 (7)
Art books	28 (2)	20 (3)	31 (1)	19 (5)	20 (3)	17 (6)	14 (7)
Novels	64 (2)	68 (1)	59 (5)	62 (3)	63 (3)	45 (6)	42 (7)
Philosophy	20 (1)	13 (3)	12 (5)	13 (3)	15 (2)	10 (7)	12 (5)
Political essays	15 (1)	12 (2)	9 (4)	7 (5)	10 (3)	5 (6)	4 (7)
Economics	10 (1)	8 (3)	5 (6)	7 (5)	9 (2)	8 (3)	5 (6)
Sciences	15 (3)	14 (4)	18 (2)	21 (1)	9 (7)	10 (6)	11 (5)
	University	Grande École	Secondary	Technical	Primary		
Detective novels	28	27	27	32	24		
Adventure stories	17	14	22	27	17		
Historical accounts	47	49	42	41	25		
Art books	25	24	22	18	10		
Novels	65	54	62	60	35		
Philosophy	19	13	15	11	7		
Political essays	16	14	6	6	3		
Economics	12	19	5	3	4		
Sciences	18	27	11	10	6		

according to the same law, it is because a refusal to indulge in this activity, which is suspected of being "vulgar" by reasons of its wide availability (*divulgation*), is one of the least expensive ways of expressing cultural pretensions (see Table 6.2).<sup>3</sup>

These indicators probably tend to minimize to a large extent the divergences between the different sections of the dominant classes. Indeed, most cultural consumer goods also imply an economic cost, theater-going, for instance, depending not only on the level of education (in a population of executive personnel it ranges from 41 percent to 59 and 68 percent between the primary, secondary, and higher levels) but also on income (i.e., 46 percent for incomes less than 20,000 francs per year against 72 percent for incomes more than 75,000 francs); furthermore, equipment such as FM radio or hi-fi sets may be used in very different ways (e.g.,

to listen to modern music or dance music), and the value accorded to these different utilizations may be just as disparate, by reference to the dominant hierarchy of possible uses, as the different kinds of reading or theater; thus, as is shown in Table 6.2, the position of the different sections, arranged in a hierarchy in terms of the interest they place in the different kinds of reading, tends to draw nearer to their position in the hierarchy set up in terms of wealth in cultural capital the more that it is a question of reading-matter which depends more upon level of education and which is placed higher in the hierarchy of degrees of cultural legitimacy.

With the exception of the liberal professions, who occupy, in this field too, a high position, the structure of the distribution of economic capital is symmetric and opposite

TABLE 6.3 Distribution of Economic Capital

	<i>Heads of Industry</i>	<i>Heads of Commerce</i>	<i>Professional</i>	<i>Managers</i>	<i>Engineers</i>	<i>Civil Servants</i>	<i>Teachers</i>
Own their own residence	70	70	54	40	44	38	51
Upper-category automobile	33	34	28	22	21	20	12
Holidays in hotel	32	26	23	21	17	17	15
Boat	13	14	14	12	10	8	8
Average income in thousands of francs	33	36	41	37	36	32	33
(Rate of non-declaration)	(24)	(28)	(27)	(13)	(9)	(8)	(6)

to the structure of the distribution of cultural capital—that is to say, in order, heads of industry and of commerce, professionals, managers, engineers, and, lastly, civil servants and teachers (see Table 6.3).

Those sections which are richest in cultural capital are more inclined to invest in their children's education at the same time as in cultural practices liable to maintain and increase their specific rarity; those sections which are richest in economic capital set aside cultural and educational investments to the benefit of economic investments: it is to be noted, however, that heads of industry and commerce tend to do this much more than do the new "bourgeoisie" of the managers who reveal the same concern for rational investment both in the economic sphere and in the educational sphere.<sup>5</sup> Relatively well provided for with both forms of capital, but not sufficiently integrated into economic life to put their capital to work within it, the professionals (and especially lawyers and doctors) invest in their children's education but also and above all in consumer goods capable of symbolizing the possession of the material and cultural means of conforming to the rules governing the bourgeois style of life and thereby guaranteeing a so-

cial capital or capital of social relationships which will provide, if necessary, useful "supports": a capital of honorability and respectability which is often indispensable if one desires to attract clients in socially important positions, and which may serve as currency, for instance, in a political career.

In fact those sections which are richest in cultural capital have a larger proportion in an educational institution to the extent that the institution is highly placed in the specifically academic hierarchy of educational institutions (measured, for instance, by the index of previous academic success); and this proportion attains its maximum in the institution responsible for ensuring the reproduction of the academic body (École Normale Supérieure) (Table 6.4).<sup>6</sup>

[T]he educational system tends to reproduce (in the double sense of the word) the structure of relations between the structure of the distribution of cultural capital and the structure of the distribution of economic capital among the sections both in and by the relations of opposition and complementarity which define the system of institutions of higher education. In fact, to the extent that it is the product of the application of two opposed principles of hierarchical ordering,

TABLE 6.4 Cultural Capital and Educational Investment

	Faculty				Prep. Class for Polytech.	ENA	Poly- tech.	Ulm Arts	Ulm Sc.
	Law	Medicine	Science	Arts					
Proportion of teachers' children	3.2	4.5	4.5	5.2	5.4	9.0	9.9	19.4	17.7
Index of previous academic success	0.4		0.3	0.5	1.2	2.0	2.9	3.1	3.6

ENA: École Nationale d'Administration

Ulm Arts: École Normale Supérieure d'Ulm (Arts)

Ulm Sc.: École Normale Supérieure d'Ulm (Science)

the structure of the system of institutions of higher education may be interpreted in a twofold way: *the dominant hierarchy within the educational institution*, i.e., the hierarchy which orders the institutions in terms of specifically academic criteria and, correlatively, in terms of the proportion of those sections richest in cultural capital figuring in their public, is opposed diametrically to *the dominant hierarchy outside the educational institution*, i.e., the hierarchy which orders the institutions in terms of the proportion in their public of those sections richest in economic capital (and in power) and according to the position in the hierarchy of the economic capital and power of the professions to which they lead. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Analysis of the specifically academic mechanisms according to which apportionment is effected between the different institutions makes it possible to understand one of the most subtle forms of the trick (*ruse*) of social reason according to which the academic system works objectively toward *the reproduction of the structure of relations between the sections of the dominant classes* when it appears to make full use of its own principles of hierarchical ordering.<sup>8</sup> Knowing, first, that academic success is directly dependent on cultural capital and on the in-

clination to invest in the academic market (which is itself, as is known, dependent on the objective chances of academic success) and, consequently, that the different sections are recognized and approved by the school system the richer they are in cultural capital and are also, therefore, all the more disposed to invest in work and academic prowess,<sup>9</sup> and knowing, second, that the support accorded by a category to academic sanctions and hierarchies depends not only on the rank the school system grants to it in its hierarchies but also on the extent to which its interests are linked to the school system, or, in other words, on the extent to which its commercial value and its social position depend (in the past as in the future) on academic approval, it is possible to understand why the educational system never succeeds quite so completely in imposing recognition of its value and of the value of its classifications as when its sanctions are brought to bear upon classes or sections of a class which are unable to set against it any rival principle of hierarchical ordering. While those sections which are richest in economic capital authorize and encourage a life-style whose seductions are sufficient to rival the ascetic demands of the academic system and while they ensure or promise guarantees beside

which the college's guarantees can only appear both costly and of little value ("academic qualifications don't give you everything"), those sections which are richest in cultural capital have nothing to set against the attraction exercised by the signs of academic approval which make their academic prowess worthwhile to them. In short, the effectiveness of the mechanisms by means of which the educational system ensures its own reproduction encloses within itself its own limitation: although the educational system may make use of its relative autonomy to propose and impose its own hierarchies and the university career which serves as its topmost point, it obtains complete adherence only when it preaches to the converted or to lay brethren, to teachers' sons or children from the working or middle classes who owe everything to it and expect everything of it. Far from diverting for its own profit children from the dominant sections of the dominant classes (as one may be led to believe by a few striking examples which authorize the most conservative sections of the bourgeoisie to denounce the corruption of youth and teachers or the intellectuals to believe in the omnipotence of their ideas), it puts off children from the other sections and classes from claiming the value of their academic investments and from drawing the economic and symbolic profit which the sons of the dominant section of the ruling classes know how to obtain, if necessary, better situated as they are to understand the relative value of academic verdicts.

But would the school system succeed so completely in diverting for its own profit those categories which it recognizes as possessing the greatest value (as is shown, for instance, by the difference in academic quality between students from the ENS and those from the ENA) if the diplomas that it awards were convertible at par on the market of money and power? The limits of the auton-

omy allowed to the school system in the production of its hierarchies coincide exactly with the limits objectively assigned to its power of guaranteeing outside the academic market the economic and symbolic value of the diplomas it awards. The same academic qualifications receive very variable values and functions according to the economic and social capital (particularly the capital of relationships inherited from the family) which those who hold these qualifications have at their disposal and according to the markets in which they use them: it is known, for instance, that the professional success of the former students of the *École des hautes études commerciales* (recruited, for the most part, among the Parisian business section) varies far more in relation to the way in which they obtained their first professional post (i.e., through family relations or by other ways) than in relation to their position in the college-leaving examination; it is also known that civil servants whose fathers were white-collar workers received in 1962 an average yearly salary of 18,027 francs as against 29,470 francs for civil servants whose fathers were industrialists or wealthy tradespeople (Praderie 1966:346-47). And if, as has been shown by the survey carried out by the Bouilloche commission over 600 firms, only 2.4 percent of the 17,000 administrative personnel employed by these firms have degrees or are doctors of science as against 37 percent who have diplomas from an engineering *grande école*, it is because those who possess the most prestigious qualifications also have at their disposal an inherited capital of relationships and skills which enable them to obtain such qualifications; this capital is made up of such things as the practice of the games and sports of high society or the manners and tastes resulting from good breeding, which, in certain careers (not to mention matrimonial exchanges which are opportunities for increasing the social capital or honorability and relationships), con-

stitute the condition, if not the principal factor, of success.<sup>10</sup> The habitus inculcated by upper-class families gives rise to practices which, even if they are without selfish motives, such as cultural activities, are extremely profitable to the extent that they make possible the acquisition of the maximum yield of academic qualifications whenever recruitment or advancement is based upon co-optation or on such diffuse and total criteria as "the right presentation," "general culture," etc.<sup>11</sup>

What this amounts to is that, as in a pre-capitalist economy in which a guarantee is worth as much as the guarantor, the value of the diploma, outside the specifically academic market, depends on the economic and social values of the person who possesses it, inasmuch as the yield of academic capital (which is a converted form of cultural capital) depends upon the economic and social capital which can be put to its valorization: for the industrialist's son who comes out of HEC, the diploma is only an additional qualification to his legitimately succeeding his father or to his occupying the director's post guaranteed for him by his network of family relations, whereas the white-collar worker's son, whose only way of obtaining the same diploma was by means of academic success, cannot be sure of obtaining a post of commercial attaché in the same firm. In a word, if, as is shown by the analysis of the social and academic characteristics of the individuals mentioned in *Who's Who*, the diploma is all the more indispensable for those from families less favored in economic and social capital, the fact remains that the educational system is less and less in a position to guarantee the value of the qualifications that it awards the further one goes away from the domain that it controls completely, namely, that of its own reproduction; and the reason for this is that the possession of a diploma, as prestigious as it may be, is in any case less and less capable of guarantee-

ing access to the highest positions and is never sufficient to guarantee in itself access to economic power. Inversely, as is shown by the diagram of correlation, access to the dominant classes and, *a fortiori*, to the dominant sections of the dominant classes, is relatively independent of the chances of gaining access to higher education for those individuals from sections closest to economic and politico-administrative power, i.e., top civil servants and heads of industry and commerce. . . . It would appear, therefore, that the further one goes away from the jurisdiction of the school system the more the diploma loses its particular effectiveness as a guarantee of a specific qualification opening into a specific career according to formalized and homogeneous rules, and becomes a simple condition of authorization and a right of access which can be given full value only by the holders of a large capital of social relationships (particularly in the liberal professions) and is, at its extreme limit, when all it does is legitimate heritage, but a kind of optional guarantee.

Thus the relative autonomy enjoyed by the academic market on account of the fact that the structure of distribution of cultural capital is not exactly the same as the structure of economic capital and of power gives the appearance of a justification for meritocratic ideology, according to which academic justice provides a kind of resort or revenge for those who have no other resources than their "intelligence" or their "merit," only if one chooses to ignore, first, that "intelligence" or academic goodwill represents but one particular form of capital which comes to be added, in most cases, to the possession of economic capital and the correlative capital of power and social relationships, and, second, that the holders of economic power have more chances than those who are deprived of it also to possess cultural capital and, in any case, to be able to do without it since academic qualifications are a weak cur-

rency and possess all their value only within the limits of the academic market.

## NOTES

1. The extremely close relationship that may be observed between museum attendance and level of education, on the one hand, and early attendance at museums, on the other hand, follows the same logic.
2. Sofres, *Le Marché des Cadres Supérieurs Français* (Paris, 1964).
3. A number of indicators suggest that the different sections of the dominant classes can also be distinguished according to the amount of free time at their disposal.
4. The figures in parentheses represent the positions of each section.
5. Managers have a much more "modernistic" style of life than do the traditional "bourgeoisie"—the heads of industry and commerce: they attain positions of power at a younger age; they more often possess university qualifications; they more often belong to larger and more modern businesses; they are the largest group to read the financial newspaper *Les Échos* (penetration index of 126 as opposed to 91 for heads of industry) and weeklies dealing with economics and finance (penetration index of 224 as against 190 for heads of industry); they seem less inclined to invest their capital in real estate; they indulge more often in "modern" leisure activities such as skiing, yachting, etc.
6. The analyses proposed below are based upon a systematic group of surveys, carried out over the last few years by the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, of the faculties of arts, sciences, law, and medicine, and of all the literary and scientific *grandes écoles* and of the preparatory classes for these colleges.
7. The discordance between the two hierarchies and the predominance, within the institution, of the specifically academic hierarchy is at the basis of the meritocratic illusion whose most typical form is the ideology of the "liberating effects of the school" along with the indignation aroused among teaching staff, who are the first victims of this kind of academic ethnocentrism, at the discordance between the social hierarchies and the academic hierarchies.
8. If the role of the system of institutions of higher education in the reproduction of the relations between the sections of the dominant classes often goes unnoticed, it is because surveys of mobility accord more attention to mobility between classes than to mobility within the different classes and, in particular, within the dominant classes.
9. For an analysis of the dialectic of approval and recognition at the final stage of which the school recognizes its members, or, in other words, those who recognize the school, see P. Bourdieu & M. de Saint-Martin (1970).
10. The proportion of students who play bridge or practice the "smart" sports increases the nearer one approaches the pole of economic power.
11. Any analysis which tends to consider cultural consumption as simple "conspicuous consumption," neglecting the directly palpable gratifications which always supplement symbolic gratifications, may well cause this fact to be forgotten. The simple ostentation of material prosperity, although it may not have such an obvious legitimating function as cultural ostentation, has at least the effect, in certain sections of the dominant classes, of vouching for success and of attracting confidence, esteem, and respect which, in certain professions, particularly the liberal ones, may serve as an important factor of success.
12. The fact that entrance into the liberal professions presupposes the possession of high academic qualifications should not conceal the fact that access to the highest positions in these professions doubtless depends scarcely any less than it does in the industrial and commercial sector on the possession of economic and social capital, as is shown by the presence of a very high rate of professional heredity, particularly in the elite of the medical profession where can be found veritable dynasties of chief doctors.

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