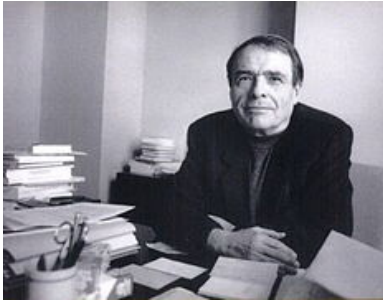


# Pierre Bourdieu

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Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) was a French sociologist and philosopher. His father was a postal worker. Pierre studied in Paris at École Normale Supérieure together with Louise Althusser (teacher of Michel Foucault). From Max Weber he retained the importance of domination and symbolic systems in social life, as well as the idea of social orders, which would ultimately be transformed by Bourdieu into a **THEORY OF FIELDS**. From Karl Marx he gained his understanding of 'society' as the ensemble of social relationships, grounded in the mode and conditions of economic production (*stratification*), and of the need to dialectically develop social theory from social practice. Bourdieu's theory of **CULTURAL REPRODUCTION** has been highly influential and has generated a great deal of literature, both theoretical and empirical.



"What exists in the social world are relations – not interactions between agents or intersubjective ties between individuals, but objective relations which exist independently of individual consciousness and will" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97).

Bourdieu's theory offers the perspective that human engagement and behaviour are socially constructed (1990). Engagement in a field is both competitive and strategic, with agents using a range of strategies to accumulate social, economic, cultural or symbolic capital. A field in Bourdieuan theory describes the physical, spatial and social territory in which 'agents occupy positions... aimed either at conserving or transforming the structure of forces that is constitutive of the field' (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30). The concept of **HABITUS** is important as is '**DOXA**' 'the universe of tacit presuppositions that we accept as the natives of a certain society (p. 37) in its form as unexamined everyday knowledge or pre-verbal beliefs.

To understand how education and arts activities influence the positioning in society, the understanding of the field (Bourdieu, 1979) becomes crucial. 'Taste', expressed in genres of music, books, leisure time activities, cloths, everyday habits and food can all be interpreted in a class context, and is a result of habitus. How you present yourself, cultural and ethnic, with your haircut, brands of clothes, ethnic and cultural marks, are all examples of the body **HÆXIS**. The class fractions vary because of the amount of economic capital and symbolic capital they inherit or are in a position to acquire.

## References

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