

What has become of the 'new *petite bourgeoisie*'?

The case of cultural managers in late 2000s France¹

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from the French by Jean Yves Bart

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8 In *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu showed that in the 1960s and 1970s, the fuzzy and
9 emerging positions of cultural intermediaries were occupied by graduates with
10 working-class roots who could not make the most of their educational capital as they
11 had not inherited the necessary social capital, and symmetrically by children of the
12 bourgeoisie who were deprived of the social capital required to reproduce the social
13 positions of their parents (Bourdieu, 1984: 119ff). Both groups could count on attrac-
14 tive yet loosely defined occupations in the fields of psychology, publicity or culture to
15 achieve a 'social infinitude' liable to offset the effects of the *déclassement* that comes
16 with the occupation of a position that is lower than they could expect, considering
17 respectively their level of qualification and their parents' occupations. These choices
18 fit within a broader quest for personal fulfillment and freedom, as they aspired to
19 have lifestyles that differed radically from those of agents holding positions that were
20 safer and better established, but also perceived as rigid and stifling, in the banking
21 or administrative sectors. The concept of 'new *petite bourgeoisie*' refers to this social
22 group and, in particular, to the combination of factors of which it is the product:
23 the transformation of the education system, redefined social stratification processes
24 through new social mobility trajectories, the invention of new occupations and social
25 positions, and the affirmation of the dispositions and lifestyles that come with them.

26 Three or four decades later, the effects of the above processes are a worthy subject
27 of investigation. In that it proposes an approach that encompasses all of these different
28 factors, Bourdieu's analytical scheme remains a valuable tool for understanding the
29 trajectories of more recent generations—however, its application in the late 2000s
30 yields markedly different insights. In this chapter, I use this interpretive model to shed
31 light on a contemporary society that has experienced far-reaching transformations.

1 This allows me both to test the current relevance of an important hypothesis formu-
 2 lated in *Distinction* and to investigate some of the changes that have occurred since
 3 the book was published. The effects of the second educational 'boom'² have now
 4 combined with those of long-term mass unemployment and led to significantly lower
 5 prospects for upward social mobility and increasing difficulties for newcomers on the
 6 job market to match the social positions of their elders (Chauvel, 1998; Peugny, 2009).
 7 In this context, cultural intermediary positions can still offer a refuge to those threat-
 8 ened with *déclassement*, but as both graduates with working-class roots and inheritors
 9 excluded from the education system have fewer chances to access them, they are now
 10 in the sights of those who are facing *déclassement* even though they have both high
 11 educational capital and high social backgrounds. As women are more often in such
 12 situations than men, for precisely this reason there are more women who apply for
 13 such positions.

14 In France, cultural manager or art manager positions share the main features of
 15 the cultural intermediaries, and provide a good angle from which to assess these
 16 changes. These occupations are first defined negatively, since they are not about artis-
 17 tic creation (comedians or writers), technical work (lighting engineers or proofread-
 18 ers), commentary or analysis (critics, historians of literature), or pedagogy (music
 19 or art teachers). Even though they share some similarities, cultural managers are to
 20 be distinguished from the better established cultural intermediary positions, such as
 21 librarians or museum curators: their emergence is much more recent and, unlike
 22 them, they have no specialized curricula leading to a specific status and occupation,
 23 and therefore do not constitute a body of professionals endowed with a collective
 24 representation. Cultural manager is not a 'profession' in the strict sense; the cultural
 25 managers make up a professional group with fuzzy boundaries (Abbott, 1988). Seen
 26 from the angle of their place in the work team, cultural managers are the organiza-
 27 tional component of the 'support personnel' who, according to Becker, do no creative
 28 work, but make artistic creation and its presentation to the public possible (Becker,
 29 1982). Their roles range from managing cultural institutions to programming;
 30 they also perform strictly administrative and organizational tasks such as promotion,
 31 communication or 'cultural mediation'. They have the social positions of educated
 32 members of the middle and upper classes, but their social status and remuneration
 33 varies wildly, in particular depending on the size and resources of the organization
 34 that employs them. It is worth noting that—at least in France—cultural manager
 35 positions are more often found in the subsidized public sector than in the private
 36 sector, even though the 'cultural industries' of publishing, film or the art business are
 37 part of their professional world.

38 In this study, my main objective was to analyze the social reasons explaining why
 39 individuals pursue cultural management as a career path; I have therefore focused
 40 on the individuals who aspire to hold these positions, rather on those already in
 41 place. I have studied the features of applicants to the training courses that lead to
 42 these jobs—namely academic master's programs in the field (the fifth year of higher
 43 education in the French system). The main method used was the administration of
 44 an online questionnaire, to which around 1,500 individuals responded. A sample of
 45 654 individuals was eventually selected after the removal of duplicates, incomplete

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1 responses and some atypical profiles. The responses were then subjected to three
 2 multiple correspondence analyses (MCA), probing the applicants' backgrounds, their
 3 future projects and their cultural tastes. In addition to this, we conducted twenty
 4 biographical interviews and a qualitative analysis of forty application files; this research
 5 was also enriched by the empirical experience accumulated over my twenty years of
 6 teaching in such programs.

7 I will first elaborate on three salient trends in these applications, which reflect
 8 the main changes that have occurred since Bourdieu first wrote about the new *petite*
 9 *bourgeoisie*. The first pertains to the increasing weight of educational capital in social
 10 reproduction (a process that had already begun then), and more generally to the
 11 transformations of the education system. The second development under study is
 12 the feminization of access to these positions. I introduce the dimension of gender, to
 13 which Bourdieu had given little consideration at that point in his research. The
 14 third trend highlighted is the elevation of the applicants' social backgrounds and the
 15 correlative decline of upward social trajectories in the orientation toward cultural
 16 intermediary positions. Lastly, I investigate the extent to which the relationship to the
 17 social world of these future cultural managers differs from that of their elders.³

18 **The effects of the transformations in the education system**

19 The generalization of access to secondary education, the relative social democrati-
 20 zation of higher education and the longer duration of education have resulted in
 21 higher educational requirements for accessing professional positions. Occupations in
 22 the cultural sector, which stand out through the high educational level of attainment
 23 of those who hold them, are also affected by this development. The younger gen-
 24 erations are much more qualified than the older ones. For instance, whereas 60 per
 25 cent of managers in the field of TV, radio and performing arts aged above 35 have
 26 successfully completed at least two years of higher education, the proportion reaches
 27 nearly 80 per cent for those under 35, including 56.7 per cent with three years of
 28 higher education or more.⁴ In other words, while at the time *Distinction* was written,
 29 cultural intermediary jobs could offer a refuge for individuals having acquired cul-
 30 tural capital within their family circle with no validation from the education system
 31 (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1979), these positions are now accessible only by higher
 32 education graduates. Even applicants to specialized programs in the field of cultural
 33 management stand out through their very high levels of educational capital. The first
 34 evidence of this is their higher achievements in the final secondary school exam (the
 35 *baccalauréat*): more of them receive honors (64 per cent, including 7 per cent of *men-*
 36 *tions très bien*—the highest honors—against 3.8 per cent of all university students).
 37 The relatively high representation of students in prestigious selective programs during
 38 early higher education is the second indicator of a high initial educational capital.
 39 More than one in four applicants have studied in a CPGE (preparatory school for
 40 enrollment in the *grandes écoles*), almost always following the literary/humanities cur-
 41 riculum, and 8 per cent have studied in an IEP (Institute of Political Studies)—the
 42 proportions for the general student population are by contrast, respectively, 3 per cent
 43 and roughly 0.35 per cent.⁵

1 Their specialized training is another factor distinguishing the future cultural man-
 2 agers of the 2000s from their predecessors. While the first arts management programs
 3 appeared in the US in the mid 1960s (DiMaggio, 1987; Peterson, 1987), they emerged
 4 only some twenty years later in France. The first cultural managers who were spe-
 5 cifically trained to hold these positions were therefore recruited only after the mid-
 6 1980s. Since then, the number of specialized programs has risen dramatically, from
 7 five in the early 1990s to around 120 twenty years later. This increase has resulted in a
 8 higher demand for specialized graduates; cultural managers from past generations had
 9 no such specialization in their training.

10 The professionalization process of cultural management jobs is connected with
 11 the development of specialized training programs, but does not suffice to explain it.
 12 This boom, indeed, reflects the dynamics proper to the transformations of higher
 13 education much more than it responds to a need for specially trained profession-
 14 als. The progressive imposition of the so-called ‘professionalization’ imperative in
 15 universities, which began progressively in the 1960s, intensified considerably in the
 16 2000s, particularly through the implementation of EU-initiated reforms. Everything
 17 happened so that, in the context of heightened competition between universities
 18 and their departments, the teachers in literature, humanities and social science—all
 19 fields where results in terms of integration into the labor market are considered
 20 insufficient—became more involved in the creation of so-called professionalizing
 21 courses, including programs focusing on preparation to work in the cultural sector,
 22 which have attracted many students. This is one of the reasons for the rise of these
 23 programs—not so much a response to a demand for manpower as the result of new
 24 constraints and of the competitions shaping the definition of the supply of academic
 25 training.

26 Before it even affects hiring conditions—holding a degree is now widely required
 27 to obtain a position—the wealth of available specialized training informs the students’
 28 projects for the future and contributes to the inclusion of cultural manager jobs in
 29 their space of professional possibilities. Our study shows that the students from litera-
 30 ture and humanities departments who make up the bulk of the applicants to cultural
 31 master’s programs, when asked to formulate a professional career plan, diverted away
 32 from teaching careers because of the degradation of the teachers’ status and the scar-
 33 city of available positions. Faced with competition from graduates in economics, law
 34 or marketing for access to executive positions, they turn to the cultural sector both
 35 because it fits their dispositions and the type of educational capital they hold, and
 36 because the existence of specialized programs in their department encourages them
 37 to pursue this path.

38 Due to the combination of the generalized increase of the weight of educational
 39 capital in the conditions of access to a social position, the professionalization of
 40 cultural sector jobs, and the changes that have occurred in the higher education
 41 system, cultural intermediary positions are no longer entrusted to individuals trained
 42 on the job, or whose low level of educational attainment is compensated by other
 43 relational or cultural resources, as was still the case in the early 1980s. Conversely,
 44 access to these positions now hinges on heightened educational selection, which did
 45 not exist when the new *petite bourgeoisie* emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

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1 The reasons for feminization

2 The feminization of the job market has been another major structural transforma-
3 tion of French society. One indicator among many is particularly eloquent in this
4 respect: while fewer than half of the women aged 25 to 59 worked in 1968, more
5 than 75 per cent did so forty years later (Afsa Essafi and Buffeteau, 2006). Cultural
6 sector jobs, and more precisely the population of the applicants to such occupa-
7 tions, have clearly reflected this trend. In addition to the main factors singled out
8 by Bourdieu to define the new *petite bourgeoisie*—social background and educational
9 capital—gender now plays a key role in the orientation toward cultural intermediary
10 positions.

11 The main feature that distinguishes applicants to cultural manager jobs from other
12 higher education programs is indeed the very high proportion of women: 85 per cent
13 among the applicants and 80 per cent among students in cultural management mas-
14 ter's programs, against 56.5 per cent of women among the general student population
15 in 2004—only in paramedical and social work schools are similar numbers observed
16 (83 per cent). Proportions are systematically lower in programs preparing students
17 for related occupations, not to mention in scientific training, where women remain
18 traditionally in the minority.

19 How are we to interpret the fact that cultural manager positions attract women in
20 such numbers? The gendered identities of professional occupations ('a man's job' vs.
21 'a woman's job') are often thought to explain positive choices (by projection) or
22 negative choices (by excluding activities reputed to be reserved to the opposite sex
23 from one's space of possibles). Such mechanisms are only partially at work in cultural
24 management. These positions are too recent or too weakly established to be assigned
25 a gender identity; besides, the sector is far from being as feminized as one might
26 assume. Women are in the minority in the cultural sector as a whole (43 per cent in
27 2007); two-thirds of posts of directors, curators and producers in TV, radio and the
28 performing arts, coveted by many applicants, are held by men.⁶

29 The large majority of women among the applicants does not reflect the choice of
30 a traditionally female sector; it indicates an ongoing feminization process. Since the
31 1980s, a similar process has been observed for executives in newspapers, publishing,
32 TV, radio and performing arts, and among art and performing arts professionals—
33 a particularly marked trend in the younger generations: in addition to publishing,
34 where they were already increasingly numerous, the proportion of women dramati-
35 cally increased in the performing arts, where gender parity has now been reached
36 among those under 30. The process has also been observed in certain typical cultural
37 management positions, such as managers of municipal cultural departments.

38 A first explanation for the overrepresentation of women among the applicants to
39 cultural managements programs lies in the combination of disciplinary orientations
40 and the longer duration of studies that defines the dynamics of women's educational
41 trajectories. The traditional pattern whereby young women already start turning to
42 literary curricula at high school level, even when their results in scientific subjects
43 match the boys', still plays a key role, whether it is thought to be a result of self-
44 exclusion, of the dissuasive effects of teachers' verdicts, of parental expectations, or

1 of the highlighting of the supposed feminine connotations of literary courses (Marry,
2 2000). The same pattern is also observed upon access to higher education, not only
3 because the choices made at high school level prevent girls from enrolling in scien-
4 tific curricula, but also because among the holders of scientific *baccalauréats*, more
5 girls choose literary subjects than boys (Convert, 2006). At the later stages of higher
6 education, choices become increasingly related to professional career plans as expect-
7 tations in terms of employment rise. Cultural sector jobs can then appear as a possible
8 and desirable way out for female students, who make up a large majority in curricula
9 such as arts, literature, languages or social sciences, where the main career prospect is
10 teaching, but which also indirectly provide an opening to work in the cultural field.
11 The large number of young women in cultural management programs may thus
12 result not so much from a direct effect of gender on the 'choice' of this sector as from
13 a succession of past choices, informed by gender rationales at every step of the way,
14 and at the end of which the amount and type of educational capital accumulated leads
15 their holders to perceive cultural sector jobs as a possible aspiration.

16 A second explanation lies in the differences between genders in the relationships
17 to cultural and artistic practices, and in their differentiated effects on professional
18 career paths. It has been long established that more women than men have cultural
19 practices—at least in certain fields (Bourdieu and Darbel, 1991). Many recent studies
20 have evidenced a trend toward the feminization of these practices: gaps are widening
21 for practices that were already predominantly female (such as reading), and narrowing
22 for chiefly male ones (such as amateur music). Since a strong correlation has been
23 observed between the intensity of cultural practices and the aspiration to pursue
24 careers in the cultural field, the feminization of cultural practices may very well be
25 among the factors affecting the feminization of career paths in this sector.

26 It is worth mentioning that the investments of men and women in these jobs
27 differ; they do not target the same positions, and differences are particularly observed
28 in creative vs. non-creative jobs. The overall trend toward the increase in the number
29 of applicants for artistic jobs should not lead us to overlook gender differences. These
30 vary from one sub-sector to the next: though they make up the majority of con-
31 sumers, women still are in the minority among creators (even though their numbers
32 are increasing)—not to mention the very unequal chances of reaching prominent
33 positions. Thus, the combination of the women's more intense cultural practices and
34 dispositions, and the endurance of a gendered division of labor in which creation is a
35 male business, may explain the very large number of women among those pursuing
36 cultural administration careers—a pattern similar to that observed for many years in
37 librarians and museum mediators, which are positions typically sought by 'women of
38 the *petite bourgeoisie* [...] inclined to appropriate at any price [...] the distinctive and
39 therefore distinguished properties of the dominant classes and to contribute to their
40 imperative popularization, in particular with the aid of the circumstantial symbolic
41 power that their position in the apparatus of production or circulation of cultural
42 goods [...] may confer on their proselytizing zeal' (Bourdieu, 2001: 101–102). This
43 could be seen as a way for women to find their place in a world where their distinctive
44 type of capital is valued, while remaining in their place, i.e. without subverting the
45 usual gendered division of tasks.

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1 Women are both less inclined to pursue creative artistic careers and more likely
2 to give them up. Dancers are a case in point, as motherhood often cuts their careers
3 short (Sorignet, 2010). When artists become teachers, more men go on to be both
4 artists and teachers, whereas more women give up their artistic work (Cacouault-
5 Bitaud, 2007). These differences can be observed at an early stage, even before
6 the beginning of artistic careers, when we look at professional aspirations. Among
7 aspirants to cultural management careers, fewer women envision a career as an artist
8 (32 per cent against 44 per cent of men) and more of them give up on this pros-
9 pect (47.5 per cent against 40 per cent of men). Cultural management can in this
10 sense allow artists who cannot expect to draw a sufficient and stable income from
11 their art to avoid an overly painful renouncement by reinvesting their disposition,
12 their network and the skills they have accumulated over the course of their artistic
13 career. The predominance of women among those who pursue careers in cultural
14 management can therefore also be interpreted as a result of their greater tendency to
15 give up on creative work and opt for a relatively smooth career transition. This is yet
16 another case of the reproduction of the gendered division of labor, in which produc-
17 tion is mostly assigned to men while women tend to be entrusted with mediation
18 and management.

19 This raises the question of the meaning of these professional career choices within
20 the broader perspective of gender inequality. The educational choices discussed
21 above can be interpreted as those of 'dominated' individuals who anticipate their
22 likely social fate (Baudelot and Establet, 1992), which includes the acceptance of the
23 often low earning prospects that characterize cultural sector jobs, often envisioned
24 as a secondary source of income for the future household. The great number of
25 women in these programs in effect contributes to sustaining a gendered division of
26 labor in which men tend to be assigned the better paid and more powerful positions
27 (including economically), while women are entrusted with the role of maintaining
28 symbolic capital and social status (Bourdieu, 1984; Collins, 1988: 38–43). This does
29 not mean these career choices are to be seen as the illustration of female 'docility',
30 leading them to follow ready-made educational and professional trajectories and,
31 even when they succeed, to occupy secondary positions. Indeed, pursuing a career
32 in the cultural sector, through the uncertainty it entails and correlatively the oppor-
33 tunity for self-assertion it offers, can also be a way to achieve emancipation from a
34 likely fate (as the wariness towards teaching jobs seems to indicate). It may therefore
35 illustrate the hypothesis which posits that 'girls are less expected than boys to succeed
36 by following the canonical model of excellence based on competition, the rule of
37 mathematics, exclusive investment in one's career [and] have more leeway to assert
38 their tastes' (Marry, 2000: 292). The very high rates of women who pursue cultural
39 management careers should therefore not be seen as merely the reproduction of
40 gender stereotypes, as these careers can also constitute ways to stray from well worn
41 paths. However, they do not constitute a challenge to existing inequalities in the
42 gendered distribution of occupations, since the jobs accepted by these women are,
43 for the most, part low-earning positions. This choice is arguably neither about repro-
44 ducing nor about subverting masculine domination, but much more likely a matter
45 of coping with it.

1 Higher social backgrounds

2 Where cultural intermediary positions were once considered as opportunities for upward
3 social mobility *par excellence*, this has been strongly challenged by traditional forms of
4 socio-professional reproduction and by the strategies used by those best endowed in
5 educational and social capital to avoid *déclassement*. The working-class and lower-middle-
6 class children's collective dreams of social promotion through culture have now given
7 way to the upper- and upper-middle-class individuals' aspirations for self-fulfillment.

8 The upward social mobility strategies implemented by working-class graduates
9 have in the past resulted in the social diversification of some cultural occupations.
10 They had also been conducive to the emergence of a key component of the 'new *petite*
11 *bourgeoisie*', which in the 1960s and 1970s made up the bulk of those who occupied
12 the then new cultural intermediary positions (Bourdieu, 1984: 365–372). This social
13 diversification process has now been halted, if not reversed, as objective chances of
14 social promotion through access to more indeterminate positions have decreased. The
15 proportion of children of blue-collar workers and farmers has been steadily decreasing
16 in the fields of media, arts and performing arts, dropping from 22.5 per cent in 1982 to
17 19.3 per cent in 1992, and to 17 per cent ten years later, while concurrently increas-
18 ing in the executive and upper intellectual categories in which these occupations are
19 included (respectively 19.2 per cent in 1982 and 23 per cent in 1992 and 2002).⁷

20 Such backgrounds are now strongly in the minority, even among aspirants. Only
21 12 per cent of applicants to master's programs in cultural management have a work-
22 ing-class background (here, I use this term to refer to blue-collar workers, employees
23 and farmers), against 20 per cent of all master's students.⁸ To some extent, this also
24 applies to holders of intermediary occupations: although they are present
25 in higher proportions (22 per cent, roughly the same share as in the labor force), they
26 are mostly found among the most educated of these occupations (as is evidenced by
27 the majority of schoolteachers among them). Conversely, a significant proportion of
28 the applicants to cultural management programs have a privileged social background.
29 Nearly half of the students (more than 45 per cent) in these master's programs are
30 children of executives or of holders of upper intellectual occupations,⁹ against only
31 37 per cent of all master's level students.

32 This elevation of the aspirants' social backgrounds partly reflects the develop-
33 ment of a professional reproduction process that is fairly common elsewhere, but
34 largely unprecedented in the field of cultural management. The inter-generational
35 transmission of professional positions in the field has increased significantly over the
36 past few decades. Among the applicants under study for this research, 17 per cent
37 have parents who work in the cultural sector. They may be largely in the minority,
38 but this proportion is still ten times higher than the estimated share of this sector on
39 the job market. In addition to being a factor of professional heredity, having parents
40 who work in the cultural sector and have the relevant dispositions and practices
41 (frequent cultural outings, reading, discussions, etc.) is largely a factor of intense
42 cultural socialization, which in turn encourages these students to choose this sector.
43 During a selection interview for access to a cultural management master's program,
44 a young woman explained: 'My dad is an artist, my mother works in the cultural

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1 media. I've been accustomed to this world ever since I was a kid, going to concerts,
 2 exhibitions, helping out at a festival to hand out leaflets ...' (observation, July 2011).
 3 As this example attests, distinctive cultural dispositions are being passed on, through
 4 the early acquisition of a sense of familiarity and practical experiences (handing out
 5 leaflets) that lead these children to move on from the world of the consumers to that
 6 of the producers. This is combined with the benefits drawn from the parents' social
 7 capital, which makes it easier for them to network in the field and obtain internships.

8 Arguably, this transmission reflects the extension of recently acquired familial
 9 positions more than the continuity of a long line. Indeed, many positions in the
 10 field were created when the parents of the current applicants entered the labor force.
 11 Those who benefit from this professional reproduction are thus likely, for the most
 12 part, to be the children of those who held the first cultural sector jobs, which they
 13 used to achieve upward social mobility and reach a level that their descendants try
 14 to maintain. The present-day aspirants are therefore the inheritors of the 'new *petite*
 15 *bourgeoisie*' rather than a new generation of its working-class component.

16 The trend toward higher and more restricted social backgrounds results not only
 17 from a mechanism of inter-generational transmission of professional positions; it is
 18 also influenced by the strategies used by upper-class children to fight *déclassement*. As
 19 they seek to avoid the risk of downward social mobility or tone down its effects, they
 20 leave less room for those who target the same positions in a perspective of upward
 21 mobility. A similar process happened with teaching since the stabilization of mass
 22 unemployment: upper-class children—again, mostly girls—were drawn to teaching,
 23 which in former generations used to constitute a vehicle for promotion for working-
 24 class children (Geay, 2002; Charles and Cibois, 2010).

25 In order to test this hypothesis of a strategy to fight social and educational
 26 *déclassement*, we have singled out those among the applicants who were high-
 27 achieving female students in literary subjects with upper-class backgrounds, a
 28 group that makes up 15 per cent of the overall population of applicants. This
 29 group can indeed be considered as characteristic of applicants both strongly
 30 endowed with social, cultural, educational and for some economic capital, and
 31 facing the likely inability to obtain positions matching this capital. In terms of
 32 cultural practices and professional experience, the backgrounds of its members do
 33 not differ much from the broader population of applicants (some features usually
 34 observed are sometimes heightened). Assessed on the basis of their artistic educa-
 35 tion and on the presence of family members working in the cultural sector, their
 36 cultural socialization is slightly higher and their tastes tend to favor legitimate art
 37 forms somewhat more. They have less anticipation of a career in cultural man-
 38 agement, but they more readily flesh out their projects in terms of functions or
 39 cultural sectors, as if the cultural resources accumulated during socialization in the
 40 family and in school were converted into a professional horizon once their stud-
 41 ies are ending and the time to choose a career path has arrived. Such is the case
 42 of Clara, the daughter of a 'well-to-do' physician. After studying for two years
 43 in a literary *classe préparatoire* in a prominent Parisian *lycée*, earning a bachelor's in
 44 literature and then unsuccessfully turning to sociology (she was unable to secure
 45 funding for her PhD), she started envisioning a career in the cultural field at a

1 rather late stage—a return to her roots, or rather a professional conversion of her
2 original cultural capital.

3 I told myself I couldn't do a PhD because I wouldn't get funding and we were
4 told so often that there was no future in sociology, so I was trying to find a way
5 out and I thought about culture because it's true, it was something [...] I grew
6 up in an environment where cultural activities were quite encouraged, my par-
7 ents, my family, ever since I was a little kid we've been going to exhibitions,
8 I play music, I play the flute, I was able to do theatre. So yeah, I've travelled quite
9 a bit with my parents, I've seen cities, museums. I was already in a conducive
10 environment that allowed me to get access to all that culture, and then I thought
11 that actually my literature studies could also be a way to move on to that program
12 and turn toward cultural jobs.¹⁰

13 Whereas at other times, similar trajectories are likely to lead to a teaching career,
14 here it predisposes Clara to reject it. This is why it is necessary to consider paths of
15 access to different sectors, which requires going back to the social logics of attraction
16 to indeterminate positions analyzed by Bourdieu in his sociology of the new *petite*
17 *bourgeoisie*. While upward social mobility for working-class graduates is now much
18 more difficult, the conditions for the social maintenance of upper-class children have
19 changed drastically. Due to the generalization of the longer duration of studies, and
20 to the transformations that impacted the role of educational capital and the different
21 forms it takes (e.g. the decline of literature and the humanities), these children (espe-
22 cially girls), who now face more competitive selection in school and more often fall
23 through the cracks, often seek to capitalize on their family inheritance by maximizing
24 a form of educational capital that is devalued (particularly in literature).

25 In this context, cultural management programs constitute both a way to avoid
26 teaching (now a devalued occupation), which used to be one of the main career
27 paths chosen by students in the humanities; an outlet for cashing in on the cultural
28 dispositions inherited from family socialization; and, if not offering clear professional
29 career perspectives, at least holding out the hope of finding one's place in a world that
30 enjoys a certain degree of social prestige. This is made easier by the fact that the weak
31 codification of cultural occupations, and of the paths to access them, often creates
32 intermediate situations well suited to avoid experiencing failure, which might happen
33 brutally when seeking more established positions; in other words, they are lifelines for
34 individuals who face the risk of educational and social *déclassement*, and because they
35 are women with upper-class backgrounds, are less affected than others by restrictions
36 pertaining to job stability and income. The social and symbolic capital that they can
37 expect to gain by having an occupation in the cultural sector compensates this risk.

38 **Coping with the social world: the aspiring cultural manager's** 39 **relationship to work**

40 The trajectories that defined the new *petite bourgeoisie* of the 1960s and 1970s were con-
41 nected with a set of dispositions (cult of self-fulfillment, quest for the new in opposition

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1 to traditional bourgeois tastes and lifestyles) embedded in a relationship to the world
2 described by Bourdieu as a 'dream of social weightlessness' (Bourdieu, 1984). These
3 people had to find their place in society, but refused to be assigned a fixed position,
4 and entertained the idea of always being able to move, which was the cornerstone
5 of their belief in their own freedom. Many of these traits can be found in those who
6 today apply for cultural management programs. Yet the transformations of the objec-
7 tive conditions for achieving their plans for the future, with the threat of unemploy-
8 ment always looming, inevitably have affected the individuals' dispositions; they have
9 adjusted the anti-conformism of their elders to fit the restrictions of a more pressing
10 necessity. The transformations in their relationships to work shed light on this tension.

11 In the 1970s, the gap between students' aspirations and their opportunities, due to
12 educational inflation, resulted in a sense of collective disillusionment toward work,
13 then made possible by a context in which access to employment could not be a real
14 problem (Bourdieu, 1978, 1984). Both this gap and the sense of disillusionment
15 it elicited contributed to the rise of post-1968 critiques arguing that work made
16 it impossible to achieve the ideal of self-fulfillment they defended (Baudelot and
17 Gollac, 2003; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). This gap is now even wider, due
18 to the combination of the further massification of higher education after the mid-
19 1980s and the sharp deterioration of the job market—particularly for newcomers.
20 However, I argue that, at least under certain conditions, this gap is now less a motive
21 for refusing to work, or criticizing it collectively, but rather is increasingly experi-
22 enced as a prompt to achieve self-fulfillment through work, or even thanks to work.

23 The population under study here illustrates this hypothesis well. Jobs in the artistic
24 and cultural sectors are usually considered as ideals of satisfaction at work (Baudelot
25 and Gollac, 2003: 146, 162), in the sense that they allow rewards in multiple forms,
26 whose diversity and combinations are not limited to the binary opposition between
27 monetary and symbolic gratifications. When considering aspiring cultural managers,
28 it is therefore less important to define the amount of these rewards, the way they
29 use of them, or their disillusionments toward them, than to investigate their belief in the
30 potency of these rewards, which make them more likely to meet social expectations
31 pertaining to self-fulfillment in and through their work. This is likely the result of
32 the increasing replacement of the 'work ethic', defined by Max Weber as a constitutive
33 feature of the development of capitalism (Weber, 2002), by the blend of the personal
34 and professional that characterizes its contemporary forms (Boltanski and Chiapello,
35 2005). More precisely, this relationship to work is specific to individuals whose char-
36 acteristics (a majority of women with rather high social backgrounds, high cultural
37 capital and few secure prospects for the future) lead them to see this blurring of the
38 lines between the personal and the professional as desirable, and to find in cultural
39 sector jobs a way to achieve it and to extend the indetermination of their youth. It
40 is in this light that the frequent statements in which professional career choices are
41 presented as a direct extension of personal life and identity should be understood:
42 'My goal is to transform my personal desires and interests into a professional career
43 plan' [applicant to a master's program, observation, July 2011].

44 Because they want to 'be themselves' at work and look for a job that 'fits
45 them', applicants express expectations for their professional career that mirror their

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1 self-described dispositions and/or qualities. Those who claim to have soft skills, which
 2 are generally associated with feminine dispositions and high levels of cultural capital,
 3 emphasize the quality of human relationships and interactions at work (teamwork,
 4 atmosphere). Those who have internalized values of autonomy and initiative and pres-
 5 ent them as personal qualities are eager to have freedom in the way they organize
 6 their work, and independence in their choices (many want, for instance, to be able to
 7 develop their own projects, or to put together the program of a festival or venue them-
 8 selves). As they possess two types of cultural capital (through their family and through
 9 their studies), they are inclined to keep accumulating knowledge after completing
 10 their education. They use their adaptability and versatility to develop skills expected
 11 in future professional experiences. Dispositions toward open-mindedness, particularly
 12 regarding culture, translate into a search for new horizons that is held up as an objec-
 13 tive in their future career. While finer analysis would be necessary in order to show
 14 how the respective work-related expectations are weighted according to individual
 15 characteristics, the above constitutes the shared basis of the applicants' relationships
 16 to work. Below, Clarisse combines these features in a virtually ideal-typical manner:

17 Born in 1987, Clarisse is the daughter of a couple of marketing executives; her
 18 mother previously worked as a lawyer. She was a good student: after graduating
 19 high school (literary *baccalauréat*), she was accepted into a literary *classe préparatoire*,
 20 then studied in a regional Institute of Political Studies before being admitted into
 21 a highly selective cultural master's program. Right after her master's, she was
 22 offered a one-year work contract in an international cooperation organization,
 23 where she manages a youth cultural education program. During the interview,
 24 she uses her current work experience as the basis for describing her expectations
 25 toward the professional career she has just started. 'There are conditions that you
 26 can't measure financially that suit me [very well]. From a purely relational point
 27 of view, you know, when you go to work everyday and you feel good in a team
 28 where there's a good atmosphere, well, it changes a lot of things. I'm very happy,
 29 especially with the people with whom I'm in touch for my job. Time-wise, we
 30 organize our week sort of as we want to, as long as we put in the hours. So
 31 because of all these factors that have no direct connection to money, I like it
 32 [...]. It's the participative aspect of it, you see, developing your personality, and
 33 while you're at it discovering new horizons, be they artistic or cultural [...], from
 34 the intercultural point of view, discovering, say, a new culture or a new country,
 35 a new language, other people coming from different horizons [...]. It's about
 36 expanding your skills, your knowledge and your sensibility through artistic fields,
 37 through themes, you think about identity, you think about what difference is
 38 [...] You discover your own skills and you also think globally with other people,
 39 other cultures. It's this combination of knowledge, skills, reflection, discovery of
 40 the other and self-discovery [that] I actually find super rewarding.

41 (Interview)

42 These projections are not as naïve or utopic as they may seem: they are associated
 43 with realistic, far less positive perspectives regarding employment conditions. This

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1 association can be the consequence of ‘values’ (such as wariness of material success) or
 2 of the preference toward a ‘cluster of non-monetary gratifications—psychological and
 3 social gratifications, appealing working conditions, few routine tasks, etc.—[which]
 4 makes it possible to compensate on the short- or long-term for the loss of income’
 5 (Menger, 2002: 52). It should, however, be related to the trajectories and dispositions
 6 on which adhesion to these values and the expression of this preference are based, and
 7 which also makes holding such occupations an elective choice. It is also necessary
 8 to consider the logic behind the anticipations of the types of gratification that can
 9 be expected in these jobs. In this perspective, this relationship to work of aspiring
 10 cultural managers, combining high expectations in terms of self-fulfillment and low
 11 expectations in terms of wage and employment conditions, can be understood as
 12 the product of personal social characteristics and histories (including gender, social
 13 background and education), which together constitute the basis of career choices in
 14 the cultural sector and the lack of concern for material considerations. It also oper-
 15 ates as a form of rationalization of this ‘choice’, which to some extent consists in
 16 accepting the likelihood of precariousness, as if to make a virtue of necessity, or to
 17 persuade others (and/or themselves) that they have picked a path they are entirely
 18 comfortable with.

19 Applicants expect relatively modest remuneration for several years after having
 20 completed their studies. Regardless of pay, they often know, and mention, how dif-
 21 ficult it is to find a job, let alone one that offers some stability. The flipside of this posi-
 22 tive relationship to work lies in the acceptance of perspectives of under-employment
 23 and more or less extended precariousness. Precarious or part-time contracts are the
 24 lot of young graduates in many sectors; they must cope with them insofar as these
 25 employment conditions have become the norm for newcomers in the job market.
 26 However, the prospect of having a less than decent job, which is often the case in the
 27 cultural sector, does not stop after the first few learning years. While the existence
 28 of a form of close-knit community between the educated often attenuates the pain-
 29 ful character of the subjective experience of unemployment or precariousness dis-
 30 guised as bohemia, the fact remains that the extension of the indeterminate time of
 31 youth and fulfillment in work come at the cost of often long-term uncertainty, which
 32 becomes less acceptable with time.

33 Though it has varied reasons and forms, depending on the applicants’ social prop-
 34 erties (particularly gender and social background), this mixture of realistic positivity
 35 and non-resigned acceptance characterizes the relationship to work of the aspiring
 36 cultural managers, which is itself embedded in a relationship to the social world that
 37 combines anti-conformism and accommodation to the social order.

38 **Conclusion**

39 In that it jointly considers the respective roles of educational capital and social
 40 background, the effects of the (upward or downward) direction of social mobility,
 41 and relationships to the future and, more generally, to the social world that match
 42 these factors, the analysis framework developed in *Distinction* to shed light on the
 43 social trajectories that lead individuals to seek out relatively indeterminate cultural

1 intermediate occupations remains largely relevant. The questions it raises by combin-
 2 ing an analysis in terms of life-style with the study of professional career paths provide
 3 valuable help in situating the positions of cultural intermediaries in the social space
 4 (i.e. defining them relationally by distinguishing them from others).

5 Yet this does not mean that the empirical observations made in *Distinction* should
 6 be considered as unchanging laws. While it was pertinent at the time of publication
 7 to speak of a ‘new’ *petite bourgeoisie* and of ‘new’ jobs, it obviously isn’t several decades
 8 later. More importantly, while the importance of educational capital in reproduc-
 9 tion strategies has ceaselessly increased since, other developments, which had already
 10 begun in the late 1970s, such as the feminization of the labor market and the rise of
 11 mass unemployment, were also considerably heightened after the 1980s, resulting in
 12 a situation that differs radically from that of previous decades.

13 In the specific case of cultural managers, none of the two typical social trajectories
 14 that used to characterize the new *petite bourgeoisie* has resisted these transformations.
 15 Even the graduates among working-class and lower-middle-class children are now
 16 virtually barred from accessing these jobs; only a few can aspire to be successful in
 17 the sector. Symmetrically, upper-class children can no longer expect to make it in
 18 the field if they do not possess a high educational capital, which was far less required
 19 for the preceding generations. While the cultural sector could previously be con-
 20 sidered as relatively open, both the social and educational hurdles have been raised
 21 quite high. These occupations are now increasingly affected by traditional patterns of
 22 socio-professional reproduction, and targeted by individuals with high social back-
 23 grounds and educational achievements as a means to prevent *déclassement*.

24 The space of the aspiring cultural managers is, overall, a narrower one—not in
 25 the sense of there being fewer of them, but in terms of their social and educational
 26 background. In order to stay wholly faithful to the approach developed in *Distinction*,
 27 this narrowing should be systematically related to the reduction of the space of pro-
 28 fessional possibles that has been under way since the 1960s in France. In that period
 29 of full employment and increased public expenditure, major socio-economic trans-
 30 formations, such as the development of a service economy, made career paths outside
 31 well established professional sectors less risky, and the invention of new professional
 32 positions possible. Mass unemployment, the trend toward less public expenditure and
 33 the institutionalization of the former ‘new’ jobs have considerably reduced the hori-
 34 zons of young people facing their career choice, forcing those who dream of ‘social
 35 weightlessness’ to figure out how to land earlier.

36 Notes

37 1X The translation of this paper received support from the Excellence Initiative of the University
 38 of Strasbourg funded by the French government’s Future Investments program.

39 2 After the first one during the 1960s, a second educational boom started in the mid-1980s
 40 in France. It consists, among other things, in longer schooling, a dramatic increase in the
 41 number of *baccalauréat* holders, and broader access to higher education.

42 3 This chapter presents some elements of research I conducted with the help of Victor
 43 Lepaux. For a comprehensive presentation of its findings, see Dubois (2013).

44 4 Source: INSEE, 2008 Population Census.

Line 37 insert:
 Translated from
 French by
 Jean-Yves Bart

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- 1 5 The *classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles* (CPGE) are selective education programs in
 2 which students are trained over two years for admission to the *grandes écoles* (such as the
 3 *Ecole normale supérieure*) which make up the elite of the French higher education system.
 4 The *Instituts d'études politiques* (IEP or Sciences Po), located in Paris and other large towns,
 5 are also selective establishments (whereas there is no selection for access to French univer-
 6 sities). They offer a multidisciplinary training (in economics, law, political science, history
 7 and foreign languages) and are more prestigious than the traditional university curricula.
 8 6 Sources: Ministère de la Culture-DEPS, *Chiffres clés 2011, professions culturelles et emploi* et
 9 INSEE, 2008.
 10 7 Source: INSEE Labor Force Survey, with additional statistical processing by the author.
 11 8 Source: Ministère de l'Éducation nationale, *Repères et références statistiques*, 2009. These
 12 categories make up between 55 and 60 per cent of the labor force.
 13 9 Source: SISE database, Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur.
 14 10 Interview with Flora—born in 1986, father physician, mother nurse, holder of a literary
 15 *baccalauréat*.
 16

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