

Article

Popular Habitus: Updating the Concept of “Habitus” as a Guide for the Selection of Cases of Analysis in Qualitative Digital Research

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Abstract: This research proposes an update of the use of the concept of “habitus”. In continuity with Wacquant, I suggest using habitus not only as an object of investigation, but also as a methodological tool, reintroducing it for qualitative studies of digital sociology. Additionally, it can be used as an analytical tool to guide the selection of cases of analysis in empirical research. The aim of this study is to provide researchers with a methodological tool in their toolbox that can apply categorizations that can guide the entire research process to interpret social differences and, consequently, the positions that subjects occupy in the social field through critical reconstruction. This study intends to use the concept of habitus, taking the following scheme into account: [(habitus)·(capital) + Field] = practice. However, the scheme is updated through the use of new indicators that are suitable for describing and categorizing subjects and their hybrid interaction in digital platforms, as well as in autochthonous contexts. For this reason, this study has provided an integration of new forms of capital with the classic ones identified by Bourdieu. In this study, habitus will be defined as “popular habitus”, i.e., a rigorous effort that is useful for finding the tools capable of determining which subjects are symbolically categorized in a “popular” representation of the self and in their practical predispositions, as well as which are not. Furthermore, through empirical examples, the capacity of the tool to understand the interaction between digital platforms and social subjects is highlighted, as well as the way in which this interaction contributes to shaping identities and social choices.



Received: 21 March 2025

Revised: 17 May 2025

Accepted: 22 May 2025

Published: 28 May 2025

Citation: Graziano, R. Popular Habitus: Updating the Concept of “Habitus” as a Guide for the Selection of Cases of Analysis in Qualitative Digital Research. *Societies* **2025**, *15*, 150. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc15060150>

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Keywords: habitus; categorization; digital sociology; selection of cases for analysis

1. Introduction

In any part of the world, limited to the social field¹ of reference, there are distinctive elements of esthetic representation, behavioral attitudes, and dispositions in relation to individuals living in the suburbs or the city center. Whether they have a high standard of living, live in poverty, or are relegated to the margins of society, sociologists and people who do not study social sciences tend to classify and categorize them into specific societal positions. We all classify people who represent a popular, middle-class, or upper-class esthetic for reasons inscribed in our habitus that have been historically incorporated [1]. Consequently, we classify others into certain positions in the social field through a naturalized pattern of thought (Doxa), which is the product of culture [2]. Therefore, I believe it is necessary to bring attention to a methodological question in the field of social sciences—how can we define which social subjects belong to these macro-categories mentioned above without being guided by common sense?

Furthermore, the question arises in a context in which the boundaries between social classes are much more blurred than in the classical class division of Fordist capitalism. Today, working conditions are not the only discriminating factor in defining one's position in the social stratification, even if employment has never been the only element determining a person's position, as was shown in Bourdieu's studies on consumption in the 1960s [3]. Categorization remains an important element for researchers in understanding, observing, and interpreting the social differences and, consequently, the positions that subjects occupy in the social field, including through critical reconstruction. Therefore, today more than ever, it is necessary to have tools in one's methodological toolbox that can apply categorizations that can guide the entire research process. Among other things, the problem of categorization is more complicated today in a digitalized society and becomes an even bigger problem for social scientists who are interested in the study of digital sociology. As such, we must consider how we can categorize the position occupied by social subjects in the online field. Also, one must consider how it is possible to categorize social subjects without using only numerical variables. This article seeks to answer these research questions using a Bourdieusian theoretical framework and the sociological approach that Bourdieu [1] defined as constructivist structuralism. This contribution reuses and updates the concept of habitus as a categorization tool for selecting cases for empirical research, specifically using an analytical model for qualitative social research that adopts non-probabilistic sampling techniques and/or case selection through a reasoned and targeted choice. The goal is to help researchers study hybrid contexts between offline and online environments. Furthermore, due to the nature identified by Bourdieu, habitus is not fixed but is changeable and manages to permeate the rigid boundaries of classificatory categories, better lending itself to describing digitalized reality. In this contribution, through an empirical example, I highlight how the concept of habitus can be used in the study of digital sociology, contributing to the selection of cases for analysis determined by their position in the social field. The study aims to use habitus, taking into account the following scheme: [(habitus)·(capital) + field] = practice [3]. This is used as an analytical tool but is updated for the digitalized online society [4]. Therefore, I have added new forms of "capital" to the classic forms identified by Bourdieu [1], specifically erotic capital [5] and autochthonous capital [6–8]. I have chosen to limit the field of investigation to those subjects who, due to their practical predispositions and self-representation, can be characterized as having a "popular" habitus.

2. Theoretical Framework

The Categorization Issue

Categorization is the process by which ideas and objects are recognized, differentiated, and understood. It involves grouping objects into categories, usually for a specific purpose [9,10]. Categorization, as an embedded preconception, is part of common sense and is conditioned by prior cultural dimensions, even for researchers who rigorously use operationalizable concepts to ensure the objectivity of the selection of cases for analysis [10]. This categorization process occurs at all stages of research, including in the definition of the research design [11] and in the selection of cases in classification processes based on the researcher's embedded thought patterns. The order of global categorization systems permeates even the most "orthodox" researchers because "the world we live in is characterized by a dialectical relationship between objective structures and subjective constructions and embedded mental schemas that allow us to get through each day" [12] (p. 112). In an attempt to objectify objectification in order to ensure accuracy in case selection, one might run the risk of studying social reality either as objective structures or as subjective constructions, thus ending up selecting cases through common sense with the pretense of objectivity [13]. This problem of case selection for the study of social reality is present in studies that use

quantitative parameters, where the aim is to generalize and transform a series of “real” situations into data and, subsequently, to codify properties into numerical variables [14] involving the objectification of the object of study. This is also present in research that adopts qualitative techniques, where the degree of objectification and detachment from social reality is lower than in quantitative techniques [10]. In any case, regardless of the techniques to be adopted during empirical research, to find answers or even explore social phenomena, a process of conceptual explanation or clarification is often indispensable [15] in order to have a reference point during the research and to catalog the subjects of study. One of the most useful examples used by social scientists in this regard, which has been adopted in both qualitative and quantitative approaches as well as mixed methods [11], is the concept of social class, which can position subjects. The concept of a class is formed or clarified by defining its semantic boundaries with concepts related to other classes [16]. The ideal criterion for a class would be a difference in exclusivity, i.e., a quality possessed by members of a class and which is completely absent from all cases outside of this class. Since the same phenomena can be classified in many different ways depending on the criteria chosen, as well as the fact that the same phenomenon, concerning different criteria, can be assigned to different and very varied groups, it follows that attempts at classification can be a source of confusion rather than guidance [10]. Furthermore, the rigidity of classes (according to the three rules of classification) of fundamentum divisionis, mutual exclusivity, and exhaustiveness [10] implies very rigid, static, and inflexible boundaries that are ill suited to the complexity of social reality. Moreover, social classes that differ from each other in a hierarchical stratification can be used as an example, which Marx defined precisely as “a group of individuals who have the same place in social production and consequently the same relationship to the means of production” [17], which, despite still having a strong significance and being a fundamental analytical parameter, fails to understand the complexity of cultural phenomena in a fragmented and non-homogeneous society such as today’s digitalized one. Furthermore, as early as the 1970s, Bourdieu succeeded in demonstrating that representation of and belonging to different social groups do not depend exclusively on structural or economic dimensions, despite his recognition of these as key elements [3]. For the author, other dimensions come into play in determining the positioning of individuals, such as cultural, social, and symbolic dimensions, which later became the famous forms of capital. To compensate for the rigidity of social classes (and social science classifications), Bourdieu, from a critical structuralist perspective, shows through his theory of practice ($[(\text{habitus}) \cdot (\text{capital}) + \text{field}] = \text{practice}$) that these boundaries, while decisive, are not so rigid, and it is the task of social scientists to grasp these nuances [18].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Objective

The main objective of this research is to use the conceptual framework of Bourdieu’s epistemological work on the concept of habitus as a tool to guide researchers in selecting cases to analyze in digital research. Thanks to the characteristics outlined by Bourdieu [1,3], habitus provides researchers with the cultural tools to classify subjects in a specific position in the social field [3]. Furthermore, in order to place habitus as an effective categorization tool in contemporary society, it is necessary to update the analytical construction of the habitus model. This is an additional objective of the present research, in which I integrate new forms of capital, which are well suited to the digitalized society, into Bourdieu’s classic scheme, generating a new model. In summary, the main objective of the research, in line with Wacquant’s studies, is to propose the concept of habitus as a methodological tool and not just as an object of research. In this study, to highlight this proposal, I emphasize how it

is also possible, in a platform society [19], to generate categorizations that are capable of critically studying social inequalities.

To highlight the applicability of this model, I use the categorization of subjects who embody a popular habitus as a case study; i.e., I propose a rigorous effort to find tools that are capable of determining which subjects are symbolically categorized in a “popular” representation and in their practical predispositions, and which are not. In an attempt to achieve this goal, I use a specific digital trend on the TikTok platform as a case study—the phenomenon of “malessere”² (meaning discomfort or unease).

3.2. *Habitus as a Compass for the Social Researcher*

The analytical concepts of Bourdieuan sociology ($[(\text{habitus}) \cdot (\text{capital}) + \text{field}] = \text{practice}$ [1–3]) are fundamental for studying the positions of subjects in the social field; they represent a strategy for categorizing subjects through which to choose the criteria that guide case selection and for targeted non-probabilistic sampling, based on reasoned choice. Contrary to the extremely deterministic views that have been produced, habitus is characterized by a strong component of elasticity. Furthermore, habitus and capital, in addition to being means of social differentiation, differ as instruments of action and social positioning [9]. They allow us to act and react within the social environments in which we are involved from time to time, while the field is the social space and the material and symbolic place in which we live every day. These three terms are inseparable in Bourdieu’s theory, and each of them needs the other two to survive [19] (p. 27). These three tools will be defined in this study as a model of habitus, since it would be redundant to explain their interconnection based on the above definition. In any case, I will explain their flexibility for this research.

The concept of habitus is actually an old philosophical idea that originated in the thinking of Aristotle and medieval scholasticism; it was taken up and developed by the French sociologist after the 1960s. However, Bourdieu was not the only one to use this ancient philosophical concept. Wacquant [8] highlights how, erroneously, sociological studies attribute the concept of habitus to Bourdieu. In fact, habitus can be found in Aristotle’s notion of *hexis*, which indicates a moral character that guides our feelings and desires. Habitus also received considerable attention in the studies of Thomas Aquinas, who stated that the term derives from *habeo*, meaning to acquire or possess [8]. In addition, other French sociologists had used the concept of habitus before Bourdieu, including Durkheim and his student Mauss in their study of religions, in which they argued for a “Christian habitus” [8]. The concept of habitus was also adopted by the German phenomenological school, by Husserl, who understood habitus as the mental connection between past experiences and imminent actions, as well as by his student Schutz, who used it to indicate “habitual knowledge”, i.e., a notion that resonates with that of *habitude*, as developed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty [8].

However, in this study, and as I try to highlight in the course of my research, I adopt the interpretation offered by Bourdieu, who wanted to use this concept to construct a dispositional theory of action that was capable of reintroducing time and the inventive capacity of agents within a structuralist anthropology. Pierre Bourdieu’s work constitutes a sociological refoundation of the concept in order to overcome the opposition between objectivism and subjectivism [9]. According to the French sociologist, habitus is a mediating construct that helps us reject the dualism between the individual and the social aspect that is widespread in common sense; therefore, it is a useful methodological tool for categorizing practices, as Wacquant has pointed out and as I try to highlight in this work.

Habitus has been defined by Bourdieu on several occasions, but for the purposes of this paper, I will take two more relevant definitions that I will discuss in the course of my research, along with some interpretations by leading scholars who have reinterpreted

Bourdieu's social theory. In a "practical sense" [1], Bourdieu defines habitus as "The set of predispositions and patterns of thought, resulting from social conditioning, which mediates the choices of individuals, a product of history and a producer of history, capable of acting as a structure, structuring but also structured, capable of mediating principles of subjective and objective forces that generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious pursuit of ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to achieve them". Objectively "regulated" and "regular" without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be orchestrated collectively without being the product of the organizational action of a conductor [1]. Habitus guarantees generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices, but also represents classificatory schemes, principles of classification, principles of vision and division, and different tastes. It allows us to distinguish between what is good and what is bad [20], and it is linked to both the objective relationships in which agents are immersed, as well as to the personal perceptions through which each of us incorporates the social situations in which we live and, at the same time, act within them. Habitus is the result of life experiences, from primary to subsequent socialization (including those that take place within the spheres to which we belong). It becomes part of us, is inscribed in our bodies, guides us, possesses us, and is guarded by us (it is no coincidence that the term derives from the Latin *habeo*, as previously argued, which means to acquire or to possess [18]. Habitus is a necessity that has been made a virtue—it is an embodiment of practical sense. Habitus is a reality that is embodied both as the distribution of capital possessed by individuals and as a reality that is observable by researchers in the social sciences. Therefore, habitus is a tool through which we can understand, categorize, and map the practical dispositions and esthetic representations of subjects. Based on these considerations, I have chosen this tool to "categorize" the elements underlying a non-probabilistic, targeted, and reasoned selection or sampling [14]. Furthermore, for this contribution, I adopt one of the latest definitions offered by Bourdieu in *The Misery of the World* [20], in which he states that "Habitus is the acquisition of forms of capital that exist in an embodied state, such as, for example, knowledge of a language or, more simply, what we commonly call culture". Consequently, distinctions between forms of capital are of vital importance for the formation of habitus. Bourdieu identifies four different types of capital—economic capital, cultural capital, symbolic capital, and social capital.

3.3. Following the Concept of Habitus for the Selection of Cases in Digital Research

Caliandro and Gandini [21] highlight some strategies that are available to researchers for studying the complex relationship between what happens in the digital world and what happens in the offline society, thus providing a toolbox for understanding those hybrid systems of relationships in the mutual contamination between online and offline that is now commonly referred to as "onlife" [4]. Proposing digital methods combined with traditional ethnography, Caliandro and Gandini [21] draw attention to what Rogers [22] said, namely that the study of digital sociology today has overcome the dichotomy between real and virtual and that it is useful to adopt its epistemological motto—"follow the medium", i.e., follow the tools that the medium itself provides to track and analyze digital data. Borrowing the term "follow the natives" from actor-network theory (Callon and Latour), the two authors also discuss the relationship between human beings and material objects in everyday life. This work starts from these epistemological assumptions, following in the footsteps of the ethnographic studies proposed by Hine [23], which relate to the idea of the internet as a space where social actors produce and reproduce culture. The use of habitus as an analytical tool for selecting cases for analysis in the exploration of digital ethnography, as we will see in the results section, allows us to overcome some of the problems present

in the choices underlying the selection when the researcher intends to understand the interaction between digital platforms and social subjects. Often in the initial phase of the digital exploration of platforms, the researcher adopts Marwick and Boyd's [24,25] perspective of Goffman's interpretation of self-representation in everyday life, which allows us to measure the degree of involvement of a user within a specific social group and to reconstruct the cultural structures shared collectively through self-representation. However, Massimo Airoldi's recent study, *Machine Habitus*, [26] considers platforms as structures in themselves but also as being structured by the subjects who inhabit them. The platform is both a structure that with its technical operating logic, plays a structuring role in the behavior of subjects, but is, in turn, structured by the culture that these subjects bring to the network; this allows the researcher to understand cultural reproduction on the web. Although this work owes much to Airoldi's theoretical mapping [26], habitus refers to the objectified subjective dimensions of social actors and not to platforms or "machines". The scientific literature owes much to Airoldi for bringing Bourdieu's sociological thinking back into the study of digital sociology. However, the author's concept of habitus and the theory of practices have not yet found their place as a key to interpreting social action on the web and as a methodological tool in digital sociology. This work aims to fill this gap. This research proposes the concept of habitus as an element of the investigation of the practices of online subjects and their hybrid interaction between digital and indigenous contexts. The habitus model presented in this work analyzes the different distributions of capital as subjective resources that can be considered by researchers as tools for classifying subjects.

When researchers analyze the practices and interactions between subjects and platforms to understand how these complex mechanisms of interaction can contribute to shaping subjective identities, they need categorization tools to understand, for example, the background of the subjects being objectified and to understand cultural reproduction, including on the web. If, for example, we want to study the reproduction of a social group on the Internet, such as hipster culture, young people living on the margins of society, etc., following the concept of habitus allows us to categorize and help us in our selection, even online. To describe how the habitus model works, I use an empirical case study. The work in question concerns the analysis of the digital trend "il malessere" (which means malaise or discomfort in English), which went viral on TikTok at the end of 2023, with the aim of understanding the pervasiveness of the phenomenon offline as well. The research involved selecting profiles that could then be compared with the subjects studied, in combination with traditional social science techniques. The study initially encountered several problems and difficulties, partly because TikTok is a completely new platform. To study and try to understand this trend, I have briefly defined it as "The reproduction of gender inequality in Neapolitan popular culture—the quarrels between heterosexual Neapolitan couples". It represents the reproduction of a popular cultural model in which malaise passes from a state of mind to an ideal type of man, with precise esthetic and behavioral characteristics. It embodies an esthetic imagery similar to that of the American urban culture described in Wacquant's hyper-ghettos [8], mixed with the traditional popular look of Neapolitan culture. A fan of trap music and Neapolitan rap, as well as being markedly macho and homophobic, in short, can be summed up by the Neapolitan popular culture of the hegemonic masculinity outlined by Connell. The malessere plays the role of an overly possessive boyfriend who enacts patriarchal stereotypes of petty male despotism.

At the beginning of my digital exploration on the TikTok platform with the first idea listed [24], I encountered several problems (it was really difficult to reconstruct collectively shared cultural structures through self-representation alone). I therefore decided to study the phenomenon of malaise through an interpretation based on the assumption described by Hine [23]—the idea of the internet as culture, or rather the space of the internet in which

social actors produce and reproduce culture [23]; from this perspective, categorization tools for research were indispensable. Categorizing “malessere” would mean being able to study a form of reproduction of Neapolitan youth culture on the TikTok platform. Therefore, even with the toolbox described above in the work of Caliandro and Gandini [21], during the analysis of digital content [26], in the manual qualitative selection without the use of automation, any direct knowledge of the subjects for the study in question of the phenomenon of “malessere” remained limited. In an attempt to categorize these social actors as “belonging to the malessere” and therefore being reproducers of a “popular” culture (since the analysis of their content revealed strong popular symbolism), I initially decided to place them in the social classification as “ceto” or “class” according to Weber or Marx [27]. However, we were not aware of any precise information about the subjects involved, beyond the markedly popular symbolism represented by the contents of the malessere. The concept of class concerns property relations and the ability to manage income, wealth, and other resources. However, these elements are difficult to operationalize through digital content analysis alone. This obviously becomes increasingly problematic in an era in which work has lost its central role in defining the social position of individuals [3]. Furthermore, and even more so with regard to the study of digital profiles, during content analysis, we did not have at our disposal the different distributions of capitals that are the subject of the operational definition of the subjects of interest in our study. Furthermore, in this case, I was not aware of the personal details or cultural and social background of the subjects. The researcher is therefore influenced by common sense, which leads them to unconsciously categorize according to arbitrary parameters.

I had no precise information about the subjects involved; I only had the geolocation of the content. In a sea of thousands and thousands of videos dealing with the theme of malessere, the concepts of class and social strata used for the selection of cases were extremely arbitrary and therefore inadequate. Forms of capital as indicators, i.e., as tools for measuring phenomena that are not directly observable and as measures linked to a conceptual model aimed at understanding different aspects of social life [14], were not usable, at least in the traditional notions of capital, such as economic capital. To overcome this problem, I decided to focus on the constants that were present in the videos. I collected the cultural elements that were repeated in the digital content—Neapolitan dialect, urban music, Neapolitan trap music, geolocation, and other elements linked to the cultural specificities of the reference context (the Campania region). Another constant that emerged as a recurring theme concerns the ways in which subjects represent themselves to increase their erotic desirability. I analyzed captions, expressions, the promotion of self-care and personal appearance, postures, and the way the body is used. All these elements are difficult to operationalize, and even if we decided to translate them into numerical variables, they would still not explain the reason for the classification.

In this way, I built a dataset of 24 variables and included only subjects who showed significant constants for the trend in question. The indicative variables, in addition to gender, relationship status, and publication dates, concerned elements that characterize the trend of malessere—esthetics, hairstyle, clothing, brand, music, dialect, jealousy, possessiveness, and violence. The analytical element capable of capturing dispositions, practices, tastes, and positions in the social field, as extensively explained in this article, is habitus. The main variables taken into account were those that were useful for tracing erotic capital and autochthonous capital, such as esthetics, hairstyle, dialectal expressions, etc. Other variables that were more easily operationalizable, such as those of engagement, although useful for understanding the intensity and pervasiveness of the phenomenon, proved less useful for categorizing the cases analyzed.

Habitus can understand classification systems starting from esthetic dispositions because it provides a “structuring structure” [1], i.e., a general system of classification of practices or the “generative principle” [1] (p. 173) underlying the conditions of all lifestyles. With this in mind, I began to try to trace the other forms of capital identified by Bourdieu to shape habitus and classify the subjects of the digital trend as subjects incorporating a “popular” or non-popular habitus. However, during the content analysis phase, another problem related to forms of capital emerged—the same problem that occurred with economic capital. Not knowing the personal details and not being able to interact deeply with the subjects, I did not have access to cultural capital or economic capital. I could only reconstruct social capital summarily through contemporary studies of network analysis [27]. Nevertheless, the practical dispositions of the subjects studied were clearly part of Neapolitan popular culture, because the act of recognition and “misrecognition” by the subjects could be symbolically connoted as “popular”.

As a consequence of the forms of capital identified by Bourdieu to forge habitus in the analysis of profiles and content, I only had symbolic capital at our disposal, specifically the act of recognition and misrecognition of the objectified subjects. For Bourdieu, symbolic capital is the fundamental element for the formation of habitus, as it is the interaction of different forms that guarantees the dispositions and the way in which habitus is possessed [1]. Consequently, I had the result of the interactions, i.e., the symbolic practices, without knowing the different forms of capital. Therefore, the problem that emerged is the idea that the classic distinction between forms of capital is not exhaustive in a digitalized society and, consequently, in order to describe esthetic representation, practical modalities, and position in the field (onlife) today [4], it is necessary to add complexity to the classic scheme with a new model of habitus, in line with the latest proposed definition, which includes other forms of capital that can serve as indicators. In analyzing the digital content of this study, since I was unable to know the operationalized distributions of the forms of capital, I included other dimensions not subject to operational definition, which allowed me to distinguish subjects that incorporate a “popular habitus”. These are erotic capital [5] and autochthonous capital [6,7]. Thanks to the distribution of different forms of capital according to habitus, as well as the possibility of categorizing the positions of subjects in the social field, it was possible to select the cases to be analyzed, both for the initial selection of TikTok profiles and for non-probabilistic sampling techniques based on reasoned choice. In the next section, I will also illustrate how these new indicators can contribute to the formation of habitus and provide specific details regarding the operationalization of the updated concept of “popular habitus”. I will explain how the new indicators are measured and applied in practice, seeking to clarify the criteria and methods for categorizing subjects within the “popular” representation.

3.4. The Disposition of Capital as an Indicator for Case Selection

In continuity with authors who have worked on the distinction of capitals and the methods of conversion between them, this research attempts to update the concept of habitus in order to use it in the analysis of digital content where it is not possible to use the already known forms of capital from Bourdieu [1]. I think it is useful to clarify that by capital, I mean the set of subjective resources that can be read as objective parameters for categorization, such as economic capital. Bourdieu identified four forms of capital as subjective resources in the classic schema of distinction [3]. The first is cultural capital³, which can exist in three forms—in the embodied condition as lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified condition, i.e., in the form of cultural assets, paintings, books, dictionaries, tools, and machines; and, finally, in the institutionalized condition, e.g., qualifications, academic publications, etc.

The second—social capital⁴—is the complex of resources that are linked to the possession of a network with lasting relationships—more or less institutionalized—of mutual knowledge and recognition. The third is economic capital, i.e., the financial and material resources available to an individual. Economic capital plays a major role in that it is the condition for all forms of accumulation of every other possible type of capital and, at the same time, is the one into which every other acquisition can be converted; it is the standard against which every other form of accumulation can be converted. All forms of capital—social, cultural, and economic—are, at least in principle, convertible into one another. As Bourdieu notes [3], the convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital (and the position occupied in the social space) by means of conversion [9]. With their possibility of conversion, it is therefore possible to define symbolic capital as the recognition and non-recognition of the habitus by subjects living in the same social field [3]. Symbolic capital is characterized by elements that are also influenced by the level of definition of symbolic meta-boundaries [28] in each field, which are conceptual distinctions between people, practices, and objects [29]. Contrary to all other forms of capital, symbolic capital is linked to the act of recognition by other people belonging to the same group, whether this be a social class or gender, or even people outside the group. Through this recognition, power dynamics and inequalities are consolidated and legitimized [2]. Reputational capital is either in close symbiosis with, and is easily observable in the world of work, a concept that indicates the set of social values and behaviors that influence the bargaining power of the individual or company [30]. It is part of symbolic recognition in the workplace. In the onlife society [4], it is increasingly complex to be able to define symbolic capital using only the forms of capital theorized by Bourdieu; consequently, they are not sufficient to determine the position of the subject in a given social order. The recognition of habitus depends on symbolic capital, which should not be understood as the mere sum of the different capitals, but as a continuous interaction of the different forms of capital. Adding other forms of capital to the classic Bourdieusian schema, which can also be found online, allows us to forge habitus and, consequently, its position in the field of the study of digital platforms. To understand the formation of onlife habitus, we have chosen to include erotic capital in Bourdieu's distribution, as defined by Hakim, which has six components—beauty, sex appeal, capacity for social interaction, vitality, the way of presenting oneself, and sexuality (sexual competence). Erotic capital can be conceived as the quality and quantity of attributes that an individual possesses and that arouse an erotic response in another individual. The author, aware of the fact that sexual desirability plays an important role in the social sphere, considers it the “fourth personal resource” and subsequently integrates social capital with erotic capital, arriving at the definition of “spornsexual capital” [5]. Erotic capital is one of the forms of capital that can be traced directly back to symbolic capital, which is also understood as a form of immediate recognition linked to a certain context (autochthony) that is physical, social, and temporal. Erotic desirability is difficult to calculate using only numerical variables, as Hakim has proposed, without taking into account the importance of the local context. Instead, the interaction between erotic capital and autochthonous capital lends itself to the study of digital sociology, as in the example of research on malessere. Furthermore, for the researcher, it may be even more relevant to analyze the cultural connections present in a given social field, which emphasize its scope. Common sense is able to make tangible, through the forms of interaction of the subjects, the effects that they create on other individuals. Erotic capital, more so than the consent exercised and the legitimization of a recognized beauty, can primarily be traced in relation to the efforts that the subjects make to become more desirable; this is a fundamental element that links it in a visceral and unavoidable way to the capital of autochthony. Therefore, in the search for consensus and approval, the peer

group and links with the local context play a crucial role in the acquisition of identity. In the conversion to symbolic capital, erotic capital therefore plays a privileged role. The second capital to be added is that of autochthony [6,7], which can be defined as the set of resources that come from belonging to localized networks of relationships. In particular, these are resources of a symbolic nature that have to do with prestige and shared meanings [7] (p. 9). The concept of autochthonous capital is obviously connected to the concepts of primary and subsequent socialization; it is the element of the subjective elaboration of socialization, i.e., the processes in which the mechanisms of socialization become a subjective resource. Therefore, it is connected to social networks; however, unlike social capital that overcomes geographical barriers, autochthonous capital feeds on contextual geography [30]. The first years of life are the years in which the autochthonous context plays a primary role [31] in the formation of the habitus that lurks in the cognitive part and translates into practices that the subject is unlikely to abandon, beyond the accumulation of other forms of capital. Autochthonous capital concerns the group of peers with whom one grew up, both in childhood and adolescence, where ambitions and aspirations are forged, but also the esthetic models to be adopted and mythologized. Context plays a key role in the formation of habitus. In *Misery of the World*, Bourdieu defined the capital (Paris) as the place of capital, the place of opportunities to accumulate forms of capital, as opposed to the periphery, where the lack of aspirations prevails [31].

The purely architectural aspect of the urban layout, but also the physical space, represent favorable or unfavorable conditions that are part of the resources that are difficult to make operational, but which, nevertheless, contribute to shaping the habitus.

I have adopted these two forms of capital that are already present in the literature because, according to the interpretation of this phenomenon, they are better suited to understanding online practices and as additional “indicators” for the selection of cases for analysis.

Erotic capital lends itself well to the activities that individuals engage in online, although, as defined by Hakim, erotic capital is based on subjective traits. In this study, using the Bourdieusian framework, I highlight how this form of capital takes on value about “common sense” and with the ability of subjects belonging to a field to categorize beauty and sex appeal according to a specific context and a specific social field. Although Hakim’s original definition is overly economistic and departs from Bourdieu’s conceptual framework, it can be considered an additional subjective resource that allows for categorization when intersected with other forms of capital. Furthermore, the framework proposed in this article for the study of digital sociology also takes into account the bodily capital discussed in the ethnographic studies of Bourdieu [1–3] and Wacquant [8]. However, I prefer to adopt erotic capital because the concept of habitus, already in its definition, includes the centrality of embodiment and the centrality of the body in its formation. This is why Bourdieu himself does not include bodily capital among other forms of capital. In any case, Bourdieu intuited the importance of esthetics as an available resource [18]. Esthetics is understood as the need to acquire an appearance that, through body size, clothing, and demeanor, embodies cultural meanings that are capable of ensuring success in the social sphere [1]; this definition came about in the wake of Bourdieu’s insights that Catherine Hakim went on to use in order to define the notion of erotic capital. The elements that make up erotic capital, as I show in my empirical work, are constantly at play in digital contexts and specifically in the case study of this work. At the same time, I have included autochthonous capital, which cannot be exhaustively contained in symbolic and social capital. Autochthonous capital, like all other forms of capital, is part of symbolic capital [1]; it not only encompasses symbolic goods, but also designates concrete forms of power, since belonging to a particular territory is not a neutral fact but, on the contrary, is likely to

have a social weight that allows one to position oneself advantageously in various markets (political, labor, marriage, associations, etc.) [7].

Although autochthonous capital has been used almost exclusively to understand conflicts of belonging between the countryside and the city and rural life, I believe, in line with Retière [7], that it is an excellent resource to be used in the urban context as well, particularly in relation to the study of suburbs. Therefore, I suggest in this work that this form of capital is an excellent indicator for studying social action in complex hybrid societies between online and offline. In this research, I highlight the fact that even the intermediation of digital platforms, specifically TikTok, cannot do without the indigenous context to give meaning to its content and thus ensure its enjoyment and successful dissemination [32]. In summary, all forms of capital [33] in this scheme are never completely autonomous or divided by clear boundaries [34], but reinforce each other, as in the most obvious case of erotic capital and autochthonous capital [35–37].

Consequently, as shown in the diagram below, the interaction of different forms of capital determines symbolic capital. The reconstruction of capital in the form of indicators and of symbolic capital in its recognition and misrecognition by individuals living in the social field has allowed me to operationalize and describe popular habitus as “the set of practical dispositions, models, and behavioral attitudes, characterized by a precise esthetic, connoted in specific historical and social contexts, which take on an internalized semantic meaning recognized by subjects who occupy more or less the same positions in society according to a tacit but ever-present autochthonous root that guides their direction”.

By popular, I refer to the legacy of the term popular from cultural anthropology. In particular, the cultural frame of reference is that of Italian anthropologists who played a disruptive role in the study of popular culture⁵, such as Cirese [38] and De Martino [39], who were interested in the study of the daily life of the working classes and mass consumption practices. Furthermore, the concept of “popular” also takes into account the studies of the Birmingham School. Following this tradition, “popular” refers to the set of traditions, knowledge, ideas, and customs handed down and spread by the lower social classes, which are economically, socially, and culturally disadvantaged.

The model of “popular habitus” allows us to look at the ways in which the different capitals interact with each other and their possible combinations, as can be seen in Figure 1. This allows us to recognize the position of habitus in the social field and to guarantee its categorization, while also managing to use forms of capital that are difficult to operationalize or for which numerical information is not available. Based on the idea of habitus as an object and method of investigation [8], I propose habitus as a compass for orientation in the field of sociology, which is capable of guiding researchers to sociologically categorize the historical preconceptions that guide our practices and the practices of the social subjects we intend to study.

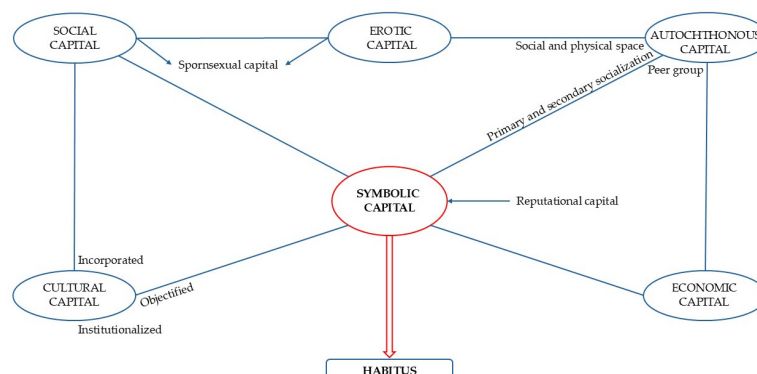


Figure 1. The new habitus model with the new capital forms as indicators.

3.5. The Selection of the Cases of Analysis

Repeating the above research on the phenomenon of malaise after constructing the 24 variables, I took greater account of autochthonous and erotic capital, considering those elements as being linked to the culture under investigation. By indigenous capital, I mean idiomatic expressions, dialectalisms, local objects and concepts, modes of representation, slang expressions, Neapolitan dialect, music (urban, trap, neomelodic, etc.) in Neapolitan environments, geolocation, and other elements related to the customs and traditions of the reference context, as can be seen in the examples shown in Table 1. In analyzing erotic capital, I traced the behavior of subjects in wanting to increase their erotic desirability, taking into account various components: captions, e.g., expressions, the promotion of self-care and personal appearance, physical predispositions, clothing, and hairstyles. I identified the dimensions of erotic capital using the elements of analysis described in Table 2.

Table 1. Indicators of autochthonous capital.

Size	Elements of Analysis
Dialectisms; idiomatic expressions; autochthonous language	Vulgar expressions. Local dialects. Neapolitan dialect. Motorbikes (Transalp; Tmax). Sunglasses. Gold necklaces. Sling bag.
Local objects and concepts	
Representation based on local items	Subjects' willingness to act and behavior patterns attributable to specific contexts.
Geolocalization	Geographical location where the contents were germinated.
Elements related to the reference context	Home furnishings, neighborhoods where videos were filmed, football team supported, social and physical space.
Music	Urban trap, trap music, Neapolitan neo-melodic.
Author's source.	

Table 2. Indicators of erotic capital.

Size	Elements of Analysis
Video diascale	Example: They are ovulating and the malessere breathes near me; two evils that mate; cutting the malessere. Example:
Type of comments related to the video	I want the guy to be so jealous; I want him to like my new haircut. I only ever want him to be so jealous.
Facial expressions	The way the subject looks at the camera; the subject who kisses the screen; shows self-confidence; facial expressions; eyebrow movements to increase his desirability.
Self-promotion and self-care	Fixing their clothes; their hairstyles; their eyebrows; filming themselves putting on perfume.
Esthetics of the subject	For men the "mullet" haircut is a look that brings to mind urban American imagery mixed with Neapolitan popular culture.
Bodily dispositions	Videos with a strong erotic components, such as couples showing off their intimacy.

Table 2. *Cont.*

Size	Elements of Analysis
Number of likes and comments in the videos	Content engagement.
Clothing	Monitor the esthetic style, for example, for men, Adidas or Nike shoes, Nike sweatshirts, Dsquared2 leather jacket, jeans, Kappa or North Face sweatsuits.

Author's source.

Among the variables used in the dataset, I took into account concepts that are difficult to operationalize, which I described in an interpretative and qualitative manner, e.g., haircut, outfit, beard, jewelry, etc. This classification model involved the use of elements to outline these two forms of capital, which I briefly define as “indirect indicators”, i.e., mental categories that allow concrete or abstract objects to be classified and named to descend to a lower level of abstraction and make them empirically detectable. For example, I qualitatively used the erotic capital indicator to try to “make empirically detectable” the concept of the “cultivation of erotic desirability”, with elements such as beard care, outfit care, and haircuts; these elements can be seen in Table 2. In the same way, I also traced indirect indicators for autochthonous capital. For example, in addition to geolocation, I used the autochthonous capital indicator to make the concept of the “importance of place” empirically observable by including elements of analysis such as the subjects in the video speak dialect, use slang, etc., as can be seen in Table 1. Through these conversion methods, I was able to make elements and items that refer to a particular culture empirically observable. In the social sciences, many concepts in the social sphere have a high level of generality and are therefore not directly observable [15]. Many concepts of great theoretical importance are so general that they cannot be satisfactorily defined by a single “measurement” operation [15]. For this reason, I believe that habitus is not only the object of this study but also the method, i.e., the tool through which to interpret these measurement tools. In this way, I partly avoid the arbitrary categorization of subjects as belonging to a popular background or not, as they are items that are recognizable and directly observable through the reading of habitus in the specific social field of observation. This technique of “analysis”, as in anthropological research, is purely qualitative and falls within the scope of complex research that involves belonging to the same culture as the researcher working in a given field and relating to the concept of culture.

Through these tools for categorizing elements, the interaction between erotic capital and autochthonous capital proved to be fundamental, since cultivating esthetics based on the reference culture and indigenous context made it possible to reconstruct the symbolic capital of subjects in a condition of life belonging to popular culture. Thanks to these new indicators, I was able to classify the esthetics of the videos, distinguishing them according to whether or not they belonged to popular culture.

Specifically, in an attempt to answer the research questions, I created new TikTok accounts without algorithmic alterations [26] of user preferences; then, I limited the spatial context to Naples. Furthermore, during the exploratory phase of digital ethnography, which took place between November 2023 and April 2024, I tested some keywords in the platform's search bar in order to explore what the social media algorithm returned. For the search and extraction of profiles, I used the following keywords in the platform's search bar: “relationships”, “couples”, “love”, and “romantic relationships”. In April 2024, I had a large number of posts with the hashtag #malessere on TikTok, from which I selected 70 profiles based on certain distinctive characteristics that were evident and interesting for content production, e.g., medium–high engagement, esthetic and communicative style, and number of

comments generated. Based on their apparent characteristics, I made analytical distinctions among (1) individual male profiles, (2) individual female profiles, (3) couple profiles, and (4) commercial profiles. For each profile, I then selected a video that was deemed relevant for the reproduction of desirable masculinity, which was analyzed in depth using topic analysis as an analysis technique. I did not use any automation software for scraping, nor did I use the platform's API. From the exploration to the extraction of empirical material, I carried out everything in a qualitative and manual manner without any automation. Therefore, thanks to these qualitative techniques using the dimensions of capital described in the habitus model, I selected profiles based on their distinctive characteristics, which can be symbolically connoted as subjects that embody a popular habitus.

The use of these forms of capital was necessary in order to categorize young people as belonging to popular culture and therefore as subjects who embody a popular habitus, in relation to the operational definition of popular habitus described above, with the elements present in the tables illustrating the two forms of capital. The selection of cases would not have been possible without the two forms of capital included, because the operational definition given to popular habitus necessarily draws on the two forms of capital, as follows:

- (1) The set of practical dispositions and behavioral models and attitudes:
Facial expressions, self-promotion and self-care with a precise esthetic connotation in clothing, hairstyles, body posture, etc. (erotic capital).
- (2) The set of elements connoted in specific historical and social contexts:
Dialectisms; idioms; expressions, native language; local objects and concepts; music (autochthonous capital).

These take on an internalized semantic meaning that is recognized by individuals who occupy more or less the same positions in society according to a tacit but ever-present indigenous root that guides their direction. In categorizing the subjects, I took into account the popular habitus of all the elements present in the tables shown above.

4. Results

4.1. *The Interaction Between Digital Platforms and Social Subjects: Popular Habitus in the Neapolitan Onlife Context*

As I have described in the previous paragraphs, the updated concept of habitus, thanks to its characteristics of flexibility, is a methodological tool that can be used to objectify naturalized preconceptions, both in the analysis of digital content and in the selection of cases for traditional field research, as well as offering tools that can be used to objectify subjective elements. Therefore, once the elements of the different distributions of capital have been reconstructed, it is possible to categorize subjects into specific social spheres and begin the reasoned selection of cases to be analyzed. In fact, the only distinction between social research, science, and common sense is the method that allows us to produce explanations of empirically verifiable phenomena, define the specific properties of the object of investigation, and arrive at a generalization of the recurrences highlighted in the reality under investigation [14]. Given these premises, I used the popular habitus model as a qualitative analysis tool to understand whether there was a “real effect” between the digital trend (“the malessere”) and the living conditions of young people living in the “hyper-ghettos” [36] of the city of Naples, where this trend originated. The intention of this exploratory phase, through the use of the habitus tool, is to understand the common thread that connects the daily lives of young people in the suburbs of Naples and their reproduction in the online media, analyzing the trend described above.

Digital ethnography follows the same implementations listed in the previous paragraph. In the section dedicated to field research, I conducted multi-sited ethnographic research [40] with the intention of understanding the complex interconnection of social

action in the hybrid context between online and offline. Furthermore, the study was conducted by following the traces of the phenomenon under study across different locations. Specifically, the ethnographic approach I used to conduct the field research is defined as “the ghetto approach” [41], whereby the object of study is not the city, but rather the social groups within the city and in specific contexts, e.g., in this research, as specified above, the “Neapolitan hyper-ghettos”.

I conducted direct and “open” observations of the activities of educational services in the city of Naples, which work in collaboration with the municipality. In this exploratory phase, the aim was to understand how young people living in working-class neighborhoods relate to digital trends and, specifically, to the phenomenon of *malaise*. By attending educational services, I was able to interact with privileged observers (service coordinators, educators, and volunteers), with whom I conducted semi-structured interviews that allowed me to learn about the distribution of capital among those working in educational services, as well as comparing this with databases of service beneficiaries. Having information on social, economic, and cultural capital in its various forms allowed me to understand the extent of the digital trend and to consider it as a form of reproduction of popular culture in the suburbs.

At that point, while I believed that the trend of “*malalessere*” reflected the practices of the young people analyzed in the educational services in Naples, and while I was aware of the distribution of traditional capital, I did not yet have sufficient empirical evidence to rigorously classify the selection of cases for the analysis of the trend of *malalessere*, which I highlighted in the previous paragraphs, with a sample of carefully chosen beneficiaries of educational services in Naples. To link the elements of analysis between the beneficiaries of the service and the creators of content in the videos relating to *malaise*, I used the previously described model of the complete popular habitus of the two forms of capital—autochthonous capital and erotic capital. For the fieldwork, I also identified the elements to outline these two forms of capital, which I briefly define as “indirect indicators”, i.e., mental categories that allow concrete or abstract objects to be classified and named in order to descend to a lower level of abstraction and make them empirically detectable.

For example, I considered the elements described in Tables 1 and 2 with regard to autochthonous capital and erotic capital, as well as the methods adopted by young people to cultivate their erotic desirability, and I found a very close analogy between the “*malalessere*” model and young people in educational services, which I summarize as behavioral attitudes, esthetic style, and hairstyle. It was also very useful to observe the brands—the same ones used by the creators of *malalessere*, e.g., Adidas, Nike, dsquared2, leather jackets, jeans, Kappa tracksuits, North Face, etc. This allowed me to reconstruct the symbolic capital of both the subjects of the digital selection and the sample of beneficiaries of educational services. Popular symbolic capital was reconstructed through a qualitative analysis of the mutual interaction between erotic capital and indigenous capital, as well as the ways in which young people in educational services cultivated their desirability and attractiveness through certain indigenous codes. During the interviews, I also observed and investigated consumption practices, both with beneficiaries and with privileged observers, because in his theory of practice, Bourdieu demonstrated that it is social stratification that determines consumption choices and not vice versa. I used the “follow the habitus” approach, empirically following communicative, behavioral, and esthetic practices, and was able to categorize subjects who embody the popular habitus.

4.2. *The Popular Habitus in Participant Observation*

To investigate the mutual onlife interaction of young people with a background in popular culture, I also used the habitus model in participant observation. In fact, in this

phase, I chose two commercial profiles from my dataset, specifically two barbershops, and decided to conduct “covert” participant observation over one year from November 2023 to October 2024 in these two commercial activities in order to observe the mutual interaction between the local context and digital platforms, as well as how this interaction contributes to shaping subjective identities. In both the digital and traditional ethnography phases, I followed the popular habitus to interact with and observe the everyday behavior of young Neapolitans belonging to popular culture.

During this phase, I was able to observe in an extremely intrusive and in-depth manner how erotic capital is cultivated in relation to indigenous capital. I chose to observe the *modus operandi* of two businesses that have marked the construction of a desirable masculinity, namely two barbershops for men offering a “malessere” hairstyle. Before going into the field, I tried to adopt a behavior and esthetic that could be symbolically traced back to the popular culture mentioned above. Therefore, to gain access to the field, I effectively became a “loyal” customer of both barbershops, changing my appearance and behavioral patterns. This choice allowed me to follow the habitus from online to offline and also allowed me to understand how viral phenomena on digital platforms can exist in cultural products, which are stubbornly reproduced on the web.

In fact, in the two barbershops identified during my digital exploration and included in the dataset because they published short videos of “malaise” hairstyles, I was able to observe the same dynamics during the field observation phase. Actively participating as a young person who engages with the commercial offerings of content creators allowed me to confirm the idea that the two forms of capital (autochthonous and erotic) play a fundamental role in the construction of habitus. In this case, I analyzed autochthonous capital, taking into account language, esthetic style, and the music listened to in clubs, and I was able to observe the time and volume of resources used by the subjects to cultivate their erotic capital. Again, thanks to the popular habitus model, I was able to categorize the subjects of study and place them in a specific field of investigation using a traditional ethnographic method, which, together with digital studies, allows us to analyze the interaction between digital platforms and social subjects and how this contributes to shaping identities and social choices.

5. Discussion

This study aims to represent an epistemological and methodological advance in relation to one of the most important concepts in social sciences—habitus. Furthermore, in line with Wacquant [8], this study proposes to use this concept not only as an object of investigation, but also as a methodological tool, reintroducing it into qualitative studies of digital sociology. The empirical example highlighted the possibility of using habitus as a tool for categorizing and selecting cases to be analyzed, both in digital ethnography and in the interaction between digital and traditional research. As I have tried to argue in the theoretical section, habitus is a tool that is capable of understanding categorization systems starting from esthetic dispositions, and this emerges both in the selection of cases to be analyzed in the digital ethnography phase and in the ethnographic field study, particularly in barbers. Habitus therefore provides a “structuring structure” [1], a general system of classification of practices—the “generative principle” [1] (p. 173)—which underlies the conditions of all the lifestyles analyzed in the research conducted in the suburbs, where it was possible to observe these classifying elements with the help of the two forms of capital—erotic and autochthonous, which are the only constants present in all phases of the research, from digital to fieldwork. The habitus model is useful when the object of research is social action. Furthermore, this analytical model clearly has a limited capacity for statistical inference, since models considered “desirable” in a local context are not

necessarily followed by all individuals living in those contexts and who have more or less similar distributions of capital. However, while not guaranteeing the exhaustiveness of representativeness, which is clearly not the goal of this model, it offers a rigorous compass for researchers because it allows them to empirically verify the model in order to guide and monitor common sense and not be guided by it in the selection of cases to analyze. Furthermore, given the qualitative nature of the work, although the habitus model is used in digital studies and therefore in a potentially global perspective, the geographical context is considered of vital importance; it is unthinkable to use this analytical model without considering the context in which digital content is generated.

In conclusion, the example of the research conducted has shown that, with this model, it is possible to categorize the social subjects studied in the field of onlife and to do so not necessarily using numerical variables but also by cross-referencing numerical variables and qualitative indicators.

6. Limitations and Follow-Up of the Research

This methodological tool for selecting cases for analysis has limitations that require an understanding of the cultural elements of the phenomenon to be analyzed. In short, the researcher should have prior knowledge of the cultural elements that refer to different imaginaries. The researcher's position in the social field becomes more crucial than ever when using this model. For example, in the case study used, I was able to see that the elements of autochthonous capital refer to a popular imaginary, thanks in part to my biographical knowledge of these cultural elements and the imaginary. The elements described in the tables of erotic capital and indigenous capital used in this study are valid in this particular research because they represent elements of Neapolitan popular culture [42]. Therefore, although the model is flexible with degrees of malleability, it must be remembered that social reality is very complex and that categorization tools must always be justified based on the study through thoughtful and reasoned choices. Therefore, there is still a risk of categorizing subjects in certain social positions that may not represent them. To be replicated in other contexts, the model must be tested through other means of empirical research. I would like to try this model for other possible future research, such as the study of the "Maranza" phenomenon in the suburbs of Milan, or in other contexts at high risk of marginalization—defined by Wacquant [40] as hyper-ghettos.

7. Conclusions

In this study, I propose, in line with Airoldi [26], the use of the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's sociology in the study of the digitalized society to categorize subjects in a specific social position. First, I briefly review the limitations encountered in categorization methods in the social sciences. I describe in detail the various definitions that Bourdieu has given to habitus, tracing the history of this philosophical concept. Following Bourdieu and the study of popular culture by Italian anthropologists, I develop an operational definition of habitus for the categorization of subjects belonging to popular culture. However, in order to update habitus to adapt it to digital studies, I had to update it by including new forms of capital, specifically autochthonous and erotic capital—two forms of capital that are observable resources in the interactions of subjects on digital platforms. I have described how the habitus model with new indicators (forms of capital) can be useful for selecting cases in digital ethnography, as well as for selecting non-probabilistic samples based on reasoned choice in traditional field research. Finally, I highlight the strengths and some limitations of this model and propose a follow-up for possible future research.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study given the nature of the research, which did not involve sensitive personal data, medical procedures, or any form of clinical experimentation. This study was based on testing a model for selecting units of analysis in digital qualitative research, without collecting any identifiable or health-related private information.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in this study.

Data Availability Statement: The data collected in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Definition of field: A microcosm is a small, relatively autonomous social world within the larger social world. Autonomous, according to etymology, means that it has its own law, its own *nomos*, which holds within it the principle and rule of its functioning. It is a universe in which its own evaluation criteria are at work and which have no value in neighboring microcosms. It is a universe obeying its own laws, which differ from those of the ordinary social world. Those who enter a particular field must undergo a transformation or a conversion, and even if the latter does not appear as such, even if they are not aware of it, it is tacitly imposed on them, insofar as any transgression would result in scandal or exclusion [1].
- ² The multidisciplinary seminar entitled “History Repeating Itself: Populist Imaginaries, Cultural Productions, and the Formation of Subaltern Identity in a Trans-Historical Perspective” is available. Presentation of the article: “The Malessere: TikTok and the Fantasies of Subaltern Genders in Naples”.
- ³ Cultural capital: Embedded cultural capital is the accumulation of culture in the embedded condition. Time must be personally invested by the investor; embedded is an external good converted into an integral part of the person (*habitus*). The work of acquisition is a work on oneself (improvement of the self), an effort that presupposes a personal cost, an investment above all of time, but also of a socially constituted form of libido, the *libido sciendi*, which can imply privations, renunciations, and sacrifices. It follows that the least imprecise parameters for cultural capital are those that take as a standard the duration of acquisition. On the basis of the assumption that this cannot be reduced to the duration of school attendance alone, embodied capital is an external good converted into an integral part of the person (*habitus* is the incorporation of cultural capital and can be carried out completely unconsciously with different intensities depending on the era, society, and social class without any deliberate educational measures having been planned. Objectified cultural capital is transmissible in its materiality through material and media objects (for example, writings, paintings, monuments, musical instruments, etc.). A collection of paintings can, for example, be transmitted as economic capital (if not better, because such a transfer of capital remains hidden). However, only the legal, not the non-legal property, is transferable. Institutionalized cultural capital is the objectification of cultural capital in academic qualifications; it is a way of neutralizing some of its properties that derive from the fact that upon being incorporated, it is subject to the same biological limits as its owner. This product of the conversion of economic capital into cultural capital then determines, in terms of cultural capital, the value of the holder of a given qualification compared to the holders of other qualifications and, with this, the monetary value at which it is exchanged on the labor market (therefore, the educational investment only makes sense if the original transformation of economic capital into cultural capital guarantees its convertibility in at least a partially objective way) [9].
- ⁴ Social capital is the complex of resources, current and potential, linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition, thus, through a multiplicity of acts of institutionalization, at the same time shaping the subjects involved and informing them of the existence of a social capital relationship, which assumes an almost real existence, kept alive and strengthened through relationships of exchange. Social capital is therefore based on relationships of exchange that are indissolubly material and symbolic, the stability and maintenance of which presupposes the recognition of a proximity; therefore, these can never be entirely reduced to objective relationships of physical (geographical) or even economic and social proximity. The amount of social capital that an individual possesses therefore depends both on the extent of the network of relationships that he or she can actually mobilize, as well as on the amount of economic, cultural, or symbolic capital possessed by each of those with whom he or she has a relationship [9].
- ⁵ Popular “refers to the people understood as the lower social classes, with a modest standard of living, and therefore economically, socially, and culturally underdeveloped, or who live in suburban neighborhoods” [34].

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