

Skidmore College

Creative Matter

Sociology Senior Seminar Papers

Sociology

Fall 2019

Finding the Origins of Musical Taste

Owen Lynch

Skidmore College, olynch@skidmore.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://creativematter.skidmore.edu/socio_stu_stu_schol

Recommended Citation

Lynch, Owen, "Finding the Origins of Musical Taste" (2019). *Sociology Senior Seminar Papers*. 50.
https://creativematter.skidmore.edu/socio_stu_stu_schol/50

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Sociology at Creative Matter. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sociology Senior Seminar Papers by an authorized administrator of Creative Matter. For more information, please contact dseiler@skidmore.edu.

Finding the Origins of Musical Taste*

Owen M Lynch

Skidmore College

Word Count = 5,727

*Please direct all correspondence to Owen M Lynch, 815 N Broadway, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. E-mail: OLynch@skidmore.edu. The author would like to extend acknowledgements and sincere appreciation for Professor Catherine Berheide, Professor Andrew Lindner, and his senior seminar colleagues.

ABSTRACT

Why do some people claim to “listen to all music” while others prefer one genre? Existing research on musical tastes suggests there is a lot more than mere taste that influences an individual’s opinions of particular musical genres (Benzecry and Collins 2014; Peterson and Simkus 1992; Vuolo, Uggen, and Lageson 2014). To investigate this, I look to the theory of cultural omnivorousness (Peterson and Simkus 1992), which suggests that high status individuals may no longer prefer a select few musical genres, but conversely a broad and eclectic arrangement of genres. Using data on musical preferences likes from the 1993 General Social Survey of 828 respondents, I link literatures on cultural omnivorousness (Peterson and Simkus 1992), cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), musical taste, and prestige by proposing that the patterns of an individual’s musical preference can be predicted through their educational attainment and income. Controlling for the age of the respondent, the multivariate regression analyses find educational attainment to be the only significant predictor of musical preferences, with neither income nor age having relationships with musical preferences. I suggest, therefore, that the theory of cultural omnivorousness is upheld, as respondents with higher levels of educational attainment liked more musical genres.

Finding the Origins of Musical Taste

Our world is as diverse as it is populated; no two individuals are the same, and no two individuals have the same preferences. Take musical genres, for example; it is common for an individual to have at least a handful of genres which they consider those that they like and it is equally common for individuals to have a genre or two that they dislike. This difference in cultural preference becomes a point of sociological debate when the question is asked; why do people dislike certain subjective art forms, assuming the agent's distaste is solely aesthetically grounded? Are people's distastes for certain genres *actually* aesthetically grounded, or could there be other aspects of the genre that influence us in determining that which we like and dislike?

There is a great debate in sociology over the origins of musical (or, more broadly, artistic) preference, which include the ideas of cultural omnivorousness (Peterson and Simkus 1992), symbolic exclusion, and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). Some literature suggests that artistic or cultural tastes are often deeply rooted in areas and opinions which can be entirely disconnected from the arts aesthetically. Specific literature even suggests that individuals may formulate their musical preferences around their prejudices, as some form of unconscious (or conscious) reinforcement of their beliefs. In the same literature, it is theorized that taste may act as a basis for exclusion by creating a barrier to resources, such as education (Weber 1968). So where do our cultural tastes actually come from? When someone claims to "listen to all kinds of music" for what purpose are they embellishing their own musical consumption? And regarding exclusion and omnivorousness, do individuals with higher family income and more years of education like a greater or lesser quantity of musical genres?

I test the idea that patterns of musical genre "likes" and "dislikes" can be predicted on the basis of education and/or family income by using the 17 musical preference items on the GSS to

test for alignments between the number of “liked” musical genres and the respondents family’s income and the respondent’s educational attainment. Through bivariate analyses, I examine the interrelationships of musical genre preference and education, as well as family household income. I have three hypotheses. First, I hypothesize that the higher the respondent’s family/household income, the more musical genres they will like. Second, I hypothesize that the higher the respondent’s educational attainment, the more musical genres they will like. And third, I hypothesize that educational attainment will be a stronger predictor for the number of musical genres liked by the respondent than family/household income.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When someone claims to “listen to all music,” do they really? Or, do they just want others to *think* they do? Cultural omnivorousness (Peterson and Simkus 1992) holds that some individuals have an increased breadth of cultural taste and willingness to cross established hierarchical cultural genre boundaries on account of having a higher SES. Whether or not this is true remains to be seen, and it is important to test because prior to the introduction of the omnivore theory, an understanding of cultural taste disallowed the possibility of a omnivore because it merely suggested that high-brow culture was consumed by those of higher SES and low-brow culture was consumed by those of lower SES. This way of conceptualizing cultural taste is largely attributed to Bourdieu (1984), whose theories of cultural capital suggest that a piece of art can only be appreciated by someone who possesses the “cultural competence” to understand the art. In this regard, the theory of omnivorousness interacts frequently with the aforementioned theme of low-brow and high-brow cultural consumption in that it suggests high-status individuals are no longer patterning their preferences such that exclusivity aligns with high social class, but rather the opposite—omnivorousness may now be a mark of high status.

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

One's level of cultural competence may not solely pertain to education in a formal sense, however. Homology Thesis claims that specified cultural tastes and specialized modes of appreciating such tastes are imbedded within each class position throughout the class hierarchy (Veenstra 2015). And specifically, Peterson and Simkus (1992) suggest that high status individuals have a wider, more "omnivorous" range of musical tastes and consumption than lower status 'univores' who are believed to adhere to more specific cultural spheres which are defined by race, age, and religion.

Numerous studies have since attempted to illustrate the truth about cultural omnivores—specifically whether or not they exist, and further, from where their preferences originate. It is drawing from past research that has informed the decision to operationalize the cultural omnivore theory's dependent variable by measuring respondents' musical genre preferences, and to operationalize respondents' SES by linking measures of income and education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

From where do individuals derive their musical preferences? At first glance the question may inspire only psychological consideration, but contrary to intuition, musical enjoyment is greatly a social experience and thus pertains primarily to sociological inquiry for answers. The three primary sociological and theoretical themes the matter deals with are cultural omnivorousness, low-brow and high-brow culture, and prestige.

Cultural Omnivorousness

The notion of the cultural omnivore has been a topic of sociological debate for several decades, as the debate has been continuously renewed in part by the rapid evolution of the music consumption industry of the 2000s. The notion is rooted in the observed contradiction that although high-status individuals are far more likely than others to consume fine arts, they are also more

Formatted: Position: Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

likely to be involved in a range of low-status activities (Peterson and Kern 1996). This observation holds significance because of the preexisting understanding it contradicts; namely, that high-status persons disregard cultural expressions that are not seen as elevated (Peterson and Kern 1996).

Studies to test the validity of the cultural omnivore frequently use musical genres to operationalize cultural taste because while a significant majority of the population listen to and are familiar with the most popular musical genres, the differences between genres are unlike book genres because they are often deeply, consciously rooted in the culture from which they originated, which sets the stage for a complicated entanglement of peoples' prejudices and objective taste. Therefore it is partly a genre's culture of origin which makes it vulnerable to scrutiny regarding whether it is considered high or low-brow culture, because in the traditional understanding, the high-culture consumer cite their own biased conception of education and quality to form a notion that low-brow art is created and enjoyed by unsophisticated, uneducated creators who only create the art they create because they lack the understanding to create anything of higher-brow. In theory, one's knowledge of an art form may be likened to possessing a key, according to Bourdieu (1984:2), because "A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded." The role of one's educational attainment, therefore, must have an undeniable role in the theory of omnivorousness. To that end, an entire body of sociological literature suggests that education increases tolerance for political and religious nonconformity (Adorno et al. 1950; Davis 1975; Nunn, Crocket, and Williams 1979; Roebuck 2009; Stouffer 1955; Weil 1985) and racial integration (Greeley and Sheatsley 1971; Hyman and Wright 1979). So, although education may be employed by elites to form boundaries, it must not be overlooked as a true determinant or influencer of one's cultural consumption.

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin,
Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

In support of the notion that omnivorousness may be the new marker for high status, it was found that consumers who only like classical (traditionally high brow) art rarely participate in either modern or classical art at all; consumers who only like modern (traditionally low brow) art only participate in arts involved in popular culture; and consumers who equally like classical and modern art are very much involved in other forms of high brow art as well (Berghman and van Eijck 2009). These findings allude to the fact that classical art, by itself, is losing its function as a marker for high status, and that only the lovers of a broad range of artistic styles may be considered a cultural elite.

High-brow and Low-brow Culture

Most sociologists would agree that some forms of cultural consumption serve as markers of social status (Bourdieu 1984; Bryson 1997; Glevarek 2017; Hanquinet 2017; Lahire 2011; McClung 2013; Okada 2017; Peterson and DiMaggio 1975; Veenstra 2015; Weber 1968).

High-brow and low-brow culture refer to the forms of art which are considered to be associated with people of higher social class (high-brow) and lower social class (low-brow). Bourdieu (1984:1) suggests, "Cultural needs are the product of upbringing and education: surveys establish that all cultural practices (museum visits, concert-going, reading, etc.) and preferences in literature, painting or music, are closely linked to education level (measured by qualifications or length of schooling) and secondarily to social origin." One example of this is classical music, which may have likely been ascribed to high-brow on account of its traditionally white-dominated past (Bryson 1997).

In support of the hypothesized connection between social class and cultural consumption, studies have shown strong correlations between the ascribed brow of a genre and the social class patterns of the genre's fans. One study found that among a sample of high-class individuals, many

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin,
Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

of the traditionally low-brow genres (namely country, easy-listening, and golden oldies) were distastes among respondents (Veenstra 2015). However, a simple distaste does not characterize the whole of the preferential distinctions made by consumers of high-brow art. In a study of opera fanatics (which are high-brow in every sense of the term) distinctions are consciously made within the mind of the high-brow consumer to determine whether their consumption was based upon their pure experience of the music or merely a class-based consumption, as well as a distinction between joining in conventional applause and really understanding the music (Benzecry and Collins 2014).

Prestige

In close relation to the themes of cultural omnivorousness and high and low-brow cultural consumption, prestige is responsible mediating or intervening on many of the social patterns found within cultural omnivorousness and high vs. low-brow art. Prestige, as a concept, is often operationalized through the interrelation of income and educational attainment, and it bears heavily on the arguments for and against cultural omnivorousness and high and low-brow culture. It is therefore necessary to account for the levels of prestige when testing these concepts. Studies have shown that existing cultural hierarchies and their relationships to one another may even account for the emergence of dissonant and omnivorous individual patterns of cultural choice (Hanquinet 2017). Specifically, some suggest that in the late 1800s, as an attempt to create a distinction between Anglo-Saxons and the incoming immigrants, appreciation of the arts—or the possession of cultural capital (Lamont and Lareau 1988)—became a mark of high status (Peterson and Kern 1996). But what about a social group during a time of upward or downward mobility? There is evidence to suggest that identity populations that are in times of upward social mobility may have patterns of cultural taste that are distinct from the social class from which they come, and the class to which they are aspiring to become. Specifically, “The evidence suggests middle-class

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

convergence with regard to Afro-American art forms, reflecting the need of upwardly mobile minorities to maintain credible membership claims in both dominant and minority cultures” (DiMaggio and Ostrower 1990:753). An individual’s prestige can therefore often taint their understanding and acceptance of an otherwise objective art form, and to this end, in the case of many art forms, race is more than involved (Ghandnoosh 2010). In one example, “Rap music—with its evocation of angry black rappers and equally angry black audiences—was simultaneously perceived as a more authentic and serious art form than was heavy metal music, and as a more salient threat to society as a whole than the ‘white’ music genre” (Binder 1993:754). If nothing else, this finding reveals that musical preference is not just about the music itself (Vuolo, Uggem, and Lageson 2014).

Situating the Present Study

This study investigates the relationship between one’s socioeconomic status and their cultural omnivorousness, operationalized via household/family income and educational attainment to measure status, and using the number of genres liked by the respondent to measure cultural omnivorousness.

As reviewed above, past literature analyzes the theory of cultural omnivorousness, the delineation of high and low-brow art, and the role and expression of one’s prestige, as well as their combined effects on an individual’s conception of their musical taste. This is an important study to further the study of cultural taste because it looks at music—which, more so than most other art forms, forms a bridge between one’s objective taste in an art form and the culture from which they and the music came.

RESEARCH METHODS

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

I use the 1993 General Social Survey (GSS) to conduct my research. The GSS is an annual study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, which uses a stratified random sampling method of noninstitutionalized adults in the United States, and had 1,606 respondents in 1993 (Davis and Smith 1993). For further information about this dataset and how data was collected, refer to <http://gssdataexplorer.norc.org>.

The 1993 survey was the first and most recent edition to include questions regarding culture, leisure activities, and musical genre preferences. While previous surveys have asked respondents to indicate the musical genres they like among a long list of genre titles, the 1993 GSS asked all 1,606 respondents “Can you tell me which of the statements on this card comes closest to your feelings about each type of music?” Respondents were instructed to indicate their opinion of each of the 17 genres individually on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “like very much” to “dislike very much.” Using these data, I created my dependent variable to effectively act as a measure of musical omnivorousness. First creating dummy variables such that each of the “like” and “like very much” responses given by each respondent equal “1” and responses of “dislike,” “dislike very much,” and “mixed feelings,” given by respondents equal “0.” After, I combined all 17 dummy variables to create a single, nominal variable to allow analysis to discern the number of genres each respondent indicated they liked. In this survey item, “don’t know” responses are treated as missing and those respondents are eliminated from the analysis, leaving 828 respondents.

The independent variable used to measure education asked respondents “What is the highest grade in elementary school or high school that you got credit for?” Responses ranging above elementary or high school were asked the follow-up “How many years did you complete?” Responses, communicated in years (as opposed to degrees/grades), were coded with their exact numerical value and range from 0 to 20. “Don’t know” responses were coded as missing and

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

excluded from the analysis. The second independent variable for income asks respondents “In which of these groups did your total family income, from all sources, fall last year before taxes, that is?” There are 21 groups, “Lt \$1000,” “\$1000 to 2999,” “\$3000 to 3999,” “\$4000 to 4999,” “\$5000 to 5999,” “\$6000 to 6999,” “\$7000 to 7999,” “\$8000 to 9999,” “\$10000 to 12499,” “\$12500 to 14999,” “\$15000 to 174999,” “\$17500 to 19999,” “\$20000 to 22499,” “\$22500 to 24999,” “\$25000 to 29999,” “\$30000 to 34999,” “\$35000 to 39999,” “\$40000 to 49999,” “\$50000 to 59999,” “\$60000 to 74999,” “\$75000+” “Refused” and “Don’t know” (Davis and Smith 1993). To make analysis easier, each of the 21 groups were recoded to be labeled as their individual medians. The new options are “\$500,” “\$1500,” “\$3500,” “\$4500,” “\$5500,” “\$6500,” “\$7500,” “\$9000,” “\$11250,” “\$13750,” “\$16250,” “\$18750,” “\$21250,” “\$23750,” “\$27500,” “\$32500,” “\$37500,” “\$42500,” “\$55000,” “\$67500,” “\$82500.”

The control variable, age, asks respondents to indicate their age. Responses are coded as the numerical response given by the respondent, beginning at 18 and with the exception of the category “89 or older” for those respondents who are aged 89 or older. Responses with “Don’t Know” and “No Answer” were treated as missing and eliminated from analysis.

FINDINGS

Univariate Analysis

A univariate analysis was run for each of my four variables. Beginning with the dependent variable for genres liked per respondent and visualized in Figure 1, with a mean of 7.55 genres and a standard deviation of 3.3 genres, we find that the majority of the sample indicated that they either “Like” or “Like very much” a range of about four to ten musical genres, with the average being about seven or eight genres (see Table 1).

[Insert Table 1 about here.]

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

[Insert Figure 1 about here.]

Like the dependent variable for musical genres, the independent variable for education showed little variation as well. With a mean of 13.44 years and a standard deviation of 3.01 years, we find that the majority of the sample fall in between about 10 and 16 years of education, with the average specifically being 13.44 years. As Figure 2 illustrates, this finding suggests that highest concentration of respondents within sample is most likely to have graduated high school (12 years,) while a smaller but yet substantial portion has graduated college with a bachelor's degree.

[Insert Figure 2 about here.]

The independent variable for family income (in 1991) shows the greatest variation, with a mean of \$36,866.20 and a standard deviation of \$24,344.86. These data suggest that the majority of the sample has a family income of roughly \$37,000 per year. The data also suggest with the high standard deviation that there is a substantial amount of variation in the sample—a common phenomenon in income data due to high-income outliers, as can be noted in Figure 3.

[Insert Figure 3 about here.]

The final variable, the control variable for age, has a mean of 43.39 and a standard deviation of 15.36, meaning the average age of the sample is 43 years old, and the majority of the sample falls between the ages of 28 and 58.

Bivariate Analysis

In order to analyze for correlations between the variables (list-wise deletion of missing data and two-tailed test of significance), a correlation matrix was run and held to a standard of $p < .05$ for statistical significance. The results, found in Table 2, show statistical significance in four of the six variables tested. Drawing from the table, first and foremost, there is a statistically significant ($p < .05$) relationship that is weak and positive between the musical genres liked per respondent

Formatted: Position: Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

and respondents educational attainment ($r = .15$). This relationship tells us that as an individual's level of education increases, so increases the number of musical genres they like.

[Insert Table 2 about here.]

There is also a statistically significant relationship between the number of musical genres liked per respondent and respondents age, that is negative and very weak ($r = -.08$). This relationship tells us that across the population, as an individual's age increases, the number of genres they like decreases.

Departing from the dependent variable of musical genres liked, there is a statistically significant relationship between respondents income and education, that is moderate in strength and positive in direction ($r = .44$). This relationship reaffirms that across the population, as an individual's level of education increases, their income also increases.

In the final relationship between respondents age and educational attainment, we find a negative, weak, and statistically significant relationship ($r = -.23$). This relationship reveals that across the population, as the age of individuals increases, their educational attainment decreases.

Multivariate Analysis

Table 3 shows the results of the multivariate regression model, which is significant at the .05 level, with an F value of 7.681. The R-squared value of the model is .025, telling us that 2.5 percent of the variation in the dependent variable (genres liked) can be explained by the effects of the independent variables (income, education, and age).

[Insert Table 3 about here.]

Of all the results, the only statistically significant relationship (and therefore the strongest relationship, as confirmed by the standardized coefficient) among variables was that of genres liked and education. The unstandardized coefficient of .136 indicates that for each additional year

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

of education attained, the respondent will like an additional .136 genres ($p < .05$). These findings are consistent with those of the bivariate correlation analysis specifically since we can see the weak, positive and statistically significant relationship between education and genres liked in both analyses ($p < .05$). These results therefore disconfirm the first hypothesis, as we see no significant relationship between income and the number of genres likes. However, they support both the second and third hypotheses as we not only see a positive relationship between the education and genres liked variables, but we see no other significant relationships, so by default, education is the strongest ($p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

The regression analysis in Table 3 reveals that net of all other variables, the relationship between education and genres liked is the only statistically significant relationship, with both income and age having no significant results ($p < .05$). Cross referencing these regression results with those of the bivariate correlation in Table 2, we see that the findings are all consistent, with the exception of age showing a significant relationship with genres liked in the bivariate correlation, while not in the regression ($p < .05$). This is likely due to the influence of the relationship between age and education. It is likely that the significance found in the bivariate correlation analysis between genres liked and age is actually the result of education acting as an intervening variable between age and genres liked ($p < .05$). Age and education are so strongly and significantly correlated ($r = -.232$) that the significance of ones age on genres liked is actually due to the effect of one's education ($p < .05$). The lack in significance of age and genres liked found in the regression is therefore attributed to the controlling effect of the regression analysis.

As the theory of cultural omnivorousness links SES to cultural taste, with SES being a combination of primarily ones educational attainment and income, these findings alone neither

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin,
Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

conclusively support nor disconfirms the cultural omnivore theory and hypothesis because while it supports that higher education leads to broader cultural taste, it does not support that higher income does the same.

Looking now to the absence of any significant relationship between income and genres liked, the findings may support Homology Thesis, put forth by Veenstra (2015), which states that specified cultural tastes are embedded within each class position throughout the class hierarchy. This therefore infers that income may not always dictate cultural tastes, even if those tastes are frequently associated with a specific social class.

The findings of this study also find indirect support from the well-established body of literature which supports that education increases tolerance for political and religious nonconformity (Adorno et al. 1950; Davis 1975; Nunn et al. 1979; Roebuck 2009; Stouffer 1955; Weil 1985) and racial integration (Greeley and Sheatsley 1971; Hyman and Wright 1979). Bourdieu (1984) would agree, and cast an even wider net in suggesting that similarly to a key and a lock, education is the key to understanding and appreciating differing art forms.

Therefore, the findings of this study partially disconfirm and support the hypotheses. While the results reject the first hypothesis, finding that measures of income cannot accurately predict the number of genres liked, the second, and by default, the third, hypotheses are supported with the finding that education can indeed predict the number of genres liked. It is, however, possible that the findings here are reflective of entirely different social dynamics at work.

CONCLUSION

Summary

Why do some people claim to “listen to all music” while others prefer one genre? Existing research on musical tastes suggests there is a lot more than mere taste that influences an

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin,
Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

individual's opinions of particular musical genres (Benzecry and Collins 2014; Peterson and Simkus 1992; Vuolo, Uggen, and Lageson 2014). To investigate this, I look to the theory of cultural omnivorousness (Peterson and Simkus 1992), which suggests that high status individuals may no longer prefer a select few musical genres, but conversely a broad and eclectic arrangement of genres. Using data on musical preferences likes from the 1993 General Social Survey of 828 respondents, I link literatures on cultural omnivorousness (Peterson and Simkus 1992), cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), musical taste, and prestige by proposing that the patterns of an individual's musical preference can be predicted through their educational attainment and income. Controlling for the age of the respondent, the multivariate regression analyses find educational attainment to be the only significant predictor of musical preferences, with neither income nor age having relationships with musical preferences. I suggest, therefore, that the theory of cultural omnivorousness is upheld, as respondents with higher levels of educational attainment liked more musical genres.

Limitations

Despite the findings, this study suffers from several limitations. First and foremost is the age of the data and its inapplicability to today. The differences in music consumption that have taken place between 1993 and today in 2019 cannot be overstated, and while the present study findings hold true to 1993, they cannot be applied to today's context. From the devices we use to access music, to the speakers we listen through, to the source from which we acquire music, to the cost of music listening, to the role of music in different applications, to even the genres that exist today, there are countless changes that have taken place and therefore there are countless interrelated limitations. What is more, having been born in 1997 myself, I was not witness to the year 1993 and therefore cannot accurately envision many of the differences. This research

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin,
Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

presupposes that respondent music listeners have the ability to choose that which they wish to listen to with the same degree of freedom that we do today, but that is simply not the case—not least because 1993 predates the modern internet.

Second, limiting the operational precision of this study is the inherently interpretive nature of musical genre delineations in the context of self-reported data. Similarly to the colors of the rainbow, there are both a handful major genres that are known and recognized by everyone, and there are peripheral genres that are more specific, perhaps more similar to one another, and ultimately less well known and understood. The GSS includes several of these lesser-known genres, and since these data cannot tell us with complete certainty that each respondent had an accurate understanding of the genres while responding to the survey, we must assume that respondents would not indicate that they like a genre that they are unsure about. For example, one of the musical genre categories is referred to in the survey as “new age.” It would not be unreasonable to ask; what exactly is new age music? In future research, a measure of respondents’ participation in a genre would provide a more precise and accurate depiction of the respondents’ enjoyment for the genre. After this, the only remaining option may be to measure the activity of an individual’s serotonin receptors as they listen to each genre—but that sounds alike a lot of work, and truthfully I am unsure if such an analysis exists!

Third, the operationalization of Bourdieu’s (1984) “cultural capital” in the present study through the survey variables of educational attainment and family income are imperfect and therefore a limiting factor to the accuracy of the findings. The concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) refers to a form of education that pertains to an understanding for traditionally high-brow art, and it functions as a form of prestige. There is no perfect item in the dataset to measure such a concept, so educational attainment and family income must suffice.

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

Contributions

This study further develops Bourdieu's (1984) theory of high-status cultural exclusiveness by adding depth to its pillars—specifically with regard to the difference of significance between income and education in my analysis. While Bourdieu would suggest that both income and education have equal bearing on the breadth of cultural tastes, these analyses would suggest otherwise; education is the stronger predictor, if not the only.

Further research into the mechanisms of cultural taste would benefit greatly from a focus on other objects of taste aside from music, such as film, for example. Additionally and similarly, it would be necessary to look into the different expressions of taste. Most people do not express their feelings for a musical genre by indicating their like or dislike on a Likert scale, as these respondents have. Perhaps the objects one consumes or appreciates are less distinguishing than the way they are appreciated or understood.

Final Remarks

As history shows, music production and consumption have permeated humanity and our cultures for as long as we can look back. Functioning differently for different societies and cultures, musicality is as much a part of humanity as any form of cultural or creative expression, and as such, deserves the same degree of respect for shaping our present society as any other social force. What does music do for us today? And what does it mean politically and socially when specific pieces of music are played in specific settings? These questions remain to be explored—but what we know for sure is this; there will always be people who “listen to everything.” Don't believe them.

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

REFERENCES

- Adorno, Theodore W., Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and Nevitt Sanford. 1950. *The Authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper.
- Benzecry, Claudio, and Randall Collins. 2014. "The High of Cultural Experience: Toward a Microsociology of Cultural Consumption." *Sociological Theory* 32(5):307-326.
- Berghman, Michael, and Koen van Eijck. 2009. "Visual Arts Appreciation: Crossing Horizontal and Vertical Boundaries within the Cultural Hierarchy." *Sociologie* 5(3):376-405.
- Binder, Amy. 1993. "Constructing Racial Rhetoric: Media Depictions of Harm in Heavy Metal and Rap Music." *American Sociological Review* 58(6):753-767.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Stratification of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bryson, Bethany. 1997. "What about the Univores? Musical Dislikes and Group-Based Identity Construction among Americans with Low Levels of Education." *Poetics* 25(2-3):141-156.
- Bryson, Bethany. 1996. "'Anything but Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes." *American Sociological Review* 61(5):884-899.
- Davis, James, and Tom Smith. 1993. *General Social Surveys, 1972-1993: Cumulative Code Book*. Chicago, IL: National Opinion Research Center.
- Davis, James A. 1975. "Communism, Conformity, Cohorts, and Categories: American Tolerance in 1954 and 1972-73." *American Journal of Sociology* 81(3):491-513.
- DiMaggio, Paul, and Francie Ostrower. 1990. "Participation in the Arts by Black and White Americans." *Social Forces* 68(3):753-778.

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

- Ghandnoosh, Nazgol. 2010. "'Cross-Cultural' Practices: Interpreting Non-African-American Participation in Hip-Hop Dance." *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 33(9):33.
- Glevarec, Hervé, and Michel Pinet. 2017. "Is Cultural Eclecticism Axiological and a New Mark of Distinction? Cultural Diversification and Social Differentiation of Tastes in France." *Cultural Sociology* 11(2):188-216.
- Greeley, Andrew M., and Paul B. Sheatsley. 1971. "Attitudes Towards Racial Integration." *Scientific American* 225(6):13-19.
- Hanquinet, Laurie. 2017. "Exploring Dissonance and Omnivorousness: Another Look into the Rise of Eclecticism." *Cultural Sociology* 11(2):165-187.
- Hyman, Herbert H., and Charles R. Wright. *Education's Lasting Influence on Values*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Lahire, Bernard. 2011. "The Individual and the Mixing of Genres - Cultural Dissonances and Self-Distinction." *Journal Fur Soziologie* 21(1):39-68.
- Lamont, Michele, and Annette Lareau. 1988. "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps, and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments." *Sociological Theory* 6(2):153-168.
- McClung, Alexander. 2013. *Cultural Omnivores in Context: An Examination of Neighborhood Effects on Cultural Taste*. Albany: University of Albany Press.
- Nunn, Clyde Z., Harry J. Crockett and J. A. Williams. 1978. *Tolerance for Nonconformity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Okada, Sosuke. 2017. "Structure of Cultural Rejection." *Sociological Perspectives* 60(2):355-377.
- Peterson, Richard A., and Albert Simkus. 1996. "How Musical Tastes Mark Occupational Status Groups." Pp. 152-86 in *Cultivating Differences: Symbolic Boundaries and the Making of*

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

Inequality, edited by Michele Lamont, Marcel Fournier. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Peterson, Richard A., and Roger M. Kern. 1996. "Changing Highbrow Taste: From Snob to Omnivore." *American Sociological Review* 61(5):900-907.

Peterson, Richard A., and Paul DiMaggio. 1975. "From Region to Class, the Changing Locus of Country Music: A Test of the Massification Hypothesis." *Social Forces* 53(3): 497-506.

Roebuck, James C. 2009. "Sounds of Distinction: Analyzing Socioacoustics to Map the Combinatorial Logic of Status and Class." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 69(11).

Stouffer, Samuel A. 1955. *Communism, Conformity, and Civil Liberties*; Doubleday

Veenstra, Gerry. 2015. "Class Position and Musical Tastes: A Sing-Off between the Cultural Omnivorism and Bourdieusian Homology Frameworks." *Canadian Review of Sociology* 52(2):134-159.

Vuolo, Mike, Christopher Uggen and Sarah Lageson. 2014. "Taste Clusters of Music and Drugs: Evidence from Three Analytic Levels." *British Journal of Sociology* 65(3):529-554.

Weber, Max. 1968. *Economy and Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Weil, Frederick D. 1985. "The Variable Effects of Education on Liberal Attitudes: A Comparative-Historical Analysis of Anti-Semitism using Public Opinion Survey Data." *American Sociological Review* 50(4):458-474.

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Level of Measurement and Descriptive Statistics for Variables ($N = 828$)

Variable	Mean	Median	S.D.
Genres Liked	7.55	7.00	3.300
Education	13.44	13.00	3.010
Family Income	36866.20	32500.00	24344.860
Age	43.39	40.00	15.360

Table 2. Correlations (r) between Genres Liked and Two Variables ($N = 828$)

	Income	Education	Age
Genres Liked	.101	.154*	-.080*
Income		.443*	-.059
Education			-.232*

* $p < .05$ (listwise deletion, two-tailed test)

Table 3. Multivariate Regression of Genres Liked on All Variables ($N = 828$)

Variables	b	β
Income	.000	.043
Education	.136	.124*
Age	-.010	-.049
Constant	5.969	

$R^2 = .025$; $F(3, 824) = 7.681$, $p < .05$

* $p < .05$

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

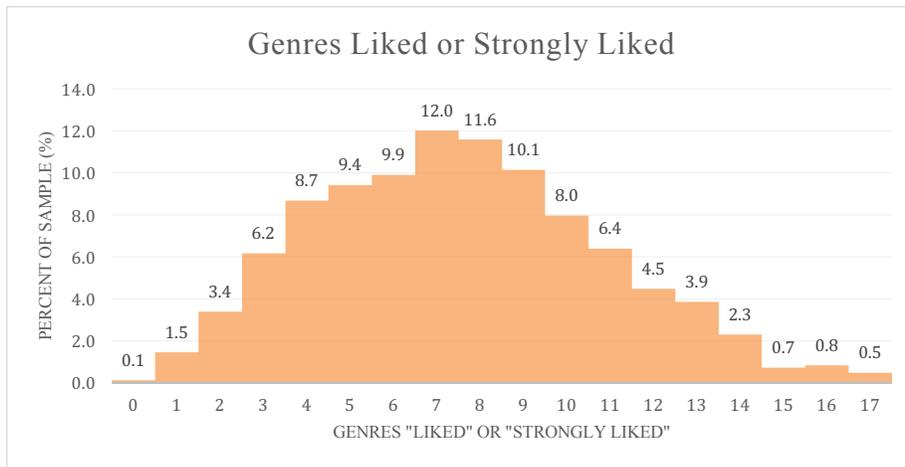


Figure 1. Histogram of the Number of Genres Liked

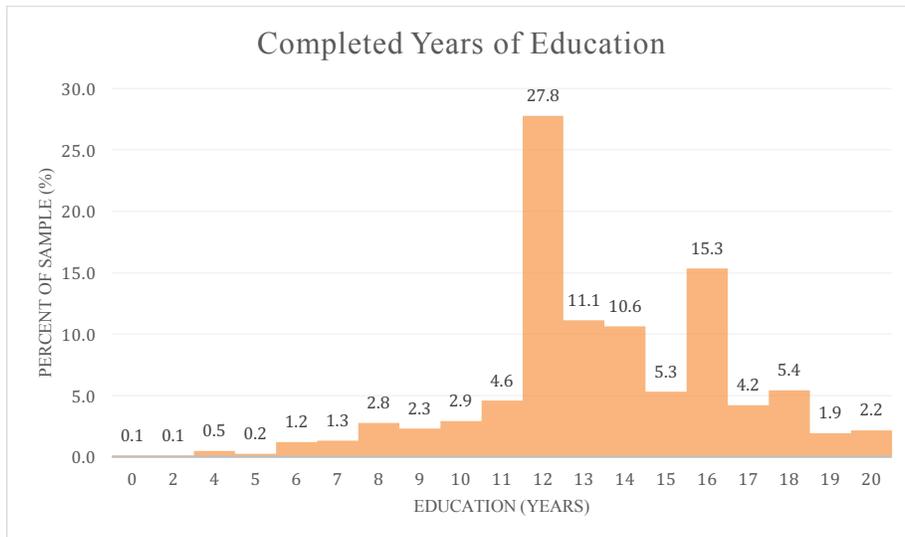


Figure 2. Histogram of Years of Education Completed

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around

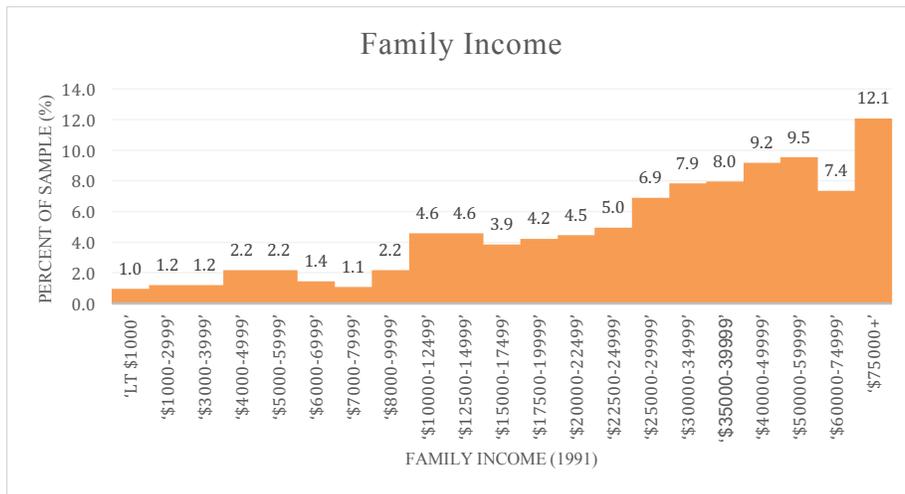


Figure 3. Histogram of Family Income

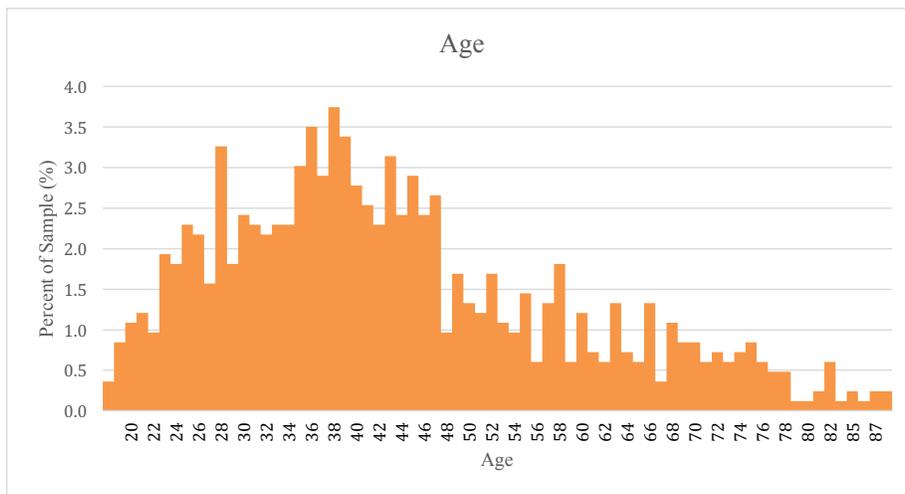


Figure 4. Histogram of Age of Respondent

Formatted: Position:Horizontal: Right, Relative to: Margin, Vertical: 0", Relative to: Paragraph, Wrap Around