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Social Class and Highbrow Lifestyle – A Cross-national Analysis

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Abstract

Above all, Pierre Bourdieu's work has argued that there is a homology of social classes on the one hand and cultural consumption on the other. In contrast, theories of individualization posit that social class plays only a minor role in shaping lifestyle in contemporary societies. In this paper, using extensive survey data, we examine a) how much contemporary highbrow lifestyles are structured by class membership, b) the extent to which highbrow consumption varies according to the level of modernization of a society and c) whether the explanatory power of class status in relation to highbrow consumption decreases in more modernized countries. The findings show that highbrow lifestyles are strongly influenced by social class, and that highbrow consumption is more common in more modernized societies. Moreover, the findings confirm the suspicion that the formative power of social class on lifestyle decreases in highly modernized societies, albeit without disappearing completely.

I. Introduction

Pierre Bourdieu, in his pioneering work "Distinction – A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste" (1984) postulated a close correlation between affluence and social class, on one hand, and lifestyle, on the other. The strength of this correlation between class and lifestyle orientation remains highly controversial in the available literature. Some authors assume that the relationship between class and (high)cultural lifestyles in increasingly individualising societies is fairly weak. Others suggest a closer relationship. In this paper, we investigate this relationship more closely. We focus on highbrow lifestyles, which, according to Bourdieu, find the highest approval in most societies. Highbrow consumption is used by the upper classes as a tool of social differentiation and for the legitimation of social inequalities. On the basis of two surveys, carried out in several countries, this paper examines the following three hypotheses: (1) To what extent is highbrow consumption tied to class membership? (2) Does the proportion of people who adopt a highbrow lifestyle increase with the degree of modernization? (3) Does the formative influence of social class on highbrow lifestyle decline with the increasing modernization of a society? As a first step, we will describe the theoretical framework and outline our hypotheses. We will then explain our methodology, and in a further step, present the empirical findings. We will close the paper with a conclusion.

II. Theoretical framework

1. Social class, taste and cultural consumption

Pierre Bourdieu's work has argued that the cultural consumption of humans is to a large extent determined by class status. Members of the upper classes consume mostly highbrow cultural goods, while members of the lower classes tend to choose products of mass and popular culture. The different class-based lifestyles thus represent a symbolic reproduction of class structure: Highbrow culture provides a degree of prestige and legitimacy, while mass culture is seen to be an expression of an illegitimate taste. We will explain below the steps by which Bourdieu specifies the general assumption of a homology between class structure and cultural consumption.

A society's class structure emerges from the unequal distribution of various kinds of capital that people have at their disposal. Bourdieu (1984, 1986) distinguishes between economic capital (income and assets), social capital (social relations) and cultural capital. Cultural capital itself is further divided into three sub-categories. Institutional cultural capital includes formal education, for instance the degrees and certificates that a person is awarded by a society's educational institutions. Objectified cultural capital is manifested in the possession of books, paintings and other cultural artefacts. In terms of cultural consumption, the third sub-category, embodied cultural capital, is especially important. This sub-category, for Bourdieu, refers to the ability of people to apply aesthetic criteria for the evaluation of "things". Embodied cultural capital is transmitted above all through the family, and its

acquisition requires time, effort and comprehensive early socialization. Once acquired, it is indelibly etched into the individual. The practical transmission of embodied cultural capital includes, for example, reading books, learning a musical instrument or visiting galleries and museums.

The class structure of a society results from the aggregation of the capital which people possess, and the assignment of individuals with the same capital to the same classes. Depending on the composition of capital, Bourdieu distinguishes three social classes and different fractions within each class. The relative composition of cultural and economic capital constitutes a horizontal axis of the two-dimensional space of class positions. In the upper class, he identifies a class group with a great deal of cultural capital and a group with relatively less cultural capital.

The propertied bourgeoisie, consisting mainly of the self-employed, has a large amount of economic capital, but proportionately less cultural capital. For the intellectual elites, on the other hand, cultural capital is dominant. For Bourdieu, this is especially true of professors and other *academic professionals*. The middle class or lower middle class consists of those in mid-level professional positions, especially *middle management*. The lower or working class consists of people who are poorly educated and do manual work.

The allocation of capital and the resulting assignment of people within classes and class fractions have a significant influence on the formation of taste and aesthetic preferences. Aesthetic taste, according to Bourdieu, is neither natural nor innate, but is instead an acquired skill which consists of competence in the aesthetic decoding of symbols, for instance, the interpretation of works of art. Since taste is class-specific, Bourdieu distinguishes different kinds of taste (Bourdieu, 1984). The luxury taste of the upper class is based on an experience of economic security and is characterized by stylization. Stylization refers to a rejection of the function of objects in favour of form and an emphasis on quality. The luxury taste of the upper class is also described by Bourdieu as the *legitimate taste*, and it alone enjoys recognition in a society. The *taste for necessity* of the lower classes is, on the other hand, the result of adaptation to economic constraints. It is characterized by a preference for "substance", for quantity rather than quality. The focus is on the satisfaction of physical needs.

Taste refers to various objects: the choice of home furnishings, holiday destinations, food, clothing and even a person's preferences for certain kinds of art. Artistic preferences, the focus of this analysis, are an important part of taste. Classical concerts, theatre, ballet, fine art etc. require an ability on the part of the receptor to decipher the art pieces offered. This ability to decode a work consists of classifying the characteristics of a work of art within the horizon of stylistic possibilities and making links between a given artwork and other works and styles. This classificatory competence is distributed differently throughout society. The upper class, and especially the fraction that possesses a large amount of cultural capital, is, due to capital resources and the resulting taste orientation, particularly likely to have this competence.

While taste refers to internalized patterns of perception and appreciation, lifestyles pertain to the characteristic patterns of actual human actions. Lifestyle is therefore a category of praxis, of practiced aesthetics, and manifests itself in the purchase of certain goods or in attendance at certain events. Like taste, lifestyles are also class-specific: Bourdieu (1984) differentiates a distinguished upper class lifestyle, a pretentious middle class lifestyle and a proletarian lifestyle that is typical of the working class.

In summary, taste and the space of lifestyles are constructed in a spatial analogue with class structure. Bourdieu (1984) describes this as a *homology of spaces*. This means that class structure and the underlying forms of capital shape tastes and the resulting lifestyles. Simultaneously, the class-specific lifestyles cement class structures: These structures only become socially visible when differences are translated into symbols and manifest themselves in observable lifestyles. The upper classes in particular distinguish themselves from the middle and lower classes by their lifestyle, claiming legitimate taste for themselves alone and expressing this through their leisure activities.

2. The de-structuring and individualization of lifestyles

The notion of the homology of social classes with cultural consumption has been criticized by many authors. This criticism has tended to be directed at the limited scope of homology theory, rather than at its underlying basis. Individualization theorists claim that while membership of social classes through lifestyle activity was common in the past, this has become less common in the post-industrial world (Atkinson, 2010; Bauman, 2001; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Hörning and Michailow, 1990; Lüdtke, 1989; Schulze, 1992). In the literature, the following reasons are given for the decoupling of lifestyles from social class.

Societies over the last 60 years have experienced an enormous increase in prosperity, leading to an increase in leisure time, in the purchasing power of citizens and in the amount of products and services available. This leads, as Ulrich Beck (1992) argues, to the melting away of class boundaries: "Class will pale into insignificance beside an individualized society of employees" (Beck, 1992: 100). The practice of lifestyles is influenced not only by taste, but also by the resources available to the individual. Expensive consumption lifestyles have become available to more people, and the number of people who can afford highbrow lifestyles has increased.

The development of societies has also led to an *increase in the level of education*, to an expansion of institutional cultural capital. Since, according to Bourdieu, education is an important precondition of a competence in legitimate taste, this in turn has an effect on the level of highbrow consumption. Therefore, expansion of education will increase the practice of highbrow lifestyles.

The increased spread of highbrow lifestyles does not automatically imply the dissolution of the influence of class status. Rather, such a de-structuring is mainly

caused by the *dissolution of class-specific milieu*. These class-specific social environments have traditionally structured the lifestyles of class members in various aspects: from memberships in associations to voting behaviour, leisure activities and family roles. According to Beck, processes of individualization are characterized by the loss of significance and the dissolution of class-specific environments. As the bonds of class-specific environments dissolve, individuals are freed from the constraints of collective definitions of meaning (Beck, 1992). This also applies to lifestyles.

Last but not least, a change in values has taken place in modern societies. A materialist orientation has in part been displaced by post-materialist values and values of self-expression and individual liberty (Inglehart 1990, 2008; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Klages, 1984). Thus, not only more options are available to individuals in material terms, but also in terms of lifestyle, as individuals are freed from normative constraints and class-specific traditions.

Increasing wealth, the expansion of education and a change in values thus lead to the emergence of a more individualized social structure and a de-structuring of cultural lifestyles. This raises the question of the extent to which highbrow consumption remains linked to class membership. Besides, two additional assumptions arise, less as an alternative than a further specification of the homology thesis: We suspect that increasing societal wealth leads to an increase in the spread of highbrow lifestyles. We further assume that the influence of class status on highbrow consumption decreases with the growing affluence of a society.

3. The state of current research

Cultural lifestyles have been explored in a series of recent works. It is very controversial whether the explanatory power of concepts of class and social stratification really decreases. Some authors assume that lifestyles and consumption are only loosely linked to class status and structure, or that there has at least been a detectable weakening of the correlations over the last decade (Clark and Lipset, 1991; Hradil, 1987; Müller-Schneider, 2000; Pahl, 1989; Schulze, 1992; Toivonen, 1992). This seems to apply to at least some areas of leisure culture, such as participation in sports, media consumption, the consumption of pop music, or social activities such as going out to restaurants and bars. However, it does not seem to be the case for highbrow cultural activities (Isengard, 2005; Otte, 2004; Rössel, 2005; Uttitz, 1985). A highbrow lifestyle, which usually manifests itself in visits to the opera or theatre, attending classical concerts, art exhibitions and museums, remains closely associated with an individual's economic resources and education. This is supported by studies in many Western societies: Participants in highbrow cultural scenes have more economic and cultural capital and belong primarily to the upper and upper-middle classes (Bihagen and Katz-Gerro, 2000; Gerhards, 2008; Katz-Gerro, 2002; Kraaykamp and Nieuwbeerta, 2000; Lamprecht and Stamm, 1994; Roose and van der Stichele, 2010; Toivonen, 2006; Van Eijck and Bargemann, 2004; Yaish and Katz-Gerro, 2010).

These findings, however, say little about the changes in the relationship between class status and lifestyle over time, about whether, in the context of modernization and individualization processes, there a de-structuring has taken place. To this end, simultaneous comparative analyses of countries at different stages of modernization may provide further insight.

To date there are, however, relatively few comparative studies (with the exception of de Graaf, 1991; Katz-Gerro, 2002, 2006; Virtanen, 2007; Gerhards, 2008; Lizardo and Skiles, 2009). Moreover, most of these studies present no systematic explanation of the differences between countries. Virtanen (2007) carried out a comprehensive study on cultural lifestyles in 15 EU countries which shows first that the proportion of people who adopt a highbrow lifestyle varies between the countries considered. Moreover, there is a correlation in many of the countries between education, age and socio-economic status with the practice of highbrow lifestyles, but the extent of the correlation varies across countries. Katz-Gerro (2002: 223) also found, in a comparative study of five countries, differences in the relationship between class status and cultural lifestyle. She stated that, "in the U.S., Israel, and Sweden, highbrow cultural consumption patterns distinguish the white-collar from the other classes, while in Italy and West Germany those consumption patterns distinguish the working class from the other classes." Finally de Graaf (1991), in a comparison of the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Netherlands, showed that cultural consumption is structured to varying degrees in terms of the education of the individual as well as that of their partner. None of these studies, however, attempted to explain these national differences systematically.

One attempt to explain national differences can be found in Gerhards (2008). Like others, he explains highbrow consumption in terms of individual characteristics such as class status and education. Additionally, it appears that the national differences can also be partly explained by the size of a country's cultural sector. A larger cultural sector means that people have easier access to highbrow cultural activities, and thus can also realize their aesthetic preferences (Gerhards, 2008). Another attempt to explain national differences was made by Lizardo and Skiles (2009). They suggest that a more distinctive highbrow lifestyle can be found especially in countries in which popular culture is subject to strong processes of commercialization. Commercialization leads, as Lizardo and Skiles (2009: 12) argue using the example of television, to a homogenization and trivialization of program formats, with the result that: "highbrow consumers (…) react to television programming styles produced in commercialized, profit-oriented media regimes with snobbish consumption patterns." These assumptions are empirically supported: In countries with a commercialized television culture, dominated by private broadcasters, people with highbrow cultural tastes are more likely to turn away from television than in those countries with a less commercial, state-dominated television culture. This promotes the formation of a highbrow lifestyle which is consciously distinguished from mass culture.

As yet, there are no studies which attempt to explain the cross-national differences in participation in highbrow activities in terms of the degree of modernization and individualization of the society.

Excursus: From highbrow lifestyle to the "cultural omnivore"?

Discussions of cultural lifestyles have in recent years been dominated by the so-called "omnivore thesis" (Peterson and Simkus, 1992; Peterson and Kern, 1996; Peterson, 2005). Although we cannot test our data against this thesis, we will provide a brief discussion of the "omnivore thesis" due to its popularity. Proponents of this thesis argue that class and status position still characterize a person's cultural consumption, but that this does not result in differences between elite highbrow and popular mass culture. Instead, members of the upper classes are "cultural omnivores" who consume both highbrow and popular culture in large quantities. Chan and Goldthorpe (2005, 2007) showed that cultural consumption among the upper classes in Britain was broadly spread: It includes on the one hand highbrow activities such as attendance at ballet, theatre and classical music concerts, but also on the other hand popular culture, such as cinema visits. People in lower social classes are, in contrast, likely to limit their consumption to popular culture. Similar results have emerged for other countries (see all contributions in Chan, 2010; Meier-Jaeger and Katz-Gerro, 2010; Purhonen et al., 2010).

These findings of Chan and Goldthorpe contradict the homology theory of Pierre Bourdieu. We find, however, the authors' conclusions not entirely convincing. Ultimately, the members of the upper classes keep 'the company of their equals' by visits to opera, ballet and classical concerts, and these activities therefore retain a highly relevant distinguishing value. In addition, the authors do not account for the high differentiation in the cinematic landscape, in which different cinemas and genres appeal to and structure very different audiences. Rössel and Bromberger (2009) show for example that people with higher educational levels tend to go to arthouse films and smaller (program) cinemas and avoid going to more commercially-oriented cinemas and action and entertainment films.[1] Qualitative studies come to similar conclusions: People with higher education levels and members of the upper classes consume popular culture very selectively, picking out specific products that they deem to be of higher quality (Atkinson, 2011; Ollivier, 2008; Warde et al., 2007). Ultimately, almost all of this lifestyle analysis is based on the assumption that those behaviours constitute a distinct lifestyle with a high

[1] In a similar analysis of television viewing, Bihagen and Katz-Gerro (2000) take certain program types like documentaries and current affairs as 'highbrow TV', while they categorize entertainment programs as 'lowbrow TV'. The latter are more frequently avoided by educated and higher status groups. In a differentiated analysis of the consumption of music, Tampubolon (2008) showed that 'cultural omnivores', while characterized by wide ranging music consumption, nevertheless consciously avoid certain styles such as heavy metal, country or pop music.

empirical correlation. For opera, theatre and concert attendance, this is almost always true. Cinema attendance is not negatively correlated with a highbrow lifestyle, but is only very weakly correlated. Cinema visits often go together with attendance at sports, restaurants and bars, in a distinct, entertainment-oriented lifestyle (Isengard, 2005; Lamprecht and Stamm, 1994; Georg, 1998; Yaish and Katz-Gerro, 2010). Such an entertainment-oriented lifestyle is correlated positively with income, but only weakly with a person's education level. It is therefore less socially exclusive and does not possess the same distinguishing value as a "highbrow" lifestyle.

Taken together, highbrow activities form a distinguished lifestyle. Such highbrow lifestyles are in most societies correlated with a person's education level and economic resources. Certain activities like opera and theatre attendance form a bastion of the upper class. The degree, however, to which a highbrow lifestyle is shaped by economic and cultural capital can vary considerably between countries. We suspect that national differences can be put down to the level of modernization and individualization.

II. Data and variables

The thesis that the influence of class status on lifestyle is waning can be tested by analyses over time or cohorts, as well as by country comparisons (Kohler, 2005). A key prerequisite for a country comparison is that the countries considered differ in economic prosperity and education. If this is the case, then one can first check whether there is a positive correlation between the level of modernization and the extent of practice of highbrow lifestyles. One can then examine whether the influence of social class on the choice of lifestyles is smaller in more modernized societies than it is in less modernized ones. Our analysis is based on *Eurobarometer* (EB) 67.1 data from 2007, on the theme of "European Cultural Values". All 27 EU countries are included in the EB survey. For multivariate analysis, we use an additional survey from the *International Social Survey Programme* (ISSP) on the theme of "Leisure and Sport", also from 2007. Since the ISSP also includes non-European countries, this offers the opportunity to test our hypotheses against other cultural contexts.[2]

Below we present the indicators for our analysis. As with any secondary analysis, there is the problem that our theoretical constructs for key questions were not considered in the design of the survey. Therefore, some of the indicators are rather

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[2] In the EB survey, people from the age of 15 were interviewed; for the ISSP, respondents aged 18 and above were evaluated. The samples are representative of the populations of the country. In the ISSP analysis, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines and South Africa were not included due to the fact that the low level of modernization means that no adequate infrastructure for highbrow activities is available (e.g. opera houses). The data was weighted by using the available variables. There was no weighting variable available for the ISSP at the country level. We have therefore calculated such a variable ourselves, using population figures and sample sizes. Both the EB and ISSP are available from the *Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences*.

crude measures of theoretical constructs. Detailed information on the operationalization of each variable can be found in the appendix.

1. Highbrow lifestyles

The interviewees of the Eurobarometer were asked whether and how often they have taken part in ten different cultural activities in the last twelve months. The following four activities correlate highly with one another: attendance at (1) ballet and opera, (2) concerts (3) theatres and (4) museums and galleries. A high correlation suggests the existence of a coherent lifestyle. Above, we had defined lifestyles as a bundle of leisure activities that form a uniform behavioural syndrome, directed by a specific taste orientation which is located inside the subject and therefore cannot be measured directly. From these four activities, we created an additive scale, which we refer to as "*highbrow lifestyle*" (Cronbach's α = .72). This new scale has a range of values from 0 to 12. Respondents who are assigned a value of 0 had no highbrow activity in the last year, while respondents who are assigned a value of 12 have participated in each of the four activities more than five times.[3]

The ISSP dataset collected information about how often respondents attend concerts, theatre performances or exhibitions: "never", "several times a year", "several times a month", "several times a week" or "daily". The variable has been recoded so that high values indicate frequent cultural activities.

2. Social classes and different forms of capital

a) Institutionalized cultural capital: Institutionalized cultural capital covers education or educational certificates awarded to an individual by a society's educational institutions. The Eurobarometer and ISSP contain variables which allow a comparison of respondents' educational levels in spite of the varying national education systems. The Eurobarometer respondents were asked how old they were when they finished their training; ISSP respondents were asked about the number of years spent in the education system. The higher a respondent's age at the end of their education, and the more time spent in the educational system, the higher the level of education is considered to be and thus the higher the institutionalized cultural capital.

b) Embodied cultural capital: Bourdieu understands this as the ability to apply aesthetic criteria to the evaluation of art objects, acquired above all by early and enduring familial socialization. The practices which instil embodied cultural capital include learning a musical instrument and participation in other artistic practices.

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[3] Bourdieu's description of highbrow lifestyles is more finely differentiated than the questions that we evaluate in this secondary analysis. While, in describing art-related activities, Bourdieu refers to very specific symphonies, composers, paintings and plays, the indicators used here measure only participation in highbrow institutions, without providing details about the actual pieces. In this respect, the analyses provide a cruder description of the highbrow cultural orientations of citizens.

Such practices, which contribute to the development of aesthetic judgement, were probed in the Eurobarometer survey: Interviewees were asked about different artistic activities. On the basis of the frequency with which respondents played music and participated in theatre and writing, a new variable was created. We use this variable as an approximate measurement of the embodied cultural capital of the respondents, since a direct measurement of competences in aesthetic evaluation is not available. The same is true of the ISSP, for which we use the frequency of reading books as a proxy variable.

c) Economic capital: The Eurobarometer dataset does not include questions about income and assets. A direct operationalization of economic capital is thus not possible. However, interviewees were asked about their current (or, in the case of unemployment, previous) job positions. Professional positions are used by Bourdieu to differentiate the classes and class fractions. We distinguish the following occupational groups: 1) employed or independent "professionals" (e.g. doctors, architects, lawyers, university teachers), 2) upper and middle management staff (e.g. directors and managers, department managers, technicians, teachers), 3) self-employed (business owners, independent craftsmen), 4) middle-tier employees and skilled workers, and 5) unskilled workers and employees.

In contrast, the ISSP includes the (country-specific) income of respondents, and thus offers the opportunity for a more direct measure of economic capital. To this end, standardized values for household income are calculated for each country. The final variable therefore measures the relative income position of respondents within a country.

3. Economic prosperity and the expansion of education

We test the thesis of the waning influence of class on highbrow lifestyles by a cross-national analysis. In order to measure economic development and the level of education, we use the *Human Development Index* (HDI). The HDI can assign values between 0 and 1, and combines various indicators of economic development, life expectancy and education. It thus nicely covers the aspects that are of interest to us.

4. Control variables

Other studies have shown that additional factors influence the practice of highbrow lifestyles. Some of these factors have been shown to be of particular importance, and we therefore use them as control variables. First, highbrow activity depends on the age and sex of an individual (Katz-Gerro, 2002; van Eijck and Bargeman, 2005; Chan and Goldthorpe, 2005). Second, the opportunity structure is crucial in determining whether people participate in certain highbrow activities (Rössel, 2004, 2005; Gerhards, 2008). For instance, if an individual has a preference for classical music or opera, but does not live near a concert hall or opera house, this preference is difficult to put into practice. Highbrow cultural infrastructure is notably better in large cities than it is in rural areas. We therefore consider the place of residence of respondents

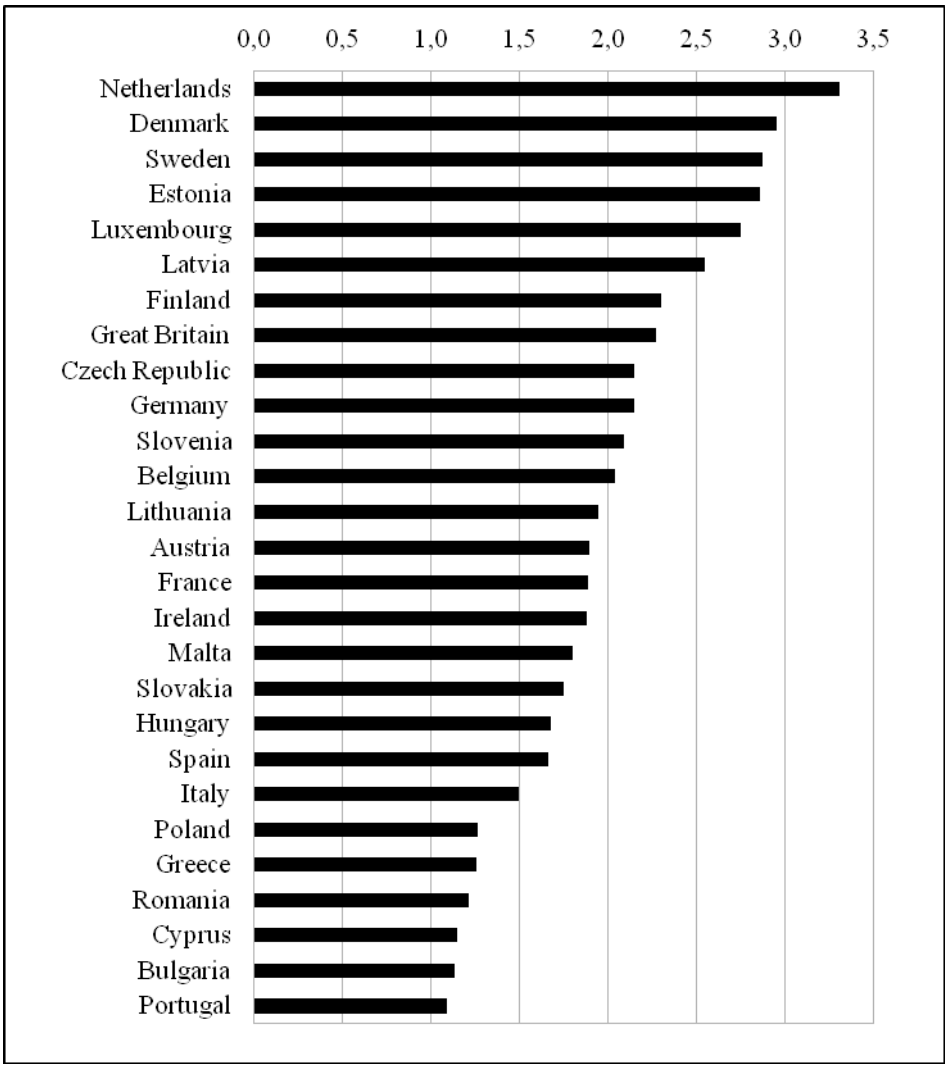
and differentiate rural areas, small towns and large cities. Moreover, we assume that parents of young children have less time and thus fewer opportunities to participate in highbrow activities. For this reason, in the analysis of the EB, a variable is considered that distinguishes between respondents who have no children under 10 in their household and respondents who live with at least one child under 10 years of age. In ISSP, a similar variable is used, though the age of the children was not specified.

III. Empirical results

To what extent are highbrow lifestyles spread throughout the analysed countries? Figure 1 shows the mean values for the established scale for highbrow lifestyles in the 27 EU countries. Although the scale used here to describe highbrow consumption ranges from 0 to 12, the mean value for all 27 countries is 1.88. This indicates that highbrow lifestyles are not widespread throughout the 27 countries.[4] One of the characteristics of elites and elite lifestyles is that they are not practiced by large parts of the population, and this seems to be true for all the countries examined here. The distinction of a unique lifestyle which is opposed to popular tastes is a constitutive feature of the elites in all 27 countries. The same is true beyond Europe: The mean value of the highbrow culture scale (from 1 to 5) in the ISSP ranges between just 1.44 and 2.05 between countries.

[4] Moreover, the frequency of highbrow cultural activities is often overestimated in surveys. Reuband (2007) compared a representative population survey with a survey of an opera audience. He concludes that compared to the number of opera tickets sold, the frequency of opera visits is overestimated in population surveys. This is probably due to effects of social expectations.

Figure 1: Highbrow cultural consumption in 27 EU countries



Below we attempt to explain the incidence of highbrow lifestyles, using multivariate linear regression analysis. In this way, we aim to test the assumptions made above: First, the influence of class membership and the possession of various forms of cultural capital on highbrow consumption is examined. We then proceed to evaluate the influence of social modernization. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 1.

1. Class membership and highbrow consumption

As explained, Bourdieu argues that class structure and the underlying forms of capital emerge in taste and thereby shape lifestyle. With respect to class structure, we first assume that all professional groups are engaged in highbrow lifestyles to a greater degree than the reference group of unskilled workers and employees, which Bourdieu associates with the proletariat. Second, we suspect that there is a difference between professionals and people in higher management positions on the one hand, and the self-employed on the other. They all belong to the upper class, but form two

different fractions. The self-employed are those who have considerable economic capital, but relatively little cultural capital. Among the other two groups, an inverse capital structure is found. Accordingly, we suspect that the self-employed have a weaker degree of orientation towards highbrow culture than professionals and managers.

Table 1: Explanation of highbrow cultural consumption

	Eurobarometer 67.1				ISSP
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4a	Model 4b
Class Fractions					
Professionals, academics	0,29***	-	-	0,18***	-
Higher and middle management	0,38***	-	-	0,22***	-
Entrepreneurs, self-employed	0,12***	-	-	0,08***	-
Skilled workers, employees	0,19***	-	-	0,10***	-
Other (never worked)	0,00	-	-	-0,01	-
Household Income	-	-	-	-	0,11***
Cultural capital					
Institutionalized (education)	-	0,31***	-	0,21***	0,18***
Embodied (activities)	-	0,24***	-	0,20***	0,20***
Modernization (HDI)	-	-	0,16***	0,11***	0,10***
Control variables					
Residence in urban environment	-	-	-	0,07***	0,04***
Children in household	-	-	-	-0,07***	-0,06***
Age	-	-	-	-0,00	-0,06***
Female	-	-	-	0,07***	0,00
R^2	13,8 %	18,2 %	2,6 %	24,8 %	16,9%
N	23 632	23 632	23 632	23 632	26 011

Notes: OLS regression models based on EB 67.1 data (models 1, 2, 3 and 4a). Model 4b is based on ISSP 2007 data. Standardized coefficients are reported. Reference category for class fractions: unskilled workers. Significance: *p < 0,05; **p < 0,01; ***p < 0,001.

The results in table 1 confirm these hypotheses (model 1). The positive regression coefficients indicate that, compared to unskilled workers and employees, members of all the other class groups are more inclined towards highbrow lifestyles. Also, as we expected, the effects for professionals and top executives are significantly stronger than for middle-tier employees and self-employed persons.[5] Overall, the results meet the expectations of our hypotheses. Slightly less than 14 percent of the variance in the highbrow activities can be attributed to class group membership.

Next, institutionalized capital should, following Bourdieu, have a positive impact on highbrow lifestyle because school curricula tend to reflect the aesthetic

[5] That the self-employed do not pursue highbrow activities more often than middle-tier employees can perhaps be explained by the greater heterogeneity of the former group, since according to our operationalization, many employees – not only entrepreneurs but also "small" independent craftsmen – fall under this category.

preferences of the educated middle class and are thus oriented towards highbrow culture. Moreover, we assume that embodied cultural capital has a positive impact on highbrow lifestyle, and that this influence is remarkably strong, following Bourdieu's particular on the influence of embodied cultural capital. As the analysis shows, both institutional as well as embodied cultural capital have a strong positive effect on the pursuit of highbrow activities (model 2). 18 percent of the variance can be explained in this way, even slightly more than by class groups and economic capital.

The results of the first two models therefore quite clearly indicate that the lifestyles of people in European societies are determined not only by class, but they are nevertheless linked to it. A highbrow lifestyle is found mainly among people in the upper class groups who possess considerable cultural capital. Bourdieu's thesis is therefore supported here.

2. The degree of modernization and highbrow cultural consumption

In the next step, the role of the level of modernization of societies in the prevalence of highbrow lifestyles will be investigated. Due to an increase in general material prosperity and a greater availability of cultural capital, in more modernized societies, more people should pursue a highbrow lifestyle than in less modernized countries. This hypothesis is first tested in model 3. Indeed, the level of modernization has a positive and statistically significant effect on participation in highbrow activities. The effect is not particularly strong, however.

Still, the effect of the degree of modernization remains significant in the overall model, in which all variables are included and the effects of age, sex and opportunity structure are controlled for (model 4a). Compared to the previous models there is little change. Although the regression coefficients of all variables have become slightly smaller, the substantive interpretation remains the same when we control for the other factors. In particular the two indicators of cultural capital remain the strongest influences, followed by the class groups and the degree of modernization, which has a significantly lower impact than the variables derived from Bourdieu's thesis. Place of residence, children, age and sex seem to have hardly any influence on the practice of highbrow activities.

The moderate influence of modernization in model 3 could be attributed to the countries included in the Eurobarometer survey, which vary only slightly in this regard. For this reason, all analyses were repeated using the ISSP data. The range in the degree of modernization spans from Russia at 0.71 to Norway at 0.94. Not all individual models were reported, as in the Eurobarometer, but only an overall model, which represents a particularly stringent test of the hypotheses under control of other variables (model 4b). Apparently, the effects of most of the explanatory variables are very similar to the Eurobarometer – with one small exception: Household income as an indicator of economic capital has a slightly lower explanatory power than class groups had in the Eurobarometer. The cultural capital

of the respondents, however, plays an equally important role. The effect of the level of modernization is roughly the same. The ISSP data thus shows that highbrow lifestyles are linked to the class structure of societies and the availability of cultural capital and occur (slightly) more frequently in the wake of increasing prosperity and educational expansion.

3. On the de-structuring of highbrow consumption

In the final step of the empirical analysis, both points are linked. On the basis of the individualization thesis, we assume that there is a decoupling of social structure and lifestyles with increasing modernization. For this reason, the explanatory power of class groups and cultural capital for highbrow activities in countries with a high degree of modernization should be less than in less modernized countries.

To verify this assumption, separate regression models were calculated for each country, including all variables from models 1 and 2 (class fractions, institutionalized cultural capital, embodied cultural capital). The explanatory power of these models, the measure R^2, was then correlated with the level of modernization of the country. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate this relationship. While the x-axes reflect the level of modernization of the countries, the y-axes show the explanatory power of class structure and cultural capital for highbrow lifestyles. The results clearly illustrate a negative relationship: The higher degree of modernization of a country, the less highbrow consumption is linked to the class status of an individual. The correlation coefficients are r = -0.44 (EB) and r = -0.52 (ISSP). Both coefficients are significant at the .05 level.

Figure 2: Explanatory power of class structure for highbrow cultural consumption by HDI – Eurobarometer 67.1 data (r = -0.44)

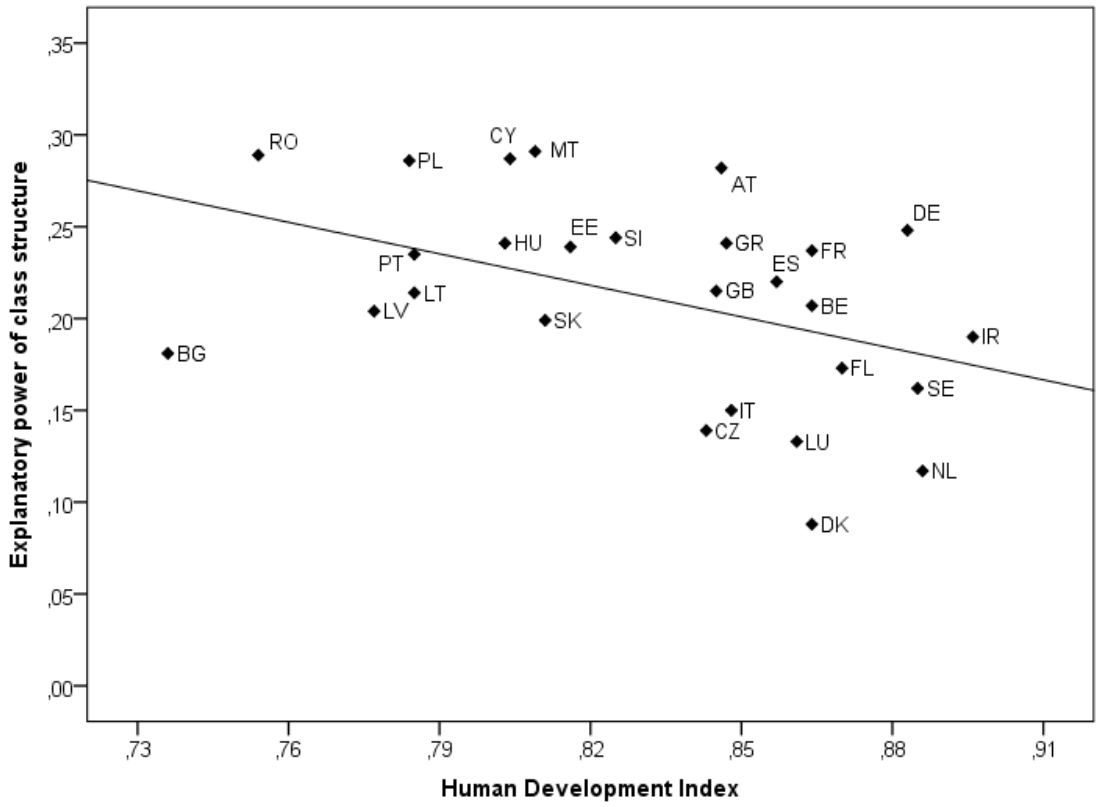
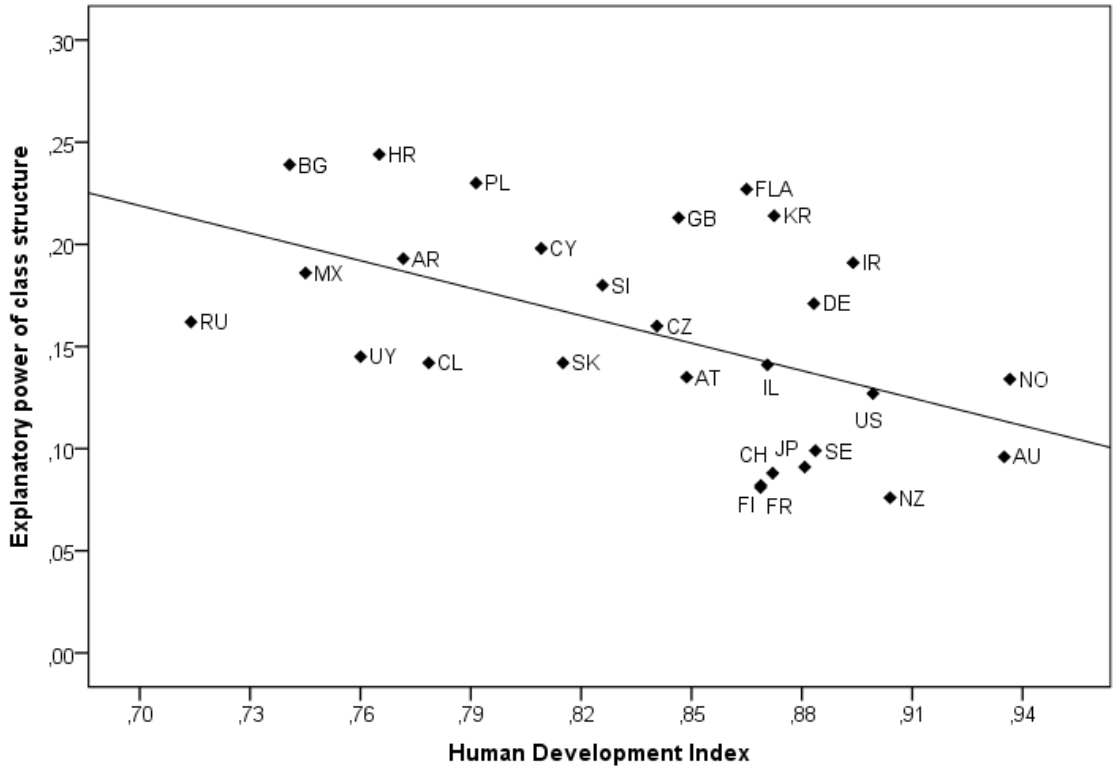


Figure 3: Explanatory power of class structure for highbrow cultural consumption by HDI – ISSP 2007 data (r = -0.52)



Clearly, there is a relationship between rising prosperity and increasing education on the one hand, and a diminishing structuring of lifestyle by class status on the other. However, one cannot go so far as to speak of a full decoupling. In highly modernized countries, the practice of a highbrow lifestyle remains related to class status, although to a lesser extent.

IV. Conclusion

In this paper we have examined the extent to which highbrow cultural lifestyles are subject to a structuring by class membership. This was guided by two theories which at first sight appear contradictory: According to Bourdieu's class theory, the overlapping class and capital structures shape the habits and lifestyle of an individual. Because highbrow consumption requires economic and above all embodied cultural capital, the relevant activities of the upper classes remain exclusive. Such a tight coupling of class status and lifestyle is denied by individualization theories, which propose instead a de-structuring of action in affluent and highly individualized societies. Our findings now show that the two theoretical approaches – Bourdieu's class theory and de-structuring theory – are not in conflict. In all of the countries considered, highbrow consumption is affected by class status. Highbrow activities are typical among the upper social classes and form an essential part of a distinguished lifestyle. Growing societal prosperity and increasing education, however, have two consequences: First, they enable a larger proportion of the population to participate in highbrow consumption. Second, these factors decrease the shaping influence of class status on highbrow lifestyles.

In closing, two limitations of this analysis should be mentioned: (1) Our data allows us to say nothing about the specific content, or artefacts, consumed by those who are highbrow-oriented because only the frequency of participation in highbrow activities was requested. Initial information on the content available in various cultural institutions can be obtained from another study, in which the programs of opera houses from around the world were collected (Gerhards, 2008). 50% of the operas performed in European opera houses belonged to only a few composers: Verdi, Mozart, Puccini, Rossini, Wagner and Bizet. Operas by these composers show permanently on the stages of many opera houses throughout Europe. The cultural elites in the various countries have not only a similar social structural basis, they also consume quite similar cultural products. The (global) standardization and uniformity usually attributed to popular culture is therefore also a feature of the highbrow culture by which the cultural elite distinguishes itself. (2) On the other hand, we are aware that we do not take into account the special historical developments of individual countries and their culture industries by simply classifying countries in terms of their degree of modernization. Aside from modernity, the cultural infrastructure in the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, is more developed than, for instance, in France or Italy (Gerhards, 2008). Historically minded, comparative social theorists have pointed out the path dependence of the development of individual

countries, and guard against simplified quantitative analyses which may not fully account for the specific characteristics of individual countries. We agree in principle with this criticism, but believe the two approaches are compatible. Systematic analyses can help to uncover the rough structure and the striking differences between countries. This does not mean that we should not also work out the historically-specific arrangements, which may help to explain the dispersion around the regression line. Despite limitations in the depth of our analysis, we can nevertheless make two claims using the simple feature of the level of modernization of a country: First, the level of modernization affects highbrow cultural orientation, and secondly, the effect of class status on highbrow consumption declines with increasing modernization.

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Appendix: Variables used in the Analyses

Variable	Eurobarometer 67.1	ISSP 2007
Highbrow cultural consumption	How many times in the last 12 months did you a) been to the theatre, b) have you seen a ballet, dance performance or opera, c) visited museums or galleries, d) been to a concert? 0 (never) 1 (1-2 times) 2 (3-5 times) 3 (more than 5 times) additive scale for all 4 activities, values range from 0 to 12	How often do you do each of the following activities in your free time: Attend cultural events such as concerts, live theatre, exhibitions? 1 (never) 2 (several times a year or less often) 3 (several times a month) 4 (several times a week) 5 (daily)
Economic capital, class fractions	Current occupation (in case of no paid work: last occupation): Professionals / academics Higher and middle management Entrepreneurs / self-employed Employees / skilled manual worker unskilled manual worker others (never did any paid work) Dummy-Variables (0 = no, 1 = yes)	Total monthly net income of household, z-transformed values per country
Institutionalised cultural capital	How old were you when you stopped full-time education? (max. 25 years)	Years of regular schooling / studying (max. 19 years)
Embodied cultural capital	In the last 12 months, have you either on your own or as part of an organised group: a) played a musical instrument, b) acted, c) written something (a text, a poem)? 0 (no activity mentioned) 1 (at least one activity mentioned)	How often do you read books in your free time? 1 (never) 2 (several times a year or less often) 3 (several times a month) 4 (several times a week) 5 (daily)
Degree of modernization	Human Development Index (HDI), values range from 0 to 1	Human Development Index (HDI), values range from 0 to 1
Children in household	Children under 10 years in household 0 (none) 1 (at least one)	Number of children in household, 0 (none) 1 (at least one)
Residence in urban environment	Type of community 1 (rural village or village) 2 (small or middle size town) 3 (large town)	Type of community 1 (country village, farm) 2 (town or small city) 3 (big city, suburb of a big city)
Gender	0 (male), 1 (female)	0 (male), 1 (female)
Age	Age in years	Age in years