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## Family (and) culture: The effect of cultural capital within the family on the cultural participation of adolescents



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### ABSTRACT

Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction states that cultural capital is passed down from generation to generation through the habitus formed within the family of origin. This cultural capital presents itself in three different states: as embodied (dispositions and practices), institutionalized (educational qualifications), and objectified (cultural goods). In this scheme, the presence of all three forms of cultural capital in the family can be assumed to have an impact on the cultural participation patterns of adolescents. This article focuses on the cultural participation patterns of adolescents, in the forms of art and heritage participation and attending pop or rock concerts. Using data from the "Cultural Participation Survey 2003–2004", a multilevel model is constructed—with the presence of the three forms of cultural capital in the family as family-level effects and the educational position, age, and gender of the adolescent as individual-level effects. We find support for Bourdieu's reproduction model for art and heritage participation, but the educational level and gender of the adolescents are also found to be important. We also find significant effects of familial cultural capital on attending pop and rock concerts, which indicates that cultural reproduction mechanisms also, although to a lesser extent, structure participation in these activities.

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## 1. Introduction

Cultural participation patterns have become a central subject in the study of social stratification, and the notion of cultural capital, in particular, has taken a prominent place in this field. In most research, cultural capital is operationalized as participation in or knowledge of high-status culture (Aschaffenburg and Maas, 1997; DiMaggio, 1982; Wildhagen, 2009). The concept was developed by Pierre Bourdieu. In his theory of social reproduction, the primary manifestation of cultural capital in early adolescence involves an interest in highbrow cultural activities (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). These activities are regarded as “legitimate” forms of culture, and in order to appreciate them, people need a culturally oriented habitus, which constitutes an “embodied” form of cultural capital. This type of cultural capital is developed in the family of origin and can be deployed in different social settings in later life (the educational system, labor market, social networks, etc.). In order to explain the development of cultural capital, Bourdieu emphasized the role of different forms of cultural capital initially present in the family and, in a second step, the accumulation of cultural capital in the educational system (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986).

Most research has demonstrated that family background and educational level are the two most important factors for explaining adolescents’ participation in highbrow cultural activities (Mohr and DiMaggio, 1995; Nagel, 2010; Nagel and Ganzeboom, 2002). In this article, we focus on the first step of this process, namely the effect of different types of cultural capital in the household on the cultural participation of adolescents. Here, we use a detailed set of familial cultural capital variables, based on the distinction between embodied (cultural tastes of the parents), institutionalized (educational level of the parents), and objectified (cultural goods) that Bourdieu described (Bourdieu, 1986). We differentiate between the embodied and institutionalized cultural capital of both the father and mother to account for gender dynamics in the cultural reproduction process, which is an underdeveloped theme in Bourdieu’s original model (Reay, 2000, 2004; Silva, 2005). We also differentiate between cultural goods (as indicators of objectified cultural capital) and multimedia, which could also function as more contemporary status-marking products (McCracken, 1990). We analyze how both types of goods relate to the cultural participation of adolescents.

The cultural reproduction model has been applied to analyze adolescent participation in highbrow cultural activities (Mohr and DiMaggio, 1995; Nagel, 2010; Nagel and Ganzeboom, 2002; van Eijck, 1997), but attending pop and rock concerts has received far less attention. However, it is also possible to apply the cultural capital framework to these activities, for the esthetic disposition that is part of the culturally oriented habitus is being applied more and more in the realm of popular culture as well (Hibbett, 2010; Lizardo and Skiles, 2008). Therefore, participation in or knowledge of popular culture can also function as cultural capital—especially for adolescents, because pop and rock music is usually seen as a specific expression of youth culture (Christenson and Roberts, 1998; Laughey, 2006; Trondman, 1990). Most research that has applied the cultural capital framework to participation in popular culture has studied this form of participation as part of an omnivorous taste pattern. This line of research states that combining popular and highbrow culture is becoming the most important distinction mechanism for younger, higher-educated groups (Peterson and Kern, 1996; Vander Stichele and Laermans, 2006). However, this research has focused on small groups of respondents who combine both types of culture. Gripsrud et al. (2011) has shown, that among students, there is a general shift toward mainstream popular culture, while their interest in “highbrow” culture is declining. There is also some evidence that attending pop and rock concerts is positively correlated with educational level, especially in younger cohorts (Bennett et al., 2009; Chan, 2010). This could suggest that pop and rock culture is becoming a more important form of cultural capital for students in higher education. Other studies that have compared these effects with the effects on art and heritage participation show that the effect of family background is along the same lines, but somewhat less so for pop and rock participation (Vlegels and Lievens, 2011; Voorpostel and van der Lippe, 2001). In this article, the Bourdieusian model is applied both to highbrow cultural participation among adolescents and to their attendance at pop and rock concerts. In doing so, we try to unravel and compare the specific influences of different types of cultural capital in the household on both types of cultural participation, while taking into account the individual characteristics of the adolescents.

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