

HIGHBROW CULTURAL CONSUMPTION AND THE PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL PRESTIGE IN EUROPE

Durmuş Ali Yüksek¹

Abstract

The association between class and culture as an important way to understand the determinants of individual tastes is well-known. Although numerous studies have confirmed this association by using education and income as proxies of cultural and economic capital in highbrow cultural consumption at the individual level, cross-national comparisons remain scarce. I contribute to the existing body of knowledge by focusing on taste publics—groups of individuals distinguished by their levels of economic and cultural capital—rather than separately dealing with education and family affluence. I examine the extent to which taste publics and specific country characteristics such as a country's population characteristics, its wealth, and its level of cultural funding affect highbrow cultural consumption across European countries. I further test the extent to which the association between taste publics and highbrow cultural consumption is moderated by these country characteristics. Using Eurobarometer (2007) data, I show that taste publics have distinct highbrow cultural consumption scores and the association between taste publics and highbrow cultural consumption varies across Europe. Furthermore, I show that highbrow cultural consumption is affected by specific country characteristics. Lastly, I find that the social prestige perceived through consuming highbrow culture becomes an important predictor of who consumes highbrow culture.

Keywords: Taste publics, Pierre Bourdieu, homology, highbrow cultural consumption, perception of prestige.

AVRUPA'DA ENTELEKTÜEL KÜLTÜREL TÜKETİM VE SOSYAL PRESTİJ ALGISI

Öz

Birey beğenilerinin belirleyici faktörlerini anlamak için sınıf ve kültür arasındaki ilişki önemli bir yöntem olarak bilinir. Birey seviyesindeki entelektüel kültürel tüketimde eğitim ve gelir seviyesini kültürel ve ekonomik sermayenin temsilcisi olarak kullanarak hazırlanan birçok çalışma bu ilişkiyi doğrulamasına rağmen, uluslararası kıyaslamalar yapan çalışmaların sayısı oldukça azdır. Bu çalışma, mevcut literatüre eğitim ve aile servetini ayrı birer etken olarak incelemek yerine beğeni grupları—ekonomik ve kültürel sermaye seviyelerine göre ayrılmış birey grupları—üzerine odaklanarak katkıda bulunmaktadır. Avrupa ülkelerinde ülkelerin nüfusları, zenginlikleri ve kültürel kaynak yaratma seviyeleri gibi ülkesel özellikleri ile beğeni gruplarının o ülkelerdeki entelektüel kültürel tüketimi ne oranda etkilediklerini incelenmektedir. Ayrıca, beğeni grupları ile entelektüel kültürel tüketim arasındaki ilişkinin ülkesel özellikler tarafından ne oranda ılımlandırıldığı test edilmektedir. Eurobarometer (2007) veri setini kullanarak, beğeni gruplarının farklı entelektüel kültürel tüketim puanları olduğu ve beğeni grupları ile entelektüel kültürel tüketim arasındaki ilişkinin Avrupa ülkelerinde değişkenlik gösterdiği gösterilmiştir. Buna ek olarak, entelektüel kültürel tüketimin ülkesel özelliklerden de etkilendiği gösterilmiştir. Son olarak, entelektüel kültür tüketim sonucu elde edilen sosyal prestij algısının kimin entelektüel kültür tüketiceğinin önemli bir göstergesi olduğu bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beğeni grupları, Pierre Bourdieu, türdeşlik, entelektüel kültürel tüketim, prestij algısı

¹ Kara Harp Okulu, durmusaliyukse@gmail.com

Introduction

The publication of Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) prompted an ever-increasing number of studies addressing the structural and cultural factors that determine individual cultural consumption. In general, empirical research operationalizes these structural and cultural factors using an individual's educational attainment and his/her income (or family affluence) indicating that there is a clear division between those with low and high levels of education and the poor and well-to-do in the participants of high culture (Bennett et al., 2009; DiMaggio and Useem, 1987; Erickson, 1996; van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013).

In this respect, Bourdieu's homology argument in which he associates class hierarchies to culture hierarchies provides us a way to understand what determines an individual's cultural consumption and how culture is consumed. Bourdieu (1984) argues that individual social classes have distinct tastes and lifestyles. In other words, considering Bourdieu's two-dimensional class design, different volumes of capital constitute social classes that occupy structural positions depending upon their levels of economic and cultural capital² (Swartz, 1997). Both economic and cultural capital are good predictors of individuals' tastes and their consumption styles. In accordance with Bourdieu's (1984) homology argument, Gans's (1973) concept of *taste publics*, namely people who make similar choices for similar reasons, might provide us an important perspective to view the complexities of individual taste and lifestyle choices. The creation of taste publics using an individual's levels of economic and cultural capital might be an important tool to understand participation in highbrow cultural activities since, as previous research shows, people with higher education and high family incomes are more likely to participate in these activities (DiMaggio and Useem, 1987; van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013).

Even though many studies confirm Bourdieu's homology argument regarding the distinction between social classes in their consumption of highbrow culture, adequate cross-national comparisons are still scarce (van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013). Several studies (Lizardo and Skiles, 2009; Katz-Gerro, 2002) indicate that determinants of highbrow cultural consumption differ between countries, and Lamont (1992, 2000) argues that different country-specific cultural and political factors lead individuals to exhibit varying behaviors in cultural consumption. As van Hek and Kraaykamp (2013) state, most of these comparative studies lack a simultaneous testing of the influence of country characteristics on individuals' highbrow cultural consumption. The aim of this study, therefore, is to systematically compare European countries to describe the determinants of individual highbrow cultural consumption in three levels of analysis: at the individual level, at the country level, and at the level of cross-level interactions.

In this study, I will first consider the expected relationship between social class and culture. I will focus on how different groups of people distinguished by their levels of economic and cultural capital (taste publics) present varying levels of appreciation towards highbrow culture. Additionally, since countries differ in their specific political and cultural factors, the association between taste publics and highbrow cultural consumption may vary across countries. To address these issues my first research question is: To what extent do taste publics differ in their level of highbrow cultural

² Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes three types of cultural capital: (1) embodied cultural capital in the form of legitimate cultural attitudes, preferences, and behaviors that are internalized during the socialization process; (2) objectified cultural capital in the form of transmittable goods—books, computers, paintings—that require embodied cultural capital to be appropriated; and (3) institutionalized cultural capital in the form of degrees and diplomas which certify the value of embodied cultural capital (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p.156). In this study, by cultural capital, I mean institutionalized cultural capital (educational credentials) as a factor influencing tastes for objectified cultural capital (different art forms).

consumption, and to what extent do these associations between taste publics and highbrow cultural consumption vary across European countries?

Second, I will investigate the specific country characteristics that might influence individual highbrow cultural consumption. For example, it can be argued that a population that is highly educated and financially prosperous will positively affect cultural consumption. Moreover, a population featuring lower levels of education and wealth will negatively affect cultural consumption. A country's level of national wealth may also positively affect cultural consumption. A country's affluence may provide more materialistic opportunities for its individuals to participate in relatively more expensive highbrow cultural activities. Finally, a country's level of cultural funding may increase the choices of cultural events and therefore positively affect cultural consumption. Accordingly, a second research question is formulated as: To what extent do a country's characteristics such as its population characteristics, its national wealth, and its level of cultural funding affect individual highbrow cultural consumption?

Third, I investigate the possible macro-level determinants of highbrow culture that increase or decrease cultural consumption at the individual level. To do this, I study the cross-level interactions in which I relate country characteristics to taste publics. Since population characteristics, national wealth, and cultural funding have moderating effects on the association between taste publics and highbrow cultural consumption, they are likely to weaken or strengthen this association. Therefore, the third research question is: To what extent do country characteristics affect taste publics in the consumption of highbrow culture, and how these effects should be interpreted in terms of social prestige perceived by taste publics?

To answer my research questions, I will use Eurobarometer 67.1 (2007), which has 20,558 respondents in 29 European countries. To analyze the cross-national data I will employ multi-level models to account for the nesting of individuals in countries.

1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

1.1. Pierre Bourdieu and the Construction of Taste Publics

Gans (1973) argues that individuals make choices through their values and aesthetic standards. Random choices are rare. These values and aesthetic standards—what Gans (1973) calls “taste cultures”—bring individuals together and constitute a group of individuals who make similar choices for similar reasons—what Gans (1973) calls “taste publics.” Due to their different values, aesthetic standards, and thus tastes and lifestyle choices, each taste public has its distinctive art, music, poetry, food, and so forth. European countries are expected to have different taste cultures and taste publics due to the increasing level of diversity in terms of country-specific characteristics such as national cultural heritage, cultural institutions, educational systems, and so forth.

Similar to Gans's (1973) taste publics, Bourdieu (1984), in his work on how social class interacts with habitus, develops a theoretical understanding of how differing tastes and lifestyles emerge among separate groups of individuals. According to Bourdieu, cultural practices demonstrate individual's different tastes and lifestyles and they represent underlying class distinctions (Swartz, 1997). This view illustrates Bourdieu's central objective, which is to show how culture and social structure correlate, thus focusing on his perspective of social class and habitus in his explanation of how individuals constitute separate groupings and generate diverse practices.

Social class is a master concept in Bourdieu's sociology in addition to habitus, capital, and field. In his own words, it is “a universal principle of explanations” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.114). Bourdieu designs class as two-dimensional, vertical and horizontal, defined by both economic capital and cultural capital. Capital volume determined by individuals' totality of economic and

cultural capital levels constitutes the vertical dimension of Bourdieu's two-dimensional class operationalization. The higher the capital volume of an individual, the higher the social position s/he occupies in the stratification system (Bourdieu, 1984). In the case of France, for instance, social classes can be separated into three depending on the differences in the total volume of capital: an upper class, a middle class, and a lower class (Swartz, 1997). In addition to the vertical dimension, the horizontal dimension of Bourdieu's two-dimensional class design indicates the composition of capitals, namely the strength of cultural capital versus economic capital (Erickson, 1996). Similar to individuals' capital volumes, their compositions of capitals are also important to distinguish them from each other and position them in the social hierarchy. In other words, a certain level of economic capital should accompany a certain level of cultural capital to distinguish an individual from others who have similar levels of cultural capital. Likewise, a certain level of cultural capital should also accompany a certain level of economic capital to distinguish an individual from others who have similar levels of economic capital. For instance, both intellectuals and industrialists have high capital volumes. However, intellectuals have higher levels of cultural capital, while industrialists have higher levels of economic capital. The difference of the compositions of capitals between these two groups of individuals show that while both intellectuals and industrialists occupy positions in the upper strata of the structural hierarchy, intellectuals attach more importance to cultural capital, and industrialists attach more importance to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont and Lareau, 1988).

Bourdieu, in his research, offers a class-symbolization model of status where cultural differences serve as markers of class differences. For Bourdieu, social classes are groups of individuals who are stratified according to the principles of acquisition and production of goods (Swartz, 1997). Bourdieu is sharply critical of the economic interpretations of social class (Swartz, 1997) and therefore argues that "social class is not defined solely by a position in the relations of production, but by the class habitus which is normally associated with that position" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.372). In that sense, Bourdieu states that each social class has a unique class habitus that generates specific sets of practices (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 1984).

In *Reproduction* (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977), Bourdieu defines habitus as "the product of structures, producer of practices, and reproducer of structures." Habitus is further described as a system of unconsciously internalized, durable, and transposable capacity acquired in early socialization; a set of master dispositions that generate action; and structured structures that are predisposed to function as structuring structures (Swartz, 1997). According to Swartz, habitus "represents a sort of deep-structuring cultural matrix that generates self-fulfilling prophecies according to different class opportunities" (1997, p.104). Briefly, habitus is the inner voice of individuals that lead them to their decisions. Bourdieu argues that each social class has its distinct class habitus. Each habitus has a close and direct relationship to the material conditions and the symbolic representation of each class (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus has a mediating role between the material conditions and the symbolic representation of class in categorizing and ranking it to other classes. Individuals make lifestyle choices and have tastes depending on their class habitus. Lifestyle choices and tastes are the markers of class relations that are used to categorize and rank social classes to others (Bourdieu, 1984; Swartz, 1997).

In *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), Bourdieu finds that aesthetic tastes and lifestyles correspond to four class habitus in his exploration of how habitus accounts for class differences in France. These four class habitus are: ostentatious indulgence and ease within the upper class, aristocratic aestheticism among intellectuals, awkward pretension by middle-class strivers, and antipretentious ignorance and conformity within the working class (Bourdieu, 1984). Considering Bourdieu's two-dimensional class design, I argue that upper class individuals who have the class habitus of

ostentatious indulgence and ease have high levels of both economic and cultural capital; intellectuals who have the class habitus of aristocratic aestheticism have high levels of cultural capital but lower levels of economic capital when compared to upper class individuals; middle class individuals who have the class habitus of awkward pretension have high levels of economic capital but lower levels of cultural capital when compared to upper class individuals; and finally, working class individuals who have the class habitus of antipretentious ignorance and conformity have lower levels of both economic and cultural capital when compared to upper class individuals. These four groups, which have separate class habitus and separate levels of economic and cultural capital, constitute what Gans (1973) called taste publics in Bourdieu's sense.

The creation of taste publics is an important tool to use to understand participation in highbrow cultural activities since, as previous research shows, people with higher education and high family incomes are more likely to participate in these activities (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; DiMaggio and Useem, 1987; Halle, 1992; van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013). Also, in the context of cross-national comparisons, this categorization of taste publics may offer valuable information on the determinants of cultural inequality and social prestige.

Van Hek and Kraaykamp (2013) argue that in addition to the comparisons over time and across various generations, cross-national comparisons of highbrow cultural consumption are particularly interesting because they concern the influence of a country's specific institutional context on an individual's cultural involvement. Accordingly, a country's social, cultural, and economic features might facilitate or restrict the consumption of highbrow culture among its population. Also, these country characteristics might influence the level of prestige that individuals acquire through making highbrow culture more accessible or not.

To study the relationship between highbrow cultural consumption and acquired social prestige with a cross-national perspective, I, in the context of Bourdieu's two-dimensional class design and its interaction with his concept of habitus, operationalize four groups—the taste publics—by using individuals' differentiating levels of cultural capital and economic capital. The four groups whose operationalization is further discussed in Section 2.3 are: high economic-high cultural (HEHC), high economic-low cultural (HELC), low economic-high cultural (LEHC), and low economic-low cultural (LELC).

1.2. Individual Characteristics and Highbrow Cultural Consumption

Bourdieu claims in his homology argument that social hierarchies and cultural hierarchies map closely onto each other. In other words, separate classes have separate tastes and lifestyles (Bourdieu, 1984). Halle (1992) argues that appreciation and familiarity with arts is a trained capacity that varies depending on individuals' educational attainment. In relation to this, research has shown that participation in cultural activities varies with individuals' levels of education—their levels of (institutionalized) cultural capital, and their socioeconomic levels—their levels of economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984; DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985).

Depending on the differential amounts of these capitals, two fundamental tastes or cultures emerge in modern society: the taste for high culture and the taste for popular culture (Halle, 1992). While high culture refers to cultural forms that are considered serious, prestigious, and sophisticated that may require some level of training to fully appreciate, popular culture refers to cultural forms that are considered common, plain, marginal, and readily available to the public (Peterson and Kern, 1996). Those with high levels of educational attainment and material affluence are more likely to have interest in highbrow activities than those with low levels of educational attainment and material affluence (Halle, 1992). This means that appreciation of high culture depends on the specific educational training and material affluence of the individuals. This level of educational

attainment determines who has the “legitimate taste” for high culture and who does not (Halle, 1992). People with higher levels of education then “share” their cultural values by affirming themselves with “legitimate taste,” thus separating themselves from those without high educational achievements and similar cultural values. The direct association between individuals’ levels of economic and cultural capital and social stratification therefore demonstrates itself in the form of a boundary between high culture and popular culture, creating groups of people who value each culture differently. Therefore social classes (or taste publics in this study), as explained in the previous section, differentiate themselves in highbrow cultural consumption through their levels of economic and cultural capital and their class habitus. Based on these arguments, I hypothesize that when compared to the LELC taste public, all the three taste publics have distinct highbrow cultural consumption scores, and the HEHC taste public has the strongest association with highbrow cultural consumption followed by the LEHC taste public due to its higher level of cultural capital compared to the HELC taste public (Hypothesis 1).

Even though there have been many studies that confirm the link between an individual’s socioeconomic position and highbrow cultural consumption, whether this link significantly varies between countries is another important and necessary point to look at, due to individuals’ differentiating perceptions of highbrow culture in different countries. Many studies have indicated that determinants of highbrow cultural consumption differ between countries. For example, in their study of 15 European countries, Lizardo and Skiles (2009) show that country specific characteristics such as whether a country is characterized by a commercialized television field affect individuals’ participation in highbrow activities. They find that in countries characterized by a commercialized and high-revenue television production field, highbrow individuals do not behave like television “omnivores,” whereas in countries in which the television production field has less substantial volumes of revenues, highbrow individuals behave like television “omnivores” (Lizardo and Skiles, 2009). Additionally, Katz-Gerro (2002) finds that how individuals use highbrow culture to create boundaries through their consumptions of it vary in Italy, Israel, West Germany, Sweden, and the United States. One possible reason behind this, for Katz-Gerro (2002), is how the meaning of highbrow culture differs in different contexts. For instance, indicators of highbrow culture in the United States, Israel, and Sweden may refer to popular culture in West Germany and Italy. Therefore, it should be considered that the variation in the degree of exposure to a genre, the history of a genre, and social meanings associated with a genre caused by different countries might depict different meanings of highbrow culture in different countries (Katz-Gerro, 2002). Finally, Lamont, in two separate studies (Lamont, 1992, 2000), compared France to the United States to understand how individuals in these two countries draw socio-economic, cultural, and moral boundaries to differentiate themselves from others. She formulated several country-specific reasons to explain the difference between American and French men in their attitudes and behaviors. Through her studies (Lamont, 1992, 2000), Lamont illustrates that different country characteristics differentiate individuals’ perceptions and actions towards others. For instance, Lamont (1992) argues that due to the varying political and cultural traditions in France and the United States, such as the different educational systems, historical national repertoires, intellectual elites, and stratification systems, upper class men in these countries differ in their perceptions of what it means to be a worthy person. Individuals’ definitions of being worthy vary socio-economically, culturally, and morally between France and the United States. Also, Lamont (2000) found that due to the same political and cultural traditions in France and the United States, working-class males in France and the United States differ in how they distinguish themselves from the poor. While American males draw strong moral distinctions between themselves and the poor, French males do not.

Following the research presented above, I expect to find significant differences across European countries affecting individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, in this study, I also aim to understand how specific country characteristics might influence an individual's tastes and lifestyle choices. Therefore I expect that the four taste publics vary in their associations with highbrow cultural consumption due to the differentiating country characteristics. In line with this reasoning, I hypothesize that compared to the LELC taste public, the association of the other three taste publics (LEHC, HELC, and HEHC) with highbrow cultural consumption vary across European countries (Hypothesis 2).

1.3. Country Characteristics and Highbrow Cultural Consumption

In this section, I focus on how a cross-national comparison of country characteristics is useful to identify various theoretical predictions regarding individuals' tastes, lifestyle choices, and their levels of cultural consumption. For that reason, I elaborate on six country characteristics in two groups that possibly affect individual highbrow cultural consumption in a country. The first group consists of population characteristics of a country and the second group, following van Hek and Kraaykamp (2013), consists of a country's level of wealth and a country's level of cultural funding.

The first group of country characteristics that I elaborate on in this section includes the distribution of economic and cultural capital in a country, measured as the percentage of LELC individuals in a country (C-LELC), the percentage of LEHC individuals in a country (C-LEHC), the percentage of HELC individuals in a country (C-HELC), and the percentage of HEHC individuals in a country (C-HEHC). As discussed above, people with higher education and higher family incomes are more likely to participate in highbrow cultural activities. Therefore, the presence or absence of these individuals may affect the level of highbrow cultural consumption in a country. While wealthier individuals are expected to have more means to participate in highbrow cultural activities, more educated individuals are expected to have more capacity to appreciate highbrow culture.

If a country has more people with education and family income (C-HEHC), then on average, those people is expected to have more highbrow cultural participation, and the chance to randomly pick an individual with higher levels of highbrow cultural participation in that country is bigger than in a country with a lot of LELC individuals. This deduction comes from simple math. However, in addition to this, social impact theory might provide a theoretical background for the relationship between the distribution of economic and cultural capital in a country, measured as the percentages of LELC, LEHC, HELC, and HEHC individuals, and highbrow cultural consumption.

The central postulate of the social impact theory is that, all else being equal, an individual is more likely to conform to the attitudes, beliefs, and behavioral propensities of the majority than the minority (Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). It is argued that individuals tend to conform to the majority to gain social approval from them, establish relationships with them, enhance their self-esteem, and avoid possible sanctions from them such as ostracism (Bond and Smith, 1996; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). In this regard, people act strategically to conform to the majority since they perceive that "minority position is aversive; it can lead to hostility, disapproval, or rejection from others. To avoid such social punishment, people might be motivated to conform to the majority position in public regardless of what opinion they hold privately" (Hornsey et al., 2003:320).

The unanimous decision by the majority might have such an impact on others that a good proportion of them might end up conforming to the decision of the majority (Bassili, 2003). For instance, Bassili (2003) argues that an illustration of the silence theory might be a good example for the conformity pressures on people. According to the silence theory, individuals hesitate to express their opinions due to the fear of social isolation if they perceive that their opinions deviate from those of the majority (Bassili, 2003). Also, Wolf and Latane's (1983) research on individuals'

choices of where to eat show that increases in both the number and strength of individuals constituting a majority led to increases in their influence. As the restaurants were reportedly liked by the majority, the perceived desirability of eating at those restaurants by the minority increased. Lastly, Wolf and Latane (1983) argue that conformity to the majority's choices should not be restricted to restaurant selection. This can also be extended to which movies to watch and books to read.

In line with these arguments, I expect that in countries where there are more individuals who are members of HEHC taste public (C-HEHC), everyone there will have a higher level of highbrow cultural participation, even if they are not members of HEHC taste public themselves. Vice versa, in countries where there are more individuals who are members of LELC taste public (C-LELC), everyone there will have a lower level of highbrow cultural participation, even if they are not members of LELC taste public themselves. Therefore I hypothesize that the higher the number of HEHC individuals in a country compared to the other three taste publics, the greater the likelihood that any particular individual in that country will participate in highbrow culture (Hypothesis 3a), and vice versa, the higher the number of LELC individuals in a country compared to the other three taste publics, the lower the likelihood that any particular individual in that country will participate in highbrow culture (Hypothesis 3b). Since C-LEHC and C-HELC do not represent the extreme cases like C-LELC and C-HEHC and are more ambiguous in their effects compared to C-LELC and C-HEHC, I don't expect them to have significant relationships to highbrow cultural consumption.

Second, according to van Hek and Kraaykamp (2013), a country's level of wealth may positively affect highbrow cultural consumption because a growth in overall prosperity is a good stimulator for individuals to participate more in these cultural activities. Also, a county's level of cultural funding is expected to have an increasing effect on highbrow cultural consumption. It is argued that cultural funding leads to the founding of more cultural facilities, and this leads to more opportunities for individuals to participate in cultural activities (van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013). Additionally, depending on how the funding works, some of the events might be free and therefore open to people from all economic levels. Based on these arguments, I expect that the higher the level of national wealth in a country, the higher an individual's highbrow cultural consumption (Hypothesis 3c); and that the higher the level of cultural funding in a country, the higher an individual's highbrow cultural consumption (Hypothesis 3d).

1.4. Cross-Level Interaction Effects, Highbrow Cultural Consumption, and the Perception of Social Prestige

In addition to my expectations of the direct effects of the six country characteristics mentioned in the previous section, I also expect these six country characteristics to have interaction effects with the four taste publics on individual highbrow cultural consumption. In this section, rather than focusing on the direct effects of these interactions on highbrow cultural consumption, I formulate expectations to examine to what extent the interactions between country characteristics and taste publics change how individuals perceive highbrow culture. In other words, I elaborate on how individuals' perceptions of social prestige differ depending on the interactions between country characteristics and taste publics.

In their research of the changing relationship between class and culture and the changing role of highbrow arts as cultural capital, DiMaggio and Mukhtar (2004) found that the consumption of highbrow arts in the United States has been on the decline. They formulate three possible reasons to explain this decline. First, they believe that popular culture has been ubiquitous and has limited the effects of universities and cultural institutions as cultural authorities. Second, the boundary between popular culture and highbrow culture has been crumbling due to highbrow culture's role in the "de-

institutionalization” of that boundary. Increasingly, individuals do not believe that there is any difference between highbrow and popular culture due to the ideas of postmodern artists and the devaluation of highbrow culture against popular culture especially by the most educated Americans (DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004). Third, and the most relevant to this study, in relation to Peterson’s “omnivore theory” (Peterson and Simkus, 1992; Peterson and Kern, 1996; Peterson, 1997), DiMaggio and Mukhtar (2004) assert that the belief that in order to accrue prestige people should be associated with specific forms of highbrow culture has lost its importance. Instead, in order to accrue prestige, people should be familiar with many cultural forms. Supporting this idea, Lopez-Sintas and Katz-Gerro (2005) state that the reason that highbrow consumers demonstrate a wide breadth of arts participation, or omnivorousness, is due to their need to represent themselves as senior consumers who have an extensive cultural knowledge (scale), which allows them to show their cultural competency. Thus, these individuals preserve the boundary between themselves and others by showing a breadth of cultural knowledge.

As is presented in *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984), social reproduction is an ongoing process in which the upper classes, those who have more economic and cultural capital than others, continually assert their difference from those of lower social standing (Jacobs and Hanrahan, 2005). This lasting and competitive process to maintain distinction between upper and lower classes is the result of imitation (Simmel, 1957). Simmel (1957, p.543) states that “imitation represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation and change.” In that sense, imitation “signifies union with those in the same class, the uniformity of a circle characterized by it, and, *uno actu*, the exclusion of all other groups” (Simmel, 1957, p.544). The process of imitation as applied by the lower classes to reduce the gap between themselves and the upper classes might be held to attain whatever the markers of distinction may be—designer clothes, a college degree, particularly the latest fashion (Jacobs and Hanrahan, 2005). However, this attempt is inevitably foiled because just as soon as the lower classes begin to copy their styles and cross the line of demarcation, upper classes adopt a new style and continue differentiating themselves from the lower classes (Simmel, 1957). As soon as the lower classes acquire the goods that the upper classes have, upper classes devalue those goods as marks of distinction. For example, as soon as everyone has a college degree, it means nothing; now only a Ph.D. is a mark of distinction (Jacobs and Hanrahan, 2005).

The concept of distinction as valued by upper classes can also be applied to highbrow cultural consumption. When access to highbrow cultural activities becomes available to everyone, it begins to lose its status as a marker of social prestige. Therefore anything that increases the means for individuals to participate in highbrow cultural activities might decrease their potential as marks of distinction and social prestige for upper class individuals. This is because highbrow arts might lose its position as the latest fashion among individuals who identify themselves as of distinct/distinguished/high status. In line with the expectation that a country’s national wealth and a country’s level of cultural funding may positively affect highbrow cultural consumption, these two country characteristics might negatively affect the association between the taste publics and highbrow cultural consumption. Therefore designating LELC as the lower class and using the other three taste publics (LEHC, HELC, and HEHC) to represent the upper classes, I hypothesize that as the levels of national wealth (Hypothesis 4c) and cultural funding (Hypothesis 4d) increase in a country, a decrease or lower levels of highbrow cultural consumption among the three taste publics (LEHC, HELC, and HEHC), when compared to LELC, will be observed.

According to DiMaggio and Useem (1987), if consumption of highbrow culture is undertaken by upper and upper-middle class individuals for the purpose of status maintenance, it

should be done collectively rather than privately. The private consumption of highbrow culture cannot bestow the element of elite inclusion that comes with the presence in the audience of a performance with others. It is speculated that those who participate in highbrow cultural activities to accumulate social prestige do so in collaboration with others. Further, it is assumed that those with whom individuals participate in highbrow cultural activities will be of similar social class as their fellow participants and those who do not, will be of a lower social class. It is through this exclusive participatory process that lower class individuals begin the process of admiration and imitation of the upper class. Admiration by the lower classes accumulates social prestige for the upper classes. Therefore, in order for the upper classes to accumulate social prestige, they not only need the establishment of union with others like them, but also the establishment of isolation from the lower classes. In countries where there are more people who have the structural and cultural means to participate in highbrow cultural activities, it is more difficult to accumulate social prestige due to the difficulty of the establishment of isolation. Since many people have the opportunity to participate in highbrow cultural activities in countries that are less educationally and financially stratified, highbrow cultural activities are no longer a predictor of social prestige. On the contrary, in countries where there are fewer people who have the structural and cultural means to participate in highbrow cultural activities, it is easier to accumulate social prestige since it is easier to provide the establishment of isolation. In these countries, limited access to high culture is widespread that the value of participating in high cultural activities and the social prestige acquired through participating them increases. Therefore, by participation in highbrow cultural activities in these countries, an individual may distinguish himself/herself from others who do not have the means to participate. Therefore I expect that as the percentage of those individuals, who are more educated and wealthier, increase in a country, those individuals who are educated and wealthier are less likely than their less educated and less wealthy counterparts to participate in highbrow cultural activities. This would be due to the decrease in the perception that highbrow cultural activities provide social prestige to its consumers. Based on these arguments, I hypothesize that the higher the percentage of LELC individuals in a country (C-LELC), the higher the consumption of highbrow culture of the three taste publics (LEHC, HELC, and HEHC) will be when compared to the LELC taste public (Hypothesis 4a), and that the higher the percentage of HEHC individuals in a country (C-HEHC), the lower the consumption of highbrow culture of the three taste publics (LEHC, HELC, and HEHC) will be when compared to the LELC taste public (Hypothesis 4b). I don't expect to find any interaction effects with C-LEHC and C-HELC since they do not represent extreme cases like C-LELC and C-HEHC and are more ambiguous in their effects compared to C-LELC and C-HEHC.

To sum up, following the arguments presented in this study, my expectations can be stated as follows: (1) due to the different volumes and compositions of capital, the taste publics will have distinct levels of highbrow cultural consumption. The HEHC taste public will have the highest level of consumption, followed by the LEHC taste public rather than the HELC taste public due to the greater importance of cultural capital than economic capital in the consumption of high culture. (2) Due to the country-specific characteristics, in reference to the LELC taste public, all the three taste publics will be associated with highbrow cultural consumption differently in each country. (3) Individuals will have higher levels of highbrow cultural consumption in wealthier and more culturally funded countries. Also, the percentage of the HEHC taste public (or LELC taste public) in a country will positively (or negatively) affect the likelihood that any particular individual chosen will consume high culture. (4) The opportunities to differentiate themselves through consuming highbrow culture are very important for individuals. Therefore, whether high culture maintains its status as a prestige giver determines whether upper class individuals consume it. In light of this, in wealthier and more culturally funded countries, it is easier to consume high culture than in less wealthy and less culturally funded countries since it is more available in wealthy and culturally

funded countries. Also, in countries with many individuals who have the means to afford to participate and appreciate high culture, it becomes difficult to differentiate oneself through consuming high culture. Therefore, as the opportunities to consume high culture (a country's level of wealth and its level of cultural funding) increases for everyone in a country, upper classes (the HEHC, LEHC, and HELC taste publics compared to the LELC taste public) decrease their consumption of high culture. Finally, as the opportunity to distinguish oneself through consuming high culture decreases (or increases) in a country due to the number of potential participants of high culture, upper classes (the HEHC, LEHC, and HELC taste publics compared to the LELC taste public) decrease (or increase) their consumption of high culture.

2. Data and Measurements

2.1. Data

The data for this study comes from the Eurobarometer 67.1 that was conducted in February-March 2007³ (European Commission, 2007). This survey measures respondents on the topics of (1) cultural topics, (2) poverty and social exclusion, (3) developmental aid, and (4) residential mobility. Also, the survey queried respondents about the demographic and other background information, such as age, gender, nationality, origin of birth, marital status, occupation, and age when stopped full time education. This survey was administered to a representative sample of 26,746 persons in 29 European countries⁴. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or were computer assisted, and addressed several issues regarding culture and other topics. All samples are representative at the country level. For the analyses, I followed the data operationalization of van Hek and Kraaykamp (2013). First, I removed all students and people below the age of 25 and above the age of 75 years from the data, which caused a reduction of respondents by 19.05%. Most students have invalid scores on the independent variables. Also those individuals who are below 25 years old might be still under the influence of their parents since they may live with their parents, therefore responses may reflect parental perspectives/behaviors instead of their own. I also disregarded individuals who are over the age of 75 because they may have restricted access to cultural activities due to limited possibilities of physical restrictions caused by their age. Education in the Eurobarometer is measured according to the answer to the question: "How old were you when you stopped full-time education?" In order to prevent biased results and misspecifications, I removed respondents who finished their full-time education after the age of 30 years since it was highly unlikely for them to continue their education after the age of 30, and it was impossible to assign the correct level of education that they have attained. This caused a reduction in the sample size by 3.24%. Finally, I also removed from the data all of the respondents with missing values on highbrow cultural consumption and respondents with missing values on independent variables, which resulted in another 0.73% loss of respondents in the sample. My final dataset consists of 20,558 respondents with an average of 709 respondents per country (see Table 2).

2.2. Dependent Variable

The dependent variable that I use in this study is highbrow cultural consumption. Following van Hek and Kraaykamp (2013), I operationalize it using five items referring to participation in

³ More detailed information on the Eurobarometer 67.1 may be found at <http://www.gesis.org/en/eurobarometer/survey-series/standard-special-eb/study-profiles/eurobarometer-671-za-4529-feb-mar-2007/>

⁴ These countries are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, East-Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and West-Germany.

various cultural activities. Respondents were asked how many times in the last twelve months they had seen a ballet/dance/opera; been to a theater-play; been to a classical concert; visited a museum or gallery; and read a book. In order to create an additive scale for highbrow cultural consumption, I coded the answer possibilities of never, 1-2 times, 3-5 times, and more than 5 to 0, 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Thus, the highbrow cultural consumption scale ranges from 0 to 15. Some respondents have valid scores only for activities in which they had participated. For those respondents, I assumed that they did not participate in the other activities and thus coded 0 for those categories. All the five highbrow culture items correlate highly and show sufficient reliability ($\alpha=0.71$).

2.3. Independent Variables: Individual Level

In order to construct the four taste publics, I first created educational attainment and family affluence variables. After removing respondents who finished their full-time education after the age of 30, I recoded the educational attainment variable for the respondents who finished their full-time education before the age of 11 (including 10) as 0 years of education, and subtracted 10 from the other categories. The final education variable ranges from 0 to 20 years of education (van Hek and Kraapkamp, 2013). The Eurobarometer data has no valid measure of household income. Therefore, I operationalized a family affluence variable that indicates the material wealth in a respondent's home, whether the respondent possesses: a fixed phone, a private mobile phone, a television, a DVD player, a music CD player, a computer, internet access, a car, and an apartment/house.⁵ For the operationalization of the family affluence variable, I added the number of "yes" responses to each of nine items each respondent possesses. The final additive scale ranges from 0 to 9.

In line with the previous research (Holt, 1998; van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013), I employ educational attainment as an indicator of cultural capital because it consists of a person's cognitive and intellectual ability, as well as an individual's incorporated knowledge of the arts. I use family's material affluence as an indicator of economic capital because it reflects a person's opportunities to acquire and consume cultural goods. To assign individuals into the four taste publics, I used 13 years of education (high-school graduate and at least attended college) and whether the respondent has all the nine family affluence items as thresholds. The reason for this is that attending college after graduating from high school (even if one does not graduate from college) can be seen as an important indicator that differentiates individuals from their less educated counterparts. College attendance is argued to be a highly likely predictor of higher levels of cultural capital. Also, individuals who possess a house (one of the nine family affluence items) are also highly likely to have the other eight family affluence items. Therefore, possessing the nine family affluence items can also be seen as an important indicator that differentiates individuals from their less wealthy counterparts. In light of this reasoning, I assigned respondents who have less than 13 years of education and less than 9 family affluence items to LELC taste public (the reference category); respondents who have less than 13 years of education and all of the 9 family affluence items to HELC taste public; respondents who have more than 12 years of education and less than 9 family affluence items to LEHC taste public; and respondents who have more than 12 years of education and all the 9 family affluence items to HEHC taste.

As control variables I used age, sex, size of community, marital status, and immigrant status. Age is a count variable. I also included age squared to account for curvilinear age effects. Sex is a dichotomous variable (female is coded as 1). Three dummy variables were created for size of community: rural area or village (reference category), small or middle-sized town, and large town. Marital status contains a broad range of categories; therefore it is operationalized using three

⁵ For the apartment/house item of the family affluence variable, I included both those who are still paying and those who finished paying for their apartments/houses.

dummy variables that combined some categories together: “single” (reference category) which combines unmarried, having never lived with a partner, and unmarried having previously lived with a partner; and “married” which combines married, remarried, and unmarried currently living with a partner. Widowed, divorced, and separated respondents also combined into one category. Immigrant status is a dichotomous variable (immigrants who were born outside of the country in which they currently live are coded as 1). Descriptive statistics with regard to individual level variables are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 *Descriptive Statistics*

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Highbrow Cultural Consumption	3.5	3.06	0	15
<i>Taste Publics</i>				
LELC	0.67	0.47	0	1
LEHC	0.09	0.29	0	1
HELC	0.18	0.38	0	1
HEHC	0.06	0.23	0	1
Female	0.57	0.49	0	1
Age	49.5	13.9	25	75
Age-Squared	2652	1395	625	5625
<i>Marital Status</i>				
Single	0.11	0.31	0	1
Married	0.7	0.46	0	1
Divorced/Widowed/Separated	0.19	0.39	0	1
<i>Size of Community</i>				
Rural Area or Village	0.38	0.49	0	1
Middle Sized Town	0.37	0.48	0	1
Large Town	0.25	0.43	0	1
Immigrant	0.05	0.22	0	1
C-LELC	66.9	15.8	26.94	84.6
C-LEHC	9.13	4.66	1.65	22
C-HELC	18.01	11.88	1.85	41.39
C-HEHC	5.96	5.56	1.3	24.35
National Wealth (GNI)	28.76	16.59	4.5	74.5
Cultural Funding	2.38	0.64	1.1	3.8

Source: National Wealth and Cultural Funding (van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013)

Note: *GNI is divided by 1,000 for the sake of interpretation.*

2.4. Independent Variables: Country Level

The two country level independent variables, a country’s national wealth and a country’s level of cultural funding were obtained from van Hek and Kraaykamp (2013). As van Hek and Kraaykamp (2013) state, a country’s level of wealth is measured by the GNI (Gross National Income) in 2007 in terms of euros,⁶ and cultural funding is operationalized as the number of people working in the cultural sector in a country as a proportion of total employment.

⁶ GNI is divided by 1,000 for the sake of interpretation.

Table 2 *Country-Level Characteristics per Country*

Country	N	Highbrow Cultural Consumption	CLELC (percentage)	CLEHC (percentage)	CHELC (percentage)	CHEHC (percentage)	National Wealth (GNI)	Cultural Funding
Austria	853	3.51	71.51	5.39	20.4	2.69	42.2	2.4
Belgium	811	3.54	56.59	8.14	28.23	7.03	41.4	2.1
Bulgaria	758	2.33	78.89	17.02	1.84	2.24	4.5	1.8
Cyprus	410	1.89	75.36	4.14	15.61	4.88	24.1	2.2
Czech Republic	877	3.92	82.21	6.15	8.66	2.97	14.4	2
Denmark	670	4.8	29.55	17.01	30.45	22.98	54.7	3
East Germany	426	3.91	73.47	9.15	11.5	5.87	39.5	2.8
Estonia	743	4.63	74.42	12.38	9.69	3.5	13.2	3.2
Finland	727	4.2	53.37	22	14.44	10.18	44.2	3.3
France	787	3.72	61.75	11.43	20.84	5.97	39	2
Great Britain	740	4.39	61.21	2.43	32.97	3.38	44.1	3.1
Greece	795	2.33	74.08	10.19	10.44	5.28	25.4	2.1
Hungary	787	3.14	83.86	5.72	8	2.41	11.5	2.1
Ireland	746	3.6	56.97	3.08	35.52	4.42	48.6	2.5
Italy	815	2.48	71.9	5.52	18.89	3.68	33.6	2.1
Latvia	799	4.32	84.6	9.76	3.88	1.75	10.1	2.7
Lithuania	769	3.22	81.27	13.26	4.16	1.3	10	2.5
Luxemburg	389	4.45	43.18	4.88	41.39	10.54	74.5	1.8
Malta	390	2.71	61.79	3.33	32.3	2.57	16.7	2.3
Netherlands	800	5.64	36.75	8.62	41	13.62	46.3	3.8
Northern Ireland	242	3.61	60.33	1.65	32.64	5.37	44.1	3.1
Poland	765	2.43	78.69	10.06	7.45	3.79	9.8	1.7
Portugal	734	1.76	82.15	3.54	11.58	2.72	19.9	1.4
Romania	804	2.11	80.47	15.3	2.36	1.86	6.4	1.1
Slovakia	903	3.36	79.73	10.19	6.64	3.43	14.3	1.8
Slovenia	745	3.4	62.95	8.59	22.68	5.77	21.5	2.3
Spain	756	2.81	69.57	5.55	20.37	4.5	29.4	2.1
Sweden	735	4.92	26.94	10.61	38.09	24.35	48.9	3.5
West Germany	782	4.08	62.53	9.08	20.84	7.54	39.5	2.8
Mean	709	3.5	66.89	9.13	18.01	5.96	28.76	2.4

Source: National Wealth and Cultural Funding and Supply (van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013)

The other four country level independent variables (population characteristics), the percentage of LELC individuals in a country (C-LELC), the percentage of LEHC individuals in a country (C-LEHC), the percentage of HELC individuals in a country (C-HELC), and the percentage of HEHC individuals in a country (C-HEHC) are measured by dividing the number of each taste public into the total number of respondents in a country.

To elaborate more on country differences in highbrow cultural consumption, I related a country's level of highbrow cultural consumption (average) to each of the country characteristics. As can be seen in Figure 1, in wealthier countries and in countries with high levels of cultural funding, there is a higher level of highbrow cultural consumption. Also, in countries where there are more HEHC individuals, there is a higher level of highbrow cultural consumption. On the other hand, in countries where there are more LELC individuals, highbrow cultural consumption seems to be less prominent. In countries where there are more LEHC or HELC individuals, there is an upward trend in highbrow cultural consumption, but this trend is ambiguous compared to C-LELC and C-HEHC.

3. Analyses

3.1. Method of Research

In order to address how individual highbrow cultural consumption is affected by the individual and country level characteristics, this study uses a quantitative research design. In this regard, to study cross-national comparisons of highbrow cultural consumption and to examine the perception of social prestige across countries, I employ multi-level modeling.⁷ Multi-level modeling is particularly appropriate for research designs where the data for participants are organized at more than one level. In this study, the data set provides individuals as the lower level who are nested within countries (the higher level). Thus, with this method, by accounting for a nesting of individuals in countries, I simultaneously estimate differences between countries and between individual respondents (van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013). In Table 3, Model A is the null model, and in Model B, all control variables are included. Model C contains the additional effects of taste publics. In Models D through I, in Table 4, I tested the country effects, and finally in Models J through O, in Table 5, the cross-level interactions are tested.

3.2. Results

In Model A of Table 3, I present the null model, which includes the maximum likelihood estimates of the variance components, both at the individual level and country level. These estimates suggest that countries differ in their average highbrow cultural consumption scores and that there is even more variation among individuals within countries. Calculating the intra-class correlation (ICC), it can be seen that 10.1% of the total variance occurs between countries. In Model B, I include the control variables. These variables explain 4.5% of the individual variance and slightly contribute to the fit of the model. As found in earlier research (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; Bryson, 1996; DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004; Kane, 2004; van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2013), women and older people participate more in highbrow culture. The current study has also found that community size matters. Urban areas provide more opportunities for individuals to participate in highbrow culture. In terms of marital status, it seems that single and married individuals do not differ, and

⁷ As the method of this study, I first used linear multi-level modeling using PROC MIXED in SAS. However, since the dependent variable is characterized by overdispersion (Mean: 3.498; Variance: 9.385) and a large number of zero values, I also used multi-level negative binomial model using PROC GLIMMIX in SAS. Both the models gave similar results in terms of signs and significance of coefficients. Therefore, for the sake of simplicity of interpretation, I, here, present the results of linear multi-level modeling. If requested, the results of multi-level negative binomial model can be obtained from the author.

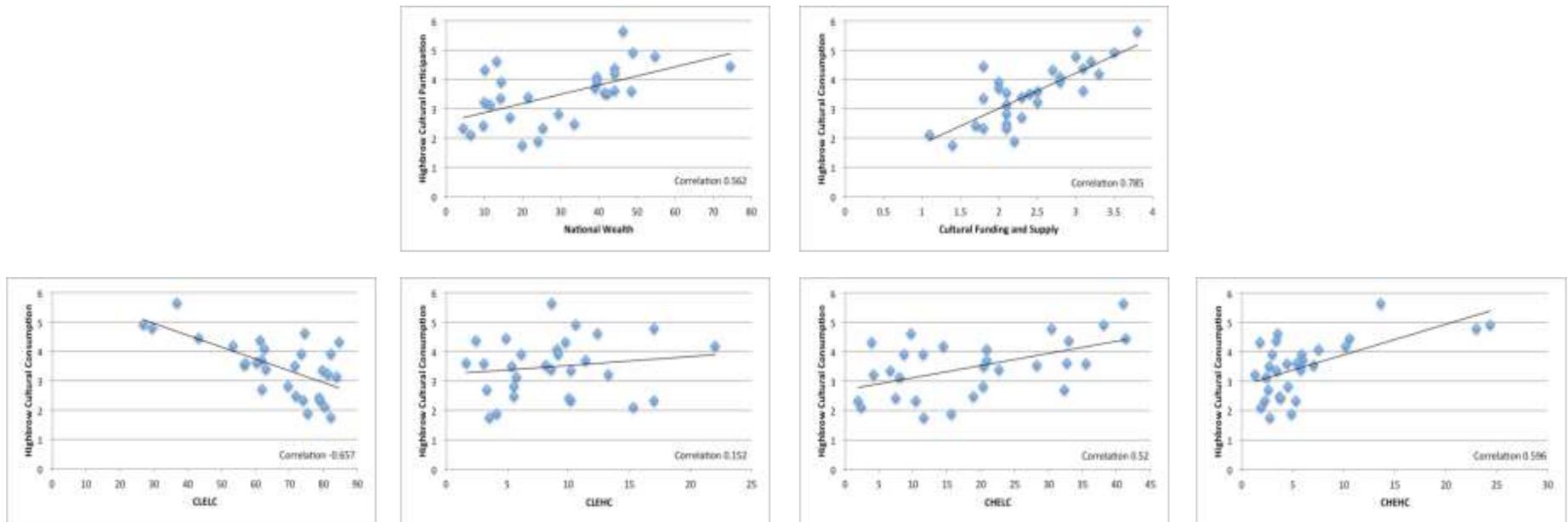


Figure 1 Visual Representation of the Association between Country-Level Characteristics and Highbrow Cultural Consumption

Table 3 Multilevel Linear Regression Estimates of Taste Publics on Highbrow Cultural Consumption

	Model A			Model B			Model C		
	B		SE	B		SE	B		SE
Intercept	3.4925	***	0.1825	1.7132	***	0.324	1.2837	***	0.2967
Individual Level									
<i>Taste Publics</i>									
LELC (ref)									
LEHC							2.5333	***	0.1238
HELC							1.3246	***	0.0666
HEHC							3.2536	***	0.1462
Age				5.3744	***	1.1105	3.8612	***	1.0565
Age-squared				-6.3366	***	1.1044	-3.8098	***	1.0525
Female				0.6049	***	0.0408	0.6907	***	0.0386
<i>Marital Status</i>									
Single (ref)									
Divorced/Widowed/Separated				-0.3115	***	0.0811	-0.1992	**	0.0769
Married				-0.053		0.0665	-0.172	**	0.0637
Immigrant				-0.1236		0.091	-0.1302		0.0862
<i>Size of Community</i>									
Rural Area or Village (ref)									
Middle-sized Town				0.6231	***	0.0471	0.4986	***	0.0446
Large Town				1.316	***	0.0527	1.0106	***	0.0504
Variance Components and Fit									
Variance of LEHC							0.2725	*	0.1205
Variance of HELC							0.0344		0.0347
Variance of HEHC							0.3518	*	0.1521
Level 1 variance (individuals)	8.4678	***	0.0835	8.0837	***	0.0798	7.1965	***	0.0712
Level 2 variance (countries)	0.9524	***	0.2578	1.0213	***	0.2761	0.7232	***	0.1975
-2 Res Log Likelihood	102,385			101,450			99,128		

Source: Eurobarometer 67.1 (2007) Number of Individuals= 20,558; Number of Countries= 29

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed test)

divorced/widowed/separated individuals significantly consume less highbrow culture than those who are single and married.

In Model C, I include the taste publics in the analysis. As I expected in Hypothesis 1, when compared to LELC, all of the three taste publics have distinct highbrow cultural consumption scores, and the HEHC group has the strongest association with highbrow cultural consumption followed by the LEHC group due to their high levels of cultural capital compared to HELC.⁸ An additional 10.97% of the variance at the individual level is explained by the taste publics. Controlling for the taste publics, the effects of control variables more or less stay the same except for the effects of marital status indicating that married and divorced/widowed/separated consume less highbrow culture than those who are single.

Additionally, in Model C, I test whether the association of the taste publics with highbrow cultural consumption varies across countries. As I expected in Hypothesis 2, it is shown that when compared to LELC, the associations of HEHC and LEHC with highbrow cultural consumption significantly vary across European countries. The reason for this might be the different country-specific characteristics, such as the educational system, cultural institutions, or historical cultural heritage, as found by earlier research (Lamont, 1992, 2000). Contrary to my expectations, there is no variance for the effect of HELC across countries⁹.

In Models D through I of Table 4, I test the effects of country characteristics on highbrow cultural consumption. In my conceptual arguments on how population characteristics (C-LELC, C-LEHC, C-HELC, and C-HEHC) might affect individual cultural consumption, I argued that the majority's decision might have such an impact on others that a good proportion of them might end up conforming to the decision of the majority. In light of this, I treated each taste public as a potential candidate for the majority of the population in a country. Therefore, I examined the effects of each population characteristics separately, and compared the percentages of each taste public to the percentages of the other three taste publics. Thus, as expected in Hypothesis 3a and 3b, in Model D and Model G, it is shown that the percentages of LELC and HEHC individuals in a country significantly affect highbrow cultural consumption. While the percentage of LELC individuals is negatively related to highbrow cultural consumption, the percentage of HEHC individuals proves to be positively related to highbrow cultural consumption. The percentage of LEHC individuals in a country is proven to have no significant effect on highbrow cultural consumption as shown in Model E; however, contrary to my expectations, in Model F, it is shown that the effect of the percentage of HELC individuals in a country significantly and positively affects highbrow cultural consumption. In addition to Hypothesis 3a and 3b, the results show in Model H and Model I that a country's national wealth and a country's level of cultural funding hold significant effects in the expected direction, supporting Hypothesis 3c and 3d and indicating that a country's level of national wealth and its level of cultural funding augment individual cultural consumption.

⁸ I also analyzed the data by changing the reference group from LELC to LEHC, HELC, and HEHC respectively to see whether these four groups have distinct highbrow cultural consumption scores. . All of these analyses showed that all of the four taste publics significantly differ from each other in their associations with highbrow cultural consumption, and HEHC group has the strongest association with highbrow cultural consumption followed by LEHC, HELC, and finally LELC.

⁹ When the reference category is changed from LELC to LEHC, HELC, and HEHC respectively, all of the associations of taste publics with highbrow cultural consumption, except for HELC individuals, significantly vary across European countries.

Table 4 Multilevel Linear Regression Estimates of Taste Publics and Country-Level Characteristics on Highbrow Cultural Consumption

	Model D			Model E			Model F			Model G			Model H			Model I		
	B		SE															
Intercept	3.1023	***	0.657	1.1221	*	0.4188	0.7293		0.3722	0.8693	*	0.3306	0.6252		0.3846	-1.0465	*	0.5065
Individual Level																		
<i>Taste Publics</i>																		
LELC (ref)																		
LEHC	2.5308	***	0.1244	2.5332	***	0.1241	2.5319	***	0.1236	2.5311	***	0.1246	2.5319	***	0.1239	2.5317	***	0.1238
HELHC	1.3195	***	0.0678	1.325	***	0.0667	1.32	***	0.0672	1.3217	***	0.0677	1.3207	***	0.0673	1.3205	***	0.0672
HEHC	3.2493	***	0.1473	3.2536	***	0.0667	3.2505	***	0.1466	3.2506	***	0.1474	3.2504	***	0.1468	3.2519	***	0.1477
Age	3.8652	***	1.0565	3.8606	***	1.0565	3.8663	***	1.0565	3.8617	***	1.0565	3.8658	***	1.0565	3.8593	***	1.0565
Age-squared	-3.8208	***	1.0525	-3.8096	***	1.0525	-3.8191	***	1.0525	-3.8158	***	1.0525	-3.8182	***	1.0525	-3.8158	***	1.0525
Female	0.6911	***	0.0386	0.6908	***	0.0386	0.6907	***	0.0386	0.6912	***	0.0386	0.6909	***	0.0386	0.6909	***	0.0386
<i>Marital Status</i>																		
Single (ref)																		
Divorced/Widowed/Separated	-0.1965	**	0.0768	-0.1995	**	0.0769	-0.1967	**	0.0769	-0.1979	**	0.0768	-0.1971	**	0.0768	-0.1964	**	0.0768
Married	-0.1699	**	0.0637	-0.1722	**	0.0637	-0.1698	**	0.0637	-0.171	**	0.0637	-0.1701	**	0.0637	-0.169	**	0.0637
Immigrant	-0.1318		0.0862	-0.13		0.0862	-0.1327		0.0862	-0.1303		0.0862	-0.133		0.0862	-0.1271		0.0862
<i>Size of Community</i>																		
Rural Area or Village (ref)																		
Middle-sized Town	0.4991	***	0.0446	0.4985	***	0.0446	0.4993	***	0.0446	0.4985	***	0.0458	0.4982	***	0.0446	0.4974	***	0.0445
Large Town	1.0117	***	0.0504	1.0105	***	0.0504	1.0114	***	0.0504	1.0113	***	0.0504	1.0109	***	0.0504	1.0079	***	0.0504
Country Level																		
C-LELC	-0.0275	**	0.0089															
C-LEHC				0.0184		0.0336												
C-HELHC							0.0291	*	0.0122									
C-HEHC										0.0684	*	0.0264						
National Wealth													0.0219	*	0.0084			
Cultural Funding																0.9726	***	0.178
Variance Components and Fit																		
Variance of LEHC	0.2767	*	0.1218	0.2745	*	0.1212	0.2715	*	0.1202	0.278	*	0.1222	0.2731	*	0.1207	0.2728	*	0.1203
Variance of HELHC	0.0382		0.036	0.0349		0.0349	0.0362		0.0354	0.0381		0.036	0.0368		0.0358	0.0363		0.0349
Variance of HEHC	0.3608	**	0.1544	0.353	**	0.1524	0.3551	**	0.1531	0.3618	**	0.1549	0.3566	**	0.1536	0.3643	**	0.1555
Level 1 variance (individuals)	7.1959	***	0.0712	7.1964	***	0.0712	7.1963	***	0.0712	7.1959	***	0.0712	7.1962	***	0.0712	7.1962	***	0.0712
Level 2 variance (countries)	0.5542	***	0.1543	0.7424	***	0.2063	0.619	***	0.1723	0.6005	***	0.167	0.5996	***	0.1668	0.3485	***	0.0993
-2 Res Log Likelihood	99.127			99.132			99.129			99.127			99.129			99.109		

Source: Eurobarometer 67.1 (2007) Number of Individuals= 20,558; Number of Countries= 29

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed test)

In Models J through O of Table 5, I test whether cross-level interactions between taste publics and country characteristics affect individuals' consumption of highbrow culture due to their different perceptions of social prestige as acquired through cultural consumption. Unfortunately, due to collinearity issues, it was necessary to estimate the effects of each country characteristics separately.

In Models J, K, L, and M, I separately test taste publics with the percentages of taste publics in a country. As expected in Hypothesis 4a, in Model J, I find significant positive interaction estimates between taste publics (except LEHC) and the percentage of LELC individuals in a country, indicating that in countries where there are fewer people who have the structural and cultural means to participate in highbrow cultural activities, those people who are more educated and wealthier (HELC and HEHC compared to LELC) have higher levels of participation in highbrow cultural activities. LEHC individuals, however, do not seem to be affected by this cross-level interaction. In contrast to Model J, in Model M, I find significant negative interaction estimates between taste publics and the percentage of HEHC individuals in a country. This finding is in line with my expectation in Hypothesis 4b that in countries where there are more people who have the structural and cultural means to participate in highbrow cultural activities, those people who are more educated and wealthier (LEHC, HELC, and HEHC compared to LELC) participate less in highbrow cultural activities. Contrary to my expectations, in Model L, I find similar results to Model M. Taste publics seem to have similar interaction effects with the percentage of HELC individuals in a country (except LEHC) as they did with the percentage of HEHC individuals in a country. A closer look actually shows that, in countries where there are more wealthy people (HELC and HEHC individuals due to their high levels of economic capital compared to LELC and LEHC), highly educated and wealthier people consume less highbrow culture compared to their less educated and less wealthy counterparts.

With Models N and O, I investigate whether the association between taste publics and cultural consumption is affected by a country's level of wealth and a country's level of cultural funding. The interactions of both the country characteristics with the taste publics seem to have significant and negative effects on taste publics (except for LEHC), supporting Hypothesis 4c and Hypothesis 4d, indicating that in wealthier countries and in countries with more cultural funding, individuals who are wealthier and more educated (HELC and HEHC compared to LELC) consume less highbrow culture. Apparently, due to increasing opportunities to participate in highbrow culture (due to the level of national wealth and cultural funding) and decreasing opportunities for individuals to achieve distinction (due to high percentages of HEHC and HELC individuals in a country), class boundaries waned and highbrow cultural consumption became less attractive as a status maker and prestige accumulator for wealthier and more educated individuals.

4. Discussions and Conclusion

In this study, I addressed three research questions with respect to three levels of analysis: the individual level, the country level, and the level of cross-level interactions. With respect to the first research question, it was shown that highbrow cultural consumption differs among individuals depending upon their levels of economic and cultural capital. More specifically, taste publics significantly differ from each other in their associations with highbrow cultural consumption, and the HEHC taste public has the strongest association with highbrow cultural consumption followed by the LEHC, HELC, and finally LELC taste publics. Considering the ranking of taste publics, therefore, it can be said that at the individual level, cultural capital predicts highbrow cultural consumption more than economic capital. Also, it was established that taste publics have divergent associations with highbrow cultural consumption across European countries due to some potential country-specific characteristics, such as the educational systems, cultural institutions, or historical

Table 5 *Multilevel Linear Regression Estimates of Taste Publics, Country-Level Characteristics, and Cross Level Interactions on Highbrow Cultural Consumption*

	Model J			Model K			Model L		Model M		Model N		Model O					
	B	SE		B	SE		B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE				
Intercept	3.3712	***	0.6613	1.0798	*	0.4192	0.6778	0.3734	0.796	*	0.3302	0.529	0.3862	-1.205	*	0.5056		
Individual Level																		
LELC (ref)																		
LEHC	1.695	**	0.5221	3.3341	***	0.2383	2.4707	***	0.2247	2.823	***	0.1758	2.6335	***	0.2499	3.045	***	0.4759
HELHC	0.5306	*	0.2465	1.3384	***	0.1378	1.6463	***	0.1402	1.5236	***	0.0952	1.7634	***	0.1473	1.9625	***	0.2564
HEHC	1.6262	***	0.4873	3.4363	***	0.3114	3.7622	***	0.2731	3.723	***	0.1968	4.0149	***	0.2856	4.716	***	0.5018
Country Level																		
C-LELC	-0.0314	**	0.009															
C-LEHC				0.022		0.0337												
C-HELHC							0.0319	*	0.0123									
C-HEHC										0.0826	**	0.0265						
National Wealth												0.0249	**	0.0085				
Cultural Funding and Supply																1.0383	***	0.1777
Cross Level Interactions																		
C-LELC*LEHC	0.0123		0.0076															
C-LELC*HELHC	0.0123	**	0.0038															
C-LELC*HEHC	0.025	***	0.0075															
C-LEHC*LEHC				-0.0825	***	0.0212												
C-LEHC*HELHC				-0.001		0.0146												
C-LEHC*HEHC				-0.02		0.03												
C-HELHC*LEHC							0.0034		0.0106									

	Model J		Model K		Model L		Model M		Model N		Model O							
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE						
C-HELC*HELC					-0.0148	**	0.0055											
C-HELC*HEHC					-0.026	*	0.0114											
C-HEHC*LEHC								-0.05	*	0.0205								
C-HEHC*HELC								-0.0323	**	0.0104								
C-HEHC*HEHC								-0.0712	***	0.02								
National Wealth*LEHC										-0.0036		0.0075						
National Wealth*HELC										-0.0132	***	0.0038						
National Wealth*HEHC										-0.0243	**	0.0076						
Cultural Funding*LEHC												-0.2166	0.1922					
Cultural Funding*HELC												-0.2626	**	0.0998				
Cultural Funding*HEHC												-0.6073	**	0.1957				
Variance Components and Fit																		
Variance of LEHC	0.2786	*	0.1252	0.1397	*	0.0781	0.2941	*	0.1288	0.2502	*	0.115	0.3044	*	0.1325	0.2808	*	0.1252
Variance of HELC	0.019		0.0286	0.0412		0.0386	0.0249		0.0301	0.022		0.0307	0.0182		0.0265	0.0235		0.0308
Variance of HEHC	0.2276	*	0.1233	0.3541	*	0.1612	0.294	*	0.1382	0.226	*	0.119	0.2388	*	0.1227	0.2259	*	0.1277
Level 1 variance (individuals)	7.1944	***	0.0712	7.196	***	0.0712	7.1948	***	0.0712	7.1942	***	0.0711	7.1937	***	0.0711	7.1958	***	0.0712
Level 2 variance (countries)	0.5562	***	0.1547	0.7405	***	0.2057	0.6238	***	0.1735	0.5929	***	0.1648	0.6041	***	0.1678	0.3425	***	0.0974
-2 Res Log Likelihood	99,134			99,137			99,141			99,126			99,136			99,100		

Source: Eurobarometer 67.1 (2007) Number of Individuals= 20,558; Number of Countries= 29

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed test)

cultural heritage, in these countries. The associations of taste publics, except for the HELC individuals, with highbrow cultural consumption significantly varied across European countries.

With my second research question I focused on the effects of six country characteristics on highbrow cultural consumption. It may be concluded that the percentages of taste publics significantly affect highbrow cultural consumption. While countries where more educated and wealthier individuals live have a positive association with highbrow cultural consumption, countries where poorly educated and poorer individuals live have a negative association with highbrow cultural consumption. The extreme forms (C-LELC and C-HEHC) proved to have direct effects on highbrow cultural consumption; however, the neutral position of C-LEHC and the positive effect of C-HELC on highbrow cultural consumption lead me to speculate that while at the individual level cultural capital predicts highbrow cultural consumption more than economic capital, at the country level economic capital predicts highbrow cultural consumption more than cultural capital. In other words, while at the individual level it can be suggested that highly educated individuals are more likely to participate in highbrow culture, at the country level, individuals in countries with a higher proportion of individuals with material affluence—that is, individuals in countries with higher overall levels of material affluence—are more likely to participate in highbrow culture. I argue that the significant effect of C-HELC compared to the insignificant effect of C-LEHC on individuals highbrow cultural consumption shows the different perspectives of wealthier individuals (HELC) from more educated ones (LEHC). I argue that in countries with many HELC individuals it might be perceived as necessary to consume highbrow culture in order to attain social standing in addition to material standing. However, in countries with many LEHC individuals consuming highbrow culture may not be perceived as a necessary tool (or may not be perceived as strongly as HELC individuals do) to attain social standing since they already have social standing due to their high levels of cultural capital. This argument might help to understand why a country with higher overall levels of education (C-LEHC) wouldn't have more participation in highbrow culture while a country with higher overall levels of material affluence would have (C-HELC). In addition to the percentages of taste publics, a country's level of wealth and a country's level of cultural funding significantly contribute to the explanation of the variation in highbrow cultural consumption.

With respect to the third research question, I focused on the interaction effects between taste publics and the six country characteristics on highbrow cultural consumption to examine how individuals vary in their consumption of highbrow culture depending on how they may perceive highbrow culture. In this respect the results indicate that the percentages of taste publics particularly affect how individuals perceive highbrow culture and consequently how much they consume it. The association between taste publics and highbrow cultural consumption becomes weaker for educated and wealthy individuals (for HEHC, HELC, and LEHC compared to LELC) as countries have more educated and wealthy individuals (C-HEHC). In other words, individuals consume highbrow culture less as long as more people have the opportunity to consume it and as long as highbrow culture loses its boundary-creating feature. Vice versa, the association between taste publics and highbrow cultural consumption becomes stronger for educated and wealthy individuals (for HEHC and HELC compared to LELC) as countries have poorly educated and poorer individuals (C-LELC). Individuals consume highbrow culture more when it is easier to use it as a boundary maker and as long as it maintains its distinguished situation as a status marker and prestige accumulator. Despite being a moderate form, C-HELC also proved to have similar effects with C-HEHC in its interaction with taste publics. This supports my speculation that at the country level, economic capital predicts highbrow cultural consumption more than cultural capital. Furthermore, in wealthy countries and in countries where there is more cultural funding, the association between taste publics and highbrow

cultural consumption becomes weaker. Individuals consume highbrow culture less as long as it becomes available to everyone.

My results also show that LEHC individuals compared to other taste publics do not follow the trend: this means that LEHC individuals do not significantly consume more highbrow culture in countries where there are poorly educated and poorer individuals and do not significantly consume less in wealthier countries and in countries where there are more cultural funding. The reason for this might be that LEHC individuals represent those people who are highly educated but not wealthy. They are the ones who not only participate in highbrow culture, but also generally like it such as intellectuals due to their high levels of cultural capital. Therefore, they are more likely to consume highbrow culture since they find it satisfying. They are possibly the only group that participates in highbrow cultural activities in order to appreciate highbrow culture, not with the intention of accumulating social prestige. This leads me to conclude that while other groups are more likely to consume highbrow culture to accumulate social prestige, LEHC individuals are more likely to consume it for pleasure. This might be the reason why they do not show any significant changes in their consumption of highbrow culture while interacting with the country characteristics. However, another reason might be that LEHC individuals might also be people who don't have some of the material things not because they can't afford them, but because they are not important to them (e.g., TV, fixed phone). In this case, this would be a limitation of the family affluence variable. Future research is needed to understand the motivations for highbrow participation for this taste public.

The main contribution of this study is that it is a comparative study that provides a way to focus on what determines an individual's cultural participation at the individual and the country level, and to identify how an individual's perception of highbrow culture might change. By doing so, I identified that in addition to the governmental cultural policy and a country's economic conditions, the population characteristics of a country also influence overall levels of highbrow cultural consumption.

More specifically, I examined both the individual and country level influences on highbrow cultural consumption using a relatively unused dataset to understand the patterns of cultural consumption. Second, I examined the effects of education and family affluence on highbrow cultural consumption using taste publics. Thus, I have improved van Hek and Kraaykamp's (2012) research in which they examined the effects of education and family affluence on highbrow cultural consumption separately. Finally, I looked at the interaction effects of the individual and country level influences on highbrow cultural consumption to understand what determines highbrow cultural consumption at the individual level—that is, the perception of social prestige in addition to being a member of a taste public. Thus, I showed that how individuals perceive high culture, either as highly distinctive/boundary maker or easily available/boundary breaker, determines whether they consume it. Future research might consider testing the effects of the perception of social prestige in the consumption of highbrow culture with other data sets to ensure comparison. Also, future research might consider looking at countries in South America or Asia to see whether the findings of this study would be similar and to decide whether the findings of this study are particular about European countries.

Even though this study provides a new perspective on highbrow culture by the creation of taste publics, there are two important limitations that should be mentioned. First, the measure of educational attainment is far from optimal. And second, the family affluence variable is operationalized rather loosely. The importance of these two measures comes from the fact that they are used to create taste publics. It is a serious drawback of the Eurobarometer data that it does not

have a valid education variable. In my defense, it must be said that the use of age leaving full-time education as an indication for educational attainment (van Hek and Kraaykamp, 2012) is the best measure currently available. Also, the family affluence variable surely holds serious measurement error when considering especially the unexpected effect of the LEHC taste public mentioned above. Due to the unavailability of a valid material affluence variable in the Eurobarometer data, the additive scale used in this study is the best available measure at hand. Future studies may improve upon this study by employing more accurate measurements of educational attainment and family affluence to create taste publics, and also find better ways to create them.

In closing, it can be concluded that individual highbrow cultural consumption is affected by not only individuals' cultural and economic means, but also the country characteristics in which they live. Consumption differs depending on the population characteristics of the country where individuals live (C-LELC, C-LEHC, C-HELC, and C-HEHC), whether they live in a wealthy or a poor country, and whether they live in culturally well-funded or poorly funded country. Finally, this study implies that increasing opportunities to participate in highbrow culture provided by countries and increasing availability of high culture in the media indicate the possible transformation of specific forms of highbrow culture into common or plain pop culture. This leads to the implication that in order to be distinctive people should be familiar with not only specific forms of highbrow culture but also with many cultural forms, as found in previous research (Lopez-Sintas and Katz-Gerro, 2005). This also supports Peterson's (Peterson and Simkus, 1992; Peterson and Kern, 1996) "omnivore theory." Therefore, it can be implied that the changing perception of highbrow culture as a status marker or a boundary breaker by the individuals seems to determine the future of highbrow culture.

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