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# Cultural consumption and social stratification in Athens: A synthesis of findings across cultural fields and some remarks on the significance of popular culture

**Dimitris Emmanuel, Roxanne Kaftantzoglou, Nicos Souliotis**

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Most of what follows draws from research reports by Emmanuel, Kaftantzoglou and Souliotis covering each of the cultural consumption fields surveyed, namely cinema, music, dance, and theater in Athens in 2013 (Emmanuel et al., 2015). The survey, based on a random sample of 2518 adults and their households in the Athens Region, was part of a more general research project on "Socioeconomic Class, Social Status and Consumption" (project SECSTACON of the Greek National Centre for Social Research (EKKE), no. 1391 of the 2011 Research Excellence Program financed by the Greek State and the E.U.). A first preliminary report covering the synthesis of the data on cultural consumption and a discussion of controversies over the issue of persistent cultural dualism in Greece was presented by D. Emmanuel in the EKKE Workshop "Cultural Consumption and Social Classes", Athens, November 4, 2014.

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**Cultural consumption and social stratification in Athens: a synthesis of findings across cultural fields and some remarks on the significance of popular culture**

The paper reviews the results of a 2013 survey of cultural consumption in public venues, that is, *going out* practices, in Athens in the fields of cinema, music and the performing arts (dance and theater). Its main aim is to present a synthesis of the findings across all three fields with a view of evaluating the validity of alternative schemata relating cultural consumption to social stratification such as Bourdieu's *homology* and Peterson's cultural omnivore thesis. This evaluation is based, in contrast to most studies on this issue, exclusively on cultural choices involving *participation* in public events and public spaces of cultural consumption in a particular large city. While the omnivore phenomenon was found to be markedly limited, Bourdieu's hierarchical schema applied partially in that, alongside adherents to "highbrow" culture, substantial segments of upper and upper-middle strata adopt sharply differing *popular* cultural practices. While cultural consumption research has lately focused on the extent of omnivorousness among the educated middle class, this study argues that equal attention should be paid to the significant presence of popular modes of cultural life that cuts across social classes.

*Keywords:* Cultural consumption; social stratification; distinction; omnivores; popular culture; Athens

## 1. Introduction [1]

The research project that produced the survey findings we will examine in the following explored the relationship between multiple dimensions of social stratification and patterns of urban consumption in the case of Athens. Although the project covered fields of both cultural and material consumption, its research design followed in large part the approach advanced by the well-known international collective project "Social status, life style and cultural consumption: a comparative study" coordinated by T. W. Chan and J. H. Goldthorpe.[2] The main guiding hypothesis in that study was that it is social status in the Weberian sense rather than socioeconomic class that accounts for differences in cultural consumption across social strata.[3] Status in this context is defined by the ranking of occupations according to prestige - the social recognition and attribution of value that forms a hierarchy of groupings that often adopt a common lifestyle and tend to enter into social relationships with their equals or those in adjacent ranks. The findings of the comparative project coordinated by Chan & Goldthorpe over a broad spectrum of national cases suggested that social status was indeed a major determinant of cultural consumption (alongside individual stratification attributes such as income and level of education) while class exerted virtually no influence. This influence does not take the form of a *one-to-one* correspondence between particular social strata and patterns of cultural consumption as suggested by the *homology* model advanced in Bourdieu's seminal work on taste distinction (1979, 1984) but a more complex one where distinct culture patterns and consumer groupings often cut across social status strata. It was also found that cultural consumption patterns and the related social groupings do not follow the classic schema of highbrow-middlebrow-lowbrow culture as in, most notably, Gans (1974) – a schema dominant among intellectuals

[1] The survey, based on a random sample of 2518 adults and their households in the Athens Region, was part of a more general research project on socioeconomic class, social status, and consumption. The present paper attempts a synthesis of the findings across three cultural fields and an overall evaluation of the alternative hypotheses examined.

[2] "Status and Cultural Consumption" for brevity. See Chan (2010). For a broadly similar methodological approach regarding the role of status vs. that of class cf. T. Katz-Gerro et al. (2007).

[3] Class in this case, was defined according to the neo-Weberian schema introduced by Erikson and Goldthorpe, typified in the well-known EGP model and, with minor alterations, adopted as standard across Europe in the form of ESeC – the European Socioeconomic Classification (Harrison & Rose, 2006).

during the first post-war decades that also upheld the one-to-one relationship model and had obvious affinities with Bourdieu's "Distinction".

The "Status and Cultural Consumption" studies found instead that, on the whole, the stratification of culture is better approximated through Peterson's schema of "omnivores" and "univores" [4]: cultural omnivores that consume a broad range of genres, including popular ones, increasingly dominate the cultural field as we move up the stratification ladder while univores, consumers of one or two genres, and a broad category of "inactives" - abstainers from cultural consumption - dominate as we move towards lower strata. Both the statistical structure of these relationships allowing extensive mixing of consumer types across a range of social strata and the "democratic", according to Peterson, tendencies of cultural omnivorousness among the elites and the upper middle class, indicate that a strict Bourdiean "homology" model and its correlates for the reproduction of cultural and social hierarchy are not supported by the facts.

In the "Status and Cultural Consumption" project, it is also stressed that the same evidence points to the lack of empirical support for the widely held "postmodern" views that stratification and more generally the sphere of production do not matter. Major analyses of the post-modern condition argue that the sphere of consumption is paramount and consumption patterns are formed autonomously while social identities and life styles are defined *via* consumption.[5] However, the extent of inequalities across the range of social stratification in terms of free time and economic and cultural resources as well as the empirical findings demonstrating a strong relationship between status stratification and types of cultural consumption clearly undermine arguments to the effect that we live in times of "individuation" of life styles and social identities to the point of complete freedom from social and economic structures.

[4] Most studies in "Status and Cultural Consumption" adopt a rather mild version of Peterson's thesis. They find the strictly dichotomous omnivore/univore model inadequate and add an intermediate type of "paucivores" consuming a limited range of cultural goods and genres.
[5] See especially the works of Bauman (2007) and Featherstone (1992).

Obviously, the examination of these alternative cultural consumption theories hinges on the approach to the issue of social stratification. The "Status and Cultural Consumption" project argued for an open multidimensional conception of stratification with main emphasis on the Weberian distinction between economic class and occupational status groups complemented by consideration of the specific influence of the respondent's educational level and her household income. The 2013 Athens survey aimed at evaluating the role of these stratification dimensions as well as the alternative cultural models involved over a broad range of consumption practices. In what follows we will restrict analysis to the three aforementioned cultural consumption fields. In doing so, we will, at a number of points, feel obliged to go into some further empirical and theoretical discussion over issues and empirical questions, such as the role of social mobility and complex or contradictory socioeconomic and cultural patterns, raised by both Bourdieu's and Peterson's approaches in the context of the Greek material.

Needless to say, a number of contextual specificities also weighed on the design of the Athens research and its underlying theoretical issues: first and foremost, the Greek economic crisis and its many-faceted social repercussions since 2010. Secondly, the local effects of globalization trends in the media, advertising and consumption spheres especially since the sharp rise of consumerism in Greece during the 1990s and early 2000s.[6] Lastly, the typical distinction between "high" and "popular" culture could not avoid taking into account the historical context of scholarly controversies over the constituents of Greek national cultural identity, the conflict between national/popular and westernized/European cultural modes and the role of populism in politics and culture especially in relation to the alleged near-hegemony of the popular cultural mode during the democratic upsurge of 1960-1967, the period following the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974 and the first years of socialist party rule in the early 1980s (Zorba, 2014).

[6] Despite these trends there is a pronounced lack of contemporary Greek sociological studies that adequately cover the relationship between culture and stratification. For two partial exceptions, see Gardikiotis & Baltzis (2012) and Panagiotopoulos & Vidali (2012, 2015). Both studies are based on rather narrow samples of cultural consumers. Older Greek studies mainly focused on the classical contrasts between modern/traditional and urban/rural (Karapostolis, 1983).

## 2. The empirical findings: consumer groupings and stratification

From the sample of 2518 households drawn for the Athens region, a random selection of adults of 18-65 years of age were asked for each cultural field whether they had attended *over the last two years*[7] at least one public performance of music, theater, dance or had been to a public film viewing and, if so, to point out the selected genre, or combination of venue and genre in the case of music, from predefined lists. The resulting individual choice profiles or repertoires were analyzed using a latent class analysis statistical package in the R-language (Linzer & Lewis, 2011, 2013). In all of the surveyed fields of cultural consumption, namely cinema, music and theater/dance, with the last two combined due to the small number of dance attendances, the statistical analysis clearly indicated the presence of the same four latent classes:[8]

1) The **"high culture"** consumers[9] who, while showing some broadness of cultural choices (i.e. a certain limited extent of "omnivorousness"), mainly attend venues and genres of "high" culture and on the whole avoid "popular" genres and venues. High culture consumers are mainly found among the higher social strata, their share increasing as we move up the social hierarchy.

2) The **"popular culture"** consumers who as a group show a profile of attendance that is the opposite of the previous group by being concentrated in popular genres and venues and abstaining from "higher" ones. Their social distribution, however, does not follow an opposite curve to that of "higher"

[7] As is well known, the respective question in such cultural surveys covers *one* year. However, due to the extraordinary crisis in Greece during 2010-2013 (according to official (ELSTAT) figures, a unprecedented rise of unemployment to 28%, a fall of average income by about 30% and a drop of household expenditures for culture and entertainment in the range of 50-60%) it was felt that following the standard approach might lead to an excessive number of aggressive negative responses. Hence the choice of the "last two years" period (i.e. roughly 2011-12). It should be noted that the question was limited to public outings – which normally involve expenses – and that the questionnaire explicitly excluded such attendances during summer vacations, tourist trips, excursions to secondary homes or any other type of travel.

[8] For the technicalities of the analysis in each field, cf. Emmanuel et al., 2015, Part C.

[9] We will avoid the widely used but obviously deplorable term "highbrow" and instead use "high" or "higher" as more appropriate and easily translatable - assuming, of course, that it is clear that such heavily biased terms are, in this context, unavoidable.

consumers: the shares of "popular culture" consumers in cinema and in music cut across the social hierarchy following a nearly horizontal convex curve with a mild fall in lower strata and a hump in middle strata while in the case of theater & dance we have a similar curve with a more pronounced fall among lower strata.

3) The fully **"omnivorous"** consumers whose choices cover the *whole spectrum* of a large number of genres and venues. These comprise extremely small categories in all three fields, from a minimal 1% in theater/dance to 6% in cinema. Their distribution along the social hierarchy essentially parallels that of high culture consumers, though with a less steep gradient.

4) The **"inactives" with** a very limited or, mostly, total lack of participation in cultural events. They represent a particularly large group (40% in cinema, 62% in music and 78% in theater-dance) and their social distribution is, on the whole, the complete opposite of that of the sum of high culture and omnivorous consumers: the share of inactives is lowest in the upper strata and rises sharply as we move toward the lower levels of the social hierarchy. However, the fact that their numbers markedly increase with age also lends this group a significant presence even among higher strata.[10]

By their very nature, the groups of *omnivores* and *inactives* present very limited interest with regard to the *particular choices* over cultural genres and venues. Our interest therefore should obviously focus on the groups of high culture and popular consumers (henceforth without quotation marks). Table 1 presents their respective attendance shares across the venues/genres of the three fields of cultural consumption. Grey shading highlights the cases where the shares of the respective consumer group are relatively high given the average of the group.

[10] While the main object of analysis was social stratification, it should be stressed that age and gender were also significant in forming the size and identity of cultural consumer groups.

**Table 1: Shares of attendance by High Culture and Popular consumption groupings across the social hierarchy of venues/genres**

**a) Film genres**

| TASTE – STATUS HIERARCHY | | HIGH CULTURE | POPULAR |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Cinephile - Art House | 40,9% | 5,1% |
| 2 | Drama / Social | 83,2% | 13,2% |
| 3 | Historical / Period | 45,4% | 17,7% |
| 4 | Music & Dance | 12,7% | 4,3% |
| 5 | Romantic Comedies & Romance | 47,1% | 20,3% |
| 6 | Mystery, Crime and Spy | 18,5% | 45,8% |
| 7 | Animation | 19,0% | 19,9% |
| 8 | Comedies | 52,5% | 49,3% |
| 9 | Fantasy & Science Fiction | 11,1% | 38,1% |
| 10 | Adventure, War, Westerns | 11,7% | 52,6% |
| 11 | Action, Martial Arts | 2,1% | 45,6% |
| 12 | Thriller, Horror | 9,6% | 35,1% |

**b) Music venues/genres**

| TASTE – STATUS HIERARCHY | | HIGH CULTURE | POPULAR |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Halls for classical, contemporary music & opera | 46,1% | 2,2% |
| 2 | Music stages/clubs for jazz and ethnic music | 54,8% | 6,5% |
| 3 | Music stages for "entechno"* Greek and foreign song | 52,1% | 23,6% |
| 4 | Music stages/clubs for concerts of rock, pop-rock, metal, electronic, rap, hip-hop etc. | 50,3% | 23,2% |
| 6 | Music mezedopolio**, music tavern | 38,8% | 64,7% |
| 7 | Music stages for rebetika*** & popular songs | 1,5% | 57,7% |
| 8 | Grand dancing floors ("megales pistes"****) | 8,2% | 40,6% |

(*)Of higher artistic quality. (**) A tavern that mainly serves tidbits (mezedes). (***) The equivalent of traditional urban blues associated with cultures of poverty and marginality. (****) Halls serving drinks and food around a large dancing floor or stage where popular singers perform - typically as parts within a broader show.

**c) Theater genres**

| TASTE – STATUS HIERARCHY | | HIGH CULTURE | POPULAR |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Experimental & modern/ contemporary | 67,4% | 5,8% |
| 2 | Classical Greek theater | 46,0% | 14,3% |
| 3 | Theater classics | 70,5% | 31,7% |
| 4 | Musicals | 8,8% | 30,8% |
| 5 | Children's theater | 20,4% | 22,8% |
| 6 | Light theater | 1,8% | 38,8% |
| 7 | Variety/Revue shows | 0,4% | 45,5% |

**d) Theater & dance genres combined**

| TASTE – STATUS HIERARCHY | | HIGH CULTURE | POPULAR |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Experimental & modern /contemporary theater | 67,4% | 5,8% |
| 2 | Classical Greek theater | 46,0% | 14,3% |
| 3 | Theater classics | 70,5% | 31,7% |
| 4 | Contemporary dance | 36,8% | 9,4% |
| 5 | Dance shows | 16,5% | 17,9% |
| 6 | Musicals | 8,8% | 30,8% |
| 7 | Classical ballet | 23,9% | 17,9% |
| 8 | Children's theater | 20,4% | 22,8% |
| 9 | Light theater | 1,8% | 38,8% |
| 10 | Variety/Revue shows | 0,4% | 45,5% |
| 11 | Greek folk dances | 4,9% | 33,9% |

The ranking of genres, activities and venues according to "good taste" constitutes a *competitive social ordering* from the viewpoint of high culture consumers. Put simply, cultural items are not exclusively evaluated on the basis of some norm of "good taste" but also, as a practical rule, according to the social composition of the people that *consume* such items: their place in the hierarchy is higher the greater the share of people of presumably good taste among their

consumers or, more to the point, the lower the share of people of *bad taste*, i.e. people of lower strata. The ordering of genres/venues in Table 1 is based on such a criterion: the average social status index (of which later) of the declared consumers of each cultural item. It is evident that this social ordering is essentially similar in each field to the "cultural" ordering that educated persons of higher social strata in Greece would find acceptable.

The four different consumer groups are, as underlined already, common among the three cultural fields. They are also socially ordered, as shown in Table 2, in a similar way across all fields: higher culture consumers, omnivores, popular consumers, inactives. All group averages for the major stratification indicators, namely income, class, status, education and education of the father, are ranked, with a few minor exceptions, according to this ordering.[11] Table 2 includes the group averages of the social status index based on the occupational status of respondents expressed in numerical terms calculated from marriage and friendship relationships for 23 large occupational groups.[12]

**Table 2: Cultural consumption fields and consumer groupings (latent classes)**

| | **MUSIC** | Av. STATUS | **THEATER-DANCE** | Av. STATUS | **CINEMA** | Av. STATUS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MUSIC** | % | INDEX | % | INDEX | % | INDEX |
| HIGHER | 13,4% | 1,069 | 11,6% | 1,240 | 28,7% | 0,857 |
| OMNIVORES | 2,9% | 0,775 | 1,1% | 1,519 | 5,9% | 0,828 |
| POPULAR | 21,7% | 0,355 | 9,2% | 0,595 | 25,0% | 0,147 |
| INACTIVE | 62,0% | -0,188 | 78,1% | -0,115 | 40,4% | -0,509 |

[11] The exceptions are mainly due to some deviations in the position of omnivores in relation to higher consumers as is the case in theater/dance. There is also a small difference between the average income of popular consumers and omnivores in the cases of music and theater/dance. This is due to the age factor: omnivore consumers are often young people with, as a rule, lower incomes.

[12] The occupational groupings used mainly followed the ones used in Chan & Goldthorpe (2004). The other indices used in the analysis are the average number of socioeconomic class (for ESeC classes 1 to 5), the average monthly income of the respondent's household, the average educational level (for broad levels 1 to 4) and, lastly, the average educational level (by similar broad levels 1 to 4) of the respondent's *father* - the latter serving as a status indicator of social origin as well as a measure of a large part of the available cultural capital. The definitions and measurements regarding these aspects of stratification and social origin in the context of the present study are essentially in accordance to those in the "Status and Cultural Consumption" project, cf. Emmanuel et al., 2015, Part B.

The first thing to notice in Table 2 is the size of the *inactive* (or abstaining) group - a group that reaches, as already noted, a share of 62% in music and as high as 78% in theater/dance. While these shares are quite high indeed, it should be noted that they are also high in cases with far richer cultural infrastructures: for example in the case of England, non-participation in music events and theater/dance performances within the last year (instead of two years in our case) surpassed 80% and 70% respectively (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005, 2007b). When, however, listening to music and watching dance/theater performances through various media at home are also included, the share of inactives is radically reduced. Thus, in the Athens case we must take into account the fact that only participation in public venues were registered. Such participation typically involves a significant cost that should be added to the separate cost of the outing itself. Moreover, as already noted, practices of attending such events during vacations, weekend excursions or longer trips, were explicitly excluded thus, arguably, raising the number of inactives.

On the other hand, the fact that our data only cover the Athens region instead of the whole country certainly lowers the share of inactives: given the deficit in the supply and infrastructure of culture in the provinces and in non-urban areas the extent of non-participation in public cultural consumption there is most probably significantly higher than the Capital's. Lastly, there is the economic crisis factor that, according to our data has reduced even minimal participation i.e. *at least one cultural outing* by about 15% across all fields. And this despite the fact that in our survey the usual one year criterion was extended to two years in order, precisely, to take into account the impact of the crisis. Needless to say, the average *frequency* of cultural outings has obviously fallen at a much sharper rate than the gross number of "active" participants. In sum, the share of inactives is certainly high but no accurate international comparisons are possible given all of the special factors and conditions involved in this particular case.

Table 2 presents a picture wherein the four consumer groups differ socially from each other in a clear-cut way that corresponds, albeit at different levels in the three fields, to the existing social hierarchy. This picture, however, is in many ways

misleading. First, the table consists of simple averages, concealing the fact that each group's distribution ranges over *multiple layers* of social stratification. Secondly, the influence and significance of the various dimensions of social stratification over each group's formation and distribution often vary substantially.

Table 3 presents a synopsis of the main findings of multinomial logistic regressions for each cultural field and for the four cultural consumption groups or, in some cases, the three groups after combining the miniscule groups of omnivores with that of high consumers in music and theater/dance. The table shows the existence of significant positive or negative influence by each stratification variable in a pair-wise comparison of groups where the dependent variable indicates the odds of belonging in one group vs. another while the independent variables are the five stratification variables shown in the table plus a number of important "control" variables: age, sex, marital status, age of children, state of health and the status of economic migrant.[13]

**Table 3: Cultural consumption groupings - influence of stratification variables**

| **CULTURAL FIELDS** | Pseudo R^2 | **ESEC5** | **INCOME100** | **STGIDX** | **EDULV4** | **EDULV4F** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MUSIC** | 0,224 | | | | | |
| POP v. INACT | | +ESEC2 | 0,027*** | | | -EDUF1 |
| HI & OMN v. INACT | | | 0,030*** | 0,236* NF | -EDU1,2 | -EDUF1,2 |
| POP v. HIGH | | | | | +EDU1,2,3 | +EDUF1 |
| **THEATER_DANCE** | 0,148 | | | | | |
| POP v. INACT | | | 0,031*** | | | |
| HI &OMN v. INACT | | | 0,021** | 0,292** | -EDU1,2 | -EDUF1 |
| POP v. HIGH | | | | | +EDU3 | +EDUF3 |
| **CINEMA** | 0,335 | | | | | |
| HIGH v. INACT | | | 0,023** | 0,309*** | -EDU12 | -EDUF1 |
| OMNI v. INACT | | | 0,034** | | | -EDUF1 |
| POP v. INACT | | | 0,027*** | | -EDU1 | -EDUF1 |
| OMNI v. HIGH | | | | | | |
| POP v. HIGH | | | | -0,219** | +EDU1,2,3 | |

Notes: The number of asterisks denotes the significance of beta coefficients at 0,05 – 0,01 – 0,001 levels. In the case of categorical variables only those significant at 0,05 level are noted. Reference categories are ESEC5=5, EDULV4=4 and EDULV4F=4.

[13] For the influence of these variables cf. Emmanuel et al., 2015, Part C.

Let us summarize the findings shown in Table 3. First, socio-economic class, defined according to the strictly relational ESEC model, has no significant statistical influence on the formation of consumption groups - with one exception (popular vs. inactive in music when ESEC5=2).

Second, in contrast to the above, the status level index (STGIDX) shows in all three cultural fields a significant positive influence on the formation of high-omnivore consumers vs. inactive ones. However, this applies in the case of music only when we abstract from the influence of father's education level (noted by the indication "NF" in Table 3).

Third, when popular consumers in music and theater/dance are compared to high-omnivore ones, there is no influence of the status level variable. This significant finding indicates that the popular grouping is not inversely related to the high one across the social hierarchy and that, more importantly, popular consumption in music and theater & dance is *not* a strong signifier of lower social status. In the case of cinema, the reverse holds, as the status index exerts a negative influence on the formation of the popular pattern of consumption - a pattern dominated by action genres lacking any significant ethnopopular elements that might enhance their social prestige and wider acceptance as in the case of popular Greek music genres.

Table 3 shows only the variables directly related to the various dimensions of social stratification. Needless to say, there were additional factors that often proved to be quite influential in the multivariate analysis of consumption but have not been included in the above, namely the gender, age and health condition of the respondent, the presence of small children or teens in the household and, finally, the status of economic migrant, an attribute that strongly increases the probability of belonging to the inactive group[14]. Of these factors, age is clearly the most influential. First, older age is a particularly strong positive factor in the formation of the inactive group and, conversely, younger age is a strong positive factor in the formation of

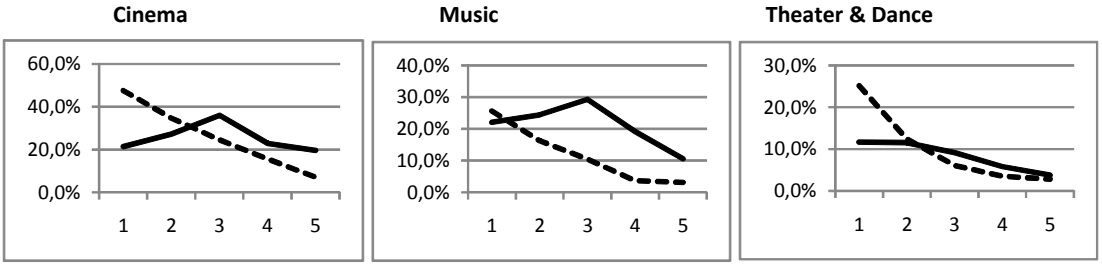
[14] Data are available at request.

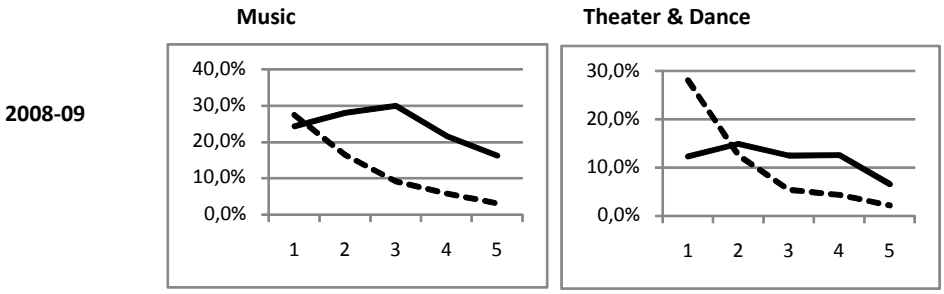
both popular and omnivore groups vis. "high" consumers (with the exception, in both cases, of the fields of theater and dance where the influence of gender is particularly strong. Both active groups in theater and dance show a much higher percentage of women. Gender is also influential in the case of the popular grouping in cinema where men are a clear majority.

## 3. The segmentation of consumption in higher strata and Bourdieu's "homology" model

There are, as John Goldthorpe points with regard to the theory of cultural capital (2007), two ways to interpret Bourdieu's views: a mild one and an extreme one ("domesticated" and "wild" according to J.H.G.). A similarly mild version would be, in the case of cultural consumption, that the "high" cultural pattern is, to a great extent, statistically related with upper social strata while, in contrast, the "popular" pattern is related to lower ones. However, while the first part of this formula is indeed validated by our empirical findings the second is not. The extreme version would insist that, on the whole, there is an essentially one-to-one correspondence between consumption patterns and major strata, and that cultural consumption constitutes an essential component of class distinctions and their social reproduction. This extreme version is clearly not consistent with our data.

**Diagram 1: Higher and popular consumers, distribution along the status strata hierarchy 2011-12 & 2008-09**






Given the pattern of statistical influences outlined in the previous section, the relationship between major status groups and consumption groupings is not that of a strictly one-to-one "homology" model - most especially in the case of popular consumption. Diagram 1 shows the curves of the per cent shares of higher consumers (broken line) and popular consumers (continuous line) in the three cultural fields along a horizontal axis that distinguishes the five major social strata according to status. While in all three fields the curve for higher consumers rises as we go up in the status hierarchy, the curve for the popular modes shows either a zero relationship with status (cinema) or a weak positive one (mainly in theater/dance, less so in music). However, when we examine the estimates of the respondents for their cultural participation before the crisis (roughly 2008-09), the shares of the popular consumption groupings in music and theater/dance among the lower strata 4 and 5 show a noticeable increase in comparison to that in higher strata. The resulting over-all picture indicates a clear-cut case of a strong popular mode that, with a slight upward inclination, cuts across classes (with a peak around the middle of the social hierarchy in the case of music).

More importantly for a critique of Bourdieu's schema, the upper social stratum exhibits an extensive cultural fragmentation that belies its role as bearer of dominant culture. Consider in the following table 4 the composition of the higher occupational stratum (in a five-strata hierarchy) by cultural consumption sub-groupings in the primary fields of music and theater/dance. This higher stratum represents 25,5% of all respondents[15] and is composed of the top status occupational categories of higher professions, artists, journalists, writers, the clergy and university graduates in education and middle ranks of the administration as well

[15] Counting cases for which adequate data for all stratification dimensions were available (N=2282).

as higher managers in business and the government. It also includes the better part of economic class 1 (the "salariat") in the five-class ESeC schema.[16] Combinations 1 to 9 in table 4 were derived from the consumption groupings in music and theater/dance after collapsing the four-part schema into three: higher plus omnivores, popular and inactive. The resulting nine combinations were ordered into a self-evident cultural hierarchy with ambivalent cases resolved by according theater and dance, as rarer and more "elitist" activities, priority over music. This hierarchy was further grouped into four ranks A to D with A the highest, B a "mixed" one including both higher and popular groupings, C the popular one and, lastly, D the fully inactive. Percentages show the shares of sub-groups 1-9, the shares of ranks A-D and, lastly, the shares of "active" ranks A-C after excluding the fully inactives.

**Table 4: Combinations of consumption groupings for music and theater/dance within the higher status stratum**

| | Music | Theatre-Dance | STATUSG5=1 | | Total% | Active% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Hi-Omni | Hi-Omni | 90 | 15,4% | **A** | **A** |
| 2 | Inact | Hi-Omni | 48 | 8,2% | | |
| 3 | Hi-Omni | Inact | 66 | 11,3% | 34,9% | 54,0% |
| 4 | Pop | Hi-Omni | 25 | 4,3% | **B** | **B** |
| 5 | Hi-Omni | Pop | 22 | 3,8% | 8,0% | 12,4% |
| 6 | Pop | Pop | 23 | 3,9% | **C** | **C** |
| 7 | Inact | Pop | 23 | 3,9% | | |
| 8 | Pop | Inact | 81 | 13,9% | 21,7% | 33,6% |
| | | | | | **D** | |
| 9 | Inact | Inact | 206 | 35,3% | 35,3% | - |
| Total | Statusg5=1 | | 584 | 100,0% | | 100,0% |

[16] The "salariat" in this case forms 36,7% of all valid cases. It has been estimated that the 2013 sample survey may have overestimated the size of the salariat by a few percentage points. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the present analysis restricted as it is to the largest city in Greece and the seat of government, concerns a rather skewed sample when compared to other national case studies. This also accounts for the large size of the upper social stratum.

While the higher cultural consumption mode "A" forms a majority group among the culturally active (54%), it barely covers more than one-third of all cases when the equally large "inactive" group is taken into account. Moreover, the purely "popular" grouping "C" covers nearly 34% among the culturally active and reaches nearly 40% when the popular element among the "mixed" grouping "B" is taken into account. Thus, while the higher cultural grouping forms a majority, popular modes constitute an extensive segment of impressive size.

The co-existence of two major radically different cultural groupings within the upper social stratum is evidently not consistent with a strict "homology" hypothesis.[17] However, one could, reasonably, advance two objections. First, does our view take into account Bourdieu's emphasis on the significance of distinct *fractions* within the dominant class that command different compositions of cultural and economic capital - a fact that, if true, may explain the pronounced segmentation in cultural consumption? Second, does the first stratum of the Athenian social status hierarchy constitute what Bourdieu considers the "dominant" class? Or is it that this stratum is too broad and therefore insufficiently homogeneous in social and cultural terms? To reply shortly to the first objection, Bourdieu's theory of the role of different compositions of capital does not imply that the cultural practices of the fraction with higher economic resources and relatively limited cultural capital do not essentially belong in what he considers "legitimate" culture. These practices simply tend to be more conservative and less modern or intellectual forms of *high* cultural consumption. Moreover, our statistical analysis summary in Table 3 showed that, with the exception of cinema, income plays no significant role in the probability of belonging to the "high" cultural consumption group versus the "popular" one.

To reply to the second objection we must examine how Bourdieu and his followers define social classes. As has been stressed by many, Bourdieu (who, notably, avoids the terms status and status group) tackles the Weberian analytical

[17] It should be added that a similar segmentation, though with the popular mode forming, in this case, a clear majority, can be observed in the second status stratum, a group that contains occupations that are part of the petty bourgeoisie according to Bourdieu. Similar findings to those for the upper two status strata obtain for the two first classes of the five-class ESeC schema for economic classes. Data are available on request.

diptych of economic class/status group by arguing that *both* are essential constitutive elements of *real* "social classes".[18] In practical terms, social classes in "Distinction" are formed by groupings of specific *occupational* categories that are distinguished "vertically" by the size of their economic capital (mainly income and real wealth) and their cultural capital (mainly their educational level). These major classes are further subdivided into "fractions" when extensive segments differ significantly in the composition of capitals they command.[19]

At first glance, this approach reminds one of models of hierarchical ordering of occupations by income, education and social prestige established in the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s. However, Bourdieu's schema is more structural than a simple socio-economic hierarchy in that its main components are broad occupational categories theoretically derived from elements of both Marxist and Weberian class theory. Bourdieu's "bourgeois" or "dominant" social class in his three-part class schema, is composed of high rank managers, the high professions, teachers of senior high schools, university and college professors, artists and other creators (Bourdieu, 1984; Weininger, 2005).[20] This does not differ much from the upper social stratum we examined in Table 4 for Athens. Evidently, this social class is much broader today in large metropolitan areas than it was in 1960s Paris and, equally important, has been enlarged by waves of social mobility fuelled by structural economic change. This being said, we are not evaluating here the realism of "Distinction" for 1960s Paris but its validity as a *general* theory and, more specifically, as a tool for understanding contemporary Athens.

Nevertheless, in order to do justice to Bourdieu's heightened concept of a "dominant" bourgeois class, let us examine a much smaller occupational stratum composed of top managers in government and public organisations, managers in businesses of more than 10 employees, the "high" professions (law, medicine and engineering) and professors in universities and colleges. This occupational group

[18] "Real" in the sense of social groupings that have subjectively perceivable boundaries grounded in common life styles and living standards (and not necessarily in common collective action).
[19] See Weininger, 2005.
[20] As it happens, this is similar to the "Upper Middle Class" in Herbert Gans' three-part schema tallying status-based social classes with different levels of "taste culture" (Gans, 1974, chapter 2).

forms less than 10% of the Athens sample (9,8%). We may further reduce the size of this group by selecting those with household income in the higher 30% of the income distribution: this brings us to a small "elite" group forming 6,2% of all cases. Comparing this "elite" with our much broader higher status stratum that forms 25,6% of the sample, we see *zero* differences in the pattern of cultural consumption. In the broader stratum, 52,7% of active cultural consumers belong exclusively to "higher" cultural groupings in the three consumption fields (high and omnivore consumers)[21] and 22,1% exclusively to "popular" ones. The remaining 25,2% belong to mixed mode cases. In the much smaller "elite" group the respective percentages are *essentially similar*: 51,5%, 22,7% and 25,8%.[22] Hence, there is no evidence to support a strict "homology" hypothesis for the dominant class however narrowly we define it: while higher cultural modes constitute the larger group, the over-all pattern of public cultural practices is clearly a fragmented one with three major segments, one of high culture, an opposite one of popular or, secondarily, cases of mixed culture and an equally important one of abstention from the public sphere of cultural activity.

The finding that the "extreme" Bourdieusian version of a "homology" relationship between social classes and cultural consumption patterns is not consistent with the facts, does not, of course, imply that there is no significant correlation between the two. In all cultural fields examined, the groups of high and omnivore consumers, on the one hand, and inactive consumers on the other, show a clear-cut correlation, though in opposite ways, with the social status hierarchy. The popular consumption group shows, in contrast, a largely cross-class distribution. Its

[21] We examine all three cultural fields, that is we also include the cinema groupings. This may raise some objections. For one, cinema is often considered culturally inferior *in toto* regardless of content or particular genre. This is, however, certainly not true in the case of Southern Europe. Secondly, the size of the omnivore group is significant in cinema (about 10% of cinema goers). Are we right in grouping it with the "high" cultural consumers? After all, the existence of cultural omnivores is typically considered evidence *undermining* the schema advanced in "Distinction". This may be a valid point but in the context of the present analysis, we thought it fairer to err in a direction favoring Bourdieu rather than the opposite.

[22] In an even narrower "elite" group where, in addition to the above criteria, at least one parent has university education (resulting in only 2,7% of the sample), the distribution among the three types (pure high, pure popular, mixed) was 40%, 25%, 35% respectively i.e. the "popular" component, particularly in the mixed cases, is larger! Needless to say, we are dealing with too small a group to draw any secure conclusions.

differentiation from the high cultural group is not evidenced as much along the axes of status and class hierarchies but rather, negatively, along the educational level axis.[23] This difference in educational profiles is reflected in the social composition of the public attending the venues and performances that the two, culturally diverging groups, visit. There is, undoubtedly, a midway cultural region, so to say, where the two meet and participate in. Nevertheless, the chasm dividing the high and the popular persists.

Findings in many ways similar to those for Athens have led most studies in the international "Status and Cultural Consumption" project we have been following in the Greek study, to conclude that, beside the critical questioning of the "Distinction" model, the data also indicate the equally significant rejection of Distinction's theoretical opposite, namely the similarly widespread post-modern theories arguing for a complete uncoupling of consumption patterns from social stratification. To the extent that post-modern views do indeed claim that consumption models have no significant relationship with class or status stratification, the facts are indeed damning.

## 4. The issue of omnivorousness

Peterson's theory of "omnivorousness" (Peterson,1992, Peterson & Kern, 1996) has brought about a major shift in the sociology of cultural consumption and led to a host of studies that, by finding significant numbers of omnivorous consumers, particularly among the upper social strata, have critically rejected both the Bourdieusian schema of distinction and the hierarchical social ordering of distinct highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow cultures that prevailed in U.S. sociology during the first postwar decades. Analysing the consumption of musical genres during the 1980s, Peterson argued that upper class culture, while continuing to have a distinct

[23] This, as we have shown, should not be taken as implying that popular consumers among the upper strata are less educated. In that context with high incidence of university education, the pattern of probabilities will simply be more favorable to the increase in the size of the high cultural group at the expense of the popular one.

"higher" component displays a significant broadening towards the inclusion of middle and lower popular genres. He also maintained that the basis of upper strata social distinction had shifted away from the elitism and exclusiveness of higher culture towards the display of *variety* in cultural repertories and choices - the ease of enjoying a broad range of cultural products thus demonstrating a democratic and tolerant spirit. At the polar opposite of this schema, the lower strata are essentially "univores" - limited to one or just few genres of low taste and narrow cultural range. In consequence, the cultural hierarchy must, according to Peterson, mainly be mapped along an axis of differences in variety.

In a later review (2005) of the (mainly supportive) extensive international literature and the arguments that the omnivorousness thesis brought about, Peterson has amended his views by acknowledging that cultural consumption must, more properly, be analysed along the *two* axes of variety and of the hierarchy of high/low taste.[24] Nevertheless, the critical response from the opposite camp (mainly Bourdieu's followers) has continued to be severe. The principal counterarguments have, in short, been the following. First, consumption of popular genres by upper strata does not rebut the operation of social distinction for the simple reason that upper strata have a different way of *perceiving* cultural products - that of a complex educated appreciation in lieu of simple unmediated enjoyment. In addition, the upper strata select higher quality cases of genres or particular items from each cultural field (Holt, 1997, Bennet et al., 2009). Secondly, a more in-depth analysis of upper strata choices that includes not only positive preferences but also expressions of dislike of certain genres, demonstrates that beyond a point popular culture forms are not acceptable in ways that delimit a clearly inferior area (Bryson, 1996). Moreover, conflicts and oppositions within the upper strata belie the appearance of cultural tolerance displayed by higher omnivores: a case in point is the aversion shown towards the youth subculture of rock, rap and hip-hop (Tambubolon, 2008).

[24] A move, in our opinion, that weakened his theory significantly. The force of his initial formulation rested on the fact that the cultural "variety" of middle-class omnivores covered genres that ranged over the whole "highbrow-lowbrow" spectrum. Peterson's interpretations of omnivorousness rested on this very fact. Therefore, what mattered was not variety as such (i.e. the number of different genres) but the crossing of class-specific cultural boundaries.

Lastly, as has often been pointed out, what may appear as genuine participation in popular cultural modes is often either the appropriation and "gentrification" of some genres (as happened with jazz in the past) or the ironic and playful excursion of higher cultural consumers into foreign and exotic lands.

These criticisms of the omnivore theory while, more often than not, aiming to faithfully preserve the original Bourdieusian schema intact, do pose valid questions for both basic aspects of Peterson's thesis: is the actual extent and authenticity of the omnivore phenomenon as claimed and has there really been a shift of cultural distinction away from the power and prestige of high culture and towards a more democratic diversity in the repertory of upper class consumers? This is not the place for a review of the voluminous relevant literature[25] but a few points must be made. Despite the valid critical points over the real extent and social meaning of omnivorousness, the fact that it has attained significant sizes in most countries of developed Europe and North America is indisputable. Numerous social, cultural and political changes have led to such a development: the post-war social-democratic political and ideological climate (especially in Europe), the emergence of an anti-establishment youth culture during the 1960s, widespread economic and educational mobility and, at a more general level, the spread of commercialisation and mass consumption of cultural goods.

Regarding Peterson's arguments about the emergence of a democratic cultural variety and multi-cultural tolerance among the upper strata, most sceptical criticisms may well be to the point but aim at the wrong target. The real issue is not to what extent the expansion of the elite's cultural repertory is authentic but the fact that the largest part of this repertory remains attached to high cultural forms that are to all intents and purposes monopolised by an upper group in support of a system of distinction and that, furthermore, these forms enjoy a privileged position in the system of institutionalised cultural power. It is, indeed, these elements that sustain the "legitimate" - to use Bourdieu's term - superiority of this upper group and therefore undermine the validity of its "politically correct" but often deceiving

[25] See, *inter alia,* the references in Peterson (2005) and in the collective volume by Chan (2010) as well as the rich collection of relevant articles in the journal *Poetics*.

description as "omnivores". To a large extent, Peterson himself admitted as much in his 2005 review by proposing the mixed term "high omnivores" - a description that concedes that such a group has only partially and selectively popular cultural tastes while mainly adhering to high culture.

In the case of Athens, there is indeed a certain mixing of modes in both high and popular groupings. Should we reconceptualise these groupings as high and low *omnivores*, instead of simply high and popular? We would argue that this conceptual shift towards emphasizing the significance of variety as well as an analytic predominance of the class-neutral concept of omnivorousness is unwarranted in view of our data; moreover it leads to a distorted understanding of the role of stratification in cultural consumption and of the differences between "high" and "popular" consumers.

An additional, equally important problem is the fact that Peterson's initial definition of omnivorousness (1992) was posited against an archetypal high culture (classical music and opera) that, according to his own references, had been crystallized as a sociological model in the 1930s. It is not surprising then, that in comparison to *that* particular historical model, the postwar acceptance of jazz by the upper strata is construed as evidence of a radical move towards omnivorousness. From the viewpoint of the last three decades this does not make much sense. Judging from our data, it is clear that the relatively widespread preference of "jazz and ethnic" music among our "high" grouping testifies more of a tendency towards social distinction vis. the popular grouping rather than of a mixing of cultural practices. The same, to a large extent, applies in the case of Greek and foreign "entechno" (quality) songs. Even the common degree to which both high and popular consumers participate in performances of "pop, rock etc." does not necessarily imply any radical subversion of the high cultural mode. For one, to use a point put forward by Bourdieu's defenders, Greek and foreign "quality" songs and, to a lesser extent, pop-rock, electronic music etc. are very broad genres that include internal differentiation into sub-genres or particular productions of higher and lower taste. Secondly, and more importantly, "light" foreign music and locally adapted

versions were the standard fare for listening and dancing to, among Greek higher cultural strata as early as the 1950s. To conclude, any present-day comparison with an excessively strict and historically outdated standard of "high culture" leads to obvious misinterpretations.

The groupings that emerged from the latent class analysis for Athens as unambiguously omnivorous, are particularly small in all three cultural fields ranging from an insignificant 1% in theater & dance, to only 2,8% in music and, lastly, a non-negligible 6% in cinema. Barring the inactives, the corresponding shares among the actives in each field are 4,7%, 7,6% and 10,0%. Do such low percentages signify that in the case of Greece and, more specifically, in its most populous and culturally well equipped region there obtains in some sense a "backwardness" vis. a major international trend? When compared to the U.S. and, most probably, to the Netherlands, the answer must be positive. In comparison, however, to a number of other countries for which relevant data are available, the differences are limited and the statistical evidence is often ambivalent.[26] In fact, our methodology and the context of data collection tend to underestimate omnivorousness. To begin with, the share of omnivores in each field has been strongly influenced by the unprecedented severity of the Greek economic crisis. After all, being an omnivorous cultural consumer in the public sphere is undoubtedly more costly than adopting more

[26] In the U.S., a similar method applied to national data shows a share of musical omnivores slightly 30% (Alderson et al., 2007). In the Netherlands, albeit with a completely different methodology, their share exceeds 50%! (Kraaykamp, Eijck & Ulte, 2010). Chan and Goldthorpe (2007b) estimate musical omnivores in England to be about 10%. They also distinguish an additional group of musical omnivores on the basis of data that also include listening to music in the home. If we only consider the visits of this group to live performances, as in the Athens survey, we are clearly dealing with "popular" consumers rather than omnivores. In the case of France, Coulangeon & Lemel (2010) estimate a share of 18% for *high* omnivores on the basis of listening choices both in and out of the home. Consequently, the size of this group must be significantly lower if we only consider *outings* for music performances. They also distinguish a second group of "middlebrow" musical omnivores. Here, the debatable point is their definition of variety: "middlebrow omnivores" do not, essentially, listen to any classical music, opera and jazz but listen to a lot of French and international pop, rock and "world music". Obviously, such a definition of omnivorousness excluding high culture is obviously of little use for most international comparisons with the existing literature. In the case of Spain during the 1990s (Lopez-Sintas & Carcia Alvarez, 2002), omnivores are estimated at about 12% (while "high" cultural consumers at about 9%). Both estimates are based on a large set of disparate items that most probably overestimates omnivorousness. Lastly, for Denmark, Meier Jaeger & Katz-Gerro (2008) find that omnivores estimated from a broad mix of various cultural activities, reached only 10% in 2004 but were much larger in 1998 (19%) - a rather surprising drop in numbers. However, a falling trend in comparison to the 1990s has also been noted by Peterson for the U.S.

selective consumption practices. According to the respondents' own estimates of their outings during the two years immediately preceding the crisis, the share of omnivores in the total sample reached roughly the double of that of the two recent years for music, and the quadruple for theater and dance.[27]

In addition, our operational definition of omnivorousness is, as stressed already, rather demanding: different genres or activities must be organised into broad groupings instead of many particular ones thus avoid artificially creating increased variety; moreover, omnivores must be active consumers in both high and popular genres and venues. More crucially, as we already stressed, cultural consumption has been limited in the Athens survey to performances *outside* the home that, moreover, are part of everyday city life. Both these requirements will, in most cases, result in far smaller omnivore groupings than those of surveys that include, in addition to outings, data for preferences, consumption in the home and consumption during recreational trips.

## 5. The popular mode: alternative views and social significance

The term "popular" is adopted here to refer to an array of genres and venues as well as to characterize a group whose cultural practices are in many ways the polar opposite of those of high cultural consumers. Its usage in similar ways is encountered in most of the international literature on cultural consumption. It predominantly refers to items that are "popular" in the sense of being preferred by large numbers of people (hence the equation with "pop") and, secondarily, to items preferred by or associated with lower social strata.[28] In the context of Bourdieusian approaches, it is typically assumed that high culture is dominant as well as hegemonic thereby defining, in ways that are widely accepted, what is "legitimate" or not in terms of taste: "popular" items are relegated to lower positions in the

[27] Obviously, no recollection of the choice of cinema genres so far back in the past was possible.

[28] In the Greek language, the term "popular" (la-i-kó, plural la-i-ká) is used in the second sense; "popular" in the first sense of enjoying popularity is covered by the term "demophiles" i.e. loved by the *demos* - the people. Nevertheless, even such cases of "pop" items may also be referred to as "popular" (la-i-ká) in the second, often derogatory, term.

hierarchy of taste by way of aesthetic judgment and are, obviously, those that are associated with the practices and tastes of lower strata.

We have seen in the discussion of Diagram 1 in section 3 that these views are not consistent with our survey data for the size and social stratification of the "popular" groupings in the three cultural fields examined. To reiterate, we have a straightforward case of a strong popular mode, particularly in the years immediately preceding the crisis, that, with a slight upward inclination (with the exception of cinema), *cuts across* social classes although with a noticeable drop in both the top and the lowest social stratum.

From the viewpoint of standard institutional economics approaches to consumption and taking into account the results of our multivariate statistical analysis, our evidence indicates that, in popular cultural consumption, we are dealing with the consumption of a *necessary* good - necessary, that is, for sustaining an acceptable standard of living within a given society. The extent of such popular consumption (a) increases with income though with a low income elasticity, (b) is limited among the lower strata since it requires a certain minimum of material resources and (c) decreases among upper strata with higher shares of university education, due to the competition from alternative goods of high social standing that cater to needs of more cultivated consumers.

In view of the fact that the consumption of popular genres in public venues satisfies common needs of entertainment, sociality, sensory and emotional stimulation and aesthetic pleasure, our view is that this simple "utilitarian" reading of the evidence suffices as an initial understanding of the cross-class distribution of popular cultural consumption in the Athens case as well as in similar ones reported in the international literature.[29] On the one hand, we have a significant presence of

[29] Chan and Goldthorpe in their synthesis of findings for a series of cultural fields in the case of England (2010) point out precisely this "utilitarian" aspect by stressing that, in contrast to Bourdieu's emphasis on social distinction, this type of cultural consumption is largely *an end in itself* the attainment of which depends on available economic and social resources. However, they incorporate this individualistic mechanism into a gradation schema where the augmentation of available resources gradually leads to higher levels of *omnivorousness* - a schema reminiscent of Maslow's hierarchy of needs that is not consistent with our findings.

the popular mode in *all* social strata and, on the other, a cultural mode that, according to our statistical findings, *does not appear* to function as a strong negative status marker - even when we consider the statistical relationship between popular and high consumers (with the partial exception of popular cinema).[30] This, of course, does not mean that "popular consumption" across all classes is uniform: what we have described as the "popular" cultural mode exhibits significant internal differentiation in terms of its content as in the level and frequency of consumption of its sub-genres.

At first glance, the form of the distribution of the popular grouping across social strata may give the impression that we are dealing here with "middlebrow culture" - a cultural mode supposedly consistent with lower middle class strata. Indeed, from a purely statistical point, the apparent weight centre of the popular distribution lies within a range containing small business owners and managers and middle-to-low clerical personnel (a band around the dividing line between status strata 2 and 3). In this particular range, however, the shares of high and popular consumers are roughly similar in both cinema and theater/dance (the popular group in music is the predominant one throughout strata 2-5) while the popular mode clearly predominates among lower strata. Why should anyone deduce that the popular mode is especially connected to these "petty bourgeois" occupational strata? After all, every cultural mode whose distribution cuts across classes with a mild positive increase following income level, would most probably have a weight centre in the area around this upper middle zone. More generally, the idea of a petty bourgeois "middlebrow" cultural mode does not sit well with popular cultural genres: it evokes the 1930s and early post-war elitist critique of mass culture as well as Bourdieu's concept of a culture that is subordinate and (unsuccessfully) mimetic of legitimate high culture - a schema that takes for granted the complete hegemony of the dominant cultural class and ignores the important role of alternative and

[30]It should be noted, however, that this particular finding is not replicated in the similar multivariate analyses for other country cases in the collective volume edited by Chan (2010).

often antagonistic popular cultural genres among the middle and higher social strata.[31]

In the immediate aftermath of the second world war, quite a few intellectual and creative movements with broad international appeal questioned the established elitism and dominance of high culture and supported the upgrading of popular cultural genres as well as the creation of new popular art forms. In Greece, this happened primarily in the field of music during the 1960s up to 1967 and, following the fall of the military regime, during the second half of the 1970s and the 1980s in tandem with changes in political structures and the political culture favoring what can be termed as "ethno-popular" elements. The role this new popular music, created by a host of widely acclaimed composers and lyricists, played in the cultural and political developments of these years may account to a large extent for the clear numerical predominance of "popular" consumers in this particular field even today.

These historical factors may account, to a certain extent, for the extensive role of popular cultural modes and more specifically for their sizeable presence in the upper stratum - a major conundrum from the viewpoint of traditional structural theories of cultural stratification advanced by such influential theorists as Pierre Bourdieu and Herbert Gans. This is especially so given that, based on our statistical analysis, even substantial further differentiation across basic socio-economic dimensions within the upper stratum has not resulted in any significant shift in the division between "high" and "popular" consumers. How may we account for the extent of this persistent cultural chasm in the life styles of upper strata?

Our results of the multinomial logistic regression (Table 3 above) show that the probability of belonging to the popular grouping, when set against that of high cultural consumers, is only affected, aside from the exceptional negative influence of status in the case of cinema, by education levels lower than a university degree. In

[31] Although we lack supporting evidence, we think that consumers of popular genres often declare a distaste for forms of high culture as a way of expressing a negative reaction to the elitism and affectation that, in their opinion, they express. More to the point, given our material of reported *attendance* behavior, they may dislike the social contexts, elitist arrangements and connotations of attending "highbrow" cultural events. Such attitudes are not adequately recorded, in our opinion, by surveys of simple preferences or, even, simple dislikes.

the cases of music and theater/dance there is also a positive influence by the low (in music) or middle (in theater/dance) educational level of *the father*. It is often suggested in the relevant literature that *contradictory* cases of cultural life styles, such as omnivores or popular consumers among the upper strata, are due to the effects of *social mobility*. Upwardly mobile members of upper strata are subject to the influence of both the, presumably lower, culture of their milieu of origin as well as the higher culture of their new social environment. Downward social mobility may have analogous effects (cf. *inter alia* Van Eijck, 1999, Bennett et al., 2009). This hypothesis has attracted increased attention over the last decade due to Bernard Lahire's work on the significance and widespread incidence of what he has called *cultural dissonance*: contradictory cultural consumption choices by the same individual that involve items or genres positioned at widely distant points of the ranking order dictated by the dominant and *legitimate* cultural system as described by Bourdieu. This *dissonance* is accounted for by the multiple past influences on the individual's *habitus* as well as by the multiple social contexts within which they act (Lahire, 2008, Bennet, 2007).

A simple comparison with Athens data on the cases characterized by *upward* mobility of at least one or two levels in the four grades of educational attainment or the five status strata among the cultural groupings of the top socioeconomic class (managerial and professional occupations), shows that the popular groupings in music and theater/dance do indeed have a higher extent of mobility compared to the higher grouping; however, they do so by small percentages that vary by 5% to 9% (and in one case by 11%). In the case of cinema, the extent of upward mobility among the popular grouping is, by similar percentages, *lower* than that of the high grouping! Similar weak differences in mobility are observed in the case of the omnivore grouping with the only exception of the field of theater/dance where the extent of omnivore upward mobility is superior to that of high consumers by 15-27%. With the exception of this somewhat odd finding that concerns a minute group of 19 cases, our data suggest that the contribution of differences in individual trajectories of mobility to an explanation of the formation of these particular contradictory cultural cases, namely omnivores and popular consumers among the middle class,

cannot be more than marginal. Adopting Lahire's more general definition of cultural dissonance may have produced different results. Our interest in the role of stratification led us to some preliminary analysis of an aggregate composed by a number of other obviously "dissonant" combinations of genres chosen from within and across fields. This showed that, with the exception of omnivores, "dissonants" as a category are randomly distributed vis. our array of possible explanatory variables. However, systematic evaluation of this alternative model must await future work. From the viewpoint of the present analysis, Lahire's approach presents three major problems. First, his overtly broad definition of mixed or contradictory cases presupposes too strict an application of the Bourdieusan model of the *legitimate* ordering of all genres and subgenres as well as his principle of *transferability* i.e. a 'rule' dictating that a *high* consumer in one field must be similarly positioned in all other fields. Second, as a result of the former, the possible cases of *dissonance* at the level of individuals are far too many thus producing widespread cultural variation and fragmentation across all classes - an analytical problem that Lahire views as positive. Finally and more crucially, Lahire explicitly proposes a radically different sociology of individuals as opposed to a sociology of groups and collectivities - in fact, he characterises the groupings that emerge in analyses such as the present one as "caricatures of groups" (Lahire, 2003).

It probably makes good sense to view extensive social mobility as an important *macro contextual* influence making for a high probability of mixed or contradictory cultural choices. The incidence of upward social mobility by at least one position, compared to that of the father, along five status strata and four educational levels is very high among our top status grouping: 65% for educational and 58% for status mobility. High rates among the upper stratum persist even when we count cases of mobility by at least *two* levels (50% educational, 36% status mobility). Such a socio-historical context combined with trends at both the national

and international level already referred to, may offer a sufficient explanatory framework for the cultural segmentation of upper strata.[32]

## 6. Concluding remarks

Before discussing our main findings, we should remind the reader that the Athens survey has a number of methodological and contextual attributes that may impinge on any conclusions relative to its significance in a comparative context. The two most obvious are the impact of the severe economic contraction during the three years leading to the deep recession of 2013 and the fact that our survey was limited to the Athens metropolitan area rather than the country as a whole. While the second predisposes for an upward bias in findings on cultural participation, the crisis after 2009 and the deep recession of 2013 predispose for the exact opposite. We may add to this the fact of Greece being part of the set of southern European countries with far lower rates of cultural participation than those observed in northern Europe.[33] However, the main objective of our project was to study the relationship between cultural participation and social stratification rather than to evaluate the *absolute* levels of cultural activities. In our opinion, such potential differences in absolute aggregate levels of participation do not matter much for the substance of our more "structural" findings.

Summing up these findings, we would first note that the essentially post-modern phenomenon of cultural omnivorousness is also evident in Athens - especially among younger groups and mainly in the fields of music and cinema - albeit with comparatively limited incidence even before the economic crisis. We may reasonably surmise, that the omnivore phenomenon also lacks any broad appeal as a legitimate new standard of democratic multicultural inclusiveness as proposed in

[32] For more recent cultural trends see especially (Sevastakis (2004) and Vamvakas and Panagiotopoulos (2010) for the rise of pop consumerism in Greece during the 1980s and 1990s.

[33] According to the 2013 special Eurobarometer (European Commission, 2013) the index of participation in a range of cultural activities, ranges from the high scores of Sweden (43%), Denmark (36%) and Netherlands (34%) to the lowest of Greece (5%), Portugal and Cyprus (both 6%) followed by countries in eastern Europe (Romania and Hungary - both 7%).

Peterson's model. On the other hand, the classic Bourdieusian schema advanced in "Distinction" appears to hold well only in the form of a rather mild version of his otherwise particularly ambitious theory. For one, the upper social stratum displays a significant cultural fragmentation, especially in the field of music, which belies its role as bearer of a unified dominant culture. We have, furthermore, shown that regardless of how "elitist" a further demarcation *within* the upper social stratum is, the division into high and popular groupings persists. More generally, the overall pattern of the social distribution of the different cultural consumption groups identified in the Athens survey as well as the results of multinomial logit analysis show that while the incidence of the "high" cultural consumption mode does increase with higher status and better education, the simple deterministic model of "homology" relationships between social classes and cultural patterns is certainly an inadequate representation of the facts - a finding consistent with most international studies that follow a similar theoretical and methodological approach (Chan, 2010) though the latter accord greater emphasis to the significance of the omnivore phenomenon. These findings of course imply that the corollaries of the homology schema are also significantly weakened: the crucial for social distinction exercise of cultural power (cultural "violence" according to Bourdieu) as well as the equally crucial functional significance of cultural styles for Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction.

What demands further special comment from the viewpoint of a critique of Bourdieu's model is the finding of the relatively shallow but certainly significant cultural chasm between the consumption practices of "high" and "popular" groupings, the cross-class distribution of the "popular" one and, especially, the social division along these lines observed among the higher social strata. While popular cultural consumption indeed has the characteristics of "mass" culture - it ranges across classes and presumably caters to simpler tastes, it is not evident that it is also perceived as a *subordinate* culture: its place in the structure is also consistent with an *antagonistic* role and attitudes toward high cultural forms and their associated institutions and social environments in the metropolitan cultural scene. We would argue that this finding is *prima facie* significant and certainly demands further

analysis and interpretation beyond any mere resort to Greek particularism. To a significant extent, this finding is the result of the specific theoretical approach and methodology applied in the Athens survey: the comparatively detailed breakdown into different genres in each field and the exclusive focus on cultural consumption activities that involve *participation*[34] i.e. the attendance of events in social milieus that are part of normal urban life and social relationships

There are ample indications in a number of important studies of cultural consumption, that often the attendance rates of popular genres by status group follow more or less similar cross-class distribution patterns and that a possibly antagonistic "dualism" of high and popular modes among the upper middle strata is also present.[35] This neglected aspect offers a line of critique equally important to that of the "omnivore" model in terms of a needed revision of the simple "homological" models of the class structure of cultural consumption established during the 1970s in American and French sociology.

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[34] The significance of the distinction between data on taste vs. data on participation has been argued at length in Yaish & Katz-Gerro (2012) who also present some evidence on the resulting differences in the estimated size and structure of cultural activity.

[35] See for the U.S., Alderson et al., 2007, especially their comment that the "paucivor" latent class in music consumption exhibits "a clear bias" toward popular activities while rejecting established highbrow ones (p.198) and the diagrams of predicted probabilities of class membership by social status (p.203). For England, we have already noted that Chan & Goldthorpe's (2007) latent class of "omnivor-listeners" to music is clearly a "popular" one if we take into account their attendance behavior, with a significant presence (27%) among higher managerial and professional occupations. Lastly, Coulangeon & Lemel's (2010) study of music consumption in France distinguishes *two* latent groupings that are more or less "popular" in our sense: "middlebrow omnivores" - listening to variety of what we roughly categorize as modern pop and rock genres - and "univores" - listening to pop. Added together they represent 53% of the total and their presence in the upper status quartile reaches 46% - much larger than the 33% of "highbrow omnivores"! (Table 4.3, p. 97).

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