

Stratification of Culture and Class Distances

Henryk Domański

Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences

CLASS(LESS) SOCIETY AND RECOGNITION GAP

University of Warsaw, 19th March 2021, Warsaw

Introduction

- I will focus on general question how social class comes into effect. By what is it created and to whom does it apply? And what significance does it hold for our understandings of social relations more generally
- To do this I use data on stratification of musical tastes in Poland.
- It extends to stratification of lifestyle and culture. The musical tastes are commonly regarded as making most clear-cut class divisions in culture.

Theoretical background

- As was empirically proved in many research the way in which people define social structure translates into their activity, and social relations, which can, in turn, shape class distinctions. It may display, for example, in that how people see or define each other. For instance, whether they see themselves as better or worse compared to others (e.g. Veblen 1901; Bourdieu 1984; Skegg 2011; Friedman 2015).
- This relationship is indirectly confirmed in research concerning social perception of key components of social stratification, especially: (i) inequalities of prestige, (ii) hierarchy of “actual” and “just” incomes, (iii) identification with the social classes according to various “class” typologies such as “upper-middle-working-lower” classes.

Cultural stratification

In contemporary debates on class the work on cultural stratification is central. In fact, a lot of studies documented that participation in culture adds to economic, prestigious, and power based gradation in shaping social distances (e.g. Lamont 1992; Lawler 2005; Bennet et al. 2009; Warde 2011; Coulangelon and Duval 2015, etc.). It is evidenced, basically, in the studies indicating effect of various parent's cultural capitals on the class position and in studies showing how cultural activity and types of cultural resources are used in patterning social distances. Central to this tenet is that lifestyle differences are linked to misapprehended relations of domination between the upper and lower classes, expressed in the latter's compliance with the status quo.

Cultural stratification (cont.)

There are many accounts how it works. According to Bourdieu (1984), domination or subordination differentials linked to class-structured lifestyles are misrecognized by social actors, meaning that power relations are not perceived for what they objectively are, but in a form that renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder. Legitimacy in this sense results from a misconception of the real basis of asymmetric power relations, which, according to Bourdieu, is the unequal distribution of various forms of capital. The legitimacy of power relations is thus secured because the question of legitimacy is not raised. Power relations are naturalized and taken for granted and remain in the realm of 'the universe of the undisputed'. Meanwhile, the symbolic value of, and social prestige associated with, specific cultural practices are maintained through institutional recognition and canonization in the fields of cultural production and education.

Questions

Although the theoretical background may be convincing the problem is with measurement. Various types of symbolic class boundaries seldom appear in pure form and are often tightly intertwined and may be contradictory. In order to capture them the best solution comes from interviewees' accounts of the class boundaries.

I will base my analysis on the information coming from the quantitative research.

My question is:

- (i) to what extent such class-based distinctions really display in cultural tastes and activity,
- (ii) how does it work across class divisions?

In doing so will focus on what do people regard as making them socially “better” or “worse”. This is my operationalization of the class-based cultural boundaries.

Predictions

- H1. Concerning whether people assign cultural practices/tastes to social position, social classes, etc.?

The stereotype exists that cultural activity, including leisure time, can be regarded as less susceptible to create class barriers relative to economic, power, or prestigious dimensions because it is less important for living although it may be counterweighted by saying that it works in a daily life, people see it, and apply lifestyle to increase their social position or defend themselves from getting down.

Predictions (cont.)

- H2. Concerning how it depends on the class position?
- H2a. One can hypothesize that the class-based cultural involvement is realized mostly by representatives of the upper-middle class (intelligentsia, higher managers, professions) It results from their higher education and complexity of occupational roles they hold. But also from an increasing role of 'soft skills' and lifestyle and personal characteristics that these individuals acquire (e.g. Jackson et al. 2005).
- H2b. Lower classes are more impressed by cultural activity such as attending operas or philharmonics. That is regarded by them as representing "higher culture". Respectively, representatives of the upper-middle class are less impressed by them since they are not willing to be regarded as a snobbery, nouveaux riches, etc.

Data

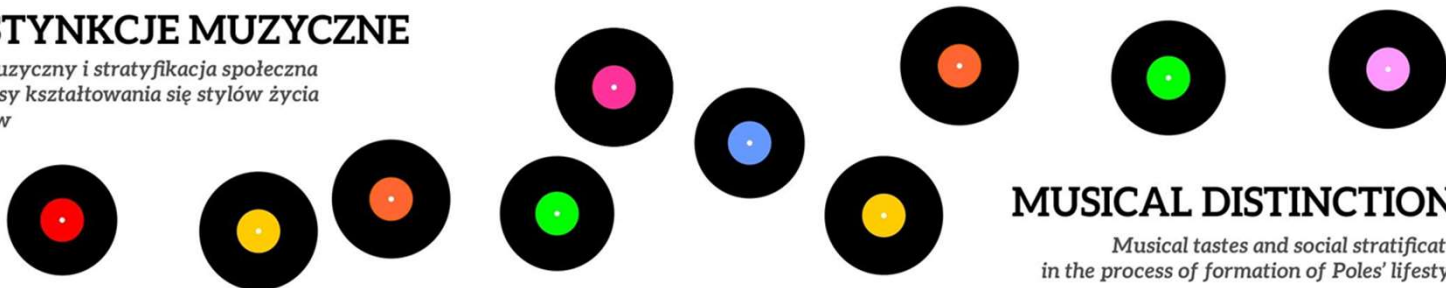
The presentation is based on the results of quantitative research (nationwide random sample) carried out as a part of the research project “***Musical distinctions. Musical tastes and social stratification in the process of formation of Poles’ lifestyles***”.

<http://www.md.ifispan.pl/>

Project is conducted by Institute of Philosophy and Sociology Polish Academy of Sciences and financed by Poland’s National Science Center (agreement number UMO-2017/25/B/HS6/01929).

DYSTYNKCJE MUZYCZNE

*Gust muzyczny i stratyfikacja społeczna
a procesy kształtowania się stylów życia
Polaków*



MUSICAL DISTINCTIONS

*Musical tastes and social stratification
in the process of formation of Poles’ lifestyles*

Data

- ❑ The research was pursued from February to June 2019 by the consortium of DANAE/REALIZACJA.
- ❑ Nation-wide probabilistic sample of population aged 15+
- ❑ 2007 interviews were completed.
- ❑ Overall response rate: 50.4% (calculated according ESS standards).
- ❑ Variables:
 - **Dependent variables** – cultural practices, and musical taste indicators (classical music, rock, disco-polo and other musical genres).
 - **Independent variables** - respondent's class position (6 categories of EGP class scheme)

Findings

“Do you think that there are musical genres which are mostly liked by people holding the highest social position?”

- Yes **23.5%**
- No **51.9%**
- Difficult to say **24.5%**

My assumption is that the higher percentage saying ‘Yes’ indicates that people are more aware of cultural stratification. The same should hold with:

“Do you think that there are musical genres which are mostly liked by people holding the lowest social position?”

- Yes **26.6%**
- No **51.2%**
- Difficult to say **21.6%**

Musical genres mostly liked by people holding the highest or the lowest social position.
Poland 2019

	Which musical genres are mostly liked by people holding:		highest/lowest
	highest social position	lowest social position	
Classical music	94.0%	4.6%	20.43
Jazz	72.8%	4.6%	13.82
Rock	34.2%	29.4%	1.16
Folk (ludowa), traditional music	32.9%	32.9%	1.00
Reggae	21.5%	23.4%	0.92
Country	21.7%	35.5%	0.61
Pop	41.7%	72.7%	0.57
Hard rock, heavy metal, and other „metalics”	11.9%	22.2%	0.54
Rap, Hip-hop	11.5%	46.9%	0.25
Techno, dance	11.4%	36.0%	0.32
Disco polo	13.5%	94.9%	0.14

My assumption is that people in Poland can also distinguish between cultural activities/lifestyles that are more or less prestigious. If so, that may affect location in the social ladder, and, in turn, affects their activity and lifestyle.

It is measured by the question:

Are you impressed if somebody:

attends concerts of classical music

plays tennis

rents luxury car on wedding

Being 'impressed'

Cultural practices	Are people in Poland impressed if somebody:	Are you impressed if somebody
attends galleries of arts	46.2%	37.3%
attends international star's concerts	56.9%	31.8%
rents luxury car on wedding	61.3%	22.2%
attends concerts of classical music	45.2%	38.0%
plays piano	55.1%	51.1%
plays tennis	51.7%	33.6%
sends children to musical school	48.3%	37.4%
going to exclusive hotels, health resorts	68.7%	32.4%
has cellphone, smartphone	59.9%	22.0%
buys branded clothes	65.7%	24.3%
systematically goes to gym, fitness	53.1%	30.7%
owns luxury car	73.4%	36.4%

Being 'impressed' by social classes

Social classes	Are you impressed if somebody:						
	attends concerts of classical music	attends galleries of arts	play the piano	sends children to musical school	plays tennis	has luxury car	attends concerts of foreign stars
Managers and professions	52.6	48.7	57.6	43.4	45.5	28.0	34.9
Lower non-manuals	46.0	44.9	57.9	41.8	42.4	35.6	38.3
Owners	45.6	42.4	60.6	43.0	51.3	42.1	38.0
Skilled workers	32.5	28.6	45.9	33.5	30.0	39.4	27.6
Unskilled workers	25.3	24.2	37.6	27.2	26.4	37.8	24.5
Farmers and agricultural workers	23.6	24.9	45.2	36.6	30.0	36.5	24.1
Total	38.0	37.3	51.1	37.4	36.6	36.4	38.1

Net effect of social class and other variables on being 'impressed'

	Impressed if somebody:		
	attends concerts of classical music	attends galleries of arts	has luxury car
Social classes			
Managers and professions	0.72	0.35	-0.70
Lower non-manuals	0.66	0.51	-0.15
Owners	0.61	0.15	-0.42
Skilled workers	0.49	-0.12	0.03
Unskilled workers	0.07	-0.56	0.05
Farmers and agricultural workers (ref.)	0	0	0
Educational level			
Tertiary	1.28**	0.85*	-1.18**
Incomplete tertiary	0.93*	0.75	-0.56
Secondary	0.62	0.31	-0.67*
Incomplete secondary and basic vocational (ref.)	0	0	0

Net effect of social class and other variables on being 'impressed' (cont.)

	Impressed if somebody:		
	attends concerts of classical music	attends galleries of arts	has luxury car
Age (ref. 15-24)			
25-34			
35-44			
45-54			
55-64			
65-74			
75 +		2.11**	
Sex (men=1)	-0.50**		

Conclusions

- Concerning recognition of various kinds of music as attributable to social position it is relatively low : 23-26%.
- However Poles are aware that some musical genres (classical music, jazz) affects class position. Thus, one can easily distinguish which musical genres matter.
- In overall there is general agreement on this. Class position does not affect whether musical genres are class-based.
- Concerning cultural activities producing „impression” all do this in some way. Which means that these may be regarded as making distinctions.
- Concerning effect of the class position it shows that representatives of “the “upper-middle” class are more impressed by almost all activities.
- Which means that lower classes are less „impressed” which suggests that they could count themselves as „lower”.

Thank You