Musical Taste and Patterns of Symbolic Exclusion in the United States 1993 - 2012: Dynamics of Continuity and Differentiation across Generations

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Abstract

Most research in the sociology of taste has focused primarily on the role of socioeconomic status (SES) in modulating patterns of cultural choice. This has led to a general neglect of the role of age as a structuring factor in its own right. In this paper, we turn our attention to cross-sectional and over-time differences in expressions of cultural taste across age groups. We concentrate on the phenomenon that Bryson (1996) has referred to as “symbolic exclusion”: namely, the (differential) propensity of persons to express dislike for certain cultural styles. Comparing musical dislikes from the 1993 General Social Survey data to a replication of the same instrument in 2012, we find that, overall, Americans are less likely to express dislikes across most musical categories, with the most substantial declines observed for Rap and Heavy Metal, especially among college-educated young adults. The exceptions to this pattern are the Country, Folk, and Religious styles, all of which are more likely to be disliked in 2012 than they were in 1993, and Rock and Classical music, both of which are increasingly rejected by high-status young people at the same time that they are less likely to be rejected by their same-status older counterparts.
1 Introduction

1.1 The Neglect of Age as a Structuring Factor in the Sociology of Taste

The focus in the majority of sociology of taste research has been the role of socioeconomic status (SES), education, and gender in modulating patterns of cultural choice, to the general neglect of the role of age and generational dynamics as a structuring factor.\(^2\) In Richard Peterson’s classic work on the omnivore phenomenon and in the (still growing) sub-field of empirical research that his work has inspired, age figures primarily either in its dynamic, cross-generational aspect—e.g. omnivorousness as the result of a cohort-replacement process (Peterson and Kern 1996; López-Sintas and Katz-Gerro 2005)—or simply as a “control” variable used to adjust for differential levels of education or status attainment across age groups, in particular when the interest is estimating cross-class differences in the range of cultural tastes.

In this paper, we turn our attention to cross-sectional and over-time differences in expressions of cultural taste across age groups as a substantive topic on its own regard. We concentrate on the phenomenon that Bryson (1996) has termed “symbolic exclusion”: namely, the (differential) propensity of persons to direct dislikes at clusters of cultural forms identified at the style or “genre” category level.\(^3\) This phenomenon is of substantive importance because it has the potential to make evident the (possibly changing) principles that govern symbolic differentiation practices in social space at a given time. This is the case insofar as there exists a duality between rejection of cultural forms at the level of musical style and boundary-drawing (and boundary-making) in relation to the (presumed) audiences of those forms (Bourdieu 1984).

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\(^3\) A note on terminology: here we follow Lena (2012: 6) in using the term “style” or “musical style” (rather than “genre”) to refer to the types of musicological “genre” categories typically included in surveys (e.g. Rock, Reggae, Classical, etc.). We reserve the term “genre” for more encompassing characterization of cultural products that include the manner, site, and technologies of production. Genre categories can crosscut standard musical style categories.
1.2 Musical dislikes as symbolic exclusion

In her (now) classic study on the subject, Bryson (1996) focused on education as the focal differentiating factor across persons in modulating the propensity towards symbolic exclusion. She found that, consistent with research showing that the educated tend to adopt more “tolerant” attitudes in the socio-political realm, highly-educated respondents were also more likely to express tolerance in the cultural domain (less dislikes) than their less-educated counterparts. Bryson argued that this tolerance was \textit{patterned} in the following sense: while it was true that the less educated expressed less dislikes, conditional on expressing a dislike, educated respondents were disproportionately more likely to dislike style categories that less-educated persons liked (Bryson 1996: 892-893). In this sense, while the educated were keen to display what she referred to as \textit{multicultural capital} (cultural tolerance), they did so in a way that still allowed for the drawing of symbolic boundaries in relation to less-privileged groups (Ollivier 2008).

1.3 Horizontal differentiation in generational space

We suggest that diachronic changes in symbolic exclusion behavior may also be modulated by synchronic partitions in the class structure premised on age. Overall, we see age as a key component of a “field theoretic” conceptualization of the dynamics of change in social space, separating “newcomers” (younger persons) from “incumbents” or “senior members” in a given class stratum (Lizardo and Skiles 2012: 276-277). As Bourdieu (1984: 295ff) noted, each class stratum (but in particular the “dominant” class) is characterized by an “opposition between the young and the old...and...between the senior members of the class and the newcomers.” Within and cross-class generational differences become more salient the more structural changes have occurred across generations in the mechanisms that determine life chances.

Our basic argument is that refusal to reject the same musical styles as their older (e.g.
same-education) counterparts (or conversely a higher propensity to reject the musical styles that are not rejected by their elders) may be driven by attempts—on the part of younger entrants into the realm of the culturally privileged—to exploit their command of the aesthetic disposition in a way that accrues “optimal distinctiveness” in relation to established incumbents (Simmel 1957; Brewer 1991). By optimal distinctiveness, we refer to the tendency of newcomers to attempt to maximize countervailing criteria of differentiation and commonality in relation status-proximate incumbents. This allows newcomers to simultaneously demonstrate allegiance to required criteria for membership in the class stratum and stake their own distinctive claim to aesthetic uniqueness.

Drawing on a dispositional action theory of aesthetic choice (Allen 2002; Bourdieu 1984; Lizardo and Skiles 2012; Warde 2005, 2008), we suggest that the pattern of aesthetic refusals of younger entrants into the educated class should exhibit tendencies to both reaffirm acquired dispositional skills (which lead them to refuse to reject styles that their elders refuse to reject), while at the same time differentiating from the older incumbents in that stratum (which lead them to refuse to reject styles that their elders reject or reject styles that their elders refuse to reject).

1.4 Organization of the Paper

In the next section (2) we review recent research and theory in the sociology of taste that is consistent with this broad set of propositions. We argue that insights from this literature (centered primarily on the realm of culture consumption and the “omnivorousness” phenomenon) can be extended to the topic the age dynamics of symbolic exclusion. We go on to introduce a new data set (section 3) containing information on the symbolic exclusion behavior of a representative sample of Americans. Following this, we contrast (section 4) the pattern of cultural refusals (in the domain of musical taste) of Americans who belong to different age (and later age-education groups) in 2012 (using recently collected data), with those of Americans in the same social categories 1993 (using General Social Survey data). The
last section (5) summarizes the results and points to their theoretical and substantive implications for future work on the subject.

2 Emerging age divides in cultural choice patterns

If newcomers into the educated classes adjust their tastes so as to find a balance between continuity and differentiation vis a vis established seniors, the result will be a cross-generational “extension contest,” with each new cohort of incumbents being forced to apply the dispositional skills geared to aesthetic appreciation of a set of cultural goods that is sufficiently distinct (e.g. yet to be legitimated) from those chosen by the more senior members of the class, while retaining allegiance to some styles accepted by their older same-status counterparts (Lizardo and Skiles 2012: 276). In this way, a cross-generational distinction (within the culturally privileged segment) mechanism may be useful in bringing conceptual order to recent discussions of the social distribution of “types” of omnivorousness, as well as providing a process-based account of the social bases of the genre-mobility, and “emerging forms of cultural capital” phenomenon (Lizardo and Skiles 2012: 277; Prieur and Savage 2011, 2013).

The institutionalized division between the commercial (so called “popular culture”) and the traditionally-legitimated non-profit arts may be coming to acquire the status of a cross-generational marker within culturally privileged strata. For instance, Tampubolon (2008) finds—using data from the same General Social Survey 1993 data used below—that a division between more “traditional” omnivores (who exploit extensions within legitimated domains) and those more open to the yet-to-be-legitimated commercial arts was already evident in the 1993 data. This taste divide, within educated strata, was keyed to age, with younger members being significantly less likely to adopt the traditional omnivore pattern.

Both Bellavance (2008) and Berghman and Van Eijck (2009) inductively derive a distinction between tastes for “old” and “new” styles, or classic and contemporary, that crosscuts the standard classification between “high” and “low” forms of art. Berghman and
Van Eijck (2009) analyze data from a Flemish survey of cultural consumption, and find two types of omnivores: “passing knowledge” and “multiple experts.” The passing knowledge omnivores prefer contemporary and pop culture, while multiple expert omnivores like a broad range of legitimate culture (both classic and contemporary) and some lowbrow culture. The former are younger, more enthusiastic about lowbrow culture and less enthusiastic about highbrow culture than the latter. Consistent with the operation of a cross-generational distinction mechanism, Berghman and Van Eijck (2009) suggest that this difference is a young generation of passing knowledge omnivores (who tend to have higher education than the multiple experts) attempting to differentiate themselves from the older generation at the level of cultural taste and consumption practices.

Van Eijck and Knulst (2005) provide convergent evidence of emerging generational taste divides from a Dutch arts participation survey. They find a divergence between younger and older Dutch respondents when it comes to participation in traditional high-status cultural activities, with younger respondents reducing and older respondents increasing their investment in these types of cultural pursuits. This generational divergence cannot be accounted for by compositional differences in terms of taste groups (e.g. increasing proportion of “omnivores” among the young), differences in the connection between life stage and cultural participation across generations, or increasing social mobility among younger respondents.

In a recent series of studies in Finland, Purhonen et al. (2009, 2011) uncover evidence of strong generational distinctions in cultural choice, similar to those documented in the studies conducted in the United States and the Netherlands reviewed above. They find that in both music and literature, older individuals are more likely to be attracted to traditionally legitimated (e.g. classical music, serious literature) forms of consumption. In the same way, younger individuals are more likely to be attracted to newly emerging forms of “popular” music consumption and mass-market literature (possibly forms on their way to legitimation). They conclude (2009: 47) that age (and gender) are structuring factors that rival the effects of
education in the modulation of culture consumption patterns.

Bennett et al (2009) came to similar conclusions in their sweeping study of cultural practices in the U.K. They find distinctively different patterns of consumption by age with regard to television viewing. For instance, preference for traditional European programming in older cohorts has been replaced by preference for American imports in younger consumers. In addition, within the professional class, interest in “new dramas” (such as Six Feet Under and West Wing) decreases sharply with age. They suggest that young professionals are marking “a distinctive place in the social space of television” (2009: 146), such that age supplements the patterning of consumption structured by education and gender. Using data from the same study Savage and Gayo (2011) and building on Bennett et al’s (2009: 80f) previous work, find that the main axis of division in musical likes and dislikes as well as familiarity for cultural works, as revealed by a correspondence analysis based on a series of relevant survey items, is linked to age. This dimension separates younger (18-34) individuals who are strongly oriented towards popular music genres (e.g. Rock, World, Electronic, Urban, Metal) and who have familiarity with songs performed by international music stars in those same genres (e.g. Oasis, Eminem, Britney Spears) from older (55-75) individuals who are oriented towards such genres as Classical Music and Country. They conclude that the key line of differentiation structuring the field of musical taste in contemporary Britain is one that “predominantly pitches younger respondents – passionately committed to new and emerging musical forms – against older ones, whose musical tastes are much less innovative” (353).

In a thought-provoking study, Christin (2010) combines data from American (2002 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts) and French (the 2008 Enquête sur les Pratiques Culturelles des Français) sources to address the issues of whether persons who prefer highbrow culture are also more omnivorous and whether this association is tied to generational location. She finds that while the general pattern of highbrow omnivorousness can be observed in the American case, in the French case, this effect is conditional on age: While younger highbrows are similar to Americans (in their propensity to be omnivores), older French highbrows are more likely to
express dislike for popular musical styles. She concludes that in contemporary France, there is a generational differentiation between a cultural logic that combines highbrow taste and a logic of inclusion of popular and commercial forms (among the young) and one that combines highbrow taste and a logic exclusion (among the old).

Taken together, these studies suggest that newcomers into high-status classes are finding ways to extend their aesthetic gaze towards cultural forms that older generations may have considered out of bounds. Bellavance (2008) hinted at this process, suggesting that consuming popular culture as well as legitimate art allows one segment of the elite to creatively and flexibly diversify their cultural repertoire. Taylor (2009), a musicologist, comes to what seems to be a fairly similar conclusion. He suggests that more attention should be paid to the notion of “trendy” (and the power to serve as a trend-setter). He argues that the new petit bourgeoisie have control over which cultural material gets attention (gatekeepers, cultural intermediaries), giving them the opportunity to redefine what is “legitimate” at the level of content, even as they preserve many of the more general criteria inherited from their senior counterparts. In what follows we examine whether we can ascertain the operation of similar dynamics in the United States during the last two decades.

2.1 Empirical Implications

In thinking about the way in which generational dynamics may be transforming the way in which cultural tastes function as markers of affinity and distinction, and how these endogenous processes may be changing over time, it is useful to distinguish between three typical ways in which generational change (or lack thereof) in cultural tastes may be detected empirically.

First, it is possible that everybody’s tastes (across all generational locations) may be changing at the same time. For instance, all groups (regardless of age) may become more accepting of certain “emerging” forms of cultural capital such as Rock or Rap, in which case we should observe declines in the probability of disliking this genres that are of the same
magnitude for members of different age groups. Conversely, a given genre category may be falling out of favor at the same rate for both young and old respondents due to an exogenous decline in that style category in the larger social field. This would show up as an increasing likelihood of disliking that genre for members of all age groups. Adapting Bourdieu’s (1984) field-theoretic vocabulary, we refer to these possibilities as (exogenous) morphological transformations of the generational field. In our context, this would imply a statistically significant main effect of period that does not vary across generational groups for that genre category.

Second, we may observe endogenous cross-generational differentiation effects. This may happen if individuals in one age group (e.g. the young) become more likely to use a particular style category as a resource for symbolic exclusion at the same time that members of another age group (e.g. the old) become less likely to do so. For instance, certain musical styles associated with emerging forms of cultural capital may be gaining currency only among young newcomers into high-status locations (thus becoming less likely to be disliked by this group), while experiencing an increasing (or time-constant) likelihood of rejection among their older counterparts. Conversely, a given genre may be falling out of favor among young newcomers while retaining (or gaining) positive reception among older incumbents. Both of these processes will serve to increase the difference in taste orientation between members of young and older generations within class strata. Empirically this will show up as a statistically significant interaction between age and period effects for that genre category. These effects may themselves be generalized across status locations (e.g. educational strata) or restricted to specific class strata (e.g. the college educated).

Finally, we may observe endogeneous continuity effects. For instance, certain musical styles may retain their currency as forms of cultural capital such that young incumbents are just as likely to “refuse to reject them” as their older counterparts are. Other genres may retain their status as negatively valued markers. This mechanism would guarantee some level of taste similarity across generational strata within classes even as their tastes diverge across other
genre categories. Empirically, this will show up as a null interaction between age and period for that genre category. Additionally, it is possible to observe generational continuity within a given class stratum (persons with a high school education) at the same time as we observe generational differentiation in another class stratum (the college educated).

3 Data

One half of the data for this study come from the 1993 “culture module” of the General Social Survey (hereafter GSS 1993; Davis and Smith 2007). The GSS 1993 culture module (N=1606) included items assessing respondents’ likes and dislikes (as well as a middle category of “mixed feelings”) for 18 musical style categories: big band/swing, bluegrass, rhythm and blues (R & B), Broadway musicals/show tunes, classical/symphony and chamber, contemporary pop/rock, country and Western, folk, gospel, heavy metal, jazz, Latin/mariachi/salsa, mood/easy listening, new age.space, opera, oldies rock, rap, and reggae. This is now a “canonical” data set providing the empirical basis for a variety of analyses (and re-analyses) in the sociology of taste (e.g. Bryson 1996, 1997; Tampubolon 2008).

In the summer of 2012 we fielded a survey that was (partially) designed to replicate the 1993 GSS effort. The data were collected by Survey Sample International (hereafter SSI 2012), a private firm that specializes in sampling, data collection, and analysis. SSI managed recruitment and participation invitation tasks to generate a panel of adults from which our working sample was drawn. Survey respondents were selected from the panel for participation based on age, gender, race, education and geographic region to approximate a sample representative of the U.S. population (N = 2250).4

For the purposes of this study, we pooled the GSS 1993 and the SSI 2012 data to obtain a repeated cross-section of the musical tastes of Americans in 1993 and 2012 (N=3875 after eliminating respondents with missing data on any of the sociodemographic markers of

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4 The main difference is that GSS uses a (stratified) random sampling design and is an in-person interview, while the SSI data were collected using a series of demographic filters to approximate a random sample and uses web-based administration.
interest). We retained 15 of the 18 original musical styles from GSS 1993 for purposes of comparison (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

4 Results

4.1 Changes in the symbolic exclusion behavior of Americans: 1993 to 2012

4.1.1 Are Americans of different age-groups engaging in different patterns of symbolic exclusion?

Table 1 shows summary results of a series of likelihood ratio tests assessing the null hypothesis of no change between all age groups across survey waves in the probability of disliking a particular musical style. Essentially these are the results of a series of statistical tests designed to ascertain whether there have been discernible changes in the symbolic exclusion behavior of Americans in the last two decades. In essence this involves determining whether including a dummy variable for survey wave improves the statistical fit of the model. The results show that (not surprisingly) the null hypothesis of “no change” can be rejected for most of the musical styles included in the two surveys, with the exception of Broadway/Show Tunes, Blues and R & B, and Reggae. This suggests that Americans are engaging in distinct patterns of symbolic exclusion in 2012 in comparison to 1993.

4.1.2 Changes in symbolic exclusion behavior by style

To determine the overall direction of these changes, we plot (Figure 1) the marginal effect of survey year on the probability of expressing dislike (on the y-axis) for each musical style against the age group of each respondent (on the x-axis). The effect size captured in each...
bar can be interpreted as the shift in the dislike probability that we would observe if we were to magically transport a 1993 respondent from the respective age group to the year 2012. Negative shifts indicate that a style's standing improved over time (dislike probabilities have dropped). A positive marginal effect of survey wave indicates that the standing of a style has deteriorated over time (persons are more likely to dislike that style in 2012 than they did in 1993). The height of the bar indicates the size of the effect.

**Table 1: Results of likelihood ratio tests of logistic regression models assessing the Null hypothesis of no change across survey waves between cohort groups.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musical Style</th>
<th>Likelihood Ratio Test</th>
<th>Direction of Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show tunes</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood and Easy</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Grass</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religions</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rap</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blues</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reggae</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont. Rock</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy metal</td>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

plot illustrates the predicted change in the probability of expressing dislike for a particular style of music. We present this series of plots, rather than tabular results from the fifteen separate regression models, for ease of interpretation and economy of space. Original regression tables are available from the authors upon request.
Figure 1: Predicted marginal effect of survey year on disliking each musical style by age-group, with slope of survey wave fixed to be the same across age groups.

We see in Figure 1 that the probability of disliking decreased for seven musical styles (Classical music, Opera, Jazz, Latin, Rap, Rock and Metal), and increased (toward symbolic exclusion) for four styles (Country, Bluegrass, Folk and Religious/Gospel music). Three styles experienced no statistically discernible shifts in status (Broadway/Show tunes, Blues and R & B, and Reggae), as indicated by the fact that the relevant confidence interval intersects the horizontal line that illustrates an effect size of zero.

This suggests that Americans have become both more and less likely to use certain cultural styles as resources of symbolic exclusion. The decreasing use of both traditionally high-status and commercial styles (e.g. Jazz and Metal) for purposes of symbolic exclusion is consistent with recent arguments for the increasing institutionalization of “conspicuous openness” as one of the primary ways of expressing cultural taste (Ollivier 2008). This reticence to draw strong
negative boundaries seems to be connected to a sensitivity against being perceived as engaging in any sort of discrimination based on the presumed audiences of the musical styles in question (Skjott-Larsen 2012: 673).

However, the increasing rejection of musical styles close to what van Eijck (2001) refers to as the “folk schema” (which includes high-powered commercial acts in American Country music) along with associated religious styles (all styles that appeal to disproportionately white, rural, Southern audiences), points to the fact that this openness continues to be “patterned” in Bryson’s sense, although the contours of that pattern have changed in ways not anticipated in Bryson’s original study. All of the styles that have become more likely to be used as resources for symbolic exclusion reflect, as Goldberg (2011:1419) has noted in an analysis of the same GSS 1993 data “local identity that is rooted in white American tradition.” Here we see that, consistent with Ollivier’s (2008) argument for “conspicuous openness” as an increasingly institutionalized form of cosmopolitan high-status display, it is precisely those forms of cultural expression that are more likely to suffer from now well-established associations for fostering (racial, ethnic, religious, or gender-based) exclusion, nationalism, and “localism” that are more likely to be rejected today. This is consistent with Skjott-Larsen’s (2012: 673-674) qualitative study of cultural capital in Denmark, which found that culturally-privileged persons draw highly morally-charged symbolic boundaries in relation to persons and cultures associated with nationalism, localism, and provincialism, as these are usually associated with racism or xenophobia (see also Prieur and Savage 2011: 575-576).

4.2 Have over time changes affected all age groups equally?

We have seen that Americans of all ages have primarily moved towards the more inclusionary end of the spectrum with respect to certain musical styles, while moving to the exclusionary end with respect to others. However, it is possible that these changes have not affected members of all age groups in the same way. Results from a second series of likelihood ratio tests evaluating the null hypothesis that the changes in the probability of disliking a given
style (for those musical styles that experienced a statistically significant change across waves) are the same across age groups\textsuperscript{8} show that for four musical styles (Opera, Country, Bluegrass, and Latin), changes in the probability of disliking are homogeneous across age/age groups. For the rest, we can detect structured variation across age groups in the magnitude of the changes across waves.

Table 2: Results of likelihood ratio tests of logistic regression models assessing the Null hypothesis of no change across survey waves within cohort groups. Difference across age groups can be non-linear (quadratic).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musical Style</th>
<th>Likelihood Ratio Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood and Easy</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Grass</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rap</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont. Rock</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy metal</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{8} This is done by comparing the likelihood ratio statistics from each of twelve logistic regression models in which age, survey wave, and an age and survey wave interaction term are used to predict dislike of a particular genre.
Figure 2: Predicted marginal effects of survey year on disliking each musical style by age-group, with slope of survey wave allowed to vary by age group.

Figure 2 shows the relevant pattern of results. This plot, just like Figure 1, shows the marginal effect of survey wave on the probability of disliking each musical style for respondents from each age group. When it comes to those musical styles usually associated with traditional high-status consumption, the decline in dislikes for Classical music can be observed across all age groups, but not at the same magnitude. In this case, the pattern of survey year effects has a “u-shaped” pattern: it is steeper both among the very young and the very old, and smaller for middle-age persons. In the case of Jazz and Easy listening, the bulk of the improvement in the standing of these genres is attributable to the increasing likelihood of older persons to not express dislike for these styles; younger (and in the case of easy listening middle-aged) people have not appreciably shifted their regard for these styles across surveys.
Finally, for Opera, the shift towards a lower likelihood of rejection can be observed across the age distribution, but it is steeper among the young in comparison to their middle-aged counterparts.

In the case of musical styles usually associated with the for-profit music industry, the trend towards a decreasing likelihood of disliking for Rap and Hip Hop is concentrated among young and middle-aged people. Persons over the age of seventy have not appreciably changed in their (relatively high) rate of rejection of this style. The declining significance of Rock music as a resource for symbolic exclusion is primarily attributable to the fact that members of middle-aged and older age groups in 2012 are substantially less likely to dislike this style than are their predecessors in 1993. Note, however, that members of younger cohorts (age 35 or younger) have actually become more likely to dislike Rock. This suggests that this style (and to a lesser extent Jazz) may have become (or perhaps are becoming) the basis for a generational taste divide. Finally, increasing acceptance of Heavy Metal is heavily concentrated in the middle of the age distribution; although it should be noted that the oldest group of respondents (aged 75) has either experienced no change, or actually increased their (already high) levels of rejection for this style across survey.

When it comes to those styles that have experienced an increase in the likelihood of being used as resources for symbolic exclusion, we can see that for Country and Bluegrass, this trajectory is fairly generalized across levels of age, except for the very oldest respondents who display no appreciable change across survey waves. For Folk music, the spike in dislike has been primarily driven by middle-aged respondents, with both the very young and the very old actually having experienced a decline in the likelihood of rejecting this style. Finally, for religious music we see a fairly generalized pattern of rejection across age groups, except (in a pattern that is the exact opposite of what we observe for bluegrass and country) among the very young, who display no discernible change across survey waves.
4.3 Over time changes across age-education groups

The final question that we examine is whether changes in the symbolic exclusion behavior of Americans of different generations have been homogeneous across educational groups. As noted above, a field-theoretic imagery of the generational dynamics of replacement of members of different class fractions (especially towards the privileged end) leads us to suspect that diachronic differences in cultural taste expression will vary significantly depending on education. A third series of likelihood ratio tests of logistic regression models assessing the null hypothesis of no change across survey waves within age by education groups was designed\(^9\) to test this hypothesis.\(^10\) The results show that for all of the styles for which we found variation across surveys (in section 4.2 above), these changes are heterogeneous across levels of education in all but one case (Bluegrass). This suggests that generational changes in symbolic exclusion do vary in substantively significant ways by education.

Table 3: Results of likelihood ratio tests of logistic regression models assessing the null hypothesis of no change across survey waves within age × education groups. Differences across age groups can be non-linear (quadratic); differences across educational categories are restricted to be linear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musical Style</th>
<th>Likelihood Ratio Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood and Easy</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Grass</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^9\) Difference across age groups can be non-linear (quadratic); differences across educational categories are restricted to be linear. Full results are available from the authors upon request.

\(^10\) This is done by comparing the likelihood ratio statistics from twelve logistic regression models in which age and survey wave, as well as a three-way interaction term that includes age, survey wave, and education level, are used to predict dislike of a particular genre.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musical Style</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Accept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rap</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cont. Rock</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy metal</td>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Predicted marginal effects of survey year on disliking each musical style by age-group, with slope of age allowed to vary by survey wave and highest degree completed.

The pattern of variation is shown in Figure 3. Here we have two charts for each genre: the one on the left displaying the marginal effect of survey wave on the probability of dislike for each style for respondents with no college degree, and the one on the right displaying this...
same marginal effect for college-educated respondents. As in the previous graphs, a negative shift indicates a decrease in the probability of dislike for a particular genre from 1993 to 2012.

Classical music represents the most interesting case: here we can see that the bulk of the decline in dislikes for Classical music comes from the less educated. This group shows a markedly decreasing propensity to use Classical music as a tool in symbolic exclusion. Among the more educated, on the other hand, we see either no change (among middle-aged and older adults) or a spike in the likelihood of rejecting Classical, in particular among young adults (aged 30 to 44). For instance, while in 1993 a college-educated person between the ages of 25 and 29 had an 8% chance of disliking Classical, in 2012 a respondent in the same age-education group had a 15% chance of disliking Classical.\textsuperscript{11}

Opera follows a different pattern: steep declines in the dislike probability among persons who have not completed a college degree (concentrated among the young and middle-aged but null for older respondents). Among the college-educated, on the other hand, we see evidence of a classic bifurcation: a decrease in the dislike probability among young elites accompanied by a corresponding spike among older elites. For instance, while in 1993 a college-educated person between the ages of 25 and 29 had a 48% chance of disliking Opera, in 2012 that number had declined to 35%. For college-educated respondents in their mid to late sixties, we observe the opposite pattern, with the dislike probability going from 14% in 1993 to 29% in 2012.

In the case of Jazz, a polarization pattern seems to be emerging, but this time among the less educated. Among older, less-educated persons, Jazz has experienced a substantial improvement: A non college educated person in their fifties would have a 25% change of disliking Jazz in 1993, but in 2012 the corresponding figure is 16%. Among younger, less-educated persons, we observe very little change across survey waves. Finally, among college-educated respondents, we can see the emergence of a bifurcation when it comes to the likelihood of disliking Jazz, with younger educated respondents increasing their likelihood of

\textsuperscript{11} Results not shown, but are available by request from the authors.
rejecting this style in relation to the older counterparts. These changes, however, are not significant at conventional levels.

The simplest set of results can be observed in the case of Rap and Hip Hop. Here, younger entrants into the rank of the college educated have substantially declined in the likelihood of using these styles for purposes of symbolic exclusion across survey waves in comparison to their older, same-education counterparts. This suggests that this style may also become the source of a taste bifurcation among American elites of different generations. While in 1993 about 58% of respondents between the ages of 25 and 29 with a college degree reported disliking rap, today the corresponding figure is 20%; a sizable improvement in standing even considering that the survey waves span two decades. Note that although the less educated are also less likely to dislike Rap and Hip Hop today than were their counterparts in 1993, the declines among the young non-college educated are actually of a smaller magnitude than the corresponding declines among their same-age college-educated peers. This makes sense, since the former group was already less likely to dislike Rap and Hip Hop in the first place, and thus the college-educated young had more room for change in this direction.

A similar pattern of results can be observed in the case of Heavy Metal. Here we see sharp declines in rates of dislike among young adults and middle-aged respondents with or without a college degree (except for the youngest age group—18 to 24—of non-college educated persons who experienced no change). This has been accompanied by a spike in the dislike probability among the newer entrants into the most senior age stratum without a college degree (75+). The result of the increasing improvement in standing of both Hip Hop and Heavy Metal among the newer entrants into the rank of the educated has resulted in a relative equalization of the probabilities of dislike across the education divide for young persons. Thus, in 2012 a 25-29 year old college educated person has a probability of disliking Rap and Hip Hop of 20%, while the corresponding probability for her non-college degree counterpart is 23%. In the case of Heavy Metal the respective rates are 39%, for college-educated respondents, versus 34% for non-college educated respondents. This 5% difference across
education groups is about half of the difference observed for this age group across education levels in 1993 (63% versus 54%).

The fact that young, highly-educated Americans are now about as equally unlikely to dislike Rap and Hip Hop and Heavy Metal as their same-age non-college educated peers constitutes a dramatic reversal of the pattern noted by Bryson (1996), who found that highly-educated respondents were more likely to dislike the styles that low-education respondents were least likely to dislike. The same thing applies to Heavy Metal, which has experienced an improvement in standing among the college educated across almost all levels of age. Note however, that older highly-educated Americans do still conform to the Bryson pattern. In the case of Rap and Heavy Metal, their attitudes have shifted very little and continue to be largely exclusionary (rejection rates of 60% and above). This is in spite of the fact that there has been a substantial decline in the likelihood disliking both Rap and Metal among middle-aged Americans of low education.

The trajectory of contemporary Rock is in many ways unique. Here we see a substantial rise in the probability of symbolic exclusion among young Americans regardless of education. This has been accompanied by a substantial decline in the probability of rejection among middle-age and older Americans of all educational groups, with the decline of engaging in symbolic exclusion being slightly stronger for low-education persons than it is for high-education persons. Thus, while in 1993 a person in her late fifties with a college degree would have had a one in two chance of rejecting Contemporary Rock, today that same-age respondent has a 25% of disliking Rock (with comparable numbers for the their same-age non-college educated counterparts: 49% in 1993 versus 18% in 2012). The opposite is the case for young people. While our hypothetical respondent in her mid to late twenties with a college degree had a (miniscule) 5% chance of rejecting contemporary Rock in 1993, in 2012 those odds have risen to a non-negligible 17% (with comparable numbers for her non-college-educated age peers: 8% in 1993 versus 18% in 2012. This dynamic in many ways seems to be a harbinger for an American version of the replacement of Rock and Roll as the
preferred music of young persons (in favor of Rap, Hip Hop and “harder” Rock-inflected styles), as well as its consolidation as the preferred music of their parents and grandparents with the (inevitable) aging of the classic (1960s and 1970s) Rock and Roll generation (Bennett 2006).

Country, Folk and Latin music reveal their own distinct pattern. For country music, the dominant effect seems to be an increase in the likelihood in the rates of rejection among young adult and middle-aged persons across levels of education. For instance, while in 1993 only 14% of high-school educated Americans in their early thirties disliked country, the corresponding figure today is 26%. For a person in the same age group with a college degree, the deterioration in the status of Country is equally substantial (23% in 1993 versus 35% in 2012). Folk music has similar dynamics to that of Country at the high-education end, with highly-educated young-adult and middle-aged respondents being substantially more likely to reject this style in 2012 than they were in 1993. In this case, however, the rates of rejection have shot up much more dramatically among college-educated young adults than they have among their non-college educated same-age peers. Thus, while in 1993 a college-educated person in her early thirties had only a 19% chance of rejecting folk, the corresponding figure in 2012 is 37%, essentially a doubling of the probability. Among non-college-educated persons of the same age, we also observe an increase of rejection, but of a much lower magnitude (31% in 1993 versus 35% in 2012).

Finally the pattern for Latin music is distinctive as well, with declines in the probability of rejection among low-educated middle-aged persons accompanied by increases in the rates of rejection among same-age persons of high education. This genre is one where we see an age-specific bifurcation premised on educational status. While in 1993 a person with a college degree in her forties had a 22% chance of disliking Latin music, the corresponding figure today is 29%, a relatively slight but statistically significant increase. A non-college educated person in the same age group has on average experienced a decline in the chances of using
Latin music for purposes of symbolic exclusion (36% in 1993 versus 31% in 2012).

5 Discussion

We began with a plea to consider age as a powerful source of heterogeneity in public expressions of taste (and distaste). We proposed a model taken from field theory, which put age at center stage because it mapped the young/old dichotomy to the newcomer/incumbent distinction. We argued that in the realm of expression of aesthetic judgments, the key dilemma faced by newcomers into the privileged (in this case high-education) stratum is that of fine-tuning their taste expressions in the face of opposing constraints for both continuity (to claim legitimate membership) and differentiation (to claim a unique position) in relation to older incumbents. This is a set of mechanisms that has been productively used to account for dynamics of change and inter-generational replacement in fields of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993), but which has yet to be used in analyzing cultural consumption. This is in spite of Bourdieu’s (1984) proposal that production and consumption fields are organized according to “mirror image” (dual) structures and processes featuring interactions between newcomers (young) and incumbents (old). We took as our case changing patterns of aesthetic refusal, or what Bryson (1996) referred to as “symbolic exclusion” in the U.S. in the last two decades. We found results that are both consistent with the field-theoretic imagery, but also which challenge any account of changing patterns of taste, to purely endogenous dynamics among age-education groups.

5.1 Generational Differentiation Effects

The most dramatic differentiation effects can be found for commercial (so-called “popular culture”) styles, in particular Rap and Hip Hop, Heavy Metal, and Rock and Roll (Berghman and Van Eijck 2009). These effects are of sufficient magnitude to allow us to conclude that the taste patterns of younger high-status Americans are now decisively distinct from their older generation same-status counterparts.
The most obvious change consists of the dramatic declines in the probability of younger persons to reject Rap and Heavy Metal. This transformation is of enough substantive significance as to make the title of Bryson’s (1996) classic article “anything but heavy metal” summarily outdated. Only about one-fifth of young Americans reject Rap and Hip Hop, a figure that is lower than that observed for Country, Bluegrass, Gospel, or Opera for this age group. And while about two-fifths of young adults and middle-aged Americans do continue to express substantial dislike for Heavy Metal, this figure is about half of what it was (for middle-aged adults) in 1993. The results show that these declines in the likelihood of using these styles for purposes of symbolic exclusion are particularly dramatic for the highest-educated young respondents, particularly in the case of Rap and Hip Hop. This suggests that it is this style—largely marketed as a music performed and produced by African-Americans with relatively low levels of schooling—that is serving as the primary generational differentiation resource for newcomers into the highly-educated class. Note the irony here, insofar as this is a stratum that is both disproportionately White and disproportionately more likely to be occupied by “stayers” (rather than “movers”).

A second set of differentiation effects are revealed by the marked increase in the likelihood of refusal on the part of high-status newcomers in 2012 of styles that continue to be less likely to be refused by high-status incumbents. These include institutionalized high-status styles (Jazz and Classical), and a previously commercial style on its way to institutionalization and consecration (Rock and Roll). The noticeable uptick in rejection (especially by very recent newcomers to the high status stratum) may indicate that these styles will be the battlefield of horizontal symbolic exclusion struggles among high-status Americans belonging to different age groups in the immediate future.

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12 Of course, newcomers are not the only ones who are active agents in differentiation processes, since incumbents may also react to the presence of newcomers by engaging in their own set of differentiation strategies. This definitely seems to be the case with Latin music, which has experienced a substantial increase in the likelihood of being used for symbolic exclusion, especially among older members of the educated class.

13 For a plea to consider horizontal symbolic exclusion on a par with so-called “vertical” differentiation effects, see Lizardo and Skiles (2012: 273-276).
5.2 Generational Continuity Effects

It is important to keep in mind that, in spite of the substantive significance of some of the differentiation effects noted above, these are happening in a background that is largely characterized by dynamic continuity. In this sense, it would be misleading to conclude that because there are now marked generational differences in the taste patterns of young and older high-education Americans, that there is no shared taste basis between them. On the contrary, what we see is a pattern of “optimal distinctiveness” in the sense of purchasing sufficient generational contrast while maintaining overall allegiance to certain high-status taste displays.

Note for instance that highly institutionalized, high-status musical styles (in particular Classical and Jazz) are rarely used for purposes of symbolic exclusion by high status persons either in 1993 or 2012. Thus, in this respect younger entrants into the high-education stratum continue to share largely the same (high status) tastes as their parents and grandparents. This pattern reflects a (familiar) form of continuity within change, consistent with the claim that high-status culture continues to survive (and in some cases even thrive) even under conditions of “openness” to commercial forms by younger entrants into the middle class (Lizardo 2008).

5.3 Morphological Effects

The most obvious morphological effect in the American cultural space as a whole is the continuing march towards a “refusal to refuse” (which implies a putative “openness to diversity”) as an increasingly institutionalized manner of taste expression (Ollivier 2008). This is most evident in the overwhelming decline in the likelihood of using most musical styles for purposes of symbolic exclusion. In many ways, this increasing “refusal to refuse” phenomenon

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14 It is important to underscore that while some tastes might have institutional legitimacy as markers of high status, practices of distinction linking tastes and status do exhibit strong variation across different fields, such that tastes that may have institutional backing as “high status” come to be devalued (Erickson 1996), while other “non-dominant” forms of cultural capital become the prime currency (Prieur and Savage 2011). In this respect, what counts as a high-status taste is always contingent on the specific fields and constellation of relations in which particular cultural practices are deployed and classified.
makes dislikes as a measure of symbolic exclusion simultaneously more problematic and more promising as an index of symbolic boundary drawing.

As individuals (in the United States and quite possibly in other settings) become increasingly less likely to express (in the survey interview situation) dislikes for any musical style, researchers will need to begin to look for more covert (and in certain way more valid since more clearly tied to practice) indices of symbolic exclusion (Holt 1998). In particular, a move towards studies emphasizing differential deployment of embodied cultural capital within the “same” style category labels may reveal that symbolic exclusion processes may be operating at the artist or fine-grained category level rather than at the level of the broad style category. In addition, rapid declines on the part of the highly-educated young of disliking genres previously associated with working-class and low-education respondents (thus implying taste convergence along class lines) may be accompanied by increasing divergence in the ways in which these broad genre categories are engaged both practically and discursively by members of different class strata (Atkinson 2011; Warde et al 2008).

By the same token, as symbolic exclusion becomes a rarer (and normatively proscribed) practice, then whatever symbolic exclusion behavior at the level of overt taste expression that is observed acquires more symbolic (and substantive) significance. This is definitely the case for the uptick in rejection of country music (and associated styles), especially among the young, which itself appears to be a morphological transformation in the field (affecting both highly-educated and less-educated young persons, and for some styles affecting all age groups at once). Thus, the association—initiated during the Bush era and consolidated in the current climate of political polarization in the United States—of country music itself, country music performers (e.g. Toby Keith, Hank Williams jr., among others), and country music fans [e.g. as in the “Dixie Chicks Controversy” (Rossman 2004)], along with folk and religious music with intolerance, xenophobia, and localist jingoism makes Folk genres a safe target for symbolic rejection. In this sense, as noted by Ollivier (2008), the very institutionalization of conspicuous openness to diversity as the most legitimate form of taste also legitimates the selective rejection of those
persons and cultures that are associated with what cosmopolitanism is not, namely localism and (perceived) exclusion of other persons and cultures. This is consistent with research outside of the U.S. that shows that members of putatively “tolerant” high-status classes have no problem expressing high levels of intolerance for those persons (and associated cultural objects) that they themselves see as connected to intolerance (Prieur and Savage 2013: 256; Skjott-Larsen 2012).

The presence of religious music in this mix suggests that the rejection dynamic may itself be tied to the same (field-theoretic) distinction mechanism that Hout and Fisher (2002) argued accounts for the rise of persons claiming “no religion” in the U.S. during the last three decades. Insofar as the “politicization” of certain musical styles in the United States has been a de facto institutionalized association of country music and religion with certain unpalatable—from the point of view of the logic of conspicuous openness to diversity—political themes (“uncritical” patriotism, misogyny, xenophobia, racism, intolerance), then the same institutional mechanism that sanctions the rejection of those groups which are themselves perceived to promote intolerance may be at play here. In this sense, it is important to understand the specific contours of the discursive field within which this form of “rejection of rejection” makes sense (Spillman 1995). This is, namely, the increasing objectification of the semiotic distinction between locals and cosmopolitans at the institutional level (Prieur and Savage 2013; Ollivier 2008). This seems to be a morphological transformation in the field, to which younger cohorts appear to be particularly sensitive. At the field level, this partition seems particularly ripe to play an important role in “vertical” distinction struggles today and in the near future.
References


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