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► **To cite this version:**

Nicolas Robette, Olivier Roueff. An eclectic eclecticism: Methodological and theoretical issues about the quantification of cultural omnivorism. *Poetics*, 2014, 47, pp.23-40. 10.1016/j.poetic.2014.10.002 . halshs-01143594

HAL Id: halshs-01143594

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-01143594v1>

Submitted on 20 Apr 2015

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An eclectic eclecticism

Methodological and theoretical issues about the quantification of cultural omnivorism

Nicolas Robette (nicolas.robette@uvsq.fr)

Olivier Roueff (olivier.roueff@csu.cnrs.fr)

Abstract

Cultural eclecticism has been the focus of most sociological debates pertaining to cultural practices since the publication of Richard Peterson's first articles. Underlying these debates surrounding results, the prevailing definitions and methods are particularly striking for their... eclecticism. And although it is not explicitly stated, it appears that sociologists disagree over the parameters of inquiry – how the object of study is constructed and all manner of methodologies –, rather than over hypotheses and whether or not they are valid. In this paper, we shall extend and systematize assertions that appear in various works on omnivorousness. Our aim is to determine the theoretical implications of the three groups of choices that seem critical in statistical methods of studying cultural eclecticism: choices concerning indicators of taste; methods of constructing a scale of cultural legitimacy; indicators of cultural omnivorousness.

“Do not deny the classical approach, simply as a reaction, or you will have created another pattern and trapped yourself there.” (Bruce Lee)

“The answer is yes. But what is the question?” (Woody Allen)

1. Introduction

Cultural eclecticism has been the focus of most sociological debates pertaining to cultural practices over the past twenty years, or since the publication of Richard Peterson's first articles (Peterson, 1992; Peterson and Simkus, 1992). Peterson's suggestion of substituting

both Herbert Gans's opposition of lowbrow vs. highbrow (Gans, 1974) and Pierre Bourdieu's distinction between the legitimate and the illegitimate (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]) with an “omnivore-to-univore” opposition spurred the sociological imagination and gave rise to a body of literature that continues to proliferate to this day. At issue in these debates are the reality of this shift, the importance of its impact, its nature, its substance, and so forth. However, while reading these articles, one is sometimes left with a sense of confusion: What exactly are they talking about? Indeed, underlying the debates surrounding results, the prevailing definitions and methods are particularly striking for their ... eclecticism. And although it is not explicitly stated, it appears that sociologists disagree over the parameters of inquiry – how the object of study is constructed and all manner of methodologies –, rather than over hypotheses and whether or not they are valid. One lesson in these debates is therefore negative: they show the extent to which results are conditioned by methodological choices and the hypotheses they imply, and how when we speak exclusively of these results, we are often speaking of different, indeed incomparable *objects* – in short, what these debates teach us is that they don't actually occur!

1.1. Questions and limitations of the study

To show this, we shall extend and systematize assertions that appear in various works on omnivorousness (see for example Peterson, 2005, Prieur et al., 2008, Warde and Gayo-Cal, 2009, Duval, 2010, and Savage and Gayo, 2011). Our aim is to determine the theoretical implications of the three groups of choices that seem critical in statistical methods of studying cultural eclecticism. First, we compare five types of taste indicators, and discuss how each of them deals with the dispositional hypothesis that underlies the concept of taste (part 1). Secondly, we test various methods of constructing a scale of cultural legitimacy, depending on the indicators of social position and on the statistical techniques. This leads us to investigate the issue of middlebrow tastes and how it also impacts the measurement of omnivorism (part 2). Finally, we discuss the issue of individual and collective indicators of omnivorism, and operationalize two contrasted definitions of omnivorism. We then show that the prevalence of omnivorism varies from 1,7% to 30,9% of the French population, depending on all the choices we discuss. We finish with a test of the hypothesis of a rise of omnivorism in France from 1973 to 2008 (part 3).

Due to the breadth of possible discussion points, we have limited our present study in several

ways. First, we will only discuss statistical methods, since they constitute the bulk of the literature; moreover, the issue of eclecticism's *measure* – the importance of the phenomenon and its social distribution – is a prerequisite to any kind of questioning with respect to its form, causes, and effects. In fact, even the existence of a new sociological order known as eclecticism is a subject of debate. For example, Prieur et al. (2008) estimate that it only really concerns about 2.1% of residents in the city of Aalborg (Denmark).

Second, we shall not discuss one of the thornier topics of debate; namely, units of measurement for cultural taste. Most statistical inquiries dedicated to eclecticism draw their units of measurement from aesthetic genres such as they are already defined in questionnaires. For example, in the case of music, which is what interests us here, one finds the following types of categories: “jazz”; “international pop”; “French songs”; “world music”. However, in addition to the “polysemic” character of most genres (Coulangeon, 2010), some studies on the internal differences of these aesthetic genres suggest that the rate of eclecticism might be quite different (and not necessarily higher) if we considered the combinations not simply of separate aesthetic genres, but also of different styles within each genre¹, as well as of the ways in which each genre is consumed (for example, Holt, 1997 or Prieur and Savage, 2011). The jazz aesthete who listens to experimental jazz and goes to avant-garde festivals and the casual jazz listener who likes early jazz standards are both counted as jazz listeners even though they no doubt belong to very different social and cultural worlds. In all likelihood, the latter also listens to French pop and not to classical music and opera (Lizé and Roueff, 2010). Yet that listener would still be counted as “eclectic” since she would combine a legitimate genre, “jazz”, with an illegitimate genre, “pop”. In the absence of data that could account for such a refined differentiation of both aesthetic genres and modes of consumption at a scale that would include the social space – a scale at which most of the research and debates take place –, we have decided to bracket this issue, and have instead chosen to work from the musical genres used in the *National Survey on French Cultural Practices [Pratiques Culturelles des Français]* (PCF2008, see below).

Third limitation: we will only be examining eclecticism “by composition” (Warde and Gayo-Cal, 2009), which we will call either omnivorism or eclecticism, as a way of encompassing all of the available designations – omnivorism, eclecticism, tolerance, cosmopolitanism,

¹On associations between classical music and French pop, or classical music and jazz, see Donnat, 1997; on country music, see Holt, 1997; on jazz, see Lizé, 2010; on classical music, see Savage and Gayo, 2011.

hybridization, open-mindedness, curiosity, etc. However, as we have already mentioned, it is important to note not only that this form of eclecticism is the subject of the most study, but also that discussions of eclecticism “by volume” (Warde and Gayo-Cal, 2009) – or “voraciousness” (Sullivan and Katz-Gerro, 2007) – most often lead, in reality, to hypotheses regarding eclecticism by composition. That is the case, for example, in Philippe Coulangeon's original method for measuring “enlightened eclecticism” (or the statistical link between eclecticism “by volume” and elevated social status), which led to his study on the most frequently combined musical genres (Coulangeon, 2003 ; 2010). Whenever this omnivorism is established as a numerically and/or symbolically important phenomenon, it engenders the most heated debates – in essence: is the distinctive power or stratification of cultural tastes diminishing, or are norms of cultural legitimacy simply evolving? In addition, and whether it is explicit or not, this eclecticism is constructed at the intersection of several indicators, and therefore covers the majority of methodological problems we wish to address here.

1.2. The data

In the literature on eclecticism, musical taste is the subject of by far the most inquiry, though the reason for this predominance is not always made explicit. Indeed, the activity of listening to music seems particularly well-suited to the types of measurements implied by our present notion of omnivorism. On the one hand, listening to music occurs more frequently in the social space than do reading, going to see a show, or visiting a museum. Music listeners thus offer a reasonably large group, with an important number of its members consuming at least two musical genres – a necessary condition in the identification of eclectic profiles. On the other hand, differences between musical genres show themselves to be more pronounced and more divisive than, for example, in the case of television – another practice that traverses the social space. From this perspective – a sensitivity to the question of legitimacy – individual tastes are more likely to be heterogenous (Robette and Roueff, 2013). One therefore has more of a chance of finding eclectic tastes for music than for other cultural practices.

Our choice of studying musical taste was then also a choice to situate our inquiry within the primary current of debate. From December 2007 to February 2008, the Department of Studies and Future Trends [*Département des Etudes, de la Prospective et des Statistiques*] (DEPS), the main research department of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication², conducted

² For a general presentation of the results, see Donnât, 2009. Data are available for free through the Quêtelet Network (www.reseau-quetelet.cnrs.fr/).

a study led by Olivier Donnat and Philippe Coulangeon on *French Cultural Practices* [*les Pratiques Culturelles des Français*] (PCF2008). The study had a sample size of 5,004 persons (all over the age of 15) and mobilized variables related to social indicators (sex, age, highest degree earned, occupational status (PCS³ in French), household income, status of primary residence, secondary residence, financial assets, father's PCS when the individual was 15 years old, mother's highest degree when the individual was 15 years old) and indicators of musical taste (genres most listened to from a list of 33 genres, favorite genre, genres never listened to due to a dislike, singers known from a list of 13 names, singers whose music one likes from the same list, frequency that one listens to music outside of the radio, frequency that one listens to music while doing nothing else, the place of this concentrated listening – at home or outside the home –, device used in concentrated listening – CD, cassette tape, internet, mobile device, etc.). The list of the 33 most listened to genres was reduced to 10 aggregate genres; first, because the other genres were chosen by an extremely small number of persons, and second because the data furnished by the DEPS had already aggregated the genres as such for its question on preferred genre, which affected subsequent comparisons with other questions.

2. What to measure?: Regarding taste indicators

Taste, appetency, preference, attachment, judgement, criterion of appreciation...: regardless of the name we give it, taste can never be entirely reduced to its observable manifestations or concrete practices that, according to one's epistemological perspective, express it, actualize it, or are an effect of it. That is precisely why we speak of taste and not simply of practice: practice is what gets realized while taste is a potential; and potential is a host of possibilities whose context for action can thwart actualization, due to geographical, economic, temporal, and symbolic obstacles, among others. The first step of a statistical inquiry into taste consists in choosing a relevant indicator: What type of question is most likely to provide a clue into what, by definition, can never be directly observed? This point is made with relative frequency and has become a common object of discussion (eg. Yaish and Katz-Gerro, 2012). We shall therefore list the various types of indicators that have been established both in order to show that they each organize musical genres differently, and to succinctly indicate what

³ Professions et catégories socioprofessionnelles (« occupations and socio-occupational categories »).

each omits as a condition of inquiry.

2.1. Five types of indicators, each with different results

Questionnaires offer five types of indicators likely to provide an indicator of taste. These questions relate to: (a) actual participation into cultural facilities (museums, concerts, the radio, etc.) or consumption of various cultural products (books, CDs, etc.); (b) abstract positive preferences for different kinds of cultural products or singular works; (c) abstract negative preferences for different kinds of cultural products or singular works; (d) modes of consumption with respect to cultural products (intensity, context in which one listens to music or reads a book, etc.); finally (e) the knowledge of certain artists or singular works⁴. Choosing between these different indicators is a matter of technical constraint and problematic, and the data of PCF2008 is useful in that it allows us to compare. Indeed, the questionnaire's designers recognized these issues and offered questions reflecting each of these possibilities.

Table 1. Distribution and organization of musical genres according to different taste indicators

% [rank]	Practices (a)	Abstract preferences (b)	Distaste (c)	Mode of consumption	
				Intensity (d)	Concentration (d')
Jazz	17.3 [6]	3.4 [7]	19.1 [5]	20.9 [8]	27.3 [6]
Classical	27.3 [3]	10.4 [3]	20.0 [6]	26.0 [5]	33.9 [3]
Opera	9.0 [9]	0.6 [10]	34.4 [7]	8.3 [10]	11.8 [10]
Pop rock	26.2 [4]	10.6 [2]	18.8 [4]	37.0 [3]	33.3 [4]
International pop and R'n'B	35.0 [2]	9.8 [4]	9.8 [3]	46.2 [2]	41.0 [2]
Rap and hip hop	12.2 [8]	3.3 [8]	44.8 [9]	22.5 [6]	27.1 [7]
French songs and French pop	62.5 [1]	32.5 [1]	3.0 [1]	57.7 [1]	50.3 [1]
Electro and techno	13.0 [7]	4.0 [6]	37.7 [8]	22.3 [7]	26.4 [8]
Hard rock and metal	6.6 [10]	1.3 [9]	53.4 [10]	12.0 [9]	13.9 [9]
World music and traditional music	23.0 [5]	4.5 [5]	4.8 [2]	26.1 [4]	28.5 [5]

Legend: 9% of those surveyed often listen to opera, which puts it ninth among genres listed.

(a) Practices = “genres you listen to most often” (multiple answers)

(b) Abstract preference = “genre that you prefer” (one single answer)

(c) Distaste = “genres that you do not listen to because you know that you do not like them” (multiple answers)

⁴ Knowledge can indeed serve as an indicator of modes of classification of artists and works, and thus support judgement. We do not present the results for such indicators as they relate to unique art works and artists, and are difficult to compare to the data based on genres. Nevertheless, these results are available from the authors.

(d) Mode of consumption – Intensity = “listening to music (outside of the radio) every day or almost every day” together with “genres you listen to most often”

(d’) Mode of consumption – Concentration = “listening to music (outside of the radio) while doing nothing else, every day or almost every day” together with “genres you listen to most often”

Table 1 offers a comparison of these taste indicators for the aggregated list of musical genres. One way to choose between indicators consists in examining the results and determining whether or not several among them give convergent information. If indeed they do, then that convergence would be a reasonable criterion to select one as a representative. Two modes of comparison are possible: (1) the way in which each indicator organizes the genres according to frequency (a ranking system); (2) the way in which genres have more or less similar frequencies depending on each indicator. In order to measure the extent to which each indicator produces different results with respect to the organization of genres, one can, for example, observe variations in rank and divergence in frequency between table 1's different rows, such as “classical” and “world music and traditional music”. For the indicator of “practices”, classical music and world music are ranked respectively 3rd and 5th, with similar frequencies (respectively 27.3% and 23%); while for the indicator of “distastes”, they are ranked 6th and 2nd, with diverging frequencies (20% and 4.8%). Globally, although the results are not entirely contradictory, one still notices significant variation in the prevalence or relative position of musical genres as a function of the taste indicator being used⁵.

2.2. In search of unobservable dispositions: Practice or preference?

An implicit dispositional hypothesis tends to underlie choices in taste indicators: an indirect mode of objectification is chosen with respect to a dispositional entity that is by definition assumed to exceed, in one way or another, the observable practices that actualize it, express it, or result from it. Three types of choices can be observed: some attempt to get around the unobservable nature of taste by inquiring into real practices; others take advantage of the expressive nature of taste and rely on positive or negative professions of preference independently of actual practices; finally, and more rarely, others try to take advantage of all available indicators, which they understand to be different but complementary facets or

⁵ This table could also be used to discuss relationships between these different taste indicators (between tastes and distastes, frequency and preference, etc.). Although it is not within the scope of the present paper, one might argue that the heterogeneity and divergences could stand in the way of systematic interpretation, and that it would only allow for the development of hypotheses with respect to a given genre.

manifestations of one single taste.

A first step in the hierarchization of these choices pertains to an idea of the degree of individual commitment to a given cultural object; this is necessary to establish whether or not an individual likes the object in question. The researcher can thus work to identify clues related to taste commitment in order to ensure that an individual's profession of taste in the questionnaire is "authentic". This point is often associated with the problem of legitimacy bias. Indeed, we know that individuals tend to make professions of taste toward more legitimate genres when faced with an interviewer in an interactional setting that may perhaps resemble a kind of scholastic exam. However, it is not known whether that is always the case nor to what extent it plays a role. Generally, it is thought that abstract professions of taste ("I like hard rock") engage individuals less than abstract professions of distaste ("I hate opera"); that professions of preference or distaste engage individuals less than assessments of "concrete" practices ("I like karaoke" vs. "I sang karaoke [one to eleven] times over the past twelve months"); and that none of the above engages individuals as much as when they know and like particular works ("I like rap" or "I've been to two rap concerts this year" may signify "I like Jean Grae" as much as it might "I like Beyoncé"⁶). A last way of ascertaining whether or not an individual is "truly committed" in a particular taste would consist in associating one of the above mentioned variables (the most coherent being participation practices) with modes of consumption, that is, if the numbers do not become so reduced as to no longer make sense. For example: if an individual often listens to such and such musical genre *and* listens to music while doing nothing else or listens to background music while working or ironing, or if an individual prefers action films *and* watches films on television, DVD, or at the movie theater.

However, it is also possible that this quest for authentic tastes – an individual being "truly committed" – is unrealistic or erroneous. On the one hand, real cultural practice depends on concrete accessibility. To be sure, if an individual asserts that she "likes karaoke" but only goes once a year, this assertion of taste may well only be "declarative" ("not very committed", "inauthentic"). But it could also mean that the individual lives far away from a karaoke outlet, or that he is a single parent with small children, or that she has been unemployed for a long time and has limited disposable funds; in these examples, the individual would go to karaoke more often *if she could*. It therefore seems reductive to assert that this individual's declaration

⁶ The first is a female "underground" rapper, recognized as such by her peers, and the second is a female singer classified as "international pop" and "R'n'B", both categories often conflated with rap.

of love for karaoke is false, simply because she rarely partakes in it. Instead, should we not design the questionnaire in such a way as to present the individual with a fictional situation in which all musical offerings would be equally accessible to her? The aim would be to provide the individual with a scenario in which she could express taste dispositions more directly, “as if” it were a kind of pure choice, one free of “extrinsic” constraints.

On the other hand, the distinctive or identity-based dimension of taste may in fact be better expressed through abstract professions than through assessments of concrete practice, despite the risk of equating very different degrees of engagement – from intense passion to superficial displays. The primary object of research therefore would not be the relationship between a population and a given musical genre but its relationship to the *relational space* of the musical genres presented in the questionnaire (genres which of course we assume have meaning for each individual of that population). The fact of liking or disliking rap is only meaningful when it is put into relation with that of liking or disliking other musical genres. Understanding Jean Grae or Beyoncé as “rap” artists is not, from this perspective, particularly harmful to the analysis. What is salient here is the individual's claim to like rap, a genre that she distinguishes from classical music, hard rock, jazz, and folk music. And that claim does not seem so different, in terms of the reasons motivating such an assertion, from a true rap connoisseur's claims to like rap. In any case, such are the limits of a statistical questionnaire, which necessarily contains a limited number of questions, which only accounts for claims regarding artificial situations, and whose generic nomenclature could be debated *ad nauseam*, since there is no consensus on it in the social world. Yet taking these abstract professions seriously is also a way of taking advantage of these limitations: since all we have here are professions – or even self-fashioning vis-à-vis the interviewer – taste as a distinctive identity marker is the only thing that we can hope to measure and therefore analyze. What is more, from this relational perspective, the variable “distaste” becomes particularly salient, since it more literally expresses the individual's point of view or relationship with the tastes of others – Pierre Bourdieu suggestively synthesized such a relational logic: “tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes of the tastes of others” (Bourdieu, 1984b, p. 56-57).

Each form of reasoning detailed above, as well as the resulting indicators, has its strengths and limitations. But these strengths can be enhanced and the limitations minimized if one considers the different available indicators jointly. To be sure, the indicators give heterogeneous results in terms of frequency, divergence, and rank for each musical genre,

which makes it impossible to construct an aggregate indicator. However, there do exist statistical tools that – if we agree to work in continuity with the relational and distinctive model of taste – allow us to consider these different indicators together. One advantage of Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) is that it allows us to situate individuals vis-à-vis one another in function of their replies to *several* questions. This is due to the multidimensionality of this method (the joint consideration of a large number of variables)⁷. We can therefore observe the distribution of taste dispositions for each musical genre in such a way as to account for all of their forms of expression (for example, the five types of indicators presented above), and even in such a way as to measure the relative correlations between each musical genre and each form of expression related to taste.

3. Choosing a standard of measurement: Regarding scales of legitimacy

Once a taste indicator is chosen, the act of measuring eclecticism “by composition” in a given population implies organizing these tastes according to classes of cultural legitimacy. That is the only condition whereby more or less heterogeneous taste profiles can appear. Here, we are getting to a crucial step, one that entails the use of a scale that hierarchizes several distinct levels of legitimacy. However, this step is rarely empirically constructed; rarely is it the subject of interrogation and debate. For most sociologists, the task of classifying cultural practices into the categories of highbrow and lowbrow (and perhaps even middlebrow) seems straightforward. It is thus taken as a given rubric, something established prior to statistical analysis and that does not necessitate methodological examination. Yet one only has to notice the differences between scales used by different researchers to understand that this creates a major operational problem, together with a host of decisive choices that must be made between different ways of articulating theoretical hypotheses and methodological options.

3.1. Scale: An *a priori* or to be constructed from data?

Our focus in this part will deal exclusively with papers in which a scale of cultural legitimacy has been *empirically and methodically* constructed, since those represent the only cases which can be reproduced and thus fully discussed. In effect, many articles construct *a priori* scales;

⁷ For a complete description of this method, see Le Roux and Rouanet, 2004.

in other words, they develop them prior to any analysis of statistical findings used to objectify taste. That is not necessarily a problem, since it would allow us to dispense with the homology hypothesis that underlies “empirical” modes of construction⁸. Indeed, rather than to indirectly establish the relative legitimacy of various tastes based on what some consider to be its cause, others to be its effect, and still others to be a simple indication of it – that is, the status or social position of their corresponding audiences (a homology between the legitimacy scale and the social ladder) –, it would be possible to establish it based on the normative structures that produce it (or contribute to making it, or officialize it, etc. – these kinds of nuances are the topic of wide-ranging theoretical debates): the state and its cultural policies or system of education; the media (and its cultural critics) or organizations that market cultural offerings; or even artists themselves, when they have the power to impose their evaluations among their peers. To our knowledge, there exists no study that constructs an *a priori* and methodical scale of cultural legitimacy in this fashion. What does exist is a sociological intuition that has at best been made explicit, which makes it possible to see the extent to which those initial choices affect all subsequent results.

An “empirical” construction of cultural legitimacy scales is grounded, for its part, on a homology between the distribution of cultural tastes and social positions: tastes are organized according to the position in the social space of those expressing them. But there are myriad ways to express such positions (and therefore to measure them statistically) and to establish homologous correspondences between positions and tastes. After describing these issues, we will present several methods that we applied to the same data set (PCF2008), and the ways in which we varied taste indicators and indicators of position. Some were borrowed from surveys on musical eclecticism, some from other surveys that have never been applied to cultural practices⁹. Finally, we will illustrate problems that arise in the case of “middlebrow” tastes, which shall lead to a discussion of the discretization of scales.

⁸ Often in a weakened version, one limited to the cross tabulation of two variables, with respect to Pierre Bourdieu's model of structural homology (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]). We would also like to point out that the homology hypothesis is sometimes reduced to a hyper-legitimist reading, which attributes to Pierre Bourdieu the notion that the members of the dominant classes *exclusively* display legitimate tastes (and not simply *more often* than those of the middle and lower classes), a notion that is easy to refute (see for example Chan and Goldthorpe, 2007). Yet as early as 1979, Pierre Bourdieu began to speak, for example, of the “*forced eclecticism*” of the new petite bourgeoisie, or “*the elective eclecticism of aesthetes who use the mixing of genres and the subversion of hierarchies as an opportunity to manifest their all-powerful aesthetic disposition*” (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], p. 329).

⁹ Due to a lack of space, only one part of the scales obtained shall be presented here; but all of the results are available through the authors.

3.2. Which indicator of position?

A hierarchy of social positions from which to organize cultural tastes can be established with the help of variables that indicate economic resources (revenue, assets), cultural resources (degrees), occupational status (PCS in France); and from one or multiple variables (along with, sometimes in addition, information on social origin, sex, age, housing situation, etc.). Figure 1 organizes ten musical genres according to the highest degree earned, household income, social origin (PCS of the father), and occupational status (PCS)¹⁰. The object here is not to discuss the comparative merits of the different indicators but to show that they produce variations as well as regularities. In particular, the category of “hard rock and metal” sometimes occupies a very elevated position and at other times a more average one; similarly, according to the scale, one set of genres occupying a middle position can appear or disappear. These two observations alone, and regarding only four of the numerous scales tested (more than fifty), underscore the idea that the choice of an indicator of position impacts all subsequent study and analysis. Such a choice must therefore be made advisedly, and it must be explicitly justified by the hypotheses that inform it.

Figure 1 – Scales of musical genres listened to most often and according for different indicators of social position



Legend: int. pop = international pop; Fr. songs and pop = French songs and French pop; trad. = traditional music

Note : Scales were standardized and lines were added in order to facilitate comparison. Scales are strictly independent of each other. The numbers from -2 to 2 have no intrinsic signification.

¹⁰ From the same statistical method, which is described later under the name “DA”.

As in the case of taste indicators, one can minimize the effects of choices related to indicators of position by constructing them with several variables and conducting a Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), which is multidimensional in nature – thereby allowing us to construct spaces with several dimensions and observe their respective effects on the distribution of tastes (for example, the effect of the composition of capital in addition to its general volume (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979])). This can be achieved, for example, by constructing a MCA from several active variables of position and “synthesizing” into a final indicator of position the individual points on an axis that can be interpreted as corresponding to the general volume of capital (probably the first axis).

3.3. Comparison of methods and their principles

We chose seven modes of empirical construction, as pertain to scales of cultural legitimacy, that were applied to variables related to the most frequently consumed genres in the PCF2008 survey¹¹. The first four were explicitly constructed and implemented in the literature dedicated to eclecticism; the fifth and sixth used common techniques such as cross tabulation and Multiple Correspondence Analysis; the last was taken from studies whose objects were outside the field of cultural practice.

- The “Peterson” method utilizes a log-multiplicative association model based on a table that crosses musical genres and professional groups (Peterson and Simkus, 1992). This statistical technique allows the researcher to rank the two variables simultaneously by calculating a score for each of their categories (Goodman, 1985; Becker and Clogg, 1989). Here, the focus is on scoring musical genres and then using those scores to create a scale.

- The “Van Eijck” method uses a hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA) based on a table that crosses musical genres with degrees earned (Van Eijck, 2001). In order to compare it to the others, a continuous scale has to be obtained¹², so we calculate the same cross tabulation and then use it as input for a Correspondence Analysis (CA). The coordinates of the musical genres on the first axis of this CA is interpreted as reflecting a legitimacy score.

¹¹ The results on preferred genre and genres never listened to can be requested from the authors.

¹² The issue of discretization will be discussed later.

- The “Prieur et al” method uses Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) based on 10 socio-demographic variables¹³ (Prieur et al., 2008). The first axis produced by the MCA scatters simultaneously indicators of both cultural and economic capital, and is thus selected as an indicator of cultural legitimacy. The musical genres are then used as supplementary variables on this axis and their coordinates produce legitimacy scores.
- The “Warde-GayoCal” method establishes the ratio between the percentage of those with degrees and the percentage of those without any educational qualification, among those who like a given musical genre. In this case, genres are divided into three classes, with rates of 0 to 1 (lowbrow), 1 to 2 (middlebrow), 2+ (highbrow) (Warde and Gayo-Cal, 2009¹⁴). In order to compare continuous scales prior to their discretization, we only retain the first step (the legitimacy score for each genre corresponds to the calculated ratio)¹⁵.
- The “bivariate” method simply consists in intersecting musical genres with a category of socio-demographic variables, which are taken as indicators of position: for degree earned, either “university diploma” or “no diploma”; for profession, either “senior managers, company heads in structures with ten employees or more, and upper-level intellectual professions”, or “manual workers”. Regardless of the chosen category, the proportion of individuals – within the sub-population defined by that category – that claims to listen often to a given genre is what decides that musical genre's score. For what follows, we will refer to the senior managers category.
- The “music MCA” method consists in conducting an MCA, with the musical genres as active variables. The first axis in the space of musical taste almost directly corresponds with degrees earned and occupational status (used as supplementary variables). We therefore interpret it as expressing cultural legitimacy and note the coordinates of each musical genre on the axis as a legitimacy score¹⁶.
- Finally, we have drawn inspiration from Discriminant Analysis, a technique used by Louis Chauvel with regard to social stratification and household spending (Chauvel,

¹³ These variables describe cultural capital, economic capital, social origin, and occupational status.

¹⁴ Also used in Purhonen et al., 2010.

¹⁵ We also reproduced this logic in relational terms for occupations (the relationship, for each musical genre, between the proportion of senior managers and that of manual workers).

¹⁶ Here the logic is similar to the “Prieur et al.” method, but its point of departure is the construction of taste spaces instead of that of social spaces. In other words, the active variables become supplementary and vice-versa.

1999)¹⁷. This method (which we will call “DA”) allows researchers, based on the results of an MCA of musical taste, to pinpoint the direction within the multidimensional space of taste that best scatters the categories of a supplementary variable (in this case, level of education)¹⁸. We then record the coordinates of the musical genres distributed over this new axis as legitimacy scores. This method resembles the last one, since it is also based on MCA, but it allows for greater precision in the construction of a scale, since it does not simply make use of a preexisting axis but constructs the “best” axis.

In terms of the position indicator, it is important to note that all of these methods used only one variable, with the exception of the “Prieur et al.” method. For the others: Peterson and Simkus (1992) chose the variable “professional group”, Van Eijck (2001) and Warde and Gayo-Cal (2009) the variable “diploma”, and the others tested several socio-demographic variables one by one.

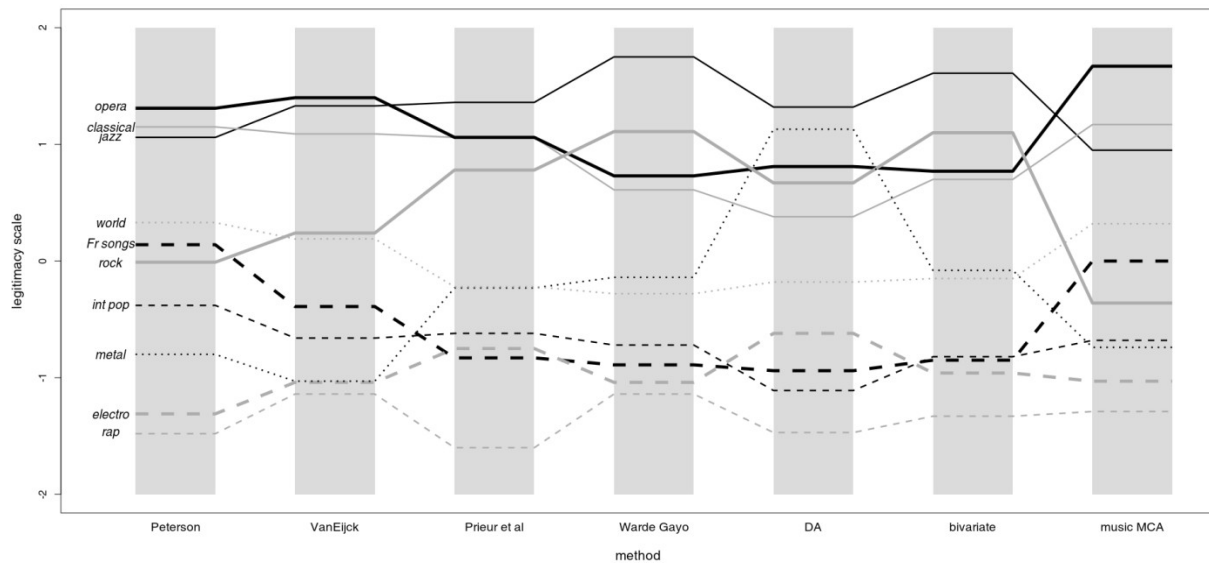
3.4. General pattern, local variation

The choice of one method over another has direct consequences on the resulting scale of legitimacy. Figure 2 represents the seven methods described in the previous section as applied to the taste indicator “genres listened to most often” (several answers).

Figure 2 – Cultural legitimacy scales of the musical genres most often listened to according to various methods of scale construction

¹⁷ This statistical technique is described in Saporta, 1990.

¹⁸ Other variables of position were also tested: income, housings, real estate assets, social origin (PCS of the father), occupational status (PCS), age, and sex.



Legend: int. pop = international pop; French songs and pop = French songs and French pop; trad. = traditional music

Note : Scales were standardized and lines were added in order to facilitate comparison. Scales are strictly independent of each other. The numbers from -2 to 2 have no intrinsic signification.

At first visual impression, the results look both like a glass half full and a glass half empty. On the one hand, we see emerge what appears to be a pattern, or general profile, among the different scales. Two groups of musical genres very clearly maintain the same general positions (at the top and at the bottom): jazz, classical music, and opera are consistently on top, and can therefore be described as legitimate genres; “international pop and R’n’B” and especially “electronic music and techno” and “rap and hip hop” are consistently at the bottom, and can thus be qualified as illegitimate genres.

On the other hand, none of the scales manages to organize *all* of the genres in a strictly identical manner, and some genres circulate between the top, middle, and bottom of the figure according to no apparent pattern – the general figure that varies all of the parameters, i.e. the modes of calculating different variables of position (degrees, income, etc.) and different taste variables (genres listened to most often, preferred genre, genres never listened to), is, from this perspective, even more impressive¹⁹. To illustrate these variations, let us take a closer look at the figure's intermediary region: there we see genres of average legitimacy appear and disappear. The “Peterson” and “music MCA” methods create a region that includes three “middle” genres, which are relatively distant from the others. The same is true in the “Van Eijck” method, though to a lesser degree. These genres are “pop and rock”, “French songs and

¹⁹ It can be requested from the authors.

French pop”, and “world music and traditional music”. For the others, only these latter appear in the “middle” region throughout. “French songs and French pop” are downgraded by the other methods, and “pop and rock” upgraded. “Hard rock and metal”, for its part, is “average” in the “Prieur et al.”, “Warde-GayoCal”, and “bivariate” methods, though enters the highbrow region with the “DA” method.

The inclusion of a “middle” region has an enormous impact on the measure of eclecticism. When it is present, it can be neutralized either by redistributing the genres it affects to the top and bottom – in micro-distances that make this a problematic choice – or by eliminating those genres from the analysis (Lahire 2004). The latter solution runs the risk of impoverishing the study (respondents chose a given genre with the idea that the list they had in front of them was unabridged; would they have made the same choices otherwise?). The “middle” region can also be kept for the subsequent measurements (this category is commonly called “middlebrow”), though this raises other issues: the number of possible combinations increases, and one must choose which should be interpreted as “eclectic”, since the combinations of “highbrow and middlebrow” and “middlebrow and lowbrow” do not mean the same thing as the combination of “highbrow and lowbrow”.

The existence of intermediary positions on the legitimacy scale of taste raises many questions, as it may have multiple explanations. Table 2 represents those surveyed who claimed to listen often to “rock and pop”, “French songs and French pop”, or “world music and traditional music”, according to occupational groups. These three genres are most often located in the middle of the legitimacy scale (and sometimes all three, as we saw in Figure 2 with the “Van Eijck”, “Peterson”, and “music MCA” methods). Each genre represents a very different social profile. If French songs and French pop sometimes find themselves in the middle of Figure 2, it is less because they are specifically associated with middle social positions and more because they are consumed at all levels of the social space, and to a very similar degree in each: these are what Coulangeon (2013) has called “omnibus” genres. Inversely, the two other genres are more specifically associated with middle managers, and to a lesser extent to the senior managers category, with world music appearing to be less divisive than rock (i.e. the differences between social classes are less pronounced).

Table 2. “Middle” tastes and occupational groups

PCS	Fr. pop	World	Rock
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Farmers	62.3	18.9	8.2
craftspeople, etc.	65.8	20.8	22.8
senior managers	58.3	27.4	30.2
middle managers	65.7	28.5	34.0
Clerks	71.0	23.2	20.4
manual workers	62.7	19.6	22.6

Legend: Fr. pop = French songs and French pop; world = world music and traditional music; rock = rock and pop; craftspeople, etc. = craftspeople, merchants, and company directors; senior managers = senior managers, company heads in structures with ten employees or more, and upper-level intellectual professions

62.3% of farmers claim to listen often to French pop, 22.6% of manual workers to listen often to rock.

The case of “middle” genres is thus illustrative of a larger problem. By using a methodical approach to indicators of taste and position, we can obtain an empirically founded scale of cultural legitimacy, one solidly grounded in previously determined and explicitly stated hypotheses regarding each of the choices made. But one last choice remains: Would it be better to conserve a continuous scale, which would be less easy to handle but more correct, since it would preserve relative differences in legitimacy between tastes; or should it be discretized, which would make it more adapted to statistical analysis but would also risk a considerable loss of information and drastic oversimplification? A principle of methodological pragmatism argues for the second option. The question, then, is how to go about discretizing the scale: How many classes (the choice of two or three classes is not without consequences, as we have seen); and from which given thresholds or calculations of distance, since none of the methods distributes the genres into “straightforward” classes?

Warde and Gayo-Cal (2009) and Prieur et al. (2008), who have respectively chosen scales with three and two degrees of legitimacy, have opted, for example, for the *a priori* establishment of thresholds, and have presented this choice as being intuitively reasonable – and they have done so convincingly. For the former, the ratio between those with a degree and those without is discretized around the thresholds 1 and 2 (0 to 1, 1 to 2, more than 2); for the latter, all of the categories with a positive coordinate on the axis of the MCA measuring volume of capital are coded as legitimate, and the others as illegitimate. Inversely, Van Eijck makes use of a technique of Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (Van Eijck, 2001): categories of

taste are distributed according to relative distance (the categories that are closest to one another and farthest from the others are assembled together).

Peterson and Simkus's article makes use of the same type of scores but interprets them without using a procedure of automatic classification – and with a surprising result: they see a “large gap” (Peterson and Simkus 1992, p. 159) between musicals and jazz on the one hand (both highbrow, along with classical and folk), and *mood/middle-of-the-road music and big band dance music* (middlebrow) on the other, although a simple reading of table 2 (p. 157) would show that jazz ought to be classed in the category of *middlebrow* tastes. In effect, musicals are, in descending order on the legitimacy scale, separated from jazz by 0.17, and jazz is separated from mood/middle-of-the-road music by 0.07. Only when these calculations are remade for white respondents does jazz “rise” again to the category of legitimate tastes. That is perhaps a good reason to code jazz as highbrow, but it also implies a series of “strong” hypotheses on the nature of legitimacy. Statistical results are but clues and elements of proof. And the choice of basing an analysis on indicators that have been empirically constructed, and not over-insisting on strictly upholding them, is probably the best policy. In other words, one's interpretation can, in all legitimacy, diverge *a little* from the numbers, that is, when the hypotheses underlying this choice have been made explicit for readers to see and discuss.

4. How to measure omnivorism?: Regarding indicators of eclecticism

After choosing a taste indicator and constructing a scale of legitimacy, one must then measure omnivorism. Here again a series of choices emerge that combine theoretical and methodological issues.

4.1. Space of possibles or individual indicators?

The first choice concerns the entity to which eclecticism is attributed: an individual or a group. Indeed, Van Eijck has criticized Peterson's first works for diagnosing a rise in eclecticism from measurements that deal with occupational groups and not the individuals who make up those groups (Van Eijck, 2000 & 2001). Observing the association of a given group with the consumption of such and such cultural genres does not tell us which part of the individuals that make up that group actually associates these genres: it is possible that a non-negligible portion of individuals within the group consume only one of these genres, and

others another one of these genres, to the extent that all of those genres are represented within the group. Indeed, Peterson has since accepted this criticism and has taken it into account in his subsequent work. This “ecological fallacy” could lead to an overestimation of the number of omnivores within a given population. Cultural eclecticism, therefore, can only be measured at an individual scale. It can only exist if individuals themselves cumulate several tastes of different legitimacies.

Nevertheless, it can be worthwhile to measure omnivorism at the scale of social groups, that is, if one assumes that all of the individual tastes within a group are equivalent to the space of *statistically probable* tastes within the group, *and therefore* to the space of *objectively possible tastes* for each of its members – but do not reflect the array of their real tastes. Another hypothesis would identify that space of possibles as a structural constraint with respect to a more or less tacit social norm – for example, one can assume that an individual might be incited to imitate his or her peers when they continually manifest a particular taste for something. The array of tastes practiced within a group can therefore be interpreted as a normative model for each of the individuals that make up that group (or for all of the individuals of a social space, if we consider that this model acts as a reference for other groups; for example, the idea that, even if a majority of its members do not adhere to it, the lifestyle that is more probable for the bourgeoisie than for other classes acts as a standard of cultural legitimacy that gets imposed on other classes as well). With respect to omnivorism, one can perhaps make use of this type of measure in order to establish the relative importance of possible taste spectrums within each group – but not, then, to establish the degree to which each group is or is not eclectic. In order to do that one must first determine if each individual is eclectic, and to what degree.

4.2. What is it to be eclectic?

There are two primary definitions of eclecticism "by composition". The first was formulated in 1992 by Peterson and has been used by a number of researchers since to designate a form of openness or tolerance toward illegitimate practices by those who participate in legitimate practices. These individuals express having tastes for musical genres of varying degrees of legitimacy. The second is rarer and more restrictive, since it defines eclecticism in opposition to snobbery and through an inclusion of distastes (Prieur et al., 2008), which is to say, by

mobilizing a distinctive and antagonistic logic of taste distribution rather than a simple idea of a socially unequal distribution²⁰: snobs are those who not only exclusively appreciate legitimate practices, but also reject illegitimate practices (by asserting their distaste for them). And eclectics are those who appreciate legitimate practices, though without asserting any sort of distaste for illegitimate practices (whether they "positively" appreciate them or not).

We attempted to measure the proportion of "compositionally" eclectic individuals in the PCF2008 study by applying the two above definitions and either including or excluding "middle" musical genres, as well as varying the threshold that defines individuals with legitimate tastes (having at least one or at least two legitimate tastes). We made use of Peterson and Simkus's scale of legitimacy (1992): cross tabulating the PCS and genres most consumed, whose scores were calculated with a log-multiplicative model (see figure 1²¹). The following table presents a synthesis of our results²²:

Table 3. Snobs and omnivores according to combinations of choices

Definition of eclecticism and snobbism ²³		Definition of an individual with a legitimate taste	% eclectics	% snobs
From tastes (Peterson)	Eclectics often listen to 1 illegitimate genre at least	At least 1 legitimate genre listened to often	13.4	22
		At least 2 legitimate genres listened to often	5.2	9.6
	Eclectics	At least 1 legitimate genre listened to often	30.9	4.6

²⁰ The distinction here is analogous to the one that Erik Olin Wright (2002) highlights between the Weberian conception of class relations (unequal distribution of economic resources and related "life opportunities") and the Marxist conception of class relations (a relationship of exploitation in which exploiters appropriate the work of those exploited, and are thus – and this is the analogy – dependent upon the exploited in order to make a profit.)

²¹ Legitimate genres: jazz, classical music, and opera. "Middle" genres: pop and rock, world music and traditional music, French songs and French pop. Illegitimate genres: international pop, R'n'B, hard rock and metal, rap and hip hop, electronic music and techno.

²² See appendix for detailed results.

²³ Peterson defines eclecticism first, and snobbism by contrast; while Prieur et al. define snobbism first, and eclecticism by contrast. Here, "snobs" are defined as individuals who do not listen to any illegitimate (or "middle") genres in Peterson's definition, or who claim never to listen to any illegitimate (or "middle") genre in Prieur et al.'s definition. The "eclectics" are defined as individuals who listen to at least one illegitimate (or "middle") genre in Peterson's definition, or who don't claim never to listen to any illegitimate (or "middle") genre (whether they positively appreciate them or not) in Prieur et al.'s definition.

	often listen to 1 illegitimate or “middle” genre at least	At least 2 legitimate genres listened to often	12.9	1.9
From distastes (Prieur et al.)	Snobs distaste 1 illegitimate genre at least	At least 1 legitimate genre listened to often	4.8	30.7
		At least 2 legitimate genres listened to often	1.9	12.8
	Snobs distaste 1 illegitimate or “middle” genre at least	At least 1 legitimate genre listened to often	4.2	31.3
		At least 2 legitimate genres listened to often	1.7	13.1

Note: The proportions of omnivores that resulted from strictly following either Peterson or Prieur et al.'s choices are respectively 12.9% and 1.9%.

First observation: depending on the chosen combination, the proportion of snobs and of eclectics varied between 1.7% and 30.9%. In addition, if one accounts for *tastes* for illegitimate genres as opposed to *distastes* for them (respectively Peterson and Prieur et al.'s choices), the results include noticeably more eclectics (between 4.8% and 30.9% vs. between 1.7 and 4.8%). Next, combining "middle" genres with illegitimate genres results in more eclectics than does their exclusion in Peterson's definition (since an individual must possess at least one of these tastes), and fewer in Prieur et al.'s definition (since an individual needs only not to reject any of these tastes). There are more marked differences in the first case. What is more, one notices that eclectics are only more numerous than snobs when Peterson's method is employed and when illegitimate and "middle" tastes are combined. Finally, establishing an individual taste based on a threshold of “one genre listened to often” is less restrictive than when it is based on a threshold of two genres, and the proportion of eclectics and of snobs is automatically between two and three times larger.

4.3. And, in the end, is omnivorousness all that widespread?

We will now reproduce the method used by Prieur et al. (2008) to test the idea of omnivorousness in their study on Aalborg²⁴. Indeed, they make explicit the choices made at

²⁴ This method uses indicators and techniques that combine several types of taste variables in order to construct an indicator of taste, as well as several variables of position in order to construct an indicator of social position. On the one hand, these choices mobilize an “ontological” hypothesis whereby indicators are grounded in indices of unobservable realities that “exceed” their expression in observable indices. More specific hypotheses ensue: taste is expressed differently depending on individuals and their various properties, to the extent that a multiplication of types of available indices would be useful (abstract

each of the three stages studied here and end with an individual indicator of omnivorism. It is also one of the most challenging approaches for the omnivorism assumption since it radically calls into question its importance: in Aalborg, there would be only 2.7% of omnivores. The scale of legitimacy was constructed using two degrees of legitimacy (positive and negative) from an MCA of the position indicators. Among the cultural indicators used as supplementary variables²⁵, all those appearing on the "positive" side of the axis measuring volume of capital were coded as legitimate, and the others as illegitimate²⁶. Next, we distinguished between tastes and distastes. More precisely, we counted the "high" and "low" categories chosen by each individual, along with the "high" and "low" categories that each individual either did not choose or avoided²⁷. The distribution of both the number of *chosen* legitimate tastes and the number of *avoidances* of illegitimate tastes were obtained in order to mobilize a hypothesis of "distinctive" snobbery (also defined by distastes for common practices) and not simply "exclusive" snobbery (defined solely by legitimate tastes). These two groups were then discretized into three classes of equivalent size, so that we could isolate the groups most defined by adhesion and/or avoidance. Table 4 presents the results of this method.

Table 4. "Strong" eclecticism: Prieur et al.'s method (2008) applied to PCF2008

%		Number of chosen legitimate tastes		
		0 to 10	10 to 17	17 to 44
Number of avoidances of illegitimate tastes	17 to 28	41.6	45	26.9
	28 to 31	35.6	30.3	28.8
	31 to 43	22.8	24.7	44.3
Total		100	100	100

Prieur et al. defined their indicator of omnivorousness by cross tabulating the two results:

preference, visiting practices, distaste, knowledge, etc.); and the social position is the result of all of the capital that an individual possesses *in relation* to the general distribution of capital within the social space (Bourdieu 1984a). In this way, combining an indicator of cultural capital (degree) and an indicator of its length of acquisition (mother's degree), an indicator of economic capital (revenue), an indicator of occupational status (PCS) and an indicator of its length of acquisition (father's PCS) seems like a minimum requirement considering our data.

²⁵ Following Prieur et al. who include several dimensions of lifestyles, for this last test, we added reading practices, film habits, television consumption, hobbies, artistic and athletic endeavors, outings and visits, to musical tastes.

²⁶ Our hypothesis is thus that legitimacy is more generally prescribed by groups with the most forms of capital, and is then related to the general volume of capital.

²⁷ We chose to reproduce the ambiguity of the term "avoidance" in order to facilitate the comparison.

omnivores are those who adhere the most to legitimate tastes (17 to 44 categories) and avoid illegitimate tastes the least (17 to 28 categories) – *i.e.* 26.9% of individuals manifesting legitimate tastes, and approximately 8% of the total population (respectively 8.1% of Aalborg residents possessing legitimate tastes, and 2.7% of the total population, in Prieur et al. 2008). As was the case in three quarters of table 3's configurations, here omnivores are less numerous than snobs, and they constitute a small minority not only of the population, but also of the highbrows. It is therefore difficult to assert that an opposition between omnivores and univores has replaced the opposition between snobby tastes and common tastes.

Nevertheless, omnivores represent one quarter of individuals with legitimate tastes. Indeed, they are not exactly a negligible minority. One might wonder, then, if they are more numerous than before. In order to do that, we have chosen to use Peterson's measure, since its exclusive emphasis on an individual's adherence to legitimate and illegitimate tastes (with “middle” tastes aggregated into these two groups) tends to exaggerate the phenomenon. As we have seen (table 3), it produced an omnivore population of 12.9% in 2008 (snobs: 1.9%). In fact, if we apply the same method to the results of a study on French cultural practices that was conducted in 1973²⁸, we notice a clear augmentation: then, omnivores only made up 1.5% of the total population (snobs made up 1.4% and thus hardly rose in number).

Yet, these findings point to the following issue: the period in question corresponds to a “boom in musical consumption” (Donnat, 1997), from which “middle” genres primarily benefited. In fact, in 1973, 11% of the population listened to “middle” genres, and 77% did in 2008. Meanwhile, listening habits for legitimate and illegitimate genres hardly rose in frequency (from 26% to 35% and from 40% to 46% respectively). At the same time, the percentage of persons claiming not to listen to any musical genre decreased from 34% to 9%. Does the rise in omnivorousness not, then, in reality reflect the general rise in music consumption – primarily affecting “middle” or “omnibus” genres²⁹ – rather than an increase in tolerance to illegitimate tastes? In fact, when we only account for legitimate and illegitimate tastes (and exclude “middle” genres), the percentage of omnivores has markedly more moderate growth

²⁸ Surveys on cultural practices in France are conducted regularly since 1973, using comparable questionnaires. For further information, see : <http://www.pratiquesculturelles.culture.gouv.fr/>. For a thorough study about the evolution of musical tastes based on these data, see Coulangeon 2010.

²⁹ In particular, French songs and French pop, which 64% of the population regularly consumed in 2008 (58% of senior managers and 71% of clerks) vs. 34% in 1973. In 1973, “pop” was mentioned by 10% of those surveyed, and in 2008 “pop, rock” was mentioned by 28%; “traditional music” (*musiques folkloriques*) was mentioned by 4% in 1973, and “world music and traditional music” by 25% in 2008.

(from 1.1% to 4.8%), which is not the case for snobs (1.8% to 9.6%).

To finish with, we focus on the sub-population of “voracious highbrows”: those with legitimate musical tastes (i.e., those who often listen to at least two legitimate genres) and at the same time who are sufficiently voracious to perhaps be eclectic (in other words, those who listen often to at least three genres). We notice the unsurprising predominance of omnivores, since the list of legitimate genres is more limited than in the case of other genres (four in 1973 and three in 2008). More interestingly, however, if we combine illegitimate and “middle” genres, the percentage of omnivores among this sub-population of voracious highbrows increases from 91% to 97% between 1973 and 2008. And if we exclude “middle” genres altogether, the percentage of omnivores diminishes from 86% to 72%: omnivore voracious, highbrows are shrinking in number!

5. Conclusion

Beyond the issues of methodological reflexivity that we have raised here, we find omnivorousness to be a secondary phenomenon at best and at worst a marginal one – statistically speaking, at least. However, eclecticism seems to have become a norm of dominant legitimacy, an effective language used to assert social status, even though its impact on real tastes and cultural practices remains rather minimal – which could be the topic of another paper³⁰. One might, then, legitimately wonder “why it works”; why has omnivorousness so effectively captured the attention of the academic world?

A first answer is that omnivorousness seems fairly easy to explore within the parameters of large surveys. In terms of participation: it can be operationalized; questions on genres can be asked; it offers a dependent variable that is relatively easy to manipulate (Savage *et al*, 2005). Van Eijck even recognizes the limitations of these categories (for him, they may be “virtually meaningless”), but that they at least have the advantage of producing mostly comparable results from one survey to another, and at an international scale (Van Eijck, 2000). At the same time, as we have argued, there is a high diversity of approaches to operationalize the

³⁰ From this perspective, the work of William Weber (1975; 2010) can be seen to relativize the novelty: for centuries, the learned groups has been torn between a hedonist model (an eclectic taste for the new and a high level of accessibility) and an ascetic model (a purist taste for the past and an ascetic disposition), with one gaining dominance over the other in function mostly of the power relations between the cultivated and economic fractions of the dominant class.

omnivore hypothesis – and this diversity would probably be even higher if we could investigate stylistic distinctions within genres or individual works and artists, (see introduction). It may explain why the debates are still so pervasive more than twenty years after the first Peterson's articles.

In addition to this pragmatic explanation, it is also worth noting one of scientific competition. For Warde and Gayo-Cal (2009), omnivorousness acts as a kind of middle ground between the idea of a perfect homology between social classes and tastes, and that of social and aesthetic individualization. It can perhaps therefore satisfy both Bourdieu's critics, who use it to call into question the theoretical model in *Distinction*, and those who are more partial to Bourdieu and consider that contemporary cultural capital can be characterized by its omnivorous orientation, which is associated with a more mobile group of "cosmopolitan" references (Savage and Gayo, 2011).

Finally, other authors have rather provocatively suggested that the idea of omnivorousness creates a more favorable image – more tolerant, liberal, flexible, mobile, and fluid – of the most privileged classes, a group that of course includes the researchers themselves (Prieur et al., 2008). If we assert that eclecticism has become a dominant norm (although a non-exclusive one) of cultural legitimacy, then we find ourselves in the following paradoxical situation: researchers, who have internalized this norm, depict the social world as though the social group to which they belong were the legitimate model, thereby transforming a false empirical statement (or at least an overstated one) into a genuine legitimist injunction.

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Appendix

Eclecticism according to Peterson's 1992 method

Table A.1 - Excluding “middle” genres (%)

# of highbrow genres listened to often	# of lowbrow genres listened to often					
	0	1	2	3	4	Total
0	32.1	21.1	8.6	2.3	0.4	64.6
1	12.4	5.9	1.6	0.7	0.1	20.6
2	7.6	2.5	0.8	0.4	0.1	11.3
3	2.0	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.3	3.5
Total	54.1	30.3	11.1	3.6	0.9	100.0

Table A.2 - Aggregation of “middle” and illegitimate genres (Peterson's choices) (%)

# of highbrow genres listened to often	# of “middle” or lowbrow genres listened to often								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
0	8.8	21.7	18.3	11.0	3.4	1.0	0.2	0.1	64.6
1	2.6	6.9	6.0	2.8	1.3	0.6	0.3	0.0	20.6
2	1.6	3.9	2.9	1.6	0.8	0.2	0.2	0.0	11.3
3	0.4	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.2	3.5
Total	13.3	33.5	28.1	15.9	6.0	1.9	0.9	0.4	100.0

Eclecticism according to Prieur et al.'s 2008 method

Table A.3 - Excluding “middle” tastes (Prieur et al.'s choices) (%)

# of highbrow genres listened to often	# of lowbrow genres never listened to ^a					
	0	1	2	3	4	Total
0	22.6	19.0	13.3	7.4	2.4	64.6
1	2.8	5.1	5.9	5.2	1.5	20.6
2	1.2	2.4	3.2	3.4	1.2	11.3

3	0.7	0.5	0.8	1.2	0.2	3.5
<i>Total</i>	27.3	27.0	23.2	17.2	5.3	100.0

^a In reality, the question combined an absence of visiting practices with negative preference (distaste): genres “that you never listen to because you know that you do not like them”

Table A.4 - Aggregation of “middle” and illegitimate genres (%)

# of highbrow genres listened to often	# of “middle” or lowbrow genres never listened to ^a								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>Total</i>
0	20.3	17.9	13.2	7.0	4.1	1.7	0.3	0.1	64.6
1	2.5	4.8	5.1	4.4	2.6	1.0	0.2	0.1	20.6
2	1.0	2.3	2.7	2.3	2.1	0.7	0.1	0.0	11.3
3	0.7	0.5	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.1	0.0	0.0	3.5
<i>Total</i>	24.5	25.5	21.8	14.6	9.4	3.5	0.5	0.3	100.0

^a In reality, the question combined an absence of visiting practices with negative preference (distaste): genres “that you never listen to because you know that you do not like them”