# High culture unravelled: A historical and empirical analysis of contrasting logics of cultural hierarchy

*Marcel van den Haak, University of Amsterdam*

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

## Acknowledgements

## Abstract

Debates on the alleged fading of the boundaries between high and low culture can be confusing due to (rarely recognised) conflicting definitions of high culture. Some associate it with classical art of high seniority, civilisation and morality; some with the modern art logic of innovation, originality and form over function; and yet others with an unlikely combination of both. This article aims to contribute to solving this puzzle, firstly by reinterpreting accounts on the sociogenesis of different logics behind high culture, and, secondly, by analysing interview questions asked to randomly selected people in the Netherlands on their perception of high and low culture.

**Keywords:** cultural hierarchy; high culture; low culture; classic art logic; modern art logic

## Introduction

When one speaks – whether it is within academia, the media or the art world – about the 'postmodern' mixing of art forms, or about the broad tastes of so-called 'cultural omnivores', one often speaks of the waning of boundaries between high(brow) and low(brow) culture (sometimes between high and popular culture). But what exactly *is* 'high culture'; to what extent can one define and demarcate this concept? And, when and how did it historically emerge as a separate cultural domain in Western societies? Despite its frequent use, the exact meaning of the concept is not clear, as definitions are not always shared by different actors.

Most sociologists agree that concepts such as high culture cannot be objectively defined, being the socially constructed result of processes of distinction by high status groups in society (Bourdieu 1984). Nevertheless, some do define them by simply attributing certain cultural fields, such as classical music, to this category (e.g. Peterson 1992). Others identify certain 'high art criteria' in order to measure to what extent a specific cultural field is valued as high art by participants in the art world (Baumann 2001; Van Venrooij & Schmutz 2010).

The selection of these criteria is based on their legitimacy in the art world, but there is no consensus on the exact set. Similarly, scholars who analyse the sociogenesis of cultural hierarchy describe different processes in different time periods: some mainly describe a process of civilisation, canonisation and institutionalisation (Levine 1988; DiMaggio 1992), whereas others focus on the emergence of the modern art paradigm, based on principles of aesthetic innovation and form over function (Bourdieu 1996; Lizardo 2008). However, it is almost impossible to combine both views into one coherent concept of high culture.

How one defines and historicises high culture affects to what extent one perceives a blurring of boundaries in the present time. If one perceives high culture as a clearly demarcated domain of certain art forms, then the rise of cultural omnivores, who combine high culture with popular culture, would logically result in the weakening of its boundaries (e.g. Peterson & Kern 1992). If one, on the other hand, perceives high culture as the logical consequence of cultural distinction by high status people, and therefore dynamic in nature, some form of high culture will always endure, even though its content will continuously change. After all, several studies have shown that high status 'omnivores' keep distinguishing themselves from others, but they increasingly do so *within* 'high' and 'low' domains and genres, rather than *between* high and low. This complicates cultural hierarchy as we know it, and it obscures high culture as a clear-cut domain with rigid boundaries.

In this article, I aim to shed light on this confusing matter. I do so in two ways. Firstly, and most importantly, I reinterpret existing literature on the emergence of 'high culture' in Western societies, by trying to merge contrasting historical and sociological analyses of processes of cultural distinction into one coherent story of status struggles (inspired by Elias 2008 [1976]). I argue that the 'modern' logic of art that emerged in the nineteenth century – based on innovation, authenticity, form over function – did not *replace* the previously germinated, and at the time still developing, 'classic' logic of high culture – seniority, civilisation, complexity – but *juxtaposed* it, leading to continuous tensions. Secondly, I analyse interviews on present-day perceptions of cultural hierarchy: how do 'ordinary' (i.e., randomly selected) people in the Netherlands, of different status and age groups, define and perceive high culture? I show that the majority only recognises cultural hierarchy in its 'classic' form, even when applying 'modern' criteria, when *practising* cultural hierarchy themselves, i.e. when distinguishing their tastes from others'. I conclude that contemporary distinctive practices undermine the classic hierarchy, yet without establishing an explicit new hierarchy. This often leads to misunderstandings about the nature of high culture as such, and about its alleged waning.

# Conflicting perceptions of high culture

Before setting out the historical and empirical analyses of 'high culture', I give a broad overview of its conflicting definitions. The first and most common way to classify cultural items as high or low culture is the direct relation with social hierarchy and cultural distinction: high culture is what high-status people (whether based on social class or educational level) prefer, and with which they distinguish themselves from lower status people. This homology thesis has been developed by Bourdieu (1984), who speaks of 'legitimate culture', implying an explicit legitimation by the upper classes, and by legitimising institutions such as universities (p. 26; cf. Baumann 2001). This logic has also been used by several scholars on cultural omnivores, who attribute labels such as 'highbrow' to specific taste clusters derived from survey data (e.g. Van Eijck 2001; Warde 2011; Coulangeon 2013). However, as said, the discussion on the waning of cultural hierarchy was instigated mostly by the increased blending of cultural tastes, particularly by high status people. This development attacked the rigidity of cultural hierarchy. One could state that, *because* high status people do not limit themselves to high culture anymore, high culture loses its significance as a distinct domain.

A second, related way to classify cultural items as high or low culture is by placing entire domains and genres into one of the categories *a priori* (e.g. Peterson 1992; Peterson & Kern 1996; Van Eijck 1998). Classical music, the visual arts, serious literature and stage plays are often classified as high culture; romance novels, comic books, television and local music as low culture. Many fields, such as pop music and film, are usually not placed in one of these categories, but are referred to as 'popular culture', an alternative antonym of high culture. However, this categorisation denies the ambiguity of boundaries as well as the status mobility of cultural objects and genres, and is therefore no longer frequently used by sociologists.

The aforementioned domains are often demarcated on the basis of certain characteristics, which is a third way to rank cultural items and fields hierarchically. Defenders of 'high culture', such as British conservative thinker Roger Scruton (1998), use such criteria to argue their case. Most sociologists would never objectify cultural items this way, as they regard such categories first and foremost as social constructions. Nevertheless, some sociologists do study the application of certain 'high art criteria' in discourse in order to analyse the (changing) status of certain cultural fields or genres, such as Baumann (2001) on film reviews and Van Venrooij and Schmutz (2010) on popular music reviews. However, these authors do not agree on the exact set of criteria, which are not always commensurable either. Below, the four most important criteria that are often mentioned in discourses on high and low culture are briefly discussed.

The most frequently used criterion is complexity. Many argue that one needs 'training' in order to 'learn' how to appreciate or 'decode' a cultural artefact, which, consequently, becomes an 'acquired taste' (Bourdieu 1984: 35; Schulze 1992; Alexander 2003: 226–7). Another aspect of this criterion is the complexity to *produce* an artwork (high craftsmanship) and the intelligence, brilliance or geniality of the artist (Baumann 2001; Van Venrooij & Schmutz 2010). [1][#N1] However, neither of these aspects can be measured objectively. Therefore, high culture's alleged complexity is often downplayed and criticised (Alexander 2003: 226–7), in a similar way to popular culture's alleged *lack* of complexity (De Meyer 2006).

A second important criterion is originality or innovativeness, particularly in aspects of form, which refers to the avant-garde logic of breaking with the traditions of one's predecessors and more conservative contemporaries. Bourdieu (1996) describes it as the most important logic in the cultural field and one of the basic attributes of the élite's 'pure aesthetic' disposition (Bourdieu 1984; cf. Lizardo 2008; Hekkert & Van Wieringen 1996). Its distinctive effects suggest that a taste for innovative art occupies a higher rung on the cultural ladder than a taste for more traditional art and for displayed clichés. However, not all scholars who study 'high art criteria' include this criterion (e.g. Baumann 2001). [2][#N2]

This contrasts with a third characteristic: seniority and sustainability. High culture has stood the 'test of time' (Scruton 2007: 2) or is perceived as 'timeless' (Van Venrooij & Schmutz 2010). However, what does and does not survive the ages is the result of social processes (e.g. Von Hallberg 1984). Moreover, if both classical and innovative art belong to the domain of high culture, neither of the attributes can be its distinctive feature.

A final criterion to distinguish high from low culture, though less often used by sociologists, is morality. High culture is said to show moral superiority, high civilisation or religious virtues (e.g. Scruton 1998: 15–16; 55). Opposite, low culture is often denounced as immoral or vulgar, because it satisfies low senses and it can lead to sexual licentiousness or violent behaviour (cf. Bennett 2000: 14–17). Similar to most other criteria, though, moral values cannot be objectively determined. Furthermore, this criterion would exclude from high culture many iconoclastic and taboo breaking avant-garde artworks that others would include.

Hence, although many actors often speak of 'high culture', whether or not because they observe a blending with low or popular culture, a definite picture of its essence does not emerge. The remainder of this article

aims to unravel, first, the historical emergence of the different logics behind high culture, and, second, ordinary people's present perceptions and definitions of the concept.

# The emergence of two logics of cultural hierarchy

Authors who analysed the sociogenesis of cultural hierarchy, the emergence of high culture as a specific domain, or more specific histories of cultural distinction, described different processes in different time periods, often without referring to each other. Many scholars date such a cultural shift in the second half of the nineteenth century, whereas others trace it back several centuries earlier. This huge gap might be due to the geographic scope of analysis (Europe or the US), or to the focus on specific cultural domains (music, visual arts, literature), but the different interpretations seem to be caused mainly by diverging definitions of high culture. Levine (1988), DiMaggio (1992) and Peterson (1997) described the institutionalisation of a 'civilised' high culture, as compared to mass-produced popular culture, starting in the nineteenth century in the USA. However, this process was preceded by distinctive practices by 'civilised' and 'refined' élites in Europe in earlier centuries, which can also be described as the emergence of cultural hierarchy (e.g. Burke 1978; Kempers 1992; Weber 1992). This 'classic' hierarchisation process is for its part largely ignored by Bourdieu (1984; 1996) and downplayed by Lizardo (2008), who both analyse the emergence of the 'modern' art paradigm by artistic bohemians in the nineteenth century. Conversely, this narrative is largely overlooked by the authors mentioned previously.

Surprisingly, integration of these different but related processes into one coherent analysis of the emergence of high culture in a long-term perspective has, to my knowledge, never been done. [3][#N3] This article aims to fill this gap by unravelling the relation between status distinction and cultural hierarchy, in order to better understand the alleged waning of cultural hierarchy in the second half of the twentieth century and up until today. The analysis comprises the subsequent emergence of, and competition between, different criteria for arts appreciation and hence for cultural distinction and institutionalisation. It is my interpretation of dispersed literature, both sociological and historical, general and specific, on different places, time periods and cultural fields.

# The classic logic of cultural hierarchy

It is difficult to trace back exactly when cultural hierarchy in the Western world first emerged. Social stratification related to the possession of expensive artworks produced by great craftsmen (e.g. Kempers 1992), as well as to divergent degrees of literacy (Burke 1978), is centuries old, but whether there was actually a significant *taste* difference between different strata in society is questionable. Spatial segregation in cultural activities shares a long history, too, but whether élites actually practised social distinction on the basis of such differences, which is essential for the social relevance of cultural hierarchy, is the subject of debate (Lizardo 2008; cf. Burke 1978: 28). [4][#N4]

The classic logic of cultural hierarchy discussed in this section is based on different artistic criteria that élite groups in society increasingly employed for status distinction. Several inter-related processes from the sixteenth century on resulted in a more and more explicit and socially meaningful cultural hierarchy. The first criterion is morality, which is linked to civilisation. Between 1500 and 1650, the Church – whether Catholic or Protestant – increasingly expressed moral objections towards common culture, which was condemned as being pagan or immoral, even though previously, élites and the common people had frequently participated in cultural activities together (Burke 1978). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the increasing

spatial separation between religious – and later secular – élites on the one hand, and the common people on the other, gradually spread across Europe (Burke 1978: 276). The 'fine arts' and musical classics were presented as morally better than contemporary popular entertainment (Weber 1992). Paintings, for instance, were increasingly supposed to depict high moral – classical, Christian, noble – ideals (White & White 1965: 6–7). If 'the fine arts were civilizing, fine arts *appreciation* came to be seen as a sign of virtuous character' (Peterson 1997: 82, italics in orig.). [5][#N5] These processes were part of a broader civilising process. Due to continuous power struggles and both distinctive and emulating practices between different factions of the élite, a social stratification system emerged that went beyond a simple dichotomy between élites and common people (Elias 1994 [1939]; Burke 1978: 271). The ever more refined behaviour, which Elias described in relation to eating habits and etiquette, included the domain of art. In the field of music, for instance, in the late eighteenth century, small groups of élitist music lovers acquired a serious and attentive listening attitude and began to distinguish themselves from (equally élite) audiences who walked around, chatted, ate and drank during a performance (Smithuijsen 2001; DeNora 1991).

Morality and civilisation went hand in hand with the rise of a second criterion of high art: intellect and complexity. Art increasingly professionalised, rationalised and formalised (Kempers 1992; Weber 1975). It was gradually perceived as an autonomous domain in society; eighteenth-century German philosophers and poets such as Kant and Schiller propagated aesthetics as distinct from, but still at the service of, ethics (Heumakers 2016). In the course of the eighteenth century, learning and establishing a pronounced taste gained importance amongst élites, who conversed with 'men of letters' in their salons (Kale 2004: 35). Again, music provides a good example of this interplay between civilised and intellectual distinction. In the eighteenth century, specific groups of listeners began to take music more seriously, starting in England with clergymen, some members of the upper-middle class and (later) of the aristocracy (Weber 1992). They distinguished themselves from the lovers of more 'frivolous' music, such as certain Italian operas, which they condemned as having the sole intention to entertain and as following the latest superficial fashions (ibid.). The supposed refinement, seriousness and formality of the high arts resulted in social distinction, albeit predominantly an intra-élite distinction based on intellect and chosen lifestyle rather than on social class as such (Weber 1975). It was supposed that one had to put considerable efforts into understanding complex artworks, and that it therefore took some time before one was able to appreciate these. 'Where there is more Learning, there will of course be more taste and better discernment', propagator of serious music William Jones wrote in 1784 (quoted by Weber 1992: 203). Hence, élites began to use the ability to appreciate 'complex' art with a high moral value, consumed in a civilised way, to recognise each other and to exclude others, such as social climbers from the middle classes, from their circles (cf. Peterson 1997).

A third – again related – criterion is seniority. Certain artworks that had been produced in the centuries before and that had survived the ages were increasingly sacralised and canonised as being important and of high quality (Herrnstein Smith 1984). Eternal value became an important asset as such: 'Nothing endures like endurance' (ibid.: 33). This started in the field of literature, for instance by means of anthologies that collected the aesthetic and/or moral highlights in poetry in the eighteenth century (Golding 1984). In the case of music, for ages, audiences had only been interested in new works of living composers. The celebration of deceased composers and of music from more than two decades old began to be taken seriously only in the eighteenth century, starting in England (Weber 1992). This canonisation reached its peak in the nineteenth century, with the establishment of a genre called 'classical music' (Weber 1992: 195–6). In the same period, more and more poetry anthologies were published (Golding 1984) and 'art history' was invented as a continuous development of successive master painters and sculptors (Boomgaard 1995: 58–61). In the rise of nation-states, such canons were increasingly based on respective national cultures (e.g. Golding 1984) and became part of national school curricula. These processes eventually contributed strongly to the continuous reproduction of the status of high culture (cf. Bourdieu 1984).

In the nineteenth century, these different processes culminated in an institutionalisation of 'high culture'. This occurred through the establishing of élite funded orchestras, concert halls and operas (Weber 1975; Levine 1988: 109–132; DiMaggio 1992), sometimes with the financial help of local or national authorities (Benzecry 2014; Weber 1975). [6] [#N6] Similar developments took place in the world of museums (Levine 1988: 70–78; 146–155; cf. Boomgaard 1995), and later in ballet (DiMaggio 1992: 38–43) and the theatre (Furnée 2007). This institutionalisation and sacralisation became clearly visible in language. In English language books, the term 'high culture' emerged around 1830 and reached a temporary peak in 1880. [7] [#N7] Similarly, the words 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' – still used today – were coined in the late nineteenth century, based on the pseudoscience of phrenology, which sought for a biological foundation of racial and class hierarchies (Levine 1988: 221–3).

Thus, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the increasing cultural distinction by factions of the aristocracy and the upper-middle class, both between each other and in contrast to the common people, eventually resulted in the institutionalisation of 'high culture'. The ever more refined distinctions were based on high morale, civilised rules of conduct, the allegedly required intellect to understand 'complex' cultural objects and the canonisation of art that had survived the ages. These criteria shaped the 'classic logic' of cultural hierarchy.

# The modern logic of cultural hierarchy

Authenticity, originality and innovativeness do not play a role in the above narrative, but constitute the rise of a second logic of cultural hierarchy: the 'modern' one. Of course, artists had been innovating for ages, but solely in order to improve the technical quality of the work, such as realist depictions of light and perspective in painting (Baxandall 1972; Kempers 1992) and virtuosic play in music (Weber 1975: 33–35). This modern logic started in the late eighteenth century and developed further in the nineteenth century. Hence, it partially coincided with the establishment of classic logic.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the upcoming (upper-) middle classes in several European countries increasingly criticised the aristocracy for their preference for classical and idealistic art. In reaction, Romanticism emerged, a paradigm in which the intuitive expression of individual emotions was highly valued (e.g. Campbell 1987). Initially, Romanticism was directed towards a search for beauty and truth in nature, the elevation of the soul and eventually a better society – in other words, with a high morality. Later in the nineteenth century, the focus shifted towards the human individual and his authentic emotions and intuitions (Boomgaard 1995; Campbell 1987). Another aspect of Romanticism was the rediscovery of the 'folk art' of the common people in rural areas, allegedly untouched by the rationality and artificiality of high art, nor by the vulgarities of low urban life (Burke 1978; Storey 2003: 1–15). Finally, authenticity was framed as opposed to artists' commercial aims of catering an expanding middle-class market (see below). Hence, both intra-élite distinctions and the rapid growth of the middle classes led to new rationales behind cultural distinction amongst certain bourgeois and aristocratic circles, whereas the – unthreatening – lower strata were partially idealised.

Romanticism gradually impacted the artist's image, too. Creativity, imagination and individual inspiration were increasingly preferred over artificiality and civilisation, as well as over commercial aims (Campbell 1987: 181–7; Guignon 2004: 70–77). The autonomisation of art, which began in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, further developed into a situation in which outsider groups of 'bohemian' artists and writers gained more status and were increasingly able to define their own rules and criteria for good art. They no longer followed their patrons' (the established élites) demands or the market's (the growing middle classes) rules. Rather, they chose their own subjects, without moral objections. This idea first gained ground in post-

revolutionary France, where the aristocracy and the church had lost much of their power. French artists and poets interpreted the autonomous position of aesthetics, as previously developed by German Romantic thinkers, in a stricter way, by excluding morality as an end goal for art (Bell-Villada 1996). Style and form became of more importance than the contents or external functions of art, be it moral or economic: the idea of 'form over function' emerged. Originality and innovativeness in subject and style became more prominent (Bourdieu 1996; White & White 1965). This also led to the canonisation in retrospect of early 'geniuses' such as Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Bach (Kempers 1992; Boomgaard 1995; cf. Bourdieu 1996: 315–9; Baxandall 1972; McKay 1999).

The rapidly increasing number of artists orientated themselves more and more towards their colleagues and other members of the emerging art world (gallerists, critics). This turned into a distinct stratum in society, depending more on 'cultural capital' than on economic capital (Bourdieu 1996), though the latter was not unimportant (White & White 1965). Artists became one other's sources of inspiration *and* one other's critics; the idea of *l'art pour l'art*, art for art's sake, appeared (Bourdieu 1996). [8] [#N8] In the early twentieth century, this resulted in a '"permanent revolution" of stylistic innovation' (Lizardo 2008: 13) in all cultural fields, from abstract art to a-tonal music. The producers of these ever-new art styles came to be known as 'the avant-garde', and the idea gained ground that unrecognised, and therefore poor and deviant, artists might be celebrated in the future, or even posthumously (Heinich 1996; White & White 1965). Hence, formal aspects, which Bourdieu (1984) calls the 'pure aesthetic', appeared as new criteria to evaluate art and to culturally distinguish oneself, partially eclipsing the classic criteria of seniority, civilisation and morality.

## The coexistence of opposing logics

Participants in and around this emerging 'modern' art world distinguished themselves from those who still appreciated art for what it represents, for its moral values or for its endurance – hence, from those adhering to the classic cultural hierarchy. Conversely, those who followed the classic logic loathed experimental innovations, sometimes denounced as immoral. This was the beginning of the 'dualist structure', the continuous struggle between two competing ideologies of cultural value (Bourdieu 1996: 113–125). Although Bourdieu (1984) obviously analysed distinctions between the economic and cultural élite – the latter described as the dominated fraction of the dominant class – in his analysis of the *emergence* of this dual structure (Bourdieu 1996), he did not describe the situation as two rival logics of distinction or as two opposing cultural hierarchies. Since the nineteenth century, though, high culture could be interpreted both as consecrated and 'conservative' art *and* as innovative avant-garde art.

There are, however, several issues that complicate this contrast. First, art fashions continuously recycle and shift from small publics to larger ones: when the former avant-garde has been replaced by the next generation, the former is often (though not necessarily) consecrated, canonised and embraced by more conservative élites.

Another complicating matter is that both logics have some elements in common. The first similarity is the appreciation of complexity and a detached way of enjoying art. The classic distinction, which includes the ability to understand complex art and to restrain one's initial emotional response, for which one should train, is comparable to the modern distinction, which includes the ability to learn to appreciate ever new forms of art that emphasise form over function and that do not appeal to the senses immediately (cf. Campbell 1987: 195–200). A second similarity between both hierarchical logics is the strong distinction from the same antonym, 'low culture', yet – as we will see – for different reasons.

# Rationales behind distinction from 'low culture'

Although cultural distinction has often paid heed to intra-élite status struggles, since the seventeenth and particularly the eighteenth century, élites distinguished themselves more and more from the upcoming middle classes, as well as from the lower classes (particularly the allegedly vulgar classes in urban areas). Owing to population growth, urbanisation and increasing wealth, as well as to several technical innovations, all sorts of cultural products were more and more produced in mass numbers. Mass-printed books, for instance, were intended for a rapidly growing literate audience (Burke 1978). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, new terms were coined to label these different kinds of commercial culture, such as kitsch, the middlebrow, mass culture and popular culture. [9][#N9]

The products of this culture and its audiences were criticised from different sides. Most critics followed the modern logic of authenticity and innovation: leftist thinkers such as Horkheimer and Adorno (2002 [1944]; cf. Adorno 1956 [1954]) condemned commercial culture's standardisation and homogenisation, which were required in order to reach the 'average' consumer (Gans 1999: 30). This was criticised by those who wanted to defend 'true' art with a high aesthetic value (Lowenthal 1961). On the other hand, conservatives followed a classic logic of cultural hierarchy: they used strong moral arguments to oppose popular culture. They protested against the obscenities of uncivilised, 'vulgar' or 'brutal culture', which were considered a danger to society (e.g. Bennett 2001; cf. Boëthius 1995b; Weber 1992). Hence, conservative élites and more progressive cultural élites used the same rationales to both distinguish themselves vis-à-vis each other *and* to condemn the cultural preferences of the lower and middle classes. The two distinctive logics led to different outcomes for the meaning of 'high culture'.

# The alleged weakening of cultural hierarchy

Despite these diverging logics behind cultural hierarchy, in the second half of the twentieth century, the boundaries between high and low culture are often said to have become blurred. This process is related to increasing differentiation and de-hierarchisation in society as a whole – particularly since the 'protest generation' in the 1960s – where egalitarian attitudes became widely shared (Wouters 2007). New generations embraced specific youth cultures, which were made possible by technical innovations (e.g. the gramophone, transistor radios) and by a rapid increase of wealth and spare time (e.g. Bennett 2001). Conversely, traditional 'high culture' lost much of its distinctive value, partially due to the expansion of higher education amongst children from the lower and middle classes (Janssen et al. 2011; cf. Henrichs 1997; Prieur & Savage 2013). In cultural sociology, the idea has been linked to the rise of 'cultural omnivores' (beginning with Peterson & Simkus 1992), literally referring to people who like or consume *everything*, but mostly defined as those who like *many* things, across high/low boundaries.

A serious shortcoming of the regular definition of cultural omnivorousness, i.e. combining items from high and low culture, is the *a priori* categorisation of these domains. [10][#N10] Although some later authors partially counter this critique by using a different statistical method (e.g. Van Eijck 2001; Coulangeon 2013), the definition is basically grounded in a static view of cultural hierarchy.

It has often been debated whether the waning of cultural hierarchy is linked with the waning of cultural distinction. This would seem logical, considering the inherent link between the two when cultural hierarchy developed. Some presume that, in recent decades, distinction decreased in favour of tolerance towards others' tastes (Peterson & Kern 1996; Ollivier 2008a). Others argue that distinction remains strong, yet in different ways. Omnivorousness could be a new distinction marker in itself: omnivores – who are often still high status people – might gain prestige from their broad taste and their alleged openness and tolerance, and distinguish

themselves from the 'narrow-minded' (Van Eijck 2000; cf. Prieur & Savage 2013). More important is the observed cultural distinction by well-educated people *within* domains and genres (Thornton 1995; Bachmayer et al. 2014). Holt (1998) argues that one should not study the differences between 'objectified' tastes – *what* people like and do – but between 'embodied' tastes – *how* they enjoy and speak about taste (cf. Jarness 2015). High status people often apply a 'pure aesthetic' (as Bourdieu called the emphasis on originality and form over function) to every aspect of their cultural taste – across *and* within genres – whereas low status people use a more 'popular aesthetic' (Lahire 2003; Lizardo 2008; Daenekindt & Roose 2014; Hanquinet et al. 2014). Such cultural distinction based on diverging modes of appreciation can even occur between individuals who like one and the same cultural object (Friedman 2012; Jarness 2015; Peters et al. 2017). Hence, it is argued, cultural distinction remains strong *despite* the waning of cultural hierarchy.

Lizardo (2008) claimed that the modern hierarchical logic was increasingly used to judge *all* cultural forms. Therefore, he concluded that the same process that *established* cultural hierarchy in the nineteenth century caused the *fading* of this same hierarchy only a few decades later. But, as we saw, he ignored the opposing, classic, logic of cultural hierarchy, which did *not* suffer under this new form of distinction. How should we then understand this supposed decline of cultural hierarchy, in the light of a continuing defence by others of high culture? To give an indicative answer to this question, let us take a look at the ways in which ordinary people of different status and age groups define cultural hierarchy and classify cultural items.

# Data and methods

The empirical data presented in this article are part of a larger research project about cultural distinction and perceptions of cultural hierarchy (see Van den Haak 2014). In 2009 and 2010, ninety Dutch people were interviewed in an open and flexible way about their cultural likes and dislikes and those of significant others, within a wide variety of cultural fields: music, film, TV fiction, theatre and the visual arts. The analysis in this article concentrates on a few semi-structured interview questions posed near the end of each interview, concerning the image that respondents had of the hierarchical concepts 'high culture', 'low culture', 'good taste' and 'bad taste'. Furthermore, each respondent was asked to perform the task of ranking thirty musical items from different genres and time periods (composers, musicians, singers, bands). They were asked to rank them both in the order of their personal preference and according to their perception of cultural hierarchy. The latter task was phrased as: 'Could you rank the items from high to low culture, as you think it is perceived in society?' [11] [#N11] Respondents were encouraged to explain (part of) their rankings.

This article explores the criteria used when defining these concepts and when ranking the items (the rankings as such will be analysed in a different article; see for now Van den Haak 2014: 99–126). This analysis is conducted by coding the interview transcripts with Atlas.ti software. The codes employed include criteria by which to evaluate art, partially deductive (based on literature on cultural taste, such as Bourdieu's popular versus pure aesthetic and the historical analysis above) and partially inductive (new (sub-) criteria emerging from the data). The numbers in the analysis below are based on the presence or absence of each criterion in each individual's answer on the relevant questions – regardless of the emphasis (large or small) or the value (positive or negative) that respondents gave the criteria – though the qualitative analysis gives a more nuanced image. The emphasis in this analysis lies on the question on high and low culture, which was posed to all ninety respondents. Owing to the open and flexible form of the interviews, the question on good and bad taste was asked of only 66 respondents, and the ranking task was performed by 77 (not all of them explained their choices).

Because the overall study was aimed at comparing groups, a quota sample was designed. The quotas consisted of three birth cohorts (before 1945, 1945–65, 1965–85) and three status groups, based on educational level and parental background (well-educated with well-educated parents, well-educated with less-educated parents, less-educated with less-educated parents), resulting in nine quotas of ten people each. [12] [#N12] In each quota, an equal number of men and women were interviewed. Phone directories were used to draw random samples in order to gradually fill the quotas. [13] [#N13] Please note that the resulting sample, with a strong overrepresentation of well-educated people, is not intended to be representative of the Dutch population.

# Perceptions of cultural hierarchy

Before presenting the criteria with which respondents define the relevant concepts, two issues must be brought up about respondents' knowledge of and opinion on high and low culture. First, 25 respondents indicated that they were not familiar with the concepts. Despite this lack of knowledge, many of them guessed at the meaning and speculated appropriately, as the adjectives high and low as such are easy to interpret. Most of them resemble the definitions and examples given by more knowledgeable respondents.

Second, in line with present-day egalitarian ideas, many respondents objected to the proposed concepts. High culture is often associated with élitism, arrogance and pretension; and low culture with disparaging speech and discrimination. Some think that this distinction is forced upon us by 'bigwigs' and 'experts' or find it outdated. 26 out of 90 respondents expressed such opinions and another 27 were ambivalent. This is not only a defence mechanism against others' distinction: many such rejections and ambivalences were expressed by well-educated respondents, who felt uncomfortable when confronted with 'élitist' concepts (see also Van den Haak & Wilterdink *in press*). The analysis below, however, is about perceptions rather than opinions: at my request, many hesitant respondents put their initial objections aside to define the concepts 'high/low culture' and perform the ranking task nonetheless.

## Social criteria

> The most frequently used logic to define high culture, applied by 32 respondents, is not related to any artistic criterion, but simply to social status, as represented by class, educational level or income. An example is Vincent [14] [#N14] (psychologist, 62 years old):
>
> That's a classic image, high culture is what I know from my childhood: it's opera, classical music, er, yes, it's really what was the top for me, so to speak, [for] those with a lot of money, a tremendously good education, academically trained, you know. (…) So that's my old association, and yes, it's still like that.

People of all educational levels make this connection; regarding age, older respondents are underrepresented. It is the most obvious connection, as respondents who never even heard of the term were able to come up with this logic: 'I don't know this expression, high culture, but I interpret it as élitist culture?', Paul (consultant, 46) asked hesitantly. Some respondents who objected to the term associated it with status distinction, such as Henny (civil servant, 55): 'I think that the artists and intellectuals who are on that level make it high themselves: above the rabble and the riff-raff. They don't have to do that.'

Related to the audience's social status is its size: high culture is for 'a small audience' (Paul), 'a select group of people' (Don, Nori) and is 'certainly not based on the market' (Charles). Low culture, on the other hand, refers to 'the popular' (Piet), the 'massive' (Joachiem) and 'commercial stations and Top 40 music' (Inge). 14 respondents used arguments like this; even in the ranking task, it was the most frequently used criterion (16 times). It is important to note, though, that a minority of three respondents – all three less-educated, an underrepresented group in the sample – use a reverse logic, by linking high culture to the most popular. They rank popular rock bands and Dutch singers on top of the hierarchy and classical music at the bottom.

## Complexity

The most frequently used aesthetic criterion is complexity versus simplicity (24 times), or depth versus shallowness (9 times). For instance, Rodney (juggling performer, 51) perceived high culture as 'difficult to understand', 'a challenge', and something 'you have to think about', whereas low culture is 'straightforward entertainment'. Well-educated respondents were overrepresented, but this does not mean that complexity was more often brought up by those who personally liked complex art. An example of the reverse was Don (university manager, 36), who defined high culture as 'intangible' and 'further from me', and low culture as 'more accessible'. When discussing good and bad taste and when performing the ranking task on music, though, complexity was rarely mentioned. On the latter, Louis (journalist, 53) was one of the few exceptions, with a perhaps surprising result: 'Vivaldi is great, but he is too accessible, so… yes, that's how it works! So he's near ABBA I think, is he? Yes, in the middle category.'

Above, in the historical analysis, complexity was described as the only criterion that forms a basis for both the classic and the modern logic. Let us therefore take a closer look at the differences between the classic and modern criteria when respondents defined high culture.

## The classic logic

26 respondents associated high culture with one or more of the classic criteria, if we include craftsmanship (13 times; 10 times in the ranking task), which actually *preceded* cultural hierarchy. It was applied in conflicting ways. On the one hand, some said that high culture implied great skills, which required serious training. On the other hand, some less-educated respondents associated high culture with abstract art, which was – in their view – *not* skilfully made (and which they, therefore, disliked).

The second classic logic mentioned was morality and civilisation (11 times). Some expected a positive impact of good art and high culture: it could take away 'the vulgarisation and disinterest in society' (Alexander), it was 'important for the ethics in society' (Paulan), or it was simply 'civilised' (Greet). Moral judgements were more often used when discussing good and bad taste: it was the most frequently mentioned criterion in reply to the specific question on this division (16 times), although many drifted away from culture in the narrow sense and spoke rather about decent clothing, etiquette and respectful behaviour (cf. Woodward & Emmison 2001; Warde 2007).

The third element classic logic was seniority (10 times): some respondents saw high culture as old and traditional, which was 'developed and went through some layers' (Liesbeth, health care manager, 60). Similarly, Sjef (engineer, 79) would 'not look for [high culture] within modern art'. An important concept in this respect is the allegedly eternal value of art: high culture was made by 'immortal figures' such as Bach and Van Gogh (Paulan), it was 'shaped by history (…) and passed on to next generations' (Hillie) and, therefore, it has 'survived the ages' (Yvonne). Natasha (scientist, 73) argued:

> Classic is classic: it lives and will live on for years. What's new, or in fashion, what people now find very good (…) will perhaps not be good anymore in ten years. The classics have been checked by the ages, by the time. That's why it's classic, it's the best.

In the ranking task, seniority was the second most frequently applied criterion (15 times), after audience size. Some explained the high ranking of classical music by the enduring element of this music. Several other genres and artists 'can disappear, they succeed each other and then you forget about it', Sandra (documentalist, 41) presumes.

## The modern logic

Conversely, twelve respondents applied one or more of the modern criteria, particularly originality and innovativeness, when defining high culture. They said that high culture was 'in any case very experimental' (Paul), that it 'searches for new horizons and finds new perspectives' (Rudolf) and that it 'in particular avoids repetitions' (Charles). Rodney (juggling performer, 51) added that being 'unique, creative, pioneering' was perceived as better than doing 'the same old routines as 20 or 25 years ago'. Ronald (anthropologist, 35) ranked rock band Radiohead above Bach in the cultural hierarchy, because:

> There are only a few bands that have innovated and changed music and that gave it such a personal feel and artistic dimension, so I don't think it's unreasonable to put it next to someone like Bach. Because, in our time, they have been pioneering.

Some explicitly stated that modern or abstract art belonged to high culture more than classical art did, but there were more respondents who explicitly stated the opposite. In the ranking task, several people combined different logics. They, for instance, considered the innovativeness of artists as a second-ranked attribute *after* seniority, by placing the jazz and pop items that they perceived as innovative directly below the classical music items, but above the allegedly more clichéd pop artists.

## Practices versus perceptions

Hence, although both the classic and the modern logic were used to define high culture and to rank cultural items, instances of the classic logic outnumbered the modern one. Amongst the youngest birth cohort (born 1965–85), both logics were balanced, but the older cohorts clearly favoured the classic logic. [15][#N15] This finding stands in contrast with respondents' abundant use of modern criteria when discussing their own and others' likes and dislikes, whether 'high' or 'low' (there is no room to discuss this in detail, but see Van den Haak 2014: 233–279; cf. Holt 1998; Jarness 2015). Although one would expect hierarchical practices and perceptions to be strongly interrelated, as two sides of the same coin, the two are separated in many cases. The well-educated in particular used modern criteria when distinguishing their tastes from others' – when *practising* cultural hierarchy – but this did not result in their *perception* of high culture as something innovative or authentic. A similar finding was described by Vermeulen and Van den Haak (2012) on the aficionados of contemporary classical composers, such as Schönberg, Boulez and Ligeti. With their 'open mind' for little known, complex and innovative music, these devotees explicitly distinguish themselves from 'regular' classical music lovers, whom they accuse of not daring to move beyond 'simple' and 'well-known' melodies. However, these explicit distinction practices do not make them perceive their favourite contemporary composers as higher on the cultural ladder than Bach or Beethoven. In their view, many

twentieth century composers are not canonised (yet) and they are not legitimised by a majority within the élite. Hence, their hierarchical practices do not correspond with their hierarchical perceptions.

# Discussion

This article aims to contribute to clarifying the puzzle of the alleged waning of the division between high and low culture while, at the same time, these concepts are still widely used. Cultural hierarchy is the socially constructed outcome of distinction processes. When distinction processes emerge *within* domains and genres, logically some sort of cultural hierarchy will continue, but many keep speaking about its waning. I argue that these disputes are, to a large degree, caused by divergent interpretations of the concept 'high culture', and by divergent accounts of its emergence in past centuries. I tried to provide clarity by reinterpreting these historical accounts and by empirically disentangling ordinary people's *perceptions* of cultural hierarchy from their hierarchical *practices*, i.e. cultural distinction.

The historical analysis forms the key to understanding how a relatively clear and rigid cultural hierarchy has waned, and if and to what extent it has been replaced by a new – more fuzzy, and hardly recognised – hierarchy. Holt and Lizardo gave the first clues to such an explanation, but they did not draw a complete picture. As we saw, Holt (1998) argued that social hierarchy corresponds more with a hierarchy of 'embodied tastes', or aesthetic criteria, than with the 'objectified' cultural hierarchy that we know. In other words, a hierarchy of 'how' has replaced a hierarchy of 'what' (cf. Jarness 2015).

Lizardo (2008) elaborated on this argument by claiming that the *emergence* of high culture as a domain in the nineteenth century – referring to the modernist art paradigm – eventually *caused* its fading in the course of the twentieth century, because many kept applying the same logic across cultural domains. However, he ignored the hierarchical implications of the classic logic, that preceded and coincided with the modern one (cf. Ollivier 2008b). It was not high culture as such that emerged in the nineteenth century, but a *competing* hierarchical logic. I argue that this modern logic was initially applied only *within* the existing domain of high culture, resulting in the dual structure that Bourdieu (1984; 1996) describes. This led to the perception of many that we can still speak of one unambiguous high culture. It is this classic domain of civilised and canonised high culture that was later combined with popular culture by 'omnivores', and left behind by others.

Based on a tentative analysis of two interview questions and a ranking task, as part of a wider qualitative research amongst ninety Dutch people, I found that a majority of respondents associates high culture with complex, classical and civilised art and with art that draws a small élite audience; and low culture with simple or vulgar cultural objects that draw a mass audience of 'common' people. Unlike Lizardo's claim, high culture is described less often as original, innovative and authentic art. In other words, classic (as well as social) criteria are applied more often than modern criteria when perceiving cultural hierarchy. At the same time, many respondents reject the idea of cultural hierarchy as such and answer questions on the matter only under protest. Their opinions diverge from their perceptions.

Therefore, I conclude that, since the nineteenth century, both hierarchical logics are competing: the 'classic' logic is more prominent in people's *perception* of cultural hierarchy, whereas the 'modern' logic shapes most of their everyday distinctive *practices*. In other words, the classic hierarchy largely corresponds with the hierarchy of 'what', and the modern hierarchy with the hierarchy of 'how'. This incongruity between perception and practice might be explained with the notion of meritocracy, which, in the twentieth century, led to significant changes in the social hierarchy, as the more intelligent members from lower and middle classes gained status. According to the meritocratic ideal that many nowadays cherish, inequality is unfair

when based on one's innate characteristics, such as one's (parental) class background. Instead, there should be equal chances for all to achieve what they want, based on their own merits, i.e. their capabilities and efforts. Many do not realise, though, that they distinguish themselves from less-educated or 'less smart' people. These distinctive practices lead to new inequalities, that might be even harder to overcome (cf. Van den Haak & Wilterdink *in press*). [16] [#N16] Similarly, according to many, a cultural hierarchy based on some objective features that others have decided on (perception of the classic hierarchy) is unfair. Instead, everyone should decide for themselves what they like or do not like. Many do not realise, though, that they distinguish themselves, with their open mind for innovative cultural products and their ability to understand complex art (whether 'high' or 'low'). Such distinctive practices on a collective level must lead to a new cultural hierarchy of some sort, which is hardly recognised.

Only a minority of respondents perceived this modern logic as a basis for cultural hierarchy. This minority was found mainly in the youngest birth cohort in the sample, which might indicate that the general perception of cultural hierarchy could change in the future. [17] [#N17] This would bring hierarchical practices back in line with hierarchical perceptions. One can only speculate whether such a newly recognised cultural hierarchy will lead to a new – undoubtedly quite fuzzy – domain of 'high culture', consisting of those elements of different fields and genres that are perceived as more innovative, authentic and complex, *or* that the novel top of the hierarchy will receive a different label. This 'new high culture' might be met with less resistance – at least by the well-educated – than the classic one, as it will no longer collide with their everyday distinctive practices. It would also end the present-day confusion on the nature of high culture and the extent of its waning.

# Notes

1. Brilliance and geniality might also be categorised under innovation and authenticity, the second criterion. [#N1-ptr1]

2. Baumann did include a related criterion: whether, in a film review, comparisons are made with other artists or artworks. [#N2-ptr1]

3. Some authors did discuss both processes, but in a different way. Boëthius (1995a) interprets the narratives as 'primary' and 'secondary' cultural differentiation, but he describes the latter as distinction within the bourgeoisie solely and he concludes – unlike me – that *both* differentiations have now faded. Conversely, Lizardo (2008) does describe a classic narrative prior to the modern one, but seems to ignore the (lasting) hierarchical effects of the former. Storey (2003: 32–42) briefly discusses both processes, but does not integrate them either. [#N3-ptr1]

4. According to Burke (1978: 23–29), in most parts of Europe, there was no significant *spatial* segregation and cultural stratification until the sixteenth century, despite high social stratification. However, the high degree of *social* mixing in common culture that he describes does not preclude a separate élite culture. [#N4-ptr1]

5. Peterson's quote is about the USA in the nineteenth century, but it discusses a similar logic. [#N5-ptr1]

6. Levine and DiMaggio describe the situation in the USA, and Benzecry in Argentina, where this process took place later and at a much faster pace than in Europe. [#N6-ptr1]

7. The source is Ngram, a Google search tool that counts words and phrases in a large sample of English language books (6,000 books per year), both British and American. See http://books.google.com/ngrams [http://books.google.com/ngrams] . [#N7-ptr1]

8. In the twentieth century, in some circles (particularly in the USA), this expression even implied the total exclusion of moral or social issues from artistic production and appreciation (Bell-Villada 1996).

Whether or not social issues are desired in art has always been ambivalent (Heumakers 2016).
↑ [#N8-ptr1]

9. Because more traditional 'folk culture' was not eclipsed completely by mass or popular culture, some contemporary scholars reject the high–low or high–popular dichotomy and replace it with a *triangle* of high, popular and folk culture (e.g. Schulze 1992). ↑ [#N9-ptr1]

10. Another frequently used operationalisation of cultural omnivorousness is liking many (for instance, musical) genres, or disliking few (e.g. Peterson 1992; Bryson 1996). A disadvantage of this approach is that genre boundaries are often fuzzy, dynamic and disputed (Holt 1997; Atkinson 2011). ↑ [#N10-ptr1]

11. In the first few interviews, the respondents were asked about their perception of the items' status in society, but this was soon changed in order to avoid misunderstandings about the meaning of both 'status' and 'society'. ↑ [#N11-ptr1]

12. Well-educated is operationalised as a Bachelor's degree or higher, less-educated as everything below that level. Downwardly mobile people were excluded, because they are relatively rare in the Netherlands.
↑ [#N12-ptr1]

13. See Van den Haak (2014: 78–84) for more details on the sampling procedure. The average response rate was about 25 per cent. The last fifteen empty spaces in the quotas were filled by drawing upon the researcher's own diverse network. ↑ [#N13-ptr1]

14. All names are pseudonyms. Information on occupation and age is added when quotes are substantial.
↑ [#N14-ptr1]

15. There are no clear differences between the three status groups or between men and women. ↑ [#N15-ptr1]

16. Needless to say, this meritocratic ideal is in reality still hindered by structural inequalities. ↑ [#N16-ptr1]

17. Naturally, this is not the only possible interpretation, as, in cross-sectional research, differences between birth cohorts could just as well refer to age as such. ↑ [#N17-ptr1]

# Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor. W. (1956 [1954]) 'Television and the pattern of mass culture.' In: B. Rosenberg & D. Manning White (eds.), *Mass culture. The popular arts in America*. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press: 474–488.

Alexander, Victoria D. (2003) *Sociology of the arts. Exploring fine and popular forms*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Atkinson, Will (2011) 'The context and genesis of musical tastes: Omnivorousness debunked, Bourdieu buttressed.' *Poetics* 39: 169–186.

Bachmayer, Tito, Nico Wilterdink & Alex Van Venrooij (2014) 'Taste differentiation and hierarchization within popular culture: The case of salsa music.' *Poetics*, 47, 60–82.

Baumann, Shyon (2001) 'Intellectualization and art world development: Film in the United States.' *American Sociological Review* 66(3): 404–426.

Baxandall, Michael (1972) *Painting and experience in fifteenth century Italy*. Oxford: University Press.

Bell-Villada, Gene H. (1996). *Art for art's sake and literary life. How politics and markets helped shape the ideology & culture of aestheticism 1790–1990*. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press.

Bennett, Andy (2000) *Popular music and youth culture. Music, identity and place*. New York: Palgrave.

Bennett, Andy (2001) *Cultures of popular music*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Benzecry, Claudio E. (2014) 'An opera house for the "Paris of South America": pathways to the institutionalization of high culture.' *Theoretical Sociology* 43: 169–196.

Boëthius, Ulf (1995a) 'The history of high and low culture.' In: J. Fornäs & G. Bolin (eds.), *Youth culture in late modernity*. London: Sage, pp. 12–38.

Boëthius, Ulf (1995b) 'Youth, the media and moral panics.' In: J. Fornäs & G. Bolin (eds.), *Youth culture in late modernity*. London: Sage, pp. 39–57.

Boomgaard, Jeroen (1995) *De verloren zoon. Rembrandt en de Nederlandse kunstgeschiedschrijving*. Amsterdam: Babylon-De Geus.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1984 [1979]) *Distinction. A social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1996 [1992]) *The rules of art. Genesis and structure of the literary field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bryson, B. (1996) '"Anything but heavy metal." Symbolic exclusion and musical dislikes.' *American Sociological Review* 61(5): 884–899.

Burke, Peter (1978) *Popular culture in early modern Europe*. New York: Harper & Row.

Campbell, Colin (1987) *The Romantic ethic and the spirit of modern consumerism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Coulangeon, Philippe (2013) 'The omnivore and the 'Class Defector'. Musical taste and social mobility in contemporary France.' Notes & Documents, 2013–03, Paris, OSC, Sciences Po/CNRS.

Daenekindt, Stijn & Henk Roose (2014) 'Ways of preferring: Distinction through the 'what' and the 'how' of cultural consumption.' *Journal of Consumer Culture* 1469540514553715.

De Meyer, Gust (2006) *De beste smaak is de slechte smaak. Populaire cultuur en complexiteit*. Leuven: Acco.

DeNora, Tia (1991) 'Musical patronage and social change in Beethoven's Vienna.' *American Journal of Sociology* 97(2): 310–346.

DiMaggio, Paul (1992) 'Cultural boundaries and structural change. The extension of the high culture model to theatre, opera and the dance, 1900-1940.' In: M. Lamont & M. Fournier (eds.), *Cultivating differences. Symbolic boundaries and the making of inequality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Elias, Norbert (1994 [1939]) *The civilizing process*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Elias, Norbert (2008 [1976]) 'Towards a theory of established–outsider relations.' In: ibid., *The Established and the Outsiders*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Friedman, Sam (2012) 'Cultural omnivores or culturally homeless? Exploring the shifting cultural identities of the upwardly mobile.' *Poetics* 40: 467–489.

Furnée, Jan Hein (2007) *Vrijetijdscultuur en sociale verhoudingen in Den Haag, 1850–1890*. PhD thesis, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

Gans, Herbert J. (1999 [1974]) *Popular culture and high culture. An analysis and evaluation of taste. Revised & updated version*. New York: Basic Books.

Golding, Alan C. (1984) 'A history of American poetry anthologies.' In: R. Von Hallberg (ed.), *Canons*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 279–307.

Guignon, Charles (2004) *On being authentic*. London: Routledge.

Hanquinet, Laurie, Henk Roose & Mike Savage (2014) 'The eye of the beholder: Aesthetic preferences and the remaking of cultural capital.' *Sociology* 48(1): 111–132.

Heinich, Nathalie (1996) *The glory of Van Gogh. An anthropology of admiration.* Princeton University Press.

Hekkert, Paul & Piet C.W. van Wieringen (1996) 'Beauty in the eye of expert and nonexpert beholders: A study in the appraisal of art.' *The American Journal of Psychology* 109(3): 389–407.

Henrichs, Hendrik (1997) 'Een intercultureel Bildungsideaal? Doelstellingen voor cultuureducatie in het fin de siècle.' *Boekmancahier* nr. 32: 136–147.

Herrnstein Smith, Barbara (1984) 'Contingencies of value.' In: R. Von Hallberg (ed.), *Canons*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 5–39.

Heumakers, Arnold (2015) *De esthetische revolutie. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het moderne kunstbegrip in Verlichting en Romantiek*. Amsterdam: Boom.

Holt, Douglas B. (1997) 'Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's theory of taste from its critics.' *Poetics* 25(2–3): 93–120.

Holt Douglas B. (1998) 'Does cultural capital structure American consumption?' *Journal of Consumer Research* 25(1): 1–25.

Horkheimer, Max & Theodor Adorno (2002 [1944]) *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical fragments*. Stanford: University Press.

Janssen, Susanne, Mark Verboord & Giselinde Kuipers (2011) 'Comparing cultural classification. High and popular arts in European and U.S. elite newspapers, 1955–2005.' In: J. Rössel & G. Otte (eds.), *Lebensstilforschung*. Special edition of *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 51: pp. 139–168.

Jarness, Vegard (2015) 'Modes of consumption: From 'what' to 'how' in cultural stratification research.' *Poetics* 53: 65–79.

Kale, Steven (2004) *French salons. High society and political sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Kempers, Bram (1992) *Painting, power and patronage: The rise of the professional artist in the Italian Renaissance*. London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press.

Lahire, Bernard (2003) 'From the habitus to an individual heritage of dispositions. Towards a sociology at the level of the individual.' *Poetics* 31(5–6): 329–355.

Levine, Lawrence W. (1988) *Highbrow / lowbrow: the emergence of cultural hierarchy in America*. Cambridge / London: Harvard University Press.

Lizardo, Omar (2008) 'The question of culture consumption and stratification revisited.' *Sociologica* 2/2008.

Lowenthal, Leo (1961) 'An historical preface to the popular culture debate.' In: N. Jacobs (ed.), *Culture for the millions? Mass media in modern society*. Princeton: Van Nostrand: pp. 28–42.

McKay, Cory (1999) 'The Bach reception in the 18th and 19th centuries.' Retrieved from http://www.music.mcgill.ca/~cmckay/papers/musicology/BachReception.pdf [http://www.music.mcgill.ca/~cmckay/papers/musicology/BachReception.pdf] (9 May 2017).

Ollivier, Michèle (2008a) 'Modes of openness to cultural diversity: Humanist, populist, practical, and indifferent.' *Poetics* 36(2–3): 120–147.

Ollivier, Michèle (2008b) 'Comment on Omar Lizardo/2.' *Sociologica* 2/2008.

Peters, Julia, Koen van Eijck & Janna Michael (2017) 'Secretly serious? Maintaining and crossing cultural boundaries in the karaoke bar through ironic consumption.' *Cultural Sociology* 1749975517700775.

Peterson, Richard A. (1992) 'Understanding audience segmentation: From elite and mass to omnivore and univore.' *Poetics* 21(4), 243–258.

Peterson, Richard A. (1997) 'The rise and fall of highbrow snobbery as a status marker.' *Poetics* 25(2–3): 75–92.

Peterson, Richard A. & Roger M. Kern (1996) 'Changing highbrow taste: From snob to omnivore'. *American Sociological Review* 61(5): 900–907.

Peterson, Richard A. & Albert Simkus (1992) 'How musical tastes mark occupational status groups.' In: M. Lamont & M. Fournier (red.), *Cultivating differences. Symbolic boundaries and the making of inequality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Prieur, Annick & Mike Savage (2013) 'Emerging forms of cultural capital.' *European Societies* 15(2): 246–267.

Schulze, Gerhard (1992) *Die Erlebsnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Scruton, Roger (1998) *An intelligent person's guide to modern culture*. London: Duckworth.

Scruton, Roger (2007) *Culture counts. Faith and feeling in a world besieged*. New York: Encounter Books.

Smithuijsen, Cas (2001) *Een verbazende stilte. Klassieke muziek, gedragsregels en sociale controle in de concertzaal*. Amsterdam: Boekmanstudies.

Storey, John (2003) *Inventing popular culture*. Malden: Blackwell.

Thornton, Sarah (1995) *Club cultures: Music, media, and subcultural capital*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Van den Haak, Marcel (2014) *Disputing about taste. Practices and perceptions of cultural hierarchy in the Netherlands*. PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam.

Van den Haak, Marcel & Nico Wilterdink (*in press*) 'Struggling with distinction. How and why people switch between cultural hierarchy and equality.' *European Journal of Cultural Studies*.

Van Eijck, Koen (1998) 'Leefstijlen van stijgers en dalers. De invloed van sociale mobiliteit op culturele consumptiepatronen.' *Mens & Maatschappij* 73(1): 27–46.

Van Eijck, Koen (2000) 'Richard A. Peterson and the culture of consumption.' *Poetics* 28(2–3): 207–224.

Van Eijck, Koen (2001) 'Social differentiation in musical taste patterns.' *Social Forces* 79(3): 1163–1184.

Van Venrooij, Alex & Vaughn Schmutz (2010) 'The evaluation of popular music in the United States, Germany and the Netherlands: A comparison of the use of high art and popular aesthetic criteria.' *Cultural Sociology*, 4(3), 395–421.

Vermeulen, Laura & Marcel van den Haak (2012) '"Je moet onder aan de ladder beginnen." Distinctie en hiërarchie binnen de klassieke en hedendaagse muziek.' *Sociologie* 8(3): 273–296.

Von Hallberg, Robert (ed.) (1984) *Canons*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Warde, Alan (2007) 'Does taste still serve power? The fate of distinction in Britain.' *Sociologica. Italian Journal of Sociology on line* 3/2007.

Warde, Alan (2011) 'Cultural hostility re-considered.' *Cultural Sociology* 5(3): 341–366.

Weber, William (1975) *Music and the middle class. The social structure of concert life in London, Paris and Vienna*. London: Croom Helm.

Weber, William (1992) *The rise of musical classics in eighteenth century England. A study in canon, ritual, and ideology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

White, Harrison C. & Cynthia A. White (1965) *Canvases and careers. Institutional change in the French painting world*. New York, London, Sydney: John Wiley & Sons.

Woodward, Ian & Michael Emmison (2001) 'From aesthetic principles to collective sentiments. The logics of everyday judgements of taste.' *Poetics* 29(6): 295–316.

Wouters, Cas (2007) *Informalization: Manners and Emotions since 1890*. London: Sage.