27

CULTURAL PREFERENCES AND PERSONAL NETWORKS

OMAR LIZARDO

It's easy to see how peer groups and social networks influence people's preferences and cultural tastes. Almost everyone has had a friend or a friend-of-a-friend introduce them to a new band, fashion trend, or TV show that they grow to like or even love. Put simply, *who* people like ends up influencing *what* they like.

But do individuals' cultural preferences shape their networks? Does *what* someone likes end up influencing *who* they like? Omar Lizardo says that yes, it does. Drawing on the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Paul DiMaggio (see pages 495 and 92), Lizardo uses network analysis to demonstrate the special power of popular culture to connect individuals who share enthusiasm for the same kinds of movies, TV shows, sports, and music. People don't just find fellow fans to connect with in their local social settings. Pop culture has the power to connect individuals who reside in diverse social settings and worlds, bridging social distances and linking people who share only weak social ties. In sociological terms, individuals convert the cultural capital (cultural knowledge and tastes) into social capital (friendships and connections). Interestingly, while popular culture has this power, "highbrow" cultural tastes (like a love of the opera, the symphony, or poetry readings) do not.

The big sociological idea here is that culture has the power to shape social structures in directly observable ways. Lizardo's research

encourages researchers to look beyond simple models, which show how individuals' cultural tastes are based on the preferences of their peers, to a model that also acknowledges how individuals select peers based on cultural tastes and preferences.

HOW CULTURAL TASTES SHAPE PERSONAL NETWORKS

Most treatments of the relation between culture and social structure—going all the way back to the classic statements by Marx and Engels (1939) and Durkheim ([1933] 1997:215, 276)—aim at explaining the connection between these two domains by highlighting the ways in which patterns of social relations affect the composition and structure of cultural systems (Bearman 1993; Douglas 1978; Martin 2002). Some of the more ambitious projects, such as formulations in which large-scale cultural formations are linked to social structure broadly conceived (i.e., Swanson 1967), have been criticized for positing an unwarranted "reflection model" of the relation between culture and society (Wuthnow 1985), in which culture is seen as somehow being isomorphic with social structure but the mechanisms that produce this convergence are left unspecified (Martin 1997:5). Bourdieu, for instance, dismissed this stance as the "short-circuit fallacy" (quoted in Wasquant 1989:33), whereby a "direct link" is sought between what are in fact "very distant terms."

Dissatisfaction with this state of affairs prompted a conceptual turn from conceiving of culture as disembodied ideas toward thinking of culture as grounded in practice (Bourdieu 1990a; Ortner 1984; Peterson 1979), moving empirical research to focus on the study of concrete fields of social relations (Anheier, Gerhards, and Romo 1995; Kay and Hagan 1998). This shift was coupled with a revitalized view of culture as useful in practical strategies of social-boundary drawing (Bourdieu 1984; Lamont 1992; Lamont and Lareau 1988; Lamont and Molnar 2002; Peterson 1992, 1997). On the side of social structure, attention now focused on how *social networks* affect individual and collective tastes, preferences, and patterns of cultural involvement (DiMaggio 1987; Erickson 1996; Mark 1998a, 2003). Nevertheless, this line of research has for the most part treated cultural practices and patterns of culture consumption and taste as being primar-

ily *shaped* and *determined* by social networks (DiMaggio 1987; Erickson 1996; Mark 1998a; McPherson 2004; Relish 1997), but never as being able in turn to have an effect on these networks.

We can refer to this pervasive assumption in the recent literature in the sociology of culture as the "traditional network model" of taste formation and taste transmission (Erickson 1996; Mark 2003, 1998b). Unquestioned allegiance to the traditional network model has precluded investigation of the question of whether cultural tastes and practices themselves have an independent effect on social structure (conceived as patterns of network relations), and if they do, *how* are different profiles of cultural tastes linked to variations in network characteristics. Exploring the implications of this alternative stance on the culture-networks link is important on both empirical and theoretical grounds. If cultural tastes can be shown to have autonomous effects on the composition of personal networks, then the simple model that sees cultural tastes and practices as *contents*, and that sees network relations as the *conduits* through which these contents are transmitted, will have to be revised. Further, shedding light on the question of reciprocal effects of taste on social networks will allow us to conceptualize more clearly the dynamic relation between cultural knowledge and social structure in both small and larger social collectivities (Carley 1991, 1995; DiMaggio 1987; Mark 1998b; Collins 1988). This in its turn may help to connect those dynamics with research and theory on the practical use of cultural resources to create and transform network relations, as part of the situated conversational rituals that constitute the micro-interactional order (Collins 1988; DiMaggio 1987; Long 2003; Mische 2003; Mische and White 1998).

This article opens a path in this direction. Using nationally representative survey data for the United States, I examine the effects of two different styles of culture consumption, what have been traditionally referred to in the literature as "popular" and "highbrow" (Blau 1989; DiMaggio 1987; Emmison 2003; Katz-Gerro 2002; Van Eijck 2001), on outcomes related to the properties of personal networks. In this manner I follow DiMaggio (1987:442) by focusing "on the ways that people use culture to make connections with one another" and Bourdieu ([1986] 2001) in clarifying the way that cultural and social capital are "transubstantiated" into one another and mobilized in practical action to attain desirable resources. In this way I aim to contribute to research and theory on the connection between

cultural competences and network relations, a link that while receiving a great deal of recent theoretical attention, continues to be a relatively understudied topic in the sociology of culture (DiMaggio 2003). I draw theoretical motivation from Bourdieu's ([1986] 2001) original statement on the forms of capital and on network theory in order to show how dispositions toward certain broad forms of taste are connected to patterns of density in different components of the personal network.

Theoretical Background

BOURDIEU AND THE FORMS OF CAPITAL

A prominent statement highlighting the mutual interconnection among economic assets, cultural dispositions, and access to social resources in the forms of network connections is Bourdieu's ([1986] 2001) classic essay "The Forms of Capital." Here Bourdieu presents a convincing argument for the fungibility among economic, cultural, and social resources. This is done through the *conversion hypothesis*, whereby economic capital is construed as capable of being transformed into cultural and social capital during the course of socialization into different class strata. Accrued social and cultural capital can then be partially transformed into economic capital throughout the life-course trajectory of individuals who originate from relatively privileged class factions.

Social capital allows the individual to accrue benefits by facilitating the formation of durable networks of acquaintance, obligation, and recognition—Bourdieu's (1986] 2001:103) definition of social capital—and providing access to membership in prestigious groups. Cultural capital on the other hand, provides the person with the symbolic recognition afforded by mastery of specific dispositions toward collectively valued cultural goods (Mohr and DiMaggio 1995). More importantly, *embodied* cultural capital (Holt 1997)—in the form of specific "pieces" of knowledge that can be exploited and exchanged in conversational rituals (Carley 1991; Collins 1988:360; DiMaggio 1987)—allows the individual to enter prestigious groups and to participate in exclusively bounded networks, helping in the formation of social connections with other individuals endowed with similar tastes.

From this perspective, all of the forms of capital—social, cultural, and economic—are at least *in principle* convertible into one another. As Bourdieu ([1986] 2001:107) notes, "The convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital (and the position occupied in social space) by means of the conversion work." Bourdieu, however, did not fully theorize the directional link going from cultural to social capital, focusing instead on the conversion of cultural into economic capital by way of the acquisition of "institutionalized" markers of the former, especially in the form of educational credentials ([1986] 2001:99–100, 102) and the analogous conversion of social into economic capital (Bourdieu 1996:329–30). In this article I am specifically interested in the alternative process of conversion of informal cultural knowledge (associated with different kinds of taste) into social connections. Recent research at the intersection of cultural sociology and network theory has indirectly dealt with the issue of conversion of cultural—defined as those portable parts of the culture that the person can deploy in interaction—into social capital.

THE CONSTRUCTURAL MODEL

The Carley-Mark (Carley 1991; Mark 1998b, 2003) "constructural" model can be interpreted as an elementary schema of how culture can be translated into social connections, and how social structure (the distribution of chances to interact across persons in the system) and cultural structure (the distribution of cultural forms across persons) can be defined in an interdependent manner. The authors use a simple assumption of similarity (homophily), which postulates that the likelihood of a social tie increases with the cultural similarity between any given dyad (a dynamic process similar to the one proposed by Homans [1950: 108–121]). In this way the probability that two persons will interact is driven by their cultural similarity. Interaction, in this positive feedback loop, in its turn increases cultural similarity as individuals exchange their stocks of knowledge with one another.

While the constructural model breaks with the one-side view of the traditional network model by explicitly modeling both the acquisition of culture by way of social connections and the formation of new social ties by way of cultural similarity (because it is explicitly concerned with the conversion of cultural knowledge into social connections), it fails to specify *which* types of cultural knowledge can convert into *what* kinds of social connections. This objection notwithstanding, the constructural model opens a promising theoretical avenue beyond the one-sided concern with

the effects of social structure on culture of conventional network theory, by providing a plausible mechanism through which cultural information can be transformed into network relations.

CULTURE CONSUMPTION, THE ARTS, AND SOCIABILITY

A more detailed formulation of how the process of conversion of cultural into social capital might operate can be found in DiMaggio's influential article "Classification in Art" (1987). For DiMaggio, the most significant change in modern, (post)industrial societies consists of the rising role of the arts, and mass-produced culture in general, in providing the "baseline" forms of cultural capital necessary to maintain interaction across different types of network ties. This process acquires more importance as these network ties have been transformed in the contemporary context of increasing geographic mobility and the decline of the traditional bonds characteristic of primordial local communities (Wellman 1979), which used to be centered around kinship and spatial contiguity (DiMaggio and Mohr 1985).

Personal networks are now more fluid, discontinuous, and less tied to geography and family (Castells 2000; Wellman 1979; Wellman and Wortley 1990), and popular culture and the arts increasingly serve as the "default" forms of knowledge that connect people across different "foci" of interaction (Feld 1982). Thus in contrast to material goods, which are "physically present and visible," cultural consumption is "invisible once it has occurred. This evanescent quality makes artistic experience, described and exploited in conversation, a portable and thus potent medium of interactional exchange" (DiMaggio 1987:442–43). This leads to the conclusion that "*[i]f there is a common cultural currency [in contemporary society], the arts (supplemented by fashion, cuisine and sport) constitute it*" (DiMaggio 1987:443, emphasis added).

DiMaggio not only notes the role of the arts as a generator of cultural knowledge, and as one of the most important facilitators of informal interaction—or "sociability" in Simmel's (1949) sense of social interaction for its own sake—but also suggests that culture consumption may play different roles in either helping foster ties that lead to social closure or social bridging. DiMaggio remarks that in the modern system, "as Douglas and Isherwood write of goods, artistic tastes are neutral, *their uses are social, they can be used as fences or bridges*" (DiMaggio 1987: 443, emphasis added). The consumption of arts and popular culture is therefore distinctive in this sense because it "provides fodder for least-common denominator talk, infusing

conversation within local, socially oriented groups with time to spend on interaction for its own sake" (DiMaggio 1987:43). More generally, the consumption of cultural goods and performances thus can serve as a bridge not only to sustain current network connections but also to gain and cement new ones. This is because the consumption of arts-related culture and other aesthetic products "gives strangers something to talk about and facilitates the sociable intercourse necessary for acquaintanceships to ripen into friendships" (DiMaggio 1987:443).

Communication theorist John Fiske (1987) concurs with DiMaggio's assessment of the pivotal role that arts and popular culture consumption play in facilitating social interaction—by way of serving as topic for conversation—in contemporary industrial societies. For Fiske, while there has been much critical attention devoted to "the mass media in a mass society," he notes that most analysts have tended to ignore "the fact that our urbanized, institutionalized society facilitates oral communication at least as well as it does mass communication." Although the household is new the primary site of leisure culture consumption, it is important not to forget that most individuals "belong to or attend some sort of club or social organization. And we live in neighborhoods or communities. And in all of these social organizations we talk. Much of this talk is about the mass media and its cultural commodities." For Fiske, these cultural commodities take on primarily expressive functions, enabling the representation of "aspects of our social experience in such a way as to make that experience meaningful and pleasurable to us. These meanings, these pleasures are instrumental in constructing social relations and thus our sense of social identity" (Fiske 1987:77–78).

Fiske's and DiMaggio's framework is useful because it allows us to see how the consumption of publicly available and mass-produced cultural goods results in the acquisition of cultural capital when individuals endowed with the requisite dispositions consume those objects (Bourdieu 1984). This cultural capital can then be linked to the relative prevalence—or comparative lack—of different types of network relations (fences or bridges). This conversion of cultural into social capital functions in the same manner as would be expected by Bourdieu: it is transformed into social and (later on) material resources that are beneficial for the individual concerned: "taste then, is a form of ritual identification and a means of construction [of] social relations. . . . It helps to establish networks of trusting relations that facilitate group mobilization and the attainment of such

social rewards as desirable spouses and prestigious jobs" (DiMaggio 1987:443).

In the following section, I begin the task of outlining a model of how such a transformation of different types of cultural capital into alternative kinds of social capital might take place.

The Conversion of Cultural into Social Capital

WEAK TIES AND STRONG TIES

Do different types of cultural tastes lead to the formation and sustenance of different types of network relations? To gain empirical and theoretical purchase on this question, I adopt the fundamental distinction in network theory between *strong* connections related to frequent, local interactions (and that are relatively more probable to cover a short distance in socio-demographic space—connecting people with individuals similar to them) and *weak* connections characterized by relatively infrequent, extra-local interactions (and that are more likely to span a larger distance in socio-demographic space—connecting people to dissimilar others) (Chwe 1999, Granovetter 1973, Lin, 2001). This distinction is helpful in bringing much needed specificity to the starting idea (Jasso 1988:4) built around a process of "conversion" of cultural into social capital, and in helping us begin to theorize the link between types of culture consumption with more specific forms of network composition.

HIGHBROW AND POPULAR TASTE

In the context of taste for cultural products associated with the artistic sector, tastes and consumption practices appear to cluster around two dominant styles (or forms) of taste (Katz-Gerro 2002: 217–218) that have come to be referred to as *highbrow* and *popular.* As Van Eijck (2001:1168) notes, highbrow taste is characterized by an emphasis on the consumption experience as helping to foster an attitude of "transcendence" and is thus infused with the classical Kantian aesthetic in which cultural products are seen as a conduit for intellectual and emotional impressions that reflect "higher" moral and aesthetic values. Popular taste, on the other hand, is geared toward a more superficial hedonic engagement with culture, with "fun" and "pleasure" as the primary goals of cultural involvement. This is essentially the same distinction made by Blau (1989:433), who differenti-

ates between an "elite culture" with a productive and distributive infrastructure centered around art museums, galleries, opera, theaters, symphony orchestras, and ballet and dance companies, and a "culture with broad popular appeal" that is primarily conveyed through live popular music concerts, general-interest museums, cinemas, and commercial bands. In a similar way, Emmison (2003:220) in a study of culture consumption in Australia notes, "Our analysis of the results for attendance at cultural venues suggests that two distinct factors are operative here. One set of venues, orchestral concerts, chamber music, ballet, musicals, opera and theatre, commonsensically can be grouped as 'high culture.' Another set, comprising rock concerts, movies, night clubs, pub music and theme parks, we regard as popular culture."

Most of the attention in the sociology of consumption focuses on the class fractions that are characterized by different combinations of these taste styles (popular, highbrow, and a third style that Van Eijck [2001] terms "folk"). Indeed, it is easy to show that these two contrasting forms of taste occupy distinct—but increasingly overlapping (Peterson 1997)—positions in sociodemographic space. Popular taste is more likely to be found among younger individuals who are either still in the process of acquiring educational credentials or who have not yet established themselves in a permanent occupation (or who are occupied in a sector of the artistic field that specializes in the production of popular culture), and among some segments of the working class and routine service sector (Bourdieu 1984:32–34). The highbrow aesthetic is more likely to be found among the older, more established upper-middle class, who engage in more difficult and demanding forms of aesthetic consumption with an eye toward using these objects to express more abstract values. The primary ideal commitment here is to approach culture as "cultivation"—what Bourdieu (1984:28) refers to as the "aesthetic disposition"—and the consumption of certain cultural goods as requiring effort, commitment, and a "distance from necessity" in order to be "properly" appreciated (Bourdieu 1984:28–30, Waterman 1998:56).

TWO TYPES OF CONVERSION

Using the distinction between two types of culture consumption ("highbrow" versus "popular") and two types of network ties (strong and weak) it is possible to formulate a more specific model of the conversion of cultural into social capital. In the very same way that weak ties are construed as

beneficial because they traverse wider portions of social space, I propose that consumption of popular cultural forms is beneficial because it provides the appropriate form of cultural capital that is more likely to flow through those types of (weaker) social connections. As DiMaggio (1987:444) notes, "popular culture provides the stuff of everyday sociability." That is, precisely because popular culture has a broader distribution in social space, it will thus tend to be associated with having connections that have a wider reach in that space. Conversely, the consumption of more demanding and arcane forms of culture—such as highbrow culture—because of its relatively stronger correlation with social position, should be more likely to be used to sustain local connections that do not reach far in social space and that are therefore more likely to be "strong" ties (Mark 1998a; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001).

This differentiation between two different types of cultural capital is roughly in line with (although not strictly homologous to) Collins's (1988:360) distinction between *generalized* cultural capital and *particularized* cultural capital, and with Basil Bernstein's (1964) analogous differentiation between *restricted* and *elaborate* codes as the two primary forms through which cultural knowledge is produced and conveyed within and across status groups (see also Emmison 2003:217 on the distinction between inclusive and restricted "modes of cultural practice").[1] For Bernstein (1964:61), restricted codes are more likely to be used when "the form of the social relation is based upon some extensive set of closely shared identifications by the members." The elaborate code on the other hand is more likely to come into play when "role relations receive less support from shared expectations. The orientation of the speaker is based upon the expectation of psychological [or in our terms, *relational*] difference." In Collins's formulation, generalized cultural capital is primarily composed of "symbols which have come loose from any particular person and which simply convey a general sense of group membership [such as talking to friends about a popular sitcom or the local sports team]," which "can be

1. Bernstein's original typology of restricted and elaborate codes was initially developed as a way to contrast the flexible styles of speech displayed by members of the affluent middle class with the more context-bound linguistic practices of the working class which would make my claim that highbrow culture is a restricted code appear to be the reverse of his original intent. Bergesen (1984:189–91), however, has shown that we can think of restricted codes in a more general way: the difficult styles of communication developed in exclusive artistic communities or scientific "thought collectives" can, and do function as a restricted code.

widely used (as a topic of conversational exchange) even with strangers." Particularized cultural capital, in contrast, is that which is only "useful in keeping up a conversational ritual but only with certain people." Particularized cultural capital is much more important in Collins's view (1988:406) in solidifying networks of power and authority (Collins 1975).

Combining Bourdieu's, Bernstein's, and Collins' terms, we can say that popular culture has *generalized conversion value:* it may be more easily converted into weak-tie connections with heterogeneous others, or used to nourish existing connections of this type, because of its relatively low correlation with position in sociodemographic space (Erickson 1996). Elite (highbrow) culture, on the other hand, has *restricted conversion value:* it should be more likely to sustain recurrent, strong-tie networks and function in the long-established-status boundary-maintaining role identified by analysts from Weber (1946:187) to Veblen ([1912] 1945) and more recently Bourdiou (1984) and Collins (1988), because of its tighter connection to social position. The reason for this has to do (in part) with (1) the normatively constrained matching of cultural content to the type of network relation (and ultimately the local situation [Mische and White 1998]), and (2) the added ritual and emotional outcomes that derive from sharing more "selective" forms of culture in an intimate (and thus more trusting) social context (Collins 1988; DiMaggio 1987). As DiMaggio (1987:443) puts it, in contrast to the consumption of popular and mass media culture that simply serves to provide "fodder for least-common denominator talk . . . conversations about more arcane cultural forms—[such as] opera, [or] minimalist art . . . enable individuals to place one another and serves as rituals of greater intensity." In this way, social interaction involving the exchange of knowledge about relatively scarce cultural goods "bind[s] partners who can reciprocate, and identify[ies] as outsiders those who do not command the required codes," with "investors in specialized tastes" joining together in "the joy of sharing names."

Without losing sight of the ultimately heuristic nature of all economic metaphors (Bourdieu 1990b:92–93)—including that of capital—when applied to culturally mediated social interaction, it is possible to envision an informal social "transaction" between two individuals that makes use of highbrow culture as one that is accompanied by a high degree of asset specificity in Williamson's (1981) sense. It therefore makes sense to embed that social transaction under a governance structure that will ensure its successful completion; this case would require a "strong-tie" or a close,

recurrent relationship that is charged with emotional value and associated cognitive salience (DiMaggio 1987; Erickson 1996; Granovetter 1973, Uzzi 1999). Social exchanges that make use of more popular cultural forms, on the other hand, are of a more general, less asset-specific nature, and thus do not need to be necessarily embedded in a strong-tie governance structure, but may occur under a looser, more "arms-length" type of social relationship (Uzzi 1999), one that would be consonant with the idea of a weak tie (Granovetter 1973). This will lead us to expect that generalized cultural tastes should increase the relative prevalence of these types of ties in an individual's social network.

ARE CULTURAL TASTES ALWAYS AN EFFECT OF NETWORK TIES?

A crucial concern when examining the dynamic interplay between cultural taste and personal network characteristics—such as the number of social ties currently possessed by the individual—is the issue of reciprocal causation. Do cultural tastes produce larger networks or do larger networks drive tastes? Not surprisingly, most sociological research and theory that draw on network imagery (Erickson 1996; DiMaggio 1987; Mark 1998a) has assumed that the principal influence flows *from* networks *to* cultural tastes. Because of this widespread consensus, the empirical and theoretical propriety of this assumption has seldom been called into question. One reason why this has been the case might have to do with habitual patterns of inference drawn from entrenched metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1999), and theoretical commitments that construe networks as the infrastructure of society (and thus these networks are "hard" and casually efficient), cultural tastes as fleeting, and cultural content as simply objects that flow through these social pipes.

Recent research (i.e., Wellman et al. 1997; Burt 2000, 2002), however, has shown that networks are hardly stable, and that change and volatility in personal networks appear to be the rule rather than exception. Current dyadic contacts are constantly being deleted and new ones being formed throughout the adult life course. As Wellman and his collaborators (1997:47) conclude, "The most striking thing about our findings is how unstable intimacy is." This volatility is even more pronounced for weak ties or "bridging" connections (Burt 2000). Even personal networks studied in relatively delimited foci of interaction for comparatively short periods of time (less than a year) experience large amounts of turnover and change (see the review in Burt 2000:5, Table 1).

There has been little empirical research on the dynamic stability of tastes through time. However, there is good reason to suppose that tastes are more stable than current network theory leads us to believe. For instance, most studies on the role that early-family and school experiences play in the development of cultural capital have shown the strong influence of arts participation, education, and after-school training during adolescence on adult tastes even after controlling for subsequent educational attainment (Kracman 1996). Bourdieu's (1984) model of the habitus as a system of *durable* dispositions acquired in the family environment assumes the same stability, of tastes through time. Smith (1995), for instance, shows that musical tastes are developed early in youth and are fairly stable across the life course, and Dumais (2002) shows evidence of stable dispositions toward certain types of culture already present in early adolescence.

Thus, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the received picture of a steady and temporally continuous social structure determining soft and malleable tastes might be a bit one-sided, if not empirically inadequate. Given the observationally established instability of social connections and the relative stability of tastes, an alternative model consistent with the idea of conversion of cultural into social capital can be proposed, one in which comparatively stable patterns of taste drive the cultural contents more likely to be deployed in interaction, which in their turn affect the composition of personal networks. While the notion of cultural tastes "having an effect" on network ties may seem relatively counterintuitive at first, this possibility should not be very surprising if these tastes are construed as "foci", or cultural structures that serve to organize social interaction around commonly shared knowledge and interests, such as fan clubs, reading groups, or internet hobby sites (Feld 1982).

Empirical Implications

The model of conversion of cultural into social capital that I have outlined so far leads to a series of important empirical implications. First, we should expect that in contrast to the traditional network model that posits a one-way avenue of conversion of social into cultural capital, we should also expect to observe a reciprocal process of conversion of cultural into

social capital. This implies that in comparison to those who are not involved in the consumption of arts-related culture, those individuals with a taste for either popular or highbrow culture should also have larger and wider spanning networks. Thus, in the very same way that tastes are seen as resulting from the network ties that transmit them, we should also find that large networks are a result of the possession of the wide variety of tastes that help to sustain them.

Furthermore, if the conversion model is on the right track, highbrow and popular culture should be subject to different conversion dynamics: we should expect that those individuals who are more likely to have mastery of the highbrow-culture restricted code should also be more likely to have personal networks rich in social ties of a more intimate nature (strong ties):

Hypothesis 1: Highbrow culture taste leads to a denser network of strong ties.

Popular culture taste, on the other hand, should be subject to a different conversion regime, whereby those individuals who have a greater degree of familiarity with these types of cultural goods being more likely to possess personal networks relatively richer in less intimate, "arms-length" ties, which, while not useful for purposes of intimacy and emotional support, provide access to nonredundant sources of information and other forms of instrumental resources (Lin 1999; Granovetter 1973):

Hypothesis 2: Popular culture taste leads to a denser network of weak ties.

Measures

To test the foregoing hypotheses, I use data from the culture and network modules of the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) (Davis, Smith, and Marsden 2002). The GSS is administered biannually by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) to a nationally representative sample of noninstitutionalized, English-speaking American adults. The 2002 wave of the GSS contained a recurring module on participation in the arts (similar to ones fielded in 1993 and 1998), along with a new module related to social networks and social support. To my knowledge, this represents the first time that sociometric measures of network size and reach as well as measures of cultural taste have been present in a high-quality, representative

dataset of the American population, which also contains relevant sociodemographic variables, thus representing a unique opportunity to evaluate empirically the adequacy of the conversion model outlined earlier.

CULTURAL TASTE INDICATORS

Respondents were asked to report whether they had engaged in the following activities during the past year: (1) seen a movie in a theater, (2) gone to a live performance of popular music like rock, country, or rap, (3) attended a live performance of a nonmusical stage play, (4) watched a live ballet or dance performance, (5) heard a classical music or opera performance, (6) visited an art museum or gallery, and (7) read a novel, poem, or play. The variables are coded one if the respondent engaged in that activity in the past year and zero otherwise.

SUMMARY

Three conclusions emerge from these analyses: (1) net of sociodemographic factors, highbrow taste is more likely to be converted into a denser network of strong ties, and popular taste leads to an increasing number of weak ties; (2) the net effect of highbrow (popular) taste on the size of the portion of the network composed of less-intimate (more-intimate) contacts is largely null, as would be expected if this type of cultural competence were not useful for the sustenance of these types of network connections; and (3) the positive effect of institutionalized forms of cultural capital (such as education) and of economic capital (as measured by occupational earnings) on the size of the personal networks is largely mediated through embodied forms of cultural capital displayed in the form of cultural taste.

Discussion

The basic thrust of the results reported in this article can be summarized in a succinct way: individual tastes for different types of culture help to create and sustain different types of network relations. In a general manner, this finding supports the basic proposition that the primary use of the

knowledge gained through cultural tastes—especially those connected with the arts and sports (and other cultural pursuits)—are *social* (DiMaggio 1987). Thus, the consumption of widely available cultural goods serves as one of the primary ways in which individuals become connected and integrated into the social structure. Individuals who are not involved in culture consumption are therefore more likely to be disconnected from others and forgo all of the benefits that come from network relations and that have been glossed under the banner of social capital. In this way the often-noted but seldom-explained association between high socioeconomic status and personal network density can be explained. Insofar as high-status occupants are also the more avid culture consumers, they will also be the ones capable of sustaining larger social networks.

An important implication of the findings reported here is that the likelihood that certain forms of cultural knowledge will serve as either "fences or bridges" depends on their appeal and ease of incorporation. Cultural pursuits that have a steep learning curve or that require extensive training and experience to be consumed (i.e., the "acquired tastes" of the dominant classes, the "niche" tastes developed around newly emerging technologies, or a strong interest in nineteenth-century social theory) are more likely to be used as fences, simply because people are likely to exploit that type of knowledge to sustain network relations already imbued with multiple meanings and emotional salience (multiplex ties), in relatively exclusionary interaction foci. Popular cultural forms, on the other hand, connect individuals to more distant segments of the social structure. In this way the consumption of widely available cultural forms serves as the "default" form of portable cultural knowledge that helps to keep a minimal level of integration even in large and complex social structures such as those characteristic of contemporary postindustrial societies (Watts 2004).

References

Anheier, Helmut K., Jurgen Gerhards, and Frank P. Romo. 1995. "Forms of Capital and Social Structure in Cultural Fields: Examining Bourdieu's Social Topography." *American Journal of Sociology* 100:859–903.

Bearman, Peter. 1993. *Relations into Rhetorics.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Bergesen, Albert. 1984. "The Semantic Equation: A Theory of the Social Origins of Art Styles." *Sociological Theory* 2:187–221

Bernstein, Basil. 1964. "Elaborated and Restricted Codes: Their Social Origins and Some Consequences." *American Anthropologist* 66:55–69.

Blau, Judith R. 1989. *The Shape of Culture.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

———. [1986] 2001. "The Forms of Capital." Pp. 96–111 in *The Sociology of Economic Lift,* edited by Richard Swedberg and Mark Granevetter. Boulder, CO: Westview.

———. 1990a. *The Logic of Practice.* Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

———. 1990b. *In Other Words.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

———. 1996a. *The State Nobility.* Cambridge, England: Polity Press.

Burt, Ronald S. 2000. "Decay Functions." *Social Networks* 22:1–28.

———. 2002. "Bridge Decay." *Social Networks* 24:333–63.

Carley, Kathleen M. 1991. "A Theory of Group Stability." *American Sociological Review* 56:331–54.

———. 1995. "Communication Technologies and Their Effect on Cultural Homogeneity, Consensus, and the Diffusion of New Ideas." *Sociological Perspectives* 38:547–571.

Castells, Manuel. 2000. *The Rise of the Network Society.* 2nd ed. Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Chwe, Michael Suk-Young. 1999. "Structure and Strategy in Collective Action." *American Journal of Sociology* 105:128–56.

Collins, Randall. 1975. *Conflict Sociology.* New York: Academic Press.

———. 1988. *Theoretical Sociology.* San Francisco, CA: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich.

Davis, James Allan, Tom W. Smith, and Peter V. Marsden. 2002. General Social Survey 2002. Chicago, IL: National Opinion Research Center; Storrs, CT: The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

DiMaggio, Paul. 1987. "Classification in Art." *American Sociological Review* 52:440–55.

DiMaggio, Paul and John Mohr. 1985. "Cultural Capital, Educational Attainment, and Marital Selection." *American Journal of Sociology* 90:1231–1261.

Douglas, Mary. 1978. *Cultural Bias.* London, England: Royal Anthropological Institute.

Dumais, Susan A. 2002. "Cultural Capital, Gender, and School Success: The Role of Habitus." *Sociology of Education* 75:44–68.

Durkheim, Emile. [1933] 1997. *The Division of Labor in Society.* New York: Free Press.

Emmison, Michael. 2003. "Social Class and Cultural Mobility: Reconfiguring the Cultural Omnivore thesis." *Journal of Sociology* 39:211–230.

Erickson, Bonnie H. 1996. "Culture, Class, and Connections." *American Journal of Sociology* 102:217–52.

Feld, Scott. 1982. "The Focused Organization of Social Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 86: 1015–1035.

Fiske, John. 1987. *Television Culture: Popular Pleasures and Politics.* New York: Methuen.

Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78:1360–80.

Holt, Douglas B. 1997. "Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's Theory of Tastes from Its Critics." *Poetics* 25:93–120.

Homans, George C. 1950. *The Human Group.* New York: Harcourt Brace.

Jasso, Guillermina. 1988. "Principles of Theoretical Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 6:1–20.

Katz-Gerro, Tally. 2002. "Highbrow Cultural Consumption and Class Distinction in Italy, West Germany, Sweden, and the United States." *Social Forces* 81:207–29.

Kay, Fiona M. and John Hagan. 1998. "Raising the Bar: The Gender Stratification of Law Firm Capital." *American Sociological Review* 63:728–43.

Kracman, Kimberly. 1996. "The Effects of School-Based Arts Instruction on Attendance at Museums and the Performing Arts." *Poetics* 24:203–18.

Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought.* New York: Basic Books.

Lamont, Michèle. 1992. *Money, Morals, and Manners.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Lamont, Michèle and Virág Molrár. 2002. "The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:167–95.

Lamont, Michèle and Annette Lareau. 1988. "Cultural Capital: Allusions, Gaps and Glissandos in Recent Theoretical Developments." *Sociological Theory* 6:153–68.

Lin, Nan. 1999. "Social Networks and Status Attainment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 25: 467–487.

———. 2001. "Building a Network Theory of Social Capital." Pp. 3–30 in *Social Capital: Theory and Research*, edited by Nan Lin and Karen S. Cook. New York, Hawthorne: Aldine de Gruyter.

Long, Elizabeth. 2003. *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mark, Noah P. 1998a. "Birds of a Feather Sing Together." *Social Forces* 77:453–85.

———. 1998b. "Beyond Individual Differences: Social Differentiation from First Principles." *American Sociological Review* 63:309–30.

———. 2003. "Culture and Competition: Homophily and Distancing Explanations for Cultural Niches." *American Sociological Review* 68:319–45.

Martin, John Levi. 1997. "Power Structure and Belief Structure in 40 American Communes." Ph.D. diss. University of California at Berkeley.

———. 2002. "Power, Authority, and the Constraint of Belief Systems." *American Journal of Sociology* 107:861–904.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1939. *The German Ideology: Parts I and II.* New York: International Publishers.

McPherson, Miller. 2004. "A Blau Space Primer: Prolegomenon to an Ecology of Affiliation." *Industrial and Corporate Change* 13:263–80.

McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook. 2001. "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:415–44.

Mische, Ann. 2003. "Cross-talk in Movements: Reconceiving the Culture-Network Link." Pp. 258–80 in *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, edited by Mario Diani and Doug McAdam. London, England: Oxford University Press.

Mische, Ann and Harrison White. 1998. "Between Conversation and Situation: Public Switching Dynamics Across Network Domains." *Social Research* 65:695–724.

Mohr, John W. and Paul DiMaggio. 1995. "The Intergenerational Transmission of Cultural Capital." *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 14:167–199.

Ortner, Sherry. 1984. "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26: 126–166.

Peterson, Richard, A. 1979. "Revitalizing the Culture Concept." *Annual Review of Sociology* 5:137–66.

———. 1992. "Understanding Audience Segmentation: From Elite and Popular to Omnivore and Univore." *Poetics* 243–58.

———. 1997. "The Rise and Fall of Highbrow Snobbery as a Status Marker." *Poetics* 25:75–92.

Relish, Michael. 1997. "It's Not All Education: Network Measures as Sources of Cultural Competency." *Poetics* 25:121–39.

Simmel, Georg. 1949. "The Sociology of Sociability." *American Journal of Sociology* 55:254–61.

Smith, Tom W. 1995. "Generational Differences in Musical Preferences." *Popular Music and Society* 18:43–59.

Swanson, Guy E. 1967. *Religion and Regime.* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Uzzi, Brian. 1999. "Embededness in the Making of Financial Capital: How Social Relations and Networks Benefit Firms Seeking Financing." *American Sociological Review* 64:481–505.

Van Eijck, Koen. 2001. "Social Differentiation in Musical Taste Patterns." *Social Forces* 79:1163–85.

Veblen, Thorstein. [1912] 1945. *The Theory of the Leisure Class.* New York, Viking.

Wacquant, Loïc J. D. 1989. "Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu." *Sociological Theory* 7:26–63.

Waterman, Stanley. 1998. "Carnivals for Elites? The Cultural Politics of Arts Festivals." *Progress in Human Geography* 22:54–74.

Watts, Duncan. J. 2004. "The 'New' Science of Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30:243–70.

Weber, Max. 1946. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology.* Edited by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wellman, Barry. 1979. "The Community Question: The Intimate Networks of East Yorkers." *American Journal of Sociology* 84:1201–31.

Wellman, Barry, Renita Yuk-Lin Wong, David Tindall, and Nancy Nazer. 1997. "A Decade of Network Change: Turnover, Persistence and Stability in Personal Communities." *Social Networks* 19:27–50.

Wellman, Barry and Scot Wortley. 1990. "Different Strokes from Different Folks: Community Ties and Social Support." *American Journal of Sociology* 96:558–88.

Williamson, Oliver E. 1981. "The Economics of Organization: The Transaction Cost Approach." *American Journal of Sociology* 87:548–77.

Wuthnow. Robert. 1985. "State Structures and Ideological Outcomes." *American Sociological Review* 50:799–821.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between *weak ties* and *strong ties* and why does this matter to sociologists?
2. Why would a preference for highbrow culture lead to a denser network of strong ties? According to Lizardo, is this hypothesis correct?