

# **Exploring cultural capital in Dublin's urban privileged class**

This thesis is submitted by

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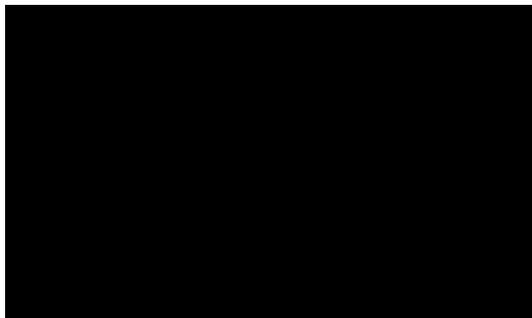
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# Declaration of Authorship

I, Kerry McCall Magan, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:



Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019

# Acknowledgments Page

Thank you to my supervisors, Dr. Dave O'Brien and Prof. Victoria Alexander, for their patience, advice and guidance.

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# Abstract

This research provides a nuanced account of embodied cultural capital in the middle and upper classes in Dublin, Ireland (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Through an inductive thematic analysis of interviews with two age cohorts (18-24 years; 45-54 years), this research finds persistence and confidence in cultural participation and taste that is remarkably enduring. Stocks of embodied cultural capital have accrued, for those in the dominant class, through histories of cultural exposure across the general register of culture. This has led to an effortless, disavowed cultural engagement that facilitates class to be performed obliquely. Though this also lends much support to Peterson's (2005) omnivore thesis, it belies an intense and narrower range of specific interests amongst interviewees, young and old. Concurrently, a voracious and profound belief in the transformational nature of arts and culture is found in the upwardly mobile. This research also finds new forms of distinction are emerging- specifically amongst the young. These encompass a broad and pluralistic cultural profile that centre on the abolition of snobbishness, knowledge-seeking and information acquisition as well as an outward facing global cosmopolitanism - one that takes pride in national culture but consumes culture transnationally and globally (Priour & Savage, 2013; Warde, Wright & Gayo-cal, 2007). This emerging cultural capital profile demonstrates the capacity of the socially privileged to juggle and transpose a rarefied aesthetic disposition across, and between, the multiplicities of genres (Friedman, Savage, Hanquinet, & Miles, 2015). As original, empirical social research this study makes a unique contribution to sociological research, bringing the perspective of a small, postcolonial nation to bear on the importance of cultural participation and taste in forming social processes. In doing so, it illustrates the need for future research to develop greater sociological understanding in Ireland of cultural stratification that is more specific to generations, class and geographies.

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# Introduction

## Overview

Throughout Irish history, arts and culture have had a complex relationship with identity and the nation state. In the early twentieth-century, the “false starts” and “cautious beginnings” of the Irish Free State (in Irish: *Saorstát Éireann*) facilitated arts and cultural initiatives as expressions of the newly founded Republic (Kennedy, 1990, p. 5 & p. 45).<sup>1</sup> Irish culture (in Irish: *Gaelic*) had been heavily influenced by the cheek-by-jowl relationship with British neighbours and subject to colonial suppression for centuries (Kiberd, 1996; Graham, 2001). However, the socio-cultural expression of an Irish people, found agency in the myths and legends of ancient Irish folklore. Once the Republic was founded, and subject to limited means and lacking political attention, arts and culture existed in a “continual state of crisis” for many years (Kelly, 1989, p. 97). More recently, and in the context of the broader fiscal crisis in Ireland, arts and culture have found an increased significance as a national asset on the international stage. Politicians and policy makers are now at pains to stress that arts and culture are “not an elegant add-on [but] the essence of who we are as a still-young Republic with an ancient people” (Department of the Taoiseach, 2016, para 7-8). In ongoing rhetorical statements, government asserts “the vital nature of culture and creativity remain at the heart of everything we do” (Department of Arts, Heritage, Rural, Regional & Gaeltacht Affairs [DAHRRGA], 2016a).

This heightened political interest has been optimistically welcomed by a cultural sector diminished after years of funding cuts and public-sector reform. In 2014, a two-year roll-in to centenary celebrations was announced for 2016 and the subsequent launch of a cultural policy framework proposing a ten-year plan (DAHRRGA, 2016b; Department of the Taoiseach, 2016). These initiatives have been followed swiftly by Creative Ireland, “a five year all-of-Government initiative,

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<sup>1</sup> Republic of Ireland founded in 1949 with for example, The Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon founded in 1952; Raidió Teilifís Éireann, founded in 1960.

from 2017 to 2022, [designed] to place creativity at the centre of public policy” (Creative Ireland, 2017; Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, 2017). Received positively by the wider cultural sector, these initiatives are considered possible signs of a strategic and genuine commitment to a sector deeply in need of government support.

Initial optimism, however, has turned to profound scepticism, as what transpires is the low political priority and high rhetorical appeal of arts and culture (Belfiore, 2009). Housing and employment levels may be on par with the height of the Celtic Tiger boom years, and GDP recovery and growth continue strongly, however, cultural producers and practitioners are not enjoying the equivalence of improved economic circumstance of those in other sectors. Funding hasn’t kept pace with the renewed, burgeoning economy and the lived experience of those engaged in cultural practice has altered little (McCall Magan, 2018). The national body for the development of the professional arts, The Arts Council of Ireland/ An Chomhairle Ealaíon, is now on official record as “hugely disappointed” at recent budget allocations (The Irish Times, 2017).<sup>2</sup>

This research study on cultural participation and taste is set within this context. The cultural sector in Ireland (as elsewhere) has experienced a “crisis of legitimacy,” that requires a body of proof with which to make the case for the arts (Crossick & Kaszynska, 2016; Holden, 2006, p. 9; Jowell, 2004; MacDowall, Badham, Blomkamp, & Dunphy, 2015; Warwick Commission, 2015). In response to the need to make value-for-money arguments and justify government spending on arts and culture, there has been increased awareness of the need to make a case for this predominantly exchequer-funded sector (National Campaign for the Arts, 2013a, 2013b; O’Hagan, 2015; Reeves, 2002). The Arts Council of Ireland, through its agency, Arts Audiences, and in response to this need for a body of proof with which to make the case for arts and culture, drew on the Target Group Index (TGI) consumer surveys which are conducted throughout the UK and the island of Ireland

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<sup>2</sup> €68m for 2018 – an increase of €3 million from 2017.

by Kantar Media.

Aligned to previous Arts Council of Ireland public surveys (1983, 1994, 2006), the TGI surveys demonstrate the Irish nation as highly engaged in arts and culture. They report “66% of the population, or 2.3 million people, are designated as “arts attenders” and over 1.2 million people state they “regularly do artistic or creative activities such as drawing, painting, photography etc” (Arts Audiences, 2010a, p. 7 & p. 8).<sup>3</sup> These percentages have remained approximately the same, year on year, with the most recent Arts Council of Ireland survey reporting that “64% of the population had attended any arts event within the preceding twelve months. This compares very favourably to other geographies, with Northern Ireland recording a figure of 47% annual attendance and Great Britain a figure of 45%” (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017, Section 2.1).

The surveys define arts attendance as any performance in a theatre (could be amateur performance, music etc.); plays; opera; ballet; contemporary dance; classical music concerts and recitals; folk concerts; jazz concerts and performances; art galleries and exhibitions (Arts Audiences, 2010a, p. 8). Cultural participation is loosely defined as “artistic or creative activities, such as drawing, photography etc” and infers a range of informal, domestic creative activities (Arts Audiences, 2010a, p. 8). Taken together, the TGI data, reported on in the Arts Audience surveys (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013), captures the arts attendance and cultural participation as nationally representative data on formal and informal arts and cultural engagement in Ireland. The surveys further show that Ireland follows patterns of arts and cultural participation as elsewhere, namely that the better socio-economically advantaged and more highly educated in Irish society are more likely to attend formal arts events. They also note a slight dominance of females, as well as the plus 55 years, as attending highbrow arts activities such as theatre, ballet, opera and gallery exhibitions, They also note the 18-25 years and 45-54 years

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<sup>3</sup> This figure comprises those indicating any “last 12 month” attendance of a specific genre of event, or indicating attendance of specific named arts festivals in the last twelve months. It should also be noted that “regular” and “occasional” participation are based upon the subjective understanding of respondents (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017).

cohorts as the most disengaged from formal culture (Arts Audiences, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013).

Recent Arts Council of Ireland reports have made more of an attempt to gather diverse findings and go deeper into the role of arts in Irish life. These reports, commissioned by the Arts Council of Ireland (2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017), continue to draw on the TGI surveys but insert a broader range of questions that are deemed to capture a more expansive range of cultural participation in informal artistic and creative activities. In these later surveys, the definition of cultural participation becomes more clearly defined as “hobbies and Interests” and includes “participation in dance (set dancing; other Irish traditional/folk dancing; other dancing); participation in music (sing in a choir; other singing to an audience or rehearsing; play a musical instrument to an audience or rehearsing; play a musical instrument for your own pleasure); participation in amateur drama (performing or rehearsing in amateur drama)” (2015b, p. 17). While these more exacting definitions of cultural participation are helpful, they continue to separate out formal arts (and therefore, most likely funded) culture from informal and more domestic pursuits.

As a result of this, this researcher began to question the assertions that were being made in the Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland surveys, specifically with regard to this separation of highbrow arts from informal culture. I became conscious of a certain politics of method at play in extant thinking about arts and culture in Ireland as this division results in little more than the reinforcement and legitimation of funded arts and culture. This also highlights certain perspectives on cultural value and cultural worth within the body politic (Gibson & Miles, 2016; Miles & Sullivan, 2010). Existing Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland research reports may therefore intentionally make a case for culture and in so doing present an argument of legitimacy that bolster the case for government support of arts and culture but they also do little more than capture a statistically-focused and quantitative logic that does little to highlight the actual role of arts or culture in Irish life. They further reinforce hierarchical and historical ways of thinking about, and

ways of seeing, arts and culture (Berger, 1972).

As Gibson and Miles have commented (on English survey tools), existing methodological decisions are “loaded with assumptions about the world in their design and in the process of their application” (Gibson & Miles, 2016, p. 152). They present a certain outlook that equates an accepted view of legitimated, highbrow culture with state-funded activities with all else deemed domestic or amateur. What manifests is an implicit fine arts focus that carries mid-twentieth century, formulaic thinking “about ‘arts and culture,’ which might be best represented as ‘ARTS (and culture)’” (Cooke & McCall, 2015, p. 6).

This approach ends up offering little real insight into the vital nature of culture and creativity in Irish society (DAHRRGA, 2016a). What does result is a refocus of organisational strategic priorities that set out to maximise arts audiences and expand the consumer base of state-funded arts and culture (Arts Council of Ireland, 2011, 2016). The embrace of formal, highbrow fine arts and the need to place “in the frame” those who have previously “been out of the picture,” is specifically targeted at those who have been labelled as non-attenders of legitimated arts and cultural activities (National Economic & Social Forum [NESF], 2007, 2008, p. 1). This deficit approach to the maximisation of arts audiences considers the “non-users” of state-funded arts and culture as requiring conversion into “users” of state-funded initiatives (Stevenson, 2013). This has left some scholars to ask exactly “what is a non-user” of culture? (Balling & Kann-Christensen, 2013, p. 74).

As such, it might be suggested that existing Irish arts research may not actually be an accurate capture of *The Arts in Irish Life* (as most recent reports are titled) nor reflective of Irish society’s standing as a highly creative and engaged nation (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017; DAHRRGA, 2016a). This researcher began to wonder what role does arts and culture actually hold in Irish society? If Ireland is a highly creative and engaged nation as polity asserts, what does this actually mean and what do people actually do? How can this researcher get behind the linear logic of statistics and find out more about those who are deemed the least

active cultural attenders? If these are the 18-24 years and 45-54 years educated, middle and upper classes of Irish society as the survey data shows (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017), how might an individual's background, education or upbringing inform an individual's cultural participation and taste? Do these individuals share certain characteristics? Display certain tastes? Hold shared perspectives? How do these manifest? These very imprecise questions began a deeper sociological consideration of cultural participation and taste in the lives of the dominant class in Ireland.

### **Sociological questions on culture**

Cultural participation has been a long-standing area of enquiry in the social sciences. Definitions of culture, and cultural participation abound, and these are often used in incomplete, over-expansive and sometimes slightly fuzzy ways. How these designations arise, the legitimacy and uses of these terms, is a source of much debate and concern (Bennett, Frow & Emmison, 1999; Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal & Wright, 2009; Miles & Sullivan, 2010; Friedman, Savage, Hanquinet & Miles, 2015). Agreeing what culture is, how to measure it, capture information on it, and who makes or attends culture, are all difficult and problematic questions to answer. When combined with identity, power and post-colonial processes (as in the Irish circumstance) this can become an even more complex endeavour. However, when subjected to sociological analysis, understanding the role culture holds in any society, can offer understandings of culture as a feature of social processes and yield insight into social, cultural and political phenomena (Bottero, 2004).

Indeed, scholars have explored sociological questions on culture and its relationship to taste for many centuries. Hume (1757), Montesquieu (1764) and Kant (1790), have all grappled with philosophical considerations of culture and sought to establish universal principles of taste that were located in objective reasoning, and principles of logic and discovery. Each identified taste as originating in the inherent capacities of individuals', and correlated good taste with good judgment and good morals. This consideration of higher-class social taste has increasingly gained

traction in Western discourses through the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and a landmark text in this regard is Thorstein Veblen's *Theory of the leisure class: An economic study in the evolution of institutions* (1899). Veblen highlighted that the leisure class define society's standards of aesthetic tastes, leisure pursuits and consumption tendencies and expose the hollowness of many canons of taste, education, dress, and culture. Scholars, Marx and Engels (1848) have also argued that culture served to justify and perpetuate inequalities in society amongst class groups. While twentieth century scholar, Weber (1958), continued to emphasise the role culture played in status creation. Weber (1958), argued that groups in society are based on shared values and norms, and that a clear correlation exists between a certain type of culture and the social hierarchy Bourdieu ([1979] 1984) furthered this analysis and provided empirical social research on this subject in his study of distinction in 1960s patriarchal France.

More recently, in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, scholars have begun to explore cultural participation and taste in the context of nation states (Bennett et al, 1999; Bennett et al, 2009; Prieur, Rosenlund & Skjott-Larsen, 2008) and among specific cultural forms (in music, see Atkinson, 2011; in comedy, see Friedman, 2011, 2014; in visual arts, see Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014). Academic studies have also investigated the relationship between cultural participation and education (Khan, 2012; Notten, Lancee, van de Werfhorst & Ganzeboom, 2013; Reay, 2010, 2015; Sullivan, 2002); symbolic boundary making (Holt, 1997; Lamont & Fournier, 1992); omnivorousness (Meier Jaeger & Katz-Gerro, 2008; Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson, 2005, 2007; Warde & Gayo-cal, 2009; Warde, Wright & Gayo-cal, 2008); public policy (Gilmore, 2014; Miles & Sullivan, 2010, 2012); enthusiasm (Benzecry, 2011; Hennion, 2004); inequality (Coulangeon, 2011; O'Brien & Oakley, 2015; Reeves, 2014; 2015); cultural funding hierarchies (Feder & Katz-Gerro, 2012, 2015), along with demonstrating the shifting definitions of the terms *culture* and *participation* (Balling & Kann-Christensen, 2013; Wright, 2011, 2015).

This has led contemporary scholars to argue that perspectives and definitions of cultural participation and cultural value are “in need of a radical overhaul” (Miles & Gibson, 2016, p. 151; 2017). They point towards moving away from a top down, *culture is good for you* grand narrative that retains a focus on involvement in state-funded cultural institutions and legitimated activities (such as that mentioned above in the Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland research), towards one that offers a more holistic and inclusive recognition of the range of arts, culture and creative activities. In this way, contemporary scholars are therefore fostering an understanding of cultural participation that includes the range across the general register of culture. This range encompasses the traditional highbrow arts such as theatre, opera and ballet as well as other less legitimised cultural forms such as the popular and folk arts, along with a wide range of hobbies, pastimes and more local pursuits.

An example of this is the Understanding Everyday Participation – Articulating Cultural Values (UEP) project. This includes a wide range of cultural participation that includes the cultural economy of charity shopping through to the attractiveness of libraries and the cultural worth of parks and commons and more (Delrieu & Gibson, 2017; Edwards & Gibson, 2017; Gilmore, 2017; Miles & Gibson, 2017). This work marks a distinct move away from the polarised and divisive arts audience research, founded in a quantitative logic, towards an understanding of arts and cultural participation garnered through a combination of research methods and one that is more comprehensive and better reflective of the role arts and culture does hold in society.

### **Bourdieu, key cultural thinker**

Bourdieu has been a foundational reference for those interested in researching the sociological nature of cultural participation and taste. He was the first scholar to bring empirical analysis to the social space of lifestyles with a rigour that attempted to capture the logic of this space. His work, while much critiqued, has endured as a key reference for those interested in understanding the relationship of culture and society (Bellavance, 2008; Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal & Wright, 2009;

Coulangeon & Lemel, 2007; DiMaggio, 1979; Fowler, 1999; Friedman, 2014; Gartman, 1991; Goldthorpe, 2007; Jarness, 2015; Lamont & Fournier, 1992; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lizardo & Skiles, 2013; Shockley, 2004, 2005; Silva & Warde, 2010; Sullivan, 2002; Weininger, 2002, 2003, 2005).

In his seminal text, *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu demonstrates how individuals are a dynamic expression of the volume and levels of capital an individual holds, at any given moment in time. Using Factor Analysis, a quantitative method and form of differential association, he demonstrated “fundamental patterns of cultural choice” informed an individual's background, education and capital profile (Gans, 1986, p. 3). He then used qualitative enquiry to illustrate the taste and cultural participation profile of a smaller number of research participants. The mixed methods approach Bourdieu used, allowed him to plot the relationship between people of varying tastes and levels of accumulated capital (economic, cultural, social). Through this research approach, Bourdieu was able to establish a deeper understanding of individual circumstance and relate this to broader structural considerations in society. This is interesting for this researcher, as a core element of Bourdieu's enquiry was the role played by cultural participation and taste in defining an individual's social position.

Key for Bourdieu (1984) was the deployment of cultural capital as a power-conferring resource in the social space of lifestyles. The dynamic expression of cultural capital, is expressed through a taste for the legitimated highbrow cultural forms such as the fine arts, theatre and literature and is expressed as a natural “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66). This taste he finds, marks the powerful in society and is the taste of the dominant class- the middle and upper classes. Those located in the lower social classes, Bourdieu posits, have not had the same opportunity to cultivate the appropriate habitus, and therefore cultural capital and possess a taste only for the necessary, the functional and the garish. Lower class taste is therefore unrefined, uncultivated and lacks the capacity for disinterestedness (Bourdieu, 1984). In this way, Bourdieu states, “taste classifies the classifier” as each class is discoverable and therefore affirmed through, and by, their

cultural taste (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6). In this way, taste contains power. As such, Bourdieu's seminal text *Distinction* (1984), highlights cultural taste and participation as an explanatory mechanism for inequality in the social field.

### **Introducing the research**

While claims exist that Ireland is a highly engaged creative nation (DAHRRGA, 2016a), little is known sociologically about the role culture holds in Irish society. This doctoral research makes a unique contribution in this regard. As noted in the Arts Council of Ireland (2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017), and the Arts Audiences research reports (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013), the educated, urban upper and middle class and the most highly engaged of all classes in highbrow and lowbrow arts and cultural forms. Further, those located in Dublin city, are the most actively engaged in all forms of arts and culture compared to other regional counties (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017; Lunn & Kelly, 2009). The use of Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) cultural capital premise as a theoretical tool emerged for this researcher and research questions were formed which were designed to surface sociological information on the cultural taste and participation of Dublin's upper and middle classes in two different age groups.

It has been highlighted above that beyond the quantitative capture of the Arts Audiences (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013) and Arts Council of Ireland (2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017) reports, arts and culture in Ireland remains distinctly under-researched, particularly from a sociological perspective. This research set out to make a meaningful contribution in this regard and explore the role cultural participation and taste hold in social processes. Specifically, how the embodied cultural capital of the privileged in the nation's capital city affirms and perpetuates power relationships in Irish society.

Through semi-structured interviews across a six-month period (January-June in 2017), this research study explored questions of cultural participation and taste amongst two age cohorts (18-24 years and 45-54 years) in Dublin city in the affluent

area of Dublin 6. In existing surveys, these age groups appear the most disengaged in formal highbrow arts and culture compared to other age cohorts and this research study provided an opportunity to get behind the linear logic of extant quantitative surveys and explore the cultural taste and participation of these two groups. It also provided the opportunity to compare and contrast the participation and taste of the older age group (45-54 years) with the younger age group (18-24 years). The choice of these two age cohorts also provided an opportunity to consider differences in cultural choices and preferences that may be a generational factor or may arise as a result of life stage. A further and unexpected benefit of this approach was the elucidation, by the older cohort, of memories of parents' cultural activities and social interests at an earlier time in Irish history.

The research aim of this study was to explore Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital and consider how the dominant class, the most powerful group in Irish society – the educated urban professionals – exercise and manifest their cultural capital as an embodied resource in the social field in Ireland. This was in order to not only consider the role cultural taste and participation hold in social processes but also to explore how they serve to perpetuate power relations in the social field. By doing this, my intention was to “move from observations of class structured oppositions to more specific claims about how cultural capital works across varied kinds of social relation” (Prieur & Savage, 2011, p. 567). The research questions, I specifically formulated were:

- *To what extent is embodied cultural capital present in Dublin's middle classes in the 18-24 years and 45-54 years age cohorts?*
- *And how is this manifested in individual cultural participation and taste?*

To answer these research questions, interviews explored the extent to which family background, education, socio-economic circumstance and previous cultural experience informed an individual's cultural participation and taste.

For the purposes of this research study (and throughout the interview process),

cultural participation was understood to mean attendance at, and participation in, arts, cultural and creative activities in formal, as well as informal contexts. As such this research study makes no distinction between domestic or state-funded activity. This is a broad view of culture that moves beyond the Arts Council of Ireland approach and one which has been informed by academic research. In this way, no prior judgment or hierarchical sensibility was unintentionally mobilised, with formal and informal cultural participation considered on an equal footing. This understanding of cultural taste and participation builds on, expands, and updates, the terms used by Arts Audiences and the Arts Council of Ireland in their quantitative surveys (see *Chapter 2 Ireland*). This approach also acknowledges that cultural forms are changing in terms of modes of access and in terms of the content and classification of cultural forms and that it is perhaps misguided to designate one label to an area of cultural engagement. This has been further reinforced by the emergence of a digital realm replete with cultural abundance, opportunity and possibility (Wright, 2011).

Following Bourdieu (1984), this research finds that an individual's habitus is key in forming cultural taste, creating persistence and confidence regarding cultural participation that is remarkably enduring. This research shows that cultural taste and disposition are an accumulated expression of *habitus*, *capital* and *field* and provide insight into the various roles the three forms of cultural capital (embodied, objectified and institutionalised) have in shaping an Irish individual's cultural participation and taste today (Savage, Gayo-cal & Warde, 2005, p. 4). Also following Bourdieu (1984), this research highlights that cultural capital is a dynamic, interactive and relational expression of an individual's taste. This means that the stocks of cultural capital an individual holds at any given moment are not static but fluid, developing and informed by ongoing cultural experience, education and cultural opportunity. This, then becomes a contemporary and emergent cultural capital, particularly among the Irish young, that is performed as neo-distinction in the Irish social field. As a result, this research highlights the importance of social processes in forming cultural participation and taste whilst also recognising the value and significance of a variety of cultural engagements that exist within and

with-out state structures. In this way, this research develops a more nuanced understanding of Irish cultural participation than has been previously available and begins to more fully inform our understanding of Ireland's status as a creative nation as well as provide deeper sociological insight on the role culture holds in Irish society.

This next section provides an overview of each of the chapters in this research study. It provides a brief introduction to each chapter and highlights the key aspects of the content.

### ***Introducing the chapters***

*Chapter 1 Ireland* traces the political, social and cultural transformation of Ireland from a colonised, agrarian economy to a highly educated, neoliberal Republic that has post-industrialised at speed in the latter years of the twentieth century (Kirby, Gibbons & Cronin, 2002). It shows how a relatively closed, localised and homogenous Catholic culture became an open, globalised and pluralist society containing an educated, self-confident, professional class that actively engages in arts and culture. This chapter also notes that while it appears as if there have been opportunities for social mobility in Ireland through the twentieth century, this does not mean that it has translated into Ireland becoming a more equal or meritocratic society (Whelan 2003; Whelan & Layte 2004). Rather that the operation of class processes in Ireland provide a perfect example of the principle of the more things change, the more they remain the same. The social reproduction of class privilege endures through a persistent disavowal and dis-identification with class. This results in a lack of class consciousness and perceptions of class difference as more or less a slight deviation from the norm of middle-class (Tovey & Share, 2003). The levelling mechanisms offered by this dis-identification, may "alleviate many pressures engendered by class relations, but often belie rather strong divisions of status, prestige, class, and national identity" (Everyday Culture, 2018). This chapter traces these complex relationships in social, economic and political processes and notes how they have resulted in repositioning the country on an international stage. The next chapter considers arts and culture more broadly and highlights the ongoing

correlation between class and culture throughout history.

*Chapter 2 Literature Review*, traces the current, English-language literature in Western discourses on cultural participation and taste. Concentrating on twentieth and twenty-first century scholarly texts, this chapter highlights the ongoing correlation between class and culture and highlights the enduring connections between class relations and cultural participation and taste and specifically explores Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) work on this subject. It also highlights how scholars have begun to favour an articulation of taste that cuts across all strata of society to form "taste cultures" and to "consider an actual frame that also participates in the construction of meaning" (Benezcry, 2011, p. 193). This chapter develops this and highlights the division that has emerged in the literature between a structural consideration of taste emanating from class position – as "taste written above" – to a conceptualisation of taste as an exercise of individual enthusiasm and intensity – as "history written by the works to which we apply them" (Hennion, 2004, p. 134). In this way, this chapter highlights the intensity of cultural practices (Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014), through the reflexivity and engagement of the amateur (Hennion, 2004), and identifies heterogeneous aggregates of people who share similar aesthetic standards and embody equal values (Gans, 1974; Khan, 2012). Finally, this chapter considers that as culture is a distinguishable phenomenon and defining feature of each society or community, it is worth exploring how cultural policy formation mirrors the values and priorities of a society. Definitions of culture matter here and have become increasingly complex and problematic. Therefore, this chapter concludes with a review of scholars who have begun to raise the debate on what exactly constitutes a "user" and "non-user" of culture and increasingly recognises that cultural participation takes place within and outside state-funded cultural institutions (Balling & Kann-Christensen, 2013, p. 67; Miles & Gibson, 2017). In so doing, this chapter sets the extant literature and context for this doctoral research study.

*Chapter 3 Methods* considers the usefulness of qualitative techniques in a study on cultural participation and taste and highlights the methodological approach of

thematic inductive analysis used in this research study. This chapter provides a brief overview on extant arts audience research and considers what we already know in relation to arts and culture in Ireland. It then sets out the rationale, operationalisation and potential of Bourdieu's "most famous' concept" in Ireland (Priour & Savage, 2013) and discusses the choice of the Dublin urban, privileged class and the usefulness of the two age cohorts (18-24 years and 45-54 years). This chapter highlights how it had been initially envisaged that the older age group would consist of two age groups comprised of 35-44 years and 45-54 years. However, individuals from the 35-44 years proved difficult to source and only one individual from this age group was interviewed. This study, therefore, concentrates on responses from the two age cohorts: 18-24 years and 45-54 years. This chapter also reviews the research journey and captures this researcher's initial hopes for a mixed method research study which became unworkable. As a result, the refocus to qualitative methods only is explained and the choice of, and approach to, thematic inductive analysis outlined. This chapter then explores the composition and structuring of the semi-structured interviews, explaining how they were broken into 3 sections that capture interviewees' socio-demographic information, the cultural interests of their parents and interviewees' cultural taste. Finally, this chapter discusses the ethical considerations of the research study and highlights the limitations of the research questions and the methodology used.

*Chapter 4 Older Cohort Results* explores interview responses from twenty individuals located in the higher social class group of managers and professionals, aged 45-54 years who are resident in the affluent south city area of Dublin 6. Bourdieu (1984) has posited that cultural tastes are formed in the home and developed through cultural transmission of parents' interests and this research found evidence to support this. Cultural transmission has translated to similar cultural enthusiasms amongst interviewees who share similar interests to the narrower range of parents' interests. From this narrower range, broader interests have developed and this chapter highlights the wide-ranging nature of formal and informal cultural participation that the older cohort is engaged in. Further, this chapter highlights how this also results in stocks of embodied cultural capital that

manifest as an effortless, easy and discerning disposition across a broad range of cultural forms (Bourdieu, 1986). This does not mean that interviewees' cultural participation is used as an overt mechanism for leveraging class position or affirming status in the social field as per the Bourdieusian (1984) distinction thesis. This is not the case. Rather, many interviewees disavow the very existence of class in Ireland, highlighting the subjective and personally valued nature of their cultural engagements. This neo-distinction is underpinned by a strong sense of individualisation and agency that finds cultural participation in Ireland centres on socialising, enjoyment and subjective interest, in a leisure pursuit that is focused on knowledge acquisition, reflexivity and intellectual challenge. This further suggests that cultural interests and activities facilitate class to be performed obliquely. Therefore, this chapter tells the story of interviewees' agency in cultural participation whilst recognising the significance of cultural participation in structuring the Irish social field.

*Chapter 5 Younger Cohort Results* draws on interviews with twenty-seven higher education students aged 18-24 years drawn from two of Dublin's universities: Trinity College Dublin and University College, Dublin. This chapter locates a contemporary and emergent cultural capital that demonstrates the importance of understanding Bourdieu's cultural capital concept as a reflexive and relational concept. This chapter demonstrates the changing and fluid nature of cultural capital and shows how traditional boundaries of culture are changing with a concurrent declassification and proliferation of cultural forms (DiMaggio, 1987; Wright, 2011). It shows how new forms of distinction are emerging: ones that integrate reflexivity, playfulness, eclecticism, and a capacity to juggle and transpose a rarefied aesthetic disposition across, and between, a multiplicity of genres (Friedman et al, 2015; Prieur & Savage, 2013, 2015). The younger cohort also demonstrate an outward-facing, global cosmopolitanism that takes pride in national culture but consumes across a global range. Strongly focused on knowledge acquisition, individuals demonstrate an information-seeking disposition facilitated by digital technologies. They retain a culturally egalitarian ethic and consider arts and culture as available and accessible to all in society. These emerging aspects of neo-distinction while

subtle are implicitly embedded in social inequality and cultural ascription. Therefore, this chapter highlights how the logic of distinction continues today and that what matters is “knowing the rules of the game” and knowing how to use these rules (Lareau et al, 2016, n.p.; Sullivan, 2007).

*Chapter 6 Comparison of Younger and Older Cohorts* compares the two age cohorts and considers how these different generations have similar as well as individual taste profiles. Actively culturally engaged, the breadth and pervasiveness of culture at home, and through to formal cultural venues, is notable amongst both groups. Individuals read a lot, surround themselves with music, watch box sets, Netflix, keep up-to-date with cultural shows: they go to the theatre, to art galleries, to classical music concerts, ballet, opera and more. This could lead to the observation that the proliferation of cultural opportunity in the nation’s capital, Dublin, creates an accessible cultural playing field as well as an omnivorous disposition. However, cultural confidence, ease and references continue to draw boundaries and mark out the players. Both cohorts show that they are *de*-differentiated by rising education standards as well as post war affluence, and through self-inclusion in cultural activities, cultural knowledge acquisition and the ability to leverage intangible resources such as cultural knowledge, they affirm the social reproduction of their privilege. This chapter therefore highlights, that while the field may be characterised by multiple and divergent forces, “‘class’ is implicitly coded in identity through practice” (Bellavance, 2008; Bottero, 2004, p. 991). In this way, the social structuring of cultural consumption in Ireland remains “remarkably steadfast...across time” (Jarness, 2015, p. 76).

The concluding chapter locates the analysis of cultural capital in relation to public policy in Ireland. It traces the usefulness of Bourdieu’s cultural capital in highlighting inequality and power in the Irish cultural field. It considers the implications of the research method used and also considers the policy implications of this work. This chapter emphasises the need to “reorder knowledge” around “particular types of activity and inactivity” and recognise that “not taking part in highbrow cultural activities is the norm” (Miles & Sullivan, 2012, p. 311). It further suggests that if arts

and culture are really at the heart of Irish society then we need to understand this more deeply, more expansively and more sociologically. Moving beyond arts audience research into a more informed sociological understanding of Irish cultural participation as little is achieved in following extant and formulaic ways of thinking about arts and culture. This chapter, therefore, illustrates the need for government intervention to develop new measures, shift definitions and develop a greater understanding of cultural participation and taste in Ireland. Finally, this chapter emphasises the need for future research to embrace more diverse methodological approaches as well as a more holistic consideration of cultural participation and taste.

Overarchingly, this research highlights that those who share the same conditions of experience, similar cultural tastes, and behaviours, actively engage in the social reproduction of privilege in the cultural field (Bottero, 2004; Savage, Devine, Cunningham, Taylor, Li, Hjellbrekke, Le Roux, Friedman & Miles, 2013). The manifestation of power relationships revealed, demonstrate how individualised experiences and atomised subjective meanings, when taken together as self-interested activities, add up to a form of collective class action (Bottero, 2004). This is because the highly individualised nature of Irish society is manifested subtly in class behaviours and taste preferences. Therefore, this research provides solid evidence that class, not only exists in Ireland, but is performed obliquely through the manifestation of individual's taste and cultural participation. The following chapter, *Chapter 1 Ireland*, provides a context for this research and highlights the historical economic, social and political processes that have led to the transformation of Ireland across approximately the last one hundred years.

# Chapter 1 Ireland

*[W]hat middle-class shits we are* (Mahon, 2011, p. 57)

## Chapter synopsis

This chapter traces the political, social and cultural transformation of this small nation, providing a context for this research study on Ireland. It captures the repositioning of the nascent nation of Ireland, from an agrarian closed and catholic community, to a professionalised, globalised and pluralised society of largely educated professionals. It shows how a relatively homogenous Catholic culture has become an open and diverse society containing a self-confident, professional class that actively engages in arts and culture. This chapter also notes that while there have been opportunities for social mobility in Ireland through the twentieth century, this has not necessarily translated to Ireland as a more equal or meritocratic society (Whelan 2003; Whelan & Layte, 2004). Rather, the social reproduction of class privilege endures, with a persistent disavowal and dis-identification with class. This results in a lack of class consciousness with perceptions of class difference as more or less a slight deviation from the norm of middle-class (Tovey & Share, 2003). This chapter considers the complex relationship of social, economic and political processes that have fed into this and led to this small nation now featuring culturally, economically and politically on an international stage. Finally, this chapter highlights the complex relationship the state has with arts and culture and notes how they have been useful in the achievement of a broader economic agenda for government, through cultural tourism and leveraging Ireland's damaged reputation in post-recession Ireland. This chapter also highlights the available arts attendance and cultural participation research in Ireland whilst noting the lack of both cultural policy and sociological research on culture in Ireland.

## Introduction

Ireland is a small, relatively young country in the West of Europe with approximately 4.758 million people (CSO, 2018a). The Irish Free State (in Irish: *Saorstát Éireann*) was founded in 1922, following a peoples' uprising (1916) and a bloody civil war (1918-21). Subject to a fraught history of colonial rule, Ireland eventually became a Republic in 1949. Early economic policies were designed to foster and strengthen this nascent state but the closed, protectionist stance, resulted in a depressed economy and forced many to emigrate. The open economic policies of the late 1950,<sup>4</sup> however, sought to redress this and along with European Union membership in 1973, created the platform for future growth. The boom-to-bust cycle of the late twentieth/early twenty-first century in Ireland, now frequently termed the *Celtic Tiger* years, witnessed Ireland reach (and subsequently fall from) dizzying heights of economic success.<sup>5</sup> However, since the end of 2012, Ireland has shown signs of continuous recovery with significant improvement in employment figures, return to pre-recessionary income levels and a housing market that is on par with the height of the boom. Favourable tax policies, a highly-skilled workforce, a pro-business environment and above average quality of life, have led many international companies to relocate to Ireland and growth looks set to continue (Connect Ireland, 2017; OECD, 2018).

Though the impact of the UK's proposed Brexit plans has yet to play out, a small number of high profile companies have already set up headquarters in Ireland's English-speaking, pro-European, open economy. Thus from a relatively closed, localised and homogenous Catholic culture, an open, globalised and pluralist culture has emerged in Ireland; one with an educated, self-confident and increasingly professionalised class. The speed at which Irish society has modernised, secularised and converged on the European norm is remarkable, with scholars such as Whelan

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<sup>4</sup> The new economic policies are normally regarded as having been initiated by T.K. Whitaker's *Programme for economic expansion* (1958).

<sup>5</sup> This has been well-documented elsewhere, for example see Considine, M. & Dukelow, F. (2009). Introduction: boom to bust, Irish social policy in challenging times. *Irish Journal of Public Policy*, 2 (1). Retrieved from <http://publish.ucc.ie/ijpp/2010/01/considinedukelow/00/en> and Kirby, P. (2015) Ireland's boom-bust cycles: The elusive search for a balanced development. In Y. Bangura (Eds) *Developmental pathways to poverty reduction*. Developmental Pathways to Poverty Reduction Series. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

& Layte (2004), commenting that Ireland has come to resemble, for better or for worse, other European countries.

### **Historical transformation**

The Flight of the Earls in the early seventeenth century, along with the Act of Union in 1800, firmly established Dublin as the second city of the British Empire (Dolan, 2009). The subsequent three hundred years of British rule finally came to an end in a small, badly-organised but effective peoples' uprising in 1916. A bloody civil war (1918-21) ensued and the Irish Free State (in Irish: *Saorstát Éireann*) was founded in 1922. As the British left, the Catholic Church and political leader, Éamon de Valera, quickly stepped into the gap with both becoming equally oppressive and constraining forces.<sup>6</sup> Holding multiple terms as head of government and head of state, Taoiseach (in English: *Prime Minister*) Éamon de Valera led his newly established political party, Fianna Fáil, in the adoption of conservative policies. Welcomed by the largely devout, rural electorate, de Valera's ultra-social and cultural conservatism favoured a version of Ireland that was profoundly agricultural, nostalgic and traditional (Ferriter, 2007). A protectionist, economic stance was taken in order to consolidate the identity of this young nation state. This resulted in a depressed economy and large numbers of the Irish populace suffering pecuniary hardship. By the 1950s, Ireland may have secured the rights to a Republic but large numbers of working age Irish were leaving for England and America.<sup>7</sup>

The first programme for economic recovery was led by Deputy Prime Minister, Tánaiste Séan Lemass in 1958, who sought to address Ireland's economic decline.<sup>8</sup> This refocus quickly began to pay rewards with de Valera's conservative, inward, social investment strategy exchanged for a vision of a "more productive

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<sup>6</sup> As the British left in 1922, de Valera was still a member of Sinn Féin, a political party formed of Irish nationalists who refused to recognise the Treaty with Britain. Sinn Féin refused to take their seats in the newly formed Irish parliament (in Irish: Dáil). In 1926, de Valera resigned from Sinn Féin and founded political party, Fianna Fáil. In 1927, he was elected leader of the party and by 1932, Fianna Fáil was the largest political party in government.

<sup>7</sup> In the 1950s, the male labour force was reduced to one-seventh (Whelan, Breen & Whelan 1992, in Goldthorpe & Whelan, 1992, p. 107).

<sup>8</sup> Séan Lemass was Taoiseach (Prime Minister) 1959 to 1966, Leader of political party Fianna Fáil from 1959 to 1966, Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) from 1957 to 1959, 1951 to 1954 and 1945 to 1948.

investment” (McSharry & White, 2000, p. 12). By moving to an economic strategy based on the attraction of foreign investment and the incentive of major tax relief, “the historic task of this generation ensure(d) the economic foundation of independence” (Boss & Maher, 2003, p. 15). A further “psychological lift” to the “dejected national spirit” occurred when Ireland joined the European Economic Community in 1973, and jumped on the “forward-moving train” of European membership (Boss & Maher, 2003, p. 16 & p. 21). Growth rates - twice what they were in the 1960s - were propelled forward by European subvention along with American investment. Civil society was also beginning to change and women were encouraged into the workforce through the abolition of the civil service marriage bar in 1973.<sup>9</sup> Along with the establishment of the Employment Equality Agency in 1977, female employment increased at almost twice the growth rate of men (McGuinness, McGinnity & O’Connell, 2008, p. 4).

The combination of European integration, an open, outward-facing economic stance and the social partnership model, transformed Ireland’s ability for growth (O’Donnell, 1998, p. 2). By the late 1990s, the State had been redefined as the driver of the economy. The prominent economist, Dr Rory O’Donnell, advisor to the government, believed the “emergence of an entrepreneurial culture” would “re-invent” Ireland and foster the rise of free market values as an agent with which to unleash enterprise (2000, cited in Kirby, Gibbons & Cronin, 2002, p. 12). These initiatives proved foundational in leading to the beginnings of a modernised Ireland typified by political, economic and social confidence.

The idea that Ireland had finally begun to reinvent itself gave legitimacy to the subsequent *Celtic Tiger* era felt to have prevailed between 1995 and 2008. During this period, the Irish economy held its highest growth since the founding of the State.<sup>10</sup> The modern, successful Irish began to move freely and confidently amongst

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<sup>9</sup> Female civil servants and other public servants (with the exception of primary teachers from 1958) had to resign from their jobs when they got married, on the grounds that they were occupying a job that should go to a man. Banks operated a similar policy (The Irish Echo, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> Average growth rate of 9.4% in the period 1995-2004 and from 2005 up to 2008, averaging 5.9% (Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2018c).

their European, American and global counterparts as newly gained wealth, supplanted images of a difficult past (Boss & Maher, 2003). This period of economic expansion and success was unfortunately short-lived as 2008 saw the collapse of Irish fortunes and the country enter a severe economic recession. GDP growth, strong at 2.2% in 2008, fell sharply to minus 6.4% in 2009 and at the height of the downturn in late 2011, nearly 15.1% of the labour force in Ireland was unemployed (Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2018c). The financial crisis was made worse by large-scale banking scandals that required the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to step in, examine and subvent the country's failing public finances.<sup>11</sup> A series of stark measures by government reversed declining GDP and recovery, since 2012, has been strong. GDP growth is forecast at 4.2 per cent for 2018 and house prices are near on-par levels with the height of the economic boom (Economic & Social Research Institute [ESRI], 2018a). Employment figures are also strong and unemployment has now reduced to 6% (CSO, 2018d).<sup>12</sup>

In this newly secularised advanced economy, scholars have noted that Ireland “has imported much, but it has learned little” (Lee, 1989, p. 627) with O’Toole highlighting that:

Many of us may be glad to see the back of holy Ireland, martyred Ireland and peasant Ireland. Most of us may have wanted nothing so much as to be normal, prosperous Europeans. But what, now that we have arrived, is left to us? What, if anything, is distinctively ours? (1999, para 5)

Concerned more with worldly goods and material success, choice has become dominant – in life, in religion, in consumer goods, in the supermarket and for the new Irish, the “source of meaning” in life has become a largely “private affair” (Inglis, 2003, p. 43). As Dolan succinctly states, “in Ireland...the balance has shifted towards the individual as agent or centre of choice” (2009, p. 119). Irish society has largely moved away from the embedded norm of being “Irish and Catholic” towards

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<sup>11</sup> A rescue package of €5.5 billion in loans was agreed and taken out from the IMF as part of a 2010 international bailout (The Journal, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Latest figures available are February 2018 (CSO, 2018d).

a society comprised of atomised individuals “questioning the sin” (Inglis, 2003, p. 50). The resulting instability and “loss of centre” at a social level, scholars have commented, has induced an inability to find meaning as “orthodoxy” has been replaced by “heterodoxy” (Delattre, 2003, p. 213; Inglis, 2003, p. 50).

Columnist John Waters posits that the loss of Irishness has been replaced with “an American capitalist culture...a world in which people seek surrogate experiences in popular culture and art in order to disengage themselves from the ‘awfulness of human life’” (Boss & Maher, 2003, p. 18; Waters, 1994, pp. 12-13). With Kirby suggesting that the “false pedigree” of new Ireland is a land of “market-accommodating business and political elites” which many experience as a foreign country” (2002, p. 35). Kirby et al through analysis of the media find “values such as individualism, materialism, intolerance of dissent, lack of concern for the environment and a failure to value caring” as characteristics of modern Irish life and the positive outcomes from economic success are a “mirage” (2002, p. 159; Kirby, 2002).

As O’Connor notes “specific ideologies and sectional interests in Irish society, have been continuous since independence” and these have largely been served by dominant economic policy” (2009, para 1). O’Connor highlights how Irish society continues to be characterised by fundamental structural problems in the welfare state, during and after the Celtic Tiger:

Many of the negative social outcomes that have resulted are attendant on the liberal pursuit of public policy. This is evident as follows: income inequalities have remained stubbornly persistent over the past 20 years (Nolan & Mâitre, 2007); enormous wealth was created, but relative poverty at the height of Ireland’s boom persisted at 20 per cent of the population; homelessness grew and became endemic (McVerry, 2006); numbers on housing waiting lists reached 53,000 (Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, 2008); hundreds of people every week continue to wait for a hospital bed (INO, 2008) and as a result of state cutbacks, the pupil teacher ratio in primary schools is set to rise (Department of Finance, 2009). (O’Connor, 2009, para 4)

In this radically altered state, new Ireland is a striking example of a highly unequal society. The top 10% in Ireland hold an estimated 42% to 58% of the country's wealth and the top 10% of income earners, 34% of gross income (averaging €130,400 per tax case). Conversely, the bottom 90% earns 66% of gross income (averaging €27,400 per tax case), (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015, p. 26).<sup>13</sup> This figure is higher than most of Ireland's European neighbours (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015, p. 34). As an OECD country, who are amongst the richest countries in the world, "Ireland ranks highly among them based on GDP per capita income" (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015, p. 28).<sup>14</sup> This would be a good news story if this equality was spread across the republic's citizens. Unfortunately, this is not the case. A 2018 ESRI study on deprivation in Ireland, finds that there is a significant gap in the rate of persistent deprivation experienced by vulnerable adults (including lone parents and adults with a disability, ESRI, 2018b). Out of 11 EU countries, Ireland's gap was the largest and has increased the most during the study's time frame of 2004-2015 (ESRI, 2018b). While GDP growth averaged at 5% in 2017 and 4.2% is predicted for 2018, gender inequality, homelessness, the housing crisis and an under-resourced health service continue to remain key pressing social issues (ESRI, 2018a). The challenges thrown up by Brexit (especially if a hard Brexit is implemented) will threaten the stability of the country and hinder future, long-term growth. Not least because "the UK is the second largest single-country for Ireland's goods and the largest for its services...Ireland imports 30 per cent of its goods from the UK" (Burke-Kennedy, 2017, para 12).<sup>15</sup>

### **Educational transformation**

Over the last five decades, Ireland has witnessed a rapid expansion in primary, secondary and higher education. On 10 September 1966, Minister for Education and Fianna Fáil TD, Donogh O'Malley, announced the introduction of free secondary school education up to Intermediate Certificate level (equivalent to the UK's O

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<sup>13</sup> With the top 1%, hold 9% of the country's wealth (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015, p. 26).

<sup>14</sup> Joint sixth place with Germany in annual report published by the (United Nations, 2015, p. 208).

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, at Independence (1922), over 90% of exports went to the UK. By 1960, this had fallen to 75% (Kennedy 1992, cited in Goldthorpe 1992, pp. 11-12).

Levels). Free post-primary education came into effect the following year. There has also been a significant expansion of third level infrastructural provision. For example, in 1996, 27.9% of Irish 30–34 year-olds had completed third-level education compared to 24.6% in the UK. By 2013, 52.6% had completed third level education compared to 47.6% in the UK (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015, p. 97). The Irish government is now on target for 60% of 30–34 year olds to have completed third-level education by 2020 and strong future growth is confidently predicted (Department of Education & Skills, 2016; McGuinness et al, 2012; O'Connor & Staunton, 2015, p. 97).

A substantial increase in those of school and university-going age has increased participation in the educational system and this has helped channel and build the nation's human capital. Ireland currently ranks tenth highest in education attainment levels of young adults aged 25 to 34 years amongst OECD countries (Department of Education & Skills, 2017, p. 4).

This expansion of education, however, has occurred primarily amongst those from the professional middle classes and not significantly increased amongst lower socio-economic groups (Higher Education Authority [HEA], 2015). Targets in 2008 were set for 31% increase by 2013 of full-time new entrants from poorer socio-economic groups, but rates of 21 per cent while an improvement have not reached the targets set (Cassells, 2015, p. 22). Comparatively speaking, the degree of equity that characterises access to higher education in Ireland has been described as “above average but well behind best practice” with those in higher socio-economic groups in Ireland are more likely to progress to third level (Cassells, 2015, p. 22). In prosperous areas such as south city, postal area Dublin 6, 99% of students' progress to higher education compared to less advantaged areas such as north of the city in postal area Dublin 17, 15% of students' progress to higher education (Higher Education Authority [HEA], 2014, p. 30). This gap continues to remain pronounced.

Whelan and Layte (2004) highlight that educational attainment is often intimately linked to increased mobility opportunities with class position strongly associated

with educational qualifications. While there has been substantial movement in the participation rates in higher education amongst all classes across the years, they continue to remain highest among the professional classes, and lowest amongst the unskilled (HEA, 2017; McGuinness, Bergin, Kelly, McCoy, Smyth & Timoney, 2012). As Ireland has moved to a service and knowledge-based economy, the jobs lost in traditional industries (which were relatively low-skilled) have been replaced with jobs requiring higher skills and educational qualifications.<sup>16</sup> This has resulted in a shift in emphasis towards a new skilled workforce: one comprised of younger, and highly educated workers.

### **Class transformation (?)**

Numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers are in decline however and numbers of those engaged in agriculture have also fallen from one-third (1975) to one-fifth (1985) (O'Connell, 1999). There has been a concurrent dramatic growth in professional and skilled employment and the proportion of upper middle-class employees has doubled since the 1970s (CSO, 2012). The census of 2011 confirms 40% of the adult population (roughly 3.6 million people) as belonging to the professional middle ABC1 social class group in Ireland.<sup>17</sup>

The pace of social change in Ireland could be considered to have generated a modern class structure that underpins the values of a new modern Ireland and the emergence of a new urban bourgeoisie. This “self-confident professional class has emerged that is deeply integrated into local and global technology and business

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<sup>16</sup> With just under 8% of the workforce registered today as employed full-time in farming, the largest area of employment growth has been in services – with the bulk of these jobs in the public sector.

<sup>17</sup> Social class in Ireland is presented in the following categories: Social Class A captures upper middle class professions in higher managerial, administrative or professional occupations such as doctors, solicitors, accountants with their own practice, and company directors; Social Class B are the middle classes. This includes higher managerial, administrative or professional at the next level of occupations such as such as engineers, school principals, journalists; Social Class C1 are lower middle class. This includes lower professional occupations comprised of supervisory, clerical, junior managerial and administration such as nuns, priests, musicians, computer technicians, bank clerks, junior civil servants; Social Class C2 are the skilled working class. This includes occupations such as bus drivers, carpenters, firemen, police, taxi and bus drivers; Social Class DE are semi-skilled & unskilled workers including labourers, van drivers, postmen, hospital attendants etc; Social Class F are Farmers. For more on this please see Census 2016 summary results:

[http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/newsevents/documents/census2016summaryresultspart2/Chapter\\_6\\_Socio-economic\\_group\\_and\\_social\\_class.pdf](http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/newsevents/documents/census2016summaryresultspart2/Chapter_6_Socio-economic_group_and_social_class.pdf)

networks and negotiates individual career paths based on mobility through these networks” (Ó Riain, 2000, p. 183). Layte and Whelan note that by the 1970s, a class structure familiar to industrialisation had emerged in Ireland (2000, p. 90). This comprises a certain fluidity and openness in class boundaries with mobility amongst class groupings usually of an upward bent. However, notwithstanding the opportunities for social mobility that have been created in the latter half of the twentieth century in Ireland, Whelan and Layte (2004) highlight that Ireland is far from becoming a more equal or meritocratic society. They emphasise that the operation of class processes in Ireland provides a perfect example of the more things change the more things remain the same.<sup>18</sup> In this Goldthorpe highlights the part played by patronage in this and “other particularistic” influences such as the persistent importance of the possession and transmission of family property (Goldthorpe & Whelan, 1992, p. 423). While Breen, Hannan, Rottman and Whelan (1990) have previously noted the degree of social closure across class boundaries that exists and how this is aligned with a certain “degree of heterogeneity of origins from which recruits are drawn” present in higher-class groups (1992, in Goldthorpe & Whelan, 1992, p. 113).<sup>19</sup>

So despite the “rapidly changing structural and institutional contexts” within which Irish society has operated, scholars find remarkable persistence and strength of class influence with limited social mobility and class fluidity in Ireland (Goldthorpe 1992; Goldthorpe & Whelan, 1992, p. 422; Whelan & Layte, 2004). As an explanation, Goldthorpe suggests that those with access to economic, cultural and social resources use more of these resources in order to maintain their children’s competitive edge and cite Halsey, who posits that: “ascriptive forces find ways of expressing themselves as achievement” (1977, p. 184 cited in Goldthorpe, 2007a, p. 171).

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<sup>18</sup> See Whelan C., & Layte R. (2004). Economic change, social mobility and meritocracy: Reflections on the Irish experience. *Quarterly Economic Commentary: Special Articles, 2004(3)*, 1-20. Retrieved from [http://www.esri.ie/UserFiles/publications/20070727140214/QEC2004Aut\\_SA\\_Whelan.pdf](http://www.esri.ie/UserFiles/publications/20070727140214/QEC2004Aut_SA_Whelan.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> The petty bourgeoisie in Ireland are, for example, characterised by high inflows from the farming class and a below-average influx from the industrial working class to the service sector. This is counter to the UK experience where a high degree of working class makes up a substantial portion of the service class.

Whelan and Layte (2004) consider this proposition further and take account of the early economic boom years of the Celtic Tiger. They find that while Irish society has incurred some “substantial absolute social mobility and some increase in equality of opportunity,” there is greater evidence of an overall upgrading of the class schema than any great expansion of opportunity (Whelan & Layte, 2004, p. 39). Even as late as the year 2000, those with professional and managerial class origins continue to have four times more chance of access to that class than those originating in the non-skilled manual class (Whelan & Layte, 2004, p. 5). So while Ireland has modernised, secularised and progressed to an open, global and knowledge-based economy, this does not mean it has become a more equal or meritocratic society, rather social processes are a good example of a rising tide lifting all boats (Whelan & Layte, 2004).

Late to industrialise, Ireland facilitates new expressions of an existing class system with a broad agreement in society that Ireland doesn't perceive itself as a classed society (Hardiman in Goldthorpe & Whelan, 1992; Tovey & Share, 2003). Social class exists more as a technical construct, than any overt identification with class consciousness or class awareness (Tovey & Share 2003). Class awareness is not as strong as it is in, for example, the UK and social divisions and class boundaries not as fixed (Breen & Whelan, 1996; Tovey & Share, 2003). This results in the sense of belonging to a class group class as a relatively limited subjectivity (Domingues, 1995). Tovey and Share (2003) highlight how Irish society tends to take an informal approach to social relations. They note “Irish social life [is] characterised by an egalitarian ethic that rejects attempts by some groups to claim social honour from others” (2003, p. 161). So while social group affiliation is by no means absent and “certainly emulation processes between the various strata” of Irish society continues to exist, Dolan suggests this is more a matter of “maintaining respectability” and is “increasingly up to the individual to express those affiliations in the form of consumption practices” (2009, p. 121). This leads to perceptions of difference as more or less a slight deviation from the norm of middle-class. The levelling mechanisms offered by this dis-identification with class may “alleviate many pressures engendered by class relations, but often belie rather strong

divisions of status, prestige, class, and national identity” (Everyday Culture, 2018).

Access to resources, to networks and to life chances, continue to determine an individual’s location within a system of social power and differences remain profoundly apparent (Hearne & McMahon, 2016; Watson, Maître, Whelan & Russell, 2016). Relative wealth and social class position continue to influence life choices though social boundaries are often indistinct with individuals consciously dis-identifying or disavowing the concept of class as this study shows.

### **Cultural transformation**

Over the centuries, language, culture and sport have held a complex relationship with Ireland and have framed understandings of Ireland’s colonial history and post-colonial identity. Traditional Gaelic culture such as *seán nós* (singing) and *seanchaithe* (storytelling) were important aspects of local cultural life and neighbourly visits to local houses would bring people together for the passing on of local lore and traditions as well as new versions of stories and songs rendered. *Ceili* (community dances), *feis* and *fleadh cheoil* (civic music and dance gatherings) were and are attended by both males and females, young and old, while spontaneous music in local pubs, using traditional Irish musical instruments (fiddle, tin whistle, the box and bodhrán), was mostly a male activity. Largely a regional, communal and rural affair, these cultural activities were held in local, domestic and informal venues and participated in by the indigenous Irish community. Larger scale cultural infrastructure, such as the National Gallery (1854) and the National Museum (1877), located in the larger urban centre of Dublin and established after the fashion of British counterparts. The “renovation of the Irish consciousness” at the end of the nineteenth and turn of the twentieth century however, was a seminal moment for the Irish (Kiberd, 1996, p. 641). A newfound energy, strength and definition were brought to Irish nationhood and indigenous Irish communities as well as leading Anglo-Irish figures and culture played a key role in this (*ibid*).

After the devastation of the famine and 300 years of cultural suppression, retrieving

what was Irish had become difficult for generations raised with English (Kelly, 1989), and “language, theatre, literature and music” were used to interpret Irish identity. Myths and legends of old Ireland heavily influenced theatre and literature, and playwrights and authors such as Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge, used the Gaelic bardic tradition of *dinnsheanchas* which emphasised locality and knowledge of lore (Kiberd, 1996, p. 107). As a result, the nascent nation quickly gathered around a few evocative phrases, some myths, a few symbols, a flag, and an anthem (Kelly, 1989). In sport, the link to “Ancient Ireland” was well captured by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) established in 1884, for the “preservation and cultivation of our national [sporting] pastimes” (Connolly & Dolan, 2010, p. 577; GAA, 2018a). Full of physical prowess, heroic feats of bravery in war and an appetite for wild and dangerous games, “cultural narratives espousing Irish nationhood” were positioned in direct opposition to English rugby, cricket and tennis:

Gaelic football was characterised as a masculine and warlike pastime as opposed to the lesser effeminate English games. (Connolly & Dolan, 2010, p. 577)

While there were some positive developments, including the creation of a national symphony orchestra (1948) and the Irish Folklore Commission (1935), “most of the landmarks were the result of private endeavours” (Hazelkorn, 2001, p. 4). Despite the rich local heritage, the new state ultimately viewed the arts with a mixture of suspicion, caution and paternalism (Hazelkorn, 2014, p. 35).

During the first four decades, censorship and cultural conservatism were enforced, along with economic protectionism. Radio broadcasting which had begun in 1926, for example, was quickly censored if “any material...affronted Catholic principles” (Hazelkorn, 2001, p. 4). Justifiable in the context of the 1930s and WW2, this gave rise to a sense of “cultural isolationism” and “intellectual malaise,” all the more credible given the country’s island status (Hazelkorn, 2001, p. 4). In support of this motivated cultural protectionism, Irish culture over subsequent decades was used to “stem the flood-tide of commercial modernism” along with any ideas that challenged the prevailing catholic nationalism (Dolan, 2014; Hazelkorn, 2001, p. 4).

This cultural strategy had limited success however as “Irish artistic endeavours were limited and the vacuum was ironically filled by Anglo-American domination of popular culture” (Hazelkorn, 2001, p. 4). Politicians were thus “compelled to create a national television service in response to the existing British service, amid fears of contamination and natural erosion” (Dolan, 2014, p. 953). As a result, Radió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) was established under the Broadcasting Authority Act of 1960 and the national television broadcaster began transmission in 1961 (RTÉ, 2018).

Other governmental initiatives designed to stem commercial influence included the Arts Act of 1951. This facilitated the establishment of “a body to be called An Chomhairle Ealaíon” which was established to “stimulate public interest in the arts; promote the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts; assist in improving the standards of the arts; organise or assist in the organising of exhibitions (within or without the State) of works of art and artistic craftsmanship” (Irish Statute Book, 2018). With “the expression *the arts*” defined as “painting, sculpture, architecture, music, the drama, literature, design in industry and the fine arts and applied arts generally” (*ibid*).

The council’s activities at this time were considered largely as “cheque book oriented,” with a “clubbable” group of men making “decisions on a case by case basis concerning the distribution of a relatively small annual fund” (Arts Council of Ireland, 2016, n.p.). By 1968, Charles Acton, a writer for the broadsheet newspaper *The Irish Times*, vociferously criticised the Council for its “muddled up administration and execution, amateurism and professionalism” (Arts Council of Ireland, 2016, n.p.). This was an important period in the life of the Arts Council, which saw an overhaul in Council staffing and a refocus of policies towards the provision of financial support to the professional artist. This was enshrined in an amendment to the Arts Act in 1973. A subsequent 2003 amendment further captured the role of local government and the arts while also specifically ensuring the Arts Council independence in its funding decisions (Irish Statute Book, 2018; O’Hagan, 2015).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Known as ‘the arm’s length principle’.

As a result of this amendment, the *arts* were now defined as “any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form...and includes any medium when used for those purposes” (Irish Statute Book, 2018). The subsequent outcome of this more comprehensive definition of the term the *arts*, is that the Arts Council of Ireland carries the remit for supporting the professional arts, whilst also carrying the burden of proof and evidence-based enquiry for any formal or informal cultural expression in Ireland from this point onwards.

The appointment of Michael D. Higgins<sup>21</sup> as first Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht (Ireland’s Irish-speaking regions) in 1993, along with the publication of *The Employment and Economic Significance of the Cultural Industries in Ireland* (Coopers & Lybrand, 1994), brought the arts “off the high culture shelf and into the heartland of public policy: economic growth and employment” (Hazelkorn, 2014, p. 5). The appointment of a cabinet ministry for arts, culture, heritage and language, “was in itself an over-due attempt to bring Ireland up to European standard” (*ibid*). These initiatives also need to be contextualised within the increasing neoliberal policies and outward-facing market economy of Ireland in the pre-Celtic Tiger years. As Hazelkorn notes:

Subsequent reports went further, referring alternatively and simultaneously to the content sector, the creative industries, and more latterly, the entertainment industry, all with the purpose of globalizing and integrating Ireland within the international, electronic entertainment industrial complex. Because Ireland is seen to be an abundant producer of cultural material, which had been identified as being a primary product of the new millennium, electronic broadcasting, print media, publishing, multimedia, the digital arts, film, music and the performing arts all came to be designated as lying at the heart of Ireland’s economic future.... (2014, p. 5)

In this, the appropriation of culture into broader government economic thinking

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<sup>21</sup> The current President of Ireland since 2011.

was established. Further initiatives supported this thinking such as the establishment of tax relief for investment in film, television and animation productions (known as Section 481) which “has been in existence in various formats since 1987” (Department of Finance, 2012, p. 3). The digital media industry through a series of technological strategies that focused on “the creation of a designated Digital Park outskirts of Dublin...and...new legislation supporting digital television (1999)” ensured the foundation of the now burgeoning technology and digital industries (Hazelkorn, 2001, p. 6).<sup>22</sup>

While culture has been useful in the achievement of a broader economic agenda for government, through cultural tourism and leveraging Ireland’s damaged reputation, the commitment to this sector is minimal. Kelly in her UNESCO text (1989) entitled, *Cultural Policy in Ireland*, clearly outlines how the actions and priorities of the Irish government have implicitly shaped Irish society. A country with no explicit cultural policy to date, the State has witnessed inferred cultural policy go through various orientations and priorities.

Following patterns elsewhere, these run the gamut through urban regeneration initiatives such as Dublin’s Temple Bar in the late 1980s, regional infrastructural development and the building of regional arts centres in the 1990s, to the social inclusion and cohesion role of culture in the 2000s (National Economic & Social Forum [NESF], 2007, 2008). Large scale cultural projects such as Imagine Ireland (in 2011), Dublin Contemporary 2011 or Limerick National City of Culture (in 2014) have been targeted at servicing the damaged, recessionary, reputational economy of Ireland and are good examples of the importance of the national and international profile of Irish arts and culture as a national asset (Department of the Taoiseach, 2011).<sup>23</sup> Receiving significant central government funding, these

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<sup>22</sup> The Information Society Commission was established in 1995. Now nine out of ten of the world-leading technology and internet companies and eight out of ten leading online game companies and platforms (Enterprise Ireland, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Imagine Ireland was Culture Ireland’s year of Irish arts in America in 2011. It supported the production of over five hundred events in a yearlong celebration of Irish creativity and artistic talent performed in the USA (Imagine Ireland, 2018). Billed as one of the most ambitious exhibitions ever staged in Ireland, Dublin Contemporary 2011 exhibited contemporary art from over 114 international and Irish artists in six separate venues: Earlsfort Terrace, the Douglas Hyde Gallery, the Hugh Lane Gallery, the National Gallery of Ireland,

initiatives emphasise arts and culture as a firm feature of the programme for national recovery, particularly as cultural tourism initiatives. However, these have been widely derided and criticised by Irish arts and cultural practitioners for the mismanagement of funds, poor programming choices, curatorial disarray and lack of significant collaboration with the arts and cultural community in Ireland.<sup>24</sup>

Slippery state nomenclature is indicative of a political culture that emphasises “pragmatic, incremental and [a] short-term-fix” approach while at the same time, avoiding long term, strategic thinking and planning (Cooke & McCall, 2015, p. 3). Since the establishment of the government portfolio for arts and culture, the department has gone through dizzying name changes (Cooke, 2013). Arts, culture, heritage, Gaeltacht, islands, sport, rural, regional affairs and tourism have all featured in the title. In 2016, the department title was changed again, this time to the rather cumbersome title of Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRGA). In May 2017, this was again altered to the more holistic Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. This can be contrasted with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in the UK which has broadly retained the same title, and same range of functions since it was set up in 1997 (Cooke & McCall, 2015, pp. 4-5).<sup>25</sup> The uncertainty about the title of the Irish government’s portfolio for arts and culture signals more than an uncomfortable-ness with terms and definitions. It highlights polity’s lack of confidence and confusion about the nature of its brief as well as an understanding of the content of its portfolio. Quinn usefully notes, “when the Irish government first paid official attention to this area, the acts which they passed were ‘Arts Acts’ and not ‘Cultural Acts’” (1998, p. 76). Perhaps as a consequence, “understandings of the term ‘culture’ have developed narrowly in the Republic, with (until recently) perspectives on the term more commonly associated” with traditional Irish culture (Durrer &

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the Royal Hibernian Academy and the city of Dublin. This event was supposed to take place every 5 years but has not been held since. The National City of Culture initiative builds on the model of the European Capital of Culture (which Dublin and Cork held in 1991 and 2005 respectively) and follows a similar initiative in the UK to designate national cities as capitals of culture. Limerick was the first city to be awarded this title and no other city has received the designation since.

<sup>24</sup> For example, see Mullaly, U. (2014, Jan 6). The Limerick City of Culture shambles. *The Irish Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/poplife/2014/01/06/the-limerick-city-of-culture-shambles/>

<sup>25</sup> In July 2017, this was changed to Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

McCall Magan, 2017, p. 190).

This narrower focus on arts has created the conditions for a cultural policy vacuum that has become filled by the organisational strategies and funding practices of the national development agency for the arts, the Arts Council of Ireland/An Chomhairle Ealaíon. While the establishment of initiatives such as Arts Audiences (2009, in partnership with the Arts Council of Ireland and Temple Bar Cultural Trust) or the formulation of *Making Great Art Work*, the most recent strategy from the Arts Council of Ireland (2015a), have enshrined the principle of increased public engagement and maximising audiences in the arts and as explicit arts strategy, these have become inferred arts policy. The next section, which is titled *Arts Audiences and the Arts Council of Ireland surveys*, highlights the evidence base with which the Arts Council of Ireland inform the strategic thinking behind their most recent strategic documents and focus.

Recently, the state has experienced a shift in public policy focus, coming forward with an intent towards an explicit national policy on culture (Durrer & McCall Magan, 2017). Two important governmental initiatives have occurred. Firstly, *Culture2025: a framework policy to 2025* which “sets out an overarching vision and framework for the future and outlines the priorities for action over the coming years,” and secondly, Creative Ireland (2017) which is “a five-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022, which places creativity at the centre of public policy” (Creative Ireland, 2017; DAHRRGA, 2016b, p. 1). Both initiatives recognise creativity and cultural expression as located at the “heart of what it means to be Irish” and point towards increased policy interest in Ireland in explicit cultural policy making (Creative Ireland, 2017). As Mark-FitzGerald (2017) highlights this is the most developed cultural policy statement to date in Ireland, with some initial indications suggesting that increased cultural resourcing after many years of decline.

However, like the fate of the first white paper on cultural policy, *Access and Opportunity*, neither initiative has yet to make any real progress in terms of political action or cultural impact (Office of the Minister of State for Arts & Culture, 1987).

This could be the result of a lack of political appetite due to ministerial changes or another example of the more things change, the more things stay the same in Ireland (Whelan, 2004).<sup>26</sup> Nearly three years on *Culture2025* is yet to be made policy and still remains a pre-White paper framework document. Concurrently, *Creative Ireland* is viewed as little more than another cultural tourism initiative and a governmental mechanism with which to promote extant cultural activities via social media.

What remains in Ireland, is a distinct lack of cultural policy accompanied by overt and explicit arts strategy that ultimately serves to highlight the interests of some, while downplaying the interests of others. As such, the policy landscape in Ireland has been a matter of Arts Council of Ireland arts strategy. This has focused on the twin-track approach of developing the professional arts and professional artist, alongside “bringing the arts to the people” (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015a; Kelly, 1989, p. 43). These two pillars of artist and public engagement drive Arts Council priorities. The Council’s most recent strategy, *Making Great Art Work*, enshrines these twin-foci in a ten-year plan, poised for implementation through three year funding cycles. This plan emphasises “the centrality of the arts to Irish life” and how they are a “sign and signature of our creativity as a people” (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, pp. 5-6).

### **Arts Audiences and the Arts Council of Ireland surveys**

Since the economic collapse in 2008, there has been increased emphasis in the public sector on evidence-based decision-making and value-for-money policy reviews. These focus on evaluation of cultural structures, strategies and resources (Arts Council of Ireland, 2014; Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, 2015; Department of Finance, 2009; Irish Times, 2012; O’Hagan, 2015). For those funded from the public exchequer, there has been a particular pressure to account for the

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<sup>26</sup> Minister Jimmy Denihan announced the intention of a cultural policy in 2015, from which the framework document arose. He was quickly replaced by Minister Heather Humphreys in July 2015, who recently was reassigned as part of a cabinet reshuffle, with Josepha Madigan took the helm in November 2017. The arts and cultural portfolio is widely considered a low priority and imperative for government.

effective spending of public funds. This has been achieved through large-scale arts audience surveys that have been conducted by either the Arts Council of Ireland, or through Arts Audiences, a cultural agency set up to maximise audiences for the arts.

In 1981 the Arts Council of Ireland embarked on its first survey on arts participation in Ireland. It was designed to “simply take stock of the extent and nature of mass involvement in the arts” and “analyse the patterns of participation across various demographic, social, and regional characteristics” (Arts Council of Ireland, 1983, p. 4). They found some 71% involvement in the arts with 60% reporting that “they had attended some sort of arts event in the previous year” (*ibid*). In 1994, and again in 2006, the Arts Council engaged in a similar research process, producing two reports both entitled *The Public and the Arts* (TPAA) (Arts Council of Ireland, 1994, 2006). These large-scale surveys continue to capture cultural participation patterns and public attitudes in Irish society towards arts and culture.

Since this point, the Arts Council of Ireland has prioritised arts attendance reports generated by the cultural agency, Arts Audiences (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013).<sup>27</sup> These draw on data captured in an annual market-research study called the Target Group Index (TGI) which is a large-scale survey, carried out by Kantar Media group throughout the UK and Ireland. This market research is conducted in two waves each year in October to December and January to April and has been designed “to provide a comprehensive picture of the habits, consumption patterns and attitudes of the population” (2015b, p. 42).<sup>28</sup> As such it is used primarily by the media and advertising industries to track consumer trends. However, for the Arts Council of Ireland, the information generated is considered as useful in audience development for arts organisations. In the absence of other academic, organisational and/or governmental research on arts and culture in Ireland, these

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<sup>27</sup> Arts Audiences is an initiative of the Arts Council and Temple Bar Cultural Trust. It analysed data from the Kantar Media Target Group Index Surveys in order to “quantify arts attendance in Ireland and to provide up to date socio-demographic information on art attenders in Ireland” (Arts Audiences, 2011, p. 13); understand the “relationship of the audience to the arts in Ireland,” and provide “a sound evidence base for audience information about the arts in Ireland” (Arts Audiences, 2010a, p. 5 & p. 6).

<sup>28</sup> A similar survey is also carried out in Great Britain and in 60 other countries throughout the world (Arts Audiences, 2015b).

reports serve the function of making the case for the arts. In so doing, it also contributes to wider debates on arts and culture in terms of value, worth, usefulness and role of arts and culture in Irish society.

While the five Arts Audiences reports draw specifically, and only, on existing TGI survey questions, in 2015 a collaboration between Kantar Media and the Arts Council of Ireland extended the set of questions, in order to better fulfil an expanded brief. This has led to *The Arts in Irish Life (AILL)*, (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 2). The chief remit of this large-scale survey was “to assemble up-to-date insight into how the adult population in the Republic of Ireland currently interact with the arts both in terms of their personal behaviours and in terms of their attitudes” (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 42). Interestingly, in these surveys the definition of an arts attender is presented as:

Those who have attended art events in the last twelve months in venues including: cinema; church; concert hall/opera house; school hall; town hall, community centre; art gallery; Theatre; other dedicated music/arts venue; library; open-air venue and pub/hotel. (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017, p. 20)

There is a notable emphasis here on ‘art’ and on legitimated arts activity in dedicated venues while the definition of cultural participation covers a broad range of informal, local and domestic cultural engagements and specifically covers:

Drawing/painting/sculpting; sing in a choir; other singing to an audience or rehearsing; any singing (summary); play a musical instrument to an audience or rehearsing; play a musical instrument for your own pleasure; any playing an instrument (summary); performing or rehearsing in amateur drama; set dancing; other Irish traditional/folk dancing; other dancing (not fitness class); other artistic activities. (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 14).

Attendance at art events is popular in Ireland and approximately 2.3 million, or 66% of the population, report arts attendance with 51% of the population attending once a year or more often (2010a). In the more recent *The Arts in Irish Life (AILL)*,

this figure remains roughly static at 65% and 64% respectively (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015c, 2017). Looking across the years of each survey, there are noticeable drop-offs in attendance during the key recessionary years. However, by 2014 all artform attendance had recovered strongly and were on par with pre-recessionary attendance figures.

These figures highlight that while approximately two-thirds of the population are denoted as 'arts attenders', one third are designated as non-attenders of formal and informal arts and culture. These non-attendance figures are further compounded in the most recent Arts Council of Ireland report (2017) which details a significant figure of almost two in five adults (39%) indicating as attending an art event once every three months or more often. In other words, this renders three out of five individuals as less engaged than this and therefore, the significance of this is that two thirds of the Irish populace attend an art event less than once every three months or more often. These figures therefore do not support polity's assertion that Ireland is highly creatively engaged as a nation.

It is important also to highlight that arts attendance in Ireland is dominated by the middle to upper classes. As noted above, in Ireland this is denoted by social class categories A, B and C1. This categorisation is comprised of a technical social class bracket of professional and managerial occupations and usefully captures the upper middle, middle and lower middle classes of Irish society. A significant portion of the Irish population is ABC1, and at 41% this social class comprises the largest social class in Ireland (Arts Audiences, 2012, p. 11).<sup>29</sup> The ABC1s of Irish society are therefore the most dominant class in Irish society and because they are the dominant class, and hold positions of influence and importance, they are also the most class in society.

An analysis of the TGI Arts Audience reports in the period October 2008 to April 2009, shows the dominant class are highly significant in terms of arts attendance

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<sup>29</sup> Due to wide ranging consensus, the professional and managerial classes in Ireland are consistently grouped together and denoted as ABC1 with the lower skilled and manual groups denoted as C2DE.

with 54% of this social class attending any performance in a theatre, 50% attending plays, 53% classical music, 54% jazz, 59% opera, 57% art galleries and 52% ballet compared to 41% in the population (Arts Audiences, 2010a). It is worth highlighting that no artform attendance, in any artform, is below the percentage of ABC1 category in the populace, with all remaining notably above. More recent surveys highlight that this pattern continues and has little altered (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017, p. 17). From these figures we can therefore reasonably conclude that the upper and middle classes, who are the dominant in Irish society are also the most dominant cohort in terms of formal arts attendance and are therefore the most likely to exercise their cultural tastes as a manifestation of power relations in the social field.

Arts attendance in Ireland compares favourably with arts attendance trends in both Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Figures reported for these territories "suggest that arts attendance in the Republic of Ireland is typically higher than both of these regions" (2015b, p. 9). Arts attendance is 8% to 9% lower in Northern Ireland and 8% to 13% lower than in Great Britain for comparable events (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 5). Therefore, there are greater numbers *not* attending arts and culture in Northern Ireland and Great Britain than in Ireland. Further, approximately 2 million adults continue to report that they attend the arts in Ireland, and this consistency stands in contrast to overall UK attendance figures from TGI UK. So while the figures of arts attenders are higher in Ireland (64%) than in Northern Ireland (47%) and Great Britain (45%), implicitly these figures highlight higher rates of non-attendance in these territories also (Ireland 36%, Northern Ireland 53%, and Great Britain 55% respectively [Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, Section 2.1]).

As noted above, cultural participation is viewed as a separate activity in the Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland surveys. These activities are not defined with any specific frequency of behaviour as in arts attendance rather they are measured as regular or occasional participation in a set of named activities. Frequency of participation is, therefore, based upon the subjective understanding of respondents (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 13).

In the report of the 2009/10 TGI wave just over 1.2 million people reported that they regularly (or occasionally) engage in cultural participation. This amounts to approximately 34% of the populace (Arts Audiences, 2010b). By 2014, this had risen to 36% who claim regular or occasional participation in one or more such activities (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 5). This year a greater number of young (15-24 years) and old (plus 65 years) groups report participating in creative and artistic activities (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 15). This is combined with a noticeable fall in the 35-44 years age group who are "significantly less likely to be regular participants in such activities" (*ibid*). This could be as a result of a number of factors but is most likely due to the "time-poor" experience of this life stage.

Interestingly, the Arts Council of Ireland surveys report a significantly positive relationship between levels of informal cultural participation and formal arts event attendance (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, 2015c, 2017). Of the 18% of the population who regularly participate in arts and creative activities, 40% of this group will attend an arts event "once a month or more" (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 14). This makes this group 115% more likely than the average adult to be heavy arts attenders and implies a distinct correlation between engagement in informal cultural participation and arts attendance (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 5). Unsurprisingly, those who are highly engaged in cultural participation are also the dominant class.

In the context of this research study, the Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland reports usefully tell the story of a nation actively engaged in attending and participating in arts and culture. This helps us understand the stratification of arts attendance and cultural participation in Ireland by reporting on the socio-economic and socio-demographic profile of Irish society (this is covered in greater detail in *Chapter 3 Methods*). Throughout, these reports highlight that distinct preferences in arts attendance are clearly correlated with social class, education and income. This follows a similar experience in the UK, where there is increasing emphasis placed on "the 8%" statistic in English cultural policy debates" with "the wealthiest,

better educated and least ethnically diverse 8% of the English population are the most engaged in culture” (Belfiore, 2016, p. 205).

The strategic response from the Arts Council of Ireland has been to try to enlist greater numbers of the Irish populace in the arts (and therefore users of culture) by increasing visibility, maximising audiences and accessibility to high art forms (Arts Council of Ireland, 2014, 2015a; Balling & Kann-Christensen, 2013). By endeavouring to increase the diversity and quantity of arts attendees, the Arts Council of Ireland is not only reinforcing extant "ways of seeing" about how arts and culture, that emphasises the value of traditional high art forms, but is also carrying the burden of proof for arts attendance as well as cultural participation (to use the Arts Council frames of reference) in Irish society (Berger, 1972).

The most recently conducted survey, *The Arts in Irish Life*, has been an attempt to gather more diverse findings and to go deeper into the place of arts in Irish life (Arts Audiences, 2015b, 2015c, 2017). It highlights who attends formal arts events and also the level of engagement in informal artistic and creative activities but it highlights little about the role the arts hold in Irish society. Designed as largely consumer tool, this is a sorely missed opportunity to make connections, strengthen arguments and deepen knowledge on cultural participation in Ireland.

### **Research developments**

Recent research conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute takes a more holistic and “broad view of children’s cultural participation and...consider(s) the range of ways in which they express themselves creatively” (Smyth, 2016, p. ii). The *Growing up in Ireland – the National Longitudinal Study of Children* data follows the progress of two groups of children since 2006: 8,000 9-year-olds (Child Cohort) and 10,000 9-month-olds (Infant Cohort). While the primary aim of this study is to inform Government policy in relation to children, young people and families, the Arts Council of Ireland commissioned a report based on this data to assess arts and

cultural participation specifically among 3, 5, 9 and 13-year-olds (Smyth, 2016).<sup>30</sup>

This report presents “a variety of structured and unstructured cultural activities” in children’s daily lives against a rich background of socio-economic data on the children and their families. It shows that Irish children who participate in structured artistic and cultural activities such as music, drama and dance have a better academic self-image and confidence and report improved wellbeing and cognitive development. Correlations are also found with those attending drama classes who are more likely to read frequently outside school. While those in “after-school cultural activities, such as choir and drama groups, were also found to have a significant influence in fostering broader interest in the arts outside of school hours” (Arts Council of Ireland, 2016b, para 4).

This report also shows “clear social background and gender differences in participation” present in different forms of cultural activities (Smyth, 2016, p. 92). Children from more advantaged families read more frequently and are more likely to take part in structured cultural lessons or clubs; these activities serve to enhance their within-school learning, thus contributing to the social gradient in school achievement. While the report acknowledges that children from less advantaged families watch more television and do develop heightened language skills, this is also considered to contribute to the kinds of socio-emotional difficulties (such as inattention and hyperactivity) that are likely to be disruptive to their school engagement.

The findings presented in the *Growing Up in Ireland (GUI)* data overwhelmingly show significant social differentiation in children’s cultural participation with the nature of such variation depending on the type of activity considered. Even from an early age, more advantaged families are more likely to read to their child, take them on educational visits and cultural outings and encourage them to engage in creative play. They are also less likely to allow their young children to watch a lot of television

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<sup>30</sup> *Growing Up in Ireland* is a Government-funded study of children being carried out jointly by the ESRI and Trinity College Dublin.

and to play computer games for prolonged periods. Among older children and young people, those from more advantaged families are more likely to read for pleasure and attend after-school music or drama lessons/clubs. The latter activities typically require payment so, even taking account of parental education and social class, children in the higher income families are much more likely to attend (Smyth, 2016, p. 95). This report confirms the cultural stratification present in the Arts Council of Ireland reports and overarchingly shows that patterns of cultural engagement are well established from an early age.

The ESRI's GUI longitudinal survey also points the way towards a broader understanding of the role and place of culture in the lives of Irish people. While not specifically a sociological study, it provides an opportunity for understanding the role of arts and culture in individual's lives through a holistic, less agenda-focused definition of arts and culture. As Smyth highlights, there is much to be gained by moving towards less divisive understandings, best represented in the use of a broader, and less consumption-oriented understanding of cultural participation:

Studies of cultural participation among adults in Ireland and elsewhere have tended to focus on participation in a specific set of activities, largely centred on attendance at arts exhibitions and performances such as the theatre, ballet and opera, as well as on reading for pleasure. In contrast, this study takes a broader view of arts and cultural participation. For those in middle childhood and adolescence, this means taking account of their engagement in popular culture, including television viewing and digital engagement, as well as involvement in music, dance and drama lessons and in reading for pleasure. For younger children, the study takes account of their involvement in creative play (such as painting, drawing and playing make-believe games) as well as the more traditional cultural pursuits of reading and attending educational or cultural events with their parents." (2016, p. 12)

The GUI study is beginning to surface valuable insights, correlations and impacts between culture and social processes. It is beginning to highlight the dynamics arising from the patterns of social relations in relation to cultural participation and show how these can be an expression of difference and preference, a public

manifestation of social boundaries, and how cultural participation can function as a most efficient group maker.

### **Summary**

This chapter has traced the political, economic and social progress over the last one hundred years in Ireland. It has considered how Ireland has been transformed from an agrarian, rural, uneducated, closed society to a successful open, knowledge-based economy populated by mobile, educated professionals. This chapter captures how the social processes at work in Ireland have resulted in a less clearly structured society which considers itself relatively homogenous and middle class. However, this chapter also demonstrates that Irish society is a highly unequal one where the forces of patronage and ascription continue to endure.

As Hoggart states in his introduction to George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* "class distinctions do not die: they find new ways of expressing themselves" (1989, p. vii). This chapter demonstrates how the context for this exists in Ireland as the dominant class in Irish society - the ABC1s - are the most active in arts attendance and cultural participation. This chapter reviews the existing literature on arts attendance in Ireland and notes how the wealthiest, better educated and most privileged are the most frequent arts attenders. This chapter briefly notes that the remaining non-participants are considered a problem in policy terms and that certain ways of seeing in the linear logic of arts attendance surveys contain a bias towards the legitimacy and funding of the highbrow fine arts (Berger, 1972).

This is covered further in the next chapter, *Chapter 2 Literature Review*, which highlights how question of class, culture and taste are implicitly bound up in power relations and ways of positioning oneself in the social field. This next chapter reviews English literature related to this and highlights how cultural participation and taste are intimately connected in the stratification of society.

# Chapter 2 Literature Review

*[T]here is a continuity between art and everyday life. The apparent discontinuity has its roots in certain of our inherited ways of thinking about 'Art'. (Benson, 1979, p. 30)*

## Chapter synopsis

This chapter reviews how we understand the term culture and outlines how this is largely in two ways: anthropologically and creatively. This chapter captures the anthropological definition of culture as the signs, symbols and beliefs of living: “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO, 2001). It also reviews another definition of culture: creative culture and how this refers more narrowly, to the creative expressions of a society and more specifically to the highbrow arts - to visual arts, performing arts, literary arts and so on. It notes how this dichotomy has led to the terms, arts and culture, often used synonymously and sometimes interchangeably, with the term culture mobilised in different contexts to signify macro as well as specific concepts. This is reflected in Ireland, as noted in *Chapter 1*, as we often talk about culture when what we really mean are the traditional highbrow arts. This chapter highlights how the frequent and narrow use of the term in Ireland, has laid down patterns of thinking and working that are unlikely to shift easily. This chapter also considers culture’s relationship to class and the scholarly literature that focuses on the structural and subjective relationship an individual has to cultural participation and taste. Finally, this chapter reviews cultural participation and policy and considers the implications for continuing extant ways of thinking using historical definitions of culture.

## Culture

The term culture originates from the Latin *cultus* meaning care, and the French *colere* meaning ‘to till’ (Berger, 2000, para 2). There is evidence of individuals using their creative talents in artistic, cultural or creatively focussed ways since humans

first started wearing clothes, making tools and creating jewellery, over 110 thousand years ago. In medieval times, the artisans of medieval Europe as skilled craftsmen, used their creative talents and intellectual capital in the provision of goods and artefacts for their communities. The wandering minstrels and troubadours of the Middle Ages performed songs, told stories and entertained their audience with dramatic tales of mythical or distant places in exchange for food and accommodation. In pre-Norman Britain, travelling professional poets were known as Scops. Bards, in Gaelic culture, carefully crafted poems and songs to reinforce the status and power of the ruling families of the land who acted as their patrons. While in Ireland, a long tradition exists of storytellers, known as *Seanachai*, who travelled widely telling tales of epic battles and local folklore (Kelly, 1989).

Creative talents and goods in pre-monetary societies were sustained through systems of patronage, exchange and barter. With Mauss (1954) and Weiner (1992) demonstrating how the inalienable possessions of cultural goods and the products of artisanship were often imbued with a value that could often grow over generations. Creative expertise endeavoured to capture, and render meaningful, stories, beliefs and symbols in tangible artefacts or less tangible narratives such as song, poetry and story. These creative practices underpinned the interactions of a people, in any given society, each having their own form of cultural expression and capture.

Culture, in this definition, included creative culture, and was “a whole way of life of a people made publicly available through the symbolic forms through which people experience and express meaning” (Swidler, 1986, p. 273). In this anthropological definition, culture is the signs, symbols and beliefs of living and “the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group...that... encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (UNESCO, 2001).

By the late eighteenth century, European Enlightenment concepts of culture emphasised self-cultivation and progress towards personal and cultural maturity.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), in his concept of *bildung* captured man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity towards a more mature, more developed, more refined self. Ideologically opposed to the anthropological definition of culture, Enlightenment philosophers celebrated the mysterious transcendence of artistic practice and placed this in direct contrast to the overtly positivist logic and discoverable discourses of truth and science (O'Kelly, 2007).

Throughout the nineteenth century, culture had become an ideal of individual refinement and the artist, a romantic genius working at a remove from society. Similar to *bildung* but with more emphasis on the ideal qualities of refinement and cultivation were promoted amongst intellectuals and the ruling classes. Carey (1992), in his book entitled *Intellectuals and the Masses*, charts the reactive position of these individuals, clearly outlining their declarative purchase on the fine arts and their vociferous stand for their exclusive and elite intellectual abilities. He paints the fear of the intelligentsia at the proliferation of reproducible images and text, in newspapers and in the cinema. Miles and Savage highlight how these intellectuals and professional groups actively “embraced the supremacy of ascriptive values of the ‘noblesse oblige’” through their cultural choices (2012, p. 600).

Benjamin (1936) on the other hand, celebrated the possibilities of the reproducibility and availability of these mass-produced forms, while Adorno ([1970] 1991), mourned the loss of aura, originality and superiority of art. He viewed as retrogressive the effects of radio, popular music, films and television, and emphasised how they were used as tools for dominance and control by polity. By the mid-twentieth century, the fine arts and high culture stood in contrast to the popular culture of the masses and had been ring-fenced as a source of distinction by threatened elites.

This relationship, between highbrow culture and the ruling classes, has endured and is pervasive throughout the literature on culture and taste. It remains bound up in Enlightenment ideals of refinement and cultivation and continues to be conflated

with class, education and well-resourced background. The following sections consider the key sociological texts in this regard and explore the relationship between creative culture, class and taste.

## **Class**

Defining the concept of class is as difficult as placing boundaries around definitions of culture, with the term sometimes used to refer to economic standing and occupation, while it is also sometimes used to capture social and employment divisions (Scott, 1996, p. x). Class theory often identifies key conflicts and struggles and links these struggles to inequalities in patterns of property ownership and employment relations (Pakulski, 2005). Marxian class theory denotes class as arising from access to the means of production (often the employment and occupational position held by an individual), while for Weber class is an expression of employment relations and linked intimately to the life chances of an individual. With Durkheim, class arises in micro-groups as a result of individuals clustering depending on their shared sectional interests (arising from interdependencies as a result of occupation and lifestyle meaning). While Bourdieu highlights a concept of class that locates individuals in a structural hierarchy determined in the first instance not by occupation but taste as a manifestation of social position in society.

Classic class theory is viewed as stemming from a Marxian analysis of these struggles, taking an original conceptualisation of class as characterised by processes of exploitation and alienation resulting from oppressive capitalist processes. In Marxian class theory, collective groupings of individuals bond together formulating class action against those who oppress, or conversely, those who are the oppressed. Classes then group around the normative principles of domination or oppression. Identifying 2 distinct classes in society, the dominant class (or bourgeoisie) control the means of production and the working class (or proletariat) are subject to their control. Those in control of assets and resources such as property, machines etc. have access to the means of production. Through access to the means of production, those in control organise the division of labour amongst those who do not. Indeed, in classical Marxian class theory, “working class” is simply short hand

for “working class location in capitalist relations” (Wright, 2005, p. 8). In this way, classes are formed through the deployment of power and rights to assets. Those in control of resources are in control of the means of production, and therefore retain a position of dominance in society.

The 2 pivotal concepts in Marxian class theory are class structure and the struggle of class relations. Class structure is a macro concept that captures the “total sum of the class relations in a given unit of analysis” (Wright, 2005, p. 19). This means that the unit to be analysed could be a city or a nation state, and the class structure of that unit is the expression of the concentration or dispersion of ownership of assets or resources in that unit (Wright, 2005, p. 20). Class relations are therefore distinctly bound up in conflict and in the unequal distribution of property ownership and employment relations (Pakulski, 2005; Scott, 1996). Class consciousness then becomes an awareness of where an individual is located in the economic and social order. It is key in the relationship between the two classes and underpins class awareness of different interests and conditions of living. From this, tensions arise and class struggle forms.

Marx and Weber both consider class as a consideration of the access an individual has to economic resources. However, the key focus for Weber rests on economic life chances and on the “shared typical probability of procuring goods, gaining a position in life, and finding inner satisfaction” (Weber, 1978 [1922], p. 302). Weber rejects the determinism of Marx and relates his class analysis to the economic relations of property and the market and to status that is distinguished by social honour and social standing (Scott, 1996, p. xi). This is expressed in the more intimate forms of commensality and connubium: in who eats with whom, and who sleeps with whom (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007a). In Weberian class theory, there is no assumption that class struggle or class conflict is a given nor is class positioning an expression of exploitation or alienation as per the Marxian schema. Rather it is an expression of the different resources an individual can use to influence the distribution of life chances, and their value within the context of the market. This is less a theory of domination and conflict as per Marx’s conceptualisation of class

and more a focus on the relational experience of the social. This consideration of the distribution of power and assets in society shapes an individual's position in life. This leads to a "web of social relationships, attitudes and values" that "creates definite groups with a recognisable social identity" (Breen & Whelan, 1996, p. 2). As such, Weberian class is best characterised by the term social class as it moves beyond the descriptive labelling of occupational positions to consider workers within a wider social and economic context.

Both Marx and Weber, however, take a highly structural position on class and stem directly from a historical specificity of their time. Critics of the above approaches would consider the grafting on of class categories onto social processes a distinctly nominalist formulation (Grusky, 2005). Processes of industrialisation extant during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century have altered into service and knowledge-based economies and class lines are less clearly demarcated in society. This does not perhaps allow for the macro class groupings identified as expressions of the labour contract as identified by Marx and Weber. A Durkheimian approach considers an "empirically more viable task of characterising such structures at the site of production" and draws out "the types of intermediary groups that have emerged in past labour markets and will emerge in future ones" (Grusky, 2005). Durkheim groups in a disaggregate fashion the shared sectional interests of individuals into micro groups in society as a result of their interdependencies on each other and the meaning an individual brings to their occupation. This has led some scholars to note that a neo-Durkheimian approach allows for the persistence of class structuration but at a more detailed level than is conventionally allowed. The starting point for analysis remains located within the unit of occupation but looks beyond the surface feature of the occupation or labour contract into the informal associations which arise as a result of this experience, such as union ties or membership of associations, shared understandings or licensing or certification agreements. Durkheim thus defines the unit of occupation through closure generating devices in terms of social boundaries (Grusky, 2005). Neo-Durkheim scholar, David Grusky (2000, 2005) recognises that in all complex societies, the stock of valued goods is distributed unequally and that most privileged families enjoy a

disproportionate share of income, power and other resources. He further recognises that this distribution of inequality existed long before labour contacts and before industrialisation and that this approach could be considered a more complete unification of class and status.

Bourdieu moves class theory beyond an expression of labour relations and into a fuller consideration of social relations. His class analysis essentially unites structure and agency in a profiling of an individual's position in the social field by capturing their economic, social and cultural capital. He conceptualises this class formation as "devoid of inherent boundaries" and considers the social similarities and differences of individuals based on the symbolic function of aesthetic consumption and practices (Weininger, 2002, p. 141). His main thesis centres on the homogeneity of individuals that result from their accrual and deployment of economic, social and cultural capital in the social field. By using the methodology of correspondence analysis, he shows that cultural participation and taste are distinctly homologous with an individual's location in this social space. Higher-class groups therefore exercise their distinction through their purchase, appreciation or engagement with highbrow cultural forms while the lower or working classes possess a taste only for the functional and the necessary. Middle class groups however emulate and ape the tastes of the upper classes.

Scholars however, question class analysis as the concept of class has "ceased to offer a frame for individual identities" (Atkinson, 2007, p. 350). Clark and Lipset have queried "are social classes dying?" (1991, p. 397), while Pakulski and Waters firmly declare the "death of class," as they posit the question, "what would sociology lose if it abandoned the concept of class?" (1996, p. 1). Current class analysis therefore invariably involves a consideration of how useful, valid or pertinent class is for understanding the underlying principles of society (Crompton, 2008; Grusky, 2000; Roberts, 2011; Savage et al, 2013; Wright, 2005).

Savage (2000) emphasises that "broad patterns of wealth-holding and income in Britain point quite unambiguously to the existence of a very small class who earn

their wealth from property, and a much larger class who predominantly rely on income from their labour” (2000, p. 51). Roberts (2011) points to the outdated nature of an over-concentration and focus on wealth and power in the class of the dominant who own all the access to the means of production and the workers who own almost nothing except their own labour power. He posits that we are all capitalists now and exploit our resources to the best possible investment available to us (Roberts, 2011, p. 167). Dorling (2014) highlights the limited usefulness of class as an explanatory concept, and notes that the majority of humans don’t go about their daily business thinking about the class they fit into: that someone can easily now have multiple class identities. Theorists of the cultural turn, such as Du Gay and Pryke (2002), suggest that the employment aggregate approach is not necessarily the best reflective descriptor of an individual in society today. While in more recent work, Savage et al argue “that if economic measures of inequality are to be kept within the purview of class analysis, we need to go beyond measures of occupational class alone” (2013, p. 222).

Beck (1992) argues that the changing logic of distribution of wealth, of property, of resources and, importantly, the rise of an attitude of risk in our social and economic processes have killed off the concept of class, allowing individualisation to come to the fore. The individualisation thesis offered by Beck (1992), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) and Giddens (1990, 1991), calls into question the influence of class as a mode for reflecting the changed nature of society with traditional understandings of class said to have lost their grip on individuals lives (Clark & Lipset, 1991; Pakulski & Waters, 1996; Scott, 1996). Emphasising the need for empirical studies on the “self-constituting agent” as the prime mode for better understanding purposive agency. Individuals, they suggest, are “no longer ‘role players’” but “constructed through a complex discursive interplay” with each other (Lash in Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994, p. 144). This, they suggest, leads to a society comprised of “merely associations of atomized individuals” (*ibid*).

As Beck notes, society today is comprised of “de facto agents in a global society of specialists” who are expert, professional, educated and highly individualised (in

Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994, p. 48). He further highlights that,

The individualised everyday culture of the West is simply a culture of built up knowledge and self-confidence: more and higher education, as well as better jobs and opportunities to earn money...[while] at the same time an emigration to new niches of activity and identity. (Beck, Giddens & Lash, 1994, p. 20)

Atkinson takes this further and suggests “people no longer, as they apparently once did in the past, talk of 'blows of fate', 'objective conditions' and 'outside forces’” that place each individual in a class-located society (2010a, para 1.1). Rather,

Instead their narratives tell of 'decisions, non-decisions, capacities [and] achievements' in an 'individualistic and active' form in which they 'perceive themselves as at least partly shaping themselves and the conditions of their lives. (*ibid*)

Highlighting that individualisation is not “simply a subjective phenomenon concerning self-identities and attitudes alone, but a structural phenomenon transfiguring objective life situations and biographies” (Atkinson, 2007, p. 353).

Crompton (2008) also highlights the rise of individualisation in late twentieth century society and suggests a revival of interest in class analysis, particularly cultural class analysis, as a mechanism for elucidating inequality in society. Savage notes that a new generation of sociologists are mobilising class with only a limited engagement with work per se. This “new generation of cultural class analysis, ...[places] emphasis on how people misidentify with class, and perform class obliquely, through practices of consumption” (Savage, 2013, p. xi). By sociologists taking this route, Bottero (2004, 2005) argues, we will be better able to understand how material relations acquire and shape meaning in the social, economic and political spheres. In this way, she captures Atkinson’s arguments for the objective structural phenomenon of persisting inequality as well as Savage’s call for a new class theory which articulates “class culture...as modes of differentiation rather than as types of collectivity” where class processes operate through individualised distinction rather than in social groupings (2000, p. 102).

Sommer Harris (2013) foregrounds the ongoing usefulness of Bourdieu in this regard and particularly his theory of taste in the understanding of class relations. This is because,

Bourdieu's class analysis is a strong analytical tool containing two main elements. The first is the conceptualisation of social relations, and the specific analysis of modern society that it entails, and the second is the strategy for analysing the relationship between class and practice. The first element introduces concepts such as capital, social space and class; whereas the second element points towards concepts such as field, symbolic space, and practice. (2013, pp. 173 - 174)

In the first context, culture is a structural concept, and in the second an active and meaning-filled practice. The two are distinct, yet interrelated. The underlying assumptions present in Bourdieu's work then, point to the premise that social collectives that form around the indicators of lifestyle, locating and clustering individuals within the social field according to their differences and similarities of cultural taste. This performing expression of cultural taste and participation provides an analysis of society that vertically ranks class and cultural taste in mutually reinforcing ways (Erickson, 1996; Weininger, 2005). For this, Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) premise is often criticised as somewhat reductive and overly structuralist, in interpretation. However, Bourdieu's class theory also provides a powerful mode for understanding cultural stratification and its role in perpetuating inequality and class divisions in contemporary society.

Recently, Savage et al (2013) have explored lines of social cleavage in contemporary Britain using Bourdieu's concept of capital in a study entitled the Great British Class Survey. In this research, they offer a new and multi-dimensional model of social class through profiling how economic capital (wealth and income), cultural capital (the ability to appreciate and engage with cultural goods, and education institutionalised through accredited success), along with social capital (the ability to draw on the connections and contacts in your social networks) indicate that "classes

are not merely economic phenomena” nor simply classes on paper but are “profoundly concerned with forms of social of reproduction and cultural distinction” (Savage et al, 2013, p. 223). Through this fine-grained articulation of social class, they make a strong case for any consideration of class to strongly take account of other social and cultural practices in order to provide a more holistic and contemporary cultural class analysis.

### **Culture, class and taste**

Though conceptualisations of class remain difficult, scholars remain definitive about the homologous relationship between cultural participation, taste and class (Bennett, Frow & Emmison, 1999; Bennett Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal & Wright, 2009; Devine, Savage, Scott & Crompton, 2005; Friedman, 2014, 2015; Hanquinet, 2014; Le Roux, Rouanet, Savage & Warde, 2008; Savage et al, 2013; Snee, 2014).

Historically, Hume (1757), Montesquieu (1764) and Kant (1790) all grappled with the mysteries of taste and correlated good taste with good judgment and good morals, sociological questions on culture and its relationship to taste have gained traction in Western discourses since Norwegian-American economist and sociologist, Thorstein Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class: An economic study of institutions* (1899). His key contribution was to highlight the enduring and hollow relationship of high culture with the dominant class. He understood man to be a creature who sought honour and status through “pecuniary emulation” and by striving to maintain social standing and esteem, man must masquerade his taste through consumption. In so doing, man demonstrates his capacity for a refined taste disposition “through extensive leisure activities and through lavish expenditure on consumption and services” (Trigg, 2001, p. 101). By drawing a correlation between higher social strata and patterns of cultural choice, Veblen highlighted that “preferences are determined socially in relation to the positions of individuals in the social hierarchy” as he directly connected taste to class (Trigg, 2001, p. 99).

“Struggles for status in a developing symbolic economy” also feature in the work of

a “neglected member of the sociological canon,” French scholar, Gabriel Tarde (Wright 2015, p. 21). Tarde locates the symbolic status of taste in the social and highlights how capitalism can be re-conceptualised as an “economy of desire” (Wright, 2015, p. 22). While largely a social theorist, Tarde’s contribution in the *Laws of Imitation* (1903) suggests society “was distinctively defined by the ability of its members to imitate each other” (King, 2016, p. 47). Tarde notes the “profound ways” we watch each other and how we respond to the lives of others with gestures and decisions which shape our own. Our needs may be satisfied by acts of consumption but our psychological desires are driven by our social milieu (Wright, 2015).

Simmel ([1904] 1957) outlines a theory of taste in which he relates fashion to the class structure and highlights how individuals use the opportunity of styling ourselves in clothes as an opportunity for emphasising difference (Simmel, [1904] 1957). He states, “fashion is a form of imitation...it unites those of a social class and segregates them from others” (Simmel, [1904] 1957, p. 541). While he recognises that fashion is used as an expression of individuated taste and styling to express difference, he highlights how it does not exist in classless societies and that while “the elite initiates a fashion, the mass imitates it” (Simmel, [1904] 1957, p. 541).

In *The Tastemakers* (1949), Russell Lynes gauges the social significance of taste in the post-war era in America. His is a tongue-in-cheek tracing of taste dispositions that relate to art, architecture, fashion and other forms of material culture. Lynes throughout identifies “that art is a consumer good” and highlights the distinct homologous taste patterning among the “Highbrow, Lowbrow and Middlebrow” of American society (Zolberg, 1990, p. 148). While *The Tastemakers* is a gentle satirical depiction of how individuals relate to style, it is also a discourse on social stratification and how the “fuzzy class lines” relate to cultural taste dispositions (Zolberg, 1990, p. 149). Lynes takes for granted that upward social mobility is displayed through conspicuous consumption and by implication, that class boundaries are permeable and open.

Herbert Gans in *Popular Culture and High Culture: an analysis and evaluation of taste* (1974) offers us a way to think in terms of the dynamics of taste as engagement, so that some may be particular “addicts” to a total way of life (Gans, 1974, p. 12). His theory of taste offers a useful mobilisation of elective affinity groups clustering around shared preferences and dispositions as various ‘sub’ cultures, each differing by preference in literature, art, consumption patterns, hobbies, and other leisure activities. His “taste publics” although they share similar aesthetic tastes aren’t aggregated because of cultural content, but are clustered because of similar values that are expressed through this cultural content. In a pre-Bourdieuian step, he develops a typology of “taste publics” that consume “taste cultures” appropriate for their educational level and social background (Crane, 2008). While Gans tried to argue that different taste publics (while connected to social classes) should be seen as equivalent, rather than hierarchical, he overarchingly highlights the dominance of high culture through the public dominance of the codified taste of the elite. This arises due to its presence in the canon of works studied in education. This “dominance” he states, is “accompanied by some political power” in the upper classes and “indirect power” amongst the middle classes while the lower classes want “money or power” but “do not feel deprived of their inability to participate in higher taste cultures” (Gans, 1974, pp. 113-114). The lower classes, on the other hand, want only social mobility, not cultural mobility (*ibid*).

Gans (1974) tries to make a more egalitarian argument that fails on critical reading. His work contains a sympathetic tendency to align with the elites, and in so doing risks the projection of his own status desires onto the topic (Halle, 1993). For example,

It is fair to say that the higher cultures are better or at least more comprehensive and more informative than the lower ones...[and]...may be able to provide greater and perhaps more lasting aesthetic gratification...because their publics are better educated, these cultures can cover more spheres of life and encompass more ideas and symbols. (Gans, 1974, p. 125)

This is a missed opportunity in Gans's 1974 work but is somewhat addressed in later editions of the same text (Gans, 2008). The value judgment is posited as a question of validity: Is NYPD Blue a less valid form of artistic expression than a Shakespearean drama? Is Rachmaninoff to be considered a better expression of the art of music than reggae? (O'Brien, 2013). Who is to judge and by what standards? This conceptualisation of taste begins to point the way forward for a deeper analysis that is less overtly structural and more insightful in surfacing the meaning of social processes and phenomena relating to cultural participation and taste. The work of French anthropologist and sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), is important in this regard and has become a foundational reference for those interested in the study of cultural stratification.

### ***Bourdieu***

Bourdieu is positioned between the more abstract and philosophical conceptualisations of taste considered by scholars such as Kant, Simmel and Weber, and provides an empirical analysis of cultural class analysis. Bourdieu develops this analysis by circumscribing a mappable research area in the social space of lifestyles in the form of the field. In order to investigate this space empirically, he endeavoured to construct a virtual research space where individuals could be mapped according to where they are at any one time. He stated that individuals are a composite of an expression of the volume and levels of all the capitals we hold at any given moment in time and that the resulting combination of habitus, cultural capital and field are a dynamic expression of an individual taste (1984, p. 101).

His empirical analysis of 1960s French society is captured in his seminal text *Distinction* (1984). This work locates taste as a marker of social distinction and has done much to illuminate the connections between class and culture. This work is interesting for this research study as a core element of his enquiry was the role played by cultural participation and taste in defining an individual's social position. His main thesis centres on the class homogeneity of individuals resulting from their individual accrual and deployment of economic, social and cultural capital in the social field. The relative differences in capital, particularly cultural capital,

become the manifestation of Bourdieu's "theory of taste" through the structure agency relationship (Holt, 1997, p. 94).

In this way Bourdieu's theory of practice is an iterative process of relationality between agency and structure. This creates a dialectical theory which foregrounds the social actor (or individual) and their actions against a background of "structuring structure" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). Walther notes how Bourdieu's theory of practice "is the result of social structures on a particular field (structure; macro) where certain rules apply and also of one's habitus (agency; micro), i.e. the embodied history that is manifested in our system of thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving" (2014, p. 7). With Tan (2010) highlighting how, "external structures are, as it were, inscribed into individual's own dispositions (habitus), and the latter implicated, when it comes into contact with those familiar fields (in which it was initially formed), (Tan, 2010, p. 47). As such, in Bourdieu's view of structure and agency, individuals act in and through their habitus in relation to given fields (agency), keeping in mind that their habitus has been conditioned by prior experiences (structure).

Bourdieu would state that he views the structure of class in society as essentially a social formation and network of positions which present the various capitals (economic, social and cultural) as distributed to varying degrees across the field of society. A social formation "*devoid of inherent boundaries*" and considers the social similarities and social differences of individuals based on the symbolic function of aesthetic consumption and practices- taste as an active yet invisible tool for social demarcation ([emphasis in the original], Weininger, 2005, p. 130).

### ***Cultural capital***

Questions of taste Bourdieu (1984) shows, are inherently bound up in questions of cultural capital and he develops a relatively straightforward argument that defines cultural capital as an explanation of the intangible differences between individuals. While the concept of cultural capital isn't fully explained in *Distinction* (1984), in a slightly later text (*Forms of Capital*, 1986), Bourdieu evolves the concept more fully

and disaggregates the concept into three distinct forms of objectified, institutionalised and embodied cultural capital.

Objectified cultural capital is found in “specific cultural artefacts, genres, and works which are consecrated and denigrated as part of cultural capital” (Savage, Gayo-cal & Warde, 2005, p. 4). Captured in tangible cultural items, these cultural artefacts are an expression of an individual’s taste. Institutionalised cultural capital is conveyed by educational certification, awards, standing and the level of educational merit achieved and the “value inculcating” and “value imposing” educational experience (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 12-14). School, Bourdieu suggests, helps form a “disinterested propensity” and “a general transposable disposition towards legitimate culture” in individuals (1984, p. 16). This occurs by not only teaching a canon of works which have been sanctified, consecrated and therefore legitimated in the education system, but by developing within individuals the “corresponding condition of reception” and the ability to move from primary level meaning to secondary signification. Bourdieu (1977) views this as the legitimisation of certain cultural forms that the higher classes have a taste for and as such they actively consecrate these tastes in the education system.

Embodied cultural capital rests on the premise that cultural practices have been incorporated into the habitus. This is whereby cultural competences acquired, feed into the “long lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243). Savage et al (2005) helpfully suggest that embodied cultural capital needs to be experienced at first hand with “the acquisition of a muscular physique or suntan,” the accumulation of cultural capital “cannot be done at second hand” (Savage et al, 2005, p. 4). It becomes present and realised through an articulation of cultural competency and familiarity with cultural references and experiences by those who are overtly familiar with specific cultural forms (Benezcry, 2011; Halle, 1993; Savage et al, 2009; Silva, Warde & Wright, 2009). In this way, Bourdieu’s cultural capital premise is “a signifying theory of practice rather than a signifying theory of objects” as it highlights the disposal of taste through the “consumption of specific cultural forms that mark people as members of specific classes” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6).

According to Bourdieu (1984), higher classes demonstrate greater stocks of all forms of cultural capital and express this by objectively finding universal principles of good taste in certain cultural goods. Unguided by notions of utility or practical concerns, they display Kantian disinterestedness, a discerning sensibility and a cultural ease developed as a result of cultural transmission in a cultivated home.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, this time investment accrues cultural competency and understanding. In an upper class home, Bourdieu outlines “it is well known that all dominant aesthetics set a high value on the virtues of sobriety, simplicity, economy of means, which are as much opposed to first-degree poverty and simplicity as to the pomposity or affection of the half-educated” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 225). Those in the middle ground, the petit bourgeois, demonstrate an emulative capacity for the “cultural goodwill” with Bourdieu rubbishing their “stock-piling avidity” (1984, p. 330). This demonstration of taste is based on familiarity with good taste but not quite the knowledge of how to exercise it correctly. Those in lower class positions are prone to overt displays of more exuberant, “garish” taste, preferring function over form and retain a “taste for the necessary” (1984, p. 330). In this way, “social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6). In this way, “taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier,” (*ibid*).

A core aspect of this distinction, is the ability to exercise cultural taste without appearing to explicitly do so: “to be unblemished by any mercenary or cynical use of culture” as a naturalised disposition is then consolidated by the “supplementary profit of being seen” (1984, p. 78). Bourdieu further highlights that cultural capital as important for professionals and managers (of the bourgeois classes) than either elites who have an inherited birth-right, or the working classes who do not possess many stocks of it. They, as the “dominated fraction of the dominant class” maintain, validate and affirm their position in this fraction (Bourdieu, 1984, p. xxi). Therefore, the dominant class through quiet assertion of power, control the social logic of supply and demand in relation to goods (1984, pp. 229-231). In this way Bourdieu realises the immanent power of cultural goods (1984, p. 225).

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<sup>31</sup>Disinterestedness is a state of mind that is free of practical concerns, goals, or desires. It is subjective and also universal. See Kant (1790) *Critique of Judgment* for his fullest expression of aesthetics.

Bourdieu specifically outlines that an individual's habitus is crucial in the formation of cultural taste. The habitus orients "thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions" and ultimately (aesthetic) choices in life- whether an individual is conscious of this or not (Bourdieu 1990, p. 55; Weininger, 2005). As such it organises "practices and the perceptions of practices" whilst also being "rooted in a specific class position" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 166). In this way, through the concept of habitus, Bourdieu unites structure and agency. He specifically defines habitus as "necessity internalised and converted into a disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning giving perceptions; it is a general, transposable disposition" (1984, p. 166). Therefore, an individual's cultural taste becomes a social logic that emanates from inherited class position, educational background and social standing. Through the dissonance an individual feels when they meet others who are not "like us" we experience a sense of difference with Bourdieu noting, this may be the only time we become consciously aware of our habitus (Lizardo, 2004; Reay, 2004). In the concept of habitus, Bourdieu re-forms Weber's "stylisation of life" premise which is a systematic commitment that organises and informs our various taste preferences and behaviours. As the distance increases from the functional and necessary in life, an individual's choices become more stylised and informed by the primacy of form over function (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 20; Weininger, 2005).

Once cultural capital has been accrued, in tangible or embodied form, the process of accruelement transfers a form of legitimised power in the capital to the individual (Fowler, 1999; Silva, 2006; Warde, Wright & Gayo-Cal, 2005). The more capital one has the more powerful one is - in this way cultural capital is often used to explain how inequalities are produced (Bottero, 2005; Burawoy, 2015; Savage, Warde & Devine, 2005). Those with higher stocks of cultural capital because they tend to have higher stocks of all capitals, tend to be in the dominant class in society, and those with less capital, the dominated. Individuals therefore deploy their capital as a power-conferring resource that shapes opportunities, behaviours and relations in the social space of lifestyles (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). For this reason, Bourdieu's understanding of capital is often referred to as neo-Marxian, as Bourdieusian capital is essentially "accumulated labour" (1986, p. 42).

Thus, capital can become a form of social energy, a marker of distinction- one that is exercised within the social space of lifestyles as a form of symbolic violence. It has the capacity to produce profits, real profits in a tangible form such as money, or useful as a boundary maker and group creator. Scholars posit the reasons for this are manifold but largely centre on individuals demonstrating their elite cultural choices as a means for upward social mobility in the class schema (Ostrower, 1998). Lamont and Lareau suggest this is because “widely shared, legitimate culture [is] made up of high status cultural signals used in direct or indirect social and cultural exclusion” (1988, p. 156). While Barnes Brus (2005) acknowledges this, and further highlights that the accumulation of cultural capital continues to demarcate those who have access to resources from those who do not. As Reeves notes,

This process matters because if cultural tastes are used as a criteria to determine access to high-pay occupations, then this may be one mechanism through which inequalities are reproduced because people with the ‘right’ cultural tastes are more likely to come from more affluent backgrounds. (2016, para 14)

Reeves (2015) further highlights that while cultural participation is driven to some extent by status seeking activities, education not class, is the main driving factor.

### **The role of education and participation**

Scholars that follow Bourdieu and others, continue to argue that education is a better predictor of behaviour patterns in relation to cultural participation (DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004; Lizardo & Skiles, 2008; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). This assertion that better educated people have a greater capacity to understand the intellectual and metaphorical qualities of cultural performances can also be traced back to the Enlightenment philosophers (Hume, 1757; Kant, 1790; Montesquieu, 1764).

Marshall et al (1997, cited in Savage, 2000) highlights that while middle class parents

cannot pass on their occupations to their children, they can impart the right kind of capacities for them to do well, particularly with regard to the education system. Through “concerted cultivation” Lareau (2003) suggests middle class parents focus on maximising the educational advantage available to their children through the choice of school, extra-curricular activities and extra paid tuition. Importantly she notes, this is more pronounced for daughters than for sons. DiMaggio and Useem also suggest that exposure to education “is, to a considerable extent, a function of class origins” (p. 142, 1978). While Reay (2010), charts the changing nature of education policies and trends in cultural participation, highlighting the reinforcing nature of the relationship between economic capital and cultural capital. Her research suggests that the heightened nature of parent involvement and initiatives to retain the middle classes within state schooling, is maximising the potential of the already advantaged, further perpetuating and exacerbating class inequalities in education current policies (Reay, 2010, p. 73).

Scholars such as Ganzeboom (1982) suggest that because of the “cognitive information processing” capacities developed through education, abilities and competencies for culture are developed. While Sullivan (2002) finds that there is an important distinction to be made, not between private and public, amateur or professional forms of cultural participation, but between verbal and literary forms versus visual and musical forms of cultural participation as those that transmit cultural content enable individuals to develop cultural information or competency skills that aid them in the education process.

Others such as Pinnock (2009) propose that cultural competencies are developed due to time investment in particular cultural forms. Pinnock (2009) argues that through repeated attendance cultural competencies are developed, maintained and reproduced through the experience of cultural participation. Over time this leads to accumulating stocks of “cultural consumption capital” which result in greater enjoyment from each encounter (Pinnock, 2009, p. 57). Effort and time over months or years has to be invested before “rewards” can be materialised and once internalised, values are learnt and remain stable as a direct result of the *a priori*

commitment already made (Shockley, 2005). Katz-Gerro and Yaish (2008) also suggest that cultural preferences and behaviours establish patterns that are difficult to alter and which shift only slightly across the course of our lifetimes.

Khan specifically notes that education “cultivate[s] a sense that these things are knowable” and through exposure to a canon of cultural works, individuals develop internalised dispositions which support them in negotiating and experiencing other cultural encounters (2012, p. 183). Bourdieu also considers education to be a guarantee of “general culture,” and though he doesn’t ascertain exactly what, and how, this connection is *a priori* established, and *a fortiori* developed between the school system and the individual, he does highlight that the education system consecrates certain cultural forms and that this consecration is perpetuated and legitimated through institutions such as galleries and museums whilst also creating the conditions for aesthetic reception in the individual (1984, p. 17).

### **Possibilities beyond Bourdieu**

While some scholars demonstrate that Bourdieu’s theory of taste continues to provide an understanding of how cultural taste and participation align to social divisions and perpetuate cultural inequality in contemporary society (Bottero, 2005; Hanquinet, 2014; O’Brien, 2015). Critics of Bourdieu’s approach specifically highlight its highly reductive nature, noting that Bourdieu conceptualised ideal types, retrofitting the data to suit the distinct social class divisions present in 1960s France. By triangulating his findings back onto the three distinct social classes, he presents an ideal type of individual, extrapolating distinctive taste preferences with behaviours and cultural engagements (Bennett et al, 2009). With Erickson (1996) noting that Bourdieu vertically ranks class and culture in mutually reinforcing ways. Bennett et al (1999) also highlight Bourdieu’s tendency to deduce meaning and provide preconceived and anaemic one-dimensional understandings of cultural stratification. This has led sociologists to suggest that art and culture is either a vehicle to demonstrate the acquisition of economic capital, and/or display cultural capital (Halle, 1993).

Halle finds conceptualisations of taste as an expression of social aspiration and mobility “weak” and perhaps “even scandalous,” as “support for the central theory is deeply unsatisfactory” (Halle, 1993). As Halle identifies, not one respondent in a survey ever offers status as the main reason for their choices. He addresses this in *Inside Culture* (1993), which is his empirical research on art and class in the American home. In this research, Halle links art and culture to the social life of the house, and the neighbourhood. He terms this a “materialist approach” to art and culture, one which focuses on the mode of dwelling and facilitates analyses of the symbols and meaning individuals derive from the aesthetics of their home context. Halle highlights “the striking similarities of all social classes” and notes that, for example, everybody likes landscapes (1993, p. 198). The issue is to what extent differences in cultural tastes create boundaries between people.

Holt (1997) tries to rescue Bourdieu’s theory of taste from its critics and makes a case for the re-interpretation of Bourdieu’s cultural capital premise through “a signifying theory of practice rather than a signifying theory of objects” (Holt, 1997, p. 101). Highlighting how cultural boundaries, while implied in Bourdieu’s work, go unexplored and suggests that Bourdieu’s theory of distinction is a set of sensitising propositions concerning the relations “between social conditions, taste, fields of consumption and social reproduction that must be specified in each application to account for the particular configurations of these constructs” (Holt, 1997, p. 100). He recommends the study of the micro-politics of everyday social interaction through detailed emic knowledge and documenting expressions of taste in their natural settings, ascribing meanings only with respect to interpretative focused communities of taste (Holt, 1997, p. 115).

Holt’s (1997) exploration of the concept of cultural capital in an American community college points the way forward here and he finds six dimensions of taste akin to taste clusters amongst people who share various fields- clothing, housing fashion etc. These six taste differences can be arranged from materiality through to the autotelic personality. Holt organises them along a scale of low to high cultural capital and identifies sub-fields of people’s “lifestyle enclaves” and finds that

boundaries are formed only to the extent that there exists “social interactional processes through which otherwise incommensurate field-specific cultural capitals are aggregated into meta-field attributions of status” (Holt, 1997, p. 97). In other words, only if the signs and symbols of the distinctive cultural capital can be read, do they convert to status signifiers – otherwise, people socially interact around their lifestyle enclaves in a mobilisation of their taste preferences. As Erikson notes boundaries exist only “if they are repeatedly tested by persons on the fringes of the group and repeatedly defended by persons chosen to represent the group’s inner morality” (1966, p. 23).

French scholar, Antoine Hennion, explores the subjective experience of cultural taste and emphasises that researchers need to take account of taste as a reflexive mechanism; one which considers the elective affinity groups where individuals come together around their taste preferences as forms of bonding, enjoyment and interaction with each other. Hennion (2004) states that taste is reflexive and individuated and that it is “first and foremost a problematic modality of attachment to the world” (2004, p. 131). He notes those writers who say that “taste is a passive social game” functioning as a reinforcement for markers of social difference and relationships of domination are radically unproductive (Hennion, 2004, p. 131). Profiling the taste of the “amateur” to our “ordinariness” (Savage, 2008), Hennion (2004) posits that we (as amateurs) commune with objects and experiences that we value and enjoy, both objectively and subjectively. That “taste” is of us, with-in us, and with-out us and is a determining factor of our life experience, socially, culturally, in material and immaterial culture (Hennion, 2004). Citing Frith (1996), Hennion notes how collectives of fans sit late at night, discussing musical forms and that we should consider what happens through these attachments as through these bestowals of value, interaction-based meaning occurs as people are active and productive in the articulation of their cultural taste.

Hennion (2004) identifies conditions and environments (material, technical, economic, institutional) as circumstances that have relevant determining, and structuring characteristics. However, he places more emphasis on the dynamic

qualities of taste, of taste as an exercise in incorporation. Whereby we consume reflexively and bestow value objectively, in order to “effect a dual movement” of a “co-formation of a set of objects and the frame of their appreciation” (Hennion, 2004, p. 134). Crucial to this, is the sharing of taste among and between, clusters of individuals who are both object and subject and both are ideally both present. Here tastes are shared, performed, tested, checked and fed-back. With every step, with every taste shared, there is a rewriting, reforming and adding to the current set of taste dispositions. This restores the performativity of the nature of taste therefore, as it can no longer be a simple badge of social honour and affirmation of status but is “felt,” is “produced,” is “made” as a “productive activity of critical amateurs” (Hennion, 2004, p. 135). Hennion recognises this sociology of taste as a “framed activity of individuals,” but also as a temporal organising structure that is a “most efficient group maker” (Hennion, 2004, p. 136).

This was also explored in Benzecry (2011) research on the subjective nature of taste in his ethnography of opera fans. Immersing himself over a three year period with opera fans in the legendary Colón Opera House in Buenos Aires, Benzecry considers the nature of the experience of the fan. His study particularly focuses on the “middle class fan” and he develops a typology of differentiation based on enthusiasm and intensity of participation from within the position of an opera fan. He hears stories of two-hundred-mile trips for performances, overnight camp-outs for tickets, while others testify to a particular opera’s power to move them (Benzecry, 2011). He posits the question: “is there a social location for passion?” and if we are looking for a class-specific form of fandom, he tells us the answer is ‘no’- such a thing does not exist (Benzecry, 2011, p. 51). However, if we are to ask are there indicators or variables which do repeat themselves in sociological research of cultural participation- then ‘yes’, there are patterns and these patterns do relate strongly to education and to the socio-demographic features of class (*ibid*). In so doing, Benzecry (2011) highlights the disconnect between an individual’s subjective enthusiasm and felt experience of culture, and the sociological need to render class position within a structural hierarchy.

As an attempt to subvert the corresponding relationship between highbrow arts and social class, Peterson developed Gans's (1974) taste cultures into an articulation of cultural participation expressed as "omnivorous" and "univorous" cultural consumption. In his work with Simkus (Peterson & Simkus, 1992) and with Kern (Peterson & Kern, 1996), Peterson tested two competing ideas: one, that high status individuals were generally becoming more omnivorousness and secondly, that the burgeoning numbers of the younger and increasingly educated factions of society, were replacing older people who were snobbish and univorous in their tastes. Peterson found both to be true- with those born after the Second World War to be distinctly more omnivorousness than those born before. Conversely, lower status individuals consumed less and as such were more univorous in their cultural habits. The resulting emphasis uncovered by Peterson is a qualitative shift from singular univore participation in exclusive highbrow art forms by the elite or dominant class, towards a middle class breadth of "omnivorous" appropriation of legitimate cultural forms (Peterson & Kern, 1996). Thus to be a "cultural omnivore" typifies as a disposition that embraces legitimated highbrow arts as well as more diverse and popular forms of culture. Scholars across Europe and the US argue the case for omnivorousness as growing evidence suggests a shift in the dynamics of a one-on-one correspondence between taste, class and culture (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004; DiMaggio & Useem, 1980; Jaeger & Katz-Gerro, 2008). While others suggest that omnivorousness is simply a new instantiation of class-based taste patterns (Atkinson, 2010a, 2010b; Lizardo & Skiles, 2015a).<sup>32</sup>

In later work Peterson (2005, 2007), recognises that omnivorousness did not mean that everything was liked and embraced indiscriminately but was redefined as an openness to a variety of art and cultural forms, and a disposition to "appreciate and critique in the light of some knowledge of the genre" (Peterson & Kern, 1996, p. 904). Later, Peterson characterised omnivorousness as "the *ability to* appreciate the distinctive aesthetic of a wide range of cultural forms, including not only the fine arts but a range of popular and folk expressions as well" (2005, p. 260). Chan (2013),

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<sup>32</sup> See Katz-Gerro (2004) and Peterson (2005) for a more extensive review of literature on omnivorousness.

suggested omnivorousness can also signify a disposition that embraces legitimate as well as more popular forms of culture, encompassing an openness of social and political attitudes. Omnivores therefore are established as more trusting, more liberal, more politically engaged less likely to belong to a religion and are not more “class conscious” (Chan, 2013, p. 1).

Hanquinet (2014) notes how omnivorousness is problematic because it is characterised by a lack of clarity and is subject to interpretation by different scholars to mean different things. She highlights how Michaud (1997) states omnivorousness is evidence of the decline of socio-cultural hierarchies while others conceive of it as a new form of socio-cultural distinction (Bryson, 1996; Coulangeon & Lemel, 2007; Friedman & Ollivier, 2004, cited in Hanquinet, 2014, p. 34). This arises because it is “part of the character of those with a breadth of social, economic and cultural resources” on which to draw (Hanquinet, 2014, p. 31). She develops a sophisticated approach and typology that usefully identifies six different cultural profiles: each a *bricolage* of different classifying registers that structure and define practices and tastes (Hanquinet, 2013, p. 790). This focuses on the relationship between omnivores versus univores, high versus low culture, experimentation versus classicism and transgression versus conservatism. In so doing, she recognises that “for over thirty years, visitors to art museums have been shown to be predominantly highly educated and members of the upper and middle social classes,” and yet we lack the tools to unravel the aesthetic diversity amongst these cultural audiences (2013, p. 791).

While Lizardo and Skiles explore omnivorousness “as a disposition” with five dimensions (2013, p. 265). Firstly, one which is “habitual and tied to routine practice.” This disposition is tied to “early development, acquisition and refinement,” and is predicated on an “ontogenetic” history (Lizardo & Skiles, 2013, p. 265). Secondly, as a disposition that is “rooted in a set of abilities or capacities generated by a specific enculturation history” (*ibid*). Thirdly, they suggest omnivorousness is “based primarily on the (early) acquisition of practical schemes of perception, appreciation, and action and on the application of conscious rules or

the deployment of explicit discourses” (2013, p. 266). Suggesting that it also has a fourth dimension which is that it “can be transposed across domains” and lastly, across genres and sub genres” (*ibid*).

Importantly, Katz-Gerro and Sullivan (2010) consider intensity of engagement as distinction from omnivorous breadth of cultural engagement as an active measure. Placing emphasis “on how *actively* individuals consume rather than on what they consume” ([emphasis added] Sullivan & Katz-Gerro, 2010, p. 194). These voracious cultural consumers demonstrate an insatiable cultural engagement that requires frequent participative engagement (Sullivan & Katz-Gerro, 2007). Hanquinet, Roose and Savage (2014) also highlight that it is not what is consumed culturally as a measure of quantitative accumulation that marks out privilege in contemporary society but how this consumption occurs. With the content of the cultural form engaged with less relevant than the ability to demonstrate discernment and “make abstract aesthetic judgments” (Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014, p. 113).

### **Working with a contemporary Bourdieu**

As scholars continue to explore Bourdieu’s legacy, Silva and Warde highlight that much of the appeal lies in the “partial appropriation and empirical application” of his work (2010, p. 157). They outline how Bourdieu’s concepts of “capital, habitus and field have inspired applications from scholars who are not faithful to the Bourdieusian schema” (2010, p. 5). Noting the applications and limitations of Bourdieu’s work, they usefully posit that it is not necessary to take on all of Bourdieu’s concepts in order to fruitfully apply his insights (Silva & Warde, 2010). The analysis of the empirical material, they suggest, can be a source of great inspiration but it is not possible to “simply adopt [Bourdieu’s] concepts or straightforwardly endorse his substantive findings” (Silva & Warde, 2010, p. 9). We see this in the work of Bennett et al (1999), Bennett et al (2009), Miles and Sullivan (2012), Friedman (2011, 2014), Friedman et al (2015), and Savage et al (2013). In each of these studies the Bourdieusian theoretical premise of capital accumulation as a form of social domination is adopted and more specifically, the mobilisation of cultural capital as method for display of power and affirmation of dominance in the

social field is updated and refined for a contemporary context. Each of these scholars has found it necessary to update and refine the Bourdieusian framework in order to mobilise his theoretical lens.

In Australia, Tony Bennett with Michael Emmison and John Frow embarked on the *Accounting for Tastes* (1999) project. This research mapped the interests of the Australian population through a “richly textured social cartography of cultural tastes” (1999, p. 2). Taking Bourdieu as their starting point and theoretical basis, and updating this for a 1990s Australian context, they explore the “roles played by social class, age, gender, education and ethnicity in distributing cultural interests and abilities differentially across the population” (Bennett et al, 1999, p. 1). They found that the social pattern of cultural interests in Australia, is “enmeshed” in a complex fashion with power and social logic, playing a role in the unequal distribution of “cultural life-chances” (*ibid*). Overall they particularly highlight the role played by cultural capital in organising social distinctions, platforming the crucial contribution education plays in the mix of the distribution of our life chances, cultural interests and social networks.

The *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* project (2003-6) in the UK provides a particularly useful and nuanced consideration of the social space of lifestyles (Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal & Wright, 2009). Bennett et al (2009) find that while legitimate culture may track across homologies of some fields, it now has less importance in contemporary Britain than it did in 1960s France. Here, Bourdieu found a system of cultural domination that persisted through generations, while in early twenty-first century UK, they find a much more complex pattern of cultural taste and participation. Noticing no primary divide on the lines of the Kantian (intellectual) high art aesthetic versus the low-browed, leisured industrialist aesthetic of popular or commercial culture. They clearly find that the simple distinction between high and commercial or popular culture has been replaced (and is better articulated) by those who are “engaged” as distinct from those who are “disengaged” and that many individuals are engaged in other forms of cultural participation. They notice that different cultural forms have different pervasive

logics. For example, within the music field, sub cultural orientations are prevalent as are the leanings towards innovation and commercial forms. While in visual culture, attachment to legitimate culture predominates and distinguishes social groups. This could be, they suggest, because the cultural order has changed, and there are now fewer “penalties” for engaging in popular entertainment or commercial forms, or indeed for ignoring legitimate culture entirely. They also highlight that people are now loath to turn their aesthetic differences and cultural choices into judgments of social or moral worth. Overall they unearthed a breadth of engagement across a variety of cultural fields.

They conclude ultimately that the “conceptual armory” bequeathed by Bourdieu is insufficient (Bennett et al, 2009, p. 256) and that we need to break from Bourdieu’s distinction between high and low culture in order to more fully develop our understandings of taste as they relate to culture (Savage, 2008). This is echoed by Savage, Gayo-Cal, Wright and Tampubolon who ask, “What does cultural capital - if it exists at all - consist of?” (2005, p. 4). Highlighting the problematic nature of Bourdieu’s cultural capital premise, they note the lack of “robust measures of cultural capital” and particularly those that would help us “order” cultural taste (Savage et al, 2005, p. 12). They trace the various limits that can be encountered by researchers who wish to mobilise Bourdieu’s cultural capital concept, not least the naming and labelling of specific art forms and genres as many of these are now declassified (DiMaggio, 1987; Savage et al, 2005). Noting how most surveys are “skewed” towards high culture, they also note there is “an undue concentration on musical activity and taste in existing sources and studies” (Savage et al, 2005, p. 11).

Bennett et al (2009) suggest that Bourdieu’s cultural capital premise requires updating in order to make it relevant for contemporary research and they specifically highlight how they differ from Bourdieu on 3 counts. Firstly, they find more relational social complexity in their findings. Highlighting that cultural preferences are not more or less an expression of class positions in the social space, but a more complex relationship of class, gender, age and ethnicity. Secondly, they note that if the notion of habitus is to be retained then gender, age, class and

ethnicity, also need to be considered in the processes of person formation (Bennett et al, 2009). Finally, they disaggregate cultural capital, “breaking it up into several different kinds of cultural assets, revealing the varied ways in which cultural resources are organised and mobilised across different kinds of social relations” (2009, p. 3).

Bennett et al (2009) note that cultural preference is led more by a considered orientation towards cultural consumption with different class groups deriving different sources of pleasure from cultural engagement. Tastes, they state, do of course cluster but this clustering is many and varied. They assert that “today's cultural boundaries are different” and that individuals do draw boundaries but only some of these are class boundaries (2009, p. 255). Overarchingly, Bennett et al (2009) move the analysis of cultural practices beyond the broad class divisions proffered by Bourdieu into a more complex, graded kaleidoscope of individuals.

While there remains some debate about what “an 'authentic' operationalisation of cultural capital would consist of” (Sullivan, 2002, p. 155), researchers have had to work with the concept in a way that articulates and remains close to Bourdieu’s main premise of cultural capital as a reflection of the dominant culture in society. Goldthorpe (2007b) highlights that it is important to stay as close to Bourdieu’s original conceptualisation as possible. However, the pace of social and technological change also means understanding cultural capital in the shift to an accelerated cultural present (Prior, 2005, p. 123). Prieur and Savage (2013) also argue that cultural capital demands to be understood in relative rather than absolute terms and that a “field analytic perspective” is required- one that provides the means of understanding cultural capital as a relative entity. In order to do so requires understanding Bourdieu’s most famous concept as *Bourdieu interpreted for contemporary Ireland* as distinct from Bourdieu pure, absolute and literally applied to the present age. This requires locating cultural capital and the properties of cultural capital to a specific field at a moment in time - in a relational present (Prior, 2005, 2015).

Other scholars have taken this approach with for example, Silva and Wright (2009) highlighting the prominence of television as a necessary cultural form to include in the CCSE research. They note that as well as needing to “tailor classifications of genres and fields into the current British context,” they needed to allow for gender balance and ethnicity boosts as, if they had remained faithful to Bourdieu’s original study, they wouldn’t have been accounted for. Friedman also highlights the importance of including lower register cultural forms, such as comedy taste in cultural participation research as he found this is also a way for the “culturally privileged to activate their cultural capital resource” (2011, p. 347). These are good examples of how researchers engaged in cultural capital research have found it useful to mobilise Bourdieu’s concept as a relational and field specific concept in nuanced ways in different fields.

So while definitions of culture, and of class, continue to prove difficult, scholars continue to wrestle with Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) cultural capital concept and move research on cultural participation into more nuanced, contemporary fields. The lens of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may have rendered Bourdieu’s work an expression of a patriarchal French society subject to fixed class divisions and rigid social norms but it has also provided a foundational platform for others to work with in a neo-Bourdieuian fashion- one that understands the role of culture in the social space of contemporary lifestyles. What results is a real concern for the unequal nature of this experience, one that grows out of an unequal distribution of resources in the social, economic and cultural spheres.

This furthers the consideration that culture, cultural policy and cultural participation are not innocent but are of great importance in emphasising the social and cultural dimensions of power (Bennett et al 2009, p. 10). By emphasising the symbolic, individualised content and pattern of highly differentiated human relations embedded in the social, economic and political spheres Bottero (2005) argues, sociologists will be better able to see how material relations acquire and shape meaning.

## **Cultural participation and policy**

Exploring the extent to which creative culture mirrors the values and priorities held by a society, or community, is a valuable and worthwhile proposition. Definitions of culture matter here and have become increasingly complex and problematic as inherent in much cultural policymaking is an approach that takes a deficit model of cultural participation.

As public budgets have tightened across Europe, “there has been an increased emphasis on evidence-based policymaking in the cultural domain” (O’Hagan, 2014, p. 1). This has resulted in policymakers and semi-state organisations seeking “indicators of participation in the arts, and the determinants of variation in participation rates, as a matter of some priority” (*ibid*). This has resulted in a variety of arts audience reports that prove attendance at arts and culture and resulting strategies that seek to convert non users of state provision into users. Concurrently, a surfeit of Irish strategy, policy, evaluation and review documents in the 1990s and 2000s, have appeared which promote the economic and social impacts of participation in arts and culture (Arts Council of Ireland, 2014, 2015a, 2017; DKM Economic Consultants, 2009; Indecon, 2011; NESF, 2007, 2008; O’Hagan 1998, 2015; Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2010). This has been paralleled by a similar case for culture in the UK (Arts Council of England, 2006; Belfiore & Bennett, 2008; Crossick, G. & Kaszynska, 2016; Holden, 2006; Jowell, 2004; Matarasso, 1997; McMaster, 2008; Myerscough et al, 1988; Reeves 2002; Warwick Commission, 2015). Centring on a *culture is good for you* argument they focus on actions and policies to pursue programmes to promote greater accessibility and democratisation of access. This has led commentators to note that if art did all it was said to do for society, there would be no need for health, education, prison and law reforms and policies (NCFA, 2013a, 2013b; O’Kelly, 2007).

Feder and Katz-Gerro term this the “arts provision” approach as it arises from a policy perception that public funding for arts and culture can act as a helpful and “equalising force” in society (2012, p. 360). This has resulted in cultural participation becoming mobilised as a “band aid for society” (O’Kelly, 2007) and a “life skill” for

an individual's personal development (Robinson 2001, cited in Jancovich & Bianchini, 2013). This has burgeoned into a variety of well-being arguments for cultural participation most of which find causation, as well as correlation, more than a little tricky (CASE, 2010; Galloway, 2006). It has also led scholars such as Oakley, O'Brien and Lee to ironically ask: are we all "happy now?" (2013).

DeNora and Ansdell (2014) highlight that while culture, in and of itself, does not actually do anything, policies continue to state the active and useful role of arts and culture. This can take the form of promoting peace and reconciliation (UNESCO, 2013); the protection of cultural diversity (Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht, 2015b); the eradication of poverty and the advancement of sustainable development (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). Pick (1991) states there is nothing new in governments finding uses for culture in positive or negative ways but increasingly we witness policy and organisational rhetoric that focuses on culture as the balm that solves the ills of society (O'Kelly, 2007). O'Brien and Oakley highlight that this is the "governmental moment in culture" (2015, p. 5), with Gray (2009) noting the difficulties arising in defining the terms culture, participation and engagement. He highlights how engagement is particularly difficult to define. While Stevenson queries whether we can accurately say there "is a direct relationship between 'participation' or 'attendance' and "engagement" and suggests these terms indeed need to be questioned" (2013, p. 79). In his analysis of Scottish cultural policy and Creative Scotland funding, Stevenson also asks, "What's the problem again?" (2013, p. 77). He suggests the problem is not that individuals in Scottish society are not engaged in culture, but that they are not engaged in the Scottish government's version of culture. The problem therefore, lies squarely in definitions of culture and cultural participation.

In this vein, scholars are beginning to foster a broader understanding of cultural participation- one that includes hobbies, pastimes and more local pursuits activities. This points towards a moving away from a top down, culture is good for you grand narrative that retains a focus on user involvement in state-funded arts and cultural institutions, towards one that offers a more democratic and inclusive recognition of

"ordinary" participation (Miles & Sullivan, 2010). In this vein, Miles and Sullivan (2010) highlight the varying forms of cultural expression and engagement in today's society. The narratives of participation they uncover centre on "everyday" engagement with cultural forms. They highlight the value-laden connotation of the word "legitimate" and the term "high" culture, noting that the "ghostly participants" in their study are defined traditionally as "non users' of legitimate culture according to arts marketing data" while these individuals are "actually quite actively engaged in arts and cultural practices" (Miles & Sullivan, 2010, p. 19).

This begs the question, exactly "what is a non-user" of culture? (Balling & Kann-Christensen, 2013, p. 74). Balling and Kann-Christensen identify "so-called non-users" of culture as very active cultural participants whose "cultural activities take place in non-institutional spaces (e.g. web sites, on the streets or other informal settings)" (2013, p. 67). Hanquinet's *Cultural Boundaries in Europe* (2014) further considers the cultures of everyday life in Europe, and the declassified cultural tastes and practices of individuals. While Gilmore's (2014) case study of Macclesfield in the North West of England also raises important questions about local knowledge and tacit, vernacular forms of cultural engagement. Gilmore's more recent (2017) research on contemporary forms of enclosure and social exclusion in public parks is in the same vein.

The Understanding Everyday Participation (UEP) research project "proposes a radical re-evaluation of the relationship between participation and cultural value" and explores "the connections between understandings of community, cultural value, the creative economy and everyday participation," (UEP, 2018). This research marks a move away from the more orthodox models which have utilised a narrow definition of cultural participation and overlook more informal activities such as community festivals and hobbies (*ibid*). UEP aims to paint a broader picture of how people make their lives through culture and in particular how communities are formed and connected through participation in a broad register of cultural activities (Delrieu & Gibson, 2017, 2018; Edwards & Gibson, 2017; Gibson & Miles, 2016; Miles & Gibson, 2017).

Increased programming outside of traditional venues has also led to a form of “participatory” co-creation of culture where attendees have become participants, co-creators and co-producers of cultural forms. Scholars have sought to explore the de-institutionalise of creative expression, exploring graffiti (Richards, 2011), comedy (Friedman, 2014) and bookclubs (Snee, 2014) with research elsewhere beginning to articulate emergent forms of less canonised culture (Friedman et al, 2015; Prieur & Savage, 2013; Roose, 2014; Miles, 2014). Prieur and Savage suggest that “the most intensely discussed cultural reference points are present-day ones, rather than historical” (2011, p. 576). Balling and Kann-Christensen (2013) frame this as the “movement from a narrow to a broad concept of culture” which has led to a growing awareness of what constitutes a “participant” (2013, p. 68). With Jenkins et al, regarding “participatory culture” as “a culture with [a] relatively low barrier to artistic expression and civic engagement [and], strong support for creating and sharing one’s creation” (2006, p. 3). This co-creation of the cultural experience as *prosumer* (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2011), or *producer* (Burns, 2008), broadens our understanding of the terms *participant* and *cultural participation*. Serving not only to dismantle and de-institutionalise traditional understandings of cultural participation but also create a growing understanding of the differing forms of interaction and modes of participation that take place outside institutional frames.

Expressed in this way, it becomes clear how the state, in its role as implicit and explicit cultural policy maker, has a central and powerful role in “influencing both the heritage and the prospects of the arts and culture in society” (Katz-Gerro, 2015, p. 1). Feder and Katz-Gerro (2015), highlight how the “patterns of government funding of arts organisations over time represent priorities driven by cultural policy” and show “how this hierarchy corresponds to the social hierarchy among ethnic and national groups and between the center and periphery” (2015, p. 76). Through distributive funding mechanisms and favouring some activities and actions over others, some genres and types of culture are preferred over others. In this shaping of the cultural field, resources are distributed and power relationships established.

In so doing, implicit policies are at work that support powerful groups in society and reinforce and reproduce the hegemonic power and control of those groups. This runs counter to the stated aspiration of many government policies and arts organisation strategies to increase social diversity and act as an equalising force that reduces inequalities, and ensures the “arts are enjoyed by the general public...support[ing] capacity building and professional development in the field of public engagement” (Arts Council, 2015a, p. 24).

It then becomes appropriate to ask what sort of policy response is required when the dominant and most resourced groups in society, are the ones who can access the social, cultural and political benefits these state funded activities are considered to bring. This places cultural policy and cultural participation at the heart of sociological stratification discourses, as culture becomes implicit in the perpetuation the power relationships in society.

### **Summary**

This chapter traces the relationship between culture, class and taste in western discourses. It notes how culture, class and taste have held a long and conflated relationship with extensive literature demonstrating a clear corollary between cultural taste and the social stratification of society. This chapter provides an overview of the key theoretical contributions in this regard and explores the enduring relationship between culture and social processes. This chapter particularly focuses on Bourdieu’s (1984, 1986) sociological consideration of cultural taste and the literature inspired by his important contribution of the concept of cultural capital. This chapter highlights that though discourses throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have continued to emphasise the correlation between social position and cultural taste, recent scholars have found the cultural stratification premise to be overtly structural. They have begun to favour an articulation of taste that cuts across all strata of society to form “taste cultures” and to “consider an actual frame that also participates in the construction of meaning” (Benezcry, 2011, p. 193). This chapter notes how a clear distinction has thus emerged in the literature between a consideration of taste as emanating from class

position and social distinction as “taste written above,” to a conceptualisation of taste and participation as an exercise of enthusiasm and intensity - as “history written by the works to which we apply them” (Hennion, 2004, p. 134). Finally, this chapter considers that as culture is a distinguishable phenomenon and defining feature of each society or community, it is worth exploring how policy formation mirrors the values and priorities of a society. Definitions of culture matter here and have become increasingly complex. In line with this, scholars have begun to raise the debate on what exactly constitutes a “user” and “non-user” of culture looks like and increasingly recognise that cultural participation takes place within and outside state-funded cultural institutions (Balling & Kann-Christensen, 2013, p. 67; Miles & Gibson, 2017).

The next chapter, *Chapter 3 Methodology*, shows how this doctoral study makes a unique contribution in this regard, mobilising Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital and considering the wide range of culture, the educated urban professionals in Dublin are engaged in. This next chapter highlights the method and approach used to capture information on how these individuals exercise and manifest their cultural participation and taste and explores the manifestation of this as embodied cultural capital.

# Chapter 3 Methodology

## Chapter synopsis

This chapter explores the method used in this research study on cultural participation and taste in the affluent area of Dublin 6. It outlines the research questions that were formulated in order to surface sociological information on the cultural taste and participation of two different age groups (18-24 years and 45-54 years) who appear the most disengaged in formal highbrow arts and culture compared to other age cohorts (Arts Audiences 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013; Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017). This chapter highlights that above that beyond the quantitative capture of the Arts Audiences (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013) and Arts Council of Ireland (2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017) reports, arts and culture in Ireland remains distinctly under-researched- particularly from a sociological perspective. This chapter traces the research journey from the beginnings of the project when a mixed methods approach was initially envisaged, to the focus on qualitative methods only. This chapter then sets out the qualitative method used and notes how thematic inductive analysis is a useful approach in qualitative studies such as this. This chapter also captures how interviewees were sourced and sets out the structure and rationale for the questions used in the interview process. Finally, this chapter covers the limitation of this method.

## Relational definitions

This research recognises that arts and culture are difficult to define and that many forms of creative expression can cross boundaries- national boundaries as well as artform boundaries and that this also mean that genres can mix. This research further recognises that culture takes place in dedicated cultural venues such as theatres, galleries, community centres and concert halls and also takes place in non-formal, informal and sometimes liminal spaces such as shopping centres, parks, back gardens, kitchens, back streets, main streets and shipyards.

The definition of arts attendance and cultural participation as used in existing

research on culture in Ireland, separates out arts from culture. This doctoral study refutes this definition, preferring to stay close to the Arts Act 2003 definition of the *arts* which is defined as:

any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes. (Irish Statute Book, 2018)

This statutory definition of the arts takes a broad view that might be more accurately termed *culture*, and associated engagement with this culture, known as cultural participation. Therefore, this research follows the definition and approach of the Arts Act 2003 in considering arts and culture as “any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form” (Irish Statute Book, 2018). This was encapsulated in the phrase *arts, culture and creative activity*.

This definition is a broad view of culture that moves beyond the Arts Council of Ireland approach noted in *Chapter 1 Ireland*, to an understanding of cultural taste and participation that builds on, expands and updates terms used in the Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland research reports. This definition has also been informed by academic literature as reviewed in *Chapter 2 Literature Review* and acknowledges that cultural forms are changing in terms of modes of access, and also in terms of content and the classification of cultural forms. It is therefore perhaps somewhat misguided to designate one label such as ‘art’ or to an area of cultural practice. This has been further reinforced by the emergence of a digital realm replete with cultural abundance, opportunity and possibility (Wright, 2011).

The phrase *arts, culture and creative activity* was used in research interviews in order to achieve ease of use and clarity of understanding for research participants. It was designed to indicate the general register of culture as a non-hierarchical range of brows that includes formal highbrow arts and culture as well as popular and folk arts, informal, local and domestic creative expressions and engagements. If

interviewees required a sharper focus and definition of arts and cultural forms, these were verbally offered and clarified in such a way as to imply no judgment or separation out of traditionally considered highbrow and lower brow cultural forms.

If we understand Bourdieu's philosophical approach to research was to think in terms of the "reality of the social world...and to think in terms of relation" then to put Bourdieu to work in Ireland today means retaining this relational perspective (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 96). This means not purely and only focusing on the cultural forms discussed by Bourdieu in his original research in 1960s France. It is to take an approach that works contextually and in terms of the reality of the contemporary social world. This means, as acknowledged above, working with a definition of culture that accounts for the connected relationship between arts and culture, as well as the confounded definitions of arts and culture. It also means working within definitions of arts and culture that account for developments in digital technology as well as global flows and also incorporates the ever-growing proliferation of declassified cultural forms present in Ireland today.

### **Existing research on artform attendance**

As noted above existing arts and culture research in Ireland provides broad patterns of cultural consumption and socio-demographic information. Each survey has been designed to be cognisant of previous surveys and work in tandem with previous reports (Arts Council of Ireland, 1983, 1994, 2006, 2015b, 2015c, 2017; Arts Audiences, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013). This allows some comparison between and across the years. The following sections consider this data and provide a quantitative backdrop against which to consider the research information arising from this qualitative study. While not all years publish full statistical information, the latest available statistics have been captured below.

The most recent Arts Council of Ireland report finds that cinema is the most popular artform in Ireland and the most visited venue with 76% of those surveyed reporting attendance at a cinema in the previous twelve months (2017, p. 12). The next most popular artform is "plays in a theatre" with nearly one third of those surveyed

reporting theatre attendance year on year (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, 2017). Conversely, ballet, contemporary dance, literature readings, jazz and world music show the smallest audiences across the years with figures of those attending ballet reported as 4%, contemporary dance 4%, literature/poetry readings 6%, jazz/ blues music 7% and world music 5%, (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 8). Country and western music (11%) reports greater numbers of attendees comparatively (*ibid*).

### ***Social class, income and employment***

Following patterns of attendance in other territories, arts attendance in Ireland is dominated by those who earn the most and those who are located in the higher social classes. In Ireland this is denoted by social class categories A, B and C1. This categorisation captures a technical social class bracket of lower and higher professional and managerial class. A significant portion of the Irish population is ABC1, and at 41% this social class comprises the largest social class in Ireland (2012, p. 11). An analysis of the TGI Arts Audience reports in the period October 2008 to April 2009, show a significant dominance of ABC1s in arts attendance: 54% attend any performance in a theatre, 50% attend plays, 53% classical music, 54% attend jazz, 59% opera, 57% art galleries and 52% ballet compared to 41% in the population (Arts Audiences, 2010a, p. 5). This has little altered in the intervening years and the dominant class remain the largest attending arts audience in Ireland (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017). It is also worth highlighting that no artform attendance, in any artform, is below the percentage of ABC1 category in the populace, with all remaining notably above. Further, those in social grade C2DE, along with the unemployed, disabled and ethnic minorities report difficulty accessing the arts and recent surveys highlight that this pattern continues (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017, p. 17).

In employment terms, arts attenders are also more likely to be in gainfully employed with "just over one-third of all arts attenders...in full-time employment (Arts Audiences, 2013, p. 23). Arts attenders are also more likely to be in the higher income groups in Irish society with 55% of arts attenders earning above €60,000 in 2012 and this figure increasing to 59% in 2014 (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p.

10). While the 2014 survey shows an increase across all income bands (due to recovery from the recession), arts attendance continues to be dominated by those who earn the most, with this figure increasing year on year as the Arts Council of Ireland statistics show (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, 2015c; 2017).

### ***Gender***

Although the Irish population is made up of a near equal balance of both genders, the arts attendance surveys report a greater number of females are arts attenders across artforms despite a relative balance of gender in the population.<sup>33</sup> This follows a similar pattern in other territories with a predominance of female arts attendees across artforms (Bennett et al, 1999; Bennett et al, 2009; Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure, 2015). Ballet shows the most stark gender difference between males and females as 78% females in attendance with only 22% males reported (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017, p. 16). Similarly, "58% of opera and classical music attendees are women," this is 13% more likely than the average population (*ibid*). In 2014, traditional Irish or Irish folk concerts and dance are reported for the first time. Interestingly, this report and subsequent reports show the exception of the lowest % of female attendance and highest male attendance at Traditional Folk Dance and Traditional Irish or Folk concerts (57% and 54% male attendance, Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 11).

### ***Age and geography***

Dublin, the capital city of Ireland located on the east coast of the country, may have the highest concentration of the population in Ireland, however the nation's city reports the lowest arts attendance figures, specifically for age brackets 15-24 years, 35-44 years and 45-54 years age groups (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017, p. 6). With the capital city reporting a greater number of arts audiences in the 25-34 years age group, than in all other regions, (compared to % of population). Generally speaking, the 15-24 years age group are "more likely to be lighter event attendees" in all regions (Arts Audiences, 2015, p. 5; Arts Council of Ireland, 2017). Yet as later

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<sup>33</sup> In the Irish population, approximately 51% female and 49% male are consistently captured in the census statistics (Central Statistics Office [CSO], 2018c).

passages show this is not the case for the cultural participation data.

### **Education**

It is well known that those with higher educational outcomes are more likely to be regular and frequent attendees at the arts (Bennett et al, 2009; DiMaggio, 1982; Sullivan, 2002). Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland reports show the same to be true of Ireland. They demonstrate that in Ireland, "it has become an established empirical fact that people of higher educational attainment, income and social class are more likely to attend live arts performances" (Lunn & Kelly, 2009, p. 1). Further, "this empirical regularity has been recorded for almost all mainstream art forms, including musical, visual and language arts" (*ibid*). The Arts Audiences (2011) report highlights that university graduates are 41% more likely to be arts attenders than the general population. These details are further bolstered by the 28% of all regular arts attenders who also have a university degree up to PhD Level population (Arts Audiences, 2011, p. 45). It is also worth noting that 59% of arts attenders are university graduates who report their summary income as at €45,000 p.a. or more (Arts Audiences, 2011, p. 46).<sup>34</sup> This means that 59% of arts attenders are located in the top third of those earning over the industrial wage in Ireland.

### **Cultural participation**

As noted above cultural participation has been separated out from arts attendance in the Arts Council of Ireland and Arts Audiences research in Ireland. While conceptually this is an unnecessary and unhelpful dichotomy, the statistics captured as a result of this separation inform us of the types of activity Irish individuals engage in that are more informal, local and domestic in nature. For example, visual arts is the most popular cultural participation activity with "Drawing/ Painting/ Sculpting" reported as the most participated in activity in the last 12 months (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015c, p. 8). This contrasts with *The Public and the Arts* survey, which ranked "playing an instrument for...pleasure," as the highest such activity and perhaps this means there has been some movement of interest in artforms in the

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<sup>34</sup> The average industrial wage in Ireland is approximately €35,000 p.a. (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015).

intervening years (Arts Council of Ireland, 2006, p. 78).

The cultural participation data also highlights that those interested in the informal arts are also more likely to be interested in, and attend, formal arts events. The Arts Council of Ireland survey of 2014 reports as "regular participants in creative activities [they] are 150% more likely to be heavy attendees of arts events" (2015b, p. 13). For example, "72% of participants in amateur drama also attend drama or plays. By comparison, 40% of participants in dance activities attended dance events" (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 13). This is perhaps unsurprising that there is a noticeable correlation between certain art forms and informal cultural participation. However, the strong correlation between family members and friends attending formal arts events and cultural participation is shown to have a distinct impact on an individual's attendance. For example, individuals for whom "all/most" family members attend similar events will be 201% more likely to be in the heaviest attendance category (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 24). For those amongst whom "all/most" friends attend formal arts events, they will be 173% more likely to be in the heaviest formal arts attendance category (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 24). These statistics are significant and show the substantial influence family members and friends can have on an individual's cultural participation.

This correlation is particularly high for the age bracket 15-24 years. Amongst this cohort are those who are "regular participants in creative activities [and] are 150% more likely to be heavy attendees of arts events" (Arts Council of Ireland, 2015b, p. 13). This is particularly interesting, as is noted above, this age group are notably light art event attenders and yet those who are creatively engaged in informal cultural participation are shown to be highly engaged as art event attendees – especially when attending with family and friends. These statistics highlight that arts attendance and cultural participation are highly social activities and that individuals are likely to be influenced in cultural participation by those in their social network or through familial or parental cultural transmission.

Taken together these statistics provide a clear indication of those who engage with

formal arts and informal culture (to use the Arts Council dichotomy). They indicate that the highest numbers of attendees at formal arts events in Ireland are in social class ABC1, are most likely to be in full-time employment and also located in the professional and higher managerial classes. These individuals are amongst the most educated in Irish society and also located in higher income groups. Therefore, arts attendance is dominated by the dominant class in Irish society and also by those who earn the most.

While these statistics are interesting as they confirm that Ireland follows broadly the same class-structured arts attendance as other nations, they highlight little more than the linear logic of quantitative methods and provide limited understanding of the role culture holds in Irish society. Though not intentionally designed to provide any sociological insights, they're usefulness in this regard is however, limited. What they do provide though is an interesting contextual backdrop as they situate this research study against the broad patterns of arts attendance and cultural participation in Ireland in terms of socio-demographic information.

From the arts audience surveys it also becomes clear that among certain age groups, and social classes in the nation's capital, cultural participation isn't as strong as it is in other age groups. The arts audience surveys also demonstrate that those who earn the most and are the most highly educated are the strongest arts attenders of the formal arts. Therefore, bringing these two aspects together and exploring the arts, cultural and creative activity of Dublin's educated and privileged middle classes in the 18-24 years and 45-54 years age cohorts becomes an interesting research proposition. The usefulness of Bourdieu's cultural capital premise in this regard has been noted previously (in Chapter 2 specifically) as he brings together how an individual's taste and cultural preferences are shaped by their educational qualifications, family background, and location in the social hierarchy in his concept of cultural capital.

This is interesting in an Irish context because of the disavowal of class as a meaningful concept for those in Irish society (Tovey & Share, 2003). By exploring, qualitatively, how Bourdieu's cultural capital is exercised in the social field in Ireland, this research moves beyond the quantitative socio-demographic information provided by the arts audience surveys, and demonstrates how individualised experiences and atomised subjective meanings when taken together as self-interested activities, do add up to a form of collective class action (Bottero, 2004). In this way, this research highlights that those who share the same conditions of experience, similar cultural tastes and behaviours actively engage in the social reproduction of privilege and positioning in the social field (Bottero, 2004; Savage et al, 2013).

### **Operationalising cultural capital in Ireland**

In practice, Bourdieu's mapping of the social space focuses largely on two forms of capital – economic and cultural. It is relatively easy to identify economic capital and in a Bourdieusian analysis, this can be represented through financial standing, home ownership and income. Savage, Gayo-cal and Wright highlight the relatively straightforward and stable entity that measures for income provide with “extensive literature on [the] different ways by which occupations can be grouped into classes or status rankings” (2005, p. 7). Crossley suggests that if we add up our income, our financial assets, (car, house, savings), we can “derive a figure of what we are ‘worth’” (2014, p. 87). For the purposes of this research study, economic capital is determined by employment status (employed, not employed, part-time, full-time), occupational income and total household income. Therefore, in the selection of research interviewees for this doctoral study, this was identified as the economic capital of the professional middle classes meaning that the individual interviewed works /has worked in a professional full-time employ; earns/ has earned over the industrial wage of approximately €35,000 per annum, and that total household income is at this level or above (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015). As such, individuals who fit these criteria would be located in the AB or C1 social class groups in Ireland. As these social classes are the dominant class in Ireland they correspond most directly to Bourdieu's bourgeoisie elite.

While most people have only one occupation, they can have however, a variety of cultural interests. These interests can take the profile of formal engagement at state funded and legitimised cultural venues such as theatres or concert halls and they can also take the profile of informal creative activities which take place at home, and outside the home, such as in libraries, community halls, cafes and parks. This can mean that determining a valid understanding that adequately captures cultural capital is potentially problematic. However, by deriving a similar approach to cultural capital as that of economic capital, we can determine the volume and composition of an individual's accrued stocks of institutionalised, objectified and embodied cultural capital. This is traditionally done in a Bourdieusian analysis by "adding up' qualifications, culturally valuable goods, etc." such as paintings and other culturally valuable interests such as arts attendance and participation in artistic, cultural and creative activities (Crossley, 2014, p. 87). Institutional forms of cultural capital are relatively easy to identify "through the academic qualifications which confer institutional recognition" (Savage, Gayo-cal & Warde, 2005, p. 4). For this research study, this was achieved through a selection of interviewees who are engaged in, or have attained third level education qualifications.

Objective cultural capital manifests in "specific cultural artefacts, genres, and works which are consecrated and denigrated as part of cultural capital" (Savage, Gayo-cal & Warde, 2005, p. 4). Bennett et al (2009) take the approach of asking questions and probing into original or reproducible art ownership and the understanding as well as level of engagement of the research participant in this regard. While Silva (2006) highlights the methodological import of the different interpretations of researchers and survey respondents of aura and meaning of original artworks to different social groups. In the UK's CCSE project, age was also an important factor, "with those between 45 and 74 years being the majority of owners of paintings" (Silva, 2006, p. 144). Higher status occupational groups as well as those with higher level of educations are also identified as having high levels of ownership of original paintings in this regard. For this research study, individuals located in desirable neighbourhoods in Dublin's south city where a predominance of Dublin's urban

educated live and which are comprised of higher status occupational groups as well as those with higher levels of education.

Embodied cultural capital is not tangible in the way objectified or institutionalised cultural capital is, as it cannot be held in the form of a cultural good or educational qualifications. It is comprised of the long lasting dispositions of the mind and body (Bourdieu, 1984) and as such, can be considered detectable through a discerning disposition, disinterested inclination. As Khan usefully states it is not “money in your wallet...[it is] a practice, not a possession” (2012, p. 204). The benefit of using the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews is that this can be drawn out through the interview process. This would seem to be a sensible proposition as more material can be unearthed through research interviews constructed in domestic settings. Questions regarding original art ownership and the value placed on other cultural artefacts can be explored – especially and ideally, if participants are interviewed in their home context. Difficult to capture using quantitative means, qualitative approaches such as this facilitate observing cultural taste in interviewee’s homes along with the naturally occurring data such as an individual’s articulation of values, attitudes and choices behind embodied cultural capital and cultural tastes. In so doing, this research approach usefully gets behind the numbers presented in the Arts Council of Ireland and Arts Audiences reports and elucidates and adds to, existing information on arts attendance and cultural participation.

### **Putting Bourdieu to work in Ireland: a report of methods**

Choosing the cohorts to interview arose from the social class and age brackets in the existing arts attendance surveys and specifically the recent Arts Council of Ireland (2006, 2015b, 2015c) surveys. These are: 15-24 years; 25-34 years; 35-44 years; 45-54 years; 55-64 years; 65+ years old. As mentioned above, those in the 35-44 years and the 45-54 years age groups as well as those under 24 years, demonstrate interesting participation profiles as they report the lowest arts attendance figures in Ireland’s capital, Dublin city (Arts Council of Ireland, 2017, p. 6). The arts attendance research captures these groups as less actively engaged than other cohorts and this is intriguing. To focus on these groups facilitates a data

capture across two age groups that are active inside and outside the home, socially mobile and professionally or educationally engaged. It also facilitates a comparison in cultural participation and taste between those at two different life stages. The research design involved selecting the middle life stage brackets of 35-44 years and 45-54 years as age parameters but established an over 18 years threshold in order that no minors were involved in this research study as interviewees. Interviewees had initially been envisaged as drawing from two age groups, comprised of 35-44years and 45-54years. However, individuals from the 35-44years age group proved difficult to source and only one individual from this age group was interviewed. This study, therefore, concentrates on responses from the two age cohorts: 18-24 years and 45-54 years.

The table below shows the composition of the age cohorts broken down by age and also by gender. The table clearly shows the number of older women (*n*15) and older men (*n*5) interviewed (total *n*20). In the younger cohort (total *n*27), more women (*n*18) were also interviewed than men (*n*9). Data from both genders was reviewed for patterns and no gender significant patterns were present. Data from both age cohorts was reviewed and patterns identified and captured in the subsequent analysis chapters.

Sample for whole study is detailed above with numbers (in brackets) of individuals mentioned in the analysis:

*Table 1: Interviewees by age and gender*

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	women	men	total
older (45-54yrs)	15 (9)	5 (5)	20 (14)
younger (18-24yrs)	18 (8)	9 (5)	27 (13)
total	33(17)	14(10)	47 (27)

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As noted in the table, of the forty-seven individuals interviewed from both age cohorts, twenty-seven were mentioned in the analysis chapters that follow (*Chapters 4, 5 and 6*). These twenty-seven interviewees were included in the

analysis because of the prescient and insightful nature of their responses which capture better, or more usefully, the responses of all forty-seven interviewed.

### ***Class***

As noted in *Chapter 1 Ireland*, Irish society views itself as more or less a slight deviation from the norm of middle class. The concept of class exists more as a technical consideration and bracket on the census form. Social class in Ireland is presented in the following categories: Social Class A captures upper middle class professions in higher managerial, administrative or professional occupations such as doctors, solicitors, accountants with their own practice, and company directors. Social Class B is the middle classes. This includes higher managerial, administrative or professional at the next level of occupations such as such as engineers, school principals, journalists. Social Class C1 is lower middle class. This category includes lower professional occupations comprised of supervisory, clerical, junior managerial and administration such as nuns, priests, musicians, computer technicians, bank clerks, junior civil servants. Social Class C2 is the skilled working class. This includes occupations such as bus drivers, carpenters, firemen, police, taxi and bus drivers. Social Class DE is semi-skilled and unskilled workers including labourers, van drivers, postmen, hospital attendants etc. Social Class F is Farmers (CSO, 2016). Due to wide ranging consensus, the professional and managerial classes in Ireland are consistently grouped together and denoted as ABC1 with the lower skilled and manual groups denoted as C2DE. Therefore, collectively social class ABC1 is an articulation of the upper middle class and middle class in Irish society.

The table below highlights the breakdown of social classes across the two age cohorts. It incorporates the social class of interviewees, as well as interviewees' parents (based on the information provided in the interviews):

Table 2: Interviewees by social class

	ABC1	C2DE	F	total
older (45-54yrs) current social class	20	0	0	(20)
older (45-54yrs) parents' social class	14	4	2	(20)
younger (18-24yrs) current social class	27	0	0	(27)
younger (18-24yrs) parents' social class	25	2	0	(27)
total				(47)

If we review the social class for the older cohort of interviewees in the first instance, and compare these to their parents, we can note some upward social mobility in this cohort. A fifth of the older cohort were located in social class C2DE and they have moved upward in the social schema. Each of these individuals is now a professional engaged in the legal, creative or health sectors, they have a third level qualification and earn above the industrial wage. As such, they are now located in the ABC1 class. Two further individuals were located in the social class of F as their parents were farmers. These individuals are now both legal professionals with high net worth incomes and are amongst those with third level qualifications. This locates these individuals in the ABC1 social class category.

It should be noted that in the majority of instances, interviewees reported their father's occupation. This is unsurprising given that, as outlined in *Chapter 1 Ireland*, interviewees' mothers would have been largely engaged in domestic work at home. There are three cases that do not follow this pattern- two as a result of a father's death and the third, as a result of long term unemployment. In each case, the mother assumed the role of principal earner. In two cases, the mother engaged in paid work outside the home and in the third, the mother managed the farmer.

Reviewing the social class profile of the younger cohort and their parents, a different picture. All of the younger cohort are in the ABC1 social class with a substantial majority ( $n=25$  of  $n=27$ ) of their parents originating in the same ABC1 social class. Two individuals, one female, one male, note that one of their parents (again one female, one male) are from a lower social class. It is perhaps unremarkable that the number has decreased in relation to lower social class backgrounds given the

increased numbers of ABC1s in Irish society. However, the sample is small and the decrease may not be statistically significant. It is also worth highlighting that given the age profile of the younger cohort who, living at home, and dependent on their parents have assumed their parents' social class.

#### ***45-54 year olds***

The census of 2016 confirms 43% of the adult population (roughly 3.75 million people) as belonging to the ABC1 Class in Ireland (CSO, 2018b). This is the largest social class group and comprises of a highly educated professional class "that is deeply integrated into local and global technology and business networks and negotiates individual career paths based on mobility through these networks" (Ó Riain, 2000, p. 183). As this research study focuses on exploring Bourdieu's distinction premise in Irish society, it was decided that sourcing individuals from the ABC1 class was the closest correlation with the dominant class in Ireland. Therefore, individuals in the older 45-54 years cohort who are engaged in professional positions, living in a high net worth locale and likely to earn over the national industrial wage were sourced through personal and snowballed contacts.

In the older 45-54 years cohort, thirty-five individuals were approached and twenty interviews secured. An initial ten interviewees were sourced through personal contacts in the first instance and a further ten interviewees sourced through snowballing and comprised of friends, family and professional contacts of the initial personal contacts cohort. All interviewees of the 45-54 years cohort had been to third level education, engaged in (or have recently been engaged in) full-time or part-time employment, and work now in the professional sector in occupations such as law, media, public relations or education. Ten of the twenty grew up in Dublin south city with the remaining interviewees growing up in other regional centres such as Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, Shannon, Co. Clare, Limerick city and Cork city. Two interviewees are from rural farming backgrounds in the west and midlands of Ireland. More than half the participants come from families that had parents engaged in professional backgrounds of medicine, engineering, company directorships, librarianship, banking or teaching professions. Interviewees now live

in the high net worth locales along the N11 transport corridor in Dublin South City. This area is comprised of settled, desirable, residential areas of mainly late nineteenth, early twentieth century homes, with average market values among the most expensive in the country (myhome.ie). These homes are, in the majority, populated by Ireland's largest social class group- the professional, educated middle classes.

Sixteen of the twenty interviewees earn above the national industrial annual wage of €35,000 with fifteen of these individuals in the plus €75,000 income category, locating them in the top 10% of income earners in Ireland (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015). The four individuals (all female) not in full-time employment have recently returned to third level education to retrain and / or up skill. Prior to this, they were engaged in the fields of medicine, law and public relations. The total household income, including spousal income, for all interviewees is in excess of €75,000. All find themselves in relatively stable circumstance – all own their own homes, eighteen are married, one is single and one is separated. Eight participants of the twenty total represent four married couples, and both spouses were interviewed separately for this study. All have children less than 18 years with the exception of one interviewee who has no children. All interviewees have completed undergraduate degrees in subjects/disciplines related to their area of work. Fourteen are educated to Masters and one to PhD level, with another interviewee currently engaged in PhD studies.

It is worth highlighting that of the twenty individuals interviewed in the older cohort, one individual's parent holds a PhD, two hold a Masters qualification, four an undergraduate bachelor degree and ten individuals' parents were educated to secondary school level with one to primary school level only. This is in comparison to the younger cohort whose parents have a more highly educated profile. The following table highlights this difference:

Table 3: Interviewees by educational level

	PhD	Masters	Bachelors	Secondary	Primary	total
Parents older (45-54yrs)	1	2	4	10	1	(20)
Parents younger (18-24yrs)	2	16	7	1	0	(27)
total	3	17	11	11	1	(47)

Notwithstanding that there are more individuals in the younger cohort, the increase in parents' educational level in the table above is notable. As noted in *Chapter 1 Ireland*, Irish society has had a dramatic increase in educational provision and also a significant rise in educational level. This is reflected in the significant difference in educational level between the two age cohorts of this study.

Finally, it is important to note that one individual (female) aged 39years (Cate, Appendix A) also agreed to interview. Her profile (urban privileged and educated class) fits the profile of others interviewed and as a result, her responses are also included in the study. Therefore, while the data analysis concentrates largely on the 45-54 years group, one individual included in this age cohort is 39years at time of interview.

### **18-24 year olds**

As noted above, a key aspect of Bourdieu's cultural capital premise is education. Education in Ireland is highly considered and rates of entry into third-level education is generally high in the Republic of Ireland, with approximately 43,000 of the Irish population enrolling as new entrants in third-level provision for the academic year 2016-17 (McGuinness, Bergin, Kelly, McCoy, Smyth & Timoney, 2012, p. 26). This is set to rise with a projected 31% increase in student numbers from 170,000 today to 211,000 in 2028 (HEA Forward-Look Forum, 2017). Though seven universities exist in Ireland and there is other third-level provision in the form of Institutes of Technology as well as private colleges, interviewees were selected from the top two universities in Dublin. Trinity College Dublin (TCD), is a world-recognised, prestigious institution, on site since 1592 and now ranked the top Irish university and 98th in

the world rankings (QS World University Ranking, 2016-17).<sup>35</sup> Historically considered the Protestant university, TCD now has a strong internationalisation agenda with students of diverse denominations attending from a variety of countries. Populated by over 18,000 students, over 4,000 of these are from outside Ireland (Higher Education Authority [HEA], 2017). University College, Dublin (UCD), is its main rival. Established in 1854, UCD is Ireland's largest university and is populated by over 32,000 students (University College Dublin [UCD], 2017). Historically considered the Catholic university and for those 'up from the country,' UCD has a thriving student population and has risen to 176 in world rankings (QS World University Ranking, 2016-17).<sup>36</sup>

All interviewees in the 18-24years cohort are students engaged in full-time undergraduate education and attend either, University College, Dublin (UCD) or Trinity College Dublin (TCD). Research participants are taking honours degree programmes in Arts and Humanities or STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) subjects and degree choices range from History of Art, through Geography, History, French, German, English Literature, Politics and Jewish and Islamic Studies to Theoretical Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Medicine, Architecture and Health Sciences.<sup>37</sup> A balance between Arts and Humanities and STEM students was sought but not secured. Though slightly more Trinity undergraduates were interviewed (fifteen compared to twelve UCD students), there are equivalent numbers of STEM students in both institutions and slightly fewer Arts and Humanities students interviewed from UCD. This means that there is a slight skew towards STEM interviewees (eighteen out of twenty-seven) overall. The table below highlights the numbers of Arts and Humanities (AH) students compared to the numbers of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) students:

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<sup>35</sup> TCD is ranked 138 in Times Higher Education World University Ranking (2016).

<sup>36</sup> UCD currently has over 6,000 enrolled international students (UCD, 2017).

<sup>37</sup> Entrance points to these university courses are equivalent to approximately 3 x As at A levels with entry above 520 points out of a total of 600 points in the Leaving Certificate exams which are the terminal exams at second level in the Irish education system.

*Table 4: Interviewees by educational institution and discipline*

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	STEM	AH	total
younger (18-24yrs) TCD	7	8	15
younger (18-24yrs) UCD	8	4	12
total			(27)

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Finally, a majority of interviewees (twelve) are in their first year of study, with the rest spread proportionately across remaining years of study. In terms of future educational trajectory, approximately two thirds of interviewees indicate an intention to go on to Masters or PhD studies.<sup>38</sup>

The younger cohort were initially a little trickier to source and as with the older cohort, interviewees in this age group were secured through personal contacts and snowballing. Individuals were invited to interview based on the professional employment status of a parent, living in a high net worth locale and registration in a high point undergraduate degree programme in one of Dublin’s top two universities. To ensure these criteria were successfully met, each interviewee was asked to self-identify in a particular social class group (unprompted) at the beginning of the interview. All interviewees self-identified as middle, or upper-middle class, though not all interviewees were from family homes of the same class origin. Thirty-two individuals were approached in the first instance, with twenty-seven interviews secured. A gender balance in both cohorts was initially secured and then due to conflicting schedules, illness or delay, a number of potential interviewees pulled out in both age groups, unfortunately these were largely male interviewees, leaving the sample dominated by female participants.

Most of the younger interviewees were from south city Dublin with one or two from neighbouring counties such as Wicklow and Meath. Again, a very stable circumstance presents, with all interviewees still living in the house they were born

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<sup>38</sup> The majority of interviewees aspire to achieve MA, MMed, and/or PhD qualifications within next five years.

into, with parents married, living together and employed in (mostly) full-time professional employment. Most interviewees live at home, with the exception of one who lives with his brother in rented accommodation in Dublin City, and another who lives with his paternal grandmother in north county Dublin during the week. This interviewee returns home every weekend to Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, a largely agricultural-focused market town in the midlands of Ireland where his father has a dental practice and his mother is the practice nurse. As in this instance, at least one parent of each interviewee is a professional, educated to third level, and the other parent has either recently returned to full-time study or is engaged in service level professional activity (for example, one is a Beds Manager in convalescent home, another, the Office Manager in the family business). All interviewees self-identified as middle class and at least six, identified as upper middle class.

About half the cohort were educated in non-fee paying second-level schools and a small proportion educated through Irish language at Ireland's highest ranked school (also non-fee paying) Gaelscoil Colaiste Iosagáin. None attended fee-paying primary schools. Most enjoyed arts and cultural activities within school, each recounting theatre trips, National Museum or National Gallery, taking part in a school play or singing in the choir and at least two have won awards for their activity in all Ireland drama, group *ceol* (in English: traditional Irish music), piano and the sport of fencing. Three interviewees were, and still are, highly engaged in Irish traditional music. All families encouraged, and paid for, structured extra-curricular activities when the interviewee was growing up. With each interviewee engaged in these activities for most of their childhood. All have given these activities up now and cite the reason as *academics* and *lack of time* due to study and part time jobs. Each person is involved in at least one club or society at college (such as the Knitting Society, Film Club, Visual Arts Society, Geography Society, Conradh na Gaelige / Irish society) but again, lack of time and unsuitable hours are cited as the main reasons for lack of extra-curricular activities now. Nearly all of the cohort have had part-time jobs at one stage or another with only about half working one or two days a week currently.

## **Interview sourcing**

Research participants were invited to participate in a research interview initially via email and once their interest had been established, a date and time for the interview to take place was set. On confirmation of interest and availability and at least one week in advance of the interview being held, interviewees were emailed one page of explanatory information along with the research questions (please see Appendix C and D). This was accompanied by confirmation of date, time and location of interview. The older cohort preferred interviews to take place in their own homes. This was a useful way to provide a relaxed context for the interviewee and also one that could provide references and examples of taste in the interviewee's own home. For the younger cohort, interviews were conducted largely on campus in the arts block in Trinity or in UCD, and they were found to be equally at ease here.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured fashion with questions designed to tease out, develop and build on interviewee responses. The intention was to approach interviewees in a conversational style and to let a rapport develop between the researcher and the interviewee (Bennett et al 2009; Oakley, 1981). On arrival, an overview was provided (verbally) of how the interview was organised and interviewees informed that they could withdraw from the discussion at any point or have their interview withdrawn from the record if they wished. Interviewees were also informed that if they would like to discuss further any elements of the interview or research process, or if they required clarification on anything, to contact the researcher at a specified email address and phone number after the interview. Each interview lasted a minimum of one hour and a maximum of two hours and each was recorded, transcribed with all identifiable information removed. Interview data, transcriptions, and audio recordings are saved in a Dropbox to which only the researcher has access.

The semi-structured interview was organised into three sections and a sample is included in the Appendix C (which contains an Information Page and Interview Questions for the 45-54 years cohort) and Appendix D (which contains an Information Page and Interview Questions for the 18-24 years cohort). There are

slight variations between the interview questions for the two cohorts as for example, the question on employment is omitted for the younger cohort and the question regarding undergraduate degree choice is phrased in the present tense for this cohort also. The first section of the interview was constructed in such a way as to establish socio-demographic information on age, gender, education level, social class, occupation and geographical location of research participants. Initial questions also focused on the educational and cultural background of participants and included questions on family background and parents' cultural activities and education. Research participants were also asked to self-identify in a particular social class, say why they identified with this social class and to consider whether class mattered in Ireland, and if class mattered in relation to cultural participation. Interviewees were also asked questions regarding their subject choices in the Leaving Cert (terminal examination at second level / A Level equivalent) along with their choice and location of their third level studies as well as any intention of future education.

Two further sections captured information on the social and cultural tastes and behaviours of interviewees. The second section of questions focused on whether the interviewee engaged, formally or informally, in any artistic, cultural or creative activity currently and if so, what this is. The research participant was encouraged to name some examples and to articulate how often they engaged in these activities. The interview also explored if they engaged in any sports activities, and if they felt there was anything distinctly Irish about their activities. Enquiry was also made about their usage of, and engagement with, social media. Research participants were asked if there were any arts, cultural or creative activity that they would like to do and don't do, if they could say why, and if their cultural participation was the same as, or different to, their parents.

The third section of the interview focused on research participants' cultural tastes and they were asked to name something (music, clothes, food etc.) that demonstrated their cultural tastes. The older cohort were much more confident in their responses to this section and gave much more certain and developed

responses. With the younger cohort appearing a little more uncertain and less clear and assertive about their cultural tastes. This can be perhaps explained by their life stage as they are at the point of developing and constructing these tastes for their future selves. Finally, research participants were asked if there was anything distinctly Irish about their cultural taste and if there are there any activities they do (formally or informally) that express their cultural taste.

Interestingly, quite a number of interviewees in both old and young cohorts initially asserted that it would be better to interview someone else who was much more culturally engaged. As interviews progressed, it become apparent that each individual displayed a distinct cultural profile of participation (and taste) and was indeed, highly engaged in formal and informal cultural activities. Many interviewees also remarked that they really enjoyed the interview and that the space and time created by participation in the interview had led to a reflexivity and moment to think through, and about, their cultural participation and taste.

### **Taking a qualitative approach: a study of methodology**

The use of qualitative methods, such as the use of semi-structured interviews in this research study, was found to be a particularly useful vehicle in revealing the complexities and social realities of individual engagement with cultural forms in Ireland today. Overarchingly, qualitative research is a useful method for capturing individuals' attitudes, values and experiences and one of the benefits of the semi-structured interview method used, was to naturally allow a conversation to emerge – one that was not forced or constrained and one that allowed the possibilities of naturally occurring data to arise. This section highlights the effectiveness of using qualitative methods generally and also specifically in relation to research on cultural participation.

Qualitative approaches consist of numerous methods from ethnography, to the longer-term ethnomethodology, from participant observation to the more immediate conversational analysis as well as a structured and semi-structured interview method. Interview data can be gathered from individuals in a one-on-one

scenario such as the interviews conducted by this researcher or from groups gathered as focus groups. Focus groups are sometimes felt to have an advantage through the speed offered by gathering a small number of people together to ask questions and observe their interactions.

Sometimes qualitative methods are used in combination with quantitative methods and in the initial stages of this research it had been my intention to embark on a mixed methods study.

### **The research journey**

This research had initially hoped to follow the approaches taken by the CCSE project and engage in a mixed methods study on cultural participation in Ireland. This researcher negotiated with the Arts Council of Ireland for use of the last fully commissioned Arts Council of Ireland data which was the 2006 *Public and the Arts* survey.<sup>39</sup> This data was owned wholly by the Arts Council of Ireland and was put at the disposal of this researcher in order that this data could be explored for further insights using alternative quantitative as well as qualitative techniques.

The data had originally been examined using classical statistical techniques such as regression and cluster analysis and the resulting report of the *Public and the Arts* (2006), providing the standard form of statistical reporting and outcome of this methodological approach. This takes the form of descriptive and inferential statistics and reporting that captures data which infers from the *general to the specific*. It highlights the *who*, and the *how often* of arts attendance and cultural participation including the age, social class, gender and marital status as well as educational level of those engaging with arts and culture in Ireland. These standard socio-demographic and socio-economic statistics tell us what is numerically and statistically significant in the assumptions of a “general linear reality” in any given data set (Savage et al, 2005, p. 8). They assume a relationship between the

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<sup>39</sup> Subsequent research was conducted by Kantar Media Target Group Index consumer survey in the period from 2008 to 2013 (Arts Council 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013). From the period 2014 to 2017, the Arts Council of Ireland joined forces with Kantar Media and inserted a number of questions into the Irish survey. The resulting outcome is *The Arts in Irish Life* (2015b, 2015c, 2017).

variables, and assume a future relationship between the same variables based on probability and inference. They are a snapshot of socio-demographic and socio-economic data as it relates to arts attendance and to cultural participation and in this way provide useful information on these aspects of Irish society. However, they tell us little about the *Public and the Arts* or *Arts in Irish Life* as two of the titles claim.

As a result of their positivist nature, they give the false appearance of scientific fact, and are limited in their use as an explanatory mechanism with which to understand a nation's engagement with arts and culture. Not least because of the dichotomy they place on formal and informal arts attendance and cultural participation.

They do not adequately reflect relationships or nuances in society and while it is useful to know which social class attends specific artforms and to what level, as noted by Halle (1993), no one ever engaged in arts and culture to fill the empty places of the class schema.

Using traditional classical statistical tools, they involve drastic assumptions concerning normality, distribution, and independence in the data – assumptions which most categorical data almost never satisfy (van Meter, Schiltz, Cibois & Mounier, 1994, p. 132). Classical statistical tools continue to limit us in the approaches we take to unearthing empirical information, by presenting us a linear view of reality that can often be far from our lived experience.

By building on the quantitative method used by the Arts Council of Ireland in the 2006, my intention was to take a mixed methods approach and explore the 1296 survey responses through SPAD in order to conduct a MCA and to support this with approximately 25 interviews. The Public and the Arts data set while not initially designed as a sociological enquiry on cultural capital in Ireland, held the potential of being re-examined and explored in order to better articulate, not only how culture is implicated in social stratification processes but, when supported with a mixed methods research enquiry, could “move from observations of class

structured oppositions to more specific claims about how cultural capital works across varied kinds of social relation” (Priour & Savage, 2011, p. 567).

The 1296 survey responses were deemed to be a representative sample in Ireland and were of a sufficiently comparable size to the UK CCSE project and scope. The CCSE project had invested in a team of researchers and a number of years to this project. However, I was cognisant of the limitations of the sole nature of my research study and so scaled the interview number and task down accordingly. This resulted in deciding to use the Arts Council quantitative data subjected to MCA/SPAD and settling on approximately 25 interviews.

With large scale questionnaire responses, which are by and large categorical, and ‘messy’ with information from observed reality, MCA is a useful statistical technique to engage in. It is a quantitative method which is distinct from other classical statistical inference tools which work with largely numerical indicators, where priority is given to descriptive analysis and summarises data /knowledge as variables and the outcome or output is by and large ‘*a sociology of variables*’. Inductive methods such as MCA, work up from the data and do not presuppose relationships within the data in the first instance as more classical statistical methods do. What emerges from the data is discovered inductively, finding relationships in the data by triangulating what is there.

MCA is a geometric frame model (rather than a mathematical frame model) and builds, geometrically, a field within which the data is located. Relationships between variables are shown as points within a low dimensional geometric plane and this is a key difference between MCA and other forms of frame models. MCA summarises data as (visual) knowledge in geometric terms and is less conventional than classical methods. As a result of this, MCA is particularly useful in the study of cultural participation because it points to underlying patterns in the data that aren’t apparent using other statistical methods.

MCA works with categorical variables, and constructs and reflects the social space.

Points are plotted against each other and precisely because of this they reflect underlying structures that are present but not previously visible in the data. Each variable is plotted against another and “salient associations” (Murtagh, 2005, p. 11) or what Bourdieu would term, elective affinities, emerge. Put simply, those with a relational proximity or frequent correspondence are said to have a close profile are nearby to each other in the geometric plane and those with remote or distant profiles are far away. This inductive approach therefore, works on the principle of allowing the data to point the way, highlighting relationships and structures apparent in, and emerging from, the data.

Key to this is the philosophical premise that researchers who use inductive approaches, such as MCA, are free and independent from *a priori* ideas in the first instance. They do not deal necessarily with “data whose analysis gives us an approximate image but [with] the factors which reflect [more closely] the essence of reality” (van Meter, Schiltz, Cibois & Mounier, 1994, p. 129).

Benzécri (1973), one of the first protagonists of MCA, or *les analyses des données*, was one of the first researchers to state that the human sciences had been threatened by an idealism which led researchers to “*substitute their own a priori assumptions for observations of reality*” (van Meter et al 1994, p. 128). A new school of data analysis emerged around Benzécri’s philosophy and became substantially taken up by French sociology in the 60s and 70s. One of the most widely recognised uses of this technique is Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (1984). In this text, Bourdieu’s captures his representation of cultural capital in the social field in France in the 1960s.

Bourdieu demonstrated a specific association between certain types of taste (lifestyle) and certain social situations with varying levels of economic and cultural capital corresponding to different locations on a two dimensional plane. Bourdieu showed how the social field was organised in relation to the underlying patterns of capital in society. He constructed the social field in terms of the three forms of

capital – economic, social and cultural – as the basic dimensions of the field of lifestyles and the choice of data to be collected.

Variables are rendered on this low dimensional plane which mirrors the social field and the relationship between the underlying variables is apparent because of where the points are located (in relation to each other) on the plane as depicted on the principal axes. The full clouds of variables are referred to by their principal axes, 1, 2, 3 etc and while many axes are rendered in the MCA, only the first few (most likely the first three or four axes) will be the most significant statistically. This may result in the first two or three axes as sufficient for interpretation. However, other axes are also ranked in decreasing statistical order of importance.

Once the data is plotted, we can begin to analyse the data and consider the structuring factors that have influenced or predisposed the data to emerge in such a pattern. These structuring factors might be age, gender or education. This leads us to consider how the individual is positioned in the social space and how this position is influenced by these structuring factors. This is one of the strengths of MCA: the non-linearity of the way the information is uncovered i.e. it's less about how many people of a social class go to theatre or circus but more about how the people who goes to theatre or circus have a relationship with other forms of cultural participation – what else do they like or not like and this can be extended to other activities such as food or television watching or sports pursuits.

In this way, plotting individuals' cultural participation inductively highlights structuring factors rather than the structuring factors leading deductively or casually to statistical inference. MCA therefore, articulates the statistical significance of underlying structures and relationships in the data set via the Euclidean cloud (Savage et al 2005, p. 8). The distance between individual points reflects the similarities and dissimilarities between response patterns of individuals' (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010, p. 6). Using the geometric frame model of MCA is therefore, to plot a family of statistical observations in order to present a foundational big picture analysis of cultural participation and taste in Ireland. For

this, SPAD software was to be used to conduct the MCA. SPAD is a mature data mining suite that provides powerful exploratory analyses and the intention was to use SPAD on the *Public and the Arts* 2006 data and then support this with semi-structured interviews which would bolster and support the MCA.

On receipt of the data, I began to consider the options available to me in terms of locating the categorical variables required to conduct a MCA of cultural participation in the social field in Ireland. It quickly became apparent that the data did not meet the two basic principles required for MCA- namely exhaustiveness of the social field and also homogeneity. For the first principle, the *principle of homogeneity* to be met “all variables need to be of the same nature” (van Meter et al, 1994, p. 14). In the raw data of *The Public and the Arts* (2006), the variables were not of the same nature and were therefore not homogenous. Categorical variables present were erratic and inconsistent in nature and though they captured information on consumer habits regarding ticket purchasing on the internet in relation to the arts, to distance travelled to arts venues to the kind of newspapers people read or their attendance in various venues, the variables were not homogenous in nature. This became apparent on receipt of the raw data and more apparent once the data had been cleaned and sorted.

The second principle, the *principle of exhaustiveness*, requires that the data “constitute an exhaustive, or at least a representative, inventory of a real research field” (van Meter et al, 1994, p. 14). In other words, that the data should be comprised of a set of modalities which are “sufficiently ample” to satisfactorily cover and represent the social space under study. This means that the data needs to be representative enough to substantially and adequately reflect the social field.

As the data from *The Public and the Arts* (2006) had been deemed a nationally representative sample, and drawn from 100 sampling points randomly selected from the Irish District of Electoral Divisions, we can deem this survey to be a representative survey of the population. However, if we consider this data to be

exhaustive in other ways, in terms of an exhaustive representation of the social field then the data does not meet this principle.

The data available is ample and *does* cover a wide range of formal arts attendance from theatre to opera, art gallery to ballet, to include more popular and commercial forms such as rock concerts, street performances, main stream film and stand-up comedy. It also covers a wide range of informal cultural participation activities from singing in a choir to amateur dramatics, playing a musical instrument, painting for pleasure at home and other creative activities such as writing for pleasure or making artworks or running arts events. However, the research data is narrow in focus around activities that are *a priori* designated as arts and cultural activities. Further, because of the separation of arts attendance and cultural participation in the surveys, the questions asked were different as were the scales of measurement. This also meant that the data would retain this dichotomy and polarisation and as such the data could not be used as a holistic representation of arts, culture and creativity. In other words, the variables do not cover a breadth of the social field but rather only designate an arts and cultural field and have embedded divisions therein. In this way, the research data available in *The Public and the Arts* (2006), does not have sufficient breadth to be deemed exhaustive of preferences and behaviours in the social space.

MCA is only a fruitful endeavour if the data is both homogenous and exhaustive. These characteristics can be determined when the research instrument is designed specifically for the research approach in hand. Unfortunately, this was not the case with the raw data that I was provided access to. While the data was comprised of a wide range of categorical variables, these did not meet the basic principles required to conduct an MCA. Rather, the survey had been constructed to demonstrate the case for culture using positivist means and inherited ways of thinking about arts and culture.

Deductive approaches such as those used in *Public and the Arts* (2006) are largely used to test hypotheses and statistical inference (van Meter et al, 1994, p. 132).

Working “with large multi-dimensional tables, they encounter problems in selecting a limited number of effective variables that can be fitted to the model” (van Meter et al, 1994, p. 134). This results in a selection of variables that are not only limited but are also loaded with assumptions about the world and a certain politics of method. In this case, the rationale and *modus operandi* of the Arts Council of Ireland was to uncover (and declare) the support for publicly funded arts and culture. In so doing they also reinforce extant ways of seeing and the division between formal and informal cultural participation.

My intention had been to follow a Bourdieusian mixed methods approach and explore the Arts Council data using MCA supported by qualitative interviews to deepen the findings. In this way, my intention was to make a contribution to the field of cultural capital research in the discipline of cultural sociology by following similar studies such as Bennett et al (2009), Friedman (2011, 2014), or Prieur, Rosenlund and Skjott-Larsen (2008).

This mixed method approach would have facilitated an exploration of cultural participation that created not only a visual rendering of cultural participation in Ireland by the weight and volume of cultural capital but also would have contributed research findings that would have deepened knowledge on arts and cultural participation in Ireland and also made a meaningful contribution to the sociological literature on this topic. As a result of the disappointing outcome of the quantitative research plan, it became necessary to focus purely on the qualitative aspect of this research study. By taking this approach, this research study would continue to make a useful, original and meaningful contribution to the sociological literature on cultural participation, and more specifically, on cultural capital in Ireland: a significantly under explored research area. No sociological research studies on cultural participation of a qualitative nature exist and although my research had to alter focus in terms of methodological approach, the contribution of the findings of this now altered research study continue to make an original, meaningful and useful contribution to the sociological literature on cultural participation and more specifically, on cultural capital in Ireland.

As it was necessary to revise my mixed methods methodological approach, and more specifically the use of MCA as a quantitative inductive methodology, it became apparent that I also needed to revise my approach to the qualitative aspect of this research project. I had initially decided that I would conduct interviews with individuals from each clustered social class (*n*5 from social class ABC1, and *n*5 from social class DEF) and that interviewees would be sourced in the east coast urban centre of Dublin and the midlands rural regions of Ireland (*n*10 in total in each location). Striving for a gender balance also, this would have translated into a total of twenty (*n*20) interviewees.

As a result of the altered research journey, I decided that I would use this to my research advantage and scale up the qualitative aspect of the research study and make a more significant and focussed contribution in this regard. This decision resulted in two distinct refinements to the intended qualitative research plan. Firstly, I decided to increase the number of interviewees (total *n*50) by engaging in a comparative analysis between two age cohorts. The genesis of this decision can be found in the Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland research which notes that two age cohorts are noted as non-users of culture – namely, 18-24years and 45-54years. Therefore, by interviewing individuals from these two age cohorts, similarities and dissimilarities in the patterning of cultural preferences and behaviours could be ascertained and affinities and contrasts established. By doing this, an important and valuable comparison between generations could be made.

Secondly, in the absence of the requirement to work within the nationally representative parameters and social classes of the MCA, the research could focus on providing a greater depth of analysis in one social class group – Dublin's urban privileged class. Individuals from this social class are located in the middle and upper classes of Irish society and have ready access to the nation's cultural infrastructure. Replete with stocks of economic capital and institutionalised cultural capital (through education), this social group are the most closely aligned to Bourdieu's class of distinction and provide a rich research site for a study exploring cultural capital in Ireland.

### **Engaging more deeply with the qualitative research journey**

Qualitative research is often a research method designed to explore cultural phenomena whereby the researcher observes society through the viewpoint of the subject of the study. This is because it is a means to represent, reflect and interpret the knowledge and the system of meanings in the lives of the individuals interviewed. Silva and Wright highlight that qualitative methods are often viewed as a way to ground the “concrete social contexts and experiences” of research participants as they provide a valuable means for the articulation of the distinct experiences of research participants (2008, para 6). Seale suggests we should be helped to “appreciate the viewpoints of people other than [our]selves” (Seale, 2012, p. 539). While Erlingsson and Brysiewicz highlight that qualitative methodological approaches help us understand the “human realities” of subjective choices, values and meanings as “multiple realities” as “multiple truths,” (2013, p. 92). They can be a useful safe space for those who may feel they have little to say or contribute, revealing a “dimension of understanding” untapped by more conventional data collection techniques (Kitzinger, 1995).

Qualitative techniques have the advantage of elucidating individualised human narratives and perspectives, providing “meaning” from the individual voices of those under study (Silverman, 2013). They can help researchers develop more sophisticated understandings of the phenomenon being studied and are particularly useful in the gathering of information regarding arts and culture. Sociological theory often outlines how our tastes and choices trace patterns of social engagement that belie the “prevailing social structure” (Silva, 2006, p. 142). And when these are articulated through quantitative methodologies, the tracing of the strata of social differentiation outlines *who* and *how*, but fails to tell us *why*.

Silva, Warde and Wright (2009) particularly suggest that qualitative research can reveal the “game of culture” in Bourdieu’s terms. They found that the dialogue of the qualitative methodological approach had real interpretative advantages – not least because some of the individuals captured in “big picture” quantitative methods, look utterly disengaged. In this way large-scale random sample surveys

such as the Arts Council of Ireland and Arts Audiences surveys, are considered as offering a particularly mechanical and limited rendering of structured data and are lacking in exploring the complexities and nuances of cultural participation and taste (Holt, 1997; Miles, 2013; Wright, 2015). Through semi-structured interviews conducted in the *Cultural Capital Social Exclusion* research project, Silva and Warde were able to draw out a full life of cultural engagement. Offering insights into a wide variety of formal and informal cultural engagements but not necessarily those purely focused on formal, legitimate forms of cultural activity (Silva et al, 2009).

To capture insight into the values and attitudes behind choices, it is necessary to use approaches that allow researchers such as these to ask *why* and probe for insight, for meaning, and for value to the individual. Qualitative techniques get behind numbers and patterns, elucidating figures, drawing narratives and the complexity of human engagement with cultural forms. Therefore, qualitative enquiry is a useful vehicle to reveal the subtleties and social realities of individual engagement with cultural forms and provides valuable means for the articulation of the distinct experiences of interviewees.

### **A thematic approach**

There are a variety of methodological approaches available to those engaging in qualitative research and qualitative researchers often use a thematic approach to the analysis of data as it involves the clustering or grouping of themes or patterns located within data. This can be done by the eye of the researcher or by using software packages that have been developed with this functionality. Ryan and Bernard (2000) suggest the coding of themes in research is often found “within ‘major’ analytic traditions (such as grounded theory)” while Holloway and Todres (2003) argue that the idea of “thematizing meanings” is one of the few shared generic skills across various qualitative approaches. As a result, thematic analysis is sometimes considered a generic tool or standard approach to analysis in qualitative research (Boyatzis, 1998).

However, as a method in itself, thematic analysis “is a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). It is an approach that originally stems from qualitative psychology but is now used (and is useful) across all forms of research. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that while thematic analysis may have shared characteristics with other major qualitative approaches, as a methodological approach it should be considered as a foundational method in its own right.

This research study follows the methodological approach of thematic analysis and the six step approach set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). This sequential process requires “clarity on process and practice of method” and it is important that researchers approach thematic analysis in a systematic and considered way (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). This approach needs researchers to move beyond the position of passively giving voice to themes embedded in interviews, and embracing the active and iterative role they hold in reviewing, selecting, analysing and interpreting data. While thematic analysis may be “very poorly ‘branded”, this does not mean that researchers should approach this method lightly (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

As Braun and Clarke (2006) note, qualitative researchers need to be clear about what they are doing, and why, and avoid potential pitfalls that willing omit the *how* of the process and the practice of methodology used. Being active and engaged as a researcher means reviewing the *data corpus* (the entirety of the data collected) and consciously deciding the *data set* (the data to be used for particular analysis) under analysis from the data corpus. It means approaching the data set and specifically the *data item* (each individual data piece collected), consciously and actively and taking the decision whether to work inductively, or theoretically, within thematic analysis (the differences of these two approaches are outlined in further detail below). Finally, a *data extract* refers to “an individual coded chunk of data” that may or not be quoted in the final analysis but will have informed the research findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The following sections outline the approaches and decisions I took in relation to using thematic analysis as a qualitative research

method.

***Inductive thematic data analysis***

My decision to use thematic analysis resulted from the research aim to explore the social role that arts and culture held in individuals' lives both in terms of participation as well as taste. More specifically, it resulted from the aim to explore Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital as an embodied resource and consider how the urban privileged class exercise and manifest their embodied cultural capital in the social field in Ireland. In order to explore this aim fully, it was necessary to follow a thematic analysis methodological approach which not only allowed thematic patterns in the research to emerge, but also allowed them to emerge inductively. As my research intention has been to deepen sociological knowledge on cultural participation and taste in Ireland, I wanted to use a methodology that would be a good fit for the question and closely support the goals of the qualitative research study, in order to make a meaningful contribution to sociological literature on cultural participation (Silverman, 2013, 2014).

Inductive thematic analysis is one of the two primary ways thematic analysis can be approached. The second is theoretical thematic analysis. Theoretical thematic analysis is more theory-driven and closely follows the research question(s) and the theoretical paradigm within which the researcher is operating. As a result, theoretical thematic analysis is more explicitly analysis-focussed than inductive thematic analysis. As researchers using this approach work with a pre-existing coding frame that tends to provide a less "rich description of the data overall" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). While inductive thematic analysis is not wedded to a particular theoretical paradigm or pursuit, the theoretical and epistemological interests of researchers using this thematic analysis approach clearly inform research projects as they provide a context within which the inductive thematic analysis has been conducted. As noted by Braun and Clarke, no researcher is free of their "theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum" (2006, p. 84). For this researcher, engaging in inductive thematic analysis means engaging in an epistemological and theoretical paradigm

that has been informed by extensive reading of related academic literature (as outlined in the literature review) as well as an iterative process between data items within the data corpus and an ongoing updating and reading of relevant literature.

As inductive thematic analysis is a method that allows the themes or patterns in the data to emerge, this seemed an appropriate methodology to reflect and to unpick the reality of cultural participation and taste in Ireland. In inductive thematic analysis “the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves” and as an empirically-focussed qualitative research method this felt very appropriate to the potential outcomes of the research project as well as the process of the research endeavour itself (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Using an inductive thematic analysis approach, meant not only working with a methodology that reflected reality but, in Braun and Clarke’s words, unpicked “the surface of reality” (2006, p. 81). Therefore, as noted by Robson, the research method applied was “a good fit” for the research questions (2011, p. 2). This is because, (as noted above in the section *Operationalising cultural capital in Ireland*), embodied cultural capital is not tangible in the way objectified or institutionalised cultural capital is and therefore, it is more difficult to track using evidence-based methods that require hard copy or tangible ‘proof’.

Further, inductive thematic analysis also allows the research question(s) to emerge and become refined through an iterative process between research aim and findings. My initial research questions had been broad and inexact, focussing on the role and reality of arts and culture in Irish society (see pg.17 in the *Introduction*). These broad areas of research questioning, through the process of using inductive thematic analysis crystallised into the more exact question, and sub-question below, which focus specifically on how embodied cultural capital manifests in the social field in Ireland’s capital city, Dublin. As research questions these became finalised as:

- *To what extent is embodied cultural capital present in Dublin’s middle classes in the 18-24 years and 45-54 years age cohorts?*
- *And how is this manifested in individual cultural participation and taste?*

While earlier questions had been broader, the iterative process of reviewing the data corpus with the knowledge of the broad questions in mind, systematically facilitated more focussed research questions to develop. This is an important aspect of thematic analysis as to use this methodology is to know that a decision has been made on what constitutes a data extract and a worthwhile data item. Choices and decisions need to be made explicit in order to ensure that the approach taken in the research is transparent. In order to make the approach transparent and explicit for this research project, I have detailed the steps used in this inductive thematic analysis methodology which follow the six steps as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

### *Step One*

Using inductive thematic analysis requires being active and systematic about the steps taken in the review and analysis of data. This involves familiarising yourself with the data set and searching across it to find “repeated patterns of meaning” (2006, p. 86). As this is a qualitative methodology there is no set amount for the proportion or number of data extracts or data items that determine *prevalence*. Prevalence occurs when the repeated patterns become meaningful and identifiable as a *theme*. According to Braun and Clarke, “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (2006, p. 82). For themes to have prevalence, they need to have an alignment or connection to the research question and need to have an expressiveness that captures a common or major aspect of the data corpus. This means the prevalence of a theme has a currency within the research, a currency that makes the theme consciously worth identifying, coding and analysing. Sometimes, a theme may not have a major currency throughout the data but may represent an aspect of the research question that is uniquely interesting and also worth identifying, coding and analysing. So Step One in this process involves reviewing the data corpus and beginning to identify which themes have prevalence.

I reviewed the data corpus as my first step and the process in which I engaged with the material was two-fold. I initially reviewed each audio recording and then transcribed each interview. Once this was complete, I then reviewed each transcription for accuracy against the recorded audio interview. While doing this I noticed pertinent comments and data extracts from both age cohorts that were good examples of discernment and disinterestedness as well as clear examples of an inculcated habitus. I noticed similarities in each age cohort as well as between the age cohorts. I could see that clear examples of embodied cultural capital existed in the transcribed interviews. Secondly, once the transcribed data corpus was complete, I systematically read through each transcribed interview and began to understand which were the most prevalent themes captured in the interviews.

This iterative process of reviewing the transcribed interviews facilitated thematic research patterns to actively emerge. This is not to suggest that themes passively resided in the data, rather that knowledge of the academic literature guided me in noticing, and then isolating, articulations of embodied cultural capital. These patterns and themes are outlined in more detail in the following sections below and in also later chapters (*Chapters 4, 5 and 6*). Completing Step One leads naturally to engaging in Step Two which involves generating initial codes for the data.

### *Step Two*

Generating initial codes for the data is one of the initial steps in the process of interpreting, and then analysing, the data that has been collected. As noted above, as the data is reviewed and re-read, the prevalent themes emerge. These prevalent themes are actively selected as elements of the data set which align to the research questions. My initial codes comprised of capturing the most stand out elements of each age cohort. For example, for the younger 18-24 years cohort, I noticed that music consumption featured as highly prevalent for this age group. I also noticed that this consumption had two distinct features – that the musical taste of interviewees' parents was still listened to by interviewees and frequently referenced in the research interviews. I also noticed that the streaming of music and the use of the internet to listen to musical choices featured strongly in

interviewees' music consumption. The music consumption across the age group varied widely, from planned attendance at live festival music events in Ireland or Europe to spontaneously accompanying friends and family at local music events to using music as a backdrop or soundtrack to their own lives. The disparate nature of the genres of musical consumption as well as the choice of venues, made these less prevalent themes. What became more prevalent was the widespread reference to parents' musical tastes and the use of the internet to access musical choices. These developed in Step Three as themes in relation to other cultural forms in this age group as well as across both age groups and directly connected to expressions of embodied cultural capital. For the younger age group, the digital connectivity theme became particularly pronounced in relation to accessing not only music but other forms of entertainment and general information.

Therefore, in this initial phase of Step Two, I begin gathering prevalent data extracts and clustering these under certain headings which I had designated as 'codes'. The codes for the younger cohort were:

- Voracious parents make highly engaged children
- Social formal arts and cultural activity
- Easy informal creative engagement
- Vicarious consumption of social media
- Non-terrestrial viewing
- Information-oriented
- Lot of music but no "prosthetic extension of sonic preferences" (DeNora, 2004)
- Lack of reading
- Non Irish
- Class
- Education
- Gender

It may be worth highlighting that the codes took the form of labelling and what might be usefully described as a descriptive categorisation of clustered data extracts. I also attempted to code for college specific and subject specific data but found no prevalent themes emerging. This was also the case for sports which I also attempted to code for but again no prevalent theme emerged in the data for this.

The codes for the older cohort comprised a less extensive list and were perhaps a little closer as regards descriptive labelling to Bourdieusian concepts and related academic literature:

- Effortless engagement
- Hopeful engagement
- Discerning engagement and taste
- Education
- The importance of parents
- Nothing distinctly Irish
- Class
- Education
- Gender

With the above codes, it is perhaps quite apparent how knowledge of relevant academic literature guided me in the clustering and labelling of codes and how as a researcher I was not working in a theoretical or epistemological vacuum. As I reviewed the data corpus and began to identify initial prevalent themes and code these themes, knowledge of the literature and the key concepts relating to Bourdieu's text *Distinction* (1984) were uppermost in my mind. In this way, in using inductive thematic analysis, I was actively searching and seeking for Bourdieu's key concepts while also reviewing the data corpus for prevalent themes.

### *Step Three*

The process of reviewing the data corpus for prevalent themes in Step One is followed quickly by Step Two and the coding of these themes. The logical and active next step in this process is to intentionally search for themes identified amongst the data corpus. This step involves gathering all data extracts and clustering these extracts under the relevant codes. In this part of the process, the themes that have been identified are reviewed and considered for emerging patterns, assumptions and "underlying ideas" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). While some researchers take a semantic or explicit approach to identifying themes through the words that researcher participants have actually said and they remain at this level of analysis, I went further and used a latent approach in reviewing and analysing data extracts.

A latent approach to inductive analysis considers the underlying conceptualisations articulated in the data. This goes beyond the explicit meaning of words to an analysis that “attempts to theorise the patterns and their broader meanings and implications” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). While my Step One review of data and initial theme identification undoubtedly resided at the level of a semantic approach whereby I reviewed and organised data at the surface level of explicit meaning, in Step Three I developed the themes and also codes, as I reviewed the material and considered the key concepts and structures that were underpinning the data.

This was very much an iterative process that involved continuously reviewing the coded data from both cohorts and triangulating this to the core relevant literature (Bourdieu’s 1984 *Distinction*). As I did this, I ultimately moved to Step Four which involves refining the themes and the codes and checking how they work with each other and which aspects were related and aligned.

#### *Step Four*

Step Three and Step Four are the most closely related of the six steps as the process of searching for themes amongst the data corpus implicitly involves reviewing and refining the themes in hand. As noted above some of the themes I thought might be prevalent in the first number of data sets such as the small number of data extracts coded for college or subject specific for the younger cohort or indeed, engagement in collective sports for both cohorts, I thought may be prevalent themes. As such I created codes for them, only to discover through an active and inductive review of the data sets, that there was not enough data to support them. In some ways these then became defunct codes or rather, less relevant codes and therefore, less prevalent themes. This systematic process of reviewing and refining the codes can also be extended to themes which, through an iterative approach moves from a semantic approach used in Step One to a latent approach used in Step Three, highlights how some themes can be collapsed into each other. So what at first has appeared as separate and isolated themes, on a latent reading and review, can be considered as distinctly related. This is because the key concepts articulated in the data arise from related ideas that are underpinning the data.

Therefore, a process of distillation and refinement characterises Step Four with this step facilitating a whittling down, clarification and affirmation of the key prevalent themes that are consciously drawn out from the data sets. While, as noted by Braun and Clarke, “coding data and generating themes could go on *ad infinitum*,” I consciously decided to stop reviewing the material once little else was being added to the prevalent themes (2006, p. 92). This meant that I had arrived at the final stages of Step Four, as in the penultimate step, Step Five, I would define and name the finalised themes for the research.

#### *Step Five*

This step focuses on defining the essence of the nature of each theme and deciding and refining the narrative that will accompany the analysis of the data. This is an important step as through this stage, decisions are taken on the complexity and difference of each theme and a consideration given to the contribution of each data extract. It is important that a theme doesn't try to do too much nor is too ambitious in its scope (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Overarchingly, it is also important to consider the themes in totality and the holistic nature of the analysis presented. By considering each theme and its contribution to the “story” of the research project, researchers using thematic analysis consider the edges of the story of their research as well as ensuring the fit between themes. As Braun and Clarke note “it is necessary to consider the themes themselves, and each theme in relation to the others” (2006, p. 92). Therefore, by the final stages of this step, researchers using thematic analysis will have a clear and informed overview of all the themes they will discuss in their analysis as well as a detailed understanding of each theme.

In the defining and refining of the themes in this research project, I coalesced my analysis around a distinct number of themes in both the younger and older cohort. I was able to achieve this as a result of moving from a semantic inductive thematic analysis through to a latent approach in Step Three. As noted above this facilitates a move to identifying patterns in the underlying conceptualisations of the data. Thereby moving from the explicit level of surface meaning and the descriptive

labelling of the coded themes in Step Two to a distilled and refined consideration of the broad underlying patterns present in the data. The broad patterns and themes I identified and captured in the final written work (produced in Step Six) are:

### **Older Cohort**

- Cultural class
- Cultural transmission
- Cultural confidence
- An easy internalised distinction
- The power of art, education and the upwardly mobile

### **Younger Cohort**

- A class of opportunity
- Voracious intensity
- Informational capital
- Knowing culture
- Abolition of snobbishness
- Cosmopolitan nationalism

### **Comparison of Younger and Older Cohorts**

- Cultural ascription: passing the cultural baton
- The importance of education
- Ireland's omnivorous class
- Emerging cultural capital (in both cohorts)

The capturing of these key themes also demonstrate, as detailed above, how the epistemological and theoretical context within which I was working clearly informs, and is embedded in, the distilled theme final titles. Each theme as titled in these refined iterations clearly bears a theoretical and/ or conceptual connection to relevant and pertinent cultural stratification academic literature. This is an important point as this step, and each theme (and data extract therein), should present an analytic narrative that links back to the research question and in so doing, provide “a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). This story is told in Step Six in the final written work.

### *Step Six*

This final step in this six-step method is the summative capture of the key and prevalent themes of the data corpus. It is comprised of an analytic narrative that goes “*beyond* description of the data, and make an *argument* in relation to the research question” (*italics in the original*, Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). It involves the production of a written capture of the data and can take many forms. It can be a written report, a research assignment, a journal article, a book chapter, a dissertation thesis or similar research publication. The key aspect to this stage is that the data extracts presented “provide sufficient evidence of the themes within the data” (*ibid*). Each “extract should be easily identifiable as an example of the issue” discussed in the analysis and should also “be embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story” that is being told about the data (*ibid*).

The written capture of this research project is presented here for consideration as a submission for a doctoral dissertation. I have provided a summative capture of the key and prevalent themes as identified in the data corpus and combined these with an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story of this research and substantially addresses the research questions.

### **Limitations of qualitative methods**

Interviews are by their essential nature, reliant on people talking and scholars highlight that what is forgotten, and not said, is often as important as what is remembered (De Bolla, 2003; Passerini, 1991, cited in Byrne 2012, p. 212). This requires reflecting on what is said, as well as not said, and necessitates for the interviewer (this researcher) to be alert to implicit processes of remembering embedded in any interview. What is remembered is as much dependent on the questions posed, and the language used, as it is an individual’s awareness and consciousness of their actions, values and attitudes. Holloway and Jefferson further posit the idea of the “defended subject” – an individual who may not hear the question through the same meaning frame as that of the researcher or they may find themselves protecting vulnerable and sensitive aspects of self which they do

not wish to reveal (2000, p. 26, cited in Silva & Wright, 2008, p. 52). For the purposes of this study, remaining cognisant of the research participant's own understanding and interpretation of the research questions and phrases used is imperative.

Charmaz further highlights how for some research participants "not all experiences are storied, nor are all experiences ready for recall" (2002, p. 305). They can indicate that an individual does not understand the question posed by the researcher, or can indicate a situation, or response an individual may not have words for. Silences can indicate difficult subject matter, or something that enlists deeper reflection or gives cause for the interviewee to pause. Therefore, as Charmaz notes "silences have meaning too" (2002, p. 305). Therefore, being alert to assumptions around language, being alert to silence or to restrained responses, especially around the framing of questions, is a vital part of the qualitative research interview process.

Scholars have also commented that qualitative research can either "reveal or obfuscate the complexity of the social world in very particular ways" (Silva & Wright, 2008, last para). This may be, as Silverman (2014) notes, because an over-focus or an inaccurate focus on the lived experience of interviewees, can lead qualitative researchers to treat interviewees more as a topic rather than a resource: as *how* the information is communicated rather than *what* is actually said, and that this can potentially take over. This can lead to an (over) focus on the perceptions and viewpoints of research participants can lead qualitative researchers to an abandonment of scientific accuracy and rigour.

Silverman (2013) further notes that qualitative research has the potential to be a form of *manufactured data* where people's behaviours and interactions in, for example, interviews, become over-emphasised, over-interpreted and exist because of the research process itself. He suggests that as a counter to this, researchers consider "naturally occurring data," and use what ordinarily happens in the world around us (Sacks, 1992, 1, p. 420, cited in Silverman 2014, p. 51). This means, "we can start with things that are not currently imaginable, by showing that they happened" (*ibid*).

This form of unremarkable data or naturally occurring and observable information, Silverman suggests, can yield rich insights that reveal or uncover realities which may not be immediately apparent in a contrived interview or focus group setting (Silverman, 2014). Therefore, to establish an interview context that feels natural and unremarkable, rather than constructed and contrived is the goal of this researcher. Following Oakley's (1981) advice, as she advocates the "proffering of friendship" or the expression of interest in hearing about interviewee's lives as a good beginning. This investment of personal involvement, she suggests, "is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (Oakley, 1981, p. 58). This requires moving away from the idea of the researcher as detached neutral observer, and interviewee as subject under study, to the researcher and interviewee as focussed individuals possessed of conscious reflexivity and critical self-awareness. Hence, reflexivity becomes part and parcel of an interviewee's role as much as it is a fundamental aspect of the interviewer's role. This is because the interviewer is often part of the research, situated "within" the research process itself as the "research instrument," through the asking of questions or the observation of contexts and interactions (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013, p. 92).

So while criticality needs to be retained by the researcher and interviewer, the subjectivity of reflexivity can be mobilised in service to a deeper understanding of subject (Khan, 2012). As Khan notes "objectivity is often a false mask that researchers hide behind in order to assert their scientific authority. To stand outside people, looking in at their lives as if they were in some laboratory or snow globe, is not to understand them" (2012, p. 201). Having an embedded understanding in the "study of human relations", Khan suggests is key to successful qualitative research (2012, p. 202). This follows Silverman's (2014) preference for unremarkable and naturally occurring information and the value of a semi-structured interview process that builds on the investment of interest and friendship (Oakley, 1981).

### **Limitations of this study**

As noted above data are “not coded in an epistemological vacuum” so while a strength of the method chosen is that data is allowed to emerge inductively, it can also be considered that this is also an inherent weakness of the method (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). This is because I may find what I am looking for as a form of confirmation bias and that precisely because I am looking for data items that relate to emerging clusters, I therefore confirm that I find them. Related to this, and from a research participant perspective is optimism bias. Labadi (2011) outlines this can occur when participants agree to take part in research and positively respond to research questions precisely because they are part of a research study. This is because they offer the information that is being sought as a way of optimistically supporting the researcher and confirming their place in the list of interviewees.

Further the limitations of this research study also consist of the key influences that have the greatest impact on the research findings, both in terms of quality and the ability to effectively answer the research questions. The limitations of this research study comprise a small number of key considerations.

This research consists of a small sample of the urban populace who live on Ireland’s east coast in the capital city of Dublin. Therefore, the ability of this researcher to be able to extrapolate to not only a rural context but also a western seaboard, or midlands context, could be somewhat limited. This research study is focused on the dominant class in Irish society. This results in a lack of information on not only the lower social classes of C2, D and E but also social class F. This is the Farming class in Ireland and along with the lower social classes of C2, D and E, each of these classes remain sociologically under explored in relation to cultural participation and taste. In the younger cohort, this research study is limited to those educated in Ireland’s premier universities, which are difficult to gain entrance to as a result of a competitive entry system. As mentioned above, there are many other third level institutions in Ireland some of whom focus on more vocational and applied subjects and others who are less competitive in terms of entrance. It could be interesting to explore cultural capital amongst different educational cohorts at some point in the

future. However, this research is limited to an elite educational cohort at Ireland's top two universities.

Taken together these limitations place restrictions on the methodology used and also the conclusions, this researcher draws. However, Law and Urry (2004) note that social inquiry is creative and that it helps us make sense of social realities. Therefore, maintain critical objectivity with the data and with the small sample interviewed, who are located amongst the urban privileged in Ireland's capital city, Dublin, is an endeavour worth exploring. The qualitative research method under employ is one that offers the possibility of a deep, reflexive understanding of human relations in the context of cultural participation and this form of sociological understanding and method is sorely lacking in Ireland.

### **Ethics**

A central issue in ethics is the "relationship between the individual and the social world" (Seale, 2012, p. 60). This is because research "inevitably involves contact with human subjects in the 'field, [and] ethical problems are not usually far away" (Silverman, 2014, p. 159). The complexity of the human nature and human conduct can mean "that there are no absolutes in practice" but this does not mean that we should not endeavour to adhere to honest, transparent and reflective research reported and explored under ethical conditions (Seale, 2012, p. 61). Bodies such as the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), provide instruction for researchers regarding ethical considerations and outline the importance for researchers and research subjects of being "fully informed about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research" (Economic & Social Research Council [ESRC], 2017). They highlight the importance of fully informed consent and voluntary participation in any research study, ideally with individuals fully aware of what the research entails and if there are any risks involved in taking part in the research. The ESRC also stress that confidentiality and anonymity of respondents must be respected.

This researcher can confirm that ethical issues such as the privacy and anonymity of

the research participants were protected and the research process respectfully conducted. All participants involved in this research study were fully briefed on the research aims and intentions, along with the professional background and academic intent of researcher. A full disclosure of any future intent for the academic material was further discussed. Each interview was handled sensitively, honestly and with respect. Research participants were introduced verbally to the research aims, and then asked for permission to engage the interviewee in a semi-structured interview for contribution to original research. Written consent was sought and a blank copy of the consent form is located in Appendix C and D along with the information sheet and interview questions used for both cohorts.

In the conducting of research, best practice dictates that if the seeking of new knowledge negatively impacts, or could negatively impact, on the individuals involved in the research, they may not undertake the study according to the code of ethics. Further, when engaged in a research study of any nature, researchers must be “open with funders, colleagues, persons studied or providing information, and relevant parties affected by the work about the purpose(s), potential impacts, and source(s) of support for the work” (American Anthropological Association, 2012, p. 360). In this research process, no participant voiced discomfort nor a desire to retract his or her research contribution. If any such wishes had been voiced, the relevant transcription and audio recording would have been retracted from this research study and the material destroyed. No such requests were forthcoming.

The Sociological Association of Ireland’s (SAI) Ethical Guidelines (2018), highlight that sociologists should exercise good caution and be “aware of their professional and scientific responsibility not only to students, colleagues, and clients, but to the wider communities and societies in which they live and work” (SAI, 2018, p. 2). Indicating also that it is imperative for any research practice to be conducted in an honest and fair manner, respecting the rights, dignity, and worth of all people when conducting research. While remaining sensitive to issues arising from inequalities of power and alert to possible conflicts of interest that may prevent them from conducting their work in a fair and impartial manner (SAI, 2018, p. 2). This

researcher aimed to achieve this throughout each interview and also in the analysis of the research data.

Though this research study does not involve any vulnerable research participant such as those affected by age, disability, or social status, this researcher is fully aware of any ethical obligations that would be required in such an instance. This researcher further notes that academic researchers are required to adhere to ethical considerations in every aspect of their research and full ethical considerations to be taken into account in all aspects - this includes future dissemination of this research work. When disseminating results of any research study, researchers have an ethical obligation to consider the potential impact of both their research and the communication or dissemination of their research on all directly or indirectly involved. Potential impacts have been considered and the research study consistently analysed for any ethical issues in the process of analysis and on any future potential impacts. Should any further issues be identified at any later stage, these can be addressed and minimised at that point.

Interviewing research participants involves ensuring that all data in use is anonymised and does not involve personal or confidential records, nor any covert or false reporting. In this research, the confidentiality and anonymity of all research participants was agreed with each individual and all identifiable traces of research participants removed from this research analysis. As such, full consideration of the privacy of individuals has been taken into account and this researcher understands and adheres to the guidelines in UK and Ireland of the Data Protection Acts.

As per the British Sociological Association (BSA), ethical guidelines, each interviewee freely gave signed consent before the interview took place. This consent was given at the beginning of the interview and was based on the understanding that the research participant could withdraw at any time. In a small number of cases, interviewees returned the consent forms as electronic copies. Soft copy consent forms, recordings and transcribed interviews are all kept in a password-protected folder to which the researcher is the only person with access. Hard copy signed

consent forms are securely kept in a locked drawer to which only this researcher has a key. As such, appropriate measures have been taken to store research data in a secure manner (BSA, 2017).

# Chapter 4 Older Cohort

*Why is it you sociologists always ask about if I go to the opera to be seen, to meet people, to see my friends, to achieve a better professional status, but always fail to ask me if I go because I like it or better, because I love it? (Benzecry, 2011, p. 194)*

## Chapter synopsis

This chapter explores interview responses from twenty individuals, aged 45-54 years, who are resident in south county and south city, Dublin. These individuals are drawn from the urban privileged and this chapter considers their cultural participation and taste in the context of their class background and class awareness. Bourdieu (1984) posited that cultural tastes are formed in the home and developed through transmission of parents' cultural preferences. This chapter highlights evidence in support of this and shows how cultural inculcation and transmission result in high levels of cultural interest and participation, particularly in those from homes of privilege. This chapter also highlights how education can underpin and facilitate significant cultural confidence and interest. Finally, this chapter demonstrates the wide-ranging nature of formal and informal arts and culture that the older cohort are engaged in, whilst also emphasising the personal and individualised nature of specific cultural interests. Overarchingly, this chapter demonstrates the significance of cultural participation in structuring the Irish social field.

## Cultural class

Tovey and Share (2003) have noted that in Ireland there exists widespread agreement on the lack of class awareness in Irish society. Individuals in this research study, when encouraged to self-identify with a class group, resisted and disavowed the very idea of class in Ireland as a relevant concept. Peter is a good example of this. He grew up in the leafy, well-resourced parish of Donnybrook, Dublin 4, went to private school and is in the top 10% income bracket in Ireland (averaging

€130,400 and above, O'Connor & Staunton, 2015, p. 26). He is also one of the higher earners in this interviewee cohort. When asked, *"Does class matter in Ireland?"* his response highlights his own (apparent) lack of class awareness:

I don't think it matters so much but when I look about me in work, I see it does matter and where they went to school and the chances they've had in life. (Peter, 52, Solicitor)

Peter highlights the lack of class awareness amongst this cohort and a good example of the class denial and deflection they articulate when asked questions regarding social location. Resoundingly, and overarchingly interviewees' responses were filled with reticence and a reluctance, bordering on confusion: "possibly middle class but I never think about it" or "perhaps you might say upper to middle if I really have to choose" (Tara, 48, Solicitor & Librarian). Most interviewees suggest that "class isn't a concept in Ireland, the way it is in the UK" with interviewees identifying as middle class because they "aren't working class or upper class" (Emer, 46, Journalist). This circumstance may have come about as a result of the late industrialisation of Irish society or because of the increasing individualisation of an educated, professionalised, mobile society. Notably, these responses are from the fourteen individuals who are located in social class ABC1 in their class background. Of the four individuals who are from a C2DE social class background, a different response is given and Ellie, Peter's wife highlights this well for us below, as does Terry (46, User Interface Designer) whose responses are captured later in this chapter.

In a separate interview, Peter's wife Ellie (51, Solicitor), articulates her perspective on class awareness and consciousness. She is now located in the middle to upper middle class bracket of ABC1 though she is originally from the farming class (F) and grew up on a farm in the West of Ireland. She has the same educational background, earning power and professional status as her husband today but answers the question, *"Does class matter in Ireland?"* differently:

I don't think it's so subtle, and I think it's a form of conversation in Ireland and where did you go to school, and where did you go to college and people try to put you somewhere and it's a class thing. I think it's common here, it's subtle here - it's more defined in England - but it can be direct here too. (Ellie, 51, Solicitor)

Ellie disagrees with her urban, educated, upper-middle class husband. Her rural background and life experience run counter to her husband's background and life experience and have shown her starkly that the resources and experiences an individual has access to (when growing up and as an adult), locate an individual in the social hierarchy of Irish society. Through social perceptions, judgments, conversations and embedded social processes, Ellie notes how an individual is labelled, pigeonholed and stratified. These are drawn out through whom your family is, where you've grown up and where you went to school, class signals are always in play. In so doing, Ellie highlights the subtlety of this class conversation in Ireland and how this is not such an unconscious an experience for those outside the urban upper middle classes.

Some countries, such as the UK or England mentioned above, are characterised by strong class awareness and class consciousness. Interviewee responses highlight that this is generally limited and often focussed on what interviewees perceive they are not (in a class sense). The majority of individuals (from all social class backgrounds) align with the middle, spurred on by awareness of life-chances and the opportunities interviewees have had in life. This very much comes from a place of individual awareness regarding their own educational, professional and employment choices and accomplishments. Some interviewees agreed that they are "in a technical bracket of middle class" as they are "financially comfortable [and] have spending power at the end of the month" (Emer, 46, Journalist). Though most lack any real class consciousness. As an organising principle of conscious social identity therefore, class appears to have little relevance to those interviewed. Emphasis is placed on the possibilities that have arisen as a result of educational or employment opportunity and throughout, Interviewees continue to align themselves to a broad and amorphous middle class bracket because of the

professional or managerial work they do, the life they live, the education they have had, the holidays they can take and the choices they have been able to make.

This is not to say that Ireland is not a stratified society with persistent inequality and an unequal spread of resources. Rather, that the concept of class as an organising feature of society has little personal meaning for individuals. Irish society has been widely acknowledged as an informal society and as a small nation has distinct characteristics such as intensified interpersonal relations and a social and geographical nearness to centres of power (Bray, 1992). This can lead to a social, personal and professional life that is more connected, layered and less formal. Therefore, the bounded nature of class is problematic in a society that takes an informal approach to social relations (Tovey & Share, 2003). As these scholars highlight, this is typified by an “egalitarian ethic that rejects attempts by some groups to claim social honour from others” (2003, p. 161). Deflection and disavowal of class therefore is a significant feature of Irish society. This is not to say that social group affiliation is absent, but more that it is a matter of “maintaining respectability” and “increasingly up to the individual to express those affiliations in the form of consumption practices” (Dolan, 2009, p. 121).

Terry (46, User Interface Designer) highlights this well. He keenly feels the dissonance between his current class situation and that of his childhood. Self-identifying from a working class background (social class C2DE), Terry relates that he “had ambitions to be middle class” when he was young but now feels quite “class-less” possibly even self-consciously “*arriviste nouveau*”:

If you're working class you will definitely look at me as middle class or posh but I wouldn't think of myself as that- I always have the sense of being outside things.

(Terry, 46, User Interface Designer)

Terry is very articulate on what he describes as the “middle class bubble”. He grew up in relative poverty in a disadvantaged Dublin suburb characterised by social housing. He is the only interviewee who articulates an overt sense of class

awareness. His parents were strong Labour party members, “back when that meant something,” and from a young age he has been aware of class divisions and the embedded nature of class practices in the higher class groups in Ireland:

It's like everybody is living on Mars, they say there's no middle class- it's like they're on another planet, they just can't see it- they're in a middle class bubble. I think it's very insidious actually- it's a hidden racism. So for instance, I think middle class and upper class Irish people, don't actually have an awareness of class or an awareness of class division but they are very exclusionary about who they talk to and who their children mix with. There's a real ignorance in south county Dublin about what class is. They imagine themselves as belonging to a middle class people and they have excluded other people through property prices or education and from mixing with their class. They have kept others out and I'm not sure they have even realised they are doing it- and that's why they are doing it. (Terry, 46, User Interface Designer)

Terry argues that class is a very relevant, pertinent concept in Ireland and through exclusionary practices higher social classes maintain their position in society. Echoing Bottero (2005), he highlights how a persistent lack of class consciousness exists amongst the middle and upper classes in Ireland and that through material and social processes, class practices become apparent. So while the concept of class is disavowed and the majority of interviewees deem there to be a lack of active class identity, it becomes apparent that this disavowal is present amongst those located in the upper and middle classes who are from this social class in their background. The social and upwardly mobile in this research study, do not agree. Therefore, this does not mean that class does not exist in Ireland, rather exclusionary boundaries continue to be drawn through implicit and explicit class practices by those in the dominant class.

### **Cultural transmission**

The persistence and influence of background therefore, remains socially and structurally significant in Irish society today. This is most apparent in the cultural participation profile of interviewees as individuals demonstrate an active cultural

participation profile in formal and informal activities at least once a week and sometimes more. Throughout research interviews, I heard many examples of the range of activities people sought out such as social activities, as holiday pastimes and as quiet, alone lunch moments. These involved going to a range of activities in formal cultural venues as well as more informal social get-togethers.

At face-value, previous arts attendance surveys are correct – middle and upper middle class Irish people, in the 45-54yrs age bracket, are engaged in a variety of arts and cultural forms and this cultural participation profile can appear eclectic, diverse and highly engaged (Arts Audiences, 2015b, 2015c). For example, Julie (49, Health Promotion) highlights how she goes to the theatre with friends: “I go with my girlfriends, Terry’s [interviewee’s husband is] just not that into it”. While for Rose (50, Entrepreneur), this is sometimes on trips abroad with family: “we always go to galleries and museums when we are abroad – it’s the first thing we do, it hasn’t been a holiday if we don’t”. It can also encompass frequent book clubs and culture clubs as social get-togethers or more casually for Peter (52, Solicitor): “I just pop in, every 2weeks or so, to a city centre gallery as there’s a few quite close to where I work”. This cohort enjoy the range of activities they do and many would like to do more, looking forward to a time in life when they can pursue arts and cultural activities more actively.

While some interviewees felt that “culture had been forced down their throat” (Robin, 49, Film Director) as a child and that they hadn’t enjoyed or valued this experience, many remain engaged with arts, culture and creativity today. All interviewees clearly articulate a broad range of cultural interests and reflect on how they read a lot, surround themselves with music (every day and sometimes throughout the day) and that they frequently watch television box-sets or series on Netflix or films on iTunes. They also keep up-to-date with reviews of cultural shows in the papers or online, they also bake, garden, run and cycle, attend the theatre, visit art galleries, classical music concerts, ballet, opera and more. The breadth of cultural forms engaged in and the pervasiveness of these forms, at home and in dedicated cultural venues, is notable. They remember being brought to formal arts

and culture while growing up and that this would have been with grandparents, aunts and uncles, as well as godparents. They also reflect that their parents demonstrated a narrower range of cultural engagement and that perhaps there wasn't as much cultural opportunity available then as now. So while the arts audience reports deem these individuals to be less engaged than others in the population, this small sample of urban privileged appear quite highly engaged in formal and informal arts, culture and creativity.

On closer inspection and when we delve a little further into the backgrounds of these individuals and learn more about their family circumstance growing up: who their main influencers were in relation to their cultural interests; what their parents did in terms of their cultural activities and more specifically, learning how what was valued at home (culturally) is similar to the range and focus of the interviewee today. The following highlights Caoimhe, who is a good example of the highly educated professional class in the older age group. She is one of the nine women interviewed and the only one of the twenty older interviewees who holds a PhD. She is from a higher social class background and is one of the seven women earning greater than €75,000 (and therefore located in the top ten % of earners in the country).

Music for Caoimhe has been a cultural interest for as long as she can remember. A legacy from her parents and grandparents while she grew up, she specifically loved the classical piano, and classical Irish music on the piano. From the age of 7, Caoimhe was enrolled in the Cork School of Music: "that was social life at 7, second instrument at 10 or 11. Then I took up violin for years and played in an orchestra as well and sang in choirs" (Caoimhe, 53, Lecturer & Musician).

Caoimhe's mother was a semi-professional musician and her maternal grandmother played the piano for the soundtrack to the silent cinema in early twentieth century Cork. When her grandmother passed away and her grandfather moved into the family home, Caoimhe's playing brought tears to his eyes and reminded him of his deceased wife. Despite the fact that her father (the city engineer in Cork), as well

as the nuns who educated her at school, told her not to waste her time on such a “frivolous” thing, she pursued her interest in music and love of playing the piano, regardless.

With a father who held high professional status along with a generous income, Caoimhe, and her five siblings, were well resourced and able to pursue interests and opportunities as they desired. Extra-curricular lessons (largely fostered by her mother) included music, tennis, riding, swimming, speech and drama lessons, and also choir, elocution and a French tutor. Though Caoimhe has had much tuition in other areas, her main concentration and interest was always music. As a college student in her early twenties when she couldn't practice music (as she wasn't registered as a core music student as she took chemistry for her undergraduate degree), her parents bought her a piano to practice on at home. A piano in most cultures is a significant purchase and in the depressed economic climate of Ireland in the 1980s this would have represented a substantial investment.

Caoimhe clearly articulates her long-term and persistent interest in music and in playing the piano. For many years as a child she did this for pleasure and now as an adult, she often performs professionally. Though a chemistry lecturer in a third level institute of technology, Caoimhe invests a lot of time in music and spends much of her time playing piano at home and also performing professionally:

I play every day...and sometimes this is work and sometimes I'm just messing...I would have toured and played a lot. I go to gigs all the time- the size is irrelevant...I might go to a small gig but I will also go to very big gigs. In terms of festivals, I probably played in about 10 or 15 festivals last summer but so I don't really feel like going to others (socially)... (Caoimhe, 53, Lecturer & Musician)

Highlighting how there isn't a day goes past that she doesn't play some form of music, the influence of her mother, and grandmother, and the parental transmission of cultural interests has been incredibly strong. Heavily influenced by childhood experiences and role models, Caoimhe's cultural interests and her

voracious enthusiasm for music, have little altered. As noted by Pinnock (2009), time investment such as this lays down patterns at a young age that are unlikely to change over the course of a lifetime. As such the time invested, develops competencies and sustains interests throughout the course of a lifetime.

Katz-Gerro and Sullivan highlight how “individuals with higher levels of human, economic and cultural capital are more voracious than others regardless of gender” (2010, p. 193). And Caoimhe is a good example of this. A highly educated individual, Caoimhe attained her PhD in her early twenties and now lectures full-time. She lives alone, has no children and earns over €75,000 a year from her “day” job, with more income generated from her musicianship. This occupation and earning ability not only locates Caoimhe in the upper middle class but also places her in the top 10% of earners in Ireland (O’Connor & Staunton, 2015). With high stocks of economic, institutionalised, objectified and embodied cultural capital, Caoimhe is a good example of an individual demonstrating Bourdieu’s (1984) distinction premise. She has incorporated the long lasting dispositions of mind and body and embodies “a general transposable disposition towards legitimate culture,” one which manifests as a “disinterested propensity” which we will see in the next section.

The cultural transmission from parent and grandparent, to child and grandchild, is a handing down of cultural tastes and interests that transmits and supports the “slow formation of dispositions, familiarity and mastery” (Atkinson, 2011, p. 176). These become “encoded in descriptions of early family milieu and activities” as a mechanism of reproduction firmly embedded in social processes (*ibid*, Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). We see this in the case of Caoimhe above, and also witness cultural transmission at work in the case of Tara.

When Tara was growing up, her parents, especially her father (an entrepreneurial farmer and successful business man) were particularly interested in opera and classical music, heritage and visual arts:

I suppose I would go to Dublin a lot with Daddy and we would have went to so

many when we were young. He would have had four or five tickets to shows and he would have given each of us some of it. Daddy used to bring us to the DGOS- that was a very elite group- the Dublin Grand Opera Society. He was a subscriber. We went to all of them - it was like a season ticket...when we moved south we used to go back for the Belfast Festival at Queens. It was very much part of our upbringing. Daddy would play classical music all the time. Mum read profusely – somewhere in the region of four books a week and she was also a current affairs junkie. Daddy would read a lot too. I guess you could say that we did a lot of cultural things. (48, Solicitor & Librarian)

As a result, Tara has developed a strong familiarity with highbrow arts and culture and when asked about her own cultural participation, she willingly declares: “I mimic my parents.” She reads widely - “I’m pretty catholic in my tastes as long as it’s well written. I like quite high literary novels, I wouldn’t read chick lit” - and enjoys visiting art galleries and doing other formal cultural activities. Her second date, with her now husband, was in an art gallery - she thought he was an art agent.

Tara is financially secure and independently wealthy. Like Caoimhe, Tara is one of the fourteen located in social class ABC1 and from social class ABC1, she holds “many degrees”, has qualified as a lawyer as well as patents expert and is now retraining as a librarian. In this career choice, she is following the footsteps of her mother, who was also an “academic librarian, working in Queen’s University Belfast library” before she was married. Tara recounts memories of her childhood- trips to historic castles and heritage venues and also of her parents purchasing and commissioning artwork. She remembers “Grandfather Gerry”, a butcher in Belfast, Northern Ireland, swapping bacon for artwork as payment and also his brother, who was “a professional painter, who would have been in the RHA like Paul Henry” (Tara, 48, Solicitor & Librarian). This interview, conducted in Tara’s house, is punctuated by reference to the original artworks she now in turn has on her walls- including those she has commissioned such as the full-length wall-size portrait of her twins of which she is particularly proud.

Tara highlights how she carefully chooses her cultural participation and “might watch a documentary” but doesn't feel that's a positive or uplifting activity. She prefers instead to “do it as a pleasure. I wouldn't watch a film to bring me down, I want to feel positive and happy” and credits her highly developed aesthetic sense (“I think a lot about aesthetics”) to her mother, and her grandmother. Unsurprisingly, Tara has a cultural confidence and aesthetic ease arising from her high stocks of inherited and embodied cultural capital. This translates into a confident disposition that is important to her. She highlights how she’s “very into symmetry – I like my house but it’s not symmetrical” and that she is particularly proud of the styled and playful topiary at the front door and the distinctive “Scandi” aesthetic she has brought to the first floor reception rooms. Reflecting on where she might have learnt this, she recalls not only, how beautifully dressed her grandmother always was but the high aesthetic standards of her mother: “I really think a lot about aesthetics and my mum did too” (Tara, 48, Solicitor & Librarian). We witness this confident aesthetic consideration throughout the following section.

### **Cultural confidence**

Cultural confidence and aesthetic ease, such as Tara displays, is a feature of the dominant class as Bourdieu has noted (1984). They exercise distinction through cultural confidence and ease and this is a feature of many of the older cohort interviewed in this research study. They attribute this to their childhood homes and often to the aesthetic tastes of their mothers- particularly those from upper middle class backgrounds.

For example, echoing the words of others from upper middle class backgrounds, Alison highlights how she “has an interest in aesthetics because it was all around” her as a child. This has resulted in her “constantly reading taste, it's a constant reference point” (47, Television Executive). Evaluating the tastes of others like this, interviewees suggest, is as a result their childhood. Lily, for example, emphasises that “aesthetics are very important [to me] because I was introduced to them at home” (45, Public Relations). We witness this in the words of Tara above and Hannah, below, is another case in point.

A creative designer who grew up in a home surrounded by ancient treasures, Hannah “literally lived in a museum” (47, Creative Designer). Her father was a Keeper of Islamic art and they lived on site at the cultural institution he managed. Today she is “very driven by my aesthetic sense” and demonstrates a natural effortless ease with various forms of arts and culture (47, Creative Designer). Though not a huge theatre-goer, she visits galleries, museums, music events, cookery festivals, art exhibitions, pop-up performance evenings, fashion events often and will go to great lengths to experience arts and culture:

I would go to London to see a concert of someone I loved. I flew to Copenhagen for a meal, it was a cultural experience – it was like eating art – it was incredible – really worth it [referring to lunch in the highly celebrated Noma restaurant in Copenhagen, Denmark]. (Hannah, 47, Creative Designer)

Reflecting on a film someone recommended, she watched, and disliked, Hannah demonstrates a confident and discriminating disposition, and states: “I’ll never get those three hours back again.” This cultural confidence is also assertively displayed by artist Tanya. This is expressed as a time efficiency that prevents her from wasting energy on activities she would rather not engage in:

I like to breeze in and breeze out [of galleries]. I don't like to linger, I like to breeze round fast. I don't see the point of looking at stuff I know I don't like or wasting time on stuff. So I focus on stuff I like and then move on. (Tanya, 54, Artist)

This confident efficiency can also lead some interviewees to actively avoid some cultural experiences. Robin (49, Film Director) is a case in point. One of the fourteen interviewees with an upper middle class background, he highlights how he availed of his mother’s National Concert Hall subscription when he was a teenager and experienced many classical music concerts. He confidently states that he “now never listens to it [classical music]. It’s really obvious when you get to hear enough of it and they do the same thing over and over again” (Robin, 49, Film Director).

Though Robin's words are negative and possibly reductionist, and Hannah's are assertively dismissive, they are also a powerful example of the overt cultural confidence that exists among the fourteen individuals from the ABC1 social classes backgrounds who remain in this class.

This cultural confidence is generally articulated across a variety of cultural forms but sometimes, it is specific to a cultural form. Tara has highlighted this above in relation to types of literature and Caoimhe highlights this below in relation to music:

My aural tastes are extremely important to me. I would be an aural snob and would read up on it a lot. I think my music taste is impeccable and I would have very strong aural taste. I'd be the first to say that I'm a musical snob and I've a huge interest in classical and it would now also include Nils Frahm as well as Chopin. Max Richter too- so I'd be very up-to-date and aware of modern composers. I'd have a massive interest in jazz and experimental electronic music as well. I'm not a big fan of hip-hop and rap – I find the repetitive note quite annoying. I don't like opera and I've had so many people trying to tell me how good it is and trying to educate me and it just doesn't grab me. (Caoimhe, 53, Lecturer & Musician)

The ability to name-check niche musical interests across contemporary as well as historical composers as well as the ability to traverse the music spectrum between experimental electronic music and classical music demonstrates not only Caoimhe's range of knowledge but also the specificities of her voracious interest. In so doing, she establishes not only her knowledge and confidence but also her focussed dedication to her cultural interests. She also, like Robin (49, Film Director) and (Tanya, 54, Artist) is confident about what she doesn't like.

The individualisation of taste that is confidently stated, can also be considered in this quotation from, visual artist Tanya, in relation to her home:

I like reviewing our home. I'd constantly be revising artwork, or reviewing wall colours or moving around pots of ceramics or bowls. That's not really a pastime, that's just something that happens when I walk by. When I'm doing something else, I think I'll take that away or I'll add something that would be better. Just being visually aware I suppose. I would only try to have things in my home that I value or appreciate or things that please me and that's all about taste. I like good...mmm, I like a particular colour palette, I like simplicity of form, but form that is functional. I like a pared back style but not too functional that it looks unliveable or stark. I don't like clutter. (Tanya, 54, Artist)

We could interpret Tanya's statement as a result of her art training and her profession, however, we also witness it in the statements of Peter (52, Solicitor) who highlights his individual and considered disposition regarding taste: "Mine would be more calculated than that [than his wife's]. Emotion wouldn't be enough...it would get filtered out if it didn't pass the test". This is interesting as it highlights the specificity of interviewees' cultural interests and re-establishes (cultural) intolerance and exclusion as practice of distinction. While Bryson (1996) found that the more educated higher classes were more tolerant in their (musical) tastes, this research counters this, and finds that rather than tolerance being shown, intolerance is individualised and tangibly present. This intolerance tends not to be an assertion that is public and overt. Rather it is quietly held, internalised and a source of differentiation and distinction for those interviewed. This quiet and covert distinction can relate to the interior décor of homes, films, niche musical tastes or in the instance below, clothes and jewellery.

Further, some interviewees, like Lily, make the connection between their discriminating confident judgments and their upbringing:

For me personally, it's something not garish, not vulgar. It's pared back and deliberation has gone into it, rather than impetuous, impulsive decisions. Aesthetics are very important to me because I was introduced to them at home. I know plenty of people who didn't have these things and they don't give a damn. I have an interest in aesthetics because it was all around me - my mother had beautiful fashion and jewellery. (Lily, 45, Public Relations)

This cultural confidence and discriminating disposition are clear evidence of Bourdieusian (1984) distinction and of the sometimes quiet, and other times, more obvious (or implicit and explicit), class practices engaged in by those in the dominant class.

Interviewees clearly articulate the aesthetic knowingness related to the “pure gaze” that correlates them with Bourdieu’s higher social classes (Bourdieu, 1984; Grenfell, 2004, p. 97). This cultured and refined sensibility, Bourdieu emphasises, bears the clear stamp of high stocks of cultural capital. It requires education, “time, effort and historical knowledge” to separate out the “absolute standards” from “immediate satisfaction” and to understand the subtleties of “detachment, refinement and exclusivity” (Prieur, Rosenlund & Skjott-Larsen, 2008, p. 50; Grenfell, 2004, p. 97). For Bourdieu, these qualities were found in the “attitudes of cultivated individuals, most clearly personified in the elite of the ruling class” (Grenfell, 2004, p. 97). As individuals who have the time, energy and long lasting disposition of the mind to appreciate form over function, the “rare over the common,” the fourteen interviewees from ABC1 social class backgrounds, actively demonstrate a history of cultural ascription and inculcation that transpires as confidence, discernment and a discriminating taste. As the dominant class, they retain the ability to make judgments removed from the pressured, functional aspects of life and are able to maintain a distance from necessity (Bourdieu, 1984; Prieur, Rosenlund & Skjott-Larsen, 2008, p. 50).

### **An easy internalised distinction**

As noted previously, fourteen of the twenty individuals interviewed in the older cohort grew up in high status, well resourced, urban environments and many remain living close to the area they grew up. All have been educated to third level and earn over the national industrial wage - with eleven of the twenty located in the top 10% of income. In research interviews, they recount the memory of parents who worked hard at their engagement with formal highbrow culture. They recall high status dinner parties, gallery openings, “historical lectures and classical music

always playing in the house” (Lily, 45, Public Relations), they mention annual trips to the Wexford Opera Festival, National Concert Hall subscriptions, Dublin Grand Opera Society season tickets and foreign holidays replete with cultural excursions. Throughout, these culturally confident individuals highlight how culturally active their parents were and how their cultural participation was as much an affirmation exercise amongst their social networks:

Maybe at that time, it defined them as upstanding middle class people whereas nowadays we don't think about this. My parents were interested in bettering themselves and maybe we don't need to. They made time for it. It would have been an expense. (Alison, 47, Television Executive)

They would have gone once a week to a gallery opening. They defined themselves by art, the openings, the exhibitions, buying a painting every now and again and selling painting...My mother forced it. We lived in a house on steroids - high art made you who you were. Me? I don't care if people know what I did today or yesterday in terms of art consumption but for my mother it was a badge. (Robin, 49, Film Director)

The observation that individuals of high social standing engage in cultural participation as a manifestation of their status is not new (Bourdieu, 1984; Katz-Gerro, 2002; López-Sintas & Katz-Gerro, 2005; Lynes, 1954; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Veblen, 1899; Warde, Marten & Olsen, 1999). However, for each of the interviewees in the older cohort, their own cultural participation today arises for apparently different reasons. Interviewees highlight that their cultural activity is based more on personal enthusiasms and subjective curiosity and enjoyment than on any conscious positioning in the social field. This is not to say that cultural interests aren't social or shared: they very often are through book clubs, attending activities with friends and partners, nights out, cultural excursions on holidays and so on. Rather the modus operandi behind their cultural activity arises from a place of highly individualised, interests and subjective enthusiasm that interviewees consider compelling. This is not to say that interviewees don't assert boundaries, they clearly do. However this boundary maintenance is less overt, more

individualised, less publicly asserted and more internalised. As Alison (47, Television Executive) highlights:

I probably make judgments about people, and the way you spend money on food, or an architect or a builder, yeah those kind of things matter to me...I'm probably constantly reading taste and I don't necessarily have good taste but I'm constantly clocking taste what people wear, I would like that kind of person because of their taste. (Alison, 47, Television Executive)

Less obviously asserted through specific attendance at highbrow cultural forms and events, interviewees' internalised distinction then becomes a private affair. Hannah provides a more expanded sense of this:

If someone says "I love Kim Kardashian," I immediately think, well, I don't think we are going to have a lot in common. All my close friends have incredible taste...This may be a controversial thing to say but I don't really know how to put it, other than say I'm a bit of cultural snob. Not that I would discard the person because they didn't have the same taste as me, but I would definitely consider my taste better. (Hannah, 47, Creative Designer)

The cultural confidence mentioned above combined with the ability to make judgments on the aesthetic aspects of life, can also be applied to covert judgments on others' taste as this example shows. Judgments on the aesthetic and cultural tastes of other's are not actively voiced or shared by interviewees rather their internalised distinction is a private affair: this is conscious, not voiced and quietly held.

Another aspect of this internalised distinction is the easy and expected nature of this distinction. When Robin (49, Film Director) is asked about his cultural interests and the arts and culture that he likes to engage in, he states that he doesn't have to "think about it, it's as natural as the air you breathe, it's just there, it's just the way". He takes this further and highlights that, "if it [arts and culture] wasn't there I would make my own" (Robin, 49, Film Director). Peter (52, Solicitor) also suggests that he doesn't "see [himself] as culturally interested...It's just part of life. I don't

really do much...it's not really something I think about".

While Peter and Robin deny much engagement with culture, it should be noted that they are amongst the most active cultural participants of all the interviewees. Both grew up in high status households, are educated professionals in knowledge economy occupations (law and media) and "could do whatever" they wanted in terms of cultural activity as child: "means wasn't an object, I just had to say or express an interest" (Peter, 52, Solicitor). This has resulted in an internalised easy disposition with culture, one that holds deep cultural assurance and self-reliance.

Most interviewees in fact suggest they don't really go to many cultural activities or have many cultural interests and they talk down any cultural engagements that arise in the interviews. Quite a few interviewees respond in the same way and relate how they've never really thought about their cultural interests before. This denial and minimisation of cultural activity Bellavance (2008) also found in his micro-qualitative study of high status professionals in Québec.

In a related question, when interviewees were asked if there is any form of activity they would like to do and don't, individuals respond readily with "I'd like to play the saxophone" (Robin, 49, Film Director); "do more pottery" (Hannah, 47, Creative Designer); "make a radio documentary" (Ellie, 51, Solicitor), or "seek out unusual theatre and things" (Alison, 47, Television Executive). As if the ability, resources and wherewithal was just at their fingertips and all that was required was to activate this desire and many relate to a time in the future when they will.

Notably, interviewees display a distinct lack of concern about, or barriers to, cultural participation or engagement, with non-participation in formal cultural activity arising simply from a lack of interest or lack of time. This effortless, easy engagement with arts and culture is a shared disposition across all interviewees (Balling & Kann-Christensen, 2013). The "naturalized cultural abilities" they cite, stem from not only their cultural confidence and ease but also from a long cultural history of familiarity and experience that belies Ireland's higher social classes

(Benzecry, 2011, pp. 188-189). Their high stocks of embodied cultural capital, garnered at first hand (Savage et al, 2005) have resulted in an easy cultural disposition that flexes confidence, conviction and an internalised distinction. So while class awareness may not be an overt concept in Irish society, it is clear through interviewee responses that social distinction and the assertion of class dominance exists and is made manifest through cultural participation and taste. This is characterised by a cultural confidence, an aesthetic discriminating demeanour and a quietly held distinction that is not overtly stated but embedded throughout interactions with others.

### **The power of art, education and the upwardly mobile**

Interestingly, ease and confidence with culture is also present in those who have had creative and aesthetic training, though identify as lower social class C2DE in their childhood. Of the four individuals who fit this profile, Maeve is the best example of this. Omnivorous and voracious in her appetite for arts and culture, Maeve comes from a lower-middle class background in south county Dublin. At university, she studied art history and went on to work in private, modern art galleries in Dublin city.

Culturally resourceful and persistently culturally enthused, she founded a successful pop-up cultural festival and also organises other similar events. Though she did not develop these interests necessarily in her childhood home. She remembers little formal or highbrow cultural participation in her childhood. Her “father was a builder and he never really appreciated good architecture,” her mum “an avid reader.” Her parents did however love music, dance halls, the radio and the television programme, Top of the Pops.

She is distinctly conscious of her poorer background growing up (“we didn't have much growing up, my mum made a lot my clothes, we only had a black and white TV, other kids wore Adidas) and is clear on the importance of education in developing her interests: “Even though a lot of people around me didn't go to college...I was singled out, I knew my education was better than they were getting.”

Her educational interests marked her out from others and she set on a path to study art history, work in art galleries and eventually design gardens, pop up festivals and become a voracious consumer of culture.

With a highly developed aesthetic sense and a deep cultural confidence, Maeve has a strong belief in the power of art in society. Her cultural enthusiasm is compelling and now forms a key aspect of her identity:

I look at a painting every day [referencing the original artwork in her home], there's music every day [referencing her radio and Spotify listening at home and in the car], and I read every day. We try to encourage our kids to do the same. Though I don't listen to jazz, read poetry etc., art is very accessible to us because it's on our walls. I'd also be documenting street art all the time: urban interventions, street installations etc...I'd get up and go into town and look at something in O'Connell St [north Dublin city main street] for example or if I saw someone doing something like rap or something in the middle of Grafton St [south Dublin city main street], I'd stop and record it. The high culture of going to the gallery or theatre, maybe I would be here but not necessarily; if it's on the street, I'll engage with that at a much deeper level. That's very much what I'm doing. Then I'm Facebooking and tweeting it, and so other people can see this, and see the difference it can make to peoples' lives and I'm very taken by this and making a difference to peoples' lives and not dissipating this. This is culture- this is art. (Maeve, 50, Garden Designer)

Maeve's cultural engagement is passionate and it is intense. Nearly evangelical in her tone and enthusiasm for arts, culture and creativity, she is keen to make a difference, break down barriers and "bring art and culture in as much as possible" (Maeve, 50, Garden Designer). Her self-assured enthusiasm and cultural confidence arises not from a well-resourced background replete with cultural transmission but from long-standing, aesthetic experience accrued through her professional experience and education.

Terry (46, User Interface Designer), previously mentioned in the section above on

class, is another example of the four from lower social class C2DE backgrounds who are incredibly enthusiastic about arts, culture and creativity. His abiding interest in creativity and aesthetics is clear, as is the importance of third-level education in his life. Like Maeve, he holds an incredibly strong belief in arts, culture and creativity. His creative interests have intensified into a clear and confident aesthetic sensibility: “I’m aware of the power of art, the power it has to make big questions”. A graphic designer and user experience lead in a global software development company, Terry (46, User Interface Designer), describes his role as “highly creative-creativity is at the core of everything I do”. Now in the top 10% of earners in Ireland and living in a leafy, red brick residential area, Terry grew up “in poverty” in social housing in Tallaght, in south county Dublin. His dad was a mechanic, and his mum a canteen and factory worker, and there was an absence of any formal highbrow culture in his background and plenty of informal creativity. His parents were:

Mad into singing – even to this day – on a Sunday night they go to a pub where they go singing. It’s always alcohol related. A workman’s club and everyone gets a chance to sing. Sing anything, literally anything and that’s what they – it’s called the Post Office Club up in Tallaght and my parents are associate members. They get dressed up and get up on stage and sing while getting slowly pissed. (Terry, 46, User Interface Designer)

Terry recalls no original artwork on the walls of his family home and isn’t sure about where his interests developed but he does recall always loving drawing and the visual:

There were loads of magazines, remember the binder magazines? And dodgy prints from the 70s – the blue child with the tears – it was in my grandfather’s house. It was really striking cause there wasn’t a lot of pictures hanging on the wall...When I was a kid, I used to draw imaginary journeys along the roads and the maps and my mum used to give me greaseproof paper and I’d draw the roads. I remember one of my dad’s friends used to draw the hulk and superheroes and I was transfixed. I wanted to be able to draw this and fix people and create something. (Terry, 46, User Interface Designer)

A chance encounter with a private school principal resulted in Terry securing a scholarship and entry to a third level college to study visual communications. While his parents experienced a very different reality:

[They] were both clever people but just never educated. My mum wanted to be a nurse but my grandmother wouldn't let her – they didn't have the money to keep her. My great grandfather was a technician in the *Irish Press* – like the lead carpenter – but he had a bad drink problem and instead of educating his kids, he sent them to work. If he had educated them they would have taken off like rockets...A friend's father was given a scholarship and his dad wouldn't let him take it. This is what makes the working classes stay working class they don't value education. Maybe that's changing now and maybe there's more social mobility in Ireland. (Terry, 46, User Interface Designer)

According to Terry, he constantly teaches himself new software and coding programmes and claims he is like “an educational zealot.” Having just completed a master's programme, he continues to learn, is constantly taking courses and upskilling and is hungry to do so. This quotation captures this well:

Education is everything, it's opportunity, it's empowerment. Education teaches you that you can learn anything if you put your mind to it, you can learn anything if you are prepared to work at it. (Terry, 46, User Interface Designer)

Terry makes a direct connection between the education he was fortunate enough to access and his improved life circumstance and that of his children's. Therefore, in Terry's view, hard work, applied effort and constantly improving yourself through education reaps tangible rewards. His improved life circumstance, professional career and home in an affluent area all bear witness to this. His children now benefit from this upward social mobility and through their private schooling, extra-curricular activities and well-resourced lives, Terry outlines a similar experience to his upper middle class peers and their children but this results, Terry highlights, from effort, hard work and merit. It is not carried as social distinction or an effortless easy disposition but hard won, effortful and worked.

These rewards and meritocratic experiences run counter to Maeve, Terry and Eoin (detailed below) parents: the majority of which had completed secondary school (three of four), while one (Eoin detailed below) completed education to primary school-level only. Therefore, each of these interviewees were first in their family to go to university. They attribute their education (and continued hard work), as the reasons for their success in life. These words by Maeve were repeated by each of the interviewees from the lower social class background C2DE:

As kids growing up education was key to progress in the world, to have choices- rather than other people telling you want to do. My mother was told to go work on the farm as opposed to being given an education. (Maeve, 50, Garden Designer)

Therefore, for the socially upwardly mobile increased opportunities for education in Ireland has resulted in resourced livelihoods and well-paying professional careers.

Eoin (52, Legal Executive) makes an overwhelming connection between his improved life experience and education. He comes from a poor farming background in Co. Leitrim (mid-west Ireland), and states:

Where we live now is the polar opposite to where I came from or what my family did. We were subsistence farmers and no one ever went to college. (Eoin, 52, Legal Executive)

For him and his mum, it was a “hard life, by Jesus, hard. My father died when we were very young and mother rented land and it’s not great land.” His childhood memories are of simple everyday activities of:

Going to people’s homes and drinking cups of tea and telling stories, playing cards. After my father died and the cattle were taken away, my mother turned half a farm into a big garden and occasionally (we lived beside the parish hall), we’d go two or three times a year to something there. Not a lot else to do or see

or hear. We'd no car. Bikes, lifts, that's how we got around. Not horses- no, we didn't even have a horse. (Eoin, 52, Legal Executive)

He recounts that for fun, him "and the boys would go swimming in the lake" and engage in other local rural pastimes but that there was never any sense of engaging in formal or highbrow culture or attending state-funded cultural venues. These wouldn't have existed in his locale and would have been outside the economic and social reach of his family. This is distinctly different now for Eoin and witnessed in his own cultural participation profile is today.

He acknowledges "the massive change in the country over 40 or 50 years you know," and Eoin is now widely and actively engaged in many cultural activities: he's in a book club; reads voraciously; attends cultural events from opera to theatre; "has everything in the car from Debussy to Cuban music." With his own family, he is hugely engaged in sport such as hurling and camogie: "I never realised just how important it was to me until I had children" and for his own personal fitness, Eoin cycles, swims and attends yoga classes. Self-conscious around his lack of ability creatively ("I've no musical ability, I can't draw, there would have been no facility to do drama or learn"), himself and his wife put their active cultural participation profile down to education and their nearness to cultural opportunity geographically. With "everything practically on our doorstep", they "keep little notes" about the events they would like to attend and regularly read reviews for tips and recommendations.

As individuals who self-identify from less resourced and poorer backgrounds, Maeve, Terry and Eoin are possibly more omnivorous than those with higher class and better-resourced backgrounds. With a passionate and sometimes intense, appetite for culture, that discriminates less between genres and embraces more fulsomely a variety of cultural forms. These interviewees relate their cultural interests to their education and their compelling belief in hard work and application and the sheer effort and hard work that they have applied to their education and to their upward social mobility, they also apply to their arts, culture and creative

engagement. In this way, their cultural ease and confidence is energy-filled, enthusiastic and committed but it is not easy, effortless nor covert.

### **Summary**

Bourdieu (1984) has posited that cultural tastes are formed in the home and developed through transmission of parents' cultural preferences and this chapter shows evidence of this in the older cohort interviewed from social class ABC1 backgrounds. It demonstrates how amongst these interviewees, cultural interests, confidence and an ease of accessing culture, stems directly from an overt familiarity with cultural forms. This arises as a result of cultural inculcation and a long standing exposure to arts and culture as well as cultural transmission. This clear cultural confidence and ability is an explicit display of interviewees' habitus and the social reproduction of privilege at work.

This chapter also demonstrates how cultural enthusiasms laid down in childhood, are repeated and extended in adulthood. Interviewees' cultural tastes largely mimic parental interests while also including a broader range of additional cultural activities. It shows how the previous generation (interviewees' parents) had a narrower cultural engagement that centred on overt social positioning through cultural participation while interviewees' motivations focus on subjective pursuits, entertainment and an exercise of personal interest. These subjective interests exist even though they are denied and suggest a strong sense of highly individualised agency that belies the enduring relationship of class and culture.

Those with privileged childhoods and a long history of cultural inculcation, hold deep stocks of embodied cultural capital and this chapter demonstrates how this is manifested as strong cultural confidence and also a naturalised and easy cultural disposition. Interviewees demonstrate disinterestedness, discernment and a highly developed aesthetic sensibility often running right across the general register of culture. These individuals explicitly make overt and disinterested judgments on cultural taste and cultural forms. They also quietly draw social boundaries, making

implicit and quiet social judgments on others. In this way, the fourteen interviewees who are from homes of privilege, demonstrate Bourdieusian (1984) distinction through their capacity for disinterestedness, a naturalised cultural disposition and a confidence and ease that is held as an internalised and easy cultural disposition. In this way, this dominant class, while articulating little sense of class awareness or consciousness, individually and collectively draw social boundaries making judgements of distinction on others who do not share or manifest these shared cultural tastes and disposition.

The confident aesthetic sensibility and cultural disposition that requires “time, effort and historical knowledge” to develop is present in those who demonstrate cultural ascription as noted above, however this is also present in those who accumulate cultural competence through education and through a committed application to learning (Prieur, Rosenlund & Skjott-Larsen, 2008, p. 50). This chapter shows how interviewees from less resourced, lower social class backgrounds have a stronger sense of class awareness and possess a profound, near evangelical and intense belief in the power of art and culture as a positive force in society. This upward mobility and belief in culture as a force for good in society is attributed to meritocratic beliefs in education and hard work. This does not mean that embodied cultural capital that displays as a natural and effortless disposition results. Rather an intense and enthusiastic belief in the power of education and in arts, culture and creativity underpins a broad range of cultural interests across the board (Atkinson, 2011).

This chapter therefore, highlights how education can underpin and facilitate significant cultural confidence and interest. In so doing, it helps us reconsider the Bourdieusian premise of cultural capital directly correlated to class position and better understand that cultural familiarity and ease, as well as discernment and an aesthetic sensibility also develop outside a high social class habitus and class group. These can be predicated on the subjective enthusiasms and the reflexive tastes of the amateur (Hennion, 2004) and those that work hard at this, enthusiastically reap more “naturalized cultural abilities” (Benzecry, 2011, p. 188). Though far from

“detached” and disinterested participation, an “experiential and emotional immersion results” (Benzecry, 2011, p. 189).

Overarchingly, this chapter demonstrates the significance of cultural participation in structuring the Irish social field. As such, this research study highlights that when the experiences of the individualised are taken together collectively, the structural principles of class, of access to resources, and a distinct correlation with cultural transmission, discernment and effortless cultural participation are apparent and add up to a form of collective class action (Bottero, 2004, 2005).

The next chapter explores cultural participation and taste amongst the younger cohort. It finds a wide range of cultural engagements are present along with a narrower range of voracious interests amongst Dublin’s privileged young adults. This next chapter also shows how new forms of distinction are emerging. These encompass a broad and pluralistic cultural profile that centre on the abolition of snobbishness, knowledge-seeking and information acquisition as well as an outward facing global cosmopolitanism- one that takes pride in national culture but consumes culture transnationally and globally (Prieur & Savage, 2013; Warde, Wright & Gayo-cal, 2007). This emerging cultural capital demonstrates the capacity of the socially-privileged to juggle and transpose a rarefied aesthetic disposition across, and between, the multiplicities of genres (Friedman, Savage, Hanquinet, & Miles, 2015).

# Chapter 5 Younger Cohort

*[T]astes and aspirations develop in class specific ways (Jonsson, Grusky, Di Carlo & Pollak, 2014, p. 503)*

## Chapter synopsis

This chapter explores interview responses from twenty individuals, aged 18-24 years, who are engaged in full-time education in Dublin's two largest universities (Trinity College and University College, Dublin). It highlights the significant levels of embodied cultural capital in these young Irish adults who articulate a rich trajectory of cultural participation that begins in the cradle, extends throughout their childhood, adolescence and into the early years of young adulthood. Appearing highly omnivorous, yet potentially more voracious than their older counterparts in the previous chapter, these younger interviewees demonstrate the changing nature of cultural capital. This chapter shows how they engage keenly and deeply with their cultural form of choice yet work hard at flattening the cultural plane, acquiring knowledge, seeking information and garnering new experiences meanwhile. It also shows how they maintain open and tolerant dispositions that are globally receptive while nationally proud. This does not mean that practices of distinction are absent, rather aesthetic distancing, a knowing disposition and a pure gaze remain present. Finally, this chapter highlights that it is no longer *what* is consumed that matters but rather *how* an individual engages that is the mark of distinction today (Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014).

## A class of opportunity

As with the older cohort in the previous chapter, the concept of class holds little relevance for the younger cohort interviewed. Many are uncomfortable identifying with a class group and tend towards denying and disavowing the concept of class. As noted by Derek, "I mean it doesn't cross my mind every day, it doesn't define me" (20, Architecture, UCD). Younger interviewees, like their older counterparts,

default to the selection of “middle class” as the closest class articulation of their circumstance. This does not mean that families are “showy” (Siobha, 19, Art History, TCD) or “loose with their spending” (Roise, 20, Science, TCD), rather they have choices in life about where to go on holiday, which school they go to and which area live in. Younger interviewees do not consider their well-resourced lives as the result of ascription or inherited, class position in society. They recognise that “the opportunities I have had throughout my life are due to the fact that my parents have a good job” (Anne, 19, Theoretical Physics, TCD), and that these opportunities and life chances arise from hard work.

As the quote from Anne shows, the younger cohort also believe hard work and a meritocratic system of rewards-based endeavour are the key factors that create a life of opportunity where there “is a level of status and financial security where we don’t have to worry” (Roise, 20, Science, TCD). When asked to self-identify with class, they prefer to highlight the holidays, cultural experiences, good education and opportunities they’ve had in life, noting the range of choice available to them because of the income, resources and interests of their parents. There is no sense amongst this younger cohort that opportunities in life have arisen as a result of ascription or inheritance nor the benefits they experience are the result of the persistence of class.

An example is Jim. He is a well-resourced individual. He has attended private school; gained entry into a competitive high status medicine degree in UCD; his dad is an accountant, his mum a pharmacologist, and they live in a large house in a wealthy area of south county Dublin. Jim is typical of those interviewed in the younger cohort and like the twenty-five others interviewed who have a similar habitus in terms of resources, wealth and education, in his life experience so far, Jim doesn’t “feel that different from these people or those people” and he doesn’t express any awareness of his privileged social position. In our interview, he outlines a background that is more or less the norm for younger middle class individuals in Ireland:

I went to a private secondary school and we live in a nice area and we're not struggling. I didn't notice it when I was younger but I'd be a little more conscious of it now [that he is mixing in college with others]. When I went to a drama class when I was younger – people there could afford to do it- like this is South County Dublin and it tends to attract people from what we would call middle class. I was talking to one of my friends who wanted to do another year for a Masters and her family definitely couldn't afford it but I know I would have that choice. (Jim, 22, Medicine, UCD)

Jim's middle to upper-middle class credentials cannot be questioned and yet his awareness of his class position arises only through discussion with a friend. He provides a good example of the lack of class awareness that we witnessed in Peter (52, Solicitor) and others in the older cohort who have maintained class position in the dominant class across generations. As with the older cohort, we are witnessing now in Jim, the perpetuation of class blindness as a result of class privilege. Class awareness arises when it is highlighted that others may not have the same opportunities and choices in life.

Jim's well-resourced class disposition is much easier than Dinny's. Dinny is the most class conscious of the younger cohort interviewed. Though, his father is a well-respected actor and creative professional today, his poorer background and class position have informed Dinny's views on class. He is self-conscious in his responses on the subject of class. When asked to self-identify with a class group he responds:

Depends on the month...on a good month it would be lower middle class. It's that sort of idea of faux middle class- where you've got the credentials but don't have the capital (money) to back it up...because of the opportunities I've had which would be better than a good percentage of the population but I don't have any security net type things. (Dinny, 22, P.P.E.S., TCD)<sup>40</sup>

This quote shows how Dinny understands an experience of childhood that is less

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<sup>40</sup> This is an acronym for Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Sociology (P.P.E.S.) undergraduate degree programme which is modelled on Oxford's PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) and Cambridge's PPS (Politics, Psychology and Sociology).

resourced and how he has had less advantages and opportunities in life. Though himself and his brother attend an elite university and were schooled in private school, Dinny feels a little bit like a pretender as he highlights how he has experienced class difference based on social and economic advantage. He knows his parents had to work hard to provide him and his sibling with these opportunities and he knows there were many sacrifices made. Though his stocks of cultural capital are high due to his (Dinny is an actor and theatre director), and his parents' cultural interests (mum is a casting agent, originally from San Francisco, and dad an actor from a poor area in Dublin), he is sensitive to the accrued advantage of his better-resourced peers. Unlike Jim, this has resulted in Dinny feeling insecure in his social position and experiences a sense of dissonance with his peers throughout his life history. This knowledge and life experience has resulted (a little like Terry in the previous chapter) in Dinny being very aware of the opportunities he has had in life as a result of his family's improved class position. Class awareness therefore exists but, as we witnessed in in *Chapter 4 Older Cohort*, this arises as a result of dissonance and feeling outside the dominant middle classes.

Hanquinet, drawing on Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) in *The Inheritors*, highlights how *héritage culturel*<sup>41</sup> “acts as a capital (the word is used) composed of knowledge, skills and savoir-faire transmitted by the parents to their privileged children” (2018, p. 328). This mastery then becomes “a habitual-dispositional phenomenon” typical of those in the upper reaches of the dominant class (Lizardo & Skiles, 2013, p. 269). So while Jim feels a social and cultural ease due to his advantaged position in life, Dinny experiences class dissonance due to a persistent lack in his life experience of economic and social advantage. This is very similar to Terry (46, User Interface Designer, who we met in *Chapter 4 Older Cohort*), who experiences the same class dissonance as a result of his habitus. He also feels a bit like a pretender with faux middle class credentials and knows he has experienced class difference and upward mobility as a result of educational advantage.

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<sup>41</sup> Though Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) do not specifically refer to cultural capital in *The Inheritors*, they do highlight *héritage culturel* that captures how the dominant class reproduce and reinforce social inequality through the school education system.

Ines, reflecting on her own middle class background, captures this advantage very well in the following extract:

With my background, I was always expected (it was taken for granted) that I would be interested in, like, reading or art or creating, that I would be involved. I come from a privileged position in that point of view. If your parents weren't engaged, or if your school wasn't involved, or if you didn't have trips out, it's disadvantage based on socialisation, about what's expected for you to engage with. (Ines, 21, Art History, TCD)

Ines highlights above the expectations of a middle class background and captures how routes to advantage are implicitly embedded in class position. In this, she is conscious of the role of education and of parents in creating the context and conditions for opportunities in life. Like Jim, Ines is located in the dominant class and can access the advantage and benefits of this class through a handing down of dispositions and pathways to social advantage. Amongst these are access to cultural experiences. This focus is on sharing a way of being in the world, of handing down "innate property," that centres on parents transmitting to their children cultural interests and routes to social advantage (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 49). The next section highlights how the younger cohort have been equipped with the cultural resources and opportunities that have led to cultural ease, confidence and mobility across and within genres (Warde, Wright & Gayo-cal, 2008).

### **Voracious intensity**

The urban privileged Irish young of this research study have had lives typified by "concerted cultivation" (Lareau, 2003). They discuss with ease their cultural interests and are notably more confident and vocal than the older cohort in this regard. They highlight the broad range of their cultural interests and discuss how these overlap with those of their parents, and friends, and how this results in many shared experiences. Growing up in a world characterised by the proliferation of

many new forms of cultural engagement, interviewees have grown up in a world of cultural abundance (Wright, 2011).

Younger interviewees have been taken trips to cultural institutions, danced, fenced, rowed, engaged in karate, tennis, swimming, hurling, choir, basketball, debating, poetry, art, knitting, singing lessons, sailing, athletics, ballet and played tin whistle, fiddle, harp, traditional flute, classical piano and played the bosca ceoil<sup>42</sup> for as long as some can remember. This non-exhaustive list of extra-curricular activities is also accompanied by their attendance at theatres, galleries, concert halls, exhibitions, pop-up events, gigs, community halls, sports, local and music festivals such as Electric Picnic, Body and Soul (music festival) and national cultural festivals such as the Fleadh.<sup>43</sup> Younger interviewees are as likely to be found running the tech rig at the college drama society, supporting a friend at an orchestral event, exhibition, or gig, attending the opera with their aunt, as listening to their dad's Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash or classical music records. They browse, play, "make things, build things, dabble in architecture magazines and books" (Derek, 20, Architecture, UCD), and relax to a variety and eclecticism of cultural pursuits that is at times quite dizzying. In the words of one interviewee, "it's hard to avoid all the culture" (Dinny, 22, P.P.E.S., TCD).

Throughout the interview with Jim, for example, he mentions a range of highbrow and more popular cultural forms with ease. Whether he's listening to Holst's *The Planets* (on his iPad), performing in Gilbert and Sullivan musical theatre or watching his favourite Korean or Hollywood films, Jim's "high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods and credentials" sit easy on him (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 156). Demonstrating a breadth of cultural consumption across traditional highbrow, popular, folk and domestic pursuits, the younger cohort highlight a variety of cultural experiences in various cultural fields from a young age. Arts and culture suffuse their lifeworlds (Atkinson, 2011) and

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<sup>42</sup> The Irish box is a musical instrument like a small accordion.

<sup>43</sup> Fleadh Cheoil is an Irish music competition run by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. There are various stages to the competition. In Ireland there are county and provincial competitions leading to the All-Ireland Fleadh.

cultural activity permeates their lives. This does not mean that interviewees engage equally across these varying genres. Rather these young urban privileged demonstrate a relaxed engagement across a variety of cultural forms whilst also demonstrating a strong enthusiasm and interest in one or two specific cultural forms.

For Jim, it's performing in and organising musical theatre. He is passionate about this. As the Musical Society Media Officer in UCD, he is involved in promotional events, "planning the sets, putting up the lights and putting on auditions, getting freshers [1<sup>st</sup> years] in and also being in the show" (Jim, 22, Medicine, UCD). As a medicine student ("planning to go into neurology, possibly the brain"), with a demanding timetable and a highly pressurised competitive academic environment, his enthusiasm for the college Musical Society is the sole focus of his extra-curricular activities: "aside from the friends on my course, the majority of the people I hang out with are involved in the Musical Society." Jim lives and breathes his musical taste, literally and voraciously:

I'd sit down at the piano for 5 minutes or so every other day and sometimes an hour or so...I tried to teach myself the guitar and my sister plays the saxophone and I've taught myself to do that. I'd sing every day, it would usually be singing at the piano or singing while I'm doing other things or every weekend I'd be doing actual singing with piano or training. If a big show was coming to the Bord Gais [Energy Theatre], I'd get tickets and go and I've been to quite a few shows in the Abbey and the Gate [theatres]...If I had the chance, I'd go to as many as I could.  
(Jim, 22, Medicine, UCD)

Theoretically, voracity places an emphasis "on *how actively* individuals consume rather than on what they consume" (emphasis added, Sullivan & Katz-Gerro, 2010, p. 194). In Jim's responses we can see this is in an energetic, self-reinforcing way. His voracity for musical theatre is active, self-reinforcing and productive- the more he gives, the more he gets, the more he knows, the more he goes. Voracious cultural consumers such as this, demonstrate an insatiable cultural engagement that requires frequent participative engagement (Campbell, 1987 cited in Sullivan &

Katz-Gerro, 2007). He rehearses:

6-10pm Tuesdays and Thursdays and then, the week of the show, it's all you do for that week. Then as a committee member there are events on every day...I would probably be spending a couple of hours with the society every day. (Jim, 22, Medicine, UCD)

As the musicals he performs in contain a lot of dancing, he recently signed up to the Dance Society. Though he wouldn't consider himself a dancer, he wants to get a better sense of how to do this technically. When asked about what attracts him to musical theatre, his enthusiasm and eagerness for his chosen cultural pursuit become apparent:

You watch a really good show it's unlike any other sort of experience and to put on a show like that is very special. It's a very social activity. It's hard to describe the passion – it's just hard to describe it. I couldn't imagine being as engaged with something like paintings, it's just not as gripping. (Jim, 22, Medicine, UCD)

Jim's intense engagement with his chosen cultural form is articulated as more than a passing interest or sometime hobby but is a meaningful participation for Jim that is worth investing time and effort in. This is an all-consuming, identity-forming ontological experience – one, which is unlikely to dissipate in the near future, and one that is undoubtedly laying down foundations for future participation (Lizardo & Skiles, 2013; Pinnock, 2009).

Dinny's central enthusiasm is acting and directing theatre and he was brought up in a home surrounded by drama. He would hang out on the television sets, where his actor father was working as a child after school or help in theatrical and music productions at the local community hall that his dad had turned into a self-funding arts centre. Sometimes, himself and his brother would wait patiently while his mum did casting calls. After years of cultural inculcation, Dinny has developed a natural inclination towards theatre and drama. He claims he is "a bit of a purist" and reports he doesn't "do much else" (Dinny, 22, P.P.E.S., TCD). He spends a large portion of his time engaged in amateur and professional drama whether this in directing,

acting or performing roles. Now, with his own casting agent, he's not sure he'll pursue a career related to his academic studies – though he's not ruling it out. At the moment, he is dabbling with the thought of a professional acting career. He is determined to finish his academic studies first though as he feels this will “give him options.”

While Dinny expresses a general cultural interest in films, books and the game, Dungeons and Dragons, he is singularly focused on theatre as a specific cultural interest and enthusiasm. The theatre is also at the centre of his social network and the core focus of his future career as this quote demonstrates:

I'd go to mostly theatre shows and sometimes a few friends who would have showcases on or film screenings for Bow St [acting organisation] or different acting institutions. The New Theatre would have a lot of nice stuff in it. Recently I was doing a show in New Theatre and I would have had a few friends in this...For myself, rehearsals and plays- it's about two or three times a week and obviously intensifies during the performance week. I'm not the most social person. A big social outlet for me would be rehearsals and plays. With the acting bug you can get very antsy not doing anything for a while. I've got things in place like an agent etc though but I want to finish off my degree first of all, then throw myself in.

(Dinny, P.P.E.S., TCD)

Through this potent participation we can see how Dinny's “taste is formed as it is expressed and is expressed as it is formed” (Hennion, 2004, p. 5). His voracious enthusiasm for this cultural form is underpinned by a confident attitude that belies a long history of cultural familiarity. One that moves his cultural interest beyond a shallow or top-slice engagement into an intense and reflexive cultural participation in which he “enter[s] into” the activity and internalises the “identified disposition” (Hennion, 2004, pp. 4-5). This intense voracity, like Jim's, is a committed engagement; an intense enthusiastic and singular focus that is akin to the fanaticism of Benzecry's (2011) “heroes” and Hennion's (2004) “great amateurs.”

This experience forms a deep cultural attachment for interviewees – one that is a

testament to the dynamic, personal and productive, cultural participation for each individual. A strongly individualised and subjective expression of cultural interests, this also leads to a “collective” to a “community of amateurs” of individuals like Dinny and Jim, who actively define themselves by their cultural enthusiasms and join with others in a reflexive engagement with their cultural interests (Hennion, 2004, p. 5). We saw this also with the older cohort, specifically those who were upwardly socially mobile and who had developed a near evangelical belief in arts, culture and creativity. As with Maeve (50, Garden Designer) and Terry (46, User Interface Designer) these Irish creatively and fullsomely enter into an activity that affirms and substantiates their identity and disposition. The difference here is not that the passionate and enthused in the younger cohort are socially and upwardly mobile, rather they are wholly located in the dominant class. What is notable is their passionate engagement and intense commitment to one or two cultural forms that is deeply informed by a range of cultural experiences.

For Jim and for Dinny, cultural voracity is a significant feature in their lives and manifests as a practice-focussed, culturally-mediated and asserted identity. While for Ines (21, Art History, TCD) and Siobha (19, Art History, TCD) their culturally-mediated identity is asserted through a strong visual aesthetic that takes inspiration from previous eras. Ines and Siobha share a similar deep attachment to their cultural interests, which for them is the historical and contemporary arts. Like Dinny and Jim, they have parents who have influenced their cultural interests. Ines was “dragged around” art galleries as a child “with varying levels of reluctance” and continues to join in with both parents in their cultural interests:

My dad’s really interested in history and I would go to museums etc with him. My mum would have encouraged me to draw when I was younger and I still help her make things at home, or hold things for her while she makes collages and things.  
(Ines, 21, Art History, TCD)

This cultural transmission has led to an inculcated disposition that now translates into her own cultural interests:

I spend a lot of time going round the National Museum or National Gallery, and I really like the National Museum as a place as it's very quiet and peaceful and the way some people do yoga or meditation I like to going into museums to clear my head...it's odd cause going into museums- it's relaxing and kind of like meditation [*embarrassed tone*]. (Ines, 21, Art History, TCD)

Ines clearly invests a lot of her time in visits to cultural institutions and feels comfortable here, as these are places where she experiences peace and calm. A long history of cultural familiarity and persistent reengagement with arts practice as well as cultural institutions has developed her cultural interests to a level at which she experiences an effortless ease that is restorative and nurturing. This easy voracity is also supported by her academic interests and as a student art historian she has consciously developed her own style to support this. She makes many references to 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century artists throughout our interview and shares how her strong aesthetic opinions also inform her clothing choices. She highlights:

My friends joke I have a strong brand: I work in a library; I am art historian; I am like old movies; I wear a lot of dresses; I wear long skirts – more comfortable than a mini. The amount of times I look like a 1950s detective- I'm a bit like a character in the 50s. (Ines, 21, Art History, TCD)

Siobha, also an art history student, has a similarly constructed aesthetic that she links to her identity. As Ines did, Siobha particularly positions her thoughts on her clothing choices in relation to a retro- and vintage-styled choices as she name-checks mid-twentieth century females known for their strong aesthetic clothing choices:

Anyone into culture is like a vintage head, and into anything particularly twentieth century. We do some much research and casual, constant looking at stuff. So it's a lot of looking back. You can see all of it. Imagery- it's very accessible, you don't have to stumble on it. I was really into the Velvet Underground for a bit, and then I came across the name Eddie Sedgwick and I could see the clothes she wears...It depends on where I am but it is generally minimal and a lot of black and if we are

going out, we'll go out in black and we'll look like witch coven. Black, denim, white, grey and more into accessories but all minimal, rarely green and red. The people I'm interested in, that's what they would wear. It's more part of my preference. It's been ingrained in me. Oh well, I like Georgia O'Keeffe and she was wearing white shirts and millinery stuff and it's all very simple and it filters down through that and the people you are interested in... It's an artsy thing. Almost like a 60s French thing. (Siobha, 19, Art History, TCD)

This self-conscious awareness of a constructed identity is an exercise in reflexive aesthetics that links strongly to Siobha and Ines voracious cultural interests. While neither Ines nor Siobha actively practice their preferred cultural form (as Jim and Dinny do), they do exercise their cultural disposition and visual art taste through their strong sense of identity. Undoubtedly to function in any of their committed cultural worlds, is to be 'inside,' is to know how to behave, how to engage and how to spend your time productively, co-producing the self. Holt (1997) suggests that this is because constructing identity in contemporary society is a possible, multiple and fluid endeavour and one that is no longer a predetermined mix of inherited status and family.

However, Lizardo and Skiles (2008) have highlighted that this is because individuals increasingly need to differentiate themselves through their cultural disposition and taste. This is as a result of rising education standards as well as post war affluence. Considering this in the light of the homogenous nature of Irish society, it could be considered that these urban privileged young are differentiating themselves through their cultural taste. As noted by Tovey and Share (2003) in *Chapter 1 Ireland*, in Irish society everyone is more or less aligned to the norm of the middle class. The quotes from Ines and Siobha therefore provide support for this and also highlight the consciously constructed identities of these Irish young.

The sense of pastiche articulated, whereby aesthetics have been decoded and are repacked to present the postmodern contemporary self, supports individuals in a dynamic process of identity construction, status affirmation and network building (Featherstone, 2007; Simmel, [1904] 1957). One, where deep and reflexive

knowledge, transforms each individual from observers, attendees or amateurs with a liking or general enthusiasm for a cultural form, to a voracious group of specialists who embody, incorporate and live their cultural experience in a way that is definitional and formational of identity (Beck, 1992). This “precession of simulacra” creates a reality, or rather an illusory reality, of signification (Baudrillard, [1981] 2006). In this way, identity consciousness and construction allies with the hermeneutic concern of the individual, social perception and status association and the rise of “middle class modes of individualisation” (Bennett et al, 2009, p. xi).

At the same time and in a similarly self-conscious vein, many interviewees also highlight how they consciously choose simplicity, block colours and no logos as a style of dress, i.e. a conscious choice to choose clothes with no strong branding as a way to clearly mark their aesthetic style. This reverse approach to that outlined above which requires a way to blend in, to not stand out but to ‘norm’, is also a way of making definite aesthetic choices but is one aligned to “Normcore” sensibilities. Friedman et al (2015) find this very much allied to practices of distinction and the discerning sensibility of the dominant. This they have termed emerging cultural capital (Friedman et al, 2015). It is emerging because the nature of cultural capital is changing and has adapted to retain currency and value in the social field. This means that practices of distinction no longer focus necessarily on *what* is being consumed but on *how* the practice of consumption occurs (Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014). This means that the content of the cultural form engaged with is less relevant than the ability to practice discernment and “make abstract aesthetic judgments” that are disinterested (Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014, p. 113). The following sections of this chapter consider the emerging cultural capital disposition among the younger cohort interviewed.

### **Knowing culture**

With the proliferation of cultural opportunity, it has become crucial for the Irish young of the dominant class to be able to mobilise their taste and distinction within a wide range of references- in an appropriate and field specific way. The years of cultural inculcation and transmission, extra-curricular activities and cultural

experiences has developed cultural references and knowledge that interviewees mobilise easily and casually. What becomes notable is that the content of the cultural form engaged with, is much less relevant than the ability to demonstrate discernment and “make abstract aesthetic judgments” (Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014, p. 113). Of importance is the ability to discriminate within genres and / or between genres, to contextualise knowledge and have sufficient information and references to practice discernment without being a “purist” (Dinny, 22, PPES, TCD). Niche taste such as liking the visuals and colours of Japanese films for example, or “weird psychological cult classics” as we witnessed with Siobha (19, Art History, TCD), differentiates interviewees from others who have less knowledge, references and experiences borne out of long familiarity (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991, p. 54).

An information seeking disposition is therefore applied as a “knowing mode of appropriation of culture” (Prieur & Savage, 2015, p. 316). To demonstrate a reflexive, knowing aesthetic capacity and to be able to transpose this across high and popular culture without much apparent effort is a distinguishing feature of the young urban privileged and those with emerging cultural capital. Possessing a disposition of cultural knowing requires understanding and being conversant in a cultural range: knowing what’s good, what’s not good, and locating this individualised judgment within a contextual range. This requires stocks of cultural knowledge and also understanding when and how to use this knowledge.

To elucidate this point further, I have detailed snippets from research interviews below. These comments demonstrate cultural knowing across niche Korean films as well as musical theatre, Scandinavian drama and social media.

Demonstrating discerning judgment, Eileen carefully chooses genres and versions of films that demonstrate her cultural knowing. She is very certain about what she likes and doesn’t like in relation to cultural forms and specifically names one or two movies based on classic texts:

I’d say it’s more what I wouldn’t go and see- I don’t like horror movies, I don’t like macho action ones- they’re just boring. I guess, anything that is interesting. I don’t

like proper comedies or stereotypical comedies or more vulgar ones- I just don't find it funny. I like dramas. Yeah...I'd say dramas would be the ones I'd mostly go see. I like the 1996 version of Romeo and Juliet and I like the Pride and Prejudice with Kiera Knightley- it's really good. I like a lot of films but they are the ones that really stuck with me. (Eileen, 20, Mechanical Engineering, TCD)

Eileen has a strong sense of her cultural tastes and dislikes as she discerns between Netflix originals and other network productions. While she "likes a lot of films" the ones she highlights distinctly flex her high stocks of inculcated capital. Not only does she highlight a sixteenth century Shakespearian text that has been made into a film. She identifies a late twentieth century version of this film as her distinct preference. She also highlights an early nineteenth century novel that she enjoyed as a film and in so doing demonstrates her knowledge of film, novels and dramas and specific versions of these. Siobha, who also likes dramas, takes this further and specifically likes and names "cult classics":

I wouldn't like any thrillers or action films. I like dramas, I really love cult classics but no one puts them on. The IFI puts them on every now and again. Old stuff I generally watch at home. I watch on laptop, by myself or with friends. I'd go to the cinema a lot with my mum. She loves the actual ritual of going to the cinema. I've run out of stuff on Netflix, I tend to illegally stream stuff cause it's easier. I'd rarely sit down and watch television. I'll always have something in mind to watch. Cult classics, Rocky Horror Picture Show, Reservoir Dogs...anything like that. With books, it's cult classics – weird psychological stuff. I read non-fiction as well. I love autobiographies and memoirs and stuff like that. Any fiction I read would be cult classics. I wouldn't read contemporary fiction. Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas. I read Orlando over the summer. (Siobha, 19, Art History, TCD)

Indeed, Bryson (1996) highlights that individuals can define themselves by what they don't like just as much as what they do like, and Ines offers comments in this regard:

I wouldn't watch a lot of rom coms, I don't think there has been very many good ones for a couple of years. Some of the stuff that has come out recently isn't

great. Now that I have Netflix, I like the ones they make themselves. I think it's a really interesting format. They kind of give the people making the shows a good budget and you can see that. So many networks don't have funding in comparison to major TV networks, like HBO has, and you can see the trends. Like in the past five years their productions are a lot like movies now, big projects. If you look at Game of Thrones or any of the Netflix ones, and Stranger Things- I really liked it, it references back to things in the Eighties, and you can pick up on the inspiration and visual references. (Ines, 21, Art History, TCD)

As noted by Bourdieu, this aesthetic disposition and discernment, as distinct from the content of cultural participation, was the aspect that mattered most in the “pursuit of distinction” (Friedman et al, 2015, p. 2):

The even rarer capacity to constitute, aesthetically, objects that are ordinary or even ‘common’...or to apply the principles of a pure aesthetic in the most everyday choices of everyday life. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 40)

Further, these judgments of taste are ones that are shared, discussed, worked through with others, with their peer group. These are not just conversations individuals have had with this researcher. These appear as well rehearsed opinions and judgments garnered through previous conversations, with subtleties exercised and socially aired. Here, Jim brings us through his preferences and demonstrates cultural knowing and boundary marking while doing so:

A good [live musical theatre] recording I'd watch that. I think I like ones that are kind of realistic. So I wouldn't like a musical like Wicked- it's all style and no substance. One of my favourite one's is Parade- it's got good music, it doesn't need like big showy theatricals. I like ones that are quite grounded. The ones I like are more modern and they are big and have dramatic endings. If you listen to the older ones they are more predictable, though I do enjoy them. With films, I recently watched 3 or 4 Korean films I found on iTunes and I really enjoyed those. I really don't like reality shows or any of those fabricated shows like Clickbait or celebrity's twitters that are fabricated. If I knew someone was into this I wouldn't be so keen. (Jim, 22, Medicine, UCD)

What appears as a conversation regarding an individual's film likes and dislikes, or their opinions on a recent Netflix production, therefore become an exercise in cultural knowing and subtlety of judgment. To miss the discernment that is taking place is therefore to remain outside the conversation and excluded from the subtleties of a shared conversation between like individuals. In this way, the interviewees in the younger cohort draw boundaries. In fact there are many similarities between Jim's comment above regarding "Clickbait" and Hannah's (47, Creative Designer) comment regarding Kim Kardashian in the previous chapter – both are showing us practices of distinction quietly at work. They also show us that while individuals can traverse the range and general register of culture and move from Korean movie to iTunes, from amateur music show to Shakespearean drama, they do choose selectively and make discerning judgments and choices as they go (Friedman, 2011).

These discerning choices and judgments are made time and time again by this younger cohort- not only in relation to cultural forms but also across genres and within genres. In this way, individuals appear cultural-experienced, culturally-knowing and culturally-able. Cultural knowing then is shown to be flexible and transposable between and across cultural forms. This creates a "heterarchy of cultural modes of appreciation that jostle widely for legitimacy" as interviewees' demonstrate a capacity to juggle, flex and bend their cultural knowledge (Friedman et al, 2015, p. 3). In this way, as Hanquinet, Roose and Savage (2014) note, it is not *what* is consumed culturally as a measure of quantitative accumulation that marks out privilege but rather *how* this consumption occurs.

Khan highlights how every child in school now reads Shakespeare and is encouraged to explore and "know" the world (2012, p. 183). He attributes this perspective to the possibility in society that the "world of knowledge has flattened":

As knowledge has become more democratised, it is no longer valuable for making distinctions within hierarchies...[education] cultivate[s] a sense that these things

are knowable and that one can relate to them not by knowing them inside out but by making casual connections between them...the world is available, knowable and at your disposal. (2012, p. 183)

Khan suggest that with information available to more people, it is not how this knowledge is acquired but how this knowledge is used as interviewees have demonstrated. Those with stocks of cultural capital demonstrate cultural ease and confidence aligned with the ability to make connections or draw on informed references, that “creates a recognisable mark of difference” today (Atkinson, 2011; Bellavance, 2008; Jarness, 2015; Khan, 2012, p. 183). Friedman et al (2015) find that emerging cultural capital takes many forms. Notable amongst these is a disposition for knowledge acquisition and one that seeks information on “anything” interesting. This sections highlights how evidence is found for this amongst interviewees in the younger Irish cohort.

### **Informational capital**

An information-seeking and knowledge acquiring behaviour is not necessarily focussed on concepts interviewees are grappling with for their academic studies but rather is focussed on a general desire for background information on most things encountered. Interviewees generally like anything “interesting,” and they like information on “a huge range of subjects, history and general topics as well” (Maire, 19, Biology/Chemistry, TCD). The younger cohort repeats this time and time again throughout the research interviews as they articulate a hunger for knowledge acquisition and search for information across various areas of interest and digital platforms:

I'd watch Netflix...I've watched a lot on climate change recently and watched a lot on food consumption and its impact on climate change. I got hooked on documentaries cause they are so shocking. Dramas based around racial tensions and I think they show quite an accurate depiction of times gone by. I spend a lot of time online. In recent months I've discovered that you can read a lot of articles online and you can get those connected to your Facebook. And I've started reading those. Like for example, Bernie Saunders – he's really interesting and

regarding American systems, and obviously the new President and people he is allocating to new positions. Like Scott Pruitt, the new Head of the Environmental Protection Agency and I like reading things like that, that inform me about what's going on. It informs my college life and helps me because of constant talk about debates and issues, on environmental issues. (Senan, 19, Geography & Political Science, TCD)

John takes this further and highlights the role played by the internet in accruing knowledge. He underlines the spiral he falls into when searching for information, one thing that leads him to another and then he "falls into the hole":

I have a Reddit account too- people post interesting facts and news documentaries you might not have seen. I'd say languages and general things you might not know about science or maths or some people do like V-logs from the West End and the kind of stuff they get up to. I often find if I see something I don't know at all and then I'd go on to Wikipedia and you fall into the hole of trying to find out things...what's this, what's that, what's this, and I don't remember half of it the next day...I fall into the trap of reading too much behind it. (John, 21, Science, UCD)

Architecture student, Derek (20, UCD) emphasises how important it is for him to have good knowledge about not only the "quality" of older films but also how to make "good films." As such his knowledge accumulation is also often focused on cultural production:

I often watch videos about filmmaking and what makes good films and they would often reference older films and I would go back and watch them (Derek, 20, Architecture, UCD)

Many interviewees also reference how important quality is to them and they define this as work that is well made, cohesive and coherent. The majority also agreed they liked "substance," with Senan mentioning that he liked "an accurate depiction of times gone by" (19, Geography & Political Science, TCD).

Prieur and Savage note the crucial part played in information-seeking and knowledge acquisition by the internet and digital communications: “there is considerable evidence that familiarity with digital communication has become increasingly significant in the daily lives of the educated” (2013, p. 261). This does not mean that all things digital are engaged with indiscriminately, rather, there is a certain selection of knowledge and information-based subject matter that is more attractive and is selected over other information that is deemed less valuable. Indeed, it should be highlighted, that interviewees stressed their dislike of celebrity culture, Twitter feeds and Facebook posts. Many had “unfriended”, blocked or deleted these social media applications and were turning now to information platforms such as Ted talks, YouTube and Netflix (amongst others) to gather and extend their knowledge and accrue information.

It seems reasonable to suggest that the privileged young Irish in this chapter have developed distinct information-processing and acquisition capabilities as they sift through, select and collect knowledge of value, and as noted above, substance and standards are very important in this regard. This supports observations by Sullivan who highlights that this “ability to collect and interpret relevant information on a given question is a demonstration of cultural knowledge and social standing (Sullivan, 2007, section 3.7). A knowledge-searching, information-acquiring and quality-seeking disposition in the digital age remains in line with Bourdieu’s cultural capital premise. Particularly if we consider cultural capital as a relational concept, that is transposable to a contemporary context (Prior, 2005, 2015). This should be no surprise as:

Students from the cultured classes are those best prepared...to adapt themselves to a system of diffuse, implicit requirements. (Bourdieu & Passeron 1979, p. 75)

Prieur and Savage note that Bourdieu suggested, in some of his later works that “the term cultural capital should be replaced by *informational capital*”. While this “suggestion of his has not received much echo...we believe the development of [the] information society has proven that the term informational capital may catch

some new tendencies better” (*italics in the original*, Prieur & Savage, 2013, pp. 261-262). Certainly on the basis of the “interested” disposition across the dominant young in this research study, this suggestion has some grounding. It seems reasonable to suggest that what we are witnessing is the manifestation of inculcated cultural capital in our digital mediated age. It also seems reasonable to suggest that this disposition is aligned to those in the dominant class as a way of reproducing and affirming social privilege.

The increase in the availability and quantity of information on the internet facilitates and supports a knowing mode and appropriation of information – information that can be used or referenced as required. It is the possession and adaptability of this knowledge that is key and the disposition that knows when, where and how to use the information acquired, that is of importance. This next section highlights how the availability of information that individuals can access creates a sense that the world is equal and accessible to all; that hierarchies don’t exist and that snobbishness and active assertion of distinction is no longer useful as a social mode of distinction. This is because society gives the appearance that acquiring knowledge is democratic and as noted by Khan (2012) above, a sense that the world is knowable and available. This results in the abolition of overt snobbishness and a sense of cultural egalitarianism as this next section shows.

### **Abolition of snobbishness**

The young Irish individuals interviewed in this research study demonstrate that they are firmly rooted in a globalised, mediated digital world where entertainment, information and cultural activity proliferate (Wright, 2011). They highlight experiences which show that the social field is now characterised by “multiple and divergent forces” there is much opportunity to gather knowledge (Bellavance, 2008, p. 212). This provides interviewees with a cultural arena in which the “natural” browsing and grazing across the range of brows also creates a flattening of the cultural plane. However, they also suggest an equalisation of cultural experience results and a sense of cultural possibility and accessibility prevails. Indeed, one of the interviewees captures this well:

With so much culture available, it's open to everyone. There's no limitations around who can engage with it. (Siobha, 19, Art History, TCD)

This "elimination of snobbishness", carries an egalitarian ethic that suggests any form of arts and culture is there for all, available to all, accessible to all (Lamont, 1992; Prieur & Savage, 2013, p. 253). Snobbishness, traditionally associated with those of high social status and cultural knowing, has been converted to a cultural egalitarianism that places emphasis on an individual's own agency and capacity to engage in activities that are of interest to them. According to interviewees: it's up to people to engage if they want to (Bennett et al, 2009). Some do acknowledge that of course money "is a factor" and the ability to pay for, say, theatre tickets, could be an issue for some, but by and large, culture is for everyone: "it's just a matter of knowing what's on" (Senan, 19, Geography & Political Science, TCD). This isn't to say that interviewees don't acknowledge inequalities in society but rather that arts and culture is viewed as something that:

You will always have people with a level of interest- you wouldn't meet many people who hate music for example. Anyone can learn to play an instrument so that wouldn't matter which class you came from. (Lou, 21, Music & French, TCD)

The multiplicity of creative possibilities, opportunities and experiences have proliferated to such an extent, that interviewees articulate that the onus is on the individual, regardless of class position or recognition of advantage in life (Jarness, 2015). This apparent openness and equality of access has become a defining feature of emerging cultural capital. With Bennett et al noting that the socially "reflexive appropriation" of culture "in a spirit of openness" has fast become the defining feature of the dominant class (2009, p. 194).

Jarness and Friedman take this further and suggest that upper middle class individuals work hard at appearing open and tolerant as a moral imperative that it is a "reflexive monitoring of self-presentation" that is distinctly aligned with

Bourdieu's "strategy of condescension" (2017, p. 14). Therefore, this is very much a presentation of interviewees' "honourable selves," appearing open and tolerant while harbouring private feelings of snobbery and condescension (Jarness & Friedman, 2017, p. 14). We witnessed with Hannah (47, Creative Designer) and a couple of others in the older cohort who had quiet internalised judgment that they rarely shared.

Robert, the son of a dentist from Mullingar town, a regional market town in the middle of Ireland, articulates a different perspective to that of his city peers:

My college friends would be interested in art history and plays. Going to museums. My friends at home are completely different but they have other interests and I don't think they have been as exposed to it. And the things they have been exposed to is through social media. They'd be into street art, contemporary art but there's still an appreciation there. (22, Jewish Studies, TCD)

Robert is the only individual interviewed to come from a regional background in the younger cohort. The ability to think and act naturally across various brows is highlighted by Robert as a question of exposure, familiarity, location and education. He doesn't directly state this but he implies that infrastructural access as well as *a priori* knowledge is a pre-requisite for highbrow cultural participation and group membership. Marking a difference between the rural and urban experiences and exposures of his peers. While Robert relates walking with his parents up country lanes at weekends and appreciating the birdsong and the air, the urban, educated middle class, young Irish adults of this research study have grown up in Dublin city and relate a longer more continuous history of cultural exposure due to basic proximity to cultural infrastructure and nearness of possibility.

### **Cosmopolitan nationalism**

A further striking feature of the research interviews and a distinct feature of emerging cultural capital is the outward-facing nature and global references of this younger cohort (Prieur & Savage, 2015). While remaining geographically fixed and resident in Ireland this group of young Irish adults reach widely and internationally

in their cultural references and knowledge. Ines captures this well:

I'd say the culture I engage in is Western centric not Irish centric. It would be American or European but I don't necessarily know much about cultures outside of my own. Maybe that's the nature of globalisation now. Everything is so connected...it's not so insular. (21, Art History, TCD)

Ines highlights above how global flows of information don't necessarily mean that interviewees know more about other cultures in any in-depth way, rather that they know more of a general nature that is not especially Irish. It is also notable how little Irish culture interviewees reference or choose to participate in. While they remain proud of their Irish cultural heritage and cite contemporary Irish authors, actors, or musicians that they enjoy and support, most consciously dis-identify with cultural work produced on the island of Ireland – in either contemporary or traditional form. Many remark that other than the fact that they were born here or they “enjoy the odd pint of Guinness” (Derek, 20, Architecture, UCD), they don't feel that anything they do is Irish. This is also true of those who are Irish speakers:

Other than speaking Irish, I think it's because my parents don't care about that kind of thing. Though I would like Irish movies I guess- I would purposely pick an Irish movie and actors – you know that kind of way. (Sally, 18, Art History & Irish, UCD)

However, scholars note the emergence of a “European field in which the well-educated professional and managerial classes are increasingly playing” (Hanquinet, 2018, p. 247). Others explore the cultural reach of the “white British” (Savage, Wright & Gayo-cal, 2010, review the 2002 – 2006 CCSE data; also see Bennett et al, 2009, for more). This research concurs with Savage et al (2010), as some interviewees show a leaning towards cultural references that are largely Anglophone in nature while also extending further afield. Quite a number stated that “so much of what I watch or read or consume could be American or English” (Jim, 22, Medicine, UCD); or “everything I do is American – my phone, the movies, Instagram – I mean everything's American...I don't like any Irish bands: they're all

English and American” (Sally, 18, Art History and Irish, UCD). These quotations add new empirical grounding to the now infamous phrase, delivered by previous government Minister for Enterprise, Mary Harney that Irish society is “closer to Boston than to Berlin” (Brennock, 2000, July 22). Other young Irish adults interviewed for this research study, graze a global field of international arts and culture. There is little preferring of European arts and culture, and certainly little focus on working with a hierarchy of European highbrow arts as Bourdieu referenced as preferred modes of distinction. Rather interviewees are as likely to watch Korean or Japanese films, engage in Grime music (and clothes), follow US Thrasher skateboarding trends (<http://www.thrasher magazine.com/>) or create their own worlds in Sziget- Budapest’s seven day, multi-genre, island music festival (<https://szigetfestival.com/>).

In an increasingly global world, information flows across nation state boundaries and settled societies are characterised by “post-national cosmopolitan subjectivities” that “feed off globally oriented forms of cultural consumption” (Savage et al, 2010, p. 598). As Hanquinet notes, this features in the “reconfiguration of cultural capital” (2018, p. 336). “Cosmopolitan nationalism” specifically highlights “the striking decline in the salience” of Eurocentric attachments with a generally more open disposition towards broader cultural referents (Savage et al, 2010, p. 607). With a global cultural field on which to draw and greater cultural references that range across the brows, these highly educated, high-status young Irish individuals are positioned in the social field, “exactly where one would expect them to be” (Priour & Savage, 2013, p. 253). This perhaps is not surprising given “small nation” status of Ireland that lends itself to a distinct mobile and migratory population (Morse, Csilla & Pálffy, 1993) as well as the transnational and digital interconnectivity of contemporary society. Yet the cultural reach of the young Irish in this chapter is quite remarkable.

### **Summary**

This younger cohort flex their cultural knowledge across the general register of culture with a discriminating but open and easy disposition replete with cultural

knowing. In so doing, they highlight the accretive disposition of the cultural distinct. Like those in the older age group, these young Irish from the dominant class consider class an irrelevant concept and disavow and deny their social location in the class structure until class dissonance is experienced. This research therefore highlights how class awareness and experience differ across class groups and how the individualised and resourced experience of the young dominant has fed into the accepted view that class is not a relevant concept in Ireland.

Overarchingly, however, this chapter tells the story of the urban privileged young in Dublin. These Irish young are well educated, have choices and opportunities in life, and access to social, economic and cultural resources with arts and culture suffusing their lifeworlds and cultural experience permeating their lives. A long history of cultural inculcation and ascription, garnered across the course of a lifetime, has been fostered by parents, close relatives and individuals themselves, and resulted in interviewees demonstrating a particular “ontogenetic” history that has centred on “concerted cultivation” (Lareau, 2003). This chapter has shown how this early (and ongoing) familiarisation with cultural activities, in formal and informal ways, has resulted in high stocks of embodied cultural capital, that manifests as cultural ease and a knowing disposition that makes discriminating judgments across and between a multiplicity of cultural forms and genres.

This chapter also highlights how the nature of cultural capital is changing and how the concept is emerging as one that focuses on the transposability of distinction. Appearing highly omnivorous, yet potentially more voracious than their older counterparts in the previous chapter, these younger interviewees engage keenly and deeply with their cultural form of choice yet work hard at flattening the cultural plane, acquiring knowledge, seeking information and garnering new experiences meanwhile. The suggested access for all and the equalising of the cultural plane along with the overarching experience that the world is knowable – through increased education, information availability and digital interconnectivity and a global purview – demonstrates a lack of awareness and reflexivity around the experience of others. Interviewees maintain open and tolerant dispositions that are

globally receptive while nationally proud. This does not mean that practices of distinction are absent, rather that aesthetic distancing, a knowing disposition and a pure gaze remain present. In this way this chapter presents evidence for how the concept of cultural capital is changing and that it is *how* an individual engages that is the mark of distinction today (Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014).

The next chapter considers both cohorts and highlights patterns and influences of cultural participation through cultural ascription. This comparative chapter also presents the case for the continued relevance of Bourdieu's cultural capital in Ireland today and suggests that forces of ascription continue to exert powerful force with increased levels of education supporting strategies of distinction and the perpetuation of class privilege.

# Chapter 6 Comparison of Younger and Older Cohorts

*[T]he love of art is not love at first sight but is born of long familiarity.* (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991, p. 54)

## Chapter synopsis

This chapter explores the cultural interests of the young and older cohort comparatively. This chapter reaches back to both cohorts' parents and traces patterns of cultural participation and considers how they have been handed down. This chapter furthers the consideration that both cohorts manifest cultural ascription as general cultural consumption akin to cultural omnivorousness and considers the case for the cultural omnivore in Ireland based on sociability. With both generational cohorts de-differentiated by rising education standards, as well as post war affluence, this chapter emphasises how a particular ontogenetic history characterised by cultural ascription leads to a certain cultural participation outcome. This, along with active and ongoing cultural exposure results in interviewees' ability to draw on and mobilise a range of cultural referents, display nuance and subtlety in judgment and distinguish themselves from others in the social field. Through these strategies of distinction, young and old cohorts mobilise a social reproduction strategy that perpetuates class privilege and marks out the powerful. Finally, this chapter shows how the nature of cultural capital is changing and how practices of distinction have had to adapt to retain currency and value in the contemporary social field.

## Cultural ascription: passing the cultural baton

As noted in previous chapters, cultural familiarity and exposure are experienced by the privileged urban class in Dublin in both age cohorts. This has laid down cultural participation patterns that have remained apparent across the lifetime of those interviewed. The two age cohorts have experienced intergenerational transmission

with the cultural interests and engagements of interviewees' parents filtering through to both groups. In these instances, cultural transmission is articulated as closely similar to, and sometimes a repeat of, parental patterns of cultural activity.

A good example of this in the older cohort is Emer. Emer (46, journalist) grew up in south county Dublin and now lives close to the city centre. An English Literature and History graduate from TCD, she trained as a journalist and now works for the national broadcaster, Radió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ). Her father (originally from Northern Ireland) was a bank manager and met her mum (originally from Sligo in the west of Ireland) in the bank – though she had to give up her up her career due to the marriage bar. Throughout Emer's childhood, her father made a concerted effort to take her and her brothers to formal arts and cultural events at the weekends. She recounts how her childhood was filled with regular and varied cultural participation:

They would have entered us into Feis Cheoil<sup>44</sup> and dad had an interest in the theatre and at Christmas time he would bring us. He would have taken us into the National History Museum as well - I'd say it would have been every second week. Out of a month, we would have gone ever weekend to the library and every second week we would go into the town and he would take us to the galleries or the museums and the other weekend would have been DIY and house stuff. He was a massive reader and he would have taken out lots of books. He would have taken us to the St Patrick's Day festival and we would have participated in it. We had one family holiday abroad France one year. That was heavy on the culture - he felt like it was his only chance to go. He also bought art and he would occasionally go to London for work - he'd audit the Bank of Ireland there and he would always come home with a painting. (Emer, 46, Journalist)

Emer now engages in a similar cultural participation profile with her family. Specifically dedicating her leisure time to cultural activities with her husband and son on a regular, weekly basis. When asked about her cultural participation, her

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<sup>44</sup> An Irish music organisation, which holds an annual competitive festival of classical music.

breadth of engagement, family-focus and time-invested, it is strikingly similar to that of her own childhood:

I suppose because Eoin [her son] is 4, I spend a lot of time in parks, but we take him to the Print Museum and the National Gallery because Gary [her partner] is interested in art we do go to galleries. We'd spend a lot of time in the RHA [Royal Hibernian Art Gallery] as they have a little kid's section. We would probably do something like that. I'd bring Eoin to the library every weekend and he's thrilled with that. Dad also brought us to the Lambert Puppet Theatre like I do now with Eoin - but it's expensive. (Emer, 46, Journalist)

This sharing and socialising of parental cultural interests with children and in so doing, the handing down of cultural interests from parent to child is pervasive throughout the interviews with the majority of the older cohort. It is articulated as a clear form of cultural ascription and a passing on of cultural interests and practices.

This family-focus is also evidenced in the responses of the younger cohort, as this example from Robert and from Ines (the 1950s, librarian-styled history of art student we met in Chapter 5) shows:

I've ended up repeating a lot of their activities which I never thought I would have but I do. Both mum and dad are very interested in the arts and the ones I get involved in probably stems from them because they are both very involved in it. (Robert, 22, Jewish Studies, TCD)

Definitely in regards to galleries, my mum loves art and...I was dragged around and probably went more than my brother. My dad's really interested in history and I would go to museums etc with him. Storytelling, and I loved drama and it was very much my interest, and my granny, she would bring children out – if ballet was on in Dublin, she would bring us. I would have done a lot of formal activities as a child. The primary school I went to, placed a lot of emphasis on this. Exhibitions are so much tied up with my course and I'd go with my mum and she would be going to an opening but not as often as I'd like to. (Ines, 21, Art History, TCD)

Ines's quote also demonstrates how it is not just parents that are involved in cultural ascription but also grandparents that provide cultural influence and focus. Aine also mentions her grandparents in our interview. When asked did she go to any cultural activities when growing up, she responds:

Yeah I definitely would have. Both my mum and her dad who was an architect who was retired now and paints as well. So anytime if I met up with my grandparents, it would have been at an art exhibition. Always taken to galleries when I was younger. If there was a question on the paper at LC – so I had to go to thing – look at the lighting, look at the curating and so mum made a massive effort to take me to things that could be useful. (Aine, 20, Architecture, UCD)

Aine now loves art and loves to paint (“I find it very therapeutic”) which is perhaps unsurprising given the cultural exposure she has received from parents and grandparents of the visual art. This familial sharing of cultural interests lays down similarity of cultural interests to parental enthusiasms. This follows findings from Crook (1997), De Graaf et al (2000) and Sullivan (2000, 2002) who note that parental cultural participation has a bearing on children's future cultural participation. We see this in the quote from Robert above and also here from Asa:

When I travel now I would tend to go to art galleries which is unbelievable to my parents as I was so averse to my parents bringing me when I was growing up. I went to Valencia last summer, to a modern art museum and a fine arts museum - one was traditional and the other, a contemporary art museum. And when I go away with my friends they tend to be quite interested in art and we would put art galleries on the agenda. (Asa, 21, Medicine, UCD)

Highly influential in forming cultural taste, this research shows how parents and grandparents lay down cultural participation patterns that remain apparent across the lifetime of those interviewed with the cultural interests and engagements of interviewees' parents filtering through substantially. Like Dinny (22, P.P.E.S., TCD) and Jim (22, Medicine, UCD) whom we met in the previous chapter, Asa, Aine and

Ines quoted here, as well as many others in the younger cohort of research participants, possess highly developed cultural competencies and display strong enthusiasms for similar cultural forms as their parents. As children of middle class professionals, it is therefore notable how interviewees' parents have made a concerted effort to share their cultural interests and develop those of their children. As these quotes show they have done this throughout the children's lives and continue to enjoy these activities with the children now they are older. This research evidence therefore confirms the link between younger interviewees' social class and their cultural experience.

The longitudinal study, *Growing up in Ireland* (Economic and Social Research Institute [ESRI], 2016), also highlights the importance of parental involvement in laying down cultural interests for children. They note that middle class parents socialise their children in certain ways and "use cultural activities as a way of promoting the academic and social development of their children" (ESRI, 2016, p. 94). Above we see this in Aine's quote which makes a clear link between being brought to art galleries as a way to inform her and help her answer questions in her final secondary school exams. The ESRI report also establishes a clear correlation between advantage and creativity:

Even from an early age, more advantaged families are more likely to read to their child, take them on educational visits and cultural outings, and encourage them to engage in creative play. They are also less likely to allow their young children to watch a lot of television and to play computer games for prolonged periods. Among older children and young people, those from more advantaged families are more likely to read for pleasure and attend after-school music or drama lessons/clubs. The latter activities typically require payment so, even taking account of parental education and social class, those in the higher income families are much more likely to attend. (ESRI, 2016, p. 95)

Repeated experience thus builds stocks of cultural capital in a life history characterised by opportunity and advantage that accrues long-term familiarity and engagement with arts and culture. As Sullivan notes, "it is plausible that cultural

participation...promotes the development of cultural knowledge, which in turn allows greater cultural appreciation, making further cultural participation more likely” (2007, n.p., section 2.3). This then becomes “a circuit of cultural capital” which facilitates a certain circularity of cultural knowledge that allows for cultural appreciation and thus, greater cultural interest, appreciation at each subsequent encounter. Pinnock has suggested that this practice of accumulating cultural experience and knowledge leads to stocks of “cultural consumption capital” which results in greater enjoyment from each encounter (2009, p. 57). Therefore, the more an individual invests time in cultural participation, the more likely they are to enjoy and value this - preferring this pastime over all others. Effort and time over months or years has to be invested before “rewards” can be materialised (rewards such a general cultural confidence with a variety of cultural forms for example) and once these rewards have been internalised (and therefore cultural competencies developed), values are learnt and remain stable as a direct result of the *a priori* commitment already made (Shockley, 2005).

Phrased thus, it is clear how this “work of acquisition is work on oneself (self-improvement)...an investment” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 48). In this way cultural familiarity through ongoing cultural participation becomes “embodied capital...converted into an integral part of the person, into a habitus” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 49). This can happen “without deliberate inculcation” or conscious intention (*ibid*). Therefore, the hereditary transmission of cultural practice, of advantage based on socialisation, of attitudinal entitlement becomes “accumulated history” in action, leading to the long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 46 & p. 47). This research evidences this by highlighting the cultural familiarity, knowledge, experience and disposition that is present in both age cohorts drawn from Dublin’s urban privileged class through cultural ascription. It shows that access to economic, social and cultural resources are important in not only perpetuating audiences for arts and culture but also how they also feed into maintaining cultural stratification.

While Bourdieu stated that this occurred primarily in the dominant class, this

research study also finds that this occurs for those who are upwardly socially mobile. While a variety of factors feed into this, such as geographical location, infrastructural access and social exposure, this research study also finds that cultural familiarity, knowledge and experience manifest in those who are originally located in lower social classes and are now located in higher social class groups. This predominantly occurs as a result of parental interest. As noted in *Chapter 4 Older Cohort*, four individuals aged 45-54 years who are located in social class C2DE backgrounds, have developed rich and self-affirming cultural interests. This next section highlights extracts from interviewees with these individuals and in so doing, highlights the importance of the parents in creating and transmitting cultural interests regardless of social position.

### **Upwardly cultural mobile**

This research finds that despite poor economic circumstance, when high stocks of cultural capital are present in a family home, cultural tastes and interests continue to be transmitted. Rose (50, Entrepreneur) and Dolores (49, Current Affairs Executive) provide examples of this. Middle class and financially advantaged now, both identify as lower social class in their childhood family home and things were financially difficult growing up. Rose's father, an entrepreneur, died at a young age (42years) and left 9 young children. Her mother had to take on paid work in a local shop to make ends meet: "there was no mortgage protection back then and so my mum was paying off her mortgage for a long time. She gave up everything- it was a hard road for her." (Rose, 50, Entrepreneur). While Dolores's father was made unemployed at a young age: "my father was a technician – he fixed cash registers. He lost his job when they changed to computerisation – he was 48. Then he was unemployed for years" (Dolores, 49, Current Affairs Executive). With 5 children to feed, Dolores's mother had to seek work as a hairdresser to keep the family going.

Though things were financially very tight, both family homes were richly resourced with culture. Rose's mum loved art and frequently took the children to the National Gallery when they were small: "that was free entertainment for the kids and she loved it – all the kids going in and lying on the ground and painting. It was a great

thing. She would think this is the best thing ever – we were always there.” Dolores’s father on the other hand, passionately loved opera and classical music and Dolores remembers him tinkering in his shed at the bottom of the garden listening to Verdi: “he spent his life in his shed fixing things, loved cars, and LOVED music. He had a massive collection of classical music and he spent hours and hours listening to classical music and loved going to the opera.” Neither Dolores, nor Rose, are from a high status or financially advantaged household growing up though both were exposed to a range of cultural experiences from a young age. Dolores’s mother was also heavily involved in amateur dramatics in Cork city:

In Cork, opera was big - my dad brought us to this when we were younger - it’s about an appreciation. I grew up in a household where my mother also loved amateur drama and plays. Like Brecht and Brian Friel – all the great dramatists. My mother would say “they were on the big stage in London, let’s try them out.” Mother would have taken you to the ‘am dram’ and the ICA [Irish Country Women’s Association] – yes big time. I have to say they both loved the GAA [Gaelic Athletic Association] and so we would be taken to games regularly and to the theatre. I remember seeing La Boheme, Swan Lake, Madame Butterfly. As well as seeing Cha and Miah from Hall’s Pictorial Weekly.<sup>45</sup> We probably went once a month and I was ten when my dad lost his job and then there was nothing after that. (Dolores, 49, Current Affairs Executive)

Dolores and Rose retain the cultural interests from their childhood and continue to share these interests with their own children today. Dolores is particularly delighted that an opera singer is her next-door neighbour and that she and the children can overhear her rehearse. They also attend her concerts. Dolores notes above how well supplied the city of Cork was with opera when she was growing up and that this geographic nearness of cultural infrastructure supported the interests of a culturally interested household. She now endeavours to do the same with her children in Dublin and brings them to as many cultural events as possible- including Irish sports such as GAA. This is notable as it is a clear example of how cultural interests are

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<sup>45</sup> Irish satirical television series, which was broadcast on Radio Telefís Éireann from 1971 to 1980.

subject to ascriptive behaviour and are akin to passing on cultural resources to the next generation. In this way, they become useful for the next generation and are a resource that can be used if required. What appears as subjective familial cultural interest becomes a valuable source of cultural audiences and participants for the future.

For Rose, making and visiting visual art was an integral part of her childhood along with many other cultural activities:

My mother was big into art- she spent her life going into galleries. Theatre too- but when my father died she wouldn't have gone as often. She would have brought us to the National Concert Hall too. She would never have gone by herself. I also did guitar, harp, the music was strong. I remember my mum bringing me in to harp and sitting outside and waiting for me. Winter, wet evenings and does that for one kid- and we were 9- it was pretty amazing. (Rose, 50, Entrepreneur)

These experiences have translated for Rose today into a love of art and belief that it is possible to instil this into her own children:

I look at art and I think isn't it great, I love it but they ain't cheap, I save up. But I often think, my Fainse [her third daughter] is quite artistic and she'd do a piece and I'd hang it. Actually Maoliosa [second daughter] did this – a little painting [she shows me]. I just bang it on the wall...the whole snobbery about art I don't like – who can tell you what is art or isn't art, a kid's piece is just as beautiful. I do sometimes think, what's it all for and then you see the enjoyment people get from dance, from theatre. What would it all be for, if you couldn't go and appreciate those talents. And it does definitely inspire. You can bring a kid along and it definitely does instil in them a love of that form. My eldest recently went to Amsterdam and she was away with girlfriends and she went along to an art gallery. I think you can instil it in the kids. (Rose, 50, Entrepreneur)

Amongst the older cohort examples cited here, Emer, Rose and Dolores each articulate a long history of cultural exposure and parental cultural transmission,

displaying a real enthusiasm for the cultural forms they choose to engage with. While Emer's background was more economically resourced than Rose or Dolores's, we find high stocks of cultural capital articulated by each of the 3 interviewees despite different financial and social positions while growing. We also find each of these individuals handing on the cultural baton to their children.

Examples of similar cultural ascription among the younger cohort, from less economically resourced backgrounds, are scarce. Though one of the younger interviewees (Sally, 18, Art History, UCD) does suggest a similar profile to older interviewee, Dolores (49, Current Affairs Executive). Sally's father works in a transport company and her mum works in the company "doing the wages." Sally highlights that her cultural interests are the "same as my parents actually. I love going for walks and for food. My dad loves opera and I've been to a few." Jim (22, Medicine, UCD) also mentioned his parents' enthusiasm and interest in amateur dramatics and indeed highlighted that this is where they first in a college society. We can also draw on Dinny's (20, P.P.E.S., TCD) background and early cultural exposure through his parents and his father who is an actor and mother a casting agent. Dinny particularly highlighted (in *Chapter 5*) his parents' enthusiasms for acting and for the arts and how they set up a community arts centre in their local village which he has volunteered in frequently while growing up. So while these responses from the younger cohort do not indicate the same level of parental cultural transmission occurs amongst younger and older cohort, it does highlight that when high stocks of cultural capital are present in a family home, cultural ascription and passing on the cultural baton can occur in the younger cohort today. This is shown in this research study to be both self-perpetuating and enduring.

As in homes of privilege this occurs "without delay, without wasted time" and "always remains marked by its earliest conditions of acquisition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 49). Facilitating an "accumulation period" that "covers the whole period of socialisation" beginning at the earliest of life history for many interviewees (*ibid*). Cultural ascription results and a profile of cultural participation arises directly from intergenerational cultural transmission. Interviewees from both cohorts have

highlighted how the cultural exposure they received as children, has created foundational cultural interests. They each reference the importance of their family background in forming and fostering these tastes.

This “intergenerational transmission” of privilege is central to Bourdieu’s theory of distinction as this is achieved through social reproduction (Miles & Sullivan, 2010, p. 4). This form of capital, sociologists have shown to be mainly within the reaches of the traditional upper classes and more within the reach of the professional and managerial salariat (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2004, 2007b; Bennett et al, 1999; Bennett et al, 2009; Savage et al, 2013). However, this research study also shows that the transmission of “these privileges” crosses class groups and is not necessarily predicated on homes of economic advantage (Miles & Sullivan, 2010, p. 4). This confirms Bourdieu’s observation that embodied cultural capital is only for those “offspring of families endowed with strong cultural capital” but extends this to those located in lower social classes also (1986, p. 49). This research finds evidence for this amongst those interviewed. Stocks of embodied cultural capital exist strongly in this research study amongst those who are offspring of individuals who possess high stocks of embodied cultural capital themselves despite economic or social advantage. In both young and old cohorts, it is parents who have laid down patterns of cultural interest at a young age.

A form of nurturing, it is a “technical capital furnished by an apprenticeship in trade” that has been a whole lifetime in the making (Atkinson, 2011, p. 182). This does not mean that cultural ascription results in interviewees’ cultural participation as a direct carbon copy of parents’ interest and activities. Rather interviewees’ cultural participation profile is often wider and broader, ranging right across a breadth of cultural consumption as noted in the above cultural omnivore section above. While this is undoubtedly because of the proliferation of opportunity in the cultural field today, this research study observes that interviewees’ parents, and grandparents, have influenced and transmitted their cultural interests to the next generation. Through cultural inculcation and ascription they have impacted substantially on interviewees’ own cultural preferences and behaviours today. Interviewees, young

and old, share cultural interests with their parents as a direct appreciation and confidence in cultural activity arising from their childhoods. Education has underpinned these stocks of embodied cultural capital as the next section shows.

### **The importance of education**

As set out in Chapter 1 the growth of educational attainment “is one of the great success stories” of Ireland (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015, p. 97). Education has witnessed a rapid expansion here, expanding six-fold over the last four decades (Fleming, 2013, p. 35). Today, Ireland has relatively high levels of third level education compared to other OECD countries and rates are continuing to grow (Department of Education & Skills, 2016). Education has provided opportunities in life for those interviewed. While this is evidenced in both cohorts, this is most pronounced for the older cohort interviewed. A college education originally brought many of older interviewees to Dublin city where they have remained and achieved high professional status and a resourced livelihood.

All of the older cohort hold undergraduate degrees and a small number have completed, or are currently engaged in, postgraduate and masters programmes. One individual holds a PhD and 1 other is engaged in PhD research. Many of their parents had attained education to a lower level than this with the majority of interviewees' parents completing secondary level education only and for a smaller number, primary school. The younger cohort are on a very similar education path to that of the older cohort and are completing undergraduate degrees with most stating they will continue on to Masters programmes. A small number of the younger cohort are also considering a PhD. All of the younger cohort have at least one parent, if not two, with an undergraduate degree and the majority also hold a master's degree. Even though the sample size of this research study is small scale, the contrasting profile of education between the research cohorts stands in sharp contrast to the educational attainment of the older cohorts' parents. This provides a good example of the increased levels of educational attainment in Ireland in the later twentieth century.

Indeed, as we have seen, Maeve (50, Garden Designer), Terry (46, User Interface Designer) and Eoin (52, Legal Executive) have remarked specifically on the importance of education in their lives. For these individuals, education brought advantages they didn't experience in their childhoods. Though this is covered in greater detail in Chapter 4, it is worth recounting that for both Terry and Eoin, their memory of poverty is great. Terry grew up in social housing in Dublin's suburbs with a father who was long term unemployed. While Eoin's memories are of an impoverished farm in Co. Leitrim where his mother struggled to make ends meet after the death of his father. Childhood memories for Terry have resulted in his near messianic belief in education as the prophylactic that will protect him from poverty. This continues to keep him upstairs at the computer, unflinchingly learning and seeking any opportunity he can to upskill and to provide for his family. Now a highly paid User Interface Designer, he continues to keep his design skills sharp, his creativity current and he works feverishly hard at doing so.

Maeve (50, Garden Designer), whose creative momentum is covered in *Chapter 4 Older Cohort*, is like many of those who are the first in her family to go to college. Through recounting her own experience of education, she captures the impetus for education in Irish society:

My parents were uneducated. They didn't own their house. My mother was told to go work on the farm as opposed to being given an education. As kids growing up, education was key to progress in the world, to have choices- rather than other people telling you what to do. (Maeve, 50, Garden Designer)

Education is highly valued for these reasons. It is considered to be the key to unlocking progress and agency in an individual's life. It is the path to making independent choices and securing stability and resources. This has been the life experience of the older cohort.

Though Aidan (52, Finance) comes from a different religious and class background (Church of Ireland, Protestant, South Co Dublin, "firmly middle class", his father and

grandfather “were alcoholics and drank all the money away”), he shares the same perspective as his wife Maeve regarding education. He too learnt as a child that “education was the way to improve yourself: study hard, work hard and that way you could protect your family’s income.” For Aidan and for Maeve, “education gives you money, and money gives you access and expectations” (Maeve, 50, Garden Designer). For these individuals, security and increased life chances are seen as possible through hard work and a college education. The older cohort has experienced at first-hand how education has altered their life circumstance compared to that of their parents. This has resulted in a profound belief in a merit-based system of rewards founded on education and hard work and the opportunities these can provide. As the examples above show, educational expansion and differentiation has reduced socio-economic inequality in the experience of the older cohort (Callender, 2017).

For the younger cohort, the educational possibilities in their future and the ease with which they will access this, is notable. None of the younger cohort articulate the importance of education in improving their life circumstance. Born into families of educated parents who have access to resources and advantage in life, third level education is expressed as an embedded expectation akin to a birth right. When asked what they will do next after university, they respond in the following way with responses underpinned by an expectancy and ease that speaks of privilege and possibility and embodied cultural capital:

I’d say definitely more education. Maybe a Master’s something in art and going and doing something in fine art. (Siobha, 19, Art History, TCD)

Ideally, in research in education on maybe a third level, sounds like a PhD. In theory I’d like to do that. (Robert, 22, Jewish Studies, TCD)

Possibly into a PhD programme...go somewhere else. England. Probably, Cambridge. (Iarla, 18, Science, TCD)

I’d like to work for a space company or work for NASA or ESA. (Anne, 19, Theoretical Physics, TCD)

Only two of the younger interviewees show a heightened sense of awareness regarding education. Dinny (20, P.P.E.S., TCD) and Lois (19, Biology & Chemistry, TCD) both have at least one parent from a lower social class and both mention the focus and importance their parents' have placed on education:

My parents made the sacrifice as it were to invest in this school [Blackrock College] they wanted to make sure we had a sound education...it probably helped keep me on the right path. (Dinny, 20, P.P.E.S., TCD)

Mum never got the opportunity to go to college. She left school and had to and this makes her sad. She places so much importance on our education. When I went to school, chemistry was my favourite but I was always obsessed with English. So I hope to stay in academia - it would be research. I'd like to do a PhD. I don't know how realistic that is but I'd definitely want to at some point. (Lois, 19, Biology & Chemistry, TCD)

Both Dinny and Lois are a little more hesitant and reflexive in their expectation and experience of education and show a heightened awareness of the contrast with their parents' generation. They also show a greater sense of insecurity in their future educational path as their responses contain less expectation.

So while the older cohort generally, but also those specifically from lower social class backgrounds, have a strong belief in the power of education, the younger cohort have a firmer expectation of the educational opportunities that are in their future. This could be because of the general emphasis placed on the importance of third level education in Irish society but may also be because of their parents' generation witnessing at first-hand how the access and opportunity provided by higher education has risen the quality of life of those in Irish society. For the younger cohort, this is articulated as embedded expectation and a natural next step in the flow of their life. These naturalised perspectives of educational opportunity reflect the educated and middle class nature of Irish society and the burgeoning story of higher education in Ireland.

However, research shows that not all class groups are represented equally in

Ireland's higher education system and after a substantial period of free fees, the increase in equality and opportunity of access has moved the socio-economic statistics only slightly (Callander, 2017; HEA, 2014). With a persistent and perpetuating dominance of the professional and managerial classes attending Ireland's third level institutions (Callander, 2017; HEA, 2014). As noted in *Chapter 1 Ireland*, those in higher socio-economic groups, such as the individuals in this research study, are more likely to progress to third level compared to those from less advantaged areas (HEA, 2014). Indeed, as also noted, university graduates are 41% more likely to be arts attenders than the general population. They demonstrate that in Ireland, "it has become an established empirical fact that people of higher educational attainment, income and social class are more likely to attend live arts performances" (Lunn & Kelly, 2009, p. 1). It is also worth noting that 59% of arts attenders are university graduates who report their summary income as at €45,000 p.a. or more. This means that 59% of arts attenders are located in the top third of those earning over the industrial wage in Ireland (Arts Audiences, 2011).<sup>46</sup> If trends continue, inequalities in education will continue to increase with higher education the preserve of the professional and managerial classes (Callander, 2017). As Dubois highlights "massive access to education does not "necessarily translate into education....nor does it equal democratization" (2013, p. xv).

The persistence and influence of social background and impact of social class on Irish society, scholars state, has continued despite increased affluence and education (Whelan, 1999; Whelan, Breen & Whelan, 2011). They have stated that while there is the broad perception that increased access to opportunity and upward social mobility has occurred; absolute social mobility has little altered (Whelan & Layte, 2004). Therefore, while interviewees in this research study have experienced increase of opportunity and upward mobility as a result of education, this is largely a limited experience and therefore, the perception of a merit-based system of effort equals rewards as a replicated experience amongst others, remains largely unfounded.

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<sup>46</sup> The average industrial wage in Ireland is approximately €35,000 p.a. (O'Connor & Staunton, 2015).

Irish society may have been characterised by much educational and economic opportunity in the latter years of the twentieth century, yet the operation of class processes in Ireland provide a perfect example of the more things change, the more they remain the same (Whelan & Layte, 2004). This research confirms this by not only demonstrating the perpetuation of class processes in cultural participation and taste in the dominant class but also by highlighting how educational and economic opportunity create the context for the perpetuation of cultural distinction amongst the dominant class – including those who are latterly arrived into this class – the upwardly socially mobile.

The enduring nature of class position remains strong in Ireland and has led to the dominant class finding new ways of expressing their distinction. As Ireland is a country comprised of a largely homogenous and educated ABC1 social class, this research study finds that cultural participation is a useful mode for identity construction and differentiation in Irish society. Lizardo and Skiles (2008) highlight that individuals increasingly need to differentiate themselves through their cultural practices as a result of rising education standards as well as post war affluence. A core aspect of this distinction, is the ability to exercise cultural taste without appearing to explicitly do so: “to be unblemished by any mercenary or cynical use of culture” as a naturalised disposition is then consolidated by the “supplementary profit of being seen” (1984, p. 78). Bourdieu further highlights that cultural capital is as important for professionals and managers (of the bourgeois classes) than either elites who have an inherited birth right, or the working classes who do not possess many stocks of it. They, as the “dominated fraction of the dominant class” maintain, validate and affirm their position in this fraction (Bourdieu, 1984, p. xxi). Therefore, the dominant class through quiet assertion of power realise the immanent power of cultural goods (1984, p. 225). This research study finds evidence of this and the continued relevance of Bourdieu’s (1984) cultural capital premise in Ireland today.

### **Ireland's omnivorous class**

Young and old cohorts in this research study are found to consume freely and widely across diverse and disparate cultural fields “ranging right across the spectrum of ‘brows’” (Atkinson, 2011, p. 171). Peterson and Simkus suggest this is typical of the classic omnivore profile as it is an “ability to appreciate the distinctive aesthetic of a wide range of cultural forms” across the popular and fine arts (1992, p. 260). Demonstrating omnivorousness, interviewees in both cohorts attend the theatre, musicals, visit galleries and arts centres and, “watch a lot of films” (Derek, 20, Architecture, UCD). Siobha highlights that she “go to galleries, I suppose, I do that a lot” (19, Art History, TCD) and younger interviewees are as likely to be found “workshopping a play for the Bath Fringe Festival” (Dinny, 22, P.P.E.S., TCD) as teaching themselves how to play music or write poetry. As such, younger interviewees could be said to be particularly culturally omnivorous (Peterson, 2005; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992).

This research supports findings from Warde and Gayo-cal (2009), who found that those aged 18-25 years in the UK are likely to be omnivorous in volume and breadth with signs of increased “volume (in the number of tastes and activities favoured),” as distinct from “composition (a variety of tastes and practices characterized by diverse legitimacy)” (Hanquinet, 2018, p. 332). This research finds this also but also notes that breadth and volume of activity are as likely to be found in Irish adults of 18-24 years, as the older cohort of 45-54 years. So while both cohorts are amongst the least active attendees in the Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland surveys, this research finds that these individuals are indeed highly culturally engaged and omnivorously active across a breadth of cultural forms (Arts Audiences, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013; Arts Council of Ireland, 1983, 1994, 2006, 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017).

Atkinson, (2011) suggests that the rise in the omnivorous participation profile in the educated middle classes coincides with an associated decline in highbrow participation. However, this research found interviewees to be highly engaged in traditional highbrow cultural forms. Many attend the theatre, visual art exhibitions,

classical music and ballet as previous chapters show. Quite a number participate in the production and practice of culture as Ines, Siobha, Jim and Dinny in the previous chapter have shown. Indeed, a range of highbrow and lowbrow culture is engaged with at home and also sought out while on holiday, and, as Cate highlights below, it can often be the reason for travel:

We [herself and her husband] would attend the National Concert Hall, musical theatre, Gaiety shows, the Taste of Dublin [food festival]. We like to go to music gigs and generally find out what's going on- it could be jazz, it could be country, we go to London and when we were in Broadway, all the different shows there. And then the Gate [Theatre in Dublin], though we haven't been in a while...Blood Brothers, Les Miserables, we'd gravitate towards those. We would have done lots of the London shows and we travelled to Vienna one time for the ballet. I love Macnas in Galway and I would attend their events and the Galway Arts Festival and I would attend that to – it could be the big top or miming, or drama or light shows- everything. One time I went down to a poetry reading even though this doesn't interest me that much and I really enjoyed it. (Cate, 39, Medic & PhD candidate)

Cate captures the active sensibility of the older cohort and usefully highlights that cultural participation can also include experiencing a cultural form that doesn't interest her that much. Her cultural taste is also transnational in its disposition and moves across nation states, not recognising national boundaries. Similar experiences are also articulated by the younger cohort:

We went to Prague recently and I went to all the galleries there. I do love it when I get a chance but it doesn't happen very often. They're some really cool galleries out there...Every 3 or 4 months, usually mum brings us to galleries. We were in the Hugh Lane<sup>47</sup> a few months ago for an installation. I would do similar things. We used to do Culture Night<sup>48</sup> - it was such a good way of seeing the city and we

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<sup>47</sup> The Hugh Lane Gallery is officially known as the Dublin City Gallery and originally as the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art. It is operated by Dublin City Council and its subsidiary the Hugh Lane Gallery Trust and houses a public collection of contemporary art, [www.hughlane.ie](http://www.hughlane.ie).

<sup>48</sup> Culture Night is an annual all-island public event that celebrates culture, creativity and the arts, as venues and public spaces across the island of Ireland open their doors to the public, [www.culturenight.ie](http://www.culturenight.ie).

have fallen out of the habit. I'd say they [her parents] do more theatre and drama and I go to more live gigs but I think that's more my generation. I think perhaps going to the theatre is something I would like to do more or the opera but that will come in time. (Asa, 20, Science, UCD)

I've been to IMMA [Irish Museum of Modern Art] a few times and I've been to the National Gallery too. With my friends and my mum. Theatre, yes, I really enjoy plays and I would go with my friends who like them too. Yeah over the years and my mum, usually the Gate Theatre – they run a lot of nice ones – classics, like *Wuthering Heights* and comedies. A year or two ago I went to a few spoken word poetry sessions. Museums when I was abroad – me and my family. I did go to a spoken word story session and they come and tell their own stories that they had written. Intervarsity slam poetry where people compete and its getting quite popular. It's a new form of communicating. It's good to hear someone put your feelings into words on a particular topic. (Maire, 19, Biology/Chemistry, TCD)

Marie's quote also highlights how the cultural range is expanding from not only visual arts, theatres and comedy to spoken word and slam poetry or music or dramatic sessions at college. Taken together the above responses from Cate (39, Medic & PhD candidate), from Asa (20, Science, UCD) and from Maire (19, Biology/Chemistry, TCD), point to an omnivorous disposition and breadth of cultural participation in both young and old cohorts and echo words from many of the interviewees in this research study. They also demonstrate a transnational cultural participation that consumes culture at home and while travelling abroad. In the case of the older cohort, this travel can result from cultural tourism and an intentional purposeful visit to the culture in another country such as in the quote from Cate above or as part of a family holiday as Asa and Marie outline. Dolores and Eoin or Tanya from the older cohort (in chapter 4) also recount this as a key focal point of their travels. For the younger cohort, as demonstrated by Asa and Maire above, cultural events and museum trips also feature in trips abroad with friends and with family on holidays. Transnational cultural participation in both young and old cohorts therefore, supports a breadth and quantity of cultural participation. In so doing, it contributes to interviewees' cultural omnivorousness.

Bellavance notes that this may be as a result of the “multiplication between boundaries” rather than the dissolution of any artform or cultural boundaries (2008, p. 214). In other words, that there is simply more available as the complexity of genres increases and cultural forms and opportunity proliferate. Emer (46, Journalist), an interviewee from the older cohort suggests this also, because there is simply more available today and it’s no surprise that people are highly engaged. She highlights the proliferation of cultural forms now available to the interested participant compared to that available to her parents. In her words, there is “simply more on offer” and she provides of examples of her weekends with her partner and son which include regular visits to libraries, parks, puppet shows, gallery exhibits, the print museum, festivals and much more. However, Emer also highlights how this proliferation of cultural opportunity is also tied into education and class:

I think education matters and how you are educated to appreciate culture. You yearn for it a bit more and traditionally third level education was costly and more likely to be available to the middle class. Now you have the advantages of the middle class and their education and they will be more likely to seek out opportunities in relation to culture. (Emer, 46, Journalist)

This is interesting because it not only highlights that education is implicitly involved in cultural appreciation (as Bourdieu has noted) but it also succinctly brings together education, culture and class. However, on a closer reading of the research data it may be hasty to suggest that education has brought with it a cultural reach that leads to omnivorousness. Rather what may be occurring is that cultural proliferation has brought a breadth of possibility and cultural opportunity for individuals who attend for a variety of reasons. This may be as a result of subjective personal interest or arise from the support and accompaniment of others as sociability and support.

This research study finds this and that notably that the quantity and breadth of cultural participation arises quite substantially from sociability amongst those

interviewed. Many of the younger cohort have outlined that much of their cultural participation results from “support” for friends (Iarla, 18, Science, TCD), for “family-bonding” (Caoilin, 20, English and Philosophy), and “a family day” (Asa, 20, Science, UCD), or because parents wish to share their cultural interests (Lou, 19, Music & French, TCD). Dinny highlights that he is as likely to attend “Slam poetry – I go to some if they’re fund raisers or to support a friend or two who do this” (20, P.P.E.S., TCD), while Asa highlights that the “cinema, yes, I would go often with friends or with my sister and see whatever’s out really” (20, Science, UCD). Derek meanwhile has “been to a couple of my mate’s gigs and I support them and I have been to a couple of gigs in the past more so” (20, Architecture, UCD) while Sally (18, Art History, UCD) goes to the cinema, festivals and restaurants with her friends and classical music concerts with her dad. This cultural participation therefore arises from support and the sharing of social experience rather than any desire to purposefully engage with a particular cultural form. It is not centred on subjective, voracious interest for a wide variety of cultural forms but is focussed on the social engagement and support provided for others. This cultural participation therefore gives the appearance of profound omnivorousness yet does not arise from any cultural interest per se.

Apparent omnivorousness then is not necessarily an indication of interest or enthusiasm in a range of cultural forms as the responses above indicate. An omnivorous disposition we can say does highlight a broad range of cultural participation that has more to do with the proliferation of cultural opportunity and a general cultural exposure in individuals’ social or familial circumstance. A breadth of cultural participation, and the appearance of an omnivorous profile can arise as many of the younger cohort have outlined, because of parents or friends sharing cultural interests and spending time together as a family. Participating in a broad range of pluralistic cultural experiences such as the interviewees do can therefore mean, that “everyone quickly becomes eclectic” (Bellavance, 2008, p. 212). Eclectic, broad and pluralistic may therefore be a more accurate reading of the apparent omnivorousness of the interviewees in this research study.

These examples demonstrate that if omnivorousness exists, it exists more as a top slice, shallow, general cultural engagement than indicate any particular subjective interest in a range of cultural forms. While wide-ranging cultural participation undoubtedly “gives the distinct impression that omnivorousness is in action” (Atkinson, 2011, p. 174), it does not however indicate the flattening of the cultural plane, increased cultural democracy nor a decrease in barriers to cultural access. These various examples highlight the under specification of Peterson’s omnivorous premise with the cultural omnivore premise becoming a problematic conceptualisation of individual cultural interest.

This research finds that age divisions are also an important feature of individuals’ cultural participation profiles and that while both cohorts appear omnivorous due to the wide-ranging nature of their cultural participation, there are distinct differences between older and younger interviewees. Younger individuals appear more likely to attend a variety and breadth of cultural forms and potentially a stronger interest in emerging and newer cultural forms such as slam poetry, live gigs and spoken word sessions. While the older cohorts demonstrate a greater interest in a traditional general cultural palette from food festivals and Netflix, through jazz, radio, books, multi genre arts festivals, cultural institutions, opera, ballet and more.

This was also found in Bennett et al (2009) in their study on cultural capital and social exclusion in the UK. They noted that lines of social cleavage in cultural participation do continue to exist in the UK but highlighted that this was less an expression of class positions in the social space and a more complex relationship of class, gender, age and ethnicity. Savage et al (2013), in the Great British Class Survey, also note that age divisions are more useful than economic and cultural capital in distinguishing social cleavages. Friedman usefully highlights that older individuals are more attracted to traditional highbrow culture and younger individuals “more oriented towards commercial forms of culture,” (2015, p. 6).

So while the Arts Audience and Arts Council of Ireland surveys have reported a highly engaged and creative nation in Ireland, on closer inspection this may not be

an accurate capture of cultural engagement or creativity in Ireland (Arts Audiences, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013; Arts Council of Ireland, 1983, 1994, 2006, 2015b, 2015c, 2016, 2017). While this research provides support for the Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland surveys in that it can say that individuals are attending a variety of cultural forms, it does not provide an indication of actual cultural interest, enthusiasm or engagement as these survey reports indicate. This may be because, as Miles (2013) and Atkinson (2011) have both noted, measures of frequency on arts attendance surveys such as these, are limited with regard to the research insights they provide. Indeed, Bellavance also highlights that other than noting that quantitative accumulation has taken place, as a methodological insight omnivorousness is somewhat lacking (2008, p. 212).

This proliferation of cultural opportunity however, does not mean that practices of cultural distinction have disappeared. Rather, they are perhaps less obvious and less visible *because* of the proliferation of cultural opportunity. As the above and previous chapters have shown, interviewees display a wide-ranging eclectic and pluralistic cultural palette but neo-distinction is pervasive throughout all research interviews. Interviewees, young and old, continue to engage in practices of discernment and boundary making in a subtle and nuanced way. This cultural confidence arises from long-term cultural exposure and participation as a result of family interest.

Hanquinet suggests that nor should this apparent omnivorousness be considered as “signs of a developing cultural democracy” but rather that the cultural plane has changed with high cultural capital now “updated to reflect wider cultural and social changes” (2018, p. 334). As interviewee Emer (46, Journalist) has acknowledged, this is simply because there is more cultural opportunity available today. Therefore, individuals incorporate a wide range of cultural engagements into their cultural activities to accompany their highbrow cultural participation.

### **Emerging cultural capital (in both cohorts)**

As noted in the preceding chapter, emerging cultural capital is comprised of a number of defining features and this research study finds emerging cultural capital in both age cohorts. This comprises of a culturally egalitarian ethic that considers arts and culture as available and accessible to all in society; an outward facing global cosmopolitanism that takes pride in national culture but consumes transnationally; an information-seeking disposition focused on knowledge acquisition and the abolition of snobbishness which disavows positioning in the social field while demonstrating a nuanced cultural and effortless ease meanwhile. Technological forces have combined and impacted on a variety of cultural forms becoming “aesthetically and socially valorised by those with high cultural capital” in such a way that scholars have suggested that this has led to the dominant class finding new emerging ways to demonstrate their cultural capital (Friedman et al, 2015; Hanquinet, 2018, p. 334; Prieur & Savage, 2013). Some aspects of emerging cultural capital have been captured in previous chapters such as the information seeking disposition and cosmopolitan nationalism of the younger cohort in Chapter 5 along with the effortless ease and cultural disavowal of the older cohort in Chapter 4. The following section highlights differences between both cohorts in relation to the digital realm.

It is important to note that both research cohorts demonstrate emerging cultural capital in differing ways. For the younger cohort digital engagement and connection occurs throughout their day, and often as a background to other activities, such as commuting, walking, sport or study. Their participation in this realm includes watching films, documentaries, gaming and reading e-books on sites such as Netflix (surprisingly founded in 1997), YouTube (2005) and Google Play (2012) as well as availing of music platforms such as Napster (1999, and significantly reorganised in 2003), Soundcloud (2007), Spotify (2008) and Apple Music (2015). It also includes, writing, studying, information seeking, communicating with friends via email, Facebook, Instagram and other platforms. Interviewees are constantly digitally “connected.” Jim, Anne and Sally highlight this well:

If I was walking somewhere I'd have a podcast playing or walking somewhere or most days I'd have YouTube playing and I'd say almost every day at the moment I'd check something. (Jim, 20, Medicine, UCD)

I use social media to keep in contact with everybody. Like all others I'm a major user of Spotify- my walk into college and in college, my day would be 6-7 hours studio work and I would often sit and listen to Spotify – it helps me to concentrate. And if I was doing exercise – running or in the gym – anytime on my own, I would use Spotify. (Anne, 19, Theoretical Physics, TCD)

I am addicted to my phone. Facebook, Messenger and Instagram, the most. Instagram specifically the most, Snapchat – yeah, the odd time. Messenger I would be on throughout the whole day talking to people. Netflix, all the time. Mainly movies. I'd watch a series but mainly movies, I get too caught up in series and then I watch them all night. (Sally, 19, Art History, UCD)

As the above demonstrates, the younger interviewees are digitally connected for a large part of their day. This can be to stream films or television series, on their laptop or their phone, in their bedroom or on the bus (Anne, 19, Theoretical Physics, TCD; Derek, 20, Architecture, UCD); walk for hours listening to Spotify (Robert, 22 Jewish Studies, TCD; Senan, 19, Geography & Political Science, TCD); watch game streaming sites such as Twitch (Dinny, 22, P.P.E.S., TCD), or research their studies via Youtube or Netflix (Eileen, 20, Mechanical Engineering, UCD; Maire, 19, Biology & Chemistry, TCD). The pervasiveness and dependence on the digital realm as a vehicle with which to mediate their lives is notable. With one interviewee highlighting how social media sites such as Tinder (2012) and Grindr (2009) have largely replaced traditional forms of dating (Dinny, 22, P.P.E.S., TCD). This does not mean that younger interviewees are highly technologically proficient rather that they move between the digital and non-digital realm as they require - making little difference between modes of engagement. They articulate a natural ease in engaging with digitally mediated information and entertainment and continue to demonstrate discernment and voracious interests in this realm. While the above digital engagements are present in the older cohort, it is not to the same pervasive and continuous extent with stories of cultural abundance particularly apparent in

this younger cohort (Wright, 2011).

The older cohort is more planned in their digital cultural engagement. The older cohort stay closer to physical attendance at traditional highbrow culture and organised activity while younger interviewees respond more spontaneously to cultural opportunities and embrace digital interconnectivity to a greater extent. This follows cultural participation patterns elsewhere. Older interviewees engage with digital culture as a planned activity and engage with the proliferation of cultural opportunity in a more traditional “sit down and watch way.” As Eoin (52, Legal Executive) states, “it’s more functional for me.” He notes that he and his wife “watch less TV all the time” and when they do it is for news and to watch some sport:

We don't have Netflix and we don't have Sky. We would have been big Borgen [a Danish political drama] fans and watched 2 episodes in a row but otherwise no...We have the standard Virgin media package – we wouldn't pay for Netflix. Terrestrial TV and current affairs and the Sunday game. (Eoin, 52, Legal Executive)

Generally, the older cohort find the internet useful as a search engine and use it to be “more aware of more cultural trends” (Emer, 46, Journalist). Though they are reticent and circumspect in relation to the internet because of the potentially biased nature of social media sites. Julie explains:

I’m connected to Facebook and it’s a good way of keeping in touch with your friends and what they are up to but I’m not an active participant in social media and I’ve had a few scares where there’s been an event like the women’s march in Dublin and I look at my feed and think we’re all brilliant and what a great demo that we all participated in it. And then you talk to a friend and you hear that’s rubbish and badly attended. Her feed and your feed are different and so your feed is different based on your preferences and so your leanings are being perpetuated and you’re not getting an unbiased point of view – it’s a little bit scary I think. (Julie, 48, Health Promotion)

Others find the constant availability and possibility of information “noise” as the

following response demonstrates: “You’ve so much noise in your life now...you need to be able to filter things” (Molly, 53, Visual Communications Executive). Some enjoy the ease of access to a variety of digital music sites such as Spotify useful but the older cohort tend to stay quite close to long standing musical tastes and preferences and also to news and opinion-based radio. Nearly all the older interviewees mention the importance of radio in their lives and that it is constantly “on, in the kitchen, in the car, in the background” (Maeve, 50, Garden Designer). Their preference for cultural participation is in the physical realm – attending the theatre, sitting down to watch television, going to an exhibition or to the cinema and experiencing this as an attender, as an audience member, as someone who is physically present in the cultural engagement. This is in contrast to the younger cohort who actively surround themselves with digital connection, distinguishing little between online activity and the physical realm.

So while the pace of digital change has resulted in the proliferation of cultural opportunity and has created greater opportunities for cultural participation, generational differences are apparent in how individuals engage with this. Younger interviewees in this research study demonstrate a pervasive and wide ranging digital profile that appears to merge seamlessly with a non-digital experience. Conversely, older interviewees experience the digital realm as an additional mode of engagement, as a useful add-on to more traditional ways of experiencing forms of culture.

This generational difference in engagement with digital interconnectivity furthers findings by Friedman et al who highlight that emerging cultural capital “foregrounds the centrality of age and generational divisions in structuring cultural tastes and participation (Friedman et al, 2015, p. 3). While previous sections of this chapter note that this study finds both cohorts actively engaged in highbrow culture, in the digital realm, engagement is structured generationally. This study finds that amongst the younger cohort an ease of engagement with the digital realm supports their consumption of culture across a range of platforms. This allows the digitally mobile, younger generations to activate their cultural capital resources in the

emerging field of cultural opportunity (Friedman et al, 2015).

As the quotes from the older and younger cohorts above show, individuals make specific choices about which digital forms of culture to engage with and when. So while the hierarchical nature of the cultural content an individual engages with has become less relevant, importance is placed on how this mode of engagement occurs and how it is mobilised in the social field that perpetuates strategies of neo-distinction. We see this in an individual such as Dinny (20, PPES, TCD) who is likely to perform in the role-playing fantasy game Dungeons and Dragons as an Ibsen play, to direct Brecht or to stream gaming sites. Jim (20, Medicine, UCD) articulates how he might “fall into a hole” on the internet, learn languages, work on singing, listen to podcasts while walking, dance in the musical at college or “make films for fun”. Sally (19, Art History, UCD) while glued to her phone for Messenger, Facebook and Instagram is equally engaged with the European festival circuit, the latest releases in the cinema and professes a very strong interest in food.

If the pace of social and technological change brings with it a proliferation of cultural opportunity as is shown here, it is reasonable to suggest that “‘emerging’ forms of activity...might compete with more established and legitimate forms” (Savage et al 2013, p. 243). The broad, pluralistic and eclectic cultural engagement witnessed above does not necessarily find that the younger cohort prefer more commercial forms of culture as is noted by Friedman et al (2025), nor does it suggest that “the forms of cultural knowledge” once marks of distinction for the elite in highbrow culture “have become less valued” (Khan, 2012, p. 182). Rather that cultural capital is a “situational” capital that is relational to context rather than fixed at a moment in time in a particular society (Lareau, Evans & Snee, 2016, p. 279). With discernment, disinterestedness, effortless ease and the exercise of cultural knowledge continuing to be demonstrated by the dominant classes across the cultural register. What has become important is the ability to have “conversational competence in this specialized, esoteric and dynamic aesthetic” (Holt, 1997, p. 104). For the younger cohort this specifically mobilised in fields of cultural abundance in the digital and non-digital realms (Wright, 2011).

This research study therefore suggests that the young dominant of Irish society activate their distinction in different ways depending on who and what is engaged with. This gives rise to the possibility that individuals activate different forms of cultural capital in different cultural fields. This idea is not necessarily a new one as Bryson (1996) highlights the concept of multicultural capital in her research on music tastes. Indeed, it is perhaps increasingly relevant given the findings of this chapter which note that the young privileged Irish have a breadth and depth of cultural participation and range of participatory levels and intensities. This gives rise to the observation that this cohort potentially mobilise their cultural capital in different ways and circumstances and that this is company-dependent.

### **Summary**

This chapter presents research evidence that highlights how interviewees, young and old cohort, share a culturally ascriptive background characterised by cultural transmission and inculcation. It shows how interviewees, in both age cohorts, possess a direct appreciation and confidence in cultural activity arising from the interests of their parents. This research study also shows that grandparents and other family members can substantially influence individuals' cultural interests. While this occurs in homes of privilege as a strategy of social reproduction, this research also finds evidence of an enthusiasm for culture occurs in homes of lower socio-economic advantage. This cultural exposure in the homes of the young who are economically constrained but culturally rich, provides support for Bourdieu's (1984) premise that a culturally rich habitus forms a long-lasting disposition of the body and mind. However, this research study also finds that in homes of limited economic and limited cultural resources, education has fostered the cultural tastes and dispositions of the upwardly mobile. This is demonstrated in this research study through individuals who now confess a highly enthusiastic and intense belief in the power of culture and creativity today.

Therefore, counter to the findings of the Arts Audience and Arts Council of Ireland

surveys, this chapter finds individuals, young and old, actively participating in a range of cultural forms and activities – at home and outside their homes. As such, they do paint a portrait of a nation highly engaged (DAHRRGA, 2016a, 2017). It could therefore, be suggested that interviewees align to Peterson’s (2005) cultural omnivore premise in their pluralistic cultural participation. However, while on face value this appears to be the case, on deeper exploration of the research data, an apparent omnivorous profile does not necessarily arise from personal interest or enthusiasm in a wide range of cultural forms. This research finds that this occurs as a result of sociability, family-bonding and support for the cultural participation of others, most likely friends and family. This engagement therefore suggests, a general amenability and openness to support and / or share the cultural interests of family members and friends across the general register of cultural forms. It does not suggest overt cultural interest or engagement by interviewees. The appearance of omnivorousness and the interpretation of this as an indication of cultural enthusiasm then is misguided. Individuals in both cohorts, while disposed to range across the general register of culture, find themselves inclined to a narrower range of cultural forms and display voracious intensity and enthusiasm for these. Finally, while older interviewees experience the digital realm more as a supplementary form of cultural engagement that supports, and is in addition to, traditional modes of non-digital engagement. Younger interviewees demonstrate a pervasive and wide-ranging digital engagement that merges seamlessly with non-digital experiences.

This chapter therefore highlights the importance of family interests and education in forming cultural taste. It notes how cultural inculcation and transmission results in stocks of embodied cultural capital that manifest as an effortless and easy cultural disposition that is often disavowed (Bourdieu, 1986). The opportunity, choice and sense of possibility that education has brought underpins this strong cultural confidence amongst interviewees. In highlighting this, this research study shows how this underpins and perpetuates class processes in Ireland by a concrete and tangible association between cultural distinctive tastes and the dominant class.

# Conclusion

If Irish culture didn't exist, how would we define Ireland? (John O'Hagan in tweet from Ali Fitzgibbon, 12/01/2017, 11:09 #placesmatter17)

## Chapter synopsis

This concluding chapter locates the analysis of cultural capital in relation to public policy in Ireland. It traces the usefulness of Bourdieu's cultural capital in highlighting inequality and power in the Irish cultural field and considers the implications of the research method used. This chapter also emphasises the need to "reorder knowledge" around "particular types of activity and inactivity" and the importance of recognising that "not taking part in highbrow cultural activities is the norm" (Miles & Sullivan, 2012, p. 311). This chapter further suggests, that if arts and culture are really at the heart of Irish society then we need to understand this more deeply, more expansively and particularly, sociologically. This means moving beyond arts audience research into a more informed understanding of Irish cultural participation and taste and the role creative culture holds in individuals' lives in the stratification and structuring of Irish society. This chapter therefore illustrates the need for government intervention to develop new measures, shift definitions and develop a greater understanding of cultural participation and cultural taste in Ireland. Finally, this chapter emphasises the need for future research to embrace more diverse methodological approaches as well as a more holistic consideration of cultural participation and taste.

## The usefulness of Bourdieu

Using Bourdieu's (1984) cultural capital premise, this research finds that interviewees in two age cohorts (18-24 years and 45-54 years), drawn from the upper and middle classes in Dublin, are engaged in a variety of cultural forms ranging across the general register of culture. Though extant Arts Audiences and Arts Council of Ireland surveys highlight that the two age groups of this research study are the most disengaged of all age groups, this research study finds both

groups actively engaged across a wide range of culture for a variety of reasons. This lends support to Peterson's omnivore premise due to the breadth and quantity of cultural engagement highlighted by interviewees (2005; Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). However, this research also finds that attendance at a broad range of culture is the result of supportive and/ or social activity with family and friends and that this is not necessarily indicative of personal taste or cultural interest. Therefore, this study suggests that social omnivorousness is present and that in fact, this research study reveals a narrower range of voracious enthusiasms that individuals cultivate and sustain for personal enjoyment and interest. This socially omnivorous but personally voracious profile is possible because of cultural proliferation and accessibility in the social field but also because of long histories of cultural inculcation and ascription that have been laid down through cultural ascriptive practices in cohorts, young and old. This is most apparent in both age cohorts but is particularly present among the young and those with privileged backgrounds.

Further, this study does not find a decline in the correlation of privileged class engagement with highbrow arts as some scholars suggest (Hanquinet, 2018; Friedman et al, 2015). This research shows that this is not the case. The Irish young interviewed for this research are as engaged in highbrow arts along with more popular forms. They demonstrate that cultural content no longer matters as much as an affirmation of class practice. In this way, this research shows how class is performed obliquely in cultural participation and taste as it is not what is engaged with but *how* this engagement occurs that matters. In other words, the possession of cultural capital, combined with the abundance of cultural opportunity does not mean that practices of cultural distinction have disappeared but rather that the dominant class mobilise their distinction in a less obvious and less visible way, at any point in the cultural register, precisely because of the proliferation of cultural opportunity. This provides support for Hanquinet's observation that there is no sign of a "developing cultural democracy" and shows that the cultural plane has been "updated to reflect wider cultural and social changes" (2018, p. 334). This research study therefore finds strong support for Bourdieusian (1984) distinction thesis in

the upper and middle classes in Dublin.

Through this research study we have also witnessed the transposability of Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) cultural capital premise to a contemporary context and this research finds new forms of distinction emerging. These encompass a broad and pluralistic cultural profile that centre on the abolition of snobbishness, knowledge-seeking and information acquisition as well as an outward facing global cosmopolitanism – one that takes pride in national culture but consumes culture transnationally and globally (Prieur & Savage, 2013; Warde, Wright & Gayo-cal, 2007). In this emerging cultural capital, individuals demonstrate the capacity of the socially-privileged to juggle and transpose a rarefied aesthetic disposition across, and between, the multiplicities of genres (Friedman, Savage, Hanquinet, & Miles, 2015). This usefully moves Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) cultural capital premise beyond patriarchal 1960s French society with its Eurocentric emphasis on highbrow culture and a clearly stratified society to a pluralistic, contemporary Ireland with a largely homogenous middle class.

By showing that new forms of distinction have emerged, and that neo-distinction practices are emerging in Ireland, this research highlights that cultural capital is not only relevant to an Irish context but continues as a critical, relevant and emergent concept sociologically. As Friedman et al note, "to treat cultural capital as a fixed entity only residing in the high arts is to operationalise a dangerously short-sighted understanding of Bourdieu's concept" (2015, p. 6). This is because taste is not innocent and to "understand contemporary developments in cultural taste," we must "be more expansive and ambitious in its analytical scope" (Friedman et al, 2015, p. 4).

The cultural participation profiles of interviewees in this research study therefore highlight how the class practices of the middle classes in Ireland are apparent through cultural participation and taste. It therefore begins to shed light on power relations in Irish society by highlighting how cultural taste and participation are embedded in social processes and the perpetuation of power relations in Irish

society. In revealing this, this research demonstrates how the manifestation of class is “implicitly coded in identity through practice” (Bottero, 2004, p. 991). Constitutive of individualised cultural experiences replete with subjective meaning, taken together these self-interested activities do add up to a form of collective action (Bottero 2004, citing Reay 1998). Thus, this research contributes to ‘new’ meanings of class by locating a collective form of individualisation and cultural class practice as demonstrated by the middle and upper middle classes in Irish society.

### **Reflections on the methodology used**

Thematic inductive analysis was used as the methodology in this research study. As noted by Braun and Clarke, it is “relatively easy to conduct a good thematic analysis on qualitative data” as knowing and using this approach does not require the same technical and / or theoretical knowledge as other more complex methods (2006, p. 94). Thematic inductive analysis is a relatively straightforward qualitative method; it is not a lazy nor undisciplined approach and resists clustering data extracts, or stringing together quotations from interviews with little analysis or interpretation. Rather, it is a formal and systematic method which consciously and actively selects, organises, analyses and interprets data. Therefore, using thematic analysis requires a considered approach to be taken and one that is captured in a transparent and explicit way such as I have done in *Chapter 3 Methodology*.

This chapter details how I consciously approached the qualitative data with a systematic method following the six step approach as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006). By actively selecting, organising and analysing the data corpus, I have extracted and presented data extracts and items that demonstrate the patterns revealed in my analysis. It was important these data extracts and items were not only compelling and good examples of the patterns present but that they were also consistent with the plausibility of the argument (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this way, the extracts from the data that I used were “illustrative of the analytic points” that emerged from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 94). In this way, I consciously avoided anecdotalism and provided strong examples of the key and prevalent themes present in the data.

Key to the conscious selection and organisation of the data I selected was the language and concepts that I identified as meaningful and I selected compelling statements that were consistent with the epistemological position of this analysis. In other words, as a researcher I was not working in a knowledge vacuum and consciously made choices in the selection of data that were guided by my knowledge and understanding of key theoretical concepts drawn from relevant academic literature relating to Bourdieu and his (1984) theory of distinction.

While I first approached this at a semantic level and was guided by the words that were used (and I coded with descriptively labelled codes), I then moved to a latent interpretative approach to the clustered data extracts. This was in order to more deeply analyse and explore the data for underlying patterns that aligned closely to Bourdieu's (1984) theory of distinction whilst also considering the aspects which are distinctive to Irish society today. Using a latent thematic analytic approach meant distilling and conflating the main prevalent themes that were coherent and meaningful to the epistemological position of this researcher and, therefore, this research project. I sought to achieve a good balance between "illustrative" and "analytic narrative" examples in the data extracts and focussed specifically on the most compelling data items that highlighted practices of cultural distinction amongst the dominant and most powerful group in Irish society- the upper middle and middle classes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96).

Of particular interest, were the data extracts that were illustrative of the socio-cultural changes in Irish society, particularly amongst the older cohort. Key examples in this regard were the quotations from Eoin (52, Legal Executive) Terry (46, User Interface Designer) and Maeve (50, Garden Designer). Eoin was particularly insightful on a poor Irish rural background and how the lack of formal cultural experiences in his childhood does not impeded his enthusiasm for a wide range of formal and informal cultural participation as an adult. Maeve highlights an equivalent dearth of formal culture in her poor suburban childhood in Dublin city. Maeve's data extracts capture an evangelical enthusiasm for arts and culture which

she practices and propagates in her professional and personal life. This evangelical enthusiasm for creativity is also found in Terry (46, User Interface Designer), whose resourced middle class life stands in stark contrast to his impoverished and working class background. The data extracts from these individuals provide not only clear illustrative examples of the importance of education to individuals in contemporary Ireland but also how developments in education in the last 50 years have impacted on these individual's lives in an economic, social and cultural way.

In contrast, data extracts from individuals in the older cohort (Robin, Peter, Hannah and Tara) highlight how a culturally- inculcated childhood leads to an effortless ease and disposition with arts and culture. Each of these individuals retain a disinterested quality that is striking. They demonstrate a highly developed aesthetic sensibility and disposition that considers culture as natural as the air they breathe. Unconscious displays of disinterestedness such as they display, stem from their upper middle class and well-resourced backgrounds that have been replete with arts and culture. These individuals are excellent examples of the spirit of Bourdieu's theory of distinction and the continued relevance of cultural capital in Ireland today.

### **Patterns of cultural class practice**

Collectively the data extracts highlight in a "coherent, consistent, and distinctive" way, how education, class, cultural interests and behaviours have a connected relationship (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 96). They show the pattern of how individuals from well-resourced backgrounds, demonstrate cultural confidence, an easy internalised aesthetic disposition and an effortless ease with arts and culture through a long history of familiarity with arts and culture. These individuals hold high stocks of cultural capital and while they do not wish to be known for their snobbish attitude to others, (keeping their judgments to themselves), they retain a quiet and internalised air of superiority and privilege and therefore of distinction.

These data extracts also show that those who are from less well-resourced backgrounds with a long history of familiarity with arts and culture as a result of education and interest, also hold high stocks of cultural capital. However, these

individuals work hard at this accumulation – building and securing these stocks through constant, conscious engagement in arts and culture. This intentional accretion builds their knowledge and bolsters their confidence as they demonstrate a commitment to arts, culture and creativity that is communicated with an evangelical and zealous quality. Yet a dissonance exists with their upper middle class peers whose cultural knowledge was accumulated easily. The upwardly mobile may hold high stocks of cultural capital but this does not mean they are carried with an effortless air and ease.

This dissonance and ease is also experienced in the younger cohort. Jim (20, Medicine, UCD) and Dinny (22, P.P.E.S., TCD) have also provided good examples of this. Each based at one of Ireland's top two universities, both with long histories of cultural transmission, Dinny's background is poorer and less resourced than Jimmy's, and Dinny never quite feels like he belongs. While Jim recalls the memory of someone he is in college with him he knows will not have the same choices and opportunities as he will.

The younger cohort all have backgrounds replete with cultural experiences through family, through extra-curricular activity, through in-school activity and through social experiences. However, cultural confidence, an easy internalised aesthetic disposition and an effortless ease with arts and culture continues to be demonstrated by those with well-resourced backgrounds and a long history of familiarity with arts and culture. This knowing cultural confidence across a wide range of arts and cultural forms gives the appearance of cultural omnivorousness. However, voracious intensity for niche cultural interests continues and this is demonstrated by data extracts from Ines, (21, Art History, TCD) and Siobha (19, Art History, TCD) as well as Jimmy (20, Medicine, UCD) and Dinny (19, TCD, P.P.E.S.). So while the younger cohort appear to have a pattern of broader cultural interests combined with cultural confidence, the qualitative approach taken, reveals through the thematic analysis of the data that, discernment, disinterestedness and an easy internalised aesthetic disposition continues to exist in Ireland's well-resourced young. They appear to have to have a wide range of cultural participation and they

appear to have an egalitarian ethic but on closer examination of the data, they have not abolished snobbishness nor has the cultural field been flattened. This might have been expected as a result of increased access to cultural infrastructure and increased familiarity with arts and culture through education for this younger cohort compared to the older interviewees. However, it is apparent that the dominant class, the upper middle and middle classes in Irish society, young and old, do demonstrate Bourdieusian (1984) distinction.

For Bourdieu, inequality was “reproduced in such simple acts as cultural preferences” and this research finds that cultural interests as exercised in cultural tastes and behaviours are distinguishing factors in the social field in Ireland (Bottero, 2004, p. 989). The principles of distinction, of positioning oneself in the social field, through the persistence and influence of an individual’s habitus, remain socially and structurally significant in Ireland. According to Bourdieu, to possess the requisite cultural competency for distancing, for displays of disinterestedness, requires moving from identifying primary meaning to a secondary stratum of understanding of what has been signified. The unlimited receptiveness of the educated therefore, finds and discerns art works through their recognition of “form” and, if an artist is to claim it as art- the intention being on the side of the producer- the aesthete, the bourgeois, will view the object for its form rather than for its function (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 21). This is present throughout all research interviews and captured in the responses of both young and old as they use their critical capacities to intellectually engage, reflect, distance and critique.

Cultural transmission has a key role to play in this with this research study recognising the influence of mothers and other key influencers in forming and informing children’s cultural tastes. Lareau (2003) has outlined the role played by parents in the transmission of cultural interests through concerted cultivation. This can be as a result of a focus “on children’s structured activities, language development and reasoning in the home, and active intervention in schooling,” and also through an active interest in forging the cultural competencies of their young Irish children (Lareau, 2002, p. 32). In this research there is no sense that this has

been based on any instrumental “rationalistic calculation” whereby children will develop more, succeeding further in life than others with these experiences under their belts (Atkinson, 2011, p. 176). While this may be an embedded and unconscious middle class approach to parenting, it is not articulated as an ends-oriented behaviour that has rational instrumentality focused on teaching children to get on in life and get ahead but is imbued with the consideration that this is typical of how Irish middle class families behave. This leads to an inculcated disposition—one that creates a transposable temperament in interviewees characterised by the ability to graze across the cultural register while holding a deeper more voracious interest in one or two cultural forms (which are not necessarily highbrow). This is most readily available to those who have had early and ongoing aesthetic training and so the new poor become those who end up outside the world of effortless, nuanced cultural knowing (Gabriel, 2005; Lizardo & Skiles, 2013).

Cultural knowing is predicated on a long history of cultural exposure that, for many of the young and old cohort, reaches back to their childhood. This cultural exposure arises largely from parental interests and the inculcation of cultural engagement from a young age. Interviewees, young and old, both demonstrate cultural interest that is substantially aligned to their parents’ cultural interests. This cultural ascription cultivates “naturalized cultural abilities” that combine to create not only cultural confidence and ease but also an undemanding disavowed engagement that belies Ireland’s higher social classes (Benzecry, 2011, pp. 188-189). Finding strong support for Bourdieu’s (1984) distinction premise, this research highlights the importance of an individual’s habitus in forming cultural taste – creating persistence and confidence that is remarkably enduring and defining. This results in cultural transmission in those with childhoods of privilege, that has become so embedded, cultural interest is disavowed by individuals who deny or minimise any conscious cultural attentiveness or activity. Bellavance (2008) also found this in his micro-qualitative study of high status professionals in Québec. In this study, this is present specifically in older individuals with high stocks of embodied cultural capital who also come from, and remain in, a high social position.

This research however also finds strong and enduring cultural interests in individuals located in a lower social position in their childhood. The parents of these individuals demonstrated and transmitted strong cultural enthusiasms for particular cultural forms that individuals now demonstrate in their own cultural participation today. In the older cohort, these cultural interests are now being handed on and passed down to their children as they actively share and encourage their children to engage in culture that they find interesting. For those upwardly mobile older individuals who did not experience strong cultural enthusiasm in their childhood, they cultivated their cultural interests through education. These individuals articulate an intense and passionate belief in the power of culture and creativity to transform individuals and society. Hard work, focused application and a higher level education in cultural disciplines have translated for these individuals into professional careers and higher social positions than their parents. Less discreet than others who come from a higher social position in life, these cultural warriors are evangelical in their praise of education and dedicated to culture and creativity.

Therefore, this research finds that the “statistical relationship” between class and culture “is not as rigid as Bourdieu’s theory would suggest” (Sullivan, 2002, p. 162). Those, self-identifying as originating from a lower social class groups, in this study have strong cultural tastes and cultural capital profiles. For these upwardly mobile individuals, this is accompanied by a potent belief in the power of culture as a force for good society. As broadly omnivorous and equally voracious as those from middle and upper middle class homes, cultural transmission has an important part to play in situating cultural interest from a young age in the homes of lower economic and class circumstance. For some, particularly those who recognise the upwardly mobile nature of their social class trajectory and improved economic situation comparative to that of their parents, they link this to education and to the opportunities they have been able to avail of as a result.

It is also worth drawing out that to use the phrase *disinterested* (as per the Kantian and Bourdieusian thesis) in relation to voracious engagement, somewhat belies the

level of intensity and sincerity with which highly-engaged interviewees discuss arts and cultural forms (Benzecry, 2011). Their passionate and committed consumption of specific genres is very much driven by the subjective enthusiasms of interviewees. These enthusiasms are highly individual and often characteristic of a long history of cultural engagement and likely future interest. As Pinnock highlights:

Because cultural values are learned, and learning takes time, from the sorts of learning experience to which people have committed time in the past, much can be inferred about their probable cultural consumption behaviour in future and about their attitudes to art. (2009, p. 47)

Subjective enthusiasms, as this study shows, can cross social class groups and bring people together through an active and dynamic cultural taste- a preference, a liking and an inclination to be with others that share similar interests. Following Hennion (2004), this raving workforce of fans spend time together discussing, reflecting and sharing opinions or experiences on small aspects or details of their specific, chosen cultural genre. In this way, as Lizardo (2006) outlines, individuals cluster in their cultural tastes and tastes help shape personal networks.

Therefore, Bourdieu's structure-agency dialectic connects the subjective meaning-filled experience of the individual with social stratification processes and while perhaps this dialectic may not be as rigid as Bourdieu originally suggested, as a frame with which to understand cultural stratification in Ireland, this research has begun to shed some light and better understand the nature of social and cultural processes and their relationship to power relations and the social hierarchy in Ireland. This research therefore, tells the story of the mobilisation of cultural capital in Ireland today through individual agency in cultural participation and taste amongst two generational cohorts. In so doing, it recognises the value and significance of a variety of cultural engagements that exist with-in and with-out state structures and the importance of social processes in forming cultural participation and taste. The downgrading of status of traditional highbrow art forms, along with the proliferation of cultural opportunity in the social field, has provided a world

replete with cultural opportunity has meant that those with stocks of inculcated cultural capital and an embodied disposition, consciously or unconsciously find ways to mark boundaries and manifest exclusionary practices across a broad range of interests. This creates a context whereby numerous cultural engagements are possible and do occur. However, this does not mean that all cultural activities are engaged with equally nor that access to arts, culture and creativity has become equally accessible across the social classes.

In the Irish young, those who have had a long history of cultural exposure, through an “early immersion in a world of cultivated people, practices and objects,” have developed a discerning aesthetic disposition that younger interviewees transpose across, and between, a multiplicity of genres (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 75). This capacity to juggle and transpose cultural distinction across a variety of cultural forms has been cultivated and is now expressed as a disinterested appreciation across the cultural register, from Netflix to Vlogs, from gaming sites to musical theatre, from niche film taste to slam poetry. The privileged Irish young exercise their cultural knowledge and references displaying distance and critique meanwhile. This is articulated “in a spirit of openness” that belies their cultural privilege. Rather than “the fall of cultural hierarchies,” what we are actually witnessing is the content of elite culture being remade (Friedman et al, 2015; Prieur & Savage, 2013, p. 258).

This neo-distinction is an emerging cultural capital that is exercised in an “expanded realm of cultural production” (Wright, 2011, p. 358). It is applied to what has been variously described as lowbrow, popular, emergent, street and mass content such as comedy, mass produced clothing, reality television, publishing and dancing (see Friedman et al, 2015, for more on this). While it reflects the “shifts in meanings of cultural hierarchies,” it does not mean that the cultural plane has equalised nor that highbrow culture is in decline rather it speaks to the social structuring of cultural distinction appearing “remarkably steadfast...across time” (Jarness, 2015, p. 76).

The hierarchy of social stratification of Irish society is manifested through cultural behaviours and preferences such as those demonstrated in this research study. In

this way, this research shows how class becomes encoded in identity through cultural practice. The resulting distribution of cultural capital then determines power relations through the class structure (Bennett et al, 2009; Friedman, 2014; Hanquinet, Roose & Savage, 2014). It therefore becomes a truism that those with more resources in life, are able to access the hidden benefits of these resources. These benefits comprise of access to networks, professional experiences and cultural experiences that appear available to all but are self-exclusionary as a result of the quiet boundaries that are drawn through practices of discernment and distinction.

### **Policy implications and recommendations**

If we think about arts, culture and creativity as a situated context, as a social construction, it becomes clear how “all art is collectively produced” (Wolff, 1981, p. 118). This is because the co-produced nature of this activity involves many people: policymakers, consumers, venues, institutions and educational providers. This means that in any given society, the practice, production and consumption of culture contains concealed beliefs, obscured value systems and hidden assumptions (Keats & Urry, 1975, p. 227).

These values, beliefs and assumptions are sometimes made explicit through educational curricula, cultural policy and arts strategies as well as through distributive mechanisms such as public funding to arts and cultural practice, infrastructure and projects. Often they remain implicit. In Ireland, as mentioned above, there is no explicit cultural policy, only explicit arts strategy which functions as *de facto* implicit cultural policy. Therefore, the interests and ideologies that are served are those held and promoted by those who make explicit arts strategy and fund arts and culture in Ireland: arts organisations, governmental bodies, cultural agencies and institutions.

Many research studies show that the formation and implementation of any policy is affected by a country’s demographics, its organisational and its political

characteristics. For example, left leaning governments tend to favour arts and culture and aim to reduce cultural inequalities and promote access. Right leaning governments favour certain artforms as they serve elite interests and promote and secure a dominance in power relationships. In democratic states, we perceive cultural policy as acting in the interests of the common good: directly acting in the interests of core cultural creators and engagers; and more generally serving the interests of those who are, or might be, interested in exploring arts and culture. In authoritarian regimes, cultural policy is a propaganda tool for the perpetuation of particular relations and ideologies (Feder & Katz-Gerro, 2012). Expressed in this way, it is also clear how the state has a central and powerful role in influencing not only the prospects of the arts and culture in society but also how the state guides sectional interests through the development of research instruments, as well as policies which seek to influence or expand audience attendance and widen access to arts and culture such as in Ireland.

Cultural agencies, such as Arts Councils, their strategies and grant programmes, are the most visible form of cultural policy outside of the main governmental apparatus. And scholars such as Katz-Gerro and Feder (2015), have charted how the cultural priorities of these agencies are manifested through their decision-making particularly with regard to the distribution of public funding. This funding, when distributed, highlights cultural priorities and legitimates some cultural forms over others. In Ireland (as mentioned in *Chapter 1 Ireland*), we have witnessed many research surveys and arts strategies which serve to perpetuate certain cultural priorities, legitimate certain state funded cultural forms and in so doing perpetuate cultural inequalities.

This is because the definitions and understandings of arts and culture that are used in these surveys follow a traditional definition of high arts that is largely consumed by the educated, middle and upper middle classes in Ireland. Participating in state funded high arts is favoured and arts strategies and *de facto* implicit cultural policies are formed on the basis of this information which seeks to convert the non-users to users of legitimated state-funded culture. As Blomkamp (2015) notes, the power of

“the weight of numbers in contemporary society” comes both from the practical importance and their symbolic power. Through the categorisation and quantification of formal and informal cultural participation such as in the Arts Council and Arts Audience surveys, cultural indicators have been created which transform “intangible phenomena and contested concepts into authoritative and seemingly objective knowledge” (MacDowall et al, 2015, p. 3). This therefore creates a definitive view on cultural participation in Ireland but one “loaded with assumptions about the world in their design and, in the process of their application” (Gibson & Miles, 2016, p.152). As the only existing research on arts and culture in Ireland, the Arts Council of Ireland and the Arts Audience reports have been used to inform implicit cultural policy and explicit arts strategies: this is troubling. Any information capture on cultural engagement in Ireland needs to take greater account of the holistic nature of cultural participation and allow for a less polarised dialectic in research that distinguishes so definitively between formal and informal cultural participation, presenting a traditional and privileged view of the world.

Indeed, as Miles and Sullivan highlight “not taking part in highbrow cultural activities is the norm” and they argue for the “the value and significance of informal and everyday cultural practices” to be understood (2012, p. 311). Taylor also demonstrates that while only a small proportion of the English population are highly engaged with state supported forms of culture, over half the population are busy with everyday culture and leisure activities (2015, p. 169). Arts Council (2015b, 2015c, 2017) and Arts Audiences (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012, 2013) surveys, mentioned extensively above in Chapter 1 and 3, capture cultural participation survey information in Ireland, and they find that the lower classes and the less educated in Irish society are unengaged, excluded and are non-users of culture. Policies and strategies are then developed by government agencies and arts organisations to convert these non-users to users and in so doing expand the audience base for state funded culture. This approach does not take account of the diverse communities and cultural activities that could be considered ordinary and everyday cultural participation (Miles & Sullivan, 2010; Williams, 1958).

What is not reflected in these surveys, and therefore in their findings, are the cultural forms and activities that are engaged with by other classes and communities in this society. For example, Ireland has a large rural and farming community, it also has an active and enthusiastic sports community – often engaged around traditional Irish sports such as the GAA and hurling. Ireland also has a significant traveller community and immigrant community – first generation and second generation (who are often referred to as the ‘new Irish’). There are also large numbers of Irish society who are lower middle and working class. None of these groups are sufficiently represented or adequately captured in terms of the specifics of their cultural participation nor the breadth of their cultural activities. The arts and culture that is surveyed in Ireland is representative of a privileged view of highbrow arts and culture that is the purview and cultural arena of middle and upper middle class cultural consumption. There is no account or capture of more ordinary or ghostly forms of cultural participation, nor the types of cultural participation and interests of others that are outside the dominant and therefore, powerful in Irish society (Miles & Sullivan, 2010; Williams, 1958).

This research study shows that the middle and upper middle classes in Ireland are highly and widely engaged in arts and culture in a variety of forms and participation modes. However, this begs the question, what do other communities do? how do the communities mentioned above meaningfully engage in arts and culture? Does it take the arts and cultural participation of other communities in Ireland take the same form as the urban privileged? Does it take a different form? Which cultural forms do different communities and classes in Ireland engage with in terms of arts and cultural participation? Do they passively attend or voraciously consume? How much of this is an engagement with highbrow artforms? Or is this more omnivorous in nature and do others in various communities cultural engage across the range of brows?? Do different communities practice discernment and disinterestedness? Or is this only the disposition of the privileged? And if not, is this across the general register of arts and culture?

The production of accurate and relevant data is required to convey satisfactory

accountability and transparency in the use of public funds as well as policy development at both local and national levels. As MacDowall et al state, “the production of accurate and relevant data has become central to cultural policy and how the cultural lives of citizens are understood” (2015, p. 1). Therefore, in Ireland, we need to develop alternative methods for the production of relevant and accurate data as well as take greater account of the context in which research occurs. Focusing less on positivist empiricism to support outdated modes of understanding and work towards a fuller, and more nuanced approach to cultural value and cultural worth that can insert questions into policy debates about what a contemporary understanding of cultural participation might mean and a contemporary definition of culture look like, particularly in an Irish context.

The implementation of any (implicit or explicit) policy exerts a power that shapes the field it pertains to, and implicit cultural policy in Ireland is no different. It shapes the cultural field, and designates some users of legitimate culture and seeks to convert others to participating in this culture. In this way it shapes the influence of certain actors within this field, as resources are distributed and power relationships established. This research shows that the middle and upper middle classes in Ireland, have no trouble accessing culture or making their own and their sense of privilege and entitlement is tangible. By perpetuating their sectional interests, the cultural interests of others (classes, communities) are not highlighted, funded, legitimated nor valued. This means that the version of culture that is profiled, funded and provided for through financial state support and subvention will continue to be a version of culture that is underpinned by Enlightenment ideals and Kantian notions of disinterestedness that are also aligned to postcolonial ideals of high arts. This is problematic for a postcolonial nation such as Ireland which continues to experience a cheek by jowl relationship with neighbours in the UK and in the main operate through the medium of English.

It is possible therefore, that a policy formulated by powerful groups in society, will continue to serve to reinforce and reproduce the hegemonic power and control of these groups. Therefore, explicit arts strategies, and implicit cultural policies, that

continue to reinforce privileged interests in society will continue to act counter to an equalising force that reduces inequalities, provides access and enables diversity (such as Culture2025 in Ireland). The only audiences that will be expanded will be the privileged ones.

To really understand the nature and fact of cultural participation in social life in Ireland means understanding the term culture differently to how it is currently being mobilised in existing Arts Council research (as cultural participation). Particularly as this research is being used to inform government policy as well as funding decisions. This also means more fulsomely exploring and researching the wide variety of cultural interests and activities of not only those from different social classes and regional groups as mentioned above but also exploring the different and diverse ethnic and cultural groups in this society.

It also means considering the role education plays in the formation of cultural tastes. Education has underpinned much of the strong cultural confidence amongst interviewees and has undoubtedly led to increased cultural experiences and conditions of cultural egalitarianism. Exposure to arts and culture are now a core facet of education policies in Ireland and help support family and individual interests in forming cultural tastes.

Indeed, “culture and cultural development have become internationally recognised as important dimensions of contemporary governance and public policy” and this is particularly true in Ireland- a country that places arts and culture at the heart of its national and international social and political identity. The “paucity of formal cultural data sets at a national level” as well as the lack of comprehensive data collection, further compounds the issue (MacDowall, Badham, Blomkamp & Dunphy, 2015, p. 3). The resulting inadequacy of “dealing with” and understanding sufficiently “the complexities of cultural processes” (MacDowall et al, 2015, p. 4) is a lazy and lacking response to the cultural activity and forms of cultural engagement in a nation considered actively culturally engaged.

Therefore, if a cultural policy is a reflection of the Irish government's priorities in relation to the cultural aspects of life, we need to explore the role the Irish state holds in mediating the policies and practices relating to culture. This points to the fact that in Ireland, we need a definitional shift and we need to change the terms of the debate around what constitutes arts, culture, participation and engagement in Ireland. We need to really consider how best to understand the role culture holds in society and how to adequately incorporate formal and informal (amateur, domestic and hobby) cultural activities into our understanding of Ireland as a cultural nation. If we can better understand different perspectives, modes of access to and participation in culture along with the proliferation of approaches, motives and experiences, then we might actually begin to more fully understand Ireland's status as a creative nation.

Cultural policy researcher Anne Kelly (1989), drawing on the words of historian Joe Lee, stated that cultural maturity is a matter of searching for, and confronting, the truth about society. In Ireland, she notes, we are still a long way from this goal but we have begun to take footsteps, however faltering in the right direction. Thirty years later, her words are still accurate and we are still a long way from the goal of cultural maturity and confronting the truth about the unequal nature of cultural stratification in Ireland. To understand the existing evidence-policy gap better, we need research that reflects on the full range of policies, programmes and practices that affect cultural practice, production and engagement in Ireland and understand how these perpetuate hegemonies, sectional interests and cultural inequalities in Ireland. In this way, we can only properly comprehend how arts and culture are collectively produced.

"Culture is not just a reflection of economic or social structures. It is mediated at a variety of levels. It is mediated by the complexity and contradictory nature of the social groups in which it originates; it is mediated by the particular situations of its actual producers;...and it is mediated by the nature of operation of aesthetic codes and conventions, through which ideology is transformed and expressed" (Wolff, 1981, p. 71). There is little doubt that arts and culture practice, production and

engagement have to be materially understood as well as socially, politically and economically situated (Wolff, 1981, p. 47). And it is perhaps more necessary than ever to understand the factors that impact and shape arts and culture in our society. Once we can engage in future research and policy-making that helps us “to communicate effectively amongst ourselves” can we move towards the “possibility of alternate futures” (Scullion & Garcia, 2005, p. 114; Williams, 2004, p. 2).

### **Pointing towards the future**

This research has made a contribution to cultural sociology, presenting analysis of responses from interviews with forty-seven of the urban privileged in the nation’s capital, Dublin. It highlights the need to move beyond arts audience surveys and the need for more research of a sociological nature. With this in mind, the following suggests some possible areas for future research.

This research study has focused on the urban privileged and through the interviews with individuals such as Terry (46, User Interface Designer), Eoin (48, Legal Executive), Dolores (49, Current Affairs Executive) and Rose (50, Entrepreneur) it would seem like a rich possibility for sociological knowledge lies in exploring different social classes, different geographic areas and different genders. This would provide the opportunity to explore how different classes (on paper) engage with arts, culture and creativity and if there is a distinct correlation between certain types of culture and certain types of social class. Terry has highlighted how his memories of cultural engagement in his suburban working class background are of his parents and sing-alongs in the local pub, club and community hall. While Dolores notes how her cultural interests arose directly from not only her father and mother’s interest in classical musical but also their nearness to a cultural centre (in the city of Cork) despite their lower class background. It would be interesting to explore if this is a distinct class circumstance and if this still continues. It would also be worthwhile considering other urban working class cultural interests and exploring if, for example, these occur more locally in working class communities or in the city centre, domestically at home or more formally, in dedicated venues or indeed, any distinct features of cultural participation and taste of those in the C2, D and E classes. As a

result, this would start to build a picture of the cultural preferences and interests of different class groups located in an urban context and how these groups may have distinct cultural class practices. This would move sociological understanding of the social life of cultural taste and participation in Ireland beyond how the urban dominant class express and engage with arts, culture and creativity and begin to incorporate a better understanding of cultural stratification.

Aligned to this is another research area which could explore geographical context and its relationship with cultural participation and taste. Reflecting on the words of Eoin (48, Legal Executive) who comes from an impoverished rural background in the midlands of Ireland, his childhood memories are of church, lake swims, gathering in other people's houses, community pastimes and sport. It would seem logical therefore, that any future research could begin to explore if a particular cultural profile is found in rural regions. Rural communities in Ireland are quite distinct and while they used to be comprised of a large farming class, this is now being eroded replaced by light industry, a large tourism sector as well as increasing numbers of commuters to major town centres. Despite this decline in numbers, Ireland's farming community still employs 8.6% of the working population (EU Commission, 2018). Existing rural and regional farming communities frequently hold community festivals as national celebration days or as fundraisers, to mark the seasons as well as notable local events. Many different generations are involved in these celebrations, as are local clubs and community groups and while some might be national celebration days and follow a more generic format such as St. Patrick's day or Halloween, each community responds in a very locally specific way in their creative engagement to these events. Often an individual's contribution to these events is highly gendered, with older females generating cake and baking stalls and produce that also contain homemade jams and chutneys, handling the money and the tea/coffee stands while males are inevitably the host of the event and substantially involved in the tractor pulls, ploughing championships, raffles and music. Therefore, to begin to map the different types of arts, culture and creative activities in rural regions, formally and informally, would be a valuable and worthwhile research enquiry as this would meaningfully begin to build a picture of

a nation, its creative profile and distinct cultural profiles for different types of people, their interest and their geographical contexts.

Sport also features highly in the rural regions and a research enquiry into rural and regional cultural participation could encompass a broader range of cultural practices that includes sport activities and interests. Gaelic football is distinct to Irish culture and is found in local clubs throughout the twenty-six counties of the Irish Republic and the six counties of Northern Ireland. Founded in 1884 in Co. Tipperary, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) has a long and complex history with the nation state and “is part of the Irish consciousness and plays an influential role in Irish society that extends far beyond the basic aim of promoting Gaelic game” (GAA, 2018b). As an amateur sporting organisation, its reach is worldwide and its influence in Irish culture is of substantial proportions. Akin to a tribal collective spirit and inspiration, a number of interviewees like Eoin and Rose made reference to this in our interviews. Given the GAA’s political and social influence along with its mission to “to revive and nurture traditional, indigenous sports and pastimes,” any research enquiry that wishes to fully consider a broad range of culture and participation and include those that are indigenous to Ireland, would need to incorporate a consideration of sport, and specifically Gaelic football in their consideration (GAA, 2018b).

Further, Ireland also has number of communities that are quite specific to this territory. These include the Irish-speaking community, Travellers, social, economic and political migrants and refugees as well as the border communities. Each group has a particular set of social, economic and political circumstances attached to their experience and future research on culture in Irish society could incorporate or specifically focus on the cultural taste and participation of these communities. For example, traditional Gaelic culture such as *seán nós* (singing) and *seanchaithe* (storytelling) were and are important aspects of local cultural life. *Ceili* (community dances), *feis* and *fleadh cheoil* (civic music and dance gatherings) continue to bring local communities together and are attended by both males and females, young and old, while spontaneous music in local pubs, using traditional Irish musical

instruments (fiddle, tin whistle, the box and bodhrán), is still a feature of many Irish speaking communities. These indigenous traditionally Irish cultural activities tend towards informality, spontaneity and are very local experiences. They stand in direct contrast to the formal cultural infrastructure and arts and culture that were established by the British in urban centre such as Cork and Dublin in the late nineteenth century. A valuable research proposition would be to explore how indigenous Irish culture exists cheek by jowl in Ireland with formal (imported) arts and culture and how cultural participation and practice perpetuates historical colonial influence.

Finally, exploring specific cultural forms and their associated “taste publics” would be a valuable research endeavour (Gans, 1974). While this study has taken a broad view across the cultural register, throughout the research interviews with young and old, it became apparent, as noted in previous chapters, that individuals retain specific enthusiasms for specific cultural forms. These become self-defining, feed directly into individual’s identities, social and cultural interests. It would be interesting to think in research terms of the dynamics of taste as engagement, and that there may be particular groups of “addicts” to a total (cultural) way of life (Gans, 1974, p. 12). Considering how people aggregate in relation to the dynamics of their taste and precisely because of an interest in specific cultural content is an interesting research proposition and one that scholars such as Benezcry (2011) have ethnographically explored in relation to one artform. For example, anecdotally, this researcher is aware of the huge interest in country and western music in Ireland and that individuals follow a wide range of country and western Irish singers for not only their music but also the dancing that takes place at country and music events. In this cultural engagement, politics are overlooked and people actively cross the border between the north and south of Ireland in search of country and music singers and events that they enjoy. These “taste publics” are one example of how elective affinity groups congregate around specific cultural content. Others include, the visual arts community, the theatre community, Irish folk music and indeed the festival community in Ireland which has gained momentum in recent years.

The possibilities noted here as areas for future research are non-exhaustive examples of the types of research studies that could be conducted in Ireland to further our sociological understanding of cultural participation and taste. As noted previously in this research, to date there has been no major study of cultural taste and participation in Ireland. Other nations have engaged in large scale research that has made a substantial contribution to the sociological field. This large-scale mixed methods and academic work is substantially lacking in Ireland.

### **The case for mixing methods on a large-scale**

As noted in *Chapter 3 Methods*, this study set out to engage in a mixed methods research project. This research project had initially hoped to explore cultural participation in Ireland through a mixed methods study of qualitative and quantitative methods focused on a visual rendering of cultural participation in Ireland by the weight and volume of cultural capital. This would have been achieved by engaging in a Multi Correspondence Analysis (MCA) supported by qualitative interviews. This would not only have followed an approach closely aligned to the approach taken by Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1984) but would also have contributed research findings that made a meaningful contribution to the sociological literature on this topic. Engaging in a mixed methods study that uses MCA would have contributed research findings that would move the contribution to the field from classical descriptive statistical techniques such as surveys previously used in arts and culture participation research in Ireland to an inductive analysis that is primarily organised around individual's participation and taste in the first instance. This had fully been the intention at the onset of this research journey. Unfortunately, as a result of the limitations of the *Public and the Arts* (2006) data set that I was provided access to, and its failure to meet the two crucial principles of MCA, namely the principles of homogeneity and exhaustiveness, the data was not suitable for use with this method (van Meter et al, 1994).

While not explicitly arguing for mixed methods using MCA, statements such as the following from Gans help make the case for using mixed methods in studies of cultural taste and participation:

The fact is that we still know virtually nothing about people and tastes...Surveys can usually afford only to ask people about their most frequent activities and their general likes and dislikes, therefore producing findings about general tendencies...The ethnographic and life history data that can identify fundamental patterns of cultural choice and that are needed prerequisites to surveys have not yet been produced. (1986, p. 33)

Halle also notes how the majority of questions asked in surveys of art and culture, relate mainly to the attendance behaviours and intellectual knowledge of the respondents through survey questionnaires which demonstrate competency and knowledge acquisition but contain little analysis of “the meaning of such art in people’s lives” (Halle, 1993, p. 5). He highlights how the tendency to “deduce” meaning and provide pre-packaged, preconceived and “anaemic” one dimensional meanings in extant research to date, has led sociologists and economists to suggest that art and culture are either a vehicle to demonstrate the acquisition of economic capital, and or display cultural capital (*ibid*). While Benezcry considers that “in contemporary debates about the social character of taste, we rarely see why people engage in a culturally esoteric practice...we fail to see the mediations that occur between social structure and taste” (2011, p. 180).

Silva, Warde and Wright (2008) note that mixing methods is the most productive strategy for the investigation of complex social phenomena such as cultural participation and taste. They show how it has required researchers, who are engaged in tracing patterns of cultural taste, to ask questions which determine if tastes cluster: if so, how they correspond to social group boundaries, whether people recognise these boundaries and whether groups make social judgments about superiority or inferiority of others on the basis of cultural taste (Silva et al, 2008). Indeed, Silva, Warde and Wright along with Bennett, Savage and Gayo-cal engage in a mixed methods study using MCA in the *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* project as noted above (Bennett et al, 2009). Miles and Sullivan highlight that MCA is not only “visually appealing” but that “MCA makes no such distinction

between variables in terms of their status” providing “for an examination of the way a set of variables – such as indicators of participation and non-participation in a wide range of activities – are arrayed” (2012, p. 313). Therefore, MCA avoids “the common pitfall associated with regression analysis of focusing only on whether a particular effect is statistically significant, rather than on the main patterns in the data” (Benzécri, 1973, cited in Miles & Sullivan, 2012, p. 313).

MCA through its ability to mobilise and visually map large data sets facilitates a big picture quantitative approach that is a particularly interesting and suitable method for qualitative methods. The geometric frame model provided by MCA functions as a combination of individual points agglomerated into clusters of taste and participation. Using the geometric frame model of MCA to plot a family of statistical observations and present a foundational analysis of cultural participation and taste in Ireland (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2004).

These bottom-up clusters, akin to presenting factors, are located within the social space constructed by the axes. While they mark out difference as well as similarity in the social field, they do not require the “empty spaces” of a class schema to be filled up, nor do they run along the sliding scale of hierarchical social class in the first instance (Halle, 1993, p. 5). Inductively, in MCA, if these aspects emerge from the research, they are considered pertinent. Relational approaches such as this, are valuable in capturing a clearer and more accurate picture of cultural participation and taste- one that does not necessarily relate class or employment relations as an *a priori* consideration but rather allows it to emerge as an *a posteriori* aspect of the research.

In a low dimensional space, MCA creates a cultural map- one which visually represents the “relationality of social life implicit in Bourdieu’s theorizing” (Silva, Warde & Wright, 2008, p. 4). It helps highlight important differences in various cultural fields and can recognise a cultural specificity that separates taste preferences and participation behaviours as well as more structured data on social divisions, educational qualifications, age and other demographic and socio-

economic data. These structuring factors are often used in MCA as supplementary variables allowing for their incorporation and overlaying into the analysis at a later point. For Bourdieu (1984), this created a distinct connection between taste and practice that articulate a strong division around social class but one that emerges as an underlying *a posteriori* pattern in the analysis.

Therefore, MCA facilitates a championing of patterns of individual tastes and behaviours that enable us to highlight the person and individualised narratives within formal and geometric fields. This allows for a much more complex and layered mixed methods approach that facilitates both a macro overview of numerical data but also the individual reflexive narrative. This creates a “rich dialogue” between qualitative and quantitative data that could further elucidate cultural participation research information on Ireland and in so doing make a meaningful contribution to cultural sociological research (Silva, Warde & Wright, 2009, p. 303).

Taken together, mixing methods provides a way of considering structures and processes, establishing relationships between variables and exploring the reasons behind those relationships, thereby providing a means of bridging macro–micro levels of social analysis (Bryman, 2003). While a mixed methods study using MCA, combines statistical analysis with oral testimonies or interviews, and considers the *relationships* between the patterns of participation and different cultural fields of practice through the Bourdieusian cultural capital frame. While the previous section highlights usefully a number of research projects that would be pertinent to engage in, overarchingly there is a need in Ireland for a large-scale mixed methods study on cultural participation that accounts for the similarities that classes share, and also the differences between different classes (Grenfell, 2015). This would provide a reconfiguring and re-consideration of taste as a social and cultural logic that has the ability to mobilise and accrue various economic and social resources. As Bourdieu posited, an analysis of a “diverse array of practices [that] can be grouped together through a set of unifying principles which express and organize the interests of different social classes” is a useful framework to account for a set

of *practices* found in the social space and to observe how differences result in people defining their position in that social space (1984, p. xx).

This is because the usefulness of mixing methods is centred on the research questions that can either ask “what and how or what and why” (Woolley, 2009, p. 8). Bryman (2003) argues for a best of both worlds approach and while it is important to be concerned with the collection and analysis of data in numeric form, including qualitative research and mixing methods may provide the best means of bridging the macro-micro gulf. Therefore, in addition to the suggestions about future research directions made above, this research recommends a comprehensive exploration of Bourdieu’s cultural capital premise through a mixed methods, nationally representative, research study using Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) in Ireland.

Mixing methods and exemplars of mixed methods are “rarely seen” (Woolley, 2009), although this approach is now growing in popularity. Savage, Gayo-cal and Wright note how the “correspondence analysis, the method used by Bourdieu” has been “nearly entirely ignored in English language research” (2005, p. 2). While MCA has grown in popularity since, it is still a relatively nascent technique. Comparable international research work includes projects such as the *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* project 2003-2006, in the UK (Bennett et al, 2009), *Accounting for Taste* (Bennett, Emmison & Frow, 1999) in Australia, and *Contemporary Patterns of Social Differentiation – the Case of Aalborg* in Denmark, (Prieur, Rosenlund & Skjott-Larsen, 2008) ); in Finland, Kahma & Toikka’s (2012) cultural map of Finland which analyses cultural differences using Multiple Correspondence Analysis. This suggested large scale mixed methods research could, therefore, feed into wider comparative discourses on cultural participation and cultural sociology research as well as having an agenda-setting role in Ireland. A research project such as this would not simply restate Bourdieu’s premise of distinction in Ireland but trace a more discrete and complex layering of formal and informal cultural practices as an understanding of how different social groups in Ireland have different cultural tastes and how these tastes relate to larger questions

of policy, inequality, gender, age and education.

### **A final few words**

While claims exist that Ireland is a highly engaged creative nation (DAHRRGA, 2016a), little is known sociologically about the role culture holds in Irish society nor how it impacts or informs social processes. This research, comprised of 47 semi-structured interviews with two age cohorts drawn from Dublin's urban educated, makes a unique contribution in this regard. As the dominant class in Irish society, this study has demonstrated through their cultural tastes and participation, how power relations are performed through the use of embodied cultural capital as a resource.

This study therefore affirms the relevance of Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital and has provided an alternate and sociological perspective on cultural participation in Ireland. As a result, it illustrates the need for future academic and government research to embrace the shifting definitions of culture, understand better the social and technological forces that are impacting on Irish society and enquire more deeply into the role that culture, and cultural stratification, hold in structuring Irish society. Finally, this research study illustrates the need for future research to embrace different methodological (qualitative and quantitative) approaches in order to develop a greater sociological understanding of the role of culture in Ireland.

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A 35-54yrs cohort overview**

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age (years)	Highest level own education	Profession	Income €	Lives now	Where Parents Originated	Highest level parents' education	Father's occupation
1	Maeve	F	50	Postgrad	Garden Designer	≤ 35,000	Dublin 6	Sth Co Dub	Secondary school	Builder
2	Aidan	M	52	Masters	Banking/project management	>75,000e	Dublin 6	Dublin 6	Secondary school	Company owner
3	Ellie	F	51	Masters	Solicitor	>75,000e	Dublin 6	West Galway	Secondary school	Farmer
4	Peter	M	52	Masters	Solicitor	>75,000e	Dublin 6	Dublin 4	Degree	Company owner
5	Lily	F	45	Postgrad	Public Relations	Student (Husband >75,000e)	Sth Co Dub	Dublin 4	Degree	Doctor
6	Hannah	F	47	BA	Creative Designer	>75,000e	Dublin 6	Dublin 4	PhD	Islamic Curator
7	Robin	M	49	BA	Film Director	>75,000e	Dublin 6	Dublin 4	Degree	Doctor
8	Alison	F	47	BA	Television Executive	>75,000e	Dublin 6	Limerick	Secondary school	Company Director
9	Rose	F	50	Masters	Entrepreneur	Student (Husband >75,000e)	Sth Co Dub	Sth Co Dub	Secondary school	Company owner
10	Emer	F	46	Masters	Journalist	55-75,000	Dublin 6	Sth Co Dub	BComm	Bank Manager
11	Katriona	F	47	MBA	Enterprise Ireland	>75,000	Dublin 6	Dublin 14	Secondary school	Company owner
12	Tanya	F	54	BA	Artist	<35,000e	Dublin 6	N. Ireland	Secondary school	Company owner
13	Tara	F	48	Postgrad/ currently MLib	Solicitor & Librarian	Student (Husband >75,000e)	Dublin 6	N. Ireland	MA	Company owner

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age (years)	Highest level own education	Profession	Income €	Lives now	Where Parents Originated	Highest level parents' education	Father's occupation
14	Eoin	M	52	MLB	Legal Executive	>75,000e	Sth Co Dub	Leitrim	Primary school	Farmer
15	Dolores	F	49	Masters	Current Affairs Executive	>75,000e	Sth Co Dub	Cork City	Secondary school	Technician
16	Julie	F	48	Masters	Health Promotion	55-75,000e	Dublin 6	N.Ireland	Primary school	Handyman
17	Terry	M	46	Masters	User Interface Designer	55-75,000e	Dublin 8	Dublin 24	Primary school	Technician
18	Cate	F	39	Currently PhD candidate	Medic	Student (Husband >75,000e)	Dublin 6	Cork	Secondary school	Bank Manager
19	Caoimhe	F	53	PhD	Lecturer & Musician	>75,000e	Dublin 6	Cork	Masters	County Council Manager
20	Molly	F	53	BA	Visual Communications	>75,000e	Dublin 6	Donegal	Secondary school	Entrepreneur
	<b>Female no.</b>	<b>15</b>								
	<b>Male no.</b>	<b>5</b>								

## **Appendix B 18-24yrs cohort overview**

**Students from Trinity College Dublin**

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age (years)	Arts / STEM	Main discipline	Academic year	Lives now	Highest level parents' education	Where parents originated	Father's occupation
1	Anne	F	19	STEM	Theoretical Physics	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	MBA/MA	Wexford/ UK + Dublin	Web Design Manager
2	Ciaran	M	22	STEM	Science	4 <sup>th</sup>	Dublin	BMed/ BAg	Westmeath (rural)	Contractor
3	Roise	F	19	STEM	Science	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	MPhil	Belfast/ Pakistan	Professor
4	Lois	F	19	STEM	Biology/Chemistry	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	MSc	Finglas/ Clontarf. N Dublin	Software Engineer
5	Clare	F	18	STEM	Engineering	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dublin	Diploma	New Orleans, USA/ UK	Teacher
6	Maire	F	19	STEM	Biology/Chemistry	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	MA	Dublin	Engineer
7	Kaolin	M	18	STEM	Science	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	MMed	Cork/ India	Consultant (Cardio)
8	Farran	F	19	AH	Politics an Sociology	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	MA	Belfast/ Dublin	Director
9	Senan	F	19	AH	Geography and Political Science	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	BA	Cork	Banking
10	Ines	F	22	AH	Art History (major) English Lit (minor)	4 <sup>th</sup>	Dublin	MA/Postgrad	Dublin	Real Estate Manager
11	Mary	F	22	AH	Art History (major) Sociology (minor)	4 <sup>th</sup>	Dublin	BA/BA	Tyrone / Donegal	Engineer
12	Robert	M	22	AH	Islamic Studies/ History of Art	4 <sup>th</sup>	Dublin	BMed/BMed	Sligo/ Sutton, N. Dublin	Dentist
13	Siobha	F	19	AH	Art History (major) English Lit (minor)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	BComm/Secretarial	Cork/ Dublin	CFO
14	Dinny	M	20	AH	Philosophy, Policy Economics, Sociology	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Dublin	MA	Ballyfermot, Dublin/ USA	Actor
15	Lou	F	21	AH	Music and French	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dublin	MA/Postgrad	Waterford/ Cork	Psychotherapist
	<b>Females</b>	<b>11</b>		<b>Arts/</b>	<b>8</b>					
	<b>Males</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>STEM</b>	<b>7</b>					

**Students from University College Dublin**

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age (years)	Arts / STEM	Main discipline	Academic year	Lives now	Highest level parents' education	Where parents originated	Father's occupation
16	Ewen	M	19	AH	Politics and French	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	BA	Dublin/ USA	Actor
17	Nano	F	18	STEM	Health Sciences	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	PhD/ PhD	Donegal/ Sweden	Professor
18	Sally	F	18	AH	Art History/ Irish	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	School/ School	Wexford/ Dublin	Transport CEO
19	Derek	M	20	STEM	Architecture	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dublin	MBS	Waterford/ Dublin	University Manager
20	Aine	F	20	STEM	Architecture (BSc Architectural Science)	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dublin	MMed/ PhD	Mayo/ Belfast	Paediatrician
21	Asa	F	20	STEM	Science	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dublin	MBS	Dublin	Pharma CEO
22	Caoilin	F	20	AH	English and Philosophy	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Dublin	Postgrad	Dublin	Primary Sch Teacher
23	Eileen	F	20	STEM	Mechanical Engineering	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dublin	MBS	Donegal/ Dublin	HSE Manager
24	Nancy	F	20	STEM	Science	1 <sup>st</sup>	Dublin	MBA/PhD	Pakistan	IT Manager Banking
25	Jim	M	21	STEM	Medicine	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Dublin	Med UG	Derry/ Clare	Accountant
26	John	M	21	STEM	Science	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dublin	MMed	Galway/ Dublin	Director
27	Kim	M	21	AH	History and German	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Dublin	BA	Dublin /Tipperary	Corporate Affairs Banking
	<b>Females</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Arts/</b>	<b>4</b>						
	<b>Males</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>STEM</b>	<b>8</b>						

## Appendix C

### *Interview Information page 35-54 years*

Ireland's reputation as a creative nation is well known. Politicians and policy makers are at pains to stress that arts and culture are not just an 'elegant add-on' to 'our national offering' but rather are 'the essence of who we are as a still-young Republic with an ancient people' (Merrion Street, 2016). Arts and culture are consciously iterated as fundamental to Irish society- economically, socially and politically- and the yet the exact nature of cultural participation in Ireland remains underexplored in research terms. Empirical research on this subject is somewhat limited, with existing information on cultural participation captured solely in quantitative surveys and arts attendance reports. Predominantly arts audience market research, these studies articulate a deficit approach to cultural participation and frame 'non-users' of culture as those who do not attend state-funded arts activities.

My research sets out to explore cultural participation and taste in Ireland and to meaningfully articulate the variety of arts, cultural and creative practices 'users' of culture are engaged in. A series of research questions have been formed around the terms 'cultural participation' and 'cultural taste' and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with approximately 30-40 people in order to explore what cultural participation and taste mean in an Irish context. This approach hopes to 'tell the story' of individual agentic experience while recognising the value and significance of a variety of arts, cultural and creative engagements that exist with-in and with-out state structures and provision. In this way, this research is a more accurate articulation and reflection of Irish cultural participation and Ireland's status as a creative nation.

I will therefore ask you questions about your cultural taste- likes and dislikes (preferences)- as well as the cultural activities you do/don't do (behaviour). I've also included one question on sport in order to consider how sport and cultural activity might be connected. I will ask you about your family background and about your profession, your education and if you feel there is anything in your home that expresses your cultural taste. The interview is therefore broken into 3 sections, with the first section focussing on socio-demographic information, the next on cultural activity and the final third section, on cultural taste. The questions in the first section specifically relate to the questions in the arts audiences surveys in order to help me draw some alignments/correlations with this material.

This interview will last about one hour and you are welcome to stop the interview at anytime. Once our interview is complete, I will transcribe the interview and review the material discussed.

The data gathered will be used in academic research outputs which will consist of things like academic journal papers, academic conference papers, possible book chapter or presentation, etc. All data will be anonymised and non-identifiable.

You can withdraw from this discussion at any point or request for our discussion or sections of it to be withdrawn from the record. Please feel free to contact me, after our interview, if you feel you would like to discuss any elements of our discussion or this research process or if you feel there is more you would like to say.

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## Written Consent and Interview Questions 35-54 years

Researcher: Kerry McCall Magan, doctoral researcher at Goldsmiths University of London, Email: [kmcca054@gold.ac.uk](mailto:kmcca054@gold.ac.uk) / [kerry.create@gmail.com](mailto:kerry.create@gmail.com)

Research Supervisors: Dr Dave O'Brien, [D.O'Brien@gold.ac.uk](mailto:D.O'Brien@gold.ac.uk) &  
Dr Victoria Alexander, [V.Alexander@gold.ac.uk](mailto:V.Alexander@gold.ac.uk)

Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship(ICCE), Goldsmiths University of London, UK.

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me for today's interview.

This interview is organised into 3 sections:

- First, I'll ask you some things about what you do, where you come from, your education and your family background.
- Then, I'll ask you if you participate or engage in cultural activity and if so, what this is.
- Then I'll ask you more about your cultural tastes and if there is anything(s) in your home which you feel is a good example of this.

You can withdraw from this discussion at any point or request for our discussion or sections of it to be withdrawn from the record. Please feel free to contact me, after our interview, if you feel you would like to discuss any elements of our discussion or this research process.

### **Interview Administration:**

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration: \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Recording Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**RESEARCHER UNDERTAKING:** I undertake to treat this data with respect and comply with the agreement made here.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Please tick (✓) the boxes as appropriate:**

I agree to participate in this research.

Yes No

I agree to the interview being recorded.

I agree that this conversation may be quoted in academic work arising from this project.

**INTERVIEWEE CONSENT:** Please sign here if you consent to participate in this discussion under the terms above:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview

### • SECTION A Socio Demographic Information

I will ask you some things about your background, where you come from, what your education is and a bit about your family background.

#### **Gender:**

**Marital status:** single; married; separated

**Age:** 35-44; 45-54

#### **Nationality:**

**Geographical Location (province):**

Have you always lived here?

**Do you speak Irish:** Y/N (Please circle)

Do you speak Irish every day?

**Working:** F/T; P/T; Self-employed; Unemployed; Student

**Current Profession:**

**(Previous Profession....?)**

#### **Education:**

#### **Income:**

Refused

Under €35,000

Between €35,000 and €75,000

€75,000 and over

Do you think of yourself as a particular social class?

Is this the same as your parents?

Do you think class matters in Ireland?

Do you think class matters in relation to cultural participation?

Tell me about when you were growing up.

Did either, or both, of your parents work? What did your dad or mum do?

Did they go to college?

What do they do in their spare time?

Did they ever go out to arts and cultural events? Did you growing up?

Were you encouraged to play an instrument, take art classes? (What extra-curricular things did you do/ if any)?

Did you have any (original) artwork at home growing up?

### • SECTION B CULTURAL ACTIVITY

What do you do to relax?

For fun? Entertainment?

Do you go to any arts, cultural or creative activities now?

Visual arts?

Theatre?

Ballet? Opera?

Cinema?

Books?

If films what genres? Do you like or books, what type?

Festivals?

Gigs?

Classical Music?  
Photography?  
Slam poetry?  
Netflix?  
TV?  
Radio?  
Spotify?  
Social Media?

Are there any arts, cultural or creative activities things you do at home?

Writing stories?  
Painting?  
Making things?  
Baking?  
Gardening?  
Other?

Do you do any sports activities?

Is there any arts, cultural or creative activity you would like to do and don't? Could you say why?

Do you think there is anything distinctly Irish about your activity?

Is engaging in arts, cultural or creative activity important to you?

Would your cultural participation be different to your parents?

## • SECTION C CULTURAL TASTE

**Now I'd like to ask you about your cultural tastes:**

Is there anything in your home that shows your cultural tastes? Tell me about this.

Does taste matter to you?

Do people say you have good taste?

What do you think good taste means?

Are there activities you do that express your cultural taste?

Do you think there is anything distinctly Irish about your cultural taste?

Finally, is there anything more that you would like to add?

***Thank you. If you want to get in touch with to discuss any elements of our discussion or the research process, please feel free to contact me, if you would like to.***

## Appendix D

### *Interview Information page 18-24 years*

Ireland's reputation as a creative nation is well known. Politicians and policy makers are at pains to stress that arts and culture are not just an 'elegant add-on' to 'our national offering' but rather are the 'the essence of who we are as a still-young Republic with an ancient people' (Merrion Street, 2016). Arts and culture are consciously iterated as fundamental to Irish society- economically, socially and politically- and the yet the exact nature of cultural participation in Ireland remains underexplored in research terms. Empirical research on this subject is somewhat limited, with existing information on cultural participation captured solely in quantitative surveys and arts attendance reports. Predominantly arts audience market research, these studies articulate a deficit approach to cultural participation and frame 'non-users' of culture as those who do not attend state-funded arts activities.

My research sets out to explore cultural participation and taste in Ireland and to meaningfully articulate the variety of arts, cultural and creative practices 'users' of culture are engaged in. A series of research questions have been formed around the terms 'cultural participation' and 'cultural taste' and semi-structured interviews will be conducted with approximately 30-40 people in order to explore what cultural participation and taste mean in an Irish context. This approach hopes to 'tell the story' of individual agentic experience while recognising the value and significance of a variety of arts, cultural and creative engagements that exist with-in and with-out state structures and provision. In this way, this research is a more accurate articulation and reflection of Irish cultural participation and Ireland's status as a creative nation.

I will therefore ask you questions about your cultural taste- likes and dislikes (preferences)- as well as the cultural activities you do/don't do (behaviour). I've also included one question on sport in order to consider how sport and cultural activity might be connected. I will ask you about your family background and about your profession, your education and if you feel there is anything in your home that expresses your cultural taste. The interview is therefore broken into 3 sections, with the first section focussing on socio-demographic information, the next on cultural activity and the final third section, on cultural taste. The questions in the first section specifically relate to the questions in the arts audiences surveys in order to help me draw some alignments/correlations with this material.

This interview will last about one hour and you are welcome to stop the interview at anytime. Once our interview is complete, I will transcribe the interview and review the material discussed.

The data gathered will be used in academic research outputs which will consist of things like academic journal papers, academic conference papers, possible book chapter or presentation, etc. All data will be anonymised and non-identifiable.

You can withdraw from this discussion at any point or request for our discussion or sections of it to be withdrawn from the record. Please feel free to contact me, after our interview, if you feel you would like to discuss any elements of our discussion or this research process or if you feel there is more you would like to say.

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Mobile: +353.86.2324288

*(this page to be left with participant)*

## Written Consent and Interview Questions 18-24 years

Researcher: Kerry McCall Magan, doctoral researcher at Goldsmiths University of London, Email: [kmcca054@gold.ac.uk](mailto:kmcca054@gold.ac.uk) / [kerry.create@gmail.com](mailto:kerry.create@gmail.com)

Research Supervisors: Dr Dave O'Brien, [D.O'Brien@gold.ac.uk](mailto:D.O'Brien@gold.ac.uk) &  
Dr Victoria Alexander, [V.Alexander@gold.ac.uk](mailto:V.Alexander@gold.ac.uk)

Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship (ICCE), Goldsmiths University of London, UK.

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- Then, I'll ask you if you participate or engage in cultural activity and if so, what this is.
- Then I'll ask you more about your cultural tastes and if there is anything(s) which you feel is a good example of this.

You can withdraw from this discussion at any point or request for our discussion or sections of it to be withdrawn from the record. Please feel free to contact me, after our interview, if you feel you would like to discuss any elements of our discussion or this research process.

### Interview Administration:

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration: \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Recording Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**RESEARCHER UNDERTAKING:** I undertake to treat this data with respect and comply with the agreement made here.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please tick (✓) the boxes as appropriate**

I agree to participate in this research.

**Yes No**

I agree to the interview being recorded.

I agree that this conversation may be quoted in academic work arising from this project.

**INTERVIEWEE CONSENT:** Please sign here if you consent to participate in this discussion under the terms above:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Interview Questions

### • SECTION A Socio Demographic Information

I will ask you some things about your background, where you come from, what your education is and a bit about your family background.

**Gender:**

**Age:**

**Nationality:**

**Do you speak Irish:** Y/N (Please circle)

Do you speak Irish every day?

Where do you live? Have you always lived here?

Do either, or both, of your parents work? What does your mum or dad do?

Did they go to college? If so, what did they do?

Are they originally from Dublin?

Did they bring you to arts and cultural events when you were growing up?

Do they go to arts and cultural activities now?

Do you think of yourself as a particular social class? Upper/Upper Middle/Middle/Lower

### **EDUCATION:**

What Secondary School did you go to?

Fee paying? Sisters/brothers?

What were your favourite/chosen subjects at school? Why did you choose them?

Did you do any arts, cultural or creative activity at school, or outside of school? play an instrument, take art classes?

At primary school?

At secondary?

Did you do any sports?

Which University do you go to?

What do you study? What year are you?

What do you hope to do after college (career, more education?)

Are you involved in any clubs or societies at college?

Do you have a part time job?

What kind of things to you do for fun? For entertainment? Or to relax?

### • SECTION B CULTURAL ACTIVITY

Do you go to any arts or cultural activities now? Could you give some examples?

- Visual arts?
- Theatre?
- Ballet? Opera?
- Cinema?
- Books?
- If films what genres? Do you like or books, what type?
- Festivals?
- Gigs?
- Classical Music?

- Slam poetry/book readings?
- Are there any arts, cultural or creative activities things you do at home?
- Netflix?
- TV?
- Radio?
- Spotify?
- Social Media?
- Photography?
- Writing stories?
- Painting?
- Making things?
- Baking?
- Gardening?
- Other?

Is engaging in any of these activities (formal/informal) important to you?

Could you say how or what it means to you?

Is there any arts, cultural or creative activity you would like to do and don't? Could you say why?

Would you do the same cultural activities as your parents? Tell me about this.

Do you think there is anything distinctly Irish about your activity?

Do you think arts and culture is for everyone?

Do you think there are social divisions or inequalities relating to arts, cultural activity?

Are you engaged in any sports activities now? If so, which ones?

## • SECTION C CULTURAL TASTE

Now I'd like to ask you about your cultural tastes:

How would you describe your sense of taste? (in music, in clothes, in food?)

Does taste matter to you? (what you wear, listen to, surround yourself with)

Are there activities you do that express your cultural taste?

Is there anything in your home/life that is a good example of your (cultural) tastes?

Do you think there is anything distinctly Irish about your cultural taste?

Finally, is there anything more that you would like to add?

***Thank you. If you want to get in touch with to discuss any elements of our discussion or the research process, please feel free to contact me, if you would like to.***

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