# Intergenerational Continuity of Taste: Parental and Adolescent Music Preferences

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In this article, the continuity in music taste from parents to their children is discussed via a multi-actor design. In our models music preferences of 325 adolescents and both their parents were linked, with parental and adolescent educational level as covariates. Parents' preferences for different types of music that had been popular when they were young were subsumed under the general labels of Pop, Rock and Highbrow. Current adolescent music preferences resolved into Pop, Rock, Highbrow and Dance. Among partners in a couple, tastes were similar; for both generations, education was linked to taste; and parental preferences predicted adolescent music choices. More specifically, the preference of fathers and mothers for Pop was associated with adolescent preferences for Pop and Dance. Parents' preferences for Rock seemed to indicate their daughters would also like Rock music, but not their sons. Parental passion for Highbrow music was associated with Highbrow preferences among their children. It is concluded that preferences for cultural artifacts such as (popular) music show continuity from generation to generation.

## Introduction

Research on taste has tended to focus on the influence of socio-economic differences in preference for cultural commodities. Georg Simmel (1957[1904]) and Max Weber (1947[1920-1921]) pointed out the association between cultural taste and social background. Similarly, in his seminal study *La Distinction* (1984[1979]), Pierre Bourdieu sought to demonstrate that individual tastes can be classified as a function of economic wealth, educational level and social network. Herbert Gans's *Popular Culture and High Culture* (1974) and Richard Peterson and his colleagues (1992, 1996) have shown that audiences can be divided into distinct "taste cultures" that relate, predictably, to social background variables. Peterson also discriminated between higher status "cultural omnivores," with differentiated tastes incorporating elements of both high and popular culture, and lower status "univores," with more circumscribed patterns of preference. This distinction has been corroborated by a host of other studies (e.g., Lopez-Sintas and Katz-Gerro 2005; Neuhoff 2001; van Eijck and Knulst 2005). Taste sociology holds that cultural distinctions solidify group boundaries and legitimize social inequality; therefore, studying taste is essential to understanding social differentiation (Dimaggio 1994; Lamont and Fournier, 1992).

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Turning to popular music, and the focus of this study, it is well established that variables such as race, class, gender and school achievement affect music tastes, and music preference can play a crucial role in the presentation of self, selection of friends and the expression of group identity (Rentfrow and Gosling 2006; Selfhout et al. 2009; Tarrant, North and Hargreaves 2001). Interestingly, however, scant attention has been paid to the process of intergenerational transmission of taste; that is, the influence of parents in the process of acquiring music taste (van Eijck 2001). To be sure, parents' socialization of their children has been *proposed* as an important mechanism for the transfer of taste patterns (van Wel 1994; Rosengren 1999), and research has shown the family to be an important context in the acquisition of cultural behavior in various areas (Nagel and Ganzeboom 2002; Kraaykamp 2001; Mohr and DiMaggio 1995). However, to our knowledge, the current study is the first to directly address the connection between parents' music tastes and those of their adolescent children using data on the preferences of both generations.

## The Structure of Music Preferences

The sociology of taste is sensitive to the variable, contextual use of music. For example, when studying the uses of music in everyday life, Tia deNora (2000) observed that women listened to different types of music for a variety of personal and social reasons: to manage emotional states, sustain images of self and project identity. In addition, authors such as Lizardo (2006) have shown that, in different social settings, people use their cultural taste selectively to promote connections to some people and dissuade contacts with to others. However, even though personal and social uses of music may vary and different types of music may be used by the same person across situations, the range of music that is put to work is probably restricted. People draw from a limited reservoir of music that is not only specific to them, but also socially relevant to their status position (Bryson 1996). In addition to the qualitative studies of music taste that address listening situations in detail, another tradition in the sociology and social psychology of music taste focuses on music preferences as rather stable characteristics of an individual. Moreover, several studies have shown that, although popular music is divided into a tremendous variety of genres, underneath this profusion lies a structure that has proved quite stable over the past few decades (Christenson and Roberts 1998).

In the United States, Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) distinguished between respondents' preferences for "reflective and complex" music, including classical, jazz, blues and folk music; "intense and rebellious" styles, defined by rock, alternative and heavy metal music; "upbeat and conventional" types, including country, sound track, religious and pop music; and "energetic and rhythmic" music encompassing rap/hip-hop, soul/funk and electronic dance music.

Similar factor analytic studies of musical preferences have been conducted in Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden (Delsing et al. 2008; Roe 1992; Stevens and Elchardus 2001; ter Bogt et al. 2003). These studies have generally confirmed a four- or five-factor structure of styles, including a popular, "mainstream pop" style; a "rock"

style; "Afro-American" or "urban" music; "dance" music; and an "elitist" or "highbrow" style, consisting of classic music and jazz. Both urban music, such as hip-hop and R&B, and dance genres such as trance have become quite popular since the 90s and early years of the new century. In some studies the five-factor structure collapses into four, with either urban or dance merging with mainstream pop. More evidence that certain genres cluster together comes from a recent large-scale project among more than 18,000 15-year-olds in 10 European countries in which preferences for 10 well-known genres of music were subsumed in a cross-culturally identical factor structure with pop, urban, rock, dance and high-brow music as metagenres (ter Bogt et al. forthcoming).

The existence of these four or five music streams intuitively ties in to the history of pop music. Mainstream pop music emerged and took on a more contemporary form in the 1950s with the advent of rock 'n roll and has remained the most popular blend of different types of catchy, easy-on-the-ears, literally "popular" music (Gillet 1970). Genres such as soul, hip-hop and R&B, later referred to as "urban," surfaced in the 60s and 70s, and rock in the late 60s and early 70s. Both strands of predominantly "black" and "white" music show a lengthy and enduring presence in the history of pop music (e.g., Campbell 2005; Garofalo 1996). Electronic dance music became popular in the late '80s, building on dance-oriented '70s musical formats such as funk and disco (Reynolds 1999). The existence of highbrow taste, consisting of a fusion of high-art classical music and newer forms of jazz, is a phenomenon that has also been observed over the years. Although music continues to evolve and newer generations modify the formats provided by older musicians (Dowd 1992), a small number of streams can be discerned, and these broad music styles are recognized by music listeners across a wide range of cultural settings (ter Bogt et al. forthcoming).

## Music Preference as a Stable Person Characteristic

Adolescence and young adulthood are generally viewed as formative phases for the development of music preferences. Research has established that the music people listen to during late adolescence and early adulthood is not only best remembered in later life (Janssen, Chessa and Murre 2007), but also remains better liked compared to music listened to at an earlier or later age (Smith 1994; Holbrook and Schindler 1989). Further support for the relative stability of taste is found in several longitudinal studies. Delsing and his colleagues (2008) followed two groups of 12- to 19-year-old adolescents during a three-year period and found preferences for four broad music styles (pop, urban, rock and highbrow) to be highly stable across one, two and three-year intervals. In fact, these music preferences were as stable as the "Big Five" personality characteristics, indicating that, far from being casual and fickle, music taste can be compared to deep-seated personality traits. Mulder and her colleagues (2010) assessed a wider age range of respondents (12-29) during a 27-month period and found that, while there was a relatively high turnover in the preference for individual artists and bands, preference for music genres and broader metagenres of music were already quite firm in early adolescence and became further entrenched during later adolescence and young adulthood.

## Music Preference as a Function of Gender and Class/Education

Gender is an important factor in the development of taste. In the early '80s Frith (1981) concluded that, in general, girls are more drawn to melodic, romantic pop music, while for boys adoring raucous, rebellious rock music is part of solidifying male gender identity. Classical music is also more popular among girls than boys, while louder forms of electronic dance music are more appreciated by boys (Stevens and Elchardus 2001; Schwartz and Fouts 2003; ter Bogt et al. forthcoming).

Adolescent music preferences are also related to social class and education. Frith (1981) observed that male, working-class youth tended to like rock 'n roll and its "heavier" derivatives, while middle-class youth were more oriented to progressive rock or "hippie music." In other studies, heavy metal for boys (Arnett 1991a; Bryson 1996) and soul and disco for girls (Arnett 1991a; Roe 1992, 1998) have been characterized as genres with a disproportionately working class fan base. Roe (1992) observed, among Swedish youngsters with low educational level or problems with school, heavy metal was the preferred music and that higher school achievement predicted a preference for mainstream pop. For adolescents and adults alike, liking "highbrow music" (e.g., classical, jazz) and an "omnivorous" affinity for a wide variety of music genres tend to be associated with higher social status and educational level (Bryson 1996; Peterson and Kern 1996; Roe 1992; van Eijck 2001). Thus, gender and social context, either in the form of class position or educational level, relate to the formation of music tastes.

## The Processes of Music Socialization

Culture is consumed, produced and reproduced in the family context. Parents' socialization of their children has been identified as the key mechanism for the transfer of class-specific taste patterns (de Graaf and Kalmijn 2001; Katz-Gerro 2006; Kraaykamp 2001; Mohr and DiMaggio 1995; Rosengren 1999; van Eijck 1999; van Wel 1994). Recently, van Eijck (1997) and Nagel (2004) made the case that parental influence in the cultural domain exceeds that of education. As such, socialization is a process with two different faces, and parents can affect their children in a more conscious or unconscious way. Parents may actively impart their tastes to their children in much the same way as they teach their children other attitudes, behaviors and habits (Grusec and Davidov 2007). For example, if classical music is deemed important, parents may take their children to concerts or teach or have them taught to play an instrument or to sing. Similarly, parents may be fans of specific types of pop music, (e.g., blues, soul, rock) and actively engage their children with their music of choice inside and outside of the home, having them sing and play along, and take them to concerts. However, music socialization may also be a far less conscious process that blends into the everyday routine as parents often control the resources available to their children and manage their environments. Simply as a function of living in the same home, children are inevitably exposed to the cultural repertoire preferred by their parents. By playing their favorite music in the home, parents expose their children to their music and, hence, may model music taste.

Mohr and Dimaggio (1995) stated that the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital is a gendered phenomenon. In a 1960 sample of 11th graders, they not only found that cultural capital was more important to girls, but also that mothers' participation in artistic and school activities predicted girls' higher interest and participation in high-culture arts and literature. Research on more recent samples has provided additional evidence for the unique role of mothers in transferring cultural practices and preferences (Nagel and Ganzeboom 2002; Nagel 2004). Van Wel and his colleagues (2006) argued that girls may be more sensitive to the taste of their mothers and boys to the preferences of their fathers. Caution is in order when generalizing results from studies on cultural capital to studies that more specifically address music. Both genders, and both adolescents and adults, enjoy listening to music, implying that both mothers and fathers may pass on their tastes to their children. Nevertheless, the studies suggest that mothers, overall, may be more influential than fathers, and that girls and boys have a special sensitivity to the tastes of their mothers and fathers, respectively.

Through their music choices, adolescents can and do rebel against parental authority, and by adoring brash, "deviant" music young people gain a sense of independence from their parents. As individualization is an important developmental task in this phase of life, adolescents may want to listen to music that, in their parents' eyes, is too loud, vulgar, violent, overly sexually charged or repulsive. Music that is *not* liked by adults, then, is a *sine qua non* for its popularity among youth (Grossberg 1984; Lull 1987). For most of the 20th century, in the words of one of the founding fathers of adolescent research, G. Stanley Hall, adolescence was characterized as a period of "storm and stress," and, hence, strained relations between adolescents and their parents. However, in recent years, a new consensus has arisen stressing the continuity in the quality of the parent-adolescent relationship. Not conflict and rebellion, but a warm, supportive parent-adolescent relationship is the ideal provision for a relatively smooth transition into young adulthood. Paradoxically, good bonds foster independence (Grotevant and Cooper 1985). In line with this argument, we conclude that there is little support for the idea that parental and adolescent tastes divide radically, although some music may indeed be used by more rebellious adolescents to fend off and challenge parents and other authorities.

Obviously, there are differences between the array of the artists and styles preferred by parents, whose preferences, as we have noted, tend to be grounded in their own youth, and the music popular during the child-rearing years. With this said, parents may pass on patterns of affinity for broadly defined styles of music. Thus, while their children are unlikely to adopt *precisely* the music, artists or bands their parents prefer, they may nonetheless acquire a taste for music within the same general style. Smith (1994) traced generational differences in music taste throughout the 20th century and found cohort effects in music taste. For example, while respondents born before 1920 liked Big Band/Swing music, few born in the 70s loved this type of music. However, Smith also found that, for cohorts born in the 50s and 60s, a taste for mainstream pop and rock music emerged, and later generations similarly liked these music genres. Preferring classical

music also revealed high intergenerational stability. Hence, parents growing up in the 60s, 70s and 80s, acquired a music taste that is relevant to their offspring as well.

## Modeling Contextualized Parental and Adolescent Taste

The review of findings from taste sociology and taste socialization theory revealed that music styles evolve; however, a number of grand streams of music have been discerned over the past four decades in (popular) music, most importantly: Pop, Urban, Rock, Dance and Highbrow. A range of preferences takes on a robust form in late adolescence and early adulthood. Additionally, people carry their appreciation for different types of music into adulthood and, as parents, may expose their children to the cultural formats they themselves prefer. Socialization theory does not conceptualize the transfer of cultural choices as merely a parent-to-child process; parents may themselves be influenced by the choices of their children. However, it is the parents who provide the first musical climate in their households, and this climate is the sum of the fathers' and mothers' tastes. Parents may actively or unconsciously model the tastes of their children; hence, links may be present between parental preferences for particular music styles that were formed earlier in their lives and their children's current preferences for similar types music, even though these musical styles have evolved. In this study, we operationalized continuity in taste as a connection between the preferences parents developed *when they were younger* and the *current* tastes of their children. Cultural taste development is further influenced by the wider social context in which the family operates. Social position and education are important forces in the development of the general cultural repertoire and music tastes of young people. Parental social position drives children's social position and, therefore, parental social position may also play an indirect role.

Based on the previous discussion, the following hypotheses were proposed:

> H1. Continuity exists between the music preferences that parents acquired when they were young and the current preferences of their adolescent children.
>
> H2. Educational level is associated with both parental and adolescent musical tastes.

These hypotheses were tested in Figure 1. Because transmission of cultural preferences is presumed to be a gendered phenomenon, all analyses included a systematic assessment of differences between fathers' and mothers' effects on sons and daughters.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants for this study were recruited from a family sample of the CONAMORE 5-wave longitudinal study (CONflict And Management Of RElationships 2000-2005;

Meeus et al. 2002). The main sample of CONAMORE included 938 early adolescents (mean age 12.4 years, *SD* = .6, ages 10-15) and 393 middle adolescents (mean age 16.7 years, *SD* = .8, ages 16-20) from 12 high schools located in the province of Utrecht, the Netherlands, who annually completed a battery of questionnaires at school. At the first measurement, early adolescents received a letter that included an invitation to participate with both parents during an annual home visit; 491 families agreed. Due to our restriction of including only two-parent Dutch families, 90 one-parent families who agreed to participate were not able to take part in this additional research project. Of the remaining 401 families, 325 were randomly selected to participate from Wave 2 onward. In Wave 3, with data on parental and adolescent music preferences, the same families participated (attrition 0%). Of the adolescents who participated in this family sample, 148 were boys (48.6%). The mean age of the adolescents was 14.4 years (13-16 years, *SD* = .5); the mean age of the fathers and mothers was respectively 47.8 years (36-67, *SD* = 5.0) and 45.3 years (35-58 years, *SD* = 4.2), respectively. Most adolescents indicated Dutch as their main ethnic identity (99.3%) and lived with both parents (98.6Adolescents were relatively highly educated with approximately 50 percent attending school and preparing for university. The educational level of the fathers and mothers were 27.3 percent and 32.0 percent low-middle and 72.7 percent and 68 percent high class, respectively. Analyses were performed to determine any differences between adolescents who participated in the family sample and those who did not. These tests showed no statistically significant differences on age, gender, educational level or music preferences (*t*-tests, X-square tests; all *p*'s n.s.).

### *Procedure*

Prior to the study, both adolescents and their parents received written information and, if the adolescent wished to participate, were required to provide written informed consent. Interviewers visited the schools and asked participating adolescents to gather in classrooms to complete a questionnaire. Interviewers also visited the families at home. During these home visits, adolescents completed an additional questionnaire, and both parents also completed an initial questionnaire independent of their children. Results were processed anonymously. Families received €27 per wave, and adolescents received an additional €10 for participating at school.

### *Measures*

#### *Educational Level*

The Netherlands is characterized by a highly differentiated secondary school system that closely reflects differences in social position. In prior research, education has been shown to be a better predictor of cultural preferences and practices than socioeconomic status (Nagel 2004); therefore, in the current study, education was adopted as a representation of social position. As such, education was operationalized as the achieved educational level of parents and current school level of adolescents. While the Dutch educational system has changed in the period between parents' youth and

**Table 1: Factor Analyses Parental Music Taste**

| | Mothers | | | Fathers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pop<br>I | Rock<br>II | Highbrow<br>III | Pop<br>I | Rock<br>II | Highbrow<br>III |
| Top 40 | .72 | .07 | -.28 | .75 | .01 | -.35 |
| Soul | .78 | .14 | .15 | .71 | .33 | .17 |
| Disco | .82 | .04 | -.12 | .87 | .00 | .04 |
| Rock | .21 | .86 | -.08 | .21 | .78 | -.24 |
| Alternative rock | .00 | .88 | .15 | -.01 | .88 | .14 |
| Classic | -.24 | -.05 | .80 | -.18 | -.13 | .83 |
| Jazz | .07 | .14 | .88 | .13 | .08 | .85 |

Note: Principal Component Analysis, varimax rotation, explained variance 72.5% (mothers), 71.7% (fathers).

their children's adolescence, the same basic three-tier structure applies to both periods. The lowest level prepares children for blue collar jobs and simple administrative work, while the higher level of the system caters to students with the potential to continue at colleges and universities. In between is a middle level that bridges the lower and higher end of the educational system. Adolescents and parents indicated which type of school they attend(ed), and their answers were coded on a three-point scale.

*Music preferences* were assessed via a short version of the Music Preference Questionnaire (ter Bogt et al 2003). The MPQ-short consists of a list of the most important types of popular and serious music. Parents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *very bad*, 5 = *very good*) the extent to which they liked a set of seven music genres that were well-known and popular *when they were adolescents themselves*: Mainstream pop music, such as pop charts music, disco and soul; rock music, with a separate items on rock and alternative rock such as punk/new wave/ progressive rock; and highbrow music, including classical and jazz. Adolescents responded to a list of the 10 most important *current* forms of popular and serious contemporary music. Some genres were the same for adolescents and parents including mainstream pop, rock, classical music and jazz. Other items on the adolescent questionnaire differed from the parent list. Soul and disco were dropped because they were no longer among the most preferred genres for young people. However, two other forms of black American and dance music, built upon the foundations laid by soul and disco artists, gained immense popularity over the past two decades and were added: hip-hop and R&B. Across Europe, forms of electronic dance music such as house/trance and club/ mellow also became highly popular in the 90s; therefore, items on these genres were added. With regard to the rock spectrum of popular music, parents were asked how much they had favored rock and alternative rock (punk/new wave/progressive rock), whereas adolescents responded to items on rock, heavy metal and punk/hardcore. In sum, adolescents responded to preference items on mainstream pop, hip-hop, R&B, rock, heavy metal, punk/hardcore, house/trance, mellow/club, classical music and jazz. Missing scale item values were imputed using a relative means substitution approach

developed by Raaijmakers (1999). With regard to music variables, means of imputed variables were never divided more than .02 from the original means.

### *Preliminary Analysis*

Embedded major music styles were identified through exploratory factor analysis (Principal Components Analysis, varimax rotation). For mothers and fathers, a highly similar three-factor structure was found (eigenvalues > 1) (see Table 1). The first factor was labeled *Pop*. Pop, soul and disco, the most popular music genres of parents' youth, loaded on this factor. A second factor, *Rock*, emerged from the items on rock and alternative rock, and a third, *Highbrow*, drew from classical and jazz. Four factors surfaced from the adolescent data: *Pop* (pop, R&B, hip-hop), *Rock* (rock, punk/ hardcore, heavy metal), *Highbrow* (classical, jazz), and *Dance* (house/trance, club/ mellow)(Table 2). For both parents and adolescents, the factors were identified by high factor loadings and no important cross-loadings appeared, with the potential exception of Pop music items, which showed some cross loading for parents. Results were highly similar to those of other studies investigating the factor structure of music tastes among adolescents (Rentfrow and Gosling 2003; Delsing et al. 2008; ter Bogt et al. forthcoming).

**Table 2: Factor Analyses Adolescent Music Taste**

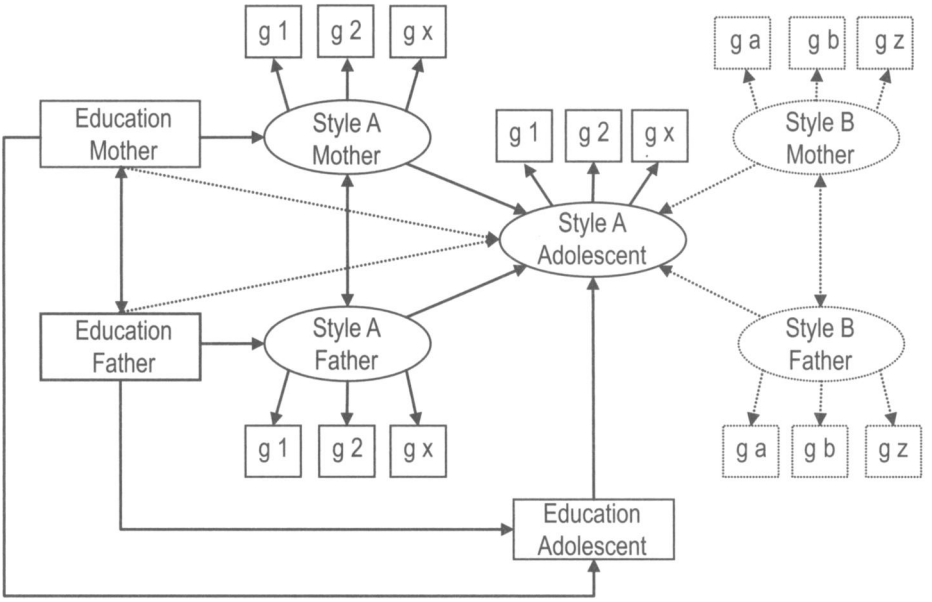
| | Girls | | | | Boys | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pop I | Rock II | Highbrow III | Dance IV | Pop I | Rock II | Highbrow III | Dance IV |
| Top 40 | .50 | -.38 | -.05 | .31 | .34 | -.34 | .04 | .44 |
| R&B | .87 | -.09 | .01 | .17 | .87 | -.12 | .03 | .20 |
| Hip-hop | .86 | -.01 | .01 | .10 | .87 | .07 | -.07 | .08 |
| Rock | .01 | .87 | .11 | .01 | -.02 | .83 | .07 | .02 |
| Heavy metal | -.22 | .88 | -.02 | .03 | -.06 | .91 | .05 | -.05 |
| Punk/ hardcore | -.03 | .88 | -.12 | .04 | .02 | .86 | .07 | .09 |
| Classic | -.24 | .01 | .82 | -.08 | -.30 | -.06 | .81 | -.09 |
| Jazz | .25 | -.04 | .83 | .09 | .27 | .24 | .76 | -.05 |
| House/ trance | .15 | -.12 | -.09 | .90 | .21 | -.10 | -.14 | .85 |
| Club/ mellow | .19 | .21 | .11 | .84 | .01 | .29 | -.03 | .82 |

Note: Principal Component Analysis, varimax rotation, explained variance 75.7% (girls), 73.0% (boys).

### *Strategy for Analysis*

Intergenerational effects were analyzed in a Structural Equation Model. Figure 1 illustrates the assumption that a link existed between parental taste for 70s and 80s Pop and a taste for the same broad style of current Pop music among their children. In a similar way, parental tastes for older Rock and Highbrow were hypothesized to predict adolescent preferences for current Rock and Highbrow, respectively. Given that parental tastes for Pop implied a preference for the highly danceable black American soul music of the 60s and 70s and ultra-rhythmic disco music, parental

**Figure 1. Structural Equation Model of Parental and Adolescent Education and Music Taste**




Pop preference was modeled as a predictor of adolescent taste for Dance. The error terms from the same type of music genres rated by mothers and fathers were allowed to covary. These models also specified links between the music tastes of parents, educational level of mothers and fathers, parental education and their tastes, and adolescent's education and tastes. Obviously, parental education was expected to predict adolescent education. In addition to these paths, two sets of confounders were introduced in the models. In order to control for potential cross-style influences, other parental style preferences (indicated by the dotted latent constructs in Figure 1) were added to the models one by one. Direct effects between parental education and adolescent style preferences were also tested. Paths were only retained when they significantly improved the model fit. Next, these models were tested in a multi-group setup with parental and adolescent gender as defining variables. All paths and covariances were constrained to be equal across groups. To test whether mothers' preferences were closer to their children's tastes compared to fathers' preferences, the mother-child pair was allowed to differ from the father-child pair. To determine whether any other path(s) differentiated a particular link or set of links, the parent-child links were set to be freely estimated successively. An increase in model fit (significant $-\Delta X^2$ at $p < .05$) was used as a criterion for differentiation.

## Results

For both mothers and fathers, the most popular form of music from their youth was Pop (see Table 3) (MANOVAs repeated measurement, $p < .05$). Rock was less popular

**Table 3: Popularity of Different Styles of Music among Parents and Their Children**

| | Pop | Rock | Highbrow | Dance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mothers | *3.9*[1] | **2.9**[2] | **2.8**[2] | — |
| Fathers | *3.6*[1] | **3.2**[2] | **3.0**[3] | — |
| Girls | *3.8*[1] | **2.3**[2] | ***2.4***[2] | *2.3*[2] |
| Boys | *3.5*[1] | **2.4**[2] | ***2.0***[3] | *2.7*[2] |

Note: Music Composite Scales consist of the following genres:
Parents: Pop (top 40, soul, disco), Rock (rock, alternative), Highbrow (classic music, jazz)
Adolescents: Pop (top 40, R&B, hip-hop), Rock (rock, heavy metal, punk), Highbrow (classic music, jazz), Dance (house/trance, club/mellow).
Rows: different superscripts indicate differences in popularity of styles within groups, at $p < .05$ (GLM, repeated measurements).
Columns: italic typeface indicates differences between mothers and fathers, and girls and boys, respectively at $p < .05$ (t-tests),
bold indicates differences between generations, i.e., fathers/mothers vs. daughters/sons, at $p < .05$ (t-tests).

and Highbrow music the least popular. Scores for Pop were well above the natural scale mean of 3 on the five-point scale. Rock was generally valued as neutral and Highbrow music was also not particularly liked or disliked. Mothers tended to like Pop more than fathers and like Rock somewhat less (paired *t*-tests, $p < .05$).

Among adolescents, Pop was also the most popular style of music (MANOVA, repeated measurement $p < .05$). Rock and Dance were significantly less popular and Highbrow music was unpopular, particularly among boys. Pop and Highbrow music were more appreciated by girls; Dance was more popular among boys (*t*-tests, $p < .05$). Significant zero-order correlations were found between Pop and Rock (-.18) and Pop and Dance (.32) (not in table).

Significant differences in the popularity of similar types of music emerged between generations, with both Rock and Highbrow being more popular among adults (paired *t*-tests, $p < .05$).

Correlations between parental and adolescent music preferences are presented in Table 4. Mothers' preferences for Pop, Rock and Highbrow were significantly associated with their daughters' taste for the same types of music; their preferences for Pop marked less enthusiasm for classical music, and their preferences for Highbrow indicated lower scores on Pop. Furthermore, mothers' liking of Pop, Rock and Highbrow was linked to sons' preferences for Dance, Rock and Highbrow, respectively. Fathers' tastes were less often linked to their children's preferences; however, fathers' affinity for Rock and Highbrow related positively to the same preferences among daughters. Fathers' liking of Pop predicted daughters' linking of Dance. Only one significant correlation between fathers and sons was found for Highbrow music. The most obvious difference in these connections was that for girls' Rock taste, preferences of both parents were relevant, whereas, for boys, neither mothers' nor fathers' preferences showed any link to their attitude toward Rock.

**Table 4: Zero Order Correlations Parental and Adolescent Music Preferences**

| | Mothers | | | Fathers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pop | Rock | Highbrow | Pop | Rock | Highbrow |
| Girls | | | | | | |
| Pop | .24** | .03 | -.16* | .13 | -.04 | -.03 |
| Rock | .03 | .27** | .02 | .01 | .24** | -.03 |
| Highbrow | -.22** | .04 | .19* | -.05 | -.10 | .18* |
| Dance | .11 | -.05 | -.04 | .17* | .02 | -.06 |
| Boys | | | | | | |
| Pop | .08 | .03 | -.11 | .02 | .01 | -.03 |
| Rock | -.03 | .03 | .08 | -.11 | -.02 | .08 |
| Highbrow | -.08 | .19* | .23** | -.07 | -.13 | .25** |
| Dance | .21** | .10 | -.08 | .05 | .06 | -.15 |
| Mothers | | | | | | |
| Pop | — | .22** | -.18** | .28** | .11* | -.17** |
| Rock | | — | .08 | .02 | .24** | -.02 |
| Highbrow | | | — | -.05 | -.18** | .25** |
| Fathers | | | | | | |
| Pop | .28** | .02 | -.05 | — | .25** | -.09 |
| Rock | .11* | .24** | -.18** | | — | -.07 |
| Highbrow | -.17** | -.02 | .25** | | | — |

Note: Pearson correlations

It is furthermore interesting to notice that highly significant zero-order correlations ($p < .01$) between parental preferences were also found: Pop mother-father = .28, Rock mother-father = .24, and Highbrow mother-father = .25, suggesting that either spouses influence each other's tastes, or that shared music preferences at a much earlier stage of their relationship promoted affiliation and romance.

Table 5 represents the most important paths for generational continuity in taste and educational effects on parental and adolescent taste. No direct effects were found between parental education and adolescent music styles and no significant cross-style influences were found; hence, these paths were removed from the models. In the Pop, Dance and Highbrow models, no significant differences in the parent-child paths were found; in the Rock model, parental connections to their daughters' and sons' tastes differed. Therefore, the Pop, Dance and Highbrow results reflected single-group models and the Rock results pertained to the multi-group analyses.

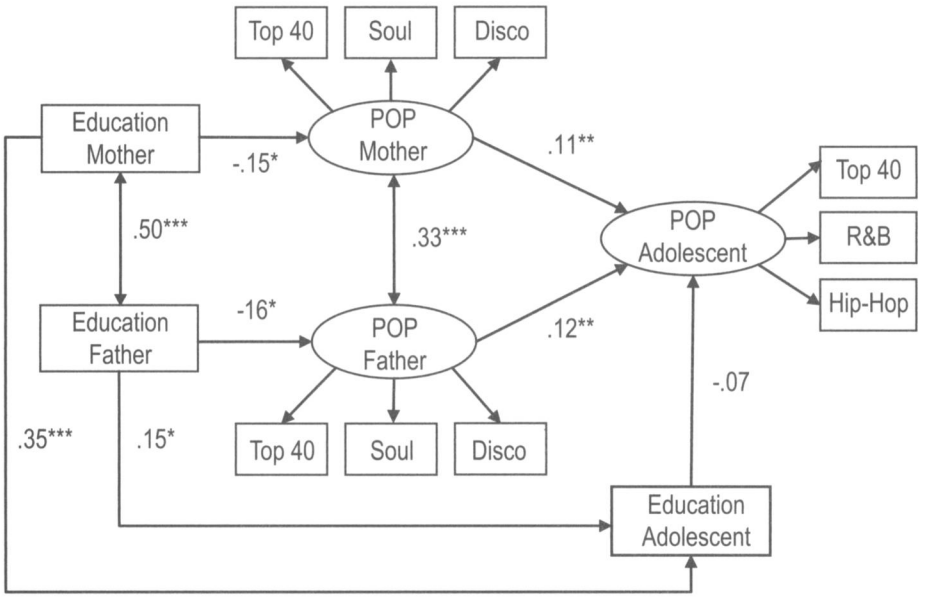
### *The Pop Model*

Table 5 and Figure 2 show that the educational level of both mothers and fathers was associated negatively with their taste for Pop music. However, adolescent education was not significantly associated with adolescent Pop preference. In addition, fathers' and mothers' preferences for Pop were positively linked to the popularity of Pop music among their children. With CFI = .98 and RMSEA = .029, the Pop model showed a good fit (Hu and Bentler, 1998), although the explained variance of adolescents' tastes (squared multiple correlation) was low (4%).

**Table 5: Standardized Path Coefficients and Fit Statistics: Education, Parental and Adolescent Music Taste**

| | Education Adolescent | Pop Mother | Pop Father | Rock Mother | Rock Father | Highbrow Mother | Highbrow Father | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Education mother[1] | .35*** | -.15* | — | .10 | — | .15** | — | |
| Education father[1] | .15* | — | -.16* | — | -.01 | — | .14* | |
| | | Pop Adolescent[2] | | Rock Adolescent[3] | | Highbrow Adolescent[2] | | Dance Adolescent[1] |
| | | All | | Girls | Boys | All | | All |
| Education adolescent | | -.07 | | .19** | .16** | .22*** | | -.17** |
| Pop mother[1] | | .11** | | — | — | -.20** | | .11** |
| Pop father[1] | | .12** | | — | — | — | | .12** |
| Rock mother[1] | | — | | .28** | .02 | — | | — |
| Rock father[1] | | — | | .25** | .01 | — | | — |
| Highbrow mother[1] | | — | | — | — | .21*** | | — |
| Highbrow father[1] | | — | | | | .21*** | | — |
| $X^2$ | | 58.69 | | 98.92 | 29.70 | 40.35 | | |
| df | | 46 | | 69 | 22 | 37 | | |
| CFI | | .98 | | .97 | .98 | .99 | | |
| RMSEA | | .029 | | .037 | .033 | .017 | | |
| Explained variance $r^2$ | | .04 | | .21 | .03 | .16 | | .07 |

**Figure 2. SEM Pop Taste Parents and Their Children**




Note: Standardized beta coefficients *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001.

### *The Rock Model*

For parents, no association emerged between education and their choice of Rock music, while for adolescents, this link was positive (Table 5, and Figure 3). Fathers' and mothers' Rock tastes were significantly associated with the Rock preferences of their daughters, while sons seemed to be far less susceptible to parental influences. The model fit was good (CFI = .97, RMSEA = .037) and a substantial part of the variance for girls' preferences was explained by education and parental preference (21%).

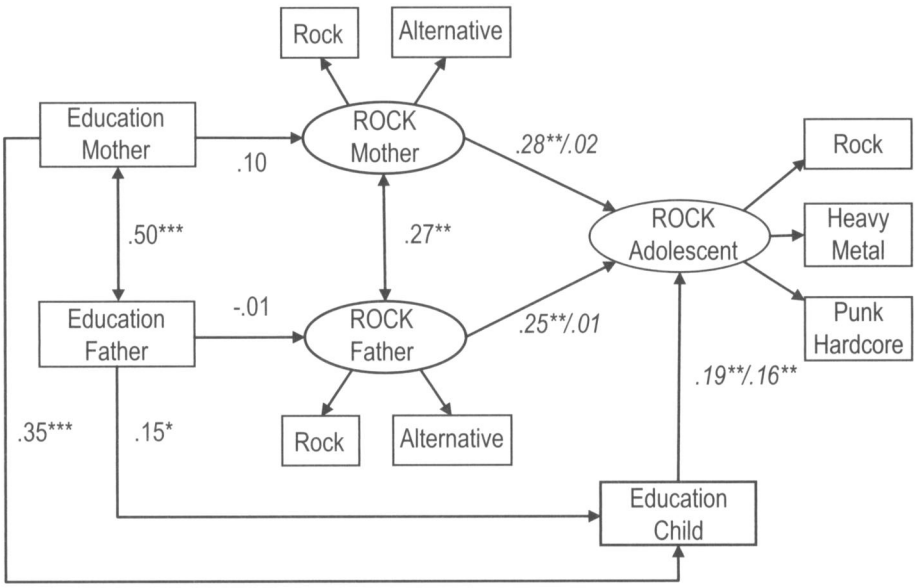
### *The Highbrow Model*

For both parents and children, education predicted affinity for Highbrow music (Table 5 and Figure 4). Parental appreciation of this type of music was also related to adolescent Highbrow appreciation. The model showed a good fit (CFI = .98, RMSEA = .033) and a relatively high explained proportion of variance (16%).

### *The Pop-Dance Model*

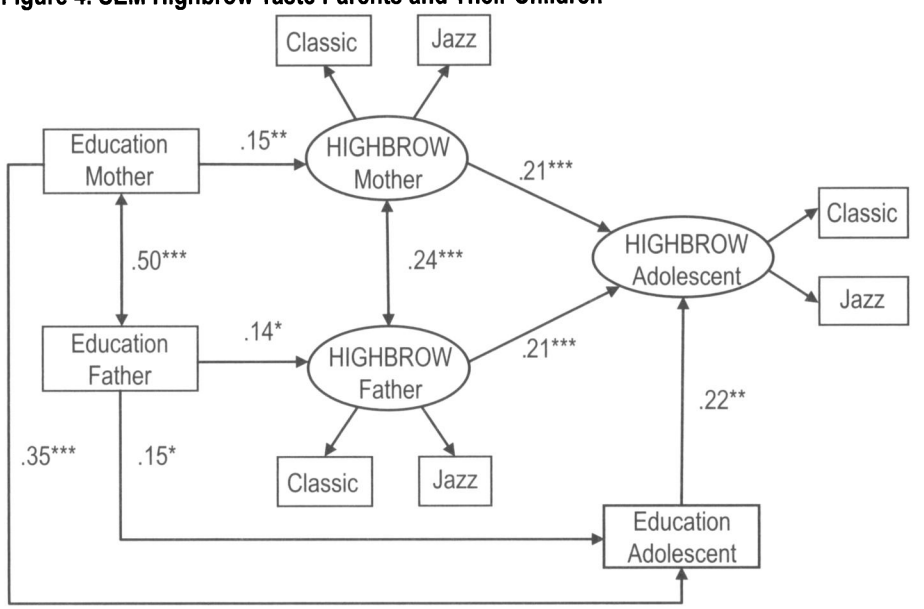
Although the composite factor of parents and children differed, parents' liking of Pop was associated positively with adolescents' preferences for Dance (Table 5 and Figure 5). Furthermore, among adolescents, lower levels of education significantly predicted affinity for Dance. Again, the fit of this model was good (CFI = .99, RMSEA = .017), although the proportion of explained variance was modest (7%).

**Figure 3. SEM Rock Taste Parents and Their Daughters and Sons**



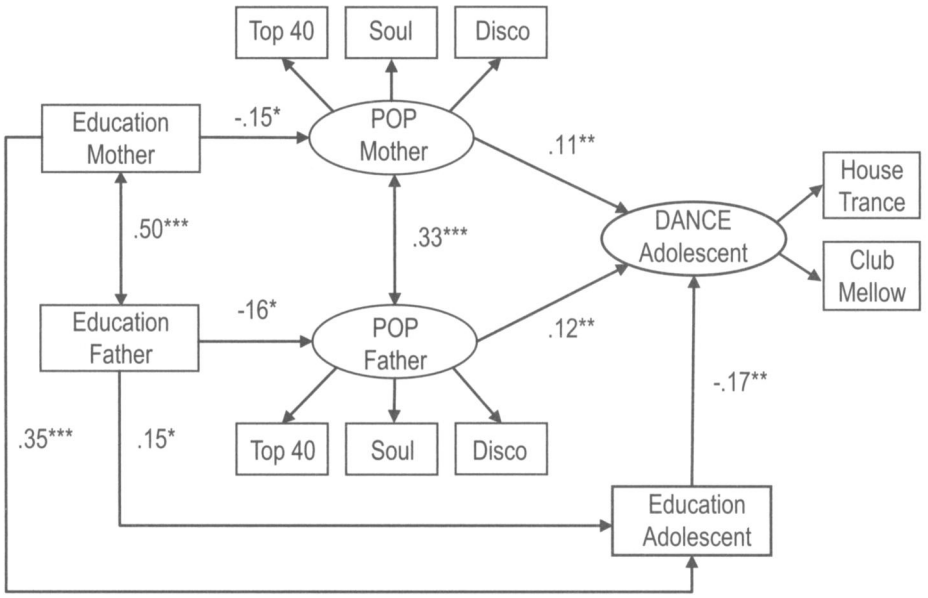

Note: Standardized beta coefficients *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001; multigroup model, italics refer to different coefficients for girls and boys, respectively.

**Figure 4. SEM Highbrow Taste Parents and Their Children**




Note: Standardized beta coefficients *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001.

**Figure 5. SEM Pop and Dance Taste Parents and Their Children**




Note: Standardized beta coefficients *p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001.

The total indirect effects of parental education, through the education of their children as well as their own tastes, were minimal. Hence, no evidence was found for strong mediation effects. Both parental and adolescent education proved to be relevant for their respective tastes; however, parental education did not show cross-generational predictive value. Finally, the multi-group analyses did not corroborate the assumption that mothers would be more influential to adolescent taste than fathers, nor were special links found between mothers and daughters. Constraining and then setting free the parent-child links did not result in a significantly improved fit of the models, with one exception. The results showed a tendency for daughters' as opposed to sons' Rock preferences to be more closely associated to parents' Rock tastes.

## Discussion

The family is an important social context for acquiring cultural preferences. The strength of this study is that parents' music preferences, from the time their tastes were defined, were assessed in relation to their children's current preferences for music genres. Evidence was found in support of H1: *Continuity exists between the music preferences parents acquired when they were young and the current preferences of their adolescent children.* Specifically, parents' preferences for Pop were linked to adolescents' attitudes toward Pop and Dance music, and their taste for Highbrow music was reflected in

their children's choice of the same metagenre. Fathers and mothers had a significant influence on the Rock tastes of their daughters, but not their sons. These results confirm various suggestions on the intergenerational continuity of cultural consumption (de Graaf and Kalmijn 2001; Katz-Gerro et al. 2007; Kraaykamp 2001; Mohr and DiMaggio 1995; Rosengren 1999; van Eijck 1997, 1999; van Wel 1994).

It is especially remarkable that a significant association between parental and adolescent tastes emerged, given that the genre preference questions differed for the two generations. Recall that the genres from which the parental Pop and Rock factors were derived differed somewhat from the genres that constituted the same general styles for adolescents. Still, for all four styles of adolescent music preferences, a substantial effect of parental tastes was found, which indicates the relevance of basic, robust parental music orientations in the development of their children's music tastes. We conclude that, on the basis of the current findings, music socialization can be proposed as a within-family mechanism for the intergenerational transfer of taste.

One result stood out in which parents' liking of Rock was important for girls but not for boys. It is interesting to note that whereas Rock was more popular among men than women in the parental generation, adolescent Rock preference was the same for girls and boys. This suggests that the "emancipation of Rock" encompassed two processes at once: Rock became more popular among females, and girls may have turned to their fathers and mothers' music collections and assumed some of their parents' feeling for the genre. This leaves the question of why parents' Rock tastes were not systematically related to that of their sons. For boys, liking Rock music has always been a mark of (white) male distinction (Frith 1981), and it can be argued that this type of music has been (and currently is) of prime importance for the music tastes shared among (male) peers. Therefore, it is possible that, specifically when it comes to Rock, boys rely on the taste that is dominant within their peer group; hence, no systematic relation can be found with their parents' likes and dislikes. Obviously this argument remains speculative until, in addition to parental taste, models can account for peer preferences.

No hard evidence was found for other gendered relationships between parental and adolescent tastes. The pattern of zero-order correlations showed more similarity between mothers and their children than between fathers and children; however, in the final structural analysis, no systematic differences between fathers and mothers could be discerned. Taken together, our results do not confirm the results of other studies that have found evidence for a more prominent role of the mother in the transfer of cultural participation (Mohr and Dimaggio 1995), at least with regard to music. Nagel and Ganzeboom (2004) and van Wel et al. (2006) have suggested that women, in general, value cultural participation more than men, and women see it as their task to actively educate their children in matters of taste. Perhaps, however, music socialization is an exception to this rule. As we have suggested before, music is valued by women and men alike and both parents may consciously seek to inculcate their children into their preferences or, at least, unconsciously model their tastes by playing music in the home or involving their children in leisure activities where music plays a prominent role. The

lack of higher salience of mothers' tastes is altogether more remarkable as women in the Netherlands are more present in the home than are men. Dutch females have been incorporated into the workforce in large numbers over the past few decades. Even so, many mothers do not work fulltime. Given the strong presence of women in the home and their spending more time with the children, it is noteworthy that mothers' tastes are not more important than fathers' to their children's taste development.

H2: *Educational level is associated with both parental and adolescent music taste* received support. As in many other investigations, a strong association between the school level of parents and children was found (for a review of the Dutch situation, see Hustinx 1998). Thus, though historical changes in the school environment may occur and intergenerational social mobility is possible, to a certain extent, parents and children still share the same type of education. We found that for both parents and their children, education was linked to preferences. In particular, Highbrow forms were, and are, more liked by individuals with higher education. Thus, the results presented here confirm the results of earlier research, which linked a taste for prestigious music with higher education and supplemented that general pattern with the finding that the link holds for both older and younger generations (Arnett 1991a; Bryson 1996; Frith 1981; Katz-Gerro 2002; Stevens and Elchardus 2001; van Eijck, 2001). Taken together, parental tastes and education explained a sizeable part of adolescents' Highbrow taste. Higher education promotes a taste for classical music and jazz, lower education induces lack of affinity for this type of music, and apparently, both parents convey to their children their orientation to Highbrow music, whether loving it or detesting it. In other words, the type of music that has always strongly communicated social position still does so.

We also found *changes* in the association between social position and music preferences across generations. Pop, with its historically strong black and white working-class roots (blues, R&B, country), indeed yielded a greater appeal for parents with lower educational levels; however, this link was not found among the younger group. Whereas, in the Netherlands, rock 'n roll was originally adopted by working-class youth, its musical offshoots have become so popular that it has lost its working-class feel. Furthermore, no systematic associations between education and Rock were found among parents; however, clearly positive links emerged among their children. This is a striking result given previous research that has linked a preference for rock, in general, and heavy metal, in particular, to school failure and school dropout among American and Swedish youth (Arnett 1991b; Roe 1992). Bethany Bryson (1996) observed that affinity for metal, one of the constituents of the Rock metagenre, was a strong sign of low education, and an eclectic, highbrow taste was defined by "anything but heavy metal." Among present-day adolescents in the Netherlands, apparently neither heavy metal nor other loud, guitar-driven music related negatively to education. In the 1980s and 1990s, noisy, rebellious Rock music attracted college kids both as the music to listen and play, in the process, losing its distinctive "drop-out," lower-class aura (ter Bogt et al. forthcoming). For more educated adolescents, some forms of dance music seemed to have taken the place of heavy metal: Dance was negatively related to educa-

tion. Bourdieu (1984) and van Eijck (2001) noted that cultural products do not have a fixed meaning in terms of status but, to some extent, always move through the socio-cultural field and Pop and Rock's upward mobility seems to exemplify this tendency. Our results, to some extent, also support the omnivorousness thesis brought forward by Petersons and Kern (1996). Among the older generation, higher education was linked to liking Highbrow music and disapproving of Pop, whereas, for the younger generation, higher education is still linked to an appreciation of Highbrow music as well as to Rock music. Furthermore, the negative relationship between education and Pop has disappeared. Young higher educated people seem to have broader tastes than their parents, even though they do not embrace all music; for them some forms of Dance music may be suspect, when it comes to "good taste."

Overall, we conclude that music socialization may account for similarities in liking music. Parents may model their tastes simply by playing music in the environment they share with their children or they may more actively persuade their children of the value of music by listening or singing together, taking them to concerts, or encouraging them to play an instrument. For most people, music is an important medium and it reasonable to assume that parents want to share their enthusiasm for certain artists, bands or composers with their children, resulting in intergenerational similarities.

### *Limitations and Conclusions*

First, it is possible that parents gave inaccurate reports of their past music preferences. Their accounts may have been biased by a tendency to superimpose their current tastes over past preferences. Additionally, children's introduction to various kinds of new music into the home may have influenced parents' retrospection. Several authors have warned against relaying on memory as a source for data collection (review: Halverston 1988). However, studies have shown that music preferences from late adolescence and early adulthood are remembered well (Janssen et al. 2007). We therefore believe it is likely that parents provided a valid impression of their preferences.

A second limitation lies in the fact that the measures of music preference in this study were not finely detailed but were reduced to a handful of broadly defined styles of music. Obviously, there can be large differences between individuals whose tastes lie in any of these global categories. For example, aficionados of Highbrow music may dispute the contributions of Bach and Mozart to music history, while parents who liked "beat music" may have taken adamant sides in the Beatles-Rolling Stones controversy. Similarly, today's adolescents may love hip-hop in the abstract yet argue endlessly between Snoop Doggy Dogg and Kanye West, or they may like rock, in general, yet disagree violently between Tool and Marilyn Manson. Measuring music preferences in finer detail, that is, on the level of artists, bands or composers, may have revealed deeper and more intricate links between parental and adolescent taste as well as between music preference and social differentiation. By focusing on specific genres and sub-genres, it might also be possible to pinpoint differences between parents and children. Some adolescents may use music to irritate or challenge their parents and other authority

figures, choosing to play and advocate rebellious, deviant music. Although we have found overall intergenerational continuity, shifting the attention to less popular, off-mainstream genres and artists might result in uncovering more differences.

Third, intergenerational relations cannot be interpreted as a sure sign of causation. Other interpretations remain plausible as well; for example, hereditary factors may play a role. Far-fetched as it may seem at first, shared genetic attributes of parents and children may contribute to similarity in the appreciation of cultural goods. Music appreciation is a highly robust, trait-like characteristic (Delsing et al. 2008). Parents' attraction to rhythmic (e.g., soul), melodic (e.g., top 40), energizing (e.g., disco), complex (e.g., classical, jazz), brash and rebellious (e.g., rock) music may mirror deep-seated propensities (McCown et al. 1997) and, through shared genetic attributes, this predisposition may be inherited by their offspring and reflected in their aesthetic judgments.

Fourth, we found modest significant effects of parental tastes on children's tastes; however, the strength of these effects should not be overemphasized. The significant intergenerational coefficients do not mean we have identified the only, or even the strongest, mechanism behind the formation of musical tastes. Most notably, it was impossible to include the effect of peers in our models. There is abundant evidence in the literature that peers are a major force with regard to adolescent music taste, and it would have been interesting to explore whether parental and peer influences run in the same direction or oppose each other. Furthermore, adolescents grow up in dense media environments, and it is quite possible that media form a major influence on the development of adolescent tastes. Fifth, this study was based on a predominantly white sample of Dutch parents and children in intact, two-parent households. Therefore, this study should be replicated in other family and cultural contexts to determine whether results are generalizable.

Finally, this study is one of the first to assess intergenerational continuity in taste, and the results indicate that preferences for seemingly highly changeable cultural artifacts, such as popular music, can be transferred from generation to generation. However, this research could not address the question of the process through which similarity might be developed. Continuity in music preference may result from shared genetic attributes, a shared social environment, active socializing or modeling by parents or an adaptation by parents to the tastes of their children, or some combination of these processes. Clearly, now that the pattern of intergenerational continuity has been established, future research should explore the contextualized within-family dynamics that produce such a pattern.

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