Culture and Social Capital

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Abstract

The network theory of social capital (NTSC) was developed during the 1990s by Peter Marsden, James Coleman, Henk Flap, Bonnie Erickson, Ronald Burt and others. It was most clearly systematized and elaborated by Nan Lin (1999a, 2002). According to NTSC, social capital can be most coherently thought of as *social resources embedded in networks people can access or mobilize*. Subsequent work outside this tradition examined the cultural foundations of network ties. Of interest were dynamic dependencies between the different forms of capital, particularly cultural and social capital (Edelmann & Vaisey, 2014; Vaisey & Lizardo, 2010), with culture conversion theory (CCT) emphasizing the role of cultural capital in the creation of and maintenance of social network connections (Lewis & Kaufman, 2018; Lizardo, 2006). The primary takeaway from this work is that culture is relevant for such processes as tie-formation and tie-decay, making it meaningful to speak of inequalities in cultural capital as being systematically relevant for inequalities in social capital (and vice versa). However, with few exceptions (Lizardo, 2013; Meuleman, 2021), the implications of culture conversion theory for the network theory of social capital still need to be spelled out. This chapter reviews work done during the past fifteen years on the mutual dependence of social and cultural capital to lay the foundations of a cultural network theory of social capital (CNTSC). This approach emphasizes the reciprocal effects of different forms of capital in the genesis and reproduction of inequality, yielding a research agenda to address outstanding substantive, methodological, and conceptual issues in CNTSC.

1.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews theoretical and empirical work linking the study of social capital—conceptualized as resources embedded in networks—and cultural capital—conceptualized as tastes and habitualized cultural practices. Work on social and cultural capital now constitute long and rich research traditions and theory in sociology. However, during the past two decades, a systematic body of work has emerged looking explicitly at the reciprocal effects of social capital and cultural capital and the processes via which they reinforce and help generate and sustain one another. Inspired by Bourdieu's (1986) seminal idea of the "interconvertibility" of the different forms of capital, this work seeks to understand how social connections are transformed into more significant opportunities to develop and accumulate cultural knowledge (Erickson, 1996). In the same way, a resurgent line of work linking cultural consumption and cultural preferences to social interaction within bounded networks looks at how these cultural aptitudes help people form and sustain network connections (Lizardo, 2006).

In this chapter, both of these lines of work are reviewed and synthesized, pointing to novel ways to consider the connection between culture and social structure. I begin by describing the critical analytic dimensions of the two core concepts at the center of this emerging line of work, namely, social and cultural capital. I then consider empirical and theoretical analyses that clarify *how* they are systematically linked and the mechanisms linking social connectivity to cultural consumption. I then consider more recent lines of work showing systematic effects from cultural aptitudes to accumulating social capital. I close by outlining how this work helps us understand the dynamic coupling between culture and social network connections.

2.0 Conceptualizing the Dimensions of Cultural and Social Capital

2.1 Dimensions of Social Capital

The network theory of social capital (NTSC) was developed in sociology during the 1990s by Ronald Burt, James Coleman, Bonnie Erickson, Henk Flap, Peter Marsden, and others. However, it was most clearly systematized and elaborated by Nan Lin (1999a, 2002). According to NTSC, social capital is best seen as *social resources embedded in networks people can access or mobilize* (Lin, 2000, p. 786). The basic idea is that social capital is best thought of as a virtual or potential resource that people can accumulate in the form of connections to people (or people in particularly powerful or influential social positions) who have access to valuable resources, whether informational or material and upon which people can draw in times of need. NTSC led to a revolution in measuring social capital at the individual level and conceptualizing its link to status attainment (Lin, 1999b).

Mainly, NTSC developed the idea of the *position generator* as the primary way of accessing resources embedded in social networks (Lin et al., 2001). In the position generator, in contrast to the traditional "name generator," (Campbell & Lee, 1991/9), people are not asked about their ties to specific others. Instead, they are asked whether they have network connections with others who occupy specific positions in the social structure usually indexed by occupation (e.g., doctors, lawyers, plumbers, nurses, carpenters). These connections can vary by relationship type and strength (e.g., kin, friends, acquaintances). Exogenous characteristics of those social positions (e.g., occupational prestige) can then be attached to this information, providing a sense of the overall volume and spread of the potential resources available to individuals via their social connections (Lin et al., 2001). Two ideal-typical conceptualizations of social capital emerge from this work (see Figure 1).

On the one hand, social capital lies in the *diversity* of positions to which a person has access (Figure 1a). In this case, a person who knows people in diverse positions (as given by the

range of prestige scores) in the social structure (e.g., a doctor and a carpenter) has more social capital than someone whose contacts are concentrated in just a few (e.g., exclusively high or low prestige) locations. In this view, social capital is associated with the principle of *resource heterogeneity*. On the other hand, social capital lies in the capacity to access people in the most prestigious positions in the social structure. In this case, what matters is not the spread of prestige of the ties to multiple positions but the concentration of ties within prestigious positions; knowing both a doctor and a lawyer counts for more than connecting to a plumber and a dental hygienist. In this view, social capital is associated with the principle of *resource richness*. These two approaches to measuring and conceiving of social capital thus complement and, according to NSTC, go beyond standard network approaches to measuring the construct, focusing either on the overall acquaintance volume (e.g., how many others a person knows) or on structural features of the ego networks such as the presence of "structural holes" (Burt, 1992/2009). As we will also see, the two main ways of thinking about social capital that emerge in the position generator tradition have a—not often noted—formal similarity to the two main ways of thinking about cultural capital in the sociology of taste research tradition.

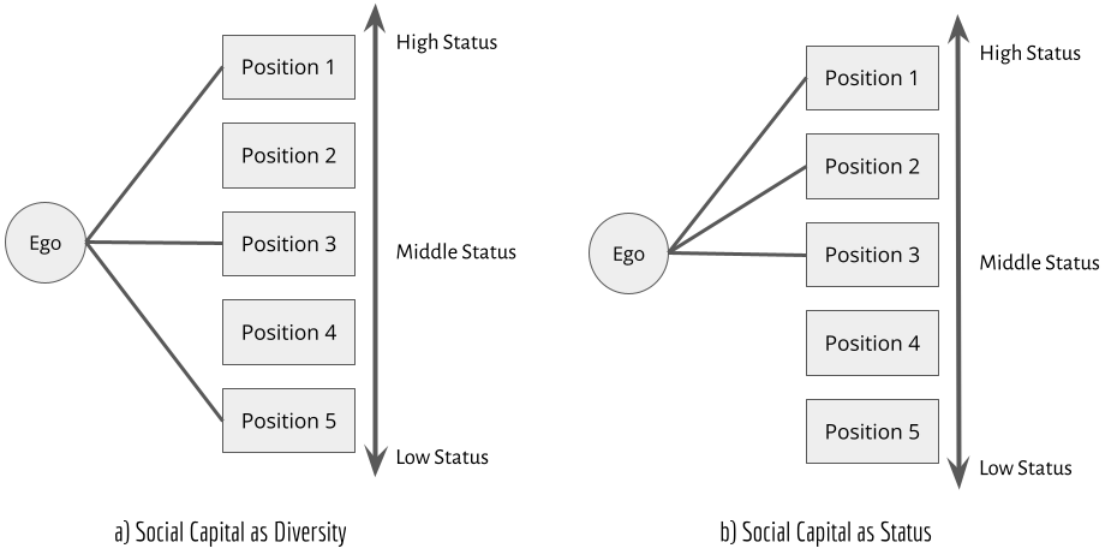

Figure 1. Two ways of thinking about social capital.

2.2 The Dimensions of Cultural Capital

The concept of cultural capital, like social capital, is multifaceted (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). A lively debate exists, trying to disentangle the idea conceptually and measurement-wise (Lizardo, 2011). Nevertheless, two primary conceptualizations of cultural capital inform contemporary theory and research. The first, partially based on Bourdieu's (1986) influential formulation, conceives of (embodied) cultural capital as a habitualized *aptitude*, *proficiency*, or *skill*. Cultural capital is acquired in the upper-middle-class family and the school system (Lareau, 2011). Bourdieu also distinguished cultural capital in its objectified and institutionalized forms, although those will not concern us here. The second central conceptualization of cultural capital is concerned with addressing what are perceived to be ambiguities in the first formulation. From this alternative perspective focused on symbolic boundaries, Lamont & Lareau (1988, p. 164) define cultural capital as "the institutionalized repertoire of high status signals" helpful in marking and drawing symbolic boundaries in a

given social context. Recent work combines the Bourdieusian idea of cultural capital as a habitualized disposition with the empirical observation that high-status individuals tend to enact and display this disposition by consuming and expressing positive preferences for *various* cultural goods and activities. Following seminal work by Richard Peterson and collaborators (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Peterson & Simkus, 1992), this has been called "omnivorousness." Thus, being an omnivore is one of the primary ways of displaying cultural capital as an aptitude (Holt, 1998; Lizardo & Skiles, 2012).

Note that the competing definitions of cultural capital are formally homologous to how social capital is conceived and measured in the NTSC tradition (see Figure 2). On the one hand, we have cultural capital as *diversity* regarding tastes for cultural goods (Figure 2a); this is cultural capital as Petersonian omnivorousness. On the other hand, however, following the "high-status cultural signals" approach would lead to a conceptualization of cultural capital as the consumption of cultural goods and the display of tastes that have been institutionalized and consecrated as high-status by dominant cultural institutions (Warde et al., 2008), as in Figure 2b. While initially, there was some skepticism regarding the existence or the ritual potency of such "high-status" taste in the American context (Halle, 1993), recent work shows that, indeed, traditional high-status markers (e.g., consumption of classical music, the arts, poetry, and so forth) function as high-status cultural signals in the American context with measurable consequences for impression formation, symbolic boundary-drawing, and labor market outcomes (Lizardo & Skiles, 2016; Nichols, 2023; Rivera & Tilcsik, 2016; Thomas, 2022). Moreover, there are systematic linkages between social capital (in both forms) and these two forms of cultural capital. I begin by reviewing work showing how social capital is converted into cultural capital and then move to more recent lines of work showing how cultural capital is converted into social capital.

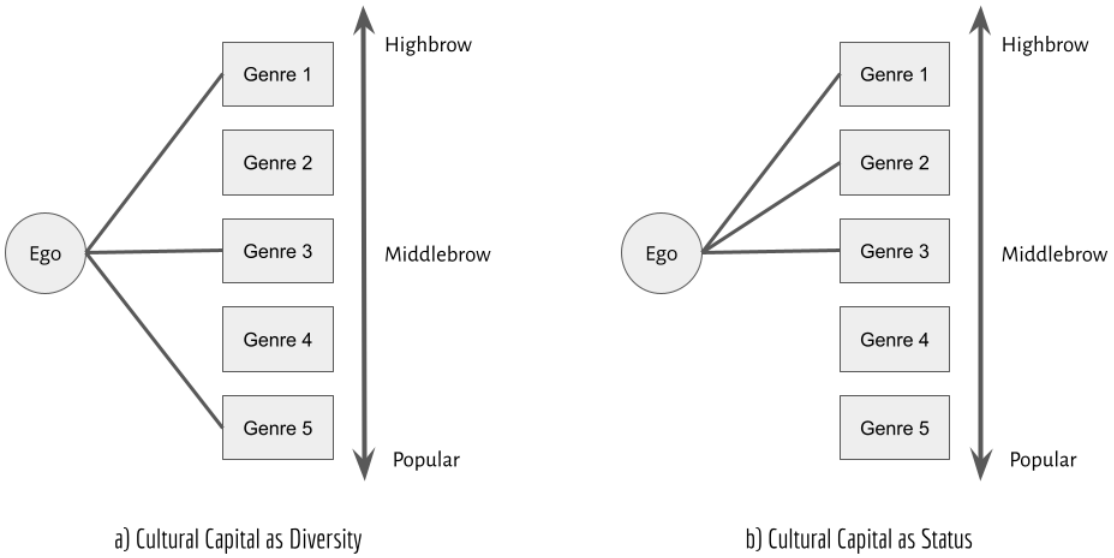

Figure 2. Two ways of thinking about cultural capital.

3.0 Social Capital in the Creation of Cultural Capital

3.1 Social Capital and Patterns of Cultural Taste

The central hypothesis driving work looking at the conversion of social capital into cultural capital (e.g., the effects of network ties on cultural taste) is Erickson's (1996) Network Variety Model (NVM). According to Erickson, the more diverse the network connections of a given individual (see Figure 1a), the more diverse their tastes and cultural consumption habits will be (see Figure 2a). That is, *network variety leads to cultural variety*. The primary mechanism behind Erickson's NVM is *exposure* since individuals who connect to a wide range of positions in the social structure will be exposed to a broader range of tastes and cultural pursuits typical of people in those positions, thus acquiring a working familiarity with those cultural styles. Using data from a sample of respondents from the Toronto contract security industry,

Erickson strongly supports the NVM. Net of the standard class and status indicators (both individual and in terms of family of origin), knowing people in more diverse class positions (a variation of the pattern shown in Figure 1a) is the best predictor of being familiar with a broader range of cultural pursuits. According to the NVM, the oft-noted correlation between markers of social position (e.g., education and occupational prestige) and cultural omnivorousness is (partially) spurious. People in high-status positions are more culturally omnivorous because they also have a more expansive volume and range of network contacts.

Erickson's NVM has been expanded and developed in subsequent work. In a follow-up study, Kane (2004) uses the NVM to examine how differences in the structure of social capital can help explain well-established gender differences in cultural participation. Using data from a student sample at an elite university, she finds that respondents with more dense networks are less likely to participate in cultural activities, except those (like sports) linked to solidarity-producing interaction rituals. More importantly, Kane finds that more socio-demographically heterogeneous ego networks increase the chances of individuals consuming high-status genres (see Figure 2a), providing evidence of a link between network structure and the accumulation of cultural capital as high-status signals. Importantly, all network effects are strongest for women, providing a social capital explanation of their often-observed cultural capital advantage over men. Warde & Tampubolon (2002) use data from the British Household Panel Survey to examine the link between social and cultural capital. Consistent with the NVM, they find that the more associational and network-based social capital people have—as indexed by associational memberships and friendships—the more likely they are to participate in a broader range of recreational and leisure activities.

In a recent series of studies, Cebula (2015, 2019, 2023) uses data from a sample of respondents in the Polish city of Wrocław to examine further empirical implications of Erickson's NVM. In the 2015 paper, Cebula used a resource-generator approach for measuring social capital—a variation of the position generator strategy—in which respondents are asked

to report if they have contacts to help them with various requests, problems, or services. This approach taps the extent to which resources are embedded in a person's network. Consistent with the NVM, Cebula finds that the more social capital embedded as resources in the personal network, the more likely the person engages in a broader range of cultural activities. Extending the analysis to the study of musical taste in the 2019 paper, Cebula finds that the more socio-demographically heterogeneous a person's ego network is, the wider the variety of musical genres people report liking. This work establishes an empirical link between heterogeneity at the level of social capital and the capacity to cross symbolic boundaries associated with cultural taste. Cebula also shows that the greater the weak-tie acquaintance volume, the more likely the person is a cultural omnivore (see Figure 2a). However, Cebula finds only a weak linkage between associational social capital (the number of voluntary organizations a person reports being a member of) and more omnivorous taste patterns.

In the most recent paper, Cebula (2023) connects Erickson's NVM with Schultz and Breiger's (2010) distinction between "strong" and "weak" culture (to be further discussed later)—proposing that weak tie network diversity should be more predictive of the number of "weak" cultural pursuits (as given by the frequency of engagement), while strong tie network diversity should predict strong cultural pursuits. Cebula constructs two indicators of network diversity. One is based on the familiar position generator but split into strong (friend and family) and weak (acquaintances) ties to others in fourteen occupations. The other is based on questions about how many contacts a person knows that *differ* from them on a series of characteristics (e.g., age, cultural pursuits, political views, organizational affiliations); this is a measure of "heterophily" in social connections, the obverse of the popular construct of homophily (McPherson et al., 2001). The basic idea is that different types of network variety (weak and strong) should be systematically connected to different types of cultural variety (weak and strong, respectively). Cebula finds that weak tie network diversity (see Figure 1a) predicts the number of weak cultural engagements but not the number of strong cultural

engagements. Strong tie network diversity, on the other hand, predicts both strong and weak cultural diversity (see Figure 2a). The volume of heterophilous ties, on the other hand, predicts weak cultural engagements but not strong cultural pursuits.

Other recent work examines how different forms of social capital connect to different forms of cultural capital, a critical empirical implication of the NVM. Rather than conceptualizing cultural and social capital as unidimensional constructs, this work seeks to differentiate *subtypes* of cultural and social capital while investigating their linkages (see Alecu et al., 2022 for a related approach). Particularly, Childress and collaborators (C. C. Childress et al., 2021) disaggregate cultural capital into high-status forms of taste that combine inclusiveness at the level of genres (e.g., Petersonian omnivorousness, see Figure 2a) with discernment and exclusiveness at the level of specific cultural objects (e.g., artists or songs in the case of music) falling within genres. They hypothesize that consistent with Erickson's diversity principle, people whose social capital profile consists of *weak ties* to others in *diverse positions* will have a wider variety of tastes at the genre level.

Childress et al. also propose a social capital basis for exclusionary taste at the object level. People with *strong ties* to others in *high-status* positions are likelier to display this cultural capital profile. Using data from a Qualtrics panel of American respondents, Childress et al. developed an inventive measure of the status rank of genres and objects. They ask separate samples of respondents from MTurk to rank musical genres and specific artists within those genres and use the position-generator approach to measure social capital. They find that, indeed, the more weak ties one has to people in different occupations, the more inclusive tastes are at the genre level (cultural capital as diversity). However, the more strong ties one has to people in *high-status occupations*, the more restricted the range of objects that are liked within each genre (cultural capital as status).

4.0 Cultural Capital in the Creation of Social Capital

4.1 Lizardo's Culture Conversion Model

Lizardo's (2006) *culture conversion model* (CCM) was the first explicit theoretical and empirical effort to link cultural and social capital. Lizardo's CCM synthesized three key theoretical strands in the literature that, at the time, had developed separately, despite each addressing critical processes and mechanisms linking culture and social networks. The first consisted of network theories linking social interaction, cultural exchange, and tie-formation and maintenance in small groups, namely Carley's constructural theory (Carley, 1991). The second one was micro-interactionist approaches to theorizing the functions of culture consumption in modern artistic classification systems linking cultural consumption to Simmelian sociability and the creation of bounded solidarities via the mobilization of cultural capital in "interaction rituals" (DiMaggio, 1987). The third was Bourdieu's (1986) imagery of the interconvertibility of the three forms of capital (social, economic, and cultural). While the literature until then had mainly emphasized the conversion of economic capital into either cultural or social capital—or social capital into economic capital as in Burt's theory of structural holes—Lizardo proposed a novel conversion avenue, the conversion of cultural into social capital. The basic idea is that cultural resources, particularly possessing embodied abilities to consume certain forms of culture, should lead people to differentially cumulate and maintain social network ties. The CMM thus stands in sharp contrast to models postulating a one-directional arrow of causation (or conversion) going exclusively from network ties (social capital) to cultural resources such as the ones reviewed earlier, which Lizardo referred to as the "traditional network model."

According to the CCM, consumption of "asset-specific" cultural goods (e.g., requiring esoteric or difficult-to-acquire cultural knowledge) should have *restricted conversion value*, leading mainly to creating and maintaining networks of strong ties and local solidarities. Consumption of cultural goods that are less asset-specific—such as the popular culture with which most people are familiar—should have *generalized conversion value*, leading to the

formation and maintenance of ego networks rich in weak ties. "Omnivorous" consumption of both types of culture should lead to more extensive networks containing weak and strong ties. Using data from the joint culture and network modules of the General Social Survey, Lizardo found strong support for the general outlines of the CCM. The more cultural activities people consume, the more extensive their reported ego networks. High-status culture—asset-specific culture—increased the volume of strong ties, while consumption of popular culture increased the volume of weak ties. In short, forms of cultural engagement with generalized conversion value increase "bridging social capital" in Putnam's (2001) sense, while forms of cultural engagement with restricted conversion increase "bonding" social capital. Omnivores who engage in both forms of culture can thus wield complementary resources, enjoying the advantages of bridging (with their weak ties) and bonding (with their strong ties).

Subsequent work has conceptually elaborated Lizardo's culture conversion model while providing further empirical support for its key predictions. For example, as already mentioned, Schultz & Breiger (2010) reworked Lizardo's original distinction between "asset-specific" and "non-asset-specific" culture to align with the classic network distinction between weak and strong ties (Marsden & Campbell, 1984). According to Schultz and Breiger, popular culture endowed with generalized conversion can best be considered *weak culture*. Like weak ties in Granovetter's theory, weak culture is strong because it allows for forming social ties, however fleeting, between people in social-structural positions that otherwise would have no basis for connecting. In addition, they show that the greater the number of mild positive cultural preferences (e.g., "likes" instead of "likes very much"), the more likely people are to perceive the U.S. to be "united" (rather than divided). In short, weak culture leads to the perception of a potential for interaction across critical social divides, an unexpected implication of the culture-conversion imagery (with critical implications for contemporary issues).

Subsequently, Lizardo (2011) extended Schultz & Breiger's consideration of the effects of weak and strong culture to a classic outcome with implications for network theories of social capital: The extent to which people have ego networks rich in "structural holes," namely contacts whom themselves do not interact with one another (Burt, 1992/2009). Lizardo hypothesizes that just like weak culture affects the quality of ties, it should affect network structure, with the more weak preferences a person reports increasing the odds of having a network rich in structural holes. Using data from the network module of the 2004 General Social Survey network module and cultural preference data from people's website browsing behavior, Lizardo finds support for the hypothesis: The more weak culture a person mobilizes, the more likely they are to stand as a bridge between disconnected contacts in their ego network. Conversely, the greater the number of strong cultural preferences, the more likely the ego network closes in on itself, composed of people tied to one another.

As Kenny Joseph and Kathleen Carley (2015) subsequently noted, Schultz & Breiger's (2010) concept of weak culture implies the existence of *strong culture* or "deep knowledge within particular domains…[people] can use…to form stronger bonds with like-minded individuals" (p. 626). Using data from more than eighteen hundred Twitter users who reported well over twelve million cultural venues "check-ins" in the Foursquare app, Joseph & Carley tested various empirical implications of the CCM. Notably, they find support for the central prediction that the more cultural preferences people have, the more extensive their Twitter ego network. They also find evidence of a weak culture effect, with the number of weak cultural preferences increasing the overall number of weak ties people have. However, Joseph & Carley find no evidence of a strong culture effect, as the number of strong preferences people have fails to predict the number of strong ties.

To date, the most sustained elaboration, both theoretically and empirically, of the CCM is that provided by Lewis and Kaufman (2018). First, they endogenize weak and strong culture to what they refer to as the local cultural ecology. Rather than using exogenous criteria

to determine what counts as weak or strong culture (e.g., broad labels such as high-status or popular), they note that what counts as weak or strong culture will depend on the local cultural environment's distribution of tastes and aptitudes. Second, they distinguish between different culture conversion mechanisms. First, there is the *dyadic conversion* of cultural into social capital, whereby people exploit commonalities in cultural tastes and aptitudes specific to the focal dyad to form and sustain relationships. Second, there is a *generalized conversion* process, whereby particular forms of taste and cultural consumption lead people to form more ties with others (increasing the acquaintance volume). Finally, there is *cultural matching* (a mechanism to be discussed in more detail in the next section), where similarities in cultural profiles (including active engagements and abstentions) increase the chances of people creating social connections with similar others. Using stochastic actor-based models for longitudinal network data on a unique Facebook dataset—the "tastes, ties, and time" data (Lewis et al., 2008)—Lewis & Kaufmann find support for all three conversion mechanisms. Notably, the more tastes two students shared, the more likely they became "Facebook friends," especially if those tastes were "specialized" to the local cultural ecology. In the same way, individuals who displayed typical tastes in the local cultural ecology were more likely to accumulate a larger volume of acquaintances via the generalized conversion mechanism.

4.2 Vaisey and Lizardo's Cultural Matching Model

Vaisey & Lizardo's (2010) *cultural matching model* (CMM) is the other conversion argument linking culture to social network ties. According to the CMM, cultural tastes, values, and preferences affect social networks mainly by serving as the underlying basis for *homophily*. According to this argument, tastes, and other internalized cultural aptitudes, have an independent causal effect in shaping social networks because people use the match between their tastes and others to *self-select* into particular social ties (Shalizi & Thomas, 2011). Moreover, the degree of cultural match between two people also determines whether certain social relationships stick over time or instead selectively die off, thus linking cultural

matching at the dyadic level with processes of tie-decay at the network level (Burt, 2000; Martin & Yeung, 2006). Using longitudinal data from the National Study of Youth and Religion, they find that adolescents who abide by a more individualist-expressivist cultural worldview are likelier to maintain social ties with other adolescents who engage in substance abuse. In contrast, those abiding by a more individualist-utilitarian worldview are likelier to keep social ties with those who volunteer (compared to those who express more communitarian cultural worldviews).

Much recent work provides strong empirical support for critical tenets of the CMM. For instance, Selfhout et al. (2009), Nagel et al. (2011), Friemel (2012), Lewis et al. (2012), Lomi and Stadtfeld (2014), and Hachen et al. (2022) show—using longitudinal culture and network data collected on adolescents and college-aged populations—that shared cultural taste promotes tie-formation, bolstering a vital prediction of the CMM.

Using data from the Cambridge College Network Dataset (a longitudinal sample of graduate students in England), Edelmann and Vaisey (2014) extended the CMM to consider not just substantive matches in terms of tastes and worldviews but also matching in terms of abstentions or dislikes. That is, just like two people can match in terms of a positive pursuit, they can match in terms of the stuff they do not or refuse to do. Consistent with the extended CMM, Edelmann & Vaisey find that mutual consumption of the same musical genres and common non-consumption systematically affects tie maintenance, increasing the odds that two students will sustain a network connection over time.

Rivera (2012) has recently extended the CMM to the organizational level, showing that matching perceived lifestyles is a gatekeeping mechanism in an elite labor market (high-powered legal and financial services). Individuals who can successfully display a cultural match with a given firm during a job interview regarding lifestyle, tastes, and extracurricular activities are more likely to receive a job offer than those perceived to be a "mismatch." Childress & Nault (2019) extend Rivera's organizational cultural matching

argument to the case of people and products in cultural fields. They show how cultural intermediaries in the publishing industry (editors) "match" themselves to specific types of novels and stories (based on both genre categories and biographical connections between their experiences and the stories that authors tell). In doing so, intermediaries reproduce patterns of categorical exclusion of authors based on race in the literary field, even when there is minimal social interaction with authors. Overall, this emerging line of work suggests that the CCM is relevant to explaining the accumulation and maintenance of network ties and linkages to organizational sites where further social and economic advantages can be garnered.

4.3 Cultural Capital and Network Resources

Recent work extends the culture conversion model to look at the effect of cultural taste on resources embedded in networks conceptualized and measured using Lin's NSTC approach. Using data from the Netherlands' Longitudinal Life Course Survey, Roza Meuleman (2021) sets out to examine, for the first time, whether there is a link between individual cultural profiles and the resources embedded in social networks. This work tests whether we can see a link between the cultural taste profiles in Figure 2 and the social capital profiles in Figure 1. When applied to Lin's NTSC, this is a critical empirical implication of the CCM. Meuleman hypothesizes that individuals specializing in high-status tastes (Figure 2b) will also display a high-status tilted social capital profile (Figure 1b).

Moreover, this connection will depend on ego's social position, being stronger for individuals in high-status positions (a cultural reproduction argument) or those who occupy low-status positions (a cultural mobility argument), with ego's social position measured by their father's occupational status. Similarly, Meuleman hypothesizes that individuals with more popular tastes are likelier to display social capital profiles tilted towards resource diversity (Figure 1a). Finally, Meuleman reasons that a cultural capital profile tilted towards high-status genres (Figure 2b) will likely increase the heterogeneity of network resources

(Figure 1a), but only for lower-status individuals.

Meuleman measures the resources embedded in networks using a "name-generator" (the educational status of top-five non-kin contacts) and a standard position-generator with occupational status measured using the international socio-economic index. Meuleman finds that high-status cultural profiles (Figure 2b) lead to more high-status contacts in the personal network (Figure 1b) and a higher likelihood of connectivity to people in higher-status positions. Moreover, this effect is more substantial for individuals occupying lower-status positions, suggesting that high-status tastes are more important for this last group to forge connectivity to high-status others. High-status cultural profiles serve as a bridge for lower-status egos to connect to higher-status positions. Meuleman finds that there is no statistically significant link between diversity in cultural tastes (Figure 2a) and the heterogeneity (standard deviation of educational attainment and ISEI) of network contacts (Figure 1a) net of network size. Meuleman also finds little evidence that high-status tastes increase the diversity of social positions lower-status people have access to. Instead, Meuleman finds the opposite: For lower-status people, a status-tilted cultural profile decreases the diversity of positions accessed; a high-status cultural profile, in contrast, *increases* their access to a diverse social network for high-status people.

In a subsequent recent study, Meuleman and Jæger (2023) use two-wave data from the Family Survey Dutch Population to examine the link between high-status taste, interactional and behavioral expressions of such taste, and social capital (conceptualized as high-status resources embedded in networks. Meuleman and Jæger reason that if cultural tastes indeed function as high-status signals (Lamont & Lareau, 1988), then they should help construct and maintain ties to people in high-status positions in the social structure, linking the pattern of taste shown in Figure 2b to the social capital profile shown in Figure 1b. The critical innovation of Meuleman and Jæger's study is that they can also empirically isolate the key interactional mechanism (theorized by DiMaggio, 1987 and Lizardo, 2006)—namely, taste

expression in talk and interaction—that helps realize the effect. To measure respondents' networks, Meuleman and Jæger use a standard "important matters" name generator (Marsden, 1987); to measure the cultural and economic resources embedded in those networks, they use the contact's educational attainment and occupational status, respectively. They measure high-status culture consumption using a standard batter of arts participation items.

Meuleman and Jæger find that a cultural capital profile tilted toward high-status cultural tastes (see Figure 2b) predicts the formation and maintenance of ties to others with high levels of cultural and economic resources. However, the effect of high-status tastes on the cultural resources embedded in the ego network is much more substantial. Moreover, these effects are more consistently mediated by the *interactional* expressions of such tastes in "culture talk," (see Lizardo, 2016) with network contacts compared to their behavioral expressions as mutual visits to selected cultural venues, suggesting that the former is the primary operative mechanism in the conversion of high-status cultural capital into social capital.

4.4 Cultural Capital and Network Activation

In an explicit attempt to link cultural and social capital theory, Lizardo (2013) studies the link between cultural consumption variety and the classic case of *activating* resources embedded in networks: Using social contacts to find out about a job (Granovetter, 2018). While most previous studies had found linkages between specific taste profiles and a higher likelihood of being well-connected (e.g., the volume of social ties), none had investigated the link between cultural capital and activation. This was a critical gap in the literature because social capital goes beyond the static possession of virtual resources in the form of more extensive and varied networks of social relations. It is through the *activation* of resources embedded in social relations that social capital is theorized as going from a potential to an actual resource (Lin, 2002).

Lizardo hypothesized that individuals who engage in a broader range of cultural activities would be more likely to report having used a social contact to find out about their last job than a non-social method. Lizardo surmised there should be a link between the "tilt" of the cultural profile (e.g., towards popular or high-status form) and the type of social contact activated. Individuals who consume high-status culture should be more likely to have inquired directly to the employer—social capital as indegree centrality based on personal status. In contrast, those who consume popular cultural should be more likely to have activated acquaintance ties—social capital as outdegree centrality based on sociability—via their consumption of "weak culture" (Schultz & Breiger, 2010).

Lizardo uncovered evidence for both effects using data from the 2002 joint culture and network modules of the General Social Survey. As the number of cultural activities that people report engaging in during the past year increases, the more likely they report finding out about their last job via social contacts. Moreover, people who engage in activities closer to the "popular culture" category are likelier to learn about their current job via an acquaintance. On the other hand, people who engage in activities closer to the category of (traditional) "high status culture" (classical music, the arts) have a higher likelihood of having learned about the current job via direct contact coming from the prospective employer. Both are prototypical "weak-tie" activation episodes (Yakubovich, 2005). However, they differ in the underlying phenomenology and mechanism. Consumption of popular culture predicts the mobilization of weak ties helping to form and sustain directed outward ties (out-degree) to a wider variety of network contacts. These weak ties, in turn, can be accessed when the person requires novel information. The consumption of high-status cultural goods, on the other hand, leads to favorable positions in more elite "social circles" (Kadushin 1966), whereby the person is the recipient of social ties emanating directly from influential intermediaries (in-degree).

This pattern of results is consistent with research pointing to the "conversion value" of popular culture as distinct from that of more delimited social pursuits. The former helps

create and maintain less intimate types of connectivity, maximizing variety and extensiveness but sacrificing depth. These ties, in some sense, reach "farther" into social space but do so with "thinner" strands (Erickson 1996). More socially delimited types of cultural engagement are more helpful in connecting the person to more exclusive social circles, which have relatively more demanding entrance requirements. Here relationships require more encompassing forms of ritual identification and deeper levels of cultural matching to be successfully maintained (DiMaggio 1987). People who engage with popular and high-status cultures can enjoy these network advantages. In this manner, cultural variety affords the person with *resource complementarity* (Lizardo 2006). This complementarity is manifested in many outgoing ties directed from the person to diverse others and in many connections coming to the individual from others, most notably those in positions of influence or authority.

Recent work by Cebula (2022) set out to replicate Lizardo's (2013) original study linking culture consumption and network activation in the case of finding a job, but in a different national and cultural context—a representative sample of participants from the Polish city of Wrocław—using a wider variety of indicators of cultural consumption and taste. Cebula's results align with Lizardo's account linking cultural taste, social interaction, network ties, and social capital activation. First, Cebula finds that the more cultural activities the person reports having engaged in the past five years to a greater extent than the sample average, the more likely it is that they obtained information about their last job from a non-kin tie, such as a friend, compared to having used a non-relational method like answering a job ad directly. In the same way, the more movie titles a person reports watching increases the odds of having learned about their current or last job via a weak tie, such as an acquaintance, compared to a non-relational method.

Cebula's subsequent exploratory analyses reveal that distinct cultural profiles are differently linked to the tendency to activate non-kin social capital to access information. For example, respondents whose taste tilted toward the "high-status" side—a form of strong,

asset-specific culture—have higher odds of using all types of ties regardless of strength (friends or acquaintances) or kin versus non-kin status. On the other hand, people whose cultural profile suggests a greater engagement with popular culture—a form of "weak culture"—tend to use exclusively non-kin strong and weak ties to access valuable information. Overall, Cebula's results provide encouraging confirmation for a model linking cultural consumption, sociability, access to social resources, and social capital activation in the classic case of finding a job.

5.0 Towards a Cultural Network Theory of Social Capital

I began this chapter by noting that a central development in conceptualizing and measuring social capital happened when it was conceptualized as resources embedded in networks in Lin's NTSC (Lin, 1999a, 1999b, 2002). While thinking of social capital as virtual assets contained in network ties is now intuitive, this leap allowed for both the measurement and conceptual tools of social network analysis to link social capital as both process and mechanism to various outcomes related to status attainment. Quietly, a similar measurement revolution happened in the way we conceive of cultural capital, which today is conceptualized in terms of the patterns of connectivity people can sustain in "cultural networks" (as in Figure 2a) (DiMaggio, 2011). Putting both social and cultural capital on the same conceptual and empirical footing has allowed subsequent researchers to clarify and theorize the processes and mechanisms via which these two forms of connectivity (person-to-position and person-to-culture) can be systematically linked to one another via processes of interaction, selection, exposure, and habituation (Breiger & Puetz, 2015).

Beginning with theories positing a linkage between the variety of connectivity in interpersonal and organizational networks and opportunities for the acquisition of cultural knowledge, we moved to theories positing a dynamic relationship between culture and social structure, in which cultural aptitudes were as equally liable to be transformed into

opportunities for interaction and the creation of valuable network connections. Thus, we move from a "network theory of social capital" to a culturally informed version of the interconvertibility of the forms of capital, a cultural network theory of social capital. In this approach, cultural preferences and knowledge co-evolve in a dynamic network linking people to others occupying critical positions in the social structure. Some forms of "strong" culture facilitate linkages to certain social positions, while other forms of "weak" culture create long ties crossing otherwise unbridgeable social boundaries.

This status-position linkage mechanism transforms cultural advantage into a "vision" *and* a structural advantage (Choi et al., 2023). This approach opens up new vistas and raises a variety of new connections ripe for future work. These include the changing shape of cultural aptitudes and their effectiveness (or lack thereof) in serving as both boundaries and bridges to advantageous positions in the social structure (Edelmann & Vaisey, 2014). As cultural preferences change in the larger status order (Friedman et al., 2015), their value as either weak or strong culture should also change. This dynamic leads to the issue of the extent to which "diversity" can serve as a general cultural resource, especially in its tension with forms of cultural practice that operate mainly via hierarchy and exclusion, in the form of high-status signals. We have seen that both versions of the cultural capital link to distinct forms of social capital (Cebula, 2022; Meuleman & Jæger, 2023). However, more work is needed in specifying the particular interactional, institutional, and situational processes via which this linkage is realized. Moreover, the mechanisms canalizing particular patterns of social connectivity into accumulating cultural knowledge need to be better specified. Finally, more research is needed on the conditions helping transform the expression and mobilization of specific cultural aptitudes into opportunities for generating and creating social capital.

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