

The Relationship between Class and Reading:
An Examination of the Cultural Omnivore Hypothesis

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The relationship between socio-economic status (SES), and breadth of book genre readership was tested utilizing Canadian secondary data. Grounded in the cultural omnivore hypothesis, higher levels of SES were expected to be associated with a greater breadth of book genre readership. In addition, it was expected that openness, centrality, and intrinsic motivation would mediate this relationship with higher SES being associated with higher levels of openness, centrality, and intrinsic motivation which in turn was expected to be associated with a larger breadth of book genre readership. In addition, grounded in the cultural omnivore literature the relationship between SES and the readership of the lowest of the lowbrow book genre was expected to be mediated by superiority. Namely, that higher SES was expected to be associated with higher superiority and a lower chance of reading the lowest of the lowbrow book genre. The results supported the expectations demonstrating the potential for the cultural omnivore hypothesis to inform the relationship between class and reading habits in addition, to centrality, intrinsic motivation, openness, and superiority's ability to help explain the cultural omnivore.

Keywords: cultural omnivore, leisure, socio-economic status (SES), openness, centrality, intrinsic motivation, superiority

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this to my Father, whom I lost just before starting my master's journey. Thank you for always supporting me and showing me how to be a better person, I love you and I miss you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Within the social sciences, including leisure studies, the intersection of class with leisure tastes and preferences has often focused on leisure tastes as either a marker of class (Bourdieu, 1980; Macdonald, 1953) or leisure that is constrained by socioeconomic status (SES) (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Jackson et al., 1993). Within the leisure studies literature, the examination of class-based differences in leisure preferences, often focuses on differences based on status or wealth such as access to resources stemming from wealth and education and is typically understood from a constraints model to leisure participation, where a person participates in leisure is based on their ability to negotiate constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Jackson et al., 1993). . In contrast to both the taste as a marker of class and leisure constraints, other research on tastes and preferences related to class has shown that those with higher SES have a broad scope of tastes known as the *cultural omnivore* (Bryson, 1996; Peterson, 1992). Although there has been some speculation about what might be driving this omnivorous pattern such as greater openness to experience related to higher levels of education (Peterson, 1992), or a sense of superiority and entitlement (Kwon & Kwon, 2013), little to no research has been done on explanatory factors for this omnivoric trend. By drawing on sociological literature around the cultural omnivore, psychological literature around class as culture, and leisure studies literature I look to expand the scope of explanatory factors while testing them empirically. Thus, I plan on examining book genre reading habits through the cultural omnivore hypothesis, in addition to, looking at openness to experience, centrality, and intrinsic motivation as possible explanatory factors for the broader palette of the cultural omnivore, and sense of superiority as a possible explanatory

factor for the exclusion of the lowest of the lowbrow. This will all be situated within a Canadian context appearing outside of the time period typically associated with the cultural omnivore (1980's to 1990's).

When approaching the relationship between class and leisure habits, including reading, research in leisure studies often draws from conceptualizations related to constraints, namely, those with higher socioeconomic status (SES) are better positioned to negotiate these constraints due to access to resources. Conversely, lower SES individuals encounter more constraints and lack the resources to negotiate those constraints to pursue the leisure they want (Kowalski et al. 2012; Shores et al., 2007). This conceptualization of the relationship between class and habits makes the phenomenon about structural differences rather than the cultural differences surrounding class that I am emphasizing. However, reading has been shown to be less affected by the financial constraints that separates high class individuals from low class individuals (Kay & Jackson, 1991). In addition, leisure, including reading, has been shown to be significantly associated with life satisfaction (Nimrod, 2007) and as a form of casual leisure, has been associated with benefits like serendipity (unintended creativity or discovery), edutainment, regeneration, relationship development or maintenance, and improved well-being and quality of life (Stebbins, 2001). Lastly, reading habits have been largely understudied within leisure literature even though reading has been categorized as leisure as part of the broad understanding leisure but rarely focused on as its own context. According to the *Survey of Reading and Buying Books* from 2005, which will be used for the analyses in this paper, the vast majority (87%) of Canadians read a book for pleasure with over 50% of Canadians reading for pleasure everyday (Canadian Heritage,

2005). Given the accessibility of reading and benefits derived from reading, reading is an ideal leisure context in which to study the relationship between class and tastes and preferences.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Conceptualizing Class

Class has been conceptualized through a hierarchy of power differentiating people based on diverse aspects of one's life (Domhoff, 1998; Kraus et al., 2011). To some extent, class and the construction of class strata are arbitrary but the difference between the classes can be seen in the differences of life chances due to having diverse forms of power for high class individuals and lacking that power for low class individuals (Porter, 2015). This class differentiation manifests itself in different ways including objective social class measures (i.e. income, and education), signals of social class (i.e. symbols of wealth), and subjective social class measures (i.e. low vs. high class rank) (Kraus et al., 2011). In turn, this differentiation of class has an influence on psychological perspectives and behaviours by acting as a social identity that creates a group or culture dynamic (Ostrove & Cole, 2003). By conceptualizing peoples' class as a shared identity that facilitates a culture of shared values and behavioural scripts (Bourdieu, 1984; Grossmann & Varnum, 2011; Snibbe & Markus, 2005), class acts like other sociocultural variables influencing and predicting varied aspects of a person's life including preferences for different types of leisure (Domhoff, 1998; Kraus & Stephens, 2012). By examining class-based groups (i.e., lower vs. higher), the relationship between class and leisure has been observed (i.e. Floyd et al., 1994) and will be the grounding of how class will be approached within this paper.

There are been diverse operationalizations of class within the literature tending towards either objective measurements, perceived measurements, and contextual measurements of class (Kraus et al., 2012). All forms of measurements have merit

demonstrating that objective measures like SES (Alder et al., 2000; Oakes & Rossi, 2003), perceived measures like perceived social status (Rubin et al., 2014) (i.e. low-class, middle-class, and upper-class), and contextual measurements like perception of class based on the environment (Johnson et al., 2011; Kraus et al., 2012), can all act as modern conceptualizations of class. Within this paper, the objective measures of class will be used. The objective measures create a stratification from upper to low class based on educational attainment, income, and occupational prestige. This states that higher income and more education leads to a higher class which is typically measured as socio-economic status (SES) (Oakes & Rossi, 2003).

2.2 Traditional Approaches to Class and Leisure

Typical conceptualizations of the relationship between class and leisure preferences and consumption have focused on the exclusion of the lower class from the higher classes more elite pursuits of leisure (Bourdieu, 1980; Macdonald, 1953), explained by higher class individuals having a taste for the “real” and sophisticated while the lower class individuals lacking this taste and refinement that the elite possesses through money, education and power. These preferences are further characterized as elite or folk with higher class individuals participating in elite forms of culture and lower status individuals participating in folk forms of culture (Macdonald, 1953). Further, mass culture is seen as a form of culture for broad consumption by low status individuals and creates a hierarchy that situates elite forms of culture as legitimate and worthy while folk or mass forms of culture as not (Bourdieu, 1980). This clear divide between the high and low class possessed above helps to conceptualize what makes low class individuals and high-class individuals different however,

consumptive patterns contradict this clear divide low and high-status consumption for a broader conceptualization of consumption.

2.3 Cultural Omnivore Hypothesis

In contrast to the notion that high-status or highbrow individuals as exclusionary dismissing and avoiding less elevated or lowbrow forms of leisure (Bourdieu, 1980), a series of studies drawing on secondary data found that high-status individuals tend to have a large and varied taste palette, characterized as the *cultural omnivore* (Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Simkus, 1992). The cultural omnivore is described as an individual who has a large breadth of tastes and preferences in regard to leisure which has been seen within literature to focus on music taste (Bryson, 1996; Savage & Gayo, 2011; Vlegels & Lievens, 2017), the fine arts (Hahl, Zuckerman & Kim, 2017), and sports followings (Gemar, 2019). In addition, to the broader taste palette the high-status omnivores still had tendencies that made them avoid the lowest of the lowbrow leisure. This trend was examined by Bryson (1996) who found that highly educated individuals listened to a wide variety of music however, they actively avoided heavy metal music. This suggested that exclusionary habits have not been eradicated rather shifted from all lowbrow culture to the lowest of low culture. This more nuanced perspective on the relationship between leisure consumption and status is intriguing but lacks an explanation for the occurrence of this omnivorous trend. Some potential explanations offered up include cultural and societal shifts that create a more open and educated populous (Peterson & Kern, 1996), and a removal of cultural boundaries (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). However, these potential explanations of the mechanism driving the

cultural omnivore hypothesis have seldom been examined, leaving a gap within the literature that I plan to address within this paper.

Drawing on the cultural omnivore hypothesis, I propose two primary hypotheses to examine both the expected breadth of reading preferences for those with higher SES and the exclusionary trend of the lowest of the lowbrow genres by higher class individuals.

Hypothesis 1: It is expected that individuals with a higher SES will have a larger breadth of book genre readership (readership of more highbrow and lowbrow book genres).

Hypothesis 2: It is expected that individuals with a higher SES will have a lower likelihood of reading the lowest of the lowbrow book genre.

These two hypotheses will be built on to help expand and explain the knowledge around the cultural omnivore phenomena.

2.4 Class as Culture: Individualism vs. Collectivism

To help explain the mechanism in difference found between high SES individuals and low SES individuals in terms of their reading preferences, I propose some possible explanatory factors for the cultural omnivore hypothesis. By contextualizing class as a shared culture that creates a shared set of values and behaviours (Bourdieu, 1984; Grossmann & Varnum, 2011; Snibbe & Markus, 2005), the groundwork has been laid for understanding what those shared tendencies are. Kraus et al. (2012) predicted that low class individuals would develop a more collectivist self-concept while high class individuals would develop a more individualistic self-concept ultimately effect the choices different class groups make.

Specifically, lower class individuals were expected to make more choices that allow them to blend in with the crowd opting to make the same choice as others while high class individuals would use choice as an act of self-expression and agency. These claims were supported by parenting strategies with low class parents stressing their children to blend in while middle class parents were more likely to stress independence (Weininger & Lareau, 2009). This emphasis on individualism for the high class could help explain the omnivorous pattern by providing a grounding for expanding explanatory factors past the cultural omnivore literature.

2.5 Proposed Explanatory Factors

Although there has been a lack of research on explanatory factors for the omnivoric pattern, several scholars have proposed potential causes. Kwon and Kwon suggested that cultural omnivores felt they possess a superior taste than others and that they were more tolerant of other cultures (2013). Greater tolerance and openness is also consistent with Peterson and Kern's suggestion that openness due to higher levels of education was a possible explanatory factor for the omnivoric pattern (1996). In addition, Kwon and Kwon (2013) offer a new characteristic that is more reflective of elite versus folk culture with the elite feeling as though their taste has more merit through a possession of superior taste. This perception of superiority offers itself as another possible explanatory factor for the cultural omnivore hypothesis as in contrast to a dissolving of elite vs. folk rather there has been a shift of superior taste to be omnivoric taste and an indicator of high status (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005). In addition, by utilizing the class as culture research, namely that high status individuals possess individualistic tendencies (Kraus et al., 2012), explanatory factors

that reflect that individualism could help explain the cultural omnivore hypothesis trend. The factors that will be focused on that reflect this individualism within this paper are centrality and intrinsic motivation.

2.5.1 Openness to Experience and Novelty

Informed from Peterson and Kern's (1996) suggestions openness to experience is a possible explanatory factor for why the omnivoric pattern is occurring. Openness is part of the big five personality traits and classified as a preference for variety and creativity (McCrae & Costa, 1987; Goldberg, 1990). This preference for variety creates a clear link between the large breadth the omnivoric trend has with possessing high openness to experience. Peterson and Kern (1996) suggested that an educated population has resulted in openness which higher education attainment has been shown to be positively associated with high openness to experience, particularly in reference to openness to participating in leisure activities (Ihle et al., 2016). In addition, openness has been shown to be highly associated with novelty-seeking (Gocłowska et al., 2019), which will help operationalize openness outside of a personality inventory. This explanatory factor will help build on hypothesis one, namely:

Hypothesis 1A: It is expected that the relationship between SES and breadth of book genre readership will be partially explained by higher levels of novelty.

2.5.2 Ego-Involvement and Ego Centrality

Informed from the class as culture literature which situates high status individuals as individualistic and low status individuals as collectivistic, ego-involvement and specifically ego centrality is a possible explanatory factor. Ego is involved with the self-concept

concerned with what the individual values (Beaton et al. 2011). Ego-involvement is associated with an individual's ability to identify with a leisure activity (Selin & Howard, 1988). This means that high ego-involvement would indicate the more they value the activity and the more it is connected to how they identify themselves. These conceptualizations value the individual and the individual's values and identity rather than the group showing that ego-involvement may be connected to individualism and the omnivore trend. In addition, typologies within leisure literature have drawn on similar ideas of ego investment, like serious leisure (Stebbins, 1982). Lastly, high ego-involvement for runners has been shown to be associated with an increase in breadth of running-related behaviours (Beaton et al., 2011), suggesting ego-involvement's influence on a large breadth of habits similar to the cultural omnivore hypothesis. To help operationalize ego-involvement, ego centrality is the component of ego-involvement to be focused on within this paper (Selin & Howard, 1988). Ego centrality and more generally centrality has been conceptualized as the chosen activity or leisure plays a central role to the participant's life and has been associated with aspects like interest, importance, and relevance and concern for the leisure (Jun et al., 2015; Ohanian, 1989). This explanatory factor will help build on hypothesis one, namely:

Hypothesis 1B: It is expected that the relationship between SES and breadth of book genre readership will be partially explained by higher levels of centrality.

2.5.3 Intrinsic Motivation

Related to the notion that high-class individuals value individualism, intrinsic motivation may help explain why high-class individuals have a broad taste of preferences.

Intrinsic motivation has been shown to be highly related to individualism, with people finding themselves within a group which norms are individualistic (i.e. high SES) showed that personal choice was associated with greater intrinsic motivation while collectivistic groups showed a leader's choice was associated with greater intrinsic motivation (Haggart et al., 2013). This means that when given a choice and individualism is fostered within the group greater intrinsic motivation for the participant occurs which is consistent with self-determination theory literature (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory (SDT) suggests that people are self-motivating and actively pursue aspects that help to foster that self-motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In addition, SDT suggests that internal motivation is higher when psychological needs are met (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) which has been shown to be more likely for individuals with a high socio-economic status in comparison to low socio-economic status (González et al., 2016). Lastly, intrinsic motivation is considered as a necessary component of leisure with intrinsic motivation stated as a characteristic of leisure. The flow model has acted as an operationalization of a leisure experience demonstrating that intrinsic motivation is highly associated with leisure experience that were freely chosen (Mannell et al., 1988; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). By grounding this explanatory factor in characterizations of leisure while connecting it to individualism and class as culture literature intrinsic motivation may help explain why the omnivoric trend is occurring for high class individuals. This explanatory factor will help build on hypothesis one, namely:

Hypothesis 1C: It is expected that this relationship between SES and breadth of book genre readership will be partially explained by higher levels of intrinsic motivation.

2.5.4 Superiority

The sense of possessing a superior taste, as described by Kwon and Kwon (2013), is closely related to a perception of superiority in comparison to other people. This superiority situates oneself above others and previous social stratificational understandings, elite vs. folk culture (Bourdieu, 1980), used the social difference of class to demonstrate and confirm superiority over the lower class (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005). This same pattern has been seen with higher class individuals having increased entitlement and narcissism which has been linked to feelings of heightened importance and betterment over others (Piff, 2014). This explanation of superiority may still be playing out within the cultural omnivore hypothesis which has focused heavily on acceptance disregarding the exclusionary habits still occurring within the cultural omnivore literature (i.e. Bryson, 1996).

As stated above, class facilitates a culture and social identity for those who are in a specific class. This means that the social identity constructed from class can be affected by social identity threats. Social identity threats are aspects that undermine an individual's social identity, which have been shown to effect behaviours (Inzlicht & Kang, 2010). An important aspect of not having social identity threats is feeling like you are included within the group which is distinctive from an out-group (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005), and in the case of class the out-group would be low class if the in-group is high class. As Bryson (1996) the distinction between highly educated and less educated was liking or not liking heavy metal making heavy metal a possible social identity threat to the high-class social identity and be part of a social exclusion which acts to exclude specific parts of culture to protect the boundaries of their social class. Thus, superiority may act as “boundary work” to protect

high class individuals from threats, the lowest of the lowbrow, to their social identity. This mechanism will act to help explain hypothesis two:

Hypothesis 2A: It is expected that the relationship between SES and readership of the lowest of the lowbrow book genre will be partially explained by higher levels of superiority.

2.6 Reading Preferences and Habits in Cultural Omnivore Literature

Reading has been seen as a reflection of class, much like listening to a particular type of music has been associated with a particular class structure also has reading specific types/genres of books (Bourdieu, 1984; Atkinson, 2016). This distinction allows for reading to act as the context for which the omnivoric trend is observed. Previous studies for the cultural omnivore have noted that reading has been an often-overlooked context with academics trending towards music taste (i.e. Bryson, 1996; Peterson & Kern, 1996) or when it has been looked at researchers opting to focus on Bourdieu's thesis often neglecting the cultural omnivore hypothesis (i.e. Atkinson, 2016). When reading has been looked at within the framework of the cultural omnivore there have been results that both demonstrate the exclusionary divide of elite vs folk culture (van Rees et al., 1999) and an omnivoric trend consistent with the cultural omnivore hypothesis (Zavisca, 2005). These conflicting findings may, and were stated as a possible limitation to van Rees and colleagues work (1999), be due to a difference of operationalizing reading with the working finding a exclusionary divide operationalizing reading as behaviour (the participant read or do not read) and the work that was consistent with the cultural omnivore hypothesis operationalized reading as preference (liking or disliking particular genres) (Zavisca, 2005).

2.7 Summary

Although the concept of the cultural omnivore has been well-established, potential explanatory factors have been largely untested indicating a clear gap within the literature. In addition, reading has been a largely under researched context both within leisure studies and the cultural omnivore literature, even though it is a highly accessible form of leisure that allows for broader interpretation of the relationship between class and habits than just constraints. By drawing on diverse literature around class and leisure habits and preferences ranging from leisure literature to social psychology openness to experience, centrality, intrinsic motivation, and perceived superiority have been identified as possible explanatory factors for the patterns occurring around the cultural omnivore. These potential mechanisms can help to partially explain why high-class individuals possess a broad range of tastes and preference for leisure while still avoiding the lowest of the lowbrow.

2.7.1 Summary of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: It is expected that individuals with a higher socio-economic status (SES) will have a larger breadth of book genre readership (readership of more highbrow and lowbrow book genres).

- A. It is expected that this relationship may be explained by higher levels of novelty.
- B. It is expected that this relationship may be explained by higher levels of centrality.
- C. It is expected that this relationship may be explained by higher levels of intrinsic motivation.

Hypothesis 2: It is expected that individuals with a higher SES will have a lower likelihood of reading the lowest of the lowbrow book genre.

A. It is expected that this relationship may be explained by higher levels of superiority.

Chapter 3: Method

3.1 Data

To test these hypotheses, data will be drawn from the 2005 Survey on Reading and Buying Books (SRBB) conducted by Canadian Heritage. The SRBB aims to collect data related to reading and buying books for pleasure for Canadians while updating previous in the 1990's. In addition to reading variables, demographic, social and geographical variables were also collected (Canadian Heritage, 2005). The survey was carried out through a national phone survey conducted between January 5 and January 31 of 2005. The target population for this survey was all members of the Canadian public who do not live in an institution, subscribe to a phone service, and are capable of being interviewed in English or French. They utilized random sampling which was stratified geographically resulting in a random sample of 1963 Canadians 16 years or older (Canadian Heritage, 2005).

The SRBB, the data that supports the findings of this study, is available through the Ontario Data Documentation, Extraction Service and Infrastructure Initiative (ODESI). Restrictions apply to the availability of these data, which were used under license for this study. Data are available to current students, faculty, and staff of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) Member Libraries for academic research and teaching only.

3.2 Variables

Within the SRBB, *age* is classified by levels ranging from 16 to 20 years old (1) to 65 years or more (7). *Education* is measured by eight levels: primary school or less (1), some high school (2), completed high school (3), some college/technical school (4), completed

college/technical school (5), some university (6), university undergraduate degree (7), university graduate or postgraduate degree (8). *Income* is measured by six levels: no income or less than \$20,000 (0), \$20,000 to \$40,000 (1), \$40,001 to \$60,000 (2), \$60,001 to \$80,000 (3), \$80,001 to \$100,000 (4), or more than \$100,000 (5). *Sex* was coded female (1), and male (0) with males acting as the reference group within the assignment. *Visible minority* was coded identify as a visible minority (1) and identifying as not a visible minority (0).

To test the hypothesis, *SES* was utilized as an objective measurement of class which was operationalized by standardizing income and educational attainment then taking the mean of the standardized variables. By operationalizing class as an objective measure, it is consistent with previous cultural omnivore literature, which drew on education as a singular indicator (i.e. Bryson, 1996), while drawing on a broader conceptualization of class as indicated by both education and income (Oakes & Rossi, 2003).

Breadth of book genre readership is operationalized by readership of both highbrow book genres and lowbrow book genres resulting in a behavioural measure of reading habits. To separate book genres into highbrow leisure and lowbrow leisure a correlation between SES (as described above) and whether the respondent read each of the 24 book genres within the survey (yes=1, no=0) (e.g. read: romance, read: theatre, and read: contemporary novels) was conducted. I classified highbrow book genres as all those above the median of the correlations (.114) and all those below the median were deemed lowbrow genres (Table 1; Readership). The single genre with the lowest readership correlation was removed from the dichotomy of highbrow versus lowbrow (as described above) and used as a single item measure operationalizing Bryson's notion of highest SES individuals avoiding the lowest of

the lowbrow with both an avoidance and readership variable (1996). By separating the book genres into highbrow, lowbrow, and the lowest of the lowbrow in this way, this categorization can be done objectively in line with the objective nature of operationalizing *SES*. In addition, the creation of these categories allows for both the broad palette and the exclusionary nature to be observed across these groups. Lastly, *SES* was used to create these categories and then *SES* will then be used again for the analyses however, it is important to note that even though the relationship between *SES* and each book genre was used to categorize it does not necessarily mean that they had a large breadth of readership when categorized.

Table 1: Correlations between SES, Readership and Avoidance of Book Genres

Book Genre	SES
	Readership <i>r</i>
Highbrow	
Humanity and Social Science	0.207***
Art	0.201***
Mystery and Suspense	0.179***
Classic	0.171***
Psychology	0.166***
Computer	0.163***
Religion	0.162***
Science and Technology	0.143***
Biography	0.141***
Sci-Fi and Fantasy	0.141***
Documentary and Current Events	0.124***
Health, Fitness and Medicine	0.117***
Lowbrow	
Theatre	0.110***
Para-psychology	0.103***
How to Books	0.099***
Poetry	0.060*
Essays	0.056*
Humour	0.052*
History and War	0.035
Cartoon and Comic Books	0.004
Historical	-0.019
Business and Economy	-0.023
Romance	-0.066**
Contemporary ^a	-0.135***

Notes: ^a Removed from lowbrow due to lowest readership correlation;

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Centrality was operationalized as “reading is important to me”, which was coded from strongly disagree being 1 and strongly agree being 5. By focusing on reading’s importance to the participant, centrality can be tested due to the question focusing on the personal importance of reading. This personal importance could act as reflection of entitlement to reading which has been seen within higher class individuals (Piff, 2014).

Intrinsic motivation was operationalized as “I read only if I have to”, which was coded from strongly disagree being 1 and strongly agree being 5. This coding was reversed to have higher values reflect higher levels of intrinsic motivation therefore, the new coding is strongly agree being 1 and strongly disagree being 5. The question originally looked at external motivation by focusing on the respondent feeling as though they must read. By reverse coding this question rather than feeling like they must read the respondent has no pressure to read but chooses to do it anyways inline with intrinsic motivation to read. With reading acting as the leisure context traditional leisure is seen as a freely chosen activity (Mannel et al., 1988) which is highly related to intrinsic motivation which in turn is related to agency and higher SES individuals (Hagggar et al., 2013).

Novelty was utilized as a proxy for *openness* and was operationalized as “I like to read newly released books”, which was coded from strongly disagree being 1 and strongly agree being 5. By drawing on this question, newly released books and the enjoyment of them is a seeking of novelty which will allow for the operationalization of openness within this paper, which has been theorized to be a leading explanatory factor for the omnivoric pattern (Peterson & Kern, 1996).

Lastly, *superiority* was operationalized as “I read faster than other people”, which was coded from strongly disagree being 1 and strongly agree being 5. This question looks at the respondent’s

comparison on reading ability to other people suggesting that higher levels means that the respondent sees themselves as better at reading than other people and thus superior in comparison to others, which this sense of being better than others has been seen to be a characteristic of the cultural omnivore (Kwon & Kwon, 2013).

Due to the way *SES* was operationalized within the study (combination of education and income) some restrictions were placed on the sample. I restricted the analyses to all respondents above the age of 24, as those respondents 24 and below have not completed their education and cannot have an accurate depiction of their SES portrayed within the SRBB dataset. In addition, non-readers, respondents who stated they have read zero books in the last 12 months, were originally not asked the readership questions however, they were including in the sample as not reading any genres, coded 0 for all readership variables. This results in a final sample size of 1458 (*n*) utilized for all analyses, including the creation of the highbrow and lowbrow split as discussed above.

3.3 Analysis Plan

Descriptive statistics will be computed for all study variables including means of *highbrow book genres readership*, *lowbrow book genres readership*, , *centrality*, *intrinsic motivation*, *novelty*, *superiority*, *age*, *income*, and *education* in addition to the percentage of *female* (in comparison to male), and *visible minority* respondents in the sample. In addition, correlations for all above variables will be conducted excluding *income* and *education* as *SES* will be utilized instead.

To examine the relationship between *SES* and breadth of book genre readership two linear regression analyses will be conducted controlling for age, gender, and visible minority. The first linear regression analysis will focus on the association of *SES* with highbrow genre readership with centrality, intrinsic motivation, and novelty added in as mediators for model two of this regression. Then by utilizing PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Hayes, 2017) total, direct, and indirect effects were calculated with the indirect effect bootstrapped to ensure the existence of all the mediators' effect on the relationship. In addition, contrasts will be calculated between all indirect effects to determine the difference between all mediators (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The second linear regression analysis will focus on the association of *SES* with lowbrow genre readership with centrality, motivation, and novelty added in as mediators for model two of this regression. Similar secondary analyses with PROCESS will be conducted for the second regression analysis focusing on the association of *SES* with lowbrow book genre readership and the same controls and mediators as the first regression analysis. Lastly, a logistical regression analysis will be conducted between *SES* and the lowest of the lowbrow (lowest readership correlation) genre readership variable (contemporary novels) while controlling for age, gender, and visible minority. Model two of the logistical regression analysis will utilize superiority as a mediator of the relationship between *SES* and contemporary readership. Then by utilizing PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004; Hayes, 2017) total, direct, and indirect effects were calculated with the indirect effect bootstrapped to ensure the existence of superiority's effect on the relationship.

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The majority of respondents within the sample were female (58.7%) and did not identify as a visible minority (86.6%) (Table 2). The average *age group* was roughly 45 to 54 years, the average *income* group was roughly \$40,001 to \$60,000, and the average *educational attainment* for the respondents was between some college or technical school and completing college or technical school. Regarding *highbrow book genre readership*, with a maximum of 12 book genres read, the average different book genres read were between 4 and 5 book genres, for *lowbrow book genre readership*, with a maximum of 11 book genres, the average was roughly 5 book genres read, and for *contemporary novel readership* roughly half of the participants read a contemporary novel. In addition, the correlation analysis showed that SES was significantly correlated to all variables tested (Table 3).

Table 2: Means, Percentages and Standard Deviations of Descriptives

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Highbrow Book Genre Readership	4.48	2.86
Lowbrow Book Genre Readership	4.82	2.39
Contemporary Novel Readership	0.53	0.50
Centrality	4.38	1.05
Intrinsic Motivation	4.16	1.32
Novelty	3.34	1.41
Superiority	3.02	1.34
Socio-demographics		
Age Group	4.85	1.34
Income	2.08	1.52
Educational Attainment	4.48	2.02
	%	
Female	58.7	
Visible Minority	13.4	

Table 3: Correlation of Socio-economic Status, Female, Visible Minority, Highbrow and Lowbrow Book Genre Readership, Contemporary Novel Readership, Centrality, Intrinsic Motivation, Novelty, and Superiority

Variables	Correlations										
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Socio-economic Status	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
2. Female	-.08***	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
3. Visible Minority	-.09***	.02	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
4. Age Group	-.25***	-.02	-.06**	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
5. Highbrow Book Genre Readership	.31***	.11***	-.07**	-.06**	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
6. Lowbrow Book Genre Readership	.09***	.29***	-.01	-.08**	.48***	--	--	--	--	--	--
7. Contemporary Novel Readership	-.14***	-.04	.04	-.02	-.01	.42***	--	--	--	--	--
8. Centrality	.17***	.20***	-.02	-.01	.40***	.32***	.03	--	--	--	--
9. Intrinsic Motivation	.23***	.19***	-.13***	.01	.45***	.38***	.04	.44***	--	--	--
10. Novelty	.10***	.18***	-.05	-.05	.39***	.29***	.02	.36***	-.29***	--	--
11. Superiority	.27***	.10***	.10***	-.14***	.29***	.11***	-.09***	.25***	-.21***	.25***	--

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

4.2 Breadth of Book Genre Readership

The regression analysis for highbrow book genre readership showed that all the controls were insignificant except female significantly associated with highbrow readership when no mediators were in the model. Namely, women (compared to men) read more highbrow book genres (Table 4). The higher SES participants read more highbrow book genres (Table 4: Model 1). After mediation, the higher SES respondents still read more highbrow book genres however, to a lesser magnitude. Centrality was significantly associated with highbrow book genre readership; namely, that respondents with higher centrality read more highbrow book genres. Intrinsic motivation was significantly associated with highbrow book genre readership; namely, that respondents with higher intrinsic motivation read more highbrow book genres. Novelty was significantly associated with highbrow book genre readership; namely, that respondents with higher novelty read more highbrow book genres (Table 4: Model 2; Figure 1). After bootstrapping, the indirect effects were shown to be significant suggesting partial mediation. In addition, after running contrasts between indirect effects intrinsic motivation was shown to be significantly different than both centrality and novelty while, centrality and novelty were not shown to be significantly different than each other after bootstrapping (Table 5).

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for the Association of Highbrow Reading Habits with Socio-economic Status, by centrality, intrinsic motivation, novelty and Control Variables

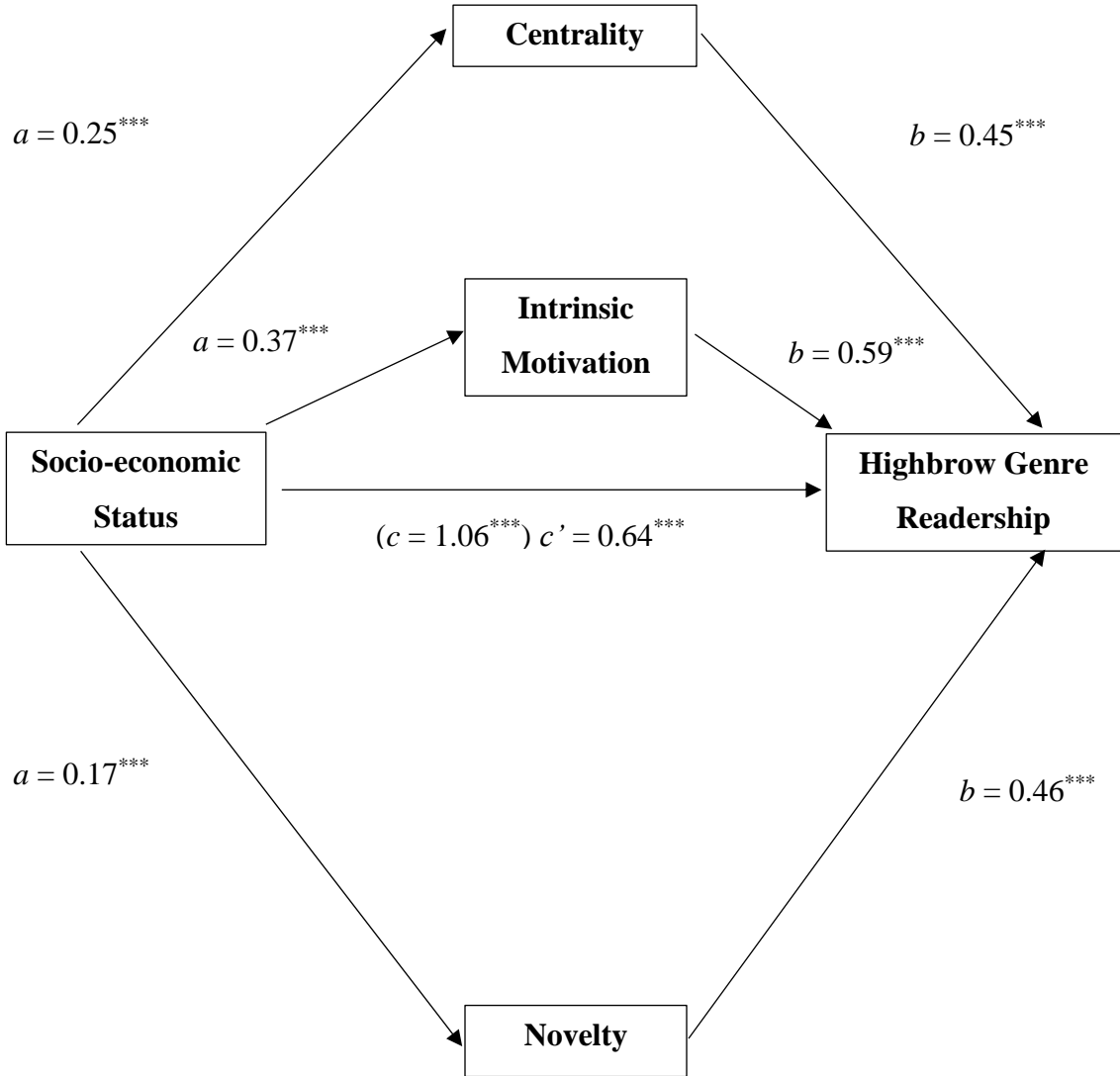
Independent Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	coeff.	sig.	SE	coeff.	sig.	SE
Constant	3.84	***	0.27	-1.44	***	0.34
Female	0.82	***	0.13	0.02		0.12
Age Group	0.05		0.05	-0.01		0.04
Visible Minority	-0.34		0.19	-0.01		0.17
SES	1.06	***	0.08	0.65	***	0.07
Centrality	--			0.45	***	0.06
Intrinsic Motivation	--			0.59	***	0.05
Novelty	--			0.46	***	0.04
Adjusted R^2	.115			.337		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5: Total effects, direct effects, and bootstrap analysis of indirect effect for the association of highbrow reading habits with socio-economic status mediated by centrality, intrinsic motivation, and novelty with contrasts.

	Effect	SE	Bootstrapping	
			95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Total Effect (c)	1.06	0.08	--	--
Direct Effect (c')	0.64	0.07	--	--
Indirect Effect (ab)				
Total	0.41	0.04	0.33	0.49
Centrality	0.11	0.02	0.08	0.15
Intrinsic Motivation	0.22	0.03	0.17	0.28
Novelty	0.08	0.02	0.04	0.12
Indirect Effect Contrasts				
Centrality - Intrinsic Motivation	-0.11	0.03	-0.18	-0.04
Centrality - Novelty	0.03	0.03	-0.02	0.08
Intrinsic Motivation - Novelty	0.14	0.03	0.07	0.20

Figure 1: Association between socio-economic status and highbrow genre readership mediated by centrality, intrinsic motivation, and novelty



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The regression analysis for lowbrow book genre readership showed that being female and younger were significantly associated with more lowbrow book genres read, both before and after mediation (Table 6). Namely, the older participants were the less lowbrow book genres they read and women (compared to men) read more lowbrow book genres. SES was shown to be significantly associated with lowbrow book genre readership, namely that the higher SES respondents read more lowbrow book genres (Table 6: Model 1). After mediation, the relationship between SES and lowbrow book genre readership was insignificant. Centrality was significantly associated with lowbrow book genre readership; namely, that respondents with higher centrality read more lowbrow book genres. Intrinsic motivation was significantly associated with lowbrow book genre readership; namely, that respondents with higher intrinsic motivation read more lowbrow book genres. Novelty was significantly associated with lowbrow book genre readership; namely, that respondents with higher novelty read more highbrow book genres (Table 6: Model 2; Figure 2). After bootstrapping the indirect effects were shown to be significant suggesting mediation. In addition, after running contrasts between indirect effects intrinsic motivation was shown to be significantly different than both centrality and novelty while, centrality and novelty were not shown to be significantly different than each other after bootstrapping (Table 7).

Table 6: Regression Coefficients for the Association of Lowbrow Reading Habits with Socio-economic Status, by centrality, intrinsic motivation, novelty, and Control Variables

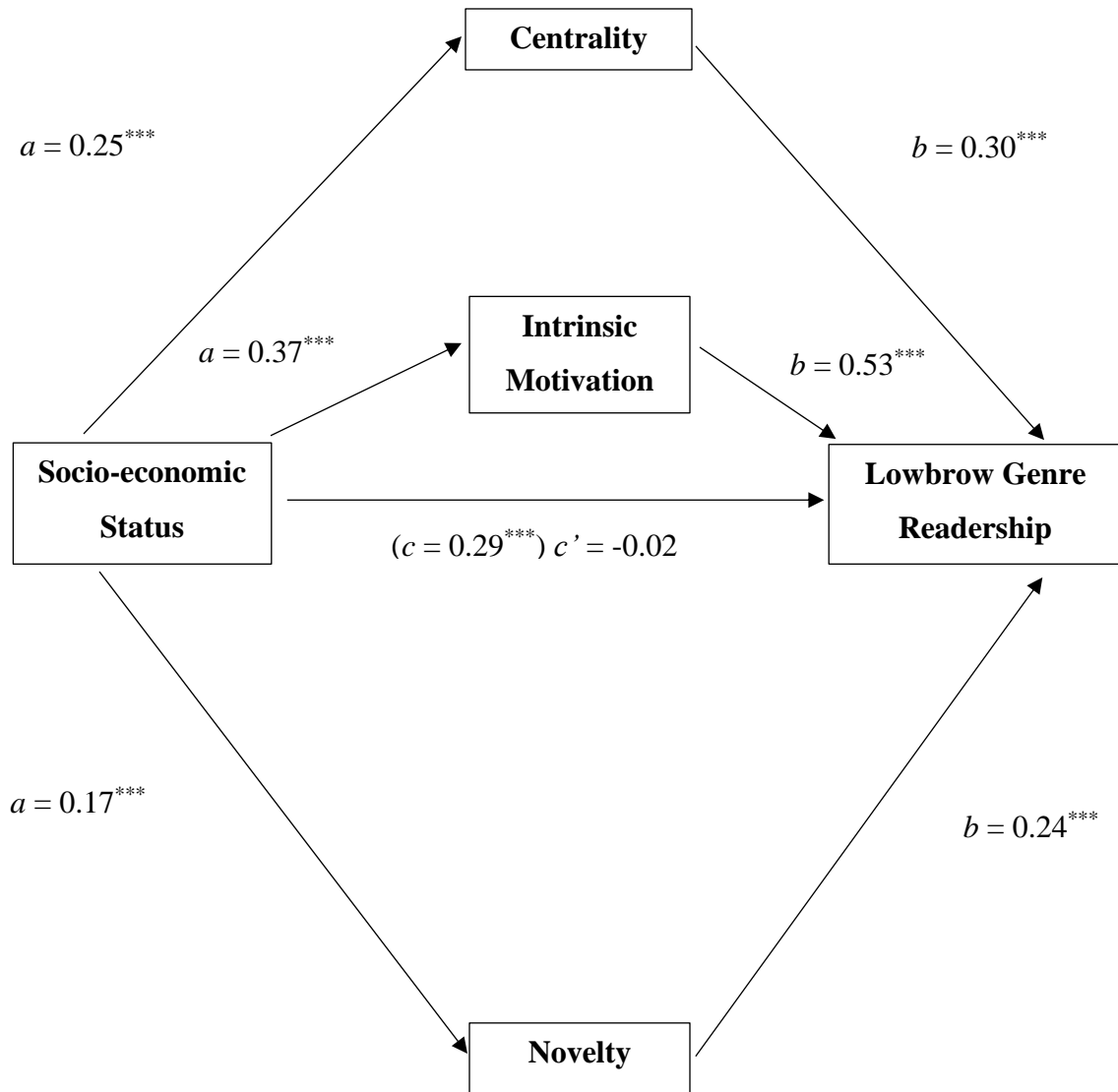
Independent Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	coeff.	sig.	SE	coeff.	sig.	SE
Constant	4.90	***	0.25	1.13	**	0.33
Female	1.55	***	0.12	0.98	***	0.12
Age Group	-0.10	*	0.05	-0.14	***	0.04
Visible Minority	-0.07		0.18	0.20		0.16
SES	0.29	***	0.07	-0.02		0.07
Centrality	--			0.30	***	0.06
Intrinsic Motivation	--			0.53	***	0.05
Novelty	--			0.24	***	0.04
Adjusted R^2	.096			.237		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 7: Total effects, direct effects, and bootstrap analysis of indirect effect for the association of lowbrow reading habits with socio-economic status mediated by centrality, intrinsic motivation, and novelty with constants.

	Effect	SE	Bootstrapping	
			95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
Total Effect (c)	0.29	0.07	--	--
Direct Effect (c')	-0.02	0.07	--	--
Indirect Effect (ab)				
Total	0.31	0.04	0.24	0.39
Centrality	0.07	0.02	0.03	0.12
Intrinsic Motivation	0.20	0.03	0.14	0.26
Novelty	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.07
Indirect Effect Contrasts				
Centrality - Intrinsic Motivation	-0.12	0.04	-0.21	-0.04
Centrality - Novelty	0.03	0.03	-0.02	0.09
Intrinsic Motivation - Novelty	0.16	0.03	0.09	0.22

Figure 2: Association between socio-economic status and lowbrow genre readership mediated by centrality, intrinsic motivation, and novelty



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The logistical regression analysis for contemporary novel readership showed that female and age were significantly associated with lowbrow book genre readership both before mediation and age was significantly associated after mediation (Table 8). Namely, the older participants were the less likely they were to read contemporary novels and women (compared to men) were less likely to read contemporary novels. SES was shown to be significantly associated with contemporary novel readership, namely that the higher SES respondents were less likely to read contemporary novels (Table 8: Model 1). After mediation, the higher SES respondents were still less likely to read contemporary novels however, to a lesser magnitude. Superiority was significantly associated with contemporary novel readership; namely, that respondents with higher superiority were less likely to read contemporary novels (Table 8: Model 2; Figure 3). After bootstrapping the indirect effect was shown to be significant suggesting partial mediation (Table 9).

Table 8: Regression Coefficients for the Association of Contemporary Reading Habits with Socio-economic Status, sense of Superiority and Control Variables

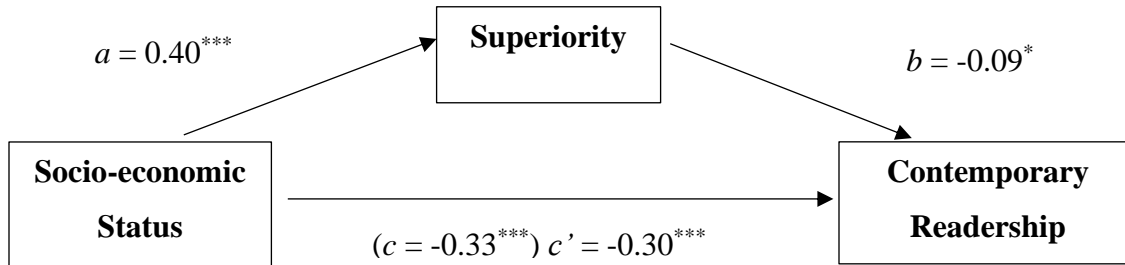
Independent Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	coeff.	sig.	SE	coeff.	sig.	SE
Constant	0.61	**	0.40	0.88	***	0.24
Female	-0.22	*	0.10	-0.19		0.10
Age Group	-0.08	*	0.04	-0.09	*	0.04
Visible Minority	0.16		0.15	0.15		0.15
SES	-0.33	***	0.06	-0.30	***	0.06
Superiority	--			-0.09	*	0.04
Nagelkerke R^2	.030			.033		

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 9: Total effects, direct effects, and bootstrap analysis of indirect effect for the association of contemporary reading habits with socio-economic status mediated by a sense of superiority.

	Effect	SE	Bootstrapping	
			95% CI	
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit
Total Effect (c)	-0.33	0.06	--	--
Direct Effect (c')	-0.30	0.06	--	--
Indirect Effect (ab)	-0.03	0.02	-0.07	-0.01

Figure 3: Association between socio-economic status and contemporary readership mediated by superiority



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Chapter 5: Discussion

I set out to examine the relationship between SES and reading habits grounded in the cultural omnivore hypothesis. By examining the possible explanatory factors of ego-centrality, intrinsic motivation, and novelty in regard to their role in broad palette observation and superiority's role in exclusion of the lowest observation, I set out to explain the factors behind the cultural omnivore. All hypotheses were supported, demonstrating the persistence of the cultural omnivore hypothesis in addition to the potential for centrality, intrinsic motivation, and seeking novelty (openness to experience) as explanatory factors for the broad taste aspect of the cultural omnivore and the potential for superiority as an explanatory factor for the exclusion of the lowest of the lowbrow.

5.1 Broad Palette

When looking at hypothesis one, it is expected that individuals with a higher SES will have a larger breadth of book genre readership, the regression analyses show that higher SES participants do read more highbrow and lowbrow book genres. This relationship would support the cultural omnivore literature suggesting that higher SES individuals have broader taste (Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Simkus, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996) and support hypothesis one. This demonstrates the persistence of the broad palette observation of the cultural omnivore.

In addition to supporting the broad palette, when looking at hypothesis I set out to explain why this was occurring. Broadly, the omnivoric trend of high SES individuals possessing a broad taste is explained by high SES individuals having higher centrality for the

context, intrinsic motivation, and seeking novelty which all are positively related to the broad palette of book genres read. This suggests that the explanatory factors of centrality, intrinsic motivation, and seeking novelty all partially explain why the omnivore trend is occurring for high class individuals building on the cultural omnivore literature, especially with higher level of intrinsic motivation having the largest effect on the relationship. This demonstrates the ability for class as culture literature to inform the cultural omnivore due to intrinsic motivations grounding in the class as culture literature. By looking at leisure literature, this could suggest that intrinsic motivation may act as an indicator of perceived leisure which would suggest that higher SES individuals consume a broader palette if they perceive the context as leisure (Mannell et al., 1988).

5.2 Exclusion of Lowest

When looking at hypothesis two, it is expected that individuals with a higher SES will have a lower likelihood of reading the lowest of the lowbrow book genre specifically contemporary books. The logistical regression analyses showed that higher SES participants were less likely to read the lowest of the lowbrow book genre (contemporary novels). This would support exclusionary practices of high SES individuals for the extreme lowbrow (Bryson, 1996). This demonstrates the complexity of classes relationship to tastes and preferences.

Even though high SES individuals were shown to have a broad taste they still avoided the contemporary books, the lowest of the lowbrow, which was shown to be partially explained by superiority. Namely, high SES participants have higher superiority which in turn results in a lower likelihood of reading the lowest of the lowbrow. This may suggest

that superiority may act as an explanation for the boundary work that Bryson suggested recreating the negative or less acceptable nature of consuming the lowest of the lowbrow as a form of symbolic exclusion (1996).

5.3 The Cultural Omnivore

The results demonstrated the complexity around the relationship between class and tastes with both the broad palette and the specific exclusion components around the cultural omnivore. In addition, the inclusion of explanatory factors for these two components helps to utilize these results when examining consumptive habits based on class. Ultimately, this results in a more informed notion for the relationship between class and taste while building on the cultural omnivore literature with explanatory factors. In sum, this can help inform future cultural omnivore literature in addition to informing decisions around consumptive habits based on class distinctions.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

This study was limited by the data itself as it was secondary data. This means that analyses were run with what was available within the survey itself limiting the ability to have scales or multi-item measures. This resulted in single item measures being used for the explanatory factors. To address this limitation more data needs to be used helping to strengthen the patterns shown within this paper through primary data collection with the addition of scales (i.e. narcissism scale, ego-involvement inventory, and the big five personality traits) or extensive secondary data analyses with diverse contexts, time frames, and explanatory factors.

In addition, due to the nature of the study, by utilizing a cross-sectional data source further analyses with more datasets would have to be made before causal claims can be made thus limiting this studies ability to make causal claims. To address this limitation more analyses with different datasets with diverse forms of leisure need to be done and continue to be done to help illuminate the cultural omnivore hypothesis and the explanatory factors that surround it. In addition, by shifting to longitudinal studies and datasets the trend can be looked at across time helping to support emerging explanatory factors for this omnivoric trend.

5.5 Conclusion

By focusing on the literature, gaps were present with a lack of explanatory factors for the cultural omnivore hypothesis and the trends that have been observed related to it, in addition to research on reading within the context of leisure and the cultural omnivore. By addressing these gaps within the literature this paper contributes to the growing literature around the cultural omnivore hypothesis and contributes an explanation for why these observations are occurring while demonstrating reading as a context for future research within sociology, psychology and leisure studies.

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