Chapter 20

Cultural Exclusion in Old-Age: A Social Exclusion Perspective on Cultural Practice in Later Life

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20.1 Introduction

Expanding the cultural participation of socially marginalised groups is a major concern of cultural policies around the world (Morrone 2006). However, cultural exclusion in later life is conceptually under-developed and empirically under-explored. Even though cultural activity in later life has received attention in gerontology since the 1980s (Fisher and Specht 2000) and has been revived as a research topic in the last 10 years (Bernard and Rickett 2016), it is hardly analysed outside of therapeutic interventions (Fraser et al. 2015) and even less so as an aspect of exclusion in later life. Despite the positive impacts of cultural participation, for example, participatory arts (Tymoszuk et al. 2019), writing (Sabeti 2014), music (Perkins and Williamon 2014), singing (Coulton et al. 2015), and visiting museums (Thomson et al. 2018) having been extensively analysed, its barriers in access as well as the impacts of exclusion on cultural participation are scarcely evident in gerontological research. This results in a lack of knowledge concerning the mechanisms through which cultural exclusion is produced and which policy instruments support the cultural inclusion of older adults.

This chapter explores exclusion from cultural participation in later life, as an example of civic exclusion, by taking three steps: first, a theoretical framework of cultural exclusion in later life is developed, which draws on social-gerontological theories of social exclusion as well as a sociology of the arts and culture; second, the phenomenon of cultural exclusion is explored with representative survey data on cultural activity of the older Austrian population (60 years and over); third, results are discussed in light of the proposed concept of old-age cultural exclusion.

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20.2 An Exclusion Perspective on Cultural Practice in Old-Age

Culture has been a well-studied topic in gerontology, however, from very different perspectives. Intervention studies have shown that involving older adults in creative activities has significant positive outcomes for well-being, health, and self-image (for reviews, see Fraser et al. 2015; Bernard and Rickett 2016). Studies with representative survey data have highlighted that even though adults aged 65 years and over attend more cultural events compared to the general population (Toepoel 2011) and 45–54 year olds are the most culturally active group (van Eijck 2005), participation declines in most European countries after the age of 65 years. This indicates an inverted U-shaped relationship between age and cultural participation (Falk and Katz-Gerro 2015). By contrast, research in cultural gerontology (see, e.g. Twigg and Martin 2015) has highlighted the role of culture in the construction of age and ageing in late-modern societies. This variety of approaches directs our attention to the heterogeneity of understandings of culture in gerontological research and the often-complicated relationship between cultural practice and social exclusion.

For the sake of this article, we can identify two notions of culture in gerontology. First, culture can be understood as the ubiquitous symbolic nature of human existence (Reckwitz 2008/2010), making culture an inherent part of our everyday lives. From this perspective, we can argue that all people are involved in culture in their everyday lives and might understand practices of consumption (for example, ways of dressing, travelling or eating), practices of everyday life (for example, ways of reading or arranging our furniture) or shared values and beliefs (for example ways of framing age and ageing) as a part of *cultural practice* in a society. Culture is an inherent part of our society, which “can be seen as discursively constituted as a web of signs, so that the central focus of analysis becomes the interpretation and deconstruction of these” (Twigg and Martin 2015, p. 353).

Second, culture can be understood as a field of social differentiation within a society, dedicated to the production of aesthetic knowledge through arts and cultural institutions (Reckwitz 2008/2010) in which some social groups participate, and others do not. *Cultural participation*, hence, describes taking part in specific activities related to arts institutions. This understanding allows us to question hierarchies in cultural practice (Bourdieu 1979/2013): While going to renowned theatres might be highly valued as a cultural activity, watching rock-concerts on TV might be valued differently. Participation in specific, “highbrow” forms of culture is therefore involved in the depiction of high social status and we can differentiate between “highbrow” (legitimate) and “lowbrow” (less legitimate) forms of culture.

How do these approaches inform understandings of old-age cultural exclusion? Drawing on conceptual frameworks of social exclusion in older-age (Walsh et al. 2017), this chapter puts forward the notion of cultural exclusion in later life to

describe the separation of older individuals and groups from highly appreciated forms of culture in a society. This definition encompasses two aspects: First, it emphasizes the manifold ways in which older individuals might experience barriers and challenges in accessing “highbrow” forms of culture, through *e.g.* physical and emotional distance or declining mobility in later life, decreasing their chances of *cultural participation* as a result. Second, it acknowledges the ubiquitous nature of *cultural practice* and asks through which processes certain forms of cultural practice are appreciated and addressed as forms of cultural participation, while others are not.

To develop a concept of cultural exclusion in later life, we must, hence, not only ask which age groups participate in culture and which ones do not, we must also ask how our understandings of culture are influenced by social power structures. Studies on arts participation in later life often find that the majority of older adults report no arts participation (Tymoszuk et al. 2019), which reflects not only decreasing participation by older adults, but also the limits of measurements used. Problematic in these understandings of cultural participation is that they are often not sensitive to changes and vulnerabilities over the life course – especially in old-age, cultural participation is not always an active behaviour (Morrone 2006), and might include consuming media, listening to music, or inventing stories while talking to friends and family, which are often not covered in traditional surveys. It might also include the consumption of easier and more accessible “lowbrow” cultural activities than in other life stages. Studies on late-life cultural participation, hence, are often somewhat at risk of reproducing an oversimplified image of older adults as frail, inactive, and excluded through the idea that cultural activity is only possible through health, activity, and independence. What comes to count as participation in later life requires acknowledging cultural practice that happens at home, or in less visible ways. Conceptualising cultural exclusion, hence, means to draw a comprehensive picture of the maybe less obvious ways in which older adults participate culturally.

One more nuanced framework to understand the dimensions of cultural participation was introduced by Morrone (2006), who defines cultural participation as a threefold construct. It comprises, first, cultural activities that happen outside of the home (“*culture de sortie*”—“going-out culture”). This dimension includes activities that are usually understood and measured as cultural practice, for example going to theatres, museums, and galleries. Second, Morrone (2006) understands cultural activities that happen at home as part of cultural participation (“*culture d’appartement*”—“home-bound culture”), such as media consumption, reading, or listening to music. Third, he acknowledges amateur creative activities as a part of cultural participation; as part of an “identity culture” (“*culture identitaire*”).

Further, an understanding of cultural exclusion in later life needs to take the differentiation between “highbrow” and “lowbrow” forms of culture into account and ask in which forms of culture older adults participate in. Although often contested,

the notion of “highbrow” culture has signified the aesthetic refinement of the well-educated since the beginning of the nineteenth century (Hanquinet and Savage 2015), while the term “lowbrow” taste was used to describe the culture of the socio-economic less well off, for example through their preference for folklore music, art, and dance. From that perspective, high social socio-economic status was connected to the appreciation of “highbrow” forms of culture, while lower socio-economic status led to “lowbrow” cultural activity and taste (Bourdieu 1979/2013).

This dichotomy has, however, been significantly contested in the last 20 years, especially through the concept of the *omnivore*, which offers a more nuanced understanding of social inequalities in cultural consumption and taste (Sullivan and Katz-Gerro 2006). Introduced by Peterson and colleagues in the 1990s, it follows the hypothesis that “[c]ontemporary elites no longer use highbrow taste to demonstrate their cultural distinction, but are better characterized as inclusive ‘omnivores’, happy to consume both high and low culture.” (Peterson and Kern 1996). Groups higher in social status can thus be characterised by a broad interest in cultural goods from all levels (Radošinská 2018). This might include both patterns of cultural voraciousness (meaning that consumers have a large appetite for all forms of cultural consumption) and taste eclecticism (meaning that they intentionally cut across boundaries between highbrow and lowbrow culture as a means of distinction) (Chan and Goldthorpe 2007). Studies on hipsters (Busman 2019) and modern cosmopolitanism (Cicchelli and Octobre 2018) show that the concept of the omnivore can be applied in different contexts to explain dominant forms of cultural participation.

Applied to the study of old-age, two different hypotheses might apply. First, considering the strong influence of activity theory (Havighurst 1961) in gerontology, it might be that it is the general level of activity that is of special value in later life, rather than a specific taste orientation. This leads to the hypothesis that older adults with high status tend towards cultural omnivorousness, interested in consuming any kind of culture that demonstrates activity. On the other hand, Peterson (1992) suggests that in a generational shift in cultural practice, dominant taste might become more subcultural as an effect of the ageing of new social groups (for example baby boomers or ageing hippies). This leads to the hypothesis that subcultures and narrow cultural tastes (especially those oriented towards pop and rock ‘n’ roll taste) are highest in status in older-age.

Applying Morrone’s (2006) framework and combining it with Schulze’s patterns of taste (2014), the present study examines patterns of cultural participation of older adults and their relationship with socio-economic status by answering the following three research questions:

First, what types of cultural participation can be observed among older adults and how does cultural participation change in later life? Second, what is the association between different forms of cultural participation in later life (high-brow and low-brow) and socio-economic status? Third, to what extent is high socio-economic status in later life related to cultural omnivorousness?

20.3 Materials and Methods

20.3.1 Data Collection and Sample

This study was conducted within the context of “Cultures of Ageing” project, a 3-year project that addresses the diverse sites of older adults’ cultural participation. This paper is based on a representative survey of older adults in Austria aged 60 years and over. Data was collected via CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interview), to reach a random sample of 1531 community dwelling older adults. Participants ranged from 60 to 98 years, with a mean of 71.9 years ($SD = 8.3$). Females account for around half of the sample (55.3%), and 29% finished only primary and 8.6% completed tertiary education. The majority of the sample (89.8%) were unemployed, unable to work, or retired and 10.8% were employed or self-employed. Data was weighted to ensure representation of the average older population in Austria. Data collection was conducted exclusively in German.

20.3.2 Measurement

The investigation was based on a specific part of the data that explored participants’ cultural participation. Participants were asked about a total of 24 activities and asked how frequently they had engaged in these activities in the 12 months (for all activities included see Table 20.1). The analysis also included variables concerning the respondents’ socio-demographic background (*e.g.* sex, education, place of residence, subjective health, size of household, age, income). Low socio-economic status was measured as having low education, social class and income as three most commonly used measures of social stratification in later life (Grundy and Holt 2001). Analysis also included a short version of Schulze’s (2014) scheme of aesthetic preferences, to measure taste preferences in three schemes: (1) High culture scheme (highbrow taste); (2) Trivial scheme (folk taste); (3) Excitement scheme (pop taste).

20.3.3 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using SPSS V. 24 software. The first step involved a factor analysis of the data describing the frequency of participating in different cultural activities using principal components extraction and varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalisation. The accepted factors had an eigenvalue of at least 1.0 and reported factor loadings were at least 0.4. Factor labels resulted from the authors’ interpretation of common characteristics of the activities in each factor. The identified factors were then subjected to a two-step cluster analysis, classifying groups of older adults

Table 20.1 Factors and factor loadings for exploratory factor analysis of three dimensions of cultural activities

Dimension (KMO)	Factor (Eigenvalue)	Activities included in the factor	Factor loading	Variance explained
Culture d'Appartement (0.578)	Reading and music (2.063)	Listening to music	0.623	17.194
		Reading books	0.823	
		Reading newspapers and magazines	0.556	
		Using a computer	0.427	
	Radio (1.737)	Listening to radio shows	0.819	14.475
		Listening to radio (music)	0.798	
	Relaxation (1.410)	Gardening	0.611	11.750
		Praying and meditating	0.741	
	TV (1.082)	Watching TV	0.856	9.013
	Games (1.009)	Playing chess or other games	0.903	8.405
		Doing crosswords or Sudoku	0.451	
Culture de Sortie (0.816)	Highbrow culture (3.751)	Concerts	0.735	31.256
		Theatre, ballet, opera	0.799	
		Dance performances, musicals	0.622	
		Comedy shows	0.557	
		Museum, galleries, exhibitions	0.802	
		Historical sights	0.702	
		Public libraries	0.552	
	Local culture (1.643)	Local events	0.809	13.694
		Services, church	0.530	
		Eating at home with 10+ people	0.641	
	Entertainment culture (1.341)	Cinema	0.705	11.171
		Sport events	0.643	

Note: Data was weighted. N = 1.518. Pairwise case deletion. Principal component extraction and varimax rotation with Kaiser normalisation. Factors included based on an eigenvalue of at least 1. Only loadings of at least 0.4 are presented. The five factors explained 61% of variance (culture d'appartement) and 57% of variance (culture de sortie). Creative activities (writing, making music, crafting, creative cooking, creative sports, painting and drawing, acting, taking photos or movies, dancing) were measured as binary variables and therefore summed for index construction

with similar cultural activity patterns as clusters. The identified clusters were named by the author based on the interpretation of each clusters' involvement in cultural activities. The next step involved analysing differences in these lifestyles according to socio-economic background and taste using cross-tabulations and chi-square tests as well as one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Bonferroni post hoc tests. Unless otherwise stated, all reported findings were significant at or above the 0.05 level.

20.4 Results

20.4.1 *The Structure of Cultural Participation in Later Life*

Factor analysis on the frequency of participation in 24 cultural activities revealed eight activity factors (Table 20.1): three in the *culture de sortie* (going-out culture) and five for activities in the *culture d'appartement* (home-bound culture). For *culture identitaire* (identity culture), an index was constructed based on the variables in the dataset.

Factor analysis for the *culture de sortie* activities revealed the importance of space as well as taste as a part of going-out culture. First, the *highbrow culture* factor included all cultural activities that usually require leaving the neighbourhood or community and are usually seen as highbrow cultural activity, such as visiting the theatre, museums, galleries, exhibitions, or historical sites. Second, the *local culture* factor included all cultural activities that can usually be done close to the home. It included activities connected to a local or community culture, like going to the church, visiting local events, or inviting more than ten persons for a meal. Third *entertainment culture* included all variables that were connected to a lighter cultural experience, such as going to the cinema or visiting sports events.

Factor analysis for the *culture d'appartement* showed that some cultural activities engaged in at home were oriented towards the medium, while others were oriented towards the aim of the activities. The largest factor, *reading and music*, involved all variables that were connected to consuming media in either a visual or auditory form. Most importantly, this factor included reading books, listening to music, or reading newspapers and magazines. The second-largest factor, *radio*, included both variables that described consumption of the radio as a cultural format (radio shows and radio music). The third-largest factor, *relaxation*, included cultural activities at home that were oriented towards self-reflection as well as relaxation (gardening and praying/meditating). Finally, *television* (TV) and *games* factors were clearly associated with specific activities, watching TV (TV), and playing chess, crosswords, Sudoku, or other games (games).

Analysing the age patterns for different activity factors reveals that while there are some groups of activities in which participation declines with age, this is not the case for all observed factors. Three factors (*highbrow culture*, *entertainment culture*, *reading*, and *music*) show clear patterns of decreased participation in higher age groups (changes larger than 0.5). Four factors (*creative activities*, *local culture*, *TV*, and *games*) point to continuity between age groups (changes smaller or equal to 0.5). Two activity factors (*radio*, *relaxation*) even increase with age (changes smaller than 0.0 and negative values). This points to patterns of age-related change in cultural activities rather than a simple decrease (Fig. 20.1).

Fig. 20.1 Factors of cultural participation by age of respondents

Note: Data were weighted. N = 1518. Significance was tested using one-way ANOVA with Bonferroni post hoc tests. Standardised means (z-score). Significance tested with one-way ANOVA with Bonferroni post-hoc test. All associations significant ($p < 0.05$)

20.4.2 Clusters of Cultural Participation

Cluster analysis of the eight factors of cultural activities produced an optimal three-cluster solution for Austria's older population (Table 20.2). The identified clusters showed significant differences in their cultural activities as well as taste orientation and general appreciation of culture and the arts.

The first cluster, which accounted for about one-fifth of the total sample (19.9%) was named '*Omnivores*', based on the cluster's tendency to consume a wide variety of cultural products—from highbrow cultural activities (for example museums, theatre) to lowbrow cultural activities (for example religious services, sports, games). Involvement in creative activities, highbrow, and local cultural activities, as well as listening to the radio, meditating, and gardening were most prevalent in this group. This group also displayed a high overall tendency towards highbrow taste. In line with this, this cluster of respondents was also most likely to state that the culture and the arts were very important to them.

The second and largest cluster (53.7%) was labelled '*Univore-TV*', as this cluster showed a strong selectivity in its cultural consumption, and strongly

Table 20.2 Clusters of cultural participation

Variable	Omnivore	Univore – TV	Univore – Entertainment
Participation factor ^a			
CI: Creative activities	1.23	–0.38	–0.15
CDS: Highbrow	0.86	–0.57	0.50
CDS: Local	0.97	–0.12	–0.49
CDS: Entertainment	0.42	–0.49	0.68
CDA: Reading & Music	–0.02	–0.39	0.80
CDA: Radio	0.49	0.01	–0.38
CDA: Relaxation	0.78	0.10	–0.80
CDA: TV	–0.06	0.16	–0.29
CDA: Games	0.60	–0.05	–0.35
Cultural scheme (taste) ^a			
High culture (highbrow)	0.41	–0.23	0.15
Trivial (folk)	0.10	0.28	–0.65
Excitement (pop)	0.08	–0.26	0.48
Appreciation of culture and the arts ^b	81.8	45.4	69.5
Weighted N	302	815	399
Percentage of sample	19.9	53.7	26.3

Note: Data were weighted. Weighted N = 1518. Significance was tested using one-way ANOVA with Bonferroni post-hoc tests. ^aStandardised means (z-score). ^bHow important are the arts and culture to you? Summed percentage for ‘very important’ and ‘rather important’

characterised by a high level of watching TV. Furthermore, this cluster was also characterised by a specific taste orientation: Analyses of Schulze’s aesthetic schemes showed that this cluster was most likely to be oriented towards trivial and folk taste, which emphasises a high appreciation of folk music and films with a regional background and love stories. Likewise, this cluster also showed the lowest subjective appreciation of highbrow culture and the arts in general.

The third cluster (26.3%) was labelled ‘*Univore–Entertainment*’. Like *Univore–TV*, this cluster was characterised by involvement in specific cultural activities. In this case, however, selectivity was associated with going to the cinema and sports events (*entertainment culture*), as well as reading books, or listening to music through traditional media or a computer (*reading and music*). Hence, this cluster was also characterised by a preference for going-out culture, which again was connected to a specific taste orientation. This cluster was most likely to react positively to the excitement scheme (pop taste).

The three clusters showed significant ($p < 0.01$) differences according to age. *Univores–TV* showed to be the oldest of the three clusters. For men and women, older participants were more likely to belong to the ‘*Univore–TV*’ cluster, with 86% of the male and 92% of the female population belonging to that cluster. On the other hand, analysis revealed that the ‘*Univore–Entertainment*’ cluster was the youngest clusters for both men and women (Fig. 20.2).

Fig. 20.2 Clusters of cultural participation by sex and age

Note: Data were weighted. N = 1518. Significance was tested using chi-square statistics. All associations significant ($p < 0.05$)

20.4.3 Socio-economic Differentiation in Cultural Practice

Nine socio-economic variables were associated significantly with clusters of cultural participation (Table 20.3). Generally, the *Omnivores* had a socio-economic status that was average to the sample, with deviations towards a high socio-economic status (*Univore-Entertainment*) and lower socio-economic status (*Univore-TV*) in both directions.

Univores-TV showed a higher tendency to be female (61.2%), have low levels of education (with 42.1% only having compulsory education), and to live in rural areas with less than 5000 inhabitants (46%). As they were the oldest cluster (73.2 years on average), they also showed a tendency towards poor subjective health (with 61.7% feeling that their health is average, bad, or very bad), being retired (85.5%), or unable to work (10.6%). In line with their lower level of education, they also showed the lowest average household income of €1350 per month. This was reflected the pattern that they were both more likely to have never been employed (10%) or to hold elementary occupations (11.3%). This cluster was also most likely to live alone (39.3%).

In contrast, *Univores-Entertainment* were more likely to be male (60.2%), higher educated (23.6% academics), and live in rural areas with more than 10,000 inhabitants (43.8%). Corresponding to their high levels of education, they showed the

Table 20.3 Background characteristics of participation clusters

Variable	Omnivore	Univore – TV	Univore – Entertainment
Sex			
Female	59.9	61.2	39.8
Male	40.1	38.8	60.2
Education			
Compulsory education (Primary)	23.8	42.1	6.3
Lower than academic (Secondary)	68.0	56.6	70.2
Academic (Tertiary)	8.3	1.3	23.6
Place of residence (No. of inhabitants)			
< 5,000	45.7	46.0	28.7
5,000 – 10,000	34.1	32.8	27.5
> 10,000	20.2	21.2	43.8
Health			
(Very) Good	69.2	38.3	77.8
Average, (Very) Bad	30.8	61.7	22.3
Size of household			
1 Person	20.9	39.3	24.5
> 1 Person	79.1	60.7	75.5
Work status			
Retired	85.4	85.5	73.2
Employed or self-employed	10.3	3.9	25.3
Other ^a	4.3	10.6	1.5
ISCO ^b			
Managers and professionals	12.2	3.0	26.3
Technicians and associate professionals	8.3	4.7	13.7
Support workers	73.6	71.0	58.7
Elementary occupations	2.3	11.3	0.5
Never employed	3.6	10.0	0.8
Age (mean)	69.2 [68.5, 69.9]	75.3 [74.7, 75.9]	66.9 [66.4, 67.5]
Income (median)	1750	1350	1833

Note: Data represent % of the sample and were weighted. N = 1518. Chi-squared statistics were significant ($p < 0.05$) for all attribute category cross-tabulations. Income and age were tested using one-way ANOVA and were significant ($p < 0.01$). (a) (b) (c) (d) mark significant ($p < 0.05$) differences between groups according to Bonferroni post-hoc tests.^a Unemployed, disabled, working in household, other^b ISCO-08 in correspondence with ISCED-97, armed forces occupations excluded due to low case numbers

highest mean household income (an average of € 1833 per month) and had the highest probability of being either managers or professionals (26.3%) or technicians and associated professionals (13.7%). Given that they were the youngest cluster (66.9 years on average), they were also the cluster with the highest ongoing labour

market participation (25.3% being employed or self-employed), and the best health (77.8% reported good or very good health).

Given that the first two clusters showed either a tendency towards a higher or lower socio-economic status in general, the *Omnivores* tended toward the sample average for most variables (income, education). This cluster was characterised by their higher probability of living in areas with 5000—10,000 inhabitants (34.1%) and living in a household with more than one person (79.1%). They also showed a higher tendency to be support workers (73.6%).

20.5 Discussion

The central contribution of this study is to put forward the notion of cultural exclusion in later life and to explore this concept based on representative survey data. Drawing on conceptual frameworks of social exclusion in older-age (Walsh et al. 2017), this chapter puts forward the notion of cultural exclusion in later life to describe the separation of older individuals and groups from highly appreciated forms of culture in a society. This topic has been explored with empirical data along three research questions. First, what types of cultural participation can be observed among older adults and how does cultural participation change in later life? Second, what is the association between different forms of cultural participation in later life (high-brow and low-brow) and socio-economic status? Third, to what extent is high socio-economic status in later life related to cultural omnivorousness?

First, data shows that cultural participation shifts, rather than declines, in later life, as this study identified patterns of decline in participation for some cultural activities, however, not for all. This was especially true for activities that are most favourably appreciated for their high artistic quality (for example highbrow cultural activities, but also interests related to cinema to some extent). Participation in high-brow as well as entertainment culture was clearly lower in higher age groups. Further, data showed that the older study participants were more likely to participate in cultural activities that occur predominantly in or close to their own home. As many other studies in gerontology have shown, this emphasises later life as a phase where disengagement from public space (Wanka 2017) and more of a focus on private spaces can be more prevalent, and highlights how spaces operate as opportunity structures for cultural participation (Brook 2016) [also see Tournier and Vidovićová, this volume]. The data therefore shows that cultural participation in later life does not only shift from more “high-brow” to more “low-brow” cultural activities, it also shifts from public to private spaces.

Second, this study suggests that lower rates of participation in cultural activities in later life might not (only) be a function of declining health, but also a function of marginalisation of specific taste orientations. While those groups with high culture taste were more likely to be culturally engaged, it was those with trivial (folk) taste that showed the lowest participation. These findings situate the changes in late-life cultural practice not only within the context of health and mobility, but also in the

context of taste. Future research might critically explore how far the taste orientation of older adults is represented in the art world and the sort of consequences this representation has for their participation. Future research might also unpack the extent to which the classification of certain forms of culture as “high culture” is *per se* exclusionist (Crowther 2003) and marginalises the taste orientations of specific age groups.

Third, regarding the omnivore thesis and socio-economic status, this study suggests that the older omnivores are characterised by their participation in different kinds of (highbrow and lowbrow) cultural activities; however, this group was socio-economically within the average population of the sample. By contrast, the *Univores-TV* showed the lowest and the *Univores-Entertainment* showed the highest socio-economic status. The results therefore show how dominant forms of cultural participation in later life do not follow the patterns of the omnivores. Rather, the highest social groups showed preferences usually associated with young audiences (for example, sci-fi, pop- and rock’n’roll taste). Dominant cultural participation and taste in later life, therefore, might not be omnivorous, but—in times of a consumeristic third age and anti-ageing cultures (Gilleard and Higgs 2000) — “young”.

Further, this study argues that cultural policies need to take diverse groups of older adults into account when supporting the inclusion of socially marginalised older people in arts and culture. In order to build more age-inclusive cultures across Europe, policy should address the diversity of older adults’ cultural participation and provide support in bringing marginalised practices into public spaces. Enabling cultural participation in inclusive societies (UNESCO 2006 (see Morrone 2006) means to understand older adults as a heterogeneous arts and culture target group. Results suggest that both questions of accessibility (for example, building accessible cultural institutions), as well as symbolic representation in the program (for example, targeting not only towards “highbrow”, but also “folk” tastes) might support cultural inclusion of older adults.

20.6 Conclusion

This chapter identifies cultural practice in later life as an important area of study for critical gerontology. Future research in gerontology needs to problematise older adults’ exclusion from cultural practice as a matter of spatial and taste marginalisation. Participation in culture and the arts is not merely a topic to be watched from the side-lines but is a field of study that shows which social groups are both structurally and symbolically marginalised in late-modern societies. It also shows that as the study of ageing becomes increasingly interested in culture (Twigg and Martin 2015), social inequalities might not only be a matter of access and barriers, but of cultural and symbolic representation in the cultural field.

The study had several limitations, including the cross-sectional nature of the data, which does not allow for analysing causalities, and the lack of data concerning

support structures needed to enable higher rates of cultural participation. Most importantly, this means that the analysis presented here can only highlight associations. Moreover, the data presented in this study did not differentiate between various forms of cultural consumption (for example, reading Goethe or a sci-fi novel) as well as the social embeddedness of cultural activities (for example, going to the theatre alone or in groups) and did not assess the extent to which people felt excluded from cultural participation or the degree to which exclusionary mechanisms actually drove different rates of participation – outside of social stratification variables. Finally, this study was limited to the context of Austria. While this means that results may be relevant to western European countries, which have a similarly structured cultural sector, the case might be different in non-European contexts.

Editors' Postscript

Please note, like other contributions to this book, this chapter was written before the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. The book's introductory chapter (Chap. 1) and conclusion (Chap. 34) consider some of the key ways in which the pandemic relates to issues concerning social exclusion and ageing.

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