

## *Distinction's framework\**

### A tool to understand the space of cultural practices in Mexico

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#### **Cultural studies in Mexico**

Culture studies in Mexico have gone through several phases where different objects and schools of thought have been prioritised: the tradition of indigenist anthropology focuses on cultural aspects of subaltern classes and ethno-cultural specificities of indigenous groups, whilst the Marxist–Gramscian school focuses on folklore and popular cultures. These approaches are characterised by a descriptive rather than an explanatory perspective of cultural phenomena, or by treating cultural manifestations as autonomous and unconnected with any reference to the country's global cultural system (Valenzuela, 2003). The most recent studies in the area of cultural studies are confined to aspects of mass culture: urban, anti-establishment, subordinate popular cultures, etc.. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, Mexico does not have any lines of research on sociology of taste. Research into cultural practices and lifestyles is still the 'Cinderella' of social sciences in Mexico (Giménez, 1999: 128).

Sociology of taste and lifestyles is a recent area of research in Latin America, despite the interest it has awoken in other developed countries.<sup>2</sup> The rarity of these studies in Mexico can be ascribed to structural reasons, among which we could list a lack of interest on the part of government institutions (especially for the financing of research projects and surveys), the absence of suitable academic spaces, and the pressure exercised by 'cultural industries' in defining the research topics in this sector (Rosas, 2002).

Furthermore, in Mexico the available studies on culture that are based on statistical material are derisory and isolated. The few that exist have paid insufficient attention to the importance of social properties in the formation of tastes and the structuring of cultural practices. One example of this is the rejection of variables that allow us to construct useful professional categories in the surveys carried out (the lack of occupation or skill variables is, unfortunately, a recurrent issue).<sup>3</sup> The common denominator

is that surveys on Mexican consumption and cultural practices have been aimed at the interpretation of demand to model supply through the design of public policies. In this regard, the hypotheses guiding the construction of the surveys are often aimed at answering questions of an administrative nature.<sup>4</sup> We have observed the same phenomenon in similar surveys carried out in other countries of the region. Chile (2007), Colombia (2009) and Costa Rica (2011) are for the moment the only countries that have statistics on cultural practices based on representative samplings of the population.

The appearance of statistics on cultural practices responds to a demand of the state, which is in strict proportion to the institutionalisation of culture as a category of public sector intervention. Eight new ministries of culture (or related institutions) have been created in Latin America in the past 10 years—Colombia (1997), Chile (2003), the Dominican Republic (2000), Venezuela (2004), Ecuador (2007), Bolivia (2009), El Salvador (2009) and Peru (2010)—these join those already existing in Cuba (1976), Brazil (1985) and Mexico (1988). The transformation of the institutions in the region possibly augurs greater interest in research in the field of culture. In any event, the correlation between the interest in collecting data about cultural practices and the creation of new public institutions responsible for defining and executing public policies is undeniable.

The study of cultural practices in Latin America is therefore a recent interest. The model that Bourdieu put together in the 1970s, that establishes a structural homology between the space of social positions and the space of lifestyles, has not so far, for the reasons we have just given, been totally verified in Mexico. The ambition of this contribution is to discuss this theoretical model and its method, making a first attempt with data on the cultural practices of Mexicans. The base we are using corresponds to the first National Survey of Cultural Practices and Consumption (*Encuesta Nacional de Prácticas y Consumos Culturales*) carried out by the National Council for Culture and the Arts (CONACULTA) in 2004, and we use the method of multiple correspondence analysis (MCA).

The initial results suggest social structures similar to the observations made by Bourdieu in *Distinction*, as the social distribution of cultural practices seems to correlate with the volume of capital controlled by the individuals. On the other hand, there appear, although with certain nuances, differentiation factors across social classes, involved with other social properties (age, sex, education, etc.). In the first part of this chapter we describe specific characteristics of Mexican society. In the second part, we present the parameters that guided the survey we used in our analysis. In the final section, we give the main results of our research.

### **Specific characteristics of Mexican society**

Cultural diversity is a feature that, ever since the colonial period, has characterised Mexican society. The unification of the cultural field in Mexico was not possible until after the Revolution (1910–20). The old regime was characterised by a social division—a legacy of colonisation and its caste system—between an elite that leant towards a culture of European origin or inspiration,<sup>5</sup> and the people's attachment to

the culture of indigenous or *mestizo* (mixed-blood) heritage.<sup>6</sup> The post-revolutionary nationalist project sought to unify the diverse forms of cultural expression under the ‘*mestizo* ideology’ (Castellanos *et al.*, 2007). The creation of the *mestizo* idea was a strategy of the political class aimed at attenuating differences in order to unify the nation. *Mestizaje* was exalted as a measure for the construction of a more homogeneous national cultural identity (Van Dijk, 2007). Made up of elements from different forms of cultural expression, *mestizos* have, to a large extent, participated in what has been defined as the ‘Mexican culture’ (Frost, 2009).

The variety of indigenous languages is an illustration of the diversity of cultures that coexist in Mexico. There are 291 languages in total, placing Mexico among the countries with the greatest number of autochthonous languages in the world (UNESCO, 2009). Despite this huge ethno-linguistic diversity, the indigenous population (with its own cultural system that encompasses systems of values, traditions, beliefs, etc.) represents only 13 per cent of the total Mexican population in 2005 (Oropeza, 2003). ‘Mexican culture’ is the result of a historical process of national construction—in permanent transformation—that combines features of cultural expressions from the pre-Columbian, European societies and, more recently, North American popular culture. The situation in Mexico is very similar to that of other countries with major inequalities based on social and ethnic origin. Everything else being equal, ‘good birth’ or skin colour are an advantage to access certain occupations. Poor whites earning less than a dollar a day represent barely 12 per cent of the population, whereas the ‘non-white’ category represents 41 per cent (PNUD, 2010). Likewise, the indigenous people of Mexico are more likely to be poor (81 per cent) than the ‘non-indigenous’ (18 per cent) (PNUD, 2004).

As for education, the possession of a university degree is not only more useful for getting a job, but also contributes to a large extent to the structuring of social status. Only 6.7 per cent of the population hold a university degree in Mexico (INEGI, 2000), a figure that contrasts strongly with European societies (compared with 42 per cent in France, according to the INSEE).<sup>7</sup> The majority of public and private universities were created after 1930, and access to university became more and more general towards the end of the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> The growing ascendancy of the United States meant a strong North American influence on the Mexican educational system which, until that point, had been dominated by the European model. The massification of public universities since 1970 (Muñoz, 2001) resulted in the rise of private institutions that, despite solid public investment in education (5.4 per cent of the GIP), capture a third of the country’s university population (ANUIES, 2004).

Thus the economic elites of Mexico tend to look to North American culture for distinctive cultural forms that would better correspond to their social aspirations (Camp, 2002), while the Mexican cultural elites are still being seduced by the European tradition and its forms of artistic, intellectual and political expression (Lemperrière, 1992). The geographic proximity with the United States is a factor that explains its influence and makes Mexico a privileged market for its cultural products. In 2003, Mexico, thanks to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), signed in 1994, is the fourth recipient of US exports of cultural goods and services (UNESCO, 2005). The influence of the United States has created divergent ways

of perceiving the cultural exchange. Some researchers consider that this can put the Mexican identity at risk, if the economic imperatives exceed the social ones (Sánchez, 1995); others think that the interactions generate 'hybrid cultures', produced by their capacity to adapt to the new transnational configurations (García Canclini, 1997).<sup>9</sup>

As regards economic inequality and its impact on access to culture, income distribution in Mexico historically has been asymmetric. In the decade of the 2000s, only 1.7 per cent of the population belonged to the 'upper class', 59 per cent to the 'lower class', and 39 per cent to the 'middle class' (INEGI, 2013a). Three-quarters of the middle class live in an urban environment. In other words, the majority of the people living in the rural areas belong to low-income groups that generally have a low level of education. Moreover, the cultural infrastructure is notably more significant in urban than in rural areas (Oropeza, 2003). More than half the population of the country live in poverty (of whom half live in conditions of multidimensional poverty<sup>10</sup>). Their global capital volume is weak, explained by the fact that having very little leisure time and a low income makes access to culture prohibitively difficult (or secondary after key priorities such as food, health and housing).

According to the Regional Human Development Report of the PNUD, Latin America is, irrespective of the reduction in inequalities recorded over the past few decades, the most unequal region in the world. Inequality, measured by the Gini index (54.6 in 2000), is widespread and persistent (PNUD, 2010: 26). The income of the wealthiest decile in Mexico is 27 times more than that of the poorest decile (by contrast with the average of OECD countries, which is only nine times more). Social expenditure in Mexico is the lowest of the OECD countries (OECD, 2010).<sup>11</sup> Income inequality is even higher if we add in the variable of gender. Purchasing power parity (PPP) is almost 3 to 1; men earn three times more than women. All these factors explain why Mexico is number 53 in the IDH world ranking in the year when the Conaculta survey was applied (PNUD, 2004).

## Data and methodology

The survey was carried out using a representative sampling of the population, in which the information from the *Encuesta Nacional de Prácticas y Consumos Culturales* (2004) was employed as a reference population. The base sample is 4400 individuals of 15 years and older. The questionnaire used included 153 questions and was conducted in December 2003 by a private firm (Mitosfsky Consultants) in 27 of the 31 states of the Mexican Republic.<sup>12</sup> The sampling plan includes, apart from cultural practices, socio-demographic variables (region, size of cities) and socioeconomic variables (sex, age, level of education and family income). The questionnaire responds to the same institutional logic that aims to measure the impact of public policies (Flores, 2004: 185).

In this vein, the survey lacks socio-professional variables, information that is particularly relevant as it would let us reconstruct more efficiently the social classes and the distribution of the different types of capital (a fundamental aspect for understanding the relationship between the aesthetic dispositions and social conditions of

existence). The structure of the questionnaire suggests that the original objective was to measure the intensity of cultural consumption and not so much the system of cultural preferences according to social properties.

In order to be able to interpret the different questions in the survey, we systematically recoded most of the variables used in the MCA to obtain a more balanced distribution of their modalities. We carried out the recoding of answered questions in order of importance using the first option. We took the other options when the frequency of the modality was under 3 per cent. We regrouped the variables with a limited number of effectives into a new modality called 'junk' (cf. Figure 16.2).

To construct the space of cultural practices in Mexico we used 26 questions, which were grouped into six topics: television, films, music, reading, radio and leisure. These questions generated 105 modalities, 14 of which were considered to be passive modalities, thus we kept 91 active modalities. The modalities considered to be passive are those with a frequency of less than 4.5 per cent, and those regrouping the modalities 'no answer', 'no purpose' and 'doesn't know'. Modalities associated with questions that had a filter were also coded as passive.<sup>13</sup>

As for individuals, 233 were eliminated from the base for the MCA because of a significant number of 'no answers'. The individuals excluded from the analysis, due to similar response patterns, tend to be concentrated in the same region of the space.<sup>14</sup> The selection of variables and their recoding respond to two prerogatives. The first seeks to obtain information that conveys the distinction between cultural taste and participation. The second covers a preliminary treatment of this information in order to obtain a better distribution of said information.

## Comprehensive interpretation of the axes

The contribution of the six items to the variance, on which basis we selected the questions for the MCA, is similar enough (see Table 16.1), meaning that there are a balanced number of modalities for each item being studied. The eigenvalue of the total variance corresponds to 2.5575. The contributions of the first three axes ( $\lambda_1 = 0.1962$ ;  $\lambda_2 = 0.0823$ ;  $\lambda_3 = 0.0684$ ) are much higher than those of the following two ( $\lambda_4 = 0.0561$ ;  $\lambda_5 = 0.0529$ ). As for the fourth axis, the difference between the eigenvalues is relatively low, which is why we shall just interpret the first three axes

*Table 16.1* Total contribution of the six items of the first three axes to the variance

<i>Items</i>	<i>Total contribution to variance (%)</i>	<i>Contribution to axis 1 (%)</i>	<i>Contribution to axis 2 (%)</i>	<i>Contribution to axis 3 (%)</i>
Television	15.2	15.3	20.9	25.9
Films	15.6	21.5	15.7	9.2
Music	17.5	12.1	14.8	10.5
Reading	18.3	12.4	13.7	24.6
Radio	15.2	6.3	18.4	23.7
Leisure	18.2	32.4	16.7	6.1
Total	100	100	100	100

(Le Roux and Rouanet, 2010: 51–52) which concentrate 67 per cent of the adjusted information about the space.

The variance of axis 1 is mostly explained by the weight of the items ‘leisure’ (32 per cent), ‘films’ (22 per cent) and ‘television’ (15 per cent) which add up to a total of 69 per cent. Consequently we could consider that visual arts and leisure contribute to the variance of this axis. Axis 2 gives the impression of being more balanced. However, the significant contribution of television (21 per cent), radio (18 per cent) and leisure (17 per cent) is particularly remarkable. On axis 3, the contribution of television predominates (26 per cent), closely followed by reading (25 per cent) and radio (24 per cent). The variables leisure and films contribute to a lesser extent to the formation of this axis (6 and 9 per cent, respectively).

### **Cultural practices and preferences of Mexicans**

For the interpretation of axis 1, we selected the modalities whose contribution is above the average ( $100/91 = 1.09$  per cent): 37 categories (over 91) have been selected according to this criterion, which contribute to 89 per cent of the variance of axis 1. This high percentage clearly reflects the contrasts and allows us to interpret this axis (see Figure 16.1).

On the left we find a dozen categories that represent ‘non-participation’ in a great number of practices. These modalities characterise those individuals who have never visited an archaeological site or a museum, have not gone to an arts centre, a cultural centre or a theatre; have not read a book in the past year, are not in the habit of reading magazines; some have never or hardly ever been to a cinema. However, they usually watch soap operas on the television, but hardly ever watch cultural programs. As for music, they are not in the habit of listening to recorded music and never go to a live concert. In their leisure time, they prefer to meet with relatives or friends.

On the right side we can observe some twenty modalities that contrast with the above and relate to the intensity of cultural participation of the individuals in a variety of activities, such as going to the cinema more than once a month, frequently watching ‘art films’; going to events in cultural centres, arts centres or the theatre. The last time they went to a musical event was less than a year ago and when they did, it was in an auditorium or a concert hall. They regularly use the computer, often watch videos on television, and perform artistic activities such as writing or singing. In the quadrant on the right we also find modalities that describe taste such as, for example, watching either cultural programs or documentaries on television. In their leisure time, they also frequent archaeological sites, museums and cinemas (where they watch Hollywood movies) that they often choose from the entertainment guide. They listen regularly to the radio in the car, tuning in to cultural radio stations, and they like rock or classical music. They often read scientific or technical books as well as scientific journals and computer magazines, and devote a little of their leisure time to video games. To summarise, axis 1 could be interpreted as that which is structured as a function of the global capital volume.

Unlike the first axis, which is mainly made up of modalities that convey the intensity of cultural practices, the second axis consists of modalities that chart the



that represent preferences for parties, concerts, films and video games contrasted with the modalities about artistic expressions, visits to cultural centres, but also to those such as going to the countryside and shopping. As for music, in the top part we find modalities such as the preference for ‘grupera’<sup>15</sup>, ‘tropical’<sup>16</sup> and rock music contrasted with ‘classical music’ and ‘boleros’. We observe a contrast between musical genres and the use of the body: the first preference is more practical and implies the use of the body (dance music); the second, on the contrary, is more abstract and involves ‘contemplative listening’. The item ‘films’ also contrasts preferences for action, suspense and terror (generally Hollywood films) with a predilection for *auteur* films (frequently European and sometimes Latin American) and cinematographic genres such as drama or historical movies. The second axis opposes a set of distinctive characteristics of taste that could well be defined as typical of ‘popular’ culture (the top part) and ‘classical or traditional’ culture (the bottom part).

The third axis also generates a series of contrasts between the modalities that make it possible to appreciate differences in taste (see Figure 16.2). In the top part we find

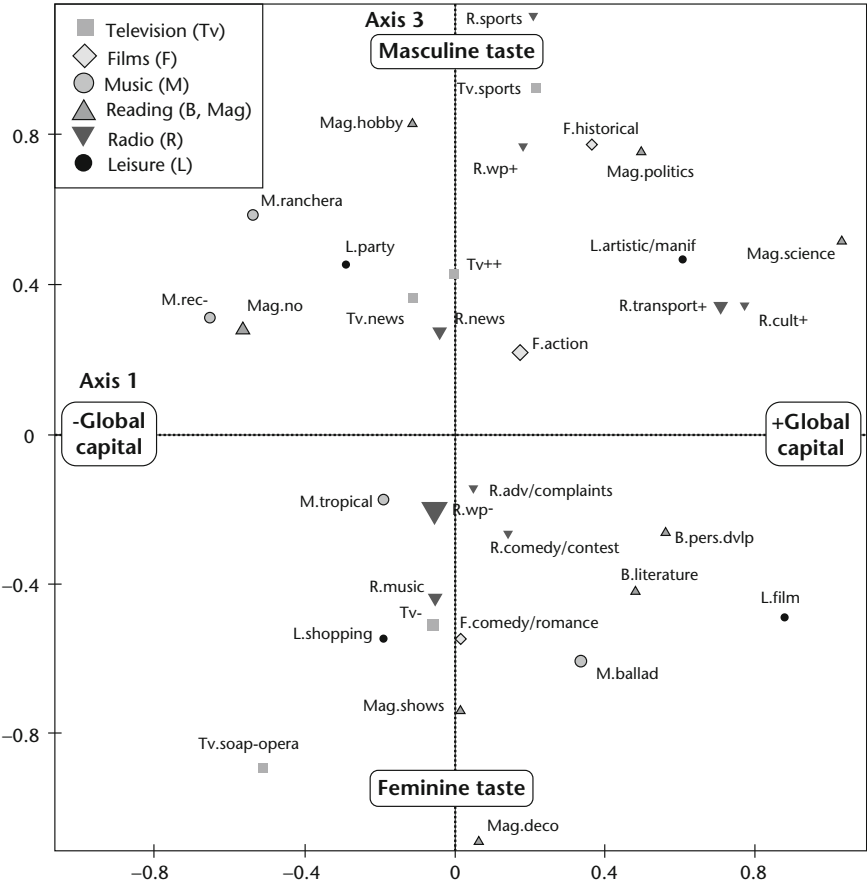


Figure 16.2 Cloud of the 31 main modalities contributing to axis 3 (plane 1–3).



modalities such as listening, usually in the workplace or while travelling in the car, to sports and cultural programs, as well as the news, on the radio. Reading is concentrated on sports magazines, comics and puzzle magazines, but also on magazines that talk about politics and science. The preferred music ranges from ‘*rancheras*’<sup>17</sup> to rock. In their leisure time they prefer to go to artistic events, although there is also a perceptible preference for going to parties. Their preferred television programs are sports and news programs.

In the bottom part of the third axis we can distinguish modalities that indicate a different taste. As regards reading, we observe a preference for magazines on hand-crafts, decoration, cooking, health, beauty and show business, but we also observe an interest in literature (although self-help books,<sup>18</sup> which are not very literary, are not very far behind). We also find the modalities that represent individuals who tend to watch very little television, except for soap operas. The programs they prefer to listen to on the radio are music and comedy, as well as programs for ‘advice and complaints’. Among their preferred musical genres are tropical music, ballads and romantic music. In their leisure time they prefer to go to a film or shopping. To summarise, we can observe that gender is the main distinction on this axis, in other words this axis illustrates the contrast between the modalities that represent male and female practices.

### Socio-demographic variables in the cultural space

By superimposing the socio-demographic variables (age, level of education, family income and gender) on the space as supplementary information—in other words, without having them contribute to the construction of the space—we observe that they corroborate the above descriptions (see Figures 16.3 and 16.4). If we return to the analysis of the first axis, we observe that the distinction we noted earlier—between volume of capital—confirms the aforementioned contrast. To the far left of Figure 16.3, we find a concentration of individuals who did not finish primary school, who are very often people on a low income and over 65 years of age. On the opposite side, we find individuals who, on the contrary, enjoy more substantial incomes and confirm a concentration of people with university degrees or who are still enrolled in university. This validates the contrast between the social groups according to the volume of cultural capital they have. Note that the acquired cultural capital (degrees in the educational system) and economic capital (economic resources) go in the same direction in the social space. This suggests that, in a country with strong economic inequalities, cultural practices are structurally interlaced with economic and cultural capital.

The second axis—characterised by the distinction between popular cultural practices and classical or traditional cultural practices—is structured according to the age of individuals. Thus popular practices are over-represented among young people (15–17 years of age), while practices considered to be more classical correspond to the seniors (≥65 years). The third axis evidences a significant contrast among the cultural preferences of men (in the top part) and women (in the bottom part). This contrast can be attributed to reasons of social inequality: the majority of women are in the ‘economically inactive’ category.<sup>19</sup> The rate of employment for men is 83 per cent, whereas it is 40 per cent for women (INEGI, 2000).

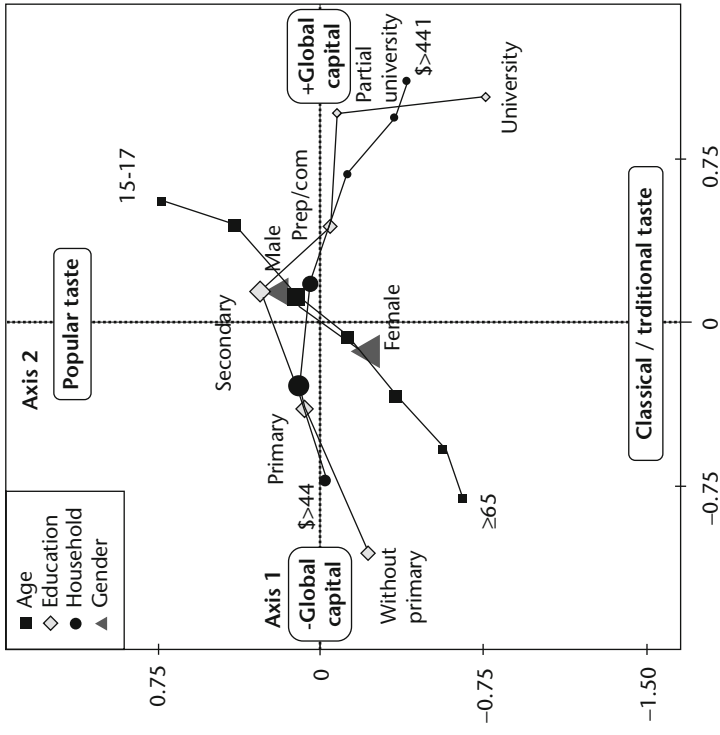


Figure 16.3 Age, education, household and gender clouds in axes 1 and 2

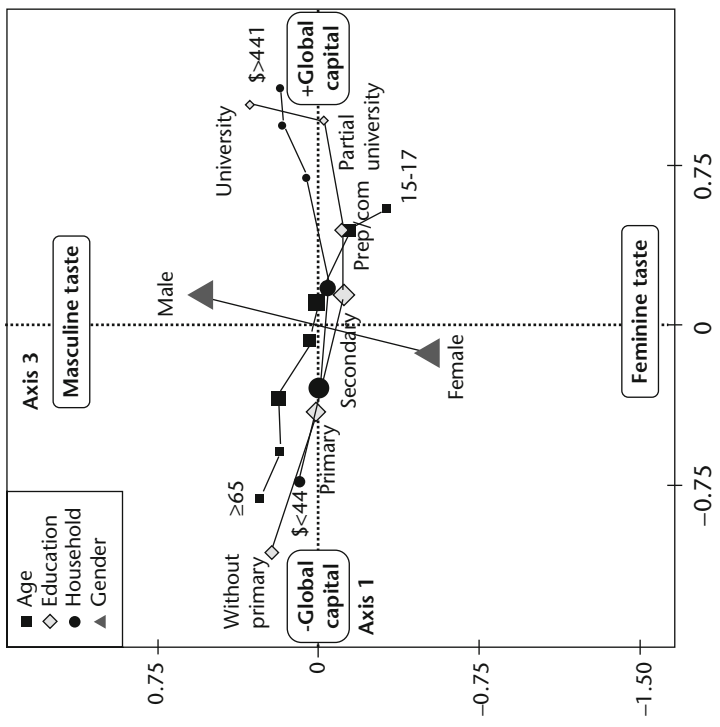


Figure 16.4 Age, education, household and gender clouds in axes 1 and 3

This inequality in access to work reinforces the differences in cultural activities between genders. However, this contrast is more significant if we consider the ages of the respondents. The younger the individuals are, the more the sex variable tends to be an element that is sufficiently differentiated in respect to cultural practices and tastes (see Figure 16.5). If we consider axes 2 and 3, we find an even greater difference among young people according to their sex ( $d = 1.41$ ) than among the senior citizens ( $d = 0.68$ ).

In Figure 16.6 we can observe that the age of the individuals surveyed has a clear effect on cultural practices in general. However, evolution tends to be even more differentiated as a function of the level of income of individuals. In fact, higher-income social groups are characterised by greater cultural activity. But their preferences and tastes seem to evolve in the social space, going from relatively 'popular' practices for young people to 'classical' practices for the older generation. While the lower-income groups as a whole present a lower rate of cultural activity, they are, however, relatively active as far as popular practices are concerned. In other words, the intensity of cultural practices is proportional to the level of income. But as people advance in age, we can appreciate sharp variations in the aesthetic preferences of the different social classes.

Cultural practices tend to be more homogeneous among young people than among people over 65, irrespective of the level of income. This difference could be explained by the fact that being released from economic imperatives by their status as students, young people benefit from conditions that allow them to devote more time to cultural activities. Following the same reasoning, we were also able to observe that the distance that separates young people between 15–17 and 18–24 years of age with a lower family income (income of less than \$44 pesos a day) is much more significant than in the other social groups. This could be explained by the fact that by belonging to low-income groups they do not stay in the educational system or prematurely enter the world of work, which radically reduces the amount of time devoted to cultural activities. For example, among the students, only 10 per cent of the people who declare a family income that is less than or equal to \$44 pesos a day are enrolled in university, while the proportion reaches 53 per cent in the case of students belonging to families with incomes of more than \$309 pesos a day. If we take the population as a whole, only 1.4 per cent of the individuals with family incomes of less than or equal to \$44 pesos a day were enrolled in a university program, while this proportion is 17 times higher (24.3 per cent) in families with incomes higher than \$309 pesos a day, a fact that coincides with the information from INEGI (2005: 89), according to which the highest decile of Mexican society spends six times more on cultural goods and services than the lowest decile. Therefore empirical evidence suggests a strong correlation between the level of education and family income, as testified by the contrasts observed in the space of cultural practices of Mexicans.

### **Social class division and cultural practices**

The structure of the space of cultural practices of Mexicans suggests a homology with the social classes according to the model outlined by Bourdieu. Cultural preferences

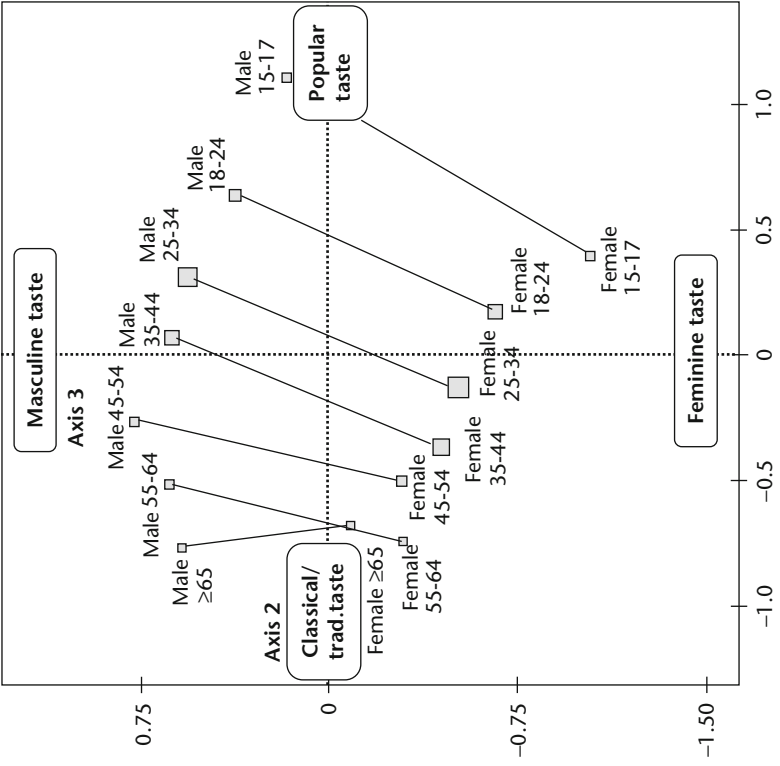


Figure 16.5 Relationship between age and sex in planes 2-3

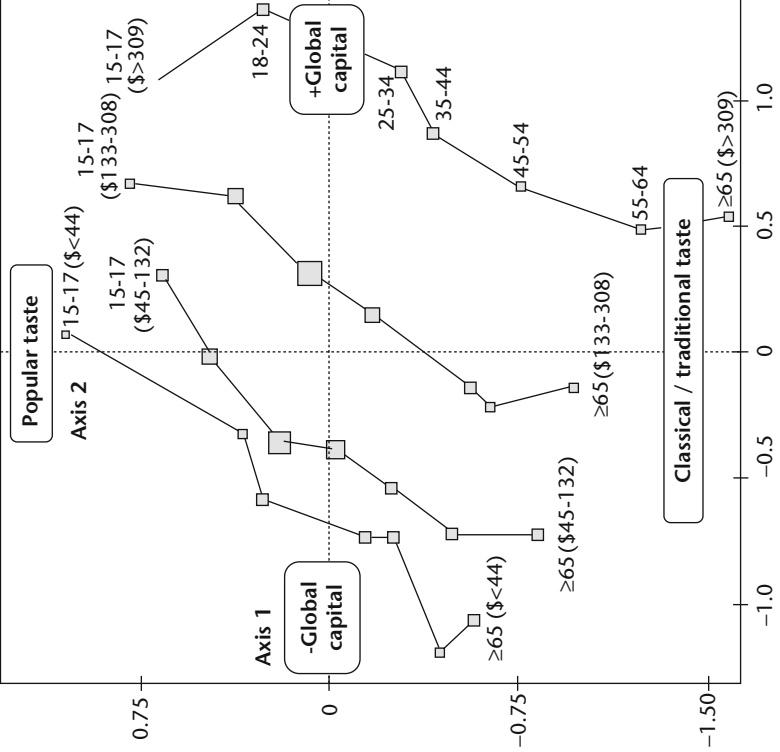


Figure 16.6 Relationship between age and income in planes 1-2

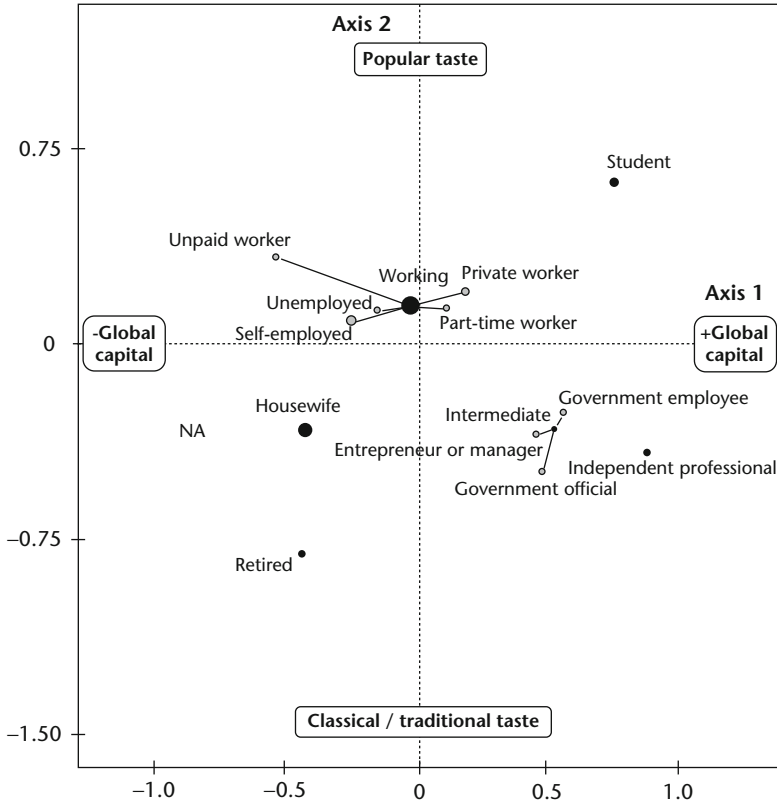


Figure 16.7 Distribution of the types of occupation on axes 1 and 2

have a particularly significant power of classification in a developing country. However, the first difficulty we faced in this contribution was the lack of adequately efficient variables for the occupations that would let us organise the population into social classes. The ‘occupation’ variable proves a relatively useful element to conceive a classification of groups according to social class, although it is a rather imprecise tool with which to do so. As Louis Pinto points out, the variable ‘occupation’ enjoys a key place in the majority of sociological studies because it is the most complete variable despite its imperfections: on one hand, it systematically crystallises the relationships with other variables (income, educational level, etc.), and on the other it defines with sufficient scope the social space of possible structural configurations (matrimonial and educational strategies, cultural preferences, etc.) (Pinto, 2009).

Consequently, we decided to employ a variable used in the survey (occupation) that, to a large extent, restores the type of work and the status of the worker. Despite being a variable that is very basic in its composition, the economic activity status allows us to regroup categories in order to define in a certain way the social groups according to their relationship with labour.

From the 12 categories proposed in the survey for measurement of individuals' occupations, we can formulate a first differentiation between the different groups: the 'economically inactive' (43 per cent) and the 'economically active' (57 per cent). The first group (students, 13 per cent; housewives, 26 per cent; retired people, 3.4 per cent) cannot be classified according to social class: there are no questions about the activity of the head of the household in the survey. That is why we decided to organise the second group into three classes (*professional*, 2 per cent; *intermediate*, 7 per cent; *working*, 47 per cent).

In Figure 16.8, we can observe the concentration ellipses for the social classes established in the cloud of individuals. The position of the barycentre for each class reveals a more significant distribution on the first axis. The *working class* is thus contrasted with the *professional class*, and the *intermediate class* occupies a position between the two. We can conclude—not without certain reservations—that in Mexico, the class division coincides with the segmentation of tastes and cultural practices. The latter structurally contribute to the composition of the social classes, as has been demonstrated in other countries (Le Roux *et al.*, 2008; Bennett *et al.*, 2009).

On the other hand, the groups of individuals within the 'economically inactive' category are distributed between the first and second axes, with a more significant contrast between the *students* and the *retired*, which corroborates the distinction of the second axis (classical/traditional taste versus popular taste). To summarise, the students and the professionals are the groups with a greater volume of cultural capital, but are differentiated by their cultural preferences. The former opt for more popular practices, the latter for more classical repertoires, which can be explained by the differentiation of ages: as people get older, their cultural demands shift accordingly. However, other generational effects could explain this difference: the first concerns the considerable rise in the university population, which has tripled over the past three decades; the second is the appearance on the scene of the new communication technologies in the differentiation of the use of leisure time between generations (frequency of use of the computer, time devoted to video games, etc.); and finally, the free trade agreements signed over the past 20 years with the United States, which have completely opened up the borders of the cultural industries.

The *working class* occupies a central position in the space of the practices and is characterised by an 'average' taste. Being relatively excluded from the higher education system, this class inclines towards forms of cultural expression that do not require a significant intellectual investment. They prefer to read comics and puzzle magazines and to watch sports programs on television, while their musical tastes are for Mexican popular music: *rancheras* and *gruperas*. Housewives and retired people appear to be a little more excluded, the former with a preference for shows and soap operas, and the latter with a slight trend towards some forms of classical or traditional cultural expressions: reading religious books, listening to *boleros*, etc.

The results obtained in the MCA are not strictly the same as those of *Distinction*. However, it cannot be denied that the space of cultural practices is homologous to the social space, as the first axis reproduces a differentiation of the cultural practices

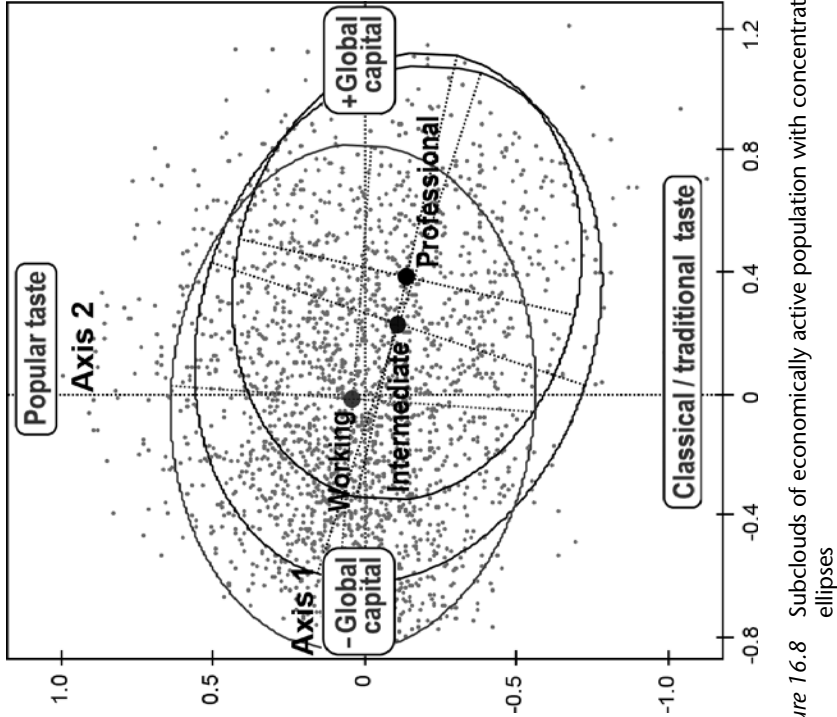


Figure 16.8 Subclouds of economically active population with concentration ellipses

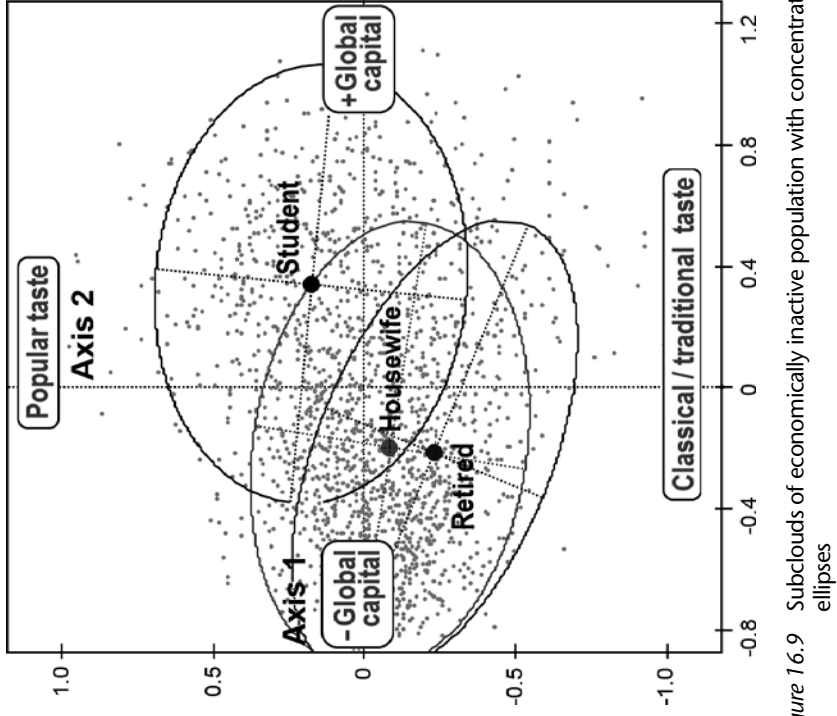


Figure 16.9 Subclouds of economically inactive population with concentration ellipses

according to the global volume of capital of Mexicans. The successive axes do not categorically show the contrast between economic capital and cultural capital, but indicate other factors structuring the differentiation in consumption, such as age and sex. The above phenomenon is similar to that observed in countries like the United Kingdom (Bennett *et al.*, 2009) and Australia (Bennett *et al.*, 2013). Both empirical and methodological aspects can explain this fact. Regarding the empirical reasons, age plays a role in differentiation that tends to be considered as a generational effect: the use of new communication technologies, the rise in the university population and the trade agreements have considerably increased the exchange of cultural goods and services over the past two decades. On the other hand, sex reveals differences in cultural consumption as an effect of structural inequalities between genders, considering that gender inequality is higher in Mexican society than in Western countries. As for the methodological reasons, Bourdieu does not apply the MCAs to the entire population of France, but rather uses one MCA for the upper class and another for the middle class (Bourdieu, 1979: 588). This methodological choice allows him to reduce the effect of variables that cut across social classes (such as age and sex), highlighting the structural characteristics that differentiate fractions at the heart of each class. Social stratification is thus the starting point of Bourdieu's use of the MCA statistical method in *Distinction*.<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

It was not our intention initially to faithfully apply Bourdieu's parameters to construct a space of cultural practices in Mexico: our analysis is based on a representative sample of the Mexican population, whereas in the data employed in *Distinction*, the upper and middle classes are over-represented, as mentioned above. Moreover, the Conaculta survey, as it was designed, presents certain limitations for a more profound sociological analysis and to test the difference in capital structure, such as the absence of socio-professional variables, and a lack of information more accurately reflecting the polarisation of tastes within classes, such as food, religion, fashion, political orientation, type of (private/public) education, etc.. However, the results of this research suggest that our initial hypothesis—that there is a structural homology between the space of social positions and the space of lifestyles—is confirmed in Mexico. If the conclusions of *Distinction* cannot necessarily be extrapolated to other national contexts without prior adjustments, there is nothing to prevent the method—adapted to the available information and the specificity of other countries—from being put into practice in order to highlight the social and symbolic logics that lie behind cultural consumption. Its application to the case of Mexico reveals that cultural practices and tastes respond to social mechanisms that constitute an element of distinction.

Furthermore, the 'omnivore–univore' thesis (Peterson, 1992) does not appear to be valid for certain categories. In 2000, 9.5 per cent of the Mexican population were illiterate and 18 per cent of the respondents declared that they had never been to the cinema (of whom 12 per cent never watched television). In consequence, could we categorise them as 'nullivores' as far as literary or cinematographic taste



Table 16.2 Contribution of the active categories

Labels of variables and modalities	Variables and modalities	%	Contribution axis 1	Contribution axis 2	Contribution axis 3
<b>TELEVISION (4 questions. 14 active modalities)</b>					
<b>TV frequency      How many hours do you watch TV per day?</b>					
Tv++	Less than 2 hours	23.50	0.00	2.50	2.39
Tv+	Between 2 and 4 hours	49.40	0.01	0.06	0.16
Tv-	More than 4 hours	27.10	0.02	1.29	3.96
<b>TV taste      What kind of programs do you prefer?</b>					
Tv.no (p)	Don't watch TV	2.60	-	-	-
Tv.comedy	Comedy	7.40	0.00	1.25	0.01
Tv.cult/doc	Cultural or documentary	9.70	1.90	3.88	0.13
Tv.sports	Sport	12.60	0.12	3.99	6.07
Tv.news	News	23.70	0.06	1.65	1.75
Tv.film.int	International films	9.80	0.10	0.85	0.12
Tv.film.nat	National films	6.70	0.17	0.01	0.00
Tv.soap-opera	Soap-opera	22.40	1.12	0.00	10.07
Tv.junk (p)	Other programs	5.20	-	-	-
<b>TV cultural channel      Do you watch any cultural channel?</b>					
Tv.cult+	Yes	28.80	4.30	2.86	0.13
Tv.cult-	No	71.20	1.74	1.16	0.05
<b>TV video      How often do you watch videos?</b>					
Tv.video+	At least once a week	57.50	2.46	0.57	0.44
Tv.video-	Less frequently or never	42.50	3.34	0.77	0.60
<b>FILM (5 questions. 15 active modalities)</b>					
<b>Film frequency      Generally speaking, how many times a month do you go to the cinema?</b>					
Film-	Never had been or at least once a month	64.20	2.35	0.93	0.33
Film+	At least once a month	20.00	1.18	0.39	0.44
Film++	More than once a month	15.90	3.48	1.53	0.17
<b>National film      Among the films you saw this year, most were Mexican or American?</b>					
F.mex	Mexican	25.10	0.18	1.57	0.00
F.usa	American	51.30	1.79	1.24	0.16
F.junk (p)	From other countries, don't know, no answer	23.60	-	-	-
<b>Film taste      What kind of films do you prefer?</b>					
F.action	Action	37.70	0.23	2.96	1.01
F.comedy/romance	Comedy or romance	22.90	0.00	0.68	3.87
F.drama	Drama	8.30	0.18	1.52	0.00
F.historical	Historical	5.60	0.15	2.79	1.89
F.susp/terror	Suspense or terror	9.50	0.17	0.08	0.36
F.no (p)	Never been to the cinema	14.00	-	-	-
F.junk (p)	Other films	2.00	-	-	-

(Continued)

Table 16.2 Contribution of the active categories (Continued)

Labels of variables and modalities	Variables and modalities	%	Contribution axis 1	Contribution axis 2	Contribution axis 3
<b>Film art</b>					
<b>How often do you see art films?</b>					
F.art++	Very frequently or regularly	14.30	3.02	1.40	0.35
F.art+	Rarely	30.30	1.30	0.03	0.48
F.art-	Never	55.40	2.99	0.52	0.04
<b>Film billboard</b>					
<b>When you go to the cinema, do you consult the billboard or just see what films are in the cinema?</b>					
F.billboard+	Yes	60.50	1.77	0.01	0.04
F.billboard-	No	39.50	2.72	0.02	0.06
<b>MUSIC (4 questions. 15 active modalities)</b>					
<b>Music live</b>					
<b>When did you last attend a musical concert?</b>					
<b>frequency</b>					
M.live-	Never	45.70	1.66	0.20	0.26
M.live+	Over a year ago	23.70	0.11	0.42	0.09
M.live++	Less than a year ago	30.60	1.63	1.26	0.13
<b>Music taste</b>					
<b>What kind of music do you listen to most often?</b>					
M.na (p)	No answer	18.60	-	-	-
M.ballad	Ballads, romantic, pop	25.40	0.57	0.10	5.28
M.boleros	<i>Boleros</i>	9.00	0.03	1.29	0.04
M.classical	Classical	5.10	0.61	3.82	0.26
M.grupera	<i>Grupera</i>	13.70	0.20	3.03	0.00
M.ranchera	<i>Ranchera</i>	12.70	0.71	0.00	2.42
M.rock	Rock	10.80	2.03	1.28	0.53
M.tropical	Tropical ( <i>salsa, merengue</i> )	4.30	0.03	0.08	0.08
M.junk (p)	Other music	0.30	-	-	-
<b>Music place</b>					
<b>Where do you usually go to hear musical performances?</b>					
M.auditorium	Auditorium, concert hall	23.60	2.87	0.24	0.06
M.square	Public square	18.90	0.0	0.13	0.03
M.party	<i>Ferias</i> , community party, restaurant or disco	10.10	0.01	1.74	0.29
M.no (p)	Never	45.20	-	-	-
M.junk (p)	Other	2.20	-	-	-
<b>Music recorded</b>					
<b>Are you used to listening to recorded music?</b>					
M.rec+	Yes	83.30	0.28	0.20	0.18
M.rec-	No	16.70	1.39	0.99	0.90
<b>READING (2 questions. 14 actives modalities)</b>					
<b>Book taste</b>					
<b>What kind of books did you read this year?</b>					
B.no	None	34.70	3.8	0.01	0.02
B.history	History, biography	14.10	0.87	0.03	0.01
B.scientific/tech	Scientific/technical, encyclopaedias	11.40	1.49	0.00	0.87
B.manuals (p)	Cooking, guides, manuals	4.10	-	-	-

Table 16.2 Contribution of the active categories (Continued)

<i>Labels of variables and modalities</i>	<i>Variables and modalities</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Contribution axis 1</i>	<i>Contribution axis 2</i>	<i>Contribution axis 3</i>
B.literature	Novels, poetry and stories	18.30	0.83	0.09	1.79
B.religion	Religion	4.60	0.12	1.97	0.11
B.pers.dvlp	Personal development	6.20	0.38	0.00	0.24
B.comics	Comics	6.60	0.13	3.54	0.89
<b>Magazine taste</b>	<b>What kind of magazines you usually read?</b>				
Mag.no	Never	34.40	2.14	0.77	1.58
Mag.art/cult	Social, travel, art and culture	7.10	1.03	0.83	0.28
Mag.deco	Arts and crafts, decoration, women's, cooking, health, beauty	12.10	0.01	0.56	8.01
Mag.science	Scientific-technical, computing	6.00	1.24	0.03	0.89
Mag.sports (p)	Sports	9.70	–	–	–
Mag.hobby	Comics, hobbies	5.60	0.01	4.11	2.17
Mag.politics	Politics	6.00	0.29	0.98	1.92
Mag.shows	TV shows	19.20	0.00	0.73	5.85
<b>RADIO (5 questions. 15 actives modalities)</b>					
<b>Radio frequency</b>	<b>How many hours a day do you listen to the radio?</b>				
Radio–	Never or at least 2 hours a day	37.70	0.08	1.41	0.00
Radio+	Between 2 and 4 hours a day	37.20	0.03	0.33	0.01
Radio++	More than 4 hours a day	25.10	0.02	0.57	0.02
<b>Radio cultural</b>	<b>Do you listen to a cultural broadcast?</b>				
R.cult+	Yes	16.70	1.95	3.68	1.08
R.cult–	No	83.30	0.39	0.74	0.22
<b>Radio workplace</b>	<b>Do you listen to the radio at work?</b>				
R.wp+	Yes	21.80	0.15	1.76	7.16
R.wp–	No	78.20	0.04	0.49	2.00
<b>Radio transport</b>	<b>Do you listen to the radio in the car, in the bus?</b>				
R.transport+	Yes	25.30	2.50	0.05	1.59
R.transport–	No	74.70	0.84	0.02	0.54
<b>Radio taste</b>	<b>What programs do you prefer?</b>				
R.no (p)	None	9.90	–	–	–
R.comedy/contest	Comedy, contest	4.90	0.02	0.48	0.20

(Continued)

Table 16.2 Contribution of the active categories (Continued)

Labels of variables and modalities	Variables and modalities	%	Contribution axis 1	Contribution axis 2	Contribution axis 3
R.sports	Sports	8.50	0.07	4.67	5.93
R.politics	Political discussion, interviews	7.20	0.14	0.58	0.12
R.news	News	33.40	0.01	2.12	1.34
R.adv/complaints	Advice/orientation, complaints	5.60	0.00	0.20	0.07
R.music	Music (second mention)	30.50	0.02	1.25	3.39
<b>LEISURE (6 questions. 18 active modalities)</b>					
<b>Leisure taste</b>	<b>In your leisure time, can you mention 3 of your favourite outdoor activities?</b>				
L.film	Going to the cinema	8.80	1.34	0.78	1.20
L.artistic/manif	Going to theatre presentations, dance, expositions, concerts or libraries	4.80	0.35	0.71	0.58
L.party	Going to parties, bars, billiards or canteens	8.30	0.13	2.12	0.94
L.shopping	Going shopping	7.90	0.06	0.70	1.36
L.sport	Playing sports	17.60	0.96	0.37	0.65
L.country	Going for walks in the countryside	9.90	0.15	1.29	0.19
L.fam/friends	Meeting with friends or family	25.40	1.09	0.41	0.33
L.concert	Dancing or going to a show	5.30	0.01	0.92	0.06
L.city (p)	Going to the city	3.80	–	–	–
L.junk (p)	Other	8.20	–	–	–
<b>Archaeological/museum</b>	<b>Have you ever been to an archaeological site or museum?</b>				
L.arch/museum–	No	24.50	4.26	0.58	0.12
L.arch/museum+	Yes	75.50	1.38	0.19	0.04
<b>Cultural center/theatre</b>	<b>Have you ever been to a cultural house, a cultural centre or a theatre?</b>				
L.cult.center–	Never	42.90	3.97	1.41	0.16
L.cult.center +	Little or so	57.10	2.98	1.06	0.12
<b>Artistic practice</b>	<b>How often do you practise writing or any other artistic activity?</b>				
L.art.pract–	Nothing	50.90	2.12	0.03	0.05
L.art.pract+	Little or so	49.10	2.19	0.03	0.05
<b>Computer</b>	<b>Do you use a computer?</b>				
L.compu+	Yes	31.40	6.07	0.30	0.05
L.compu–	No	68.60	2.78	0.14	0.02
<b>Video games</b>	<b>Do you play video games?</b>				
L.v.games+	Yes	13.30	2.21	4.90	0.14
L.v.games–	No	86.70	0.34	0.75	0.02

is concerned? This is perhaps where we find the limit of ‘omnivorism’. Aside from wondering, as Peterson (2004) does, if this hypothesis is applicable to societies in the developing countries, it would be relevant to find out first of all if this theory is capable of accounting for all the possible social configurations (without excluding the ones that have already been left out). On the contrary, the transferability in space and time of Bourdieu’s model is possible because it depends on its relational nature: it is not the cultural practices in themselves that produce an effect of distinction or differentiation, but rather the use that each group makes of them in respect of those of the other social groups (Sapiro, 2013).

The differentiation between cultural and economic capital—for the aforementioned methodological reasons—is not shown in a way that is sufficiently clear. However, we can also formulate the hypothesis that these two types of capital are structurally intertwined, which can be explained by the inequality of access to education and culture. Access to quality education in Mexico is, generally speaking, in direct proportion to economic resources, which might explain the strong connection between economic and cultural capital, as suggested by the growing expansion of the private education sector.

The preliminary results of this incipient research offer circumstantial evidence to prove that the specific social context of this country makes culture an important factor in social differentiation. Among the aspects that characterise Mexican society we can observe some forms of vernacular culture, linked to the construction of a national identity, that often transcend the social classes.<sup>21</sup> In this vein, while the state promotes the liberalisation of the cultural market, one can perceive, at the same time, an institutional desire to reassess the indigenous cultures. This kind of double-game policy participates in the constant redefinition of cultural legitimacy and in the reconfiguration of representations connected with Mexican national identity. Moreover, its position in the international circuit of cultural goods and services makes it more permeable to expressions and tastes that are defined as international, particularly among the more socially favoured fractions. Finally, culture continues to crystallise social relationships in their broadest sense, and its study offers nuances that help us identify the symbolic boundaries distinguishing the different groups that make up society.

## Notes

\* Translated from the Spanish by Lesley Clarke.

- 1 The responsibility for this contribution lies with each of the authors; nevertheless, this article is indebted to Julien Duval, Remi Lenoir and Brigitte Le Roux for their advice, remarks and subsequent recommendations. We would like also to thank Elsa Abou Assi, Fruela Fernández, Sophie Noël and Russel Clarke for their pertinent comments which helped us to improve the preliminary drafts of this version.
- 2 Ever since Bourdieu’s pioneer work in France (1979), numerous research projects have been carried out in other countries which have contributed certain nuances without calling into question the principle observed by Bourdieu. Of these we can mention the ones carried out in the United States (Lamont, 1992), Norway (Rosenlund, 2000), Portugal (Borges, 2005), Denmark (Prieur *et al.*, 2008), United Kingdom (Bennett *et al.*, 2009) and Australia (Bennett *et al.*, 2013). For a general discussion of the so-called *Distinction* studies, see Duval (2010).

- 3 The main studies on cultural practices in Mexico that include statistical information are, in chronological order: The *Bibliotecas públicas y conducta lectora* survey (SEP, 1988); the *El cine, la televisión y el vídeo en México* survey (García Canclini, 1994), the *Encuesta Nacionales de Juventud* (Pérez, 2000, 2005), the *Encuestas sobre el mundo estudiantil universitario* by Adrián de Garay (2001, 2004), the *Encuesta Nacional de Prácticas y Consumo Culturales* by Conaculta that we are studying here (Flores, 2004) and the *Encuesta Nacional de Lectura* by Conaculta (Ávalos *et al.*, 2006).
- 4 However, the research of Adrián de Garay (2004) about the world of the university student constitutes an exception and deserves special attention as it combines qualitative and quantitative methods. The restrictions that impede the elaboration of social class variables are not a Mexican specificity.
- 5 Embodied since the start of the twentieth century by France principally and, to a lesser extent, by England, without forgetting, obviously, the legacy of Spain.
- 6 Represented by the ancient indigenous peoples of the region (Mayans, Aztecs, Huichols, etc.).
- 7 *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques*.
- 8 University enrolment has increased from 78,000 to 2.5 million students between 1960 and 2010.
- 9 From a post-modern perspective, Néstor García Canclini suggests that cultural stratification, the consumption of symbolic goods and the legitimacy referents have fallen apart. In his opinion, this is an effect of the weight of the media and deterritorialisation (loss of geographic and social bases). Popular and elitist culture belongs to modernity, whereas, on the contrary, mass culture corresponds to post-modernity. His concept of 'hybrid culture' is a mixture of elitist, popular and mass culture (García Canclini, 1990).
- 10 Multidimensional poverty, according to the INEGI, includes three necessary dimensions for the development of the population (economic wellbeing, social rights and the territorial environment) (INEGI, 2013b).
- 11 Social expenditure, without counting the investment in education, corresponds to 7.5 per cent of the GDP in 2009, in other words a third of the average for the countries of the OECD.
- 12 This survey has 109 closed and 26 open questions, including socio-demographic information.
- 13 For example, individuals who do not go to the cinema do not answer the next question (what type of films do you prefer?).
- 14 However, we verified the correlation of the first five axes. A correlation was observed with the first axis of 0.90, second axis of 0.96, third axis of 1, fourth axis of 0.96 and the fifth axis of 0.97. In other words, the axes are relatively stable (Le Roux and Rouanet, 1998).
- 15 *Grupera* music is a genre of folklore that regroups a variety of styles, such as *cumbia*, *norteña* and *ranchera*, and is very popular in northern Mexico.
- 16 'Tropical' music corresponds to rhythmic and dance genres from the Caribbean and includes *salsa*, *merengue*, *bachata*, etc.
- 17 *Ranchera* music is a traditional genre of Mexican popular music that dates back to the Revolution and generally deals with rural life, honour, patriotism and the national conscience.
- 18 These are motivational texts to help people overcome all manner of obstacles through their own individual abilities. This category of reading tends to raise the national average, which is relatively low: the average number of books read in Mexico is 2.9 books per person a year (Ávalos *et al.*, 2006).
- 19 Within this category, 26.6 per cent are students, 46.8 per cent people devoted to domestic work (of whom 99 per cent are women), 3.2 per cent retirees, and 23.5 per cent have another type of inactivity.
- 20 This is also supported by a French tradition in the use of socio-professional variables (Desrosières, 2000).
- 21 There are, for example, some cultural expressions, in gastronomy, that come from the lower classes and yet are considered to be 'authentic' and that the Mexican elites—under certain configurations—associate with a form of social distinction (Pilcher, 2012).

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