CultureCase

The role of the family in shaping adolescent cultural engagement

This research was conducted by **Mart Willekens and John Lievens** at **Ghent University, Belgium**

Summary

This paper looked at how household structure and parental behaviour affected the cultural lives of children, specifically engagement in the visual arts, heritage or pop and rock music. While it might seem tempting to assume that engagement in pop and rock concerts (representing popular culture) would be shaped by different factors to those for art and heritage (representing highbrow culture) this paper showed that both are influenced by household structure and parental cultural engagement.

The paper used survey data from 705 Flemish households collected between 2003 and 2004

Art and heritage participation was defined as ‘visits to art museums or exhibitions; attending a classical concert, a play or a dance performance; and participating in a heritage activity’ outside of school within the last six months. Rock and pop activities were defined as ‘attending pop and rock concerts or festivals’ outside of school in the last six months.

The key factors determining engagement were: gender, education, the role of mothers and the presence of cultural goods in the household

More girls than boys participated in art and heritage, as did the more educated adolescents in the survey. These differences did not apply to attending pop and rock concerts. The education level and cultural habits of the mother shaped the

likelihood of the adolescents in the household engaging in art and heritage and pop and rock concerts. The same did not apply to the habits of the father. The presence of musical instruments increased the likelihood of participating in art and heritage and pop and rock concerts. Books and classical music CDs in the household only related to increased participation in art and heritage. A lot of multi-media devises in the home (TVs, computers, game consoles etc.) actually decreased the likelihood of engagement in both art and heritage and pop and rock concerts.

Keywords

survey **Belgium** **music** **teenagers** **heritage** **art** **families**

Title	Family (and) culture: The effect of cultural capital within the family on the cultural participation of adolescents
Author(s)	Willekens, M. & Lievens, J.
Publication date	2014
Source	Poetics, Vol 42, pp 98-113
Link	**http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2013.11.003**
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By **Culture.Case** | 5 May 2015 | **Insights into arts and culture** , **Developing new audiences in arts and culture** |

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