

Abstract

Relative Effects of Cultural and Economic Capital on Mode of Consumption : Survey Findings on Seoul Residents

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The study of consumption has recently emerged as a central concern in the sociology. The growing recognition of the significance of consumption linked the broader context of macro-social change, including expansion of capitalist commodity production. The tremendous amounts of goods and service are produced and consumed everyday to meet their own material and symbolic needs not only in western societies but also in Asian society including Japan and Korea. Now taste and consumption styles are distinct components of social inequality.

Most empirical studies of cultural capital have concentrated on the relationship between cultural capital and style of consumption. But previous studies ignore the effect of economic capital on consumption. I think both economic and cultural capital are a two resource of consumption. Accordingly I attempt compare relative effect of economic capital and cultural capital on modes of consumption, and examine role of the latter in class reproduction. Cultural capital, measured as years of education, include those of parents and respondents. and economic capital is measured as home ownership and income.

The regression models differ with respect to the size of the effect between cultural capital and economic capital in each field of consumption. Economic capital consists of main causal factors influencing the individual's choice of

clothing, food and interior. But the effect of cultural capital on mode of consumption was substantial relative to that of economic capital. People coming from higher class and better educated are more likely to prefer flavor food, stylistic clothing, ornament furniture controlling the effect of economic capital. More specifically the effect of cultural capital is larger in the choice of what kind of music, sport, leisure than what kind of clothing, food.

In order to illuminate the relative effects of cultural capital and economic capital, every class is reclassified into four in accordance with the differential distribution of two kinds of capital: the economically and culturally privileged group who has relatively more both economic and cultural capital; the economically privileged group who has more economic capital; the culturally privileged group who has more cultural capital; the economically and culturally deprived group who has relatively less both economic and cultural capital. Each group has a different combination of economic and cultural capital and thus different modes of consumption.

The most economically and culturally privileged group consists of professional/managerial class. They are more likely to adopt the different types of consumption associated with high levels of economic and cultural capital. They have high scores in style-orientation in clothing, gastronomy-orientation in food, health-orientation in food, high interest in interior. They involve outdoor activities, including golf, tennis, jogging, ski.

The most culturally privileged group is consist of white collar class. As they have a reverence for culture, they have more interest in classical music, attendance at art activity and reading literature than the economically privileged group in spite of low income. Especially they are combined with ascetic ways of life based on body-maintenance and self-preservation. They know that education plays a role of reproducing inequality and class structure from one generation to the next. As well as the economically and culturally privileged group, they put priority to children's school performance and

excessively invest in children's education in order to enter prestigious colleges. They have higher scores in attitudes giving priority to both children's school performance and to perfection of children's personality than those of the economically privileged group. The culturally privileged group has various cultural mobility strategy than economically privileged group.

The most economically privileged group consists of petit-bourgeois. In spite of above-average income, they have an aversion to many of the higher forms of culture like classical music and foreign food. But by means of their higher levels of economic capital, they are more likely to have larger size in house , car, refrigerator than the culturally privileged group. And they have higher scores in attitudes gastronomy-orientation and health-orientation to food than the culturally privileged group.

The most economically and culturally deprived group consists of labour class. They have little choice in consumption because of economic limitation. They have low scores in style-orientation to clothing, gastronomy-orientation and health orientation to food, interest in interior interest. Still more deprived of material consumption, they less participate in cultural events as concert, opera, dance performance and possess less paintings, sculpture than other three group. They have low scores in attitudes giving priority to children's school performance and perfection of children's personality.

A great increase of commodity supply has taken place in contemporary Korea in a way that creates the difference in mode of consumption between the elderly who used to suffer from poverty and hunger and the youth who live in relative affluence. The older generation in Korea has no chance to acquire cultural orientations learned early in life. In contrast with the elderly, The younger generation is first generation who socializ cultural orientations in early life. In order to explore generation gap in Korean society, the samples were each divided into two groups on the basis of respondents's age: the older generation above age 50 and the younger generation before age 50. The

parental cultural capital has a less significant effect on taste of consumption in the older generation in contrast with the younger generation. The patterns of consumption of elderly people are much more dependents of economic capital than cultural capital.

Given previous findings of the effect of cultural capital in Western society, the effect of cultural capital cannot be exaggerated in Korea as I tested for differential effect of cultural capital between the older generation and the younger generation. But this finding does not mean that there is no effect of cultural capital on consumption in Korea. Rather cultural capital is more beneficial to younger generation rather than the older.

Key Word: cultural capital. economic capital. mode of consumption, class. reproduction of class. taste. generation gap.