



## “THIS IS MUSIC!”: CULTURAL ELITISM IN BRAZIL

“ISSO QUE É MÚSICA!”: ELITISMO CULTURAL NO BRASIL

Recebido em 01.07.2021 Aprovado em 03.11.2021  
Avaliado pelo sistema double blind review  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12712/rpca.v15i3.50686>

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### Abstract

This research aimed to understand how elitist thinking takes place regarding music consumption in Brazil. Fifteen music professionals were interviewed, as they were considered individuals with high cultural capital in the subject. The results showed that, although cultural elitism in relation to music is on the way to being softened, it is still very present in Brazilian society, being strongly supported by cultural and social issues. Even if implicitly, a notion of good and bad musical taste can be observed from the (de)valuation of certain musical styles, especially by people professionally involved in the musical world.

**Keywords:** Cultural elitism. Musical taste. Social classes.

### Resumo

Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo compreender como se dá o pensamento elitista no que concerne o consumo musical no Brasil. Foram entrevistados 15 profissionais da área da música, considerados indivíduos com alto capital cultural no assunto. Os resultados apontaram que, embora esteja caminhando para uma amenização, o elitismo cultural em relação à música ainda se encontra bastante presente na sociedade brasileira, sendo fortemente sustentado por questões culturais e sociais. Ainda que de forma implícita, uma noção de bom e mau gosto musical pode ser observada a partir da (des)valorização de determinados estilos musicais, sobretudo por pessoas envolvidas profissionalmente no meio musical.

**Palavras-chave:** Elitismo cultural. Gosto musical. Classes sociais.

## Introduction

Music is part of the lives of the vast majority of human beings, whether through language and artistic, aesthetic representation, with value in itself, or in conjunction with other manifestations, such as musics that are songs, which in turn, become trails and trails that become producers of a culture and also conductors of life (Bellochio, 2016). According to Bourdieu (2007, p. 23), “music is the most spiritualist of the arts of the spirit; moreover, the love for music is a guarantee of “spirituality”, which is closely related to interiority. According to the author, music is the purest and most spiritual of the arts, and possibly the most corporeal. It is associated with states of the body and spirit, arousing ecstasy, setting it in motion, moving and placing itself beyond words, in gestures, movements and body rhythms (Bourdieu, 2007).

The preference for specific musical genres can express identity based on the association with reference groups and the exclusion of others who belong to other groups, often causing the segregation of consumers according to a series of demographic variables such as age, gender, ethnicity and social class (Abolhasani, Oakes, & Oakes, 2017). Thus, an opportunity that an individual finds to express their artistic intention is to refuse the singers loved by the popular classes (Bourdieu, 2007).

In the sociology of artistic tastes, the behavior of the upper classes is usually characterized by an inclination towards the high arts, alongside a rejection of popular arts and the products of mass culture. However, trends identified by research analyzes of cultural practices have not fully attested to such representation (Coulangeon, 2005). Although the argument that economic inequality has increased in the world in recent decades remains valid, a new dynamic has emerged. Not only have elites ceased to necessarily exhibit a taste for classical music, but classical music is also increasingly appreciated by those outside of high society (Ashwood & Bell, 2017).

Queiroz (2004) highlights that there are several musical universes in Brazil that characterize a cultural/musical context full of different meanings, uses and functions, marking the identity diversity of Brazilian culture. From the perspective of “musical worlds” within the same culture, the author deduces that we do not have a single Brazil, but “Brazils” with regard to cultural/artistic aspects.

It is undeniable that Brazil is a mixed country, musically speaking. Music emerges within the communities and reveals itself in other scenarios, representing different cultural practices. The meanings that emerge from this manifestation make up an important analysis plan for more refined studies in the field of music (Giraldi & Portéro, 2020). Research that addresses the complexity of Brazilian musical diversity is fundamental for understanding various issues related to musical plurality, not only in relation to musical products, but also to the concepts and behaviors established by music in the cultural sphere (Queiroz, 2004).

There are few studies on the theme of cultural elitism, with little information about the subjectivities of the ruling class (Ljunggren, 2017). In order to fill this gap and contribute to both academic and managerial knowledge on the subject, this research sought, through in-depth qualitative interviews with individuals with high levels of specific cultural capital in music, to understand how elitist thinking takes place regarding music consumption in Brazil.

Evidencing the importance of the subject nowadays, it is noteworthy that, recently, the theme musical prejudice came to light after the criticism of a Brazilian music producer regarding a performance in Rio de Janeiro funk rhythm made at the 2021 Grammy awards. The American singer Cardi B performed at the event with the remix of the song 'WAP' made by DJ Pedro Sampaio, from Rio de Janeiro. According to information published by Estadão (2021), on a social network, the producer referred to the song as “noise” and said he felt ashamed. Users and singers associated with funk expressed dissatisfaction with this comment, claiming that it is a prejudice thought.

## Cultural capital and musical taste

Bourdieu (1986) defended the idea that it is impossible to explain the performance of the social world without considering capital in all its forms. Therefore, cultural capital was cited as being of extreme importance, and it encompasses the knowledge, experiences, titles of nobility, educational qualifications and cultural heritage of individuals, creating a sense of collective identity that makes it possible to be in a certain social class. Cultural capital is not an absolute entity, but a relative one. Therefore, it is subject to great generational, temporal and spatial changes (Ljunggren, 2017).

According to Bourdieu (2007), there are two ways to acquire cultural capital: inheriting it from the family or acquiring it at school. The first involves all social relationships of an individual, whether with his family, friends and everyone he lives with. Each class will learn different customs, thus generating the distinction. The second way is through learning that will distinguish the individual from others who do not study or who have less knowledge. In this case, there is the guarantee of the school institution, as in the case of this study, education in music. Those who have cultural capital that is lacking in school certification can be summoned to present their proof at any time because they are identified only by what they do, without a formal statement of their capital.

The formation of musical cultural capital is influenced by previous experience in musical practice and, consequently, by family origins with regard to the transmission of cultural values, beliefs and skills. Children who belong to families more engaged in musical practice, whose relatives play, sing or compose, may be more likely to experience music in the context of regular family activities and through important socialization agents, which facilitates their identification with the musical practice (Valenzuela & Codina, 2014). The person who grows up in a family where music is not only listened to, but also practiced and, in addition, there is an early practice of some musical instrument considered noble, has the effect of producing a more familiar relationship with the music, completely distinguishing herself from someone who had access to music late. A similar situation is with regard to painting, with people who only discover it in the museum's late school atmosphere (Bourdieu, 2007).

Bourdieu (2007) states that there are two distinct varieties of the human species: a division of society between those who have pure taste and those who have barbaric taste, those who understand culture and those who do not, with art being aimed at a minority who are endowed with special gifts. Individuals who do not have good taste are given a feeling of humiliation and inferiority, being considered unworthy of the artistic sacraments. Through art, the "best" ones can recognize themselves in the middle of the vulgar.

According to Bourdieu (2007), the exhibition of musical culture is not a cultural display like any other. Musical culture, in its social definition, is something different from a simple sum of experience and knowledge, accompanied by the ability to deal with its purpose. The manifested preferences, that is, the tastes, are the practical affirmation of a difference that is inevitable. When people are forced to justify themselves, they assert themselves in a totally negative way by refusing other tastes. When it comes to taste, more than in any other topic, all determination is denial, and tastes are, above all, an aversion or intolerance to other tastes, to other people's different tastes (Bourdieu, 2007).

## Cultural Elitism

The cultural elite can be seen as something beyond its cultural consumption, seeking to more comprehensively understand their cultural identities (Ljunggren, 2017). According to the author, there are three criteria that stand out to determine who is part of the cultural elite. The first criterion indicating who the members of the cultural elite are, the second why and the third being seen in relation to how positions and power are used: (i) occupy a professional position considered "right", that is, an occupation in the field of cultural production, such as cultural producers; (ii) indicate the possession of some power, whether specific to the field or its influence, affecting the way people think about a given topic; and (iii)

how this power is used, as power alone is insufficient. The right form of participation in society is an important factor in belonging to the cultural elite, as it ends up showing who is part of the true and false cultural elite.

In their research on the cultural practices of people who occupy positions of power in British society, Warde and Bennett (2008) pointed out that the elite recognizes the value of cultural capital and that the time spent on cultural activities brings them return. However, based on their results, the authors believe that these profits are not related to a strategic issue of distinction through refined taste, but to a matter of connections, as the participation of cultural actions enables a platform on which it becomes possible the acquisition and use of share capital.

Jarness and Friedman (2017) state that upper classes go to great lengths to minimize cultural judgments in social encounters. In their study, the monitoring of self-presentation became evident, which, incorporated into the habitus of these classes, constitutes a distinct Bourdieusian “condescension strategy”. This device allows the more privileged to keep hidden feelings of cultural distinction and snobbery and convey instead dominant moral feelings of tolerance and egalitarianism. Such behavior is rarely intentional or even conscious and refers to what Bourdieu calls the “art of behaving properly”.

There is a public impression that people from the cultural elite are snobs (Ljunggren, 2017). Within the sociology of culture and consumption studies, cultural snobbery is defined as an absolute rejection of mass culture (Peterson, 1992). In this line, the snob refers to someone who does not participate in any activity considered vulgar or average (Levine, 1988), which in the case of the theme is related to the consumption of popular culture. On the contrary, it is the case of the omnivore, a person who is, at the very least, open to appreciating them all. The shift from snobbery to omnivorous appropriation suggests that intellectuals have become increasingly omnivorous over time. This fact is related to status group politics influenced by transformations in social structure, values, artistic world dynamics and generational conflicts (Peterson & Kern, 1996).

According to Ljunggren (2017), it is believed that the encirclement of the cultural elite is closing due to significant changes that have been taking place in the functioning of cultural capital. It is not what it used to be anymore. Legitimate culture was believed to be admired by the working class, but it seems to have been replaced, in many contexts, by anti-elitist sentiments that considered the exclusive taste of high culture snobbish and pretentious. At the same time, the elite is increasingly showing an eclectic taste, being cultural omnivores.

### **Cultural omnivorism: the boundaries between the intellectual and the vulgar**

The discussion about cultural omnivorism began in the 1990s with the works of Richard Peterson. Two of his works (Peterson and Simkus 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996) were determinant in the popularization of the term. In opposition to Bourdieu's idea of distinction, Peterson endeavored to demonstrate the growing interest of the middle and upper classes in popular-class cultural consumption objects. In the research cited, the authors came to the conclusion that cultural omnivorism was gradually replacing a certain elitism and intellectual snobbery present among the upper classes (Rodríguez & Heikkilä, 2011). From this new perspective, new researches have been carried out in different countries, bringing to the investigative field of cultural consumption a democratization of distinct practices that until then were considered elite, as well as support for the validation of cultural forms previously considered denigrated (Ollivier, 2008; Smith Maguire, 2018).

Conceptually, omnivores can be represented by high-status individuals who enjoy classical music at the same time as other musical genres (Peterson, 1992). In contrast, univores, still according to Peterson (1992), correspond to members of the lower classes who seek to defend their exclusive taste for popular musical genres, or those considered to be of lower status. Ollivier (2008) points out that with the development of subsequent research, the concept of omnivore has become less related to erudite cultural

forms and in its new conception it is related to the number of genres or activities that individuals prefer or practice, in other words, is more associated with a dimension of breadth of cultural consumption, than standards considered erudite, medium and inferior to cultural consumption. It is worth noting that in this new meaning the omnivore does not like everything indiscriminately, but corresponds to an openness to everything (Peterson & Kern, 1996). According to Sayer (2005), the elegant can actually be good and the common can be bad. Challenging symbolic domination does not mean denying these possibilities, but affirming that there is a growing willingness to evaluate cultural goods independently of class hierarchy, with an increase in cultural omnivorous.

According to Coulangeon (2005), stated musical preferences continue to be particularly strong indicators of social class. Music is a field where family and peer groups have considerable influence. Central to Bourdieu's sociology is the establishment of a direct link between the upper classes and a taste for the high arts. However, this idea is refuted as the increase in eclecticism in upper-class tastes is confirmed, particularly in the musical area (Coulangeon, 2005).

North and Davidson (2013) point to the possibility that variations in musical taste and purposes for listening to music may imply common emotional reactions to music among people from different economic backgrounds. The authors argue that there is a relationship between social class and musical taste - so that higher social classes are associated with high art musical styles - but the differences between social classes may extend beyond mere musical taste. Furthermore, Veenstra (2015) highlights that intellectual tastes are not necessarily deeply sophisticated or common, but rather are characterized as a result of their locations in social spaces of capitals in which social classes are potentially manifested.

## **Methodological Procedures**

In order to meet the objective of this research, that is, to understand how elitist thinking takes place regarding music consumption in Brazil, a qualitative research was carried out (Bauer & Gaskell, 2002), with a descriptive focus, due to the study contemplate a description and analysis of the information that was previously collected (Cooper & Schindler, 2003).

As a data collection procedure, the in-depth interview was used from a semi-structured script, so that the interviewer could conduct the dialogue through some predefined questions, not being restricted to them only (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009). In this line, the script used was based on papers related to the theoretical framework of this research.

Fifteen interviews were conducted with individuals inserted in the context of music, whether in teaching, performance or in both cases. Therefore, it can be inferred that respondents have high levels of inherited or acquired cultural capital. Below, in Table 1, the description of the interviewees who participated in the research is presented in a summarized form. It is worth noting that, initially, these respondents were selected due to the researchers' prior knowledge. Subsequently, to select other participants, the non-probabilistic snowball convenience sampling criterion was used, in which the research subjects indicate new possible informants with the characteristics required for the investigation (Flick, 2009).

Table 1 – Description of respondents

Nº	Gender	Age	Academic formation	Profession	Income	Region
1	M	33	Licentiate in Music	Private school teacher	From 3 to 5 salaries	SP
2	M	48	Licentiate and Master in Music; PhD student in Composition	Musician and university professor of the music course	From 9 to 12 salaries	MG
3	M	35	Licentiate in Music	Musician and music teacher	From 3 to 5 salaries	DF
4	F	29	Licentiate in Music	Music teacher	From 3 to 5 salaries	MG
5	M	35	Licentiate and Master in Music	Musician and music teacher	From 1 to 3 salaries	MG
6	M	35	Bachelor of Music and Licentiate in Music; Licentiate in Pedagogy; Master in Arts/Music; Doctorate in Education	Coordinator of EAD Degree Courses	Above 12 salaries	DF
7	M	66	Licentiate in Conducting; Master in Music; Doctorate in History	University professor of the music course	Above 12 salaries	MG
8	M	57	Bachelor of Music and Licentiate in Music	Musician	From 9 to 12 salaries	SP
9	M	34	Licentiate in Music	Musician and music teacher	From 3 to 5 salaries	MG
10	F	31	Licentiate in Music	TV audio editor	From 1 to 3 salaries	MG
11	F	28	Licentiate in Music	Musician and private music teacher	From 1 to 3 salaries	MG
12	F	27	Licentiate in Music and Bachelor of Music Therapy	Musician, vocal coach and music teacher - children's musicalization	From 1 to 3 salaries	MG
13	F	29	Bachelor of Performing Arts; Licentiate in Visual Arts	Musician	From 1 to 3 salaries	MG
14	M	45	Licentiate in Music; Master in Music; Doctorate in Social Sciences	Musician and university professor of the music course	From 7 to 9 salaries	PR
15	M	33	Licentiate in Music	Musician, music teacher and music producer	From 3 to 5 salaries	MG

Source: Authors (2021).

After the 13th interview, the researchers recognized the reaching of the saturation point (Thiry-Cherques, 2009); however, two more that were previously scheduled were conducted. The interviews took place between February and March 2021. The researchers chose to do them via virtual platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom, due to the pandemic context experienced. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed in full at a later time.

With the data collected and organized, data analysis was carried out from the content analysis using the thematic analysis technique (Bardin, 2016). Following the steps proposed by Bardin (2016), the researchers carried out the (i) pre-analysis of the transcripts; (ii) the description of the meaning arising from each element; and (iii) categorization. In addition, it was chosen the mixed analysis grid (Bardin, 2016). Thus, the categories of analysis were organized into: (i) heritage and acquisition of cultural capital, (ii) social classes and musical styles in Brazil, (iii) good and bad taste, and (iv) cultural elitism and snobbery.

## Results

This research was conducted with 15 Brazilian participants who have a background or profession in the area of music, that is, who are endowed with high musical cultural capital. If other individuals from the Brazilian population had been randomly selected, pointing out their tastes and opinions about the content of this study, there would certainly be a much greater heterogeneity than what was revealed in this

research with these interviewees. In this case, as it is a group with similar realities, striking similarities were observed in the statements presented.

## **Inheritance and acquisition of cultural capital**

As presented by Bourdieu (2007), there are two ways of acquiring cultural capital, being (i) inherited from the family or other individuals who are or were part of their social relationships or (ii) acquired through educational institutions. Thus, in this study carried out with music professionals, inherited cultural capital was strongly cited by the interviewees as the beginning of their contact with musical culture. Many parents, grandparents and other family members who enjoyed, sang or played informally, not as a profession, influenced the participants.

“This contact with music began with an influence at home. [...] This approach to music, I've always had it since the first moments of my life, right? And so, at home, my father plays, my brother plays too, so the family likes it a lot and I've been leading myself in this place, in this scenario” (Interviewee 1).

“My great-grandfather was an accordion player of congado. [...] I was returning from the congado meeting all happy and telling. My grandmother was at home and she said “oh, of course you have to be all happy and emotional. Your great-grandfather was a congado accordion player”. So, there's a very rooted foot in the congado” (Interviewee 4).

“I come from a very musical family. My grandfather is captain of the folia de reis there in my city and he is a self-taught guitarist, as well as several uncles of mine on his mother's side, my older brother is a musician, nowadays, he is the vocalist and guitarist of a band there from my city” (Interviewee 13).

“An interesting fact, my mother always sang a lot and my father played the guitar as an amateur, my grandmother was a pianist. So, there was the genetic thing on both sides. And also my 3 sisters played the guitar. So, it was an environment of music made at soirees, very informal like that. I had a sister who had a vocal group. So, I grew up a lot with music being performed live right next to me. And when I was young, my dad practically forced me to take guitar lessons. [...] He said “you will try. If you don't like it, you leave it”. And then I was upset, but he took me to class and I went and I liked it. I really enjoyed! Suddenly, at the age of 13, I already felt like a professional that I wasn't yet, but since I started there, I've never stopped studying music” (Interviewee 2).

Most interviewees have a musical culture of family influence, as can be seen in the interviewees' statements above. Individuals who belong to families more dedicated to musical practice may be more likely to continue experiencing music in their lives and propagating this action from generation to generation (Valenzuela & Codina, 2014). In addition, a person who grows up in an environment like this experiences an early practice, developing a more familiar relationship with music and distinguishing herself from other people who had access to it later. In this way, the family ends up passing different customs from generation to generation, thus being able to generate a form of distinction due to these transmitted knowledges and cultures (Bourdieu, 2007).

In addition to their family heritage, living in a music-loving environment, many of them had the opportunity to take music classes as children or teenagers. In some cases, the course was held at the subject's own will and, in others, because the parents insisted that their children take the classes to gain greater knowledge about music or improve their singing or their instrument, as pointed out in the speech of respondent 2. Thus, it was possible to notice that attention was paid to musical culture by the family, providing the child with the opportunity to delve deeper into this knowledge and expand his knowledge on the subject. In some cases, there was not a family musical heritage having examples at home, but situations where the parents supported the child in music lessons.

Some interviewees went through conservatories, which are music schools associated with traditional and conservative music education practices, which are still today a strong reference in the way in which music teaching practices are established in Brazil and in the world (Silva, 2019). An example can be seen below.

“In my family, I'm the only musician like that, and ... the first contact was a phase when everyone was wanting to learn guitar, in the group of friends. [...] And then I told my mother “Oh I want to learn the guitar”, that I already had some friends who were learning. Then she put me in class. She got a teacher in the neighborhood, then he gave me, I think, a month of classes and he said “oh you've got a way. So, I think you have to study in a conservatory”. [...] I went to study at the conservatory, and then I started to take it seriously” (Interviewee 9).

In some cases, family members also had the opportunity to study at a conservatory, as is the case with interviewee 11's father: “My father is trained in the guitar at the conservatory. My whole family is very musical, everyone likes music a lot, but he didn't even have a career in music, but he does play the guitar”.

In addition to the family influence, during adolescence, friends also had a great influence on the taste for music, awakening the desire to learn to play musical instruments and/or to sing, being an entertainment activity performed by the group. Some cases of creation of friends' bands, whether informal or for public presentation purposes, were mentioned by the survey participants, as is the case of interviewee 8: “My contact with music was that still young taste, teenager really, liking the bands, the group, liking, wanting to learn to play an instrument, wanting to set up that garage group.” Another example can be seen in the speech of the interviewee below.

“Roughly, at 13, 14 years old I really started to get involved with the band, like presenting myself, traveling with this group, which was there in the city. And from there, I was leading my life through this, right, school and music on the weekend, until I decided when I graduated, I decided to go to college. [...] [AC1] I got a place at UFOP and then I went to Ouro Preto studying Music” (Interviewee 1).

Most respondents pointed out that, due to this great contact with music in the family, with friends and in their bands, they felt that they should continue studying music by entering a college, as is the case with interviewee 1 above and interviewee 12: “I started with music when I was 10 years old. I joined this group that I work today. [...] I started to sing. [...] At 17 I was so entangled with music that I had no other way than to go to college. And then it went”. In some cases, the participants mention that their connection with music is so strong since they were younger, that they do not imagine themselves in another profession, as is the case with interviewee 10: “Oh, studying music... actually, it was because not imagining myself doing something else”.

The acquisition of cultural capital takes place through learning in educational institutions that will generate the individual's distinction in relation to those who do not have this knowledge or have it to a lesser degree. The certificate issued by the school institution is even a guarantee of this knowledge, being a formal declaration of his cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2007). Most respondents have a background in music. Only one participant, interviewee 13, does not have a background in music, and her musical cultural capital was inherited from her family during her childhood and youth. Thus, most of the interviewees have inherited and acquired musical cultural capital, as they lived from childhood with their social circles that had contact with music and acquired training in music through courses such as licentiate, bachelor's or postgraduate courses.

## Social classes and musical styles in Brazil

Most respondents believe that musical styles vary according to social class. Even stating that there may be divergent cases, they consider that, in general, there are styles that are more appreciated by upper classes and others that are more present in the experience of lower social classes, with musical preferences being strong indicators of social class (Coulangeon, 2005). Some of them comment that in the past this division of musical styles and classes was much more visible, but that today, although it still remains, it



presents itself in a lesser intensity. One of the reasons mentioned is that of respondent 1, who mentions that “I feel that there is an issue of social classes, which is also aligned with a kind of cultural result”. There is a divergent culture between these classes, especially in such a large and diverse country. An affirmation of this difference between musical styles according to social classes can be seen in the interviewee's speech below.

“I believe, I truly believe. I believe and think that one of the great vehicles of this, if not the media, is also the school, because the school is the gateway to music, it is the gateway for the teenager, for the child who listens to music at home and who sometimes lives in an equidistant neighborhood, but meets another child there. Sometimes, what we do is separate: 'look, a child who lives in the poor neighborhood, she studies in the poor neighborhood. Child who lives in the rich neighborhood, studies in the rich neighborhood'. It makes those tastes of those people from that place come together. So, I truly believe that there are songs that play more in poor neighborhoods and songs that play more in rich neighborhoods and that this has a whole connection with social class” (Interviewee 6).

The places that the individual frequents influence their musical taste. Interviewee 6 even mentions that the school is an environment that ends up being a vehicle for having a division between lower class and upper class students. Another point mentioned during the research was the racial issue, as can be seen in interviewee 8's speech: “We see it in movies, right, Americans, North Americans, ah, this one is white music, this one is black music”. In a survey in which the interviewers mentioned racial topics at no time, having this content in the responses is something that needs to be pointed out. Relating color to social class is not unrealistic since, according to IBGE data in 2016, among the poorest 10% of the Brazilian population, 78.5% are black (black or brown) and only 20, 8% white. While among the richest 10%, the situation is inverted, with 72.9% being white and only 24.8% black (Oliveira, 2018).

Respondents who stated that there was a difference between musical styles according to social class were asked to cite which styles are present in each one. In the upper classes, some styles mentioned were jazz, MPB, opera, orchestral, classical, instrumental and baroque music. This separation of styles can be seen in the speech of interviewee 10: “Ah, I think some songs, some musical styles, they are elitist like that. [...] It is placed on a pedestal as if only someone who had a super ear, a super musical knowledge could become fond of it or hear that”. Some examples of these genres can be seen below.

“This is still for a very specific audience like that, right, an upper middle class, you know? Orchestra, for example. You will attend a concert, many places still have an expensive ticket. So, I think there are styles that yes, which are still restricted to an audience like this” (Interviewee 9).

“Sometimes from the middle and lower classes, if the person is a musician, has a greater involvement with music in some way, these styles will also arrive, but for lay people, people who are not in the music field, it is very common we arrive to talk and not be able to talk about Blues, Jazz and Bossa, right, and MPB” (Interviewee 12).

“I know, like, people from higher social classes who like more sophisticated things, maybe, more classical music or even MPB, right, who is considered more like, I don't know, almost an erudite Brazilian music. It is difficult to answer this question” (Interviewee 13).

Financial issues are cited by respondent 9 as a reason for the lack of approach to these styles, characterizing a lack of access, which will be addressed with examples later in this topic. Interviewee 12 points out that these genres also reach individuals from other classes, but generally for those who have a background in music, and are not often found in the taste of others from lower classes. In the speech of interviewee 13, he says that it is a difficult question. And, yes, it is a complex question, as it is based on the opinion of the interviewees, on what they perceive, on the experiences they have already had visualizing this distinction in terms of musical taste between classes.

The styles strongly cited as appreciated by the lower classes are funk, sertanejo universitário, pagode, samba, rap and “gum songs”, which are songs that are in fashion and are produced to stay in the mind of the person who listens to it. Funk is the most mentioned among all survey participants. Interviewee

15 mentions that “you can define funk as ghetto music, right? Low class music is funk and the pagoda is also very popular. [...] It's the two that will... like, if you go to a favela, you won't hear anything else, you'll hear this”. Other examples are presented below.

“Then enters funk and enters the sertanejo universitário, right, intense with the people. Who are these people? It's the bricklayer's servant, his colleague, a bricklayer. I've already seen that, among them, they hear this a lot, they go with a pendrive to work and build a house, I'm seeing what people hear there. I don't see them listening to João Gilberto, Tom Jobim, Caetano Veloso, not at all. It's very selective about it.” (Interviewee 7).

“Certain musical styles are more present in people who have a less privileged financial situation. It's common for us to see that they have a more similar musical style, that they listen to some songs that might be part of the place where they live, the group they live with. And the same thing the other way around. I think the more elite, among many quotes, this class, the musical style becomes very similar too. And the middle class is really a middle where you get from these two extremes” (Interviewee 12).

The reality is cited by interviewee 12 as something significant for people's musical taste. Other interviewees also point out this and state that it occurs mainly in the case of lower classes because these musical styles portray the reality of that individual, thus having a greater identification. Two examples can be seen below.

“The samba enredo translates the daily life of those peripheral communities in RJ, too, right? So, like, it's kind of like they're telling a little bit of their story there” (Interviewee 1).

“Funk ends up being a song more from the periphery, because it says a lot to those who live there too, right? It speaks of that reality there in a more open way. The rap, right? So, I think, like, that some styles are related to social class, you know? For a guy who, like here in Brasília, there are neighborhoods here where people are millionaires, right? They have a lot of money. For a guy who was born there, hearing a rap that talks about the reality of the street, it doesn't make any sense to him, you know? [...] He can even hear, right? He can: "oh, I like the beat of rap, I like the style of rap", but [...] it's different from the reality of the person who is there on the periphery, living that reality every day, listening to lyrics that speaks and that portrays that reality of hers” (Interviewee 3).

The issue of access, mentioned earlier in this topic, is better explained with the following examples. They present that some choices must be made by low-income people. And this lack of access may be for financial reasons, but also for education, for the lack of coexistence. Some participants address this issue and, at different times, interviewee 11 clearly addresses this topic.

“We're talking about music, right, but it can be... think about... a general aspect of art, right, so, what is accessible or not, right? [...] How are you going to tell a person to choose between [...] buying an outfit or paying an amount to go to the theater, to go and watch instrumental music, you know?” (Interviewee 11).

“There's something kind of elitist about certain styles, right? [...] If people had musical education, sometimes they would be able to understand that high level music, right? But then, who has the education, who can study music? It's who has the money to pay, right? [...] And then... this differs from the periphery, right, which is a whole nother history right, [...] which is mass music and which arrives in general, which the 'mercens' dictate, right. So... I think so, I think this is very clear, unfortunately” (Interviewee 11).

The “mercens”, mentioned by interviewee 11, are the big businessmen who have great strength in the music media. This is even a criticism of most research participants: the fact of investing a lot in certain styles, such as the sertanejo, and distancing themselves from other styles, making them not reach everyone in mass.

Despite most interviewees agree that there is a differentiation between the musical styles present in social classes, which is something remarkable, observations should be made because class is not the only

demarcation that can be made in relation to styles, as stated by interviewee 13: “I think there are a lot of clippings. I think the class one, yes, it could be one of them, but I think it will also have a perhaps regional cut, right? But I believe so, I think so”. However, even with the observations, it is possible to see that, often, the musical style is something restrictive, as stated by interviewee 10: “I think there is a lot of stereotype. So, I think unfortunately there are these barriers of class and music.” This is in line with what Abolhasani, Oakes and Oakes (2017) state: the different preferences for musical genres can be caused by a series of variables, such as gender, age, ethnicity, social class, etc.

## Good and bad taste

Bourdieu (2007) points to a distinction in society by the elite between those who have pure taste and barbaric taste, a kind of good and bad taste, with high art being aimed at a minority that can understand this culture. Based on this, the participants of this research were asked if they believe that there is a notion of good and bad musical taste in Brazil, as well as which styles are valued and devalued. Two points were perceived about valued tastes: the valuation according to what is well regarded by society and the valuation according to what has a strong presence in the media. What is praised by society are the musical styles mentioned in the previous topic as appreciated by the upper classes, while those that are in force in the media are others, as can be seen in the interviewees' statements.

“It depends on what is valued [laughs]. If it's a consumer value, turning money, capitalism, sertanejo and funk, no doubt about it. But I think there is still an appreciation of this avant-garde music. Milton, Gilberto Gil, Caetano still survive musically in the 21st century” (Interviewee 4).

“I had a project that I taught in Cruzeiro do Sul and Rio Branco, in Acre. And [...] there was once, by the way, I failed that day. I got there and said, 'today I'm going to teach a class for the boys and I'm going to play *Águas de Março*, by Elis Regina, which everyone knows, it'll be easy to explain the rhythm'. Of my 25 students, none knew Elis Regina's *Águas de Março*. None. 'Ah, what song is this teacher?', "*Águas de Março*, man, by Elis Regina, this is Elis Regina" - I said. "Who? ". And then, on that day, I said 'it's music to show to the gringo, because here, it's really not valued” (Interviewee 6).

In the speech of interviewee 4, it is possible to clearly see the difference regarding the two types of valuation. The case of interviewee 6 can represent an example of the lack of access to this elite musical style. An interesting situation was that of interviewee 9, who expresses what he values, which is “Brazilian popular music, from the song, well, you know, by Milton... it is... since Tom Jobim. [...] These guys kind of wrote the history of Brazilian music” and what the media has been highlighting: “The sertanejo, it has one, something from the cultural industry like that, it keeps injecting a lot of money. The pagode thing... So it ends up being appreciated”, being two opposites about what he likes and what is strongly pointed out in the media. Complementing the speech of respondent 9, respondent 15 adds: “I think that no movement in the world was as strong as the sertanejo universitário”. The taste of most interviewees is focused on MPB (with 10 participants). When they mention the musical genres, they don't like, most of the testimonies are the sertanejo universitário (mentioned by 9 respondents) and funk (indicated by 6).

On the contrary, devaluation practically inverts these musical styles mentioned. As the most elite styles do not have great support from the media, they end up being considered undervalued precisely because they are not, in mass, being published in the press. Interviewee 8 speaks with regret about the devaluation of these styles, which, in his opinion, are valuable: “Ah, the devalued ones will, of course, be classical music... so, speaking for the... popularly, speaking for the... media, right, the... Brazilian instrumental music, which is very rich”. Interesting funk-related cases were mentioned at different times of the interview by respondent number 4.

“I think funk, it's on this wall. It is overvalued to generate money, but it is super devalued because it has lyrics that talk a lot about how the sexual situation of the community is very vulnerable, how vulnerable the situation of women, of black women, is, how much our country has this inequality. [...] It is being said in a very explicit way and this still bothers society a lot” (Interviewee 4).

“What makes funk good, in this current sense, is how much money it makes. Musically, it's bad because it says things that no one wants to be said that way, but it's great because it has a beat that everyone wants to dance. So like that, it's good, but it's bad. And when we think 'oh, let's compare', people who enjoy the *pancadão* hardly ever are at the Palácio das Artes watching the Philharmonic of Minas Gerais. It's bad, but I guarantee that the guys who are there at the Palácio das Artes watching the Philharmonic, if they throw a party at home, what's going to play is funk, but funk is still bad” (Interviewee 4).

Not only is funk mentioned in this situation, but also the *sertanejo*, *pagode*, *axé* and others, which are even considered appreciated by people from lower social classes. Most research participants show respect for all musical styles, however, they affirm that there is a notion of good and bad taste in relation to musical styles in Brazilian society, being clear that people with “good taste” are from the upper classes, that are socially valued, and those with bad taste, those that can often be seen being contemplated by the lower classes. According to Bourdieu (2007), to those who do not have good taste is attributed a feeling of inferiority and humiliation.

Some interviewees claim that, a few decades ago, this division of songs considered to be in good and bad taste was of greater intensity. Interviewee 5 points out that: “There's already been more, right. [...] Until a few generations ago, it was much more social than musical, I think, right, it was much more like that, like, embarrassment to listen to poor music”. He claims that it was stronger and affirms that the term “poor people's music” was enunciated in a pejorative way by people. However, at another time, when asked about playing or teaching songs that he doesn't like, he replied:

“It [the piano, his instrument] has a social thing associated with being chic, being something of a refined person, sometimes of people from a high social class and so. [...] My friends who teach guitar, having to teach something very vulgar like that, that happens very little to me like that. [...] My friends who teach guitar, they have other types of market, then they really have to play bad music” (Interviewee 5).

He implicitly makes a division between good and bad taste when he uses the expression “bad music”. In many cases, in qualitative research, respondents start by talking about others and end up pointing out their own opinion on the subject. Regarding this change in tastes, respondent 3 mentions why they have become different from decades ago:

“Like in the 80s, you had at the end of *Fantástico*, who had the money to pay, Djavan, João Bosco, you could afford a clip at the end of *Fantástico*, which has always been one of the most watched programs by the entire Brazilian population, right? These guys, at that time, they had the money, in the late 80s and early 90s, they had money to pay for a video at the end of *Fantástico* and appear there for the entire population of Brazil. So, like, then you say: 'ah, Brazilians' musical taste in the decade, in the early 90's was better than it is today'. No! I think a musical taste was sold in the early 90's that is different from the musical taste that is sold today, you know?” (Interviewee 3).

A recent event, which demarcates this distinction between tastes and prejudices with those who are considered prized by low-income, was seen at the 2021 Grammy, in line with what Bourdieu (2007) mentions about an individual having the opportunity to demonstrate their artistic pretension by refusing what is successful in the lower classes. One respondent mentioned about the subject:

“There was this Grammy episode, right, that I didn't even see, but I learned that Rick Bonadio, right, music producer from Mamonas and so. He posted talking about it, yeah... and made a mess. [...] And you see people's prejudice, right? Because he said, well, what he meant is that he thinks, it feels a pity for a country that produces so much, to be represented by music in this way and precisely because... at the time they released, precisely, an excerpt that talks of bitching and so, right? So, he said that there are so many good things that he thinks *funkeiros* had to study more, pursue more, and enhance the style. Falling on the contrary, right, losing their mind” (Interviewee 15).

Ljunggren (2017) cites three criteria to determine who is part of the cultural elite, as can be seen in the theoretical framework of this work. In this case, producer Rick Bonadio can be considered part of the musical cultural elite for the recognition he receives for his work and for the influence he has on those who admire him. In this current case, where, in the producer's post, many left their comments supporting what he said, it is possible to see the support he receives and also the existence of a great stigmatization of certain musical styles considered to be from the lower classes. However, these classes are in the majority in the country. Interviewee 15 points out: "Brazil was never beautiful the way people used to say it, right? Anyone who comes to Brazil listening to Tom Jobim is lost [laughs]". This shows that the reality of the majority is quite different from what is portrayed in the lyrics of musical genres considered to be from the upper classes.

## Cultural elitism and snobbery

Cultural elitism was the final agenda of the interview, in order not to influence the participants to modify their answers. Thus, they were asked if they believe there are arrogant or even snobby people, considering themselves more cultured or superior because their musical taste is more valued than that of other people. All interviewees fully agree with this idea, claiming it exists in mass in Brazilian society, as interviewee 6 points out: "These people feel more important because they like a type of music that is decisively linked to a social class that earns more money, yes". Interviewee 2's statements point to this distinction:

"Certainly. It becomes an instrument of power, right? Knowledge is also subject to this. The person has an 'ah, I know this, I have access to this' and then they think they are superior there and almost always this is mixed with something of money, right, social like that" (Interviewee 2).

"You have to work hard to be able to have a little bit in Brazil. So it's like this, every little thing you have, you kind of stand out. [...] In Brazil not, being equal is bad. You want to be different. [...] even in this musical taste business, this happens. The person says 'I'm chic because nobody knows this here', 'I play this', 'this is European' or 'this is North American'" (Interviewee 2).

Respondents mentioned several cases they witnessed, in line with what Jarness and Friedman (2017) claim about the upper classes making no effort to minimize cultural judgments in their social encounters. One of them is that of participant number 6, who tells an experience lived while playing in a restaurant considered to be high class, where the types of music should be played for the public of the establishment were indicated. In this case and in the speech of interviewee 8, it is possible to see how people usually refer to the styles that individuals from lower classes listen to:

"Look, here you have to play these types of music, because people here come from a certain place and have money and don't like poor people's music'. [...] And I could see this clearly from them asking: 'look, it's no use playing this kind of music as soon as it's played on the radio, because people here don't like, the people here are not that'" (Interviewee 6).

"I've met people like that who feel like they're elite and like to be elite and be different. [...] So these are people who would little collaborate, I believe, for this song to be accessible to the rest of the world, right, for everyone. There are people who like it like that 'no, poor people hear that' (laughs). [...] A pedestal that he believes exists, right" (Interviewee 8).

Interviewee 8's testimony, on the other hand, shows how these individuals do not make an effort for other people to have access to this elite music, as they like this distance they have from the lower classes. Respondents point out that this is the opinion of many and that they have witnessed several cases of snobbery. Respondent number 2 states that: "It may not be exposed in public, in the post, but there at dinnertime, it does. Brazil is a serious case, right?". In addition, there is a desire on the part of certain people to be recognized as from more socially valued classes, as interviewee 12 states: "If people want to be more cultured, they will start to listen to a certain rhythm like that, a certain style, right? Because she won't be able to confess that she listens to others".

Interviewee number 8 brings some controversial terms in his speech, giving examples of cultural elitism. First, he points out the lack of interest in something healthy, mentioning the Big Brother Brazil program and insinuating that this type of content does not add value to the lives of those who watch the reality: “So we see that a Big Brother has more audience than anything else on the planet, right (laughs). So, why is there this disinterest, where we were taken to have disinterest in something healthy and that really brings some value to be added?”. In the second case, he suggests that as the Brazilian market focuses only on sales, Brazilians will never know “good music”, in addition to indicating that people who have a taste based on fads are not very rational: “So it's difficult for Brazilians to know and listen to good music from Brazil, in my opinion. [...] The great mass goes on fads, right, we are emotional, fashionists, right, not very rational”. According to Bourdieu (2007), the exhibition of musical culture is not a simple cultural display. People usually assert themselves in a totally negative way, refusing other tastes, showing aversion or intolerance.

Some interviewees, even when asked about snobbery in society in general, mention that it exists massively among music professionals: “Especially in the musical world. Musician thinks the music he listens to is the best of all, right?” (Interviewee 1). Other examples can be seen below:

“I think there's an ego issue involved, because especially when we talk about musicians, ah, I play classical music. So, I'm really badass. If you keep playing this samba, popular song, that's people who don't play, it's all easy to be played” (Interviewee 4).

“For example, the guy who plays in the orchestra, let's suppose he plays in the orchestra, he doesn't know anything about what's going on in the periphery, which is the true representation of Brasília. And when he meets a musician who plays, I don't know, in the band that serves the juvenile center I don't know what, he doesn't talk to you, doesn't even talk to you, because in his job, which is to be a musician, he earns R\$20,000, and at your job, which is to be a musician, you earn R\$1,000, but you don't mix because he plays good music for rich people and the other plays bad music for poor people. Like, this for me, in Brasília this is very clear, very clear indeed. Within the class of musicians, artists, people who work with this, it's quite clear” (Interviewee 6).

“People who think they are super important because they play classical music, for example. If you listen to another song, “for God's sake.” It's quite common, actually. [...] The folks from popular music, in my view, it's more like this feud with what's in fashion. [...] But for the classical music people, everything that is not classical, for them it isn't... people think it is superior, yes, I believe a lot in that (Interviewee 10).

Despite the fact that they point out this great feeling of snobbery in the music world, most interviewees demonstrate in their speech a great respect for the taste of others, as can be seen below. A current case, which spread on the internet, was remembered by respondent number 3.

“A musician more, let's say, boring, the guy says: No, Marília Mendonça sucks, no, too bad, man! But if you listen to it and that song touches you, oh yeah, it's all right, it's beautiful, it's wonderful! And that's it” (Interviewee 1).

“It makes me rethink friendship (laughs) a person who thinks that way, like that. I prefer a person who likes sertanejo and is a nice person, than a person who likes jazz, classical music, and is ‘ah, do you like that? For God's sake. This is crap’, you know? Then I think it's not like that” (Interviewee 9).

“The music you listen to doesn't make you more cultured. It can help with your formation as a whole, but she doesn't change anyone, you know? [...] Sometimes, like this, I listen to music that is elaborate, but I'm not in the habit of reading, you know? Then, sometimes the guy who listens to any music that is not so elaborate from my point of view, is a guy who reads, swallows books on various subjects, who knows how to talk about various things, where I'm more cultured than a guy like that? [...] I saw a video a few days ago of a guy who was going to take the entrance exam and recording, singing a funk, then he was super criticized: [...] “oh, singing this funk he must not even know how to make a math account”. And then this guy recorded an answer. [...] The guy participated in numerous math competitions in the country, you know? [...] Look how

ridiculous it is, like, someone belittled that guy because he's singing a funk, which is something that tells his reality, which is something that's cool for him, he likes it and it's okay, I think, you know? He doesn't owe anyone anything for that, because he likes funk and he's a cultured guy, he's a smart guy, he's a guy who goes to two colleges, man! [...] This video, for me, opened wide this vision of: 'oh, listen to funk, it's dumb'. No, nothing to do" (Interviewee 3).

The study by Jarness and Friedman (2017) shows that there is a strategy of condescension, a mechanism that allows the most privileged to keep hidden the feeling of cultural distinction and snobbery, transmitting moral feelings of tolerance and egalitarianism. This behavior is often not intentional or conscious, being, as Bourdieu put it, a way of behaving properly. This is a possibility of occurrence with some participants in this research, and it is not possible to say due to the limitation of understanding something that is in the individual's unconscious.

As Ljunggren (2017) points out, it is possible to perceive a public impression that people from the cultural elite are snobs, exercising an absolute rejection of mass culture (Pettersen, 1992) and not participating in activities considered vulgar or average (Levine, 1988), that is, from the consumption of popular culture. Unlike snobs, omnivores are people who are, at the very least, open to appreciating all styles. Some interviewees expressed the desire to be or demonstrated characteristics of a cultural omnivore when trying to listen to different styles in order to know and be able to judge whether they like it or at least to be able to be up-to-date due to their profession as a music teacher. A point highlighted by Peterson and Kern (1996) is that the omnivore is not the one who likes everything, but who has an openness to everything. As much as the idea of omnivorism is growing (Rodríguez & Heikkilä, 2011), the results of this study show that elitist thinking still seems to exist in society (at least in the view of a musical cultural elite) when it comes to musical culture.

## Final Considerations

This study was carried out with the aim of understanding cultural elitism with regard to music consumption in Brazil. It is believed that the objective was satisfactorily achieved, as it sought to analyze deeper aspects of taste manifestations, such as cultural heritage and social issues that are often implicit, despite having a strong influence on preferences of the individuals.

The results allowed to discuss how, in the interviewees' opinion, musical cultural elitism is perceived by classes that are at a high level in social hierarchies in the field of music. From the musicians' perspective, snobbery is present in Brazilian society with regard to musical taste, and they attribute different "culprits" to this behavior: Brazilian culture, media, inappropriate elite behavior. The research broadens the understanding of the theme of musical taste and adds a new perspective of analysis by approaching cultural practices that demarcate distinct characteristics between more or less favored social classes.

This research sought to contribute both to academia and the managerial field by dealing with the issue of cultural elitism. There are few studies on the subject, so there is a gap. Thus, through in-depth interviews, it was possible to know the perceptions of individuals with high musical cultural capital, identifying the elitist thinking that involves some musical genres. Currently, the theme of musical prejudice is being strongly debated in the media by several singers who work with undervalued musical styles and fight for their recognition. Thus, this research provides relevant information for the music market and for future academic research on the subject.

The limitations found for carrying out the study were due to the delicate theme. Some interviewees, initially, did not feel comfortable in accepting the prejudice that exists in relation to musical genres. However, throughout the interview, carried out in the form of a chat, seeking to make the participants comfortable when talking about the subject, they recognized the strong existence of discrimination and aversion to certain styles.

The focus of this article was the cultural elite, participants with high levels of musical cultural capital, and therefore we not aimed at understanding the other side, that of individuals with low capital. Thus, we suggest for future research a comparative study to obtain new information about what this class, which has its musical taste devalued, feels and thinks, having an understanding of how this cultural elitism is perceived. Another suggestion is to carry out a survey that seeks to understand whether cultural omnivorism is inversely proportional to cultural elitism, trying to understand whether omnivorism is growing in Brazil and whether this behavior really represents greater tolerance and less snobbery. Furthermore, it could be fruitful to carry out a study that explores the factors mentioned as causes of snobbery, such as the media and Brazilian culture.

## Acknowledgment

This article was carried out with the support of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel – Brazil (Capes).

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