

# CONCERT ATTENDANCE AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

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## Background

Concert attendance forms an important aspect of musical involvement, drawing both on resources of time and money. Furthermore, explicit or implicit norms of behaviour and mutual monitoring of visitors make concerts an important site of cognitive-emotional exchange and symbolic affirmation. Which aspects of social inequality discriminate between audiences of different types of music?

## Aims and Method

Audiences of all major musical genres in Berlin/Germany 1999 (20 concerts, N=6500) were investigated with a mainly standardized questionnaire, focussing on social inequality in terms of the recent sociological debate (“conduct of life”).

Results are presented for the following features: (1) age, (2) sex, (3) educational and professional status, (4) prime values, (5) social self-assessments. For the SES-variable, ISEI-scores are available for ANOVA and a qualitative classification of professions for correspondence analysis. For the value variable, rated “aims in life” were factorized and cases clustered over factor values to produce four types of basic orientations. Main self-assessments of different types of concert visitors are identified through logistic regressions.

## Results

The discussion of results draws additionally on results from 1979 audience research. Age is confirmed as the most important single aspect of social inequality influencing concert attendance. However, cohort- and stage-of-life-effects apply in different degrees to the various types of music. Regarding sex, mainstream Rock (Jethro Tull, REM) appeals equally to young men and women today, indicating strong female appropriation activity over the past 20 years. Deviation from equal distribution of sexes in concert audiences increases with decreasing socio-economic status. Analysis of prime values reveals that similar value structures correspond to different popular musical styles in different cohorts.

## Conclusions

Findings are discussed in light of the general theoretical concepts in social structure analysis. Styles of popular music are found to be more instrumental in communicating social difference than are styles of classical music.