Are Environmental Practices Luxury Goods?

Towards a Framework for Social Class and Environmental Practices in Everyday Life.

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“How it is in my head: The upper class does not care at all. Plane trips, bulging garbage bins, nothing recycled, lights on everywhere, doors open with the heating on. Because they do not feel it in their wallet. And poor people just do not have the resources. They may want to, but they have other concerns. If you have to make sure there is food, you are not thinking about what kind of food.”

Charlotte

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Chapter 1

General introduction

Sofie is a financial expert working for a bank. When I met her, she prepared a vegan spread with crackers for our interview. She shows me the eco-labels and ingredient lists of the products she used. Environmental eating practices are an important part of her identity. Sofie and her husband also own a second home in Turkey, which they fly to every year.

Alexei is a lifeguard who describes himself as poor. He does not believe in eco-labels and accuses them of mafia practices. They are marketing tricks to sell expensive products to rich people. At the end of the day, all products are the same. Alexei is very careful about his consumption habits because he has a strict budget. It's cold and dark in his home. He uses candles to provide extra light. His kids shower at the swimming pool where he works.

My dissertation examines the relationship between social class and environmental practices. Who among my interviewees is most 'environmental'? Sofie or Alexei? Research generally concludes that environmental practices are most common in middle and upper classes by arguing, for instance, that both environmental concern and ethical consumption are positively influenced by social class. Despite mixed evidence, research has treated environmental practices as luxury goods that depend on access to economic and cultural resources (e.g., Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Laidley, 2013b; Zorell & Yang, 2019). This makes sense when we look at Sofie's eating practices. But Alexei consumes considerably less, and does not travel by plane. Indeed, studies show that the ecological footprint of one's daily life consistently increases with income, and to a lesser extent education (Abrahamse & Steg, 2011; Boucher, 2017; Enzler & Diekmann, 2019; Kennedy, Krahn, & Krogman, 2014; Lévay et al., 2021). In addition, while drastic, Alexei's distrust of eco-labels may not be misplaced given the prevalence of greenwashing (Miller, 2017; Pierre-Louis, 2012). While research often tries to ascertain who is 'environmental' and who is not, the stories above reveal that reality is nuanced and complex. Hence, the first question in this dissertation is how various environmental practices are understood and performed in various social classes, without necessarily looking for a linear nor hierarchical difference.

Second, it is important to scrutinize who we recognize as legitimate 'environmentalists', and why. In contemporary society, the growing awareness of environmental issues has enlarged the cultural and symbolic value of environmental practices (Brooks & Wilson, 2015; Noppers et al., 2014). Consequently, studies highlight that environmental practices may provide social status by signaling moral virtues (Brick & Lai, 2018; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010; Uren, Roberts, et al., 2019). Yet, the way environmental practices are defined is often exclusionary in itself. Environmental practices generally refer to the actions undertaken by individuals to minimize their negative impact on the environment (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Preisendörfer & Diekmann, 2021). Moreover, when discussing social class differences, focus often lies with high-cost practices such as green consumerism (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014; Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnson, Tariq, & Baker, 2018). Hence, it is tempting to understand environmental practices as costly, normative choices and to discount Alexei as an 'accidental environmentalist' (Kennedy & Horne, 2020). Throughout this dissertation, I not only argue that there are multiple ways to understand and engage in environmental practices, but also that this narrow view of environmental practices inadvertently creates a social class bias by confounding environmental concern with high-cost environmental practices (Kennedy & Givens, 2019).

1.1 Research aims and approach

In this dissertation, I aim to disentangle the complex relationship between social class and environmental practices. The central argument is that environmental practices are not individual responses to environmental concerns, but rather a reflection of one's social conditions (Ford, 2019). I draw inspiration from two interrelated theoretical approaches.

First, I employ practice theory as an analytical lens. In practice theory, environmental practices themselves become the focus of inquiry (e.g., going to work, heating homes, and so on) by decentralizing individuals, their values, and (rational) choices (Hargreaves, 2011; Kasper, 2009; Shove, 2010; Spaargaren & Van Vliet, 2000). It sensitizes us to consider the embeddedness of environmental practices in encompassing material and cultural systems. Moreover, it invites us to consider the situationality and multiplicity of environmental practices. Indeed, purchasing eco-labeled products is not the same as showering less. In this research, practice theory represents a clarifying step back that underscores what people actually do, rather than why they do it.

Second, I draw inspiration from Bourdieu's (1984, p. 1) basic assertions about cultural practices such as going to the opera. He argues that cultural dispositions are mistakenly seen as natural and normative. Yet, they are learned through one's upbringing and education. Therefore, he proposes that "one cannot fully understand cultural practices unless 'culture', in the restricted, normative sense of ordinary usage, is brought back into 'culture' in the anthropological sense". Drawing an analogy with flavor preferences in food, he argues that class-based tastes underlie cultural practices. Moreover, cultural practices have symbolic properties; they serve as markers for social class. Much of Bourdieu's work is preoccupied with the valuation of certain cultural traits above others, whereby culture becomes a resource to (re)produce social class boundaries. This idea gave rise to the notion of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Correspondingly, in this dissertation, I pay attention to the cultural and symbolic dimensions of environmental practices by (re)conceptualizing these practices as cultural traits. I am less interested in the way environmental practices matter ecologically, akin to how cultural capital research is less concerned with the intrinsic value of music. My focus lies with the way environmental practices and associated dispositions are structured along the lines of social class. At the same time, this dissertation highlights the way they can play a role in social differentiation. More specifically, environmental practices can signal cultural and moral virtues (Anantharaman, 2022; Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). Even though I challenge the idea that environmental practices are luxury goods, the cultural representation of environmental practices as luxury goods can be utilized to create and maintain social class boundaries.

The aims of my dissertation can thus be summarized in one research question with two sub-questions (visualized in Figure 1):

What is the relationship between social class and environmental practices?

i. How does one's social class position influence one's engagement in various environmental practices?
ii. How do environmental practices (re)produce social class boundaries?

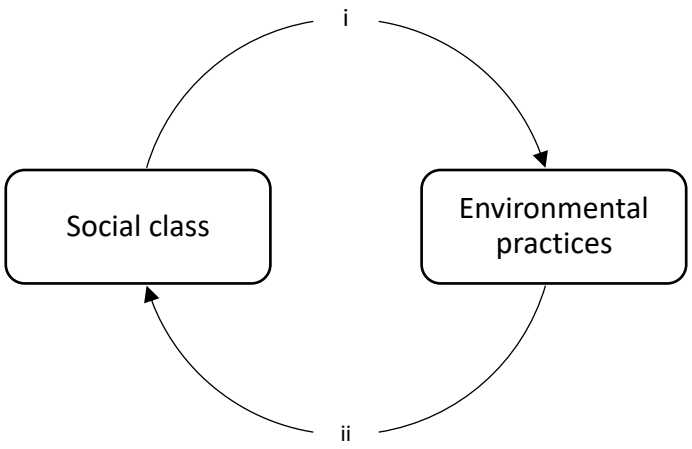

Figure 1. Research questions

Below, this chapter first describes the theoretical background of the dissertation. Afterwards, I provide more insights into the materials and methods used to answer the research questions. The empirical part of this dissertation is based on 6 chapters. These are structured in two sections, each corresponding to one sub-question. Finally, I end this dissertation with an in-depth discussion of the findings and implications of the research.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Concerns about the overconsumption of material resources can be traced back more than 2000 years (Jackson, 2014). In more recent history, modernity triggered various critical accounts of consumption but less specified to environmental issues (e.g., Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002 on mass culture; Veblen, 1899 on conspicuous consumption). More tangible and widespread sociological interest in environmental issues developed since the late 1960s and 1970s (Dunlap, 2002). This period can be characterized by a growing public awareness of and concern for the human impact on our natural environment (Kenny, 2021). Books such as *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962) and reports such as *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) were published. In addition, the birth of the contemporary environmental movement is generally associated with this period. For example, *Earth Day* was first organized in 1970. At the time, Erskine (1972) described the emerging environmental concerns as a miraculous change in public opinion. Moreover, environmental issues increasingly became part of (international) policy action (Jackson, 2014).

Accordingly, there is a large social scientific literature occupied with environmental practices, or similar notions such as *(pro-)environmental behavior* (Buttel, 1987; Preisendörfer & Diekmann, 2021) and *sustainable consumption* (Mol, Sonnenfeld, & Spaargaren, 2009), and adjacent concepts including *political* or *ethical consumption* (Boström, Micheletti, & Oosterveer, 2018; Warde, 2015) and *sustainable* or *ecological citizenship* (Dobson, 2003; Micheletti & Stolle, 2012). This is a very broad domain, where research streams have developed relatively separately. With the exception of ethical consumption research, a scan of various review articles and handbooks about environmental sociology reveals that social class often remains in the background (e.g., Bohr & Dunlap, 2018; Caniglia et al., 2021; Franzen & Mader, 2021; Gross & Heinrichs, 2010; Legun et al., 2020; Pellow & Brehm, 2013; Redclift & Woodgate, 2010). Especially sustainable consumption research, which is very much dominated by practice theory, has largely neglected social class (Anantharaman, 2018; Evans, 2018; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). In works on (pro-)environmental behavior, terms such as *inequality* or *socioeconomic status* seem to be more prevalent, which are then interpreted as social class differences. Sørensen (2000) denotes this as nominal theories of class that are useful for describing attitudes and behaviors. However, I contend that this undertheorization of social class has potentially contributed to paradoxical findings and a general murkiness surrounding the relationship between social class and environmental practices (see Lareau & Conley, 2008 for a general critique of the 'murkiness' around social class in contemporary research).

It is my aim in this dissertation to provide a more theoretical engagement with social class and its relation to environmental practices by (i) acknowledging that social classes are groups of people that live under similar life conditions and (ii) providing insights into the mechanisms behind social class differentiation (Sørensen, 2000). For readability, I will predominantly use the concept of social class below, even when describing literature that does not.

1.2.1 Environmental practices as luxury goods?

Overall, a positive relationship between social class and environmental practices is assumed, suggesting that they are most common in middle and upper classes (Carfagna et al., 2014; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Laidley, 2013b; Zorell & Yang, 2019). Indeed, numerous studies have associated environmental practices with highly educated groups that have a decent income. Especially regarding education attainment, research often finds a positive association (Callan & Thomas,

2006; Fernandes & Heller, 2006; Meyer, 2015; Monier et al., 2009; Poortinga, Steg, & Vlek, 2004; Torgler & Garcia-Valiñas, 2007). To a lesser extent, the same holds true for affluence (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Lorenzen, 2014), although the connection is less clear (Blankenberg & Alhusen, 2019). Accordingly, environmental practices are often understood as elitist (Anantharaman, 2016; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). This is apparent in notions such as yuppie chow (Guthman, 2003) or eco-chic (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). Moreover, they are described as high-status practices (Carfagna et al., 2014) and elite distinction strategies (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014).

When discussing social class differences, both research and society have - implicitly or explicitly - understood environmental practices as luxury goods that require access to economic and cultural resources (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). I contend that this impression is a consequence of the dominance of an intent-oriented approach where environmental practices are understood as ecologically oriented activities (Moser & Kleinhückelkotten, 2017; Preisendörfer & Diekmann, 2021; Stern, 2000). On the one hand, research emphasizes practices that people associate with being "ecologically sound", including recycling, driving electric vehicles, purchasing eco-friendly products, and so on (Preisendörfer & Diekmann, 2021, p. 135). Moreover, research often focuses on high-cost practices such as green consumerism (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014; Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnson, Tariq, & Baker, 2018).

On the other hand, studies tend to focus on ecological intentions. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002, p. 240), authors of the most cited paper in the domain, define environmental practices as "behavior that consciously seeks to minimize the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world." Large parts of social scientific research, including (early) sociological studies, have been heavily dominated by individualistic, psychological paradigms that focus on environmental values and individual choices (see Heiskanen & Laakso, 2019; Shove, 2010; Spaargaren, 2011 for extensive discussions). However, environmental practices are more than merely individual pro-environmental choices, but are also connected to structural factors. Sociological approaches generally highlight the embeddedness of environmental practices in a larger context (Brand, 2010; Ford, 2019; Rieger & Schor, 2021). However, the focus on values and intentions continues through concepts such as political consumption or sustainable citizenship (Dobson & Valencia, 2005; Micheletti & Stolle, 2012; Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005; Zorell & Yang, 2019). Most importantly for the current research, the literature on ethical consumption

highlights the cultural meaning of environmental practices (Adams & Raisborough, 2008; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). Yet, this literature also focuses on environmental value-orientations and consciousness, rather than actual practices (Carfagna et al., 2014).

These intent-oriented approaches lend themselves to two 'luxury good hypotheses' (Preisendörfer, 1999), namely that only privileged groups can afford to care for the environment (Franzen & Meyer, 2010) or are able to align this care with their behavior (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). These are explored in more detail below. Moreover, I identify several reasons to challenge the notion of environmental practices as luxury goods.

The postmaterialist paradigm

The relationship between social class and environmental concern is a longstanding theme in environmental sociology (Buttel, 1987; Dunlap & Catton Jr, 1979; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1980), and also the subject of chapter 2 of this dissertation. Generally, studies report that environmental concern is most common among the well-educated and affluent (Franzen & Meyer, 2010; Franzen & Vogl, 2013; Gelissen, 2007; Givens & Jorgenson, 2011; Hao, Michaels, & Bell, 2019; Kemmelmeier, Król, & Kim, 2002; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Globally, citizens of affluent nations are also seen to be most concerned about environmental issues (Pampel, 2014). Explanations are sought in access to information and knowledge (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003), but also in the fact that affluent people can 'afford' to care for the environment. Conventional wisdom holds that poor people "will naturally have a greater incentive to give priority to more goods and services than to the environment in general" (Beckerman, 1974, p. 89). This idea aligns with Inglehart's (1971) *theory of postmaterialist values,* which attained hegemonic status in the explanation of (emerging) environmental concerns in Western countries since the 1960s and 1970s (Dunlap & York, 2008; Guha & Alier, 2013). Drawing on Maslow's (1943) *hierarchy of needs,* Inglehart (1971) argued that increased affluence in industrialized societies after WOII prompted a shift from material to postmaterial values (e.g., freedom or self-expression), including environmentalism. Hence, environmental concern is conceptualized as a higher order need. Likewise, the *affluence argument* portrays environmental concern as a luxury good that only middle and upper classes can afford (Diekmann & Franzen, 1999; Franzen & Meyer, 2010).

However, there are salient critiques to the postmaterialist paradigm. Indeed, evidence for associations between social class and environmental concern has always been weak and mixed (Buttel, 1987; Dunlap & York, 2008; Fairbrother, 2013). Accordingly, the *global environmentalism theory* advocates that environmental concern has spread to disadvantaged groups and less affluent nations, not in the least because they are more dependent on the local environment and are disproportionately confronted with environmental issues (Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Dunlap & York, 2008). Moreover, environmental justice activists and scholars have illuminated the everyday experiences of environmental degradation among disadvantaged populations. Studies show that their environmental concerns are often expressed less in terms of (postmaterialist) environmentalism, but more in relation to one's immediate surroundings, and the impact of environmental issues on family, health, and quality-of-life (Burningham & Thrush, 2003; Hastings et al., 2005; Mohai & Bryant, 1998; Phoenix et al., 2017; Walker, 2020). However, these expressions are usually not reflected in conceptualizations of environmental concern devised by researchers (Bullard, 1991; Burningham & Thrush, 2003; Malin, 2015). For example, the focus on generalized and abstract environmental concern, economy-environment trade-offs, and conative elements of environmental concern (e.g., willingness-to-pay) may create an undue social class bias (Adeola, 1998; Hochschild, 2018; Klineberg, McKeever, & Rothenbach, 1998; Lo, 2016). In sum, critical scholars assert that the postmaterialism framework and associated conceptualizations of environmental concern do not allow us to account for the various ways in which environmental concern is expressed in disadvantaged groups (Guha & Alier, 2013).

Bridging the gap between environmental concern and behavior

The gap between environmental concerns and behavior has been a particularly troubling question in research on environmental practices, and is also the topic of my 3rd chapter (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Countless studies have shown that the associations between environmental concern and behavior are moderate at best (Klöckner 2013; Bamberg and Möser 2007). This well-established phenomenon has many names, among which: value-action gap, attitude-behavior gap, concern-behavior gap, intention-behavior gap, and green gap (e.g., Babutsidze & Chai, 2018; ElHaffar, Durif, & Dubé, 2020; Frank & Brock, 2018; Park & Lin, 2018; Tam & Chan, 2018). The most salient explanation highlights the behavioral costs (e.g., effort, difficulty, expensiveness, etc.) associated with environmental practices. It is hypothesized that the association between environmental concern and behavior will be strongest in low-lost situations (Diekmann &

Preisendorfer, 2003). More generally, a distinction is often made between internal (e.g., lack of knowledge) and situational (e.g., available infrastructure) barriers to environmental practices (ElHaffar, Durif, & Dubé, 2020; Kennedy et al., 2009; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

Against this background, social class is often seen as a proxy for the personal capabilities (Stern, 2000) or resources (Kennedy & Givens, 2019) needed to align one's behavior with one's environmental concerns. For instance, green products are often charged at a premium rate, therefore requiring a certain level of affluence (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). Furthermore, scholars have shown the relevance of access to cultural resources such as environmental knowledge, competencies, self-efficacy, and an affinity with green products (Baumann, Engman, & Johnston, 2015; Carfagna et al., 2014; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). For example, ethical eating practices require "not simply the resources of money and time to shop, prepare and eat in certain ways, but also the tastes or dispositions to do so in particular ways" (Maguire, 2016, p. 12).

To the contrary, there are good reasons to be critical of these insights. First, much of the literature focuses on high-cost practices such as green consumerism and eating practices (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014; Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnson, Tariq, & Baker, 2018; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). Other practices, such as recycling or shorter showers, may be less dependent on access to resources. Authors such as Warde (2005) have expanded our gaze beyond what is typically seen as consumption to include (but not limited to) sorting behavior, transport choices, and energy use. As discussed in the next section, practice theory highlights the routinization and universality of these more mundane consumption practices (Gronow & Warde, 2001; Shove & Warde, 2002). Hence, a multidimensional view on environmental practices may nuance social class differences.

Second, while it is plausible that lower classes may struggle to align their behavior with their environmental concerns (Kennedy & Givens, 2019), the emphasis on ecologically oriented and environmentally sound practices overlooks environmental practices that are not inspired by ecological motivations but still impactful. On the one hand, excess consumption of privileged groups (e.g., flying) is not taken into account. An abundance of resources can allow people to be unsustainable (Kennedy et al., 2009). For instance, while some cannot afford a car, affluent people have the 'option' to drive. On the other hand, as Martinsson and Lundqvist (2010, p. 518)

argue: one can “come out ecologically clean without […] turning green". This is especially true for people with few economic resources. Studies suggest that they also engage in environmental practices, albeit less embedded in ecological values. In contrast, it is more strongly connected to economic scarcity. McClintock (2018), for example, shows that engagement in urban agriculture is not a prerogative of upper classes. It can also be understood as a food security strategy. Buying local (Schoolman, 2020) and bicycling to work (Anantharaman, 2016) can similarly be understood as economic rather than ecological strategies. In sum, while research illuminates the behavioral restrictions of less privileged groups, many other studies have shown that, in the end, highly educated and affluent households emit the most carbon (Boucher 2016) and have the highest household energy use (Abrahamse and Steg 2011).

Finally, more fundamentally, there is ample reason to be suspicious of the idea of environmental concerns as antecedents or drivers of behavior. The association between values and action is more dialectic than research commonly assumes (Strand & Lizardo, 2015). On the one hand, people seem to construct their values around the realm of the achievable (Martin, 2011). In this context, Kennedy and Givens (2019) make a strong argument that lower social strata cannot live up to ideal modes of engagement in environmental protection (e.g., electric cars or solar panels) and adjust their environmental concerns accordingly. On the other hand, while values are often understood as motivations of action, cultural sociologists have highlighted inconsistencies in people’s action and professed motives (Swidler, 2001), and noted values rather as justifications for behavior (Vaisey, 2009). In other words, they can serve as accounts to make sense of behavior after the fact. This idea was already present in Mills’ (1940) ‘vocabularies of motive’, recently recuperated in environmental debates (Kennedy, 2022, p. 8). People tend to reframe their environmental practices “in order to make them appear to act consistently with their values and with values that they perceive to be well-regarded by their audience”. Moreover, justifications are subject to rules of acceptability, and not all justifications are equality desirable in a given situation (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999). Hence, people who hold biospheric values may justify their environmental practices with environmental concern, even if contextual cues, rather than environmental concern, lie at the basis of their actions (Kennedy, 2022), for example when attending climate marches because of peer pressure, or when conservating energy due to price inflation. Nonetheless, I contend that such justifications are revealing about what people think is important, and more specifically social class differences therein.

1.2.2 *Towards a practice theory of social class*

Given the limitations discussed above, I argue that social practice theory may provide a better understanding of the relationship between social class and environmental practices. My theoretical intentions are twofold. First, I aim to use the social practice framework as an analytical lens to better understand social class dynamics in environmental practices. Here, action does not depend on individual motivations and conscious decision-making. Instead, focus lies with environmental practices themselves. Second, I aim to center social class. While practice theoretical approaches to date have largely overlooked social class (Anantharaman, 2018; Evans, 2018; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019), I argue that social class is a constituting factor in the way environmental practices are understood and performed. Particularly, I provide a Bourdieusian perspective through the notion of ecological habitus (Kasper, 2009).

Social practice theory and environmental practices

While practice theory has a long and varied history (Nicolini, 2012), a relatively clear lineage can be detected for its application in studying environmental practices. The origins are commonly sought in praxeological theories of Bourdieu (1977) and Giddens (1984), who tried to move beyond the dualities between agency and structure (Welch & Warde, 2015). Not individuals and structures, but social practices are placed at the center of social inquiry (Spaargaren, 2004, 2011). Practice theory proposes that social life consists of a continuous series of interwoven practices, for example ways of preparing food, traveling to work, or cleaning oneself (Hargreaves, 2011). A minimal definition of social practices can be found in Welch and Warde (2015, p. 2): "an organized, and recognizable, socially shared bundle of activities that involves the integration of a complex array of components" such as materials, know-how, mental activities, values, and so on. Through the work of Schatzki (2001) and Reckwitz (2002), practice theory found its way into sustainable consumption scholarship, with Spaargaren (2000) and Shove (2012) as key actors (see Welch & Warde, 2015 for a more detailed overview). Spaargaren and Van Vliet (2000) are interested in promoting the ecological modernization of consumption in the context of global sustainable development, thus also highlighting the political dimensions of consumption (Spaargaren & Martens, 2004). Shove's (2003) interest lies mostly with the emergence of and changes in resource-intensive everyday practices by specifically emphasizing the role of materiality.

While applications thus vary, the contributions of practice theory to the study of environmental practices can be summarized in three elements. First, it was introduced as an alternative to the dominance of psychological views on environmental practices that emphasize individuals, their values, and (rational) choices (Kennedy, Cohen, & Krogman, 2015; Spaargaren, 2013b; Spaargaren & Van Vliet, 2000). These approaches were critically dubbed 'attitude-behavior' models by Spaargaren (2004, 2011) or 'attitude, behavior, and choice' models by Shove (2010). In fact, studying the motivations of environmentalists is seen as a distraction by Shove and Walker (2014) because their pro-environmental choices are not able to compensate for escalating consumer demands, and are therefore insufficient to truly have an impact on environmental issues. Arguably, one of the main challenges of value-driven approaches is the action-cognition gap and their treatment of environmental concerns as situationally invariant (Bamberg, 2003; Hargreaves, 2011; Spaargaren & Van Vliet, 2000). Contrastingly, practice theory sheds light on shared behavioral patterns and the social organization of everyday life (Shove, 2010; Welch & Warde, 2015). In other words, environmental practices are not only understood as (individual) responses to environmental concerns, but rather as practices embedded in complex material and cultural systems (Ford, 2019).

Second, in a turn away from symbolic acts of conspicuous and socially communicative consumption, practice theory has emphasized ordinary, mundane, and inconspicuous forms of consumption that are far removed from ecological deliberations, but nonetheless have a large environmental impact (Gronow & Warde, 2001; Shove, 2003; Shove & Warde, 2002; Warde, 2014). Indeed, much of our consumption is not reflexive, but part of our everyday accomplishments such as cleaning and watching TV (Warde, 2015). Third, applications of practice theory have emphasized the role materiality and technology (Shove, 2003; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012; Shove & Southerton, 2000; Shove & Walker, 2014). Questions, for example, arise about how material artifacts interact with social norms and conventions, and how this impacts escalating consumer demands. For example, freezers, washing machines, and central heating can respectively produce and define standards for storing food, cleaning clothes, and room temperature.

However, the focus on ordinary practices and materiality has diverted attention away from social class. Some practice theorists even explicitly argue against studying social variations because the universality of consumption practices (allegedly) matters more for our consumption levels than

social differences within practices (Shove, 2009; Shove & Walker, 2014). Hence, a focus on everydayness and shared behavioral patterns contains the risk of flattening out social and cultural variation (Gram-Hanssen, 2021; Yates, 2022). Against this background, my dissertation highlights a Bourdieusian view (1977, 1990) on social practices. Despite being acknowledged as a key figure in social praxeology, his presence has been notably absent in practice theoretical approaches to environmental practices. (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019; Welch & Warde, 2015). In particular, I employ Kasper's (2009) notion of *ecological habitus* to illuminate how environmental practices are, at least partly, embodied in a class-based system of dispositions. This is the topic of chapter 4 of this dissertation.

The ecological habitus

Schatzki (2001, p. 12) understands the social as a field of "embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings". Dissecting this statement provides two invaluable insights. First, social practices are organized around a shared practical understanding of appropriate behavior (Schatzki, 1996); which are the unwritten rules, conventions, and tacit knowledge that allow us to know how to do something in a given context without presupposing reflexiveness or conscious aims. Other concepts reflect similar ideas, for instance practical knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) or consciousness (Giddens, 1984). Second, Schatzki (2001, p. 12) reveals that practical understandings can be both embodied in humans and materialized in artefacts (see Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019 for a detailed discussion). As discussed above, most research on environmental practices has sought practical understandings in the material world, including infrastructures, regulations, and especially technology (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove & Walker, 2014; Warde, 2015).

Social practices are not only externalized in material artefacts but also embodied in humans, something that has been downplayed (Dubuisson-Quellier & Gojard, 2016; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019; Schatzki, 2001; Wilhite, 2012). In other words, they can be internalized through one's experiences, social interactions, and class conditions (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). Bourdieu's (1990, p. 53) notion of habitus expresses this outstandingly. Habitus denotes a "system of durable, transposable dispositions […] which generate and organize practices and representations […] without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations

necessary in order to attain them". Hence, embodiment does not represent a voluntaristic model of conscious choices but contrastingly emphasizes social structuredness (Evans & Jackson, 2008).

Habitus is determined by one's social class position. An agent's social position is driven by the distribution of *capital*, or in Bourdieu's (1984, p. 114) words "the set of actually usable resources and powers." A distinction is made between types of capital, namely economic (material resources), cultural (dispositions, cultural goods, or institutionally recognized competences), and social (networks and connections) capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Symbolic capital is a somewhat atypical form of capital that people gain when other forms of capital are recognized as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1989). These capitals do not exist in isolation, and can often be interchanged. For example, formal education is a form of cultural capital that can be valorized in the labor market through higher wages.

More specific to environmental practices, Kasper (2009, p. 318) employs the notion of ecological habitus to describe the "embodiment of a durable yet changeable system of ecologically relevant dispositions, practices, perceptions, and material conditions—perceptible as a lifestyle—that is shaped by and helps shape socioecological contexts". Thus, ecological habitus is able to account for the social patterning of more or less distinct environmentally relevant lifestyles (Evans & Jackson, 2007). It is worth noting that Kasper's ecological habitus should not be confused with Carfagna's (2014) eco-habitus. While the latter refers to the emergence of a habitus that is oriented towards environmental awareness and environmental practices, the former denotes a value-neutral concept that describes the environmentally relevant aspects of a habitus (also e.g., a habitus oriented towards disinterest or environmental destruction). My own engagement with the concept - especially in the introduction, chapter 4, and the discussion – fits mostly with Kasper's ecological habitus, although I employ Carfagna's eco-habitus in chapters 3 and 6.

In any case, an embodied practical understanding enables class-specific ways of understanding and engaging in environmental practices (Brand, 2010; Burton, Kuczera, & Schwarz, 2008; Evans, 2018). Accordingly, my approach fits within a broader call for the (re)appraisal of the cultural dimensions of environmental practices to better understand the actions and inaction of individuals and social groups (Balsiger, Lorenzini, & Sahakian, 2019; Kennedy & Johnston, 2019; Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020; Welch, Halkier, & Keller, 2020). The dominance of (a particular) version of practice theory led Evans (2018) to provocatively conclude that sustainable

consumption scholarship suffers from conceptual amnesia and that research has lost sight of several core sociological interests, including (but not limited to) social class, status, and tastes. Yet, cultural (class) approaches do not necessarily conflict with practice theory. In his seminal work, Reckwitz (2002) points out that social practices are necessarily cultural practices because they depend on implicit schemes of shared knowledge or presuppositions (see also Welch, 2020). Moreover, attention to cultural class factors may be useful to critically assess group dynamics, inequalities, and (cultural) power relations (Anantharaman, 2016).

1.2.3 Environmental practices and social differentiation

This brings me to the final part of this theoretical framework, namely the issue of social differentiation through environmental practices (Anantharaman, 2016; Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). Studies on ethical consumption highlight the increasing cultural and symbolic value of environmental practices. Research also suggests that this may not be universal, and especially salient in highly educated middle classes (Carfagna et al., 2014). One explanation for the growing value of environmental practices among high cultural capital persons can be found in neo-institutional theory. In general, education produces cultural scripts by which actors understand and define behavior (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000). In specific, education seems to - implicitly or explicitly - cultivate values and practices deemed important by society, including environmental awareness and practices (Chawla, 1999; Sela-Sheffy, 2011). Moreover, education may promote citizenship (Wiseman & Baker, 2006) and political efficacy (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). In other words, highly educated groups may be more willing to act on their environmental awareness and feel more confident that their actions will have a meaningful contribution (Kennedy & Givens, 2019).

Additionally, Carfagna et al. (2014, p. 1) describe the emergence of a habitus "incorporating environmental awareness and sustainability principles in a configuration that has been called ethical or 'conscious consumption'". Environmental practices are then part of a broader reconfiguration of cultural value among highly educated middle classes. Furthermore, while these environmental practices are seemingly value-led, they also have distinctive power (Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). Accordingly, Anantharaman (2018, 2022) emphasizes the role of environmental practices in the (re)enforcement of cultural power relations (see also Grosglik, 2021). In this context, certain ways of engaging in and appreciating environmental practices can

be seen as cultural accomplishments (Greenbaum, 2005), high-status practices (Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019), and distinction strategies (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). Educational systems then lie at the center of the (re)production of distinctive cultural and environmental traits (Bourdieu, 1984; Wright, 2018). In sum, these studies have attempted to (re)conceptualize environmental practices as emerging forms of cultural capital (Carfagna et al., 2014; Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2023).

Bourdieu and cultural class analysis

Theoretically, research in this tradition is mostly rooted in Bourdieusian sociology. Bourdieu's approach (1977, 1984, 1986, 1996) is part of a wider project of cultural class analysis (Crompton, 2008; Devine et al., 2004; Savage, 2000). This can be described as an attempt to solve the dualism between social class and culture that troubled earlier conceptions of social class, among other reasons caused by a declining class consciousness (Crompton, 2008; Savage, 2000; Sayer, 2005; Weininger, 2005). These were often rooted in either Marxist or Weberian theory (Atkinson, 2015). Following Marxist traditions, social class analysis focused heavily on the material dimensions of social class, which could then serve as a basis for class consciousness and culture. Similarly, Weber defined social classes through economic relations, but challenged the material determinism of Marx. Among other things, he identified status groups as another mode of stratification that may influence one's life chances. Status refers to prestige or honor associated with groups, lifestyles, cultural practices, and so on. In any case, before cultural class analysis, social class conceptions relied on an analytical separation between social class and culture. In contrast, contemporary cultural class analysis does not (solely) define social class in terms of economics, but centers culture as a fundamental and constituting aspects of a social class. On the one hand, many empirical investigations reveal that cultural traits are structured along the lines of social class. On the other hand, cultural traits are highlighted in the (re)production of social class (Devine, 2004), rather than solely a consequence of class (Bennett et al., 2009).

In this endeavor, Bourdieu provides a relational view which defines class in terms of social relations and differentiation. Chapter 5 delves deeper into this relational view in the context of green consumerism across European countries. Essential is the idea that social classes cannot be defined and clearly delineated a priori, but that they are (re)produced through people's everyday practices. A key ingredient in the process of social differentiation is the struggle for *recognition*,

where cultural traits play a central role. According to Honneth (1996), recognition is a fundamental human desire. It is the need of having "worth and value in the eyes of others, so as to bestow justification on our existence" (Atkinson, 2015, p. 7). Questions of recognition direct our attention towards the unequal valuation of cultural traits and the normative significance of social class (Sayer, 2005). It is true that the (de)valuation of cultural traits can directly impact opportunities for material and economic advantage (e.g., headscarves and job opportunities). Yet, I want to highlight here that the issue of recognition goes beyond material wealth. Our social class position also affects our access to things and (cultural) practices which are valued in society, such as paintings in one's home, the right clothing, and so on. (In)access to these goods and practices is then related to the way we are valued socially, and subsequently connected to our self-worth. Thus, recognition (or the lack thereof) is central to the experience of social class (Sayer, 2007).

Today, it is not farfetched to relate social worth to environmental debates. Many people at least attempt to act environmentally sound, even if it is only through micro-gestures such as recycling. In addition, we praise people that do and judge people that do not, as revealed in chapter 7 (see also Kennedy & Horne, 2020). This is evident from the research showing that environmental practices may provide social status by signaling moral virtues (Brick & Lai, 2018; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010; Uren, Roberts, et al., 2019). Moreover, as argued in this dissertation and many other works (Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy & Givens, 2019), certain environmental practices, such as buying eco-labeled products and solar panels, have become valuable commodities which are inaccessible by lower social classes. Hence, I argue that the (normative) experience of social class must also be connected to one's environmental practices, in other words one's *environmental worth* so-to-speak.

In a Bourdieusian sense, what is seen as 'valuable' or 'worthy' is dispositional and part of one's habitus (Sayer, 2007). Moreover, marginalized groups tend to be denied valuation of their way of life, and can thus experience stigmatization (Honneth, 1996). Much of Bourdieu's work is preoccupied with the recognition of certain cultural traits above others. The concept of *misrecognition* denotes that (i) even though these traits are often seen as natural, they are acquired, and (ii) worth is not inherently associated with cultural traits, but based on a struggle for recognition.

Accordingly, social differentiation based on tastes and lifestyle is an important element in the work of Bourdieu (most notably in 1984). Indeed, much attention has been paid to the symbolic space; that is the social organization and hierarchical ordering of tastes (physical sensations, aesthetic preferences, moral sensitivities, etc.). In specific, Bourdieu's cultural model (1984) mainly differentiates between legitimate (or highbrow) and popular (or lowbrow) culture. The legitimate tastes of dominant classes are characterized by a *distance from necessity*. In other words, they have access to sufficient capital, which allows them to appreciate aesthetics over practicality, or form over function (Atkinson, 2015). In contrast, dominated classes with less capital at their disposal may value functionality, hence remaining closer to *necessity*. Crucially, practices of dominant groups are seen as discerning and universally valued, while lowbrow culture is seen as common or even vulgar. While resistance may exist, the traits of dominant classes are recognized as aspirational or worthy, even by dominated classes. This is because dominant classes have more resources at their disposal in the struggle for recognition. Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1989) denotes this as symbolic violence: "being compelled to see one's life and lifestyle through the denigrating lens of someone else's" (Atkinson, 2015, p. 78). Hence, throughout this dissertation, I contend that it is critical to scrutinize which social classes we (do not) recognize as legitimate 'environmentalists'.

Environmental practices and distinction: Thinking with Bourdieu

Works on ethical consumption and distinction are mostly concerned with the reconfiguration of high-status tastes and cultural capital to include ethical, and also more specifically environmental considerations. The influential paper of Carfagna et al. (2014) on the emergence of an ecologically oriented habitus showcases a theoretical lineage from Bourdieu (1984) through Holt (1998) to a group of contemporary consumption scholars that seem largely based in North America (e.g., Baumann, Engman, & Johnston, 2015; Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022; Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019; Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Schor et al., 2016).

Bourdieu (1984) did not explicitly focus on environmental issues but rather on highbrow culture to conceptualize legitimized cultural capital. Following critiques on the relevance of Bourdieu's work outside the context of 1960s and 1970s France, Holt (1997, 1998) recovered the notion of cultural capital by establishing that its specific operations are socio-historically dependent. It was

argued that high cultural capital individuals (in 1990s United States) valued aesthetics and ascetics over functionality and materialism; cosmopolitanism over locality; authenticity over mass production; and so on. While most research engages with aesthetic preferences, environmental considerations have more recently been incorporated (Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022). Accordingly, for example, Carfagna et al. (2014) observe a revaluation of locality (e.g., local food and business) and manual labor (e.g., Do-It-Yourself) among high cultural capital individuals.

Yet, this does not merely represent the adoption of formerly low-status practices (e.g., manual labor) by high-status groups, but rather a rearticulation of high-status practices (Carfagna et al., 2014). The notion of defensive distinction (Anantharaman, 2016) makes clear that, while low-status practices may be adopted, distinction is reproduced through the incorporation of environmental values (McClintock, 2018). Indeed, studies show that environmental practices (e.g., bicycling, energy-saving, buying local, etc.) are quite common among lower classes, albeit often for financial reasons (Anantharaman, 2016; McClintock, 2018; Schoolman, 2020). Yet, these are not valorized equally because they are less grounded in environmental considerations (De Nardo et al., 2017); a clear case of misrecognition for McClintock (2018).

Indeed, as argued in chapter 6, ethical consumption is not (or no longer) an alternative mode of distinction, but incorporated within existing (dominant) distinction frameworks (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014; Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022; Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2023). Indeed, studies have focused on the associations between various consumption styles and have recognized high cultural capital as "a synergistic combination between morals and aesthetics" (Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019, p. 394). For example, locality is valued in a cosmopolitan context (Carfagna et al., 2014); aesthetic products of manual labor are valorized rather than functional products (Schor et al., 2016); high-status bicycling requires expensive bikes and outfits (Anantharaman, 2016); ethical food is often understood as an expression of foodie culture (Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019); green consumption often has values of e.g., personal wellness and spirituality attached to it (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014) and so forth.

Thinking beyond Bourdieu: environmental practices and symbolic boundary-making

Several critiques can be formulated against the Bourdieusian approaches in the previous section. First, Bourdieu's notion of habitus may present an overly structured view on social class socialization, especially when assuming that dispositions are unconsciously internalized in early

childhood and adolescence (Nash, 2003). Many scholars have pointed out the increased autonomy that individuals enjoy in contemporary society to choose their own path and lifestyle (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). Hence, both class as an organizing principle and the existence of an overarching scheme of cultural legitimacy are rejected (Pakulski & Waters, 1996). Yet, while there may be more room for agency, empirical evidence suggests that lifestyles and tastes remain strongly shaped by one's social class position (Bennett et al., 2009; Flemmen, Jarness, & Rosenlund, 2018; Kahma & Toikka, 2012). Moreover, self-expression can itself be a product of social class. Bourdieu (1984) observed, for example, a *new petite bourgeoisie* that occupied an insecure middle position in society. The rejections of cultural hierarchies and the valorization of self-realization are then useful tools to legitimate one's own position and propagate the dream of upward mobility (Atkinson, 2015). Similarity, Skeggs (2004) argues that the development of the *self* depends on access to resources, and is thus exclusive. Accordingly, it can be argued that (the desirability of) individualization (Savage, 2000), subjectivity (Gillies, 2005), agency (Snibbe & Markus, 2005), or openness (Ollivier, 2008a) resonate mostly with middle-class experiences and are themselves part of a struggle for recognition (Ollivier, 2008b). Potentially, this can be extended to the idea of expressing ethical and environmental perspectives through one's lifestyle (Adams & Raisborough, 2008; Anantharaman, 2016).

Second, others have critiqued Bourdieu's general framework on cultural distinction. On the one hand, studies often assume that the cultural preferences of dominant classes define legitimate culture, which is then internalized by dominated classes (Bourdieu, 1984). In this context, Bourdieu (1984) perhaps overestimates the universal acceptance of legitimate cultural traits. Indeed, ample evidence exists that criteria of judgment are varied and class-based (Heikkilä & Rahkonen, 2011; Jarness & Friedman, 2017; Lamont, 1992, 2000a; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Skjøtt-Larsen, 2012). A second related critique entails that people, as social beings, may more intrinsically use morality to make sense of the world and one's self-worth, rather than it solely being part of a struggle for advantage (De Keere, 2018; De Keere, 2020; Lamont, 2010, 2018). Hence, in chapter 7, I favor a more inductive view on the way people from various social classes make moral evaluations and classifications, and subsequently delineate social groups based on these judgments (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999; Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013; Lamont, 1992, 2000a).

An especially fruitful approach in sociology has been symbolic boundary-making (Lamont, 2000a; Lamont & Molnár, 2002, p. 168). Symbolic boundaries are the "conceptual distinctions made by

social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space". Boundaries can be based on cultural or socioeconomic grounds, but are regularly based on moral worth and generalized notions of a good life (Lamont, 2000a; Ollivier, 2008b; Sayer, 2007). Hence, symbolic boundaries are separated from social boundaries, which are "objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities" (see also Ollivier, 2008b). Moreover, this view on social differentiation allows more room for bottom-up struggles for legitimacy. In her seminal book, Lamont (2000a, p. 3) finds that so-called dominated groups employ morality as a social marker to position themselves above middle and upper classes.

> *"White American workers extend to professionals and managers the moral standards they use to evaluate people in general. They often draw boundaries against this group, judging professionals and managers to lack personal integrity and sincerity and to have poor interpersonal relationships. By doing so, the workers dissociate socioeconomic status from moral worth and thereby locate themselves above the upper middle class according to a standard to which they attach overarching importance."*

Research in the 'symbolic boundary-making' tradition shifts the focus from more 'traditional' social class conceptions that focus on the effects of social boundaries (e.g., poverty and health inequalities) towards the relationship between social and symbolic boundaries (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, & Lamont, 2007). While symbolic boundaries can operate separately from social boundaries (Anthias, 2001; Juteau, 2003), social divisions mostly arise when both social and symbolic boundaries are present. On the one hand, symbolic boundaries are often central in the creation and maintenance of social boundaries such as social class (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont, Pendergrass, & Pachucki, 2015). They can codify so-to-speak (e.g., through discrimination) or at least justify (material) inequalities (Edgell et al., 2020). On the other hand, it should also be noted that 'subjective' experiences, interactions, and differentiations exist within a broader framework of 'objective' social structures (e.g., social class or gender), which Bourdieu highlights (Bottero & Crossley, 2011). Most likely, a middle position is closest to the truth. Social boundaries and symbolic boundaries are both real and do not necessarily overlap, but social divisions are most salient when they do (Lamont, 1992; Ollivier, 2008b).

Previous research shows that environmental concerns and practices can be used to position oneself socially and serve as boundary markers (Horton, 2003; Johnston & Baumann, 2014; Laidley, 2013a). More specifically, it is utilized by middle and upper classes to create and maintain boundaries that exclude lower classes (Anantharaman, 2022), for example by emphasizing the health and environmental benefits of organic shopping (Erler, Keck, & Dittrich, 2022). Conversely, research has also identified opposing claims where organic eating is seen as a scam, and organic consumers as fundamentalists (Dubuisson-Quellier & Gojard, 2016). Moreover, Johnston's (2011) low-status respondents, while excluded from expensive environmentally friendly products, critique the wastefulness and overconsumption of those richer than themselves. In this dissertation, and especially chapter 7, I aim to further explore the interrelationship between social and symbolic boundaries with regard to environmental practices. I do not claim that symbolic boundaries regarding environmental practices are central to social class materialities. The poor, for example, are not disadvantaged primarily because they lack environmental recognition (Sayer, 2007), although this may indirectly affect inequalities in environmental policy (Van Lancker & Otto, 2022). Crucially, however, I examine the way symbolic boundary-making overlaps with social class markers (such as income or education) because this connects the (normative) experience of social class to environmental (self-)worth, and associated processes of (mis)recognition and stigmatization.

1.3 Materials & Methods

In this dissertation, I aim to disentangle the complex relationship between social class and environmental practices. This objective can be summarized in one research question with two sub-questions:

What is the relationship between social class and environmental practices?

i. How does one's social class position influence one's engagement in various environmental practices?
ii. How do environmental practices (re)produce social class boundaries?

The first objective is to investigate how environmental practices are understood and engaged in by various social classes. The aim is not necessarily to look for linear nor hierarchical differences, but rather to understand on a more primary level if and how these practices are performed.

The second objective is concerned with the way environmental practices create and maintain social class boundaries. Hence, this question centers around social differentiation. An important element here is recognition. Which social classes are recognized as legitimate 'environmentalists', and which are not? Under what circumstances do environmental practices become high-status practices?

To answer these research questions, quantitative and qualitative data were combined into a mixed method approach. I followed a sequential design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). In other words, quantitative phases and qualitative phases were 'mixed' but not conducted at the same time. First, quantitative research was utilized to assess how social class relates to environmental practices. Afterwards, qualitative research methods were employed to examine in more depth the relationship between social class and environmental practices, and search for possible explanations for quantitative findings. While the quantitative phase and the qualitative phase were conducted sequentially, the chapters themselves are structured thematically, rather than in their methodological sequence. Each chapter has a methodological section where the materials and methods employed are discussed. In this section, I provide a global overview.

For the most part, the research pertains to Flanders, a Dutch-speaking region of Belgium. It is worth keeping in mind that associations between social class and environmental practices found in this dissertation are potentially connected to regional (or at least Western) specificities. For instance, my inspiration for processes of social differentiation in the context of environmental practices is mostly drawn from North American research (e.g., Baumann, Engman, & Johnston, 2015; Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022; Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019; Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Schor et al., 2016). Even though my findings are often in line with these studies, I advise against attaching an a-contextual universality to them. Moreover, there are also specificities in my research compared to the North American studies. For instance, Kennedy (2022) emphasizes political differences between liberals and conservatives. In contrast, my respondents rarely brought up politics. Even though I did not focus on political views, it seems to me that social class matters relatively more than politics in Flanders, at least compared to North America.

1.3.1 Conceptualizing social class and environmental practices

Before delving deeper into the materials and methods of each chapter, it is useful to clarify my conceptualization of social class and environmental practices. My view of social class aligns with cultural class analysis (Devine & Savage, 2004; Savage, 2000), where Bourdieu (1984) is arguably the main actor. I do concede that people enjoy more freedom than overly structured interpretations of social class allow, especially when it comes to a static and unreflexive position on early life socialization (Nash, 2003). Hence, my arguments are not deterministic, but probabilistic. Indeed, empirical evidence does suggest that lifestyles and tastes remains shaped by one's social position. To define one's social position, I will mostly highlight the role of resources, or *capitals* (Bourdieu, 1986; Savage, Warde, & Devine, 2005). On the one hand, this position relates my view to Bourdieusian work on distinction. On the other hand, I am simultaneously sensitive to the role of active (and bottom-up) social differentiation and symbolic boundary-making as fundamental aspects of social divisions, including class (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, & Lamont, 2007). In specific, moral criteria for symbolic boundary-making seem especially relevant in discussions on environmental issues and practices. However, I do contend that a social class concept must be at least partially organized around social boundaries, and not solely dependent on symbolic boundaries. Moreover, overlapping social and symbolic boundaries greatly increase the salience of social class differentiation (Ollivier, 2008b).

In terms of operationalization, I focus on the roles of economic and cultural capital. I hereby follow the studies most in line with this dissertation (e.g., Carfagna et al., 2014; Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Laidley, 2013a) and the more general literature on social class, tastes, and lifestyles (e.g., Atkinson, 2021; De Keere, 2020; Flemmen, Jarness, & Rosenlund, 2018). Chapter 4 also takes into account socio-professional status, but this was utilized mostly as a proxy for social class in the sampling strategy. Admittedly, I pay little attention to social capital in this dissertation. On the one hand, this is caused by data limitations in the quantitative surveys. On the other hand, social capital did not really arise as an important factor during the interviews. For the interested reader, I have paid more attention to social networks and capital in other research efforts (El-Achkar et al., 2021; Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2020; Vandermoere et al., 2019).

With regard to environmental practices, the statistical chapters focus on various types of environmental practices, namely energy curtailment, sustainable shopping practices, sustainable

transport, and waste sorting (Diekmann & Preisendorfer, 2003; Stern, 2000; Zorell & Yang, 2019). During the interviews, people were asked more broadly about their practices and general dispositions towards environmental issues, leaving room for respondents to define environmental practices themselves. I consciously employ the notion of environmental practices, rather than more often utilized concepts *sustainable consumption* or *pro-environmental behavior*, to avoid value-laden conceptions of what environmental practices are and ought to be. In line with practice theoretical arguments, I focus on what people actually do. The question of why they do it is not unimportant because, as I show in this dissertation, it is relevant for processes of social differentiation. Yet, in contrast to most research, motivations and justifications are a secondary question, and do not define environmental practices.

1.3.2 Quantitative research

Chapters 2, 3, 5, and 6 are based on quantitative methods. These chapters aimed to examine the association between social class and various types of environmental practices (energy curtailment, sustainable shopping practices, sustainable transport, and waste sorting). The specificities of each chapter are presented in table 1. My analytical strategy for this dissertation is threefold. First, I employ structural equation modeling in chapters 3 and 6 to investigate the relationship between economic and cultural capital on the one hand, and various types of environmental practices on the other. Structural equation modeling is a statistical method to analyze relationships that include latent variables. I followed the strategy proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). Initially, a measurement model (or confirmatory factor analysis) was conducted to evaluate latent factors on their reliability (composite reliability) and validity (average variance extracted). Subsequently, the measurement model was transformed into a structural model with directed relationships between (observed and latent) variables. Second, chapter 5 is based on a multilevel logistic regression to examine green consumerism across European countries.

The third analytical strategy employed in this dissertation (Chapters 2, 3, and 6) is a combination of multiple correspondence analysis and clustering techniques. On the one hand, multiple correspondence analysis is a method akin to factor analysis utilized to analyze categorical variables (Abdi & Valentin, 2007). Multiple correspondence analysis is the method of choice to study the way social class structures tastes and lifestyles (Bourdieu, 1984; Roose, Van Eijck, &

Lievens, 2012). It is used to visually represent individuals and/or variables on a two-dimensional space. Additionally, supplementary variables may be added that do not contribute to the scaffolding axes in order to measure their relationship with the dimensions (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010). I utilize multiple correspondence analysis to investigate the relationship between social class on the one hand, and environmental concerns and practices on the other, which is, to my knowledge, relatively innovative. On the other hand, I utilize clustering techniques to delve deeper into types of environmental concerns and environmental practices. While I employ agglomerative clustering in chapter 2, other chapters (3 and 6) are based on latent class analysis. More specifically, I use clustering techniques for two reasons. Initially, clusters are backprojected on the graphs from the multiple correspondence analysis to better appreciate the social complexities behind environmental concerns and practices. Additionally, this allows me to identify social groups, rather than solely individual positions on the graph. Afterwards, the clusters are further investigated through crosstables (Chapter 2) and logistic regression (Chapters 3 and 6) to study the class-based nature of group membership.

Chapter 2 delves into the relationship between social class and environmental concerns among adolescents. Data was utilized from the 4th Flemish Human Biomonitoring Program of the Flemish Center of Expertise on Environment and Health (Steunpunt Milieu en Gezondheid, 2021). The expertise center organizes Flemish Environment and Health Studies (FLEHS) as a tool for environmental health surveillance, which also includes research on environmental attitudes and perceptions. In the school year 2017-2018, a survey was conducted which collected data from 428 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 16, their parents, and their school (trajectories). In this chapter, social class is operationalized through parental economic (household income) and cultural (educational attainment) capital. Moreover, attention was paid to the educational trajectory of adolescents (general, technical or vocational trajectory) as secondary education in Flanders is organized hierarchically in a cascade system. On the one hand, general trajectories prepare for tertiary education, while other trajectories mostly prepare for the labor market. On the other hand, it is common knowledge that intergenerational educational inequalities are reproduced in this system because children of lower socioeconomic or migrant backgrounds are overrepresented in technical and vocational trajectories (Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2023).

Chapter 3 explores class-based inconsistencies between environmental concern and practices. The empirical investigation is based on two data sources, namely the Flemish Survey on Socio-

Cultural Shifts [SCV-survey] (2016, n = 1449) and the Eurobarometer 92.4 (2019, n = 1007). SCV-surveys are representative measurement instruments from the Flemish government to gain insight into the attitudes, values, and behaviors of people living in Flanders. Here, social class was operationalized by economic (household income) and cultural (educational attainment) capital. The Eurobarometer is a periodic measurement instrument from the European Commission assessing the attitudes and behavior of European citizens. For comparability with the first study, I focused on the Belgian respondents. Social class was also operationalized through economic (affluence: difficulties paying the bills) and cultural (education: years in formal education) capital.

Given that other chapters show that social class differences are most prevalent in green consumerism, chapter 5 zooms in on social differentiation regarding sustainable purchasing practices. Specifically, Chapter 5 contains a (European) multilevel analysis based on data from the full Eurobarometer 92.4 dataset (2019, n = 27498). More specifically, I explore the role of income inequality and how differences between countries can impact citizens' sustainable purchasing practices. On the one hand, similar to previous chapters, social class is operationalized by economic (affluence: difficulties paying bills) and cultural (education: years of formal education) capital. On the other hand, in contrast to other chapters, I argue here that capital is not only absolute, but also relative. In other words, one's access to capital stands in relation to the capital of other people in one's surroundings. In sum, the chapter highlights social inequalities as a central driver of green consumerism (or the lack thereof). This holds true on an individual, but also on a societal level.

Chapter 6, the final quantitative chapter, examines the relationship between cultural engagement and environmental practices. Data from the Flemish Survey on Socio-Cultural Shifts [SCV-survey] (2016, n = 1449) was used. In this study, social class is operationalized by economic (household income) and cultural (educational attainment and cultural engagement) capital. More than in the previous quantitative chapters, however, I search for group dispositions and lifestyle groupings. In particular, I focus on the relationship between more traditional conceptions of cultural capital (cultural engagement as aesthetic tastes) and environmental practices (as ethical tastes).

	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Objective	Social class and environmental concerns among adolescents	Class-based inconsistencies in environmental concern and practices	Green consumerism and the role of income inequality	Cultural engagement and environmental practices
Dataset	FLEHS IV	SCV-survey + Eurobarometer 92.4	Eurobarometer 92.4	SCV-survey
Year	2017-2018	2016 + 2019	2019	2016
Sample	428, Flanders	1449, Flanders + 1007, Belgium	27498, Europe	1449, Flanders
Statistical techniques	t/F-test; Principal component analysis; Multivariate regression; Multiple Correspondence analysis; Agglomerative hierarchical clustering	Multigroup structural equation modelling; Multiple Correspondence analysis; Latent class analysis; Multinomial logistic regression	Multilevel logistic regression	Multiple factor analysis; Latent class analysis; Multinomial logistic regression; Structural equation modelling
Social class	Parental capital (income + education); Educational trajectory	Economic capital (income/affluence); Cultural capital (education)	Economic capital (affluence); Cultural capital (education)	Economic capital (income); Cultural capital (education + cultural engagement)

Table 1. Description of quantitative chapters.

1.3.3 Qualitative research

While the quantitative chapters were based on secondary data, primary data was used for the qualitative part of this dissertation. Interviews were conducted with 28 participants, and supported by numerous informal conversations. All names in this document were pseudonymized to protect the anonymity of respondents. Respondents were drawn from the province of Antwerp in Belgium. The aim was to conduct in-depth interviews with a wide range of participants from different social classes. During the sampling process, however, it proved difficult to recruit people in (extreme) poverty. Therefore, I enlisted the help of several social work organizations that organized around a project to give a voice to people in poverty in the climate debate. Based on their advice and experience with people in precarious situations, they suggested organizing a focus group with their clients (instead of individual interviews). The focus group consisted of 4 people in poverty and 3 social workers. Accordingly, the full dataset consists of 21 in-depth interviews and 1 focus group. The characteristics of respondents can be found in Table 2. The participants were a good reflection of the population, although women and tertiary educated persons were overrepresented. In particular, even though not the focus of this dissertation, it is worth reflecting on the unequal gender division of the sample. Previous research suggests that

women are more concerned about environmental issues and more likely to engage in environmental practices (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kennedy & Kmec, 2018), for which evidence was also found in the quantitative chapters of this dissertation. Potentially, the sample may therefore be over-engaged in environmental practices. In terms of recruitment strategy, I employed socio-professional status as a proxy for social class. On the one hand, participants were recruited through contacts in my personal network. On the other hand, I also utilized organizations to gain access to respondents. This included the social work organizations through which I was able to interview people in poverty, and a general practitioner's clinic where I distributed flyers to recruit a broad range of respondents.

The interviews were structured around a topic list. First, respondents were asked about their daily life, social life and leisure activities. As discussed above, cultural practices and tastes are an important element of social class. In addition to more clear-cut indicators (e.g., educational attainment), a respondents lifestyle was considered as an indicator of cultural capital (e.g., going to museum as a marker for high cultural capital and being culturally engaged as a marker for low cultural capital). This served as social class markers while at the same time easing respondents into the interview setting. Subsequently, the interviews focused on a wide range of environmentally relevant consumption practices, both with a positive and negative impact on our natural environment. I emphasized engagement in various social practices, in line with Warde's (2005) claim that consumption is a moment in each practice, rather than a practice in itself. At first, I left it to respondents to define what they understood as environmental practices. Afterwards, consistent with the quantitative studies, interviews zoomed in on shopping practices, mobility, energy consumption, and waste sorting. Photographs of these practices were utilized as visual cues to make taken-for-granted practices a more reflexive topic of conversation and bring visibility to the everyday (Henwood, Shirani, & Groves, 2018; Rose, 2014). Third, respondents were more broadly asked about their perceptions regarding environmental issues and potential solutions. The fourth topic discussed who respondents themselves saw as environmentally (un)aware people and groups, and how they (morally) evaluated them. Finally, I ended the interview with a range of background questions if they were not already answered (age, education, occupation, parents, and so on).

Most interviews were conducted between March 2022 and April 2023. In terms of context, respondents were interviewed during what Swidler (1986) refers to as a period of social transformation that produces 'unsettled lives'. On the one hand, individuals and households are increasingly seen as actors in sustainable development strategies. On the other hand, the research took place in a period of energy crisis following COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. In other words, the research was conducted at a time with various economic and ecological challenges. Hence, many aspects of consumption are no longer practices *in and of themselves* and their stability is diminished (Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020). Consequently, I noticed that many people tried to adapt or develop new practices to account for these challenges. In such periods, underlying cultural schemes are even more important for the way we navigate challenges.

	Number of respondents
Gender	
Male	9
Female	19
Age	
18-35	6
35-60	14
60+	8
Migration background	
No	23
Yes	5
Education	
Non-tertiary	11
Tertiary	17
Income	
Low	6
Middle	17
High	5
Socio-professional status*	
Managerial and professionals	13
Working and lower service workers	11
Unemployed/precariat	4
Social class	
Upper middle class & elite	5
Established middle class	8
Working class & lower middle class	10
Poverty	5

Table 2. Characteristics of qualitative respondents.
**Students and retirees were respectively classified by their future or past occupation.*

Analytically, I employed a reflexive approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In particular, I utilized the method described in Flick (2022, p. 318), which was developed to comparatively study "the social distribution of perspectives on a phenomenon or a process." First, interviews were listened to and read to familiarize myself with the data. As a second step, the interviews were analyzed in more depth, and central themes from the interviews were identified via a coding scheme. Finally, interviews and associated themes were analyzed comparatively to investigate social class groups based on similarities and differences.

More specifically, chapter 4, the first qualitative study, explores social class dynamics regarding environmental practices in more depth. In this contribution, I underscore that people's environmental practices are a reflection of their social conditions (Ford, 2019). For the purposes of this chapter, the respondents were divided into 4 social classes based on their economic and cultural capital. Moreover, occupation was descriptively used to better understand these social classes. This was loosely inspired by the social class model of Savage et al. (2013), although fewer classes were retained. First, respondents categorized as upper middle class or elite (18%) had managerial or professional occupations and tertiary education, but were mostly characterized by high levels of economic capital. Second, established middle-class respondents (29%) were characterized by professional occupations, tertiary education, and stable, moderately high incomes. Third, working and lower middle-class respondents (36%) were mostly employed in blue-collar or lower-service occupations, had non-tertiary education, and a low to moderate income. Finally, 18% of respondents lived in (extreme) poverty and were mostly characterized by very low levels of economic capital. I acknowledge that 'poverty', in comparison to other groups, is generally not considered a social class category. Another way to define this group would be as 'precariat' (Standing, 2011). Yet, the term precariat is commonly employed to describe precarious employment. In contrast, my respondents were mostly characterized by long-term unemployment and access to very few social benefits. Therefore, 'in poverty' was considered a more accurate description, especially considering that members of the group self-identified as 'in poverty'. While there is variation within these social class groups, the categories were created in interaction with the participants' position on environmental issues and practices. Thus, while this may be a crude categorization, they serve as ideal types for understanding social class variation in environmental practices.

The final chapter (7) is based on the same data and methods as chapter 4. In this chapter, I underscore the way people from various social classes make moral evaluations based on environmental practices, and subsequently delineate social groups based on these judgments. Especially for this chapter, I originally aimed to operationalize social class as self-identification. Yet, it seems that most respondents identified as middle class, thus leaving little variation. Only people in poverty did not identify as middle class, but rather as 'living in poverty'. More generally, I only found limited social class differences in symbolic boundary-work, again with the exception of people in poverty. Hence, in this chapter, I do not focus on the social class position of interviewees. In contrast, I shed light on the way respondents understand the relationship between social class and environmental practices, and the classed prototypes they construct.

Summarizing the empirical research, figure 2 visualizes the chapters and associated topics.

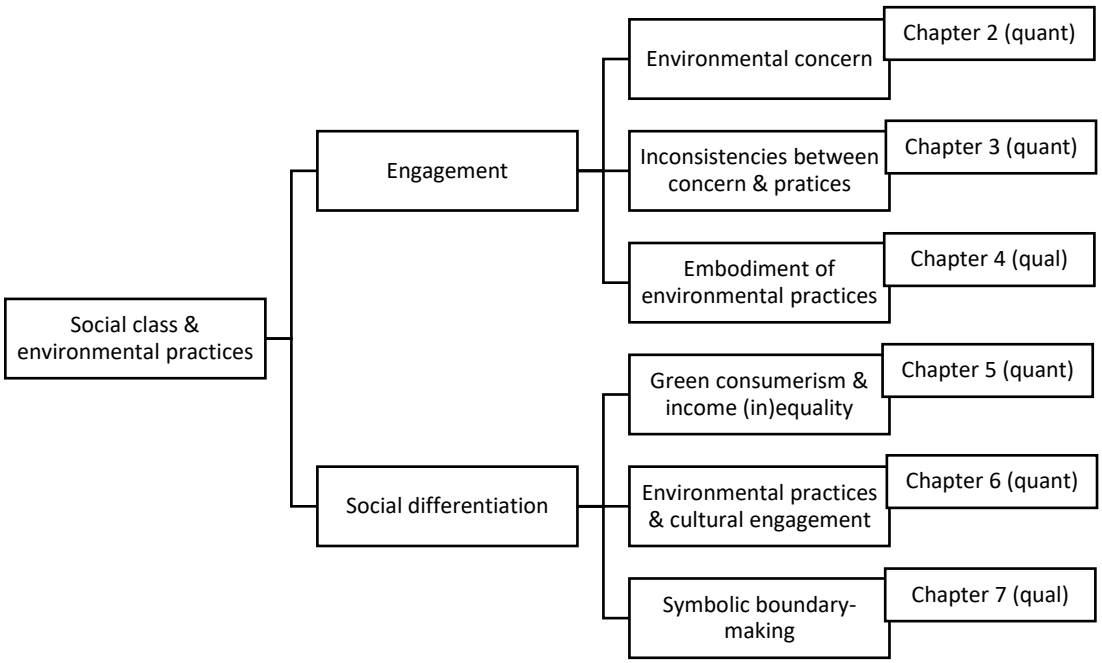

Figure 2. Summary of the empirical research

1.3.4 Research positionality and process

It was a pleasant and sunlit weekend in May. My girlfriend and I are discussing how we will travel to a family occasion at the house of my uncle and his family. The distance: a little under 10 kilometers. Would we go by car? No, we decided. Why not travel by bicycle? It was a beautiful day after all. We'll take the scenic route and pass through as much green space as possible. We felt it was less stressful than taking the car through traffic and we could avoid the hassle of finding parking space. As an added bonus, we would not need a designated driver.

In the garage, we had an electric bike, and we could borrow another electric bike from my sister-in-law across the street. This would prove less effortful and more pleasant than using the regular bicycle we have stalled. We enjoyed our stress-free bike ride. By chance, we arrived at the same time as my parents. They also traveled with their electric bikes for a relaxing Sunday ride. What a coincidence, we laughed. When we went in and greeted the other members of the family, we noticed something. Both cousins and their partners, as well as an uncle and aunt came by bike. It seems that only grandpa and grandma, aging well over 80, traveled by car. Notwithstanding my sporty brother with a regular bike, all of us had an electric bike.

The whole family made this choice independently, coming from different parts of the region and taking different routes. Most of us even made green detours to extend what became a Sunday afternoon leisure activity instead of a mere passage from point A to B.

To end this section, it is worth noting my positionality. The story above is a slice of my own life. I come from a middle-class family, mostly consisting of tertiary educated professionals with a decent income. As this dissertation shows, my position in society is very much related to environmental practices. I have tried to prevent my predispositions from influencing the research and findings, although this is arguably impossible. Moreover, stories such as these were an important source of inspiration for me. They showcase that environmental practices are more than merely individual pro-environmental choices, but rather connected to a process of socialization. Additionally, they show the variety of meanings (e.g., leisure, convenience, and exercise) and materialities (e.g., bikes, garages, and surroundings) associated with environmental practices.

Furthermore, I notice that my dissertation contains a self-critique. I worry about environmental issues, I am vegetarian, I recycle, and bring my own bags to the supermarket. Yet, I travel by plane for conferences. I am a member of the social group that is (mis)recognized as 'environmentally aware'. Yet, according to the ecological footprint test of the WWF, my consumption patterns require 2.8 earths. When I reflect on my own work, I notice that critiques about middle class engagement with environmental practices shine through. While I try to describe, instead of judge, the way various social classes understand and engage in environmental practices, I have also been told that I lose my neutrality when discussing people in poverty by siding with them. However, I decided to keep doing this because I believe that giving voice to invisible groups is an important task for sociologists.

Finally, regarding the theoretical process, I employ a social practice approach to environmental practices. Yet, my dissertation did not initiate with practice theory as the theoretical background. My interests for this dissertation lie more generally with social class dynamics in environmental practices. But, during my research, I came to understand practice theory as an invaluable way to understand environmental practices and social class dynamics therein. Consequently, it is only a central part of the theoretical framework in some chapters, and less so in others. Moreover, with the benefit of hindsight, ethnographic and observational research would have been invaluable additions to this dissertation.

Notwithstanding, it is my intention to make a theoretical contribution to practice theory, especially in chapter 4. Provocatively, Evans (2018) claims that the majority of the literature on environmental practices rehearses the same arguments, namely that people do not consume resources per se but that resources are consumed in the pursuit of social practices. Similarly, Warde (2014) assesses that, more often than not, researchers demonstrate practice theory rather than extend it.

I concur with Nicolini (2012) that practice theory is a wide and multifaceted approach. Most research on environmental practices utilizes a zooming-in approach where practices are explored as case studies, and researchers study in-depth the way certain consumption practices are accomplished, such as showering (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2020) or heat metering (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2023). While notable exceptions should be commended (Anantharaman, 2016; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019), issues of social class have been overlooked (Anantharaman, 2018; Evans, 2018).

Against this background, I employ a zooming-out approach. Hence, I attempt to trail social practices and their connections into bundles that make up people's everyday life-world, with focus on the way this differs between social classes. Moreover, I scrutinize the symbolic properties of environmental practices, and how they are utilized to create and maintain social class boundaries (Anantharaman, 2016).

Section I

How does one's social class position influence one's engagement in various environmental practices?

Chapter 2

Early-life socialization in environmental concern? On social class and the everyday concerns of adolescents

Based on Geerts, R., Morrens, B., Coertjens, D., Vandermoere, F., and Loots, I. 2022. Invloed van sociale achtergrond, gezinscontext en schoolcontext op milieuattituden van jongeren. Een exploratieve analyse op basis van data uit het Vlaamse Humane-biomonitoringsprogramma 2016-2020. In Milieu en Gezondheid Rapport 2021.

Abstract. Utilizing data from the Flemish Environment and Health Studies, this contribution examines environmental concern among adolescents. While research has shed light on the environmental attitudes and concerns of children and young people from diverse backgrounds, little clarity exists about social class differences. Two central questions guide this study. Do social class differences in environmental concern surface during adolescence? And if so, what are the mechanisms through which adolescents are socialized into class-based environmental concern? First, initial results suggest that privileged adolescents in general education trajectories (compared to vocational or technical tracks) are most concerned about environmental issues. In addition, this study reveals that adolescents are socialized into class-based environmental concerns from an early age by highlighting two crucial socialization agents. While evidence was found for the role of parental social class, results also show that the secondary education system plays a central and mediating role by (re)producing educational inequalities. At the same time, however, further exploration of different types of environmental concern challenges that environmental concern is a middle- and upper-class phenomenon. Rather, adolescents from various social classes seem to express their concerns differently. On the one hand, while adolescents generally agreed that their environment is polluted, adolescents from a lower-class background attributed less relative importance to these issues. On the other hand, whereas privileged adolescents seemed more intrinsically concerned about environment and nature, others appeared to prioritize issues of health, annoyance, and wellbeing.

Keywords. Environmental concern; social class; Inequality**;** everyday

2.1 Introduction

Both in academic discourse and broader society, young people are seen as an ecologically conscious generation because they grew up with continuous and intensifying exposure to information about environmental issues (Strife, 2012; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1980; Walker, 2020). This idea is rooted in Mannheim's (1927) *theory of generations*, which suggests that important historical events during adolescence are formative and thus shape the minds of a generation. In recent years, attention to adolescents' environmental concerns has increased following student-led climate protests that mobilized millions of people worldwide in 2018 and 2019. Notably, the Fridays for Future (FFF) school strike on March 15, 1019, drew 1.6 million protesters (Wahlström et al., 2019), and in September of the same year, 7.9 million participants were mobilized in what is considered the largest climate protest in world history (De Moor et al., 2021; De Moor et al., 2020). However, these protests have also (re)sparked a debate about the social class composition of environmental movements. While accusations of elitism postulate that middle and upper classes are overrepresented in these movements (Wennerhag & Hylmö, 2022), reality is often more nuanced. For example, della Porta and Portos (2021, p. 36) challenge the idea that "FFF marches are predominantly populated by 'rich kids'".

There is a danger, however, in focusing solely on high-profile activism, and confounding the environmental concerns of highly mobilized adolescents with the everyday concerns of young people in general (Walker, 2020). Some noteworthy research efforts shed light on the everyday concerns of children and young people from diverse backgrounds (e.g., Phoenix et al., 2017; Threadgold, 2012; Walker, 2020; Wilson & Snell, 2010), but less is known about social class differences in these everyday environmental concerns. This is somewhat surprising since adolescence is considered a foundational period where attitudes develop that persist in later life (Alwin & Krosnick, 1991; Sears & Funk, 1999) and where social class is (re)produced (Bourdieu, 1984).

Against this background, we explore social class differences in the environmental concerns of adolescence utilizing Flemish survey data. Our survey contains information on individual adolescents, their families, and school characteristics, variables which are rarely studied simultaneously in a common framework (Mónus, 2022). Two central questions guide this study. Do social class differences in environmental concern surface during adolescence? And if so, what

are the mechanisms through which adolescents are socialized into class-based environmental concern? Addressing the latter question, we highlight two socializing agents, namely parents and schools. On the one hand, we hypothesize that parental socioeconomic status directly affects their children's environmental concerns. On the other hand, as argued by Bourdieu (1984), education often lies at the center of the reproduction of dispositions and practices. In this view, parental social position works indirectly through schooling choices.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Studies on the environmental concerns of adolescents - usually from educational sciences or psychology – highlight the social context wherein they grow up, mostly focusing on family and school characteristics (Casaló & Escario, 2016; Coertjens et al., 2010). In other words, they emphasize the ways in which adolescents are socialized into environmental concern. In very basic terms, socialization theories are based on the idea that people think and do what they have been brought up to think and do (Nash, 2003). More specifically, socialization has been used to understand the intergenerational reproduction of social differences and inequalities because it allows for the transmission of attitudes and dispositions across generations (Singh-Manoux & Marmot, 2005). Bourdieu's (1984) notion of *habitus* (or internalized system of dispositions) is a particularly salient expression of this idea. In accordance with the literature on environmental concern among adolescents, we focus on two principal agents of socialization, namely one's parents and educational institutions (Jones, Loiselle, & Highlander, 2018; Singh-Manoux & Marmot, 2005).

First, studies have investigated the transmission of environmental concerns and behaviors from parents to their children (Casaló & Escario, 2016; Grønhøj & Thøgersen, 2009; Leppänen et al., 2012; Meeusen, 2014). It is argued that attitudes are easily transferred because young people are impressionable. Accordingly, Meeusen (2014) highlights parents as potential role models, especially when they show a visible commitment to environmental values through behaviors, routines, discussions, and so on (see also Casaló & Escario, 2016; Eagles & Demare, 1999). Yet, less is known about social and cultural differences between families, and how this influences the intergenerational transmission of environmental concerns (Casaló & Escario, 2016). Notwithstanding, it is commonly assumed that people with a higher socioeconomic status are more concerned about environmental issues, and that this is transmitted to their children. While

there is evidence that parental socioeconomic status may influence their children's environmental concerns and behaviors, results are inconsistent with studies reporting limited, positive, and even negative effects (Boeve-de Pauw & Van Petegem, 2010; Coertjens et al., 2010; Mónus, 2022).

Second, educational institutions provide a crucial role in promoting environmental concerns and values (Chawla, 1999; Sela-Sheffy, 2011). Educational systems, including those in Flanders, have increasingly incorporated environmental education from primary education onwards (Flemish Government, 2014; Romero Jr & Silveri, 2006). In addition, research has emphasized the differences between schools and the role of certain school characteristics (Boeve-de Pauw, 2011; Casaló & Escario, 2016; Coertjens et al., 2010; Duarte, Escario, & Sanagustín, 2017; Mónus, 2022). On the one hand, similar to many countries worldwide, Flanders has an eco-school program called MOS, which loosely translates to environmental care at school. MOS is a community of schools dedicated to environmental education (Flemish Government, 2014). Studies on the effects of eco-school participation on environmental concerns, literacy and behaviors show mixed but overall (limited) positive results (Boeve-de Pauw & Van Petegem, 2013, 2018; Cincera et al., 2017; Flemish Government, 2014; Gericke, Manni, & Stagell, 2020; Mónus, 2019, 2022; Spínola, 2015). On the other hand, it is generally assumed that the development of attitudes and behavior among school-going students is influenced by their educational trajectory (Klaczynski & Reese, 1991). While some studies suggest that students in technical or vocational training may be less environmentally aware than students in general trajectories (preparing for tertiary education) (Meeusen, 2014; Mónus, 2019), conflicting evidence also exists (Coertjens et al., 2010). Moreover, while crucial for promoting environmental values, it has been established that formal education contributes to social inequalities due to unequal access to and participation in education (Bourdieu, 1984; Wright, 2018). In Flanders specifically, secondary education is organized hierarchically in a cascade system. It is common knowledge that intergenerational educational inequalities are reproduced in this system because children of lower socioeconomic or migrant backgrounds are overrepresented in technical and vocational trajectories (Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2023).

In sum, while indications exist that parental socioeconomic position and school (trajectory) characteristics may lead to class-based socialization in environmental concerns among adolescents, evidence is often mixed (Boeve-de Pauw & Van Petegem, 2010; Coertjens et al., 2010; Mónus, 2022). One explanation for inconsistent findings may be the way environmental

concerns are conceptualized (Klineberg, McKeever, & Rothenbach, 1998). Studies generally rely on composite measures for general environmental concern, and emphasize postmaterial values ("concerns beyond simply economic or physical security issues") and pro-environmental behavior(al intent) (Casaló & Escario, 2016, p. 66; Meeusen, 2014; Mónus, 2022). These particular measures, however, do not reflect the nuanced relationship between social class and environmental concern. Therefore, we aim to develop a more in-depth understanding of environmental concern among adolescents inspired by the sociological literature.

2.3 Social class and environmental concern

The relationship between social class and environmental concern has always been a central theme in environmental sociology (Buttel, 1987; Dunlap & Catton Jr, 1979; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1980). Overall, two perspectives can be identified, unified by a two-way hypothesis which is sometimes referred to as *subjective values and objective problems* (Dunlap & Mertig, 1995; Haanpää, 2006; Nawrotzki, Guedes, & do Carmo, 2014). The first view suggests that environmental concern is limited to privileged citizens of affluent nations (Dunlap & York, 2008; Givens & Jorgenson, 2011). Indeed, conventional wisdom holds that poor people "will naturally have a greater incentive to give priority to more goods and services than to the environment in general" (Beckerman, 1974, p. 89). This idea aligns with Inglehart's (1971) *theory of postmaterialist values* which attained hegemonic status in the explanation of (emerging) environmental concerns in Western countries during the 1960s and 1970s (Dunlap & York, 2008; Guha & Alier, 2013). Drawing on Maslow's (1943) *hierarchy of needs,* Inglehart (1971) argued that increased affluence in industrialized societies after WOII caused a shift from material values such as economic security to postmaterial values such as self-expression, well-being, and also environmentalism. Likewise, Franzen and Meyer's (2010) *affluence argument* treats environmental concern as a luxury good that only middle and upper classes can afford. Accordingly, many studies report positive associations between environmental concern, and occupational prestige, income, subjective class, and/or educational attainment, albeit sometimes weak (Franzen & Meyer, 2010; Gelissen, 2007; Givens & Jorgenson, 2011; Pampel, 2014).

In contrast, critical scholars assert that the postmaterialism framework and associated measurement instruments do not allow us to account for the various ways in which environmental concern is expressed in disadvantaged groups (Guha & Alier, 2013). The *global*

environmentalism thesis contends that environmental concern has spread across the world including disadvantaged populations, not in the least because they depend more directly on the environment and are confronted disproportionately with environmental hazards (Adeola, 1998; Brechin & Kempton, 1994; Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Buttel & Flinn, 1978; Dunlap & Mertig, 1995; Dunlap & York, 2008; Uyeki & Holland, 2000). It should be noted that disadvantage is not only defined in terms of social class, but also relates to (ethnic or racial) minority communities. In specific, environmental justice activists and scholars have illuminated the everyday experiences of environmental degradation among disadvantaged populations. Studies show that environmental concerns are often expressed less in terms of (postmaterialist) environmentalism, but more in relation to one's immediate surroundings, and the impact of environmental issues on family, health, and quality-of-life (Burningham & Thrush, 2003; Hastings et al., 2005; Mohai & Bryant, 1998; Phoenix et al., 2017; Walker, 2020). Thus, in this study, we do not only take into account general environmental concerns, but also everyday and substantive concerns by focusing on particular issues (e.g., air pollution or biodiversity loss) (Dunlap & Jones, 2001).

This viewpoint is enriched by cultural sociologists arguing that environmental concerns are relational; that they are embedded in the wider web of social relations and contexts (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Hochschild (2018), for example, demonstrates that some people may express environmental concern, but still reject climate change and environmental protection efforts, even if they face environmental degradation. Her research in the United States reveals, among other things, that a desire for work, status, and prosperity can lead to a belief that industrial pollution is a necessary evil. Similarly, Kennedy and Givens (2019) make a strong argument against the dualities between environmental concern and action. In particular, they argue that disadvantaged groups are often excluded from dominant modes of environmental practices such as green consumerism. This may cause feelings of powerlessness, frustration, and alienation from environmental protection, and indeed from environmental concern itself.

Against this backdrop, this study explores the relationship between social class and environmental concern among Flemish adolescents. In addition, we will provide insights into the mechanisms through which adolescents are socialized into class-based environmental concern by focusing on household (socioeconomic status, migration background, and environmental behavior in the home) and school (MOS membership and educational trajectory) characteristics. Most previous studies employ composite measures of general environmental concern. Furthermore, while

studies usually try to ascertain the perceived importance of environmental issues and degradation of environmental quality, they are often – implicitly or explicitly – weighted in relation to other concerns such as economy-environment trade-offs. Thus, measures may fail to capture the concerns of disadvantaged groups and generate a social class bias. We aim to address this issue by focusing not only on general environmental concern, but also on everyday and substantive concerns.

2.4 Materials & Methods

The data for this study was collected in the context of the 4th Flemish Human Biomonitoring Program of the Flemish Center of Expertise on Environment and Health (Steunpunt Milieu en Gezondheid, 2021). In the school year 2017-2018, a survey was conducted which collected data from 428 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 16, their parents, and their school (trajectories). Recruitment was based on a multi-stage stratified sample. The aim was to collect data from a representative sample for third year students in Flanders. First, 20 schools (10 in an urbanized and 10 in a rural area) were randomly sampled, proportionally stratified per province. To anticipate selective non-response among vulnerable populations, special attention was paid to include at least 1 school per province with a GOK[1]-percentage higher than 50%. If a school refused participation, another was randomly selected (response rate: 43%). Subsequently, students were recruited across 20 schools, and a response rate of 34% was achieved. The final sample was a close approximation of the population, based on gender, residence, (ethnic) origin, and educational trajectory (see Table 3 in appendix for a comparison between sample and population characteristics).

Our research strategy contains two phases. First, we examine social class differences in general environmental concern through bivariate associations and stepwise multivariate regression. The second phase explores in more depth the specific (or substantive) concerns of adolescence

[1] GOK is a policy indicator that indicates the amount of vulnerable students that are enrolled in a school, based on the spoken language at home, educational attainment of the mother, students qualifying for school subsidies, and students living in educationally disadvantaged neighborhoods.

through multiple correspondence analysis, a method akin to factor analysis used to analyze categorical variables. The findings of this study provide novel insights into social class differences among adolescents, and also the mechanisms through which social class differences in environmental concern are (re)produced.

The dependent variables include measures for general environmental concern and substantive concerns. The former consists of 8 Likert-scale items (EnvCon1: 'Air, water, and soil in Flanders are heavily polluted'; EnvCon2: 'Most environmental problems in Flanders are exaggerated'; EnvCon3: 'I seldom worry about environmental pollution in Flanders'; EnvCon4: 'All that talking about environmental pollution in Flanders makes people more worried than necessary'; EnvCon5: 'We worry too much about the future of the environment and too little about prices and employment'; EnvCon6: 'The state of the environment is a threat to my health'; EnvCon7: 'People worry too much about progress harming the environment'; EnvCon8: 'As an individual, you can contribute to the protection of the environment'). Regarding substantial concerns, respondents were asked to select a maximum of 5 subjects they are most concerned about from the following list: 'Exhaustion of natural resources', 'growing amount of waste', 'extinction of plants, animals and natural ecosystems', 'water pollution', 'pesticides in food', 'the throw away society', 'soil pollution', 'global warming', 'nuclear waste', 'lack off and disappearing green and open space', 'chemicals in everyday products', 'radiation of cell phones, wi-fi etc.', 'air pollution', 'noise pollution', 'noise pollution', and 'increasing traffic'.

The independent variables are subdivided in three categories, namely individual characteristics, household characteristics, and school (trajectory). Individual characteristics include gender and age (13.5-14.5, 14.5-15.5, and >15.5). Household characteristics entail highest parental education (lower secondary education, higher secondary education, or tertiary education), equivalent household income (0–1250 euro, 1250-1600 euro, 1600-2000 euro, > 2000 euro), migration history of adolescent and/or parent (Belgium nationality, EU nationality, non-EU nationality), and household size (2-3, 4-5, > 5). Moreover, parents were asked how they evaluate their household environmental behavior: 'not at all environmentally friendly', 'not environmentally friendly', 'neutral', 'environmentally friendly', and 'very environmentally friendly'. Following a skewed distribution, a dummy variable was constructed where 1 represents the latter two categories. Finally, we included whether a school is part of the eco-school program MOS (Yes or No) and the education trajectory of adolescents (vocational, technical or general trajectory).

2.5 Results

General environmental concerns

Table 1 shows bivariate associations between the various independent variables and individual items for environmental concern. First, results suggest that gender and age differences remain limited. Similarly, few significant associations were found for migration background, household size, household environmental behavior, and MOS. Second, significant differences were found based on the socioeconomic background of adolescents. Regarding parental education and household income, differences were found for items EnvCon2, EnvCon4, and EnvCon5. Moreover, a positive and significant association was found between parental education and EnvCon8, and between household income and EnvCon7. A closer look reveals an interesting trend. The items for which no significant associations were found between socioeconomic background and environmental concern reflect a general sense of environmental degradation and risk (EnvCon1: 'Air, water, and soil in Flanders are heavily polluted'; EnvCon3: 'I seldom worry about environmental pollution in Flanders'; EnvCon6: 'The state of the environment is a threat to my health'). In contrast, items that do reveal a statistical association between socioeconomic background and environmental concern assess the relative importance of environmental problems, either implicitly (e.g., they are exaggerated) or explicitly (e.g., in relation to employment, prices, and progress). Moreover, EnvConc8 does not assess environmental concern, but rather one's sense of self-efficacy to address environmental issues.

In sum, our results confirm that the relationship between social class and environmental concern is dependent on the way environmental concern is measured. Overall, adolescents from various backgrounds seem to agree that the state of the environment is problematic, yet adolescents from disadvantaged households may attach a lower relative importance to environmental issues in comparison with other issues such as price levels. Our results reveal a similar trend for the students' educational trajectory. It seems that students from the general trajectory are most concerned about environmental issues and students from vocational trajectories least, but that this remains limited to items that weigh the relative importance of environmental concern.

	EnvCon1	EnvCon2	EnvCon3	EnvCon4	EnvCon5	EnvCon6	EnvCon7	EnvCon8
Gender	**Male: 3.62** **Female: 3.81** **t= -2.06***	Male: 2.92 Female: 2.81 t= 1.10	Male: 3.10 Female: 2.99 t= 0.93	Male: 3.26 Female: 3.15 t= 0.88	Male: 2.66 Female: 2.81 t= -1.13	Male: 3.58 Female: 3.80 t= -1.89	Male: 2.86 Female: 2.97 t= -0.88	Male: 3.82 Female: 3.83 t= -0.0
Age	12-14.5: 3.66 14.5-15.5: 3.69 >15.5: 3.88 F= 0.27	12-14.5: 2.78 14.5-15.5: 2.88 >15.5: 2.89 F= 0.27	12-14.5: 3.07 14.5-15.5: 3.01 >15.5: 3.10 F= 0.17	12-14.5: 3.22 14.5-15.5: 3.15 >15.5: 3.33 F= 0.47	**12-14.5: 3.06** **14.5-15.5: 2.72** **>15.5: 2.40** **F= 4.38***	12-14.5: 3.68 14.5-15.5: 3.69 >15.5: 3.72 F= 0.03	**12-14.5: 3.05** **14.5-15.5: 2.90** **>15.5: 2.87** **F=0.54***	12-14.5: 3.94 14.5-15.5: 3.80 >15.5: 3.81 F= 0.42
Education parents	Low: 3.82 Middle: 3.75 High: 3.69 F=0.29	**Low: 3.06** **Middle: 3.00** **High: 2.75** **F=3.07***	Low: 2.96 Middle: 3.26 High: 2.94 F=2.89	**Low: 3.56** **Middle: 3.42** **High: 3.04** **F=4.56***	**Low: 3.15** **Middle: 2.95** **High: 2.56** **F=5.04****	Low: 3.85 Middle: 3.64 High: 3.71 F=0.35	Low: 3.16 Middle: 3.07 High: 2.78 F=3.20	**Low: 3.71** **Middle: 3.62** **High: 3.93** **F=3.11***
Eq. household income	0-1250: 3.87 1250-1600: 3.85 1600-2000: 3.83 >2000: 3.64 F= 1.48	**0-1250: 3.01** **1250-1600: 2.85** **1600-2000: 2.82** **>2000: 2.59** **F= 2.92***	0-1250: 3.18 1250-1600: 3.23 1600-2000: 3.018 >2000: 2.87 F= 1.73	**0-1250: 3.17** **1250-1600: 3.45** **1600-2000: 3.36** **>2000: 2.88** **F= 3.55***	**0-1250: 2.86** **1250-1600: 3.00** **1600-2000: 2.67** **>2000: 2.39** **F= 3.93****	0-1250: 3.76 1250-1600: 3.84 1600-2000: 3.77 >2000: 3.615 F=0.68	**0-1250: 3.19** **1250-1600: 3.06** **1600-2000: 2.98** **>2000: 2.59** **F=5.13****	0-1250: 3.81 1250-1600: 3.81 1600-2000: 3.75 >2000: 3.90 F=0.30
Nationality	Belgium: 3.76 EU: 3.39 Non-EU: 3.61 F= 2.40	Belgium: 2.84 EU: 3.08 Non-EU: 2.92 F= 0.81	Belgium: 3.03 EU: 3.18 Non-EU: 3.00 F= 0.24	Belgium: 3.19 EU: 3.48 Non-EU: 3.03 F= 1.09	Belgium: 2.69 EU: 3.21 Non-EU: 2.65 F= 2.73	Belgium: 3.70 EU: 3.48 Non-EU: 3.94 F= 1.41	Belgium: 2.85 EU: 3.26 Non-EU: 3.15 F= 2.94	Belgium: 3.83 EU: 3.61 Non-EU: 4.00 F= 0.97
Env. behavior household	No: 3.69 Yes: 3.75 t= -0.70	No: 2.90 Yes: 2.78 t= 1.24	**No: 3.27** **Yes: 2.77** **t= 4.05*****	No: 3.29 Yes: 3.07 t= 1.68	No: 2.75 Yes: 2.69 t= 0.40	No: 3.67 Yes: 3.76 t= -0.77	No: 2.96 Yes: 2.86 t= 0.85	No: 3.80 Yes: 3.85 t= -0.42
Household size	2-3: 3.66 4-5: 3.69 >5: 3.88 F=1.32	2-3: 2.78 4-5: 2.88 >5: 2.89 F=0.27	2-3: 3.07 4-5: 3.011 >5: 3.10 F=0.17	2-3: 3.22 4-5: 3.15 >5: 3.33 F=0.47	**2-3: 3.06** **4-5: 2.72** **>5: 2.40** **F=4.38***	2-3: 3.68 4-5: 3.69 >5: 3.72 F=0.03	2-3: 3.05 4-5: 2.90 >5: 2.87 F=0.54	2-3: 3.94 4-5: 3.80 >5: 3.81 F=0.42
Educational trajectory	Voc.: 3.84 Tech.: 3.66 Gen.: 3.71 F=0.88	**Voc.: 3.07** **Tech.: 3.02** **Gen.: 2.70** **F=5.69****	Voc.: 3.13 Tech.: 3.15 Gen.: 2.95 F=1.24	**Voc.: 3.67** **Tech.: 3.35** **Gen.: 2.96** **F=9.15*****	**Voc.: 3.34** **Tech.: 3.07** **Gen.: 2.31** **F=25.45*****	Voc.: 3.70 Tech.: 3.56 Gen.: 3.79 F=1.53	**Voc.: 3.53** **Tech.: 3.07** **Gen.: 2.62** **F=19.09*****	Voc.: 3.58 Tech.: 3.78 Gen.: 3.92 F=2.18
MOS	No: 3.70 Yes: 3.79 t=-0.83	No: 2.88 Yes: 2.80 t=0.61	No: 3.02 Yes: 3.11 t=-0.60	No: 3.20 Yes: 3.22 t=-0.12	No: 2.73 Yes: 2.74 t=-0.08	No: 3.65 Yes: 3.86 t=-1.58	No: 2.86 Yes: 3.11 t=-1.80	No: 3.84 Yes: 3.78 t=0.42

*Table 1. Bivariate association based on t- or F-tests. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on the following thresholds of *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001.*

In the second phase, a principal component analysis was conducted to construct a composite scale for general environmental concern, which could then be used in a stepwise multivariate regression analysis. While two components were initially found, only one proved valid and reliable. In the end, a factor was created utilizing EnvCon2, EnvCon3, EnvCon4, EnvCon4, EnvCon7 (explained variance = 45%, and Cronbach's Alphas = 0.68). The scale was reversed so that high scores mean increased environmental concern. When interpreting the results, it is worth keeping in mind that this scale mostly contains items that weigh the relative importance of environmental concern, and for which social class differences were found.

Table 2 reveals the findings from the stepwise multivariate regression. In the first step, the individual characteristics of adolescents (gender and age) were included, but no significant associations were found. In the second step, socioeconomic and migration background were added. Results reveal that these background characteristics explain 12.3% of variance. The third step also included other household characteristics, namely size and environmental behavior (2.4% of variance). Subsequently, the school (trajectory) characteristics explain approximately 8% of variance. Finally, we tested for interaction effects. Interactions were estimated one at a time because simultaneous estimations could lead to issues of multicollinearity (Lagaert & Roose, 2018). Two significant effects were found, as shown in models 5 and 6 (Table 2).

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	Std β	Sig.	Std β	Sig.	Std β	Sig.	Std β	Sig.	Std β	Sig.	Std β	Sig.
Gender (female)	-.009	.895	.037	.573	.038	.567	.033	.596	.015	.816	.024	.703
Age												
13-14.5	.073	.568	-.018	.884	.005	.969	-.060	.620	-.086	.478	-.099	.409
14.5-15.5	-.012	.926	-.046	.713	-.019	.876	-.073	.544	-.090	.457	-.097	.417
>15.5	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Education parents												
Low			**-.152**	**.024**	**-.152**	**.023**	-.100	.133	-.103	.122	-.104	.104
Middle			**-.151**	**.032**	-.118	.107	.012	.871	-.002	.979	.032	.667
High			Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Eq. household income												
0-1250			-.151	.058	**-.189**	**.020**	**-.163**	**.039**	**-.162**	**.041**	**-.169**	**.029**
1250-1600			**-.194**	**.013**	**-.218**	**.006**	**-.191**	**.012**	**-.194**	**.011**	**-.194**	**.010**
1600-2000			-.141	.052	-.152	.038	-.105	.138	-.122	.088	-.084	.230
>2000			Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Nationality												
Non-EU			.108	.111	.096	.155	0.081	.285	.083	.196	.100	.117
EU (excl. Belgium)			**-.133**	**.045**	**-.135**	**.042**	-.070	.213	-.078	.235	-.064	.323
Belgium			Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Env. behavior household					.116	.073	.117	.061	.121	.053	.020	.772
Household size												
2-3					-.062	.505	-.085	.346	-.093	.303	-.078	.373
4-5					-.143	.123	-.175	.050	-.164	.066	-.163	.063
>5					Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Educational trajectory												
Vocational							**-.287**	**.001**	**-.321**	**.001**	**-.287**	**.001**
Technical							**-.265**	**.001**	**-.319**	**.001**	**-.266**	**.001**
General							Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
MOS							.062	.325	-.062	.489	-.113	.184
MOS*Ed. track												
Vocational									.107	.270		
Technical									**.168**	**.049**		
General									Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
MOS*Env.Beh											**.276**	**.003**
Model information												
R^2	0.7%		13%		15.4%		23.2%		24.8%		26.5%	

Table 2. Stepwise multivariate regression. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on a threshold of $p \leq 0.05$.

Results can be summarized as follows. Overall, findings suggest that adolescents from households with a lower socioeconomic status or an EU migration background are least concerned about environmental issues. However, the relative importance of household background characteristics diminishes after controlling for school (trajectory) characteristics. Hence, results seem to suggest that the influence of background characteristics is, at least partially, mediated by school (trajectory) choices. On the one hand, educational trajectory has an especially strong effect, with respondents from the general trajectory being most concerned. On the other hand, it appears that socioeconomic and migration background affects adolescents' educational trajectory, with disadvantaged groups being more likely to be situated in technical or vocational trajectories. Finally, it is worth noting some interesting interaction effects. Generally, no significant influence was found for MOS or household environmental behavior. Yet, it seems that they can lead to increased environmental concern when they work in concert, namely when adolescents both attend a MOS school and household environmental behavior is present. Moreover, results reveal that, while MOS in itself does not provide clear effects, MOS schools seem to be successful in closing the gap between general trajectory and students from technical trajectories. Figure 4 in the appendix visualizes this interaction

Substantive concerns

Multiple correspondence analysis can be used to analyze categorical variables by visually representing individuals and/or variables on a two-dimensional space (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010). Subsequently, supplementary variables can be superimposed that do not contribute to the scaffolding axes in order to measure their relationship with the dimensions. In this study, MCA is utilized to study the substantive environmental concerns of Flemish adolescents (Figure 1). Only modalities that contribute at least average to the scaffolding axes are shown to aid in the interpretation of the axes (Table 3 in appendix). The modified rates reveal that two axes explain almost 80% of the modalities (Table 4 in appendix). Therefore, it appears sufficient to only interpret the first two axes of the MCA.

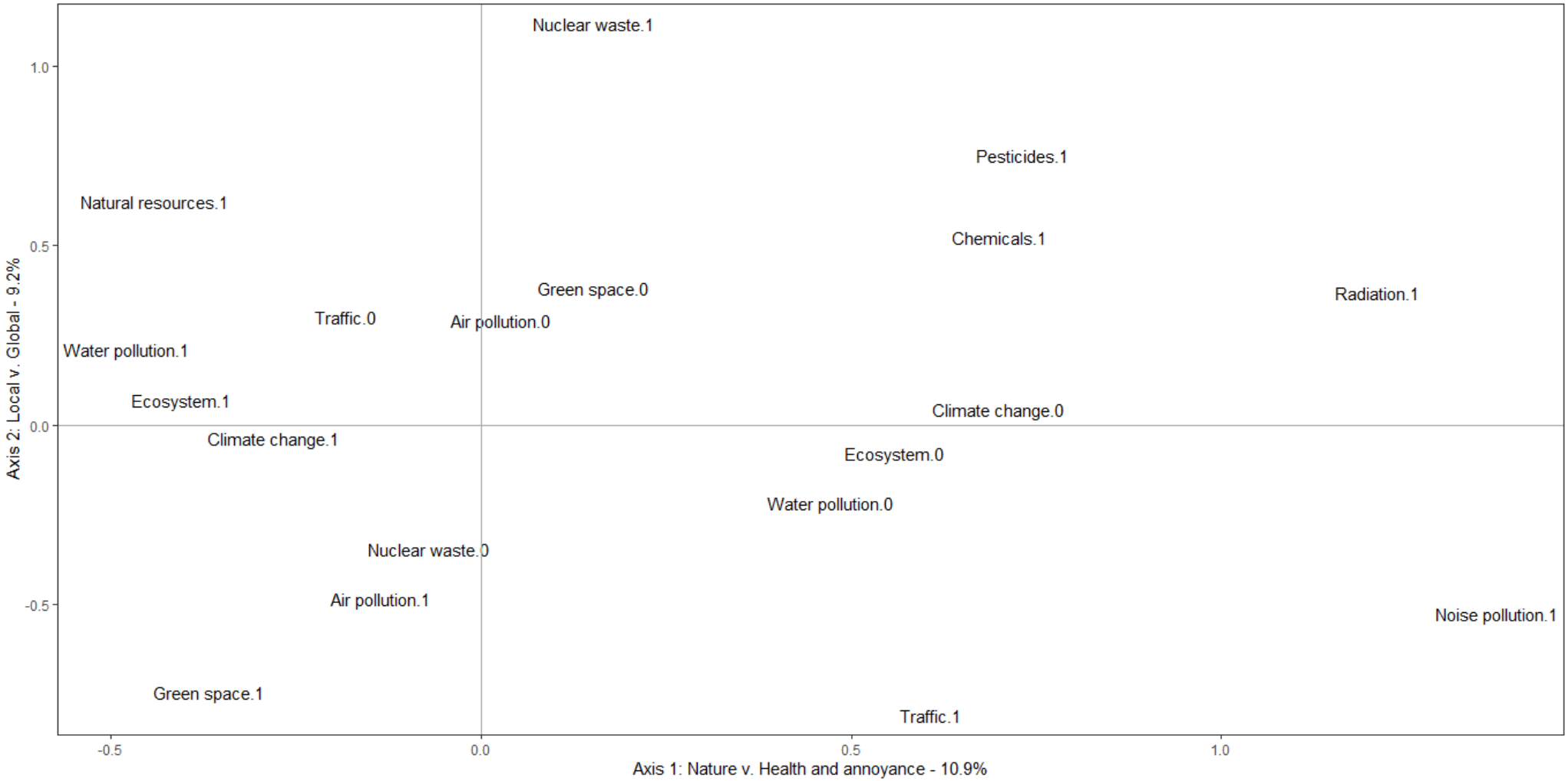

Figure 1. Multiple correspondence analysis with modalities that contribute half or more to the axes.

The first axis (λ = 0.109) mainly differentiates between concerns about the effect of environmental issues on nature (e.g., ecosystems or water pollution) on the left, and health concerns, annoyance, and wellbeing on the right (e.g., radiation or noise pollution). The main contributors to the first axis are whether or not adolescents were concerned about ecosystems, water pollution, and climate change on the one hand, and chemicals, radiation, pesticides, noise pollution, and traffic on the other (Table 3 in appendix). In contrast, the second axis (λ = 0.094) seems to differentiate between mostly local and tangible issues on the bottom (e.g., traffic), and global and complex issues situated on the top part of the graph (e.g., nuclear waste). Main contributors are concerns for natural resources, pesticides, and nuclear waste on the one hand, and green space, air pollution, and traffic on the other (Table 3 in appendix).

The supplementary variables reveal the relationship between the axes and background characteristics of adolescents. We hereby focus on socioeconomic and migration background. Typicality and homogeneity tests reveal that significant differences can be found for all supplementary variables (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010). Yet, most notably, figure 2 reveals that parental educational attainment is associated with the first axis, and to a lesser extent also educational trajectory. It appears that (educationally) disadvantaged groups are most concerned about issues of health, annoyance and wellbeing. In contrast, privileged adolescents in a general trajectory seem more intrinsically concerned about the effects of environmental issues on nature.

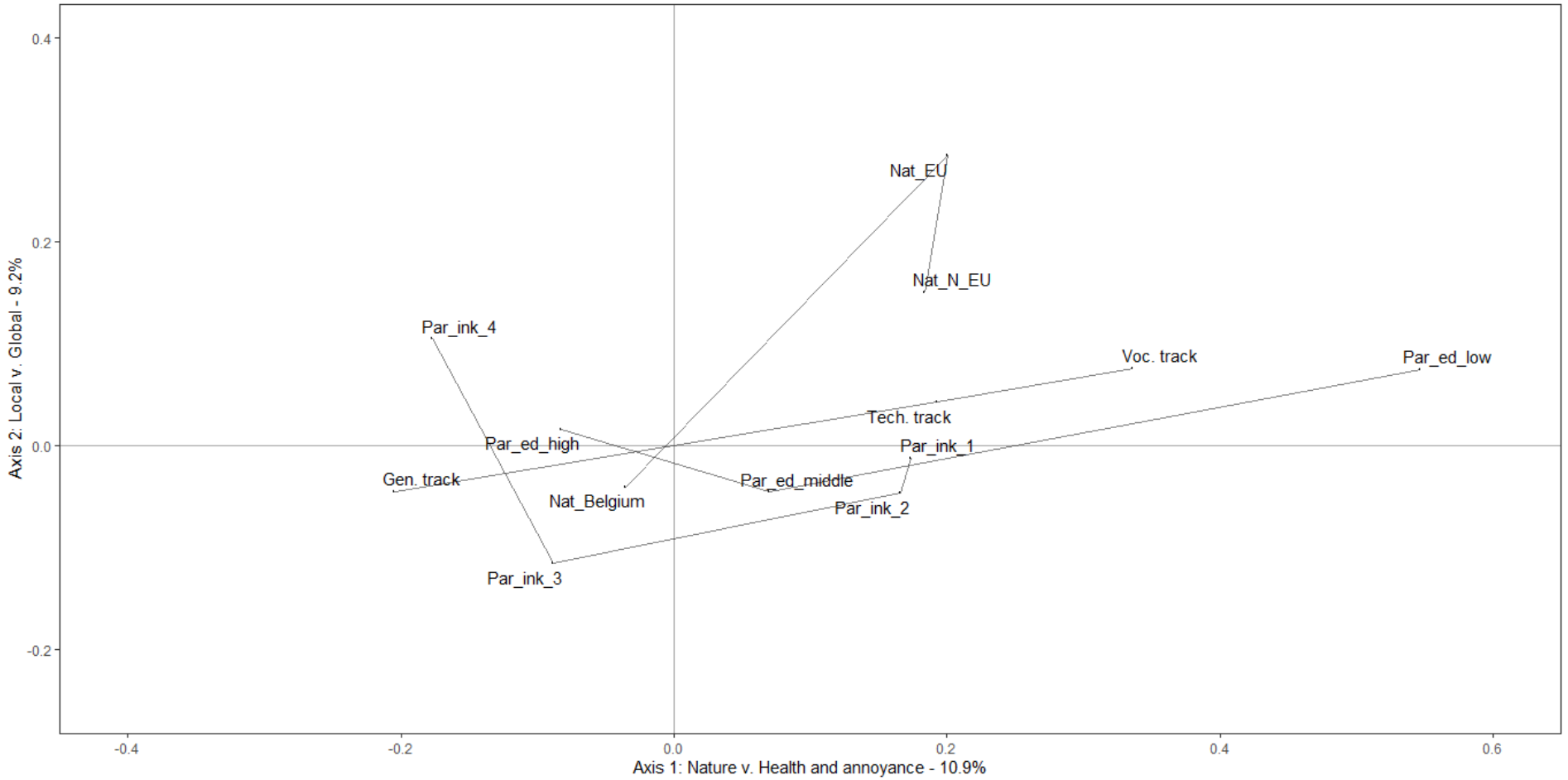

Figure 2. Multiple correspondence analysis with supplementary variables.

Finally, to provide more insights into the types of environmental concern and search for subgroups among adolescents, we employed Euclidean clustering using the individual scores on the axes, also known as agglomerative hierarchical clustering (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2004). Three meaningful clusters were found. Subsequently, these clusters were projected on the MCA using concentration ellipses (Figure 3) and chi-square tests were utilized to assess their relationship to the background characteristics of adolescents (Tables 5-8 in appendix). In brief description, the clusters are (1) adolescents with broad environmental concerns that generally include concerns about nature and ecosystems. Group 1 mostly consists of students in a general trajectory from socio-economically advantaged households; (2) Adolescents in group 2 are mostly concerned about issues of health, annoyance and wellbeing, with a specific focus on local quality-of-life issues. This group mostly contains students from technical trajectories, and members are less likely to have highly educated parents from the second highest income category. Finally, (3) the third group had broad concerns with focus on global risks and their connection to health issues. Group 3 mostly consists of students from vocational trajectories with a lower socioeconomic background.

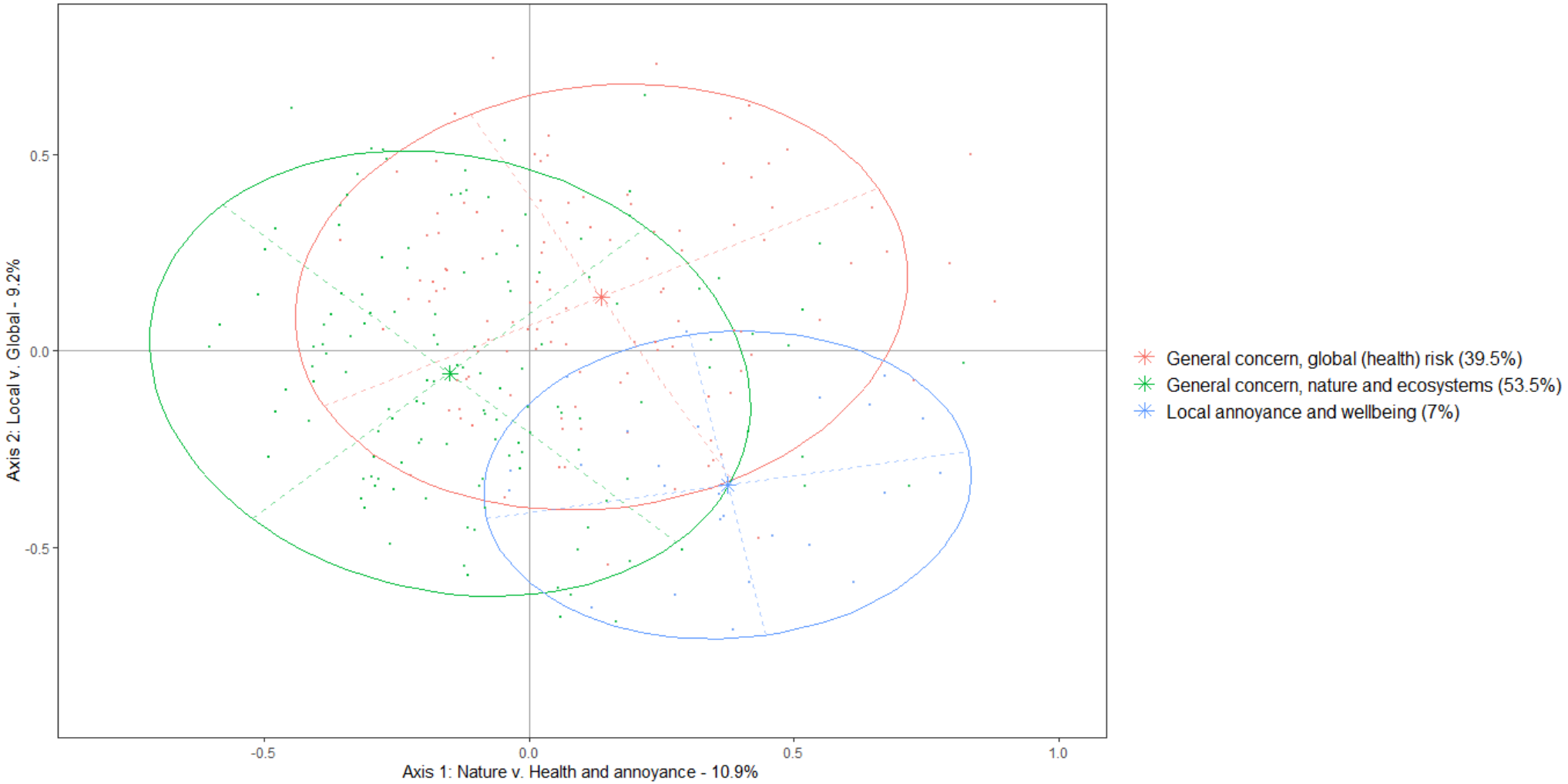

Figure 3. Multiple correspondence analysis with projection of the clusters using concentration ellipses.

2.6 Discussion

Following recent cases of high-profile youth activism, attention increased for the environmental concerns of adolescents. This study contributes to the debate on the relationship between social class and environmental concerns among adolescents. Studies generally rely on composite measures for general environmental concern, and emphasize postmaterial values (e.g., Casaló & Escario, 2016). While a positive relationship is often assumed, such measures may not capture the ways in which environmental concerns are expressed in disadvantaged groups (Burningham & Thrush, 2003). In contrast, the current research not only takes into account general environmental concerns but also the everyday and substantive concerns adolescents may have.

Despite mixed evidence, conventional wisdom holds that awareness of environmental issues and support for environmental protection is limited to privileged citizens of affluent nations (Dunlap & York, 2008; Givens & Jorgenson, 2011). Yet, the results of our study challenge the idea that environmental concern among adolescents is a middle- and upper-class phenomenon. In line with insights from the environmental justice literature (e.g., Burningham & Thrush, 2003) and cultural sociological studies (e.g., Hochschild, 2018), findings reveal that less privileged adolescents are also concerned about environmental issues, albeit that this concern is expressed differently. On the one hand, while adolescents generally agree that their environment is polluted, adolescents from a lower-class background may attribute less relative importance to these issues, for example in comparison with the economy. For instance, Hochschild (2018) suggests that working class and lower middle-class dwellers may resist environmental protection despite their concerns because they are more dependent on industry for their livelihood. On the other hand, whereas privileged adolescents seemed more intrinsically concerned about environment and nature (e.g., ecosystems in danger), less privileged adolescents appeared to emphasize issues of health (e.g., pesticides), or annoyance and wellbeing (e.g., traffic and noise pollution). This is consistent with literature arguing that disadvantaged communities express their concerns less in terms of environmentalism, instead highlighting issues regarding their immediate living environment (Burningham & Thrush, 2003).

Second, this study provides novel insights into the mechanisms through which adolescents are socialized into class-based environmental concern. While a role for parents should not be dismissed, our results mainly highlight the influence of the education system. Environmental

concern was especially high among students following a general educational track which prepares students for tertiary education, in comparison with students in vocational or technical trajectories. The influence of parental socioeconomic position was mostly mediated through these educational trajectory characteristics. Indeed, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to be situated in the latter two trajectories, either by choice or because of a lack of opportunities (Laurijssen & Glorieux, 2023). In line with Bourdieu (1984), our results thus confirm the role of educational systems in the reproduction of social class differences. Moreover, our findings have important implications for the broader literature on social class and environmental concern. Studies usually highlight tertiary education (e.g., Laidley, 2013a). In contrast, this study suggests that social class differences may already be present at an earlier stage, namely through school trajectory paths that do or do not prepare students for tertiary education. Thus, it is essential to acknowledge the pivotal role of early life socialization in class-based dispositions and attitudes. Notwithstanding, our study also reveals the potential of eco-schools. Even though we did not find clear-cut evidence that eco-schools are successful in fostering environmental concern among students, our findings do reveal evidence that they may be able to close the gap between educational trajectories, or at least for students from technical trajectories. One explanation could be that most students in a general track receive some type of environmental education, either through the curricula or peer interactions. Eco-school may be important to increase attention for environmental issues in other trajectories, although no evidence was found for an increased environmental concern in eco-schools among students from vocational trajectories. Moreover, eco-schools appear to successfully foster environmental concerns when parents show a visual commitment to environmental values through their household behaviors (Casaló & Escario, 2016; Meeusen, 2014). Hence, results suggest once again that formal education works best when supported at home.

In sum, our study highlights the diverse ways in which adolescents perceive and prioritize environmental problems. They also reveal issues with traditional measurement instruments used in social scientific research. Our study shows that the expression of environmental concerns is shaped by one's social conditions and thus class-based, rather than there being an absolute difference (Ford, 2019; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). This, however, is not evident in many research efforts. As Ford and Norgaard (2020, p. 44) argue:

"Rather than attending to the culturally specific ways in which people make sense of and respond to climate change, most social scientific research on climate response has measured subjects' relationships to researcher-identified units of meaning […] without accounting for the researchers' own subjectivities, and the ways that those shape the questions being asked."

We believe that the findings of this study warrant further explorations that could address some limitations of this investigation. First, the sample is relatively small (n = 428), so further research may be needed to validate our findings. This is especially the case regarding the diverging role of eco-school in various educational trajectories. Moreover, given the cross-sectional and quantitative nature of our study, further research would benefit greatly from longitudinal methods to offer insights into the dynamic nature of environmental attitudes and qualitative research to provide a deeper understanding of the contextual factors shaping adolescents' environmental concern. Furthermore, in this study, we were only able to construct a factor for items that – more or less - measures the relative importance adolescents attach to environmental issues. As discussed above, such items may exaggerate social class differences. Further studies should pay attention to other measures for environmental concern that may nuance social class findings.

Acknowledgement

This chapter is based on research conducted within the framework of the Flemish Center of Expertise on Environment and Health (FLEHS 2016–2020), funded by the Flemish government, Department of Environment & Spatial Development. The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily endorsed by the Flemish government.

2.7 Appendix

	Sample	Population
Gender		
Male	46.5%	51.3%
Female	53.5%	48.7%
Educational trajectory		
General	50.5%	49.6%
Technical	31.1%	27.9%
Vocational	18.5%	20.6%
Origin		
Belgium	81.5%	79.5%
EU	8.4%	9.2%
Non-EU	10.1%	11.3%
Province		
Antwerpen	27.3%	28.2%
Oost-Vlaanderen	21.3%	23%
West-Vlaanderen	19.2%	18.2%
Limburg	14.5%	13.3%
Vlaams-Brabant	17.8%	17.4%
Urbanization		
Rural	47.4%	39.1%
Suburban	17.1%	20%
Urban	35.5%	40.9%

Table 3. Sample characteristics compassion with population characteristics based on data from the Flemish government from 2018 (https://Statbel.fgov.be & http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be, see also Steunpunt Milieu en Gezondheid (2021))

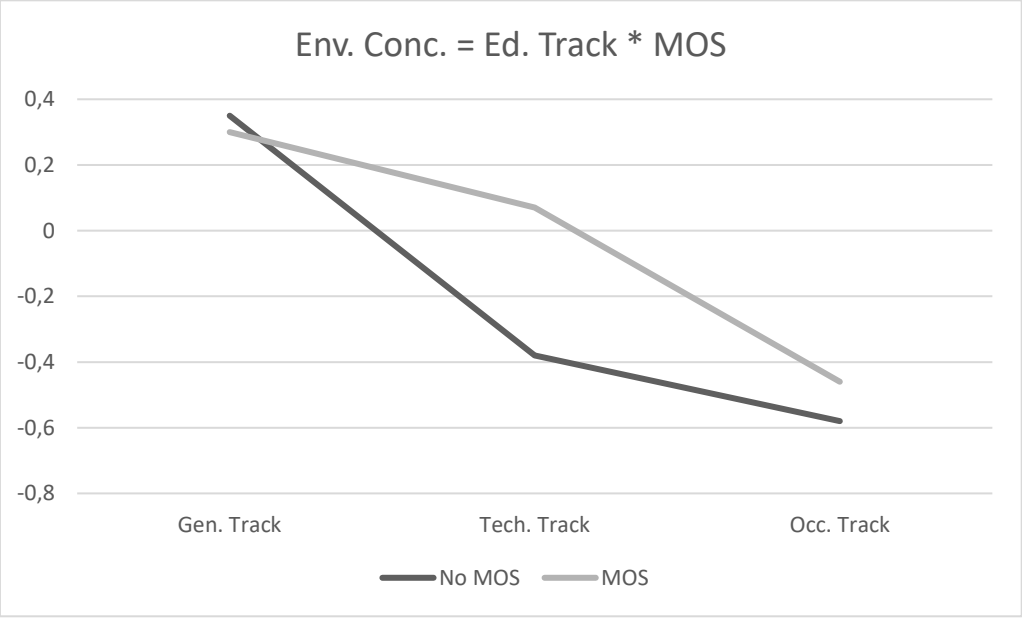

Figure 4. Visualizing the interaction between educational trajectory and MOS regarding environmental concern. This figure is based on three variables, and not the full regression model.

	Axis 1	Axis 2
Natural resources.0	0.94	1.64
Natural resources.1	3.20	5.60
Waste.0	0.05	0.41
Waste.1	0.09	0.66
Ecosystem.0	7.56	0.52
Ecosystem.1	6.57	0.45
Water pollution.0	7.81	1.08
Water pollution.1	7.26	1.00
Pesticides.0	0.86	1.07
Pesticides.1	5.16	6.44
Throw-awaysociety.0	0.00	0.08
Throw-awaysociety.1	0.05	1.48
Soil pollution.0	0.10	0.00
Soil pollution.1	0.75	0.00
Climate change.0	8.67	0.00
Climate change.1	4.28	0.00
Nuclear waste.0	0.05	5.30
Nuclear waste.1	0.18	18.67
Green space.0	1.44	7.93
Green space.1	2.43	13.35
Chemicals.0	1.49	1.03
Chemicals.1	6.34	4.36
Radiation.0	2.09	0.20
Radiation.1	12.25	1.16
Air pollution.0	0.17	4.53
Air pollution.1	0.22	6.11
Noise pollution.0	1.01	0.21
Noise pollution.1	10.30	2.11
Traffic.0	2.22	3.73
Traffic.1	6.48	10.89

Table 4. Modalities and their contributions.

Axis	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Eigenvalue	0.109	0.092	0.088	0.081	0.074
Variance rate	10.9	9.2	8.8	8.1	7.4
Modified rate (Benzécri)	56.1	20.5	14.6	6.7	1.6

Table 5. Eigenvalues and (modified) variance rates.

$\lambda^2 = 15.50$ ($p = 0.004$ or $^*p = 0.007$)	**Par_ed_low**	**Par_ed_middle**	**Par_ed_high**
General concern, nature and ecosystems	15%	49.5%	58.8%
Local annoyance and wellbeing	15%	8.1%	5.8%
General concern, global (health) risk	70%	42.3%	35.4%

*Table 6. Crosstable of clusters and parental education. *The table contains cells with an expected frequency below 5. Therefore, p-valus were also computed by Monte Carlo simulation.*

$\lambda^2 = 19.21$ ($p = 0.004$ or $^*p = 0.006$)	**Par_inc_1**	**Par_inc_2**	**Par_inc_3**	**Par_inc_4**
General concern, nature and ecosystems	47.3%	38.4%	67.6%	59%
Local annoyance and wellbeing	7.7%	13.7%	1.4%	5.7%
General concern, global (health) risk	45.1%	47.9%	31%	35.2%

*Table 7. Crosstable of clusters and parental income. *The table contains cells with an expected frequency below 5. Therefore, p-values were also computed by Monte Carlo simulation.*

$\lambda^2 = 14.51$ ($p < 0.001$ or $^*p < 0.001$)	**Vocational track**	**Technical track**	**General track**
General concern, nature and ecosystems	36.7%	47.1%	62.1%
Local annoyance and wellbeing	5%	13.7%	4.1%
General concern, global (health) risk	58.3%	39.2%	33.8%

*Table 8. Crosstable of clusters and educational trajectory. *The table contains cells with an expected frequency below 5. Therefore, p-values were also computed by Monte Carlo simulation.*

$\lambda 2 = 7.31$ ($p = 0.11$)*	**Nat_Belgium**	**Nat_EU**	**Nat_non_EU**
General concern, nature and ecosystems	55.1%	50%	39.3%
Local annoyance and wellbeing	7.3%	10.7%	0%
General concern, global (health) risk	37.5%	39.3%	60.7%

*Table 9. Crosstable of clusters and migration background trajectory. *The table contains cells with an expected frequency below 1. Therefore, p-values were only computed by Monte Carlo simulation.*

Chapter 3

Exploring class-based inconsistencies between environmental concern and practice. Do we need economic and cultural resources to bridge the gap?

Authors. Robbe Geerts, Vandermoere, F. & Oosterlynck S.

Abstract. Research points out a gap between people's environmental concern and practices. While many studies have connected social class to environmental practices, less is known about the class-based nature of the concern-behavior gap. Hence, we examine class-based inconsistencies between environmental concern and various environmental practices. Empirically, we draw on two separate studies based on data from the Flemish Survey on Socio-Cultural Shifts and Eurobarometer 92.4. Results first contradict the assumed positive association between social class and environmental practices. In contrast, a multidimensional approach to environmental practices showcases a mixed relationship. Specifically, a positive relationship between social class and environmental practices was only found for sustainable shopping. In contrast, negative associations were found for energy curtailment and sustainable transport. Second, results suggest that the concern-behavior gap differs depending on educational attainment. Specifically, the gap is smallest among highly educated groups. In contrast, we found a disconnect between environmental concern and practices among people who are primary educated or less. It seems that cultural capital can be a useful resource for aligning one's behavior with one's environmental concerns. In sum, this study suggests that certain cultural resources, rather than economic resources, may be necessary to align one's behavior with one's environmental concerns. At the same time, however, low-income households also engage in environmental practices, albeit less rooted in environmental concerns. Among low economic capital groups, various environmental practices were understood less in terms of environmentalism, and more in terms of economics.

Keywords. Environmentalism; Social Class; Cultural Capital; Value-Action Gap

3.1 Introduction

Today, individuals and their household behavior are increasingly seen as an important factor in the struggle against environmental issues (Dobson, 2003; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). However, even though environmental awareness is relatively high in our society (European Commission, 2017), action does not always follow (Gleim et al., 2013). Numerous studies have pointed out inconsistencies between people's environmental concern and practices i.e., the concern-behavior gap (ElHaffar, Durif, & Dubé, 2020). Our everyday lives do not appear to match our environmental awareness (Haluza-DeLay, 2008). Many reasons have been given to explain this gap e.g., a lack of knowledge or money (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Furthermore, researchers have pointed out differences between types of behavior, or in other words: the relationship between environmental concern and behavior varies depending on the type of practice (Binder & Blankenberg, 2017). Indeed, people seem selective in the practices they adopt. Previous studies have, for example, differentiated between sustainable shopping decisions, curtailment behavior, sustainable transport, and sorting waste (e.g., Diekmann & Preisendorfer, 2003).

Even though studies connect social class to environmental concern and practices (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Laidley, 2013b), less is known about the classed nature of inconsistencies between environmental concern and practices. While the concern-behavior gap and its causes are well-documented (see ElHaffar, Durif, & Dubé, 2020; or Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002 for extensive reviews), it has mostly been studied through an individual lens. Less studies have explored whether the size of this gap differs between groups of people. In this study, we focus on social class differences, given that many explanations for the concern-behavior gap (e.g., money or knowledge) also relate to social class. It is commonly hypothesized that the alignment of one's practices with one's environmental concerns is predicated upon access to economic and cultural resources, which makes it more difficult for less privileged groups (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Lorenzen, 2014). Yet, studies also reveal that one's ecological footprint consistently increases with one's income and education (Abrahamse & Steg, 2011; Boucher, 2017; Kennedy, Krahn, & Krogman, 2015; Lévay et al., 2021).

Our study aims to provide a sociological understanding of the class-based inconsistencies between environmental concern and various environmental practices. Empirically, we draw on

two separate studies. The first study utilizes data from the Flemish Survey on Socio-Cultural Shifts. Here, multigroup structural equation modeling is employed to examine whether the size of the concern-behavior gap differs between income and educational groups, which serve as social class indicators (Laidley, 2013b). The second study is based on data from Eurobarometer 92.4. Multiple correspondence analysis and latent class analysis are used to investigate behavioral groups with regards to their environmental practices, and the class-based constitution of these groups. Combined interpretations from these studies will provide new insights into the class-based nature of inconsistencies between environmental concern and practices. Moreover, the combination of multiple datasets and multiple statistical methods serves to replicate our findings and strengthen conclusions.

3.2 Theoretical framework

Given contemporary environmental challenges, social scientists have shown a great interest in environmental practices over the last decades. Yet, defining the scope of such practices has been the subject of some debate. Most studies explicitly ascribe intentionality to practices, suggesting that people must act based on environmental awareness and intent, as evident in the widespread concept of 'pro-environmental behavior' (Preisendörfer & Diekmann, 2021). This is reflected strongly in early research on environmental practices which focused heavily on environmental values and attitudes (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Prominent works include the New Environmental Paradigm (Catton Jr & Dunlap, 1978) or the Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory (Stern et al., 1999). This legacy lives on through concepts such as ecological lifestyles, political consumption, or sustainable citizenship (Zorell & Yang, 2019). For Micheletti and Stolle (2012, p. 92), for example, the notion of sustainable citizenship indicates "the need for reflexivity, other-oriented thinking, and voluntary behavior or individualized responsibility-taking in citizen practice." Similarly, for Dobson and Valencia (2005, pp. 157-158), ecological citizenship "requires shifts in attitudes at a deeper level". Moreover, sustainability "aims at attitudes […] by drawing on a powerful commitment […] to the idea of the common good."

These approaches, focusing on value-led decisions and ecological deliberations, have a difficult time explaining empirical accounts of a disconnect between environmental concern and practices. Meta-analyses show that correlations between our green attitudes, values, and practices are

generally low to moderate (Bamberg & Möser, 2007; Klöckner, 2013). There seems to be a disconnect between environmental awareness and actual behavior. This well-established phenomenon has many names, among which: value-action gap, attitude-behavior gap, concern-behavior gap, intention-behavior gap, and green gap (e.g., Babutsidze & Chai, 2018; ElHaffar, Durif, & Dubé, 2020; Frank & Brock, 2018; Park & Lin, 2018; Tam & Chan, 2018). We follow the definition of ElHaffar, Durif and Dubé (2020, p. 3): "the inconsistency between what the individual says regarding his/her growing concern about the environmental problems and what he/she does in terms of actions."

Many theoretical and empirical inquiries have attempted to explain the concern-behavior gap. Much attention has been paid to the behavioral context that may restrict or enable behavior (e.g., Stern, 2000 and the ABC theory). Studies have mainly differentiated between internal (e.g., lack of knowledge or self-efficacy) and situational (e.g., available infrastructure or behavioral costs) barriers to environmental practices (ElHaffar, Durif, & Dubé, 2020; Kennedy et al., 2009; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Following this line of thinking, researchers identified a so-called low-cost strategy (Diekmann and Preisendorfer 1998). In an unfavorable context (e.g., expensive or time-consuming), people may be less likely to follow their environmental concern (Stern, 2000). People thus tend to engage more in low-cost environmental practices (Binder & Blankenberg, 2017; Diekmann & Preisendorfer, 2003). Costs may be defined broadly and diversely (e.g., financial costs, effort, time, etc.)

While the concern-behavior gap and its causes are well-documented (see ElHaffar, Durif, & Dubé, 2020; or Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002 for extensive reviews), it has mostly been studied through an individual lens. Research has not yet fully explored whether the size of this gap differs between groups of people. Some indication in the literature is given about the group-related characteristics of these environmental inconsistencies. Taylor (1989) for example focused on African Americans. Others have studied differences between societies in cross-cultural analyses (e.g. Tam & Chan, 2017, 2018). In this article, we focus on social class differences.

3.3 Social class and environmental practices

The social class literature has often taken a critical position towards environmental issues, emphasizing social inequalities and power relations (Anantharaman, 2018). This also pertains to environmental practices which are often seen as elitist (Anantharaman, 2016; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). This is apparent in notions such as yuppie chow (Guthman, 2003) or eco-chic (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). Moreover, they are described as a cultural performance of class (Kennedy & Givens, 2019), high-status practices (Carfagna et al., 2014) and elite distinction strategies (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). Indeed, numerous studies have connected both environmental concern and practices to middle and upper classes in society. Specifically, it is mostly associated with highly educated white-collar workers with a decent income (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Rhead, Elliot, & Upham, 2018; Zorell & Yang, 2019). For the aims of this study, we identify two mechanisms that contribute to this idea of elitism.

First, much of the literature focuses on ethical consumption (e.g., Carfagna et al., 2014; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). Kennedy and Givens (2019) argue that privileged actors are able to define ideal modes of engagement in environmental protection, thus attribution a sense of legitimacy to green consumerism. Indeed, middle and upper classes seem to value consumerism and market solutions, which are often unattainable for lower classes (Laidley, 2013a). Second, research commonly emphasizes a very specific type of environmental engagement i.e., ecologically oriented behavioral choices (Preisendörfer & Diekmann, 2021). Here, being green is seen as the alignment between environmental values and practices. It is commonly argued that this alignment depends on access to economic and cultural capital (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). In terms of economic resources, green products are often charged at a premium rate, therefore requiring a certain level of affluence (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). Moreover, studies show that such alignment appears especially common in highly educated groups, thus revealing the relevance of cultural capital. One explanation can be found in neo-institutional theory where it is argued that education produces cultural scripts by which actors understand and define behavior (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000). In specific, education seems to - implicitly or explicitly - cultivate values and practices deemed important by society, including environmental awareness and practices (Chawla, 1999; Sela-Sheffy, 2011). Moreover, education may promote citizenship (Wiseman &

Baker, 2006) and political efficacy (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). In other words, highly educated groups may be more willing to act on their environmental awareness and feel more confident that their actions will have a meaningful contribution (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Additionally, Carfagna et al. (2014, p. 1) describe the emergence of an eco-habitus, or a habitus "incorporating environmental awareness and sustainability principles in a configuration that has been called ethical or 'conscious consumption'". Environmental practices are then part of a broader reconfiguration of cultural value and high-status tastes among highly educated middle classes.

Yet, a wide range of other environmental practices and motives to engage in them exist, which may be less exclusive. Authors such as Warde (2005) have expanded our gaze beyond what is typically seen as consumption to include (but are not limited to) sorting behavior, transport choices, and energy use. On the one hand, proponents of practice theory argue that many of these ordinary (Gronow & Warde, 2001) or inconspicuous (Shove & Warde, 2002) forms of consumption are more susceptible to routinization and further removed from ecological deliberations (Shove, 2003; Warde, 2014; Welch & Warde, 2015). Indeed, many of our environmental practices are not inspired by ecological motivations but are part of a wide range of other daily accomplishments (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). Moreover, as Martinsson and Lundqvist (2010, p. 518) argue: one can "come out ecologically clean without […] turning green." This is especially true for people with few economic resources. Studies suggest that they also engage in environmental practices, albeit less embedded in ecological values. In contrast, it is more strongly connected to economic scarcity. McClintock (2018), for example, shows that engagement in urban agriculture is not a prerogative of upper classes. It can also be understood as a food security strategy. Buying local (Schoolman, 2020) and bicycling to work (Anantharaman, 2016) can similarly be understood as economic rather than ecological strategies. Moreover, many studies have shown that, in the end, highly educated and affluent households emit the most carbon (Boucher, 2017) and have the highest household energy use (Abrahamse & Steg, 2011), also in Belgium (Lévay et al., 2021).

In sum, a multidimensional and value-neutral view of environmental practices may shed new light on the supposed positive relation between social class and environmental practices. Against this

background, two studies were conducted to examine the class-based nature of inconsistencies between environmental concern and practices. This will help us to better understand social inequalities related to environmental practices. In particular, we focus on 4 types of practices i.e., sustainable shopping practices, (energy) curtailment, sustainable transport, and waste sorting. With regards to social class, we focus on income and educational attainment as indicators (Laidley, 2013b). The latter is generally used as an indicator for cultural capital, while the former represents economic capital. Economic capital is defined in monetary terms. The concept of cultural capital similarly envisions culture as a resource, including certain forms of knowledge, competencies, practices, and action strategies (Bourdieu 1986). Furthermore, the notion of cultural capital calls attention to the fact that these resources are unevenly distributed and unequally valorized (Bourdieu 1984).

3.4 Materials & Methods

The findings of this contribution are based on 2 separate empirical studies. In what follows, we first outline the materials, analytical strategies, and measures of both studies. Subsequently, the results of each study are presented separately. We hereby focus on the most important aspects of the analysis. In order to save space, background information regarding model testing and fit statistics can be found in appendices A (for study 1) and B (for study 2).

3.4.1 Study 1

The first study was based on data from the Flemish Survey on Socio-Cultural Shifts [SCV-survey] (n = 1449). The analytical objective was to examine whether the size of the concern-behavior gap differs between educational and income groups. Specifically, multigroup structural equation modeling techniques were used. On the one hand, SEM is used to investigate a structure of relationships between latent and manifest variables (Kline, 2015). On the other hand, a different SEM is estimated for each group to assess class-based inconsistencies between environmental concern and practices. For model estimation, a weighted least square estimator (DWLS) was used because the indicators were ordered categorical variables. Information on the various steps involved in the analysis can be found in appendix A, so that this results section can focus on the main findings of the analysis.

Measures. At the dependent level, environmental practices were measured through 24 items (Appendix A, Table 4). All items were measured on a 5-point scale (1. Never - 5. Always). These items were conceptually divided into 4 types of practices: sustainable shopping practices, sustainable transport, curtailment behavior, and sorting waste. At the independent level, environmental concern was measured through 5 items, which can also be found in appendix A, table 4. Participants could answer on a 5-point scale (1. Completely agree – 5. Completely disagree).

Grouping variables entail educational attainment (primary education or less, secondary education, and tertiary education) and household income (0^{th}-33^{rd} percentile, 33^{rd}-66^{th} percentile and 66^{th}- 100^{th} percentile). Although they are somewhat rudimentary indicators of social class, they are both methodologically and theoretically useful. As mentioned in the introduction, income is used as an indicator for economic capital and education for cultural capital. Lastly, each structural model includes a variable for household size, as a control variable in tandem with household income.

3.4.2 Study 2

The second study was based on data from Eurobarometer 92.4. For comparability with the first study, we focused on the Belgian respondents (n = 1007). First, a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) was conducted. This is a method similar to factor analysis, used for categorical variables (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010). The objective is to examine the dimensions underlying a set of categorical variables, or environmental practices in our case. Secondly, a latent class analysis (LCA) was conducted. LCA is a method used to search for latent groups based on a set of (usually categorical) variables (Vermunt & Magidson, 2004). In this study, the LCA was used to identify groups based on their environmental practices. Moreover, covariates were used to provide more insight into the composition of these groups and their motives.

Measures. In terms of environmental practices, 9 measures were used (see also Appendix B, Table 9). In specific, respondents were asked whether, during the last 6 months, they engaged in the following practices: choosing for sustainable transport (e.g., public transport, bike, …), avoiding products with overpackaging, sorting waste, curtailing water usage, curtailing energy

usage, buying products with an eco-label, buying local, avoiding the usage of a car (e.g., avoiding unnecessary trips, working from home, …), and choosing for sustainable food. Considering the respondents' background, 4 indicators were utilized. Firstly, a measure for affluence was used as an indicator for economic capital. Respondents were asked whether they had difficulty paying the bills during the last 12 months. In the analysis, a score of 1 indicates never or almost never, while a score of 0 indicates either most of the time or sometimes. Secondly, educational attainment was used as an indicator for cultural capital (still studying, no full-time education, or education up to 15 years, 16-19, 20 years and older). In terms of socio-demographic control variables, respondents were asked about their age (15-24 years, 25-39, 40-54, 55 years and older) and gender (male or female). Finally, to measure environmental concern, respondents were asked whether or not they perceive climate change as a serious problem in Belgium (10-point scale ranging from *not at all a serious problem* to *an extremely serious problem*).

3.5 Results

3.5.1 Study 1

The multigroup CFA's firstly reveal bivariate relations between environmental concern and practices on the one hand, and income and educational attainment on the other (Appendix A, Tables 6 & 7). It seems that environmental concern is positively related to both educational attainment and income. In contrast, curtailment practices seem most common among less educated and low-income households. Transport seems unrelated to educational attainment but negatively to household income. Sustainable shopping practices were most common among highly educated groups. Lastly, sorting waste appears unrelated to educational attainment and household income on a bivariate level. In conclusion, these initial findings seem to contradict the idea that environmental practices are a prerogative of middle and upper classes. On the contrary, the relationship between social class and environmental practices depends on the practice in question, and some practices are more common in lower classes.

Subsequently, tables 1 and 2 respectively provide insight into the class-based nature of inconsistencies between environmental concern and environmental practices through multigroup structural equation modeling (i.e., MGSEM). First, a MGSEM was estimated for groups depending

on educational attainment. Initially, a model with free regression coefficients across groups was estimated, which fitted well with the data (Appendix A, Table 8). Subsequently, a model was estimated in which the regressions originating from environmental concern were held equal across groups. This resulted in a significantly worse fit. Therefore, it can be concluded that the concern-behavior gap between environmental concern and environmental practices differs between educational groups.

	Curtailment		**Shopping**		**Transport**		**Sorting**	
Primary education or less								
Regression	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.
Concern	.099	.613	-.008	.931	.099	.572	.283	.222
Household Income	**-.048**	**.007**	.003	.689	-.004	.784	.030	.155
Household size	-.070	.505	-.105	.058	.016	.864	**-.335**	**.025**
Covariances	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.
Curtailment			.006	.932	**.361**	**.034**	**.892**	**.003**
Shopping					**.144**	**.045**	**.355**	**.006**
Transport							-.126	.409.
Secondary education								
Regression	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.
Concern	-.094	.257	**.286**	**.000**	**.298**	**.000**	**.233**	**.039**
Household Income	-.011	.063	.002	.559	**-.022**	**.000**	**.016**	**.032**
Household size	**-.124**	**.005**	-.032	.151	.060	.077	**-.175**	**.004**
Covariances	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.
Curtailment			**.089**	**.001**	**.123**	**.007**	**.435**	**.000**
Shopping					**.118**	**.000**	**.265**	**.000**
Transport							.005	.930
Tertiary education								
Regression	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.	β	Sig.
Concern	**.252**	**.000**	**.373**	**.000**	**.318**	**.000**	**.266**	**.001**
Household Income	**-.011**	**.032**	**-.010**	**.005**	**-.020**	**.000**	.008	.200
Household size	-.059	.131	.018	.500	-.010	.765	-.002	.965
Covariances	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.	Cov	Sig.
Curtailment			**.136**	**.000**	**.145**	**.000**	**.232**	**.000**
Shopping					**.145**	**.000**	**.095**	**.001**
Transport							-.070	.076

Table 1. MGSEM for educational groups. The table is limited to the regression coefficients. Only non-standardized coefficients are given. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on a threshold of $p \leq 0.05$.

Specifically, it seems that the gap is smallest among higher educated groups. For our tertiary educated participants, environmental concern had a positive effect on curtailment, shopping, transport and sorting waste. Among secondary educated groups, this was the case for shopping, transport and sorting, but not for energy curtailment. Moreover, we did not find a significant relationship between environmental concern and practices among participants with a primary education or less. Furthermore, this model revealed that income was significantly related to environmental practices within educational groups, after controlling for environmental concern. Household income was negatively related to curtailment behavior for both lowly and highly educated groups. Similarly, income was negatively associated with transport for secondary and tertiary groups. Furthermore, it was negatively associated with shopping behavior among the tertiary educated. Lastly, income had a positive effect on sorting waste for secondary educated groups.

Considering the MGSEM for income, again, two models were estimated. Firstly, a model was estimated with free regression parameters. A second MGSEM was estimated in which regressions originating from environmental concern were held equal across groups. It seems that these models did not significantly differ. Therefore, this study cannot conclude that the concern-behavior gap differs between income groups. Subsequently, the model with equal regression coefficients was retained. For all income groups, environmental concern had a positive effect on environmental practices, after controlling for household size and educational attainment. Furthermore, the results revealed some interesting findings on the relationship between educational attainment and environmental practices. Among low-income households, tertiary educational attainment was negatively related to curtailment behavior and positively related to shopping and transport. Among middle-income households, tertiary educational attainment was positively related to sustainable shopping.

	Curtailment		Shopping		Transport		Sorting	
Household Income #1								
Regression	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**
Concern	**.074**	**.039**	**.292**	**.000**	**.235**	**.000**	**.104**	**.008**
Primary education	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Secondary education	-.221	.095	.044	.564	.201	.092	.000	.995
Tertiary education	**-391**	**.020**	**.360**	**.001**	**.419**	**.010**	-.042	.604
Household size	**-.121**	**.005**	-.034	.244	-.062	.180	-.004	.850
Covariances	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**
Curtailment			**.067**	**.041**	**.188**	**.003**	**.128**	**.007**
Shopping					**.116**	**.001**	**.086**	**.002**
Transport							**-.069**	**.032**
Household Income #2								
Regression	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**
Concern	**.074**	**.039**	**.292**	**.000**	**.235**	**.000**	**.104**	**.008**
Primary education	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Secondary education	.264	.125	.049	.656	-.211	.064	-.058	.638
Tertiary education	.143	.433	**.303**	**.012**	-.045	.712	-.028	.833
Household size	-.065	.145	-.014	.628	.037	.227	**-.091**	**.005**
Covariances	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**
Curtailment			**.093**	**.001**	**.091**	**.006**	**.170**	**.000**
Shopping					**.128**	**.000**	**.111**	**.000**
Transport							.006	.800
Household Income #3								
Regression	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**	**β**	**Sig.**
Concern	**.074**	**.039**	**.292**	**.000**	**.235**	**.000**	**.104**	**.008**
Primary education	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Secondary education	.135	.519	.211	.273	-.147	.414	.229	.291
Tertiary education	.113	.585	.371	.051	-.062	.728	.351	.155
Household size	-.050	.065	-.021	.408	0.011	.594	-.021	.528
Covariances	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**	**Cov**	**Sig.**
Curtailment			**.082**	**.000**	**.048**	**.003**	.097	.067
Shopping					**.075**	**.000**	.074	.063
Transport							.025	.200

Table 2: MGSEM for income groups. #1 0^{th}-33^{rd} percentile, #2 33^{rd}-66^{th} percentile, 66^{th}-100^{th} percentile. The table is limited to the regression coefficients. Only non-standardized coefficients are given. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on a threshold of $p \leq 0.05$.

3.5.2 *Study 2*

First, a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) was conducted to analyze the dimensions underlying environmental practices. Sampling weights were used for the analysis. Following Le Roux and Rouanet (2010), the number of axes to be interpreted was based on the (modified) rates for explained variance (Appendix B, Table 11).

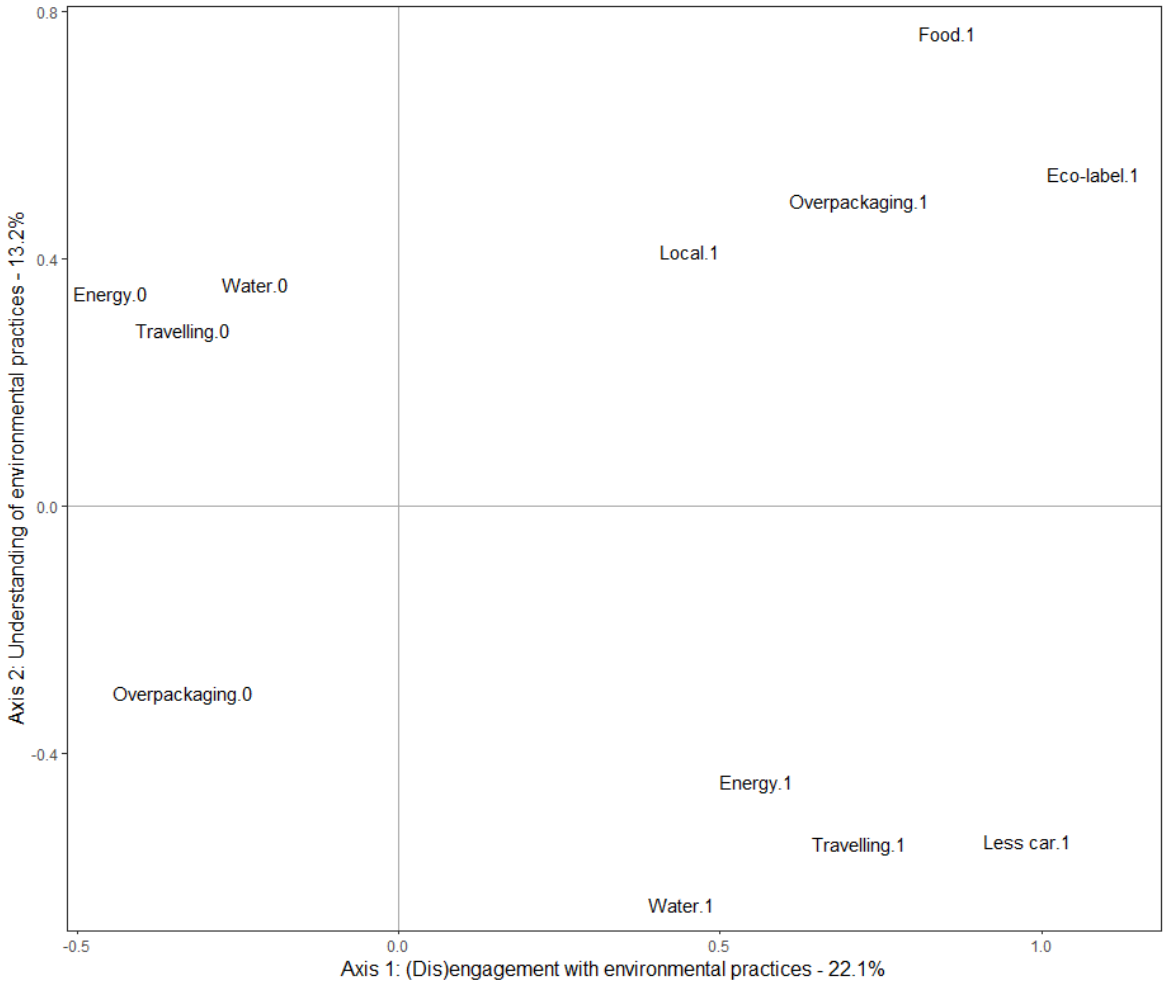

Figure 1. Multiple correspondence analysis with modalities that contribute half or more to the axes.

Results suggest that the dimensions underlying environmental practices can be represented by two axes. In order to interpret these axes, the modalities (i.e., variable categories) were graphed and their relationship with the axes could be used to provide insight in the meaning of the axes. With 9 dummy variables, there are 18 modalities. Each modality represents either engagement or disengagement with a certain environmental practice. Only modalities that contribute approximately average or more to the axes (Appendix B, Table 10) were visualized and used to interpret the axes (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010). Moreover, affluence and educational attainment were added to the graph as supplementary variables. Consequently, we were able to analyze the structuring capacities of economic and cultural capital. It is worth noting that, even though typicality and homogeneity tests reveal significant differences, they are relatively small (Figure 2).

Axis 1 ($\lambda = 0.221$) seems to represent either general engagement or disengagement with environmental practices (Figure 1). Moreover, it seems that educational attainment structures social differences in axis 1, with the highest educated being most engaged in environmental practices (Figure 2). Affluence does not seem to differentiate much between the engaged and disengaged. Axis 2 ($\lambda = 0.132$) is characterized by differences between types of environmental practices. The lower part of the graph appears to depict practices that are financially attractive i.e., saving water, saving energy, and car avoidance. In contrast, the top part consists of consumer actions such as buying eco-labeled products, eating sustainable food, buying local, and avoiding overpackaging. Sustainable consumer action is often more expensive than non-sustainable alternatives. This is showcased by the fact that people with financial issues are situated more in the lower parts of the graph, compared to people without financial troubles. An educational gradient seems to exist as well, with more educated people being situated more in the top part of the graph, and lower educated people in the lower part.

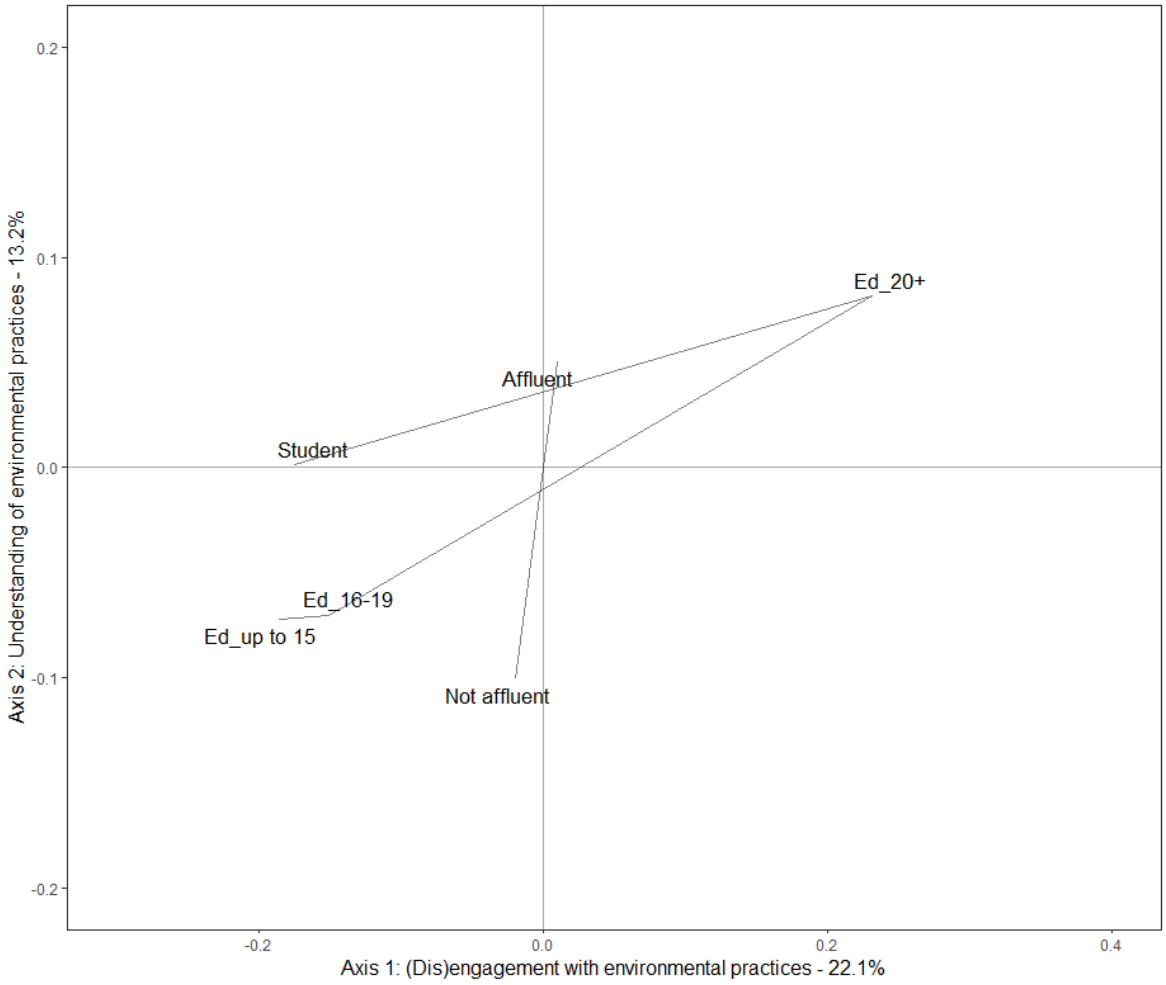

Figure 2. Multiple correspondence analysis with supplementary variables.

Subsequently, a latent class analysis was conducted based on the measures for environmental practices. Each model was run 50 times to avoid local maxima. Based on fit statistics and theoretical interpretability, a three-class model was selected. BIC reached a minimum in the three-class model and AIC seems to level off after 3 classes similar to an elbow-plot (Appendix B, Table 12). Figure 3 projects class membership back on the two-dimensional plane of the MCA to aid in the interpretation. Class 1 is the smallest class (16.5%). This class appears to engage in all types of environmental practices, given their high probability to endorse each practice. We dubbed this class the *ecological practitioners*. In contrast, class 2 (the largest group – 63.7%) seems mostly disengaged in environmental practices. Therefore, they were called the *non-*

practitioners. Lastly, the third (19.8%) has relatively high probabilities to endorse the items on sustainable transport, energy and water curtailment. However, they score lowest on items that represent consumer actions (i.e., buying eco-labeled products, buying local, avoiding overpackaged items, and choosing for sustainable food) and sorting waste. It seems that this class mostly engages in environmental practices that can be financially beneficial, while being least engaged in all other types of behavior. These results provide evidence that a group of people exists who evaluate and understand environmental practices in financial rather than ecological terms. Therefore, we dubbed them *financial practitioners*. This line of reasoning is explored in more detail when taking the covariates into account.

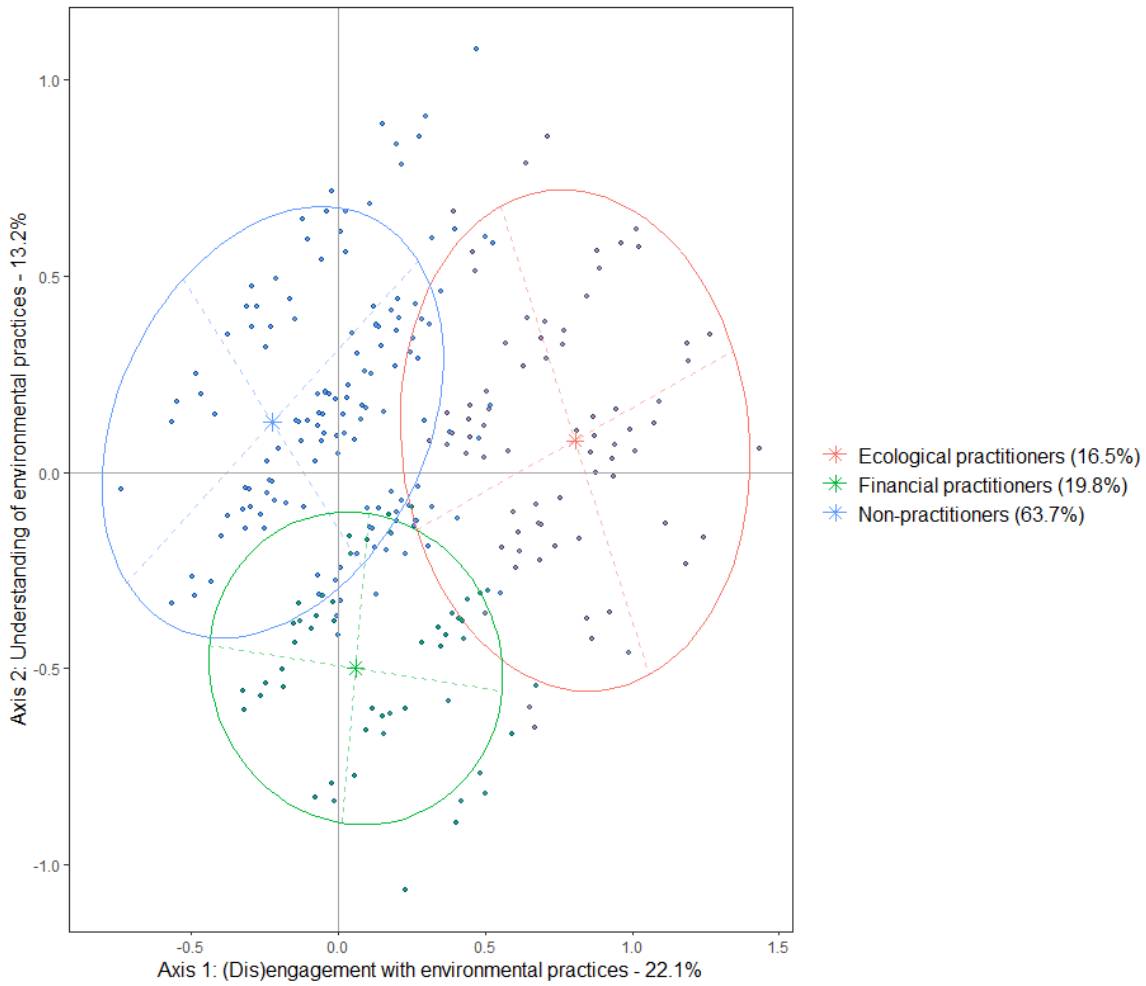

Figure 3. Multiple correspondence analysis with projection of the latent classes using concentration ellipses.

Table 3 shows the results of a multinomial regression where class membership is predicted by environmental concern, age, gender, educational attainment, and affluence. Class 1 (ecological practitioners) serves as the reference category. It seems that age does not affect class membership. Considering gender, it seems that women have considerably smaller odds of being a non-practitioner compared to being an ecological practitioner.

More importantly to our study, we also investigated the role of educational attainment (as an indicator for cultural capital) and affluence (as an indicator for economic capital). On the one hand, educational attainment seems positively related to being an ecological practitioner. Specifically, people who followed full-time education from the age of 20 onwards have significantly lower odds of being non-practitioners or financial practitioners compared to being an ecological practitioner. On the other hand, affluence seems to differentiate between financial and ecological practitioners. In specific, people who regularly have financial issues had increased odds of belonging to the group of financial practitioners, thus providing further evidence of our interpretation that this group is mainly financially motivated in their environmental practices.

In sum, it seems that educational attainment mostly determines whether or not people are ecological practitioners, and affluence whether or not they are financial practitioners. Finally, we pay attention to the role of environmental concern. Unsurprisingly, environmental concern relates positively to being an ecological practitioner. Moreover, it seems that environmental concern does not differentiate between non-practitioners and financial practitioners. In other words, these groups have equal levels of environmental concern ($p=0.359$, not shown in table), which further shows that financial practitioners may not be ecologically motivated.

	NonPrac (vs. EcoPrac)			FinPrac (vs. EcoPrac)		
	Std β	Sig.	Exp(B)	Std β	Sig.	Exp(B)
Age						
15	Ref.					
25	-.323	.747	.849	-.428	.669	.760
40	-.334	.738	.840	.947	.344	1.841
55	-.554	.580	.750	1.137	.255	2.072
Gender (female)	**-2.43**	**.015**	**.637**	-.539	.590	.885
Education						
< 15	Ref.					
<20	-.502	.616	.794	-.443	.657	.800
20+	**-3.087**	**.002**	**.248**	**-2.398**	**.016**	**.301**
Student	-.944	.345	.530	-.163	.871	.878
Affluence						
No	Ref.					
Yes	-.696	.487	.406	**-2.245**	**.014**	**.550**
Environmental concern	**-4.011**	**.001**	**.702**	**-3.851**	**.001**	**.790**
Intercept	**5.810**	**.001**		**3.120**	**0.002**	
Nagelkerke R^2	12%					

Table 3. Multinomial logistic regression. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on a threshold of $p \leq 0.05$.

3.6 Discussion

Next to governments and market agents, individuals and their consumption practices are increasingly seen as key players in strategies aiming for global sustainable development (Micheletti & Stolle, 2012). Consequently, the gap between environmental concern and practices constitutes a major barrier to solving environmental issues such as climate change. Against this background, this study examined the class-based nature of these inconsistencies. Several major findings arose from our investigation.

First, the results of this study suggest that inconsistencies between environmental concern and practices depend on educational attainment. Concretely, it seems that higher educated people are most successful in aligning their concern with their environmental concern. Moreover, environmental concern was completely unrelated to environmental practices among people who are primary educated or less. In contrast, this study cannot conclude that the concern-behavior gap significantly differs between income groups. In social class research, income and educational attainment are often researched in pair, where income represents economic capital and educational attainment represents cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In line with the cultural turn in social class research, this examination confirms the prevalence of cultural dimensions (Crompton, 2008). Particular to our study, educational attainment matters above and beyond

purely financial differences. People may need certain cultural resources to align their environmental concern and behavior. Similar to Kennedy and Givens (2019), lower educated groups may lack these resources, leading to a sense of powerlessness in light of ecological issues. Our findings thus correspond with research suggesting that the emergence of an eco-habitus is mostly associated with cultural capital, and that economic capital is less strongly associated with these green dispositions (Carfagna et al., 2014). Similarly, while materialistic approaches have been dominant in environmental sociology, Kennedy and Johnston (2019) argue to pay more attention to cultural approaches (see also Evans, 2018; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). Culture may provide more insights in our actions and inactions with regard to environmental issues (Balsiger, Lorenzini, & Sahakian, 2019; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011).

Secondly, our findings also reveal that much of our environmental practices are detached from environmental concern. On the one hand, in absolute terms, most people seem to be engaged in low-cost and at-home practices, such as sorting waste and curtailment behavior, that are relatively decoupled from environmental concern (see Appendix A, Table 4 and Appendix B, Table 9). One explanation entails that these behaviors are part of people's routines, and therefore less understood in terms of their environmental impact (Flynn, Bellaby, & Ricci, 2009). Practice theory may provide a better understanding of these *inconspicuous (or ordinary)* forms of consumption (Gronow & Warde, 2001; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012; Shove & Warde, 2002; Warde, 2014). While practice theory is a broad and multifaceted theoretical perspective, its common denominator is the acknowledgement that behavioral practices are not only determined by conscious and deliberate action (Warde, 2014). In contrast, many practices are a routinized part of everyday life, and are enshrined in habits, rules, regulations, and material systems of provision (Spaargaren & Van Vliet, 2000; Warde, 2005). For example, sorting behavior has been legally obligated in Belgium for quite some time.

Finally, even if groups engage in similar practices, they may have a very different interpretation and appreciation of these practices. Results suggest that practices such as curtailment or sustainable transport were negatively associated with household income, thus contradicting the idea that environmental practices are elitist. Yet, our study also reveals that these practices are less rooted in environmental concern. Most likely, they are tied to financial considerations.

Indeed, one's engagement in various social practices is dependent on implicit schemes of knowledge or presuppositions (Reckwitz, 2002; Welch, 2020), which are very much tied to social class (Bourdieu, 1984). Arguably, the same is true for environmental practices, which can be understood differently depending on one's social position. While high cultural capital individuals may understand their behavior in terms of environmentalism, others may have a different understanding of these practices.

We believe that our results have important scientific and societal implications. To start, a discussion may arise about the way we should study and understand environmental practices. While studies often emphasize individual environmental values and choices, our study reveals that research should incorporate a larger repertoire of mainly unconscious and inconspicuous behaviors that are detached from environmental considerations. In the sociological literature, practice theory is the most salient expression of this idea (Kennedy, Cohen, & Krogman, 2015; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012; Spaargaren, 2011). Yet, to date, practice theory has focused on the roles of routinization and materiality. This has somewhat overshadowed cultural viewpoints, and neglected social relations and social divisions such as social class (Evans, 2018; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). Our study shows that culture still has a role to play in environmental sociology. In specific, cultural approaches may be useful to critically assess group dynamics, power relations, and social class inequalities. A Bourdieusian view on practice theory may provide valuable insights into the ways various social (class) groups understand, appreciate, and engage in environmental practices (Kasper, 2009).

A second discussion may arise about what constitutes environmental practices. On the one hand, we did not find a positive but rather a mixed relationship between social class and environmental practices. On the other hand, it seems that the environmental practices of high cultural capital individuals are driven more by environmental concern. Moreover, they seem to adopt behaviors that are usually seen as low-status (sustainable transport and curtailment behavior), albeit with an ecological twist (Anantharaman, 2016). The literature suggests that this green intentionality is important for the status of environmental practices and their societal valorization (McClintock, 2018; Schoolman, 2020). Among other reasons, upper classes may retain their high-status position through this ecological grounding. Consequently, a focus on intentionality may overvalue

the environmental practices of some groups. Concepts such as ecological lifestyles, political consumption, and sustainable citizenship have been successful because they frame individual behavior in terms of civic responsibility and collective strategies to tackle environmental issues. However, they tend to focus on green values (Martinsson & Lundqvist, 2010). Ignoring non-deliberate and apolitical environmental practices may inadvertently give them an elitist connotation. In this context, Kennedy and Givens (2019) warn not to unintentionally associate environmentalism with higher social classes by confounding concern, awareness, affinity with solutions, self-efficacy, and environmental practices.

While our research has limitations, it also provides promising avenues for future research. Firstly, our study found educational differences in the concern-behavior gap, emphasizing cultural resources. Yet, it remains up to further studies to explain these differences. Mixed method and qualitative research would be valuable additions to achieve this goal. Secondly, our study was based on cross-sectional data. In order to strengthen causal claims, longitudinal data may be necessary. While our attitudes affect our behavior, the opposite may also be true (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Thirdly, we admit that our measures for social class were somewhat rudimentary. Further research should utilize a more nuanced and complex operationalization of social class. Finally, we have focused on social class when examining group-based inconsistency between environmental awareness and behavior. Future research may examine other social divisions such as ethnicity or gender.

3.7 Appendix A

Following the methodological best practices, the multigroup structural equation model was constructed stepwise (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Before constructing the structural model, (i) a measurement model (confirmatory factor analysis) was estimated in order to evaluate the latent constructs (Table 5). (ii) Step two involved testing for measurement invariance. In a multigroup SEM, researchers must ensure that latent construct measurements are comparable across groups. In practice, nested models are tested for equivalence (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). In each step, additional parameters are equalized across groups in order to ensure measurement comparability. A chi-square test subsequently determines whether these restrictions significantly worsen the model. Using categorical indicators, this study's approach to measurement invariance somewhat differs from the usual steps of configural invariance (equal measurement structure), metric invariance (equal loadings) and scalar invariance (equal intercepts) (Svetina, Rutkowski, & Rutkowski, 2020). Particularly, scalar invariance involved equalizing thresholds instead of intercepts. If strict equality constraints do not hold across groups, some parameter constraints may be loosened in order to achieve partial invariance (Byrne, Shavelson, & Muthén, 1989). At least 2 indicators for each construct should be invariant for any meaningful comparisons between groups. In the last step (iii), a structural model was estimated to investigate structural relationships between latent constructs and manifest variables (see Tables 1 & 2 in main text). Specifically, environmental practices were regressed on environmental concern for each subgroup. Furthermore, education was used as a control variable in the multigroup SEM for income and vice versa. Given the correlation between educational attainment and income, this was done to avoid confounding their effects. All model fit information can be found in table 8 in this appendix.

	Completely agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Completely disagree
Environmental concern					
Environmental problems are exaggerated (x1)	34	236	350	698	120
I seldom worry about environmental pollution (x2)	59	346	206	697	141
Talking about pollution only serves to worry people (x3)	48	408	278	621	92
We worry too much about the environment and too little about employment (x4)	69	383	342	533	116
We worry too much about progress damaging the environment (x5)	43	484	325	525	65
	Never	**Seldom**	**Sometimes**	**Often**	**(Almost) always**
Curtailment					
Shut down electric devices when not in use (x6)	61	111	190	450	636
Shut off lights when leaving the room (x7)	9	22	72	321	1024
Only heating space when necessary (x8)	60	68	132	341	845
Shopping					
Recycled products (x9)	187	223	450	428	157
Biological products (x10)	451	300	437	200	58
Local food (x11)	146	167	479	467	182
Take into account packaging e.g., no surplus, bio-degradable, etc. (x12)	344	314	368	303	117
Inspecting the product labels (x13)	419	316	321	252	137
Env. friendly personal care products (x14)	407	336	379	230	86
Env. friendly household products/cleaning supplies (x15)	348	302	396	273	116
Transport					
Public transport when possible (x16)	478	337	240	205	188
Cycling or walking short distances (x17)	157	147	252	356	531
Searching for alternatives to a car as much as possible (x18)	329	331	351	226	194
Sorting					
GFT waste (x19)	157	43	73	126	1048
Going to the container park (x20)	75	51	160	200	960
Returning empty batteries (x21)	59	45	67	142	1131
Small hazardous waste (x22)	45	39	76	137	1148

Table 4. Descriptive statistics.

Measurement Model: Construct Validation

Initially, a confirmatory factor analysis was estimated for all groups simultaneously. The model appeared to fit with the data (Table 8). Moreover, the AVE and CR for sustainable transport (AVE: 0.63 and CR: 0.83), sustainable shopping decisions (AVE: 0.47 and CR: 0.86), curtailment behavior (AVE: 0.45 and CR: 0.71), sorting waste (AVE: 0.55 and CR: 0.83), and environmental concern (AVE: 0.45 and CR: 0.80) were all satisfactory.

	Env. Concern	Curtailment	Shopping	Transport	Sorting
Env. Concern	1	-0.026	**0.356*** **	**0.221*** **	**0.145*** **
Curtailment	-0.026	1	**0.223*** **	**0.253*** **	**0.404*** **
Shopping	**0.356*** **	**0.223*** **	1	**0.349*** **	**0.394*** **
Transport	**0.221*** **	**0.253*** **	**0.349*** **	1	-0.035
Sorting	**0.145*** **	**0.404*** **	**0.394*** **	-0.035	1

*Table 5. Covariances from the CFA. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on the following thresholds of *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001.*

Measurement Invariance

For both multigroup CFAs (Tables 6 and 7), only partial measurement invariance was established. In each case, full scalar invariance did not hold. Based on modification indices, some equality constraints were released. Specifically, loadings and thresholds for items X2, X5, X10 and X11 were released in the MGCFA for education. Item loadings and thresholds for items X5 and X11 were freely estimated in MGCFA for income. However, equality constraints for more than 2 items were maintained for each construct, thus maintaining comparability (Byrne, Shavelson, and Muthén 1989).

MGCFA – Education	Env. Concern	Curtailment	Shopping	Transport	Sorting
Primary education or less (n = 179)	Intercept: **-0.883*** **	Intercept: **0.590*** **	Intercept: **-0.198** **	Intercept: -0.035	Intercept: 0.107
Env. Concern	1	-0.031	0.003	0.076	-0.013
Curtailment	-0.031	1	0.047	0.263	**0.634*** **
Shopping	0.003	0.047	1	**0.186** **	**0.278*** **
Transport	0.076	0.263	**0.186** **	1	-0.059
Sorting	-0.013	**0.634*** **	**0.278*** **	-0.059	1
Secondary education (n = 682)	Intercept: **-0.505*** **	Intercept: **0.234** **	Intercept: **-0.152*** **	Intercept: -0.043	Intercept: -0.085
Env. Concern	1	-0.033	**0.128*** **	**0.127** **	0.058
Curtailment	-0.033	1	**0.104*** **	**0.146** **	**0.329*** **
Shopping	**0.128*** **	**0.104*** **	1	**0.148*** **	**0.235*** **
Transport	**0.127** **	**0.146** **	**0.148*** **	1	-0.024
Sorting	0.058	0.329***	0.235***	-0.024	1
Tertiary education (n = 524)	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Env. Concern	1	**0.095** **	**0.170*** **	**0.160*** **	**0.121*** **
Curtailment	**0.095** **	1	**0.176*** **	**0.218*** **	**0.258*** **
Shopping	**0.170*** **	**0.176*** **	1	**0.204*** **	**0.136*** **
Transport	**0.160*** **	**0.218*** **	**0.204*** **	1	-0.027
Sorting	**0.121*** **	**0.258*** **	**0.136*** **	-0.027	1

*Table 6. MGCFA for educational groups. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on the following thresholds of *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001.*

MGCFA – Income	**Env. Concern**	**Curtailment**	**Shopping**	**Transport**	**Sorting**
Household Income #1 (n = 456)	Intercept: **-0.123***	Intercept: **0.325*** **	Intercept: 0.059	Intercept: **0.199****	Intercept: 0.145
Env. Concern	1	-0.007	**0.148*** **	**0.093***	**0.113***
Curtailment	-0.007	1	**0.077***	**0.205****	**0.361*** **
Shopping	**0.148*** **	**0.077***	1	**0.180*** **	**0.278*** **
Transport	**0.093***	**0.205****	**0.180*** **	1	-0.126
Sorting	**0.113***	**0.361*** **	**0.278*** **	-0.1262	1
Household Income #2 (n = 433)	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Env. Concern	1	-0.010	**0.149*** **	**0.089*** **	0.071
Curtailment	-0.010	1	**0.103*** **	**0.093****	**0.288*** **
Shopping	**0.089*** **	**0.103*** **	1	**0.168*** **	**0.201*** **
Transport	**0.149*** **	**0.093****	**0.168*** **	1	0.012
Sorting	0.071	**0.288*** **	**0.201*** **	0.012	1
Household Income #3 (n = 414)	Intercept: **0.212*** **	Intercept: **-0.258*** **	Intercept: -0.065	Intercept: -0.103	Intercept: 0.047
Env. Concern	1	**0.059***	**0.146*** **	**0.189*** **	**0.100***
Curtailment	**0.059***	1	**0.118*** **	**0.111*** **	**0.189*** **
Shopping	**0.146*** **	**0.118*** **	1	**0.169*** **	**0.136*** **
Transport	**0.189*** **	**0.111*** **	**0.169*** **	1	0.059
Sorting	**0.100***	**0.189*** **	0.059	0.136	1

*Table 7. MGCFA for income groups. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on the following thresholds of *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001.*

Multigroup SEM

In the final step, structural models were estimated, based on the MGCFA's (Tables 1 & 2, main text). Initially, a model with free regression coefficients across groups was estimated. Subsequently, a model was estimated in which the regressions originating from environmental concern were held equal across groups. Then, ANOVA tests were conducted to analyze whether or not the equalization of regression coefficients could be considered a worsening of the model. In the MGSEM for income, item x22 was removed due to estimation issues caused by a negative item variance. Further inquiries revealed that one of the categories was empty for one of the groups which caused problems estimating the models. Therefore, to test the robustness of findings, all models in the whole study were rerun without x22 and quasi-identical results were attained.

	Chi Square; df; P-value	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
CFA – measurement model					
CFA	1033.36; df=199; p < 0.001	0.947	0.939	0.055	0.050
MGCFA - Education					
MGCFA - Education - configural	1306.96; df=597; p < 0.001	0.951	0.943	0.051	0.061
MGCFA - Education – scalar	1573.13; df=753; p < 0.001	0.944	0.948	0.049	0.062
Configural v scalar invariance: Chisq diff = 236.46, p < 0.001					
MGCFA - Education - partial invariance	1453.19; df=723; p < 0.001	0.950	0.952	0.047	0.062
Configural v scalar invariance: Chisq diff = 151.16, p = 0.063					
MGCFA – Income					
MGCFA - Income - configural	1275.81; df=597; p < 0.001	0.950	0.942	0.052	0.062
MGCFA - Income – scalar	1470.81; df=753; p < 0.001	0.947	0.951	0.048	0.063
Configural v scalar invariance: Chisq diff = 202.49, p = 0.007					
MGCFA - Income - partial invariance	1428.44; df=739; p < 0.001	0.949	0.952	0.047	0.063
Configural v scalar invariance: Chisq diff = 166.18, p = 0.081					
MGSEM – Education					
MGSEM - Education - free regression	1496.51; df=831; p < 0.001	0.949	0.958	0.044	0.063
MGSEM - Education - equal regression	1522.65; df=839; p < 0.001	0.948	0.957	0.044	0.065
Free regression vs equal regression: Chisq diff = 15.87, p = 0.044					
MGSEM - Income					
MGSEM - Income - free regression	1595.00; df=824; p < 0.001	0.938	0.953	0.047	0.061
MGSEM - Income - equal regression	1589.20; df=832; p < 0.001	0.939	0.954	0.047	0.061
Free regression vs equal regression: Chisq diff = 10.02, p = 0.263					

Table 8. Fit statistics for multigroup models.

3.8 Appendix B

	No	Yes
Sustainable transport	64.8	35.2
Avoiding products with overpackaging	65.3	34.7
Sorting waste	30	70
Curtailing water usage	64.7	35.3
Curtailing energy usage	57.1	42.9
Buying products with an eco-label	82	18
Buying local	59.3	40.7
Avoiding the usage of a car	73.6	26.4
Sustainable food	76.6	23.4

Table 9. Descriptive statistics.

	Axis 1	Axis 2
Travelling.0	4.436998	5.243573
Travelling.1	8.246928	9.746086
Overpackaging.0	5.240352	4.181637
Overpackaging.1	9.818497	7.834855
Waste seperation.0	3.895627	3.866438
Waste seperation.1	1.663411	1.650948
Water.0	2.072555	6.039991
Water.1	3.852097	11.226066
Energy.0	5.560307	4.711907
Energy.1	7.448402	6.311914
Eco-label.0	2.393759	0.849359
Eco-label.1	11.034401	3.915250
Local.0	3.198667	4.415477
Local.1	4.711597	6.503943
Less car.0	4.207563	2.508814
Less car.1	11.864124	7.074139
Food.0	2.407148	3.235873
Food.1	7.947568	10.683730

Table 10. Modalities and their contributions.

Axis	1	2	3	4	5
Eigenvalue	0.221	0.132	0.112	0.109	0.996
Variance rate	22.1	13.2	11.2	10.9	10
Modified rate (Benzécri)	96.4	3.6	0	0	0

Table 11. Eigenvalues and (modified) variance rates.

	BIC	AIC
2-class model	10524.49	10431.59
3-class model	10521.60	10379.80
4-class model	10554.69	10364.00
5-class model	10591.66	10352.07
6-class model	10637.71	10349.22

Table 12. Fit statistics latent class model.

Chapter 4

On embodiment and the ecological habitus. An empirical exploration of social class dynamics in (un)sustainable consumption practices

Authors. Robbe Geerts, Vandermoere, F. & Oosterlynck S.

Abstract. Following the practice turn, research on sustainable consumption has emphasized ordinary, inconspicuous consumption and the role of materiality. Studies, e.g.,, highlight the role of central heating in explaining escalating consumer demands. However, this has been at the expense of addressing social stratification. Utilizing qualitative interviews, this contribution explores social class dynamics in sustainable consumption. Two key findings. First, despite the focus on everyday life within practice theory, there has been a notable oversight regarding the diverse everyday experiences of people across various social classes. For example, (operational) central heating is not self-evident among people in poverty. Second, such differences can translate into diverging environmentally relevant systems of dispositions. In particular, we employ a Bourdieusian perspective, which has often been overlooked. Through the notion of ecological habitus, we underscore that sustainable consumption is not solely externalized in material artifacts, but also embodied through one's class conditions. Findings, for instance, reveal a habitus of necessity among people in poverty that focuses on scarcity. Results also show contradictions between elite or middle-class tastes (e.g., traveling, second homes, swimming pools, old-timers), and sustainability objectives. In conclusion, the focus of practice theory on normalized practices contains the risk of flattening social differences. Moreover, the notion of ecological habitus directs attention to the cultural dimensions of sustainable consumption. We underscore the need to enrich practice theoretical approaches with perspectives that highlight the embodied nature of sustainable consumption practices to better understand social variations and inequalities.

Keywords. Social class; Bourdieu; Environmental Behavior; Ecological Habitus

4.1 Introduction

Since the 'practice turn' (Schatzki, Cetina, & Von Savigny, 2001), practice theory has a strong – or even dominant - presence in sociological studies on sustainable consumption (Evans, 2018). It was originally introduced as an alternative for economic and psychological perspectives on environmentally significant behavior that emphasize the values, intentions, and conscious choices of individuals (Kennedy, Cohen, & Krogman, 2015; Spaargaren, 2013b; Spaargaren & Van Vliet, 2000). Instead, the social organization of consumption in everyday life came to the foreground. As Warde (2005) notes, much of our consumption is not for its own sake, but in the pursuit of social practices such as showering and heating one's home. Practice approaches have shed light on two previously underacknowledged aspects of consumption. First, in a turn away from symbolic consumption, sustainable consumption research has increasingly emphasized ordinary, mundane, and inconspicuous forms of consumption that are far removed from ecological deliberations, but nonetheless have a large environmental impact (Gronow & Warde, 2001; Shove, 2003; Shove & Warde, 2002; Warde, 2014). Indeed, much of our unsustainable consumption patterns are related to our day-to-day routines. Second, applications of practice theory have emphasized the role of materiality and technology, as exemplified by the work of Shove (Shove, 2003; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012; Shove & Southerton, 2000; Shove & Walker, 2014). For instance, studies shed light on how material artifacts interact with social norms and conventions, and the way this impacts our levels of consumption. For example, freezers, washing machines, and central heating can respectively produce and define standards for storing food, cleaning clothing, and room temperature.

Recent scholarship, however, has argued that the focus on ordinary, inconspicuous consumption and materiality has been at the expense of addressing social variation (Gram-Hanssen, 2021; Hui, 2017; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019) and inequality (Anantharaman, 2018; Evans, 2018). Against this background, this study examines social class differences in (un)sustainable consumption practices through qualitative interviews. In particular, we highlight a Bourdieusian perspective. Bourdieu, acknowledged as one of the central figures in social praxeology (Welch & Warde, 2015), has been remarkably absent in the sustainable consumption literature (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019; Welch & Warde, 2015). While Bourdieu's work on distinction (1984) is increasingly applied in ethical

consumption debates (e.g., Carfagna et al., 2014; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019; Schor et al., 2016), these studies are situated more on the level of environmental consciousness than actual behavior. In contrast, it is our intention to have a more practical focus. Specifically, we employ Kasper's (2009) notion of ecological habitus to better understand social class dynamics in (un)sustainable consumption. Our argument centers on two elements. First, despite the emphasis on everyday life and materiality within practice theory, it has gone underacknowledged that people from different social classes inhibit vastly different everyday (material) life-worlds. Second, such differences can translate into diverging environmentally relevant systems of dispositions. Accordingly, we underscore the need to enrich practice theoretical approaches by directing attention to the cultural dimensions of sustainable consumption, and how this relates to social class.

4.2 Social variation and sustainable consumption

Practice theorists propagate a specific ontology, namely that "the social is a field of materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 12). Rather than individuals or structures, social practices become the locus of social inquiry in an attempt to move beyond the dualism between structure and agency (generally drawing on Bourdieu, 1984; Giddens, 1984). Practices can be minimally understood as recurring constellations of saying and doing (Schatzki, 2001; Schatzki, 1996), or bundles of activities that integrate a wide range of heterogeneous components such as materials, know-how, mental activities, values, and so on, e.g., ways of preparing food or travelling to work (Reckwitz, 2002; Welch & Warde, 2015). Accordingly, practice theory represents an interest in everydayness, and in the recognizable and shared activities that organize the social world (Welch, Halkier, & Keller, 2020).

Studying social variation has received less attention (Gram-Hanssen, 2021; Hui, 2017). Yet, this does not negate the fact that social variation exists in the way practices are adopted and incorporated in daily life (Warde, 2005). If practice theory is interested in everydayness (Reckwitz, 2002), then it should be minimally acknowledged that individuals and social groups can inhibit vastly different everyday life-worlds. For instance, it is not difficult to imagine how having children affects the constellation of social practices that makes up one's daily life. Cooking practices change, kids have to be brought to school or extracurricular activities, and picked up afterwards,

people change their work-life balance, and so on. Thus, practices have trajectories or paths of development which are dependent on space, time, and social context (Hui, 2017; Southerton et al., 2012; Warde, 2005). Moreover, assuming that practices are constituted by various elements such as materiality, know-how, meaning, competences, and so on (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012), then social variation may stem from the socio-contextual dependence of these elements, and particularly the way they vary among people and groups (Gram-Hanssen, 2021).

In more general terms, social practices are dependent on a practical understanding of appropriate behavior (Schatzki, 1996), also described as practical knowledge (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984) or consciousness (Giddens, 1984). This allows us to know how to act in a given context without presupposing reflexiveness or conscious aims. Hence, it stands to reason that social variation in practices may stem from differences in practical understandings. In the sustainable consumption literature, practical understandings have been mostly sought in materiality and infrastructures (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). Practices are often materially scripted (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996), particularly in technologies, such as central heating, because they intersect with norms of comfort, cleanliness, and convenience (Shove & Walker, 2014). Concerning social class, it should be noted that the material constellation of everyday life is very much class-based. For instance, research shows that lower classes have fewer household appliances, which in turn leads to lower energy demand (Jones & Lomas, 2016; Leahy & Lyons, 2010). If (access to) materiality is a central element of social practices (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012), then this should affect the way social practices are incorporated and bundled in the everyday lives of people from various social classes.

4.3 The ecological habitus

Furthermore, (practical understandings of) social practices are not only externalized in material artefacts but also embodied (Dubuisson-Quellier & Gojard, 2016; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019; Schatzki, 2001; Wilhite, 2012). In other words, they can be internalized through one's experiences, social interactions, and class conditions. Bourdieu's (1990, p. 53) notion of habitus is an especially salient expression of this idea. It denotes a "system of durable, transposable dispositions […] which generate and organize practices and representations […] without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in

order to attain them". Hence, embodiment does not represent a voluntaristic model of conscious choices but rather emphasizes unconsciousness and social structuredness (Evans & Jackson, 2008). More specific to sustainable consumption, Kasper (2009, p. 318) devised the notion of ecological habitus to describe the "embodiment of a durable yet changeable system of ecologically relevant dispositions, practices, perceptions, and material conditions—perceptible as a lifestyle—that is shaped by and helps shape socioecological contexts". Thus, ecological habitus is able to account for the social patterning of social practices in – more or less – distinct environmentally relevant lifestyles, even if it is routinized in ordinary practices (Evans & Jackson, 2007). In sum, an embodied practical understanding enables class-specific ways of understanding and engaging in (un)sustainable consumption practices (Brand, 2010; Burton, Kuczera, & Schwarz, 2008; Evans, 2018).

Our approach fits within a broader call for the (re)appraisal of the cultural dimensions of social practices in sustainable consumption research (Balsiger, Lorenzini, & Sahakian, 2019; Kennedy & Johnston, 2019; Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020; Welch, Halkier, & Keller, 2020). Arguably, this has been neglected as the result of an overcorrection (Evans, 2018; Spaargaren, 2013a) when practice theory diverted attention away from symbolic, socially communicative consumption. The beliefs and actions of self-confessed environmentalists were seen as a distraction. What matters, in the words of Shove, is "the big, and in some cases, global swing of ordinary, routinized, and taken-for-granted practice" (Shove, 2003, p. 9) and research should "underline the point that technologies matter and that actions are materially scripted" (Shove & Walker, 2014, p. 47).

This led Evans (2018) to provocatively conclude that sustainable consumption scholarship suffers from conceptual amnesia and that research lost sight of several core sociological interests, including social class and tastes. In particular, for instance, the constatation that large parts of our consumption is inconspicuous, does not invalidate the fact that environmentally significant conspicuous consumption exists (Urry, 2010). Moreover, inconspicuous consumption can often be explained by cultural theories of social class, including Bourdieu's (1984) work distinction (Evans, 2018). For example, these may explain why people buy large houses. The expectation of social interaction (e.g., meeting with friends or arrival of guests) can explain heating, cleaning, and showering practices (Gram-Hanssen, 2011; Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020). In addition, even

if the position is taken that behavior consists of routinized practices, habits are generated and learned (Turner, 1994). This does not happen in a social vacuum (Evans & Jackson, 2008; Wilhite, 2012) and can be very much tied to meaning and conscious deliberations (Wilk, 2009). For example, while bicycling to work may be a routinized practice, people still have to decide to start bicycling and buy an (electric) bicycle. Finally, similar social practices and associated material artifacts can be 'read' through various cultural schemas (Sewell Jr, 1992). They can be understood quite differently and even contested (Halkier, 2020; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020; Schoolman, 2020). Imagine, for example, ethical food consumption that can be interpreted as cruelty-free, vegan, local, and so on.

While cultural analysis may appear to conflict with the way practice theory has developed in sustainable consumption studies, practice theory is not necessarily a-cultural (Welch, Halkier, & Keller, 2020). For example, Spaargaren's (2000) social practice model, derived from Giddens' (1984) structuration theory, explicitly acknowledges the role of lifestyle as the integration of practices that expresses one's identity. Shove, Pantzar and Watson (2012) include meaning as a constitutive element of social practices. Schatzki (1996) describes teleo-affectivity (i.e., goal-oriented engagement), otherwise referred to as engagements by Warde (2005) or Gram-Hanssen (2011). Later on, Schatzki (2002) added general understandings as another element of social practices, which can be described as ideational components that are shared across multiple practices (Welch & Warde, 2016). Accordingly, several scholars point out that social practice theory can be considered a cultural theory of action, and that social practices are necessarily cultural practices because they depend on implicit (or tacit, unconscious) schemes of shared knowledge or presuppositions (Reckwitz, 2002, 2016; Welch, 2020). Hence, even though individual motivations may not be well suited to define our actions, practices remain carriers of meaning, and imply an (albeit routinized) intentionality of what is perceived as important, of wanting, desiring, and liking (Reckwitz, 2002).

In conclusion, this study employs a Bourdieusian view on sustainable consumption research to better understand social class dynamics, utilizing Kasper's (2009) notion of ecological habitus. It is not our intention to move away from the invaluable insights of practice theory, but rather to enrich them with insights from cultural sociology, and specifically from cultural social class

theories. Attention for cultural elements does not necessarily divert attention away from the practical because, in this view, culture itself is recognized as enactments, as 'practice' (Swidler, 2005). Hence, cultural systems of meaning can be examined through the (mundane) practices in which they unfold. Moreover, it is our position that sharp distinctions between routines and reflexiveness, or between materiality and culture are difficult to maintain (Halkier, 2001; Swidler, 2005; Wilk, 2009). In sum, consumption practices can be both shared, enacted, and material on the one hand, and also socially patterned, embodied, and meaningful on the other (Brand, 2010; Sewell Jr, 1992; Swidler, 2005).

4.4 Materials & Methods

The dataset includes 21 in-depth interviews and 1 focus group, and is supported by numerous informal conversations. The respondents were drawn from the province of Antwerp in Belgium, and interviews were mostly conducted between March 2022 and April 2023. Respondents were selected on the basis of their occupation, which was used as a proxy for social class in the sampling process. The aim was to conduct in-depth interviews with a wide range of participants from different social classes. During the sampling process, however, it proved difficult to recruit people in (extreme) poverty. Therefore, we enlisted the help of several social work organizations that organized around a project to give a voice to people in poverty in the climate debate. Based on their advice and experience with people in precarious situations, they suggested organizing a focus group with their clients (instead of individual interviews). The focus group consisted of 4 people in poverty and 3 social workers. Accordingly, the full dataset consists of 28 participants. Their characteristics can be found in Table 2 in the appendix. The participants were a good reflection of the Flemish population, although women and tertiary educated persons were overrepresented.

The respondents were divided into 4 social classes based on their economic and cultural capital. Moreover, occupation was descriptively used to better understand these social classes. This was loosely inspired by the social class model of Savage et al. (2013), although fewer classes were retained. First, respondents categorized as upper-middle class or elite (18%) had managerial or professional occupations and tertiary education, but were mostly characterized by high levels of economic capital. Second, established middle-class respondents (29%) were characterized by

professional occupations, tertiary education, and stable, moderately high incomes. Third, working and lower middle-class respondents (36%) were mostly employed in blue-collar or lower-service occupations, had non-tertiary education, and a low to moderate income. Finally, 18% of respondents lived in (extreme) poverty, and were mostly characterized by very low levels of economic capital. We acknowledge that 'poverty', in comparison to other groups, is generally not considered a social class category. Another way to define this group would be as 'precariat' (Standing, 2011). Yet, the term precariat is commonly employed to describe precarious employment. In contrast, our respondents were mostly characterized by long-term unemployment and access to very few social benefits. Therefore, 'in poverty' was considered a more accurate description, especially considering that members of the group self-identified as 'in poverty'.

While there is variation within these social class groups, the categories were created in interaction with the participants' position on environmental issues and practices. Thus, while this may be a crude categorization, they serve as ideal types for understanding social class variation in (un)sustainable consumption practices. Coincidentally, the interviews were conducted during what Swidler (1986) refers to as a period of social transformation that produces 'unsettled lives'. On the one hand, individuals and households are increasingly seen as actors in sustainable development strategies. On the other hand, the research took place in a period of energy crisis following COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. In such periods, cultural differences can be enlarged. People adapt or develop new practices, a process which is influenced by the cultural script to which one has access.

The interviews were structured around a topic list. First, respondents were asked about their daily life, social life and leisure activities. These served as social class markers while at the same time easing respondents into the interview setting. Subsequently, the interviews focused on a wide range of environmental practices, both with a positive and negative impact on our natural environment. We emphasized engagement in various social practices, in line with Warde's (2005) claim that consumption is a moment in each practice, rather than a practice itself. At first, I left it to respondents to define what they understood as environmental practices. Particular attention was paid to shopping practices, mobility, energy and water consumption, and waste sorting.

Photographs of these practices were utilized as visual cues to make taken-for-granted practices a more reflexive topic of conversation and bring visibility to the everyday (Henwood, Shirani, & Groves, 2018; Rose, 2014). Third, respondents were more broadly asked about their perceptions regarding environmental issues and potential solutions.

Analytically, we employed a reflexive approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In particular, we utilized the method described in Flick (2022, p. 318), which was developed to comparatively study "the social distribution of perspectives on a phenomenon or a process." First, interviews were listened to and read to familiarize myself with the data. As a second step, the interviews were analyzed in more depth, and central themes from the interviews were identified via a coding scheme. Finally, interviews and associated themes were analyzed comparatively to investigate social class groups based on similarities and differences.

Below, we describe the empirical results of this study. First, a summarizing overview of the main findings is provided. Afterwards, we delve deeper into the most important themes. We end the paper with a more theoretical discussion of the contributions of this research to practice theory.

4.5 Diverging (un)sustainable consumption practices

As described above, we identify two sources of social class variation. On the one hand, the everyday experiences of individuals across social classes are diverse. This includes the resource-intensiveness of practices and materialities that make up people's daily life. For instance, while wealthy respondents often had comfortable houses, large gardens, and cars, interviewees in poverty often lived in small apartments with dysfunctional central heating. On the other hand, aligning with Bourdieu's (1990) theory of habitus, our results indicate that practical understandings of appropriate behavior are, at least in part, embodied (Schatzki, Cetina, & Von Savigny, 2001; Wilhite, 2012). This embodiedness is revealed by two elements. First, our study sheds light on dispositions and tastes that underlie consumption practices. Second, respondents often referred to bodily sensations or tastes (e.g., shame or disgust when eating animal-based products) and embodied activities (e.g., habitually reading labels on articles).

Table 1 presents a typology of social class groups in relation to environmental practices. In short, the daily lives of upper middle-class/elite respondents (people with high levels of economic capital) were characterized by resource-intensive practices and associated materialities. These practices were partly driven by luxury tastes, such as detached housing, pools, fancy cars, and so on (Herzberg, 2006). Attempts to address overconsumption predominantly revolved around investment strategies rather than alterations in consumption habits, e.g., solar panels. Established middle classes, mostly characterized by high cultural capital, often expressed a habitus oriented towards ecological awareness, particularly with regard to ethical consumption and food practices (Carfagna et al., 2014). At the same time, however, they experienced conflicts between their environmental awareness and other expectations of comfort, convenience, and leisure, notably including desires for overseas travel. Conversely, people in poverty and respondents from a working or lower middle-class background often articulated a sense of eco-powerlessness (Kennedy & Givens, 2019); that is a perceived inability to engage in environmental protection practices, often combined with institutional distrust. Consequently, consumption practices are less associated with environmental meaning, and more oriented toward convenience, comfort, and economics. More particularly, environmental practices of respondents facing poverty were organized heavily around economic constraints, and a low ecological footprint. Accordingly, people in poverty often expressed a habitus of necessity (Bourdieu, 1984; Herzberg, 2006), including the reconceptualization of scarcity as an environmental virtue.

Upper middle class & elite. - Very resource-intensive practices - Investment logics - Habitus of luxury	**Established middle class.** - Resource-intensive practices - Ecologically oriented habitus - Comfort, convenience, and leisure
Working & lower middle class. - Moderate resource consumption - Eco-powerlessness - Convenience, comfort, and economics	**Poverty.** - Low resource consumption - Eco-powerlessness - Habitus of necessity

Table 1. Social class typology in relation to environmental practices.

4.5.1 The (in)conspicuousness of materiality

The 'inconspicuous consumption' framework is arguably the most important contribution of practice theory to sustainable consumption debates. Studies have shed light on the mundanity of consumption and its interconnectedness with materialities, such as heating one's home (e.g., Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020) or showering (e.g., Gram-Hanssen et al., 2020). Shove (2003, p. 3) contends that around "half the energy in the world is used in buildings and much of that is devoted to keeping people comfortable." First and foremost, our results point out that people from different social classes live in different types of houses, which in turn influences social practices and consumption patterns regarding energy/water use and mobility (Des Rosiers et al., 2017; Fuller & Crawford, 2011). To illustrate the differences, we compare two extremes, namely members from the upper middle class/elite and people in (extreme) poverty. At face value, in line with Shove and Walker (2014), one can argue that inconspicuous consumption is materially scripted by housing. However, findings also reveal that inconspicuous consumption is preceded by classed cultural tastes and dispositions (Evans, 2018). More specifically, the differences between upper middle class/elites and people in poverty are remarkably similar to Bourdieu's (1984; 1998) differentiation between the habitus of luxury and necessity.

The upper middle-class/elite interviewees live on sizeable, mostly detached, properties with large gardens. For instance, Dana, a notary[2] [upper middle-class/elite], lives in a beautiful and historic house built in 1875. It has 5 bedrooms, multiple bathrooms, servants' quarters (although they are not in use), a boudoir, and a large English porch. The house is tremendously energy inefficient and still heated with mazut, a low-quality and heavy fuel oil. Even though it is sometimes inconvenient, Dana's home is a reflection of her aesthetic tastes. It breathes highbrow cultural capital with a classic interior full of art and books. Unsurprisingly, during her leisure time,

[2] In Belgium, notary is a prestigious and high-earning occupation. The number of notaries allowed is limited by law, and the job is often passed down intergenerationally.

she paints. Similar to most interviews in this group, Dana's aesthetic and luxury tastes extend beyond housing. She is somewhat of a car enthusiast.

> *"At one point, I had to invest a substantial sum that I received. I said, now I'll buy my dream car. So, I told my husband to find me a car. Please, no Jaguar, Ferrari or BWM. And he said, what about Aston Martin. Back in the days, it was the car of James Bond. So, I bought it some time ago. […] It's a car that I mostly drive in summer because it is a cabrio."*

Dan, a self-employed veterinarian [upper middle-class/elite], also lives in a sizable house, although it is more energy-efficient than Dana's. His home is also a reflection of his tastes. He appreciates green space and fresh air. He has a large garden with a swimming pool, a stable and field for his horses, chickens, and a vegetable garden. Consequently, Dan consumes enormous amounts of water to fill his pool, keep up the garden, and feed the animals. He described how he spends a lot of his free time working in his garden. For instance, he built the stables himself. Dan expresses joy when he talks about his garden.

> *"My vegetable garden, I really enjoy doing it. It's fun when you get a big zucchini to eat. You have some herbs in the garden. You live by nature. […] It also has its charms. You organize a BBQ, you do not have to go to the store. You just take it. I really like it. Strawberries, bean sprouts, spinach. It's really nice. Mint. Wow. The mint got a bit out of hand now, but last year in the summer when everybody made mojito's, they came to get their mint here. […] I handed out zucchinis in my practice. If you have a good vegetable garden, you cannot eat it all. Like eggs from our chickens, you cannot eat it all."*

In addition, our findings reveal that housing is related to mobility practices. The upper middle-class/elites, and to a lesser extent also established middle-class dwellers, often live outside urban centers because there is more (green) space and fresh air. Yet, it also makes them dependent on their car for transport. Moreover, Dana [upper-middle class/elite] has an apartment at the Belgian coast. Sofie, a financial expert [established middle-class], and Paul, entrepreneur [upper-middle class/elite], have second homes abroad. Paul also owns other properties and businesses abroad. He travels back and forth every 10 days: *"I take the taxi to the airport. I arrive and walk to the station. I take the train to where I live."*, Over the years, these mobility practices have become

ordinary for the simple reason that, when you have a second home, you go there once in a while, often by car or plane. Yet, they remain rooted in luxury tastes, namely the desire for a second home and associated travel practices.

In sum, while inconspicuous household consumption and mobility practices may be 'ordinary', they were often preceded by embodied luxury tastes among upper middle class/elite, and to a lesser extent also established middle-classes. In this sense, wealth and associated dispositions become barriers to adapt and reduce overconsumption as a certain lifestyle becomes normalized (Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole, & Whitmarsh, 2007). At one point in our conversation, Wilfred turns to me, whom he perceives as a young idealist, and justifies his large property by claiming it as a universal desire:

> *"I consume quite a lot, way too much. I consume a lot because I have a pond that constantly has a pump running 24 by 24. Should I get rid of it for the environment? […] and I have a pool, yes that also costs money, but you are going to have that too one day. You'll get there."*

In stark contrast to these villas, housing of **people in poverty** was much more tied to necessity. Annie [unemployed and in poverty] lives unhappily in a small apartment close to a highway without terrace or garden. She doesn't like to open her windows because of the smog. In her former home, she had to heat her house with two petrol stoves connected to a mazut tank. There are, however, important differences with Dana's mazut heating practices. First, her housing is less rooted in a desire for a beautiful home, and more of an economic necessity. Second, she could hardly afford to fill them, and the heating didn't work in all rooms anyway. She once woke up with 4 degrees Celsius, 80% humidity, and a frozen blanket. A similar situation can be found in Bert's description of his home and central heating practices:

> *"The trouble is, we rent very cheap. These are old apartments. The big problem is that the landlord doesn't work on it anymore. The windows are 40 years old, so the draft enters. […] I have electric heating with lava stones. They have to charge the whole night. When I put it on, I have 25 degrees in the morning, you can't adjust it. 25 degrees the whole day. So, I put it on, then shut off the fuse box to enjoy the warmth for two days. And afterwards, I put it on again.*

Otherwise, I have to pay too much." Later in the conversation, he adds that he bought a small electric heater to compensate and to postpone using his central heating.

Furthermore, respondents with little wealth mostly live in urban(ized) centers close to public transport so they are more mobile and less dependent on cars (which they do not have). While such housing circumstances are very much tied to economic realities, Lotte, a student counselor [established middle class], describes a similar situation. For her, living centrally means mobility and less dependence on cars. She does not aspire the luxury of a big garden.

Interviewer: "Do you live far from work?"

Lotte: "No, under 5 kilometers, so it is easy to do by bike. […] Close to a station, so if I have a job outside Antwerp one day, I can also go there without a car […] We will not go and live on the countryside with a big garden because then we would have to do everything by car."

4.5.2 *Negotiating resource consumption: invest or adapt?*

Most interviewees were concerned about their (over)consumption of resources, in part for environmental reasons, but concerns were very often financial. This could be expected at a time of rampant energy prices. Hence, many aspects of consumption are no longer practices *in and of themselves*, and their stability is diminished (Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020). Respondents could roughly be divided in two groups: those who adapted their daily practices and thus sacrificed various comforts, and those who compensated for their consumption by investing in technology. Access to economic capital was the main distinguishing factor between groups.

Adaptation. Most respondents had adjusted their energy consumption recently by, for example, lowering the temperature setting on their central heating and, if necessary, wearing a sweater indoors. But convenience and comfort prevented most people from making big adjustments. People with very little wealth, however, were an exception. Their consumption practices organized heavily around limited resource use, for example sitting at home in the dark without heating. Alexei, a lifeguard, tells us he cannot afford his energy bills. He uses gas canisters and candles to respectively provide extra heating and light. Moreover, he explains that he and his 5 children shower at the pool:

"I went to the store for gas bottles for 1 euro and bought 40. […] Is it dangerous? Yes. But I put that in a bowl, and I heat it. To shower, I take my kids to the pool. I do not have another choice. If I do not do it, energy will be more expensive, that is unaffordable […] And I have lights with solar panels [to charge] in the garden. And I take them into my home in the evening. And candles."

Suzanne, retired actress [working class/lower middle class], for example, has a cast iron stove in her living room. She uses it to heat her home, but also to cook. Better yet, this way of cooking makes for very tasty meals. Hence, indicative of a habitus of necessity, she (re)conceptualized necessity as both a functional and good cooking practice (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu, 1998).

"Also, energy saving, I have heating in cast iron. It looks like a stove from the 1900s, and it works on gas. But because it is cast iron, you can make delicious stews on it. And why do I care that it is not in my kitchen but in my living room […] First, I save on gas. And it has time to cook and make the best things."

Our interviews thus indicate that these practices are not a mere response to economic scarcity, but that austerity practices are very much embodied by people who grew up and live in poverty. On the one hand, expectations of comfort and convenience were lowered due to economic constraints. During the focus group, I hear stories from people who are content with the light coming from the TV or the pilot light from the stove. When we discussed minimum in-house temperatures, a discussion erupted between one of the social workers and one of the respondents in poverty. Jessie argued that 16 or 17 degrees is more than enough. Janne, social worker, quite avidly stated that this is way too cold for a decent level of comfort. The cold doesn't bother me, Jessie says.

On the other hand, they described a physical unease when resources are wasted. Leila, a teacher [working/lower middle class], explains:

"My parents were dirt poor. I do no longer belong to the class of the poor, but you will never get poverty out of me. […] I can afford to waste water and electricity. But I can't do it. Life has made me this way. I really can't waste and spend more than I need. And that goes for everything. With clothing, money, everything. […] Filling a bathtub. I just can't do it. When I

was 11, 12, 13 years old in Morocco, I stood in line on the local marketplace with 5-liter bottles because there was a public faucet. It sometimes took hours. […] So, we were really cautious with water because we didn't want to go there again the next day."

Investment logics. In contrast, many upper middle class/elite respondents, and to a lesser extent established middle classes, were able to compensate for their consumption levels by investing in materiality and technology.

"We used to have a rainwater tank but no pump[3]. The first year we lived here, we paid 25 euro per quartal, which is a forfeit. But these animals [chicken and horses] had to eat and drink. […] All of a sudden, we got a bill of 1800 euro extra. […] So, we installed a pump. The pump cost 900 euro, so we recovered it within a year." [Dan, upper middle class/elite]

In part, these investments were scripted by regulations where government subsidies promote energy-efficient renovations and electric cars for those who could afford them. Yet, among upper middle classes/elites, investment logics were also embodied. They all managed companies. Hence, investment calculations came quite naturally. Paul, an entrepreneur [upper middle class/elite], has properties in Belgium and abroad. He somewhat struggles with his mobility footprint, but explains that he has to move around for family and business obligations. One of the solutions he describes essentially comes down to carbon offsetting:

"I have been playing with the idea to do something there [abroad]. Something that is useful for biodiversity [he owns agricultural grounds in an area with a lot of monoculture]. Something that is bio and can compensate my carbon footprint. […] I have been thinking to start an agriculture company that does not have to generate profit, as long as it pays what it costs.

[3]The installation of a rainwater tanks is compulsory in Flanders in new buildings or when big renovations are made.

Then we are fine. And to let someone else do the work as much as possible because I do not have the time."

It is worthwhile to note that investment logics do not necessarily lead to investments, but rather that the profit and costs are weighted to make a decision. This investment logic was often combined with a broader belief in business and technology and/or a skepticism in people's willingness to adapt for the environment. This is most outspoken in the following extract from Wilfred's interview:

Interviewer: Did you notice changes in energy prices?

Wilfred: "I don't count that in money. No, no, I count more in profits. I know what I consume each year and the year before. When I placed them [solar panels], I thought to just get enough, you don't need to much. That is not fiscally interesting. But indeed, last summer I had 1000 kilowatt more profits than the year before. […] All in all, I consume almost nothing […] I generate what I consume.

[…]

Interviewer: "Do you think people and their behavior can be a solution for environmental issues?"

Wilfred: "I am pessimistic about that. I rather think that they can do a lot technologically. If you say climate change, I do not think people can solve that. […] I can't imagine anyone not taking a plane for environmental reasons only. I don't think we can do much. But big companies, yes. Chemical companies that adapt and are able to filter CO2 out of the air. You can do a lot and it gets solved like that."

4.5.3 Practices as carriers of environmental meaning

Individuals are increasingly assigned responsibility to address environmental issues in their daily lives. Accordingly, even though practice may be routinized, we should acknowledge that "ethical consumption exists as meaningful moments in practices" (Gram-Hanssen, 2021, p. 441). In other

words, practices are potential carriers of environmental teleo-affectivity (Schatzki, 1996); that is environmental meaning and goal-orientedness.

Ethical consumption and the established middle class. In line with ethical consumption research (Carfagna et al. 2014), our findings show that environmental meaning is mostly incorporated in the consumption practices of highly educated middle classes, and thus among our established middle-class respondents. Even practices of consuming less energy, which are common in other groups, are expressed more often in environmental terms. Emma [established middle class], for instance, grows her own vegetables and finds inspiration in Buddhist writings:

> *"I do not know if it is going to save the world, but I think it is important to have a connection to nature […] because I believe that if you are connected well to nature, you start to care for it."*

In part, during the interviews, the incorporation of environmental meaning in existing practices among established middle classes felt like a justification after the fact (cf. Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999; Mills, 1940). While other groups were much more direct about their financial motives behind, for example, energy conservation, established middle class dwellers were more likely to justify such behavior with a combination of financial and environmental motives, even if e.g., energy conservation was directly preceded by the inflation of energy prices. This is not to say that professed environmental motives are disingenuous, but this rather reveals something about class-based processes of meaning-making and norms of justification. On the other hand, however, even if most of our behavior is mundane and unconscious, moments of conscious deliberation do exist (Evans, 2008; Vaisey, 2009), that can subsequently lead to changing habits. For instance, Charlotte, a veterinary assistant [established middle class], stopped flushing her toilet when she urinates. *"When it's yellow, let it mellow. When it's brown, flush it down"*, goes the saying. While this could be dismissed as a micro-gesture, it can make a significant difference to one's water consumption considering the average person in Flanders yearly consumes between 6500 and 12000 liters of drinking water by flushing the toilet (De Watergroep, 2020).

The main thing that sets the established middle class apart is ethical and political purchasing practices, which are commonly referred to as boy- or buycotting (Yates, 2011). Ethical purchases include a wide range of products and practices such as avoiding avocados and palm oil, ethical

clothing, buying biological food and eco-labeled household products. For instance, Sofie, financial expert [established middle class], mentions:

> *"I rather save [money] a bit longer, to buy something that is okay […] And I don't really need anything. I have a roof over my head, I clearly pay my utility bills because the electric works. I went to the story today. So, I buy good. […] I also believe that we, as consumers, can have a major impact, if we only realize that we have that influence."*

Sofie's use of buying 'good' is very revealing about her tastes. For many people, good can mean healthy, decent pricing, tasty, and so on. For Sofie, ethics are a constitutive element of good food (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). Sustainability, and especially veganism, is a central part of her identity. She describes her lifestyle as whole food plant-based. We asked her how she experienced the transition to these new eating practices. She says she needed to learn how to cook all over again, because her first vegan meals were really bad. But now, ethical eating and cooking practices also signify deliciousness, excitement, and fun. This also included new materialities:

> *Sofie: "The biggest issue was that I was used to make potatoes, meat and vegetables. So, I started googling. And then I came across things [blogs] […] And there I got my inspiration to cook differently. My wok is my daily tool. […] And I have my airfryer. […] I have the vegan food circle over there. Everyday, I look at it, and think about what I haven't eaten today. You have to think about it because you need to look for nutrients in a lot more stuff."*
>
> *Interviewer: "Can you remember when you started? Were there a lot of challenges?"*
>
> *Sofie: "Yes, there were. My bean burgers were either tasteless or burned. I thought to myself, this is not what I want. But now I make a meal in thirty minutes and most people really like it."*
>
> *Interviewer: "Is it better than meat?"*
>
> *Sofie: "Yes, I have encountered so many new tastes. I eat so much more varied."*

Lotte also eats vegetarian and describes how she believes in boycotting the farming and fishing industries. She even experienced physical discomfort when she engaged in unethical consumption practices during her pregnancy.

> *When I was pregnant, I ate and drank some milk products because that advice was given to me. It didn't sit well with me. That felt wrong. Because of what happens to the cows. Yes, that doesn't feel right. […] And also, the ecological footprint that comes with it."*

Accordingly, more than other groups, if established middle class respondents participated in practices that they perceive as being unsustainable, they often do it begrudgingly (Bottero, 2023). Yet, certain unsustainable practices also reveal a tension between their environmental awareness and other expectations of comfort and convenience. Overseas travel as a leisure activity seems particularly important, with many respondents continuing to fly while suffering from 'flight shame' at the same time. Martha, a procurement specialist [established middle class], voices these tensions:

> *"I really like to travel. I have traveled a lot to Asia, and when it's possible again [after the COVID restriction], I plan on doing it again."*

> Later on, we were discussing the lack of green space*, she says: "I notice that I find peace in green space. I noticed it already during my travels in Asia, especially by the ocean. It is really sad to see some of these places with pollution [...] And then a plastic soup comes by. So, I try to avoid plastic and such if I can. […] I am a big fan of the supermarket Albert Hein. And those prepackaged salads and meals. It is very convenient […] but that it is packaged in so much plastic and that bothers me. But it doesn't bother me enough to not buy it because there is no alternative in the neighborhood. So, I keep buying it even if it really bothers me." [Martha, established middle class]*

As evident from Sofie's report on exciting cooking practices and Emma's emphasis on connections to nature, ethical consumption practices were often part of a broader assemblage of meanings (such as fun and spirituality) beyond solely environmental (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). In particular, people often make the connection between biological food, ecological food, and healthy food. Similarly, while most respondents described the car as the most convenient mode

of transportation, established middle class respondents more often traveled by bicycle. Bicycling was reconceptualized as an environmental but also convenient mode of transportation. For a large part, this was possible through the use of (expensive) cargo and/or electric bikes.

> *Anna: "We have 6000 kilometers on our cargo bike [in a bit over a year]. We could travel Europe with it."*
>
> *Interviewer: Why do you bike that much?*
>
> *Anna: Because it is not easy to find parking space in Antwerp. You are in traffic a lot. You get there faster. You can stop everywhere, easy with kids that want to do this and that. So, you are much more mobile. It is also fun. And it is also environmentally friendly, of course."*

Eco-powerlessness among people with less economic capital. While ethical consumption was important in established middle class lifestyles, this was less so for the other groups. As discussed above, upper middle classes/elites mostly committed to investments and technological fixes. Moreover, environmental meaning often remained at the background in practices that are generally conceived as pro-environmental. Wilfred, managing director [upper middle class/elite], answers the following when we ask why he has a vegetable garden: *"I do it, if I'm honest, if you were to say the environment, no. I just like doing it. It is the farmer in me."*

Furthermore, Kennedy and Givens (2019) contrast an ecologically oriented habitus with an eco-powerlessness. Eco-powerlessness denotes an inability to engage in environmental practices, and a sense that one's actions have little bearing on broader issues. Subsequently, this can act as a barrier for various environmental engagements (Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole, & Whitmarsh, 2007). Josef, a retired architectural technician, reflects that it is not *"my fault that everything [products in supermarkets] comes from the other side of the world".* And Abby, a warehouse worker [working/lower middle class], notes that biological products are too expensive. Moreover, in contrast with Sofie, the ethics behind food did not matter for their 'goodness'.

> *"If you look at the end total of the bill in the supermarket, it is a third more expensive than, let's say, one and a half year ago. So, if you also have to buy bio-products, it becomes even more expensive. I buy store-brand products. They taste just the same."*

Furthermore, powerlessness was often connected to institutional distrust. Iza, laboratory assistant in a large chemical corporation, relates her sense of powerlessness to industrial pollution and lack of environmental regulations due to collusion between big companies and governments. This was rooted in her own experiences at work:

> *"Companies have too few responsibilities. I work in a gigantic company. They only have to maintain a small lake because then they can extinguish the company [in case of fire]. But in the laboratory, we throw away a lot in the sink. And I always felt bad about this because there were many hazardous products involved. Alright, some had to be placed in a container, but other things were allowed in the sink, and I am not okay with this […] Personally, I know that it is toxic and I don't drink tap water anymore […] If you look at the research, there is a lot of medical waste, and I don't believe all waste includes the things you and I throw away"*

Similarity, Bert [poverty] and Annie [poverty] have some familiarity with the port of Antwerp. They agree that companies start dumping and polluting at night and on weekends when there is less oversight. Annie lives nearby and sees her CO2-meter going red every weekend. They do not like the fact that environmental responsibility gets pushed on ordinary people when big companies are at fault. A very particular distrust was revealed when discussing biological and eco-labeled products. They were often seen as a tool to increase prices. Alexei gathers it is all just marketing, thus alluding to greenwashing (Miller, 2017; Pierre-Louis, 2012):

> *Interviewer: "If you are in the store, do you look for eco-labels?"*
>
> *Alexei: "To expensive and it is mafia […] Just don't do it. They are just brands and a label. They just sell brands to rich people. And they are like, yes so cheap and then they inspect it [in a sarcastic voice]. The same, it is all the same! […] But who am I to say this? I am a lifeguard. Who listens to me?"*

Alexei also voices critiques regarding green technologies:

> *"The green party wanted a lot of wind turbines and solar panels. You have to find the resources [to make them]. It's chaos. Solar panels are made in India and Pakistan and wherever, and by children […] and then they're sold here. Is that fair?"*

Skepticism was also related to practical issues, arguably, in the case of electric cars, because people with less wealth have less access to private charging facilities. Lana, a nursing student [working/lower middle class], describes that her family will not transition towards an electric car:

> *"A lot of pollution, that is just the car. Everybody uses cars, I think. But I do not believe it will all go electric all of a sudden. Well, we [her household] will not do it because, if you need to charge, there are not enough spaces and that is not feasible for us".*

Josef, a retired architectural technician [working/lower middle class] complains about solar panels and associated policies. He explains that he has invested quite a lot in solar panels because government regulations are increasingly stringent regarding the energy-efficiency of houses. Moreover, the government made a promise to allow 'roll-back counters' for solar panels[4], but this promise was not kept. Now, he needs to install an air conditioning system to use all the energy he produces, which seems a bit ironic. Josef feels forced and betrayed. *"They won't convince me anymore. I won't do anything anymore [for the environment]. I quit".* He also adds that environmental policies only benefit the rich because those who can afford renovations are subsidized, and *"then nobody verifies whether it was done technically sound!"* Moreover, he argues that we'll be in trouble in the future because solar panels are not recyclable, thus potentially creating a huge *"mountain of waste in 20 years."*

The virtues of a sober and humble life. Finally, interviewees in poverty often reframed economic scarcity as environmental austerity practices. Even though their actions are driven by necessity, they disagree that their practices are devoid of environmental meaning, not in the least because people in poverty are disproportionally confronted with environmental issues such as waste, smog, heat waves, and so on. Joske lives in poverty but explains that she has always been

[4] A roll-back counter refers to a feature of a utility meter that tracks the amount of electricity generated by a solar panel system that is fed back into the grid. When a solar panel system generates more electricity than is being consumed on-site, the utility meter 'rolls back'. Hence, solar panel owners are compensated for the electricity the generate and contribute to the grid.

environmentally aware, for example as a member of Natuurpunt[5]. Bert explains how poverty has made him more conscious of his consumption and its environmental impact:

> *"Of 60 euros per week, you have to see what you buy in terms of food and everything. So, you have to live to live more consciously. I'm not going to buy new shirts every year. […] Also, in the garden, you're going to make compost so that you can use it to fertilize the flowers. But we live very consciously in those situations. […] Also, with middle-class people, all lamps are on, it is a sea of light. With us, we light one lamp by the TV. […] I have known the other side of the line, when I had it better. And indeed, you notice that you are less conscious about it, that you put glass in the grey bag instead of going to the glass container. I had money enough back then."*

4.6 Discussion

Sustainable consumption is a major (sociological) research domain strongly associated with its namesake policy domain. It reflects an "emerging recognition of the importance of consumption within international debates about sustainable development" (Jackson, 2014, p. 254). A key sociological contribution regarding sustainable consumption debates has been practice theory and its focus on ordinary and inconspicuous consumption (Gronow & Warde, 2001; Shove & Warde, 2002). Sociological research has focused mostly on the role of materiality. In this endeavor, research has looked for sharedness and normalization in consumption practices, for example heating or cooling (Rinkinen & Jalas, 2017; Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020; Shove, 2003; Shove & Southerton, 2000). However, practice theoretical approaches to sustainable consumption have often neglected social class and associated cultural factors such as tastes and dispositions (Anantharaman, 2018; Evans, 2018; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019). Against this background, this study examines social class dynamics in (un)sustainable consumption practices.

[5] Natuurpunt is a large association of volunteers that aims to protect endangered nature in Flanders.

Our study reveals two sources of social class variation. On the one hand, despite practice theory's focus on the materialities of everyday life, it has gone underacknowledged that people from different social classes inhabit vastly different material life-words. For instance, while wealthy respondents often had comfortable houses, large gardens, and cars, interviewees in poverty often lived in small apartments with dysfunctional central heating. In this context, research reveals that greenhouse gas emissions are positively related to house size and locations outside urban centers (Des Rosiers et al., 2017; Fuller & Crawford, 2011). Our interviews thus suggest that the resource-intensity of social practices and associated material aspects increase with economic capital. This is in line with a Flemish study by Lévay et al. (2021) on actual environmental impact where income, and to a lesser extent educational attainment and occupational status, were positively associated with carbon footprint in most domains of everyday life, including food, goods and service expenditure, housing and energy, and transport (see also Abrahamse & Steg, 2011; Boucher, 2017; Kennedy, Krahn, & Krogman, 2015). As many of our interviews also remarked, this may not be compensated by investment in materiality and energy-efficient technology.

Moreover, aligning with Bourdieu's (1990) theory of habitus and its influence on human action, our research indicates that practical understandings of appropriate behavior are, at least in part, embodied in a system of dispositions (Schatzki, Cetina, & Von Savigny, 2001; Wilhite, 2012). In line with Kasper (2009), environmentally relevant dispositions and practices were internalized within a class-based ecological habitus (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019), subsequently generating class-specific ways of understanding and engaging in consumption practices (Brand, 2010; Burton, Kuczera, & Schwarz, 2008; Evans, 2018). This can work either directly by generating and changing habits (Wilk, 2009), or more indirectly as precedents of inconspicuous forms of consumption and associated materialities (Evans, 2018). Finally, even if cultural factors are not always a basis for behavioral change, they shed light on the various ways environmental practices are understood and contested (Halkier, 2020; Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020). The most outspoken example in this study was ethical consumption and eco-labels. In established middle classes, it was often (unquestionably) understood as an ethical practice. Yet, other groups were more skeptical, and mentioned greenwashing mechanisms. Similarity, while most people associated cars with convenience and bicycles with effort, (sub)urban professions with electric bikes often reconceptualized biking as a convenient mode of travel.

Our findings are remarkably reminiscent of Bourdieu's work on class-based types of habitus (1984; Bourdieu, 1998; 2000). The relations between upper middle class/elite respondents and their consumption practices were characterized by luxury tastes, whereas people in poverty often expressed a habitus of necessity (Herzberg, 2006). Bourdieu (1984) identifies a 'pretentious habitus' among people in intermediate positions; that is overtly attempting to mimic elites (Delhey, Schneickert, & Steckermeier, 2017; Herzberg, 2006). In contrast, our findings reveal that established middle classes aspire to live ethically, even if it is often unsuccessful. Most likely, not only the dispositions of middle classes have changed over time, but also the meaning and constitution of 'intermediate' groups. In line with Carfagna et al. (2014), our established middle-class respondents expressed a habitus oriented towards ecological awareness, particularly with regard to ethical consumption and food practices (Carfagna et al., 2014). Conversely, people in poverty and respondents from a working or lower middle-class background often articulated an eco-powerlessness (Kennedy & Givens, 2019).

In addition, findings suggest that these environmentally relevant aspects of habitus should be understood within a broader class-based system of disposition. Few of our respondents, and especially not older people, were socialized in environmental awareness and practices from an early age, as attention for environmental issues was more limited when they grew up. Habitus seems to function more as a system of dispositions that is transposable to new situations. Hence, more generalized class-based action strategies and cultural schemes - such as consuming, austerity, or investing – were transferred to environmentally relevant practices (Swidler, 2005).

Furthermore, our results have important implications for ethical consumption research. These studies generally highlight the way highly educated middle classes utilize consumption practices to express environmental concern (Baumann, Engman, & Johnston, 2015; Carfagna et al., 2014; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). This also entails a revalorization of locality, materiality, and manual labor. The critiques unfolding from the current research are twofold. First, in line with Barendregt and Jaffe (2014), sustainable consumption practices carry a manyfold of meanings beyond environmental meaning such as health, fun, good food, supporting local business, fairtrade, spiritualism, self-sufficiency, and so on. For instance, revalorization of locality, materiality, and manual labor was common among upper middle class/elite respondents, but

environmental meaning was pushed to the background, or even absent. Secondly, as Carfagna et al. (2014) acknowledge, claiming an ecological consciousness does not necessarily imply minimalizing one's ecological footprint. Our findings suggest that the groups that most express an ecologically oriented habitus paradoxically have the highest ecological footprint. By and large, this can be explained by materialities and expectations of convenience, comfort, and luxury in daily life. We even found evidence for more direct paradoxes. For example, an appreciation of green space and growing one's own food coincided with desires for a large home away from urban centers, which subsequently led to resource-intensive energy and mobility practices.

To sum up, while practice theory has emphasized materiality and inconspicuous habits, our results not only direct attention to cultural dimensions of consumption practices, but also reveal that cultural approaches provide a better understanding of social divisions and inequalities (Evans, 2018). Our study showcases that there is no *universal* or *normal* consumer. The focus of practice theory on sharedness, everydayness, and normalization contains the risk of flattening out social and cultural differences (Gram-Hanssen, 2021; Yates, 2022). Notions such as ordinary consumption and everyday practices presume that universality in consumption practices matters more for our consumer demands than social differences (Yates, 2022). While this may be true overall, this does not negate that social differences exist. As our study reveals, consumption practices may be shared among people and within social groups, but this does not necessarily imply universality. It can even be argued that many research efforts average out social variation into a middle-classness. Consequently, the overconsumption patterns of elites and the underconsumption of the poor are overlooked. In this sense, we agree with Oleschuk, Johnston and Baumann (2019, p. 356): when something is designated as 'normal(ized)', the first sociological question should be: "normal for whom?" This question is especially important for lower classes. Lorde's (1995) notion of *mythical norm* denotes that the standard that is portrayed as the norm in various aspects of life can cause stigmatization and marginalization. This also appears to be the case with regard to environmental concerns and practices when people in poverty are excluded from participation in dominant modes of environmental protection such as ethical consumption and material investments (Ford & Norgaard, 2020; Kennedy & Givens, 2019).

While we focused on social class in our study, future research may emphasize other inequalities such as gender and ethnicity. Furthermore, our social class scheme contains broad categories with potential for internal variations, so these may be explored in more depth. Moreover, in this study, we have utilized a zooming-out approach to practice theoretical research by trailing social practices and their connections into bundles that make up people's everyday life-world (Nicolini, 2012). While our aim was to explore more broadly social class dynamics in consumption practices, future research can employ a zooming in approach through case studies and in-depth studies of the way certain consumption practices are accomplished, such as showering (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2020) or heat metering (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2023). Finally, whereas occupation was employed as a sampling proxy, our interviews revealed that occupation plays a central role in how people perceive environmental issues and practices. For instance, Alexei used to be a garbage collector and focused on issues of waste throughout the interview. Conversely, Gina, a care worker, emphasized health issues, and Charlotte, a veterinary nurse, was most worried about the effects of environmental issues on wildlife. Follow-up studies on the role of occupation could provide valuable insights.

Appendix

	Number of respondents
Gender	
Male	9
Female	19
Age	
18-35	6
35-60	14
60+	8
Migration background	
No	14
Yes	4
Education	
Non-tertiary	11
Tertiary	17
Income	
Low	6
Middle	17
High	5
Occupation	
Managerial and professionals	13
Working and lower service workers	11
Unemployed/precariat	4
Social class	
Upper middle class & elite	5
Established middle class	8
Working class & lower middle class	10
Poverty	5

Table 2. Description of respondents.

Section II

How do environmental practices (re)produce social class boundaries?

Chapter 5

A multilevel perspective on green consumption in European countries. Does income inequality lead to environmental distinction?

Authors. Robbe Geerts, Vandermoere, F. & Oosterlynck S.

Abstract. In this study, we examine European cross-national differences in green purchasing behavior, focusing on the role of income inequality. Numerous studies have highlighted social inequalities regarding green purchases. Green consumers are often characterized as elites. Arguing that green purchases (GPs) require certain economic and cultural resources, these studies have focused on individual characteristics of consumers. In contrast, we emphasize the role of income (in)equality as a central driver of GPs, and evaluate to what extent different levels of income inequality impact the inequality gap. In this endeavor, we use data from Eurobarometer 92.4 to conduct a multilevel analysis. We focus on the impact of affluence (as a form of economic capital) and education (as a form of cultural capital), and GINI as a measure for income inequality. First, results confirm that green purchases are most common among people who are affluent and more educated. Second, our findings reveal that social inequality relates to green purchasing behavior on a more fundamental level than individual (in)access to economic and cultural resources. On the one hand, green purchases were most common in countries with low levels of income inequality. On the other hand, the inequality gap regarding green purchases seems to widen with increased levels of income inequality. In line with previous research, we conclude that income inequality may increase the existing divisiveness of green consumption and create a framework for social differentiation and class distinction based on green purchases.

Keywords. Cultural Class Distinction; Environmental Behavior; Bourdieu; Cultural Politics

5.1 Introduction

Over the past decades, there has been a rise in green products and corresponding certification and labeling initiatives as part of a growing green market (Conroy, 2007; Gulbrandsen, 2006; Lorenzen, 2014; Oosterveer, Guivant, & Spaargaren, 2007; Raynolds, Murray, & Heller, 2007). This trend aligns with a growing recognition that household consumption patterns play a significant role in addressing environmental issues (Lorenzen, 2014), and the view that the purchase of environmentally friendly products may minimize our environmental impact (Liobikienė, Mandravickaitė, & Bernatonienė, 2016). Green purchases (GPs) can be understood as a buycotting strategy, or the intentional purchase of a product on environmental grounds (Yates, 2011). These consumption strategies are then seen as a new form of political participation where consumer choices are an expression of political, ethical, and - in our case - environmental values (Boström, Micheletti, & Oosterveer, 2018; Moisander, 2007; Shah et al., 2007). The citizen-consumer conveys a political message through market-based consumption practices, often referred to as 'voting with your dollars' (Johnston, 2008; Willis & Schor, 2012). The issue of green purchases, however, is far more complex than a question of ethical behavior and moral virtue. On the one hand, skeptics have questioned the efficacy and political potential of consumer actions such as green purchases (GPs). Is it not an undue individualization of collective issues and responsibilities that displaces our capacity and willingness to act collectively (Maniates, 2001; Szasz, 2007)? Are consumer actions not anti-political by definition and rooted in self-interest instead (Johnston, 2008) with other considerations attached such as status, lifestyle, and personal wellness (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014)?

Our goal here is not to judge the (anti-)political nature of green purchases, but we are concerned with another salient critique i.e., elitism. A broad literature on green consumption - also connected to similar notions such as ethical, conscious, or political consumption – alludes to social inequalities associated with GPs (Carfagna et al., 2014; Geerts et al., 2022; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). "Where just a decade or two ago, green lifestyles and fair-trade purchases were perceived as the domain of activists or the open-toed-sandal-and-woolly-socks brigade, sustainable and ethical initiatives are now increasingly popular among affluent hipsters" (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014, p. 1). Our understanding of green consumption has remarkably shifted from an act of citizenship related to the environmental movement towards an exclusive social practice part of an elite lifestyle (Johnston, Szabo, &

Rodney, 2011). Accordingly, green consumers today are often characterized as middle or upper class, privileged, highly educated, etc. (Baumann, Engman, & Johnston, 2015; Carfagna et al., 2014; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014).

Most studies approach these inequalities through individual characteristics of green consumers. Few multilevel studies have been conducted on GPs with cross-national differences and inequalities remaining understudied (Liobikienė, Mandravickaitė, & Bernatonienė, 2016). In this article, we move beyond individual-level research on social inequalities in GPs by including a multilevel perspective. In specific, we highlight the role of income (in)equality as a central driver of GPs, and evaluate to what extent different levels of income inequality impact the inequality gap. Our argument is based on two elements. First, current research emphasizes the role of green consumption in the (re)enforcement of cultural power relations and class distinction (Anantharaman, 2016; Carfagna et al., 2014). Second, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) note that the need for lifestyle distinction though consumption may increase under high levels of income inequality. In line with Veblen (1899), they highlight status consumption as a central driver of (conspicuous) consumerism. In sum, we argue that income inequality may impact the inequality gap in GPs, and more specifically that this gap widens when income inequality increases.

Against this background, survey data from Eurobarometer 92.4 is utilized to investigate the role of social inequalities in European countries, and how this relates to their citizens' GPs. In this contribution, we assess the inequalities associated with GPs by investigating (i) the influence of individual-level inequalities through affluence and education, (ii) the impact of income inequality through the GINI coefficient, and (iii) the ways in which they interact. As will be shown below, this comparative analysis will provide new insights into the mechanisms behind the inequality gap in GPs, and more broadly allow us to better understand the inequalities that are often observed in the literature on green (but also ethical, conscious, or political) consumption. It is noteworthy that this is an interesting application of the work of Wilkinson and Pickett (2009). One of their arguments revolves around the idea that income inequality is a barrier to climate change mitigation because it drives consumerism. In contrast, we highlight the role of income inequality in sustainable consumption.

5.2 Theoretical framework

Our aim is to examine in more detail the social inequalities related to GPs by including a multilevel perspective. It is therefore useful to make explicit the approaches to these inequalities in the literature. Scholars have argued that green consumption strategies tend to be driven by access to both economic and cultural capital (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Economic capital is defined in monetary terms. The concept of cultural capital, for which educational attainment is often seen as an indicator, similarly envisions culture as a resource, including certain forms of knowledge, competencies, practices, and action strategies (Bourdieu, 1986). With regard to their relationship with GPs, multiple (although complementary) views can be found. For the purposes of this article, they can be subdivided into two approaches i.e., a resource-based and a relational approach. In the first approach, GPs presuppose access to economic and cultural resources. The relational approach posits that these inequalities can only be understood if we take into account the wider web of social relations.

In the first approach, one's willingness and ability to engage in GPs may depend on one's access to certain economic and cultural resources. On the one hand, studies tracing back decades report that environmental concerns and willingness to pay for environmental protection are most common among the well-educated and affluent (Franzen & Meyer, 2010; Franzen & Vogl, 2013; Gelissen, 2007; Givens & Jorgenson, 2011; Hao, Michaels, & Bell, 2019; Kemmelmeier, Król, & Kim, 2002; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Similarly, on a cross-national level, citizens of affluent nations are also seen to be most concerned about environmental issues, and more willing to support and pay for environmental protection (Pampel, 2014). Explanations are sought in access to information and environmental knowledge, but also in the fact that affluent people can 'afford' to care for the environment above other economic and material needs (Inglehart, 1995). However, relationships in these studies are often weak and evidence is mixed (Dunlap & York, 2008; Fairbrother, 2013). Moreover, substantial environmental concerns are often found among less privileged groups, not in the least because they are confronted disproportionately with environmental issues (Brechin & Kempton, 1994; Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Bullard, 1991; Burningham & Thrush, 2003; Gifford & Nilsson, 2014). Still, privileged groups seem to score highest on action-based expressions of environmental concern such as willingness to pay for environmental protection (Lo, 2016).

On the other hand, irrespective of environmental concern, research has focused on the behavioral restrictions less privileged groups face (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). Another explanation for social inequalities in GPs thus suggests that certain resources may be necessary to align one's behavior with one's concerns (Kennedy & Givens, 2019), and bridge the so-called attitude-behavior gap (Gleim et al., 2013). Indeed, green products are often charged at a premium rate, therefore requiring a certain level of affluence (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). Additionally, research suggests that green products are less likely to be sold in deprived areas (Lorenzen, 2014). Furthermore, scholars have also shown the relevance of access to cultural resources such as environmental knowledge, competencies, and an affinity with green products (Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). For example, ethical eating practices require "not simply the resources of money and time to shop, prepare and eat in certain ways, but also the tastes or dispositions to do so in particular ways" (Maguire, 2016, p. 12).

5.3 A relational approach to green purchases

While the previous section discussed the importance of (in)access to resources, this section highlights a relational view on social inequality and GPs. Such a view rejects the isolation of individuals and their behavior from larger society (Shove, 2010). Accordingly, a duality between the two is rejected. Whereas actors are understood as part of and influenced by a social system, they simultaneously create it (Giddens, 1991). Moreover, people are seen as inevitably social beings, and social relations become central to social inquiry (Elias, 2001). In the current article, this has important consequences for our understanding of both inequality and GPs. With regard to the former, Sahlins (1972, p. 37) for example argues that poverty is not just "a certain small amount of goods, nor is it just a relation between means and ends; above all is a relationship between people." Similarly, human-environment interactions are seen as relational (Kasper, 2009). GPs are not solely individual responses to environmental issues, but exist in a wider social and cultural context (Ford, 2019).

Accordingly, Kasper (2009) makes an excellent argument for the inclusion of Bourdieu's notion of habitus in the study of environmental behaviors such as GPs. Environmental practices associated with certain groups, she argues, are shaped by social systems and relations between people, but they also shape the social world and relations in it (see also Ford & Norgaard, 2020). This argument is part of a growing literature on the relationship between social class and green

consumption. Attention is paid to green consumption as a field of cultural politics (Anantharaman, 2018) that is closely connected to class-based identity projects (Horton, 2003). In other words, GPs can be understood as a cultural performance of class (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). For middle and upper classes, green consumption strategies are a way to express environmental values (Shah et al., 2007), not in a small part because they have the resources to do so (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). A more skeptical reading of these consumption strategies sees them as "forms of cultural and moral capital […] central to the creation and maintenance of class distinction" and part of the "identity kit of the upper classes, offering an attractive way to combine taste and style with care for personal wellness and the environment" (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014, p. 1). Indeed, GPs can be utilized as conspicuous acts of environmentalism that provide social status (Babutsidze & Chai, 2018; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010; Uren, Roberts, et al., 2019). Accordingly, they are a reformulation of high-status consumption and may function as a distinction strategy (Anantharaman, 2016; Carfagna et al., 2014; Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2023; Schor et al., 2016). In contrast, Kennedy and Givens (2019) describe an eco-powerlessness among lower classes. They argue that less privileged groups lack the necessary resources to engage in GPs, but also realize that this is a highly appreciated ideal in contemporary society. Therefore, they may feel uncertain, frustrated, and alienated by what they cannot attain. Consequently, this may develop into a lack of self-efficacy, and a sense that their actions have little bearing on environmental issues. Environmental protection is in turn seen as "a 'luxury' good which primarily preoccupies those richer than themselves" (Laidley, 2013, p. 166). Similarly, Hochschild (2018) found a link between 'anti-environmental' identities and people's low social position. A desire for work, status, and prosperity may lead to a belief that industrial pollution is a necessary evil.

This relational view on GPs has important implications for the role of income (in)equality. Scholars have argued that income inequality weakens the social fabric of a nation, with egalitarian societies being more healthy and socially cohesive (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2008). Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) point out the negative consequences of income inequality, including a wide range of social and health problems. Moreover, their social gradients are often enlarged. In specific, income inequality can negatively affect GPs in two ways. First, income inequality seems to erode social and political trust, and reduce solidarity and cooperation, which can in turn limit support for environmental policies and willingness to engage in prosocial behaviors (Grunewald et al., 2017; Kemp-Benedict, 2013; Roberts & Mangold, 2023; Stephany, 2017; Uslaner, 2000; Uslaner &

Brown, 2005). Second, income inequality seems to promote status consumption (Pybus et al., 2022; Walasek & Brown, 2015). According to Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), high levels of inequality lead to increased status anxiety and competition. Consequently, one's social position becomes increasingly important to one's self-evaluation and identity, leading to self-promotion and self-enhancement strategies. While these are mainly sociopsychological explanations, a similar argument can be applied in relation to the need for cultural class distinction (Delhey, Schneickert, & Steckermeier, 2017). Especially among high cultural capital groups, studies reveal a growing cultural and symbolic value of green consumerism (Carfagna et al., 2014). As income distribution is connected very strongly to the constitution of social class characteristics (Bourdieu, 1984; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2007), income inequality may create a framework for increased social class distinction through cultural tastes, identities, and lifestyle choices. By understanding GPs as a field of cultural politics and a form of class-based lifestyle differentiation, we hypothesize that inequalities are largest in unequal countries.

5.4 Materials & Methods

In this study, we used data from Eurobarometer 92.4 (2019). The Eurobarometer is a periodical survey that measures the behavior and attitudes of European citizens. In total, 27498 respondents were reached from 28 countries (Table 1). Survey weights were used to account for selection bias and non-response. As the independent variable for our analysis, respondents were asked whether or not they bought products with an eco-label in the last 6 months. The purchase of eco-labeled products is a good measure for GPs because eco-labels are intended to indicate the measure of ecological responsibility with which a product or service is produced, and allow consumers to identify environmentally responsible alternatives (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). While we acknowledge that greenwashing is a widespread issue, our focus lies with the environmental intent behind these purchases.

In terms of independent variables, 5 individual level predictors were used in the analysis. Firstly, affluence was measured by asking if people had experienced difficulties paying the bills during the last 12 months. In the analysis, a score of 1 indicates never or almost never, while a score of 0 indicates either most of the time or sometimes. Secondly, a measure was included for formal education: still studying, education up to 19 years, 20 years and older. These categories loosely correspond with whether or not someone attended tertiary education, which serves as an

important marker for cultural capital in research related to environmental attitudes and behaviors (Carfagna et al., 2014; Laidley, 2013b). In terms of socio-demographic variables, respondents were asked about their age (15-24 years, 25-39, 40-54, 55 years and older) and gender (male or female). Finally, as a proxy for environmental concern, respondents were asked whether or not they perceive climate change as a serious problem in their country (10-point scale ranging from *not at all a serious problem* to *an extremely serious problem*). This variable was standardized.

Finally, 8 country-level predictors were included in the analysis. First, and central to the current study, each country was assigned its GINI coefficient. The GINI index is a statistical measure devised to assess income inequality within countries. Second, 7 variables were added as potential confounding variables. On the one hand, GDP per capita was included as an economic measure. The latest available information on both GINI and GDP per capita at the time of the survey was retrieved from World Bank Data. On the other hand, as cultural confounders, Hofstede's measures of national culture were investigated i.e., power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation, and indulgence[6]. A more detailed description of these measures can be found in Hofstede (2011). All country-level variables were grand-mean centered and standardized.

To examine the impact of social inequalities across countries with different levels of income inequality, we used multilevel analysis, and specifically a multilevel logistic regression (Hox, Moerbeek, & Van de Schoot, 2017). The analysis was conducted stepwise. Firstly, a random intercept model was estimated. Subsequently, in models 2 and 3, level-1 and level-2 predictors were added, and random slopes were included for education and affluence. It is necessary to include random slopes for variables in cross-level interactions because their exclusion would bias results in an anticonservative manner (Heisig & Schaeffer, 2019). Finally, (cross-level) interaction effects were examined to assess whether the amount of income inequality within a country

[6] No data was found for Cyprus on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Consequently, Cyprus was excluded from the analysis when the derived variables were examined. All relevant models were also examined without Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The in- or exclusion of Cyprus did not affect the results of the analysis and subsequent conclusions.

influences individual differences based on income and educational attainment. Interactions were estimated one at a time because simultaneous estimations could lead to issues of multicollinearity (Lagaert & Roose, 2018).

5.5 Results

Before discussing the multilevel model in more detail, we first explore GPs across European countries on a descriptive level. Table 1 describes European countries by the percentage of green consumers among its citizens. Quite large differences were found. In some countries, GPs are rather widespread. In Denmark and Sweden, half or more of their citizens bought products with eco-labels during the last 6 months. In 11 countries, 20% to approx. 30% of citizens reported GPs. 13 countries fall below 20%. It seems that GPs were least common in Portugal and Bulgaria (approx. 10%).

Country	Percent GPs	Country	Percent GPs
Portugal	10.37%	Cyprus (Republic)	19.84%
Bulgaria	10.41%	United Kingdom	20.14%
Spain	11.64%	Ireland	20.26%
Hungary	12.09%	Czech Republic	20.48%
Italy	13.43%	Croatia	20.89%
Romania	13.78%	Slovenia	22.17%
Greece	13.89%	Germany	26.41%
Malta	16.20%	France	26%
Slovakia	16.28%	Netherlands	29.55%
Estonia	16.38%	Luxembourg	31.04%
Latvia	16.67%	Austria	31.93%
Poland	17.89%	Finland	32.27%
Belgium	18.37%	Denmark	49.90%
Lithuania	18.90%	Sweden	60.67%

Table 1. Percentage of GPs among the citizens of European countries.

Figure 1 visualizes the association between income inequality and GPs at a country-level. The GINI coefficient for each country is plotted on the x-axis. The y-axis reflects the percentage of citizens in each country that bought an eco-labeled product during the last 6 months. Results suggest a

negative association. In other words, these findings provide a first indication that GPs are less common in countries with high levels of income inequality[7]. In what follows, the multilevel models explore this relationship further, and examine whether income inequality affects the inequality gap in GPs based on affluence and education.

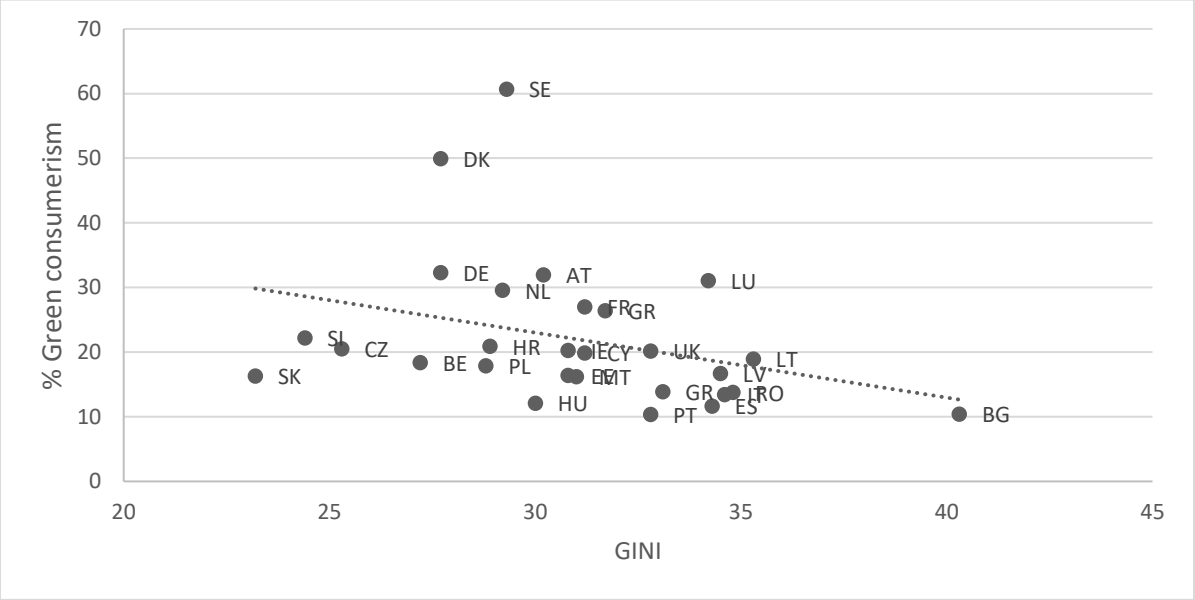

Figure 1. Correlation between %GPs in country and GINI

5.5.1 Multilevel analysis

Table 2 illustrates the results from the multilevel model. Model 1 represents the random intercept model. On the one hand, a significant intercept indicates that differences between countries exist in individual-level GPs. On the other hand, results reveal that approximately 11% of variance is accounted for by countries, leaving 89% of variance at the individual level. Consequently, sufficient variation at a country-level exists to warrant a multilevel analysis.

[7] Based on figure 1, Sweden and Denmark can be considered outliers. Therefore, the entire analysis was rerun without Sweden and Denmark, and equivalent results were obtained.

Subsequently, in model 2, individual-level predictors were added, including random slopes for affluence and education. Unsurprisingly, environmental concern had a positive effect on GPs. Furthermore, women were 32% more inclined towards GPs, compared to men. Regarding age, GPs were most common among people aged 25-39 and least common among people aged 55+. More important for our study, positive associations were found for affluence and education. People who never experience difficulties paying their bills were 17% more likely to have bought an eco-labeled product during the last 6 months, compared to people with more financial difficulties. Additionally, people who attended formal education until or beyond the age of 20 were 57% more likely to have bought eco-labeled products than people who stopped before the age of 20. In addition, model 2 is a random slope model. Results reveal that the effects of affluence and education significantly vary between countries.

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**
	Exp (β)	*Exp (β)*	*Exp (β)*	*Exp (β)*	*Exp (β)*	*Exp (β)*
Intercept	**0.27*** **	**0.14*** **	**0.14*** **	**0.14*** **	**0.14*** **	**0.14*** **
Environmental concern		**1.37*** **	**1.37*** **	**1.28*** **	**1.37*** **	**1.37*** **
Gender (female)		**1.32*** **	**1.33*** **	**1.33*** **	**1.33*** **	**1.33*** **
Age (ref. = 55+)						
15-24		**1.25****	**1.28****	**1.27****	**1.28****	**1.27****
25-39		**1.48*** **	**1.50*** **	**1.50*** **	**1.50*** **	**1.50*** **
40-54		**1.28*** **	**1.28*** **	**1.28*** **	**1.28*** **	**1.28*** **
Education (ref. = <19)						
20 or older		**1.57*** **	**1.56*** **	**1.55*** **	**1.57*** **	**1.56*** **
Still studying		**1.22***	1.15	1.10	1.14	**1.15***
Affluence		**1.17****	**1.18****	**1.18****	**1.18****	**1.18****
GDP per capita			1.13	1.13	1.14	1.12
GINI			**0.77*** **	**0.77*** **	**0.75*** **	**0.74*** **
Power distance			0.88	0.89	0.88	0.87
Individualism			0.90	0.90	0.90	0.89
Masculinity			0.89	0.89	0.89	0.88
Uncertainty avoidance			**0.84***	**0.84***	**0.84***	**0.84***
Long term orientation			1.13	1.13	1.13	1.14
Indulgence			1.16	1.16	1.16	1.17
EnvConc*Education						
20 or older				**1.11****		
Still studying				**1.33*** **		
GINI*Education						
20 or older					**1.10***	
Still studying					0.98	
GINI*Affluence						**1.16****
	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.	Est.
Intercept	**0.38*** **	**0.31*** **	**0.06****	**0.06****	**0.06****	**0.06****
Affluence		**0.06***	**0.06***	**0.06***	**.06***	**0.04***
Education		**0.02***	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01

*Table 2. Multilevel logistic regression. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on the following thresholds of *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001.*

Country-level predictors were added in model 3. First, the model confirms the negative association between income inequality and GPs found above. Citizens of countries with high levels of income inequality seem to buy fewer eco-labeled products. Second, a culture of uncertainty avoidance also appears to negatively affect GPs. The effects of all other country-level variables were insignificant. Models 4-6 further build upon these findings by including (cross-level) interactions. We focused only on interaction effects relevant to and hypothesized in the theoretical framework. In specific, three were found. Model 4 reflects the interaction between environmental concern and education. Results suggest that for people who stopped formal education before the age of 20, each increase of 1 standard deviation in environmental concern increases the likelihood of GPs by 28%. The effect of environmental concern on GPs increases among people who attended formal education longer (by 11%) and especially among people still studying (by 33%). It seems that formal education allows people to align more easily their environmental concerns with their purchases. Models 5 and 6 respectively contain interaction effects between income inequality on the one hand, and education and affluence on the other. In countries with average income inequality, people who attended formal education until or beyond the age of 20 were 57% more likely to have bought eco-labeled products than people who stopped before the age of 20. These differences significantly increased in countries with above average income inequalities. Conversely, education differences decreased in countries with below average income inequality. With regard to affluence, a similar trend was found. While the effect of affluence becomes stronger in countries with high levels of income inequality, it weakens in countries with low levels of income inequality.

5.6 Discussion

The purchase of green goods has become a key element in sustainable development narratives (Lorenzen, 2014). Consumer action is a widely appreciated ideal to achieve sustainability that does not fundamentally challenge our way of life (Balsiger, Lorenzini, & Sahakian, 2019; Szasz, 2007). However, less privileged groups are often not able to participate in these green consumer ideals (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Indeed, our results confirm that access to certain levels of economic and cultural resources may be necessary to engage in GPs (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Especially formal education appears to help people to align their environmental concerns with their consumer choices, and bridge the so-called action-cognition gap (ElHaffar, Durif, & Dubé, 2020; Gleim et al., 2013; Park & Lin, 2018). Explanations can, for example, be sought in access to

information, affinity with and trust in green products (Johnston & Baumann, 2014; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). In this article, we have further built upon individual-level research by adding a multilevel perspective. In specific, we highlight income (in)equality as a central driver of GPs.

This study provides strong evidence for a relational approach to social inequality regarding GPs, and reveals the impact of relative income distribution. On the one hand, it seems that GPs are more common in countries with low levels of income inequality. This is consistent with previous studies arguing that inequality erodes social and political trust, reduces solidarity and cooperation, and in turn lowers support for environmental policies and willingness to engage prosocial behaviors such as GPs (Grunewald et al., 2017; Kemp-Benedict, 2013; Roberts & Mangold, 2023; Stephany, 2017; Uslaner, 2000; Uslaner & Brown, 2005).

On the other hand, findings suggest that the inequality gap widens when income inequality increases. In other words, the gap between rich and poor, more and less educated seems to be smallest in egalitarian societies. Given the quantitative and cross-sectional nature of this study, we are guided by theory for the interpretation of our findings. At the very least, these results underscore that not only the amount of resources one has access to matters, but also the relative distribution of these resources (Sahlins, 1972). While explanation can be sought in confounding country characteristics, the statistical analysis contains control factors including economic development and a range of measures for national cultural (Hofstede, 2011). We believe that two mechanisms lie at the basis of this phenomenon. (i) GPs are a field of cultural politics that is closely connected to social class (Anantharaman, 2018; Carfagna et al., 2014; Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2023). GPs are framed as a vital way to engage in environmental protection, arguably by privileged actors who have the power to define their own actions as ideals and the resources to attain them (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). At the same time, they are increasingly seen as luxury products (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014; Laidley, 2013a). Less privileged groups may experience frustration or powerlessness (Kennedy & Givens, 2019); they may emphasize economic development (Hochschild, 2018); propose other solutions such as consuming less (Laidley, 2013a); or more fundamentally challenge the legitimacy of societal institutions (Ford & Norgaard, 2020). Subsequently, social exclusion and inequalities may further increase the divisiveness and polarization around green consumption strategies (Burningham & Thrush, 2003; Hochschild, 2018). (ii) An unequal income distribution can lead to

status anxiety (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009) and status consumption (Pybus et al., 2022; Walasek & Brown, 2015). Consequently, a framework is created for cultural class distinction (Bourdieu, 1984; Delhey, Schneickert, & Steckermeier, 2017; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2007).

In terms of practical implications, our study highlights social inequalities as a central driver for GPs (or the lack thereof). This holds true on an individual, but also on a societal level. Therefore, we encourage scholars and policymakers to consider both general (income) inequalities and inequalities specific to sustainability debates. Like many others, this article shows that they are not an afterthought or an unintended side effect of sustainability transitions. In contrast, the issues of social inequality and sustainability are deeply interconnected. While sustainability initiatives such as green consumption tend to produce and reproduce social inequality and exclusion (Anantharaman, 2018), the latter may also reduce the effectiveness and challenge the legitimacy of sustainability initiatives (Burningham & Thrush, 2003; Hochschild, 2018). Finally, we encourage further research to build upon this study by employing relational approaches to social inequalities regarding green consumption. Moreover, while the focus of our study was limited to GPs, future studies may expand its gaze to broader environmentally relevant debates. Moreover, our findings would benefit greatly from qualitative research approaches that would be able to explore the causal mechanisms in more depth, and further reveal the processes of meaning-making associated with GPs in a cross-national setting. Finally, this study and the findings within are limited to European countries, and more globalized research is needed to expand conclusions to other parts of the world.

Chapter 6

Culture and green tastes. A sociological analysis of the relationship between cultural engagement and environmental practices

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Abstract. In this study, we approach environmental practices from a cultural point of view, focusing on the role of cultural capital. While previous studies have looked at educational attainment, we focus on cultural engagement. We use data from the Flemish Survey on Socio-Cultural Shift to examine the relationship between people's cultural activities and their environmental practices. In the first step of the analysis, we identify environmental and cultural dispositions, their overlap, and association with social class through multiple factor and latent class analysis. Results showed a strong connection between cultural engagement and environmental practices, especially among educated middle classes. Economic elites were mostly culturally oriented, and less focused on environmental practices. 'Purely' environmental orientations appeared most common in lower classes. In a second step, through structural equation modeling, we examined in more depth the association between various forms of cultural engagement and environmental practices. Our study confirms that education relates positively to environmental practices, and more importantly shows that educational differences in cultural engagement can explain educational differences. General cultural engagement was most associated with environmental practices, and to a lesser extent also highbrow cultural capital. In contrast, a traditional musical orientation seemed negatively related to environmental practices. In conclusion, our findings present strong evidence for a (re)conceptualization of environmental practices as a cultural taste and a form of cultural capital. Our study suggests that future research on social differentiation should pay more attention to environmental practices.

Keywords. Culture; Sustainability; Environmentalism; Inequality; Social Differentiation

6.1 Introduction

The growing awareness of environmental issues has enlarged the cultural and symbolic value of environmental practices (Brooks & Wilson, 2015; Noppers et al., 2014). Increasingly, environmental practices are seen as having a lifestyle component (Evans & Jackson, 2007). This fits within a broader trend of the politization of everyday life through lifestyle politics (Bennett, 1998; Giddens, 1991). Notions such as political consumers, citizen-consumers or sustainable citizens articulate that people use everyday practices to "express and support political and ethical perspectives" including environmental protection (Shah et al., 2007, p. 217; Szasz, 2011). Flanders, where this study is located, is no exception (De Moor & Verhaegen, 2020; Geerts et al., 2022). Moreover, governments see their citizens and their everyday practices as important factors in the struggle against environmental issues (Jackson, 2005). In 2011, for example, the Flemish government explicitly wrote into policy the objective to increase the environmental awareness and environmental practices of its citizens (Flemish Government, 2011). Additionally, it is increasingly part of the curricula in the Flemish (public) school system from primary education onward (Flemish Government, 2014).

Research also suggests that the growing cultural value of environmental practices may not be universal, and especially salient in highly educated middle classes (Carfagna et al., 2014). Moreover, while the environmental practices of these high cultural capital individuals are seemingly value-led, they also have distinctive power (Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). On the one hand, research has argued that certain cultural resources may be necessary to consistently incorporate environmental practices into a coherent lifestyle (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). On the other hand, studies show that, in some contexts, environmental practices may provide social status because they signal ethical or moral virtues (Brick & Lai, 2018; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010; Uren, Roberts, et al., 2019). Accordingly, Anantharaman (2018) emphasizes the role of environmental practices in the (re)enforcement of (cultural) power relations (see also Grosglik, 2021). In this context, certain ways of engaging in and appreciating environmental practices can be seen as a cultural accomplishment (Greenbaum, 2005), performance of class (Kennedy & Givens, 2019) and distinction strategy (Carfagna et al., 2014).

Consequently, recent studies have attempted to (re)conceptualize environmental practices as emerging forms of cultural capital (e.g., Carfagna et al., 2014; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston,

2019). However, they have mainly focused on educational attainment. While the focus on educational attainment presents an *institutionalized* view on cultural capital, we emphasize a more *embodied* view on cultural capital, namely cultural engagement (Bourdieu, 1986). Sociology has a long history in the analysis of cultural engagement as a form of cultural capital, and the role it plays in mechanisms of social differentiation and distinction (Lizardo, 2018; Wright, 2018). However, this grand tradition has not yet fully incorporated ecological debates in its analysis.

Against this background, this study assesses the way environmental practices in Flanders fit within a broader cultural framework and existing cultural distinction practices. In specific, we examine the relationship between cultural engagement and environmental practices. In what follows, we first discuss the role of cultural engagement in processes of social differentiation and distinction. Afterwards, we discuss the literature on environmental practices and distinction. Methodologically, we analyze Flemish survey data in two phases. (i) The first phase aims to identify groups in relation to both environmental practices and cultural engagement. In specific, multiple factor analysis (MFA) and latent class analysis (LCA) were used. In the second phase, a structural equation model (SEM) is used to examine in more detail the relationship between environmental practices and cultural engagement. Here, we examine the relationship between cultural engagement and various environmental practices. Finally, we present the results of our study, and reflect on the findings in a more in-depth discussion.

6.2 Social class and cultural tastes

Sociology has a long history in the analysis of social differentiation and stratification (Lizardo, 2018). In particular, sociologists have focused on the role of culture in the acquisition of status and advantage, and in dynamics of domination and exclusion. Thus, even though culture matters for its own sake (e.g., the aesthetic beauty of arts), culture can also function as a resource i.e., cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). Most studies examining the relationship between cultural capital and environmental practices have emphasized the role of educational attainment (e.g., Carfagna et al., 2014). Educational attainment represents an *institutionalized* form of cultural capital, or in other words the institutional recognition of certain cultural competencies and traits (Bourdieu, 1986). In contrast, this study focuses on another form of cultural capital i.e., *embodied* cultural capital, which entails a wide range of long-lasting dispositions, embodied competences, tastes, and practices that are engrained in mind and body (Bourdieu, 1984). Accordingly, many studies

have investigated the way tastes, leisure activities, and lifestyles function as cultural resources. In this line of research, cultural engagement has been a major research topic (e.g., Roose, Van Eijck, & Lievens, 2012; Savage et al., 2013).

In the work of Bourdieu (1984), embodied culture is very much intertwined with social class. Parental socialization and class conditions inform a habitus, which is a set of pre-reflective dispositions and interpretative schemes. Subsequently, a habitus produces and reproduces certain class-based practices. Cultural processes stand at the center of Bourdieu's analysis with much emphasis on the social organization and hierarchical ordering of tastes (physical sensations, aesthetic preferences, moral sensitivities, etc.). Bourdieu's cultural model (1984) mainly differentiates between legitimate (or highbrow) and popular (or lowbrow) culture. Moreover, he argues for a symbiotic relationship between institutionalized and embodied cultural capital. In particular, education lies at the center of the (re)production of distinctive culture and tastes (see also Wright, 2018). Specifically, the educational system is instrumental for the socialization in and the consecration of legitimate culture.

However, more recent studies indicate that Bourdieu's differentiation between highbrow and popular culture may not be as relevant as it was in 1960s France (Bennett et al., 2009; Prieur & Savage, 2011, 2013; Wright, 2018). On the one hand, popular culture grew increasingly complex, and upper classes also seem to engage in popular culture (Savage & Gayo, 2011). On the other hand, culture is produced and dispersed increasingly. Highbrow culture today may not be as exclusive as it once was. Yet, these critiques do not imply that cultural capital became irrelevant (Prieur & Savage, 2011, 2013). Rather, the specific modes and mechanisms of cultural stratification have simply changed. Indeed, as Holt (1998) argues, the notion of cultural capital is relative and dependent on its socio-historical context (see also Bourdieu, 1998; Lareau & Weininger, 2003).

Contemporary studies have shown that the main distinction may lie in the amount of culture people consume, thus differentiating between those who engage in culture and those who are culturally disengaged (Bennett et al., 2009; Kahma & Toikka, 2012; Prieur & Savage, 2011; Prieur & Savage, 2013; Roose, Van Eijck, & Lievens, 2012). Compared to the latter, they generally have a higher income (Bihagen & Katz-Gerro, 2000; Chan & Goldthorpe, 2007; Kraaykamp et al., 2007; Van Berkel & De Graaf, 1995) and education (Peterson & Kern, 1996; Roose & Vander Stichele,

2010; Van Eijck & Bargeman, 2004; Vander Stichele & Laermans, 2006). In addition, it seems that younger people are more culturally engaged than older people (Roose, Van Eijck, & Lievens, 2012).

Moreover, different modes of cultural engagement may differentiate between the culturally engaged. Peterson and Kern (1996) identify cultural omnivorousness as a contemporary form of cultural capital. Omnivores have expanded their taste profile to incorporate both high- and popular culture (Coulangeon, 2005; Van Eijck & Knulst, 2005; Van Eijck & Lievens, 2008; Wright, 2018). This is ascribed to the middle and upper classes (Bennett et al., 2009; Peterson, 1997; Skeggs, 2004). Today, advantageous culture is "no longer a short simple list of classy things" (Erickson, 2007, p. 345), but rather a diverse mixture. This distinguishes them from univores (Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005; Peterson, 1992) who are seen as the culturally narrow and immobile working class (Skeggs, 2004; Wright, 2018). However, some scholars have cast doubt on the fact that a true omnivore-univore divide exists (Prieur & Savage, 2011).

Others have argued for the existence of multiple cultural capital frameworks and competing claims for cultural value (Wright, 2018). Savage et al. (2013) present a picture of a younger middle class who consume other forms of cultural expression than those traditionally considered highbrow (e.g., metal or rap music). They describe these more novel forms of cultural capital as emerging cultural capital (see also Bennett et al., 2009; Roose, 2015). The declining grip of highbrow culture on legitimized culture may present an opportunity for more contemporary forms of cultural capital. Here, age appears to be the main distinguisher with older generations leaning towards highbrow culture (Bellavance, 2008; Bennett et al., 2009; Savage et al., 2013; Van Eijck & Knulst, 2005). Additionally, women have been found to engage more in highbrow culture than men (Lizardo, 2006).

The notion of emerging cultural capital reiterates the socio-historical dependency of cultural capital (Holt, 1998). Cultural capital is never a necessary attribute of a certain taste or practice. Rather, Bourdieu's (2000) concept of symbolic capital refers to the symbolic mechanisms by which they are valued, and emphasizes that practices must first be valorized. Today, a growing awareness of environmental issues has enlarged the cultural and symbolic value of environmental practices, at least (but not exclusively) among highly educated middle classes (Brooks & Wilson, 2015; Noppers et al., 2014). Indeed, empirical research shows that, in some contexts,

environmental practices may provide social status (Brick & Lai, 2018; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010; Uren, Roberts, et al., 2019).

6.3 Social class and ecological tastes

While much of the literature on social class and cultural engagement has focused on aesthetics, more recent studies have argued that the notion of cultural capital and high-status tastes should be expanded to include ethical considerations and moral distinction (e.g., Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). This builds upon the idea that morality can act as a marker for social worth and positioning (Lamont, 1992, 2000a; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Against this background, specific attention is being paid to the relationship between social class, culture, and environmental practices (e.g., Carfagna et al., 2014). Following this line of inquiry, this contribution examines the way environmental practices fit within a broader cultural framework and existing cultural distinction practices.

In order to understand environmental practices and their distinctive capacities, our approach is inspired by practice theory. Here, social practices are placed at the center of social inquiry, rather than individuals or societal structures (Reckwitz, 2002). A practice is a routinely performed set of activities that are constituted and routinely performed through a complex constellation of heterogenous elements including mental activities, artifacts, skills, values, know-how and so on (Welch & Warde, 2015). In other words, environmental practices are not only understood as (individual) responses to environmental values or concerns, but rather as practices situated in a complex array of material, social, political, and cultural systems (Ford, 2019). Contributions of practice theory in environmental sociology are often exemplified by the works of Elizabeth Shove (2003; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012; Shove & Walker, 2014) that have emphasized the role of material surroundings and technology, and how this may help to understand our levels of consumption (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019).

In the context of our study, a Bourdieuan view (1977) on social practices and his notion of habitus are especially useful. Practical understandings of appropriate behavior are learned through one's social history and class conditions (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019), and sustained through the repeated performance of these practices (Hargraves 2011). In other words, social practices are regulated by a collective history through group-specific dispositions, knowledge schemes, cultural

frameworks, socio-historical conditions, and so on (Ford, 2019). This enables group-specific ways of engaging in and appreciating environmental practices (Burton, Kuczera, & Schwarz, 2008; Evans, 2018). At the same time, these practices shape the social world and the social differentiations within (Bourdieu, 1977). It is through their repeated performance that they are constituted and green distinction becomes reality (Horton, 2003). In this context, Kasper (2009, p. 318) discusses the notion of ecological habitus as the "embodiment of a durable yet changeable system of ecologically relevant dispositions, practices, perceptions, and material conditions—perceptible as lifestyle—that is shaped by and helps shape socioecological contexts."

In contrast to Kasper's value-neutral conception of ecological habitus, others use similar concepts to describe the increasing cultural value of environmental practices among certain social groups. Here, ecological habitus (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Smith, 2001), green habitus (Kirby, 2017), or eco-habitus (Carfagna et al., 2014) refers to a habitus oriented towards environmental awareness and environmental practices. Moreover, for Carfagna et al. (2014), such habitus constitutes a reconfiguration of high-status tastes and cultural capital.

However, the concept of eco-habitus has been the subject of a debate that centers on the paradoxical tension between openness and distinction (Schor et al., 2016). At first sight, eco-habitus appears a relatively open cultural orientation that potentially challenges existing and exclusive forms of cultural authority. Even though 'innovators' are often highly educated, dispersion is possible and even desirable. For Carfagna et al. (2014), it is a (re)valorization of locality, manual labor, materiality, and connection to earth. Moreover, the concept is closely related to the environmental movement (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Kirby, 2017). Here, it can be seen as a collective strategy to tackle environmental issues (Carfagna et al., 2014; O'Shaughnessy & Kennedy, 2010). Accordingly, people need to develop an embodied and practical understanding of how to live well both socially and environmentally (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Smith, 2001).

Yet, the concept of eco-habitus also has a potential for distinction, and may be rooted in class divisions (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Two arguments can be given here. First, it seems that these environmental orientations are mostly found among the usual suspects: privileged, white, middle class, politically active, etc. (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Rivera-Torres & Garces-Ayerbe, 2018). Cultural capital, and especially educational attainment is seen as a strong predictor of an eco-habitus (Carfagna et al., 2014). Most likely, this is partially caused by a socialization process within

middle class groups whose children tend to be highly educated. Yet, education has a more direct role because it seems to (implicitly or explicitly) cultivate values and behaviors deemed important by society, including environmental awareness and practices (Chawla, 1999; Sela-Sheffy, 2011). As mentioned above, this is also the case for Flemish schools. Similarly, Bourdieu (1984) argues that education lies at the center of the (re)production of legitimate culture and tastes.

Second, Kennedy, Baumann and Johnston (2019) argue that environmental orientations are no longer an alternative mode of differentiation. Rather, dominant views on sustainability are often conceptualized within existing (dominant) cultural frameworks (Balsiger, Lorenzini, & Sahakian, 2019; Uren, Dzidic, et al., 2019). Contemporary forms of high-status may entail a "synergistic combination between morals and aesthetics" (Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019, p. 394). Particularly, environmental practices are mostly defined in terms of high-cost and high-status practices which mostly appeal to upper classes, such as market- and technology-based solutions (Kennedy & Givens, 2019; Laidley, 2013a). Some other examples: an appreciation for locality is still understood in a cosmopolitan context (Carfagna et al., 2014). Often, only aesthetic products of manual labor (e.g., a wooden bike rack used as a piece of art on the wall) are valorized, in contrast to functional productions (e.g., repairing a dishwasher) (Schor et al., 2016). Another example can be found with Anantharaman (2016), who argues that high-status bicycling entails modern-looking expensive bikes and outfits. Lastly, in their research on high-status food orientations, Kennedy, Baumann and Johnston (2019) notice an overlap between ethical and foodie considerations.

In conclusion, it is worth approaching environmental practices from a cultural point of view. Similar to the aesthetic and societal benefits of culture, we look beyond the environmental benefits of environmental practices. The main aim of our study is to examine the ways in which cultural practices and environmental practices overlap.

6.4 Materials & Methods

In our study, data from the Flemish Survey on Socio-Cultural Shifts 2016 (SCV-survey) was used (Statistiek Vlaanderen, 2016). The data was provided by the Study Service of the Flemish government. Data was collected face-to-face from a representative sample of the 18+, Dutch-speaking population of Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region (Belgium). Ultimately, 1449

people participated in the survey. The analysis for this study was conducted in two steps. The first step aimed to identify environmental and cultural dispositions, their overlap, and associated social class groups. The analysis for this step relied on multiple factor and latent class analysis. In a second step, we examined in more depth the association between various forms of cultural engagement and environmental practices. This step relied mostly on structural equation modeling, although a multiple correspondence analysis was first conducted to identify types of cultural engagement and thus reduce data. To save space, the details of the multiple correspondence analysis are discussed in the appendix.

6.4.1 Variables

Following previous studies, we employ a multidimensional conceptualization of environmental practices (Diekmann & Preisendorfer, 2003; Zorell & Yang, 2019). We focused on a set of 17 household environmental practices subdivided into 4 categories (curtailment, transport, shopping, and waste sorting). From a practical point of view, the number of environmental practices and the meanings associated with these practices are potentially endless. We were, however, limited by the quantitative nature of our study which forced us to focus on broad (and perhaps crude) categorizations. The scope is thus limited to 4 types of practices that are theoretically inspired and empirically verified to be similar practices. On the one hand, previous studies have used some or all of these categories (Diekmann & Preisendorfer, 2003; Stern, 2000; Zorell & Yang, 2019). On the other hand, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to identify communalities between items and statistically validate these categories.

As mentioned above, environmental practices were measured through 17 items, divided into 4 categories. Respondents could answer on a 5-point scale ranging from 1=Never to 5=Always, which were dummified for the multiple factor analysis (1 = often or always). Curtailment behavior was measured through 3 items: ‘shutting down electrical devices when not in use’, ‘dimming lights when leaving the room’, and ‘only heating rooms when really necessary’. Sustainable transport was measured through 3 items: ‘Cycling or walking short distances’, ‘Searching for alternatives to a car as much as possible’, and ‘Public transport when possible’. Sustainable shopping practices were measured through 7 items: ‘Recycled products’, ‘Taking into account packaging e.g., no surplus, bio-degradable, etc.’, ‘Inspecting the product labels’, ‘Biological products’, ‘Local food’, ‘Env. friendly household products/cleaning supplies’, and ‘Env. friendly

personal care products'. Lastly, sorting waste was measured through 4 items: 'Organic waste', 'Small hazardous waste', 'Going to the container park', and 'Returning empty batteries'.

Cultural engagement included 26 items, for which respondents were asked whether they engaged in each activity during the last 12 months. Activities included: attending … an opera, … dance performance, … theater, … circus, … musical, …cabaret show, … movie screening, … (dance) party, … rock concert, … jazz or blues concert, … folk or other traditional concert, … classical music concert, … world music concert, … a Flemish music concert, … fanfare or orchestra performance, … *Kleinkunst* or *Chanson* concert (which are respectively Flemish and Walloon/French musical genres, sung in Dutch or French while typically using simple acoustics), … exhibition, … historical memorial, … competitive sports event, and … guided walking tour. People were also asked whether they engaged in … sports, … creative expression, … hiking through the woods or forest, … visiting a significant building, … reading a book, and … visiting a library.

Other variables included educational attainment (primary education or less, secondary, or tertiary education), gender (0 = male, 1 = female), household income (1. Less than 500 euro – 42. More than 10450 euro), household size (range 1 through 10), age (range 18 through 95), and environmental knowledge ('How much do you know about solutions for environmental issues': 1= Nothing to 5= A lot). Lastly, we measured environmental concern through a composite measure of 5 items (1. Completely agree to 5. Completely disagree): 'Most environmental problems in Flanders are exaggerated', 'All this talking about environmental problems in Flanders worries people more than necessary', 'Today, we worry too much about the future of the environment and too little about prices and employment', 'People are too worried about progress that would harm the environment', and 'I seldom worry about environmental pollution'.

6.5 Results

6.5.1 Multiple factor analysis & Latent class analysis

The multiple factor analysis involved a multiple correspondence analysis, with the acknowledgement that the variables are subdivided in multiple groups (Escofier & Pages, 1994), in our case cultural engagement and environmental practices. The results of the analysis are visualized in figure 1. The modified rates reveal that two axes explain 70% of the modalities (Table 3 in appendix). Therefore, it appears sufficient to only interpret the first two axes. The first axis (λ

= 7.54) mainly differentiates between a general engagement in cultural activities and environmental practices on the one hand, and a general disengagement on the other. In contrast, the second axis (λ = 4.71) seems to differentiate between cultural engagement (top of the graph) and environmental practices (bottom of the graph). It is quite interesting to note that the cognitive environmental factors (namely environmental knowledge and concerns) were situated among the cultural activities rather than environmental practices. The supplementary variables included in figure 2 reveal the relationship between the axes on the one hand, and income and educational attainment on the other. Substantial associations were found for both axes. Generally speaking, high income and educated individuals are mostly located in the top left corner of the graph, thus both engaging in cultural activities and to a lesser extent in combination with environmental practices. These groups thus combine cultural and green dispositions. In contrast, less privileged groups seem generally more disengaged in both, although engaging in environmental practices above cultural activities.

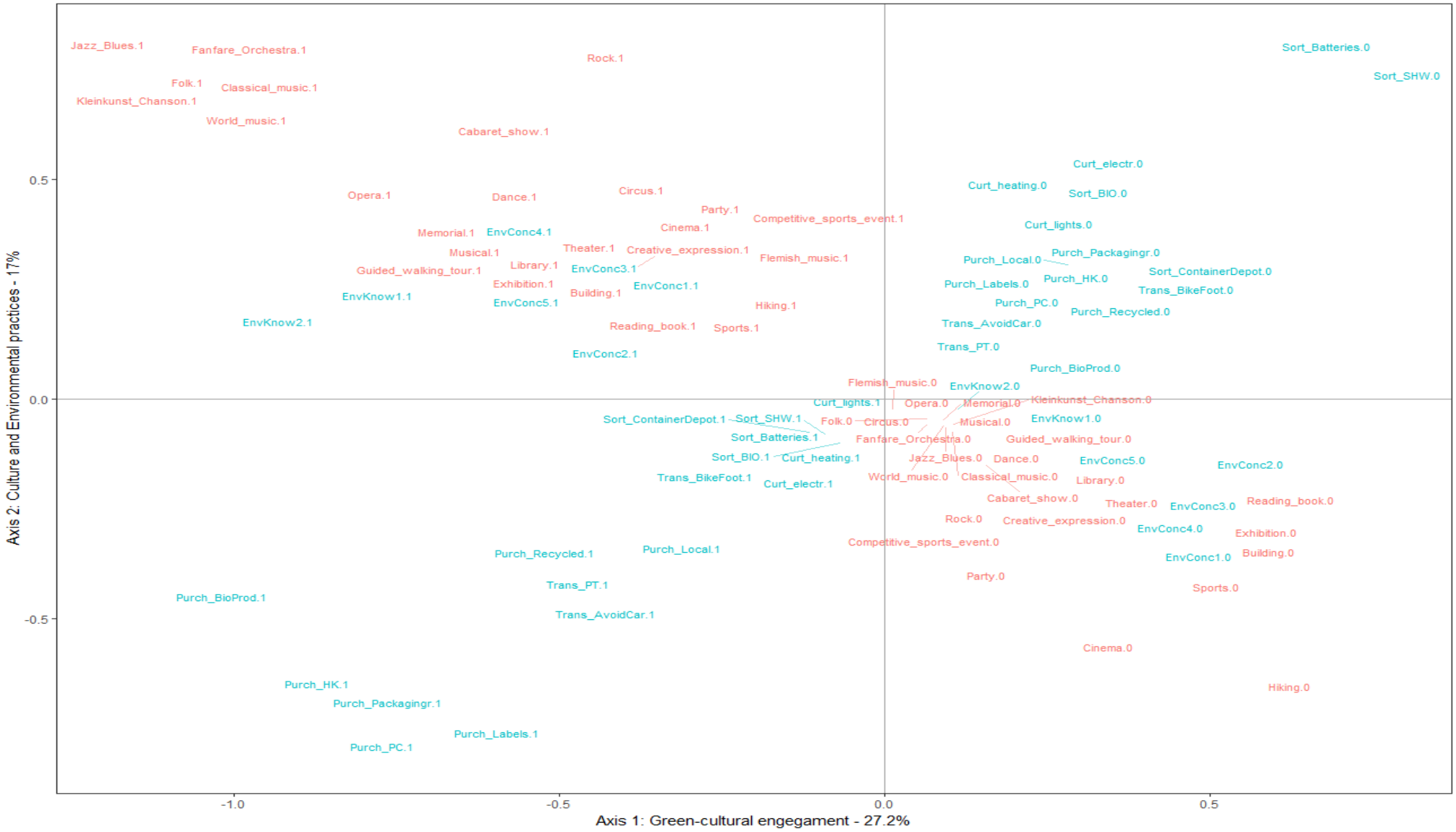

Figure 1. Multiple correspondence analysis with modalities.

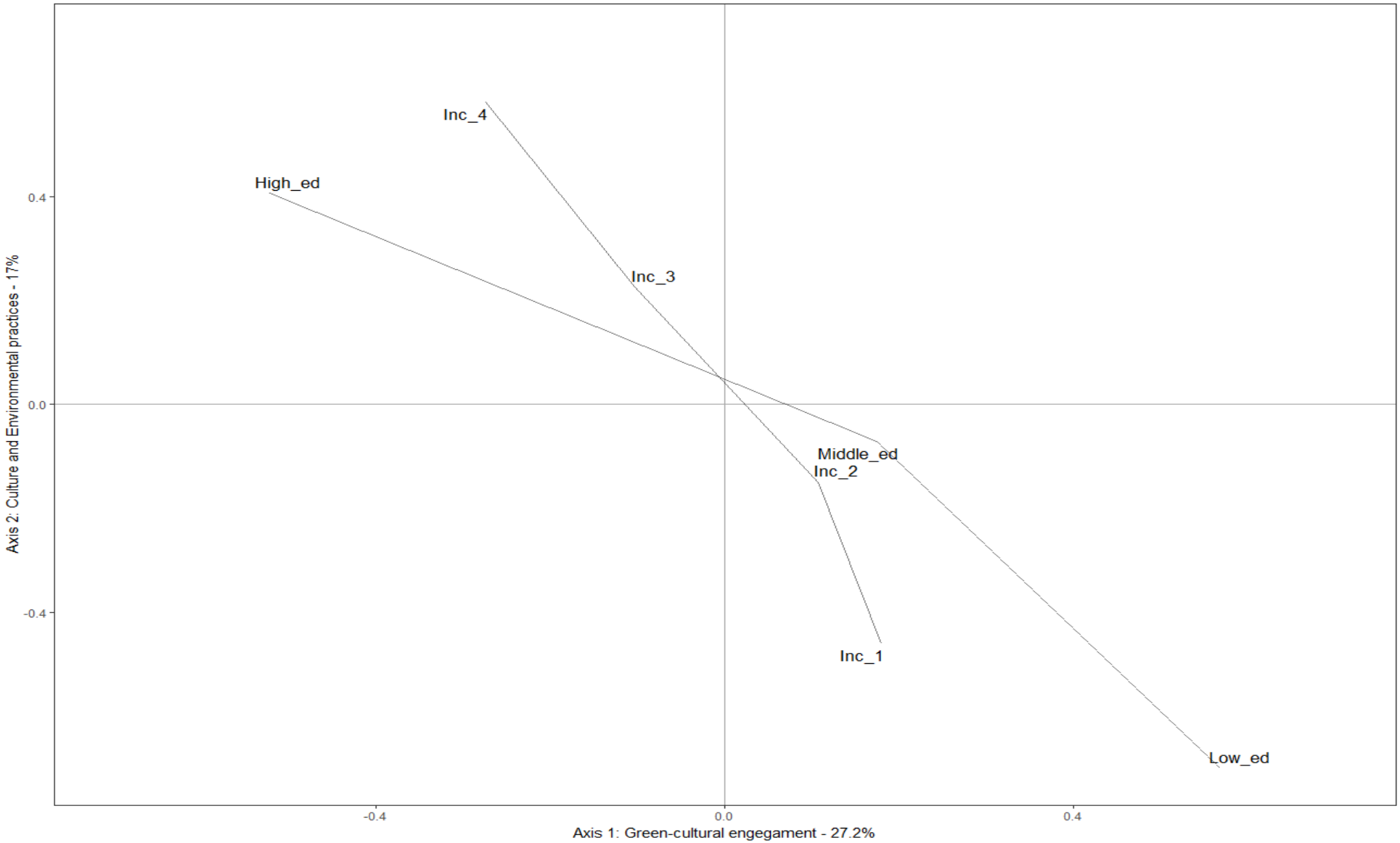

Figure 2. Multiple correspondence analysis with supplementary variables.

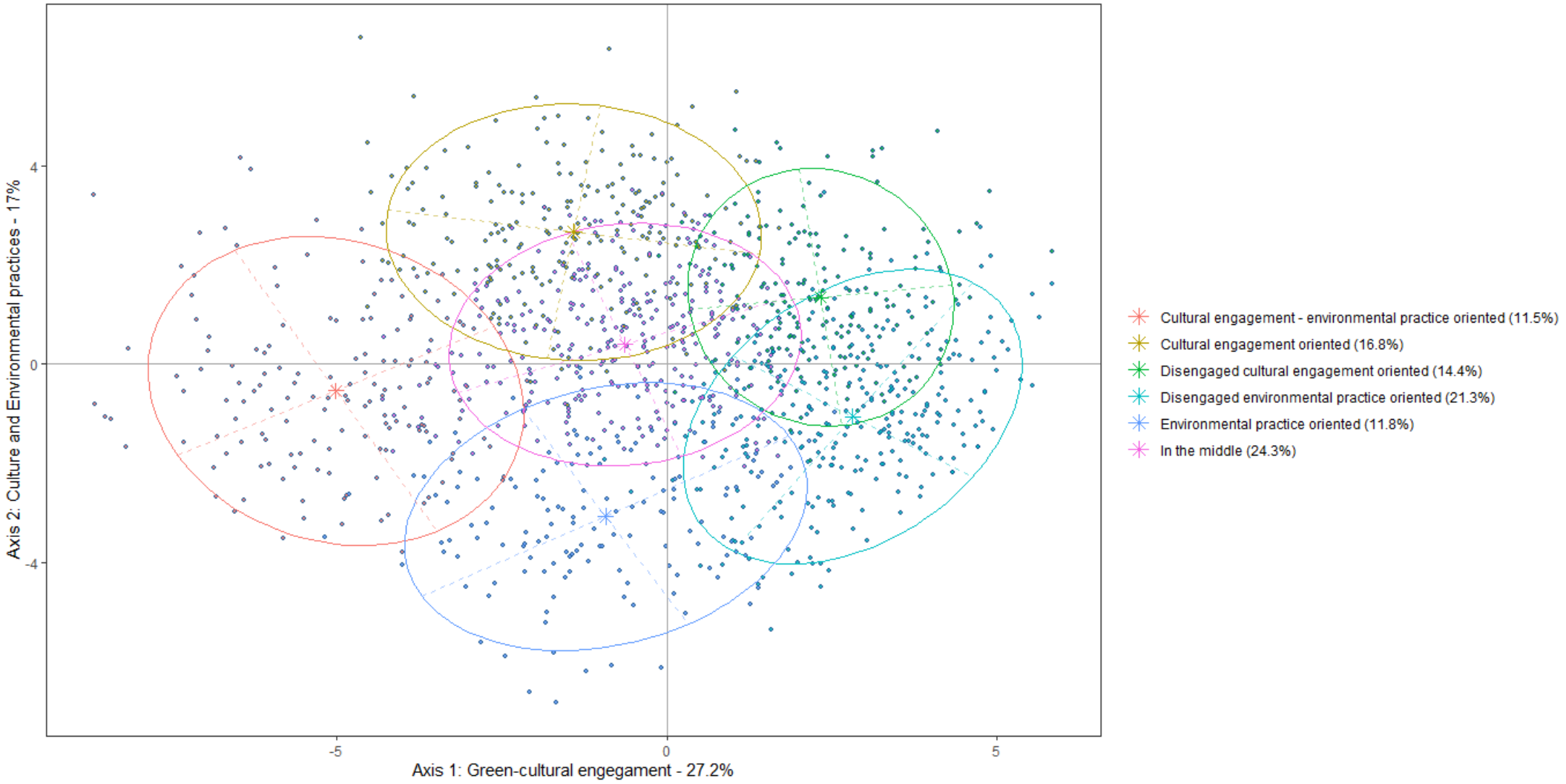

Figure 3. Multiple correspondence analysis with projection of the latent classes using concentration ellipses

Finally, to provide more insights into the types of 'green-cultural' engagement and search for subgroups, we employed latent class analysis. In the end, a 6-class model was preferred for theoretical and statistical reasons (see Table 4 in appendix for fit statistics). Subsequently, these latent classes were projected on the MCA using concentration ellipses (Figure 3). In table 1, these groups were further examined through multinomial logistic regression. In the interest of briefness, we highlight the three most interesting groups. The first group is located at the top of the graph and is oriented towards cultural engagement. This group is mostly characterized by a tertiary education and has the highest household income in the sample. Another group, located at the left side of the graph, is oriented towards both cultural activities and environmental practices. This group represents highly educated middle classes with a decent income. A third group, situated at the bottom of the graph, is oriented mostly towards environmental practices, and is relatively deprived in terms of income and education.

	Culturally oriented (vs Environmentally-culturally oriented)	**Disengaged environmentally oriented (vs Environmentally-culturally oriented)**	**Disengaged Culturally oriented (vs Environmentally-culturally oriented)**	**In the middle (vs Environmentally-culturally oriented)**	**Environmentally oriented (vs Environmentally-culturally oriented)**
	Exp(B)	**Exp(B)**	**Exp(B)**	**Exp(B)**	**Exp(B)**
Gender (female)	0.953	0.724	0.700	0.902	0.946
Age	**0.964*** **	**1.027*** **	**0.976** **	1.005	**1.030*** **
Household size	0.937	1.373**	0.981	0.957	0.733
Education					
Low	Ref.				
Middle	1	**0.210** **	0.495	0.454	0.316
High	0.868	**.018*** **	**0.116*** **	**0.196** **	**0.077*** **
Household income	**1.031***	**.935*** **	1.018	1.018	**0.960** **
Nagelkerke R^2	38%				

*Table 1. Multinomial logistic regression. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on the following thresholds of *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001.*

6.5.2 Structural equation model

In a second step, we investigated the association between cultural engagement and environmental practices through structural equation modeling. For the purpose of data reduction, we first conducted a multiple correspondence analysis to identify types of cultural engagement (see appendix). In specific, three forms of cultural engagement were identified, namely a general cultural engagement, highbrow cultural engagement, and traditional (musical) engagement.

Subsequently, individual scores on the cultural engagement axis were utilized in the structural equation model. A DWLS estimator was utilized because indicators were ordered categorical variables. Model fit was assessed based on the following fit statistics: χ^2 -test, comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (see Hooper et al. 2007; Kline 2015 for reviews on statistics and their recommended values). Following recommendations by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in order to evaluate the latent constructs to be used in the SEM. Factors were judged on reliability and validity (Bacon, Sauer, & Young, 1995). Respectively, a composite reliability (CR) of > 0.7 and an average variance extracted (AVE) of > 0.5 were expected. An AVE slightly below 0.5 can be accepted, when CR is satisfactory large (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Lastly, multiple SEMs were estimated. In the initial model (M1), the influence of educational attainment on environmental practices was tested, controlling for common covariates. In a second model (M2), cultural engagement was introduced. The last model (M3) entails an additional test for the robustness of the findings. Specifically, a measure for environmental knowledge was included.

Initially, a CFA was conducted in order to evaluate latent constructs. The model appeared to fit well with the data (χ^2 = 1029.87 df = 199, p ≤ 0.001; CFI = 0.947; TLI = 0.939; SRMR = 0.050; RMSEA = 0.055). Furthermore, AVE and CR for environmental concern (AVE: 0.45 & CR: 0.80), curtailment behavior (AVE: 0.45 & CR: 0.71), sustainable transport (AVE: 0.63 & CR: 0.84), sustainable shopping (AVE: 0.47 & CR: 0.86), and sorting waste (AVE: 0.55 & CR: 0.83) were all satisfactory. Afterwards, the CFA was used to construct multiple SEMs (Table 2). Covariances between dependent variables were estimated in each SEM. The lower part of table 2 only shows the covariances for the final model, given that covariances in other models were very similar to quasi-identical. (i) In the first SEM (M1), the factors for environmental practices served as the dependent variables, while being explained by gender, age, household income, household size, environmental concern, and educational attainment (χ^2 = 1282.61 df = 307, p ≤ 0.001; CFI = 0.925; TLI = 0.944; SRMR = 0.047; RMSEA = 0.050). (ii) In M2, cultural engagement was included by adding individual MCA-scores on our three dimensions (χ^2 = 1366.82 df = 361, p ≤ 0.001; CFI = 0.912; TLI = 0.944; SRMR = 0.048; RMSEA = 0.047). (iii) In M3, we introduced our measure for environmental knowledge (χ^2 = 1377.51 df = 379, p ≤ 0.001; CFI = 0.910; TLI = 0.945; SRMR = 0.047; RMSEA = 0.046).

As expected, environmental concern has a significant positive effect on environmental practices in almost all models and types of behavior. However, the relationship between environmental

concern and curtailment behavior is rather weak, and even absent from M2 onwards after including cultural engagement. Concerning gender, it appears that women are more engaged in sustainable shopping practices and sorting waste, compared to men. Age seems to relate positively to curtailment behavior, sustainable shopping practices and sorting waste, but was unrelated to sustainable transport from M2 onwards. In M1, we found a negative association between age and sustainable transport. Household size did not associate significantly with any type of environmental practices. The association between household income and environmental practices was mixed. In the case of curtailment behavior and sustainable transport, household income appeared to have a negative effect on environmental practices. After controlling for the cultural variables in M2, the same holds true for sustainable shopping practices. In contrast, high-income households reported to sort waste more often than low-income households.

Looking at the relationship between educational attainment and environmental practices, it was generally positive in M1. Educational attainment was only unrelated to curtailment behavior. In M2, however, after controlling for cultural activities, the association between educational attainment and environmental practices disappeared. Furthermore, we found a strong relationship between general cultural engagement on the one hand and sustainable transport, sustainable shopping practices, and sorting waste on the other. Moreover, in the case of sustainable transport and shopping, it was the strongest predictor. Concerning sorting waste, it was the second strongest predictor, after environmental concern. Furthermore, general cultural engagement does not seem to be the only fault line. The type of cultural engagement matters too. Particularly, highbrow cultural capital was positively related to sustainable transport and shopping decisions. In contrast, traditional musical cultural engagement appeared to be negatively associated with sustainable shopping practices and sorting waste.

Lastly, by adding environmental knowledge to the model, M3 provides additional evidence for the robustness of the relationship between cultural engagement and environmental practices. Accordingly, the effects of our measures of cultural activities on environmental practices only diminished slightly. It seems that cultural engagement and specific cultural orientations matter above and beyond educational attainment and environmental knowledge. Notwithstanding, the relationship between environmental knowledge and environmental practices was positive for curtailment behavior, sustainable shopping practices, and sorting waste.

	Curtailment			Transport			Shopping			Sorting		
	M1 (std.β)	**M2 (std.β)**	**M3 (std.β)**	**M1 (std.β)**	**M2 (std.β)**	**M3 (std.β)**	**M1 (std.β)**	**M2 (std.β)**	**M3 (std.β)**	**M1 (std.β)**	**M2 (std.β)**	**M3 (std.β)**
Environmental concern	**0.084***	0.079	0.065	**0.216*****	**0.141*****	**0.133*****	**0.333*****	**0.236*****	**0.205*****	**0.208*****	**0.177*****	**0.155*****
Gender (female)	0.062	0.051	0.067	0.032	0.008	0.019	**0.084****	0.055	**0.088****	**0.108****	**0.089***	**0.111****
Age	**0.241*****	**0.211*****	**0.211*****	**-0.091***	-0.072	-0.072	**0.161*****	**0.225*****	**0.226*****	**0.389*****	**0.404*****	**0.405*****
Household size	-0.037	-0.038	-0.035	-0.007	0.032	0.034	0.021	0.051	0.057	0.028	0.039	0.041
Household income	**-0.144*****	**-0.145*****	**-0.145*****	**-0.255*****	**-0.297*****	**-0.297*****	-0.021	**-0.079***	**-0.075***	**0.177*****	**0.160*****	**0.162*****
Education												
Primary education or less	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.	Ref.
Secondary education	0.062	0.051	0.042	0.013	-0.068	-0.075	**0.114***	0.019	-0.001	0.107	0.073	0.060
Tertiary education	0.007	-0.025	-0.040	**0.126***	-0.063	-0.074	**0.299*****	0.081	0.048	**0.133***	0.055	0.035
Cultural engagement												
General cultural engagement		0.018	-0.006		**0.299*****	**0.283*****		**0.420*****	**0.370*****		**0.173*****	**0.134****
Traditional culture		0.004	0.011		-0.011	-0.005		**-0.115*****	**-0.099****		**-0.117****	**-0.105***
Highbrow culture		0.077	0.068		**0.130*****	**0.124*****		**0.107*****	**0.088****		0.076	0.061
Environmental knowledge			**0.078***			0.053			**0.165*****			**0.122*****

Covariances (M3)	**Curtailment**	**Transport**	**Shopping**	**Sorting**
Curtailment	1	**0.237*****	**0.174*****	**0.344*****
Transport	**0.237*****	1	**0.267*****	-0.051
Shopping	**0.174*****	**0.267*****	1	**0.254*****
Sorting	**0.344*****	-0.051	**0.254*****	1

*Table 2. Standardized regression coefficients are categorized by their dependent variables. The lower part of the table shows the covariances between dependent variables for M3. Associations marked in bold were considered 'significant' based on the following thresholds of *p ≤ 0.05, **p ≤ 0.01, ***p ≤ 0.001.*

6.6 Discussion

The objective of this study was to assess the way environmental practices fit within a broader cultural framework and existing cultural distinction practices. Through a social practice approach, we emphasize that environmental practices cannot solely be understood as value-led responses to environmental issues, but rather as practices which are situated within a broader cultural system (Ford, 2019). In specific, we examined the association between cultural engagement and environmental practices. Sociologists have (re)conceptualized cultural engagement and more recently environmental practices as cultural resources (i.e., cultural capital) that play a role in mechanisms of social differentiation, status, and domination. However, it is not yet clear to what extent both systems of stratification overlap.

First, our results reveal a substantial overlap between cultural engagement and environmental practices, particularly among tertiary educated middle classes. This is consistent with previous studies that highlight the way highly educated groups increasingly combine aesthetics and ethics into their consumption styles (Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). Yet, our results also build further on this literature by providing novel insights into the relationship between social class on the one hand, and various cultural or environmental engagements on the other. Our findings somewhat nuance the idea that environmental practices have become a high-status consumption style among elites (e.g., Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). Rather, it seems that there is a middle-classness associated with environmental-cultural orientation. On the one hand, findings suggest that economic elites are mostly culturally oriented, and less focused on environmental practices. On the other hand, 'purely' environmental orientations appear to be most common among the more vulnerable groups. This is consistent with research highlighting the environmental practices (Schoolman, 2020) and low carbon footprint (Lévay et al., 2021) of people in poverty. A form of environmental practice seems to exist that is less rooted in dominant cultural frameworks and dispositions, particularly among people in poverty. In part, this may be explained by the fact that energy curtailment and car-avoiding transport have economic benefits. Yet, chapter 4 reveals that the motivations of people in poverty are more complex, and environmental convictions also play a role.

Subsequently, various types of cultural orientations were used to investigate their relationship with environmental practices with specific attention to the role of educational attainment. While

educational attainment was positively associated with most environmental practices after controlling for environmental concern, this could be explained by educational differences in cultural engagement. Many studies in the past have examined the influence of environmental values, concerns, and knowledge on environmental practices (Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002), as well as how they relate to educational attainment (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Lorenzen, 2014; Saphores, Ogunseitan, & Shapiro, 2012; Stern, 2000). While our results show that these factors matter, we also confirm that a large gap remains between such cognitions and actual behavior(al change) (see also Blake, 1999; Kennedy et al., 2009). Moreover, our findings suggest that a strong association exists between cultural engagement and most environmental practices, irrespective of environmental concern, knowledge, and educational attainment, thus suggesting that cultural dispositions, and predilection may be more relevant than cognitions to explain why people engage in environmental practices. Subsequently, the role of education (as an institutionalized form of cultural capital) may be more indirect by cultivating embodied cultural capital. Similarly, Norgaard (2011) problematizes the presumed causal link between cognitions and environmental practices, and calls attention to, among other things, the cultural context. While the nature of this cultural framework and how this relates to various environmental practices is context-dependent, a social practice approach seems useful to decenter individuals and their values, knowledge and (rational) choices (Hargreaves, 2011; Kasper, 2009; Shove, 2010) to include, in our case, a broader cultural system.

In specific, our findings suggest that the distinction between the culturally engaged and disengaged is also the main distinguisher when it comes to environmental practices. Furthermore, highbrow cultural capital was positively related to sustainable shopping practices and sustainable transport. Interestingly, a study by Uren, Roberts, et al. (2019) concludes that people perceive these behaviors as highly visible and effortful, which was subsequently related to a perceived increase in social status. Consequently, our results suggest that conspicuous environmental practices may be a particular form of highbrow cultural capital. Parallels can be found with the role of conspicuous consumption in the work of Veblen (1899). Lastly, a traditional musical cultural orientation was negatively related to sustainable shopping practices and sorting waste. This is perhaps a contra-intuitive finding requiring further qualitative research. However, this finding does suggest that not all cultural practices relate to environmental practices the same way, and that some cultural orientations may displace or clash with environmental practices. In

our case, a traditional musical orientation is a rather narrow mode of cultural engagement with people limiting their cultural engagement to only such activities. Consequently, they may be quite univorous and rigid in their cultural engagement. In a Flemish study, Roose, Van Eijck and Lievens (2012) argue that rigid cultural orientations are opposed to a cultural openness to new things and the adoption of new cultural practices. They may therefore be less likely to include environmental practices in their cultural repertoire. Furthermore, these findings also fit within the specific Flemish cultural context. Flemish traditional culture typically has a conservative connotation, especially among the older population. In addition, Flemish identity is often connected to right-wing parties, nationalism, and anthropocentrism, in contrast to more cosmopolitan left-wing and green parties. This is not dissimilar to other European cultural contexts where a local and conservative traditional orientation seems to oppose a more cosmopolitan orientation (Bennett et al., 2009; Kahma & Toikka, 2012; Prieur, Rosenlund, & Skjott-Larsen, 2008), which other studies connect to environmental awareness and practices (Carfagna et al., 2014).

We believe that our findings have some important academic and societal implications. We have shown that lifestyles and cultural frameworks are still socially structured along the lines of social class and other socio-demographics (Prieur, Rosenlund, & Skjott-Larsen, 2008). Furthermore, our findings indicate that environmental dispositions and lifestyles may also play a role in processes of social and cultural differentiations. Moreover, in light of today's ecological issues and polarized debates, their relevance will most likely increase. Therefore, we call attention to the role of cultural politics and power in sustainability debates (Anantharaman, 2018; Fuchs et al., 2016). Our finding may be interpreted in function of a possible (re)conceptualization of environmental practices as cultural tastes. Similar to the aesthetic functions of culture, environmental benefits may not be the only function of environmental practices. As argued in previous research, environmental practices may structure the social world through mechanisms of social differentiation (e.g., Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014; Carfagna et al., 2014; Laidley, 2013a). Moreover, when both culture and environmental practices are understood in terms of social distinction, it is not surprising that highbrow culture relates most to conspicuous environmental practices.

It is worth noting that cultural and environmental repertoires function as different types of resources and distinction strategies. While engagement in cultural activities is seen as class distinctive because of differences in aesthetic value ascribed to various activities, the distinctive nature of environmental practice is situated in the ethical or moral realm (Kennedy, Baumann, &

Johnston, 2019; Kennedy & Horne, 2020). However, our results also suggest that an overlap exists between these two modes of stratification. While economic elites seem to focus on cultural activities and people in poverty on environmental practices, highly educated middle classes appear to incorporate both in their lifestyle. Consequently, a symbiosis between aesthetic and ethical distinction can be found. Following Kennedy, Baumann and Johnston (2019), environmental practices themselves may not be a cultural capital framework that displaces or overshadows other forms of cultural distinction. High-status cultural capital may comprise either aesthetics (for elites) or a specific combination of certain environmental (or ethical) and other cultural (or aesthetic) practices (for educated middle-classes). Moreover, Hargrove (1989) questions the boundary between environmental ethics and aesthetic values by arguing that environmental conservation is often motivated by a (quasi-)aesthetic appreciation of nature. Similarly, Greenbaum (2005) draws on Bourdieu's work (1993) to argue for a symmetry between 'connoisseurship' of culture and nature where both are an acquired 'taste'. The appreciation and appropriation of cultural and environmental practices may require similar competencies and dispositions cultivated in middle class socialization and higher education.

In sum, our findings contribute to cultural stratification research by providing evidence for the overlap between environmental practices and existing cultural distinction frameworks. However, we acknowledge that our study has important limitations. Similar to other quantitative studies on cultural stratification, we have relied on perhaps crude categorizations of cultural engagement, environmental practices, and their associations. This can obscure the generative mechanisms, the dynamism of tastes or practices, and the diversity of repertoires within and across groups (Ford, 2019; Ford & Norgaard, 2020; Greenbaum, 2005). Our findings reveal that many environmental practices function as cultural practices with cultural value among a specific group in a specific society i.e., highly educated people in Flanders. Culture and the notion of cultural capital, however, is bound by a specific socio-historical context (Bourdieu, 1984; Holt, 1997, 1998). Other groups in diverse social locations define and engage in environmental practices very differently, which is shaped by situated knowledge and cultural frameworks (Ford & Norgaard, 2020). It is important to acknowledge such environmental subjectivities and the (cultural) power relationships that shape them (Ford, 2019). For example, while middle classes tend to engage in individualized household practices such as green consumerism (MacKendrick, 2018; Szasz, 2007), oppressed groups may call for social justice (Guha, 2014) and/or collectively challenge the

legitimacy of institutions more directly (Ford & Norgaard, 2020). Considering further research, we therefore suggest that our quantitative approach is complemented with qualitative and cross-cultural research. Lastly, in this study, we have focused on the consumption of both culture and environmental practices. Yet, unequal cultural spaces are not only consumed, but also produced (Swidler, 2018). Similarly, research on eco-gentrification shows that ecological inequality is produced (McClintock, 2018). Accordingly, future investigations may analyze the relationship between culture and environmental practices from a perspective of production. Following Lamont and Lareau (1988, p. 156), cultural capital must be “institutionalized”. We urge further research to examine the institutionalization of environmental practices as a form of cultural capital.

6.7 Appendix

Axis	1	2	3	4	5
Eigenvalue	7.54	4.71	3.34	2.81	2.53
Variance rate	27.2	17	12.1	10.1	9.1
Modified rate (Benzécri)	50.6	19.5	9.6	6.7	5.4

Table 3. Eigenvalues and (modified) variance rates.

	BIC	AIC
2-class model	68148.57	67620.21
3-class model	67179.40	66384.24
4-class model	66574.87	65512.92
5-class model	66457.04	65128.30
6-class model	66435.05	64839.51
7-class model	66458.44	64596.11
8-class model	66522.39	64393.26
9-class model	66593.61	64197.68

Table 4. Fit statistics for latent class analysis.

Multiple correspondence analysis of cultural engagement

For the purpose of data reduction, we used multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) in order to map cultural engagement in Flanders. MCA is the method of choice for such endeavors (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984; Roose, Van Eijck, & Lievens, 2012). Given the socio-historical nature of cultural differentiation, we preferred an inductive and localized view on cultural engagement, rather than a theoretical one. Similar arguments can be found in the literature (e.g., Savage et al., 2013).

In particular, MCA is a method used to analyze categorical data, similar to factor analysis for continuous data (Abdi & Valentin, 2007). It is commonly employed to visually represent individuals and/or variables on a two-dimensional space. Additionally, supplementary variables may be added that do not contribute to the scaffolding axes in order to measure their relationship with the dimensions (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010). This study will use MCA to examine cultural engagement in Flanders. Each activity is shown either with a 0 or a 1 attached. 1 indicates engagement with the activity, while 0 represents disengagement. We only show the modalities (i.e., categories) that contribute approximately average or more to the axis, as recommended for the interpretation of MCA axes (see Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010 for a guide to conduct and interpret MCA). Similar to Savage et al. (2013), in a second step, we superimpose socio-demographic variables onto the two-dimensional cultural plane. In other words, socio-demographics do not influence the composition of the cultural space. Subsequently, we were able to analyze the

relationship between cultural engagement and the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, education, and household income).

Axis	1	2	3	4	5
Eigenvalue	0.218	0.077	0.057	0.045	0.041
Variance rate	21.8	7.7	5.7	4.5	4.1
Modified rate (Benzécri)	94.4	4.4	1	0.14	0.02

Table 5. Eigenvalues and (modified) variance rates.

	Axis 1	Axis 2	Axis 3	Modalities	Axis 1	Axis 2	Axis 3
Opera_0	0.22	0.08	0.80	**Flemish music_0**	0.04	0.21	0.32
Opera_1	2.15	0.76	7.82	**Flemish music_1**	0.59	2.98	4.54
Dance_0	0.76	0.00	0.63	**Fanfare/orchestra_0**	0.20	0.88	0.01
Dance_1	2.75	0.00	2.30	**Fanfare/orchestra_1**	2.59	11.52	0.09
Theater_0	2.57	0.01	0.31	**Kleinkunst/chanson_0**	0.36	1.25	0.00
Theater_1	3.29	0.02	0.39	**Kleinkunst/chanson_1**	3.69	12.73	0.01
Circus_0	0.13	0.02	0.04	**Exhibition_0**	4.41	1.85	3.46
Circus_1	1.07	0.18	0.29	**Exhibition_1**	3.39	1.43	2.66
Musical_0	0.42	0.02	0.23	**Building_0**	4.20	2.76	2.48
Musical_1	2.52	0.13	1.37	**Building_1**	3.11	2.04	1.83
Cabaret show_0	0.92	0.08	0.00	**Guided walking tour_0**	0.82	0.11	1.01
Cabaret show_1	3.42	0.30	0.00	**Guided walking tour_1**	2.87	0.38	3.53
Cinema_0	3.45	3.40	1.57	**Memorial_0**	0.23	0.02	0.15
Cinema_1	2.13	2.10	0.97	**Memorial_1**	1.60	0.12	1.05
Party_0	1.95	1.02	8.62	**Sports_0**	2.71	4.35	1.78
Party_1	2.09	1.10	9.26	**Sports_1**	0.99	1.58	0.64
Rock_0	1.33	0.09	3.88	**Creative expression_0**	2.07	0.29	0.23
Rock_1	3.53	0.23	10.34	**Creative expression_1**	2.31	0.33	0.26
Jazz/blues_0	0.31	0.63	0.14	**Library_0**	1.73	0.48	0.10
Jazz/blues_1	3.49	7.06	1.55	**Library_1**	2.90	0.81	0.17
Folk_0	0.18	0.69	0.01	**Competitive sports event_0**	0.91	0.47	6.99
Folk_1	2.64	10.37	0.20	**Competitive sports event_1**	1.09	0.57	8.37
Classical music_0	0.39	1.09	0.37	**Reading**	2.69	1.85	3.32
Classical music_1	3.28	9.25	3.16	**Reading**	1.42	0.98	1.75
World music_0	0.31	0.42	0.08	**Hiking_0**	3.65	5.25	0.11
World music_1	3.08	4.22	0.80	**Hiking_1**	1.06	1.53	0.03

Table 6. Modalities and their contributions.

The results of the MCA give insights into the Flemish cultural field of today (Figures 4 and 5). The first three axes were interpreted for their theoretical value and relevance for the Flemish context. The findings are similar to a study by Roose, Van Eijck and Lievens (2012) on Flemish cultural lifestyles, and also resonate with other studies in a European context (such as Bennett et al., 2009; Kahma & Toikka, 2012; Prieur, Rosenlund, & Skjott-Larsen, 2008). Moreover, the eigenvalues and variance rates seem to level off as can be seen in table 5. Modified rates were also included in the table because they give us a better appreciation of the relative importance of the axes. To aid in the interpretation of the axes, contributions of each modality can be found in table 6.

It seems that the main cultural distinguisher in Flanders is cultural engagement vs. disengagement. Secondly, a traditional musical orientation vs. a more eclectic and contemporary orientation was found. Finally, highbrow culture can be distinguished from more emerging forms of cultural engagement. Our findings suggest that the relative importance of traditional, consecrated, and highbrow culture has downshifted over the last decades. This can also be observed in our data given that younger people are attracted to more general, eclectic, and contemporary activities, while older people are still drawn to a more exclusive cultural engagement in traditional and/or highbrow activities.

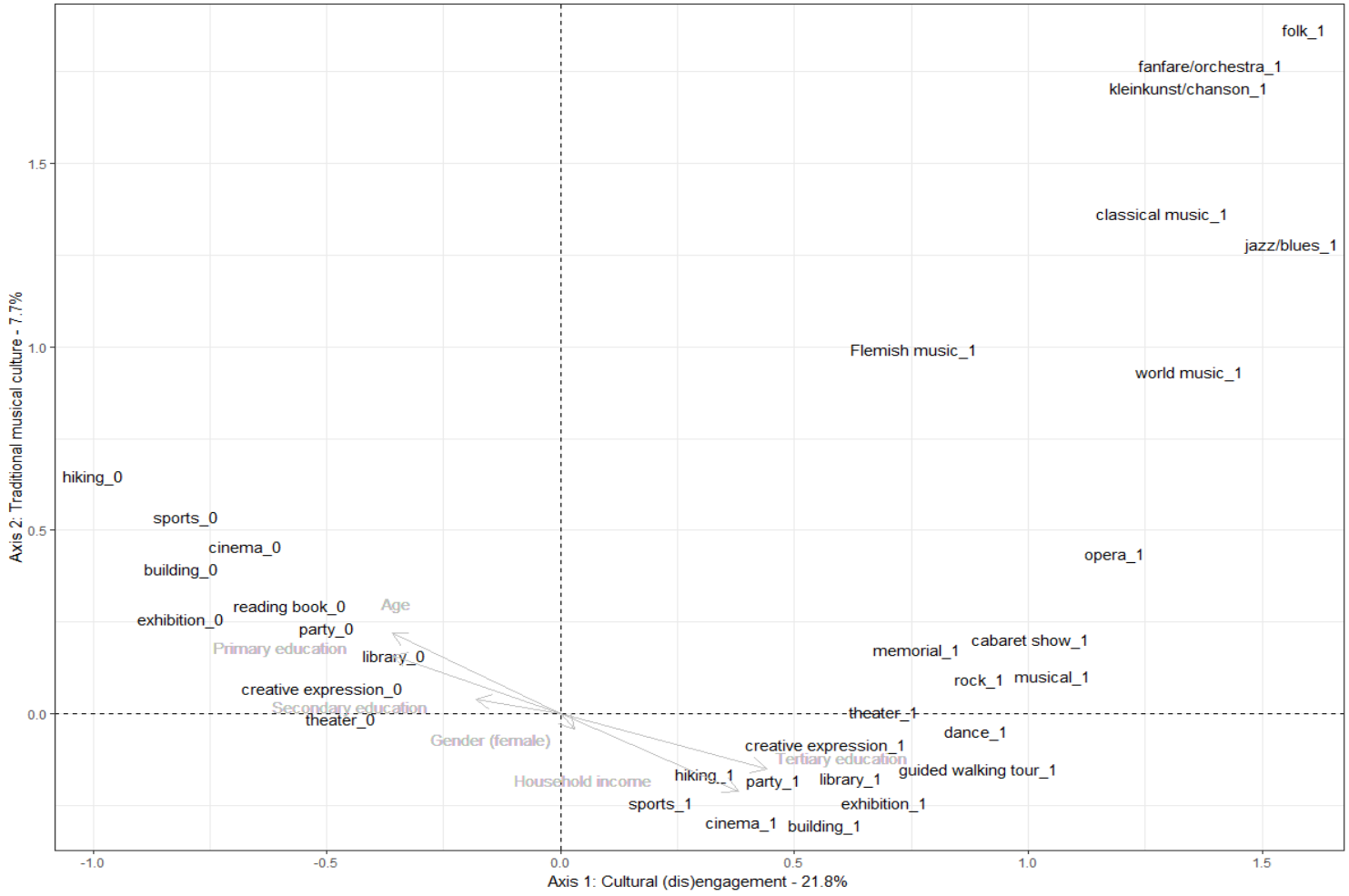

Figure 4. Multiple correspondence analysis (axis 1 & 2) with modalities that contribute half or more to the axes, and supplementary variables.

Axis 1: Cultural (dis)engagement

The first axis differentiates between general cultural engagement and disengagement (Bennett et al., 2009; Cvetičanin & Popescu, 2011; Prieur, Rosenlund, & Skjott-Larsen, 2008; Roose, 2015; Roose, Van Eijck, & Lievens, 2012; Savage et al., 2013). The modalities on exhibitions, significant buildings, theater, cinema, rock, and hiking contribute 30% of variance. It seems that the main distinction in Flanders today lies between people with an active lifestyle with high levels of cultural participation in activities of various sorts, as opposed to a more disengaged public. Typically, and in line with our results, people with an engaged lifestyle are younger. In contrast, less educated and less affluent groups are least active and culturally engaged.

Axis 2: Traditional musical engagement

The second axis represents an engagement in traditional musical activities. This entails an orientation towards music that can generally be described as old-fashioned and/or traditional. Additionally, many items have a localized and folksy nature. Some are particularly Flemish (e.g., Flemish music or *Kleinkunst*), while there is also room for music indigenous to other countries (e.g., world music or jazz/blues). The modalities regarding Kleinkunst/Chanson, fanfare/orchestra, folk, classical music and jazz/blues contribute 55% of variance to the axis. Such cultural engagement was mostly found among older people. In addition, it was mostly observed among people with a primary education and low household income (see also Chan & Goldthorpe, 2005; Hanquinet, Roose, & Savage, 2014). Moreover, this seems a rather narrow cultural orientation that can be contrasted with a more eclectic and contemporary orientation. These findings are consistent with similar studies in other European countries. Studies in e.g., Finland (Kahma & Toikka, 2012), Denmark (Prieur, Rosenlund, & Skjott-Larsen, 2008) and the UK (Bennett et al., 2009) also identify an age-related traditional cultural orientation. Traditional here is defined as activities that were popular and widespread more than 50 years ago. This relates to our findings and the Flemish cultural context because e.g., orchestra, folk music, classical music, Kleinkunst/Chansons (Flemish and Walloon/French traditional genres, typically using simple acoustics) have been around for a very long time and are perhaps a bit outdated among younger generations. This is contrasted by more contemporary cultural activities such as going to the cinema and musical genres such as rock.

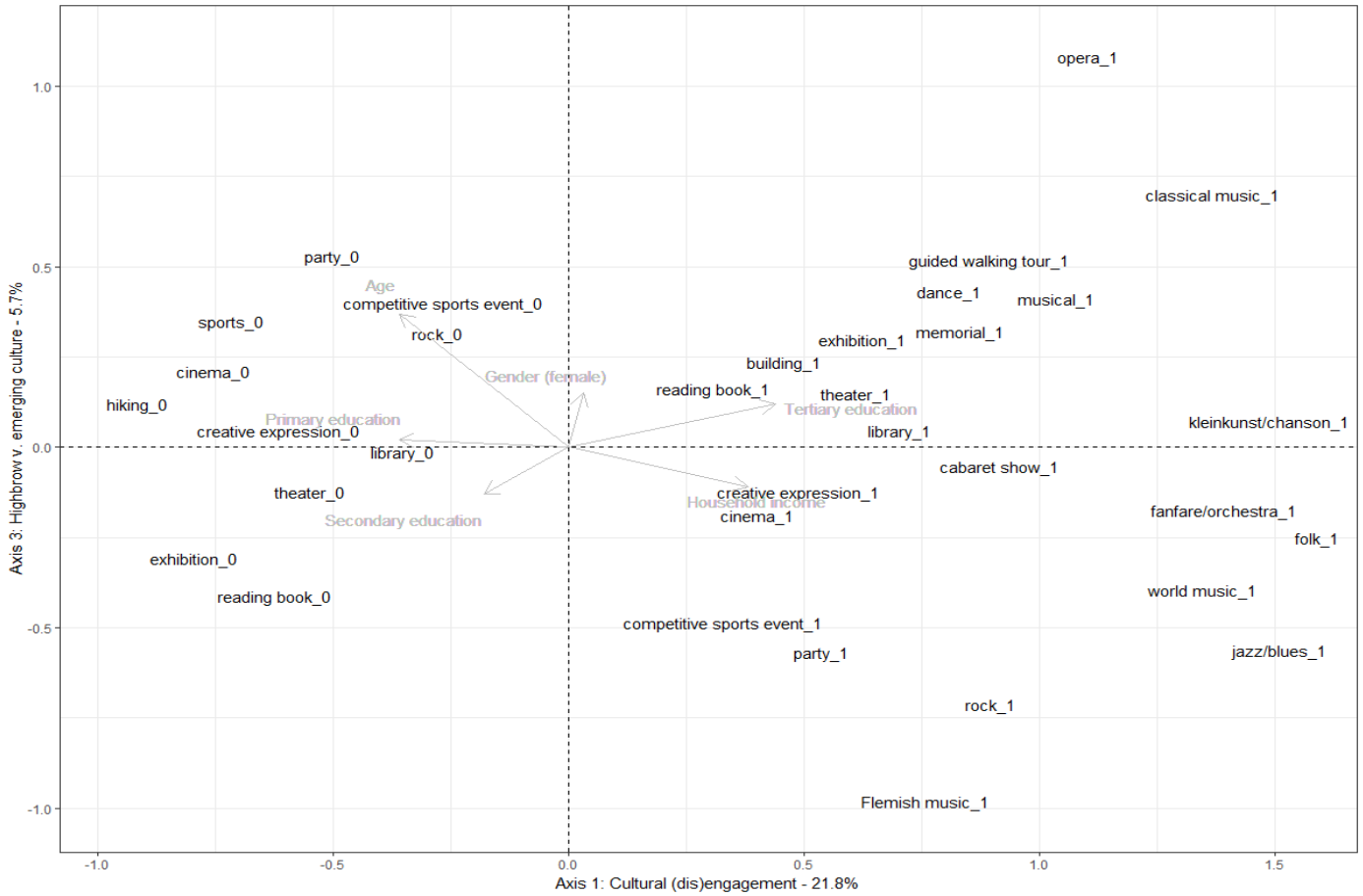

Figure 5. Multiple correspondence analysis (axis 1 & 3) with modalities that contribute half or more to the axes, and supplementary variables.

Axis 3: Highbrow vs. emerging culture

The last axis differentiates between highbrow and emerging cultural capital. The most important modalities seem whether or not people go to dance parties, competitive sport events and rock concerts for the bottom part of figure 5. The top part of figure 5 shows various consecrated, often contemplative, cultural activities such opera, exhibitions, reading a book or guided walking. In contrast with some previous works (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984), the antipode of highbrow culture does not appear a commercialized form of lowbrow culture. Our findings more closely resonate with Savage et al. (2013) and their attention to emerging cultural capital. Consequently, it seems that the y-axis differentiates between two competing cultural frameworks. An emerging (or at least alternative) form of cultural capital (e.g., attending parties, rock concerts and competitive sport events) may exist that does not necessarily overlap with highbrow cultural capital (e.g., opera or classical music). While highbrow cultural capital was a characteristic of older respondents, women, and tertiary educated groups, emerging cultural capital was mostly engaged in by young people, men, secondary educated people, and high-income households.

Chapter 7

“If you’ve got no money, you don’t care about sustainability. Cause why would you?” Exploring symbolic boundaries in environmental concerns and practices

Authors. Robbe Geerts, Vandermoere, F. & Oosterlynck S.

Abstract. While the literature reveals a role for environmental practices in the (re)production of social class, very little research actually examines the way people from various social classes make moral judgments based on environmental practices, and how this subsequently affects processes of social differentiation. Utilizing qualitative interviews, this study scrutinizes how symbolic boundaries are drawn, and how they overlap with social class. Moreover, we shed light on the cultural repertoires that underlie symbolic boundaries. First, this contribution confirms that people draw moral boundaries based on environmental practices. Generally speaking, respondents discursively attached a middle-classness to it. On the one hand, top-down boundaries were utilized to construct a positive association between social class and environmental practices. Dominant cultural repertoires understood environmental practices as luxury goods that people with little wealth are unable to afford. In contrast, bottom-up symbolic boundaries mostly drew on repertoires of overconsumption that associated environmental degradation with the (over)consumption patterns of middle classes and elites. Moreover, people in poverty not only drew moral, but also cultural boundaries by mocking those they perceive as green elites. In sum, this study highlights the role of cultural repertoires and boundary-making in creating and maintaining social class differences in the context of environmental practices. While top-down boundaries were most common, we also see evidence of people in poverty constructing moral and cultural boundaries to place themselves above middle classes and elites.

Keywords. Social Differentiation; Symbolic Boundary-Work; Social Class; Environmental Morality

7.1 Introduction

Today, individuals and households are seen as crucial actors in the struggle against environmental issues (Jackson, 2014). 'Voting with your dollars' or 'changing a light bulb to change the world' reveals that it has become commonsense - even hegemonic - to address environmental issues through consumer action (Carfagna et al., 2014; Willis & Schor, 2012). Yet, the idea that consumers can effectively achieve environmental goals is neither straightforward nor clear (Johnston, 2008; Szasz, 2007). Moreover, studies have increasingly understood environmental concerns and practices as extensions of lifestyle (Evans & Jackson, 2007) and social status (Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010; Uren, Roberts, et al., 2019), especially in highly educated middle classes (Carfagna et al., 2014). In other words, it appears that high cultural capital individuals increasingly incorporate environmental concerns into their consumption practices (Baumann, Engman, & Johnston, 2015; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). Accordingly, inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1984), a growing literature (re)conceptualizes ethical and green consumption as a high-status taste that plays a pivotal role in mechanisms of distinction (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014; Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2023). Hence, this literature underscores the significance of environmental practices in creating and maintaining social class boundaries (Anantharaman, 2022).

However, very little research actually examines the way people from various social classes make moral judgments based on environmental concerns and practices (Kennedy & Horne, 2020). We argue that Bourdieusian approaches perhaps overestimate the universal acceptance of legitimate cultural traits, and focus on more active (and bottom-up) processes of social differentiation. Similar to Lamont (2010), our interest lies with the process of valuation ('what is a worthy person'), the cultural accounts people draw on to make sense of environmental worth, and particularly how this relates to social class differentiation. Against this background, we employ an inductive and interview-based approach to address social differentiation as an open question to be answered from the ground up (Lamont, 2009). In specific, our aims are twofold. First, we examine how symbolic boundaries are drawn based on environmental concerns and practices, and how they overlap with social class markers. Second, we investigate the cultural repertoires that underlie the process of symbolic boundary-work. In sum, this study highlights the role of cultural repertoires and boundary-making in creating and maintaining social class differences in the context of environmental concerns and practices (Lamont & Molnár, 2002).

7.2 Environmental distinction

Sociological studies, and particularly Bourdieu (1984), have not only established that social class can structure cultural traits, but also that they are not valued equally. Consequently, cultural traits can contribute to the (re)production of social class (Atkinson, 2015; Bennett et al., 2009; Lizardo, 2018; Wright, 2018). The notion of cultural capital was originally developed to denote high status cultural signals (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). It was first utilized to explain why working class children underperformed in school, not because of lesser abilities, but because children are often evaluated on their familiarity with legitimate culture e.g., dominant ways of saying and doing things (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). This idea was later expanded into a more encompassing framework on the role of tastes and cultural preferences in distinction processes (Bourdieu, 1984). Symbolic violence then denotes that the cultural traits of dominant classes are imposed as legitimate and internalized by dominated classes (Atkinson, 2019; Bourdieu, 2000). Accordingly, the social organization and hierarchical ordering of cultural traits has received much scholarly attention (Bennett et al., 2009; Kahma & Toikka, 2012; Le Roux et al., 2008; Prieur & Savage, 2011; Roose, Van Eijck, & Lievens, 2012; Savage et al., 2013).

While most of the literature has historically emphasized differences in aesthetic preferences (e.g., in food, sports, or cultural engagement)[8], the moral dimensions of tastes have increasingly been incorporated, especially in food consumption (Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022). At the same time, attention is increasingly being paid to the moral and normative dimensions of social class (De Keere, 2020; Sayer, 2007; Sayer, 2005). In light of today's environmental issues, it is not surprising that environmental debates can be connected to morality and social class. Indeed, we praise people that act environmentally sound and judge people that do not (Kennedy & Horne, 2020). This is evident from the research showing that environmental practices may provide social status by signaling moral virtues (Brick & Lai, 2018; Griskevicius, Tybur, & Van den Bergh, 2010; Uren, Roberts, et al., 2019). The class-based nature of environmental morality has, at least, two

[8] Even though Bourdieu (1984) considered the moral dimensions of cultural consumption, it was relatively neglected in subsequent empirical research.

elements. On the one hand, certain environmental practices, such as buying eco-labeled products and solar panels, have become valuable commodities which are inaccessible by lower social classes (Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Moreover, the inaccessibility of socially valued things and practices is then related to the way people themselves are valued socially (Sayer, 2007), which may lead to frustrations regarding environmental protection and stigmatization (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). On the other hand, however, there is a paradox to be identified where higher classes seem to consistently have a higher ecological footprint, which leaves them open to accusations of hypocrisy (Kennedy & Horne, 2020).

Hence, research has also focused on environmental concerns and practices when discussing social differentiation. Carfagna et al. (2014, p. 160), for example, identify the increasing importance of environmental awareness in consumption practices as a "reconfiguration of high-status tastes that is part of a re-articulation of the field of high-class consumption, fostered by a more general social valorization of environmental consciousness." Similarly, Barendregt and Jaffe (2014, p. 1) observe the rise of eco-chic lifestyles which are increasingly part of "the identity kit of the upper classes, offering an attractive way to combine taste and style with care for personal wellness and the environment."

Research has mostly concluded that ethical consumption is not a new mode of distinction, but rather that such concerns are incorporated into high-status consumption repertoires (Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2023; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). In other words, dominant social classes simultaneously uphold aesthetic and moral (including environmental) preferences (Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022). Similarly, and alluding to Bourdieu's (1984, 1990, 2000) symbolic violence, Kennedy and Givens (2019, p. 661) assert that environmental concerns and practices are associated with middle and upper classes because "privileged actors in society have the power and legitimacy to define the ideal modes of engagement in environmental protection (green consumption) and, concomitantly, have the capacity to align their own actions with these ideals."

However, it has been argued, in particular by Lamont (Lamont, 2000a, 2010; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lamont & Small, 2008), that cultural capital approaches often contain a twofold fallacy. First, they presume a certain level of institutionalization of cultural legitimacy; that is a shared

understanding of what high status signals entail. While cultural capital remains invaluable to analyze the role of culture in the (re)production of social inequality (also regarding environmental practices e.g., Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2023), it arguably underestimates the variety in cultural representations of environmental issues and action (Balsiger, Lorenzini, & Sahakian, 2019; Ford, 2019; Ford & Norgaard, 2020). Second, studies often assume that the cultural preferences of dominant classes define legitimate culture, which is then internalized by dominated classes (Bourdieu, 1984). Yet, ample evidence exists that moral criteria are varied and that dominated groups also employ morality as a social marker to position themselves above middle and upper classes (Lamont, 2000a), also with regard to ethical consumption (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011).

In contrast to the Bourdieusian focus on the role of cultural traits in the struggle for advantage, other scholars have emphasized that humans, as social beings, use morality more intrinsically to make sense of the world and their own self-worth (De Keere, 2018; De Keere, 2020; Lamont, 2010, 2018). Therefore, to examine social differentiation with respect to environmental concerns and practices, this study favors a more inductive and process-oriented view that sheds light on the ways in which people from various social classes make moral judgments and subsequently delineate social groups based on these judgments (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999; Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013). In this context, research shows that the criteria of evaluation and worth are not universal, but highly dependent on socio-cultural contexts (Lamont & Small, 2008; Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). Kennedy and Horne (2020), for instance, reveal that environmental practices may not be part of everyone's 'moral culture', and more specifically that liberals were more likely than conservatives to make moral evaluations based on environmental grounds. Similarly, the focus of this study lies in the way members of different social classes use moral criteria to evaluate others (Heikkilä & Rahkonen, 2011; Jarness & Friedman, 2017; Lamont, 1992, 2000a; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Skjøtt-Larsen, 2012). Subsequently, class-specific moral dispositions can be employed to draw and maintain boundaries between in- and out-groups, between us and them (De Keere, 2020; Flemmen, Jarness, & Rosenlund, 2019; Lamont & Small, 2008).

7.3 Cultural repertoires and symbolic boundary making

An especially fruitful approach in sociology has been symbolic boundary-making (Lamont, 2000a). Symbolic boundaries are the "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects,

people, practices, and even time and space" (Lamont and Molnár 2002, 168). First, boundaries can be drawn on socioeconomic grounds (e.g., wealth or success). Second, cultural boundaries are based on a wide range of factors such as custom, tradition, good taste, intelligence, and are very often grounded in affinity with legitimate (or high) culture (Lamont et al., 1996; Skjøtt-Larsen, 2012). Finally, special attention in the 'symbolic boundary-making' framework is paid to moral boundaries which are based on principles of right and wrong. Indeed, boundaries are often rooted in moral worth and generalized notions of a good life (Lamont, 2000a; Ollivier, 2008b). Moreover, they tend to overlap with existing social boundaries such as gender and social class (Pachucki, Pendergrass, & Lamont, 2007; Puetz, 2021). For the current study, symbolic boundary-making is an invaluable concept because it allows more room for bottom-up struggles for legitimacy than Bourdieusian approaches, an argument well-reflected in Lamont (2000a, p. 3):

> *"White American workers extend to professionals and managers the moral standards they use to evaluate people in general. They often draw boundaries against this group, judging professionals and managers to lack personal integrity and sincerity and to have poor interpersonal relationships. By doing so, the workers dissociate socioeconomic status from moral worth and thereby locate themselves above the upper middle class according to a standard to which they attach overarching importance."*

Furthermore, previous research shows that environmental concerns and practices can be used to position oneself socially and serve as boundary markers (Horton, 2003; Johnston & Baumann, 2014; Laidley, 2013a). More specifically, it is utilized by middle and upper classes to create and maintain boundaries that exclude lower classes (Anantharaman, 2022), for example by emphasizing the health and environmental benefits of organic shopping (Erler, Keck, & Dittrich, 2022). Conversely, research has also identified opposing claims where organic eating is seen as a scam and organic consumers as fundamentalists (Dubuisson-Quellier & Gojard, 2016). Moreover, Johnston's (2011) low-status respondents, while excluded from expensive environmentally friendly products, critique the wastefulness and overconsumption of those richer than themselves.

To gain a better understanding of the cultural representations that underly these boundaries, we draw on the notion of cultural repertoires, which denotes culture as a 'toolkit' of cultural accounts to make sense of things, practices, and also people (Lamont et al., 2016; Swidler, 1986, 2001).

Previous studies have shown that people employ cultural repertoires to make sense of environmental issues and actions (Balsiger, Lorenzini, & Sahakian, 2019; Halkier, 2020). On the one hand, cultural repertoires can be used to comprehend the complex relationships between people's values and behavior (Swidler, 2001). Oleschuk, Johnston and Baumann (2019), for instance, find that liberty repertoires of consumer apathy and sovereignty are employed to justify meat eating. On the other hand, studies have shown that these cultural accounts may not be universal, but rather dependent on cultural and structural factors (Ford & Norgaard, 2020). For instance, whereas certain people may define meat eating as unethical, it is also strongly connected to tradition (Oleschuk, Johnston, & Baumann, 2019). Concerning buying local, Schoolman (2020) reveals that his interviewees from less privileged communities understood the practice in terms of community building instead of sustainability, thus not corresponding to the 'typical' ethical consumer.

These processes of cultural meaning-making are strongly related to symbolic boundaries (Lamont, 2000b). The concept of cultural repertoires has been effectively used to comprehend social divisions related to environmental concerns and practices, and particularly how boundaries are developed and maintained (Johnston & Baumann, 2007; Paddock, 2015). For instance, research on cultural repertoires has emphasized gendered understandings of eating practices, and particularly connected meat consumption with masculinity and plant-based diets with femininity (De Backer et al., 2020; Oleschuk, Johnston, & Baumann, 2019). Hence, cultural repertoires are employed to construct prototypes in order to comprehend the association between environmental concerns and practices on the one hand, and social categories on the other, e.g., 'the manly meat eater' (Johnston, Baumann, & Oleschuk, 2021).

While this research domain predominantly focuses on food preferences and eating practices, we aim to build further on these studies to gain a broader understanding of social class differentiation regarding environmental concerns and practices. In particular, we examine how individuals make (moral) judgments and delineate social class boundaries. In this endeavor, we utilize the concept of cultural repertoires to examine the cultural schemes that underlie symbolic boundary-work. In sum, our study sheds light on the role of cultural repertoires and boundary-making in creating and maintaining boundaries between social classes within the context of environmental concerns and practices.

7.4 Materials & Methods

The dataset includes 21 in-depth interviews and 1 focus group, and is supported by numerous informal conversations. The respondents were drawn from the province of Antwerp in Belgium, and interviews were mostly conducted between March 2022 and April 2023. Respondents were selected on the basis of their occupation, which was used as a proxy for social class in the sampling process. The aim was to conduct in-depth interviews with a wide range of participants from different social classes. During the sampling process, however, it proved difficult to recruit people in (extreme) poverty. Therefore, we enlisted the help of several social work organizations that organized around a project to give a voice to people in poverty in the climate debate. Based on their advice and experience with people in precarious situations, they suggested organizing a focus group with their clients (instead of individual interviews). The focus group consisted of 4 people in poverty and 3 social workers. Accordingly, the full dataset consists of 28 participants. Their characteristics can be found in table 1 in the appendix. The participants were a good reflection of the population, although women and tertiary educated persons were overrepresented.

The interview first focused on a broad range of environmentally relevant dispositions and consumption practices. Subsequently, participants were questioned on the way they evaluate people who do or do not act environmentally aware. Finally, the interview focused on who our respondents perceived as (not) environmentally aware. We did not specifically ask about social class so that the symbolic boundaries would come up naturally. Analytically, we employed a reflexive approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In particular, we utilized the method described in Flick (2022, p. 318), which was developed to comparatively study “the social distribution of perspectives on a phenomenon or a process.” First, interviews were listened to and read to familiarize myself with the data. As a second step, the interviews were analyzed in more depth, and central themes from the interviews were identified via a coding scheme. Finally, interviews and associated themes were analyzed comparatively to investigate social class groups based on similarities and differences.

7.5 Consumption practices and environmental morality

As argued by many works in ethical consumption scholarship, environmental concerns are increasingly incorporated into consumption practices, especially among highly educated middle classes (Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022; Carfagna et al., 2014; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011; Shah et al., 2007; Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005). Our interviews suggest that sustainability has somewhat become a 'general understanding' (Schatzki, 2002; Welch & Warde, 2016) to evaluate consumption practices, such as mobility, showering, eating, and so on. This is not to say that people necessarily act sustainably, but rather that it is an overarching principle by which people measure consumption practices. Indeed, many people try to act sustainably or describe feelings of guilt or shame associated with environmentally destructive practices, such as flying.

More central to the objectives of this study, interviewees made (moral) judgments about others regarding their environmental practices, thus revealing that environmental practices have become part of 'moral culture' (Kennedy & Horne, 2020). We asked respondents how they felt about people who are not environmentally aware. Interviewees described them as apathic, lazy and selfish, or at least found it incomprehensible in this day and age. When we asked Leila, a 50-year-old teacher, she responded: *"Yes, egoists, they are not part of my social network. I'll be polite and say hi if I have to be at work or something but no, people, no!"*

Noticeably, while moral judgments based on environmental practices were widespread, they were most common in highly educated middle classes. The judgments of other social groups were more likely to be milder. When we asked Abby, a 52-year-old warehouse worker, she responded:

> *"I just believe that everyone should decide for themselves how far they are willing to go. […] Being totally unengaged, I find that regrettable. I can understand that you are not fanatical, but that you are totally unaware […] Yes, if you have other concerns on your mind, then I understand, but otherwise…"*

A small number of respondents even described a sense of fanaticism, where environmental awareness gets a negative connotation. Revealing comparisons were made between 'the greens' on the one hand, and pastors, police, or communists. In our conversation with Wilfred, a 77-year-old managing director of a family holding, he mentioned that he is not dark green. When we ask

what he thinks of people he perceives as dark green, he answers: *"How should I say this? Extreme. A bit fanatical."* Iza, a 37-year-old laboratory technician, doesn't like overly zealous environmentalists and their moral judgments.

> *"Some people seem to live just for that, but it shouldn't be like that. Yeah, no imposing on others or pretending to be the police. Yeah, that happens. I don't think that's acceptable either. No, people should have the feeling themself. It's good to move forward, but only consciously for themselves."*

7.6 Cultural repertoires and symbolic boundaries

In my conversation with Charlotte, a veterinary nurse in her twenties, she describes how she comprehends the association between environmental practices and social class:

> *"How it is in my head: The upper class does not care at all. Plane trips, bulging garbage bins, nothing recycled, lights on everywhere, doors open with the heating on. Because they do not feel it in their wallet. […] And poor people just do not have the resources. They may want to, but yeah. They have other concerns. If you have to make sure there is food, you are not thinking about what kind of food."*

Paul, an entrepreneur in his fifties, similarity ascribes a middle-classness to environmental practices:

> *"I think that if you are in the social layer that has to struggle to survive, then the environment is the least of your worries. I think that if you are in the higher social layer, that are mostly figuring out 'how can I fiscally benefit and exploit green policies'. That is also not the class that is good for the environment. I think those who are really engaged with the environment, the zone in between, that do it out of idealism rather than other motivations."*

These extracts from Charlotte's and Paul's interviews first reveal that people draw symbolic boundaries that overlap with social class, although most did not use the concept of social class but articulated it in terms of rich(er) and poor(er). Moreover, their boundaries are both top-down (boundaries drawn by higher classes towards lower classes) and bottom-up (boundaries drawn by lower classes towards higher classes). Finally, boundaries were based on several interconnected cultural repertoires to understand environmental concerns, practices, and associated social

realities, for instance elite selfishness. In total, we identified six cultural repertoires that our respondents employed to understand the relationship between environmental awareness and social class. Four repertoires were based on moral boundaries. The first two describe environmental practices as luxury goods and thus positively associated with social class. We define the latter two as repertoires of overconsumption where the disproportionate ecological footprint of middle and upper classes is critiqued. The final two repertoires are based on cultural boundaries. These boundaries were employed by people in lower social classes to mock people they perceive as green elites. While these cultural boundaries exist, moral boundaries were much more common during our interviews.

7.6.1 Environmental practices as a luxury good

Many respondents described environmental practices as a luxury good. We asked Jeffrey, a psychologist in his thirties, how he judges people who are not engaged with environmental issues. *"Not necessarily negative"*, he says. *"Because I think it is also a luxury to be engaged with it. And that not everyone has room for it, and time and money to spend on it. If you live on welfare, you will not go to the bio-store".* They are not able to afford it, he argues. *"And it's not their fault, it's because they do not have the mental space to be engaged with it."*

In our interview, Jeffrey draws on the most dominant repertoire throughout the interviews, namely that environmental concerns and practices are luxury goods that only middle and upper classes can afford (Diekmann & Franzen, 1999; Franzen & Meyer, 2010). In line with Kennedy and Horne (2020), our interviewees were mild in their moral judgments towards people they perceive as powerless and as victims of economic and structural constraints. But it is nonetheless a symbolic boundary, even somewhat patronizing at times. An in-depth reading of Jeffrey's account reveals two intersecting repertoires. On the one hand, he believed that people with little wealth do not have the mental head space to care for the environment because they have other concerns. On the other hand, he emphasizes that people with little wealth do not have the resources to translate their environmental concerns in behavior, even if they wanted to.

#1: Postmateriality and the need for mental space. This repertoire remarkably overlaps with Inglehart's (1971) postmaterialism thesis, which drew on Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. The repertoire of postmateriality presumes that a difference exists between material (such as economic security) and postmaterial values (such as environmental awareness). Initially, people

prioritize fulfilling basic material needs such as food, shelter, and paying energy bills. Environmental practices typically follow once these primary needs are met. This perspective was commonly held among respondents from all social groups, with the exception of those experiencing poverty. Many interviewees imagined that individuals living in poverty often lack the mental capacity to focus on sustainability due to the burdens of their daily struggles.

This is evident in our interview with Leila, a 50-year-old Dutch teacher for adult newcomers. She explains that her students are not really engaged with the environment. *"Ecological conditions",* she says, *"they do not think about it much. For the moment, they are really surviving."* Leila believes that *"there is no space in their head. There is no space for anything else than surviving."* Most of the time, this was a tolerant boundary with little moral judgment. Yet, it can also end up somewhat stigmatizing. Anna, also a teacher, contends that poor people are less environmentally aware *"because they have it more difficult mentally. They try to comfort themselves with a cigarette or alcohol. Or with a soda, cola for example. And I think they are more self-centered and focused on themselves because they live in misery."*

#2: Environmental practice and (in)access to resources. The second repertoire supposes that certain economic and cultural resources may be necessary to align one's behavior with one's environmental concerns (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Some interviewees make the connection with cultural capital, and particularly believe that uneducated groups are unknowledgeable about environmental issues and practices. Most of the time, however, resources were understood as economic. Lotte, a student counselor in her thirties with a PhD, tells me:

> *"I don't want to say that people with a lower income are less environmentally aware. I don't think so, but they have less means to attach a consequence to it. To act. Let's say yoghurt, if you have to buy the plant-based one, then it is three times more expensive than the regular one. And if you don't have money, then it is clear what you buy."*

This statement from Lotte is very revealing about what our respondents recognized as environmental practices. Many interviewees focused on technological and material investments or the purchase of environmentally friendly products, rather than turning off the light or walking instead of driving for instance. The latter examples are much less dependent on access to economic resources. Hence, this repertoire depends on framing environmental awareness in terms of high-cost practices (Kennedy & Givens, 2019).

Finally, respondents also used the 'luxury good' repertoires to reflect on their own environmental practices. Apart from self-reflection, this is important for two reasons. First, it implicitly carries a boundary by placing ourselves in the shoes of others, and constructing a what-if scenario. Martha, a procurement specialist in her fifties, maintains that she would be more environmentally aware if she had more money: "*It is easy if you have to look less at your wallet. If I had a bigger budget, I would have insulated my home completely. I would probably buy a lot more ecological products and drive an electric car."*

Second, among people in poverty, this indicated a sense of powerlessness; that they cannot keep up with what is expected of them in terms of environmental practices, such as buying eco-labels and solar panels. As Bert mentioned, *"it is not because we are not environmentally aware, but because we cannot afford it".* Consequently, people felt left behind by politicians that are mostly drawn from middle class and elite backgrounds.

> *"In Brussels, at all those desks, they do not understand. If you look at the climate plan, everything is made for middle classes. They'll force the landlords to renovate windows and all before 2030, then my 600 euro [rent] will not suffice anymore, and everything will become more expensive. What will I have to do, live in a tent?" [Bert, poverty]*

In other words, people in poverty felt judged by the standards of middle and upper classes, which point to mechanisms of symbolic violence (Atkinson, 2019; Bourdieu, 2000). Hence, 'luxury good' repertoires had a sense of stigmatization attached to them. Bert (unemployed, in his fifties) and Joske (retired, in her seventies) gather that this fits with a broader issue of invisibility and stigmatization:

> *Joske: "They [middle classes] are on the news and we are not. That Swedish girl [Greta Thunberg] she is a child of rich people."*
>
> *Bert interrupts: "On television, they always show middle classes. When they enter a home, they have beautiful homes, beautiful central heating. They never show a house of someone in poverty to talk to them. […] Also, when they do street interviews. Someone who has it difficult never gets questioned. It is always people who are more well off. And then I think, what do you answer? That is not meant for me."*

The focus group agrees that, when people in poverty are shown on television, focus lies on distressing situations (dirty apartments, smoking, drinking, and so on) because that has more entertainment value. They wonder why their motives and morality are always questioned. Indeed, we found no evidence that people in poverty care less about environmental issues than other social classes.

Our conversations with people who do not live in poverty reveal that this stigma does not come out of the blue. Some interviewees acknowledged that people in poverty have a low ecological footprint, but implicitly or explicitly challenged the motives of people with little wealth by alluding to the fact that they only do it out of necessity. Most explicitly, Dan, a veterinarian in his forties, acknowledges that people in poverty may do more for the environment, but *"unconsciously more. But I think they would just do the same as the rest of us if they had more [money]."*

7.6.2 Overconsumption repertoire

> *"What is now in the spotlight, that is something that I have already done my whole life. And people who do not have much, will do it much easier. If you look at people who earn a lot. 'We have to go shopping because my clothes are not in fashion anymore'. […] Everybody has to live with their budget, and it is not the people with a small budget that are the biggest polluters. Going on holiday 3 times, that is not possible for us. Flying is also really polluting. I do not have a car because it doesn't fit within my budget. I consciously went to live in the center. […] No car needed. I can do everything by bike. And now it is part of current events, what we always did out of necessity. But also, out of conviction."*

In contrast to previous repertoires, Joske, a retired woman in poverty, perceives people with little wealth as most environmentally aware. In line with Anantharaman's (2016) defensive distinction, she feels like middle-class environmentalists are only adopting things she has practiced her whole life, albeit with a more explicit ecological twist (McClintock, 2018). More specifically, Joske draws on two repertoires to make sense of the association between social class and environmental practices. We define these as overconsumption repertoires because they critique the overconsumption patterns of middle classes and elites. On the one hand, elites were depicted as selfish and overly attached to luxury. On the other hand, the low environmental impact of people in poverty was weighted against hypocrisies in the 'environmentally aware' middle class.

#3: Elite selfishness and luxury was a common repertoire that people from all social layers drew on. Even rich respondents utilized this repertoire to draw boundaries against people who were richer than themselves, for instance billionaires with private planes. Similar to Johnston and Szabo (2011), even very privileged respondents draw symbolic boundaries against the 'true elite'. Dana, a notary in her sixties has issues with *"people that only think of themselves. A type of person, if you look at television, the Kardashian. The type that is self-centered, drive a big car, take the car for everything, have 20 pairs of shoes, if it is not 100."* This repertoire is based on two assumptions, namely that elites are selfish and overly attached to luxury. Accordingly, Gina, a care worker in her thirties, perceives rich people as inherently selfish:

> *"People with lots of money don't look at anything. They don't recycle. They just throw it out. […] they don't look at what they buy. Whether it is ecological or organic, they don't care, I think. I believe people like us care more."*

Moreover, the overconsumption patterns of elites are commonly associated with conspicuous consumption patterns. Alexei is a 37-year-old lifeguard. He has 5 children and struggles to make ends meet at the end of the month. He believes that rich people are more susceptible to status consumption than himself:

> *"I think they would rather look at what is fashionable. A new Porsche, I'll buy it. But people like me, I live in poverty, and I feel like I need to lower the heat setting on my central heating. Yes, I think the poor do 5 times more for the environment than the rich. The rich think 'wow gold, diamond, channel, clothes, brands."*

#4: Environmentalism of the poor vs middle-class hypocrisies. The final repertoire to draw moral boundaries was predominantly employed during the focus group with people in poverty and their social workers, or by other interviewees with little wealth. The repertoire praises people in poverty for their low environmental impact and critiques middle-class hypocrisy. Hence, following this repertoire, we can learn a lot from people in poverty and their austerity practices are seen as the solution for environmental issues. Janne, one of the social workers present during the focus group, summarizes one of our discussions while venting her personal and professional frustrations:

"A certain anger comes over me with a particular part of the middle class, the upper part mostly, 'thinking environmentally aware, acting environmentally aware, but now I really need a vacation. And I jump on a plane, with Ryanair, which brings me to Valencia. […] Enjoying it because we have worked really hard, and we deserved it. We need it.' And then I think maybe you should consider that you can afford to jump on a plane twice a year but, for the upper middle class anyway, if you are so environmentally aware, maybe you could say: taking a plane, I only do that once every two year […] And then I think it is really judgmental towards people with little money, people that never take planes. […] Please do not act hypocritical. […] and know that the lowest ecological footprint is located among people who live modestly and sober. […] And be consistent when you, as person that often overconsumes, who wanted to be environmentally aware but [overconsumes] unconsciously or without wanting to see it […] I have difficulty with such overconsumption."

Respondents in poverty felt like their contributions are not recognized. Accordingly, during our conversations, they consistently challenged the idea that they are not environmentally aware. By contrast, they live more consciously than other social classes due to their economic constraints. Moreover, they disagree with the presumption that environmental concerns are postmaterial (Brechin & Kempton, 1994). In contrast, being disproportionally confronted with issues such as smog, temperature swings, and noise pollution, environmental issues are very important to them. Indeed, we found no evidence that people in poverty care less about environmental issues than other social classes.

7.6.3 Cultural boundaries: Mocking green aesthetics and the gullible

As expected given the moral aspects of environmental practices, cultural repertoires that construct moral boundaries were most prevalent. Yet, we did find evidence for the presence of cultural boundaries such as good taste. For instance, Sofie, a financial expert and vegan, drew boundaries against the conventional Flemish cuisine of bread and charcuterie in the morning, and meat, vegetables, and potatoes in the evening. She felt like her diet was tastier, and more varied. Yet, such cultural boundaries, largely expressed by (upper) middle class respondents, did not overlap with social class boundaries.

However, during our interviews, people from lower strata did construct cultural boundaries to place themselves above people they perceived as green elites. Josef, a somewhat disgruntled

architectural technician, refers to people he perceives as green leftist elites as eco-snobs. Cultural repertoires were employed to construct bottom-up cultural boundaries against dominant modes of environmental protection. On the one hand, this entailed ridiculing green aesthetics. On the other hand, the intelligence and competencies of 'elites' was mocked, mainly concerning their gullibility with regard to organic and eco-labeled products. The best expression of these cultural boundaries could be found in our interview with Suzanne, a retired actress with little wealth. She tells us she cannot afford solar panels. But she also finds them aesthetically displeasing. *"Here, people place these ugly flat things on their roof. I think it is ugly. It rubs me the wrong way. You can do it, but it's against my sense of aesthetics."*

"*I mean, it is in fashion now, these stupid square things [garden or planter boxes]. […] Because laying out plots themselves, they can't do it anymore. […] It has become a must, these wooden boxes. Lining up plots and so on, it is not possible anymore. How silly can you be? And it must be with wood that doesn't rot. That might come from illegal deforestation."*

[…]

"It's not because it's a lot more expensive and supposedly has an eco-label [...] Because that's obviously for sales, sales tricks for a certain class [...] I think there's definitely abuse of those labels, of eco-friendly, because then it becomes a lot more, right, the price. Suddenly, it becomes much more expensive. Who or who are you then gullible. If you have the money and you can spend it and you think yay. My clothes aren't made by little hands, no slave labor. I don't know. You can't verify that, you know."

As apparent from the abstract above, Suzanne does not only mock green aesthetics, but also consumer gullibility. She understands eco-labeled products as marketing tools devised to trick rich people into buying more expensive products. Similarly, Alexei contends that eco-label or not, they are all the same products, except the pricing.

Alexei: "To expensive and it is mafia […] Just don't do it. They are just brands and a label. They just sell brands to rich people. And they are like, yes so cheap and then they inspect it [in a sarcastic voice]. The same, it is all the same! […] But who am I to say this? I am a lifeguard. Who listens to me?"

7.7 Discussion

Increasingly, ethical consumption scholarship connects environmental concerns and practices to mechanisms of social differentiation and distinction (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014; Baumann, Engman, & Johnston, 2015; Carfagna et al., 2014; Geerts, Vandermoere, & Oosterlynck, 2023; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019; Schor et al., 2016). Studies generally conclude that environmental practices are increasingly incorporated in the consumption practices of high cultural capital individuals. However, very little research actually examines how people from various social classes make (moral) judgments and construct symbolic boundaries regarding environmental concerns and practices (Kennedy & Horne, 2020). Different from Bourdieusian (1984) theories on distinction, this study, inspired by Lamont (1992, 2000a), provides an inductive view on the (moral) judgments and boundary-work that people perform (Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013). Moreover, we explore the ways in which these symbolic boundaries are associated with images of social class (Lamont & Molnár, 2002).

Our study overall confirms that people employ cultural repertoires to understand the association between environmental awareness and social class (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011), often through the use of classed prototypes (Johnston, Baumann, & Oleschuk, 2021). While cultural boundaries were present, moral boundaries appear particularly significant, which is in line a wide range of other research domains (e.g., Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019 on boundary-work among refugees). Generally speaking, respondents discursively attached a middle-classness to environmental concerns and practices. In part, our respondents mostly self-described as middle class, regardless of their 'objective' social position (Kostet, Verschraegen, & Clycq, 2022; Van Eijk, 2013), although people in poverty were a notable exception. Consequently, social class boundaries were commonly drawn between the middle class (us) on the one hand, and the rich or poor (them) on the other.

Yet, this middle-classness was also maintained by both constructing top-down and bottom-up boundaries. Considering top-down symbolic boundaries, dominant cultural repertoires understood environmental practices as luxury goods that people with little wealth are unable to afford, either because they lack the mental space to care for environmental issues or lack the resources to translate their concern into action. While some people acknowledge that people in poverty generally have a lower ecological footprint, they are seen as 'accidental

environmentalists' (Kennedy & Horne, 2020). This was a mild moral boundary as respondents lessened their moral judgment towards people they saw as victims of circumstance. Nonetheless, people did construct a somewhat patronizing symbolic boundary between themselves and people with less wealth.

In contrast to top-down boundaries, bottom-up symbolic boundaries mostly drew on repertoires of overconsumption that associated environmental degradation with the consumption patterns of middle classes and elites (Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). First, many interviewees constructed boundaries against elites which they perceived as selfish and overly attached to luxuries (Kennedy & Horne, 2020). Second, people in poverty expressed impact-oriented repertoires where they (i) highlighted their own sober and humble lifestyle and (ii) criticized hypocrisies within the so-called 'environmentally aware' middle class. Additionally, people in poverty drew cultural boundaries by mocking those they perceive as green elites, labeling them as eco-snobs due to their green aesthetics and gullibility regarding eco-labels (thus hinting at greenwashing).

Our findings have important societal and academic implications. The dominant repertoires and boundaries (i.e., environmental practices as a luxury good) are very telling about what people recognize as environmental awareness and legitimate action, and subsequently what and who is seen as 'environmentally worthy'. As most research endeavors, environmental awareness is defined as value-driven and intentional acts of environmentally sound behaviors such as recycling (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Preisendörfer & Diekmann, 2021; Stern, 2000). Moreover, when discussing class-based prototypes, respondents focused on high-cost practices such as buying eco-friendly products or material 'efficiency' investments such as home renovations. Disadvantaged social groups are then excluded from this repertoire.

Arguably, this repertoire derives from a middle-class and elite consensus that individualizes responsibility and problematizes the poor (Boddy et al., 2016; Swyngedouw, 2013). Our findings suggest that this was partly internalized by lower social classes, but not completely. In this context, Kennedy and Givens (2019) warn to not inadvertently create and reinforce a social class bias by confounding environmental awareness with high-cost ethical consumption. While previous research has highlighted the role of eco-friendly products in mechanisms of social differentiation (Dubuisson-Quellier & Gojard, 2016), our respondents also emphasized the role of housing and home renovations. To our knowledge, this is a novelty in research on the relationship

between ethical consumption and social class. Most likely, in contrast to our respondents, researchers do not consider housing as 'consumption' and thus exclude it from their studies. This critique of the consumption literature has been expressed most strongly in social practice theoretical studies, that shed light on mundane, inconspicuous household consumption and its relation to materialities such as housing (e.g., Sahakian, Rau, & Wallenborn, 2020; Shove, 2003).

Furthermore, in light of the dominant repertoires and their partial internalization by lower classes, Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence seems useful to understand social differentiation regarding environmental practices (Atkinson, 2019; Bourdieu, 2000). As interviewees in poverty argue, these repertoires and boundaries most likely fit within a broader framework of stigmatization. In part, they attribute this to the fact that their voices are not being heard because politicians and media personnel are mostly drawn from middle and upper classes. Hence, their cultural repertoires remain invisible because other groups have more power at their disposal in the struggle for recognition.

At the same time, however, during our conversations, we also see evidence of people in poverty employing cultural repertoires to (re)assert a sense of dignity (Vandevoordt & Verschraegen, 2019), maintain a positive (self-)image (Cohen & Dromi, 2018) and place themselves above people in middle classes and elites (Lamont, 2000a) through the construction of both moral and cultural boundaries. Hence, the 'symbolic boundary-making' framework was more useful than Bourdieusian approaches to shed light on complex struggles for moral worth and legitimacy with regard to environmental concerns and practices (Lamont, 2000a; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, & Lamont, 2007).

In sum, our study reveals that people make moral evaluations and classifications, and subsequently delineate social groups based on these judgments (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999; Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013; Lamont, 1992, 2000a). Moreover, findings suggest that this overlaps with social class dynamics, both in terms of diverging 'moral cultures' and group delineations. During our interviews, people found it important to signal environmental worth and justify their actions. However, it should be noted that most boundaries appeared more or less hypocritical. While respondents regularly constructed symbolic boundaries based on environmental practices, they did not hold themselves to the same standards (see Batson et al., 1999 on moral hypocrisy). Future research may further examine processes of boundary-making, and how this relates to

actual behavioral practices. In addition, research may employ ethnographic methods to explore in more depth the relationship between symbolic and social boundaries (Brown, 2009). For instance, while respondents often feel comfortable to express moral boundaries in an interview setting, real-life circumstances may be quite different.

Appendix

	Number of respondents
Gender	
Male	9
Female	19
Age	
18-35	7
35-60	13
60+	8
Migration background	
No	14
Yes	4
Education	
Non-tertiary	12
Tertiary	16
Income	
Low	6
Middle	18
High	4
Occupation	
Managerial and professionals	12
Working and lower service workers	12
Unemployed/precariat	4

Table 1. Description of respondents.

Chapter 8

Discussion

In this dissertation, I aimed to disentangle the complex relationship between social class and environmental practices. As I have argued above, most people, including research(ers), assume a positive relationship between social class and environmental practices, suggesting that they are most common in middle and upper classes (e.g., Gifford & Nilsson, 2014; Laidley, 2013b; Zorell & Yang, 2019). Arguably, research has considered environmental practices as luxury goods that depend on access to resources, which are needed to be able to care for the environment (Franzen & Meyer, 2010) or to align this care with one's behavior (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that this impression is a consequence of an intent-oriented approach where environmental practices are understood as ecologically oriented responses to environmental concerns through 'environmentally sound' activities (Preisendörfer & Diekmann, 2021). Moreover, when discussing social class differences, focus often lies with high-cost practices such as green consumerism.

Against this background, I have adopted a practice-oriented approach where environmental practices are not merely seen as a matter of individual choices but rather a reflection of one's social conditions, both materially and culturally (Ford, 2019). The question then becomes how environmental practices are embedded in everyday life, and how people in similar social class conditions embody and perform environmental practices within a broader system of interwoven materialities and dispositions (Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019; Kasper, 2009). At the same time, these practices shape the social world and the social differentiations within (Bourdieu, 1977). Accordingly, this dissertation emphasizes the way environmental practices can create and maintain social class boundaries (Anantharaman, 2016, 2022).

For this dissertation, inspired by Bourdieu's (1984) analysis of tastes and lifestyles, environmental practices and associated dispositions are (re)conceptualized as cultural traits that are (partly) structured by social class. Moreover, these cultural traits in turn shape social relations and differentiations. This led me to two complementary research questions (visualized in Figure 1):

i. How does one's social class position influence one's engagement in various environmental practices?
ii. How do environmental practices (re)produce social class boundaries?

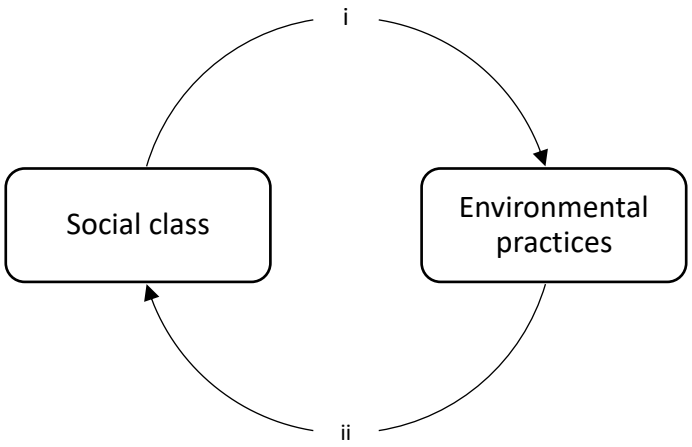

Figure 1. Research questions

Even though the arguments run across chapters, the empirical chapters were structured in two sections, each focusing on one subquestion. In the first section (Chapters 2-4), I examine how one's social class position relates to one's engagement in various environmental practices. The second section (Chapters 5-7) explores social differentiation and the (re)production of social class through environmental practices. Below, I briefly summarize the sections and chapters before providing a more general discussion of the most important implications of my dissertation.

Section I: How does one's social class position influence one's engagement in various environmental practices?

The first section explores social class differences in the way people understand and engage in various environmental practices. In terms of social class, I focus on the role of economic and cultural capital. With regard to environmental practices, I focus on energy curtailment, sustainable shopping practices, sustainable transport, and waste sorting (although respondents were free to define environmental practices themselves in qualitative research). However, the initial empirical chapter first takes a step back to examine social class differences in environmental concern among adolescents.

Chapter 2 utilized data from the 4th Flemish Human Biomonitoring Program of the Flemish Center of Expertise on Environment and Health. The initial results suggest that privileged adolescents (with well-earning and well-educated parents) in general education trajectories (compared to vocational or technical tracks) are most concerned about environmental issues. In addition, results reveal that adolescents are socialized into class-based environmental concerns from an early age by highlighting two crucial socialization agents. While evidence was found for the role of parental social class, results also show that the secondary education system plays a central and mediating role by (re)producing educational inequalities through differences in educational trajectories. At the same time, however, further exploration of different types of environmental concern challenges the idea that environmental concern among adolescents is a middle- and upper-class phenomenon. Rather, adolescents from various social classes seem to express their concern differently. On the one hand, while adolescents generally agreed that their environment is polluted, adolescents from a lower-class background attributed less relative importance to these issues, for example in comparison with the economy. On the other hand, whereas privileged adolescents seemed more intrinsically concerned about environment and nature, others appeared to prioritize issues of health, annoyance, and wellbeing.

	Economic capital: Income	Cultural capital: Education
Energy curtailment		
Transport		
Shopping		
Waste sorting		

Figure 2. Summarizing chapter 3 (part I). The figure is based on data from SCV-2016. Red cells represent a negative, green cells a positive, and white cells an insignificant bivariate association. Crossed-out cells were not examined due to data limitations.

Chapter 3 employed quantitative methods to examine the relationship between social class (as economic and cultural capital) and various environmental practices (energy curtailment, shopping practices, sustainable transport, and waste sorting). First, the chapter contradicts the assumed positive association between social class and engagement in environmental practices. In contrast, a multidimensional approach to environmental practices showcases a mixed relationship between social class and environmental practices depending on the type of practice. More specifically, as revealed in the bivariate analysis presented in figure 2, a positive relationship between the forms of capital and environmental practices was only found for sustainable shopping practices. In contrast, a negative association was found for energy curtailment and to a lesser extent sustainable transport. Second, the chapter does reveal that environmentally oriented practices are most common among highly educated groups (see Figure 3). It seems that cultural capital can be a useful resource for aligning one's behavior with one's environmental concerns. In contrast, among low economic capital groups, various environmental practices were understood less in terms of environmentalism, and more in terms of economics (such as energy curtailment and saving money).

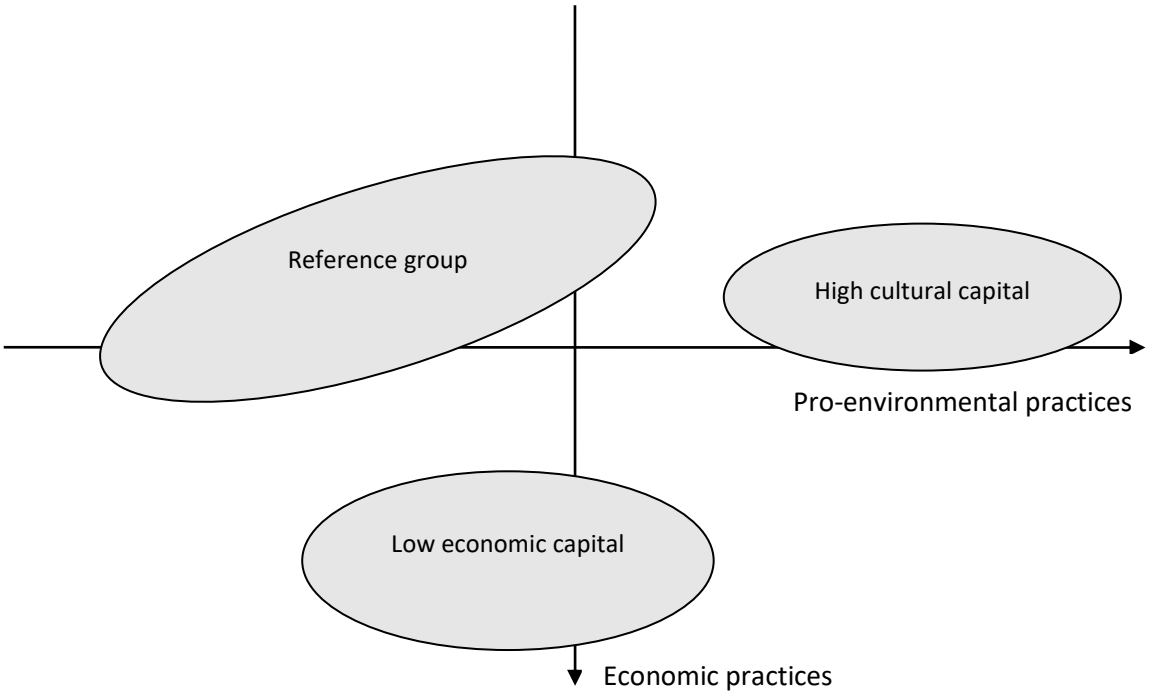

Figure 3. Summarizing chapter 3 (part II). The figure is based on data from Eurobarometer 92.4.

Finally, chapter 4, the first qualitative study of this dissertation, explores social class dynamics regarding environmental practices in more depth. Starting from current practice theorical approaches to environmental practices, chapter 4 develops, both theoretically and empirically, a Bourdieusian perspective. I emphasize two interwoven sources of social class differences. While practice theory has often focused on the role of materiality, it has gone underacknowledged that people from different social classes inhibit vastly different material life-worlds. For example, (operational) central heating is not self-evident among people in poverty. Furthermore, our results direct attention to the cultural dimensions of consumption practices to better understand social class dynamics.

Upper middle class & elite. - Very resource-intensive practices - Investment logics - Habitus of luxury	**Established middle class.** - Resource-intensive practices - Ecologically oriented habitus - Comfort, convenience, and leisure
Working & lower middle class. - Moderate resource consumption - Eco-powerlessness - Convenience, comfort, and economics	**Poverty.** - Low resource consumption - Eco-powerlessness - Habitus of necessity

Figure 4. Summarizing chapters 4.

Through the notion of ecological habitus, I underscore that environmental practices are partly embodied through one's social history and class conditions. I identified four social class groups (see Figure 4). The relationship between upper middle classes/elites and their environmental practices was characterized by luxury consumption, in part compensated by technological investments such as solar panels. Established middle classes commonly express their environmental concerns through ethical consumption, while at the same time experiencing paradoxes between their environmental awareness and other expectations of convenience,

comfort, and leisure. People in poverty and from working/lower middle-class backgrounds often articulated a powerlessness regarding their ability to engage in environmental practices. On the one hand, working/lower middle-classes evaluated practices more often based on convenience, comfort, and/or economics. On the other hand, the habitus of people in poverty was heavily organized around economic constraints. These constraints were internalized, for example by lowering expectations of comfort. Additionally, necessity was reconceptualized as a virtue, thus highlighting the ecological value of economic scarcity and austerity practices.

Section II: How do environmental practices (re)produce social class boundaries?

Section II delves deeper into the way environmental practices may (re)produce social class. Even though environmental practices are commonly understood as postmaterial and costly sacrifices that individuals make in favor of environmental protections, my results reveal various (perceived) benefits (such as health and biological food). This was also the case regarding social class and the forms of capital. For example, various practices had economic benefits, especially the energy-efficiency investments that affluent groups use to compensate for their resource consumption. The focus of this dissertation, however, was on the cultural and symbolic mechanisms behind social differentiation.

Given that previous chapters have shown that social class differences are most prevalent with regard to green consumerism, chapter 5 zoomed in on social differentiation in green consumerism. At the same time, the chapter zooms out by utilizing a (European) multilevel perspective. While previous research theorizes that the need for lifestyle distinction increases in unequal societies, chapter 5 explores this hypothesis regarding green consumerism. Results first confirm previous findings that educational attainment and affluence are positively associated with green consumerism. Second, and more importantly, the inequality gap seems to widen with increased levels of income inequality. In other words, the gap between rich and poor, more and less educated seems to be smallest in egalitarian societies. While cultural and economic capital may indeed be necessary to engage in green purchases, income inequality may increase the existing divisiveness of green consumption, and create a framework for social class distinction based on green purchases. In sum, the chapter highlights social inequalities as a central driver of green consumerism (or the lack thereof). This holds true on an individual, but also on a societal level.

My approach in chapter 6 fits within a broader research domain where ethical (including green) consumption is (re)conceptualized as a cultural taste that plays a role in mechanisms of distinction by studying the relationship between environmental practices and other (aesthetic) cultural tastes. In specific, the association between cultural engagement and environmental practices was examined. Findings are summarized in figure 5. The analysis first showed a strong connection between cultural engagement and environmental practices, especially among the educated middle classes. Economic elites, by contrast, were mostly culturally oriented, and less focused on environmental practices. To a lesser extent, this is also the case among (affluent) middle and working classes. 'Purely' environmental orientations, on the other hand, appeared to be most common among more socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. Second, the study revealed that cultural engagement was more strongly related to environmental practices than educational attainment, environmental concern, and environmental knowledge. Moreover, educational differences in environmental practices could be explained by differences in cultural engagement. Hence, this chapter reiterates that cultural dispositions and predilections may be more relevant than cognitions to explain why people engage in environmental practices. In sum, it seems that environmental practices fit within a broader (middle class) cultural framework and existing cultural distinction practices, at least for highly educated groups.

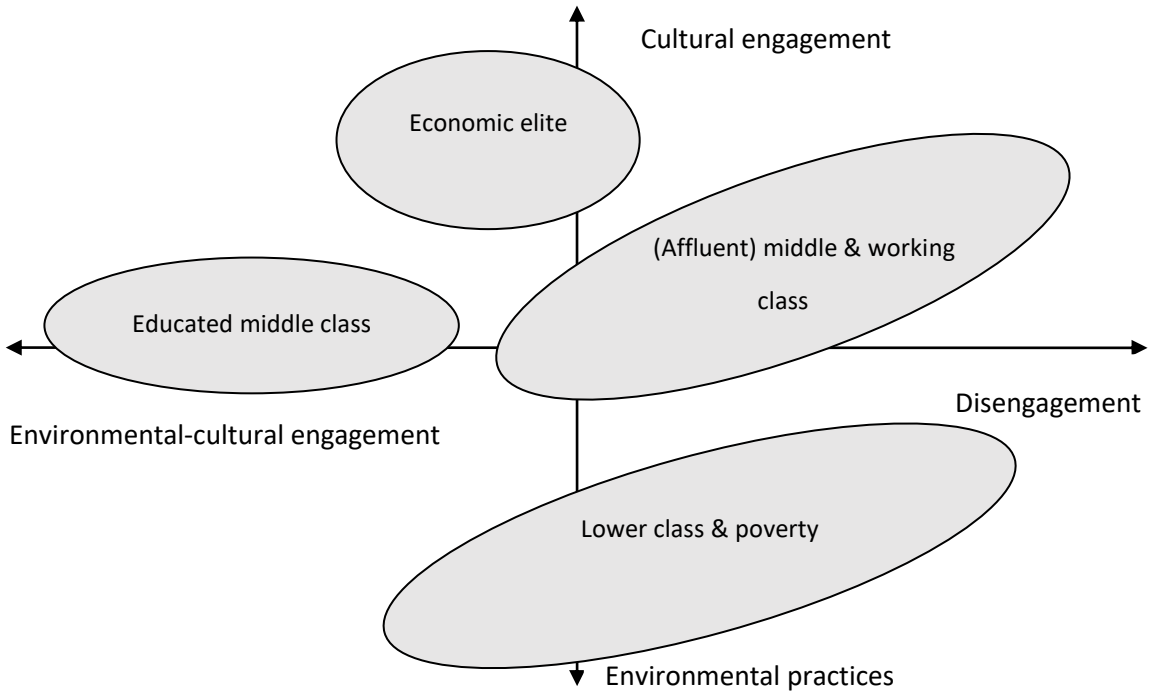

Figure 5. Summarizing chapter 6.

The final chapter examines the way people from various social classes make moral judgments based on environmental concerns and practices, and how this subsequently affects processes of social differentiation. An inductive and interview-based approach was employed to address social differentiation as an open question to be answered from the ground up. The study highlights the role of cultural repertoires and boundary-making in creating and maintaining social class boundaries in the context of environmental concerns and practices (see Figure 6). Generally speaking, respondents discursively attached a middle-classness to environmental concerns and practices. On the one hand, top-down boundaries were utilized to construct a positive association between social class and environmental practices. Dominant cultural repertoires understood environmental practices as luxury goods that people with little wealth are unable to afford, either because they lack the mental space to care for environmental issues or lack the resources to translate their care into action. In contrast, bottom-up symbolic boundaries mostly drew on repertoires of overconsumption that associated environmental degradation with the (over)consumption patterns of middle classes and elites. Moreover, people in poverty also drew cultural boundaries (not shown in Figure 6) by mocking those they perceive as green elites, labeling them as eco-snobs due to their green aesthetics and gullibility regarding eco-labels (thus hinting at greenwashing).

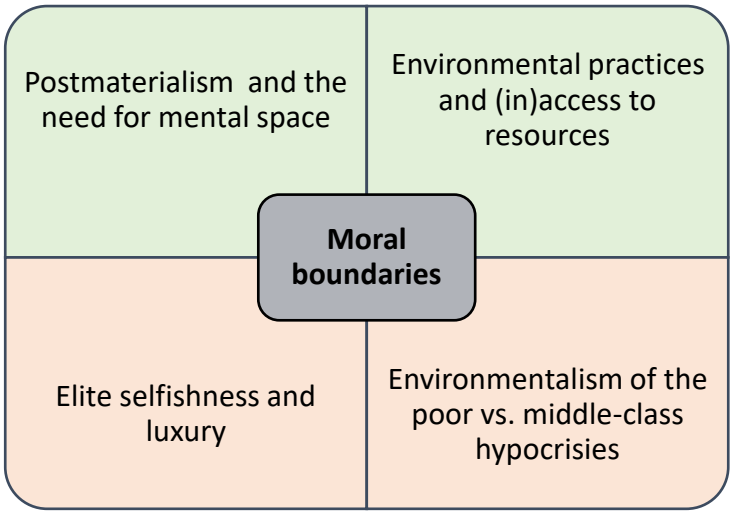

Figure 6. Summarizing chapter 7. Red cells contain bottom-up, and green cells top-down cultural repertoires.

8.1 General conclusion and implications

Crucially, this dissertation sheds light on a paradox. On the one hand, environmental practices are not a prerogative of middle and upper classes. Results reveal that when specific environmental practices are examined, as opposed to looking for an overall environmental consciousness, many environmental practices were not or negatively associated with social class (Longhi, 2013; Moser & Kleinhückelkotten, 2017). Accordingly, this challenges the notion of environmental practices as luxury goods that depend on access to resources. To the contrary, an abundance of resources, especially economic capital, can allow people to act unsustainably (driving cars, overseas holidays, wasting energy and water, and so on). At the same time, however, this dissertation also underscores that environmental practices are employed to create and maintain social class differences by attaching an (upper) middle-classness to them. I contend that this is made possible by employing a very specific interpretation of environmental practices to judge people and social classes on their environmental practices, namely ecologically oriented and high-cost practices such as green consumerism and technological investments.

Similarly, Kennedy (2022) identifies 'the ideal environmentalist' cultural schema as a reference point through which people evaluate their own and others' environmental concerns and practices. The ideal environmentalist is concerned about environmental issues, caring about their environmental impact, and committed to environmental protection. Based on the results of this dissertation, the ideal environmentalist also engages in high-cost practices such as green consumerism, ethical eating, and energy-efficient investments. In the rest of this section, I take Kennedy's (2022) ideal environmentalist as a point of reference to extrapolate the main conclusions and implications from my dissertation. Below, in three key messages, I argue that this ideal (i) obscures other ways of understanding and engaging in environmental practices, (ii) detaches environmental practices from other parts of daily life, (iii) and plays a role in processes of social differentiation.

Key message #1. What about other ways of understanding and engaging in environmental practices?

Throughout the chapters, the group that most closely resembles the ideal environmentalist are people from, what I called in chapter 4, the established middle class. Generally speaking, they are well-earning professionals, but are mostly characterized by their high cultural capital (including a

tertiary education). This is consistent with previous research suggesting that environmental practices are increasingly incorporated in the consumption practices of highly educated groups, especially regarding green consumerism and eating practices. (Baumann, Engman, & Johnston, 2015; Carfagna et al., 2014; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019). In particular, the ideal environmentalist seems to align with the established middle-class' habitus. One explanation can be found in neo-institutional theory, where it is argued that education produces cultural scripts by which actors understand and define behavior (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000). In specific, education seems to - implicitly or explicitly - cultivate values and practices deemed important by society, including environmental awareness and practices (Chawla, 1999; Sela-Sheffy, 2011). Moreover, education may promote citizenship (Wiseman & Baker, 2006) and political efficacy (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). In other words, highly educated groups may be more willing to act on their environmental awareness and feel more confident that their actions will have a meaningful contribution (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). In this context, educational systems can be seen as institutions that (re)produce cultural and environmental traits (Bourdieu, 1984; Wright, 2018).

Yet, there are reasons to be critical of these neo-institutional explanations that allude to the idea that more schooling is the solution for environmental issues. First, chapter 2 reveals that educational systems also reproduce social differences, also with regard to environmental concerns. Through early and classed divisions in educational trajectories, not all social strata benefit similarly from the environmental scripts provided by educational institutions. Second, people, and thus also educated middle-classes, are rather inconsistent in their behaviors and professed motivations (Swidler, 2001). Hence, environmental concerns and values should not be unquestionably understood as drivers of action. Rather, the relationship between values and behavior is dialectic. In this context, Giddens (1984), for instance, differentiates between practical and discursive consciousness. The way we talk about our actions is not always the motivation behind our behavior, but rather a post hoc justification (see also Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999; Vaisey, 2009). While some environmental practices by educated middle-class respondents may be environmentally motivated, the incorporation of environmental meaning in these practices can also be seen as an environmental justification after the fact. Following this line of reasoning, cultural capital may simply signify that people understand what are socially desirable justifications (e.g., for energy conservation) and thus having the right 'vocabularies of motive' (Mills, 1940),

especially in an interview-setting. In sum, from a cultural standpoint of recognition, not only what we do matters, but also how we justify our actions.

Finally, another explanation can be found in more general social class theory, which suggests that educated middle classes disproportionally utilize reflexive consumption as an expression of self, identity, and ethics (Atkinson, 2010; Featherstone, 2007; Ollivier, 2008b; Skeggs, 2004), for instance through fairtrade consumption (Adams & Raisborough, 2008) or organic food (Guthman, 2003). Additionally, as a class, while occupying a somewhat insecure middle position, they are characterized by and derive their power from cultural capital. To create and elevate their social position, they (aim to) loosen existing cultural hierarchies (Van Eijk, 2013) and construct universal political and cultural claims (Fernandes & Heller, 2006). Hence, they are seen as cultural innovators, also with regard to ethical consumption (Carfagna et al., 2014). Accordingly, they form a class-in-practice that distinguishes itself through, in the context of this dissertation, ethical consumption (Anantharaman, 2016; Fernandes & Heller, 2006).

However, as also argued by Kennedy (2022), the ideal environmentalist takes up a lot of cultural space and overlooks other ways of understanding and engaging in environmental practices. Specifically, it confounds environmental awareness, self-efficacy, and high-cost environmental practices (Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Yet, many (perhaps even most) environmental practices are not inspired by ecological motivations but are part of a wide range of other daily accomplishments (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). Overall, environmental practices are not inspired by a single motivation, but rather carry a complex web of complementary and competing meanings. While educated middle classes most frequently and strongly ascribed environmental meaning to their practices, practices are also associated with leisure, health, fairtrade, locality, spirituality, good food, and so forth (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). In other social classes, environmental meanings were more often pushed to the background, absent, or even contested. Dan and Wilfred, whom I classified as upper middle class/elite, understood their vegetable garden as a leisure activity and did not really associate it with environmentalism. Alexei and Suzanne, respectively classified as ‘in poverty’ and ‘lower middle/working class’, were quite skeptical about eco-labels and viewed them as mere marketing tricks. Furthermore, the environmental practices of respondents facing poverty were organized heavily around economic constraints, and a low ecological footprint. Accordingly, people in poverty often expressed a habitus of necessity (Herzberg, 2006), including the reconceptualization of scarcity as an environmental virtue. In

addition, similar to Kennedy and Givens (2019), we identified an eco-powerlessness among people in lower classes regarding the dominant repertoires of ecologically oriented and high-cost environmental practices such as green consumerism and technological investments. Interestingly, chapters 2 and 3 suggest that powerlessness stems from a lack of cultural capital, while chapter 4 also highlights the role of economic capital. Most likely, it is a combination of both. That being said, self-efficacy and behavior(al intent) are often seen as elements of environmental concern in both research and society (Dunlap & Jones, 2001). Hence, people excluded from the ideal environmentalist are subsequently labeled as 'unconcerned'. Yet, as chapter 2 reveals, environmental concern has spread among social classes, albeit sometimes expressed in diverging ways. Given that dominant repertoires of environmental care and environmental protection are often defined by middle and upper classes, the ideal environmentalist cultural schema may obscure power relations (Kennedy & Givens, 2019).

In sum, the ideal environmentalist contains the risk of obscuring the variety of meanings associated with environmental practices and associated power relations by universalizing the middle class experience (Skeggs, 2004). For people in poverty especially, this means overlooking people and their (legitimate) environmental practices (Anantharaman, 2022). When the austerity practices of people in poverty are not acknowledged, we may unduly construct a social class bias in environmental concern and practices. As a consequence, interviewees in poverty expressed feelings of stigmatization. It seems to me that a question of recognition lies at the root of this issue (Atkinson, 2015; Honneth, 1996). What solutions do we see as legitimate, and which social groups do we recognize as legitime 'environmentalists'? Many scholars have taken the position that environmental values and intentions are a crucial element of environmental practices because society needs, above all, a change in ecological values (Dobson & Valencia, 2005; Stern, 2000). However, there are also arguments to be made for an impact-oriented approach to environmental practices, in which studies find a consistently positive association between social class (mainly regarding economic capital) and ecological footprint (Abrahamse & Steg, 2011; Boucher, 2017; Kennedy, Krahn, & Krogman, 2015; Lévay et al., 2021). Moreover, even if we take an intent-oriented position, to me personally, it feels a bit unfair to discount people in poverty as 'accidental environmentalists' (Kennedy & Horne, 2020) and solely question their motives, especially when the motives of other social classes are also varied and complex. While stigmatization based on environmental worth may seem insignificant in light of the large

(material) inequalities in contemporary society, (negative) beliefs about social groups often serve as justification for policy inequalities (Valentino & Vaisey, 2022), for example by focusing on electric cars instead of public transport.

Key message #2. The detachment of environmental practices from everyday life.

Similar to my findings, Carfagna et al. (2014) show that high cultural capital individuals increasingly incorporate environmental awareness and practices in their habitus. This also entails a revalorization of locality, materiality, manual labor, and a connection to earth. However, claiming an ecological consciousness does not necessarily imply minimalizing one's ecological footprint. People's environmental practices often remain limited to so-called micro-gestures such as installing energy-efficient light bulbs, which may fall short when it comes to real change (Balsiger, Lorenzini, & Sahakian, 2019). These practices are sometimes critiqued as 'performative environmentalism' (Anantharaman, 2022). More positively, Kennedy (2022) describes them as flagship practices that carry cultural meaning and stimulate support for environmental protection. In any case, they offer limited direct material and ecological benefits (Moser & Kleinhückelkotten, 2017).

Practice theoretical studies have rightfully argued that much of our unsustainable consumption patterns are unconscious and unreflexive. Instead, consumption is related to our day-to-day routines (such as heating and freezing practices) and associated materialities (such as central heating and freezers) (Shove & Walker, 2014). Accordingly, research has emphasized ordinary, mundane, and inconspicuous forms of consumption that are far removed from ecological deliberations, but nonetheless have a large environmental impact (Gronow & Warde, 2001; Shove & Warde, 2002; Warde, 2014). In this dissertation, I underscore that inconspicuous resource consumption is especially salient in affluent groups, and specifically economic elites. By contrast, people in poverty were very conscious of their consumption patterns. While studies on ordinary and inconspicuous consumption in the past have shed light on the normalization of inconspicuous consumption, a crucial first sociological question should be: "normal for whom?" (Oleschuk, Johnston, & Baumann, 2019, p. 356).

Although I did not measure actual environmental impact, my findings paradoxically suggest that social classes who most strongly express an ecologically oriented habitus have the highest ecological footprint (supported by Kennedy, 2022). By and large, this can be explained by

materialities (big houses, cars, second homes, etc.) and expectations of comfort, convenience, and luxury in daily life. There are also more inherent paradoxes associated with an ecologically oriented habitus among affluent people. For example, an appreciation of fresh air, green space, and growing one's own food coincided with desires for detached homes away from urban centra, which subsequently led to resource-intensive energy and mobility practices (Des Rosiers et al., 2017; Fuller & Crawford, 2011). This is in line with Lévay et al. (2021) where income, and to a lesser extent educational attainment and occupational status, were positively associated with carbon footprint in most domains of everyday life, including food, goods and service expenditure, housing and energy, and transport (see also Abrahamse & Steg, 2011; Boucher, 2017; Kennedy, Krahn, & Krogman, 2015). Admittedly somewhat pessimistically, I argue that one of the reasons that ethical consumption among 'ideal environmentalists' falls short is the fact that the everydayness of life gets in the way. This tension is particularly salient in Sofie's life. For Sofie, sustainability, and especially veganism, is a central part of her identity. Yet, she and her husband have a second home in Turkey. Hence, her mobility practices are ecologically damaging for the simple reason that, if one has a second home, one goes there once in a while.

To better understand environmental practices, their embeddedness in daily life, and associated social class dynamics, I have proposed a social practice approach where practical understandings of appropriate behavior are both interwoven with materialities and culturally embodied within a system of dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977; Jacobsen & Hansen, 2019; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2001; Schatzki, 1996). On the one hand, despite practice theory's focus on the materialities of everyday life, it has gone underacknowledged that people from different social classes inhabit vastly different material and everyday life-words. On the other hand, aligning with Bourdieu's (1990) theory of habitus and its influence on human action, our research indicates that practical understandings of appropriate behavior are, at least in part, embodied in a system of dispositions (Schatzki, Cetina, & Von Savigny, 2001; Wilhite, 2012). Firstly, this can shed light on the mental maps and cultural schemas that underlie class-based understandings of and engagement in environmental practices. Second, conceptualizing environmental practices, even if they are ethically inspired, as cultural traits help us to see underlying mechanisms of social differentiation and distinction (see key message #3).

Finally, it is worth reflecting theoretically on the notions of ecological (Kasper, 2009) and eco-habitus (Carfagna et al., 2014). In this dissertation, I have mostly relied on Kasper's ecological

habitus as a value-neutral concept that denotes the environmentally relevant aspect of habitus. Hence, it only differs from Bourdieu's habitus in the sense that it directs attention towards environmental debates. In my view, this fits well with a Bourdieusian social practice approach to social class. In contrast, Carfagna's (2014) eco-habitus, as well as similar usages (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Kirby, 2017; Smith, 2001), highlights what I have described above as an ecologically oriented habitus that values environmental awareness. While useful to describe a reconfiguration in high-status tastes among educated middle classes (see below), I identify several issues with this conception. First, its lineage is connected to the environmental movement where it is seen as a collective strategy to tackle environmental issues (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Kirby, 2017). Rather than more fundamentally questioning social class mechanisms, high cultural capital consumers are then seen as early adopters of this new habitus (Carfagna et al., 2014). Second, such conceptions carry a danger to divert focus towards the environmental orientation behind practices, rather than actual practice. Finally, while it is tempting to understand the emergence of an eco-habitus as monothetic dispositions and practices, this dissertation shows the multiplicity of eco-habitus' within and between social classes. Some respondents focused on eating practices, while others emphasized technological investments or austerity practices. In other words, even if people have an ecologically oriented habitus, this may manifest diversly and even conflictingly.

Key message #3. The role of environmental practices in processes of social differentiation.

While one's understanding and engagement in environmental practices is class-based, these practices also shape the social world and social relations within (Bourdieu, 1977). It is through their repeated performance that they are constituted and social class differences are (re)produced (Horton, 2003). In this context, an important realization is that, even though environmental practices are often represented as altruistic and/or biospheric sacrifices, they can also have positive benefits, such as health, life satisfaction, and wellbeing (Binder, Blankenberg, & Guardiola, 2020). This also extends to social class and the forms of capital that constitute classes. For example, various practices have economic benefits, especially the energy-efficiency investments that affluent groups use to compensate for their resource consumption. Similarly, I found instances where environmental practices were beneficial for one's social network, for example in the search for likeminded vegans. In one of my research endeavors (El-Achkar et al., 2021) that did not make it as a chapter in this dissertation (the main differentiator in this study was arguably age rather than class), experiments with urban greening led to group formation and

social capital among initiative takers, and the social exclusion of opposants. The focus of this dissertation, however, was on the cultural and symbolic mechanisms behind social class differentiation.

Environmental practices contain a paradoxical tension between openness and distinction (Schor et al., 2016). On the one hand, they are relatively open dispositions. Overall, they are not a prerogative of upper classes (especially not bivariately), and the dispersion of ecological dispositions is desirable (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Kirby, 2017). My respondents gave me no reason to suspect that their eco-engagements were disgenuine. Additionally, even though the distinctiveness of practices depends on exclusivity, I found no indication that people aspired exclusivity. Moreover, being environmentally unaware was generally frowned upon, although people were milder in their moral judgments towards people they perceived as powerless (Kennedy & Horne, 2020). At the same time, however, the environmental movement has been accused of elitism from its conception onwards, even if reality is more nuanced (della Porta & Portos, 2021). Moreover, environmentally friendly consumption strategies are often characterized as exclusive through notions such as *eco-chic* (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014) and *yuppie chow* (Guthman, 2003). Overall, this literature describes the increasing cultural value of environmental practices among certain social groups and their distinctive properties. Various authors utilize Bourdieu's (1984) habitus to account for emerging dispositions oriented towards environmental awareness and practices (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Kirby, 2017; Smith, 2001). For Carfagna et al. (2014), this more fundamentally constitutes a reconfiguration of high-status tastes and cultural capital. Hence, environmental practices can be seen as cultural performances of class (Kennedy & Givens, 2019), high-status practices (Carfagna et al., 2014) and elite distinction strategies (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014).

Based on the findings of this dissertation, several contributions can be made to this debate. First, chapter 5 reveals that inequalities regarding green consumerism are constituted by more than (a lack of) access to resources, but that they are also relational. The gap between affluent and non-affluent, between educated and less educated was largest in countries with an unequal income distribution. This is in line with the hypothesis that class-based lifestyle differentiation is most common in unequal societies (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). Second, even if we define environmental practices in terms of the ideal environmentalist, they are not elite but rather associated with educated middle classes (Chen, Yang, & Chen, 2023).

Third, the cultural schema of elite (or at least middle class) environmental practices is dependent on a very specific interpretation of environmental practices, namely ecologically oriented and high-cost environmental practices. Thus, environmental distinction is not only based on doing the right type of (flagship) practices, but one also has (to be perceived) to attach the right meaning to environmental practices. I am reminded of Anantharaman's (2016) work on defensive distinction. She argues that educated middle classes employ environmental practices and meaning to distinguish themselves ethically from lower classes, even if they engage in low-status practices such as bicycling or energy savings (see also McClintock, 2018). Fourth, in line with current research (Baumann, Kennedy, & Johnston, 2022; Kennedy, Baumann, & Johnston, 2019), I contend that environmental practices are not an alternative distinction framework, but rather fit within a broader cultural framework and existing cultural distinction practices. Most likely, high-status lifestyles are characterized not (solely) by morals, but by either aesthetics (for elites) and a combination of morals and aesthetics (for educated middle-classes). For instance, veganism is often combined with cosmopolitan and foodie tastes. Barendregt and Jaffe (2014) propose the notion of eco-chic to indicate the blurring of lines between ethical, sustainable, and elite consumption.

Finally, my dissertation highlights that social differentiation arises from an interaction between 'objective' and 'subjective' mechanisms. On the one hand, in line with Kennedy and Givens (2019), I argue that distinction arises because (upper) middle classes are able to define their own tastes and ideals as the standard, which was partially internalized by lower classes. In Bourdieusian terms (1984, 1990, 2000), this is an indication of symbolic violence. Indeed, previous research has argued that educated middle classes have an especially strong impact on our cultural and environmental imagination because their position and power is derived from cultural capital (Anantharaman, 2016; Fernandes & Heller, 2006). On the other hand, my dissertation also directs attention to more 'subjective' mechanisms of symbolic boundary-work, largely inspired by cultural repertoires to account for environmental practices and associated class-based prototypes (Johnston, Baumann, & Oleschuk, 2021; Johnston, Szabo, & Rodney, 2011). (Upper) middle-class respondents constructed moral boundaries to distinguish themselves from "selfish elites", but more often from lower classes by propagating the idea of environmental practices as luxury goods. In this sense, the ideal environmentalist functions as a mythical norm that is very much interwoven with images of social class (Ford & Norgaard, 2020; Lorde, 1995). Yet, results also

reveal that we should not take these moral judgments and social differentiations for granted (Lamont, 2009, 2010). Lower social classes also engaged in bottom-up moral boundary-work by addressing the overconsumption patterns and hypocrisy of middle and upper classes. Moreover, although to a lesser extent, we identified cultural boundaries where middle-class or elite environmentalists were ridiculed by labeling them as eco-snobs due to their green aesthetics and gullibility regarding eco-labels. In other words, people in poverty constructed both moral and cultural boundaries to maintain a positive (self-)image (Cohen & Dromi, 2018) and place themselves above people from middle classes and elites (Lamont, 2000a) Hence, the symbolic boundary framework was useful to shed light on complex struggles for worth and legitimacy with regard to environmental concerns and practices (Lamont, 2000a; Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Pachucki, Pendergrass, & Lamont, 2007).

Where do we go from here: politization needed?

In one of his final works, Latour, together with Schultz (2022), discusses the emergence of an ecological class that breaks away from traditional social class classifications based on production, and the distribution of resources. He does not mean to make an empirical observation, but rather to philosophize the emergence of a group that makes the struggles for the habitability of our planet its main battlefront, in opposition to the liberal bourgeoisie.

> *"The arrival of a new class. It's not 'class' in the traditional sense of social class […] but in the sense of Norbert Elias […] that is to say classes of culture at the bottom. So there is a moment when the ecological question will become key, and this will define associations between friends and enemies." (Latour, 2021 min 1:18 [translated from French])*

In essence, this dissertation disputes the idea that we can decouple ecological questions from social class in the more 'traditional' sense. I have highlighted that the ways in which people understand and engage in environmental practices is very much class-based, and that this can subsequently play a role in the (re)production of social class. Similar arguments have been made, for example, regarding inequalities in environmental policy (Van Lancker & Otto, 2022), environmental justice and health hazards (Brown, 1995), environmental privilege and access to green space (Taylor, 2009), or the environmental labor performed by working classes to make sustainable consumption possible (for instance garbage collection and waste management) (Anantharaman, 2024).

Moreover, dominant modes of environmental protection are generally rooted in inequalities and power relations (Ford & Norgaard, 2020; Kennedy & Givens, 2019). Both academics and broader society alike often focus on green consumerism and technological fixes, which closely align with the interests of, in the terminology of Latour (2021), the liberal bourgeoisie. According to Swyndgedouw (2011, 2013; 2020), we have reached a post-political consensus about environmental protections that focuses on techno-managerial solutions. Post-politics involves a process of foreclosing the political and the universalization of political demands (Mouffe, 2000; Swyngedouw, 2010). Yet, the current dominant materialities and repertoires are arguably skewed to fit middle classes and elites, and exclude and/or problematize the poor (Boddy et al., 2016). This may cause a sense of powerlessness among lower (middle) classes and subsequent frustration with and alienation from ecological questions. In addition, we may fail to see the alternative ways environmental practices are understood and engaged in by less privileged groups (Ford & Norgaard, 2020). Therefore, I argue for re-centering the political nature of environmental protection to make power relations visible and to showcase the legitimate views, concerns, practices, and demands of less visible and less privileged groups. For instance, during the focus group with people in poverty, I noticed a strong desire to be heard and a cry for help with the provision of energy efficient (social) housing (see also Smets, Van der Wilt, & Keppens, 2022).

Future directions in research

Throughout the chapters, I have suggested various possible avenues for future research, of which I will highlight the two most important implications here. Research on social class and environmental practices would benefit greatly from ethnographic and observational methods. This has several benefits. First, I have utilized a zooming-out approach to practice theoretical research by trailing social practices and their connections into bundles that make up people's everyday life-world (Nicolini, 2012). While my aim was to explore more broadly social class dynamics in environmental practices, future research can employ a zooming-in approach through ethnographic and/or observational case studies of the way certain practices are accomplished in different social classes, such as showering (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2020) or heat metering (Gram-Hanssen et al., 2023). Second, ethnographic and/or observational research may explore in more depth the relationship between symbolic and social boundaries (Brown, 2009) by examining processes of boundary-making, and how this relates to actual behavioral practices and social

relations. For instance, while respondents often feel comfortable to express moral boundaries in an interview setting, real-life circumstances may be quite different.

The most crucial recommendation is a shift in research focus. Rather than searching for the most environmental class, the first question should be what environmental practices are to various social classes. Current research arguably misrecognizes environmental practices by overlooking that they are classed on a primary level. The concept of misrecognition denotes that (i) one's understanding of and engagement in environmental practice is not natural but acquired and (ii) environmental worth is not inherently associated with people and practices, but based on a struggle for recognition. In this endeavor, we should avoid an exclusive focus on sets of "research-defined pro-environmental behavior" (Ford & Norgaard, 2020, p. 47). Otherwise, environmental professionals (including researchers) tend to overlook alternative environmental practices (Norgaard, 2012). Theoretically, this means centralizing social class and conceptualizing environmental practices as relational. Overall, research on environmentally significant behavior has lacked serious engagement with social class, although a literature is developing around social class and ethical consumption (Anantharaman, 2016; Carfagna et al., 2014). In addition, more attention should be paid to the intersection between material and classed scripts. There has been research on the gendered nature of material script, but - to my knowledge - far less on the class-based nature of material script. Questions, for example, arise how social class is inscribed in materialities such as solar panels and electric cars, and whether this can account for social class differences. Methodologically, this also entails special attention to include vulnerable populations in research efforts. While this dissertation has focused on social class, further research may emphasize gender, race, and associated intersectionalities.

Summary

This dissertation aims to disentangle the relationship between social class and environmental practices. A positive relationship is assumed, suggesting that environmental practices are most common in middle and upper classes. Despite mixed evidence, research has treated environmental practices as luxury goods that depend on access to economic and cultural resources. Allegedly, these are needed to be able to care for the environment or to align this care with behavior. Yet, there is ample evidence that one's ecological footprint consistently increases with economic capital. This paradox shows that the relationship between social class and environmental practices remains poorly understood. I draw inspiration from two analytical lenses. First, I employ practice theory as a clarifying step back to focus on what people do, rather than why they do it. Second, in line with Bourdieusian theory, I (re)conceptualize environmental practices as cultural traits that are structured by social class. In turn, these cultural traits play a role in processes of social differentiation because of their symbolic properties. Methodically, quantitative and qualitative data were combined into a mixed method approach. Initially, quantitative research was used to assess how social class relates to environmental practices. Afterwards, qualitative research was utilized to examine the relationship between social class and environmental practices in more depth.

First, results contradict the positive association between social class and environmental practices, which was only accurate for sustainable shopping practices. A negative association was found for energy curtailment and sustainable transport. At the same time, however, environmentally oriented practices were most common among highly educated groups. Second, findings paradoxically underscore the role of environmental practices in processes of social differentiation. Attaching an (upper) middle-classness to environmental practices was possible by employing a narrow interpretation of environmental practices, namely ecologically oriented and high-cost practices. In sum, even though I challenge the idea of environmental practices as luxury goods, the cultural representation of environmental practices as luxury goods can be utilized to maintain social class boundaries. Hence, this dissertation underlines the need to reevaluate our perceptions of environmental practices and social class dynamics, to acknowledge cultural power relations, and to make visible the legitimate views and practices of less privileged groups.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift probeert de relatie tussen sociale klasse en milieupraktijken te ontrafelen. Vaak wordt een positieve relatie verondersteld, waarbij milieupraktijken het meest voorkomen in midden en hogere klassen. Onderzoek behandelt milieupraktijken als luxegoederen die afhankelijk zijn van toegang tot economische en culturele middelen. Deze zouden nodig zijn om zich zorgen te kunnen maken om het milieu of om deze zorgen om te zetten in gedrag. Toch is er bewijs dat iemands ecologische voetafdruk consistent toeneemt met economisch kapitaal. Deze paradox toont aan dat de relatie tussen sociale klasse en milieupraktijken nog steeds slecht begrepen wordt. Ik haal mijn inspiratie voor dit onderzoek uit twee analytische lenzen. Ten eerste gebruik ik de praktijktheorie als een verduidelijkende stap terug om te focussen op wat mensen doen, in plaats van waarom ze het doen. Ten tweede, in lijn met de Bourdieusiaanse theorie, (her)conceptualiseer ik milieupraktijken als culturele kenmerken die gestructureerd zijn door sociale klasse. Op hun beurt spelen deze culturele eigenschappen een rol in processen van sociale differentiatie vanwege hun symbolische eigenschappen. Methodologisch werden kwantitatieve en kwalitatieve methoden gecombineerd. Eerst werd kwantitatief onderzoek gebruikt om na te gaan hoe sociale klasse zich verhoudt tot milieupraktijken. Daarna werd kwalitatief onderzoek gebruikt om de relatie tussen sociale klasse en milieupraktijken diepgaander te onderzoeken.

Ten eerste spreken de resultaten de positieve associatie tussen sociale klasse en milieupraktijken tegen. Dit was enkel het geval voor duurzame winkelpraktijken. Er werden negatieve verbanden gevonden voor energiebesparing en duurzaam transport. Ten tweede benadrukken de bevindingen paradoxaal de rol van milieupraktijken in processen van sociale differentiatie. De culturele representatie van een positieve associatie tussen sociale klasse en milieupraktijken wordt mogelijk gemaakt door een enge invulling van milieupraktijken, namelijk ecologisch georiënteerde en dure praktijken. Kortom, hoewel ik het idee van milieupraktijken als luxegoederen betwist, kan de culturele representatie van milieupraktijken als luxegoederen worden gebruikt om sociale klassengrenzen in stand te houden. Daarom benadrukt dit proefschrift de nood om onze percepties over milieupraktijken en sociale klasse te herzien, om culturele machtsverhoudingen te erkennen, en om de legitieme standpunten en praktijken van minder bevoorrechte groepen zichtbaar te maken.

Author contributions

Chapter 2: Early-life socialization in environmental concern? On social class and the everyday concerns of adolescents

Robbe Geerts: Data analysis, drafting and revising the manuscript

Bert Morrens: Preparing research, data collection, drafting and revising the rapport on which the manuscript is based.

Dries Coertjens: Preparing research, data collection, drafting and revising the rapport on which the manuscript is based.

Frédéric Vandermoere: Feedback outline, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript and original rapport.

Ilse Loots: Preparing research, data collection, critical revision of the original rapport.

Chapter 3: Exploring class-based inconsistencies between environmental concern and practice. Do we need economic and cultural resources to bridge the gap?

Robbe Geerts: Preparing research, data analysis, drafting and revising of the manuscript.

Frédéric Vandermoere: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Stijn Oosterlynck: Preparing research, feedback outline, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 4: On embodiment and the ecological habitus. An empirical exploration of social class dynamics in (un)sustainable consumption practices

Robbe Geerts: Preparing research, data collection, data analysis, drafting and revising of the manuscript.

Frédéric Vandermoere: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Stijn Oosterlynck: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 5: A multilevel perspective on green consumption in European countries. Does income inequality lead to environmental distinction?

Robbe Geerts: Preparing research, data analysis, drafting and revising of the manuscript.

Frédéric Vandermoere: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Stijn Oosterlynck: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 6: Culture and green tastes. A sociological analysis of the relationship between cultural engagement and environmental practices

Robbe Geerts: Preparing research, data analysis, drafting and revising of the manuscript.

Frédéric Vandermoere: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Stijn Oosterlynck: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 7: "If you've got no money, you don't care about sustainability. Cause why would you?" Exploring symbolic boundaries in environmental concerns and practices

Robbe Geerts: Preparing research, data collection, data analysis, drafting and revising of the manuscript.

Frédéric Vandermoere: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Stijn Oosterlynck: Preparing research, contributions to theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

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