

# Forms of culture (Culture Coverage)

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**KEYWORDS**

*cultural coverage, cultural form, cultural discipline*

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**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE VARIABLE**

This variable describes what kind of concept of culture underlies the cultural coverage at a certain point of time or across time. The variable dissects the concept of culture into cultural forms that are being journalistically covered. It presupposes that each article predominantly focuses on one cultural genre or discipline, such as literature, music, or film, which is the case in most articles in the cultural beat that are written according to cultural journalists' areas of specialization. By identifying the cultural forms covered, the variable delivers an answer to the question of what kind of culture has been covered, or what kind of culture has been represented. Forms of culture are sometimes also called artistic or cultural disciplines (Jaakkola, 2015) or cultural genres (Purhonen et al., 2019), and cultural classification (Janssen et al., 2011) or cultural hierarchy (Schmutz, 2009). The level of detail varies from study to study, according to the need of knowledge, with some scholars tracing forms of subculture (Schmutz et al., 2010), while others just identify the overall development of major cultural forms (Purhonen et al., 2019; Jaakkola, 2015a).

The concepts of culture can roughly be defined as being dominated by high cultural, popular cultural, or everyday cultural forms (Kristensen, 2019). While most culture sections in newspapers are dominated by high culture, and the question is rather about which disciplines, in the operationalization it is not always easy to draw li-

nes between high and popular forms in the post-modern cultural landscape where boundaries are being blurred. Nevertheless, the major forms of culture in the journalistic operationalization of culture are literature, classical music, theatre, and fine arts. As certain forms of culture – such as classical music and opera – are focused on classical high culture, and other forms – such as popular music and comics – represent popular forms, distribution of coverage according to cultural forms may indicate changes in the cultural concept.

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**FIELD OF APPLICATION/THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

The question of the concept of culture is a standard question in content analyses on arts and cultural journalism in daily newspapers and cultural magazines, posed by a number of studies conducted in different geographical areas and often with a comparative intent (e.g., Szántó et al., 2004; Janssen, 1999; Reus & Harden, 2005; Janssen et al., 2008; Larsen, 2008; Könno et al., 2012; Jaakkola, 2015a, 2015b; Verboord & Janssen, 2015; Purhonen et al., 2019; Widholm et al., 2019). The essence of culture has been theorized in cultural studies, predominantly by Raymond Williams (e.g., 2011), and sociologists of art (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). In studying journalistic coverage of arts and culture, the concept of culture reveals the anatomy of coverage and whether the content is targeting a broader audience (inclusive concept of culture) or a narrow audience (exclusive or elitist concept of culture). A prevalent motivation to study the ontological dimension of cultural coverage is also to trace cultural change, which means that the concept of culture is longitudinally studied (Purhonen et al., 2019).



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**REFERENCES/COMBINATION WITH OTHER METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION**

Concept of culture often occurs as a variable to trace cultural change. The variable is typically coupled with other variables, mainly with representational means, i.e., the journalistic genre (Jaakkola, 2015), event type (Stegert, 1998), or author gender (Schmutz, 2009; Jaakkola, 2015b). Quantitative content analyses may also be complemented with qualitative analyses (Purhonen et al., 2019).

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**SAMPLE OPERATIONALIZATION**

Cultural forms are separated according to the production structure (journalists and reviewers specializing in one cultural form typically indicate an increase of coverage for that cultural form). At a general level, the concept of culture can be divided into the following cultural forms: literature, music – which is, according to the newsroom specialization typically roughly categorized into classical and popular music – visual arts, theatre, dance, film, design, architecture and built environment, media, comics, cultural politics, cultural history, arts education, and other. Subcategories can be separated according to

the interest and level of knowledge. The variable needs to be sensitive towards local features in journalism and culture.

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**EXAMPLE STUDY**

Jaakkola (2015b)

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**INFORMATION ABOUT JAAKKOLA, 2015**

**Author:** Maarit Jaakkola

**Research question/research interest:** Examination of the cultural concept across time in culture sections of daily newspapers

**Object of analysis:** Articles/text items on culture pages of five major daily newspapers in Finland 1978–2008 (Aamulehti, Helsingin Sanomat, Kaleva, Savon Sanomat, Turun Sanomat)

**Timeframe of analysis:** 1978–2008, consecutive sample of weeks 7 and 42 in five year intervals (1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008)

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**INFO ABOUT VARIABLE**

**Variable name/definition:** Concept of culture

**Unit of analysis:** Article/text item

**Values:** see Table 1

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**Table 1.** *Values.*

Cultural form	Description
1. Fiction literature	Fiction books: fictional genres such as poetry, literary novels, thrillers, detective novels, chil-
2. Non-fiction literature	Non-fiction books: non-fictional genres such as textbooks, memoirs, encyclopedias, etc.
3. Classical music	Music of more high-cultural character, such as symphonic music, chamber music, opera, etc.
4. Popular music	Music of more popular character, such as pop, rock, hip-hop, folk music, etc.
5. Visual arts	Fine arts: painting, drawing, graphical art, sculpture, media art, photography, etc.
6. Theatre	Scene art, including musicals (if not treated as music, i.e. in coverage of concerts and albums)

Cultural form	Description
7. Dance	Scene art, including ballet (if not treated as music, .e. in coverage of concerts and albums)
8. Film	Cinema: fiction, documentary, experimental film, etc.
9. Design	Design of artefacts, jewelry, fashion, interiors, graphics, etc.
10. Architecture	Design, aesthetics, and planning of built environment
11. Media	Television, journalism, Internet, games, etc.
12. Comics	Illustrated periodicals
13. Culutral politics	Policies, politics, and administration concerning arts and culture in general
14. Cultural history	Historical issues and phenomena
15. Education	Educational issues concerning different cultural disciplines
16. Other	Miscellaneous minor categories, e.g., lifestyle issues (celebrity, gossip, everyday cultural issues), and larger categories developed from within the material can be separated into values of their own

**Scale:** nominal

**Intercoder reliability:** Cohen's kappa > 0.76 (two coders)

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