



Parental cultural socialization and educational attainment. Trend effects of traditional cultural capital and media involvement



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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes long-term developments in parental cultural socialization effects for children's educational attainment. Retrospective information of 3,106 respondents from the Family Survey of the Dutch population are used to address questions on trends in the impact of traditional measures of parental cultural capital and the impact of parental media involvement activities. Foremost, our study highlights that the relevance of traditional parental cultural capital for children's educational success in the Netherlands diminishes over time, while parental media involvement activities became more important. Over the past decades, especially parental reading instruction and parents' setting television restriction rules became increasingly more meaningful for children's educational performance.

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1. Introduction

Recent investigations on parental cultural socialization and children's school success emphasize that traditional measures of cultural capital, being parental highbrow cultural visits, are at least only part of the story. Various studies signify that next to customary or traditional indicators of cultural capital, aspects of parental media involvement may be relevant in preparing children for the higher levels of education (Bodovski & Farkas, 2008; Chiu & Chow, 2010; Jaeger, 2011; Kloosterman, Notten, Tolsma, & Kraaykamp, 2011; Notten & Kraaykamp, 2010; Park, 2008; Tramonte & Willms, 2010; Evans, Kelly, & Sikora, 2014). Following reproduction theory, arguments on the importance of cultural capital in education are traditionally formulated in terms of a cultural clash; a normative (mis)match between a child and the school (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982; De Graaf, De Graaf, & Kraaykamp, 2000). Likewise, in the U.S. Lareau (2003) points at class-specific child rearing strategies in terms of "concerted cultivation", with its consequences for children's school achievement. From both theoretical notions it follows that especially enrollment of children from low status backgrounds in higher levels of education would be limited because their upbringing is characterized by a lack of familiarity with a cultural habitus, elite dispositions and educational norms (Dumais, 2006; Wildhagen, 2009). And, when we investi-

gate inequality in children's educational attainment, both parental in-home cultural practices as in media involvement, and parental socialization activities in the domain of highbrow visits, may refer to important cultural parenting practices.

A relevant question in this respect is whether the influences of both parental traditional cultural and media socialization activities on children's educational attainment have remained important over time. More specifically it seems interesting to study whether Bourdieu's argument formulated in the 1970s on a cultural clash between school and family cultures still holds true for the most recent cohorts. Two points of view may be discerned here. At first, several scholars point at growing openness in Western societies (Breen, 2004; Shavit & Blossfeld, 1993). Because of this openness it is proclaimed that in modern societies traditional cultural behaviors and tastes are ever less associated with social status aspects and social background (Notten, Lancee, Van de Werfhorst, & Ganzeboom, 2015; Pakulski & Waters 1996; Van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2013). Possible causes for a declining social basis of traditional cultural tastes are found in a popularization of highbrow cultural supply, social mobility, growing consumerism and alternative cultural activities (Beck 1992; Prieur & Savage, 2013). From this reasoning it may be expected that in recent decades, indicators of traditional cultural capital have become less prominent in processes stimulating children's educational attainment.

According to a second viewpoint, it is clear that empirical studies do not point at the end of class in the cultural domain. Social background indicators still explain a substantial part of people's cultural behavior (DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2004), and parental socialization

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still seems highly influential when looking at a person's cultural preferences (Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2010; Yaish & Katz-Gerro, 2012). Moreover, theoretically Bourdieu (1984) points at parents' investing in cultural capital as a possible compensating strategy for decreased opportunities of more direct ways of intergenerational transmission of inequality. Hence, over time alternative parental cultural socialization activities, like media involvement, may have become more relevant in stimulating children's educational attainment. This especially may be true because reading instruction activities and setting television rules are strongly associated with the nurturing of competence in children (Farkas, 2003; Jaeger, 2011; Notten & Kraaykamp, 2010; Valkenburg et al., 1999), and media use and exposure play a dominant role in our current knowledge-based societies (Lizardo, 2008; Van Eijck & Bargeman 2004). This leads us to question whether the importance of parental media involvement activities, as in reading stimulation and television guidance, for children's educational performance has increased over time. Taken these arguments into consideration, our research question reads: *To what extent do influences of parental media involvement activities and traditional cultural socialization activities on children's educational attainment decline or increase over time?*

With this research we intend to broaden the scope of cultural capital research. We acknowledge that both traditional cultural capital and media involvement activities in the parental home simultaneously may be influential for a child's educational attainment. Most importantly, we investigate if and how the relation between various parental cultural socialization activities and children's educational attainment has changed over time. To do so, we employ unique information on 3.106 respondents from the Family Survey Dutch Population that holds retrospective information on parental socialization activities during a child's upbringing. Although we are aware of the downsides of using recall data, such retrospective information makes it possible to investigate long-term consequences of parental cultural socialization activities looking at 'adult' children of birth cohorts born between 1950 and 1987 (4 decades) in the Netherlands.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Cultural socialization and educational attainment

Ever since the influential work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) numerous studies have pointed at the relevance of parental cultural capital for children's educational career (Becker, 2009; De Graaf et al., 2000; DiMaggio, 1982; Jaeger, 2011; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). From their theoretical frameworks it may be reasoned that parents transfer cultural skills, norms, tastes and competencies to their children via various daily socialization practices. According to Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory especially parents from the higher social strata would transmit beneficial cultural resources from their generation to the following (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

Although the idea of cultural reproduction is extensively investigated in educational research, scholars are ambiguous about the correct classification of valuable parental cultural activities (Kingston, 2001; Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2010; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Sullivan, 2002; Van de Werfhorst, 2010). Earlier studies often have defined parental cultural capital as being associated to outdoor highbrow cultural visits, such as going to a museum, theatre play or ballet. Accordingly, in parental homes where highbrow cultural visits are common practice children are frequently socialized with elitist (school-related) norms. Next, parental cultural highbrow activities may also foster cognitive qualities in children related to school curricula in language, history and philosophy. In museums, theaters and concert halls prestigious and canonized

expressions of a country's cultural heritage are highlighted. Since features of the cultural canon are discussed and tested at the higher levels of (secondary) education, a highbrow parental socialization may also be cognitively beneficial to children. So, the theoretical reasoning behind the importance of parents' participation in highbrow activities for children's education primarily refers to a cultural clash or cultural match; for some children the home environment simply does not match with the norms and requirements of higher education, whereas for other children school parallels parents' competencies and preferences for elite cultural activities.

Solely focusing on the above-mentioned traditional representation of cultural capital, however, largely ignores the notion that parental reading activities and television behaviors may be relevant in cultural reproduction processes as well (Crook, 1997; Elchardus & Siongers, 2003; Georg, 2004; Jaeger, 2011; Notten & Kraaykamp, 2010; Sullivan, 2001). Nowadays media activities have become an integral part of everyday family life, and subsequently subject to a variety of parent-child interactions. Moreover, due to its in-home character, media behavior is observable and highly time-consuming. Parental media involvement as another representation of parental cultural socialization thus is likely to be important for a child's educational career, perhaps even more so, than the less frequent and less visible parental highbrow cultural outings.

From this line of reasoning it follows that parents who allocate a substantial amount of free time into the reading of books themselves and stimulate reading with their children provide a relevant example (Kraaykamp, 2003; Notten & Kraaykamp, 2010; Park, 2008; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002). Since reading is valuable in the development of cognitive competency, and its status matches school culture particularly well, parental reading involvement likely will foster the educational career of children. Research on reading socialization indeed indicates that in-home encouragement of children's literacy positively affects children's educational success (Bus, Ijzendoorn & Pelligrini, 1995; Becker, 2009; Chiu & Chow, 2010; De Graaf et al., 2000; Georg, 2004; Jaeger, 2011; Kloosterman et al., 2011).

Frequent television watching is generally not observed as a socially rewarding or high-status activity. Television viewing often is -justifiable or unjustifiable- associated with entertainment, low cognitive stimulation, reduced concentration and non-creativity. Moreover, television time habitually is perceived as time that alternatively could be spent on cognitive (school-related) activities (Verboord & Van Rees, 2003; Hancox, Barry, Milne, & Poulton, 2005; Sharif & Sargent, 2006). Therefore, offspring of television affectionate parents probably will be less acquainted with developmental norms on cognitive stimulation, and thus are less prepared for higher education (Gentile & Walsh, 2002; Sullivan, 2001; Vandewater et al., 2005; Zimmerman & Christakis, 2005). Studies on television consumption indeed show that frequent (parental) television exposure is disadvantageous to children's academic performance (Elchardus & Siongers, 2003; Hancox et al., 2005; Notten & Kraaykamp 2010; Zimmerman & Christakis, 2005).

2.2. Trend effects of traditional cultural capital on educational attainment

From the theoretical outline above it could be concluded that associations of parental cultural socialization practices with children's educational attainment are stable over time. Yet, this is highly unlikely and therefore this study investigates whether the influences of different aspects of parental cultural socialization on children's educational performance have changed over time.

A first issue is whether traditional indicators of parental cultural capital have kept their manifest role in explaining educational inequality over time. Modernization theory implies that in Western societies educational inequality has decreased over time, pointing

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