

Parents and the media

A study of social differentiation in parental media socialization

Natascha Notten^{*}, Gerbert Kraaykamp¹

Department of Sociology, Radboud University Nijmegen, P.O. Box 9104, 6500 HE Nijmegen, The Netherlands

Available online 11 April 2009

Abstract

In this study we analysed the effects of parental social background and family composition on various types of parental media socialization. We employed the Family Survey Dutch Population 1998, 2000 and 2003 ($N = 2608$), and analysed respondents' reports of socialization practices in their parental home. Respondents from high-status families report more extensive parental media socialization in all highbrow and guidance activities. In contrast, a parental example of popular television viewing is reported less often by children from the higher social strata. Family composition also affects parental media socialization practices. Parental media guidance takes place less frequently in families that have experienced a divorce and in larger families. Finally, parental highbrow media consumption evidently causes more parental media guidance, therefore interpreting a substantial part of the effects of parental social background.

© 2009 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

A large body of theoretical and empirical research in the social sciences demonstrates the dominance of conditions within the parental home in predicting the well-being and success of children (Bennet et al., 2002; Bianchi and Robinson, 1997; Coleman, 1988; De Graaf et al., 2000a). Parents furnish their children with skills, competencies and resources, but this parental socialization differs both in quality and in quantity among social groups. As a result, children tend to be unequally endowed with beneficial competencies. This study focuses on parental in-home media socialization activities that may be beneficial or disadvantageous in children's

^{*} Corresponding author. Tel.: +31 24 3612037; fax: +31 24 3612399.

E-mail addresses: n.notten@maw.ru.nl (N. Notten), G.Kraaykamp@maw.ru.nl (G. Kraaykamp).

URL: <http://www.nnotten.nl>, <http://gerbertkraaykamp.ruhosting.nl/>

¹ Tel.: +31 24 3612014; fax: +31 24 3612399.

upbringing. Parents may nurture their children with prestigious or cognitively stimulating reading and television viewing, but they might also transmit less socially valued or non-stimulating media habits to their offspring (Austin, 2001; Bus et al., 1995; Kraaykamp, 2003; McLeod and Brown, 1976; Nathanson, 1999; Verboord and Van Rees, 2003).

We study social differentiation in experienced parental media socialization, and expect social background and family composition to be relevant explanatory factors. Research has shown that families with high socioeconomic status have more cultural, social and cognitive resources to help their children “conquer the world” than low-status families. Consequently, parents from privileged social backgrounds are more successful in equipping their children with beneficial resources (Bourdieu, 1984; De Graaf et al., 2000a; Lareau, 2003). Another factor influencing parental socialization activities is a family’s composition. The intensity and quality of parent–child interaction has been found to be affected by factors like a parental divorce and the mother’s employment status (Coleman, 1988; Sandefur et al., 1992). Consequently, our first research question reads: *How do parents from (a) various social backgrounds and (b) various family compositions differ in their media socialization activities?*

Among media socialization practices, we distinguish parental media consumption (parental media example) from parental media instruction and guidance, and we assume a causal relation between the two. We consider it likely that parents’ own media consumption will affect the efforts they undertake in guiding and coaching their offspring’s media behaviour. Thus, our second research question is stated as follows: *To what extent does parental media consumption explain differences in parental guidance activities?*

The current study is innovative for a number of reasons. First, it makes theoretical and empirical contributions to research on the reproduction of cultural resources. Here we study primarily the media aspects of cultural socialization rather than the elitist cultural outings that are traditionally investigated in cultural reproduction research, and we take both parental social background and family composition into account. Second, our research explicitly acknowledges parents’ roles as both intentional and unintentional educators when it comes to reading and television-viewing habits. We therefore study the parental example and parental guidance activities separately. Third, we study the actual socialization achieved by respondents making use of retrospective measurements. Most media studies focus on the current situation when children are still living in the parental home. This may, however, lead to an overvaluation of the situation at the time of the interview. Our data contain respondents’ reports of completed parental media socialization; respondents no longer lived in the parental home. Fourth and finally, we use three waves of the Family Survey Dutch Population (De Graaf et al., 1998, 2000b, 2003), employing information on 2608 adult Dutch respondents who reported their socialization experiences. This should produce conclusions on parental media socialization concerning people from birth cohorts ranging from 1955 to 1985.

2. Theory and expectations

2.1. Parents and media socialization

Previous research has shown that parents contribute to a child’s development in at least two major domains (Snow et al., 1991). First, parents’ provision of a safe environment is a precondition for successful development. Second, and more importantly for our study, parents fulfil the role of educators, undertaking various socializing activities to guide their children’s behaviour. Furthermore, we believe it is relevant to acknowledge that parents may carry out their

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1128632>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1128632>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)