

The development of literary reading of boys and girls: A panel study into the influence of parents and education on the reading level.

31 January 2014

Version prepared for ISOL meeting of 5 February 2014, please do not cite.

Marc Verboord, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam (verboord@eshcc.eur.nl)

Ineke Nagel, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (f.a.nagel@vu.nl)

Kernwoorden

Cultural participation, Reading level, Cultural socialization, Cultural Reproduction versus Cultural Mobility, Panel research

Introduction

Reading literary books is one of the most prestigious cultural activities in our society. An indication of this status is the fact that literature is the only art form which for decades has been a compulsory part of the secondary school curriculum (Verboord, 2005). Often, literary reading is also seen as an important aspect of cultural capital, which increases educational attainment and, subsequently, life chances (e.g. De Graaf, De Graaf & Kraaykamp, 2000). This article studies how literary reading develops in the period when adolescents are in secondary education and just after. The question whether secondary education is actually able to positively affect the type of books students read later in life remains somewhat contested. Participation into cultural activities is to a large extent determined by the parents (Bourdieu, 1979; Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999; Nagel, 2010) and it is not always clear what school adds to this primary socialization. Arguably, Bourdieu's work on the cultural reproduction of cultural capital has been hugely influential (and often empirically corroborated): since the school curriculum is more accessible to students from culturally active milieus due to the cultural capital they received at home, it just reproduces existing inequalities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1979). Often, indeed, cultural taste patterns of the parents exert the strongest influence on the lifestyles of people later in life (Nagel & Ganzeboom, 2002; Nagel, 2010).