CULTURAL AUDIENCE FORMATION IN THE NETHERLANDS BETWEEN 1962 AND 1983

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In this paper I attempt to answer two research problems. The first is: How are cultural audiences in the Netherlands socially composed and how has this composition changed over time? The second asks how historical changes, if any, in audience composition are to be explained.

The background of these problems is both political and theoretical. Politically the question of changes in social composition of cultural audiences is of importance, because the Netherlands government (as no doubt other governments have done) has strived to broaden the reach of its cultural subsidies; this "cultural diffusion policy", in its turn, has served as a justification for enlarging subsidies. The cultural diffusion policy has had a twofold content.

First, its intention is geographical. As in other countries, cultural accommodations in the Netherlands tend to be concentrated in the larger cities and in the core part of the country; the west part in general and Amsterdam in particular. Policies to invert this pattern have been very explicit and have consumed large amounts of subsidies. The main objective has been the establishment of cultural accommodations outside the traditional centres of culture. For example public libraries of good quality are nowadays to be found in even the smallest villages. Accommodations for concert and theater can be found in small towns and are practically within reach of every part of the country. Subsidies for evening transports are furnished by local administrations. Another component of the geographical cultural diffusion policy has been the obligation for theater companies and symphony orchestras to tour outside the traditional centres of culture or even to establish themselves in one of the larger province towns.

The second intention of the cultural diffusion policy is social. Given the large overrepresentation of high status groups in cultural audiences, the government has set itself the task of bringing lower status groups within its cultural reach. Although this aim has been explicitly formulated for decades, the policy implications have been less clear than for the geographical component of cultural diffusion. On a very general level, the main policy means have been to lower prices in order to keep culture consumption free of substantial cost, even for lower income groups. Specific price subsidies have been given to some particular low-income groups, such as senior citizens and students, but more often than not price subsidies have not been income-dependent. Other means to obtain socially more evenly composed cultural audiences include advertisement, special youth programs and cultural education programs.

The relevance of comparing cultural audience composition over time is not only to be found in its political background; it is interesting for social theory as well. Cultural consumption appears to be one of the most unevenly distributed goods among social groups. The study of it therefore lends itself specifically to gather some insight in the

determinants of distributive processes within modern societies. Whether government policies to diffuse cultural consumption has been a success, can for example, be predictive for the prospects of spreading similar and maybe more important goods such as educational and occupational chances and knowledge in general.

The Explanation of Differential Cultural Consumption

Before dealing with the issue of whether and how cultural consumption has diffused over social groups, I will propose some prior hypotheses on the distribution of culture consumption over persons in Dutch society. My contention is that the level of culture consumption can be predicted from five types of determinants:

a. The supply of culture within fair distance of a person.
b. The financial cost of participation in relation to a person's money budget.
c. The time costs of participation in relation to a person's time budget.
d. The complexity of the cultural information to be processed in relation to a person's information processing abilities.
e. The status thresholds of culture consumption in relation to a person's status conformity.

A first condition to be fulfilled in order to become a culture consumer is a supply factor. The presence of possibilities for cultural consumption could, in principle, be measured directly and assigned to a person as a variable. However, it is clear that this type of supply differentiation is largely a function of a person's spatial location and can therefore be represented confidently by geographical variables.

The second and third determinants of cultural consumption will be dealt with together as they show some specific interaction. A simple hypothesis is that culture has both financial and time costs. If one wants to predict a person's consumption level, one has to deal with both financial and time prices (Becker, 1976; Linder, 1969) and with the corresponding budgets. One of my contentions is that money prices in themselves are of little importance to the distribution of culture because prices are fairly low and in some cases nil. Incomes have become larger and more evenly distributed over time. This leads to the expectation that money budgets will not be a very good predictor of cultural consumption and, if anything, have become less important over time.

Things become more complicated when time prices and time budgets are taken into account. The time necessary to consume cultural goods has not declined, at least not in cases like cinema, theater and concerts, that are organized in much the same way as they were 30 years ago. These goods have to be consumed at given moments (usually in the evening) and at a given place. Time budgets have changed in a fairly complicated manner. For analytical purposes, I think it feasible to distinguish two parts in time budgets: (a). The time given to work, including household labor. (b). The time for consumption.

It is very hard to predict whether the time for labor has declined or grown. On the one hand, the declining labor force participation by the young and the old, the diminishment of a week's work duration, the growth of part-time work, unemployment, the declining number of children and the time saving effects of household automation (e.g. laundry machines, cars) has to be taken into account. On the other hand, one has to deal with the growing rate of female labor participation and the attraction of overtime work. It is much easier to predict the trend in time for consumption. Since disposable income has grown considerably in all social groups and has become much more evenly distributed over time, it can be expected that consumption, in particular in low income groups, has grown. At the same time, some prices of behavioral alternatives for cultural consumption have declined considerably. The most important instances are prices for media consumption and for short-term and long-term holidays. There is no doubt that the consumption of these goods consumes in its turn a major part of the time budget and thereby restricts the time available for culture consumption.

Although there is no logical conclusion from these conflicting tendencies without a quantified model, I hold the opinion that time consuming tendencies have largely outweighed the time saving tendencies, in particular in low income groups. This leads to the expectation that time budgets have a greater importance for cultural consumption than money budgets and that this importance has grown over time. Since disposable income is the main determinant of level of consumption, it will have a negative effect on the time spent on culture.

These predictions can be conditioned for different cultural alternatives. In general, behavioral alternatives that are fixed in time, either in duration and/or in moment (such as cinema, concert and theater going), will suffer more from growing time restrictions than more freely attainable alternatives (reading, museum visits).

The level of cultural consumption will not be the same for everyone with equal time-money budgets; preferences differ. A main predictor is a person's abilities to produce pleasure from cultural consumption. Culture can be viewed upon as the supply of complex information and persons differ in their ability to process this information and produce pleasure from it. The determination of these abilities is multiple, as I have shown in earlier research. (Ganzeboom, 1982, 1984) Its main determinants are training in early socialization, cultural activity itself and, by far most important, formal education. It can be shown that cultural abilities, as measured by indicators like knowledge tests and self-administered judging tests, are very unevenly distributed among social, and in particular educational, groups. They act as the intervening variables between social background and cultural consumption. Empirical research (Ganzeboom, 1982) shows this determinant to be of far more importance than any other, including supply, time and money budgets.

Historically, one is tempted to assume that the overall level of cultural ability has grown. This is due to the fast growth of the educational level of the population. I expect that the growth of media consumption will also have contributed to average growth of cultural competence. However, it should be noted, that one cannot conclude that

cultural abilities have been more evenly distributed among the population. On the contrary, it can be assumed that the educational system has grown in its capacity to select competent individuals and that therefore the distribution of abilities has become more unequal over time. In particular in the Netherlands' situation, where the general growth of the level of schooling has tended to promote the inequality of educational attainment, it can be hypothesized that the distribution of cultural abilities has become more unequal over time.

The fifth and last determinant of cultural consumption is a purely social component and has been associated with higher status groups. Apart from effects of income, time, and information processing capacities, a status conformity component can be called upon to explain this distribution. On the one hand, cultural activity is a kind of behavior to be expected in high status groups. The activity itself functions as a means of displaying social status and to meeting like minded persons. On the other hand, lower status groups will feel excluded from this type of behavior.

The hypothesis on the effects of status conformity and status thresholds is a perennial one in theories of cultural consumption. (Zetterbert, 1962; Bourdieu, 1979) Nevertheless, it is hard to find conclusive evidence for the hypothesis. From the point of traditional sociological theory, the hypothesis leads to the prediction that social prestige is the main determinant of cultural consumption, and this prediction has very often been rebutted in empirical analysis. Once ability indicators, such as education, are introduced as controls, the association between cultural consumption and social prestige has a persistent tendency to disappear in multivariate models. (Ganzeboom, 1982) One could argue that when more direct indicators of status motivation are used, such as behavioral norms, networks, behavioral models and feelings of exclusion, the effect of status conformity is more clear. In other research I have been able to include some of these components, (Ganzeboom, 1985) but their importance is only second to that of the information component and of about the same size as the time budget component.

It is interesting to ask whether the effect of status motivation has declined over time. At this point the historical trend appears to be unequivocal. Both status thresholds (in the presentation of culture) and status motivations have declined over the last decades. Therefore, from this factor in itself, one would expect a declining importance of social status for cultural consumption.

To sum up, cultural consumption is assumed to be a function of the following determinants, in order of assumed importance: abilities, status motivation, time budgets, supply and financial budgets. The importance of these determinants will fluctuate over consumable alternatives, according to the level of complexity, status thresholds, time price, geographical distribution and financial price. Over time one expects a declining importance of status, supply and financial factors, a constant importance of abilities and a growing importance of time restrictions.

Data and Methods

The data come from three leisure surveys in the Netherlands, held in 1962 (CBS), 1974 and 1983 (both LSO). We have restricted the analysis to the groups aged 18-64; total N's equal N62=759, N74=956 and N83=651. All surveys represent a random, nationwide sample. The data have been collected by the Central Statistical Office CBS (in 1962) and by the Social and Cultural Planning Office (1974, 1983) and are important and often used data-sources about the level of living in the Netherlands. There exist some considerable differences between the CBS62 survey and the other two, that prevent strict comparability. The comparability of the LSO74 and LSO83 files is excellent.

In this paper I will strive to obtain a comparability as high as possible between the three surveys; that is to use identical variables and if possible the same recodings. Table 1 gives an overview of the variables used in the analysis and some figures on their distribution.

Some of the variables need some further comment. This does not regard age and education, that are measured according to standard procedures. The description of urbanization in Table 1 is also self-explanatory. The six occupational status categories, that serve as an indicator of social status in general, are ordered along their presumed cultural interest: farmers, manual labor, self employed, lower and higher non-manual employees and lastly the higher occupations.

Since we have no information on direct time budgets in these data-sets, these budgets are represented by an inferred variable and by the main component of time consumption, television watching. The inferred variable time budget consists of a count of elements that promote the available time for a person. It summarizes the influence:

- being without partner;
- having no children;
- having younger children in contrast to having older children;
- being employed gainfully.

In data-sets where we have direct measurements of available leisure time a variable inferred this way proves to be a good predictor of available leisure time. However, it should be clear that this variable presents in particular (the absence of) constraints on the time budget by primary activities, and does not measure the amount of time taken by consumption of goods and media. The latter aspect of the time budget is measured through a question on the amount of time spent on TV-watching.

Money budgets are inferred from information on total net household income and the number of persons dependent on this income. Children in the household were regarded only as consuming half the budget adults take. No attempt has been made to correct for inflation, but the variables will be used in a logged form and therefore be measured in relative terms.

The dependent variables include visits to cinema, museums, theater and concert and book reading. These variables have been measured in

Table 1

Variables in the Analysis

	1962	1974	1983
URBANIZATION			
(1) Rural Areas	17%	26%	17%
(2) Towns 5000-10000 inh.	23%	25%	31%
(3) Towns 1000-100000 inh.	28%	23%	27%
(4) Towns > 100000 inh.	21%	22%	19%
(5) Amsterdam	10%	4%	5%
mean	2.80	2.52	2.62
st.dev.	1.20	1.18	1.13
AGE			
(1) 18-24	12%	20%	20%
(2) 25-34	28%	27%	27%
(3) 35-44	25%	21%	21%
(4) 45-54	20%	19%	17%
(5) 55-64	15%	14%	16%
mean	39.3	37.5	37.9
st.dev.	12.3	13.2	13.3
EDUCATION			
(1) only primary	42%	24%	19%
(2) lower occupational	18%	27%	19%
(3) lower secondary/middle occupational	22%	34%	46%
(4) higher secondary	15%	6%	6%
(5) higher occupational	2%	6%	8%
(6) university	2%	1%	4%
mean	2.20	2.48	2.75
st.dev.	1.30	1.16	1.13
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS			
(1) farmers	7%	5%	7%
(2) manual workers	38%	37%	33%
(3) self-employed	12%	4%	6%
(4) lower employees	22%	21%	22%
(5) middle employees	11%	18%	15%
(6) higher occupation	10%	13%	16%
mean	3.20	3.50	3.51
st.dev.	1.50	1.56	1.63

	1962	1974	1983
HOUSEHOLD INCOME PER CAPITA			
mean	2989	5275	14064
st.dev.	2159	3937	7968
missing	17%	14%	22%
TIME BUDGET DETERMINANTS			
having children 0-14 years old	56%	45%	38%
employed men	44%	45%	37%
employed women	9%	8%	15%
TIME BUDGET INFERRED (0-4)			
mean	1.71	1.80	2.08
st.dev.	1.12	1.13	1.09
TV WATCHING			
(1) Seldom/never	50%	9%	8%
(2) Regularly	21%	36%	37%
(3) Often	29%	56%	56%
mean	1.79	2.47	2.48
st.dev.	.75	.65	.64
BOOK READING	74%	75%	86%
THEATER GOING	15%	36%	35%
CINEMA VISITS	34%	43%	41%
MUSEUM VISITS	12%	33%	45%
CULTURE CONSUMPTION INDEX (0-4)			
mean	1.39	1.85	2.07
st.dev.	.97	1.24	1.15

(*) No strict comparison of variable possible between surveys for the underlined figures.1974 and the 1983 surveys.

exactly the same manner, with identical questions and answers, in the

To obtain comparability with the 1962 survey, the original three-category answers have been dichotomized. Still, there are some differences in the wording of questions and answers between the 1962 survey and the other two that prevent strict comparability, in particular of the means. The percentages in 1962 refer to participation in the last three months, and the percentages in 1974 and 1983 to participation in the last year. These percentages will be analyzed using a linear probability model for percentage differences.

The separate activities have been pooled together into an index for cultural consumption, on which the analysis will concentrate, using a regression model. My supposition is that this general index has a better comparability between years than the separate indicators. I will therefore start the analysis with the model for the general culture consumption

index and add to that the specific details of the linear probability analysis for the four separate cultural activities.

Table 1 gives the distribution of the variables in all three surveys. The distributions of urbanization and age have not changed in a conspicuous manner. The fluctuations between surveys should be attributed largely to measurement and sampling error. The education variable nicely reflects the increase of schooling that has taken place during the last decades. This increase is paralleled by an increase in occupational class, where we see in particular a growth of the higher occupations.

Although we have not corrected for inflation, it should be 'clear that the household income per capita has grown appreciably over the years. This is not only true because of the increase in the real level of wages, but also because of the increase of the number of earners and the decrease of the family size.

The decrease of the family size is also largely responsible for the growth of the available time budget. The number of families with young children (0-14 years old) has gone down from 56% (1962) to 38% (1983). This trend is not offset by the growing percentage of women active in the labor force.

Unfortunately, the variable on TV-watching cannot be compared literally between 1962 and the other two years. The first category in 1962 (50%) indicates that half the population had no television sets; by 1974 this had decreased to an insignificant amount. There is no doubt that the mean time spent on television watching grew considerably between 1962 and 1974 and then stabilized.

The set of variables on cultural activities are strictly comparable between 1974 and 1983, but not with 1962. The questions in the early survey were phrased in a somewhat different format and pointed to participation in the last three months, not in the last year. Fortunately, something can be said about the general trends by using information from the Central Statistical Office (CBS, 1985) where ticket sales are registered. They show that theater going and cinema going have declined over the last decades. The same registration shows number of museum visits have also increased, as the survey results of 1974 and 1983 have shown. It is hard to assess the amount of reading in the population, since it is composed of many items. Market sales of books and magazines have gone up during the period 1962-1983 and at the same time the use of public libraries has grown, in particular since 1974. This latter aspect of reading behavior is reflected in the increase from 75% (1974) to 86% (1983).

The cultural consumption index shows a gradual increase of cultural participation over the years. The average population was participating in 1.4 activities in 1962 and nearly 2.1 in 1983. It should be taken into account that this is in some degree a consequence of the particular measurement procedure. An important point is also that the constituting variables reflect the participation in activities proper, not the frequency of participation or amount of time spent in it.

Analysis

Table 2 gives the correlations, the unstandardized and standardized regression models for the cultural consumption index. The correlations refer to the general association between the standardized independent variables and cultural consumption and give a descriptive measure for inequality of distribution of cultural participation between social categories. The regression models estimate the direct influence of the social background variables on cultural consumption. In the standardized equation, all variables are measured on the same scales and the weight can be compared between variables. Since ranges and variances differ between variables, this is not true for the unstandardized equations, but these allow comparison on weights between years. For the unstandardized models, standard errors of the estimate coefficients are given in

Table 2

Regression model for Culture Consumption Index

	Correlation			Standardized			Unstandardized		
	62	73	83	62	73	83	62	73	83
AGE/10 (2-6)	-.18	-.21	-.14	-.14	-.16	-.10	-.11 (.03)	-.15 (.03)	.08 (.04)
URBANIZATION (1-5)	.14	.11	.11	.08	.03	.06	.07 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.06 (.05)
HOUSEHOLD INCOME P.C. (ln)	.31	.31	.18	.03	.14	.10	.01 (.02)	.32 (.08)	.18 (.09)
TIME BUDGET (0-4)	.19	.05	.03	.17	.08	.05	.15 (.04)	.09 (.04)	.05 (.04)
TV WATCHING (1-3)	-.14	-.14	-.11	-.11	-.02	-.03	-.12 (.03)	-.04 (.06)	-.07 (.08)
EDUCATION (1-6)	.38	.45	.38	.26	.30	.24	.20 (.04)	.32 (.04)	.22 (.05)
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS (1-6)	.29	.32	.36	.11	.11	.19	.07 (.03)	.09 (.03)	.14 (.04)
R =							.49	.53	.47

(*) Dependent variables and coefficients are scaled in percentage points. (**) Approximate range of independent variables. (***) Standard errors of estimate in parentheses.

parentheses. They provide the possibility of formal statistical testing of differences of coefficients between years.

A coefficient is statistically significant at the p=.05 level if a coefficient is at least twice its standard error.

To gain general insight in the determination of cultural activity, the standardized equations are most instructive. The weights of coefficients can be compared. Given the explanatory theory outlined above, the results may be summarized as follows.

The influence of the geographical variable urbanization on cultural activities is weak and disappears over time. The zero order correlations (.14/.11/.11) disappear in the standardized regression effects to an insignificant amount. A first conclusion should be that geographical differences in cultural consumption are not so large, as one would surmise from the amount of investment in cultural policies on this matter. On the other hand, the models give rise to the conclusion that the geographical cultural diffusion policy has been successful. What is left of geographical differences (the zero order correlation are significant) has to be attributed to differences in demand factors among areas and not to supply.

The influence of money budgets on cultural activities is substantial (but less than the influence of education) in the 1974 and 1983 data and not significant in 1962. It is hard to say whether this constitutes a trend on the growing importance of income. If so, this (upgoing) trend rebuts the expectation that income differentials have become less important over time.

The influence of the time budget that measures the available leisure time after more primary activities have been taken care of, is not very substantial at the zero order level (.19/.06/.03). On the zero-order level the relation is slight, but the regression equation proves this relation to be confounded, in particular by age. After the correction by the multivariate regression model, the contribution of the time budget is significant in all three instances, but it declines over time (.17/.08/.05). This development is consistent with the increased mean of the time budget variable, that points to a growth of leisure time of this type.

A puzzling result is that TV watching that represents another type of time constraint on cultural consumption, has only a weak direct influence on cultural consumption. The negative zero-order relation disappears with the introduction of education in the equation. The negative relation between TV watching and cultural consumption is small, but still statistically significant in 1962, but has vanished in the last two years. This result signifies that there exists no hard trade-off between the time spent on media and the time spent on cultural activities.

Of great influence on cultural activity is the formal education one has enjoyed. Its coefficients outweigh all of the others. The zero-order correlation of education and culture consumption (.38/.45/.38) is quite close to the multiple correlation between cultural consumption and all the variables in the equation. As in other analyses of these matters, this result points to the overwhelming influence of cognitive abilities and competence in enjoying culture.

The effect of occupational status is smaller than that of education,

but it increases over time to a substantial level (.11/.14/.19). This strengthens the hypothesis that status motivation (that can be assumed to be directly related to the actual social status) is of influence on cultural consumption. The apparent growing importance of it contradicts my earlier contentions that status conformity has become less prominent in modernizing societies.

Table 3 gives the unstandardized models for the four separate cultural activities. The dependent variables are dichotomous and scaled in percentage points. The coefficients can therefore be compared between equations, not only over periods, but also over activities. To gain some insight in the contribution of variables, the figures on their ranges might be used.

The results are not at great variance with the ones reported, although some interesting fluctuations must be commented upon.

The influence of urbanization does not depend on the particular form of cultural activity. This contradicts the assumption that its effect should be attributed to the differential distribution of cultural accommodations between geographical areas and confirms our earlier conclusion that differences between areas have to be attributed to the differential composition of local populations.

The influence of time budgets varies between activities in a significant way. Its influence is largely restricted to cinema going and to a lesser extent to theater visits. This confirms the supposition that activities that take place in the evening at a fixed time are most vulnerable to time restrictions.

The equations show a very similar pattern between the three surveys and give rise to the supposition that the process determining the choice for cultural activity has essentially been stable over time. In most cases the fluctuation in coefficients is indeed within sampling boundaries. Significant differences can be found for the effects of income on museum and cinema, of education on theater and museum and occupational status on theater and museum. Whereas some of these differences show trendless fluctuation, others display a growing influence of social background on cultural consumption. Not much change in determination of cultural activity has taken place between 1962 and 1983 and where it exists, it is a trend towards more inequality of consumption. Notwithstanding the active policies of the Dutch Administration, the accommodations and the artists themselves, paralleled by profound changes in social structure, no change in the aimed direction can be observed!

As outlined above, I regard this result as a strong confirmation of the point of view that differential abilities to cope with cultural information have primarily been responsible for the distribution of cultural activities among the population. In many respects, societies like the Netherlands may have become more open over time, but not in the distribution of abilities between the lower and the higher educated that are so strongly related to cultural activity.

Conclusion

The analyses reported above lead to the conclusion that cultural

Table 3

Linear probability (*) models for participation in four activities

	Reading			Theater			Musem			Cinema		
	62	74	83	62	74	83	62	74	83	62	74	83
MEAN	74%	75%	86%	15%	36%	35%	12%	32%	45%	39%	42%	41%
AGE/10	-0.0	1.0	2.0	-0.0	-0.4	1.0	0.1	2.0	3.0	-12.0	-15.6	-15.0
[2-6]	(1.0)	(1.3)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.3)	(2.0)	(1.0)	(1.3)	(2.0)	(2.0)	(1.3)	(2.0)
URBA	1.2	0.3	0.4	1.2	0.0	1.7	0.9	0.1	1.6	3.2	1.5	2.6
[1-5]	(1.6)	(1.3)	(1.5)	(1.3)	(1.4)	(2.0)	(1.2)	(1.4)	(2.2)	(1.6)	(1.4)	(2.0)
INC	-1.4	4.0	1.1	1.2	0.4	3.9	1.3	8.8	3.9	0.6	8.6	8.7
[ln]	(1.2)	(3.1)	(3.0)	(0.9)	(3.2)	(4.1)	(0.9)	(3.2)	(4.3)	(1.2)	(3.2)	(4.0)
TIME	2.2	2.5	-2.4	1.7	2.5	3.9	1.1	0.2	-0.3	9.7	5.8	4.1
[0-4]	(2.0)	(1.4)	(1.6)	(1.6)	(1.5)	(2.1)	(1.5)	(1.5)	(2.2)	(2.0)	(1.5)	(2.1)
TV	-4.3	5.3	1.1	-1.6	-6.3	-4.1	-1.4	-6.7	-6.4	-4.6	4.0	2.8
[1-3]	(2.3)	(2.5)	(2.7)	(1.8)	(2.6)	(3.6)	(1.7)	(2.6)	(3.8)	(2.3)	(2.6)	(3.5)
EDUC	6.3	8.3	6.3	4.5	3.4	6.6	1.5	10.1	4.7	7.1	4.7	4.8
[1-6]	(1.9)	(1.6)	(1.6)	(1.5)	(1.7)	(1.6)	(1.4)	(1.7)	(2.3)	(1.9)	(1.7)	(2.1)
STATUS	2.1	0.8	0.4	1.1	4.1	6.1	3.1	2.8	5.4	1.4	1.3	1.0
[1-6]	(1.5)	(1.2)	(1.2)	(1.2)	(1.3)	(1.6)	(1.1)	(1.2)	(1.6)	(1.5)	(1.2)	(1.6)
R =	.23		.26	.26		.38	.24		.31	.48		.46

(*) Dependent variables and coefficients are scaled in percentage points.
(**) Approximate range of independent variables.
(***) Standard errors of estimate in parenthesis.

diffusion policies have failed to a large extent; the hypotheses used for explanation lead to the conclusion that cultural diffusion is no more to be expected in the future, unless inequality in cognitive abilities can be diminished. Whereas a general growth of average cognitive ability is attainable and has indeed been accomplished with the growth of mean education, I have severe doubts on the possibility and desirability of equalizing the distribution of knowledge and skills. The cultural sector faces a very fundamental distributional principle in modern societies, that can only be fought at great individual and societal costs.

Consequences of the apparent failure of cultural diffusion policies should in my opinion not result in even 'greater attempts to reach low status audiences; the goal of cultural diffusion itself is in need of rethinking. This failure should give rise to a reconsideration of the subsidies given to the cultural sector and the relations that exist between these government spendings and the ones on leisure activities that can be regarded as compensation for the unequal distributive effect of cultural subsidies.

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