

Literary socialization and reading preferences. Effects of parents, the library, and the school

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Abstract

In this article, I study the long-term effects of reading socialization in the parental home, the use that is made of the extensive supply of books in the library, and the cultural encouragement that takes place in secondary school. Employing representative data for the Netherlands in 1998 ($N=1762$), the first research question deals with a description of trends in reading promotion activities. In general, reading promotion has slightly increased in the Netherlands over the past five decades. There is an especially strong increase in parental promotion activities. Furthermore, use of library facilities at an early age has shown a sharp increase and secondary schools nowadays seem to pay more attention to the cultural education of their pupils than they used to. The second question deals with the effectiveness of reading promotion. The results indicate that if young people have experienced a great deal of attention to reading in their youth, this has a positive influence on their reading level in adult life. First, parents who read literature relatively often, as well as direct parental stimulation, have positive consequences for present reading levels. Second, people who in their youth were library members for a long time later have a stronger preference for literary books and suspense novels. Third, a cultural education in secondary school and the choice of an extensive humanities-oriented set of finals seems particularly effective in stimulating pupils interest in literature.

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1. Introduction

Is it important for parents, libraries, and secondary schools to stimulate young people to get involved in reading? How effective are the efforts made by these agents to stimulate reading? These are the central questions in this article. In theories of reading, it is implicitly or explicitly assumed that (early) childhood is the essential period to stimulate reading and reading pleasure. Literary socialization means that both cognitive and motivational resources are strengthened by concrete activities or

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circumstances in social interaction, which foster children's cultural development. Many questions remain unanswered about the effectiveness of literary socialization activities, however. Empirical studies usually focus on specific reading promotion projects or activities shortly after their implementation. A major disadvantage of such studies is that they tend to overestimate the effects of reading promotion policies. If we assume that reading promotion aims to foster people's cultural literacy, it is vital to assess its long-term effects. Cultural knowledge and skills are not acquired by unique and non-recurrent introductions to literature or culture, but by intensive and lasting activation of available competencies in a respected social environment. These conditions for reading socialization, i.e., recurrent instruction and experienced relevance of social interaction, occur primarily in three institutions: the home environment, the library, and the secondary school. In each of these institutions, meaningful people aim to transfer cultural resources to young people by recurrently exposing them to cultural products or knowledge.

In this contribution, I specifically investigate the positive conditions of the home environment, the use that is made of the extensive supply of books in the library, and the cultural encouragement that takes place in secondary school classrooms. This means that I exclusively study people's general but recurrent literary socialization experiences in their childhood. A starting point is the pedagogical and educational premise that literary socialization experiences are most effective when they come about in the so-called formative years (between ages 5 and 20) in a relevant social context. Therefore, I will first investigate if and to what extent people have been exposed to literary socialization activities. My first descriptive research question, therefore, is the following: *what is the degree of reading promotion in family, library, and school during childhood, and how have these reading promotion activities developed over the last few decades?*

Then I will investigate how these reading promotion activities have affected adult reading preferences. For if reading promotion improves cultural competence, this should pay off in later life. Previous empirical research has demonstrated that cultural competence is especially important in choosing to read challenging literary works (Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999; Kraaykamp, 2001). Cultural competence is a life-long effort, but childhood in particular offers opportunities to stimulate cultural competence through reading socialization. Adult reading achievement, therefore, is generally expected to benefit from attention paid to childhood reading by parents, library, and school. If instruction helps to boost the cultural development of young people, this will make high-quality reading more attractive. Therefore, my second research question is: *to what extent does reading promotion in home, library, and school in childhood affect reading preferences in adult life?* This question addresses the long-term effects of reading promotion by parents, library, and school on a person's subsequent reading preferences.

2. Reading socialization in three institutions

Previous research into reading shows that successful promotion of reading and reading pleasure takes place mainly in three institutions: the home, the library, and

the school (Purves and Beach, 1976; Duijx and Verdaasdonk, 1989; Kraaykamp, 2001; Kraaykamp, 2002). In the following sections, each of these reading-promoting agents will be dealt with consecutively.

2.1. Literary socialization in the home

There is a considerable body of sociological literature on the effects of cultural socialization in the home (Ganzeboom, 1982; Bourdieu, 1984; Mohr and DiMaggio, 1995). Intensive socialization by parents has proved to be significant for various forms of cultural participation, such as visits to art galleries, classical concerts, or theatre performances (Ganzeboom, 1982; Nagel and Ganzeboom, 2002); children of culturally active parents often prove to be cultural devotees themselves in their later lives. In the specific field of reading, there are also studies showing that a positive reading environment in the parental home affects reading preferences (Duijx and Verdaasdonk, 1989; Cobb-Walgren, 1990; Van Peer, 1991; Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999; Kraaykamp, 2001). Parents can stimulate their children's cultural development either by setting a good example through their own reading habits or by specifically encouraging their children to venture into in the world of culture. In the educational literature, these two ways of parental socialization are known as 'imitation' and 'instruction' (Bandura and Walters, 1963; Leseman and De Jong, 1998). In imitation, the parental promotion of cultural development takes place more or less unconsciously through recurrent example setting, whereas in instruction, children's cultural development is purposefully encouraged.

Applied to reading promotion, imitation is the presentation of 'correct' behaviour by parents. If parents themselves read books and prefer literature to light reading, they present a 'good' example to their children (Duijx and Verdaasdonk, 1989; Cobb-Walgren, 1990; Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999; Kraaykamp, 2001). This kind of parental literary socialization has a highly informal character. Because children are around when their parents read, because there are books in the home, or because parents are library members, children are informally introduced to books and acquire the joy of reading. Transfer of taste from parents to children is common, not only for literary reading but also for romantic light reading, as Kraaykamp (2001) has demonstrated. Lovers of romance fiction often have mothers who also used to enjoy romance fiction. Therefore, it may be expected that parental taste affects adult reading preferences.

In addition, research points to instruction as an important practice in children's cultural education (Leseman and De Jong, 1998). Instruction refers to family activities that directly stimulate children's reading habits, such as reading books to children, discussing books, or presenting books as a gift. This way, parents consciously and actively engage in their children's cultural education. Instructional practice in the parental home usually consists of supplying information for developing cultural skills and fostering a positive attitude towards reading (Van Peer, 1991; Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999; Kraaykamp, 2001). This transfer of information cultivates both cultural competence and reading pleasure. In other words, parents transfer norms and values by reading books to their children, recommending books, or talking with

their children about books they have read. Such reading promotion in the parental home is expected to result in children developing considerable cultural competence and reading literary books more often and romance fiction less often.

2.2. Literary socialization through library membership

Some studies on literary socialization point to the availability of reading facilities (Mann, 1982; Duijx and Verdaasdonk, 1989; Van Peer, 1991), meaning that young people must have reading opportunities. Such circumstances are obviously created by parents, but also, in the Netherlands by public libraries (Statistics Netherlands, 2003). The library is one of the institutions that have strongly propagated the notion of dissemination since the 1950s. It is the objective of public libraries to open up an extensive reading supply, at a relatively modest lending fee, to as many Dutch people as possible. For the government, an important function of libraries is ‘to enable the citizens of this country to acquaint themselves with knowledge, information, and culture’ (W.V.C., 1992). In particular after the enactment of the Public Library Law of 1975, a trend towards greater participation was set in motion (Statistics Netherlands, 2003). In this, an important role was played by the introduction of free youth membership. It is expected that an intensive acquaintance with reading through library membership at an early age will have positive effects on a person’s cultural competence. A shortcoming of this approach, however, is that it is impossible to check what library membership really amounts to: one can be a member and mainly make use of other facilities, such as CD lending, information products, or computers. It is assumed, however, that for most young people library membership implies that they borrowed books and got acquainted with reading as a meaningful leisure activity and a source of information.

At present, the reading promotion activities of libraries are no longer restricted to lending books. Various activities to enthuse children are being organized by the libraries, such as storytelling afternoons, children’s book week projects, cooperation projects with primary schools, and instruction afternoons. All this has made the Dutch library a significant institution which promotes reading in a broad sense. It is expected that people who made intensive use of the library in childhood will more often read literary, romantic, and suspense novels in later life.

2.3. Literary socialization in secondary school

Since school introduces many children to reading and culture, it is expected that education, too, is influential in children’s cultural development (Purves and Beach, 1976; Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999; Kraaykamp, 2001). To clarify the role of literary socialization in secondary education, it is important to make a distinction between the selection effects and the learning effects of secondary education (Jencks, 1972; Kraaykamp, 2001).

School can be looked upon as an institution where knowledge is acquired and skills are taught, but where, at the same time, pupils are selected on the basis of their knowledge and skills. As a result of this selection, children with above-average

intellectual abilities end up at the higher levels of secondary education. At these higher levels, however, a relatively large quantity of cultural knowledge is offered and the training in cultural skills is more intensive. As a result, children at the higher school levels develop greater cultural competence than children at the lower levels (the selection effect). Empirical research has often shown the positive correlation between educational attainment and cultural participation (Ganzeboom, 1982; VanEijck, 1999; Kraaykamp, 2001): people with higher education are much more often culturally active than those with lower education. As this effect is not the direct result of literary socialization in school but of a cognitive selection procedure, I only include it in this study by taking an individual's educational attainment into account in the analyses.

Here, the focus is on the literary socialization in school through learning effects. The development of pupils' cultural competence takes place through cultural instruction within a curriculum (Guthrie et al., 1995; Nagel et al., 1997; Janssen, 1998). Pupils with the same educational level may show differences in cultural development because secondary schools pursue reading promotion activities with varying intensity. The literary aspects of modern language instruction are especially important in stimulating pupils' cultural development (Janssen, 1998; Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999; Kraaykamp, 2001). To be more specific, secondary education fosters literary and cultural schooling through classes dealing with literary history and the understanding of literature (Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999). Attention paid by the school to literary education seems to be especially important in explaining reading preferences: focussing on literature in secondary education results in a keener interest in complex literary genres in later life (Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999; Kraaykamp, 2001). Schools also diverge in the attention they pay to their pupils' general cultural development. There are schools, for example, that have children attend theatre performances or visit museums as a class (Nagel et al., 1997; Nagel and Ganzeboom, 2002). This form of cultural socialization, too, might lead to a keener interest in culture at an adult age. In this context, Janssen (1998) shows that there are substantial differences among teachers, both in terms of their goals for cultural education and the time they devote to it.

Pupils in secondary education also differ as regards the specific subjects they choose for their finals (Nagel et al., 1997; Kraaykamp, 2001). At every school level pupils specialize for their exams, and have the choice to select a humanities-oriented or a science-oriented track. A general expectation is that a humanities-oriented set of finals, with ample scope for modern and classical languages, increases pupils' interest in reading and culture, since developing pupils' cultural knowledge and competence is an explicit aim of foreign language instruction. Sometimes it also is stated that the compulsory reading list in modern language teaching diminishes the pupils' love of reading. Research into the effects of the selected set of finals, however, shows that pupils with a humanities-oriented set of finals are more culturally active in later life than pupils without many humanities subjects (Kraaykamp, 2002). It is expected, therefore, that people who were generously exposed to reading and culture in secondary school will more often choose literary books and will less often read romantic fiction.

3. Research design and measurements

3.1. Research design

To answer the above research questions, I have compared the influences of reading promotion by parents, library, and school on subsequent reading preferences. Fig. 1 provides a schematic representation of the research design adopted.

Fig. 1 makes clear that the research into the effects of literary socialization concerns the three institutions mentioned: parents, library, and school. The direct influences of literary socialization in the parental home are represented by arrow A. In this study, parental reading promotion has been operationalized by means of the parents' literary reading, the parents' popular reading, and their direct stimulation of book reading. The direct effect of reading promotion by library membership between the ages of 6 and 18 is represented by arrow B. To indicate the direct influences of literary socialization at school (arrow C), I used information about the scope for culture on the curriculum and the number of humanities finals chosen in secondary education.

Fig. 1 shows that parental literary socialization also has a direct influence on children's library use and the decision to select a particular type of school and set of finals (via the arrows D1 and D2). Culturally active parents will more often stimulate their children to make use of a library, will select a school for their children that offers a lot of cultural education, and will have a preference for many humanities

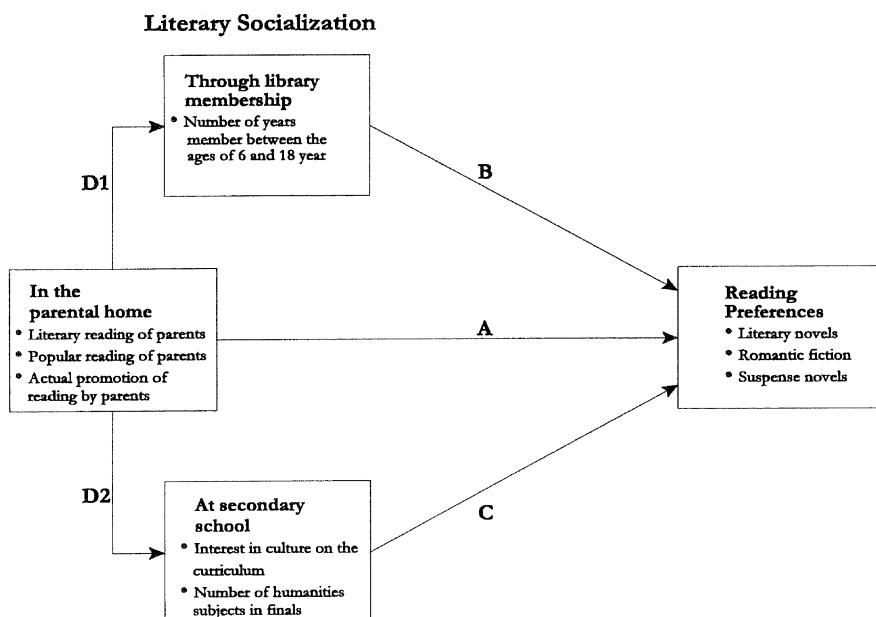


Fig. 1. Schematic representation of the effects of literacy socialization by parents, the library and secondary school on reading preferences.

subjects in their children's set of finals. As a consequence of these relations, parental literary socialization characteristics will also affect a person's cultural behaviour via pathways D1*B and D2*C. Therefore, the research design adopted here entails that a severe test for the effectiveness of parental literary socialization is employed, since the direct effect of parental socialization (arrow A), as studied here, is controlled for the indirect effects via library use (path D1*B) and school choice (path D2*C). Consequently, it is more difficult to find a significant direct effect of parental reading promotion on their children's reading level. As a study of direct effects is the soundest way of comparing the three institutions, I opted for this set-up. In interpreting the effects, however, we must always bear in mind that reading promotion by parents is also significant for more intensive library use and the decision to choose more culturally active schools and more humanities-oriented set of finals.

3.2. Data and measuring instruments

To find out what effect reading promotion has on later reading levels, I made use of national representative data from the *Family Survey Dutch Population 1998* (DeGraaf et al., 1998). This is a combined oral and written survey among people who were selected from the municipal registers via a stratified random procedure. All respondents were between 18 and 70 years of age and spoke Dutch (response 49.5%).

The partner (if applicable) of each primarily selected respondent was also interviewed. Both answered exactly the same questions. Since both partners' socialization nearly always took place independently of each other, mostly in other families and at other schools, it was decided to look upon the partners as individual respondents. The analyses only included people over the age of 25 who had left the parental home. This made it plausible that the respondents had completed their school careers and were no longer directly influenced by their parents. After exclusion of respondents with missing data on measuring instruments, the final database consisted of 1762 respondents (out of the original 1883 people).

In this national representative survey, information was gathered via retrospective questions on the circumstances of a person's childhood. The questions only concerned actual behaviours, situations, or choices, rather than opinions, preferences, or views. This way, relatively reliable information can be obtained on the course of people's lives (Van der Vaart, 1996). Of course, it is possible for memory effects to occur in matters that relate to past events. If these memory effects occur in a select group and simultaneously imply over- or underestimation, they are problematic. Most research into the quality of retrospective information, however, shows that reporting errors are more or less random. The consequence of random errors is that a significant correlation between two aspects is less easily established. In this study, this means that it is less easily concluded that an intensive literary socialization in childhood is related to a greater cultural interest in later life. Six aspects were selected that I believe are good indicators of the degree of reading promotion in childhood (see Fig. 1). It was decided to represent these reading socialization characteristics in three categories: the first category represents relatively little reading promotion, whereas the third category represents a lot of reading promotion.

This method of operationalization helps to make the effects of the reading socialization aspects comparable with one another.

Reading socialization by parents is indicated with three measuring instruments: (a) the parents' literary reading, (b) the parents' popular reading, and (c) actual parental reading promotion. The two aspects that concern parental reading preferences represent the idea that socialization partially proceeds by way of imitation. To construct these measurements, I used the questions from one block of the questionnaire about father's and mother's genre preferences when the respondent was approximately 15 years old. For five prescribed book genres, respondents indicated to what extent father and/or mother read them [answer categories: (1) never, (2) sometimes, and (3) often]. If father or mother did not read any books at all, the score 1 (never) was assigned to all genres. To measure *parents' literary reading*, I used the average score for father and mother on the questions on the reading of Dutch literary novels and on the reading of foreign language novels (varying from 1 to 3). To construct the final measurement, the scale was reduced to three categories. In about 48% of all Dutch families, the parents never read any literature. In contrast, in 12% of the families, at least one of the parents often read literary books. In this parental context, we may speak of a repeated literary reading example that is presented to children. In measuring *parents' popular reading*, I employed an average score for father and mother on the questions on reading romantic fiction and on reading detective, science fiction, and war novels (varying from 1 to 3). Again, the scale was recoded to three categories. In 14% of the families, at least one of the parents often read popular novels. Popular novels were never read in 40% of the families.

The aspect of *actual parental reading promotion* represents the idea that parental reading socialization proceeds by way of instruction. To construct this, the respondent was asked about five actual parent-child interaction activities [answer categories: (1) never, (2) sometimes, and (3) often]. The activities were: parents reading to children, giving books as presents, recommending books, discussing books that have been read, and taking interest in reading preferences. The average score on the five items was calculated, and the scale was reduced to three categories (Cronbach's alpha = 0.83). Approximately 21% of the respondents were hardly stimulated by their parents. In contrast, 15% of the respondents relatively often experienced parental interest in their reading. These figures support the idea that there are substantial differences in parents' interest in direct reading promotion.

In this study, reading promotion by visits to the library during childhood is indicated with a single measurement: (a) membership duration between the ages of 6 and 18. It is presumed that membership duration is a relevant indicator to examine the effect of reading promotion by libraries, for library membership makes it possible for all Dutch nationals to borrow books and to take advantage of other activities in the library. Consequently, people who were library members for a considerable period of time in their childhood show more reading socialization than people who never were members. In the Family Survey Dutch Population, *library membership between the ages of 6 and 18* was measured by a single direct question [answer categories, ranging from (1) never was a member to (4) was a member for more than 6 years]. As in the other reading socialization measurements, the number of categories

was reduced to three, with the two middle categories (1- to 2-year membership and 2- to 6-year membership) being collapsed. No less than 33% of all Dutch people were members of a library in their childhood for more than 6 years. Another third (32%) were never a member. This leads me to conclude that many people have frequently made use of available library facilities and have thus been intensively socialized into reading.

The third socializing aspect in this study is reading promotion in secondary education. I have used two measuring instruments: (a) amount in the curriculum devoted to culture, and (b) the number of humanities subjects taken as finals. This was motivated by the idea that, especially in secondary education, there are differences among schools and among pupils in the matter of exposure to culture and literature.

First of all, to construct the instrument *amount in the curriculum devoted to culture*, mean scores (varying between 1 and 3) were used on three questions referring to paid attention to literary history, theatre, and the plastic arts in the curriculum, with answer categories: (1) never, (2) sometimes, and (3) often. People with primary education only were scored as 1 (never). I assumed that ample attention devoted to these components develops pupils' competence, which boosts their interest in culture (Kraaykamp, 2001). The final scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.66) was again subdivided into three categories. Roughly two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they hardly experienced any attention being paid to these cultural subjects in secondary education. Only 8% of the respondents indicated they were exposed to cultural subjects in the curriculum relatively often.

The Family Survey 1998 also investigated whether secondary-school pupils took finals in nine subjects [answer categories: (1) no and (2) yes]. The measuring instrument *the number of humanities subjects taken as finals* was constructed by verifying how many pupils took their finals in five of these subjects (English, French, German, Latin/Greek, and history). People with primary education only were scored as 1 (no) for all five subjects. It was assumed that people who markedly opted for, and therefore were more exposed to, humanities subjects had developed greater cultural competence in their educational careers. Here, too, I created a variable with three categories. The distribution of respondents over these three categories shows that most Dutch nationals (41%) only took finals in 0 or 1 humanities subject. On the other hand, 21% may be characterized as genuine humanities examinees, having taken finals in at least four humanities subjects. It is important here to take into account the effect of the introduction of the so-called *Mammoetwet* (Mammoth Act) in 1968 (Verlinden, 1968). The educational restructuring ensuing from this Act meant that the number of final-examination subjects was considerably reduced. In this study, therefore, people who took extensive humanities finals are expected to stem from older birth cohorts.

A person's reading preferences are indicated here by means of three measuring instruments: (a) reading or not reading literary novels, (b) reading or not reading romance fiction, and (c) reading or not reading detective, science fiction, or war novels. Without meaning to be exhaustive, I think that this fairly represents a possible set of reading preferences ranging from accessible to complex: one relatively complex genre, one relatively accessible genre, and one genre that might appeal to the average reader. To construct the measurements, I used questions from one section of the

questionnaire on reading-preferences. Respondents were to indicate whether they read six specified genres [answer categories: (1) never), (2) sometimes, and (3) often]. People who indicated that they read no books at all were scored 1 (never) for all genres. To measure *reading literary novels*, I calculated a mean score for questions on reading Dutch literary novels and reading literary novels in translation. People with a mean score of 2 or above (i.e., at least ‘sometimes’ for both genres or ‘often’ for one) were considered to be literary readers. Approximately 35% of the Dutch population are literary readers by this definition. These respondents indicated they frequently spend time reading literature. The same strategy was used for *reading romance fiction*. A mean score was calculated for each person who read romance fiction or family/regional fiction. Once again, people with a mean score of 2 or above (i.e., at least ‘sometimes’ for both genres or ‘often’ for one) were considered romance readers. Approximately 20% of the respondents indicated that they frequently read romance fiction. It is quite remarkable that the romance genre, which is virtually ignored by the media, is so popular with Dutch readers. Especially women (35%) are regular romance readers. For *reading detective, science fiction, or war novels*, I applied a concrete question about reading these genres. People with a mean score of 2 or above were considered aficionados of this genre. Detective, science fiction, and war novels are quite popular: approximately 45% of Dutch readers sometimes or often read such books.

Finally, six social and demographic characteristics were used as control variables in the study. All six aspects proved to be significantly related to literacy in previous research (Kraaykamp and Dijkstra, 1999). If one does not take account of these aspects in research, one might erroneously conclude that an aspect of literary socialization plays a role, while this can be attributed to selection on one or more of these social characteristics. First, a person’s year of birth was taken into consideration, measured as a continuous characteristic (stretching from 1914 to 1973). In addition, gender was taken into account (female = 0, male = 1). A respondent’s individual level of education was measured in four categories: (1) primary education, (2) lower secondary education, (3) higher secondary education, and (4) tertiary education. The same categories were used for parental level of education, taking into consideration the highest level attained by one parent. An indication of religiousness was obtained by combining questions on religious affiliation and churchgoing behaviour: (1) not religious, (2) religious with low churchgoing activity (less than once a month), and (3) religious with high churchgoing activity (more than once a month). To determine marital status, I distinguished three categories: (1) single, no children, (2) married or living together with young children (under 13), and (3) married or living together with adolescent children (over 12).

4. Results

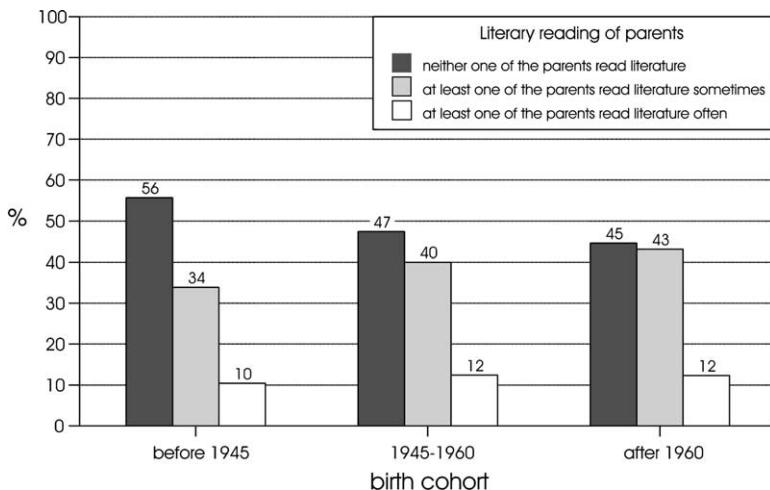
4.1. Describing trends in reading promotion

My first research question focuses on a description of the developments in reading promotion. Have young people always been socialized by parents, libraries, and

schools to the same extent, or has the involvement of these agents in reading promotion decreased or increased? To ascertain this, I present the frequency distributions for the six socialization aspects for three birth cohorts (born before 1945, born between 1945 and 1960, and born after 1960). A general expectation may be that the youngest cohort has been socialized into reading more than the other two. Due to the general expansion of education in the Netherlands, parents' average level of education has risen steadily, and, after 1975, library membership became free for young people. These external developments led me to expect that cultural socialization in the youngest cohorts has intensified compared to the older cohorts.

[Fig. 2](#) shows that one parent often reading literature is a fairly stable situation across cohorts. However, literary reading by parents does increase over time. The number of families in which one parent sometimes read literary works increases from 34% for the pre-1945 cohort to 43% for the post-1960 cohort. There is a similar development for the reading of popular fiction by parents ([Fig. 3](#)). The percentage of non-reading parents has gone down from 54 to 30%. At the same time, the number of parents that often read popular fiction increases sharply across cohorts. In the oldest cohort, 8% of the parents often read popular fiction during the respondents' childhood, which went up to 19% for the post-1960 cohort. A general conclusion with regard to exemplary reading behaviour is that the percentage of non-reading parents has decreased over the years. More and more parents regularly spend time reading literature and popular fiction and thus set a living example to their children.

[Fig. 4](#) sketches the trend for actual reading promotion by parents, in which the parent-child interaction is central. The developments are clear. In particular the number of parents that do not engage in reading promotion is decreasing: 31% of the respondents' parents in the oldest cohort made no effort at all to encourage their children's reading habits; in the youngest cohort, this has gone down to 15%. At



[Fig. 2](#). Percentage literary reading of parents for three birth cohorts (of the respondent).

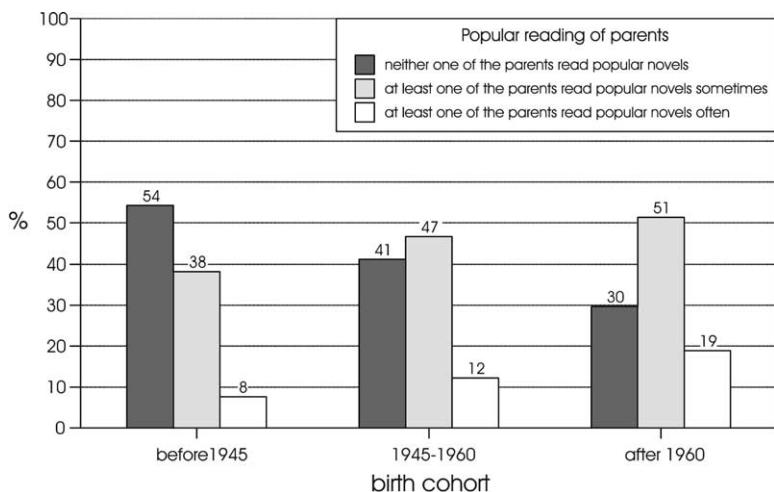


Fig. 3. Percentage popular reading of parents for three birth cohorts (of the respondent).

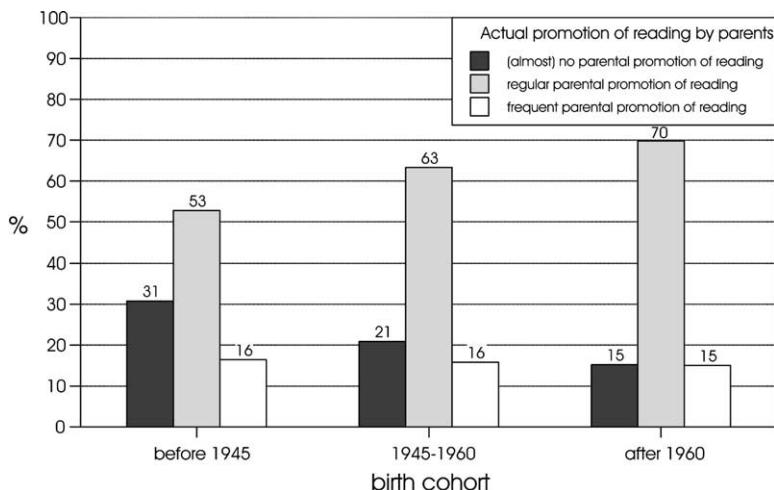


Fig. 4. Percentage parental promotion of reading for three birth cohorts (of the respondent).

present, a vast majority of all Dutch parents engage in direct reading promotion by reading books to their children, discussing books with them, or buying them books as presents.

Fig. 5 illustrates developments in library use. The number of young people who were not library members at any time between the ages of 6 and 18 has dropped substantially. In the pre-1945 cohort, 55% of the respondents were never library members, whereas this has gone down to 9% for the post-1960 cohort. Therefore, we may conclude that libraries now reach virtually all young people. At the same time, the intensity of library use has increased enormously. Out of the respondents

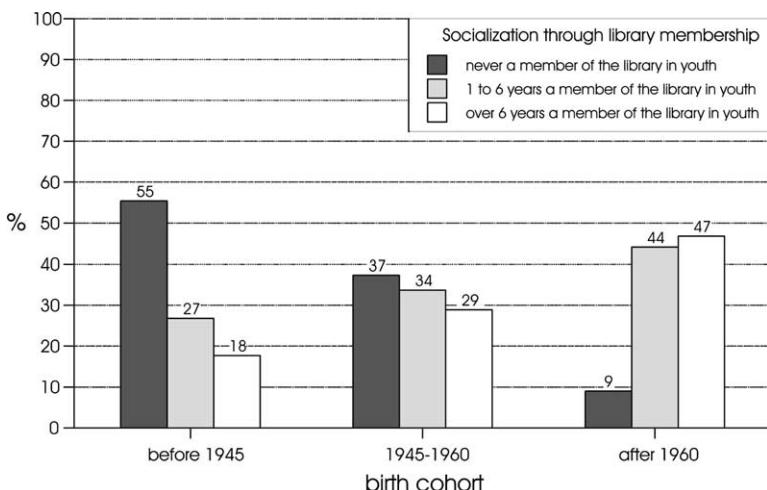


Fig. 5. Percentage library member in youth for three birth cohorts (of the respondent).

born before 1945, only 18% were library members for more than six years in their childhood; among young people in the post-1960 cohort, this figure has risen to 47%. It is likely that the introduction of free youth membership in 1975 has had a considerable impact on this rise of youth interest in the library.

Fig. 6 represents developments in attention paid to culture in secondary school curricula. In general, more and more pupils have gone through cultural socialization in education to some extent: 77% of the respondents in the pre-1945 cohort were not exposed to any cultural promotion in secondary education, whereas this figure dropped to 62% for the post-1960 cohort. Nevertheless, it is clear that, in secondary

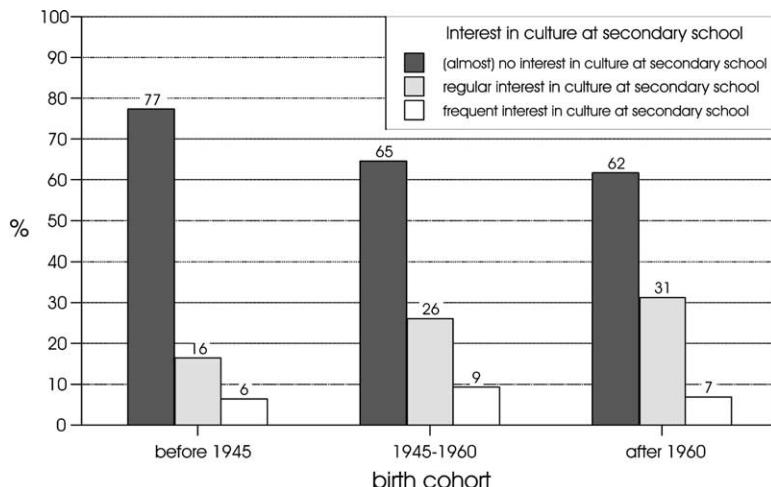


Fig. 6. Percentage interest in culture at secondary school for three birth cohorts (of the respondent).

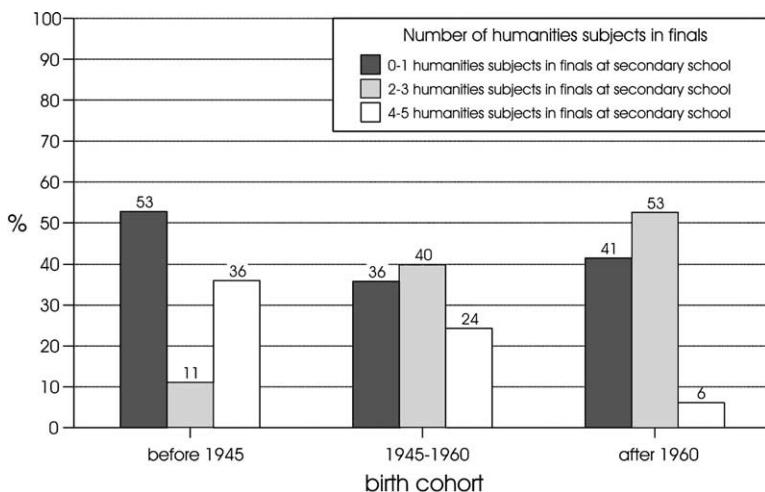


Fig. 7. Percentage humanities subjects in finals at secondary school for three birth cohorts (of the respondent)

education, the majority of respondents were exposed to literary history, the visual arts, and theatre to a very limited extent only.

Fig. 7 provides information on the number of people who took humanities finals. In contrast with the other literary socialization aspects, a downward trend across cohorts is observed: a decreasing number of pupils opted to take humanities finals. Out of the respondents born in the oldest cohort, 36% chose mainly humanities subjects, whereas this went down to 6% for respondents in the youngest cohort. As was mentioned above, this may be attributed to the introduction of the Mammoth Act in 1968, which made it harder to choose four or more humanities subjects as finals.

4.2. Multivariate analysis of reading preferences

To find out what influence reading promotion by parents, library, and school has on later reading preferences, a multi-variate logistical regression technique is applied. With this method, various aspects can be considered simultaneously and assessed on their merits. Such an analysis takes account of the fact that the various socialization aspects can be correlated: parents who read literary books more often introduce their children to the library and more often advise them to opt for schools with a great deal of culture on the curriculum. In the tables, I present so-called odds ratios [$\exp(b)$]. Odds ratios indicate how much higher or lower the odds of reading a certain genre are when one has undergone a certain literary socialization process (always in comparison with the reference category ‘no literary socialization’). When, for a particular literary socialization aspect, a great difference is found in the odds [$\exp(b)$] between the highest and the lowest category, it implies that this characteristic is important in explaining the reading preference in question. In contrast, a small difference means that a characteristic is of minor significance.

For each genre, I will present three models. Model 1 is the point of departure, with six control aspects being taken into account. Subsequently, in Model 2 the reading promotion aspects of the parental home are introduced. Finally, in Model 3, the aspects of library membership and secondary school enter into the analysis. Such a set-up corresponds with the causal structure as represented in Fig. 1 and makes it possible to check to what extent influences of parental literary socialization take place via the library and school aspects.

4.3. Reading literary books

Table 1 illustrates the influence of literary socialization characteristics on reading or not reading literary books. Model 1 makes clear that women read literary works much more often than men [$\exp(b)=0.30$]; women have a 3.3 better chance [$1/0.30 = 3.3$] of being literary readers than men. The birth cohort is also relevant in literary reading. People born after 1960 prove to go in for literary reading significantly less often: they have a 2.3 smaller chance of being literary aficionados than people born before 1945. The influences of marital status and religiousness are fairly modest. Only the frequent churchgoers read literature somewhat less often (about 45%). The educational level attained proves to be a very important predictor of reading literary books: people with the highest educational attainments have a 20.5 better chance of being literary aficionados than people with primary school only. This result corresponds with what was found in earlier empirical research. In addition, the parents' socio-economic background proves to be significant: the higher the parents' education, the better the chance of their children reading literature in later life.

On top of the influences of the social background, model 2 presents the effects of literary socialization in the parental home. Nearly all the aspects from model 1 retain their significance, with the exception of the parents' educational level. This implies that the influences of the socio-economic background in the family of origin can be almost completely interpreted by the cultural behaviours of parents in such families. This supports Bourdieu's (1984) cultural reproduction idea, which holds that parents from the highest social classes ensure, via cultural socialization, that their children possess cultural knowledge and skills. These skills subsequently pay off in education and in the fact that these children often prefer elitist cultural expressions.

For literary reading, the parental example proves to be especially relevant. Children whose parents often read literature during their childhood prove to have a 2.9 better chance of also reading literature than children without this parental reading example. Note that the child's own educational level is controlled for in this influence. The parents' intensive reading of popular books has no effect. These results lend support to the imitation hypothesis. Children are presented with the 'correct' behaviour by their parents and take it over as a matter of course. In addition, the concrete reading instruction by parents proves significant for literary reading also. Children who were intensively stimulated to read by their parents later prove to have a 2.6 better chance of being literature lovers than those who were not encouraged to

Table 1

Logistic regression of literary socialization by parents, library membership and at secondary school on literary reading

	Odds ratio exp(B)		
	Model I	Model II	Model III
Socio-demographic background			
Gender (Men = 1)	0.30***	0.30***	0.36***
<i>Birth cohort</i>			
• before 1945 (ref.)	1	1	1
• 1945–1960	0.81	0.79	0.84
• after 1960	0.43***	0.41***	0.44***
<i>Marital status</i>			
• no partner (ref.)	1	1	1
• partner no children under 13 years of age	0.86	0.85	0.78
• partner children under 13 years of age	0.94	0.90	0.85
<i>Religious affiliation</i>			
• non religious (ref.)	1	1	1
• religious low church going	0.90	0.94	0.97
• religious high church going	0.69*	0.71*	0.82
<i>Educational attainment</i>			
• primary education (ref.)	1	1	1
• lower secondary education	2.51**	2.39**	1.48
• higher secondary education	5.39***	5.09***	2.81***
• tertiary education	20.50***	18.70***	7.36***
<i>Educational attainment parents</i>			
• primary education (ref.)	1	1	1
• lower secondary education	1.52**	1.21	1.13
• higher secondary education	2.44***	1.59*	1.32
• tertiary education	2.44***	1.23	1.01
Socialization in the parental home			
<i>Literary reading of parents</i>			
• neither one of the parents read literature (ref.)	1	1	1
• at least one of the parents read literature sometimes	1.53**	1.38*	
• at least one of the parents read literature often	2.89***	2.55***	
<i>Popular reading of parents</i>			
• neither one of the parents read popular (ref.)	1	1	1
• at least one of the parents read popular sometimes	1.11	1.09	
• at least one of the parents read popular often	1.27	1.28	
<i>Actual promotion of reading by parents</i>			
• (almost) no parental promotion of reading (ref.)	1	1	1
• regular parental promotion of reading	1.50*	1.31	
• frequent parental promotion of reading	2.58***	1.80*	
Socialization through library membership			
<i>Member between the ages of 6 and 18 years</i>			
• never a member in youth (ref.)			1
• 1–6 years a member in youth			1.07
• over 6 years a member in youth			2.35***

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

	Odds ratio exp(B)		
	Model I	Model II	Model III
Socialization at secondary school			
<i>Interest in culture in curriculum</i>			
• (almost) no interest in culture at school (ref.)			1
• regular interest in culture at school			1.51**
• frequent interest in culture at school			2.89***
<i>Number of humanities subjects in finals</i>			
• 0–1 humanities subjects in finals (ref.)			1
• 2–3 humanities subjects in finals			1.29
• 2–3 humanities subjects in finals			2.37***
Adjusted R-squared	32.1%	36.5%	41.6%

Source: Family Survey Dutch Population 1998 ($N = 1762$).

Significance: * $P < 0.05$; ** $P < 0.01$; *** $P < 0.001$.

read. This makes the importance of an intensive literary socialization in the parental home for literary reading overwhelmingly clear.

In model 3, the aspects of library membership and secondary school are introduced. Both socializing institutions are relevant to the later reading level and account for part of the imitation and instruction effects of literary socialization in the parental home. Intensive library use during childhood proves to be highly influential for a present literary preference: people who were members for more than 6 years between the ages of 6 and 18 have a 2.4 better chance of being literature lovers than people who did not get acquainted with the library in early childhood. It is remarkable that people who were library members for some time (1–6 years) do not differ significantly from non-members. It shows that only a long-term acquaintance with library facilities bears fruit. Cultural instruction in secondary school curricula proves to be of great significance for a subsequent interest in literature. Pupils who often experienced attention to culture at school have a 2.9 better chance of being literary readers than pupils who had to do without this attention. The choice of a humanities-oriented set of finals has a similar effect: those who took more than four humanities finals differ significantly from pupils with fewer humanities subjects. It should be borne in mind here that both influences of cultural instruction were established while taking account of other socialization aspects and the educational level attained. Therefore, these influences do not reflect differences that can be attributed to a high and a low educational attainment but indicate, within one level, what the effects of a cultural education are. This finding supports the idea that efforts made by teachers at secondary schools to increase their pupils' interest in culture are effective. All this makes clear that paying attention to culture in secondary school curricula enables teachers to compensate for possible deficiencies incurred in the parental home. This is the case because the effect of the cultural socialization at school was established while taking account of the characteristics of the parental home.

Table 2

Logistic regression of literary socialization by parents, library membership and at secondary school on romantic fiction reading

	Odds ratio exp(B)		
	Model I	Model II	Model III
Socio-demographic background			
Gender (Men = 1)	0.07***	0.07***	0.07***
<i>Birth cohort</i>			
• before 1945 (ref.)	1	1	1
• 1945–1960	0.85	0.81	0.75
• after 1960	1.07	0.97	0.81
<i>Marital status</i>			
• no partner (ref.)	1	1	1
• partner no children under 13 years of age	1.73	1.67	1.64
• partner children under 13 years of age	2.01*	1.93*	1.97*
<i>Religious affiliation</i>			
• non religious (ref.)	1	1	1
• religious low church going	1.68**	1.77***	1.75***
• religious high church going	1.70**	1.73***	1.72**
<i>Educational attainment</i>			
• primary education (ref.)	1	1	1
• lower secondary education	1.46	1.49	1.50
• higher secondary education	1.22	1.19	1.19
• tertiary education	0.81	0.77	0.79
<i>Educational attainment parents</i>			
• primary education (ref.)	1	1	1
• lower secondary education	1.06	0.96	0.96
• higher secondary education	0.60*	0.53*	0.53*
• tertiary education	0.75	0.68	0.71
Socialization in the parental home			
<i>Literary reading of parents</i>			
• neither one of the parents read literature (ref.)	1	1	1
• at least one of the parents read literature sometimes	0.96	0.97	
• at least one of the parents read literature often	0.60	0.62	
<i>Popular reading of parents</i>			
• neither one of the parents read popular (ref.)	1	1	
• at least one of the parents read popular sometimes	1.23	1.23	
• at least one of the parents read popular often	2.38***	2.31***	
<i>Actual promotion of reading by parents</i>			
• (almost) no parental promotion of reading (ref.)	1	1	
• regular parental promotion of reading	1.25	1.24	
• frequent parental promotion of reading	1.61	1.59	
Socialization through library membership			
<i>Member between the ages of 6 and 18 years</i>			
• never a member in youth (ref.)			1
• 1–6 years a member in youth			1.08
• over 6 years a member in youth			1.17

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

	Odds ratio exp(B)		
	Model I	Model II	Model III
Socialization at secondary school			
<i>Interest in culture in curriculum</i>			
• (almost) no interest in culture at school (ref.)		1	
• regular interest in culture at school		0.92	
• frequent interest in culture at school		0.79	
<i>Number of humanities subjects in finals</i>			
• 0–1 humanities subjects in finals (ref.)		1	
2–3 humanities subjects in finals		1.23	
• 2–3 humanities subjects in finals		0.80	
Adjusted R-squared	30.5%	32.0%	32.4%

Source: Family Survey Dutch Population 1998 ($N=1762$).

Significance: * $P<0.05$; ** $P<0.01$; *** $P<0.001$.

4.4. Reading romance fiction

In Table 2, I present the analyses on reading romantic fiction. It is hardly surprising to see that in particular women are lovers of this genre (a 14.3 better chance than men). Furthermore, the effects of the social background characteristics are fairly limited. Only the churchgoers prove to be readers of romance fiction a little more often than the non-churchgoers and married people with children under the age of 13 are slightly over represented among the readers of romantic fiction.

Model 2 clearly shows that, in the case of a romantic reading preference, there is only a direct imitation effect. It is the readers whose parents read popular fiction who opt significantly more often for romance fiction [$\exp(b)=2.3$]. Parental instruction to take up reading has no significant influence on subsequent reading of romance fiction. At the same time, intensive library-going in childhood (model 3) does not prove to be effective in promoting popular reading preferences. On the one hand, this may be remarkable because the library, too, offers romance fiction and regional novels, but on the other hand, it is clear that romance fiction is often disseminated through unofficial channels, such as barter, the tobacconist's, and the supermarket. Furthermore, model 3 in Table 2 illustrates that none of the school socialization aspects has any influence on the decision to read romantic fiction. Perhaps this was to be expected. The aspects of secondary education chosen here mainly have to do with pupils' cultural schooling, which causes the attractiveness of romance fiction to diminish rather than to grow.

4.5. Reading suspense novels

What socialization aspects are important for reading suspense novels? To answer this question, we should take a look at the results in Table 3. First of all, it is evident from model 1 that men read suspense novels a little more often than women [$\exp(b)=1.25$]; hence they have a 25% better chance of reading this genre. Out of

the social background characteristics, only the educational aspects are significant. People with higher educational attainments have a 4.1 better chance of reading detective, science fiction, and/or war novels than those with the lowest educational attainments. For the parental educational level, people whose parents have only primary education differ significantly from people with parents who have had higher education: they have a 1.5 smaller chance of reading suspense novels.

If, in model 2, we take account of the existing selection on social and demographic background characteristics, popular reading by parents seems especially predictive for reading suspense novels: children whose parents often read popular books have a 2.6 better chance of reading suspense novels later in comparison with children of parents who did not. However, direct stimulation of reading by parents is also significant for suspense reading [$\exp(b)=2.5$]. It is not only the literary genre, therefore, that profits from attention paid to reading promotion in the parental home.

From model 3, it is also evident that library-going during childhood is important in explaining preferences for suspense novels in later life: young library-goers have a

Table 3

Logistic regression of literary socialization by parents, library membership and at secondary school on suspense novels reading

	Odds ratio exp(B)		
	Model I	Model II	Model III
Socio-demographic background			
Gender (Men = 1)	1.25*	1.30*	1.49***
<i>Birth cohort</i>			
• before 1945 (ref.)	1	1	1
• 1945–1960	1.01	0.95	0.94
• after 1960	0.76	0.67*	0.61**
<i>Marital status</i>			
• no partner (ref.)	1	1	1
• partner no children under 13 years of age	1.21	1.17	1.13
• partner children under 13 years of age	1.33	1.27	1.26
<i>Religious affiliation</i>			
• non religious (ref.)	1	1	1
• religious low church going	0.87	0.92	0.95
• religious high church going	0.85	0.86	0.92
<i>Educational attainment</i>			
• primary education (ref.)	1	1	1
• lower secondary education	1.50*	1.37	1.18
• higher secondary education	2.31***	2.05***	1.66*
• tertiary education	4.11***	3.48***	2.38***
<i>Educational attainment parents</i>			
• primary education (ref.)	1	1	1
• lower secondary education	1.55***	1.25	1.18
• higher secondary education	1.52**	1.12	1.00
• tertiary education	1.49**	1.03	0.92

(continued on next page)

Table 3 (continued)

	Odds ratio exp(B)		
	Model I	Model II	Model III
Socialization in the parental home			
<i>Literary reading of parents</i>			
• neither one of the parents read literature (ref.)	1	1	
• at least one of the parents read literature sometimes	1.06	1.00	
• at least one of the parents read literature often	0.92	0.85	
<i>Popular reading of parents</i>			
• neither one of the parents read popular (ref.)	1	1	
• at least one of the parents read popular sometimes	1.48**	1.44**	
• at least one of the parents read popular often	2.56***	2.48***	
<i>Actual promotion of reading by parents</i>			
• (almost) no parental promotion of reading (ref.)	1	1	
• regular parental promotion of reading	1.83***	1.70***	
• frequent parental promotion of reading	2.54***	2.06***	
Socialization through library membership			
<i>Member between the ages of 6 and 18 years</i>			
• never a member in youth (ref.)		1	
• 1–6 years a member in youth		1.29	
• over 6 years a member in youth		2.21***	
Socialization at secondary school			
<i>Interest in culture in curriculum</i>			
• (almost) no interest in culture at school (ref.)		1	
• regular interest in culture at school		1.03	
• frequent interest in culture at school		1.45	
<i>Number of humanities subjects in finals</i>			
• 0–1 humanities subjects in finals (ref.)		1	
• 2–3 humanities subjects in finals		1.11	
• 2–3 humanities subjects in finals		1.34	
Adjusted R-squared	10.6%	15.8%	18.3%

Source: Family Survey Dutch Population 1998 ($N=1762$).

Significance. * $P<0.05$; ** $P<0.01$; *** $P<0.001$.

2.2 better chance of reading suspense later in life than young non-members of the library. The aspects that are related to reading-promoting activities at secondary school prove not to be important for suspense reading. Their significance is mainly limited to stimulating more elitist reading preferences. In suspense reading, reading promotion is especially effective if it takes place via parental stimulation of reading and the reading of popular books by parents.

5. Conclusion and discussion

In this study, I wanted to find out whether the efforts of parents, libraries, and secondary schools to introduce young people to reading bear fruit. A condition for

the effectiveness of reading promotion in young people is that the efforts must take place through intensive repeated contact in a relevant social environment. In this study, the concrete focus was on the effects of a number of positive circumstances in the parental home, the utilization of the extensive book supply in the library, and the cultural stimulation that takes place through secondary school curricula.

My first research question concerned a general description of the developments in reading promotion. In general, attention to reading promotion has slightly increased in the Netherlands over the past five decades. Ever more people are getting acquainted with reading and culture in their childhood. There is an especially strong increase in parental reading promotion activities. First of all, a growing number of parents find it important to stimulate reading in their children through instruction (reading to them, talking about reading). However, as more and more parents have taken to reading literary books in recent decades, setting the right reading example has become much more common in Dutch families. Furthermore, use of library facilities at an early age has shown a sharp increase, partly as a result of the introduction of free youth membership in 1975. Consequently, ever more children are introduced to books and information via their library membership. Finally, secondary schools nowadays pay more attention to the cultural education of their pupils than they used to. In the curricula for the modern languages, social studies, and history, there is an emphasis on increasing children's cultural competence and developing their interest in culture.

Is reading promotion effective? This was my second research question. If young people have experienced a great deal of attention for reading, this clearly has a positive influence on their reading levels in adult life; people who were stimulated to read in their childhood more often like literary books and also, slightly more often, suspense novels. Not only, therefore, does parental reading promotion lead to more reading, it also fosters greater appreciation for the high-quality end of the reading supply. Parents who read literature relatively often turn out to develop a literary taste in their children, and direct parental stimulation of reading also has positive consequences for present reading levels. The reading of romance fiction is almost completely determined by the direct transfer of taste from parents to children (imitation). Earlier research showed that the library is effective in promoting interest in reading (Kraaykamp, 2002). For present library use, the principle of 'what is learnt in the cradle lasts till the tomb' appears to be especially true. Childhood experiences with the library also play a role in reading levels, however. People who in their youth were library members for a long time later have a stronger preference for literary books, and also, up to a point, for suspense novels.

Scope for cultural education in secondary schools and the choice of an extensive humanities-oriented set of finals is very effective in stimulating pupils' cultural interest. First of all, this socialization at school leads to a stronger preference for literature at an adult age. These effects support the idea that cultural instruction at secondary school is important to promote pupils' cultural competence. This cultural instruction is effective at every school level. In this study, the effects of cultural socialization through the school are the most remarkable. It makes clear that the school can compensate for certain deficiencies incurred in the parental home by an intensive exposure to cultural products in the curriculum.

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