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The new educational estates: benefits and costs of education.

A synthesis of OBPWO-report 09-07: Maatschappelijke baten en kosten van onderwijs en leerervaring. Een micro-benadering. By: Saskia De Groof, Mark Elchardus, Dimokritos Kavadias, Jessy Siongers, Eef Stevens, Karen Van Aerden, Bram Spruyt, Frank Stevens

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Mark Elchardus

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1 Introduction

From the fifties on every new generation was more highly educated than the previous one. Combined with the demographic metabolism of society - the passing away of the older less educated generations - this has in the space of half a century resulted in a spectacular transformation of society. In a short time people with a post secondary education evolved from a privileged but quantitatively truly insignificant minority to about a tone setting third of the population. This is a synthesis of a report dealing with some of the consequences of that transformation. The report was called "Social consequences of learning". It should, from the outset, be noted that education is about more than learning and, more important even, that the exploration of the consequences of education necessarily starts from the observation of differences. Broadly speaking, two kinds of differences can be taken as a starting point. Differences between people with less and more education within a given society, which can be called the micro-perspective, and differences between countries with different aggregate levels of education, the macro-perspective. The report deals with the micro-perspectives and focuses on Flanders, although it also comprises a number of cross-nationally comparative chapters.

It is by no means easy to move from the observation of differences by levels of education to statements about consequences of education. The two are separated by a distance known in the literature as the difference between inequalities *by* education and inequalities *through* education. In the report and in this synthesis a number of differences and inequalities by education are reviewed. Where adequate data are available an attempt is made to see whether those differences and inequalities have increased, remained stable or decreased over time. Then, an attempt is made to estimate to what degree those differences and inequalities can be ascribed to the transformative impact of schooling, to what degree they are the result of a reproduction by the educational system of inequalities between the families into which the pupils were born. The evidence suggests that schools do (much) more than reproduce.

The "effects" of education are often evaluated on the basis of observed relations between the level of education – the highest diploma – and the trait or variable property under investigation. Such an approach often ascribes great influence to higher or post-secondary education. Yet, the growing literature on selection and socialisation effects tends to suggest

that, for quite a range of variable properties, the impact of higher education is less than usually assumed and that important differences and inequalities are due to differences between the tracks at the level of secondary education. The fourth section of the report tries to distinguish the properties for which higher education and the properties for which variation at the level of secondary education make the difference.

The consequences of education can come about is many different ways. An important distinction can be made between, on the one hand, consequences that come about because educational experience and credentials allocates people to certain occupations, labour market positions and material conditions and different cultural practices, on the other hand consequences that come about because of the cognitive and cultural transformation caused by education. Part five of the report investigates through which of those mechanisms the observed differences and inequalities between people with different levels of education come about, with a focus on distinguishing the role of occupations and material conditions from the role of cultural practices.

Many researchers have shown that the magnitude of differences by education and effects of education depend on the national context. Therefore the differences observed in Flanders (and Belgium) are also looked at comparatively. This makes it possible to also take into account the characteristics of countries or educational systems that influence the extent to which educational groups or educational classes differ.

2 The educational expansion and the transformation of society

According to the population census about 1% of the adult Belgian population had a diploma of post secondary education at the beginning of the post-World War II period, in 1947. About sixty years later, in 2009, about one in three of the Belgians had such a diploma. Much of the change took place in the half century between 1961 and 2009. Over that period the proportion of people with a low level of education - lower secondary (ISCed 0-2)- declined from 92 to 34%, the proportion with a medium level of education, a diploma secondary education (ISCed 3-4) increased from 6 to 35%, and the proportion with a high level of education, a diploma post-secondary education rose from 2 to 31%. Using the same definition of the levels of education there were 42% people with a low level of education in Flanders in 1999 and 27% in 2009. The proportion with a medium level of

education increased in Flanders over that period from 33% to 39%. The highly educated went from 25 to 34%.

One of the consequences of this fast transformation of the population in terms of the level of education, is that the older members of the population have an average level of education that is much lower than that of the younger cohorts. Of the Flemish born between 1976 and 1980 44% has a diploma of post secondary education. Of the people born before 1935 and still alive about 7% has a diploma post-secondary education (originally their cohort did not count that many highly educated members because people with a high level of education live much longer than the less educated).

3 Inequalities and differences by education

3.1 Work

The consequences of education are clearly felt in the labour market. The chances of finding and holding on to a job are strongly influenced by the level of education (van Hoof 1987). The less educated participate less in the labour market (Eurostat 2009). According to the Labour Force Survey of 2009 74% of all inhabitants of Flanders aged 25 to 64 were employed. For people with a low level of education this was 53%, for people with medium level of education 78% and of the people with a high level of education 87%. Not only the employment rate of the less educated is lower, they also run a (much) higher risk at unemployment. According to the Labour Force Survey of 2009 the risk at unemployment for people with a low level of education is 1.8 times higher than for people with a medium level and 2.8 times higher than for people with a high level of education. Those differences have not significantly changes over de past ten years(Stevens 2003a). Moreover, when the less educated are unemployed it is more difficult for them to re-enter the labour market than for the medium and highly educated (De Beer 1996).

When the less educated are employed they hold other jobs than the medium and highly educated (Booghmans, Cortese et al. 2009). Through the occupational opportunities education offers, a quite strong relationship exists between the level of education and the earning capacity. The less educated earn less and in the course of their career their income increases less (Schultz 1961; Cantillon, Ghysels et al. 2000). Their jobs offer less secure

employment (De Beer 1996). They also run a higher risk to have job related accidents (Vriend, van Kampen et al. 2005; Vandenbrande and Ver Heyen 2009; Vanderleyden, Callens et al. 2009).

3.2 Health

An inventory of health differences by level of education is not easy to establish because health researchers have predominantly worked with so called class differences based on classifications of occupations or with composite measures of social economic status (Sassi and Hurst 2008). When levels of education are distinguished from other measures of class or status, it was in almost all cases observed that of all indicators the level of education is significantly and often the most strongly related to variations in health and morbidity (Elo 2009: 557). In Belgium 52% of the people with only a diploma of primary education evaluate their health as "bad" or "very bad". Of the people with post secondary education 13% does so. Such relationships have to be treated with care because of the already mentioned relationship between age and level of education. However the differences in indicators of health do not disappear after controlling for age and sex (Deboosere, Demarest et al. 2006); Tolsma and Wolbers (2010); Van der Heyden, Gisle et al. (2010). Forty per cent of the inhabitants of Belgium with a low level of education suffers from a chronic illness. Among the medium educated this is 24% and among the highly educated 14%. Those differences also do not disappear after controlling for age and sex (Deboosere, Demarest et al. 2006). The less educated also experience more mental health problems (Van der Heyden, Gisle et al. 2010) and they more frequently suffer pain (Van der Heyden, Gisle et al. 2010).

All those differences result in spectacular inequalities in life expectancy. In Belgium men of 25 with the lowest level of education (no diploma primary education) can expect to live 18.5 years less in good health than men of 25 with a post-secondary diploma. The difference between 25 year old men with a medium level of education and a high level of education is 6.8 years (Deboosere, Gadeyne et al. 2008; Vranken, Campaert et al. 2009).

3.3 Social distance and social segregation

No great differences in the frequency of "informal" contacts with family, friends and neighbours are observed between the people with different levels of education The highly educated have somewhat less frequently contacts with family and neighbours and more frequently with friends and colleagues (outside of the work setting) than the less educated, but the observed differences are rather modest (Waege and Agneessens 2001; Agneessens, De Lange et al. 2003; Smits and Elchardus 2009; Tolsma, van der Meer et al. 2009). Much more important differences are observed for civic participation and participation in voluntary organizations. In 1998 about 40% of the people with a low level of education was an active or organizing participant in a voluntary organization, compared to 55% of the people with a medium level and 60% of the people with a high level of education (Elchardus, Huyse et al. 2001).

The less educated do not only have a lower degree of civic but also of political participation. When considering electoral participation one should be aware that Belgium has a duty to vote (or at least to present oneself at the voting bureau). Estimates of participation in elections are based on the survey question whether one did go to the voting booth, did vote and did not voluntary invalidate one's voting bulletin. After the Parliamentary elections of 2007 2% of the highly educated inhabitants of Flanders declared not to have voted in a valid way, compared to 7.6% of the people with a medium level of education and 11.3% of the people with a low level of education (De Groof, Elchardus et al. 2012). When asked in 2009 whether they would go to vote when the duty to do so would be abolished, 13% of the people with a high level of education, 32% of those with a medium level and 47% of those with a low level declared that they would never again go to vote under those circumstances. Similar differences are observed for other forms of political participation. According to a 2003 survey 84% of the people with a high level of educated had already signed a petition at least once in their life, 71% of the people with a medium level and 53% of the people with a low level of education. Of the highly educated 43% had already participated in a demonstration, against 26% of the people with a medium level and 19% of the people with a low level of education. For political or ethical consumption the differences are even greater (Decoster, van Aelst

et al. 2002; De Groof, Elchardus et al. 2012). Of the people with a low level of education 58% declares to never or only very rarely talk about politics.

3.4 Social distance

Extremely revealing of the social distance between the educational classes is educational homogamy: the choice of a life companion or marriage partner at one's own educational level (Kalmijn 1991). Homogamy is considered to be the result of opportunity (the likelihood of meeting someone with certain characteristics) and taste (the likelihood of liking someone with certain characteristics) (Blossfeld 2009); (Kalmijn and Flap 2001). The opportunities for people of the different educational classes to meet each other are limited (Feld 1982; Kalmijn and Flap 2001; Bottero 2005; Haandrikman 2010) and apparently when they meet they do not like each other too much or at least do seldom consider marriage or cohabitation. Some authors point to the universities as an important institution where the future highly educated live and date, to a large extent segregated from the rest of society, at an age when many couples are formed (Blossfeld 2009). Skopek, Schulz et al. (2011) investigated the behaviour on dating sites where the opportunity structure should play a lesser role. They found that people tend to send messages to people with a level of education similar or higher to their own, people tend to respond to invitations from people with a level of education similar to their own, and similarity of educational level was more important for the highly educated than for the others. All this illustrates that besides opportunity, taste plays an important role and does so independently of personal knowledge of the person concerned.

While researchers do not agree on whether educational homogamy has increased over time, there is now widespread agreement that homogamy by level of education is more important than homogamy by other characteristics such as the socio-economic position of the family of origin (Mare 1991; Uunk 1996; Kalmijn 1998; Smits, Ultee et al. 1998; Lucas 2001; Blossfeld and Timm 2003; Corijn 2003; Smits 2003; Schwartz and Mare 2005; Domanski and Przybysz 2007; Hou and Myles 2008; Blossfeld 2009; Blossfeld and Buchholz 2009; Skopek, Schulz et al. 2011). If the choice of marriage partner would be random one would in Flanders in 2009 among the population 24-32 have 18% of the couples with both partners with a low level of

education. In fact there 32% such couples. With 3 levels of education one expects about 33% of the marriages to be homogeneous in terms of the level of education of the spouses, in fact 67% of all couples were homogeneous (De Groof, Elchardus et al. 2012).

While homogamy is a strong indicator of patterns of social segregation, it also plays an important role in the distribution of education opportunities for the children (Katrnak, Kreidl et al. 2006). Homogamy implies that all the economic, social and cultural resources parents can invest in their children's educational career by virtue of their own level of education, tend to be concentrated in some and almost completely lacking in other couples. High levels of homogamy can therefore indicate both social segregation and closure or lessening of the opportunity for intergenerational educational mobility (Kalmijn 1991; Smits 2003; De Groof, Elchardus et al. 2012). Educational mobility tends to be low in most European societies, but it is particularly low in Flanders, according to some about the lowest in Europe (Pfeffer 2008).

3.5 Class and status

The importance of educational homogamy is often seen as an indicator of a great social distance between the educational classes, turning those classes into status groups that are not only separated by important material inequalities, but also by social and emotional distance. Those status groups dispose of very unequal resources to aid the educational achievement of their children, and might therefore also come to form cognitively different groups. Cohort analyses by (Gesthuizen and Kraaykamp 2002) have shown that in the Netherlands the least educated become increasingly homogeneous in terms of verbal competence. It should therefore not come as a surprise that the idea of a new kind of society divided by great inequalities between educational classes that act as socially segregated estates manifests itself under different guises. One often mentioned element of that new type of society, to which we will return later, is the importance of the ability to manipulate symbols. Collecting, dealing with, interpreting and using symbolic information is seen as crucial to the contemporary (knowledge) economy and as the new frontier of scientific and technological innovation. The work of the highly educated mainly consists in collecting, ordering, analysing, and interpreting symbols in order to derive

usable information and knowledge. They form, as Reich formulated it in *The Work of Nations* a class of "symbolic analysts". Such arguments are based on the thesis that there is something in contemporary economy, science and technology, that helps the highly educated to become a privileged class and distinct status group.

The most controversial version of that thesis is probably Herrnstein and Murray (1994)'s idea of a "cognitive class". They argue that several generations of an open and meritocratic educational system, coupled with hiring on the basis of educational achievement and educational homogamy, leads to a class of less educated that will also have less cognitive capacities. The controversy surrounding their thesis is largely due to their assumption of strong heredity of cognitive capacity and to the one sided policy implications they draw from their thesis. These are, however, two non essential elements of their thesis which is also relevant when stripped of them. It suffices to assume that the educational system is relatively open, that it is somewhat meritocratic, and to observe that there is a high degree of education homogamy and to assume that early socialization in the family influences future cognitive capacities and the ability to learn in a way that can not easily or completely be changed or reversed by the schools, and to observe that the allocation of life changes is strongly influenced by the achieved level of education, to expect an evolution in the direction of cognitive classes or at least of classes which will offer their children extremely unequal chances at educational and social mobility due to the combined relative scarcity of cultural, cognitive and material resources. Such a diagnosis need not be used as a legitimation of existing inequalities. It can on the contrary be considered a strong argument in favour of a policy strongly focused on the education and on particularly the early education of the children from educationally deprived families.

3.6 A new social question?

A related albeit different worry about the evolution of the nature inequality has been called the "new social question" (Verhue, Schockaert et al. 1999; Manssens 2000; Rosanvallon 2000 [1995]; Castel 2003; Marx 2007), several contributions in Cantillon, Elchardus et al. (2003). Summarized briefly the thesis of the new social question contains three propositions. First, that inequalities and significant differences tend to become more strongly related to educational qualifications. Secondly that such

differences tend to be seen by many as a consequence of personal merit and responsibility, as measured among other things by achievement in an open and meritocratic educational system. Thirdly, that the life chances, the various risks such as ill health and unemployment, become increasingly predictable, due to advances in knowledge and technology, but also due to the strong relationship between educational achievement and such risks. Unemployment ceases to be a risk with an unknown probability to become an accident predictable on the basis of educational qualifications, certainly predictable at an aggregate level. From progress in genetics greater predictability of individual health is expected. In other words, the *veil of ignorance*, which forms the basis of solidarity as self interest well understood, is being torn or lifted, and risks being replaced by a calculus of the relative risks of various groups. The authors writing about the new social question therefore expect that it threatens the solidarity, particularly between the educational classes. The highly educated, they expect, will become aware of their much lower risks and withdraw from full solidarity with the less educated (Vlek 1997: 261). For Flanders it was shown that the living standard of the less educated did not decline in the eighties and nineties, compared to that of the more highly educated, but that this stability was due entirely to the redistributive effect of the welfare state, while the pre-tax income did show a relative decline (Marx and Passot 2003).

Worries about the willingness to support the welfare state has stimulated research into that topic, which has often shown that on average the highly educated are stronger supporters of the welfare state than the less educated. As a consequence of that repeated observation the new social question came to be seen as less pressing and has received less attention. Yet, it is not excluded that the strong inequalities by level of education and the important differences in the risk of ill health and unemployment will put a strain on welfare state arrangements and will fuel conflicts between the educational classes.

3.7 School segregation

The social distance between the educational classes or status groups perpetuates itself over the generations, not only because the families are very unequal in terms of the resources they can put at the disposal of their children's educational careers, but also

because the children of the different educational classes do not attend the same kind of schools. The children of the less educated attend schools and school tracks that offer them less opportunity at educational achievement.

The degree of inequality that can developed between schools depends strongly on two features of the educational system: the degree of freedom parents have in the choice of school for their children and the age at which tracking starts (and the degree to which it is irreversible). In general, more freedom of choice in the selection of schools for one's children, earlier and less reversible tracking, tend to lead to greater inequality between schools and hence to greater inequality between pupils (Balla, Bowea et al. 1996; Lubienski 2005; Sönderström and Uusitalo 2005; Desmedt and Nicaise 2006; Hirtt, Nicaise et al. 2007; OECD 2007; Jenkins, Micklewright et al. 2008; Horn 2009; Jacobs, Rea et al. 2009; Lubienski, Gulosino et al. 2009; Alegre and Ferrer-Esteban 2010). Together with Ireland and the Netherlands, the Flemish educational system is characterized by far reaching, in fact extreme freedom of school choice and relatively early and strongly irreversible tracking at the level of secondary education (Eurydice, 2009). When the countries that participated in PISA-2008 are ordered in terms of inequality between the schools in terms of the parents socio-economic background and cultural capital (OECD 2010:88,131) from the most equal to the most unequal, Flanders is 47th out of 65 countries. When looking at the results of the PISA tests, the inequality between students in Flanders is also high (Boeren and Nicaise 2011). Of the 38 countries that participated in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) Flanders is among the five countries in which the inequality in civic knowledge among the pupils is the largest. In a comparative perspective the Flemish educational system, while on average performing will according to the PISA-results, is characterized by extremely low educational mobility, high inequality between the schools in terms of social composition, and very high inequality between pupils in terms of performance. It is likely that this is due to its high degree of freedom of school choice and its relatively early and irreversible tracking. This does certainly contribute to perpetuate educational inequalities and its many consequences over the generations.

3.8 Personal happiness and social malaise

One would expect the many and huge inequalities between the educational classes to result, on the part of the less educated, in a lack of satisfaction with personal life or happiness as well as in social malaise or dissatisfaction with the way society is evolving. Social malaise has been observed to manifest itself in different ways: a negative evaluation of how society is doing, feelings of insecurity, anomie, a bleak view of the future of the economy and society, lack of trust in institutions … (Betz 1998; Elchardus and Smits 2002; Jacobs, Janssens et al. 2003; Derks 2005). Some authors do not distinguish between the degree of satisfaction with personal life and the degree of satisfaction with society (Pope and Ferguson 1982-1983; Bruyninckx and Mortelmans 1999). Yet, there is now abundant evidence indicating that these two forms of evaluation are only weakly related and that one should therefore carefully distinguish between them (Culbertson and Stempel 1985; Trommsdorf 1994; Arnett 2000; Funk 2000; Ester and Vinken 2001; Jacobs, Janssens et al. 2003; SCP 2003; Schnabel 2004; Elchardus and De Groof 2005; Mutz 2006 [1998]; Elchardus and Smits 2007; Elchardus 2011; Elchardus and De Keere 2011). People do not evaluate the way society is evolving on the basis of the degree of satisfaction with their personal life.

On a very detailed measure of happiness or satisfaction with personal life (based on responses to 36 questions) administered to a probability sample of the Belgian population, the people with a low level of education had an average of 60, the medium educated of 63 and the people with post-secondary schooling 65 (Elchardus and Smits 2007). The more highly educated are happier, but the differences are small and in light of the observed inequalities and patterns of segregation, surprisingly small. Moreover those differences disappear, are explained away by differences in health and socio-economic status (poverty in fact). Poor people in poor health are much less happy than the others, and people with a low level of education run a higher risk of being unemployed, poor and in ill health.

In contrast to the small differences observed for the degree of satisfaction with personal life, the differences between the educational classes are always large for social malaise, regardless of the indicator considered (Elchardus and Smits 2002;

Derks 2005; Elchardus and De Groof 2005; Elchardus and Smits 2005b; Elchardus and Smits 2007). Highly educated people have a much more positive view of how society is evolving than the less educated. The latter are pessimistic concerning the evolution of the economy, the rise of crime, the possibilities of leading a good life or the problems related to greater diversity (Elchardus, Smits et al. 2003; Jacobs, Janssens et al. 2003; Elchardus, De Groof et al. 2005; De Groof 2006; Cops 2009; Elchardus and Smits 2009), they have higher fears of becoming a victim of crime (Borooah and Carcach 1997; Elchardus, Smits et al. 2003; Cops 2009; Reese 2009), feel powerless to influence the course of events, which they perceive as unfavourable (Garfield 1987; Deflem 1989; Scheepers, Felling et al. 1992; Elchardus, De Groof et al. 2005), and place less trust in institutions (Elchardus and Smits 2001; Elchardus and Smits 2002; Kampen and Van de Walle 2003; Derks 2005; Grosskopf 2008). The position, defended by some Mishler and Rose (1997) and Cook and Gronke (2004), that higher education sharpens a critical attitude and therefor leads to less trust in institutions, does certainly not apply to Belgium/Flanders, and neither to most developed societies. For almost all institutions trust is (much) lower among people with a low level of education than among the highly educated. Sometimes exceptions are observed for the Catholic Church and the army, two institutions which are, at least in some countries, trusted more by the less than by the highly educated (Dekker and de Hart 1999; Elchardus and Smits 2002).

Looking at the relationship between the level of education, satisfaction with personal life and social malaise leads to two surprising observations. First that despite the great inequalities that separate them, the educational classes do not differ much in personal satisfaction, and secondly that despite small differences in personal satisfaction they differ a lot in the evaluation of society, its future and institutions. In the comparative chapters of the report an attempt is made to explain this paradox.

3.9 Attitudes

It is quite likely that the observed inequalities, the social segregation, the different views of how society is evolving, will result in differences in attitudes. The number of attitudes one can look at is potentially unlimited. The report focuses on attitudes that are often considered as expressing social malaise and that are politically important in

the sense that they are observed to strongly differentiate between the electoral choices of the educational classes. Two attitudes often researched meet those conditions: ethnocentrism or ethnic prejudice and authoritarianism or repressiveness (a though stand on law and order) (Middendorp 1978; Middendorp 1979; Fleishman 1988; Topf 1989: 70; Grunberg and Schweisguth 1990; Elchardus 1994a; Kriesi 1998; Achterberg 2006; Achterberg and Houtman 2006; Kriesi, Grande et al. 2006; Van der Waal, Achterberg et al. 2007; Treier and Hillygus 2009; Houtman and Achterberg 2010).

In Flanders large to huge differences in ethnic prejudice are observed between the educational classes, with the less educated expressing the highest degree of ethnocentrism (Carton, Swyngedouw et al. 1993; De Witte and Scheepers 1999; Elchardus, Huyse et al. 2001; Jacobs, Abts et al. 2001; Meuleman and Billiet 2003). In a 2006 survey in Flanders for instance, 8% of the people with post secondary education against 26% of the people with a low level of education agreed with the statement "all in all, immigrants cannot be trusted" Such differences can already be observed at the level of secondary education between the different tracks, with the pupils of the vocational track expressing much higher levels of prejudice than the pupils in the general or academic preparatory track, with the pupils in the technical tracks in between (Elchardus, Kavadias et al. 1998; De Groof, Elchardus et al. 2001; Elchardus and Stevens 2001; Pelleriaux 2001; Smits 2004; Siongers 2010; Elchardus, Herbots et al. 2011). Similar observations are made for authoritarianism/repressiveness (Grabb 1979; Dekker and Ester 1987; Duriez and Van Hiel 2002; De Groof and Elchardus 2009). In the 2006 survey already referred to, 41% of the people with a low level of education against 11% with a high level of education agreed with the statement: "We need strong leaders that tell us what to do".

3.10 A short interim summary

An impressive mass of evidence now documents the huge inequalities and differences that in most developed societies separate the educational classes, i.e. the people with different levels of education. Huge inequalities in employability, health, and life expectancy have been observed, as well as educational homogamy and school

segregation along the lines of the parents' level of education, and great differences in attitudes and opinions. The summarizing judgements of authors who have looked at the evidence are telling: "[…] everybody knows and everybody knows that everybody else knows that education rules in modern society" (Kingston et al., (2003: 55). Gesthuizen (2004) describes the educational system as the nervous system of contemporary society (2004: 154). Bovens (2006) suggests replacing the concept of representative democracy by 'diploma democracy' and according to Tolsma and Wolbers educational inequalities and differences now form the main societal cleavage (2010).

Observed differences between levels of education are, of course, not the same as consequences of education. Yet, the overwhelming majority of authors who document inequalities and differences by education do so on the basis of multivariate analysis controlling for possible other explanatory factors (such as age, material conditions, gender, characteristics of the family of origin…). In the overwhelming majority of cases they find that the "net effects" of education remain strong and significant. The following sections deal with the question to what degree and in what sense the differences by educational level can be considered differences through educational level.

4 Reproduction and the transformative capacity of schools

In Flanders educational mobility is low. The children from parents with a low level of education often end up in the vocational track at the secondary school level and do not to pursue higher education (Van de Velde, Van Brusselen et al. 1996; Tan 1998; Elchardus and Siongers 2003). While in the Netherlands (de Graaf and Ganzeboom 1990; De Graaf and Ganzeboom 1993; Dronkers and Ultee 1995) observed a trend towards more educational mobility, no such trend was observed in Flanders. It should be noted that later analyses have nuanced the previously optimistic conclusions concerning educational mobility in the Netherlands. The influence of the parents' level of education has decreased for choices at the secondary level, but not at the level of post-secondary education (Shavit and Blossfeld 1993; De Graaf and De Graaf 2001; De Graaf and De Graaf 2002; Breen and Jonsson 2005). Moreover, when educational systems are confronted with growth of the student population, they tend to differentiate in tracks and different forms of education

that offer unequal opportunities for further education and for the future careers to the pupils (Lucas 2001). When that property is taken into account and the type as well as the level of education is considered, the educational system in the Netherlands appears not to have become more equal or open since the nineties of the previous century (Tieben, De Graaf et al. 2010)

To varying degrees a lack of educational mobility is observed in all societies (Iannelli 2002) and this has given rise to an extensive literature, which does not achieve consensus about the precise mechanisms of this intergenerational lack of mobility. Authors working in the tradition of Bourdieu tend to emphasize the role of the class conditions of the family of origin, often conceived in terms of economic, social and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970; Bourdieu 1979; Coleman 1988). Other authors emphasize the role of ambition and educational aspirations (Sewell and Hauser 1980; Coleman 1988). Quite frequently the role of ambition and aspiration is emphasized by researchers working within the frame of rational choice theory. Variations in ambition are then explained as the result of a cost benefit calculus of educational choices (Boudon 1974; Murphy 1990; Breen and Goldthorpe 1997). Children use the educational level of their parents as a reference point and their fear of "dropping" lower is higher than their ambition or desire to "climb" higher. In order to avoid dropping, so the authors defending this theory suggest, those youngsters avoid risky undertakings and choose safer, but less ambitious educational careers.

Several analyses indicate that the role of material conditions and the parents' occupation(s) in influencing the educational career of the children, tend to become less important while the influence of the parents' level of education and the cultural capital of the family (measured in various ways, ranging from counting books in the home to a more middle or high brow mass media preference) tend to become more important (De Graaf and De Graaf 2001; Pelleriaux 2001; De Graaf and De Graaf 2002). Such a tendency also increases the importance of homogamy. The reanalysis of a survey from 2006 has shown that, even after controlling for age, sex and the socio-economic characteristics of the family, the probability of children with two parents with a high level of education were four times more likely to be in the general of academically preparatory track in secondary school than children with two parents with a low level of education. The latter were between three and four times more likely to be in the vocational track than the former.

Parents and children do not only resemble each other in terms of their educational achievement, but across a wide array of traits (Siongers 2007). Generally speaking two kinds of explanations are offered for this, which might be labelled direct and indirect transmission. Direct influence occurs because parents consciously and unconsciously influence their children (Bandura and Walters 1969; Kraaykamp 2003). The indirect influence of the parents or the family can be realized in different ways. First, families offer their children an array of material conditions and culural resources that can influence the way they think, feel and act. Secondly families "channel" their children towards other socializing settings such as certain schools, school tracks and media uses. Thirdly, the conditions and resources at the disposal of the parents will probably also influence the ambitions and aspirations they have for their children, which in turn are likely to influence the children (Bourdieu 1979; Bengtson, Biblarz et al. 2003; Lareau 2003).

There are sound theoretical reasons to expect strong effects of the family of origin on the educational achievement of the children and on many aspects of the way the children will think, feel, act and fare in future life. Hence the importance of the question whether schooling and education adds anything tot that influence: do they simply reproduce the inequalities and differences that separate the families of the pupils or are they transformative, able to create differences independently from the ones which they receive as an input? Most authors try to answer that question by observing what "effects" of education (level or kind) remain after controlling for various characteristics of the family of origin. It is this style of analysis that has led to the conclusion that education affects a very broad array of variable properties and is an important source of differences and inequalities. Yet, people who believe that the influence of the class background is very strong and exerts a lasting influence, can always object to such findings by claiming that insufficient characteristics of the family and its class position were into account. Such criticisms will always to some extent be true because it is impossible to take all relevant characteristics of the family into account or it is at any rate impossible to know whether one has taken all the relevant characteristics into account. Even sibling research does not solve this problem, in part because of its inherent limitation, but also because siblings have much more in common than what is usually understood as the class position of the family. In the report the transformative power of the schools was evaluated on the basis of the following criterion: the school has an independent effect on a given trait when a significant

effect of the track young people are in is still observed after controlling for the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the family and the parents' value for that trait. Research allowing for this test is rare, one needs studies in which both the pupils and their parents (or at least one parent) is interviewed. One such study is (Siongers 2007). For ethnocentrism for instance, she finds that the parent's extent of ethnocentrism and the child's correlates 0.42. A model that controls for the parents' level of education, socioeconomic status, media use and ethnocentrism, as well as for the grade and the track the pupil is in, as well as the media use of the pupil, explains 31% of the variance in the pupils ethnocentrism. In that model both the track and the media use of the pupil increase the explained variance (the two effects are roughly of equal strength) and have a significant influence on the ethnocentrism of the pupils. The parents' level of education and socio-economic status do not directly influence the pupil's ethnocentrism, but exert their influence by channelling their children to certain tracks and media preferences. This suggests that at least for this attitude, for which the test could be performed, later socialization settings such as school tracks and media have an additional influence, partly independent of the family of origin. It seems that the role of education cannot be understood as a reproduction of class background, despite the important influence of that background and the limited educational mobility. Another lesson to be drawn from that analysis is that the interplay and interaction between kinds of education and kinds of media uses and preferences should receive much more attention.

5 Selection and socialization effects

The inequalities and differences by education that have been described did nearly always refer to differences by level of education. From such observations it seems that one can conclude that the pursuit of higher education makes the difference. Such a conclusion is however not necessarily true in the case of Flanders where there is relatively early and quite irreversible tracking. That feature of the educational system raises the question to what extent the observed inequalities and differences are due to the level of education as such or to the track pursued at the secondary level of education.

In terms of the existing literature this question can be situated in the discussion about socialization and selection effects. The so called socialization hypothesis sees effects of education as the result of the socializing influence of schooling or the influence of the

learning experience on ways of thinking, feeling and on practices and/or cognitive abilities (Cassel and Lo 1997; Kam and Palmer 2008; Bovens and Wille 2009; Persson 2010). Until recently this was the dominant view of the effects of education. The socializing influence of additional education was considered the cause of the positive social outcomes, the positive and desirable traits of people with higher education (Kam and Palmer 2008; Persson 2010).

That explanation for the effects of education, or for the observed differences between people with different levels of education, has been criticized because it does not take into account the possible influence of factors that are related to education but can not be considered socializing effects of education (Kam and Palmer 2008). One such set of factors is called selection effects (Kam and Palmer 2008; Persson 2010). The general thesis is that what appears as affects of a certain educational experience such as for instance the pursuit of higher education, is in fact a consequence of the characteristics of the people who were selected for that educational experience. The problem of trying to sort out socialization and selection effects arises for all levels and kinds of education. Are the results of different forms of primary education due to the socialization effect of that education or to the characteristics of the children (and their families) that were selected into those different forms of primary education (Zakrisson and Ekehammar 1998). It is obvious that a similar question can be raised with regard to the tracks in secondary schools or with regard to the effects of post-secondary education when compared to the outcomes of secondary schooling.

In order to separate selection and socialization effects for specific levels of education one needs longitudinal panel studies. Such studies attempting the distinction between selection and socialization effects are extremely rare. We were able to identify six such studies. Two of them look at effects on health, but are not only concerned with the effects of higher education, but with the added value in terms of health of additional years of education in general. One of those studies, performed in the United States, found that after controlling for the situation experienced in childhood, every additional year of education increased self-reported good health by a little over 2% for both men and women (Shefi 2009). In a comparable British study the improvement was estimated to be about 5% per additional year of education.

The other studies focus explicitly on the added value of higher education. (Kam and Palmer 2008) start from the observation that people with post-secondary education report a higher level of political participation, but observe that this apparent consequence of higher education disappears after controlling for attitudes that are formed before higher education is undertaken. They ascribe the relationship between higher education and political participation to selection effects: people who embark on higher education have already the attitudes that makes them more active citizens. Highton (2009) used panel data to investigate the relationship between higher education and political knowledge and also concludes that this relationship has to be ascribed to selection rather than socialization effects. The crucial variables are the political knowledge of the parents, the general cognitive capacities of the students and the extent of their political commitment. Elchardus & Spruyt (2009; 2010) compared the socio-political attitudes of incoming university students and of the same students four years later, upon graduation. They also conclude that the socializing impact of the university is minimal and that the association between the level of education and attitudes such as ethnocentrism has to be ascribed almost completely to selection effects.

While the studies concerning self-reported health do indicate an effect of education in general, the panel studies focusing on the effects of higher education and on political participation, political knowledge and socio-political attitudes, find little or no socializing effect of higher education and ascribe the observed relationship between the level of education and those variable properties mainly or completely to selection-effect. They are the consequences of traits students have already before they undertake post-secondary education. This conclusion dovetails with a growing number of research findings that uncover selection effects, rather than socialization effects of higher education (Vedlitz 1983; McClelland and Auster 1990; Astin 1993; Windolf 1995; Dey 1996; Nie, Junn et al. 1996; Cassel and Lo 1997; Jacobsen 2001; Persson 2010). In Jacobsen's succinct summary: "What education does is, at best, to maintain the values the students already had before they started to study: higher education does not seem to reinforce or weaken many political values" (2001: p. 366).

In the report the question is raised to what extent the differences observed by level of education can be ascribed to the (socializing) effect of higher education or to differences that already exist at the end of secondary school and can be ascribed to differences

between the tracks. The question is highly relevant in the case of Flanders because from the second grade of secondary schooling on there is a strict division between the vocational, the technical and the general track. Based on a 1999 analysis of the school careers of the cohort born in 1976 about 41% of the pupils start and complete their secondary training in the general track, for the technical track this is 18% and the vocational track 5%. 36% of the students start in the general track and "cascade" down to the technical and the vocational track, due to poor grades. No wonder then that vocational training is regarded by many as a choice forced by failure, which is also likely to affect the motivation and the attitudes of the pupils in that track. Almost all of the pupils finishing secondary school in the general track go on to higher education. From the pupils finishing secondary school in the technical track a fair number goes on to higher education, mainly advanced technical training. From the pupils finishing secondary school in the vocational track very few go on to higher education almost none to the university. Therefore the possibility of selection effects is very real.

No panel data are available to investigate those effects (with the exception of the Elchardus and Spruyt 2009, 2010 studies). However two surveys (one from 2002 and one from 2006) could be identified in which both the level of education and the track pursued at the level of secondary education was asked. This made it possible to compare the following groups (the people with a low level of education, less than secondary education, were excluded from this analysis):

- secondary education, vocational track
- secondary education, technical track
- secondary education, general track
- higher education, vocational or technical track at secondary level
- secondary education, general track at secondary level

This makes it possible to compare groups that pursued the same track at the secondary level but one of which stopped after secondary school and the other went on to obtain a diploma of higher education. This makes it possible to estimate the additional effect of pursuing higher education, controlling for the track pursued at the secondary level. Of course, this is not the same as an analysis of panel data. Strictly speaking, the socialization and selection effects of higher education cannot be distinguished in this way. The present

analysis will overestimate the effects of higher education and underestimate the effects of tracking at the secondary level, because the people from the general track that do not go on to higher education are most probably a particular group having already less of the "good values" associated with the outcomes of higher education, while the small group of students that go from technical (and in very rare cases vocational) education to higher education probably have more of those "good values" than their colleagues who do not. Those selection effects are counted as socialization effect of higher education in the approach used, and that is why this approach underestimates the effects of tracking at the secondary level and overestimates the effects of higher education.

The analysis was performed for the self-evaluation of health, for smoking, employment (employability), job satisfaction, active or organizing membership of voluntary associations, non-voting, ethnocentrism and feelings of insecurity. Education has a strong effect on all these variables and in the familiar direction, the higher the level of education the higher the positive values of the variables: better health, less smoking, better employability, greater job satisfaction, more active civic and political engagement, less ethnic prejudice, less fear of crime. When the additional influence of higher education on these different variables is estimated, over and above what can be explained on the basis of the tracks pursued at the secondary level, we can distinguish three groups of variables (see figure 1).

For three variables the effects of the tracks at the secondary level turn out to be more important that the pursuit of higher education: the self evaluation of health, ethnocentrism and civic participation. If one takes into account the fact that the method used necessarily underestimates the effects of the tracks and overestimates the effects of higher education, it is plausible to conclude that higher education adds little to these values and that, if improvement is pursued through education, the efforts should be concentrated on the secondary level and deal with the differences between the tracks.

For three other variables the effect of higher education is slightly bigger than that of the tracks. Taking into account the bias of the method it seems safe to say that for these variable properties the tracking at the secondary level and the pursuit of higher education play an equally important role: the participation in elections, the feelings of insecurity (or fear of crime) and job satisfaction.

For only one variable does higher education seems to be clearly more important that the tracking at the secondary level of education: the probability of being employed (considered here as an indicator of employability).

In general it seems safe to conclude, both in light of the existing literature and our own analyses, that with regard to most variable properties considered as outcomes of education, the effect of higher education is usually (grossly) overestimated. In an educational system characterized by relatively early and highly irreversible tracking such as exists in Flanders, the social consequences of education are to a great, in some cases quasi total extent, decided at the level of secondary education. The effects of tracking at the secondary level should become the central focus of an educational policy geared towards improving the output or desirable consequences of education.

6 Allocation and socialization effects

While the previous question can be situated in the attempt to separate selection and socialization effects, this section deals with what is called allocation and socialization effects. The effects of education can be ascribed to socialization, but also to allocation, i.e. as realized through some consequences of education rather than through the educational experience itself. A level of education leads, for instance, to some kinds of occupation and to the experience of the practices, social milieu, cognitive challenges, daily routines… typical of that sort of occupation and, therefore, indirectly to the attitudes, ways of feeling and thinking and practices that are the result of those experiences. The implication of this is not so much that these consequences will be mistaken for consequences of education when the occupation is not taken into account, but that they clarify the way in which the consequences of education come about. By making a difference between allocation and socialization effects, people in fact try to distinguish the socializing role of education proper from the socializing role of other institutions, such as occupation. In the report a great many data sets were used to look at three kinds of allocations: the labour market position, the material position and the cultural practices.

The empirical study of the effects of socialization is divided over the question whether the early experience is decisive or later socialization experiences are important too (Bengtson, Biblarz et al. 2003); (Elder 1994), with some authors emphasizing the lasting effects of

primary socialization (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Searing, Wright et al. 1976; Sapiro 1994; Van Eijck 1997; Verboord and van Rees 2003), others emphasizing the important role of secondary socialization (Jennings and Niemi 1981; Vollebergh, Iedema et al. 2001). Within the Bourdieusian theoretical framework, which has had a great influence on the study of the effects of education, this dispute concerns the stability or, in Bourdieu's terminology, the hysteresis (Bourdieu 1990 [1980]:55; see alsoMesny 2002)) of the primary habitus acquired as a consequence of the class position of the family into which one is born.

An empirically grounded discussion of this issue is made difficult by three circumstances. The first is the lack of theoretical elaboration of how habitus is formed and works (Jenkins 1992; Farnell 2000; Steinmetz 2006), which solicited DiMaggio's comment that "[…] habitus is a kind of theoretical *deux ex machina* by means of which Bourdieu relates objective structure and individual activity" (Bourdieu 1979: 1464). The second are the quite different views Bourdieu has expressed concerning hysteresis and the inertia of primary habitus, and the third is the absence of empirical work evaluating the validity of those different views. In some passages Bourdieu suggests that hysteresis is extremely strong, creating an almost total inertia of the primary habitus, i.e. forcing the effects of new experiences into the mould of the primary habitus thereby continually reaffirming the almost absolutely determining influence of the class conditions experienced in the family of origin (Bourdieu and Passeron 1979[1964]:81-83; Bourdieu 1990 [1980]:55; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:87). In other passages inertia is seen more as a variable property depending on an equally variable measure of hysteresis, as well as on the empirically variable extent of social mobility and on the variable continuity of the material or class conditions that have contributed to forming the primary habitus (Bourdieu 1979:123; Bourdieu 1984 [1979]:109; see also Bourdieu and Chartier 1988: 79; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:133). On the basis of this explanation one expects a great influence of the occupation and the material conditions of the family of origin. It proposes that much of the observed effect of education will in fact be due to the fact that education allocates people to certain occupational and material class conditions (which in Bourdieus view largely reproduce those experienced in the family of origin).

Another possible explanation for the formation of attitudes is derived from the theory of symbolic society, which highlights the role of new controlling institutions, among which schools and the media play an important role (Elchardus 2009; Elchardus and De Keere

2010). A still crucial insight into the role of mass media is offered by cultivation theory (Gerbner 1969; Gerbner and Gross 1976; Gerbner, Gross et al. 1994; Signorielli and Morgan 2001) which rejected the so called 'media effect studies' in favour of a conception of media influence as consisting in the cultivation of frames of interpretation (see also Gamson, Croteau et al. 1992; Hetsroni 2010). People who have cultivated such frames will perceive and interpret the world in a particular way. According to this strain of cultivation theory, watching media content cultivates frames of interpretation, and in doing so creates interpretative communities of people that to a significant degree share such frames. The interpretation of the media 'texts' then becomes not a function of that text, but of the encounter between a text and an interpretative community (Fish 1980: 1-17, 97-111, 303-320)[3]. The role of interpretative communities in selecting and interpreting symbolic content is quite similar to habitus as a structuring structure or a mental habit (Bourdieu, Chamboredon et al. 1968:11) guiding the selection and interpretation of new experiences. Yet, there are at least three differences between the way the interpretative communities and habitus conceive of the way in which attitudes, ways of feeling, thinking and practices are formed. (1) The role of interpretative communities does not assume a priori a total or strong inertia of the primary socialization or the primary habitus. (2) It leaves room for the influence of other settings than the family of origin. (3) It therefore gives not a priori a preponderant role to the class position of the family of origin. On the basis of the theory of symbolic society one expects rather important effects of the symbolic environment the level of education allocates people to, i.e. the media use to which it leads.

Various data sets were identified that make it possible to look at the effects of material conditions, occupation and media preference and religion on: self reported health, civic participation, political participation (voting), ethnocentrism and feelings of insecurity or fear of crime. Not all the variables are present in all the data sets and they are not measured in exactly the same way in each of the data sets used. The more variables that are present and the more detailed their measurement, the smaller remains the direct effect of the level of education on the dependent variable. Such a direct effect remains in all the models estimated, indicating that these do not identify all the mechanisms through which education exert its influence. The models are intended to look at the relative importance of material conditions, work and the symbolic environments in mediating the effects of

education. In all the models those three sets of variables do have a significant effect on the outcomes considered.

In general, the symbolic environments to which different levels of education lead appear to be the most important mediators of the effect of education. After controlling for the material conditions and the symbolic environments, the occupation and the various ways of classifying occupations appear to be rather unimportant. The material conditions appear to have a significant influence on health, together with and in equal measure to the symbolic environment. The latter now appears to be the most important transmitter of the effect of education, particularly the time spent watching television and the media preference, the latter being by far the most important factor. The symbolic environment has strong effects on self-reported health, civic participation, political participation, ethnocentrism and fear of crime. The material condition has a strong mediating effect only on the self-reported health. The latter is, despite the strong development of the welfare state, still significantly influenced by income and the extent one can live well with one's income, and this effect explains part of the relationship between health and education. Labour market participation and occupation has a medium sized mediating effect on civic participation, but almost negligible effects on the other variables.

In general the mediating effect of symbolic environments appears to be much more important than that of material conditions and occupations. The output of education appears to be realized less through the access it gives to the labour market, advantageous material conditions and certain jobs, more to the constitution of cultural capital or interpretative communities that lead to particular ways of selecting and interpreting symbolic content.

7 Has the influence of education increased over time?

The very great inequalities and differences by education, often inspires the thesis that educational differences have become more important over time. While there is plenty of evidence that educational differences now are more important than say differences in material conditions or jobs, this does of course not imply that educational differences have become more important over time. The evidence on which to base such a judgement is simply not always available or, if it is available, pertains to too short a period of time, going

back ten to twenty years, while given the expansion of education, the growing importance of education, if it exists, can probably only be observed over a period of forty years or more. The evolution of most of the differences focused on in the report can be studied only over the last ten to twenty years. The exception is the level of employment which for the population aged 15 and over is available at regular intervals since 1947. Because the labour force participation of women has changed considerably over that period due to other factors than employability, it makes sense to concentrate on men when using employment ratio's as an indicator of employability. Already in 1947 there was a (small) difference in the employment ratios of the different educational classes: for every 100 people with a high level of education, 89 with a low level of education were employed. The ratio shows little change until the eighties of the previous century. The employment situation of the less educated starts declining relative to that of the people with post-secondary education from the eighties on. The ratio is still 73 in 1991, but drops to 62 in 2001 and 59 in 2009. The employment rate and presumably the employability of the less educated has indeed deteriorated over the last thirty years. A similar development has taken place in the Netherlands where the ratio in 2010 has dropped to 64. That observation has given rise to a more thorough investigation in the Netherlands. According to (Josten 2010) the number of jobs demanding low skill and elementary levels of education has hardly declined in the Netherlands, what has declined is the relative proportion of such jobs because the number of jobs demanding advanced levels of training and education has increased more rapidly.

The evolution of civic participation in Flanders can be looked at over the span of the last 16 years. Over that period there has been no overall decline of civic participation in Flanders, rather a slight increase (Smits and Elchardus 2009). Yet, over that period there has been a growing gap between the level of participation of the educational classes, mainly because the participation of the highest educated has grown, while the participation of the people with a low level of educations has slightly decreased (Smits and Elchardus 2009).

Surveys also make it possible to map the evolution of non-voting or purposely voting invalid for the period ranging from 1991 to 2009. Non-participation is always, in all surveys, higher the lower the level of education. Over the period of 19 years the participation of the people with post-secondary education increased, that of the people with a medium level of education stagnated and that of the less educated declined, resulting

in a fast growing and wide gap between the levels of political participation of the educational classes[1]. For the other indicators of political participation we find no discernable trend. The same holds for the other criterion variables for which the evolution over the last 15 to 20 years could be mapped. Over that period the differences between the educational classes appear to remain stable.

8 Comparative research

8.1 Presumed consequences of the knowledge society

The available longitudinal evidence offers only a shaky foundation for the thesis that the differences and inequalities by education have increased. The thesis of a growing importance of education, and concomitant increases in the inequalities and differences between the educational classes, is often based on the assumed consequences of the knowledge society and more specifically of the economic, social, and cultural changes wrought by the ICT-revolution and the increased globalization it helped to make possible (Stehr 1994; Mansell and Wehn 1998; Heidemann 2001; Eimers and Verhoef 2004; UNESCO 2005). It is assumed that as a consequence of the dynamics of the knowledge society the employability of the less educated falls victim to the automation of the simple, routine jobs (Gini 2000; Green, Ashton et al. 2000; Caroli and van Reenen 2001; Heidemann 2001; Machin 2001; Bresnahan, Brynjolfsson et al. 2002; Cantillon, Elchardus et al. 2003; Onderwijsraad 2003; De Grip and Zwick 2004; Eimers and Verhoef 2004; De Rick, Vanhoren et al. 2006; Derks 2006; Nixon 2006; Schneeberger 2006). The globalization is seen as increasing competition from low wage countries, that pushes the native with elementary levels of education into long term unemployment (Cantillon, Elchardus et al. 2003; Schneeberger 2006). The rising unemployment figures of those people, observed in several European societies over the last decades, are often considered as corroboration of those expectations (Gini 2000; Cantillon, Elchardus et al. 2003; Onderwijsraad 2003; Eimers and Verhoef 2004; De Rick, Vanhoren et al. 2006).

[1] According to Hakhverdian, Van den Brug en de Vries (2012) such a trend cannot be observed in the Netherlands

The assumption that the relative labour market position of the less educated has weakened, moreover leads many authors to expect a relative weakening of their material position, including a deterioration of their health compared to that of the more highly educated (Gadeyne and Deboosere 2002; Blisard, Stewart et al. 2004; Matthys, De Henauw et al. 2004; ESDIS 2006; ISPL 2007; Lee 2008; Vranken, Campaert et al. 2009; Gisle, Hesse et al. 2010).

The assumption that in the knowledge society the material and health position of the less educated deteriorates, relative tot that of the more highly educated, also gives rise to the thesis that the differences in attitudes between the less and highly educated have increased. It has indeed often been observed that the various inequalities and forms of social segregation between the educational classes are related to differences in attitudes. Particular attention in the literature has been paid to attitudes such as ethnocentrism and authoritarianism because these are politically salient and are considered to offer an explanation for the political and electoral specificity of the less educated (Middendorp 1978; Middendorp 1979; Fleishman 1988; Topf 1989: 70; Grunberg and Schweisguth 1990; Elchardus 1994a; Kriesi 1998; Achterberg 2006; Achterberg and Houtman 2006; Kriesi, Grande et al. 2006; Van der Waal, Achterberg et al. 2007; Treier and Hillygus 2009; Houtman and Achterberg 2010). These are indeed, in many countries, observed to be more ethnocentric and authoritarian (Grabb 1979; Dekker and Ester 1987; Middendorp and Meloen 1990; Dutch and Taylor 1993; Elchardus, Kavadias et al. 1998; Warwick 1998; De Witte and Scheepers 1999; Duriez and Van Hiel 2002; Houtman 2003; Napier and Jost 2008; Stubager 2008). Particularly the spread of those attitudes, that are considered indicative of or related to social malaise, resentment and/or feelings of (relative) deprivation, has been described as a consequence of the rise of the knowledge society (Billig, Condor et al. 1988; Calhoun 1988; Betz 1990; Jenssen 1995; Pelleriaux 1998; Derks 2000; Wimmer 2000; Derks 2006; Kriesi, Grande et al. 2006; Bornschier 2010)[2].

[2] Several authors suggest that the feelings of malaise and resentment and the related attitudes are further increased by a discourse that presents educational achievement as a matter of personal merit (Billig, Condor et al., 1988; Jenssen, 1995; Pelleriaux, 1998; Derks, 2000, 2006; Wimmer, 2000; Elchardus & Pelleriaux, 2001; Cantillon et al., 2003; De Botton, 2004)

One can distinguish two different propositions in those various expectations. The first holds that the rise and development of the knowledge society leads to a relative deterioration of the material position of the less educated. The second – which can be labelled the deprivation thesis – predicts a growing difference between the educational classes in feelings of social malaise, resentment and related attitudes (such as ethnocentrism and authoritarianism) when the material inequalities increase. Those propositions do not only sound plausible, they also seem to explain the often observed relationship between the level of education on the one hand, feelings of malaise, anomie, resentment, relative deprivation, lack of trust in institutions and attitudes such as ethnocentrism and authoritarianism on the other. Yet, a number of reservations can be formulated with regard to the two propositions.

1) The evidence supporting the propositions is based on data from one or a few countries which are supposed to be knowledge societies, but without explicitly and empirically establishing the relationship between the extent to which the knowledge society is developed and the magnitude of the inequalities and differences between the educational classes.

2) Differences between educational classes, also in attitudes, have been observed for a long time. At the end of the fifties Lipset already drew attention to working class authoritarianism (1959). In the middle of the sixties Almond and Verba (1965:379) summarized their findings writing that "The uneducated man or the man with limited education is a different political actor from the man who has achieved a higher level of education". According to Converse, writing in the early seventies (Converse 1972: 324) education "[…] is everywhere the universal solvent, and the relationship is always in the same direction. The higher the education, the greater the 'good' values of the variable". The seventies witnessed a vivid interest in the differences between educational classes (o.a. Aronowitz 1973; Lewis 1978; Young 1979). Later, around the turn of the century Putnam (2000: 186) concluded that "Education is one of the most important predictors— usually, in fact, *the* most important predictor—of many forms of social participation (…)" So, there is ample ground for wondering how new the differences that have been observed over the last two decades really are, and to what extent they can be linked to the rise of the knowledge society.

3) It is difficult to establish a clear link between the inequalities between the educational classes and the rise of the knowledge society because there is a lack of longitudinal evidence that allows one to relate the rise of the knowledge society to the material inequalities and cultural differences between the educational classes over the that last forty or fifty years, the time span that seems to be required to cover the growing impact of the knowledge society and the expansion of higher education. Also, it is not clear, when considering a development over such a period of time whether one should look at differences between fixed levels of education or whether one should look at relative levels of education and for instance compare over time the position of the 20% least educated with the average of the population. The transformation of the population in terms of the absolute levels of education has over the last half century been nothing short of spectacular in many European societies. Comparing the effects of absolute as opposed to relative levels of education over such a time span might therefore not be adequate. For the moment longitudinal analysis of the kind described and on the basis of relative levels of education does however appears impossible due to the lack of adequate data.

4) If such an analysis is possible it is, in the best of cases, in a single or a few countries and that might provide insufficient evidence because several authors have clearly shown that effects of education are context dependent and that one should take (characteristics of) the national context into account (Abramson and Inglehart 1994; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Wattenberg 2002; Preston and Green 2003; Campbell 2006; Huang, Maassen van den Brink et al. 2009): 800).

5) Therefore, the propositions based on he rise of the knowledge society can for the moment only be tested on the basis of comparative data. Comparative research concerning the effects of education in relation to the development of the knowledge society is relatively scarce. The research that exists does not support the proposition that the knowledge society leads to a relative deterioration of the material position of the less educated. (Gesthuizen, Solga et al. 2010) draw attention to the fact that in what they call modernized societies (and which within the European context are also knowledge societies) not only the demand for highly trained personal has increased but also the number of highly trained people. In countries where the supply of highly trained persons is high compared to the demand, they observe smaller differences

between the educational classes. In the Netherlands for instance, the number of people with elementary levels of education has declined more sharply than the number of jobs for which such levels of education are demanded (Josten 2010). (Gesthuizen and Scheepers 2010)) also propose that the transformation of work on the basis of technological innovation has benefited the complexity of the jobs of the less educated, leading to a decrease in the vulnerability of that educational class.

8.2 Alternative hypotheses

Therefore alternative theories predicting the development of differences between educational groups should be explored. An analysis by (Gesthuizen, Huijts et al. 2011) throws doubt on the proposition that the relative health situation of the less educated deteriorates with further modernization or development of the knowledge society. They observe that the higher the socioeconomic status of the less educated (which they regard as an indication of a modernized labour market) the smaller the health differences between the educational classes are. They also signal the role of the welfare state in reducing such inequalities. Welfare state development is certainly a factor that should be taken into account when considering the consequences of the development of the knowledge society. The welfare state can improve the situation of the less educated in various ways, first by compensating for an eventual tendency towards income inequality before the redistributive effects of taxes and of the welfare state provisions (Andress and Heien 1999; Wildeboer Schut, Vrooman et al. 2000; Marx and Passot 2003), secondly by increasing the access of the less educated to medical services and health (Eikemo, Huisman et al. 2008; Gesthuizen, Huijts et al. 2011).

On the basis of these findings and the more general propositions concerning the effects of the welfare state underlying them, one expects smaller inequalities between the less and highly educated in more developed welfare states. If that is the case one would, on the basis of the deprivation thesis, also expect smaller differences in malaise, resentment and related attitudes as the welfare state is more developed.

Predictions based on the assumed effects of the knowledge society and the welfare state, and on the deprivation proposition, can be contrasted to hypotheses derived from the

theory of symbolic society (Elchardus 2009; Elchardus and De Keere 2011) and the proposition of persistent republicanism (Elchardus 2011).

While theories based on the knowledge society privilege cognitive and technological variations as explanatory variables, and explanations based on the welfare state privilege rights and redistributive effects as explanatory factors, the theory of symbolic society draws attention to variations in the mode of social control, i.e. to the mechanisms by which societies operate what Foucault called the "the conduct of conduct". Over the past half century important mechanisms of social control such as the threat of poverty, obedience and the effectiveness of command, the hold of self evident traditions, the authority of religion and ideology, have been strongly weakened as a consequence of economic development, the expansion of the welfare state, the decline of obedience and of educational practices emphasizing obedience, the waning of self evident tradition and the decline of religious fate and ideological fervour. This process of de-traditionalization has not, so the theory of symbolic society proposes, led to the rise of autonomous individuals, but has been accompanied by the rise of a new mode of social control. This comprises a conception of the self as an autonomous subject (individual*ism*) and a series of provisions to conduct conduct, steer the feeling and thinking of individuals by having an impact on their knowledge, competencies, frames of interpretation, feelings and tastes. Several institutions fulfil these functions, either trough socializing practices or by providing symbolic content that presents the individuals with scripts for desirable ways of thinking, feeling and acting. These institutions, the educational systems, the (mass) media old and new, the therapeutic practice and broader therapeutic culture and the capitalism of desire (the complex of packaging, presenting and distributing goods and services, and the accompanying advertising – see Leach (1994) for a case study of the rise of this institution - have in many societies experienced a staggering growth and expansion. The have expanded in terms of the people employed in them, the provisions for the training of that personnel, the knowledge base of the work involved, the technologies used, the budgets involved and the number of people reached. Those different controlling institutions do of course not steer the thinking, feeling and acting of individuals in the same direction, on the contrary they lead to multiple tensions and even conflicts, yet they do share a mode of control based on the belief in personal autonomy and on the influencing of the factors that shape individual decisions. In that sense they create a mode of control very different from the

one based on religious belief and ideological fervour, the self evidence of traditions and traditional roles, obedience, and the acute threat of poverty.

The theory of symbolic society has no direct implications concerning the material differences between the less and more highly educated, however, since the rise of a full-fledged symbolic society presupposes the lessening of the threat of poverty and the development of the welfare state, one expects that in symbolic societies which are also welfare states the material inequalities and inequalities in health between people with a low and a high level of education will be smaller.

The theory of symbolic society does however lead to entirely different expectations from the one implied by deprivation theory, concerning the differences in attitudes between the educational classes. The important role of education and the media is expected to lead to great differences between people with low and high levels of education. Young people spent a long time in school and schools do not only address the cognitive but also the non-cognitive development of their pupils. Therefore differences in the level and kind of education are likely to generate differences in the way people perceive the world and interpret what they perceive. Information about the world now usually reaches people through the media. Various authors have shown that variations in the style of different media outlets have different effects on the attitudes and on the way people perceive the world, and that educational classes differ in their preference and choice of papers, radio stations, television channels and internet sites (Rotter and Chang 1990; Vergeer, Rutten et al. 1996; Vergeer and Scheepers 1998; Siongers 2007; Schuyt 2009). The combined effect of the level and kind of education and the nature of the media used, creates interpretative communities (Fish 1980) i.e. communities of people likely to share similar ways of selecting and interpreting representations of their environment and likely therefore to develop similar views of how society is evolving and which are appropriate attitudes and political choices to deal with that situation.

The importance of those interpretative communities for the difference in malaise, resentment, deprivation and related attitudes depends on how people form judgements about society and attitudes based on those judgements. Deprivation theory assumes that people use their personal situation to form judgements about society and to develop feelings of resentment and malaise on the basis of such evaluations and to develop certain

attitudes such as ethnocentrism en authoritarianism as a consequence of those feelings of malaise, resentment or deprivation. Ethnocentrism for instance, has been explained as a consequence of the perceived threat of competition (Bobo 1988), the felt relative deprivation (Bobo 1983; Grant and Brown 1995) and by feelings of malaise and anomie caused by vulnerability (Scheepers, Felling et al. 1992). The thesis of persistent republicanism (Elchardus 2011) proposes that people draw a clear distinction between their personal concerns and the evaluation of their personal life on the one hand, their evaluations of public affairs and reaction to it, on the other (see also: (Culbertson and Stempel 1985; Trommsdorf 1994; Arnett 2000; Funk 2000; Ester and Vinken 2001; SCP 2003; Schnabel 2004; Elchardus and De Groof 2005; Mutz 2006 [1998]; Elchardus and Smits 2007). The evaluation of personal life is based on the personal experience of one's job, health, neighbourhood, employment prospects etc. To evaluate the way society is doing, people require more and other information than the one provided by their personal experience. The media play an important role in providing this information, and the interpretative community to which one belongs plays an important role in selecting and interpreting the information gathered through the media. Evaluations of how society is doing and related attitudes such as ethnocentrism and authoritarianism will, according to the thesis of persistent republicanism, be relatively independent of the personal (material) situation, and strongly dependent on the interpretative community and hence the educational class people belong to.

The theories and propositions reviewed lead to different expectations, which can be systematised as hypotheses:

- On the basis of the common interpretation of the consequences of the knowledge society, one expects greater material inequalities between educational classes the more the knowledge society is developed (hypothesis 1)
- On the basis of the interpretation of the consequences of the welfare state one expects smaller material inequalities between educational classes the more the welfare state is developed (hypothesis 2)
- The theory of symbolic society expects smaller material inequalities between educational groups, the more symbolic society is developed because the

development of symbolic society and the welfare state are closely related (hypothesis 3)

- Deprivation theories expect differences in satisfaction with personal life and resentment or social malaise and related attitudes between educational groups to be bigger in those societies where the material differences are larger (hypothesis 4).
- The thesis of symbolic society and persistent republicanism expect differences in evaluations and attitudes related to public matters to be greater the more symbolic society is developed, regardless of material differences (hypothesis 5)

In the report, data from the European Social Survey, 2008 (ESS08) were used to test those hypotheses. Twenty nine countries participated in the survey. Some (Israel, Croatia, Ukraine and Russia) were dropped from the analysis because insufficient data to operationalize the country characteristics were available. Two different measures of the level of education were used. The first measures the absolute level of education (three educational classes are distinguished: low (ISCEd 0-2), medium (ISCEd 3-4), and high (ISCEd 5-6). The second measures the relative level of education. It is based on the number of years people have pursued full time education[3]. On the basis of that variable an attempt was made to distinguish the 20% least educated members of society. Six criterion or dependent variables are used to gauge inequality by education: employment and health as indicators of material differences, satisfaction with personal life and trust in institutions as respectively indicators of the evaluation of personal life and the evaluation of society, and two attitudes, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism, often observed to be related to social malaise.

While the hypotheses distinguish between the development of the welfare state, the knowledge society and the symbolic society, those three developments turn out to be very closely related in European societies. It appears as a characteristic of European societies that the development of the welfare state, the decline of faith and tradition and the rise of an economy based on science and technology are closely interrelated, resulting in

[3] This variable correlates .76 with the 3 category measure of education and .79 with a five category measure.

correlations between the indicators of the development of the welfare state, the knowledge society and the symbolic society that range from .78 to .94. Such a path of development – which can be labelled European modernization – stands in sharp contrast to the position defended by American social conservatives and libertarians that a well ordered and functioning society needs the threat of poverty (the absence of a welfare state) and the guiding force of religious faith (eg. (Murrey 2012). The European project combines strong detraditionalization and secularization, with welfare state development and a reliance on scientific knowledge and technology as a motor of economic and social development. This implies that one cannot, within the European context, distinguish between the effects of the development of the knowledge society, the welfare state and the symbolic society. Due to their strong interrelations the use of any one of these three indicators leads to the same observations.

Looking at European countries one observes a very strong relationship between the development of the knowledge society, the welfare state and the symbolic society. This pattern of European modernization can be interpreted as a project, geared towards the development of a society that for the conduct of conduct relies less on the threat of poverty and the influence of religion, and that makes it economic development dependent on knowledge and technological innovation. One of the possible consequences of such a development, about which many authors have expressed their apprehension, is the weakening of the position of the less or least educated. When comparing European societies one does however observe that the inequalities in terms of employability and health, and the difference in satisfaction with life between the people with a low and a high level of education and between the least educated and the average of the population, is lower at high levels of the development of the knowledge society, the welfare state and the symbolic society. The worries, which are usually based on presumed consequences of the development of the knowledge society and globalization, do not seem justified in the light of a comparison of European countries. This could mean that such worries are unfounded, as Gesthuizen and colleagues have suggested, or that the development of the welfare state has compensated for the negative consequences of the development of the knowledge economy. In the European area the development of the welfare state and the knowledge society are too closely linked to separate their effects on the basis of comparative research. If welfare state development has allowed for the development of the knowledge society

while decreasing inequality between the educational classes, then regression of the welfare state could signal an era of growing material inequality between the educational classes.

On the basis of deprivation theory in its various guises one expects that growing material inequality between the educational classes will lead to greater differences in attitudes, particularly attitudes that express social malaise, lack of trust in institutions and attitudes often observed to be related to such feelings, such as ethnic prejudice, negative attitudes with regard to migrants, authoritarianism and repressiveness or a though stands on law and order. In the light of that very influential thesis and of what is observed concerning the material inequalities, one should observe that the differences in those attitudes are smaller at high than at low levels of European modernization. The reverse is true. For trust in institutions, the attitude with regard to migrants and with regard to repression, the differences are (much) greater at high levels than at low levels of European modernization. Looking at comparative evidence we see that in highly developed welfare states the material inequalities between the educational classes are relatively small, while their politically sensitive differences in attitudes and opinions are relatively great. The "welfare state compromise" and the pacification of class antagonism does not seem to work (anymore) and that failure cannot be ascribed to a contradiction between the interest of labour and capital, resulting in a deterioration of the material position of the less or least educated. This, in the light of belief in the pacification power of the welfare state, paradoxical outcome is predicted by the theory of the symbolic society and the thesis of persistent republicanism: the attitudes of people, particularly with regard to the public sphere, are only weakly influenced by their personal, material situation and by the satisfaction with their personal life, but very strongly by the interpretative communities they belong to. This could explain why well developed welfare states, characterized by a relatively high level of equality, are not spared political revolt in the form of the success of extreme right wing and populist parties that have been shown to be particularly attractive to voters with low levels of education (Eisinga, Lammers et al. 1994; Elchardus 1994a; Elchardus 1994b; Falter and Klein 1996; Kitchelt 1997; Delwit 1998; Martin 1998; Lubbers and Scheepers 2000; Lubbers and Scheepers 2001; Derks 2006).

While we used the theory of the symbolic society as a guide, there are other possible explanations for a growing gap in attitudes like trust, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism. One that would seem to fit our observations focuses on the role of cultural capital

(Houtman and Achterberg 2010b). It proposes that the more highly educated acquire the cognitive means to deal with a more complex and diverse society, while the less educated fall victim to feelings of anomie and malaise that drive them to attitudes like ethnocentrism and authoritarianism. The emphasis on anomie suggests that the reaction comes from the less educated, but that it is not a reaction against material deprivation or vulnerability, but a consequence of cultural deprivation. There are several, not necessarily mutually exclusive possible explanations for a divergence of the attitudes of the educational classes, even under conditions of decreasing material inequality. Explanations based on cultural capital would expect a divergence of attitudes because anomie drives the less educated to feelings of malaise and the accompanying attitudes, while the more highly educated, having more cultural capital would "cosmopolitise", become more open and tolerant in attitudes with regard to migrants and people considered to deviate. Explanations based on the symbolic society would expect a divergence due to the role of interpretative communities and would, more specifically, expect that media use and media preference explains part of the difference in attitudes between the educational classes. Another, and very different type of explanation, which until now has received scant attention, is "chartering" (Meyer 1977); for applications see (Solga 2002; Elchardus and Siongers 2007; Bovens and Wille 2011). One feels, thinks and acts in a certain way because that is considered the appropriate way of feeling, acting and thinking for people with a certain level of education. Chartering can work because, as (Kingston, Hubbard et al. 2003) observe: "[…] everybody knows and everybody knows that everybody else knows that education rules in modern society". Chartering links certain modes of feeling, thinking and acting to educational levels because the members of an educational group views them as appropriate for their group because it is a way to signal one's membership in that group as well as distance from other educational groups (Solga 2002); see also literature on symbolic boundaries: (Lamont and Fournier 1992; Barth 1998). On the basis of chartering one could even expect the more highly educated to deepen attitudinal or symbolic differences when material distance declines. Further research will have to try the estimate the extent to which cultural capital, anomie, the rise of symbolic society and the role of interpretative communities and chartering can explain the growing cultural distance between the educational classes under conditions of growing material equality. Yet, looking at the comparative data it is striking to observe that for the attitudes studied the position of the less educated does not change very much. The degree of trust, ethnocentrism and authoritarianism of the less educated in

Romania and Bulgaria does not differ much from that in the Netherlands, Sweden or Denmark. The differences between those countries are due to the people with post-secondary education. The more highly educated have much higher levels of trust and much lower levels of ethnocentrism and authoritarianism in the more modernized than in the less modernized European societies. This "cosmopolitization" of the educational elites throws doubt on the validity of an explanation in terms of anomy which implies that the shift in attitudes occurs among the less not among the more highly educated.

9 Conclusions: consequences for educational policy

Inequalities by education are very important and manifest themselves with regard to many valued goods. It is therefore quite appropriate to speak of educational classes. Differences in the level and kind of education now form the main social divide or cleavage. The social distance between the educational classes is very large, the members of those different classes rarely meet each other as friends or in voluntary associations. They tend to marry within their own educational class, and to send their children to different schools. This leads, on the one hand to families in which the resources to help the educational careers of the children are plentiful and which send their children to sought after schools, on the hand to families in which those resources are lacking and which send their children to schools often incapable of compensating for the lack of resources of the parents. Therefore the inequalities between the educational classes tend to perpetuate themselves over the generations. Because the classes are not only separated by great inequalities, but are also strongly socially segregated and tend to perpetuate themselves over the generations, they should be regarded as not only classes, but as the new estates of contemporary society.

That growing inequality and social segregation are the result of the upgrading of the employment opportunities, the health, and in general the values and culture of the people that have profited from higher or post-secondary education. They formed a tiny minority of about 1% of the population at the end of World War II, and constitute now about a third of the population. The rise of the educational estates poses a double challenge, how to profit from the societal upgrading education and higher education offers and how to deal with the threat the great inequality and segregation poses for social cohesion and future upgrading?

The valued effects of education are an output of the educational system and the schools. These do not merely reproduce the influence of the family and the family's class situation. The influence of the contemporary family consists to a significant extent in its role as a "dispatcher". It channels its children to other socializing settings which exert and independent and additive influence on the cognitive and non-cognitive characteristics of the children. Two important settings are the schools and the media. For educational policy this highlights the importance of strengthening the role of the schools in order to compensate for the very great inequalities in educational opportunities the contemporary families can offer. One way to do that could be to start early with and to strengthen nursery education. The other necessary step is to reduce inequalities between the schools.

What are now often considered to be effects of higher education turn out, on closer inspection, to be not the socialization effects of higher education, but selection effects. The difference is not made by higher education, but is already made at the level of secondary education as a result of the differentiation into tracks. The exception is employability for which higher education makes a big difference, regardless of the tracks pursued at the secondary level. For all other investigated valued outcomes of education, the differentiation at the level of secondary schools turns out to be very important and should therefore become a core focus of educational policy.

The effects of education can be direct in the sense that they are a consequence of the competencies, perspectives, values acquired through education. Important parts of the observed differences between the educational classes are however due to the so called allocation effects of education, i.e. to the fact that people with different levels of education hold different kinds of jobs, live under different material circumstances, read different papers, watch different television channels, have different cultural practices… In general, the occupational and material differences were observed to be (much) less important in explaining the differences between the educational classes than the differences in cultural practices (eg. media use and preference). The relationship between the kind and level of education on the one hand, the cultural practices and cultural settings to which these lead – although clearly recognized through a concept such as 'cultural capital' – should become a still more important focus of educational policy.

Insufficient longitudinal data are available to reliably assess the evolution over the last half century of the inequalities and differences between the educational classes. When using cross national comparative analysis of European countries, it turns out that as European modernization is more advanced (a higher development of the welfare state, the knowledge economy and the symbolic society) the material inequalities (employment and health) and the difference in life satisfaction between the classes are smaller. It is possible that the dire predictions based on the rise of the knowledge society do not hold or else are compensated for by the development of the welfare state which in the European project is strongly related to the development of the knowledge society. Maintaining the welfare state appears as a condition to avoid growing material inequality between the educational classes.

Yet, the smaller the material inequalities between the educational classes, the larger the differences in trust in institutions and in attitudes such as ethnocentrism and authoritarianism. At high levels of European modernization those differences become very large, threatening social cohesion and stimulating the rise of extremism and populism. The welfare state, while reducing material inequality does no longer pacify relations between social classes. Educational policy should devote more and a more effective attention to the kind of interpretative communities into which the pupils evolve, particularly the pupils in the secondary schools tracks that do not lead to post-secondary schooling.

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