

*Chapter 12*

## READING HABITS IN SPAIN AND THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURAL RESOURCES\*

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### ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes how cultural resources affect the formation of reading habits. The theoretical framework is supported by cultural reproduction theory and research into how early age experiences affect the formation of cultural tastes and practices. The representative dataset for the Spanish population was analyzed using regression models. While cultural socialization with friends was found to be of importance for taking an interest in reading and the frequency of reading books, external cultural environment factors (i.e., school) were found to have a greater influence on the frequency of reading informative media, such as newspapers. Gender differences also apply, with women on average reading more than men, but while women read books with more frequency, men prefer to read newspapers. Regarding cultural capital, highly educated individuals are on average more likely to engage with reading.

**Keywords:** Environmental cultural resources, cultural capital, reading habits

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\* The author would like to acknowledge financial support received from the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (Project ECO2011-29558-C02-01) and the Commission for Universities and Research of the Ministry of Innovation, Universities and Enterprises of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia (Project SGR-2009-411). I am grateful to participants at VII ICCPR Conference, Barcelona 9-12 July 2012; ESA Consumption Research Network Interim Meeting, Berlin 6-8 September 2012; The 11th International Colloquium on Nonprofit, Social, Arts and Heritage Marketing, London 19 September 2012; and IV Workshop on Cultural Economics and Management, Bilbao 29-30 November 2012, for their insightful comments on previous versions of this work.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Research on cultural consumption very often takes into account the socioeconomic and cultural characteristics of not only individuals but also their families. This association can be ascribed to Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory (Bourdieu 1977, 1984; Bourdieu and Passeron 1964, 1990[1977]). According to said theory, individual "cultural capital" owes much to family cultural resources transmitted across generations. In particular, individuals belonging to the so-called "highbrow" social classes do not only benefit from superior endowments of "economic" and "social" capital (see also Bourdieu 1986) but also inherit the cultural habits of their social class, which turns out to be a much stronger advantage than economic and social background (Vogt 1978). These social inequalities are outlined in Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990[1977]) analysis of the French higher education system, their findings showing a significant relationship between family cultural resources and the educational performance of individuals, among other things. According to this theory, then, the role of the school prevails as a mediating mechanism through which cultural capital preserves social inequalities over time (Vogt 1978).

Following Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory, an important bulk of research has focused on the effects cultural capital has on educational attainment, with rather mixed findings when it comes to factors that influence academic success. Most of these coincide in reporting only partial empirical support for Bourdieu's thesis, pointing to perhaps an overstated effect of cultural capital (see, for example, de Graaf 1986; de Graaf et al. 2000; Sullivan 2001; Dumais 2002; Georg 2004; Zimdars, Sullivan and Heath 2009; to name but a few). A special reference in this respect is the study by DiMaggio (1982). Said author found not only that family cultural background had only a partial effect on students' school grades, but moreover that the impact of cultural capital on school success was greater for lower and middle class male students, thus contradicting Bourdieu's theory and leaving room for an upward "cultural mobility model".

At the other extreme, Jaeger (2009) empirically tested the three conditions necessary for cultural capital to have a beneficial effect on children's educational outcomes, defined by the type of secondary education chosen by Danish students after elementary school. These three conditions were: cultural resources possessed by parents, the parents' transmission of cultural resources to their children, and children's capacity to transform their cultural capital into school success. Empirical operationalization of the theoretical model has shown that all three components of cultural capital were important for school success: students possessing higher levels of cultural capital chose superior forms of secondary education. Thus, in this case, the fact that cultural capital preserves educational inequality gives support to Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory.

According to some authors (Lamont and Lareau 1988; Kingston 2001; Sullivan 2002; Lareau and Weininger 2004, Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2010, etc.), however, the above mixed evidence is to a large extent explained by how cultural capital was conceptualized and used in the empirical analysis (for reviews see, for example, Van Peer 1991; Kingston 2001; Sullivan 2002; Lareau and Weininger 2004; Kraaykamp and Van Eijck 2010; Van de Werfhorst 2010, among others). Tzanakis (2011), for example, argues in favor of a more flexible use of the concept of cultural capital, beyond that of social class structure, so as to better capture the mechanism through which social inequalities are reproduced. This author

proposes several other types of cultural capital –ethnic, religious, occupational and social-network based (p. 85)– that might also be considered in order to better explain the relationship between cultural capital and educational attainment. Jaeger and Breen (2013) propose a dynamic approach to the cultural reproduction mechanism, with particular focus on the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital. In their context, these authors treat cultural capital transmission as an investment made by parents attempting to make an optimal investment decision at any point in time. Thus, by taking into account behavioral assumptions regarding parents, children and institutions, the authors expand the framework of Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory. Their empirical findings show that cultural capital is transmitted to children in a dynamic fashion over time and has a positive impact on their school success.

This chapter does not focus on the traditional approach of cultural reproduction theory, or the effect of cultural capital on educational attainment. The objective instead is to gain a deeper insight into the formation of reading habits and preferences, with a special focus on the role played by environmental cultural resources such as literary socialization in the family, at school or with friends. Cultural tastes (i.e. music, the performing arts, films, etc.) have received substantial attention from researchers due to their capacity to act as social markers, thus distinguishing between individuals' social statuses and lifestyles (Bourdieu, 1984; Peterson and Kern 1996; DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004; López-Sintas & Katz-Gerro, 2005; North & Hargreaves, 2007; López-Sintas, García-Álvarez and Filimon 2008; Katz-Gerro and Jaeger 2012, etc.). A significant body of research has paid special attention to reading, findings indicating that patterns and habits are to a great extent explained by certain factors (socioeconomic status, education level, literary socialization, gender or generational components, among others) also common to other cultural preferences (see, for example, Van Eijck 1997; Katz-Gerro and Shavit 1998; Van Rees et al. 1999; Scales and Rhee 2001; Love and Hamston 2003; Verbood and Van Rees 2003; Kraaykamp 2003; Torche 2007; Gripsrud et al. 2011, for various approaches).

This research is intended to add further evidence regarding the formation of reading habits and preferences in Spain, as little recent research exists on the issue (see i.e., Díaz and Gámez 1997; Fernandez-Blanco, García-Díez and Prieto-Rodríguez 1999; and Iszipua, Lavia and Galarraga 2008 for an exploratory study of reading habits in the Basque Country). Following Fernandez-Blanco et al. (1999), the dataset allows for a more complete assessment of the impact of environmental cultural resources on reading, impacts which to the best of our knowledge have not been measured in the same fashion in previous studies on Spain. Socioeconomic demographics are used to complete the profile of Spanish readers. The empirical analysis builds on quantitative regression models applied to a representative dataset, which corresponds to a survey performed by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) (see CIS 2009).

Empirical findings show that reading socialization with friends has a greater effect on reading interest in general and on the frequency of reading books. Other cultural resources (i.e., school) appear to be more influential in the formation of preferences for reading informative media, such as newspapers. Gender differences also apply, with women on average reading more than men, but while women read books with more frequency, men prefer to read newspapers. Regarding cultural capital, highly educated individuals are more likely to engage with reading. The chapter is structured as follows: the following section provides a brief review of the literature, section 3 is dedicated to the methodology, section 4 discusses the main results and the final section presents the main conclusions.

## 2. READING HABITS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

In their work, Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1986) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1964, 1990[1977]) have developed different types of capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic). The concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), with its three forms (Bourdieu 1986) –embedded, objectified and institutionalized–, is perhaps the one that generated most controversy among researchers given that, as Lamont and Lareau (1988:155) argued, “the authors [Bourdieu and Passeron] group under this concept a large number of types of cultural attitudes, preferences, behaviors, and goods, and that the concept performs different roles in their various writings” (see also Vogt 1978; Van Peer 1991; Kingston 2001; Sullivan 2002; Lareau and Weininger 2004; Goldthorpe 2007; Van de Werfhorst 2010; Bennet and Silva 2011 to name but a few, for discussion and critical reviews of Bourdieu’s cultural capital).

Kraaykamp and Van Eijck (2010) are among the few authors who have fully operationalized the three forms of cultural capital stated by Bourdieu (1986). The authors have analyzed the transmission of cultural capital from parents to children –Netherlands, period 1998-2003– and have found strong evidence in favour of the intergenerational transmission of cultural resources. Moreover, the embodied cultural capital (i.e., cultural preferences) was the most prominent form of cultural capital: parents’ embodied cultural capital was found to be determinant for children’s educational attainment and cultural behavior; in the same fashion, children’s own embodied cultural capital had a significant impact on their cultural possessions (p. 226).

Recently, Yaish and Katz-Gerro (2012) have paid special attention to the cultural capital embedded in individuals’ mental and physical dispositions and propose a distinction be made between the operationalization of cultural preferences (tastes) and cultural participation (behavior), the former being a priori determinants of the latter. Furthermore, their findings show that while economic capital conditions cultural participation, cultural resources play a much more significant role in the formation of cultural preferences through habitus. Environmental cultural resources like the family, school or friends are therefore important explanatory factors to be taken into account in analyzing how cultural preferences are formed as they shape individual habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron 1964, 1990[1977]; Lamont and Lareau 1988; Yaish and Katz-Gerro 2012, etc.). In a similar vein, Holbrook and Schindler (1989) focused on the role of social factors (i.e., group norms) as shapers of musical preferences in a specific age group (see also Holbrook 1993), and Gilleard (2004) refers to “generational habitus”, which has the power to structure individual practices.

Van Peer (1991) conducted a review of research into the influence family cultural climate has on literary socialization and identified fifteen factors deemed to have a “positive” effect on children’s attitude towards reading. The author classified these into the following four categories (1001:543): material provisions (i.e., the presence of books in the home, etc.), parental activities (i.e., parents themselves reading or encouraging children to read, etc.), parental attitudes (reading tradition in the family, positive value attached to reading, etc.), and interactions in the family (parents reading to children, telling stories, assisting them with the selection of reading material, etc.). According to the empirical evidence reviewed by Van Peer (1991), a large part of the research also reported a positive relationship between social class and reading habits, in favor of the highbrow classes, this interdependence being explained by a greater abundance of the aforementioned “positive” factors in a household

belonging to the upper social strata. However, as the author mentions, some other studies did not report a relevant association between social class and reading but rather an association between class differences and type of reading. In this respect, lowbrow classes appear to prefer reading for entertainment while middle and upper classes' preferences also include informative books and classics (Van Peer 1991:545). Empirical evidence on literary socialization in the family also returned interesting results: although authors coincide on the fact that reading and writing take place in all households, frequency, duration and intensity may vary according to social class (see Van Peer 1991:546), and this also applies to oral forms of literature (i.e. story-telling). Social status differences also affect the interaction between families and school: in middle class families, an environment that stimulates reading continues to be provided beyond the preschool age, while in lower class families this support tends to stop at the above mentioned age (Van Peer 1991).

Several studies have focused their attention on the issue of parents reading books to children and found a positive association with various children's literacy outcomes (see, for example, Bus, Van Ijzendoorn and Pelligrini 1995; Frosch, Cox and Goldman 2001; Teale 1981; 1984; Wells 1982, etc.). Some authors, as mentioned by Kassow (2006), have followed a quantitative approach and found a positive relationship between the frequencies of parent-child book reading and children's development of language skills or reading achievements (see also Bus et al. 1995); other studies have measured the effect of the quality of the parental interaction (attachment parent-child) on children's literacy outcomes (Frosch et al. 2001), distinguishing between mother-child and father-child type attachment in book reading, but did not find significant differences.

Kraaykamp (2003) worked with 1998 data from the Netherlands and found that literary books were preferred mostly by women and the influence of the family environment played an important role in forming literary reading preferences. That is, people whose parents had paid a lot of attention to reading during their youth experienced a positive influence on their reading level as adults. Furthermore, those who frequently went to the public library when young also developed stronger preferences for literary reading than other people. The evidence presented by Kraaykamp (2003) also shows that children who pursued a more cultural or humanistic-oriented educational profile developed a greater interest for literary reading than others.

Verbood and Van Rees (2003) measured the impact reading socialization students were exposed to during secondary education had on their adult reading level. The authors distinguish between reading socialization at home, at secondary school and that resulting from contact with popular culture (i.e., watching television). Several indicators were used to measure reading level: number of recently published literary books read after secondary school, frequency of reading literary genres and, a measure of each respondent's reading level calculated as the average literary prestige of the authors of the books they had read. The results confirmed the positive influence of parents and school on reading level. The impact of socialization from popular culture did not return clear-cut results, leaving room for other factors that might better explain the decline in reading level observed across birth cohorts.

Love and Hamston (2003) analyzed the literacy performance of teenage boys at a highly educated middle-class school in Australia and the findings indicated that both parents and sons were mutually shaping their reading practices. The authors distinguish between tacit/collaborative reading practices and explicit ones, the latter being used for the transmission of intergenerational reading preferences. The results of the analysis indicate that

parents' guidance is generally more likely to transmit the cultural capital accumulated in the family across generations, while boys are often reluctant to appropriate their parents' literary dispositions, preferring to make their own choices balanced in favor of various forms of electronic reading rather than the traditional print media.

Gripsrud, Hovden and Moe (2011) disentangled the cultural habits of Norwegian students in 1998 and 2008 with a special focus on the issue of cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu. The research revealed a close relationship between social class and family cultural habits for students with high cultural capital, although overall there was a downshift in the preference for highbrow culture (the "traditional legitimate taste", p. 522) from 1998 to 2008. In the particular case of reading preferences, the empirical findings showed that reading frequency and preferences for literary genres did not vary much across time. The interest in genres classified as "traditional legitimate taste" (i.e., classics, poetry, contemporary literature) was strongly correlated with social class; the students belonging to a cultured family environment revealed an above average cultural knowledge and interest. Moreover, students' preference for some highbrow literary genres appeared to go hand in hand with their parents' interest in these same genres, proving the role of parental cultural habits in forming children's reading tastes.

Torche (2007) analyzed the correlation between status and cultural consumption in Chile and found that social status was particularly important (more than economic and education level) as an influential factor in book reading habits and diversity in reading preferences. This author also found that books were the main distinguishing element for the cultural elite in Chile.

A different approach to the relationship between family environment and children's cultural consumption is found in Van Eijck (1997). The methodology used in the analysis allows the author to differentiate between the impacts of family background and individual educational attainment on siblings' cultural consumption (see also Hauser and Mossel 1985; Hauser and Wong 1989, etc.). Parental cultural resources were found to have a greater impact on siblings' cultural participation than material resources, with the exception of mother's level of education. The effect of siblings' educational attainment on their own cultural consumption was rather small, results showing that family background was a better predictor of their cultural participation.

In the same vein, Katz-Gerro and Jaeger (2012) looked at the origins of gender differences observed in participation in highbrow cultural activities among siblings from the same family. The authors tested for the impact of several explanatory variables –family cultural background (within family cultural socialization), socioeconomic position and family obligations– on Danish data but found only limited supporting evidence. Their research points rather to factors outside the family that should be considered for a better explanation of the gap in highbrow cultural participation among brothers and sisters.

Another stream of research has focused on the reciprocal influence members of a same family (i.e. married or cohabiting couples, parents and children) may exert on each other's lifestyles. Kalmijn and Bernasco (2001), for example, demonstrate that couples' joint leisure activities are an important variable to take into account. Hendricks Vettehen et al. (2012) studied television preferences and distinguish between the influence on Dutch adults of their parents' media choice during their childhood (past context) and the influence mutually exerted by partners on each other (current context) in relation to this activity. The empirical analysis considered only two television genres –news and soap series– and results show that

cultural practices assimilated in childhood, during the socialization process within the family, are transmitted to adulthood. Thus, television genres preferred by parents are a good predictor of children's future television choices (see also Roe 2000; Kraaykamp 2001).

In Spain, Fernandez-Blanco, Garcia-Díez and Prieto-Rodríguez (1999) analyzed preferences for reading books and newspapers taking into account the role of parents' and partner's educational attainment and individuals' own level of education. Overall, family cultural background had a positive and significant effect on reading books and newspapers. Gender differences (women read more books while men read more newspapers) and other socioeconomic indicators like social status, type of habitat and occupational status also had significant effects on reading habits and preferences. This analysis therefore proves the importance of both formal education and family cultural environment on the formation of reading habits.

More recently, Iszipua, Lavia and Galarraga (2008) performed explorative research on the reading habits of Spanish adolescents (high school students aged 12 to 16) in Bilbao, the Basque Country. One of the conclusions reached by the authors (p. 51) is that the more parents read, the higher the reading frequency among students and the greater their perception of living in a reading family environment (more books in the house, more encouragement towards reading, more tales read, etc.). Other findings indicate that students who usually read do so because they like reading and the most preferred reading materials are books and magazines. While girls prefer books and magazines, boys read more newspapers and comics (see also FGEE 2011).

Following Fernandez-Blanco, Garcia-Díez and Prieto-Rodríguez (1999), our research focuses on cultural practices (Yaish and Katz-Gerro 2012) and aims to add more recent evidence regarding Spain. In this study, reading habits are expanded to include reading interest in general and the frequency of reading books and newspapers. By contrast with Fernandez-Blanco et al. (1999), however, the role played by environmental cultural resources in the formation of reading habits is measured by means of a block of indicators referring to family reading practices at home, encouragement received from teachers with regard to reading, literary socialization with friends and the obligation to read imposed at school. Based on related research evidence, additional control variables are included in the analysis – educational attainment, gender, occupational status, social class, habitat, main activity performed during a working day, Internet access, reading reasons, going to the public library – as they are a priori expected to play a role in the formation of reading habits.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Data and Variables

Data are taken from the 2009 Cultural Barometer, a representative database harmonized according to EU standards. The survey was performed by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Centre for Sociological Investigations -CIS) and information collected from 2,482 individuals, all Spanish residents at the time of the interview, of both genders and aged 18 or above. The information is stratified according to regions and municipalities (see CIS 2009).

### 3.1.1. *Dependent Variables*

Several variables collected information on the frequency of reading (1) books and (2) newspapers, each with the following categories: every day or almost every day, once a week, once a month, once every three months, never, and almost never. The percentage distribution of the sample according to each variable and category is given in Table 1 below. For methodological purposes, each variable was recoded into a binary variable taking into account the differences observed in reading behavior (see Fernández-Blanco et al. 1999): a) for frequency of reading books, the answer 1="yes" stands for individuals who read books at least once a week and 0="no" for all other cases; b) in the case of newspapers, as more than 40% of the sample do this activity daily, the category 1="yes" stands for those who read newspapers daily and 0="no" for all other cases (see Table 1). A likert-type variable ranked the interest of the interviewed individuals with regard to reading; there are four levels: great interest (25.0%); some interest (34.5%); little interest (27.2%); and no interest (13.3%) in reading. This variable was also collapsed into two levels with 1="yes" for the first two levels (great and some interest in reading) and 0="no" for the remaining two levels (little and no interest in reading).

**Table 1. Reading habits**

|                            | Books (%) | Newspapers (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Every day/Almost every day | 26.2      | 41.7           |
| Once or twice per week     | 14.3      | 25.2           |
| Once a month               | 13.4      | 7.1            |
| Once every three months    | 6.8       | 1.3            |
| Never/Almost never         | 39.3      | 24.7           |

### 3.1.2. *Explanatory Variables*

#### **Socioeconomic Variables**

The survey comprises information on several representative indicators of individuals' position in the social hierarchy: socioeconomic status, occupational status and level of education, all informative with respect to respondents' social, economic and cultural capital endowments. As for socioeconomic status, respondents were asked to classify themselves according to three levels of social strata: 1) high or middle-high social class; 2) middle class; and, 3) working class (see Table 2 hereafter). Occupational status is divided into five categories: 1) employed; 2) retired; 3) unemployed; 4) students; and 5) unpaid housework. Although the survey did not collect information on income level, the above mentioned indicators are a good proxy for individuals' social and economic status (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992; Evans 1992). The proxy for cultural capital is the highest educational attainment reported by the respondents, with four levels: 1) primary studies or lower; 2) secondary school; 3) vocational training; and 4) college and postgraduate studies.

The socio-demographic profile of the respondents was completed with information on: gender (male, female); age, with six levels (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and above 65 years of age); size of habitat, divided into five levels (under 10,000 inhabitants; between 10,001 and 100,000 inhabitants; from 100,001 to 400,000 inhabitants; from 400,001 to



1,000,000; and large metropolis with over 1,000,000 inhabitants). Respondents were asked to indicate the places where they most frequently read and, out of nine possible locations, the home was by far the most preferred place for more than 90%. The remaining locations are fairly evenly spread among places like the public library, place of study, bars and cafeterias, open spaces, waiting places and other unspecified locations. For this reason, place of reading was collapsed into a variable with two categories, one for the most frequent place (home) and one category (outside home) for other cases (see Table 2). One question collected information regarding the main activity undertaken during a normal working day, with the following categories: work, housework, taking care of children, leisure activities (watching TV, going for a walk, read, etc.), studying and volunteering or other activities. As the survey did not elicit information on individuals' civil status and family size, this variable could measure the impact of family responsibilities on reading habits. Additional questions referred to the following issues: use of internet in the last twelve months previous to the interview, with two levels (Yes, No); going to the public library (Yes, No) and reasons that motivate them to engage with reading, with four levels –to be informed; entertainment; for study and professional reasons; to learn new things (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Main demographics**

| Variable                         | Proportion (%) | Variable                     | Proportion (%) |
|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Socioeconomic status</i>      |                | <i>Public library</i>        |                |
| High/middle-high class           | 18.8           | Yes                          | 26.1           |
| Middle class                     | 36.8           | No                           | 73.9           |
| Workers                          | 44.4           | <i>Education level</i>       |                |
| <i>Occupational status</i>       |                | Primary studies or lower     | 26.4           |
| Employed                         | 46.9           | Secondary school             | 37.6           |
| Retired                          | 22.5           | Vocational training          | 15.5           |
| Unemployed                       | 14.8           | College and postgraduate     | 20.5           |
| Student                          | 5.3            | <i>Habitat (inhabitants)</i> |                |
| Unpaid housework                 | 10.5           | <=10,000                     | 22.4           |
| <i>Gender</i>                    |                | 10,001-100,000               | 37.3           |
| Male                             | 49.0           | 100,001-400,000              | 22.5           |
| Female                           | 51.0           | 400,001-1,000,000            | 7.0            |
| <i>Place</i>                     |                | >1,000,000                   | 10.8           |
| At home                          | 91.8           | <i>Age</i>                   |                |
| Outside home                     | 8.2            | 18-24                        | 10.0           |
| <i>Main activity working day</i> |                | 25-34                        | 20.3           |
| Work                             | 43.7           | 35-44                        | 20.1           |
| Housework                        | 23.3           | 45-54                        | 16.1           |
| Leisure time                     | 15.1           | 55-64                        | 13.5           |
| Taking care of children          | 7.2            | >= 65                        | 20.0           |
| Study                            | 7.0            | <i>Reading reasons</i>       |                |
| Volunteering/Other               | 3.7            | To be informed               | 17.2           |
| <i>Internet use last year</i>    |                | Entertainment                | 56.8           |
| Yes                              | 57.9           | For study/profession         | 10.5           |
| No                               | 42.1           | To learn new things          | 15.5           |

### Environmental Indicators

This section includes variables considered significant in determining individuals' reading habits as they show the various influences received during their life, starting with infancy, school and friends. The influence of the family environment was captured by means of a question regarding parents' dedication to reading them stories or books at home in their infancy, with the following statistics: a) parents reading stories or books very often (20.5%); only sometimes (20.8%); rarely (13.2%); never/did not remember this activity (45.5%). The impact of school and teachers was captured by means of two questions: one referring to whether individuals were obliged to read at school and another question which focused on whether teachers encouraged them to read when attending school. For the first question, the distribution reveals the following: a) almost half of the sample (49.8%) said they were often obliged to read; b) 26.0% only sometimes; c) 8.7% rarely; d) 15.5% never/did not remember. With regard to teachers encouraging them to read at school, the distribution is fairly similar: a) 45.5% said they were often encouraged to do this activity; 25.0% sometimes; c) 9.9% rarely; d) 19.6% never/did not remember. Finally, the influence of friends shows the following results: a) 18.7% of individuals said they often talked about and commented on books with their friends; b) 25.3% only sometimes; c) 21.1% rarely; d) 34.9% never/did not remember. Each variable was recoded into two categories, one for the first two levels (very often and sometimes) and one category for the remaining two levels (rarely and never/did not remember).

### 3.2. Method of Analysis

In order to test for the impact of the variables described above on the formation of reading habits –in this case, reading interest and the frequency of reading books and newspapers– the empirical analysis fits a multilevel logistic model (Laird and Ware 1982). The specification for such models consists of fixed and random effects to account for correlation of the data. The model is usually applied in the cases when the data set is structured in hierarchical levels and the dependent variable ( $Y$ ) takes on values of 1 (i.e., in this case, interest in reading) and 0 (i.e., no interest in reading). In our data set level-1 subjects, structured according to a set of  $i=1, \dots, n_k$  categories, are nested in  $k=1, \dots, N$  level-2 regions. Let us assume that  $\pi=P(Y=1)$  represents the proportion of the sample for which  $Y=1$ ,  $(1-\pi)=P(Y=0)$  the proportion of the sample for which  $Y=0$ , and  $X_{ik1}, X_{ik2}, \dots, X_{ikj}$  ( $j=1, \dots, M$ ) are a set of predictor variables (level-1 fixed effects) for the dependent variable  $Y$ . Following existing literature (i.e., Hedeker 2005; Baayen, Davidson and Bates 2008; to name but a few), the multilevel logistic regression model can be expressed as in the equation below, where  $\alpha$  is the  $Y$  intercept,  $\beta_s$  are the regression coefficients associated with the predictor variables  $X_s$  and  $\mu$  is the level-2 random effect (intercept) which will control for differences among regional social contexts. The usual assumptions are made regarding the independence of the random effect  $\mu$  and the residual errors  $\epsilon$ . The logistic link function is usually recommended for mixed-effects models, and will ensure the linearity of the model in terms of log odds (logits).

$$\text{logit}(Y_{ik}) = \ln\left(\frac{\pi}{1-\pi}\right) = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{ik1} + \beta_2 X_{ik2} + \dots + \beta_j X_{ikj} + \mu_k + \varepsilon_{ik}$$

The *logit* model, based on a logistic cumulative distribution function, is usually estimated by means of the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method and for this purpose the *lmer* function from the *lme4* package was used, implemented on the R language and environment for statistical computing, version 2.15.3 (see R Development Core Team 2013; Pinheiro and Bates 2000; Fox 2002). Thus, for an individual *i* in category *k*, the coefficients of the mixed-effects logistic model above would allow us to estimate the likelihood of being, for example, very interested in reading.

## 4. MAIN FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Model Selection

The mixed-effects logistic regression model was used to estimate the regression coefficients for the three models whose dependent variables were introduced in the data section: model 1– predicting the likelihood of an individual being very interested in reading; model 2– the likelihood of an individual reading books at least weekly; and model 3– for the case of reading newspapers on a daily basis. The output produced for the mixed-effects logistic regression under R environment supplies for each model the deviance residuals ( $-2 \cdot \text{Log likelihood}$  or  $-2LL$ ) and the AIC and BIC criteria. Under R software environment, the likelihood ratio test (LRT) for mixed-effects logistic models is performed by the ANOVA function which allows for comparing nested models (under the null hypothesis that the reduced model is better). At an initial stage, a model was estimated that included all the predictors and its goodness of fit was tested against the reduced models, with each reduced model eliminating one non-significant predictor at a time.

*Model 1: Interest in reading.* The general model ( $M_1$ : AIC=1113), that included the individual predictors presented in the data section and two interaction terms (gender\*reading reasons; socioeconomic status\*reading reasons), was tested against reduced models. The LRT test carried out with the ANOVA function has returned evidence in favor of a model  $M_2$  (AIC=1108.2) without the interaction term ‘gender\*reading reasons’. The reduced model  $M_3$  (AIC=1108), that excluded the interaction socioeconomic ‘status\*reading reasons’, was rejected by the LRT test in favor of model  $M_2$ . The regression coefficients for model  $M_2$  are presented in Table 3.

*Model 2: Frequency of reading books at least once a week.* The validation of the finally estimated model (see Table 3) followed a similar process to the one described for the previous model. The pairwise comparison of the reduced models against the model including more variables gave the following results ( $M_1$ : AIC=1707.7 is the general model): the reduced model without the variable ‘internet’ ( $M_2$ ; AIC=1707.7) was tested against  $M_1$  (AIC=1707.7) and the variable was retained; the variable ‘occupational status’ was removed and the reduced model  $M_3$  (AIC=1707.9) was

contrasted with M1 (AIC=1707.7) but the LRT test has shown that the removal of the variable was not justified and model M<sub>1</sub> was retained. The results for model M1 are presented in Table 3.

*Model 3: Frequency of reading newspapers every day.* In a similar fashion, the general model (M<sub>1</sub>:AIC=1750) was tested against a reduced model which excluded the variable ‘gender\*reading reasons’ (M<sub>2</sub>: AIC=1745.8) and model M<sub>2</sub> was retained. Next, the variable ‘socioeconomic status\*reading reasons’ was removed and the reduced model M<sub>3</sub> (AIC=1735.6) was tested against M<sub>2</sub>(AIC=1745.8). The AIC criterion has shown that the removal of the variable was justified. Thus, model M<sub>3</sub> was retained. The variable ‘occupational status’ was excluded and model M<sub>4</sub> (AIC=1740.5) was further contrasted with model M<sub>3</sub> (AIC=1735.6). The AIC statistics returned a better goodness of fit in favor of model M<sub>3</sub> and the variable was left in the model. The regression estimates for the model M<sub>3</sub> are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Estimates of the regression models**

| Predictor<br>(reference category in<br>brackets) | Reading interest |            |         | Books            |            |         | Newspapers       |            |          |
|--|------------------|------------|---------|------------------|------------|---------|------------------|------------|----------|
|  | $\beta$          | SE $\beta$ | p-value | $\beta$          | SE $\beta$ | p-value | $\beta$          | SE $\beta$ | p-value  |
| Constant   | -0.2087          | 0.7323     | 0.7755  | <b>-1.3299*</b>  | 0.6119     | 0.0297  | <b>-1.0702^</b>  | 0.5575     | 0.0549   |
| <b>Environmental variables</b>                   |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| <b>Parents (never)</b>                           |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| At least sometimes                               | -0.2397          | 0.1811     | 0.1855  | 0.0907           | 0.1353     | 0.5024  | 0.0134           | 0.1321     | 0.9188   |
| <b>Friends (never)</b>                           |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| At least sometimes                               | <b>0.6182***</b> | 0.1775     | 0.0004  | <b>0.3745**</b>  | 0.1358     | 0.0058  | 0.0293           | 0.1337     | 0.8260   |
| <b>Teacher (never)</b>                           |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| At least sometimes                               | 0.3294           | 0.2486     | 0.1852  | -0.0789          | 0.1998     | 0.6929  | 0.1093           | 0.1947     | 0.5743   |
| <b>School (never)</b>                            |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| At least sometimes                               | 0.0218           | 0.2755     | 0.9368  | 0.0006           | 0.2092     | 0.9974  | <b>0.3809^</b>   | 0.2078     | 0.0668   |
| <b>Socioeconomic variables</b>                   |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| <b>Age (18-24)</b>                               |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| 25-34  | 0.2707           | 0.3194     | 0.3967  | 0.0468           | 0.2697     | 0.8621  | 0.4016           | 0.2616     | 0.1247   |
| 35-44  | <b>0.6180^</b>   | 0.3449     | 0.0731  | 0.0705           | 0.2805     | 0.8014  | 0.3855           | 0.2733     | 0.1583   |
| 45-54  | <b>1.1676**</b>  | 0.3786     | 0.0020  | <b>0.5427^</b>   | 0.2953     | 0.0667  | <b>1.2152***</b> | 0.2882     | 2.49e-05 |
| 55-64  | <b>1.0418*</b>   | 0.4353     | 0.0166  | 0.4700           | 0.3404     | 0.1674  | <b>1.5938***</b> | 0.3423     | 3.23e-06 |
| >=65   | <b>1.1223*</b>   | 0.5323     | 0.0350  | <b>0.9790*</b>   | 0.4135     | 0.0179  | <b>1.4520***</b> | 0.4116     | 0.0004   |
| <b>Gender (Woman)</b>                            |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| Men  | <b>-0.5042**</b> | 0.1883     | 0.0074  | <b>-0.5802^</b>  | 0.3088     | 0.0603  | 0.9480***        | 0.1358     | <0.0001  |
| <b>SES-Social class (Workers)</b>                |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| MC-Middle Class                                  | -0.5811          | 0.4253     | 0.1718  | 0.0280           | 0.3352     | 0.9334  | 0.0063           | 0.1468     | 0.9655   |
| HMH-High/Middle high class                       | -0.6281          | 0.5394     | 0.2442  | 0.6794           | 0.4213     | 0.1068  | -0.1919          | 0.1911     | 0.3150   |
| <b>Habitat (&lt; 10,000)</b>                     |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| 10,001-100,000                                   | 0.2030           | 0.2161     | 0.3475  | -0.0139          | 0.1754     | 0.9368  | -0.0489          | 0.1739     | 0.7784   |
| 100,001-400,000                                  | <b>0.4116^</b>   | 0.2455     | 0.0937  | 0.0711           | 0.1911     | 0.7098  | 0.1358           | 0.1902     | 0.4753   |
| 400,001-1,000,000                                | 0.0122           | 0.3358     | 0.9709  | -0.2566          | 0.2792     | 0.3580  | 0.3892           | 0.2716     | 0.1518   |
| >1,000,000                                       | <b>0.6658*</b>   | 0.3223     | 0.0388  | -0.1608          | 0.2652     | 0.5442  | 0.3268           | 0.2559     | 0.2016   |
| <b>Education (Primary)</b>                       |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| Secondary  | -0.0035          | 0.2865     | 0.9900  | -0.2246          | 0.2191     | 0.3053  | 0.0115           | 0.2205     | 0.9581   |
| Vocational training                              | -0.1883          | 0.3148     | 0.5497  | 0.2325           | 0.2493     | 0.3510  | -0.1702          | 0.2468     | 0.4905   |
| College and above                                | <b>0.8394*</b>   | 0.3678     | 0.0224  | <b>0.4734^</b>   | 0.2680     | 0.0774  | <b>0.5670*</b>   | 0.2622     | 0.0306   |
| <b>Place (Other)</b>                             |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |          |
| Home   | <b>0.8416**</b>  | 0.2678     | 0.0016  | <b>0.7784***</b> | 0.2229     | 0.0004  | <b>-0.5256*</b>  | 0.2264     | 0.0202   |

| Predictor<br>(reference category in<br>brackets) | Reading interest |            |         | Books            |            |         | Newspapers       |            |         |
|--|------------------|------------|---------|------------------|------------|---------|------------------|------------|---------|
|  | $\beta$          | SE $\beta$ | p-value | $\beta$          | SE $\beta$ | p-value | $\beta$          | SE $\beta$ | p-value |
| Constant   | -0.2087          | 0.7323     | 0.7755  | <b>-1.3299*</b>  | 0.6119     | 0.0297  | <b>-1.0702^</b>  | 0.5575     | 0.0549  |
| <b>Main activity (Work)</b>                      |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |
| Housework  | <b>-0.7189*</b>  | 0.3582     | 0.0365  | -0.2981          | 0.2573     | 0.2466  | <b>-0.6376*</b>  | 0.2545     | 0.0122  |
| Leisure time                                     | <b>-0.8941*</b>  | 0.3820     | 0.0125  | -0.1782          | 0.2888     | 0.5371  | -0.3742          | 0.2865     | 0.1915  |
| Take care kids                                   | -0.4642          | 0.5641     | 0.2243  | -0.2175          | 0.2848     | 0.4449  | -0.3845          | 0.2804     | 0.1703  |
| Studying   | 0.1529           | 0.5050     | 0.7863  | -0.2281          | 0.3915     | 0.5601  | -0.1702          | 0.3531     | 0.6298  |
| Volunteering                                     | <b>-0.8485^</b>  | 0.2434     | 0.0929  | <b>0.8581^</b>   | 0.4782     | 0.0727  | -0.6037          | 0.3976     | 0.1289  |
| <b>Occup. status<br/>(Housework)</b>             |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |
| Unemployed                                       | 0.1953           | 0.3761     | 0.6034  | 0.3858           | 0.2837     | 0.1739  | 0.1660           | 0.2934     | 0.5715  |
| Retired  | 0.3233           | 0.3985     | 0.4171  | 0.2085           | 0.3005     | 0.4877  | 0.1862           | 0.3029     | 0.5386  |
| Student  | -0.9102          | 0.6571     | 0.1660  | 0.3095           | 0.4897     | 0.5273  | -0.5405          | 0.4785     | 0.2586  |
| Employed   | -0.1848          | 0.4057     | 0.6487  | 0.3283           | 0.3053     | 0.2822  | -0.0702          | 0.3148     | 0.8234  |
| <b>Internet (No)</b>                             |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |
| Yes  | <b>0.4598^</b>   | 0.2434     | 0.0589  | 0.1751           | 0.1854     | 0.3449  | <b>0.6388***</b> | 0.1904     | 0.0007  |
| <b>Library (No)</b>                              |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |
| Yes  | <b>0.5408**</b>  | 0.2049     | 0.0083  | <b>0.5016***</b> | 0.1462     | 0.0006  | 0.0802           | 0.1385     | 0.5625  |
| <b>Reason (Information)</b>                      |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |
| Entertainment                                    | -0.2979          | 0.3628     | 0.4115  | 0.1807           | 0.3389     | 0.5940  | <b>-0.4091*</b>  | 0.1719     | 0.0173  |
| Study & Work                                     | <b>-0.8755^</b>  | 0.4924     | 0.0753  | <b>1.9409**</b>  | 0.6263     | 0.0019  | <b>-0.4260^</b>  | 0.2544     | 0.0940  |
| Learning   | 0.0617           | 0.4778     | 0.8972  | 0.6887           | 0.4306     | 0.1096  | -0.2587          | 0.2169     | 0.2330  |
| <b>SES: Reason<br/>(Workers: Inf.)</b>           |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |
| MC: entertainment                                | <b>1.3321**</b>  | 0.4952     | 0.0071  | 0.1254           | 0.3771     | 0.7393  |                  |            |         |
| HMH: entertainment                               | 0.6527           | 0.5925     | 0.2706  | -0.3368          | 0.4576     | 0.4617  |                  |            |         |
| MC: study & work                                 | 0.9802           | 0.6752     | 0.1465  | -0.4140          | 0.6289     | 0.5103  |                  |            |         |
| HMH: study & work                                | <b>1.3700^</b>   | 0.7591     | 0.0711  | <b>-1.1684^</b>  | 0.6484     | 0.0715  |                  |            |         |
| MC: learning                                     | 0.3146           | 0.6323     | 0.6187  | -0.1104          | 0.4860     | 0.8201  |                  |            |         |
| HMH: learning                                    | 0.0068           | 0.7726     | 0.9928  | -0.4341          | 0.6187     | 0.4828  |                  |            |         |
| <b>Gender: Reason<br/>(Woman: Inf.)</b>          |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |
| Men: entertainment                               |                  |            |         | 0.2580           | 0.3446     | 0.4540  |                  |            |         |
| Men: study & work                                |                  |            |         | <b>-1.1035*</b>  | 0.5565     | 0.0473  |                  |            |         |
| Men: learning                                    |                  |            |         | -0.0144          | 0.4456     | 0.9742  |                  |            |         |
| <b>Random effects</b>                            |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |                  |            |         |
| Region intercept<br>(variance/SE)                | <0.0001/0.0007   |            |         | 0.1923/0.4385    |            |         | 0.2693/0.5189    |            |         |
| AIC/BIC  | 1108/1328        |            |         | 1701/1936        |            |         | 1736/1942        |            |         |
| logLik   | -512.1           |            |         | -805.3           |            |         | -831.8           |            |         |
| No. observations:                                | 1374             |            |         | 1377             |            |         | 1377             |            |         |
| No. groups                                       | 17               |            |         | 17               |            |         | 17               |            |         |

Note: Significance codes: 0 '\*\*\*'; 0.001 '\*\*'; 0.01 '\*'; 0.05 '^'; 0.1 '^'; 1.

## 4.2. Discussion of the Results

### *Environmental Resources*

Overall, the results seem to indicate that the effect of environmental indicators on individuals' reading habits depends on the type of reading. If referring to reading interest in general, only friends appear to have a significant impact; the results indicating that those who comment on books more often with friends are more interested in reading than others. Educational system has a positive impact too, thus contributing to children developing reading habits when they become adults, although the scale of the effect does not appear to be

significantly related to the intensity of sharing reading experiences at school. The effect of literary socialization within the family seems to be weak on interest in reading: the coefficient is negative and not significant indicating that family cultural resources don't have a clear effect on the likelihood of being interested in reading later on in life. In the case of a preference for reading books, the coefficients are positive for 'friends', 'parents' and 'school' and significant for 'friends'. It seems that socialization with friends around books has a clear effect on the frequency of reading books later on in life. The general trend is that the less intensive these interactions are the less likelihood of reading books frequently. When it comes to a preference for reading newspapers and other informative media, external environmental factors like school obliging children to read seems to be the most influential, with significant coefficient. As for family environment, friends and school, the influence is positive but not significant.

### ***Socioeconomic Indicators and other Variables***

These variables allow us to complete the socioeconomic profile of Spanish readers. Gender returned significant coefficients for the three models, indicating that women are more interested in reading than men; women read more books, whereas men read more newspapers. The coefficients for age are positive in all cases, and particularly significant in the case of reading interest and newspapers. Overall, the trend indicates that reading interest increases with age, reaching a peak with the 45-54 age segment, followed by the over 65's; in the case of books, the over 65 segment has the highest likelihood of reading books frequently; in the case of newspapers, the coefficients are significant for the 45-54 segment and above, reaching a peak with the 55-64 segment, followed by the over 65's. Reading habits also depend on level of education, those individuals with a college degree or higher displaying a positive and significant coefficient in all cases. The variable 'place' with two levels (home vs. other place) allows us to distinguish between two main reading habits: while for reading interest and books the house is the most preferred place to read (positive and significant coefficients), in the case of newspapers the preferred place is outside the home. Individuals with family responsibilities, measured by means of the question referring to main activity performed during a working day, have less time to read. Individuals who engage in leisure activities (going for a walk, watching TV, etc.) are less interested in reading and the same applies to those dedicated to volunteering and unpaid house works (the coefficients are negative and significant). When it comes to a preference for reading books, only volunteering has a positive and significant coefficient. As for newspapers, individuals engaged in house works are the ones who read less (the coefficient is negative and significant). Both occupational status and socioeconomic status had no significant effects. Internet users are more likely to engage with reading in general and newspapers (positive and significant coefficients). The practice of going the public libraries seems to have a significant effect on the interest in reading and on the frequency of reading books. Individuals who engage with reading for study and professional reasons are significantly less interested in reading compared to those who read for informative purposes; the opposite is true when it comes about a preference for books. The frequency of reading newspapers every day depends on reading reasons as follows: individuals who read mainly for informative purposes are more likely to read newspapers frequently; for those who read for entertainment and for study and professional reasons, the likelihood of reading newspapers every day is significantly lower. The two interactions –a) socioeconomic status\*reading reasons; b) gender\*reading reasons– returned

the following results: a) middle class individuals who read for entertainment are more likely to be interested in reading; for the high and middle-high social strata the engagement with reading is clearly related to study and professional reasons; on the contrary, the preference for reading books is inversely related with reading for study and professional reasons; b) the interaction of gender with reading reasons shows that men who read for study and professional reasons are less interested in books than women.

## CONCLUSION

Empirical findings on Spanish reading habits are in line with existing evidence (see Fernández-Blanco et al. 1999; Ispizua et al. 2008), indicating that environmental cultural resources are important in the formation of reading habits: cultural socialization with friends (“social norms”) affect individuals’ interest in reading and their frequency of reading books later in life, thus confirming the importance of cultural experiences received in childhood (Holbrook and Schindler 1989; Holbrook 1993). The education system (school and teachers) seems to be less influential in the case of books, leaving the formation of reading habits to the closer environment (friends) and to other cultural resources like public libraries (Kraaykamp 2003). In the case of newspapers, the results show that external cultural resources (school, in the first place, teachers and the internet) appear to be more influential in the formation of such reading habits. The association between social class and type of reading has shown that middle classes appear to prefer reading for entertainment while high/middle-high classes’ preferences also include informative books, for study and professional reasons (Van Peer 1991). The demographic analysis confirmed the existence of gender differences with regard to interest in reading and also reading preferences (see Fernández-Blanco et al. 1999; Katz-Gerro 2002; Kraaykamp 2003; etc.). Reading habits increase with level of cultural capital, confirming the importance of educational attainment in the development of this cultural practice. Further research is needed in order to assess the impact of cultural resources on individuals’ educational attainment in line with the framework proposed by Bourdieu’s cultural reproduction theory.

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