

Educational stratification in cultural participation: Cognitive competence or status motivation?

Natascha Notten, Bram Lancee, Herman van de Werfhorst and Harry Ganzeboom

Educational stratification in cultural participation

Social differentiation in cultural participation

- Cultural participation; attending performances (visiting concerts, theatre) and reading literature
- Cultural capital and cultural consumption research
- Most research on participation is on the individual level
 - Individual characteristics, especially education
 - Higher educated consume more (highbrow) culture than lower educated

Relevance

- Social differentiation in lifestyles may reflect the disbalance between social cohesion within subgroups
- Cultural participation is an important factor in the intergenerational transmission of inequality

Educational stratification in cultural participation

Two main but contrasting explanations for these inequalities:

- *Status hypothesis*: Cultural reproduction and lifestyle theories: cultural participation is a signal of social status and group identity
(Bourdieu, 1984)
- *Cognitive hypothesis*: Information processing theory: cultural participation depends on cognitive skills (Scitovsky 1976; Ganzeboom 1982)

Educational stratification in cultural participation

Disentangling the educational differentiation in cultural participation; status or cognitive aspects?

With regard to education itself both the status and cognitive explanations for cultural stratification may be at work.

Two distinct but related strategies

1) First, we separate the status-related from the cognitive explanation of educational stratification in cultural participation by including a person's *cognitive competencies (individual level)*

The remaining effect of education (i.e., net effect) represents status-related issues

2) Second, we examine whether stratification in cultural consumption is more pronounced in societies with higher levels of educational inequality (*country-level comparative perspective*)

Cultural participation and status: “Status hypothesis”

People participate in cultural life mainly as an expression of their social status, to confirm existing social cleavages: status signaling.

Social context is relevant for participation in cultural activities; in a context where status is less prominent or present, this mechanism is likely to be less pronounced (and reverse)

In countries with more highly educated people, it might be harder to differentiate oneself by means of cultural consumption

In more ‘mobile’ countries, status is likely to be less important, less need or incentive to emphasize life with status markers

Cultural participation and status: “Status hypothesis”

Hypothesis 1:

In countries with a higher level of *educational expansion*, as in a greater share of highly educated people, the status-related (net) effects of education on cultural participation are smaller, especially once a person’s cognitive competencies are controlled for

Hypothesis 2:

We expect high levels of *intergenerational educational mobility* to reduce the correlation between the status-related (net) effects of education on cultural participation, especially when filtering out the cognitive aspects of education.

Cultural participation from a cognitive perspective: “Cognitive hypothesis”

Cultural participation occurs because of the level of information these specific cultural activities provide.

Education is related to cultural participation because different levels of education stand for distinct cognitive competencies.

We further test the information-processing theory by including a concrete measure of cognitive skills into our models, next to a person's educational attainment (cognitive vs non-cognitive)

Hypothesis 3:

We expect a person's cognitive competencies, here conceived as a person's literacy skills, to capture a large share of education's effect on cultural participation.

Cultural participation from a cognitive perspective: “Cognitive hypothesis”

From a cognitive perspective, cultural participation as such is not dependent on the social context.

Consequently, cognitive capacity affects the enjoyment of culture, but this is independent of the number of highly qualified or mobile persons in a country.

Hypothesis 4:

The level of educational expansion and level of intergenerational educational mobility in a society do not affect the relation between cognitive competencies (i.e., literacy skills) and cultural participation.

Data, measurements and methods

International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)(1994-1998)

International comparative measures on individual participation in cultural activities, educational aspects, cognitive skills (i.e., literacy) and relevant control variables

18 countries, age>25, N=43,981

- Cultural participation (highbrow): frequency attending cultural performances (movie, play or concerts) (0-4; M=0.93) and reading books (0-4; M=2.24)
- Educational level (yrs) (z-standardized)
- Literacy skills (z-standardized)
- Parental education (ISCED)
- Age, gender, born abroad

Data, measurements and methods

Country level variables, context influences

GDP per capita

1996 ppp current international dollars

Educational mobility

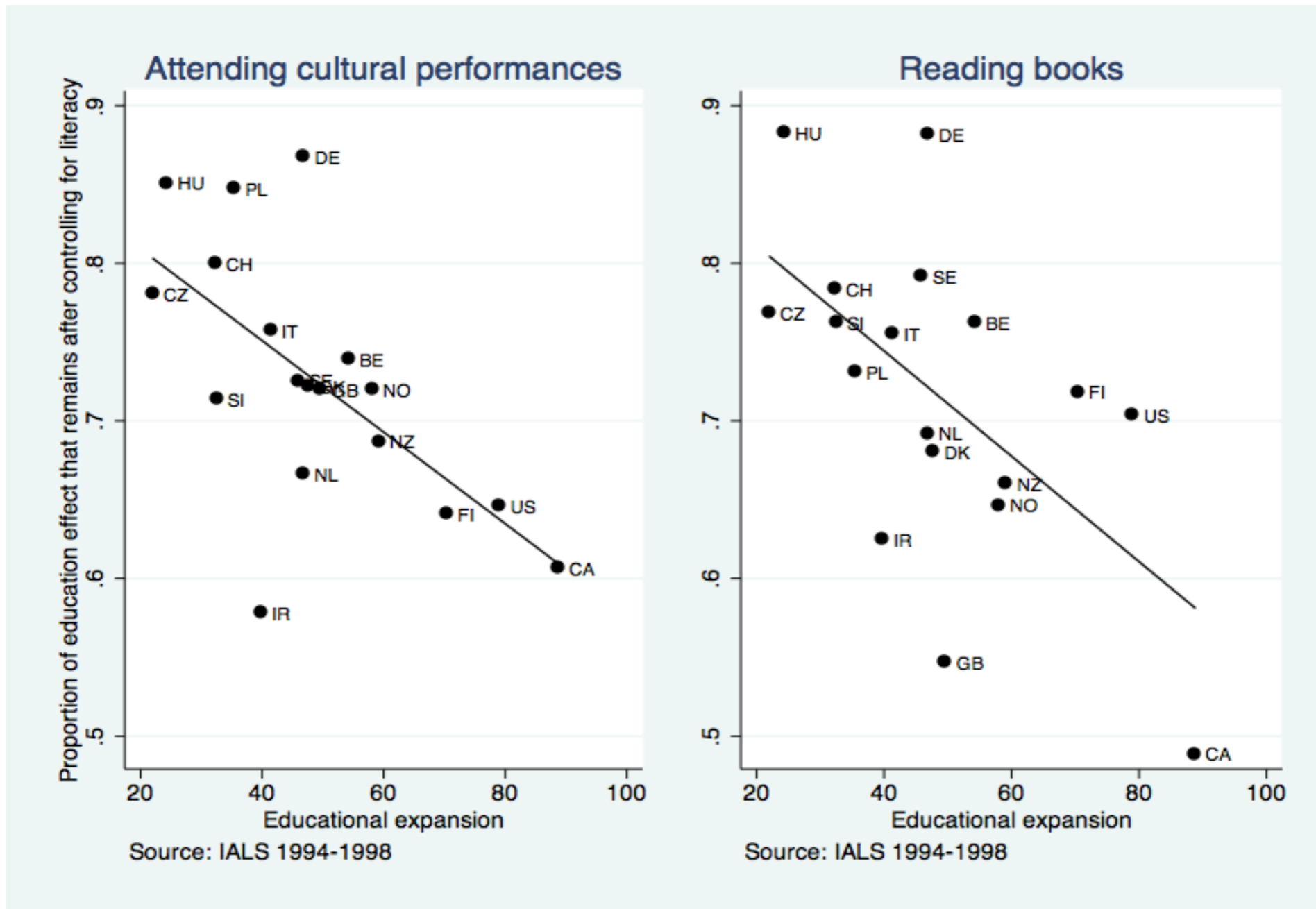
intergenerational association of education; relation education parent-respondent; ranging from strong to weak
(the weaker the relation, the more educational mobility)

Educational expansion

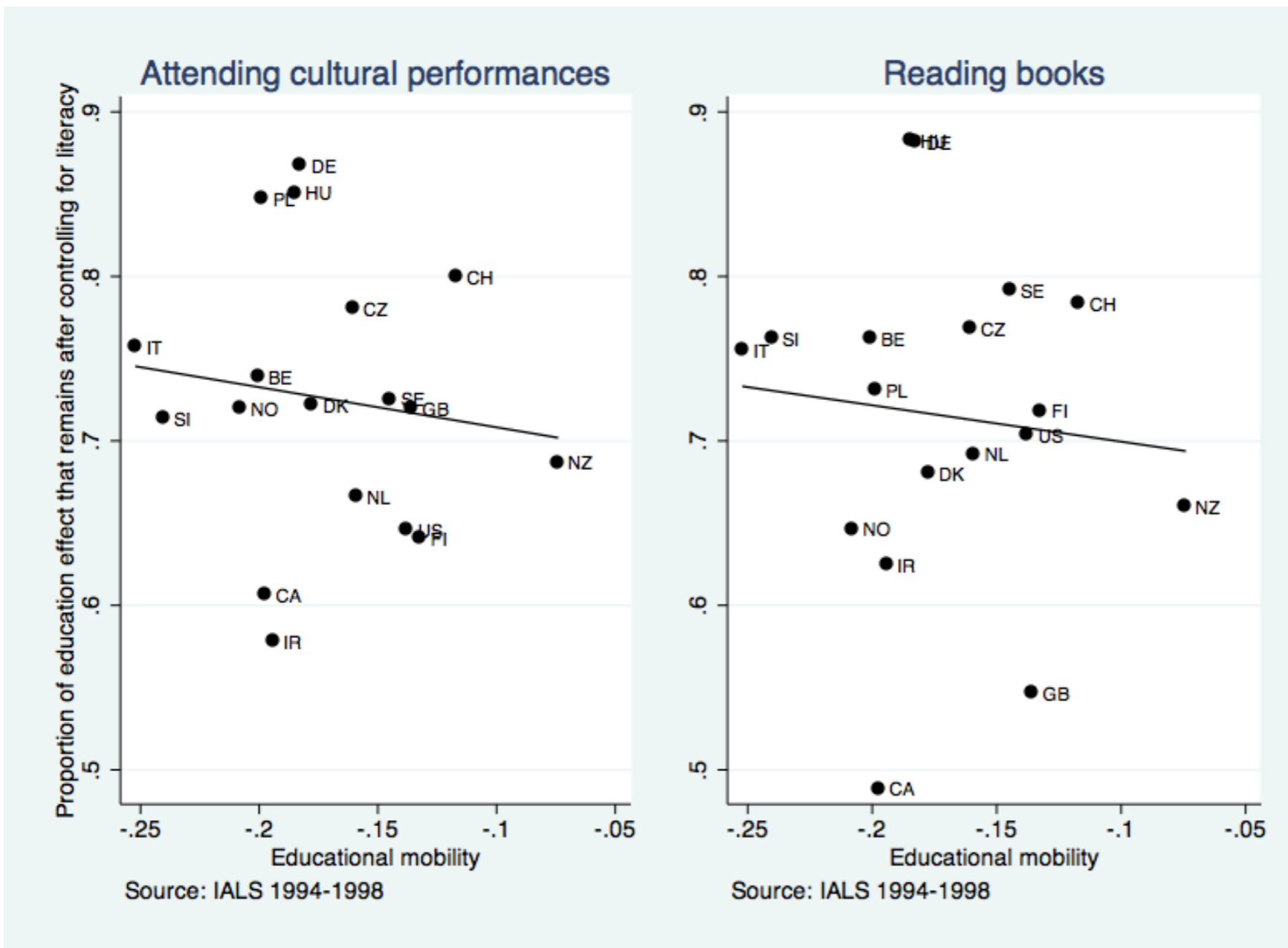
general level of participation in tertiary education in a given country
(UNESCO, 2011)

Multilevel models, random slopes, cross-level interactions

Descriptive analyses: Proportion of education effect that remains after controlling for literacy skills, by educational expansion



Descriptive analyses: Proportion of education effect that remains after controlling for literacy skills, by educational mobility



Results multilevel models attending cultural performances

*controlled for age, gender, born abroad

Table 2. Multilevel models on cultural performance attendance

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se
Years of education	2.159***	(.103)	1.580***	(.093)	1.556***	(.076)	1.581***	(.094)
Literacy			1.072***	(.060)	1.072***	(.060)	1.075***	(.060)
Educational expansion/10 x education					-.109*	(.043)		
Educational mobility x education					-2.726	(1.742)		
Educational expansion/10 x literacy							.007	(.033)
Educational mobility x literacy							.562	(1.357)
Educational expansion/10	-.010	(.033)	.023	(.030)	.026	(.029)	.023	(.030)
Educational mobility	2.177	(1.124)	1.178	(1.029)	1.279	(1.019)	1.111	(1.040)
GDP per capita ppp/1000	.019	(.010)	.005	(.009)	.005	(.009)	.005	(.009)
Parents' education: no or primary	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Parents' education: lower secondary	.087***	(.010)	.061***	(.010)	.060***	(.010)	.061***	(.010)
Parents' education: higher secondary	.195***	(.011)	.155***	(.011)	.154***	(.011)	.155***	(.011)
Parents' education: tertiary education	.279***	(.013)	.233***	(.013)	.233***	(.013)	.233***	(.013)

Results multilevel models book reading

*controlled for age, gender and born abroad

Table 3. Multilevel models on book reading

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se
Years of education	3.981***	(.280)	2.824***	(.252)	2.722***	(.169)	2.818***	(.250)
Literacy			2.093***	(.120)	2.092***	(.117)	2.080***	(.116)
Educational expansion/10 x education					-.279**	(.097)		
Educational mobility x education					-12.720**	(3.903)		
Educational expansion/10 x literacy							.042	(.066)
Educational mobility x literacy							-3.321	(2.658)
Educational expansion/10	-.026	(.050)	.020	(.050)	.025	(.049)	.017	(.051)
Educational mobility	9.439***	(1.744)	8.649***	(1.743)	8.799***	(1.702)	8.960***	(1.776)
GDP per capita ppp/1000	.025	(.016)	.005	(.016)	.005	(.015)	.005	(.016)
Parents' education: no or primary	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
Parents' education: lower secondary	.148***	(.019)	.095***	(.018)	.095***	(.018)	.095***	(.018)
Parents' education: higher secondary	.305***	(.020)	.227***	(.020)	.226***	(.020)	.227***	(.020)
Parents' education: tertiary education	.432***	(.024)	.341***	(.024)	.341***	(.024)	.341***	(.024)
Age 26-35	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	

Conclusions

We found that both status-related and cognitive aspects of education are relevant for cultural participation

In line with the status theory, the status signaling part of education is less pronounced in countries with lower levels of educational inequalities (i.e., higher levels of educational expansion and mobility).

In line with the cognitive theory, the effect of cognitive competency (i.e., literacy) on cultural participation is not dependent on variation in educational inequalities across countries.

Reducing educational inequality results in less inequality in other domains

Descriptives: Individual level variables

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>Dependent variables</i>				
Book reading	2.24	1.48	0	4
Attending cultural performances	0.93	0.83	0	4
<i>Individual-level variables</i>				
Years of education	0.37	0.11	0	1
Literacy skills	0.59	0.14	0	1
	Percentage			
Parents' education: no or primary	31		0	1
Parents' education: lower secondary	31		0	1
Parents' education: higher secondary	24		0	1
Parents' education: tertiary education	14		0	1
Gender (female=1)	54		0	1
Age 26-35	29		0	1
Age 36-45	28		0	1
Age 46-55	22		0	1
Age 56 and older	21		0	1
Born abroad	8		0	1
<i>Country-level variables</i>				
Educational mobility	-0.17	0.04	-0.25	-0.07
Educational expansion	49.4	14.16	22	89
GDP per capita PPP	20573	5593.53	8050	28772

Source: IALS 1994-1998

N1=43.981 N2=18

Descriptives: Country level variables

Appendix A: Country level variables

Country	Educational mobility (a)	GDP per capita ppp (b)	Educational expansion (c)
Canada (CA)	-0.20	23,253	89
Switzerland (CH)	-0.12	27,438	32
Germany (DE)	-0.18	23,049	47
United States (US)	-0.14	28,772	79
Ireland (IR)	-0.19	19,510	40
Netherlands (NL)	-0.16	22,652	47
Poland (PL)	-0.20	8,050	36
Sweden (SE)	-0.14	22,647	46
New Zealand (NZ)	-0.07	18,076	59
Great Britain (GB)	-0.14	20,936	50
Belgium (BE)	-0.20	22,790	54
Italy (IT)	-0.25	21,799	41
Norway (NO)	-0.21	26,039	58
Slovenia (SI)	-0.24	13,715	33
Czech Republic (CZ)	-0.16	13,643	22
Denmark (DK)	-0.18	24,049	48
Finland (FI)	-0.13	19,242	70
Hungary (HU)	-0.18	9,134	24

(a) Source: IALS 1994/1998 (own calculations)

(b) Source: Worldbank, 2011

(c) Source: UNESCO, 2012

Educational stratification in cultural participation

Disentangling the educational differentiation in cultural participation; status or cognitive aspects?

Taking into account an cognitive competence (i.e., literacy score)

- Indicating more explicitly an individuals cognitive skills
- The remaining effect of education (i.e. relative effect) represents status-related issues

A country's level of educational dispersion and inequality

- We study the association between a person's educational level and his/her cultural participation (micro level), by comparing its strength between countries with different levels of educational inequality (macro-level).