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The Bivalent Role of Tertiary Education in Promoting Universalism in Europe

Fiorenzo Parziale

ABSTRACT: *Through analysis of ESS data collected in four waves, this article investigates the relationship between education and worldview point (Weltanschauung), focussing on the role of tertiary education in promoting universalism. Using a theoretical framework connecting the perspective of Bernstein, and that of Bourdieu to the Weberian theory of rationalization, tertiary education was found to play a bivalent role in the spread of universalism in the European context.*

KEYWORDS: *Universalism, Education, Code, Class, Rationalization*

Introduction

The article aims to understand the role tertiary education plays in promoting *universalism* – where each individual belongs to the same collective, the human kind – in European society.

Universalists are seen to believe in equality and prefer policies that remove social barriers to emancipate subaltern groups (women, ethnic minorities, the working class, and so on). Here, we intend universalism as an implicit view, based on the mutual recognition of people (Honneth, 2016), contrary to the imposition of an ethnocentric vision that cancels out differences.

Universalism, as for other worldviews, corresponds to what Mannheim (1929) would define as a *Weltanschauung*, which constitutes an interpretation of reality or the workings of the world depending on the social condition of individuals.

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In our pluralistic and global society full universalism can be achieved, so long as there is recognition of the Other, instead of diversities being assimilated into the national majority culture (Ferrara, 2008; Marramao, 2015). This vision entails replacing citizenship rights with personal rights (Ferrajoli, 1994), and the idea that democratic institutions should work to eradicate social inequalities regardless of ethnic group, religion and other features possessed by individuals: egalitarian policies must avoid aiming at cultural assimilation, but strive to break down the existing social barriers that feed economic exploitation and political domination. That said, the recognition of the Other must not cause differences between individuals and social groups to be enhanced as to exasperate power relations in the fight for emancipation.

Universalism contrasts with Neoliberalism, the present dominant ideology based on a strong individualism, and the idea that market and capitalism are the only appropriate means of organizing society (Harvey, 2007). However, that neoliberal regulation of capitalism has failed is evident given the present economic crisis, which has already spanned 12 years. Nevertheless, the discontent over unemployment and social insecurity connected to this crisis has given rise to demands for securitarian, rather than egalitarian policies. This can be attributed to the long-term effects of Neoliberalism, which, as the predominant ideology, has gradually produced not only an economic system that encourages an individualistic culture based on competition, but also the widespread belief that consumers' satisfaction is of higher value than workers' rights (*ibidem*).

In this scenario, the recovery of egalitarianism has been thwarted (Crouch, 2004), while at the same time, 'liberal secularism' (Žižek, 2017), otherwise defined as 'cultural liberalism' (Sciolla, 2013), has been erased.

Regarding the crisis of egalitarianism, in the last few decades neoliberalism has fostered the process of capitalist expansion on a global scale, on the one hand giving capitalists an immediate financial return greater than with medium/long-term industrial investment (Piketty, 2013), while on the other, forcing workers to pay the price of enterprise risk and capitalist competition (Gallino, 2013).

Instead, liberal secularism is in crisis as the reinvention and exaltation of national cultural traditions (Appadurai, 1996) encourages people – especially if belonging to subaltern classes – to attribute the economic crisis and related social insecurity to the increasing migration, which, in turn, is actually produced

by the severe exploitation of the ‘Global South’ due to neoliberal governance (Sassen, 2014).

Therefore, the two values promoted by modern educational system – liberal secularism and social equality – have been put into crisis.

In this scenario, the present educational system continues to play an ambivalent role as it promises universalism to those who want a long scholastic career, but at same time it also reproduces social inequalities (Bourdieu, 1979; Weis, 2010; Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2013).

Given this context, the aim of this paper was to understand whether university education (with the successful obtaining of a degree) enables Europeans to develop critical thinking with regards to the dominant ideology. In other words, it investigates whether tertiary education can influence an individual’s identity so that the most educated show a worldview different from that expressed by people with less education.

This aim stems from the idea that tertiary education is an indicator of participating in a specific ‘learning environment’ which conveys knowledge farthest from ‘commonsense’ (Bernstein, 1971). That is, tertiary education may nurture analytical competences connected to theoretical rationalism (Weber, 1920), based on abstract and generalizing thought. This kind of thinking, in turn, may be more predisposed to contrast particularism, and be prevailed upon to contest power relationships and social hierarchies (Gouldner, 1979).

1. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Theoretically, this research rejects the idea of a vertical (or top-down) socialization whereby schools shape individual identity in a linear manner. Equally, though, our perspective does not underestimate the cognitive effects of education, with several studies, for example, showing the connection between ‘civiness’ and education (Assirelli, 2014).

We believe that education shapes an individual’s cognitive script, but its effects are not simply a direct consequence of schooling, but differ according to various multiple factors. Among these, the interaction of an individual’s social condition and their educational trajectory should be considered. With this theoretical framework, it can be said that, on the one hand, the individual in-

ternalises norms, values, and beliefs conveyed by schools on the basis of their habitus, namely the cognitive dispositions connected to their social condition (Bourdieu, 1979); on the other, the transmitted messages are also objectivations (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) that in turn affect readers' thought processes: messages work as texts that shape cognitive frames and consequently individual identity (Ricoeur, 1986).

With regard to the first, Bernstein (1971) highlights how the greater probability of school failure by working class students depends on their use of a 'restricted code', which is opposite to the 'elaborated code' that schools request. At the same time, he points out how this second kind of code, as representing universal categories, enables the educational system to function, and encourages the acquisition of a universalistic worldview point.

The perspective taken here connects Bernstein's observations to the analysis of the origins of the modern educational system – essentially the integration of diverse institutions promoted by different social groups belonging to the upper-middle classes (Archer, 1979). These institutions are necessarily connected to the development of rationalization (Weber, 1920), which produced the modern State-Nation and Capitalism through the powerful shaping of human behaviour. In particular, university represents the place where the most theoretical knowledge is elaborated, contributing to the development of modern society.

University arose thanks to the cultural awakening of the late Middle Ages, and was built from the struggle between Church and Empire (Gramsci, 1964). An important role was played by the *clerici vagantes* who contributed to the circulation of theoretical knowledge and its systematic organization. They represent the predecessors of the most intellectual middle class group, now made up of highly educated professionals (Gouldner, 1979), in particular those working in the education system (Giroux, 2005).

By developing this analysis, it could be ascertained whether the role of tertiary education in building universalistic cognitive scripts depends on specific cultural fruition of scholastic system by different groups together with educational trajectory pursued by individuals.

Adopting this theoretical framework, the following three hypotheses were corroborated:

H1. *Formal education has a positive impact on encouraging universalism, as long as scholastic careers enable individuals to develop a sufficiently elaborate*

code as to allow them to identify the connection between specific features of phenomena and collocate them to wider categories (Bernstein, 1971);

H2. *But the orientation towards universalism should be more widespread among individuals who carry out intellectual work, as they make constant use of the elaborate code, usually nurtured by university knowledge – they are the heirs of *clerici vagantes*; instead, those who carry out manual or executive work are less inclined to universalism because of their restricted code, connected to their social condition, as highlighted by Bernstein.*

H3. *Universalism should be stronger between individuals who experience an upward educational mobility, since this specific trajectory is characterized by the deeper socialization based a more restricted familial code being elaborated into another more complex code (Parziale and Vatrella, 2019): this path should promote an identity of an individual favourable to the recognition of the Other, combined with the desire for social justice, deriving from the critical reflection of their own social origin.*

2. Methodology

This empirical research is based on the elaboration of data gathered by the waves of the *European Social Survey* (ESS) carried out in 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016. This time span allows the thinking of Europeans' to be studied before and after the economic crisis of 2007-2008. In particular, the research analysed the interviewees that had an occupation and resided in the 17 countries reached by all of the selected waves¹.

First, some variables connected to properties conceived as indicators of worldview were identified.

Referring to this particular existing survey addressed to a very large number of interviewees across Europe restricted the present analysis of worldviews to two themes: immigration and social equality. Other analytical dimensions of the concept of 'worldview' were not examinable through the ESS survey.

¹ The countries analysed are as follows: Belgium, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Spain, Finland, France, United Kingdom, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia.

Notably, the two themes analyzed are connected to each other, as migratory flows adversely affects the belief in social equality, which, however, is in crisis due to the effects of neoliberalism (Crouch, 2004). That is to say, the success of neoliberal regulation has promoted individualism, especially in the obstinate search for the most elevated individual status obtainable, at the cost of breaking social ties. This has produced the significant retrenchment of welfare state. At the same time, increasing immigration has led several Europeans to see immigrants as a threat to the residual welfare state.

Therefore, by taking the two dimensions ‘immigration’ and ‘social equality’, a relevant part of the interviewees’ worldview – ‘the way you relate to others’ – could be studied. The aim was to identify the different worldviews by categorizing them on the basis of a typology, which considered two criteria: the opposition between universalism and particularism (Marradi, 2005); and, the opposition between individualism and collectivism².

Specifically, the research focused on 9 variables, of which 6 centred on immigration, the other 3 variables relating to social equality.

To summarize the information of various variables in a few indexes, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used. Unfortunately, it was not possible to analyse both topics through components that correspond to a linear combination of the variables examined on the basis of their common variance (Di Franco and Marradi, 2003). Therefore, an index for immigration was built, and the other three variables relating to social equality were examined individually.

Going in order, Table 1 shows the factor score coefficients obtained by the 6 variables³ concerning immigration in relation to the specific index we called ‘Openness to migrants’: factor score coefficients were used to estimate the net contribution of each variable on this index.

As evident, the variables variance reproduced by the index is constant in the four surveys. Moreover, no significant change occurs in the factor score coefficients in the different surveys. Its range varies from $-2,4$ to $+2,3$ in 2004, these values becoming $-2,6$ and $+2,1$, respectively, in 2008, then $-2,6$ and $+2,1$ in

² This last opposition has been studied by social psychologists, especially those interested in distinguishing the cultural matrixes from which individuals draw resources for action (Hofstede, 1980).

³ The first three variables are ordinal, but they can be transformed in scale variable; instead, the other three variables are built using the Cantril scale in order to obtain variables similar to the scale variables.

TAB. 1. *The factor score coefficients of six variables chosen to analyse the Openness to migrants in the last four waves of ESS*

| | 2004 (REPRODUCED VARIANCE: 64,1%) | 2008 (REPRODUCED VARIANCE: 65,1%) | 2012 (REPRODUCED VARIANCE: 65,8%) | 2016 (REPRODUCED VARIANCE: 64,9%) |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country's] people to come and live here? <i>1. None, 2. Few, 3. Some, 4. Many</i> | .206 | .203 | .204 | .199 |
| To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people? <i>1. None, 2. Few, 3. Some, 4. Many</i> | .223 | .221 | .219 | .220 |
| To what extent do you think [country] should allow people from poorer countries outside Europe? <i>1. None, 2. Few, 3. Some, 4. Many</i> | .213 | .214 | .211 | .212 |
| Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries? <i>Scale 0 (bad) - 10 (good)</i> | .199 | .198 | .199 | .200 |
| Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? <i>Scale 0 (undermined) - 10 (enriched)</i> | .201 | .197 | .196 | .205 |
| Is country made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries? <i>Scale 0 (worse) - 10 (better)</i> | .205 | .206 | .202 | .203 |

2012, and eventually $-2,2$ and $+2,1$ in 2016. Being a standardized index, the average value remains 0.

Next, I analysed three variables that cover different and relevant features of social equality: *economic equality*, analysed through agreement with the idea that ‘the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels’; *equality of opportunity*, determined by how far the respondent thinks that ‘every person in the world should be treated equally. S/he believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life’; *the recognition of the Other*, ascertained by seeing to what extent the respondent identifies with the statement ‘it is important

TAB. 2A. *The differences between groups with regards to Openness to Migrants in the last four waves of ESS*

| | PARTICULARISTS | NEOCOMMUNI- TARIANS | NEOLIBERALISTS | UNIVERSALISTS |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 2004 (26,645) | -1.0 | -0.7 | 0.5 | 0.9 |
| 2008 (28,448) | -1.2 | -0.6 | 0.4 | 0.9 |
| 2012 (29,587) | -1.2 | -0.7 | 0.3 | 0.9 |
| 2016 (29,873) | -0.8 | -0.1 | 0.5 | 1.1 |

TAB. 2B. *The differences between groups with regards to Economic Equality in the last four waves of ESS*

| | PARTICULARISTS | NEOCOMMUNI- TARIANS | NEOLIBERALISTS | UNIVERSALISTS |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 2004 (26,645) | 1.7 | 2.5 | 1.6 | 2.1 |
| 2008 (28,448) | 2.1 | 2.1 | 1.5 | 2.2 |
| 2012 (29,587) | 1.9 | 2.5 | 1.6 | 2.2 |
| 2016 (29,873) | 2.3 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 2.5 |

TAB. 2C. *The differences between groups with regards to Equal Opportunity in the last four waves of ESS*

| | PARTICULARISTS | NEOCOMMUNI- TARIANS | NEOLIBERALISTS | UNIVERSALISTS |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 2004 (26,645) | 1.4 | 2.6 | 1.7 | 2.7 |
| 2008 (28,448) | 1.5 | 2.6 | 1.6 | 2.6 |
| 2012 (29,587) | 1.5 | 2.6 | 1.7 | 2.7 |
| 2016 (29,873) | 1.7 | 2.7 | 1.5 | 2.6 |

TAB. 2D. *The differences between groups with regards to Understanding the Other in the last four waves of ESS*

| | PARTICULARISTS | NEOCOMMUNI- TARIANS | NEOLIBERALISTS | UNIVERSALISTS |
|---------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 2004 (26,645) | 1.4 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 2.4 |
| 2008 (28,448) | 1.3 | 2.3 | 1.5 | 2.3 |
| 2012 (29,587) | 1.3 | 2.3 | 1.6 | 2.3 |
| 2016 (29,873) | 1.5 | 2.3 | 1.6 | 2.3 |

to listen to people who are different from him/her. Even when s/he disagrees with them, s/he still wants to understand them’.

The operational definition of the three variables was redefined so that they had the same polarity, with the lowest score indicating the greatest aversion to the item, and the highest to indicate instead complete agreement with the item⁴. The values of these three variables are always positive, because their range goes from 1 (low propensity/hostility) to 3 (high propensity/favour).

As a third step, a k-means cluster analysis was used (Di Franco, 2006) to classify interviewees according to their value on the index of Openness to migrants, and according to the other three variables concerning social equality, as well. This technique allowed us to identify four distinct groups on the basis of their worldview:

- *Universalists*: people who are egalitarians and are open to migrants;
- *Particularists*: people showing the opposite profile of Universalists, revealing a hierarchical vision of world, and further characterized by hostility towards migrants;
- *Neoliberalists*: people open to migrants but who do not share the value of social equality;
- *Neocommunitarians*: people with an egalitarian vision but only extended to compatriots.

Taking the first two groups as reflecting the opposing views of universalism and particularism (Parsons, 1951; Collins, 1975), the other groups can be seen as hybrids of these two poles, revealing present day differences between communitarians and liberals: the former think that individual rights depend on belonging to a community, whereas the latter believe individual rights have to prevail over collective constraints (Zolo, 1994). The Tables 2.a-2.d show how the four groups changed over the time.

Briefly, Neocommunitarians tend to favour an egalitarian society, but in the last survey this tendency and the hostility to migrants lessens; over time, Par-

⁴ Originally, the first variable consisted of the following five categories: 1. Strongly Agree; 2. Agree; 3. Neither agree nor disagree; 4. Disagree; 5. Strongly disagree; 7. Refusal; 8. Don't know. The last two categories were removed from our reworking of the variable. Still bearing in mind the balance of the data distribution, in our redefinition category 5 became 1, category 4 became 2 and the other categories became 3. The other two variables had the same operational definition of the response categories, namely: 1. Very much like me; 2. like me; 3. Somewhat like me; 4. a little like me; 5. not like me; 6. not like me at all; 7. Refusal; 8. Don't know. In this case, too, the last two categories were removed. Moreover, in both cases two tricotomies were built, still bearing in mind the balance of the data distribution. The three response categories were as follows: 1. Not like me, not like me at all, or a little like me, 2. Somewhat like me or like me; 3. Very much like me.

ticalarists change their opinion about the economic role of State but the low propensity to equal opportunity and the recognition of Other remains. Differently, Universalists and Neoliberalists show a stable profile over time.

As a final step, two sets of multinomial logistic regression models (Corbetta, Gasperoni and Pisati, 2001) for each of the four waves were built.

The first set was used to corroborate H1 and H2, as we chose educational level and kind of profession as variables made up of the main regressors; instead, in the second set, education level was replaced by educational mobility, given the collinearity between these two variables. This last set of models allowed us to corroborate H3 and analyse H2.

For educational level, interviewees were subdivided, as follows: 1) less than upper secondary education; 2) with upper secondary education; 3) with tertiary education.

Profession was studied using a synthetic version of the recent International Standard Classification of Occupations, ISCO-08: in this research the 6-7-8-9 categories were aggregated into a single group, that of manual workers.

Finally, to analyse educational mobility, interviewees were subdivided into six groups on the basis of their educational level compared to that of their parents: 1) those with an upward educational mobility with tertiary education ('Upward tertiary')⁵; 2) those with an upward educational mobility without tertiary education ('Upward secondary'); 3) individuals with an 'Immobility at the Top', namely interviewees with tertiary education on a par with the parent with the highest level of education; 4) those with 'Immobility in the Middle', individuals with upper secondary education and belonging to a family where the highest level of education is the same one; 5) persons with 'Immobility at the Bottom', namely individuals with no upper secondary education, as with their parents; 6) interviewees with a downward mobility ('Downward'), that are individuals with an educational level lower than their parents'.

In both set of models we considered the effect of the main regressors, while still maintaining the following variables: gender (male/female), age cohort (15-24 years old; 25-35; 36-50; 51-65; over 65), geographical area (North; West; Centre; East; South). These variables were used as control variables.

⁵ I distinguished two kind of upward mobility because I wanted to understand the specific role of tertiary education compared with the other possible path of upward mobility. The focus on tertiary education comes from the importance given to theoretical knowledge (see par. 2).

3. Findings. The importance of formal educational level, despite social competition

Examining the first set of logistic models, clear findings can be identified, despite differences between the samples built in each of the four surveys (Table 3).

The analysis shows that people with tertiary education tend towards universalism rather than particularism, with a likelihood as much as 4 times higher (in 2004) than that revealed among individuals with no upper secondary diploma (Exp (B) is 4.072).

As Exp (B) coefficients show, this likelihood, however, decreases over time, dropping to 3 and 2.7 times in 2008 and 2012, respectively – the period which marked the beginning of the economic crisis – but then significantly increases again in 2016: in the latest survey, graduates have a propensity for universalism (as opposed to particularism) 5 times higher than the least educated people.

People with upper secondary education have a greater likelihood of being universalists than individuals without this level of education, but still less than graduates.

As regards the role of profession, intellectual workers are 2.3 times in 2004 (Exp (B) 2.296) and 3.3 times in 2008 (Exp (B) 3.314) more likely to be universalists than manual workers, those most inclined to particularism. This trend is confirmed in the other two waves, with the intellectuals' relative propensity for universalism being at least double, compared to manual workers: intellectuals are followed by technicians and entrepreneurs/managers as regards the good propensity for universalism.

In summary, education has a greater effect than that of profession; nonetheless, this last variable is relevant as intellectual workers show a high propensity for universalism, as is also the case when only graduates are considered.

Therefore, the models illustrated corroborate the first two hypotheses. Nevertheless, an unexpected result emerges. Our findings lead us to identify a bivalent role of theoretical knowledge, with both graduates and intellectual workers being particularly inclined not only to universalism, but to neoliberalism, as well. In particular, though the former group are slightly more inclined to universalism than neoliberalism, the latter show almost the same propensity for these two visions of the world, the differences being minimal, especially in 2008, though universalism is preferred overall.

TAB. 3. *Description of variables used in logistic regression models*

| | 2004 | | 2008 | | 2012 | | 2016 | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Particularists | 4,596 | 20.2 | 4,118 | 17.4 | 5,336 | 20.5 | 5,691 | 21.1 |
| Neocommunitarians | 5,270 | 23.2 | 5,472 | 23.1 | 4,625 | 17.8 | 5,279 | 19.6 |
| Neoliberalists | 7,440 | 32.7 | 7,585 | 32.0 | 8,085 | 31.0 | 8,635 | 32.0 |
| Universalists | 5,435 | 23.9 | 6,541 | 27.6 | 8,009 | 30.7 | 7,345 | 27.3 |
| Less than upper secondary education | 5,025 | 22.1 | 6,791 | 28.6 | 13,923 | 53.4 | 13,238 | 49.1 |
| Upper secondary education | 9,603 | 42.2 | 9,896 | 41.7 | 6,921 | 26.6 | 7,512 | 27.9 |
| Tertiary education | 8,113 | 35.7 | 7,029 | 29.6 | 5,211 | 20.0 | 6,200 | 23.0 |
| Managers/Entrepreneurs | 2,140 | 9.4 | 2,130 | 9.0 | 1,968 | 7.6 | 2,320 | 8.6 |
| Intellectuals | 2,825 | 12.4 | 3,062 | 12.9 | 3,987 | 15.3 | 4,743 | 17.6 |
| Technicians | 3,649 | 16.0 | 3,873 | 16.3 | 4,373 | 16.8 | 4,600 | 17.1 |
| Clerical workers | 2,469 | 10.9 | 2,887 | 12.2 | 2,490 | 9.6 | 2,578 | 9.6 |
| Service Workers | 3,452 | 15.2 | 3,596 | 15.2 | 4,739 | 18.2 | 4,622 | 17.1 |
| Manual Workers | 8,207 | 36.1 | 8,169 | 34.4 | 8,498 | 32.6 | 8,087 | 30.0 |
| 15-24 | 2,447 | 10.8 | 2,757 | 11.6 | 2,426 | 9.3 | 2,628 | 9.8 |
| 25-34 | 3,926 | 17.3 | 4,271 | 18.0 | 4,212 | 16.2 | 4,169 | 15.5 |
| 35-44 | 4,682 | 20.6 | 4,646 | 19.6 | 4,636 | 17.8 | 4,521 | 16.8 |
| 45-54 | 4,303 | 18.9 | 5,073 | 21.4 | 5,217 | 20.0 | 5,309 | 19.7 |
| 55-65 | 3,810 | 16.8 | 4,271 | 18.0 | 4,781 | 18.4 | 5,098 | 18.9 |
| Over 65 | 3,573 | 15.7 | 2,699 | 11.4 | 4,784 | 18.4 | 5,226 | 19.4 |
| Male | 11,468 | 50.4 | 11,895 | 50.2 | 12,908 | 49.5 | 13,313 | 49.4 |
| Female | 11,273 | 49.6 | 11,821 | 49.8 | 13,147 | 50.5 | 13,638 | 50.6 |
| North | 5,206 | 22.9 | 5,563 | 23.5 | 5,687 | 21.8 | 6,185 | 22.9 |
| West | 5,621 | 24.7 | 5,682 | 24.0 | 6,493 | 24.9 | 6,596 | 24.5 |
| Centre | 5,779 | 25.4 | 5,759 | 24.3 | 6,642 | 25.5 | 6,882 | 25.5 |
| East | 3,383 | 14.9 | 3,532 | 14.9 | 3,730 | 14.3 | 3,773 | 14.0 |
| South | 2,752 | 12.1 | 3,180 | 13.4 | 3,503 | 13.4 | 3,515 | 13.0 |
| Total | 22,741 | 100 | 23,716 | 100 | 26,055 | 100 | 26,951 | 100.0 |
| Nagelkerke | | 14.6 | | 12.0 | | 14.0 | | 14.2 |

TAB. 4. *First set of logistic regression models: Exp(B) coefficients*

| | | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | 2016 |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Constant | | | | |
| | Tertiary education | 1.214 | 1.509 | 0.760 | 2.247 |
| | Upper secondary education | 1.139 | | 0.936 | 1.388 |
| | Less than upper secondary education | | | | |
| | Managers/Entrepreneurs | 0.754 | 1.087 | 0.556 | 1.516 |
| | Intellectuals | 0.793 | 1.445 | 1.039 | 1.487 |
| | Technicians | 0.919 | 1.334 | 0.798 | 1.426 |
| | Clerical workers | 0.871 | 1.197 | 0.860 | 1.185 |
| | Service Workers | 1.077 | 1.085 | 0.905 | 1.209 |
| | Manual Workers | | | | |
| Neocommunitarians rather than Particularists | 15-24 | 0.865 | 0.940 | 0.751 | 1.561 |
| | 25-34 | 0.622 | 0.783 | 1.066 | 1.014 |
| | 35-44 | 0.884 | 0.841 | 1.265 | 1.163 |
| | 45-54 | 0.892 | 0.951 | 1.281 | 0.949 |
| | 55-65 | 0.964 | 1.006 | 1.232 | 0.961 |
| | Over 65 | | | | |
| | Male | 0.765 | 0.883 | 0.819 | 0.918 |
| | Female | | | | |
| | North | 0.520 | 0.466 | 0.456 | 0.775 |
| | West | 1.243 | 0.749 | 0.912 | 0.653 |
| | Centre | 0.505 | 0.709 | 1.037 | 0.932 |
| | East | 1.357 | 0.514 | 1.380 | 0.442 |
| | South | | | | |
| | Constant | | | | |
| | Tertiary education | 3.234 | 2.428 | 2.176 | 3.266 |
| | Upper secondary education | 1.577 | 1.453 | 1.250 | 1.753 |
| | Less than upper secondary education | | | | |
| | Managers/Entrepreneurs | 1.279 | 2.291 | 1.263 | 1.750 |
| | Intellectuals | 1.869 | 3.091 | 2.136 | 1.681 |
| | Technicians | 1.597 | 2.231 | 1.500 | 1.745 |
| | Clerical workers | 1.242 | 1.644 | 1.559 | 1.255 |
| | Service Workers | 1.118 | 1.275 | 1.224 | 1.118 |
| | Manual Workers | | | | |
| Neoliberalists rather than Particularists | 15-24 | 2.386 | 2.350 | 2.069 | 2.044 |
| | 25-34 | 1.197 | 1.412 | 1.592 | 1.149 |
| | 35-44 | 1.448 | 1.381 | 1.747 | 1.188 |
| | 45-54 | 1.297 | 1.255 | 1.553 | 1.097 |
| | 55-65 | 1.236 | 1.196 | 1.299 | 1.003 |
| | Over 65 | | | | |
| | Male | 1.158 | 1.310 | 1.244 | 1.227 |
| | Female | | | | |
| | North | 1.008 | 1.264 | 0.879 | 1.513 |
| | West | 0.777 | 1.370 | 1.207 | 1.029 |
| | Centre | 0.809 | 2.186 | 2.822 | 1.853 |
| | East | 1.329 | 1.509 | 1.843 | 0.564 |
| | South | | | | |
| | Constant | | | | |
| | Tertiary education | 4.072 | 3.036 | 2.741 | 5.175 |
| | Upper secondary education | 1.625 | 1.599 | 1.380 | 2.217 |
| | Less than upper secondary education | | | | |
| | Managers/Entrepreneurs | 1.360 | 1.906 | 1.499 | 1.527 |
| | Intellectuals | 2.296 | 3.314 | 2.521 | 2.049 |
| | Technicians | 1.674 | 2.214 | 1.510 | 1.803 |
| | Clerical workers | 1.198 | 1.333 | 1.551 | 1.802 |
| | Service Workers | 1.417 | 1.178 | 1.497 | 1.358 |
| | Manual Workers | | | | |
| Universalists rather than Particularists | 15-24 | 2.346 | 2.658 | 2.083 | 2.762 |
| | 25-34 | 1.207 | 1.623 | 1.805 | 1.401 |
| | 35-44 | 1.447 | 1.606 | 1.876 | 1.515 |
| | 45-54 | 1.615 | 1.906 | 1.617 | 1.081 |
| | 55-65 | 1.242 | 1.430 | 1.421 | 1.177 |
| | Over 65 | | | | |
| | Male | 0.859 | 0.985 | 0.971 | 1.063 |
| | Female | | | | |
| | North | 0.584 | 0.565 | 0.439 | 0.543 |
| | West | 0.697 | 0.824 | 0.729 | 0.411 |
| | Centre | 0.445 | 1.216 | 1.824 | 0.858 |
| | East | 0.666 | 0.816 | 0.930 | 0.113 |
| | South | | | | |

Note: values in bold have a significance level < 0,05

Even though education level affects interviewees' worldview more constantly over time and to a greater extent than the profession pursued, intellectuals, however, tend to universalism *and* neoliberalism more than the other groups, including graduates. This said, the differences between groups noticeably drop in 2016, although the greater propensity of manual workers to particularism rather than communitarianism or universalism is a constant.

Finally, the influence of the other variables appears less decisive and more indistinct. Some trends, however, can easily be discerned: the elderly tend towards particularism more than the others, while the youngest people tend more to neoliberalism or universalism, without a particular preference between these two visions emerging. Geographical differences are less clear and gender distinctions are very weak, with men more inclined to neoliberalism than particularism. Moreover, men are not averse to particularism, as shown by their lower propensity for neocommunitarianism and universalism (Table 4).

The second set of logistic regression models is based on a distribution of data similar to that recorded for the first one (see Table 3); likewise, the percentage of reproduced variance concerning the dependent variable can be deduced from the Nagelkerke coefficients (Table 5).

This set of models show that H3 is only partly corroborated. Indeed, the most important educational mobility trajectories are three: upward mobility with tertiary education, immobility at the top, and immobility at the bottom.

In line with H3, upward educational mobility due to the acquisition of degree increases the probability of being universalists rather than particularists: in the four surveys this probability is between 1.4 and 2.2 times higher than among those who experience downward mobility, a more particularist worldview apparently accompanying this last trajectory. Immobility at the bottom also increases the propensity towards a particularistic worldview (Table 6).

The propensity for universalism, however, seems to grow even further due to the effect of immobility at the top, with people emulating their parents in the acquisition of the degree tending to be more universalists than others: over time they are 2 to 3.4 times more likely to hold this vision of the world than individuals with downward mobility.

Consistent with previous findings, both upward mobility with tertiary education and immobility at the top produce trajectories promoting a neoliberal worldview, as well, but with an important difference: immobility at the top

TAB. 5. *Description of variables used in the second set of logistic regression models*

| | 2004 | | 2008 | | 2012 | | 2016 | |
|--------------------------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Particularists | 3,893 | 19.8 | 3,575 | 16.9 | 4,165 | 19.2 | 4,683 | 20.3 |
| Neocommunitarians | 4,533 | 23.0 | 4,788 | 22.6 | 3,782 | 17.5 | 4,457 | 19.3 |
| Neoliberalists | 6,485 | 32.9 | 6,860 | 32.4 | 6,807 | 31.4 | 7,466 | 32.4 |
| Universalists | 4,780 | 24.3 | 5,961 | 28.1 | 6,920 | 31.9 | 6,457 | 28.0 |
| Upward tertiary | 2,781 | 14.1 | 3,786 | 17.9 | 3,122 | 14.4 | 3,713 | 16.1 |
| Upward secondary | 2,997 | 15.2 | 3,252 | 15.4 | 3,345 | 15.4 | 3,659 | 15.9 |
| Immobility at the Top | 1,806 | 9.2 | 2,514 | 11.9 | 1,632 | 7.5 | 2,094 | 9.1 |
| Immobility in the Middle | 4,109 | 20.9 | 4,302 | 20.3 | 1,570 | 7.2 | 1,840 | 8.0 |
| Immobility at the Bottom | 5,268 | 26.8 | 4,368 | 20.6 | 9,607 | 44.3 | 8,695 | 37.7 |
| Downward | 2,730 | 13.9 | 2,961 | 14.0 | 2,398 | 11.1 | 3,062 | 13.3 |
| Managers/Entrepreneurs | 1,866 | 9.5 | 1,954 | 9.2 | 1,726 | 8.0 | 2,084 | 9.0 |
| Intellectuals | 2,570 | 13.1 | 2,906 | 13.7 | 3,542 | 16.3 | 4,323 | 18.7 |
| Technicians | 3,199 | 16.2 | 3,562 | 16.8 | 3,720 | 17.2 | 4,022 | 17.4 |
| Clerical workers | 2,146 | 10.9 | 2,560 | 12.1 | 2,049 | 9.5 | 2,164 | 9.4 |
| Service Workers | 2,902 | 14.7 | 3,141 | 14.8 | 3,821 | 17.6 | 3,835 | 16.6 |
| Manual Workers | 7,007 | 35.6 | 7,061 | 33.3 | 6,817 | 31.5 | 6,635 | 28.8 |
| 15-24 | 2,143 | 10.9 | 2,484 | 11.7 | 2,044 | 9.4 | 2,252 | 9.8 |
| 25-34 | 3,458 | 17.6 | 3,859 | 18.2 | 3,514 | 16.2 | 3,594 | 15.6 |
| 35-44 | 4,010 | 20.4 | 4,157 | 19.6 | 3,915 | 18.1 | 3,988 | 17.3 |
| 45-54 | 3,759 | 19.1 | 4,534 | 21.4 | 4,336 | 20.0 | 4,507 | 19.5 |
| 55-65 | 3,240 | 16.5 | 3,771 | 17.8 | 3,995 | 18.4 | 4,391 | 19.0 |
| Over 65 | 3,081 | 15.6 | 2,378 | 11.2 | 3,869 | 17.9 | 4,332 | 18.8 |
| Male | 9,959 | 50.6 | 10,686 | 50.4 | 10,877 | 50.2 | 11,379 | 49.3 |
| Female | 9,732 | 49.4 | 10,498 | 49.6 | 10,797 | 49.8 | 11,683 | 50.7 |
| North | 4,000 | 20.3 | 4,786 | 22.6 | 4,186 | 19.3 | 5,084 | 22.0 |
| West | 4,729 | 24.0 | 4,930 | 23.3 | 5,436 | 25.1 | 5,431 | 23.5 |
| Centre | 5,253 | 26.7 | 5,196 | 24.5 | 5,416 | 25.0 | 5,810 | 25.2 |
| East | 3,137 | 15.9 | 3,334 | 15.7 | 3,397 | 15.7 | 3,463 | 15.0 |
| South | 2,572 | 13.1 | 2,939 | 13.9 | 3,239 | 14.9 | 3,275 | 14.2 |
| Total | 19,691 | 100 | 21,184 | 100 | 21,674 | 100 | 23,063 | 100 |
| Nagelkerke | | 14.6 | | 12.7 | | 14.3 | | 15.0 |

TAB. 6. *Second set of logistic regression models: Exp(B) coefficients*

| | | 2004 | 2008 | 2012 | 2016 |
|--|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Neocommunitarians rather than Particularists | Constant | | | | |
| | Upward tertiary | 1,252 | 1,584 | 0,898 | 1,57 |
| | Upward secondary | 1,383 | 1,221 | 1,146 | 0,877 |
| | Immobility at the Top | 1,195 | 1,304 | 0,619 | 1,984 |
| | Immobility in the Middle | 1,062 | 0,912 | 0,916 | 1,247 |
| | Immobility at the Bottom | 0,973 | 0,906 | 1,131 | 0,731 |
| | Downward | | | | |
| | Managers/Entrepreneurs | 0,735 | 1,157 | 0,531 | 1,641 |
| | Intellectual workers | 0,754 | 1,442 | 1,002 | 1,475 |
| | Technicians | 0,923 | 1,316 | 0,824 | 1,426 |
| | Clerical workers | 0,827 | 1,185 | 0,835 | 1,158 |
| | Service workers | 1,039 | 1,15 | 0,864 | 1,161 |
| | Manual workers | | | | |
| | 15-24 | 0,861 | 0,893 | 0,752 | 1,421 |
| | 25-34 | 0,678 | 0,807 | 1,179 | 1,021 |
| | 35-44 | 0,884 | 0,797 | 1,336 | 1,26 |
| | 45-54 | 0,906 | 0,942 | 1,28 | 1,062 |
| | 55-65 | 1,015 | 0,987 | 1,21 | 1 |
| | Over 65 | | | | |
| | Male | 0,74 | 0,904 | 0,787 | 0,865 |
| Female | | | | | |
| North | 0,562 | 0,457 | 0,551 | 0,792 | |
| West | 1,224 | 0,711 | 0,877 | 0,639 | |
| Centre | 0,51 | 0,722 | 1,01 | 0,95 | |
| East | 1,37 | 0,507 | 1,371 | 0,437 | |
| South | | | | | |
| Neoliberalists rather than Particularists | Constant | | | | |
| | Upward tertiary | 2,225 | 1,754 | 1,544 | 1,601 |
| | Upward secondary | 1,189 | 1,101 | 0,931 | 0,879 |
| | Immobility at the Top | 2,896 | 2,024 | 1,858 | 2,443 |
| | Immobility in the Middle | 1,148 | 0,988 | 1,055 | 1,076 |
| | Immobility at the Bottom | 0,803 | 0,67 | 0,727 | 0,551 |
| | Downward | | | | |
| | Managers/Entrepreneurs | 1,321 | 2,432 | 1,189 | 1,823 |
| | Intellectual workers | 1,796 | 2,969 | 1,998 | 1,761 |
| | Technicians | 1,622 | 2,137 | 1,363 | 1,745 |
| | Clerical workers | 1,246 | 1,693 | 1,388 | 1,257 |
| | Service workers | 1,072 | 1,291 | 1,104 | 1,093 |
| | Manual workers | | | | |
| | 15-24 | 2,491 | 2,162 | 2,123 | 1,79 |
| | 25-34 | 1,363 | 1,458 | 1,687 | 1,1 |
| | 35-44 | 1,639 | 1,339 | 1,944 | 1,213 |
| | 45-54 | 1,441 | 1,224 | 1,728 | 1,152 |
| | 55-65 | 1,343 | 1,174 | 1,338 | 1,045 |
| | Over 65 | | | | |
| | Male | 1,124 | 1,29 | 1,182 | 1,173 |
| Female | | | | | |
| North | 0,896 | 1,302 | 0,998 | 1,578 | |
| West | 0,813 | 1,415 | 1,252 | 1,072 | |
| Centre | 0,851 | 2,172 | 2,859 | 1,825 | |
| East | 1,36 | 1,52 | 1,759 | 0,544 | |
| South | | | | | |
| Universalists rather than Particularists | Constant | | | | |
| | Upward tertiary | 2,092 | 2,013 | 1,431 | 2,202 |
| | Upward secondary | 1 | 1,119 | 0,759 | 0,962 |
| | Immobility at the Top | 3,484 | 2,181 | 2,021 | 3,224 |
| | Immobility in the Middle | 0,89 | 0,869 | 0,797 | 1,105 |
| | Immobility at the Bottom | 0,568 | 0,582 | 0,572 | 0,451 |
| | Downward | | | | |
| | Managers/Entrepreneurs | 1,338 | 2,015 | 1,354 | 1,59 |
| | Intellectual workers | 1,975 | 3,277 | 2,306 | 2,061 |
| | Technicians | 1,527 | 2,198 | 1,351 | 1,719 |
| | Clerical workers | 1,155 | 1,417 | 1,386 | 1,711 |
| | Service workers | 1,293 | 1,223 | 1,321 | 1,339 |
| | Manual workers | | | | |
| | 15-24 | 2,219 | 2,318 | 1,937 | 2,284 |
| | 25-34 | 1,304 | 1,621 | 1,868 | 1,337 |
| | 35-44 | 1,524 | 1,522 | 2,001 | 1,546 |
| | 45-54 | 1,748 | 1,868 | 1,742 | 1,176 |
| | 55-65 | 1,27 | 1,354 | 1,467 | 1,15 |
| | Over 65 | | | | |
| | Male | 0,822 | 0,994 | 0,922 | 1,035 |
| Female | | | | | |
| North | 0,517 | 0,581 | 0,509 | 0,562 | |
| West | 0,739 | 0,795 | 0,695 | 0,422 | |
| Centre | 0,45 | 1,214 | 1,775 | 0,834 | |
| East | 0,67 | 0,811 | 0,882 | 0,105 | |
| South | | | | | |

Note: values in bold have a significance level < 0,05

tends to encourage universalism more than neoliberalism, whereas upward mobility with tertiary education tends to foster both visions to almost the same extent. In other words, immobility at the top is the educational trajectory most connected to the development of universalism.

Furthermore, upward mobility with tertiary education slightly influences the likelihood of being neocommunitarians rather than particularist, whereas here the role of immobility at the top is not clear-cut. Finally, the effects of the other variables are similar to those found in the first set of models.

4. Summary and discussion

This paper set out to understand how far tertiary education promotes universalism, understood as a worldview aimed at recognising differences, while maintaining social equality (Honneth, 2016). Consistent with Bernstein's theory, our findings show a relevant connection between social condition and worldview, conceivably a product of linguistic code. On this, Bernstein (1971) states that linguistic code organizes the experience to the point of influencing thought and the way in which reality is interpreted. Our research highlights how over time the most educated people are inclined to universalism or neoliberalism, whereas other people prefer neocommunitarianism or particularism. Universalists and neoliberals give priority to individual rights over collective bonds deriving from belonging to the same community (Triandis, 2001): both groups disagree with people who express hostility towards an individual's freedom to migrate.

Following Bernstein's thought, we hypothesized that identities based on owning a developed theoretical education were also particularly critical of neoliberalism, the dominant ideology. Instead, intellectuals, followed by technicians, are almost equally inclined to neoliberalism as they are to universalism, probably due their privileged social condition. This finding appears in agreement with rational choice theory (Wodtke, 2012), though in actual fact such an explanation is not entirely satisfactory for at least two reasons.

First of all, our research shows that the group most characterized by the use of theoretical knowledge is the most inclined to universalism: if several intellectuals express a neoliberal vision, just as many show a universalistic point of

TAB. 7. *Distribution of intellectual workers according to worldview and education*

| | PARTICU- LARISTS | NEOCOMMU- NITARIANS | NEOLIBERA- LISTS | UNIVERSA- LISTS | TOTAL |
|---------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| <i>2004</i> | | | | | |
| Tertiary | 8.7 | 8.4 | 42.3 | 40.6 | 100 (2,256) |
| Upper secondary | 13.6 | 17.3 | 37.1 | 32.0 | 100 (388) |
| Less than upper secondary | 20.8 | 19.8 | 28.6 | 30.6 | 100 (192) |
| Total | 10.2 | 10.4 | 40.7 | 38.7 | 100 (2,836) |
| <i>2008</i> | | | | | |
| Tertiary | 6.6 | 14.2 | 37.5 | 41.7 | 100 (2,752) |
| Upper secondary | 10.8 | 16.9 | 39.1 | 33.2 | 100 (361) |
| Less than upper secondary | 13.3 | 34.3 | 33.3 | 19.1 | 100 (105) |
| Total | 7.3 | 15.1 | 37.5 | 40.1 | 100 (3,218) |
| <i>2012</i> | | | | | |
| Tertiary | 9.0 | 6.2 | 36.9 | 47.9 | 100 (2,685) |
| Upper secondary | 14.9 | 11.4 | 36.2 | 37.5 | 100 (897) |
| Less than upper secondary | 16.3 | 22.7 | 33.7 | 27.3 | 100 (406) |
| Total | 11.1 | 9.1 | 36.4 | 43.4 | 100 (3,988) |
| <i>2016</i> | | | | | |
| Tertiary | 7.4 | 16.0 | 35.3 | 41.3 | 100 (3,275) |
| Upper secondary | 13.2 | 16.5 | 36.7 | 33.6 | 100 (844) |
| Less than upper secondary | 27.9 | 25.1 | 27.6 | 19.4 | 100 (637) |
| Total | 11.2 | 17.3 | 34.5 | 37.0 | 100 (4,756) |

view (Table 7). Even more important, this trend is repeated in accordance with education level, as logistic regression models show.

The second reason consists in the apparent bivalent role of tertiary education that seems to foster both neoliberal *and* universalism visions of world (even though the latter view prevails).

This bivalence could be explained by the theory of *rationalization* (Weber, 1920), the education system being a cornerstone of this process. Long scholastic careers convey an analytic mentality that promotes intellectual or non-manual work. This aspect is consistent with a part of the dominant ideology where one of its functions is make the educational system an institution that legitimizes the division of capitalistic labour (Bowles and Gintis, 2003). The same competition for educational credentials (Collins, 1979) is based on the contrast between the social closure on the part of the upper-middle classes, and the attempt to appropriate these credentials by the lower-middle classes.

At the same time rationalization is based on the coexistence of two opposing aspects: first, methodical organisation implies a division of labour that favours a hierarchical vision of society; second, resorting to theoretical knowledge feeds the *intellectualisation of the world* (Habermas, 1981), that is, the capacity for post-conventional thought (Kohlberg, 1971; Habermas, 1976; Gouldner, 1979), capable of advancing the social emancipation of all individuals, and contrasting whatever hierarchal vision others might hold.

This research identified two different elaborated codes (following Bernstein): one more addressed to acquisition (and thus connected to a neoliberal vision) and one more inclined to understand personal relationships (connected to universalism). The second kind of elaborated code seems to be associated with those that reproduce the good cultural level of their family (immobility at the top) rather than those who are in upward mobility. Educational immobility in more educated families is likely to particularly strengthen a cognitive script inclined to the intellectualization of world.

Future researches could analyse whether good scholastic performance, a specific kind of tertiary education, and positive relationships with teachers develop universalism, revealing the conditions where long scholastic careers foster a view of emancipation rather than one which adheres to the value of competition conveyed by neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007).

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