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Parents, Children and the Distance between Them: Long Term Socialization Effects in the Netherlands

Eva Jaspers*
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THE TRANSMISSION OF ATTITUDES

Socialization as the source of continuity between generations and a buffer for social change has received much attention over more than a century (Beck, Bruner, and Dobson, 1975; Giddings, 1897; Jennings and Niemi, 1981). Every socialization theory gives importance to the transmission of values, beliefs, traditions and attitudes from parents to their children, both through deliberate actions and reactions, and through non-verbal communication and examples. Such influences from parents to their children are considered important factors in the formation of attitudes (Dalhouse and Frideres, 1996; Jennings and Niemi, 1981). The parental influence on attitudes toward three issues that have been causing controversy in the Netherlands are subject to the present research; these attitudes involve homosexuality, euthanasia and the presence of ethnic minorities. We investigate the influence of the parents on their children's attitudes toward these issues and study to what extent successes in transmission are dependent on family characteristics. In doing so, we are able to address the influence of socialization dependent on family relations and family composition. The central research question of our contribution reads: *to what extent do parents affect attitudes of their children and to what extent does the influence vary with family characteristics?*

Research on attitude similarity between generations is not new. We will however improve on existing research on the intergenerational transmission of attitudes in two ways. First, by studying the facilitating or hampering characteristics of the family for the transmission of attitudes. We take family relations, as well as family composition into account in our research. In this way, we are able to define conditions under which parents are more or less successful in influencing their children's attitudes. Second, we will study the similarities between parents and children in three different attitudes, to test the generalizability of socialization effects. We chose attitudes toward homosexuality, toward euthanasia and toward ethnic minorities. All of these are topics of debate in the Netherlands, and have been so for the last decades. We deliberately chose to investigate subjects more and less influenced by religious beliefs, in order to control for religious pressures. Furthermore, these issues have seen conflicting trends in public support in the Netherlands, which could lead to

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differences in the influence parents have had on their children between the three attitudes.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THREE ISSUES IN THE NETHERLANDS

For those not familiar with the Dutch situation, we present a short introduction into the legal and public opinions on euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minority members in the Netherlands.

Euthanasia, if meticulous and reported to the authorities has been legal in the Netherlands since 2002. In 1988, an earlier bill, in which euthanasia was still considered a criminal act but individual physicians were freed from persecution provided they acted according to certain guidelines, passed parliament. Prior to 1988, euthanasia was considered a criminal act, although judges were reluctant to deliver convictions. Attitudes toward euthanasia have not changed much since the late sixties. Approximately half of the population approves of it (Jaspers, Lubbers, and De Graaf, 2008).

The Netherlands was the first country to legalize gay marriages, and did so in 2001. This is often considered the final step in the legal emancipation of gay men and lesbians in the Netherlands. Other issues, such as inheriting and housing rights, and anti-discrimination laws were regulated before the twenty-first century. Attitudes toward homosexuality in the Netherlands are among the most positive in the world (Kelley, 2001), and have been so since the early eighties (Van de Meerendonk and Scheepers, 2004). Since the sixties, the percentage of people with negative attitudes toward homosexuals shows a steep decline. However, there is some concern that the growing Moslem population might redirect this trend.

The presence of ethnic minority members—making up approximately ten per cent of the population — is currently one of the most discussed topics in the Netherlands. The Dutch had considered themselves to be rather tolerant with respect to ethnic minorities. However, since the September 11 attacks in the United States, and especially since the murders of the populist politician Pim Fortuyn and filmmaker Theo van Gogh, the climate appears to have changed, and the discussion on the many problems of ethnic minorities is abundant in the media. Research provides a different insight, with opposition toward ethnic minorities in the Netherlands not very different from other European countries, at least since the nineties (Coenders, Lubbers, and Scheepers, 2005; Quillian, 1995).

THE INFLUENCES OF PARENTS ON THEIR ADULT CHILDREN

Most parents go to great lengths to provide their offspring with a moral base they believe is just. They socialize their children to become the adults their parents want them to be. This socialization is the core of the present research. We will test the influences parents have on their children's attitudes extensively. The question is to what extent they are successful in influencing their children. Previous research has shown both similarity and dissimilarity in values (Jennings and Niemi, 1981; Moen, Erickson, and Dempster-McClain, 1997). Many of these studies have focused on similarities between parents and adolescents. We study the influences parents have on their adult children's attitudes. In other words, we argue that a long-term effect of the family socialization process is indicated by the values and behaviors of adult children.

There are two reasons why the influence from parents on their adolescent children might differ from the influence from parents on adult children. Adolescents are often in a process of breaking loose from their parents, which could lead to intentional dissimilarity in their attitudes. On the other hand, most adolescents live with their parents and they might be much more influenced by them than adult children living outside the parental home or have a desire to avoid conflict in the house. Knowledge about the influence from the parents on adolescent children does therefore not provide much insight in the influence at a later stage. Our focus is on influences of parental attitudes during socialization on the attitudes of their adult children.

Causes of Intergenerational Attitude Similarity

We make use of two major perspectives on the influence of parental attitudes on their children's. The first perspective we discuss is that of *socialization* (Glass, Bengtson, and Dunham, 1986). In the socialization perspective, the cause of the influence from the parents on the children is that the latter are being taught what to think by their parents. Adult children have certain attitudes because they have learned that these were just and this is now also what they believe. The attitudes of the parents shape the attitudes of the children (Barber, 2000). There has been an ongoing debate on the lasting or fading influence of socialization on attitudes over the life course. Some researchers argue that the amount of change is extremely small after a certain age is reached; others claim that, although levels of change are highest for young adults and the elderly, changes take place over the entire time of life (Alwin and McCammon, 2003; Glenn, 1980; Visser and Krosnick, 1998). The heart of socialization takes place during the so called formative years. Although no definite ages for this phase have been set, it is commonly accepted that adolescents are the most susceptible to attitude formation (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991; Jennings and Niemi, 1978). The attitudes teens are socialized with then remain either constant over the life course, partly because of environmental continuity throughout the life span (Miller and Sears 1986), or undergo some change, dependent on the perspective one holds in the continuity versus change debate. The hypothesis reads: *Parents' attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minority members in the past influence their children's present attitudes toward these topics (H1).*

A second perspective on intergenerational similarities in attitudes is the idea that children do not as much inherit their parents' attitudes, as they do their parents' *structural positions* (Hello, 2003; Vollebergh, Iedema, and Raaijmakers, 1999). These hereditary structural positions include educational attainment, which has been proven an important predictor of many attitudes, including those in the present study (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998; DeCesare, 2000; Hyman and Wright, 1979; Jelen and Wilcox, 2003; Loftus, 2001). The research on the processes of intergenerational transmission of educational attainment and status was initially developed in the sixties (Blau and Duncan, 1967), and has received much scientific attention ever since. In many ways, parents influence the status positions their children will achieve (Nan Dirk De Graaf, De Graaf, and Kraaykamp, 2000). Parents hence affect adult children's attitudes through adult children's educational attainment, for which the parents are partly responsible. In this view, similarities in attitudes between parents and their adult children can be explained by identical or closely related social positions. In the present research we control for status positions of both parents and children. *Part of the influence parents have*

on their children's attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minority members is due to the inheritance of structural positions from parents (H2).

Not all children remain exclusively in similar environments as they age. Most children leave their parents' home as they get older, only to increasingly encounter dissimilar influences, for instance from partners and colleagues (Glass et al., 1986). These new institutions socialize the children as well. Although these new sources have usually somewhat similar norms and attitudes as the parents, since the parents are partly responsible for the paths their children follow and the persons they meet along the way, it is expected that the more children are socialized by others, the less they will resemble their parents (Kelley and De Graaf, 1997; Mortimer and Simmons, 1978). This leads, from the perspective of the parents, to a similarity paradox: they want their children to be upwardly mobile, but this mobility also increases the chance of the child having different attitudes. The gradual estrangement of the child from its parents implies that children resemble their parents less in attitudes as the children age. *The older the child, the smaller the influence from the parents' attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minority members on the children's attitudes (H3).*

Family Characteristics and Parent to Child Attitude Influences

There are indications that not all children are equally successfully socialized by their parents—in terms of parent to child attitude influences. Girls are supposedly more susceptible to their parents' attitudes than are boys (Bao, Whitbeck, Hoyt, and Conger, 1999; Trevor, 1999). Girls are usually taught to be more obedient and submissive than boys. Therefore, they incorporate their parents' attitudes to a greater extent than their brothers, the latter being taught to be more independent. Girls are usually socialized in a more 'narrow' way (Arnett, 1995), that emphasizes conformity instead of individualism and self-expression. We hypothesize: *women will be influenced more by their parents' attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities than men (H4).* Parents with many children are often unable to pay as much attention to each child individually, as parents with one or two children (Smith, 1984). Parents might be more actively involved with the individual moral development of the children in a small family, whereas the parents of large families might need to spend more time and energy on the management of the household. Thus, *the smaller the number of siblings, the more a child will be influenced by its parent's attitudes (H5).*

The transmission of attitudes will also be more effective in loving circumstances. Having a good relationship is facilitating for transmitting attitudes from parent to child (Arnett, 1995). It is the child's perception of the relationship that matters most (Bao et al., 1999). If a child perceives the relationship as warm and trusting, chances are that this child will value the same things as its parents. If the child perceives the relationship as very bad, chances are that the child will continue to react against its parents' values throughout adult life. We expect that *children that report a warm family environment are more influenced by their parents in their attitudes toward euthanasia, toward homosexuality and toward the presence of ethnic minorities (H6).*

Not all parents are equally successful in transmitting their values. Contradictory to their

expectations, Acock and Bengtson (1978) find that not fathers, but mothers exert the largest influence on their children's orientations. It has been proposed that mothers are usually more successful, as they tend to spend more time with their children and are more concerned with their upbringing (Bao et al., 1999). The higher frequency of interaction with the child gives the mother more control over the influences the child is exposed to and more opportunity to exchange ideas. We hypothesize that *mothers have a larger influence on their children's attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities than fathers (H7)*.

Second, attitudes of the parents toward the three issues may be less clear when parents differ in opinions. Children from parents with opposite opinions on euthanasia, homosexuality or the presence of ethnic minorities receive mixed messages during socialization. For these children, a simple transmission of parental attitudes is impossible. It could be that the average attitude of the parents is what is transmitted in this situation. However, one of the parents, most likely the mother, could be dominant in influencing the child's attitude. *Children whose parents differ in their attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities are less influenced by their parents' attitudes than children whose parents have similar opinions (H8)*.

DATA

To test our hypotheses, we make use of the Family Survey Dutch Population 2003 (FNB 2003) (Nan Dirk De Graaf, De Graaf, Kraaykamp, and Ultee, 2003). FNB 2003 is a repeated, cross-sectional national survey among the Dutch speaking population of the Netherlands, aged 18-70. Part of the sample was a random selection of respondents from the Dutch postal service. A smaller part consisted of a sample of respondents in the research panels of the interviewing agency. Inhabitants of the four largest cities were over sampled in the latter. Primary respondents and their spouses were interviewed in the winter of 2003-2004. The number of respondents is 2,174; however, for the analyses of each dependent variable we selected only those respondents with valid measurements on the respective dependent variable. This means that the analyses for *the attitude toward euthanasia* were performed on 1740 respondents, for *the attitude toward homosexuality* on 1839 respondents, and for *the attitude toward ethnic minorities* on 1735 respondents. For the latter, we also excluded respondents of non-Dutch origin. Response rate of the total survey is 52.6, which is reasonably high for the Netherlands.

All respondents of the initial survey were asked to provide name and address of their parent(s) and one randomly selected sibling. In approximately one third of the cases, these addresses were given to the interviewer. All parents and siblings that were assigned by their relatives, and whose addresses could be verified, then received a mail questionnaire in the fall of 2004. We sent out one questionnaire only to the parent(s). When there were two parents living at the same address, they themselves decided who filled out the booklet. In this contribution, we use the data from the primary respondents, as well as the data provided by one of their parents and the randomly selected siblings. The response rate of parents was 79.476. Parents returned a completed questionnaire. The response rate for siblings was lower at 57.9 percent, resulting in 367 completed questionnaires.

Dependent Variables

Questions on the attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities of the respondents were phrased in very general terms, to facilitate recollection of attitudes of the parents. The exact wordings were (translated from Dutch): *We present you a few issues on which opinions diverge. How do you think about the following subjects?* Response categories ranged from *very disapproving* to *very approving*. We also included other items for the three dependent variables. Table 1 shows the frequencies for the items of the dependent attitudes and the standardized factor loadings in a SEM measurement model. All dependent attitudes were measured on a five point Likert scale.

Table 1

Frequencies for Dependent Variables

	% (Strongly) Disappro ving / Disagreeing	% Neutral	% (Strongly) Approving/ Agreeing	N	λ
<i>Attitude toward euthanasia</i>					
General attitude	13.4	26.6	60.1	1740	.898
Should a doctor give a lethal injection when asked?	14.9	10.3	74.8	1740	.807
<i>Attitude toward homosexuality</i>					
General attitude	13.5	38.3	48.2	1839	.794
Homosexuals should have same rights adoption	29.1	15.2	55.7	1839	.774
Gay marriage should be abolished*	15.7	17.7	66.6	1839	.843
<i>Attitude toward ethnic minorities</i>					
General attitude	16.4	49.9	33.7	1735	.753
concern about deterioration neighborhood when ethnic minorities come to live here	25.0	32.5	42.5	1735	.599

Source: FNB 2003; * recoded in opposite direction

The attitudes toward euthanasia are very approving. Aggregate attitudes toward homosexuals are less approving than is often found in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is known for its unusually tolerant stance toward homosexuals, Kelley reports most Dutchmen to find nothing wrong at all with homosexual behaviour (Kelley, 2001). Table 1 shows that approximately one eighth of the population disapproves of it, whereas close to half of the respondents approves of homosexuality in general. Despite this item showing more variance than is often found in the Netherlands, it correlates strongly with the other items on homosexuality that are available in the data. Moreover, factor analysis shows that all items on homosexuality in the data form a one-dimensional scale. Most reservations are found for the attitude toward the presence of ethnic minority members. A large part of the Dutch population appears to have a nuanced opinion, with less than half positive on this issue.

Explanatory Variables

Table 2 shows descriptives for the explanatory variables for each of the three analyses separately. Gender and age of the respondent were measured directly. Respondents were provided with a list, to fill in their educational attainment. Educational attainment was then collapsed into five categories, ranging from (some) primary school to one or more university degrees. The number of siblings was asked. Church attendance was measured on a five point scale from (almost) never, to more than once a week. Further, a scale was constructed for the amount of emotional warmth from the parents a respondent remembers from the period (s)he was at primary school. The scale consists of four items that form the Emotional Warmth subscale of the EMBU (Swedish Acronym for 'My memories of Upbringing') (Arrindell et al., 1999). Cronbach's alpha for these four items is .84. Educational attainment of the parents is based on the answers from the primary respondents, and collapsed into five categories. Respondents were asked which opinions their mother and father had about euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities, during the time respondents were in their teens. Parents were asked how they felt about the three issues mentioned above when their child was approximately fifteen years old. The wording of the questions was similar to the wording for the primary respondents. For respondents whose parents returned a questionnaire, we have either mother's or father's *attitude toward euthanasia*, *attitude toward homosexuality*, and *attitude toward ethnic minority members* at age 15 of the child as reported by the parent. For respondents whose siblings returned a questionnaire, we have attitude of father and mother toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities as reported by the sibling. In general, parents consider themselves to have been more positive toward the three issues we study than both respondent and sibling perceive them to have been. However, the averages shown in Table 2 do of course not represent identical groups. Higher educated parents, parents with higher socio-economic status, and parents over whom the child reported a warm upbringing style were more likely to cooperate with the mail-questionnaire. The oldest respondents, especially, will no longer have parents who could have filled out the questionnaire, and these parents will likely have been the most conservative.

Table 3 shows the correlations between fathers' and mothers' report on their attitude at the one hand, and respondents' report on this specific parent's attitude on the other. The perception of the parental attitude of the child correlates stronger with that of the recollected attitude of the mother than with the recollected attitude of the father. It is plausible that respondents remember their mother's attitude better than their father's attitude. Previous research found stronger recollection correlations between children and parents concerning church membership (0.70), self-employment (0.81), right-wing party preference (0.75), and cultural consumption (0.67) (De Vries, 2006). The correlation between the child's perception and mother's report on the attitude towards homosexuality and euthanasia is 0.585 and 0.566 respectively. The correlation is particularly weak between father's attitude towards ethnic minorities and the child's report (0.346).

Modelling Strategy

We estimate two structural equation models for each dependent attitude. First we estimate a simple model, wherein we show the influence from parental attitudes on the attitudes of

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>For the analyses on the child's attitude approval of euthanasia</i>			
mother's attitude – respondent report (1-5) ^a	1613	2.75	1.16
mother's attitude – sibling report (1-5)	288	2.81	1.16
mother's attitude – mother report (1-5)	198	2.91	1.10
mother's educational attainment (1-5)	1688	2.01	1.09
mother's church attendance (0-4)	1718	1.79	1.49
gender (male=1)	1740	.49	.50
age (18-77)	1740	42.2	
		7	12.44
educational attainment (1-5)	1740	3.15	1.36
church attendance (0-4)	1740	.82	1.17
number of siblings (0-17)	1740	2.93	2.45
warm family environment (1-5)	1736	3.83	.83
<i>For the analyses on the child's approval of homosexuality</i>			
mother's attitude – respondent report (1-5)	1738	2.60	1.00
mother's attitude – sibling report (1-5)	311	2.71	1.10
mother's attitude – mother report (1-5)	208	2.95	.93
father's attitude – respondent report (1-5)	1692	2.3	6.95
father's attitude – sibling report (1-5)	300	2.42	1.05
father's attitude – father report (1-5)	182	2.83	.91
mother's educational attainment (1-5)	1781	1.99	1.09
mother's church attendance (0-4)	1816	1.76	1.49
father's educational attainment (1-5)	1756	2.30	1.32
father's church attendance (0-4)	1787	1.65	1.52
gender (male=1)	1839	.49	.50
age (18-77)	1839	42.5	
		3	12.54
educational attainment (1-5)	1839	3.12	1.35
church attendance (0-4)	1839	.80	1.16
number of siblings (0-17)	1839	2.92	2.45
warm family environment (1-5)	1835	3.82	.83
<i>For the analyses on the child's approval of the presence of ethnic minorities</i>			
mother's attitude – respondent report (1-5)	1626	2.95	.80
mother's attitude – sibling report (1-5)	294	2.98	.90
mother's attitude – mother report (1-5)	203	3.00	.74
father's attitude – respondent report (1-5)	1591	2.84	.83
father's attitude – sibling report (1-5)	289	2.77	.94
father's attitude – father report (1-5)	179	3.08	.75
mother's educational attainment (1-5)	1690	2.00	1.08
mother's church attendance (0-4)	1714	1.76	1.48

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
father's educational attainment (1-5)	1668	2.32	1.32
father's church attendance (0-4)	1687	1.64	1.51
gender (male=1)	1735	.49	.50
age (18-77)	1735	42.4	12.35
educational attainment (1-5)	1735	3.16	1.35
church attendance (0-4)	1735	.80	1.15
number of siblings (0-17)	1735	2.92	2.45
warm family environment (1-5)	1731	3.83	.83

Source: FNB 2003; a father's attitude was not included in the analysis

the children. Figure 1 shows this model. Lines are dotted when the effects of these variables are not estimated for all three dependent attitudes. The attitude toward homosexuality of the respondents is measured with three instead of two items. For the attitude toward euthanasia we were not able to estimate the simple model, because of multicollinearity between the attitudes of both parents. Therefore, we estimate a model with only mother's attitude for the attitude toward euthanasia. For the other two cases, we include information on –and from– both parents. We allow for error correlation between both the sibling's report on the attitude of the father and the mother, and between the respondent's report on the father and the mother, since these measures stem from a single two-step question on parental attitudes. We also allow for error correlation between the general measure of the respondent's attitude and her report on both parents. The wording and source of these measures are identical.

Second, we estimate a model with structural characteristics of both parents and children for all three attitudes. Figure 2 shows this model. Again, for the attitude toward euthanasia, only mother's attitude and not father's attitude is included as an explanatory variable. For church attendance of the parents we include the highest of the items for father's and

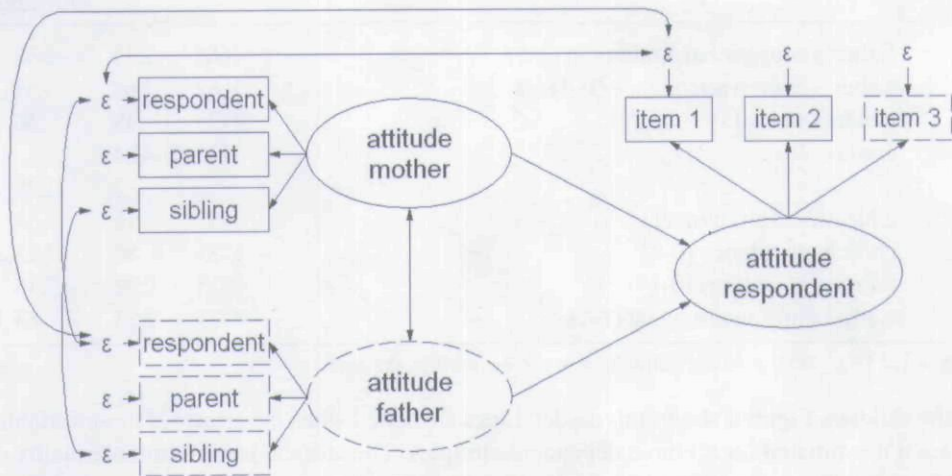
Table 3
Correlations between Respondent's Report on Attitudes of Her Father and Mother and the Parent's Report on the Same Attitude

	father's own report	mother's own report
Respondent report on parental attitudes toward euthanasia	.523***	.585***
Respondent report on parental attitudes toward homosexuality	.411***	.566***
Respondent report on parental attitudes toward ethnic minority members	.346***	.478***

***=p < .001

Source: FNB 2003

Figure 1
Simple Estimation Model for Parent-child Attitude Transmission



mother's church attendance, because of multicollinearity between the two measures. The effects of the structural characteristics of the parents on the parental attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities are included in the models. Results for these effects can be found in Appendix A. All ψ 's are left free in the models, for instance between church attendance and educational attainment. For reasons of graphical complexity, these are not drawn in Figure 2.

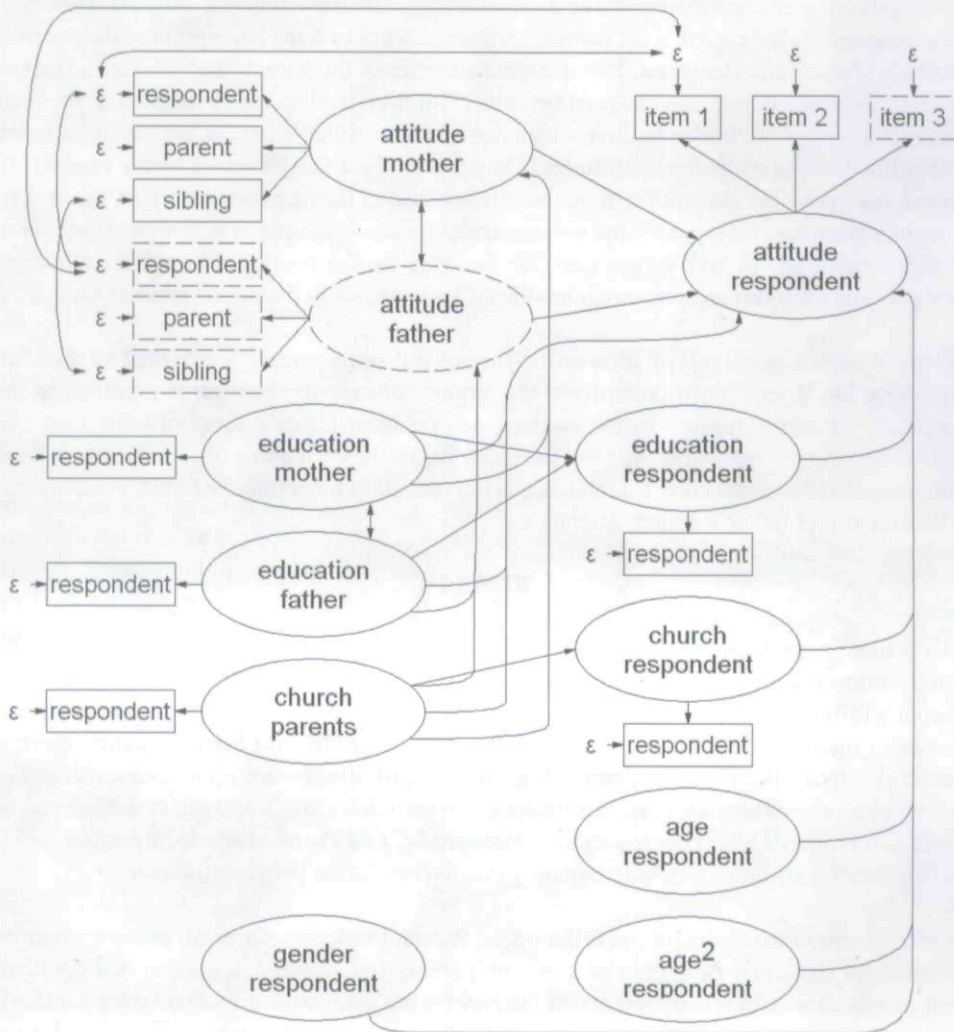
Third, we look at interactions between selected explanatory variables and mother's attitudes by applying a multiple group approach. We use the simple model as the base model, and consecutively add and delete all grouping variables. We did the same for father's attitude. Results for the socialization influence of the father are very similar to those for the mother and can be found in Appendix B.

Missing Values

We selected only those respondents who provided valid information on their own attitudes, but we do have missing values for our explanatory variables. Most missing values concern the parental and sibling information on the parental attitudes. Four reasons are responsible for this. First, not all respondents have a parent or sibling who is alive. Especially the older respondents do not have living parents. Second, respondents did not always give permission to send a questionnaire to a parent or a sibling. This often happens for older parents, who are likely to be in ill health. Third, not all parents and siblings returned the questionnaire they received. Fourth, some of those who did return the questionnaire, did not answer the questions about attitudes.

We cope with the missing values by using Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML). This method looks at the patterns of missing values for the variables (Enders, 2001). Though no values are imputed for the missing values, likelihoods of values and covariances are estimated on the basis of the missing value patterns and the values on the other variables. This method gives reliable results if data are at least missing at random (MAR). Therefore,

Figure 2
Full Estimation Model for Parent-child Attitude Transmission



the fact that missing values are more frequent among older respondents does not lead to a bias.

Biases

Due to the nature of the data collection, we are bound to find some biases in recollection of attitudes. Both the parents and the children report on a past time. Parents are asked for their attitudes toward homosexuality, euthanasia and ethnic minorities at a time when their child was approximately fifteen years of age. The children had to report on their parents during the children's teenage years. Both measurements will be flawed to some extent. The nature and amount of the biases are debatable (De Vries, 2006; Schachter, 2002). However, we do expect the parents to report attitudes in the past that are biased by their current attitudes.

Similar, we expect some bias in the children's report, as they report on someone else. Because of the distinction they make between themselves and the person they answer questions on, we expect them to show a bias away from their own current attitudes. However, previous results indicate that the parental influence works via the perception of the parental attitude (Acock and Bengtson, 1980). Stated attitudes of the parents are of lesser influence than the attributed attitudes children perceive. Children tend to, on the one hand, see their parents as more dissimilar to themselves than parents' state, whereas, on the other hand, the influence of the attributed attitudes is larger than the attitudes stated by the parents. To check for a possible corruption of our results because of the respondents reporting on their parent's attitudes, we repeated the simple model for a sub sample of respondents of whom a parent or sibling or both cooperated. We find very similar results, although the effects of the parental attitudes are somewhat smaller. This is probably due to the smaller sample.

Some of the structural information on the parents was retrospectively provided by the adult children. De Vries (2006) determined the amount of measurement error involved in the accounts of adult children in the Netherlands on their father's level of education and father's church attendance at age 15 of the child. We set the error terms of parental educational attainment and parental church attendance in our models to his results for father's educational attainment and father's church attendance.

RESULTS

We present the results for the simple model in Table 4. Parents have a large influence on their children's attitudes via their own attitudes. The mother's influence is larger than father's influence in models in which we include both parents. We also show the psi-value between mother's and father's attitudes. For the attitude toward homosexuality, there is more similarity between the parents than for the attitude toward ethnic minorities. The effect of mother's attitude toward euthanasia on the adult child's attitude is .689. It can be seen that mother's effect decreases in homosexuality (.429) and in ethnic minorities (.351) when father's attitude is included, mainly due to correlation between the two.

Table 5 shows the results for the full models. Parental influences are still present when we control for structural characteristics of both parents and children, a finding that confirms our expectation. Church attendance of the parents has a negative effect on father's attitude toward homosexuality (results for structural effects on parents' attitudes can be found in Appendix A) and a positive effect on church attendance of the respondent (not shown in table). Father's attitude toward homosexuality then has a positive effect on the respondent's attitude toward homosexuality, while simultaneously church attendance of the respondent has a negative influence on the respondent's attitude.

We see that the direct effects of parental structural characteristics on their children's attitudes have somewhat unexpected signs, when controlled for parental attitudes. Respondents with religious parents for instance, are less negative toward euthanasia and homosexuality. However, these are likely the effects for children that have left the church. For religious children, the effect of parent's church attendance is via their own church attendance and via the effect of parental attitudes.

Table 4
**Effects of Parental Attitudes on Attitudes toward Homosexuality,
 Euthanasia and Ethnic Minorities**

	Approval of euthanasia			Approval of homosexuality			Approval of ethnic minorities		
	b	s.e.	beta	b	s.e.	beta	b	s.e.	beta
<i>Parental characteristics</i>									
Father's attitude				.308	.118	.265**	.273	.095	.286**
Mother's attitude	.689	.061	.672***	.429	.106	.395***	.351	.091	.329***
psi (father's attitude, mother's attitude)				.398	.041	.828***	.265	.050	.652***
Chi-square			1.98			33.26			16.77
Df			3			20			13
RMSEA			.034			.019			.013
Explained variance			.452			.400			.313
N			1740			1839			1735

***=p < .001; **=p < .01; *=p < .05; ~p < .10

Source: FNB 2003

The respondent's structural characteristics have effects on their attitudes that are similar to those in other research. Men are more opposed to homosexuality and ethnic minorities, whereas a higher educational attainment leads to a more tolerant attitude toward homosexuality and ethnic minorities, but has no effect on euthanasia. Respondent's church attendance has a negative effect on the attitude toward euthanasia and homosexuality, but no effect on the attitude toward ethnic minorities. There is a positive curvilinear relationship between respondents age and all three attitudes.

Interactions

Table 6 shows the results of the multiple group modeling. The results are very similar for the three attitudes, indicating that our results are valid across attitude domains. Our first interaction hypothesis is falsified. Women are not more influenced by their mother's attitude than men. For the attitude toward ethnic minorities, we found that men are more influenced by both their mother and their father than women (latter result can be found in Appendix B). Older respondents are less influenced by their parents than younger respondents. Although it seems that the older people get, the more their parents' influence diminishes, we cannot be sure that this is the mechanism at work since we cannot distinguish between age of the respondents and birth cohort of the respondents. It is possible that younger generations are more influenced by their parents than older generations. Coming from a warm family improves the transmission of attitudes from both parents to their children for all three attitudes, as we expected. The structure of the sibling set is of no influence at all. Whether there are more or fewer siblings does not matter for parent-child attitude transmission. Our hypothesis on the difference of opinion between parents is supported by our findings.

Table 5

Effects of Parental Attitudes, Parental Background and Respondents' Characteristics in Attitudes toward Homosexuality, Euthanasia and Ethnic Minorities

	Approval of euthanasia			Approval of homosexuality			Approval of ethnic minorities		
	b	s.e.	beta	b	s.e.	beta	b	s.e.	beta
<i>Parental characteristics</i>									
Father's attitude				.443	.133	.349***	.334	.113	.292**
Fother's attitude	.753	.112	.680***	.416	.119	.363***	.351	.103	.306***
Father's educational attainment				-.055	.039	-.080	.023	.038	.043
Mother's educational attainment	-.083	.037	-.083*	-.037	.047	-.044	-.059	.045	-.090
Parents' church attendance	.091	.037	.132**	.080	.024	.141***	-.007	.017	-.015
<i>Respondent characteristics</i>									
Man	.006	.045	.003	-.229	.038	-.146***	-.137	.034	-.111***
Age	.027	.007		.026	.006		.032	.006	
Age2	-	.0001		-	.0001		-	.0001	
	.0003			.0003			.0005		
<i>Educational</i>									
Attainment	.027	.019	.039	.057	.017	.098***	.104	.016	.230***
Church attendance	-.233	.034	-.291***	-.181	.024	-.267***	.026	.017	.057~
Chi-square			104.66			113.27			94.99
Df			24			68			53
RMSEA			.044			.019			.021
Explained variance			.602			.562			.434
N			1740			1839			1735

***=p < .001; **=p < .01; *=p < .05; ~=p < .10

Source: FNB 2003

When parents differ in their attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities they are less successful in influencing their adult children's attitudes on these issues. Again, a finding that is consistent over all three attitudes.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Parent's attitudes clearly influence how their adult children will think on a number of issues. We showed that for the attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities this is the case in the Netherlands. Mothers have a larger influence on their children's attitudes than fathers. We also identified some characteristics of families that might ameliorate the transmission of attitudes from parents to children. An overview of

Table 6
Interaction Effects with Family Characteristics for the Influence of Maternal Attitude toward Euthanasia, Homosexuality, and Ethnic Minorities, b coefficients

	Approval of euthanasia (N=1740)	Approval of homosexuality (N=1839)	Approval of presence of ethnic minorities (N=1735)
gender: female	.720	.659	.534
male	.702	.614	.684
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	.088	.418	3.617 ~
age: < 40 years old	1.016	.979	.714
> 40 years old	.530	.537	.538
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	**	***	~
	50.179*	26.691	3.413
warm family: weak	.598	.549	.493
strong	.795	.688	.674
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	10.551**	4.151*	5.304*
# siblings: ≤ 2	.665	.626	.621
>= 3	.810	.761	.642
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	3.828 ~	2.478	.100
difference in parental attitude:			
yes	.350	.438	.292
no	.909	.785	.667
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	**	***	26.238***
	50.381*	18.266	

***=p < .001; **=p < .01; *=p < .05; ~p < .10

Source: FNB 2003

our hypotheses and results is given in Table 7. Effects reported here did not differ by gender. The effect of the parental attitude on the present attitudes is for girls and boys comparable. The idea of broad socialization for boys and narrow socialization for girls is not supported by our findings. The emotional warmth in the family, as perceived by the child, facilitates the transmission of all three attitudes. For respondents who remember their youth with their parents as emotionally warm, the effect of the parental attitude is larger. We may conclude from this finding that caring parents are better able to imprint their own attitudes on their children. On the other hand, people who perceived their parents as less caring may enlarge the distance between themselves and their parents coming to believe that they differ markedly from their parents in attitudes. The number of siblings has no effects on the transmission of attitudes.

We formulated a hypothesis on the effects from parental socialization when the children grow older. We found that with respect to the attitudes toward euthanasia and homosexuals in the Netherlands, the parental influence on the attitudes of their adult children diminishes as the latter age. However, in order to fully capture the lasting or fading effects of socialization,

Table 7**Overview of Hypotheses and Results**

H1	Parents' attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minority members in the past influence their children's present attitudes toward these topics.	+
H2	Part of the influence parents have on their children's attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minority members is due to hereditary structural positions.	+
H3	The older the child, the smaller the influence from the parents' attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minority members on the children's attitudes.	+
H4	Women will be more influenced by their parents' attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities than men.	-
H5	The smaller the number of siblings, the more a child will be influenced by its parent's attitudes.	-
H6	Children that report a warm family environment are influenced more by their parents in their attitudes toward euthanasia, toward homosexuality and toward the presence of ethnic minorities.	+
H7	Mothers have a larger influence on their children's attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities than fathers.	+
H8	Children whose parents differ in their attitudes toward euthanasia, homosexuality and the presence of ethnic minorities are less influenced by their parents attitudes than children whose parents have similar opinions.	+

longitudinal analysis would be required.

The influence of parent's attitudes on their adult children's attitudes is substantial. This large influence does not disappear when we control for structural similarities between parents and children. How influential the parents are depends in part on family characteristics. However, even in those families where the parental influence is relatively small, this influence is still sizeable. Parental attitudes are thus important explanatory variables for adults' attitudes. Survey researchers might be reluctant to include parental attitudes based on children's reports because of possible measurement errors. According to our findings, this fear is unwarranted. Not only do they then lack one of the most important predictors, it is also possible to adjust for measurement errors.

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Appendix A

Structural Effects of Parent's Background on Parents' Attitudes toward Euthanasia, Homosexuality and the Presence of Ethnic Minorities

Effects of parental background on parental attitudes toward homosexuality, euthanasia and ethnic minorities

	Approval of euthanasia			Approval of homosexuality			Approval of presence of ethnic minorities		
	b	s.e.	beta	b	s.e.	beta	b	s.e.	beta
<i>parental characteristics</i>									
Father's education on father's attitude				.164	.020	.304***	.174	.020	.371***
Mother's education on mother's attitude	.237	.030	.262***	.239	.025	.330***	.214	.023	.372***
Parental church attendance on father's attitude				-.206	.016	-.457***	.019	.015	.049
Parental church attendance on mother's attitude	-.379	.020	-.611***	-.245	.016	-.492***	-.013	.014	-.032
Unexplained variance of father's attitude						.699			.860
Unexplained variance of mother's attitude			.529			.627			.859
N			1740			1839			1735

***=p < .001; **=p < .01; *=p < .05; ~=p < .10

Source: FNB 2003

Appendix B**Interaction Effects with Family Characteristics for the Influence of Paternal Attitude**

Interaction effects with family characteristics for the influence of paternal approval of euthanasia, homosexuality, and ethnic minorities, b coefficients

	euthanasia (N=1740)	homosexuality (N=1839)	ethnic minorities (N=1735)
gender: female	.716	.689	.336
male	.696	.676	.426
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	.013	.023	5.975 *
age: < 40 years old	.941	.948	.195
> 40 years old	.550	.609	.259
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	**	**	
	39.446 *	8.684	2.322
warm family: weak	.589	.519	.314
strong	.819	.761	.403
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	**		*
	17.792 *	2.983	4.268
# siblings: <= 2	.662	.638	.380
>= 3	.741	.760	.377
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	1.234	1.571	.009
difference in parental attitude:			
yes	.302	.487	.325
no	.823	.783	.607
Chi-square difference test (1 df)	**	**	11.161 **
	35.236 *	9.283	

***=p < .001; **=p < .01; *=p < .05; ~p < .10

Source: FNB 2003

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