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# Reciprocity Revisited: Give and Take in Dutch and Immigrant Families

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## INTRODUCTION

The idea that reciprocity is the basic principle underlying forms of social organization, among which the family, is as old as classical anthropology and sociology. The essence of the principle is that giving prompts receiving, thereby creating forms of ongoing exchange and durable cooperation. Reciprocity has been studied both as a factor affecting family life and as an outcome of family life (e.g., Dwyer, Lee & Jankowski, 1994; Dwyer & Miller, 1990). Only a few studies focus on reciprocity itself by investigating the various forms reciprocal exchanges among kin can take (Hogan, Eggebeen, & Clogg, 1993; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). As yet it is unclear to what extent giving support in families is 'answered' by receiving support or remains one-sided. Who are the main givers within families and who are the principal receivers? Are there any cultural differences in patterns of reciprocity within the family, as the work of Kagitçibasi (1996) suggests? These questions will be addressed in this article. Prior to discussing some modern views and findings about reciprocity in families we will pay attention to classical theory on reciprocity, since it contains the building blocks on which all later work on reciprocity is based (Komter, 2005).

## CLASSICAL THEORY ON RECIPROCITY

Anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski described in detail how "the principle of give and take" structured the exchange in archaic society (1950 [1922]). He differentiated gifts—both material and nonmaterial ones—according to the underlying feelings: gifts to close kin, which he called "pure gifts," are more often given disinterestedly, whereas more or less direct expectations of returns and elements of barter are more characteristic of gifts given to persons farther away in the kinship hierarchy. Also Marcel Mauss (1990 [1923]) argued that social ties are created, sustained and strengthened by means of gift exchange.

Lévi-Strauss (1949) emphasized the structural character of reciprocity and argued that the principle of reciprocity is universal, and not restricted to so-called primitive societies. Sociologist Georg Simmel (1950 [1908]) called gift exchange "one of the strongest sociological functions:" without it society would not come about, and Gouldner (1960) explored the "norm of reciprocity" as a mechanism to start social relationships. He argued that reciprocal exchange relationships may be very asymmetrical, one party giving much while the other

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does scarcely reciprocate and the reverse. In addition to the norm of reciprocity, Gouldner (1973b) distinguished the "norm of beneficence" (Malinowski's "pure gift"): the expression of real altruism. This kind of giving is not a reaction to gifts received from others; examples are gifts to people in need of care or help, for instance children or frail elderly.

The connection between reciprocity and family relationships returns in the work of anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (1972). Sahlins considers giving to near kin and loved ones as mainly disinterested and not based on any definite expectations of returns, and calls it "generalized reciprocity." "Balanced reciprocity," a form of direct and equivalent exchange, is more likely in relationships that are emotionally more distant. "Negative reciprocity"—the unsocial extreme—is the "attempt to get something for nothing." According to Sahlins "kindred goes with kindness."

These various insights converge in their emphasis of the specific nature of reciprocity in the context of family relationships. The "pure" gift or "generalized exchange"—support given without clear expectations of return and without actual returns of help and care—will be a common pattern within families, in particular when caring for the needs of children or elderly parents is concerned. However, this pattern may not be the only, or even the main reciprocity pattern existing within families; factors like age, partner status, proximity, but also cultural norms and values are likely to affect the type of reciprocity. For instance, when the parents of adult men and women are not completely dependent on their children and still able to offer support themselves, reciprocity with respect to their adult children may be more symmetrical than the "pure gift" suggests: adult children will not only give to, but also receive from their parents. Whereas the classical literature implies that exchange within the family is mainly characterized by generalized reciprocity—one-sided support provision—modern views tend to assume ethnic variation in the nature of reciprocity. Western culture is believed to be more "individualistic" and to put more emphasis on personal choice and voluntary kin relations than do non-Western cultures, where "collectivistic" values stressing familism and filial obligation would be more salient (Kagitçibasi, 1996). Along these lines some authors have suggested that balanced reciprocal exchange would be less common among ethnic minorities than among members of the majority group; cultural norms of obligation and loyalty are supposed to override the "self-interest" implied by balanced reciprocity (Katzner, 2000). Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004), however, found indications of the contrary: black women were more involved in reciprocal support exchanges than white women. Similarly, a Dutch study comparing Surinamese and Antillean poor single mothers with their Dutch counterparts, found balanced reciprocity among the first two groups to be more self-evident than among the Dutch women (Ypeij & Steenbeek, 2001). Existing research evidence concerning reciprocity among families belonging to various ethnic groups seems to be mixed.

### MODERN VIEWS AND FINDINGS ABOUT RECIPROCITY IN FAMILIES

Exchange patterns appear to change over the life course (Antonucci & Jackson, 1989, 1990). Some researchers find that both very young and very old people receive the most (Hill 1970). In a study on gift giving in the Netherlands—among which giving help and care—young adults were found to be the greatest receivers of help and care whereas people over fifty years of age received the least; young and middle aged people gave more help and care than people over fifty (Komter; 1996). Róssi and Rossi (1990) demonstrated that parental help to

children declines over time, but children's help to parents continues at the same level. Other researchers suggest that both giving and receiving decline with age overall (Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1992; Eggebeen, 1992).

Gender is consistently found to be related to both norms of obligation towards elderly parents and to giving concrete assistance (Dwyer & Coward, 1992; Silverstein, Parrott, & Bengtson, 1995; Stein, Wemmerius et al., 1998). In a Dutch study on gift exchange women were not only found to be the greatest givers (of material as well as nonmaterial gifts like help and care) but also the biggest receivers, regardless of who the givers were (Komter, 1996). This is consistent with other evidence showing that women are both giving and receiving more familial help (Brody, 1990; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Women's role as caregivers has been explained by their centrality in kin-keeping (Marks & McLanahan, 1993; Roschelle, 1997). Daughters are more likely to provide key assistance to their elderly parents than sons (Rossi & Rossi, 1990), and mothers have been found to receive more emotional and other support than fathers (Marks & McLanahan, 1993; Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2002).

Ethnic differences in cultural norms with respect to reciprocity in intergenerational exchange have been demonstrated in a study by Lee, Peek and Coward (1998). They found that Blacks had higher filial responsibility expectations than Whites, even when socio-demographic, health and support factors were controlled. Research also suggests that Blacks in America have stronger kin networks, emphasize informal support systems more than Whites and maintain higher levels of actual family support (Lee, Peek & Coward, 1998). Similarly, Burr and Mutchler (1999) found that Blacks and Hispanics were more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to agree that each generation should provide co-residence assistance when needed. In a study by Schans and Komter (2006) migrant groups in the Netherlands were found to adhere more to traditional family values than the native Dutch.

Although religion is rarely included in research on reciprocity, it is not far-fetched to assume that religious beliefs have an impact on attitudes toward intergenerational exchange (Tarakeshwar et al., 2003). Partner status of both caregiver and recipient as well as the presence of children have been found to be of influence (Hogan et al., 1993; Marks & McLanahan, 1993). Hogan et al., (1993) demonstrated that having young children was associated with being mainly a receiver of support as well as with being involved in high levels of both giving and receiving. Geographical distance reduces help between generations (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Health conditions and marital status of parents are important need-related reasons for support in old age (Lawton, Silverstein & Bengtson, 1994; Silverstein, Parrott & Bengtson, 1995).

Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004), in their study on kin support among American Blacks and Whites, focus directly on specific forms of reciprocal exchange among kin. They distinguished between balanced and generalized forms of exchange, and one-way transfers. Similarly, Hogan, Eggebeen and Clogg (1993) took the structure of intergenerational exchanges of help and care as their main focus. They attempted to explain various patterns of reciprocity, and found intergenerational assistance to be constrained by family structure and the needs and resources of each generation. Those in poverty were more often low exchangers (low on both giving and receiving) and receivers (high on receiving and low on giving) than those

with higher incomes. Similarly, other researchers argue that structural positions, in particular socio-economic resources, rather than cultural norms account for ethnic variations in intergenerational exchange (Berry, 2001; Lee, Netzer & Coward, 1994; Lee & Aytac, 1998; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004).

Part of the explanation for the fact that previous research on ethnic variation in intergenerational exchange has generated mixed results may be that structural explanations of reciprocity have received more attention than cultural ones, and that cultural norms are often not included as predictors of exchange (e.g., Hogan et al., 1993). Moreover, a systematic comparison of the relative impact on reciprocity of structural and cultural factors, and factors associated with the relationship is not yet available. It is our assumption that the nature of reciprocity in families is varied and that this variety is conditional on socio-structural and cultural factors, and factors associated with the relationship. We want to contribute to the literature by putting both classical theory and modern theoretical assumptions about ethnic differences in the nature of reciprocity to test. Our research questions are:

1. To what extent is intergenerational exchange characterized by "generalized reciprocity," as classical theory suggests?
2. Are there any differences between ethnic groups in the nature of reciprocity?
3. How is the nature of reciprocity affected by socio-structural and cultural factors, and the quality of the relationship between parents and their adult children?

## METHODS

### Sample

The data used for this study are from a recent, large-scale study of family relations: the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (Dykstra, Kalmijn, Knijn, Komter, Liefbroer & Mulder, 2005).<sup>1</sup> Between 2002 and 2004 computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI) were held with 8,155 men and women aged 18-79, who form a random sample of adults residing in private households in the Netherlands. Families of migrants formed one of the foci of the NKPS program. Given the relative size of these groups, over-sampling was deemed necessary to arrive at sufficient numbers for purposes of comparison. Therefore, a stratified random sample of members of the four largest migrant groups in the Netherlands was added ( $N = 1,392$ ). Whenever this was possible, members of ethnic minorities were interviewed by an interviewer of the same ethnic background. After a non-response follow-up the response rate in all samples was around 45 percent which is comparable to that of other large-scale family surveys in the Netherlands, where response rates tend to be lower than elsewhere (de Leeuw & de Heer, 2001). The tendency of the Dutch to be hesitant or unwilling to participate in scientific research has been attributed to their sensitivity to privacy issues and individualistic attitudes (Dykstra et al., 2005). It should be added that the Netherlands are a

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small country with a relatively large number of universities, which is part of the explanation of the high frequency of requests to participate in research.

In this study we will compare three ethnic groups: the native Dutch, the Turks and Moroccans whom we will call "Mediterraneans," and the Surinamese and Antillean migrants, the "Caribbeans." Since the 1960s migrants from former Dutch colonies like Surinam and the Dutch Antilles settled in the Netherlands predominantly for educational purposes. In addition, like many other western European countries, the Netherlands recruited labor migrants from southern Europe and the Mediterranean (like Turkey and Morocco) to carry out mostly unskilled labor. Nowadays, the Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Antillean population form the larger part of the non-Western population in the Netherlands. They predominantly reside in the major urban areas, where they account for up to 30 percent of the population. Turkish and Moroccan societies are traditionally predominantly Islamic, patrilineally organized and gender segregated. Family is important and strongly interdependent relations between family members exist that are prescribed by social norms. People from a Surinamese and Antillean background are considered to be more culturally similar to the Dutch due to their former colonial ties to the Netherlands. As opposed to the Turkish and Moroccan family system, the Caribbean family system is often described as matrifocal, with a relative absence of cultural norms promoting marriage and the tolerance for non-marital childbearing.

The restrictions we imposed were necessary for the following reasons. Quite a large proportion of the ethnic minority groups have parents who live in their country of origin so that information about the exchange of support in these cases cannot be compared to reports on support exchange with parents who do live in the Netherlands. We excluded the data on adult children living with their parents for various reasons. First, there were only a small number of respondents who shared a home with their parents. Second, adult children sharing a household with a parent may involve a different quality and quantity of support and care compared to those who do not live with their parents. Therefore, coresiders may measure and report help differently from those who do not coreside (Hogan et al., 1993).

The majority of the migrants arrived in the Netherlands in the sixties and seventies, when they were in their early twenties. Their children are among the adult respondents included in the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study. Since the average age of their parents is considerably lower than that of the Dutch respondents, reports about the support exchange with their parents would not be comparable to those of the Dutch adults, who are presumably more frail due to their higher age. The—mainly Dutch—respondents older than 75 years of age were, therefore, excluded from the research. Finally, each respondent was asked a number of questions about the support exchange with their parents. In case both parents were still alive, one parent was randomly selected.

The original dataset from which we recruited the subsample used for this paper consisted of 8155 Dutch respondents and 1392 Mediterraneans and Caribbeans, a total of 9547 respondents. The previously described data restrictions necessitated the following numbers of respondents to be discarded from the sample: 406 respondents who belonged to other ethnic groups than the Mediterraneans or Caribbeans, or whose ethnicity could not be established due to missing data; 2665 respondents who had lost both parents at the time of the interview; 786 respondents whose parent(s) did not live in the Netherlands; 302 respondents who were co-

residing with their parents; 1685 (mainly Dutch) respondents whose parents were older than 75 years of age; 183 respondents from whom information was missing on the questions used to create the dependent variable. The final dataset we created for this paper consisted of  $N = 3,520$  respondents: 241 Mediterraneans, 250 Caribbeans, and 3,029 Dutch. The characteristics of our sample are given in Appendix 1.

As in the overall sample women are slightly overrepresented in our sample, especially in the Caribbean and Dutch group. Family is usually seen as the domain of women, who therefore might feel more inclined to participate as respondents in research on family issues. As far as some main socio-demographic characteristics are concerned, our sample can be considered to be representative of the general immigrant population in Dutch society: Mediterraneans have much lower educational levels than the Dutch, while the Caribbeans hold a middle position. All immigrant groups have significantly lower incomes than the Dutch, and especially the Mediterranean group is characterized by a very high level of religiosity (cf. Vermeulen & Penninx, 2000).

### **Dependent Variable**

For the construction of our dependent variable, "types of reciprocity," we used in total eight questions about the exchange of support, both instrumental and emotional, between adult children and their parents. The perspective of the adult respondent on help exchange with his/her parent is taken as our starting point. A first question about giving practical support concerned helping the parent with chores in and around the house, lending things, transportation, or moving things; a second question measured helping the parent with housework, such as preparing meals, cleaning, fetching groceries, or doing the laundry. The questions about giving emotional support concerned giving council or good advice to the parent, and having shown interest in the personal life of the parent. Identical questions about receiving support from parents were posed. In order to cover both support given/received on a regular basis and support given/received less frequently, the questions were posed about 'the past three months'. The answering categories were 1 (never), 2 (sometimes), 3 (several times). Unfortunately, it was not possible to control for the need for support of the elderly parents, since information on their health status was not available for the minority groups.

The various types of support are clearly of a different nature, and some forms of support such as showing interest are exchanged much more often than others. Nevertheless, response patterns of the support variables were very similar, and correlations between the different forms of support given and received were all positive and significant, varying between  $r = .13$  ( $p < .01$ ) and  $r = .60$  ( $p < .01$ ). Since our main objective is to investigate the determinants of the types of reciprocity—patterns in the amounts of total support given and received—rather than the determinants of the specific types of support, we decided to combine the different types of support given and received. We constructed the variable "types of reciprocity" in the following way. First, the answers to the questions about giving support were combined into a scale measuring the total support given to parents; the same was done for the questions about the support received from parents. The alpha-reliability coefficients of both scales were  $\alpha = .68$  and  $\alpha = .62$  respectively (the alpha-reliability of the combination of all giving and receiving items was .75). Next, both measures were split into two by defining scores below

the median as low, and scores above the median as high (median "total support given" = 8, median "total support received" = 7). Finally, the variable "types of reciprocity" was created by distinguishing the four possible combinations: (1) high exchangers (high on both giving and receiving); (2) receivers (high on receiving and low on giving); (3) givers (high on giving and low on receiving); and (4) low exchangers (low on both giving and receiving).

### **Independent and Control Variables**

A dummy variable was created for the three ethnic groups with the native Dutch as reference category. Dummies were also constructed for gender, being religious or not, and proximity, operationalized as "living in the same place as the parent" (unfortunately, a more sophisticated measure of "distance" was not available for the migrant sample). Educational level was measured in years of schooling. Household income was measured by a variable consisting of 11 income categories, combining the sources of income of both the respondent and his or her partner, if present. A scale of "Family solidarity" was constructed by combining 7 statements measuring the respondents' general norms about how supportive one should be towards family, including their own parents. The answering categories ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Examples are: "One should always be able to count on family"; "If one is troubled, family should be there to provide support"; "Children should look after their sick parents." The reliability of this scale is  $\alpha = .80$ . Parental age was included, as well as a dummy for gender of the parent. The quality of the relationship was measured by the following question: "Over all, how would you describe you relation with your father/mother?" Answering categories ranged from 1 (not so well) to 4 (very well).

Age, gender, marital status, and the presence of children were used as control variables. Dummies were created for gender, being married or not, and having children or not.

### **Analyses**

Because our dependent variable is composed of four categorical outcomes, we use multinomial logistic regression analysis to generate maximum likelihood estimates of the effects of gender, ethnicity, socio-structural and cultural variables, and aspects of the relationship between adult children and their parents. The multinomial regression model shows how the probability of being in a particular outcome category (in our case: high exchanger, receiver, giver) versus the likelihood of being in the reference group (in our case: low exchanger) is modified by particular independent and control variables. We compare two models, the first one only including ethnic group membership, the second adding the independent and control variables. This allows us to determine whether ethnicity as such has an impact on reciprocity, and to what extent this impact still holds after controlling for the other variables.

## **RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Results**

The descriptive characteristics of the sample variables are presented in Appendix 1. It appears that the Mediterraneans are the youngest of all three groups, and are more often married than the other groups; both the Mediterraneans and the Caribbeans have more often children



than the Dutch group. The parents of the Dutch are the oldest of all groups, followed by the Caribbean and the Mediterranean parents. The Mediterraneans have the lowest level of education, followed by the Caribbeans and the Dutch. The Mediterraneans display higher levels of family solidarity than the other two groups, with the Dutch showing the lowest level. Mediterraneans are more often religious (even 98 percent indicates that they are religious), they report a higher relationship quality, and they more often live in the same place as their parents than the other two groups.

As stated previously, our main interest is in the reciprocity patterns that manifest themselves in the total amounts of help given and received by our respondents, rather than in the specific forms of support given and received. Which "types of reciprocity" can be discerned among our respondents? We found that from all our respondents 36.6 percent fall into the category of the low exchangers: those who give little and also receive little in return. The next category in terms of magnitude are the receivers: those who receive much while giving little; they consist of 28.2 percent of the sample. Those who both give and receive much, the high exchangers, form 26.5 percent of all respondents. The givers, those who give much but receive little in return, are the smallest group, consisting of 8.7 percent of the respondents. These results generally confirm those of Hogan et al. (1993): the two largest categories in the USA are also the largest in the Netherlands, and have the same ranking.

Table 1 compares the percentages of the various types of support exchange between adult children and their parents for the three ethnic groups, by gender and overall.

The table shows that with the exception of advice, which is more often received than given, all forms of support are more often given than received. Although in general differences between ethnic groups are small, a few patterns are worth mentioning. Overall, the Dutch give somewhat less household help to their parents than the other two ethnic groups, and tend also to receive less in return. The Dutch and the Caribbeans give less practical support to their parents compared to the Mediterraneans, but the Dutch receive more practical support in return compared to the other two groups. The majority of all three groups show interest to their parents but the Dutch tend to receive more interest in return, compared to the other two groups. The Dutch tend to give as well as receive less advice to their parents than the other two groups. Compared to Dutch men, Dutch women give as well as receive more help of all kinds with the exception of practical help, which is more often given by men. Mediterranean women give more household and practical help to their parents and receive more in return, whereas Mediterranean men give their parents more advice but receive less in return than their female counterparts. Caribbean women give and receive more household help than Caribbean men, like in the other two groups. However, like the Dutch women they give less but receive more practical help from their parents than Caribbean men. There are no clear differences between Caribbean women and men with respect to the interest they show to their parents and receive in return. Like among the Mediterraneans Caribbean men give more advice to their parents than women, but receive less in return.

### **Multivariate Results**

Our multivariate models enable us to determine if these differences hold after we introduce our independent and control variables.

Table 1.  
**Response Distribution for Giving and Receiving Household Help, Practical Help,  
 Interest and Advice by Gender and Ethnic Group (N = 3,520)**

<i>Types of help</i>	Men (%)			Women (%)			All (%)		
	Mediterr.	Caribbean	Dutch	Mediterr.	Caribbean	Dutch	Mediterr.	Caribbean	Dutch
Household help given									
Not at all	51.6	54.5	65.2	42	48.7	57.8	46.9	50.8	60.6
Once or twice	26.2	16.8	22.4	30.3	32.2	25.7	28.2	26	24.4
Several times	22.1	28.7	12.5	27.7	19.5	16.5	24.9	23.2	14.9
Household help received									
Not at all	63.9	71.3	76.3	58	66.4	67.7	61	68.4	71
Once or twice	22.1	11.9	14.8	29.4	18.8	17.9	25.7	16	16.7
Several times	13.9	16.8	9	12.6	14.8	14.3	13.3	15.6	12.2
Practical help given									
Not at all	44.3	48.5	38.4	42.9	53.7	55.9	43.6	51.6	49.1
Once or twice	34.4	28.7	39.5	31.1	26.8	28.9	32.8	27.6	33
Several times	21.3	22.8	22.1	26.1	19.5	15.2	23.7	20.8	17.9
Practical help received									
Not at all	67.2	67.3	59.6	59.7	61.7	50.8	63.5	64	54.2
Once or twice	23	12.9	26.6	29.4	25.5	29.7	26.1	20.4	28.5
Several times	9.8	19.8	13.8	10.9	12.8	19.4	10.4	15.6	17.3
Interest given									
Not at all	9.8	9.9	9.6	10.1	13.4	5.4	10	12	7
Once or twice	24.6	23.8	30.7	11.8	19.5	21	18.3	21.2	24.8
Several times	65.6	66.3	59.6	78.2	67.1	73.6	71.8	66.8	68.2
Interest received									
Not at all	12.8	14.9	8.7	10.1	14.8	6.9	11.2	14.8	7.6
Once or twice	27.9	21.8	24	17.6	14.1	18.6	22.8	17.2	20.7
Several times	59.8	63.4	67.3	72.3	71.1	74.4	66	68	71.7

Table 1. (Contd)  
**Response Distribution for Giving and Receiving Household Help, Practical Help,  
 Interest and Advice by Gender and Ethnic Group (N = 3,520)**

<i>Types of help</i>	Men (%)		Women (%)		All (%)	
	Mediterr.	Dutch	Mediterr.	Dutch	Mediterr.	Dutch
Advice given						
Not at all	26.2	35.3	33.6	29.4	29.9	31.7
Once or twice	35.2	44.6	31.1	45.7	33.2	45.3
Several times	38.5	20.1	35.3	24.9	36.9	23
Advice received						
Not at all	23.8	29.6	19.3	24.9	21.6	26.7
Once or twice	32	41.7	30.3	41.2	31.1	41.4
Several times	44.3	28.7	50.4	33.9	47.3	31.9

Model 1 in Table 2 shows that ethnicity significantly affects the likelihood of being a high versus a low exchanger. Both Mediterraneans and Caribbeans are more likely than the Dutch to be involved in an intensive intergenerational exchange. No significant ethnic differences are found with respect to being a receiver or a giver. After entering the other independent and control variables in Model 2, however, ethnicity loses its impact on the likelihood of being a high exchanger. Apparently, ethnicity in itself is not enough to account for the variations in reciprocity among our respondents. In line with previous research, we found gender to be a particularly strong predictor of both being a high exchanger and being a receiver: women are more likely than men to fall into either of these categories. A higher educational level increases the likelihood of being involved in all three types of reciprocity. Compared to those with less

Table 2.

**Multinomial Logistic Regression Models of Types of Reciprocity<sup>a</sup> (N = 3,520)**

Independent Variable	High exchanger		Receiver		Giver	
	Model 1 Exp(B)	Model 2 Exp(B)	Model 1 Exp(B)	Model 2 Exp(B)	Model 1 Exp(B)	Model 2 Exp(B)
<i>Ethnic Group<sup>b</sup></i>						
Mediterranean	1.647**	.977	.969	.888	1.303	1.671
Caribbean	1.387*	1.381	.932	.955	1.051	1.486
<i>Child Characteristics</i>						
Gender (male = 0)		1.784***		1.818***		1.008
Education in years		1.128***		1.100***		1.074*
Household income		.962*		.961*		.952
Family solidarity		1.038**		1.005		1.004
Religious		1.184		1.022		1.109
<i>Parent Characteristics</i>						
Age		1.013		1.005		1.085***
Gender (father = 0)		2.341***		1.123		2.511***
<i>Relational Characteristics</i>						
Quality relationship		4.254***		2.910***		1.893***
Living in the same place		2.217***		1.080		1.687**
<i>Control variables</i>						
Age		.937***		.934***		.994
Married		.942		.782		1.307
Having children		.760		1.086		.524**
<i>Constant</i>	-.387	-6.937	-.256	-3.024	-1.460	-9.789
-2 Log Likelihood	55.529	6771				
Model $\chi^2$ (df)	17.119** (6)	1128*** (42)				
Nagelkerke's Pseudo $R^2$	.005	.33				

<sup>a</sup>Low Exchangers = reference category

<sup>b</sup>Dutch = reference category

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

education, adult children with more years of education are not only significantly more likely to have an intensive exchange of support with their parents, but also to receive one-sided support from them, and to give them one-sided support. Interestingly and contrary to previous research findings, income has an effect opposite to education; a higher income significantly decreases the likelihood of being a high exchanger and a receiver. Unlike Hogan et al. (1993) we found that those with lower incomes are more often high exchangers and also more often receivers, relative to the reference category of the low exchangers. Apparently, intergenerational exchange in the Netherlands is not constrained by family resources in the same way as it is in the USA. A possible explanation is the higher level of caring arrangements provided by the Dutch welfare state; those with higher incomes might be freer to outsource their needs for help and care, whereas the less wealthy would be forced by financial constraints to fall back on their family more often.

Family solidarity is significantly affecting the likelihood of being a high exchanger but does not influence the likelihood of belonging to either of the other reciprocity types. Religion has no significant effect on the nature of the reciprocity between adult children and their parents. The older the parents, the more likely they are to receive help from their adult children. Mothers, like their daughters, are more likely to be involved in high exchange. In addition, they more often than fathers receive support from their adult children. Relationship quality positively affects all three reciprocity types but the association is strongest with the high exchangers. When parents and children live in the same place, the likelihood of being involved either in intensive support exchange or in giving one-sided support to their parents is significantly higher than when they live at a greater distance from each other. Younger people are significantly more often involved in intensive reciprocal exchange compared to older people. They are also most often at the receiving end of the reciprocity relationship. No significant differences in the type of reciprocity are found between those who are married or not. Finally, those who have children are less likely to give support to their parents than those without children.<sup>2</sup>

In Table 2 the likelihood of being a high exchanger, a receiver or a giver versus the likelihood of being a low exchanger was depicted. Theoretically, the category receivers is particularly interesting since they are, so to speak, the "most unlikely category" among adult children. As sociological and anthropological literature suggests, they are supposed to be involved in either one-sided giving or in intensive reciprocal exchange rather than in the role of one-sided receiving. In order to obtain a clearer insight into the characteristics of the group of receivers we changed the reference category into the high exchangers, and re-estimated the multinomial regression models for the entire sample. In Table 3 the results for the receivers relative to the high exchangers are presented.

What factors condition the likelihood to be a receiver relative to a high exchanger? Like in the previous analysis (Table 2), Mediterraneans and Caribbeans prove to be less likely than the Dutch to be receivers, as can be seen in Model 1 of table 3; however, ethnicity is no longer significant after entering the other independent variables. Different from our previous analysis

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noticed that the number of respondents in both the Mediterranean and the Caribbean groups is substantially lower than the number of Dutch respondents ( $N = 241, 250$  and  $3,029$ , respectively). This may affect the coefficients in our multinomial regression analyses in the sense that the likelihood of significant results for ethnicity is reduced in the models that include all independent and control variables.

Table 3.

**Multinomial Logistic Regression Models of Types of Reciprocity<sup>a</sup> (N = 3,520)**

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Receiver</i>	
	Model 1 Exp(B)	Model 2 Exp(B)
<i>Ethnic Group<sup>b</sup></i>		
Mediterranean	.588**	.909
Caribbean	.672*	.692
<i>Child Characteristics</i>		
Gender (male = 0)		1.019
Education in years		.975
Household income		.999
Family solidarity		.968**
Religious		.863
<i>Parent Characteristics</i>		
Age		.992
Gender (father = 0)		.480***
<i>Relational Characteristics</i>		
Quality relationship		.684***
Living in the same place		.487***
<i>Control variables</i>		
Age		.996
Married		.830
Having children		1.430*
<i>Constant</i>	.131	3.913
-2 Log Likelihood	55.53	6771
Model $\chi^2$ (df)	17.12** (6)	1127*** (42)
Nagelkerke's Pseudo $R^2$	.005	.33

<sup>a</sup>High exchangers = reference category

<sup>b</sup>Dutch = reference category

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

where the low exchangers were the reference category, family solidarity and gender of the parent have a significant effect. Those who feel not very strongly committed to their family are more likely to be at the receiving end of family support, relative to the high exchangers; this holds in particular when their parent is a father instead of a mother. With the high exchangers as reference category, being a receiver is also significantly related to having a lower relationship quality and to not living in the same place as the parent. Finally, having children increases the likelihood of being a receiver relative to a high exchanger.

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Families are assumed to act upon shared values and a common core of felt obligations, and to reflect altruism in the way support is exchanged. No wonder that Emile Durkheim regarded the family as the example of mechanical solidarity par excellence. Classical anthropologists

(Malinowski, 1922; Sahlin, 1972) assumed that "generalized exchange"—support given without any well-defined expectations of returns—would be the prototype of support exchange within the family. Modern views such as have been propagated by Kagitçibasi (1996) suggest that family values and filial obligation are more pronounced among non-Western migrants than among native Western-born people, presumably leading to ethnic variation in patterns of reciprocity. In this study we put these theoretical assumptions to an empirical test by exploring patterns of reciprocity among various ethnic groups in the Netherlands.

Contrary to the assumption of classical anthropologists and sociologists, we found that "generalized reciprocity," giving without receiving much in return, is in fact the most exceptional pattern of all within the family (research question 1). In fact, the reciprocity pattern where a low level of giving is paired with a low level of receiving is the most common pattern—more than one third of all respondents fall into this category—, despite the fact that in several European studies the level of intergenerational solidarity and support has been found to be still substantial (Knijn & Komter, 2004; Komter & Vollebergh 2002). This finding is in line with the results of Hogan et al. (1993), who also found this category to be the largest in the USA. The reciprocity pattern of receiving much while giving little is the next most important category: more than one quarter of all are found to be receivers. Apparently, parents give their adult children a lot of support that is not necessarily (immediately) reciprocated. This was also the second largest category in the study by Hogan and his colleagues. A slightly smaller group of adult children are involved in an intensive mutual exchange of support with their parents: the high exchangers. As we have seen, the givers, consisting of less than one tenth of all respondents, are the smallest category. "Generalized reciprocity" is definitely not the prototype of family support exchange.

Contrary to what modern theory on cultural differences in the nature of reciprocity suggests, our data show that the similarities in intergenerational exchange patterns between ethnic groups are greater than the differences (research question 2). This finding is important in view of the persistent tendency in Western European countries to exaggerate differences between ethnic minorities and the original population, or to think in stereotyped ways about them. Although we found some differences between ethnic groups in patterns of support exchange, these are predominantly attributable to the structural, cultural and relational variables we included in our analysis. Gender, both of the respondents and of their parents, stands out as one of the strongest predictors of the type of reciprocity, regardless of ethnic group membership. Ethnic group membership does affect reciprocity type in the sense that the Dutch are less often found among the high exchangers, but the effect disappears when specific characteristics of the adult children, their parents, and their relationship are taken into account. This finding supports our previous research results, which showed that although ethnic differences may have an impact on norms and values, they do not affect the actual exchange of support in all domains (Schans & Komter, 2006). The migration experience and acculturation process may have reduced the intensity of habitual patterns of intergenerational support and feelings of family solidarity, and have created more similarity between migrants and the native Dutch.

How is reciprocity affected by socio-structural and cultural factors, and relational characteristics (research question 3)? Low exchangers, the largest category, tend to be lower educated and male; they are of a higher than average age and have a higher than average

income; they tend not to feel very committed to their family, they often have a male parent with whom they do not have a particularly good relationship and tend not to live in the same place as their parent. Receivers of support are mostly young and female; they tend to have a higher level of education, a lower income, and a good relationship with their parent. High exchangers are generally young, female, highly educated, and have a less than average income; they feel highly committed to their family and have a female parent with whom they have a very good relationship. Givers are mostly found among the more highly educated and older respondents who don't have children themselves, who have an elderly female parent who lives in the same place, and with whom they have a good relationship.

Some limitations of this study should be mentioned. First, our focus was on the amounts of total support given and received, and not on other potentially interesting dimensions of reciprocity such as the time stretch between giving and receiving, or the potentially different meanings of what has to be given or received in the various ethnic groups. "Delayed reciprocity" is assumed to be a general characteristic of support exchange between parents and children: as a child you receive your parents' care and help, which later is returned when the parents are needy themselves. Our research does not provide information about the time stretch between giving and receiving between adult children and their parents. Similarly, possible differences in cultural norms concerning the desirability of certain types of exchange were not investigated in our research. Both the time dimension and cultural differences in family-related norms about support exchange constitute interesting areas for future research. Second, we were not able to include financial help in the construction of our dependent variable because questions on financial support were phrased differently for the Dutch and the minority groups. Third, we did not include childcare because it is a one-sided form of help (only given by parents to their adult children). We felt that the distribution of giving and receiving between parents and adult children might become artificially skewed as a consequence. It can also be argued, however, that parents who do provide childcare to their adult children receive more practical and emotional help in return. The question whether adults with children reciprocate the help with childcare they receive from their parents by giving them comparatively more practical and emotional help deserves attention in future research. Finally, measuring the actual support exchange between parents and their adult children is not necessarily a proper reflection of their real needs. For instance, support can be received but not asked for and not needed; conversely, support that is needed will not always be actually provided. Due to data limitations we were not able to include variables indicating need such as the health situation of the parent. The same applies to education and partner status of the parent.

Nevertheless, this study allows us to draw some conclusions about the nature of reciprocity in intergenerational exchange. A first conclusion is that, since various types of reciprocity are found to exist in the relationship between adult children and their parents, it does no longer make sense to talk about reciprocity as such. Both a high and a low level of reciprocation can occur in response to, respectively, giving much and giving little support. In addition, there are patterns of one-sided giving and of one-sided receiving. A second conclusion is that reciprocity is not predominantly a socio-structural characteristic as the family literature suggests, but is influenced by cultural and relational factors as well. We found cultural factors to significantly affect the type of reciprocity. The more strongly people adhere to norms of family solidarity the more likely they are to be involved in intensive reciprocal



exchange with their parents. Gouldner's (1960) idea that reciprocity has normative connotations has been proven true. Finally, it can be concluded that different types of reciprocity are associated with distinctive patterns of background factors. Young people are more often receivers, whereas people with aged parents are more often givers. High exchangers are more highly educated than low exchangers, and are more often female. Low exchangers are more likely to be male, and to have a higher income. Family solidarity has a positive effect on the likelihood of being a high exchanger, and is negatively associated with being a low exchanger. Having a good relationship with one's parents positively affects all varieties of reciprocity except being a low exchanger, which is more often associated with a bad relationship.

All human relationships whether inside or outside the family, are based on the varieties of reciprocity researched and discussed in this article. Inside the family, it is likely that the pattern of reciprocity will vary according to the specific nature of the family relationship involved. Among siblings, for instance, low exchange will be a more common pattern than among adult children and their parents, whereas between parents and their small children a pattern of one-sided giving will be more prevalent. Couple relationships constitute another interesting domain for research on reciprocity. One might wonder, for instance, to what extent marital power is influenced by patterns of reciprocity between spouses (Komter, 1989). Among friends high exchange will be the most common type, whereas among business partners sponsoring and bribery represent yet different forms of reciprocity. In specific types of social relationship specific types of reciprocity will prevail. Whereas our study focused on reciprocity patterns between generations, future research could investigate whether different reciprocity types exist within different types of family relationships.

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Appendix 1. Description of Sample Variables per Ethnic Group (alpha in parentheses) (N = 3520)

Variables	Mediterranean			Caribbean			Dutch			All		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
Practical support given	1.80	.79	1-3	1.69	.79	1-3	1.69	.76	1-3	1.70	.76	1-3
Household support given	1.78	.82	1-3	1.72	.82	1-3	1.54	.74	1-3	1.57	.75	1-3
Advice given	2.07	.82	1-3	2.15	.82	1-3	1.91	.74	1-3	1.94	.75	1-3
Interest shown	2.62	.66	1-3	2.55	.70	1-3	2.61	.62	1-3	2.61	.63	1-3
Practical support received	1.47	.68	1-3	1.52	.75	1-3	1.63	.76	1-3	1.61	.76	1-3
Household support received	1.52	.72	1-3	1.47	.75	1-3	1.41	.69	1-3	1.42	.71	1-3
Advice received	2.26	.79	1-3	2.18	.83	1-3	2.05	.76	1-3	1.42	.71	1-3
Interest received	2.55	.69	1-3	2.53	.74	1-3	2.64	.62	1-3	2.63	.63	1-3
<b>Child characteristics</b>												
Gender (0 = male)	.49	.50	0-1	.60	.49	0-1	.61	.49	0-1	.60	.49	0-1
Education in years	9.29	4.53	3-18	12.26	3.91	3-18	13.72	2.96	3-18	13.31	3.37	3-18
Household income	5.97	2.25	1-11	5.98	3.07	1-11	7.55	3.20	1-11	7.33	3.18	1-11
Family solidarity	28.62	3.81	16-35	23.59	5.41	9-35	22.09	4.23	7-35	22.69	4.63	7-35
Religious	(.70)	.98	.14	(.80)	.61	0-1	(.78)	.46	0-1	.52	.50	0-1
<b>Parent characteristics</b>												
Age	58.25	7.93	40-75	59.04	8.82	38-75	62.89	7.82	37-75	62.3	8.04	37-75
Gender (0 = father)	.53	.50	0-1	.67	.47	0-1	.59	.49	0-1	.60	.49	0-1

## Appendix 1. (Contd.)

## Description of Sample Variables per Ethnic Group (alpha in parentheses) (N = 3520)

Variables	Mediterranean			Caribbean			Dutch			All		
	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range	M	SD	Range
<b>Relational characteristics</b>												
Quality relationship	3.52	.72	1-4	3.18	.97	1-4	3.23	.84	1-4	3.24	.84	1-4
Living in the same place	.82	.38	0-1	.48	.50	0-1	.42	.49	0-1	.45	.50	0-1
<b>Control variables</b>												
Age	30.80	6.79	18-57	33.08	7.68	18-54	34.50	7.13	18-67	34.15	7.21	18-67
Married	.67	.47	0-1	.24	.43	0-1	.50	.50	0-1	.49	.50	0-1
Having children	.68	.47	0-1	.70	.46	0-1	.55	.50	0-1	.57	.50	0-1

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