Conformity to Parental Rules
Asymmetric Influences of Father's and Mother's Levels of Education

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The relative effects of both parents' educational levels on their child-rearing values were examined by analysing data from a sample of Dutch families (N=589). This research focuses upon dominance of fathers over mothers with respect to the value placed on children's conformity to parental rules. We argue that for this kind of research 'diagonal reference models' are preferred. Application of these models shows asymmetric patterns of influence, i.e. 'male dominance': wives' child-rearing values are more in line with their husband's educational level than with own educational attainment. Mothers' adjustment is even more pronounced in the case of family conflict.

Introduction

It is a platitude to state that both mothers and fathers are typically involved in raising their children. Given the extent of joint parenting it is quite surprising that so little is known about the degree to which parents affect each other with respect to their child-rearing. Such mutual influences seem to be quite self-evident. In the present study we elaborate on this matter by examining the degree to which both parents' educational backgrounds affect their child-rearing values and their conformity with parental rules.

Within socialization research it is well known that parents in lower social positions differ from parents in higher social positions with respect to their child-rearing practices (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1958; Gecas, 1979). Less-educated parents are found to demand more conformity than do the higher educated. Because the parental child-rearing value conformity could offer a meaningful interpretation of this relationship (Kohn, 1989; Gecas, 1979), many researchers have tried to clarify the precise nature of the link between social position and this particular parental child-rearing value (e.g. Alwin, 1984). We will elaborate on this matter, although we want to emphasize that the nature of the relationship between parental attitudes and behaviour remains subject to debate.

Unfortunately, most studies dealing with the relationship between child-rearing values and social position focus on the child-rearing values of the mother, while the social position of the family is measured by means of the father's characteristics, leaving the mother's characteristics unaccounted for. Apparently, it is assumed that a mother's socioeconomic characteristics are neither relevant for her own child-rearing values, nor for her husband's values. Such an assumption of wives being totally dependent on their spouse seems nowadays rather questionable. Given that all wives, whether they are in paid work or not, have a history of their own (i.e. one not shared with their husband), it seems plausible that their past experiences exert at least some influence on their current values and behaviour.

Asymmetric Influences of Father's and Mother's Levels of Education

Both the characteristics of a father and the characteristics of a mother might influence the value that each places on the child's conformity to parental rules. That influence might be gender specific. A mother's socio-economic background, for instance, might affect only her values but not those of her husband. Alternatively, the background of the father, for example, could influence the values of the mother as well. The present study concentrates on level of education as the background variable. We will also investigate the extent to which the effect of mother's education is stronger for younger birth cohorts and stronger when a mother is in paid work. Furthermore, we will investigate the degree to which the effects of education are moderated by the extent to which parents endorse traditional gender roles and by the degree of conflict within the family.

The choice of level of education as the primary background variable may at first seem surprising. The particular conditions of work that Kohn and his colleagues have emphasized might have been an obvious choice (conditions such as degree of autonomy or the level of complexity of a job: e.g. Kohn, 1989). Such conditions, however, are traditionally considered as part of the father's occupation, leaving the impact of the mother's social position on her own values unaccounted for. If all mothers were in paid work, the labour conditions for both parents could be considered, but that circumstance would restrict the sample to dual-earner couples. In contrast, level of education can be determined for all mothers and all fathers.

The attention given to both father's and mother's level of education is also prompted by dissatisfaction with measures that are often presented as 'family' measures, but are restricted to father's occupation or income. That restriction is paternalistic (Acker, 1973). It has also led to a conceptual gap. How, for instance, does the nature of a father's occupation influence the values of his wife, a person who is not experiencing that occupation in any direct fashion and in fact is in work, whether paid or unpaid, that has quite different conditions?

There are at least two reasons why education might explain the fact that better-educated parents are more liberal with regard to child-rearing than less-educated parents. First, according to psychodynamic theory, education facilitates the development of a more secure personality, enhancing the capacity to develop autonomous and, probably, less conventional values and behaviours (Adorno *et al*. [1950] 1982; Lipset, [1960] 1981). Secondly, socialization theory proposes that the extent to which people are exposed to the educational system has an enduring effect on the development of liberal values in a variety of domains (Gabennesch, 1972; Hyman and Wright, 1979; Vogt, 1997). As one's educational development takes place during one's transition from childhood to adulthood it might be expected that the influence of education exceeds that of later vocational choices. And it is for this reason that the past experiences of women have to be taken into consideration as well.

There is indeed evidence showing that level of education is a stronger predictor for the value placed on children's conformity than current occupation is. Within the United States, Alwin (1984) found over time that the effect of social class on child-rearing values declined between the years 1958 to 1983, while the predictive power of education increased. Even in 1976, however, Wright and Wright (1976) found that educational level was a stronger predictor than social class for the value placed on a child's conforming to authority. Alwin and Jackson (1982), again using US data, have also found that educational level was a stronger predictor than occupational prestige for the child-rearing value conformity. These findings have been repeatedly replicated, both for fathers and for mothers (Alwin and Krosnick, 1985; Krosnick and Alwin, 1987), and they have turned out to be stable across countries. Slomczynsky, Miller, and Kohn (1981), for example, have found for both the USA and Poland that education is a stronger predictor than occupational conditions for the value placed on a child's conformity. And in the Netherlands education predicts child-rearing values such as conformity to parental rules for mothers as well as fathers, but net of the effects of education, occupation and income do not (Meijnen, 1977; Van der Slik, Gerris, and Felling, 1996). In sum, one's education, completed virtually without exception before marriage, appears to be a more important predictor for the child-rearing value conformity to external authority

than one's current social class position or actual occupational conditions.

Level of education is also a variable that has generated a number of possible effects: effects that suggest a variety of patterns for the ways in which parents may influence one another. One possible result is that each parent's level of education may influence only his or her own values. In a study restricted to dual-earner couples, for instance, Spade (1991) found that the child-rearing values of husbands and wives were best predicted by their own educational backgrounds. Spouses' socioeconomic characteristics had no significant effect, although the trend was clearly in the direction of the father's education on his wife's child-rearing values being stronger than the effect of the mother's education on her husband's values. In line with that trend is Maccoby's (1961) report of an unpublished study by Bronfenbrenner in which the husband's level of education was more important for the wife's child-rearing values than was her own level of education. Meijnen's (1977) finding of asymmetrical effects is also in line with these findings. For mothers, child-rearing values were predicted, to equal degrees, by their own level of education and that of their husbands. For fathers, there was no effect from the wife's level of education.

Where it occurs, such asymmetry may have several bases. It could reflect the general presence of a cultural norm that is widely accepted: one in which the position and the viewpoints of the husbands are dominant (Ganong and Coleman, 1992; Tynes, 1990). In marriages in which the wife has less education than her husband, this culturally accepted norm of husbands being dominant over their wife is not violated and often not even recognized. However, compliance to this norm could become potentially problematic when the wife is more highly educated than her spouse. For a husband in such a mixed marriage, an 'adjustment' to values corresponding with his wife's education could imply a sacrifice he is not able or willing to make. Such an asymmetry is referred to as the 'sexual sociology of adult life' (Chodorow, 1974; Brines, 1994). From this literature we deduce that status violation is also the case when the husband has a lower level of education than his wife. Being married to a more highly educated wife is one thing; being ridiculed by his friends and acquaintances for this loss in his 'masculinity'

(Chodorow, 1974; Williams, 1989) is quite another. For a wife with more education than her husband an 'adjustment' to her spouse's position would imply a sacrifice that would have several 'advantages'. First, she would have a less problematic relationship. Hornung, McCullough, and Sugimoto (1981), for example, have found that in marriages in which the husband has less education than his wife, husbands showed more violent acts toward their wife. Secondly, such an adjustment would be positively reinforced by her spouse and her surroundings (or at least by her spouse's surroundings). As a result, wives and husbands 'do gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987): wives by accommodating to their spouse's position; husbands by refusing to do so in the face of opposition. Following De Graaf and Heath (1992) we formulate the *male-dominance hypothesis*, stating that a wife's educational level is less important for the child-rearing value conformity, than her husband's educational level, either for her own or for her husband's degree of valuing conformity to parental rules. This would hold even when the wife is more highly educated than her spouse. When we speak of 'male dominance', we mean that wives adjust more to their husband's position than the other way around, irrespective of the level of the wife's education. This does not necessarily imply that at the family level wives adapt their spouse's values. It would mean that the probability that wives adopt values which are in accordance with the husband's educational level, is greater than the probability of their holding on to values which are in line with their own educational level.

As an alternative to a male dominance interpretation, *resource theory* might be applicable. Resource theory (Blood and Wolfe, 1960) predicts that the spouse who has the most resources within the relationship is the more powerful one. Blood and Wolfe consider spouses' education, occupation, and income as potentially relevant resources. Given that education is the main predictor of child-rearing values, in the present study this particular resource will be examined. Because those with more education are supposed to have more status outside the family than those with less education, in mixed couples those with the lower level of education tend to move towards the child-rearing values of the one with the higher level of education in order to acquire this higher status as well (Ganzeboom,

1982). Consequently, it can be expected that within heterogamous couples, spouses, with respect to their child-rearing orientation, adjust to whoever has the higher educational level. This would mean that in the case where the husband's educational position is higher – traditionally the more common situation – the relative salience of husband's education in predicting conformity to parental rules would outweigh the relative salience of the wife's education. Note that this is what one would expect to find, testing the male-dominance hypothesis. Departing from a resource or status interpretation, however, this would only apply in the case where the husband is more highly educated than his wife. If the wife is better educated than her husband, it would follow that the husband adjusts to his spouse's position. In this particular case, the relative salience of the wife's education would outweigh the relative effect of the husband's education in predicting the child-rearing value conformity to parental rules. Following De Graaf and Ganzeboom (1990), we term this the *status maximalization hypothesis*. See Table 1 for a summary of expected effects.

In addition, what may be involved is the presence of norms and social characteristics that are unevenly distributed throughout contemporary families. There is much empirical evidence of an increase in educational attainment for women in the Netherlands, that is to say that the educational gap between men and women has narrowed (Dessens, Jansen, and Ultee, 1990). As a result of such an emancipation process, the self-assertion

of women seems to have increased during recent decades, which would imply that within younger cohorts, wives will adjust to their husband's education with respect to their child-rearing orientation less strongly than wives within older cohorts. We therefore expect that the relatively improved position of married women in the Netherlands will result in an increased effect of own education for wives within younger cohorts, while the relative effect of the husband's education will decrease. We call this the *cohort hypothesis*.

Elaborating on the idea of the increased self-assertion of women, we argue that the gender role orientations of the partners could make a difference. The asymmetrical pattern of father's education influencing mother's viewpoints more than mother's education influencing father's values might well be expected to occur more in families where parents endorse traditional gender roles than in families where more egalitarian values are endorsed. We term this the *gender role hypothesis*.

In addition, the asymmetrical pattern we have noted might not occur in families where the mother is in paid work, a position often regarded as influencing her power base within the family (e.g. Komter, 1989). Blumstein and Schwartz (1983), and Spade (1991), using American data, have found support for this hypothesis. In the USA the employment rate of women has always been much greater than in the Netherlands. Yet the employment of mothers in the Netherlands has increased rapidly during recent decades (Van Berkel, 1997). In our

Table 1. *An overview of expected effects*

A   **'Male dominance'** Father's education has a larger effect than mother's education on both own as well as on mother's valuing conformity of children.

B   **'Status-maximalization'** In educationally mixed couples, the effect of the one with the higher education will outweigh the effect of the one with the lower education in predicting own as well as spouse's child-rearing values.

C   **'Cohort'** Effects of younger mother's education in predicting own as well as spouse's child-rearing values, will be stronger than effects of older mother's education.

D   **'Gender role'** Effects of father's education and his wife's education will be about equal in strength when parents endorse egalitarian gender roles, while in families in which parents endorse traditional gender roles, the effect of the father's education will outweigh the effect of the mother's education.

E   **'Mother's employment'** The effect of the mother's education in predicting own and spouse's child-rearing values, will be larger for mothers with a paid job outside the home, than for wives not employed.

F   **'Conflict'** The effect of father's education in predicting either own child-rearing values or spouse's values, will be stronger in cases of family conflict, than in absence of family discord.

database, 45 per cent of the mothers have a paid job outside the home. We will test the *mother's employment hypothesis*, stating that as compared to an unemployed mother, an employed mother will take less account of the educational level of her husband, implying that the relative influence of her education on her child-rearing values will be stronger. Additionally, it is assumed that the employment of wives affects the power base of their husbands, implying that the relative effect of the education of an employed mother on the child-rearing orientation of her husband will be stronger than the relative effect of the education of an unemployed wife.[1]

Finally, we consider the case of a conflictual family climate. Several researchers have found that in the case of intense marital conflict the mother, rather than the father, will try to protect the relationship (Raush, Barry, Hertel, and Swainn, 1974; Gottman, 1979). These outcomes suggest that in the case of marital discord, the mother rather than the father will give in and accommodate to the spouse's position. Consequently, we formulate the *conflict hypothesis*, stating that in the case of conflicts within the family the mother will adjust to the father, implying that the relative influence of her education on her child-rearing values will weaken. Conversely, no such adaptations are expected for fathers.

Without the addition of measures and of analyses that tap into these various possibilities, we may be left with no indication of the particular circumstances linked to particular patterns of influence. Diagonal reference modelling is particularly suited to test who is adjusting to whom with respect to a dependent variable. The logic of this design is that inferences about who is adjusting to whom are made on the basis of couples that are educationally homogamous. In other words, the child-rearing values of those married to a partner with the same education is taken as a reference. The theoretical advantage is that such values are not influenced by a spouse's dissimilar education. In addition, these models allow us to test under which conditions symmetric or asymmetric patterns of influence are weaker or stronger. This will be done by comparing different models representing each of our hypotheses. These hypotheses are summarized in Table 1.

Method

Data

To test our hypotheses we will draw data from the 'OGGIN-1990' survey, which covers a representative sample of Dutch families. In the second half of 1990, sample families were chosen through a multi-stage sampling procedure. First, a sample was drawn from all Dutch municipalities, weighted by regional zone and degree of urbanization. Next, a sample was drawn of children, aged between 9 and 16 years old, equally divided by gender, in the selected municipalities: 788 families with at least one child took part in this study on parenting and family function. Both two-parent and one-parent families participated. Parents and the child were approached individually by an interviewer. Part of the information was collected in a structured interview; the rest was gathered by means of questionnaires, which the interviewer left behind. Parents were asked to return the filled-in questionnaires in a self-stamped envelope. Their child was offered the prospect of a sum equivalent to approximately €10 if the parents returned the questionnaires; 679 families actually did (an 86 per cent response rate). Selective non-response could not be observed (for more detailed information see e.g. Gerris *et al.*, 1992: 7–15). Given our research questions only the data for the two-parent families can be used. This reduces the number of families to 612. Because 23 families have given incomplete information on the questions being used in the present study, the total number of families analysed is 589.

Variables

All the scales described in this section have a Likert format. Low scores refer to 'completely disagree', while high scores refer to 'completely agree'. We emphasize that all the scales have been developed for both parents separately. These scales have been validated in a separate study (Gerris *et al.*, 1993), which provides more detailed information. Table 2 gives a description of the sample.

The two dependent variables are the 11-item child-rearing value 'conformity to parental rules' scales. These scales measure the degree to which parents emphasize that their children have to adjust to

Table 2. *Description of the sample*

Variables	Range	N	Mothers			Fathers		
			Mean	SD	α	Mean	SD	α
Dependent variables								
Conformity to parental rules	1–7	589	4.36	0.92	0.80	4.32	0.93	0.82
Independent variables[a]								
Educational level	1–7	589	3.16	1.60	–	3.68	1.88	–
Covariates								
Mother's birth date	'36–'64	589	49.91	4.17	–			
Traditional role model	1–5	589	2.08	0.64	0.76	2.33	0.68	0.77
Mother's employment[b]	0–1	589	0.45	0.50				
Family conflict	1–7	589	2.39	0.94	0.70	2.30	0.87	0.66

[a] 45% of the husbands are better educated than their wives; 24% of the wives are better educated than their husbands; 31% of the couples are educationally homogamous.
[b] Of employed mothers (267), 23% are working 1–10 hours; 44% are working 11–20 hours; 18% are working 21–30 hours; 15% are working 31–40 hours a week.

their rules. Sample items of these scales are: 'My son/daughter should learn how to behave him/herself in interaction with his/her parents', and 'It is important that children obey'. On average, both Dutch parents slightly agree with statements tapping conformity to parental rules. The mean score for mothers is 4.36 (SD=0.92); and for fathers 4.32 (SD=0.93). The reliability of these scales is satisfactory for both mothers (α=0.80) and fathers (α=0.82).

The independent variables are highest education completed by the wife and her husband. Compared with the rather one-dimensional educational system in, for example, the USA, the Dutch schooling system is quite complex. In the Netherlands one can follow different tracks. One track leads to both higher vocational schooling and university, another to lower and intermediate vocational schooling, while transitions from one track to the other remain possible to a certain extent (for a detailed description of the Dutch schooling system, see De Graaf and Ganzeboom, 1993). Education is coded as: primary (1), lower vocational (2), intermediate secondary (3), intermediate vocational (4), higher secondary (5), higher vocational (6), and university (7). In our database 31 per cent of the couples are homogamous with respect to education; 45 per cent of the husbands are more highly educated than their wives; while 24 per cent of the wives are more highly educated than their husbands.

The covariates included in the analyses are mother's birth cohort (born in 1950 or before coded as 0, born in 1951 and after: 1);[2] the 6-item 'traditional role model' scales (scores below or equal to the mean were coded as 0, above the mean as 1); mother's employment (not in paid work coded as 0, in paid work coded as 1); and the 5-item 'conflictual family climate' scales (scores below or equal to the mean were coded as 0, above the mean as 1).

The 'traditional role model' scales measure the degree to which parents value a traditional division of roles and tasks between males and females in household, career, child-rearing, and education. Sample items are: 'It is most natural when the man is the breadwinner, and the woman runs the household and takes care of the children', and 'It is unnatural if women supervise men in a company'. On average, both parents disagree with these statements. The 'conflictual family climate' scales measure the degree to which parents report conflicts within the relationships between family members. Representative statements of these scales are: 'We quarrel a lot in our family', and 'Family members try to one-up or outdo each other'. Parents report low rates of family conflict. The reliabilities of the 'traditional role model' scales, and the 'conflictual family climate' scales (see Table 2) are acceptable. Additional information can be found in Gerris *et al*. (1993).

Diagonal Reference Models of Spousal Effects

In order to assess the relative effects of own and spouse's education we make use of diagonal reference models, introduced by Sobel (1981; 1985). Diagonal reference modelling is particularly suited to estimate spouse effects when marital partners are heterogamous with respect to an independent variable. Diagonal reference models have been used in various studies analysing spousal effects (De Graaf and Ganzeboom, 1990; De Graaf and Heath, 1992; Sorenson and Brownfield, 1991; Van Berkel, 1997) The basic argument behind these models is that within educationally homogamous couples, the educational level of one's spouse cannot have an additional effect on one's own child-rearing values. Most conveniently, this is the case by definition for educationally homogamous spouses. (This, of course, does not imply that educationally homogamous spouses might not influence each other on the basis of characteristics in which they differ, but that would be a subject for a sequential study.) As a consequence, the child-rearing values of homogamous parents could be considered as the reference for other, heterogamous couples. Within diagonal reference modelling, the child-rearing values of an educationally heterogamous parent (say with educational level 2, while the spouse's educational level is 4), are modelled as a function of the child-rearing values of homogamous parents with educational level 2, and the child-rearing values of homogamous parents with educational level 4. If the child-rearing values of this heterogamous parent resemble those of homogamous parents with educational level 2, own education has the largest effect. On the other hand, if this parent's child-rearing values come close to those of homogamous parents with educational level 4, spouse's education has the largest effect. Note that in the latter case it can be assumed that an adjustment of this parent's child-rearing values has taken place.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the diagonal models representing our hypotheses. Since the models are equivalent for fathers, we only give the models for mothers. The models for fathers are made up in similar fashion. The baseline Model A represents our male dominance hypothesis. Male

Model A: *Male dominance (baseline model)*

$$MCF_{ijk} = (w) \cdot (meduc_i) + (1-w) \cdot (feduc_j) + \Sigma B\, X_{ijkl} + e_{ijk}$$

Where:
i = level of education of mother (1–7)
j = level of education of father (1–7)
w = weight ($0 \leqslant w \leqslant 1$)
k = 1 through 589 (respondents)
l = number of co-variates
e = error term

Model B: *Status maximization*
If: mother's education < father's education
$w = 1-w$

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Model C: *Cohort*
$w = (p + p_{mcohort} \cdot mcohort)$

Model D: *Gender role*
$w = (p + p_{mrm} \cdot mrm)$

Model E: *Mother's employment*
$w = (p + p_{mempl} \cdot mempl)$

Model F: *Conflict*
$w = (p + p_{mfc} \cdot mfc)$

$\Sigma B\, X_{ijkl} = B1 \cdot mcohort + B2 \cdot mrm + B3 \cdot frm$
$\qquad\qquad + B4 \cdot mempl + B5m \cdot mfc$

....

Notes: MCF = mother's conformity to parental rules score; meduc = mother's educational level; feduc = father's educational level; mcohort = mother's birth cohort; mrm = mother's traditional role model score; frm = father's traditional role model score; mempl = mother's employment; mfc = mother's family conflict score.

Figure 1. *Model specifications (given for mothers only)*

dominance will be found if the weight-factor (w), referring to the relative effect of mother's education on her child-rearing value conformity is less than 0.5. In that particular case the relative effect of her spouse's education would outweigh a mother's education ($1-w$). Note that it is assumed that $0 \leqslant w \leqslant 1$. In order to test our subsequent hypotheses, interaction effects have been incorporated in baseline Model A.

Model B, representing the status maximalization hypothesis, contains a symmetrical heterogamy effect. This is done parsimoniously by inverting the weights (w) and ($1-w$) if the spouse has the highest education. Whereas Model A assumed that, independent of the level of the spouse's education, the effect of the mother's education always has to be weighted by (w), Model B assumes that this applies only if the mother's education is

higher than spouse's education. If the spouse's education is the higher one, Model B assumes that the effect of the spouse's education has to be weighted by (w).

Models C through F incorporate interaction effects on the weight-factor (w). For example, the conflict hypothesis expresses that within families marked by conflict, the mother gives in and accommodates to the father's values. This would imply that in cases of family conflict (mfc), the relative effect of mother's education on her child-rearing value conformity is weaker than in the case of the absence of family discord. The weight-factor ($w=p+p_{mfc}$ mfc) models this interaction effect (see Figure 1, Model F). In cases of family conflict (mfc=1), the weight-factor of mother's education would be: ($w=p+p_{mfc}$), whereas in cases without family conflict (mfc=0), the weight-factor of mother's education would be ($w=p$). By incorporating interaction terms in the Models C through F, these models are nested within the baseline Model A, and consume an additional degree of freedom, as compared to the baseline Model A.

For comparison of these nested models with the baseline model, the standard likelihood-ratio test is used (cf. Sobel, 1981; 1985). The nested model results in a significant improvement of the baseline model ($p < 0.05$) if the difference in the likelihood-ratio is at least 3.84 against one degree of freedom. By design,

for Model B the same number of parameters has to be estimated as in Model A. So Model B uses the same number of degrees of freedom as Model A. This implies that any improvement related to Model A will be considered as significant (cf. Hendrickx *et al.*, 1990).

The analyses were conducted by means of the SPSS Non Linear Regression (NLR) program (1990). Missing values were handled listwise. This resulted in valid scores on all the variables selected, for 589 fathers and the same number of mothers.

Results

Model Testing

The results of the tests of hypotheses are presented in Table 3 and the equations belonging to each hypothesis are presented in Figure 1. The male dominance hypothesis is represented by Model A; the status maximalization hypothesis, specifying the male dominance hypothesis, by Model B. The cohort, gender role, and mother's employment hypotheses are represented by Models C, D, and E, respectively. Finally, the conflict hypothesis is represented by Model F.

With seven parameters for the diagonal, one weight parameter w, and five parameters for the covariates, the baseline Model A uses 13 degrees of

Table 3. *Goodness-of-fit statistics for diagonal reference models predicting mother's and father's child-rearing value conformity to parental rules*

		Mothers		Fathers	
Model	**Description**	**D.F.**	**Diff. in −2L2**	**D.F.**	**Diff. in −2L^2**
A[a]	Male dominance	13	—	13	—
B	Status maximalization	13	0.26	13	9.92
C	Cohort	14	−0.18	14	0.85
D	Gender role	14	−2.26	14	0.92
E	Mother's employment	14	1.02	14	−0.43
F[b]	Conflict	14	−5.16*	14	0.69

[a] Model A is the preferred model for fathers.
[b] Model F is the preferred model for mothers.
Notes: Differences are calculated from Model A in each case.
      See Figure 1 for model specifications.
      Number of cases is 589 for mothers and for fathers.
      For Model A (mothers): $-2L^2=178.59$; for Model A (fathers): $-2L^2=218.74$
*$p < 0.05$

freedom. The general fit statistics for both mother's and father's models are presented in Table C. For fathers as well as for mothers Model B, representing the status maximalization hypothesis, is clearly less appropriate than Model A. Instead of a decrease in likelihood-ratio we find an increase, for both mothers and fathers (cf. Table 3, diff. in $-2L^2$). These results imply that a status-maximizing interpretation is not justified by the data. Next, Models C through E incorporate interaction terms to model cohort effects, mother's employment, and the gender role orientations of both parents (see Figure 1). We find no indications for the validity of these hypotheses. Models C and D show an increase in model fit for mothers, as compared to Model A, but the improvement is not significant (see Table 3, diff. in $-2L^2$). These results imply that we still prefer Model A. The employment hypothesis, is rejected too, as indicated by an increase of the likelihood-ratio for mothers, and a non-significant decrease for fathers. Only Model F, referring to the 'conflict' hypothesis, gives a significant improvement on Model A, for wives only ($-2L^2$ decreases 5.16 against 1 D.F., p < 0.05). Model F (explained variance is 16 per cent) seems to be the best fitting model for mothers; for fathers, Model A (explained variance is 21 per cent) is preferred, although in line with previous studies, the explained variance is quite small.

Comparing the Relative Effects of Spouses' Education

The parameter estimates of the baseline Model A and the best-fitting model (Model F for mothers) can be found in Table 4. The weight-factors (w) and ($1-w$) of Model A for mothers (see Table 4, Panel I) indicate that the relative effect of mother's education (w) on her conformity scores is only 0.42, while the relative effect of her husband's education is 0.58 ($1-w$). So, it appears that within heterogamous couples mothers bridge the distance between their values and their partner's about halfway. This bridging certainly does not occur in the other direction (Table 4, Model A for fathers). The relative effect of the father's education (w) on his conformity orientation is 0.99, while the relative effect of the mother's education ($1-w$) on her husband's conformity scores is only 0.01, which is negligible.[3]

These results point quite clearly to male dominance, yet we would like to emphasize that status interpretations cannot account for these outcomes. The rejection of Model B implies that within heterogamous couples the effects of education for those with the higher level education do not differ significantly from those with the lower level of education.

Table 3 has shown that for mothers Model F resulted in a better fit than our baseline Model A. The outcomes of our analyses revealed that the weight-factor for mother's education (p)=0.74 (p < 0.01), while the interaction term for family conflict $p_{mfc}=-0.71$ (p < 05). As can be observed in Table 4, Model F, these outcomes imply that in the case that mothers report fewer than average conflicts within the family (mfc=0), the effect of the mother's education on her conformity scores is $w=p+p_{mfc}$ mfc=0.74+(−0.71) 0=0.74 (see Figure 1). The relative effect of her husband's education on her conformity scores is 1−0.74=0.26. However, if the mothers report more than an average level of conflict within the family (mfc=1), the relative effect of her education is reduced to 0.03 ($w=p+p_{mfc}$ mfc=0.74+(−0.71) 1), which is negligible. This means that in a conflictual family setting the wife's conformity score is completely accounted for by her husband's education. The relative effect of husband's educational level on his wife's conformity scores is 0.97 (1−0.03). The effect of husband's education on his conformity score is not affected by the degree of family discord, since Model F did not result in an improvement for husbands. So, only in families which are not characterized as conflictual is the effect of the wife's education on her child-rearing value conformity rather substantial, albeit not of the same magnitude as that of her husband. In this particular case, we find 'independence' between spouses with respect to their conformity scores. In conflictual family settings, however, it is exclusively the father's education which has a predominant effect on both his own and his wife's scores.

As already indicated, accommodating to the husband's position does not necessarily imply that at the family level wives adjust to their spouse's values. However, given the huge effect of the father's education on both his own and his wife's conformity scores in discordant families, it might be hypothesized that accommodation to the husband's position

Table 4. *Parameters of diagonal reference models presented in Table 3 (standard errors in parentheses)*

	Mothers		Fathers
	Model A	Model F	Model A
Panel I: Weight-factors of:			
Own education (w)	0.42**	–	0.99**
	(0.14)		(0.15)
Spouse's education ($1-w$)	0.58**	–	0.01
	(0.15)		(0.15)
When mother reports < average conflict:			
– Mother's education (w)	–	0.74**	–
		(0.20)	
– Father's education ($1-w$)			
When mother reports > average conflict:			
– Mother's education ($w=p+p_{mfc}$):	–	0.03	–
		(0.31)	
– Father's education ($w=1-p-p_{mfc}$)	–	0.97**	–
		(0.31)	
Panel II: Mean scores on conformity of educational homogamous spouses (intercepts)			
Primary school	4.95**	4.82**	4.99**
	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.14)
Lower vocational school	4.86**	4.88**	4.95**
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Intermediate secondary school	4.86**	4.84**	4.86**
	(0.13)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Intermediate vocational school	4.72**	4.75**	4.44**
	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.12)
Higher secondary school	4.44**	4.42**	4.55**
	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.15)
Higher vocational school	4.19**	4.18**	4.22**
	(0.17)	(0.16)	(0.14)
University	4.43**	4.41**	4.19**
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.14)
Panel III: Covariates (unstandardized Bs)			
Mother born in 1951 or after	0.06	0.06	0.05
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Mother's traditional role model	0.32**	0.32**	0.08
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Father's traditional role model	0.25**	0.26**	0.44**
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.07)
Mother is employed	−0.06	−0.08	−0.15*
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Mother reports family conflict	−0.06	−0.02	–
	(0.07)	(0.07)	
Father reports family conflict	–	–	−0.00
			(0.07)

Notes: see Figure 1 for model specifications.
p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.

implies deference to the husband's viewpoints, a deference which will not be observed in the absence of family conflict. We have tested this hypothesis by comparing the absolute difference between both spouses' values in a conflictual family setting (mean=0.75, SD=0.67) with the absolute difference between spouses' values in case of absence of family discord (mean=0.84, SD=0.62). A t-test reveals a significant difference between the two groups (t(306, 283)=−1.81, p<0.05) in the predicted direction. Seemingly, in discordant families, there is an increased probability that accommodation to the husband's position is accompanied by deference to the husband's point of view.

The seven diagonal reference intercepts (see Panel II, Table 4) represent levels of conformity of educationally homogamous parents with primary schooling to university education after controlling for the covariates. It shows that parents with the lower educational qualifications place the highest value on conformity. More highly educated parents value conformity as a child-rearing value less than less highly educated parents do, though the trend is non-linear. Mothers with a university degree appear to value their children's conformity more than mothers with higher vocational schooling. Such a reversed trend cannot be observed for the fathers. On average, the scores on conformity to parental rules of fathers with a university degree do not differ significantly for the scores of their equally educated wives (though the trend is in the direction of mothers' scores being higher than the fathers' scores).

Additionally, we found significant independent effects of gender role orientations (see Table 4, Panel III). We would like to emphasize, however, that in the present study gender role orientations have been used as covariates rather than as causal factors because the causal chain between them is by no means clear. It is nevertheless of interest that the effects of gender role orientation were not of the same magnitude for fathers and mothers. The degree to which men value children's conformity to parental rules was substantially related to their own traditional gender role orientation, while a significant effect of their wife's gender role orientation was absent. On the other hand, the degree to which women valued conformity was affected by their own as well as their spouse's gender role orientation. These effects were almost equal in strength. Again, the results point to an asymmetry between husbands and wives, which suggests the dominance of males. No significant independent effects of mother's birth cohort, and conflictual family climate were found. We did, however, find a significant effect of mother's employment. Within dual-earner couples, fathers – not mothers – value conformity to parental rules to a lesser degree than do fathers within traditional single-earner couples.

Discussion

The primary goal of this article was to gain insight into the mutual effects of spouses' education on the parental child-rearing value conformity to parental rules. Although such mutual influences seem rather self evident, empirical studies are quite rare. We hypothesized that for this value the effect of the husband's education would outweigh the effect of the education of his wife, implying that wives adjust more to their husband than the other way around. We have tried to explain this male dominance using status or resource theory, but we could not find any support for these interpretations.

The rejection of the status maximalization hypothesis implies that equal educational opportunities for both sexes will not automatically lead to more equal balanced power relationships between husband and wife. Our analyses reveal that even when a wife is in an advanced educational position as compared to her husband, this does not lead to an increasing impact on her own as well as her husband's conformity scores. Gender-based expectations of a future partner (Ganong and Coleman, 1992; Spade and Reese, 1991) might have set the stage for such asymmetric power relationships. However, the relatively low rate of female labour participation in the Netherlands could be responsible for the existence of male dominance as well. Though female labour participation is rapidly increasing, a majority of Dutch employed mothers work 24 hours a week at most (Niphuis-Nell, 1997). As a result their employment would have only a minor effect on their power base within the family. Against this possibility, however, we can set the fact that Dutch husbands spend around six hours a week

more on the combination of paid work, household chores, and childcare than their wives do. This holds for dual-earner, one-and-a-half-earner, as well as single-earner couples (Niphuis-Nell, 1997). These are unexpected findings given that, for example, in Russia and the United States, where female labour participation always has been much higher, employed wives still spend more time on the combination of tasks outside and inside their homes than husbands (Becker, 1991; Hochschild, 1989). These observations cast at least some doubt on the widely accepted assumption that female employment has a substantive effect on the balance of power between husbands and wives, and they may help explain why we were not able to find support for the mother's employment hypothesis. It has to be kept in mind, however, that the mother's employment hypothesis, utilized in the present study, basically tests whether differences occur between mothers with and without their own income. Therefore, we were not able to test in greater detail whether income differences between spouses are responsible for the existence of male-dominance. This is a potential weakness of the present study.

It might be argued that the term male dominance overstates the case. It might be pointed out, for instance, that for the wife's conformity scores, the relative effect of her own education balances the effect of the education of her husband. There are, however, clear indications for the existence of male dominance with regard to the husbands' scores on conformity. In addition, the outcomes of the conflict hypothesis were particularly illustrative in this respect. Only in the case of the absence of marital discord does the magnitude of the effect of the wife's education on her conformity scores come close to the strength of the effect of the husband's education on his conformity values, a result Spade (1991) has found for dual-earner couples. In the case of a conflictual family setting, the impact of the wife's education on her own child-rearing values is virtually absent. Family discord, however, does not affect the impact of the husband's education on his conformity scores. Conflict or not, his education prevails massively. A third indicator of male dominance is the finding that for mothers, both their own as well their partner's gender-role beliefs have significant independent effects on their child-rearing

orientations, while for fathers only their own gender role beliefs – not their wives' – have an effect on their rearing values.

We would like to emphasize that we have restricted ourselves to analyses of the mutual effects of spouses' education on their child-rearing values. Nothing has been said about their actual child-rearing practices. Possibly, women dominate their spouses with regard to practices. Huls (1984), for instance, has found that within conversations between husband and wife, the wife appears to be dominant. If child-rearing values precede child-rearing behaviour, however, this practical female dominance would only operate within the limits of male dominance. Future research could clarify this issue.

We would like to make two final remarks. First, some may regard the outcomes of our analyses as the result of partner selection before marriage (Tynes, 1990; Sutton, 1993). Mate selection, however, cannot tell the whole story. Although people are inclined to choose a partner who is similar in some characteristics, and dissimilar in others (Ganong and Coleman, 1992), this can hardly be the whole explanation for male dominance with regard to the value placed on conformity. People tend to select a partner based on many criteria. However, assuming that there are countless criteria for mate selection, it seems rather unlikely that researchers may yet find some kind of systematic link between partners' education and their ideas about raising children (cf. Van Berkel *et al.*, 1995). Even in the hypothetical case that partners do choose each other on the basis of their child-rearing values, this would still mean that something like male dominance actually exists.

Secondly, it has to be stressed that education is not the single determinant of parental child-rearing values. Personality characteristics and the childhood experiences of parents are also considered to be important factors (e.g. Belsky, 1984). It remains an open question as to whether a male dominance pattern is to be found with regard to other values. Furthermore, another interesting related field of research might be the study of the effects of educational heterogamy on spouses' child-rearing behaviour.

What is clear, however, is the need for future exploration of mutual influences, building on the

availability of methods of analysis that make it possible to determine the presence of a various patterns of influence.

Notes

1. In addition to spouses' employment one might like to consider income differences between spouses, because resource theory would predict that money yields power within the family. The study conducted by Spade (1991), however, using data for American dual-earner couples, reported no significant effects of spouse's income on the child-rearing value conformity to external authority. Unfortunately, the database used in the present study only contains information about family income. Therefore, an 'income difference' hypothesis cannot be tested directly, although the 'spouses' employment' hypothesis might serve as an approximation.

2. The year 1950 was primarily chosen for numerical reasons. It proved that alternative divisions of age did not alter the outcomes presented here.

3. As suggested by an anonymous *ESR* reviewer, the weight factor w is not necessarily a constant and might vary in strength depending on mother's educational level or on father's educational level. This suggestion, however, was not supported by the data (as compared to the baseline model the difference in fit amounts to $(-2L^2=) -4.34$ against 6 df. for the mother's scores, and the difference in fit amounts to $(-2L^2=) 3.78$ against 6 df. for father's scores).

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