

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusion

6

This chapter contains responses and conclusions with respect to the research questions formulated in Chapter 1. Each of the five research questions are discussed in chronological order.

Parental socio-economic status and adolescent preferences

The first research question, as stated in the introduction, is: *How does the cultural and economic status of parents' influence their adolescent child's future plans and preferences?* In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 a division based on the socio-economic status of parents is presented after Bourdieu (1986[1979]). The general idea is that adolescents' preferences about key decisions in young adulthood are influenced by both the economic and the cultural status of their parents, because I expect that parents' financial and cultural resources and their economic and cultural value orientations are important in shaping their children's preferences for the future. The cultural status of parents is measured as the level of education of both parents, while their economic status is measured as family income corrected for family size.

The second chapter contains an examination of the effects of parental status on adolescents' preferences in two domains, the professional *and* the family domain. Adolescents' preferences in the professional domain are studied as preferences for a range of occupations. I examine how parental status influences children's preferred occupation with respect to the cultural and economic dimensions of these occupations. Occupations have a cultural and economic status (Ganzeboom et al., 1987). Generally, cultural and economic statuses are strongly positively correlated, meaning that occupations generally have both a high cultural *and* high economic status, or they have neither. For example, both the cultural and economic status of brain surgeons is high, while refuse collectors have a low economic and a low cultural status. Examples of 'skewed occupations' are e.g., teachers and poets, which are occupations with high cultural but moderate or low economic status, and entrepreneurs and traders, which are occupation with low/medium cultural and high economic status

Results from Chapter 2 show that the cultural and economic statuses of both parents affect preferences in the professional domain. For both sexes, adolescents with parents who have a higher cultural status are more likely to prefer occupations with a strong cultural dimension, while adolescents with parents with a higher economic status are more likely to prefer occupations with a strong economic dimension. However, the cultural status of parents seems to exert a somewhat stronger influence than their economic status does. In addition, for boys the economic dimension of preferred occupations is not just related to the economic status, but also to the cultural status of their parents. This main result corroborates previous sociological research (Davis-Kean, 2005), which suggests that parental

cultural status is more influential in relation to youth outcomes than economic status. Furthermore, the finding that parental cultural status mainly influences children's preferences about the cultural dimension of a job, and that parental economic status mainly influences preferences about the economic dimension, are congruent with Bourdieu's work (1986[1979]).

Additional research in the domain of adolescent professional preferences is considered in Chapter 3, where the effects of parental cultural and economic status on preferred fields of study are examined. The main objective is to understand how preferred fields of study in tertiary education are influenced by parental status. I ranked fields of study according to the extent to which they can be viewed to generate extrinsic or intrinsic rewards. By extrinsic, I mean that a field of study is mainly chosen on the basis of its outcome, or to be more precise, whether a field of study leads to highly paid and secure job. A field of study in this sense is a means to an end. By intrinsic, I mean instead that a field of study is mainly chosen on the basis of considerations of interest, 'taste', and personal growth. A field of study is in this sense an end in itself. Obviously, fields of study are not purely intrinsically or extrinsically rewarding, but are usually a mixture of the two, but certain fields of study tend more to one type than the other, which may possibly be explained by parental status. I argue that having parents with high economic status leads adolescents to opt for fields of study that are more extrinsically rewarding, while having parents with high cultural status leads them to opt for more intrinsically rewarding fields of study. The effects of parental status on the intrinsically and extrinsically rewarding fields of study were analysed in two ways. First, I analysed the effects of cultural and economic status of parents on an intrinsic/extrinsic reward scale for fields of study. The constructed scale ranges from subjects that are mostly intrinsically rewarding (i.e., art, history) to those that are mostly extrinsically rewarding (i.e., economics, law). Second, I studied the effects of parental cultural and economic status on preferences regarding 13 specific fields of study.

The results described in Chapter 3 show that a higher cultural status of their parents is more likely to lead children to prefer more intrinsically rewarding fields of study, whereas a higher parental economic status leads them to prefer more extrinsically rewarding fields of study. And again, as in Chapter 2, the cultural status of parents seems generally to be more influential than their economic status. Nonetheless, parental economic status also affects field-of-study preferences. For instance, the higher the economic status of the parents, the less likely the adolescent child is to opt for an education in the field of teaching. More gender-specific results are that those girls who opted for more extrinsically rewarding fields, such as law and economics, are not only influenced by their parents' economics status,

but also inversely by their parents' cultural status. Thus, girls with parents with a high cultural status are less likely to opt for law and economics. This suggests that having parents with a high cultural status not only lead their children to prefer intrinsically rewarding fields of study, but can also stimulate adolescents to refrain from choosing more extrinsically rewarding fields.

Family-life preferences were studied in Chapter 2 as well. Preferences regarding the importance and timing of family formation were examined by asking the adolescent about the importance and expected timing of four transitions of family formation (unmarried cohabitation, marriage, having children, and buying a house). Also in Chapter 4, the effect of parental status was studied in relation to family life preferences, by focusing on preferences for the timing of family life. Both chapters considered the question: how are parental cultural and economic status related to timing preferences for family formation? In comparison with Chapter 2, in Chapter 4 more parental characteristics are taken into consideration. In Chapter 2, only the parental cultural and economic status and parental attitudes on importance and preferred age of family formation were taken into account, whereas in Chapter 4, parental religiousness, marital status, number of children, and the parents' timing of their own family transitions were all included in the analysis.

Results in Chapter 2 show that the higher the cultural status of the parents, the later adolescents expect family formation to take place. No effects of parental economic status are found, although some gender differences are observed. For girls, both the timing and importance of family formation are related to their parents' cultural status, while for boys only the timing of family formation is associated with parental cultural status. The results in Chapter 4, based on a more extensive analysis of the timing of family formation, suggest that the effects of parental cultural status are weaker when other parental background factors are taken into account. The absence of direct effects of parental status is probably due to the fact that in this analysis I added other parental characteristics about family formation behavior, which are correlated with parental cultural and economic status. Because Chapter 4 is concerned with the importance of the transmission of parental values and parents as role models for adolescent preferences, only the direct effects, rather than the total effects of parental cultural and economic status, were measured.

The most important general conclusion to be drawn is that parental cultural status has a pervasive influence on different aspects of adolescents' future life plans. In the professional domain, the main contribution is that parental cultural status partly explains horizontal stratification in preferences and expectations concerning future fields of study and types of jobs. A large body of literature has

already shown that parents with higher socio-economic status have children who perform better in the educational system, leading to higher levels of education and higher-status jobs (Sewell et al., 1969; Sewell and Hauser, 1975; Parker et al., 2016). My research shows that having parents with high cultural status leads to a stronger preference for jobs with a high cultural dimension and to a preference for more intrinsically rewarding fields of study. This suggests that parental cultural status reproduces itself to a considerable extent via children's educational and work preferences. The same pattern is found in relation to parental economic status, but to a lesser extent. Along the lines of Bourdieu's social status division, both parental cultural and economic status influence adolescent preferences in the professional life domain. Furthermore, parental status is in most research related to their offspring's vertical stratification, meaning that a higher parental socio-economic status (SES) leads to higher academic achievement and more job opportunities (Booth and Dunn, 2013). My research shows that horizontal stratification in preferences for fields of study and types of jobs are influenced by parental status as well.

With regard to expectations about the timing of family formation, my results show that these are associated with parents' cultural status, but not with their economic status. Higher parental cultural status leads to an expectation of later family formation. A possible explanation is that enrolment in education and the start of a job usually do not mix very well with family formation (Blossfeld and Huinink, 1991). For that reason, adolescents may first wish to finish education and settle in a job before they enter marriage and have children. Another possible explanation could be that parents with different cultural statuses may raise their children with different sets of values, which may influence the timing of family formation. This is in line with the results of Chapter 4, where parental family life characteristics, such as family size and religiousness, were found to influence adolescent timing preferences of family formation via parental attitudes. At the same time we found evidence that, in line with Bourdieu's idea of reproduction, the effects of cultural status on preferences regarding the timing of family formation are strongly transmitted via the educational system.

Mechanisms of parental influence

The second research question in this dissertation is: *Through which mechanisms do parents influence their adolescent child's preferences?* This is answered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

The second research question is concerned with mechanisms by which parents influence adolescent preferences. Via which behaviors, attitudes, and values do parents influence their adolescent offspring? In Chapter 2, two possible pathways,

the adolescents' level of education and specific parental attitudes, are assessed in terms of the effect of parental status on adolescent preferences. In Chapter 3, the role of child-rearing values as a transmission channel of parental status is studied. In Chapter 4, the role of actual parental behavior (modeling) and parental attitudes are proposed as mechanisms of parental influence.

In Chapter 2, parental attitudes were measured by asking parents about their preferences regarding future outcomes for their child in the professional and family domain. The general question is to what extent parents' and children's preferences are aligned. The other mechanism that is analysed is transmission via the educational system. In line with Bourdieu's view, part of the parental status transmission is expected to occur via the educational system.

Results from Chapter 2 show that adolescents' preferences in the professional domain are related to the attitudes of their parents and to their own position in the educational system. However, generally adolescents' current level of education is more important than parental preferences in explaining adolescents' preferences in the professional domain. In addition, the effects of parents' cultural status on preferences in the professional domain are almost fully transmitted via education and parental preferences, while for parental economic status I found almost no transmission effects. Some gender differences are observed as well. The effect of parental cultural status on the professional preferences of boys is transmitted via the educational system and via parental preferences, while for girls it is only transmitted via the educational system. This suggests that boys are more susceptible to their parents' ideas concerning their educational and occupational future career than girls are. In particular, more traditionally minded parents might emphasize the importance of the man as the breadwinner in the family, and thus try to influence their sons' future employment choices.

Chapter 2 also shows that parental attitudes and the adolescents' position in the educational system influence adolescents' family-life preferences as well. I also found evidence for mediation: higher parental cultural status leads to higher levels of education and this, in turn, leads to a preference for a later start of family life. For girls, the effect of cultural status on timing preferences is also transmitted via parental preferences. The effects of cultural status on the importance of family life are only weakly transmitted for girls, while for boys I found no effects at all. Although for both boys and girls the importance of family life is to some extent aligned with their parents' preferences, this is not due to parental cultural status. To conclude, the level of education is an important mechanism when it comes to the timing of family life, with higher levels being associated with a later start. The level of education also transmits parental cultural status. Another mechanism of importance relates to parental preferences in the family life domain; these

preferences are related to the preferences of adolescents themselves about the timing and importance of family life.

In Chapter 3, the role of child-rearing values was studied, by asking parents a set of questions on child-rearing. The questions were divided into two generic categories reflecting child-rearing values, namely conformity and self-direction. According to Kohn (1963), lower-status parents emphasize conformity, whereas high-status parents tend to emphasize self-direction. I am interested to know whether these parenting values influence adolescents' field-of-study preferences, and whether they also transmit parental status effects to field-of-study preferences. In line with Kohn (1963), my results show that the cultural status of parents is related to their child-rearing values; parents with higher cultural status value conformity less and self-direction more when parenting. These parenting values have different consequences for the field-of-study preferences of sons and daughters. Sons of parents who stress conformity have a stronger preference for fields of study such as law, the police, and the military, with good financial prospects and a strong hierarchy. Daughters of parents who stress conformity have a stronger preference for stereotypical female fields, such as social care or teaching. Conversely, daughters of parents who stress self-direction have a preference for less stereotypically female fields of study, such as maths, transport, or law. Although parenting values influence the field-of-study preferences of adolescents, they do not mediate the relationship between field-of-study preferences and parental status. Thus, these parenting values are probably related more to other parental characteristics, such as religiousness for example, than to parental status. In Chapter 4, just as in Chapter 2, the role of educational attainment and parental attitudes as mechanisms of parental influence on children's preferences are investigated. More specifically, I examined to what extent parents as 'role model' and parents as 'value/attitude transmitters' influence their adolescent child's family-life preferences. The actual timing of family formation was measured by asking one of the parents what age they were when they left home, started to cohabit, got married, and had children. Are children modelling their family-life preferences based on the example set by their parents?

In line with the results in Chapter 2, the educational system and parental attitudes were both found to be important mechanisms influencing adolescents' preferences. More surprisingly, the actual timing of parents' own family formation events also influences the timing preferences of their children, irrespective of parental attitudes. It is possible that parents do not see their own behavior as an example for their children, they rather take their children's situations into account in formulating preferences regarding the timing of family formation. At the same time adolescents seem to view their parents' timing behavior as an example.

The age at which the parents married and had children relates directly to their child's preferences. In sum, we found evidence for the importance of a number of mechanisms by which parents influence their adolescent children's future life plans. First, intergenerational transmission of educational opportunities is important, in that the current level of education of adolescents strongly influences their future life plans, and the level of education itself depends strongly on parental socio-economic status. Second, active parental value socialization is important, given that parents' preferences for their children's future and their general parenting values influence their children's future life preferences. Finally, modeling is relevant, in that children's preferences regarding the timing of family life to some extent mirror their parents' experiences in this regard. These results show that parents influence their children's future life plans in a myriad of ways.

Parental influence on adolescent life domain preferences

Here, I jointly discuss conclusions to the third, fourth and fifth research questions, given that these three questions are so closely linked. These last three research questions were respectively, "How do parents influence their adolescent child's professional life preferences?" (3), "How do parents influence their adolescent child's family-life preferences?" (4), and "Does the parental influence on adolescent professional-life preferences differ from the influence on family-life preferences? And how are adolescent professional-life and family-life preferences related? (5)"

From Chapters 2 and 3, we learn that parental status explains both vertical and horizontal stratification in relation to preferences in the professional domain. The higher the cultural status of the parents, the more their children prefer occupations that provide high cultural status, and the higher the economic status of the parents, the more their children prefer occupations that provide high economic status. In addition, parental status also explains horizontal stratification in preferences for tertiary education, with higher parental cultural status associated with a preference for more intrinsically rewarding fields of study, and higher parental economic status associated with a preference for more extrinsically rewarding fields of study.

I also examined which mechanisms mediate the effect of parental status on preferences in the professional domain. Next to intergenerational transmission of educational attainment, I explored parents' own preferences regarding their children's plans and their parenting values. In the case of occupational preferences, parents seem to influence their sons' occupational preferences not only via the educational system, but also via their attitudes, whereas their effect on daughters was only mediated by the educational system.

The results of the analyses in Chapter 2 show that the cultural status of parents affects their children's preferences on the timing of family formation, and their daughters' (but not their sons') preferences regarding the importance of family life as well. The higher the cultural status of parents, the more their children prefer a later start for family formation, and the less importance they attach to family formation in general. In addition, the effect of cultural status on adolescents' preferences regarding the timing of family formation is mediated by both educational attainment and parental preferences among girls, while for boys the preferred timing is only affected via the educational system. Contrary to the findings in the professional domain, girls seem to be more susceptible to their parents' ideas concerning their future family life, while boys are more susceptible to their parents' educational and occupational career plans. Additionally, my results also show that the actual timing of parental behavior relates to adolescent timing preferences. Regarding the importance of family formation, it is interesting to note how the importance that parents attach to family formation influences the importance attached by adolescents to it. The values and attitudes of parents and children on the importance of family formation seem to be aligned and suggest a degree of socialization outside the educational system.

The similarities and differences between the influence of parental status on professional- and family-life preferences relate to the sort of parental characteristics considered and the pathways through which the influences occur. Adolescents' educational and career preferences are mainly associated with parental cultural status and to a lesser extent with parental economic status. These parental cultural status effects are mainly transmitted via the educational system. This suggests that higher parental cultural status leads to higher levels of education among their children, and this in turn leads to stronger preferences for cultural occupations such as teacher or musician. At the same time higher parental economic status is connected with more financially beneficial occupations such as entrepreneur or lawyer. The same types of effects are observed for preferences concerning the timing of family life, because the effects of the cultural status of parents is related to a preference for the later timing of family transitions, with the effect of cultural status being transmitted via the educational system. I also find strong evidence that preferences in the family domain are influenced by parental attitudes (socialization) and parental behaviors (modeling). These family characteristics seem at least as important as the adolescents' own level of education in influencing family life preferences.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the relationship between professional and family-life preferences. Attention is paid to both fertility preferences and

preferences concerning future fields of study and types of occupation. Choices related to fields of study are thought to determine future labor market options and opportunities to combine employment and family life. I assume that (female) adolescents with strong family orientations sort themselves into educational fields that emphasize caring for individuals and the use of interpersonal skills. Adolescents' fertility preferences concerning timing (when to have children) and quantum (how many children to have), and their preferences with regard to their future field of study, were taken into account. The results show that girls with preferences for communicative fields (teaching and caring studies/occupations) and boys with preferences for economic fields are less likely to prefer to remain childless, while boys who prefer cultural fields (humanities and social studies) are more likely to prefer to remain childless. The timing of fertility is mostly associated with the level of education of the adolescent, and only weak effects are found for adolescents who opt for cultural fields of study. When it comes to the number of children adolescents might prefer in the future, the results show that girls who prefer communicative occupations (and fields) want more children, while boys who prefer more manual occupations expect to have more children as well. Therefore, my research shows that girls who are more family-oriented also self-select into fields of study, like communication and social care, that offer good prospects for combining work and family. The results for boys instead suggest a progressive vs. traditional pattern. More 'progressive boys', who opt for cultural fields of study prefer more often tend to remain childless or to have children relatively late in life, while 'traditional boys', who prefer economic fields, are less likely to prefer to remain childless, hinting at a breadwinner motive. Also 'traditional boys' who prefer manual jobs that require little education, for instance in technical fields, prefer more children. The most important conclusion is therefore that preferences in the professional domain and in the family domain are already inter-related during adolescence, not just in terms of timing, but also with respect to childlessness and preferred family size. This suggests that as well as there being a causal effect of working in a specific field on fertility behavior, there is also some self-selection in terms of preferences in both domains which are mutually influential, and this also explains part of the correlation between fertility and employment choices.

Gender

Clearly, male and female adolescents differ in terms of their preferences for fields of study, occupations and the timing of family life. For example, on average girls prefer certain technical fields of study and occupations less than boys, while girls tend to prefer their family life transitions a little earlier than boys do. Although

the content of the preferences may vary according to the gender of the adolescent, the influence of parents on these preferences seems the same. For both boys and girls, parental cultural status is the most important factor influencing adolescents' preferences. In addition, the same mechanisms of parental influence seem to be important for both sexes. The level of education is for both sexes an important mechanism in explaining adolescent preferences. The role of parents' attitudes, however, seems to differ between the sexes. Parental attitudes seem to be a more important factor of influence with regard to the professional domain for boys, while for girls, they seem to exert a stronger influence on the family domain. To be more precise, the economic status of parents particularly influences boys' preferred occupations and fields of study, whereas girls' preferences for fertility timing and quantum are influenced by parental attitudes. This seems to suggest that parental socialization is gendered. Because boys are more actively socialized in the professional domain and girls more so in the family-life domain, it appears that parents prioritize the two life domains differently for boys and girls. This pattern hints at more traditional gender roles for boys and girls, with boys being socialized as breadwinners more than girls, and girls being socialized more than boys as home-makers. The inter-relationships between the preferences in the professional and family-life domains are observed for both sexes, but these preferences seem to be more intertwined for girls than for boys. Even when adolescents, girls take the inter-relationship between professional and family-life preferences much more into account than boys do.

Practical implications

Because one of the most important conclusions contained in this dissertation is that parental cultural status and the current level of education exert a strong influence on adolescents' preferences, my study emphasizes the fact that both parents and school are important socializing agents for adolescents. In the Netherlands, policy makers work not only on the repression of negative outcomes relating to youth and social inequality, but also on prevention. Recently, the Dutch Minister of Education made 87 million Euros available (Leijten, 30 oktober 2016) to tackle the inequality between students from low- and high-educated parental backgrounds. Dozens of national and municipal programs have been initiated, ranging from job-interview training to health and sports programs. The outcomes of my research provide policy makers with the following insights. One of the conclusions of this dissertation is that adolescent preferences and expectations are socially stratified, which could lead to social inequality. The level of parental cultural status in particular influences adolescent preferences in the professional domain. Thus, if we take into account adolescents' level of education, children of

better-educated parents have higher job ambitions. One possible explanation for the difference in preferences could be that children of parents with low cultural status do not have a full or sufficiently detailed view of what is involved in specific fields of study or occupations. One of the solutions to this problem already exists to some extent; within schools there are programs where successful role models talk to adolescents about their work and career. These talks and presentations are intended to be motivational and serve as inspiration for young people. Most programmes of this type tend to focus on athletic or economic success. My research shows that they could also refer to more culturally oriented jobs, allowing adolescents to be presented with a broader array of possible job opportunities. My suggestion would be to invite people from more cultural professions such as poets, musicians and professors, besides CEO's and soccer players. Aside from trying to create more consciousness of the content of future job opportunities, I say let these role models talk about their career paths. Another outcome of my research is that the level of education already attained influences preferences strongly, therefore adolescents need to hear from role models that their entry level in junior high school at age 12 does not have to determine their future prospects completely.

Besides social inequality among adolescents, the dissertation also reflects on gender inequality. A conclusion within the dissertation is that family- and professional-life preferences are already related in adolescents, especially for girls. Because females now work much more than they used to and work longer hours, while men play more of a role in running the household (SCP, 2016), work-life balance should be more prominently discussed within school. The Dutch government is trying to tackle gender inequality by supporting females in their careers to attain the highest possible levels within the corporate and public sector. The focus is especially on supporting and promoting females in male-dominated sectors and occupations. On the basis of my results, besides fully agreeing on the fact that women should be supported in their careers to achieve the highest levels, I argue that adolescents should be guided much more and educated much better on work-life balance. While few men and even fewer women become CEOs of multinational companies, we must all learn to deal better with the modern-day work-life balance. Programs or subjects of study within school should address this issue much more.

One of the mechanisms in relation to adolescents' preferences is parenting, and my results show that parenting values are stratified. The observed parenting value of conformity was more related to lower social status, while self-direction was more related to parents with higher social status. Parenting values also seem to indicate that more conformity in parenting affects field-of-study preferences

in a traditionally gendered way; females opt for caring fields, while males opt for economic and technical fields. Relating these outcomes to social inequality, nowadays self-direction is seen within (tertiary) education and within the labor market as an increasingly more valued trait than conformity (Schwartz, 2013). Because of this, adolescents with higher-status parents have an advantage with respect to being more self-directed, because they are more likely to be raised in this fashion. On the basis of these results, I suggest that children (of lower social-status parents) should be trained in self-direction to cultivate a much more level playing field. How parents raise their children is clearly a private issue, but parenting affects educational and occupational outcomes (Steinberg et al., 1992). Therefore, instilling self-direction in young people via exercises or alternative work forms in junior high school might reduce this value/trait inequality among adolescents.

The three policy-related arguments discussed above, (1) creating more consciousness among adolescents on the content of a wider range of job opportunities, (2) focusing more on work-life balance, and (3) steering adolescents more towards self-direction, all have to do with planning for the future in adolescence. Research has already shown that planning is essential for future life (Giddens, 1991), and that planning for the future is socially stratified (Anderson et al., 2005). The paradox is that in an increasingly rapidly changing world, planning is ever more important. This is not because future plans are necessarily followed, but rather because it at least identifies personal goals, gives direction, reveals problems, and provides perspective, all of which are very important characteristics to establish in adolescents. On the basis of my results, I argue that within Dutch high schools adolescent future planning in general should have a much more prominent role. The three arguments made above relate to specific directions of future planning, but the general process of learning how to plan for the future can be beneficial for the rest of adolescents' lives.

Recommendations for future research

Finally, I would like to make several recommendations for future research. First, as has been mentioned in previous chapters, in this study I assumed that parents influence their children's preferences. In reality, this influence is bidirectional. However, previous research has shown that the influence of parents on children is usually stronger than the other way around (Roest, 2009). Panel research, in which both parents and children are followed longitudinally, would make it possible to study this bidirectional influence in more detail. In addition, another set of interesting questions that could be addressed when longitudinal data become available is what aspects of parents, their behaviors, values or attitudes,

influence children the most in their transition from adolescence to adulthood. My research on modeling in Chapter 4 suggests that what parents 'did and do' is just as important an influence as what parents 'think and say'. Apart from parental influence on adolescent preferences, obtaining longitudinal data helps to try to answer questions in relation to social inequality. First, which of the adolescents can realize their preferences and which preferences are most likely to be realized? Second, when preferences are not realized, what events or obstacles do young adults encounter to prevent them from realizing their preferences? My research already shows that adolescent preferences differ in relation to their parental social status, but maybe the realization of preferences is also related to social status? For instance, are adolescents of parents with more social status better able to realize their preferences, and if so is this due to more financial resources or more cultural and social capital? Furthermore, in this dissertation preferences in the professional and the family domain were studied, with the assumption that the accuracy and attainment of these preferences are the same for both domains, but are they really? Are job preferences just as precise and feasible as fertility preferences? Aside from the extent to which different kinds of preferences can be realized, longitudinal data could also show the evolution of preferences from adolescence to adulthood. Which adolescents are able to develop better plans? Claussen (1991) already showed that adolescents who have more 'planful competence' are attaining higher levels of education and higher job statuses. Planful competence differs from ambition, because planful competence focuses on the cognitive skills needed to make accurate future plans, as opposed to just being blindly ambitious. That planful competence is an important trait seems obvious, but is it socially stratified? If so, could this competence be learned in school to avoid further social inequality? Finally, this study was conducted in the Netherlands, a country that scores highly on egalitarianism and poorly on income inequality. It would be interesting to see what the effects of parental economic status are in other countries. Because the cost of being enrolled in the Dutch secondary and tertiary educational system is relatively low compared to other countries, parental financial resources may be less important in the Netherlands than in other countries. Another reason to replicate my study internationally is because the Dutch educational system is quite stratified, which may enhance the effects of educational attainment on future orientations. As I noted before, at age 12 in the Netherlands, young people are channelled into different levels of education ranging from basic vocational training to training for a scientific career. It would be interesting to compare the preferences of adolescents at ages 14-17 in the Netherlands to these of adolescents in other countries, where sorting by educational level takes place later during adolescence. My results show that the

adolescents' level of education has an important role in relation to adolescent preferences, but this may be different when 'sorting into educational tracks' takes place later on in their educational career.