

Chapter 1

Introduction

Aim of this study

In the last few decades the transition to adulthood has been the focus of much more attention by researchers than before. The ‘obvious’ sequence of events leading from adolescence to adulthood has changed, both in terms of the average timing of events and the type of events that actually occur. On average, young adults in the Netherlands now leave the parental home at age twenty-two, they start to cohabit at twenty-four, usually before they marry, and have children at an average age of thirty (CBS, 2016). In the 1970s cohabitation was much less common and people married and had children earlier in life, at age twenty-three and twenty-four respectively (CBS, 2016). Nowadays, one out of three marriages ends in divorce and a significant proportion of young adults do not wish to marry (CBS, 2016). Not only has the timing and content of family life changed, but so has professional life. Participation in tertiary education has greatly increased with students in higher education finishing their studies on average at age twenty-four (CBS, 2016). In 1990 only a quarter of the Dutch population above thirty were college graduates, but by 2014 this number had risen to 45 percent (CBS, 2016). Thus, almost half of the Dutch population over thirty has a tertiary level qualification.

Many young adults make these life-course transitions to worker, spouse and/or parent, successfully. However, some young adults experience setbacks with regard to the transition to adulthood, for example they might drop out of school (9% in the Netherlands, CBS, 2016) or fail to find a job (11.3% in the Netherlands, CBS, 2016). In 2005, only 81 percent of the 25-34 year olds had a ‘starting qualification’, which means in the Netherlands having an initial educational qualification that facilitates entry into the labor market. These early setbacks might influence other adulthood transitions such as starting a family. Because early transitions can influence the rest of people’s lives, monitoring them closely is important; hence numerous government programs and policies address the problem of school ‘dropouts’ and try to improve the education-to-work transition (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2016).

Within the fields of demography and sociology, these transitions to adulthood are usually researched under the broad banner of life-course research. In the last decade, the life course has become less standardized, the fixed order of school completion, getting a job, getting married, and having children is breached more and more often, while episodes of living on one’s own and unmarried cohabitation occur more often. To some extent, the standard life course has given way to a ‘choice biography’ (Blossfeld, 2005). Personal capacities, preferences and possibilities are viewed as increasingly instrumental in individuals’ professional

and personal careers (Giddens, 1991), rather than the fixed life-course pattern, which was usually endorsed by family and/or religion. These changes suggest an increasing individualization of the life course, with people experiencing increased autonomy to organize their life-course, causing expectations and aspirations to be much more important than in the past.

According to some life-course researchers, life-course planning in adolescence has become increasingly crucial for a successful career (Crocket and Beal, 2012). Due to the diversity of alternative lifestyles, life-course planning is seen as a necessity (Giddens, 1991). Other life-course researchers suggest that young people do not have crystallized life-course expectations at this stage of 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2000); instead, they prefer to keep all their options open. Still, it remains to be seen whether adolescents' future planning is determined individually emerging exclusively from an individual's preferences and capacities. In a study in 23 European countries, Hellevik and Settersten (2013) found that many young people in all European countries make life plans, but that highly-educated young adults plan more than less-educated ones. Their research stresses the importance of family background, and although they do not deny that individual capacities and preferences are important factors in determining the future life course of individuals, their study suggests that even the act of planning is at last partially socially stratified.

The content of young people's plans also seems to vary by social background. Whereas authors such as Giddens (1991) and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) place the emphasis on individuals as architects of their own lives with a need only to 'find out' what they want, studies in social stratification and life-course research stress that many life-course choices are still not completely autonomous, but depend strongly on people's social origins (Van de Werfhorst, De Graaf, and Kraaykamp, 2001). Despite increasing individualization in Western societies, the socio-economic status of parents still has a strong bearing on their offspring's education, profession, 'life style' and criminal conviction rate (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997). Young people's lives are partly determined by their social, cultural and economic background (Jacob and Wilder, 2010). Part of the parental influence is due to parenting practices and parental values. Although some of the parents' socialization functions may increasingly be shifted to school and peers during the teen years, the family is still thought to influence a child's choices before, as well as throughout, adolescence, and remains the main institution of socialization (Macionis and Gerber, 2011) instilling attitudes, values and preferences in children from the earliest stages of life by their parenting practices and values.

In most of the literature on specific life-course planning, such as concerning marriage and parenthood or transition from school to work, there is limited attention to the role of parents. For this reason, this dissertation will study the influence of parents on the future-life plans and preferences of their adolescent offspring. The aim of this dissertation is to *improve our understanding of how parents influence their adolescent children's plans and preferences in relation to life-course transitions*. More specifically, I will examine the strength of the link between parental status and their children's preferences, the mechanisms by which this influence comes about, and whether these mechanisms differ between different life domains. I elaborate below on each of these three issues.

Parental socio-economic status and adolescents' preferences

Current literature

In the literature, the influence of parents' socio-economic status on their children's life-course preferences is mostly associated with differences in the availability of and access to resources. Most of the research in this extensive body of literature investigates how educational achievement is related to parents' socio-economic status (i.e., Blau and Duncan (1967), Sewell et al. (1969)). Socio-economic status (SES) is a combined economic and sociological measure of a person's or a family's economic and social position in relation to that of others, based on income, education, and occupation. Parental, or more traditionally, father's SES influences adolescents in numerous ways, ranging from the neighbourhood and social context adolescents grow up in to the availability of cultural and financial resources. While SES is usually studied in relation to certain outcomes, such as academic achievement or employment, I study the relationship between SES and adolescent life-course preferences.

Contribution of this study

When studying the impact of parents' social status position on their children's life-course preferences, I aim to add to the literature by making a distinction between the economic and cultural aspects of social status (Bourdieu, 1986), instead of treating SES as a unidimensional concept. This distinction has been used in several studies in relation to academic achievement (i.e., de Graaf et al., 2000), but not in relation to adolescents' expectations and preferences. According to Bourdieu (1986), positions in social space can best be ordered according to differences in the amount and composition of economic and cultural capital, i.e., resources, social norms, and values. The highest-status positions are most strongly endowed with both economic and cultural capital, but the distribution of the two forms of capital is not necessarily even, and either economic or cultural

capital may dominate. At the top of the social ladder these differences become most apparent, i.e., between those who owe their social position to their high income and wealth (managers, lawyers, and CEOs) and those who owe it to their high level of education and cultural knowledge (teachers, artists). In the middle of the status hierarchies, where the amount of economic and cultural capital is more limited, the distinction between the two kinds of status positions becomes less clear (shopkeepers versus primary teachers). At the lower levels, the amount of economic and cultural capital is too limited to allow any differentiation. In my view, a main advantage of Bourdieu's conceptualization of social position is his distinction between an economic and a cultural dimension, rather than viewing social status as one-dimensional (i.e., Sewell et al., 1969). The distinction offers a clearer view of what aspect of parents' socio-economic status influences adolescents' preferences than the one-dimensional scale. To be more specific, the issue is whether adolescents' preferences are more strongly influenced by cultural resources and values (i.e., understanding the educational system, family museum trips) or by financial resources and values (i.e., able to pay for violin lessons, the idea that the salary is the most important aspect of work). Therefore, the first research question of this dissertation is: *How does the cultural and economic status of parents influence their adolescent child's life plans and preferences?* This first research question will be answered in Chapters 2 and 3.

How do parents influence adolescent preferences? Is this via the educational system or otherwise?

Current literature

This study also focuses on mechanisms by which parental status influences the preferences of adolescents. It is expected that life plans - especially those relating to education and employment - are strongly structured by adolescents' educational attainments. Children whose parents have a high socio-economic status have a greater chance of achieving a high level of education than children whose parents have a low socio-economic status (Breen and Jonsson, 2005; DiPrete and Eirich, 2006; Bowden and Doughney, 2012). Cultural reproduction theory offers one potential explanation. According to this theory, children from lower socio-economic classes have a hard time in the educational system because that system is attuned to the views and values that are dominant in the cultural middle class (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). Highly educated parents are supposedly better at helping their children with homework and familiarizing them with specific forms of culture, such as the museums, books and digital media that are valued in education. The educational attainments of adolescents in turn structure their family formation preferences, because educational achievement influences the

possibility of continuing one's studies and their duration. More highly educated people also commonly delay entering a long-term relationship and starting a family, because these are often difficult to combine with tertiary education and the start of a career (Clarkberg and Moen, 2001). Reproduction of SES via the educational system is, however, only one of a number of potential mechanisms by which parents may influence their children. In addition, the highly educated often value autonomy more strongly, and as a result hold other norms and expectations regarding starting a family (Liefbroer and Billari, 2010). Next to the structuring role of educational attainment, developmental studies emphasize the socializing role of parents. Parents mostly succeed in transferring their attitudes to their children even outside of the educational system (Kim and Schneider, 2006). Parents socialize their children in multiple ways, by exhibiting or expressing values, by being a role model, and by demonstrating specific parenting styles.

Contribution of this study

Besides the often-studied intergenerational transmission of educational opportunities, I try to add to the literature by considering other forms of influence, in particular value transmission, imitation and parenting values. Value transmission (Barber and Axinn, 1998; Kapinus, 2004) is the active process by which agents of socialization, such as parents, define through parenting their expectations for their children, who in turn perceive and internalize these expectations (Mead, 1934). Essentially, parental attitudes relating to behavior are transmitted at least partially to their children, leading to an alignment of their attitudes and behaviors. Modeling influence does not result from active attempts from parents to influence the attitudes and behaviors of their children, but emphasizes the imitation of available role models (Mischel, 1966). The importance of imitation as a learning strategy is stressed by several socialization theories (Tillman, 2004). These 'imitations' (or modeling behavior) start at a young age, but can influence a person's attitudes and behavior for a lifetime. Modeling usually takes place somewhat subconsciously; children perceive their parents as the norm and their behavior as normal, which may lead to 'natural' replication of their attitudes and behavior.

Several different strands in the literature suggest that childrearing values and styles may play a key role in parental transmission processes as well. In his classic study 'Class and Conformity', Kohn (1963) argued that values that are appreciated in the workplace are transferred from parents to their children. Middle-class parents often have jobs that demand intellectual stimulation and independent decision-making. These parents internalize 'self-direction' in their behavior, and this orientation, both intentionally and unintentionally, is transferred to

their children. In the experience of parents from lower socio-economic groups conformity to rules and requirements is valued, and 'conformity' is internalized and passed on to their children. Lareau (2011) suggests a similar link between upbringing and SES. According to Lareau, "concerted cultivation" is the most common type of parenting among middle-class parents in the USA. These parents teach their children things that are not taught in school and stimulate critical thinking and participation in many out-of-school activities. An important advantage of this form of parenting is that children learn how to get along with both adults and same-age peers through organized activities. In addition, children develop a 'sense of entitlement': they have experiences in which their opinions matter and are taken into consideration. This is in contrast to socialization by poorer parents, which is often more directive. These parents, due to their lower level of education and lack of time, are less able to support their children. Children participate less in organized activities and spend more of their free time with other children in the neighbourhood. These children and parents often allow themselves to be led by the choices that institutions, such as the school, present to them. In addition, children learn how to get along with each other on the street, outside the realm of parental supervision. The desired attitude with respect to adults and parents is that of obedience. Lareau terms this type of socialization "the accomplishment of natural growth". What these strands of literature have in common is that they emphasize a relationship between parental social class and the ways children are raised. Empirical research shows that supportive parenting improves adolescents' performance in school (Dornbusch, et al., 1987; Weiss and Schwarz, 1996), increases their involvement in school activities (Steinberg et al., 1992), and enhances their attitude toward school (Oostdam and Hooge, 2013; Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Steinberg et al, 1992). These results are often attributed to encouraging independent problem-solving and learning to think critically. The same was found for Lareau's ideas, with socialization characterized as 'concerted cultivation' leading to better school performance and more involvement in school compared to an upbringing characterized by 'accomplishment of natural growth' (Bodovski and Farkas, 2008; Redford, et al., 2009). I aim to add to this literature by arguing that parenting may affect not only adolescents' educational attainment, but also adolescents' preferences for certain fields of study and occupations. Thus parenting not only affects the vertical, but also the horizontal stratification of adolescents' preferences. Given that there are multiple potential mechanisms by which parents can influence their children's preferences, the second research question of this dissertation is: *Through which mechanisms do parents influence their adolescent child's preferences?* The second research question will be answered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of my dissertation.

Parental influence on adolescents' life domain preferences

Because parents can influence their children's preferences regarding a multitude of topics, I make a distinction between preferences in the professional and the family life domains. This distinction results in examining academic and labor-force preferences, and also marriage and fertility preferences. After studying the professional- and family-life preferences separately, the next step is to consider whether the strength of parental influence differs between the two domains. On the one hand, one could argue that stronger effects are to be expected in the domain of employment than in that of the family. After all, parents strive for at least the same or a higher socio-economic status for their children (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997), which suggest that parents exert a strong influence on the occupational choices of their children. Furthermore, parents are nowadays thought less inclined to interfere in the family choices of their children (Kalmijn, 1998). All these arguments tentatively suggest that parental influence on the domain of employment will be stronger than on the family domain. On the other hand, one could argue that choices in the occupational domain strongly depend on adolescents' own capacities, which is the subject of heavy selection within the educational system itself, while choices in the field of relationships and family formation are less central to the educational system. Moreover, parental efforts at occupational socialization are probably becoming less effective in a rapidly changing labor market. Aldous and Hill (1965) have argued that the family is best positioned to transmit norms and values for which the family is the key or sometimes even the sole socializing institution. Preferences related to the family domain are much more exclusively the area of socialization by the family than preferences in the occupational domain. Based on this argument, a stronger parental influence on the family domain than on the occupational domain could be expected.

Current literature on parental and adolescent professional-life preferences

In my research on adolescent preferences I focus on the effects of parental status on their offspring's educational and occupational preferences and their family formation preferences. Concerning educational and occupational preferences of adolescents, empirical research has shown strong similarities between the fields of study followed by fathers and those of their children (Van de Werfhorst, De Graaf, and Kraaykamp, 2001). Van de Werfhorst and Luijkx (2010) also found an association between the father's field of employment and his children's choices regarding field of study. One explanation for this link between SES and field of study is Lucas' (2001) idea of 'Effectively Maintained Inequality' (EMI). EMI suggests that parents with higher SES try to secure 'benefits' for their children through the educational system. These 'benefits' can take two forms: quantitative

(e.g., level of educational attainment) and qualitative (e.g., curriculum choices). As more and more young people extend the duration of their education and enter tertiary education, the benefits from level of education have reduced in importance, thereby increasing the need to secure the benefit of choosing the 'right' field of study. Assuming that good employment prospects are seen as a benefit, one can infer that parents with a high SES are more likely to inspire their children to opt for fields of study with better employment prospects (Ma, 2009). An alternative explanation leading to quite different expectations is provided by Breen and Goldthorpe's (1997) 'Relative Risk Aversion' theory (RRA). RRA states that parents prefer their children's future social status to be just as good as or better than their own. However, for low SES parents, inspiring their children to opt for educational upward mobility may be a risky strategy, and they might rather focus on countering downward social mobility. RRA was initially used to explain status attainment, but it could also explain the choice of field of study. Assuming that parents with a low SES are strongly risk averse, it is expected that these parents will point their children towards fields of study with good employment prospects. Research into adolescents' attitudes towards work shows that adolescents who have parents with a high SES better appreciate the intrinsic advantages of a job, such as self-fulfillment, than adolescents from low SES origins (Johnson, 2002; Kohn and Schooler, 1969), while the latter are more appreciative of the extrinsic advantages of a job, such as a good salary and job security.

Contribution of this study

In studying the effects of parental status on preferences regarding fields of education and occupation, this study focuses on the role of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. In summary, field-of-study preferences were split into intrinsically and extrinsically rewarding; 'some studies you do out of interest, others you do to make money', with actual preferences for a particular field of study usually being based on mixed motivations. My aim was to add to the literature by looking at possible horizontal stratification effects, asking whether social background affects preferences for certain kinds of fields of study and occupations. First, I looked at adolescents' preferred fields of study. Second, I looked at the effects of parental status on the preferred occupations of adolescents. In both analyses I controlled for educational attainment of the adolescents, thus providing a clearer picture of possible horizontal stratification. In my analysis, as in all analyses in this dissertation, parental status is divided into cultural and economic status. This leads to the third research question in this dissertation: *How do parents influence their adolescent child's preferences in the professional life domain?* The third research question will be answered in Chapters 2 and 3.

Current literature on parents and adolescent family life preferences

Parents' social status can also have wide-ranging consequences for children's expectations about the future in the family life domain (Conger et al., 2010). Children of high-status parents may be more likely to postpone marriage and parenthood, either because they are enrolled in education for an extended period of time (Blossfeld and Huinink, 1991) or because they have higher consumption aspirations that need to be met before starting a family (Easterlin, 1980). In a liberal country such as the Netherlands, with its emphasis on self-fulfillment, children from higher-status parents may even attach less importance to traditional family values, because this runs counter to the more liberal ideals that prevail in higher-SES groups (Liefbroer and Billari, 2010).

Contribution of this study

I analyzed the effects of parental cultural and economic status on adolescents' views of the importance of family life and on their preferences regarding the timing of major family formation events. In my analysis of family formation, I aim to add to the literature by taking a closer look at the influences on adolescent preferences for the timing of family formations. Besides the cultural and economic status of the parents, other family background variables, such as religious observance, divorce, and the parents' own age at marriage and childbirth, are studied as well, because these family characteristics also influence the attitudes of parents and children towards family formation. This leads to the fourth research question of this dissertation: *How do parents influence their adolescent child's family life preferences?* The fourth research question will be answered in Chapters 2 and 4.

Current literature on the relationship between adolescent professional life and family-life preferences

Apart from the question of whether parental background differentially affects adolescents' professional and family-life preferences, another interesting question is how adolescents' preferences in these two life domains are related. The literature contains a discussion on how fertility preferences are related to field of study and occupational preferences (Begall and Mills, 2012; Opperman, 2014). Women educated or working in stereotypical 'feminine' fields usually have more children. How do these preferences in the two different domains interact? One reason to expect that preferences concerning fertility on the one hand and educational and occupational fields on the other are already related during adolescence is that both sets of preferences are shaped by interactions with family and friends during childhood and adolescence (Youniss and Smollar, 1985). The family in which one is raised is viewed as the most important socializing institution for an adolescent.

Many empirical studies have shown that parental education and occupation exert an effect on one's chosen field of study via a process of intergenerational transmission (Goyette, 2008; Goyette and Mullen, 2006; Grodsky and Riegle-Crumb, 2010; Van der Werfhorst and Luijkx, 2010). Another set of studies, drawing on cultural reproduction theory (Bourdieu, 1986), emphasize the role of more general preferences. Bourdieu argued that the cultural environment is important in choosing a field of study, since it corresponds to standards and practices within the social 'field' in which one is raised. Parents also influence their children's family-life behavior (Thornton, 1980). Several mechanisms, such as observational learning (Murphy and Wang, 2001) and the transmission of values and preferences (Thornton 1980; Barber, 2000) are proposed to explain why parents and children resemble each other when it comes to the timing of childbearing and the number of children they have.

Contribution of this study

Not only are preferences concerning both family and career developed during adolescence, but studies on the development of gender roles suggest that these preferences might develop in tandem (Stockard, 2006; Risman and Davis, 2013). Stockard (2006) provides an overview of the different theoretical approaches (including social learning theory, gender schema theory and psychoanalytic approaches) underpinning arguments that socialization processes lead to the development of gendered identities and thus influence how girls and boys reflect upon their roles in key life domains relating to work and family. At the same time, the actual expression of such identities may differ substantially, as is evident in Hakim's "Preference Theory" (Hakim 2000, see also Hakim 2003), which looks at how women in modern societies combine family life and employment. Preference Theory suggests that there are three types of women; (1) non-working women, with family life and children as their main priority in life; (2) adaptive women, with no prevailing preference orientation (the majority who usually wish to have the best of both worlds, combining work and family); and (3) career women who view work and career as the focus of their lives. In line with socialization theories, Hakim (2003) argues that these different identities are to a large extent shaped during adolescence. This leads to the fifth research question of this dissertation: *Does parental influence on adolescents' professional-life preferences differ from the influence on family life preferences, and to what extent are adolescents' professional- and family-life preferences related?* The fifth research question will be answered in Chapters 2 and 5.

Figure 1. provides a schematic overview of the dissertation. Within the parentheses, reference is made to the chapters that discuss specific topics.

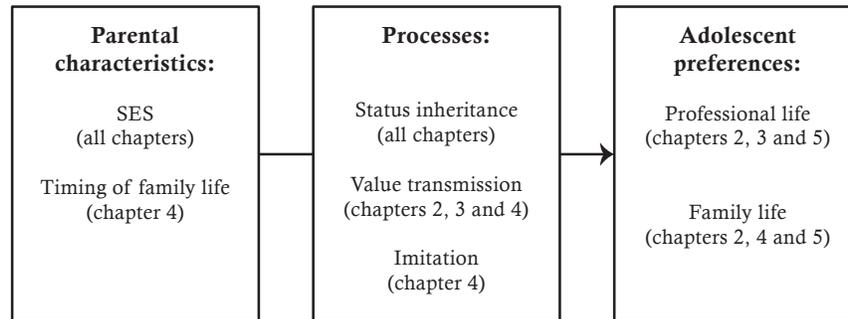


Figure. 1

Gender

Thus far, I have refrained from any explicit discussion of gender, because I expect that the same basic intergenerational transmission processes apply to boys and girls. At the same time, I acknowledge that boys and girls hold different preferences with regard to their future life course in the professional (Goyette and Mullen, 2006) and family domains (Hakim, 2006). In particular, if parents hold traditionally 'gendered' ideas, I expect preferences on future occupational status and the timing of family life to differ between boys and girls (Baird, 2008). To be clear, the main interest lies not in whether the expectations of parents are gendered or in whether the preferences of boys and girls differ, but in whether the parental influence on these expectations is gendered. While preferences may differ between boys and girls, parental effects on these preferences do not necessarily differ.

Societal relevance

In Western societies, social inequality appears to have been increasing during the last two decades (OECD, 2015), causing many negative externalities. One of the poignant aspects of social inequality is that it not only affects adults, but also the success of their offspring in their future private and professional lives (OECD, 2015). For example, success in school and academic achievement is related to parental SES (Sirin, 2005); children with a higher SES background perform better in school and in tertiary education. Children growing up in higher SES households are also healthier and happier (OECD, 2015). Even when it comes to media usage, higher-SES adolescents seem to profit much more from 'new media' in relation to school and other activities than lower-SES adolescents (Larson, 2001). The negative outcomes are clear; adolescents and young adults with lower-SES backgrounds are overly represented in relation to school dropout, youth

unemployment, delinquency, drug abuse, teenage parenthood, gender inequality, and obesity (Fortin, and Yazbeck, 2015). Governments are trying to address these issues with laws and social policy, but with mixed results. To address these unequal social outcomes, one approach could be to examine the role of parents in forming adolescent preferences. Before unequal outcomes materialize, adolescents usually develop preferences regarding professional and family life that may lead to these unequal outcomes. My study examines whether adolescents with lower-SES parents have different preferences regarding professional and family life from adolescents with higher-SES parents. Furthermore, my study examines parenting, parental attitudes, and the educational system as possible mechanisms explaining how parental SES influences adolescent preferences. Findings from these analyses could be helpful in designing potential interventions.

Description of the data

All the chapters in my dissertation make use of data, collected in 2005 and 2006 (Ganzeboom et al. 2005-2006) as part of the research project 'Youth and Culture' (Ganzeboom and Nagel, 1998-2002). The uniqueness of the data resides in the fact that adolescents and their parents were independently questioned on future preferences. The data collection took place in 14 municipalities located throughout the Netherlands, varying in size and region, including in two large cities, eight medium-sized municipalities and four small municipalities. Of the 69 schools contacted within these municipalities, 60 were prepared to participate in the study. Dutch secondary education is highly stratified, and all possible educational levels (vmbo-b, mavo/vmbo-t, havo, vwo and gymnasium) are represented in the sample (Nagel, 2007). For each selected school, a stratified sample was taken. The stratification took place according to educational level (vmbo-b, mavo/vmbo-t, havo and vwo/gymnasium) and school year/grade (3, 4 or 5 = age 14-17) of the schoolclass in question. Within the school, a sample was drawn from three classes of students (two classes when only one educational level was present). The sample needed to meet the condition that there should be no overlap between classes with respect to the educational level and year/grade within a school. This procedure resulted in 190 classes of which eventually 148 actually participated in the study. The response rate was 87% at school level and 78% at class level. In every class, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire during one class period (45-50 minutes). Due to the fact that the data collection was part of a larger project, the classes were randomly divided into two halves; one half of the class received a questionnaire regarding their plans for the future and cultural participation, the other half received a questionnaire regarding computer use. In the end, 1,544 students filled out the questionnaire about their life plans. The exact response

at the level of the students cannot be determined, because the exact number of students in a class was not known beforehand. Non-response can be assumed to be relatively low, because the questionnaire was answered in a classes situation. In January 2006, the parents were sent a postal questionnaire on their child's plans for the future. For two-parent families, a random parent was approached; for one-parent families, the parent with whom the student in question was living was selected. This eventually led to 1,001 adolescent-parent pairs in the survey. This is a parental response rate of 64%. Non-responding parents had a slightly lower level of education than responding parents, based on the information provided by their adolescent child. To give an impression of the data a few examples of preference-related questions will be provided. The timing of family formation was measured by asking children for the ages at which they prefer to marry, have a child, live together with a partner, and buy a house, and asking their parents about the ages at which they preferred their child to experience them. Adolescent's preferences with regard to field of study were measured directly from the adolescent by asking: "If you are thinking about going into higher education, in which field of study do you think that will be?" Participants evaluated 13 fields of study offered, ranging from teacher training, languages, history, theology, agriculture, to economics and law.

Lastly, I collected additional data from student counsellors. For the research, I needed to determine the extent to which a field of study can be considered as intrinsically or extrinsically rewarding, for which I employed an expert panel. Thirteen field-of-study choices (mentioned above) were presented to 52 student counsellors working in secondary schools in the Netherlands. These student counsellors advise on all levels of education, from lower secondary professional education to the highest level of secondary school. The surveys that were presented to them were distributed through two student counsellor associations, namely the Vereniging van Schooldecanen en Loopbaanbegeleiders (Association of Careers Advisors, VvSL) and the Nederlandse Vereniging van Schooldecanen en Leerlingbegeleiders (Dutch Association of Careers- and Student Advisors, NVS-NVL). The survey asked for their experiences on how the various fields of study are viewed by adolescents, as intrinsically or extrinsically rewarding.

Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 analyses the effects of parental cultural and economic status on adolescents' preferences in the professional and family domains. Besides the direct effects of parental status on preferences in both domains, the mediating effects of the level of education and parental value transmission are also analyzed. Chapter 2, which has the broadest scope, provides

a summary of the research findings in relation to all the research questions. Chapter 3, which is more specific, focuses on adolescents' professional preferences. In this chapter, the effects of parental cultural and economic status on field-of-study preferences are examined, where opting for a field of study in tertiary education is singled out as a transition in the professional domain. The different fields of study are ranked from the most intrinsically to the most extrinsically rewarding. The hypothesis is that social background influences a young person's preference regarding how intrinsically or extrinsically rewarding a field of study is. In contrast to the more usually studied vertical educational stratification, horizontal forms of stratification are studied. Besides the effects of parental status, the mechanism of child-rearing values in relation to field of study preferences is studied as well. Chapter 3 provides answers to research questions 1, 2 and 3. Chapter 4 is again more specific, and focuses on family life. The chapter studies the effects of parental behavior and value transmission in relation to the timing of family formation. The preferred timing relates to leaving home, cohabitation, marriage and having children. In this chapter on preferred timings in the family domain, the central themes are the effects of parental status on timing preferences and the mechanisms by which parents influence this preferred timing. The key research question is whether parental imitation or value transmission is more important in relation to preferred timing. The chapter provides answers to research questions 1, 2 and 4. Chapter 5 examines the interaction between adolescents' professional and family life preferences. More specifically, this chapter relays the relationship between fertility and educational/occupational preferences. At the age when tertiary education, full-time work, and children are all future prospects, what is the coherence between the two domains? Finally, Chapter 6 contains a general discussion and some conclusions.