Understanding variations in parental advice and interest: a focus on differences and similarities in educational attainment between parents and their adult children

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ABSTRACT

This article tests competing mechanisms explaining linkages between parent-child educational similarity and parental advice and interest to adult children, asking whether mechanisms differ for mothers and fathers. Educational similarities might provide common ground whereas educational dissimilarity affects parents' authority to dispense advice. Using ordinal logistic regression with data from the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (N=2,541) parental advice and interest are modeled separately for mothers and fathers. Seemingly Unrelated Regression is used to test for gender differences across models. Fathers show more interest in adult children when they are educationally similar, but only among the highly educated. Fathers' advice is conditioned on their own educational attainment whereas mothers give advice unconditionally, providing evidence that the mechanisms driving parental advice differ by parents' gender. This study reinforces that parent-adult child educational similarities are important predictors of advice and interest and that fathers are more likely to differentiate between their children than mothers.

Keywords: adult children, education, family support, intergenerational relationships, parent-child relationships

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When children are young, receiving more advice and interest is linked to children's improved wellbeing and school performance (Fan & Williams, 2010; Wenk, Hardesty, Morgan, & Blair, 1994). As adults, parents' support in the form of advice and interest helps individuals to define life goals, overcome difficult life events, and improves life satisfaction (Amato, 1994; Cooney & Uhlenberg, 1992; Fingerman et al., 2012).

The provision of emotional support by parents remains common throughout children's life courses. Even after children reach adulthood, parents are generally constants in their children's support networks (Albertini, Kohli, & Vogel, 2007; Dykstra, 2007). Moreover, thanks to improving health care and long life expectancy, mothers and fathers now spend more time being parents of adult children than they are of minors. Given the importance of parental advice and interest for adult children and the increasing amount of time that parents and adult children spend as fellow life travelers (Hagestad, 1986), this article aims to provide a better understanding of the driving forces behind parental advice and interest in adulthood.

In investigating the driving forces underlying parental advice and interest, we allow that different mechanisms may be relevant for mothers and fathers. As parents of young children, the factors influencing involvement are known to differ by gender of the parent. Father involvement is thought to be more motivated by structural factors such as their and their partner's work hours, whereas mothers are thought to be more motivated by normative factors such as gender or motherhood ideology (for a

review, see Thompson & Walker, 1989). Even when children reach adulthood, mothers and fathers continue to 'parent' differently; most notably, mothers give considerably more emotional support than do fathers (Kahn, McGill, & Bianchi, 2011). Therefore we also investigate whether mechanisms differ for mothers and fathers.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Prior studies of parents of both young and adult children reveal the importance of education in influencing parental involvement. More highly educated parents of school-aged children are thought to spend more time in cultural capital building activities than parents with lower levels of education (Kalil, Ryan, & Corey, 2012; Lareau, 2002). Furthermore, studies of fathers of young children consistently show educational attainment to be a reliable predictor of both the quantity and quality of father involvement, with more highly educated fathers spending more time with their children in activities that further child development (Gauthier, Smeeding, & Furstenberg, 2004; Gracia, 2014). Among adult children, we also know that highly educated parents give more (Davey, Janke, & Savla, 2005; Fingerman et al., 2015; Kalmijn, 2013) and highly educated adult children receive more emotional support (Kalmijn, 2013, 2015; Lawton, Silverstein, & Bengtson, 1994; Pillemer & Suitor, 2002) compared to less well-educated parents and children.

Although educational attainment as such may be a strong predictor of parental support and advice, we believe that focusing only on the educational attainment of the 'sending' or 'receiving' party will not be sufficient in understanding why some children receive more support and advice than others. Prior research on parental

support of adult children identifies several characteristics of intergenerational dyads that may drive support, including residential propinquity, relationship quality, and past support (for a literature review see Davey et al., 2005). For example, value and gender similarity has been linked to closeness in mother-child relationships (Pillemer & Suitor, 2002). Despite this generally accepted conclusion, however, when it comes to testing the effect of sociodemographic characteristics such as education, researchers have primarily examined them as individual characteristics thus overlooking their combined influence. The lack of attention to educational similarity is all the more conspicuous given the importance of educational attainment in affecting parental advice and interest, and the role of education as both a transmitter of status and a socializing agent.

Thus, we build on prior literature by considering the way in which educational similarities between parents and children contribute to the provision of parental support. Do parents give more advice and interest to 'apples who fall close to the tree' or to adult children who differ more radically from their parents, and are there differences between mothers and fathers? In other words: *is the difference in educational attainment within parent-adult child pairs linked to receipt of parental advice and interest by adult children, and if so, how do the mechanisms vary for mothers and fathers*?

EDUCATIONAL SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

In order to test the relationship between educational similarity and parental advice and interest, we consider four types of parent child dyads: dyads where both parent and child have a low level of education; the parent has a high level of education and the

child a low level (downwardly mobile children); the parent has a low level of education and the child a high level (upwardly mobile children); and both parent and child have a high level of education. These four types of dyads will be useful in the present study because they broadly describe the educational similarities and differences between parents and children yet are still parsimonious. In particular, it is useful to distinguish between cases where both parents and children are highly educated from those where both have low educational attainment because of the positive relationship between educational attainment and parental support as outlined above.

By studying the relationship between educational similarity and intergenerational solidarity we hark back to Parsons' (1951) idea that social mobility and intergenerational solidarity are antithetical. According to Parsons, whereas social mobility implies that individuals can attain a different status than that ascribed to them at birth, intergenerational solidarity implies that statuses ascribed to one member are inferred to all family members. Thus, an increase in social mobility would be accompanied by a decrease in intergenerational solidarity. At the time, empirical research that tested this theory mostly failed to support Parsons' hypothesis by concluding that upward mobility did not weaken intergenerational ties (Aiken & Goldberg, 1969; Blau, 1956; Litwak, 1960). As a result, this line of inquiry was mostly forgotten. A half-century later we return to study the relationship between (a lack of) educational mobility and intergenerational support, but with different assumptions derived from more recent developments in the intergenerational support literature. Whereas Parsons and followers posited that status differences between family members would lead to tensions which would in turn lead to decreased support, we now know that intergenerational support, and in particular parental

support of adult children, is not in danger of disappearing (Albertini et al., 2007). Given the overall high levels of parental support and improved survey data, one line of current research has turned to investigating why some parents provide more support than others (c.f. Suitor et al., 2016). In this vein, we ask whether it is educational similarity or difference that affects the amount of advice and interest parents give to their adult children. To answer this question, we test three mechanisms that might drive parental support: homophily, off-script, and long-term reciprocity. The mechanisms are described below.

Homophily Hypothesis

Homophily, or the principle that similarity breeds connection (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001), is a term developed from social network research to describe why peers tend to select friends based on certain qualities such as gender and education. Various studies reveal that one of the strongest forms of homophily by which individuals choose both friends and romantic partners is educational attainment, due to the influence educational institutions assert in shaping individuals' preferences as well as opportunities to make social contact (e.g. McPherson et al., 2001). Assuming parents provide emotional support to adult children in part because they enjoy doing so, it may be that parents prefer involvement with educationally similar children because educational institutions have imparted similar interests to both parent and child. Furthermore, because parental interest is linked directly to the mechanism driving the relationship between educational homophily and parental support, namely preferences, we expect that educational homophily will be more predictive of parental interest than advice. Using the same data as in our present

study, Kalmijn (2006) finds that parents and children with more similar educational attainment have a higher frequency of contact, but that this effect disappears after controlling for residential propinquity.

In short, we hypothesize that *children with the same educational attainment as their parents will receive more parental advice and interest (H1).* If this hypothesis is confirmed, the dyads with the same level of education, both high-high and low-low, will have higher levels of parental advice and interest than either the upwardly or downwardly mobile dyads (Table 1). Given that parental interest is linked directly to the mechanism driving the homophily, *we also expect that Hypothesis 1 will be stronger when measuring parental interest than advice (H1a).*

Off-Script Hypothesis

The second mechanism explaining a possible relationship between educational dissimilarity and parental advice and interest comes from life course research on the role of on- and off-timing. Within the life course paradigm, well-being and status of all members of a family are interconnected. As a result, the inability of a child to meet social scripts can cause feelings of guilt and inadequacy not only in the child, but notably, also in a parent (Hagestad, 1986). Given the educational expansion of the last century (Canton & de Jong, 2005), one of the social scripts in modern Dutch society may be that children will be more highly educated than their parents (Van den Broek, Bronnenman-Helmers, & Veldheer, 2010). If children never meet this social script, parents may try to help them achieve success in other arenas by giving those children more emotional support and advice. Given that this hypothesis presupposes that parents want to help their children succeed, we propose that parents see advice as a

more concrete way to help than showing interest in their children's lives. Thus we expect the off-script mechanism to particularly drive parental advice.

Based on the off-script hypothesis, we posit that *children with a lower educational attainment than their parents will receive more parental advice and interest than children with the same or higher levels of education (H2).* We consider our findings to support this hypothesis when parents give the most advice and interest to downwardly mobile children and the least to upwardly mobile children, with dyads having similar levels of education falling somewhere in between (Table 1). Furthermore, *we expect that Hypothesis 2 will be stronger when measuring parental advice than interest (H2a).*

Long-Term Reciprocity Hypothesis

The final mechanism we test with regard to educational dissimilarity is long-term reciprocity. The concept of reciprocity is often used in the intergenerational solidarity literature to explain why parents differentiate between their children with regard to parental support (Kalmijn, 2010; Swartz, 2009). According to some scholars, parents give more support to the children who live closer by with the idea that these children will be able to perform practical care tasks when the parents are too frail to do the chores themselves (Grundy, 2005; Suitor, Pillemer, & Sechrist, 2006). In addition to children who live close by, parents may also consider educationally successful children as future potential caregivers because successful children are most likely to have the resources to provide care (Fingerman et al., 2012). In particular, parents with low levels of education themselves may value children with high levels of education. Thus, we assert that parents will be likely to consider children as potential caregivers

when the children are upwardly educationally mobile relative to the parents. Theoretically, this mechanism should be linked to both advice and interest.

According to these principles, we hypothesize that *children with a higher educational attainment than their parents will receive more parental advice and interest (H3).* If this hypothesis is supported, upwardly mobile children will receive the most parental advice and interest and downwardly mobile children the least. Dyads where parents and children both have low or high levels of education will fall somewhere in between (Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

Gender Hypothesis

A general critique of the social mobility literature and to a lesser extent of the literature on intergenerational support is that gender differences have often been neglected or overlooked. Because men's employment rates have always exceeded those of women, studies of social mobility compared children's occupational status to their father's rather than their mother's status (Beller, 2009). Thus, particularly in older mobility studies, "parent" is implicitly equated with "father". Ironically, the opposite tended to occur in the literature on determinants of intergenerational support, where studies have been quick to equate "parent" with "mother". Prior research would often focus on only mothers (e.g. Kalmijn, 2013; Pillemer & Suitor, 2002; Suitor et al., 2006). Other studies examined both parents together (e.g. Fingerman, Miller, Birditt, & Zarit, 2009; Grundy, 2005; Kalmijn, 2006), assuming that similar mechanisms drive both fathers' and mothers' support. To our knowledge, no study on

the association between parent-child educational similarity and intergenerational support has yet examined gender differences in the way the education mechanisms function. This lacuna is particularly glaring given the abundance of studies on gender differences in parenting young children (Simon, 1995; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Yet although family sociologists acknowledge men's and women's different motivations as parents of young children, when the same parents reach older adulthood, researchers often act as if men's and women's motivations converge (Kahn et al., 2011; Leopold & Skopek, 2015).

In general, we expect educational similarities to have more of an impact on advice and interest from fathers rather than mothers. Although paternity uncertainty is quite low in the Netherlands, evolutionary adaptation may have shaped behavior in a way that persists today (Kaptijn, Thomese, Liefbroer, & Silverstein, 2012). Unable to tell which children were theirs, men may have historically discriminated between children based on a number of mechanisms, including the homophily, off-script, and long-term reciprocity hypotheses. By comparison, women may have been motivated to provide unconditional support to their children because they were certain that their children were there own (Biblarz & Raftery, 1999; Trivers, 1972). As a result, *we hypothesize that the relationship between educational similarity and parental advice and interest will be stronger for fathers than mothers (H4).*

Controls

A number of characteristics of the child, parent, and dyad may be related both to the educational difference as well as to the frequency of advice and interest parents show adult children. *Child's* and *parent's age* may influence the educational difference as

there may be cohort effects where older children (with older parents) are more likely to be more highly educated than their parents, due to the dramatic increase in educational attainment following the Second World War (Canton & de Jong, 2005). Likewise, prior research suggests that support from parents to adult children decreases as children age due to a decrease in need on behalf of the child and a decrease in ability to provide on behalf of the parent (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). It is also important to control for both parents' and children's health as poor health may indicate need of emotional support or ability to provide it (Grundy, 2005), just as poor health is related to lower educational attainment (Pincus & Callahan, 1994). Daughters may be more likely to have lower educational attainment, particularly in older cohorts (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2007), and same-gendered dyads have been shown to exchange more emotional support (Pillemer & Suitor, 2002). We control for birth order because first born children have been shown to receive more support (Emery, 2013; Suitor & Pillemer, 2007) and because they may receive more parental resources allowing them to pursue higher education (Black, Devereux, & Salvanes, 2005). Geographical distance between parent and child may be an indirect result of educational difference, where higher educated children move farther away from parents (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), and although distance is not an obstacle to providing emotional support or advice, close proximity may provide more opportunities for parents to give advice and interest (Kalmijn, 2006).

METHODS

Our analyses were conducted using the Netherlands Kinship Panel Study (NKPS), a longitudinal, multi-actor survey designed to measure solidarity within family

relationships (Dykstra et al., 2005). The survey has a primary respondent and up to five survey alters consisting of the current partner, up to two (randomly selected) children, one parent, and one sibling. We use the first wave, gathered between 2002 and 2004 for our analysis (N = 8,161 families), selecting families where at least one parent and one child filled out the questionnaire and excluding 59 families where both children surveyed were born in the same year (N = 8,102). After selecting only children between 25 and 50 years old, we were left with N = 2,420 families. We further selected only families where the parents were heterosexual, lived together at the time of the survey, and had been together since before the child's birth (N = 1,734). If families had two children who participated in the survey, we selected those families where the parents had been together since before the birth of the older child. As we are interested in educational similarity as a driving mechanism of parental advice and interest, we selected only children who were not participating in education at the time of the survey and thus are assumed to have completed their education (N = 1,699). Our final selection was to exclude the 11 families where children and parents live together and the one family where the mother was too young to realistically have given birth to a child of 25 years old, leaving us with a total of 2,541 parent-child dyads in 1,687 families. After listwise deleting cases with missing values on any of the variables, we are left with varying sample sizes for each of our dependent variables. Final sample sizes are visible in the regression models in Table 3.

Dependent Variables

Paternal and *maternal advice* are the child's responses to "Did you get council or good advice from [father's/mother's name] in the past 3 months?" with responses

coded as: 0 = “not at all”, 1 = “once or twice”, 2 = “several times”. *Paternal* and *maternal interest* are the child’s responses to “Has [father’s/mother’s name] shown an interest in your personal life in the past 3 months?” Responses were coded as: 0 = “not at all”, 1 = “once or twice”, 2 = “several times”. Means and number of observations for all variables are visible in Table 2, broken down by dyad type.

Insert Table 2 about here

Independent Variables

Educational similarity between parent and child is our main independent variable. This is a four category variable at the dyad level, where dyads are characterized as (0) low-low: both parent and child have a low level of education; (1) high-low: the parent has a high level of education but the child’s education is low (downwardly mobile); (2) low-high: parent is low but child is high (upwardly mobile); or (3) high-high: both parent and child have a high level of education. Because children had systematically higher levels of education than their parents, we defined high and low education differently for parents and children. High education for parents is considered a three or higher on an ISCED 7 scale (*completed high school*) whereas high education for children is a four or higher on the same scale (*post-secondary education*). We conducted robustness checks on this operationalization of education, which we describe in the conclusion (results available upon request)

Controls

Child characteristics.

We use a number of control variables to capture characteristics of the child including age, gender, health, and birth order. *Age* is the child's age in years at time of interview created by subtracting the birth year from the year of survey (range 25-50); *gender* is a (0) if the child is "male" and a (1) if she is "female"; *health* is the self-reported health on a 5 point scale where (0) is *very bad* and (4) is *excellent*; and *parity* is the child's birth order within the family, including adopted children but excluding step-children (range 1-11).

Parent characteristics.

We also control for two important parent characteristics that may influence both educational attainment and parental support: age and health of the parent. *Age* is the parent's age in years at time of interview, created by subtracting the year of birth from the year of the survey (range 45-87). *Health* is the self-reported health on a 5-point scale, again with (0) indicating *very bad* health and (4) indicating *excellent* health.

Dyad characteristics.

Geographical distance from parent to child is measured in kilometers as the crow flies according to the formula suggested in the NKPS codebook (Dykstra et al., 2005) (range 0.10-250).

Method

In order to test our hypotheses, we perform four ordered logistic regressions on father's and mother's advice and interest separately, and then we compare results across mother and father models using Seemingly Unrelated Regression in Stata 14 (Kubáček, 2013). Because our data are hierarchically structured with individuals nested in dyads nested in families, individuals within dyads or within families are more alike than those between dyads and families, thus violating the assumption of independence of observations necessary for a generalized linear model. As a result, standard errors are likely to be inflated and we run the risk of committing type 1 error. We correct for this by using robust standard errors to calculate the confidence intervals. Because we are not interested in analyzing mechanisms at the family level, we do not need to conduct a multilevel analysis nor do we include variables to capture differences between families.

RESULTS

Our analyses as shown in Model 1, Table 3 reveal that dyads where fathers show the most interest are those where both father and child have a high level of educational attainment ($\beta_{high\text{-}high} = 2.53$, $p < 0.01$). In substantive terms, fathers have a factor of 2.53 higher odds of showing frequent interest in children when both they and their child are highly educated compared to low-low dyads. Figure 1 presents the same information, but as predicted probabilities rather than odds ratios. Here we see that children in high-high father-child dyads have on average an 82% chance of their fathers showing interest in their lives three times or more in the past month given average values on all control variables, compared to the on average 67% chance of receiving frequent interest for children in each of the three other dyads. Together

Model 1 and Figure 2 provide partial support for a homophily effect (H1), though homophily in this case only seems to apply for the highly educated, not those with lower levels of educational attainment. That a homophily effect was found to predict parental interest rather than advice is in keeping with Hypothesis 1a.

Turning to Model 3, Table 3 we see that dyads where fathers give the most advice are those in which the father is more highly educated than the children ($\beta_{high\text{-}low} = 1.68$, $p < 0.01$) and high-high dyads ($\beta_{high\text{-}high} = 1.84$, $p < 0.01$). The same information is presented in the form of predicted probabilities in Figure 2, revealing that children in high-low and high-high dyads have an approximately 25% chance of having gotten paternal advice three times or more in the past three months. Although children in high-low dyads do receive paternal advice significantly more frequently than children in low-low dyads, this cannot be interpreted as support of the off-script hypothesis given that the 'high-high' coefficient is also significant (i.e. H2 and H2a are not supported). Rather, it suggests that the level of education of the father is the relevant factor in determining paternal advice.

From Model 2, Table 3 we see that children in low-high (upwardly mobile) and high-high dyads have higher odds of receiving frequent interest from their mothers than children in low-low dyads ($\beta_{low\text{-}high} = 1.59$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta_{high\text{-}high} = 2.35$, $p < 0.01$). The same finding is reflected in Figure 1 where we see that, compared to children in low-low dyads, children who are more highly educated than their mothers have an approximately 7% higher chance and children in high-high dyads have a 12% higher chance of receiving frequent maternal interest. Although upwardly mobile children are significantly more likely to receive maternal interest, the long-term reciprocity hypothesis (H3) is not supported given that the high-high coefficient in this model is also significant. Taken together, we interpret these finds as evidence that

the level of education of the child is the relevant factor in determining maternal interest.

The Seemingly Unrelated Regression analysis comparing Models 3 and 4 in Table 3 reveals a significant difference between the frequency with which children in high-high mother-child and father-child dyads receive advice ($F(12,2102) = 9.47$, $p < 0.01$). The difference is likewise visible in Figure 2, where we see that the predicted probability of receiving frequent maternal advice is more or less the same for all educational combinations, whereas pronounced differences in the probability of frequent paternal advice exist across father-child dyads. Thus, education of the father appears to be a driving mechanism of paternal advice but education of either the mother or child does not affect maternal advice. This gender difference is in keeping with expectations as articulated in the gender hypothesis (H4). We observe no gender differences in the role of education on interest.

Insert Table 3 & Figures 1 & 2

DISCUSSION

In this study we sought to understand mechanisms underlying parental advice and interest to adult children. We posited competing hypotheses about whether parental emotional support would be driven by educational similarities or differences and we asked whether the same mechanisms are at play in influencing support from mothers and fathers.

Main Findings

Our analyses provide partial support for a homophily effect and a gender effect.

Neither the off-script nor the long-term reciprocity hypotheses are supported. Support for the homophily hypothesis comes in that children receive more frequent interest when fathers and children both share high educational attainment. It was unexpected that the homophily effect would only hold for highly educated pairs. However, this can be explained by the more general socializing effect of educational attainment. We had hypothesized that homophily would increase the frequency of parental interest by giving parents and children more shared interests based on educational attainment. Instead we found that whereas educational homophily does play a role in influencing the amount of parental interest, it does so by compounding the more general effect of educational attainment rather than counteracting it. Thus, achieving a high level of personal educational attainment seems to make individuals more receptive to giving and receiving paternal interest, and this effect is even stronger when both father and child have high levels of education. The effect goes beyond what we would expect based on the individual influence of either father's or child's educational attainment and reveals the importance of considering the way educational attainment interacts within parent-child dyads.

We further found evidence that mechanisms driving parental emotional support vary for fathers and mothers, albeit not the mechanisms we hypothesized. We found that fathers' own educational attainment is a significant determinant of giving paternal advice, whereas mothers appear to give advice unconditionally of either individual educational attainment or educational similarities with their children. We explain this finding as mothers having more evolutionary incentive to invest in all their children equally. That significant gender differences exist for advice but not interest suggests that advice is gendered in a way interest is not and lends credence to the suggestion that different mechanisms drive advice and interest. Perhaps only

higher educated fathers feel qualified to provide advice, or adult children only solicit advice from those fathers who are highly educated. Mothers, by comparison, appear to give advice to all children at the same rate, regardless of educational achievement or similarity.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

We acknowledge data limitations that might have impacted our conclusions. First, we dichotomized educational attainment in an attempt to simplify the many possible educational similarities and differences between parent and child. In so doing we lose information about the complexity of educational attainment, however we believe these choices are justified in the spirit of parsimony. Furthermore, parents were considered highly educated if they had graduated from high school (ISCED 3 or higher), but children were only considered highly educated if they had followed any post-secondary schooling (ISCED 4 or higher) in order to accommodate the educational expansion of the last century. We tested the appropriateness of these choices with four alternate operationalizations of educational similarity (analyses available upon request): 1) education was dichotomized into high and low education, but where the cutoff point was the same for parents and children; 2) a three-category formulation of educational attainment where the cutoffs were different for parents and children according to frequency distributions; 3) a three-category formulation of educational attainment where the cutoffs were the same for parents and children; and 4) a linear interaction term between the seven-category ISCED scores for parents and children. Although results vary somewhat depending on how education is operationalized, these additional analyses reinforce our conclusions and, in the case of fathers' advice, deepen our understanding of the relationship between parent and

child's educational attainment. Specifically, it appears that the tendency of highly educated fathers to give advice to children with low levels of education is driven primarily by fathers who have completed secondary education only (ISCED score 3). The highest educated fathers do not give significantly more advice to lower educated children.

Our second limitation is that we run our analysis on cross-sectional data, and as such run the risk of reverse causality. It could be that parental advice and interest remain stable over the course of one's life. Although the survey questions are asked about advice and interest in the last three months, they could be representative of advice and interest prior to the child completing his or her education. As such, it would be advice and interest that drive educational similarity or dissimilarity, rather than the reverse. In particular, this may provide an alternate explanation for why highly educated children receive more maternal interest than children with low levels of educational attainment. It could be that maternal interest helped children to achieve a high level of educational attainment in the first place. However, reversed causality does not explain why fathers give more advice to children who are educationally downwardly mobile (high-low dyad), as one would expect advice to be beneficial to educational attainment. Neither does reverse causality explain the homophily mechanism driving paternal interest. If paternal interest explained children's high educational achievement, then we should see an additional significant effect of being upwardly educationally mobile (low-high dyad). Although the NKPS is longitudinal in design, answering this particular question requires collecting data from childhood until late 20s or early 30s, a time frame which we are not yet able to cover. It is an interesting question for future research, however, to what extent parental support changes over the course of children's lives and its impact on educational attainment.

Conclusion

In this article we revealed that parent-child educational similarities are an important yet often overlooked predictor of parental support. We have two main findings. First, fathers show more interest within highly educated homophilous dyads; in other words, to apples who have fallen close to the tree, education-wise. As one of the few articles to examine the effects of educational similarity between parents and children on parental support, our findings suggest that research which fails to account for educational similarity underestimates the effect of education on some types of parental support, but not others. Second, we conclude that mothers and fathers give advice for different reasons. Fathers give less advice when they have low educational attainment, perhaps due to a lack of confidence in their ability to give good quality advice. Mothers, on the other hand, have no such doubts. They give advice equally to all their children regardless of educational similarity, and they do so at rates equal to what highly educated fathers give. Just as gender of the parent is an important factor in determining parental support of young children, we see continuity across the life course in that gendered parenting continues into late adulthood. The gender differences found in our study suggest that research which groups mothers and fathers together may underestimate the relationship between educational attainment and parental support. Returning to the question we posed at the beginning, 'Does it matter how far the apple falls from the tree?', our answer is: Perhaps, but only to fathers and only in highly educated father-child dyads.

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Table 1. *Predicted Ranking of Advice and Interest by Educational Difference According to Each Hypothesis, Where 4 = Most Advice and Interest and 1 = Least.*

Educational difference[a]	Homophily (H1)	Off-script (H2)	Reciprocity (H3)
Low-low	4	2.5	2.5
High-low	1	4	1
Low-high	1	1	4
High-high	4	2.5	2.5
Advice or interest	Interest (H1a)	Advice (H2a)	Both

[a]Educational difference between parent and child first describes the parent's educational status (low or high) and then the child's. Thus, low-high refers to a dyad where the parent's status is low and the child's is high.

Table 2. *Means and Observations of Variables in Analysis by Father-Child and Mother-Child Dyads*

	Mean, father-child dyads				Mean, mother-child dyads				Obs	Range
	Low-low	High-low	Low-high	High-high	Low-low	High-low	Low-high	High-high		
Parental support										
Interest	1.62	1.64	1.67	1.78	1.74	1.75	1.84	1.86	2,405	0-2
Advice	0.91	1.07	0.91	1.08	1.05	1.09	1.06	1.08	2,397	0-2
Dyad characteristics										
Frequency	.30	.23	.15	.31	.44	.11	.26	.19	2,257	0-1
Distance	15.36	24.57	27.80	47.27	18.81	26.79	37.31	43.88	1,670	0.1-250.09
Child characteristics										
Age	36.42	34.98	36.15	35.19	35.84	34.73	35.61	34.99	2,539	25-50
Gender	.62	.64	.56	.56	.64	.59	.61	.54	2,405	0-1
Health	3.15	3.28	3.31	3.40	3.22	3.21	3.38	3.32	2,406	1-4
Parity	1.99	1.83	1.87	1.85	1.90	1.97	1.85	1.85	2,539	0-11
Parent characteristics										
Age	65.49	63.54	65.71	64.83	62.41	61.57	63.37	62.21	2,539	45-87
Health	2.80	3.01	2.92	3.06	2.81	3.00	2.93	3.02	2,531	0-4

Table 3. *Ordered Logistic Regression Predicting Advice and Interest from Mothers and Fathers to Adult Children (Odds Ratios)*

	Model 1: Father interest		Model 2: Mother interest		SUR	Model 3: Father advice		Model 4: Mother advice		SUR
	Coeff	SE	Coeff	SE		Coeff	SE	Coeff	SE	
Parent - child edu										
Low-low (ref)										
High-low	1.10	0.21	0.79	0.20	1.33	1.68**	0.29	1.11	0.23	2.75^{+}
Low-high	1.23	0.27	1.59*	0.32	0.99	1.10	0.22	1.02	0.15	0.12
High-high	2.53**	0.52	2.35**	0.58	0.08	1.84**	0.32	1.01	0.17	9.47**
Child's age	1.00	0.02	0.91**	0.03	9.49**	0.95**	0.02	0.90**	0.02	5.23*
Daughter	1.30	0.19	1.70**	0.26	3.03^{+}	0.91	0.11	1.65**	0.20	24.88**
Child's health	1.26*	0.14	1.08	0.13	1.61	0.95	0.10	0.88	0.08	0.56
Parity	0.97	0.07	0.81**	0.07	4.66*	0.98	0.06	0.83**	0.05	5.79*
Parent's age	0.97	0.02	1.04	0.03	6.40*	0.97	0.02	1.01	0.02	3.50^{+}
Parent's health	1.10	0.10	1.20	0.13	0.37	1.13	0.09	1.11	0.09	0.03
Distance	1.00*	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.70	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.80
cut 1	0.03**	0.02	0.02**	0.02		0.01**	0.01	0.01**	0.01	
cut 2	0.28	0.22	0.25	0.23		0.13**	0.09	0.11**	0.08	
AIC	1427.92		1206.89			1950.78		2124.87		
BIC	1486.85		1266.72			2009.69		2184.67		
N dyads	1003		1081			1001		1079		

$^{+}$ p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Figure 1. PREDICTED PROBABILITIES FOR FREQUENT PARENTAL INTEREST

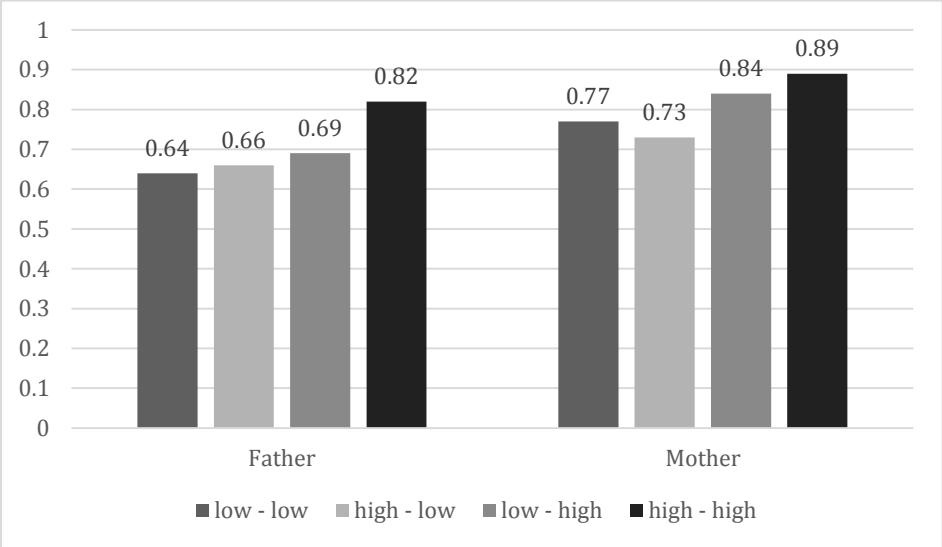

Figure 2. PREDICTED PROBABILITIES FOR FREQUENT PARENTAL ADVICE