

Authoritative Parenting and the Transmission of Religion in the Netherlands: A Panel Study

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This study was designed to explore the effect of authoritative parenting, over and above the effect of explicitly religious parenting practices, on the juvenile and adult church attendance of offspring. Data were collected as part of a panel study in which 474 Dutch respondents were questioned in 1983 as youths and in 2007 as adults. In 2007 the respondents retrospectively answered questions about how they were raised by their parents. Analyses revealed that juvenile church attendance depends mainly on parental and more specifically on maternal church attendance, whereas adult church attendance is largely an outcome of juvenile church attendance. No effects of an authoritative parenting style, that is, a simultaneous effect of responsiveness, strict control, and the granting of psychological autonomy as the three dimensions of authoritative parenting distinguished in this study, were observed. Only the dimension of strict control turned out to be a negative determinant of adult church attendance.

Parents play a vitally important part in the intergenerational transmission of religious beliefs and practices. Generally speaking, children become religious only if their parents are religious; otherwise, they do not become religious at all. Religiosity therefore basically concerns the intergenerational transmission of religious commitment from parents to child (e.g., Hoge &

Petrillo, 1978; Hunsberger & Brown, 1984; Myers, 1996; Sherkat, 2003; Sherkat & Wilson, 1995; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger & Gorsuch, 2003; see also Erickson, 1992, for a somewhat different view). Moreover, not all content can be successfully transmitted in this way: Parental influence shows up more particularly in the fields of political orientation and religion (Troll & Bengtson, 1979). The importance of parents as active socializing agents or religious role models has often been stressed (Glass, Bengtson, & Dunham, 1986). Children should be able to perceive their parents as religiously committed people—people to whom religion is important. Parents can facilitate such a perception by overt religious behavior (such as churchgoing or daily prayer)—insights confirmed in a recent study by Vermeer, Janssen, and De Hart (2011) of the longitudinal effects of a religious family upbringing on church attendance. They, too, found that parental religiosity and especially parental church attendance are important predictors of juvenile church attendance.

However, being a religious role model may not be enough. As several U.S. studies have shown, the effectiveness of a religious family upbringing is enhanced by warm family relationships and an authoritative parenting style. As early as the beginning of the 1970s, Weigert and Thomas (1972) had observed a joint effect of parental support and control on a child's religiosity. A similar finding was reported by Dudley (1978), who found parental authoritarianism and harshness to be negative predictors of a child's religious commitment—even among conservative religious groups. Indeed, the propensity among conservative Protestants to spank and discipline children has a negative impact on religious transmission unless counterbalanced by warm parent-child relationships, which would imply conservative Protestant parents not only using more than average discipline but also praising and hugging their children more frequently (Wilcox, 1998), a phenomenon that Bartkowski (2007) called the conservative Protestant paradox. The importance of positive parent-child relationships in transmitting religion was also confirmed by studies by Myers (1996); Flor and Knapp (2001); and more recently by Abar, Carter, and Winsler (2009) and by Day et al. (2009). These latter studies in particular make it clear that the transmission of religion is facilitated by warm family relationships and a so-called authoritative parenting style—in other words, a combination of parental warmth and parental control.

Research has also shown that parental religiosity in itself may promote warm and positive family relationships. Parental church attendance and religious saliency may result in more cohesive family relationships, as reported by Brody, Stoneman, and Flor (1996); more particularly, it may strengthen mother-child relations (Pearce & Axinn, 1998). Such effects are especially likely if religious congruence already exists between parents and child (Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). Research suggests that, apart from general effects on the family climate, parental religiosity more specifically promotes an authoritative parenting style. This latter effect was found in studies by Gunnoe, Hetherington, and Reiss (1999) and by Snider, Clements, and Vazsonyi (2004). In these studies, parental religiosity was operationalized mainly as parental church attendance, but studies by Ellison and Sherkat (1993) and by Wilcox (1998) showed that parental religious beliefs, too, influence parent-child relations and parenting practices. Among conservative religious groups in particular, conservative theological orientations in parents tend to be more influential than mere churchgoing (Bartkowski, 2007). Next to religious beliefs, a spousal perception of their relationship as sacred may strengthen parent-child relations and influence parenting practices (Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003).

This brief overview of U.S. studies already goes to show that religion interacts with family functioning in different ways (cf. Mahoney et al., 2001, and Marks, 2006, for more extensive overviews). Parental religiosity may result in warm, positive parent–child relationships, which in turn may facilitate the transmission of religion between parents and child. The latter effect can be more fully explained by means of the distinction, put forward by Darling and Steinberg (1993; cf. also Grusec, 1997), between *parenting practices* and *parenting style*. Parenting practices refer to the actual behavior of parents toward their children—such as spanking, helping them with their homework, showing an active interest in their activities, and so forth. Parenting practices may be defined as specific behavior with a view to specific socialization goals. For instance, to parents who consider religious commitment to be an important goal, monitoring the children’s saying of their prayers or taking them to church might be appropriate parenting practices. According to Darling and Steinberg, however, the effectiveness of parenting practices in a child’s development is enhanced by parenting style—the general emotional climate in the family, which conveys the parents’ general feeling about the child. Style, according to Darling and Steinberg (1993), is “a constellation of attitudes toward the child that are communicated to the child and create an emotional climate in which the parents’ behaviors are expressed” (p. 493). Parenting style thus serves as a general emotional context that affects the relationship between specific parenting practices and specific developmental outcomes. This also implies that a particular emotional climate in the family will better promote the effectiveness of certain parenting practices in achieving specific socialization goals.

Steinberg (2001; cf. Hurrelmann, 2002, p. 162) claimed that an *authoritative parenting* style is especially beneficial in stimulating a child’s development. The three marks of authoritativeness are responsiveness, strict control, and the granting of psychological autonomy. Responsiveness refers to warmth or parental involvement, which makes the child more receptive to parental influences. Strict control implies active monitoring of the child’s activities and whereabouts, which promotes the development of self-regulatory skills and encourages the child to act responsibly and competently. Granting psychological autonomy means controlling the child’s behavior not by manipulative strategies but by reasoning, which also challenges children to develop their own opinions and beliefs. It is thus assumed that, by simultaneously expressing warmth, exercising control and granting psychological autonomy, parents establish an emotional climate favorable to the transmission of religion. Because authoritative parenting promotes a sphere of mutual compliance and cooperation between parents and child, the latter will be more willing to accept parental values (Grusec, 1997). For instance, taking one’s children to church or monitoring the saying of their prayers (parenting practice: *what*) will be more effective in strengthening their religious commitment (goal) if done in an authoritative rather than an authoritarian way (parenting style: *how*).

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION OF THE CURRENT STUDY

As the aforementioned U.S. studies show, parenting style may be an important and interesting factor in the transmission of religious beliefs and practices from parent to child. Nonetheless, although the transmission of religion has been the object of several empirical studies in the Netherlands and Belgium (e.g., Alma, 1999; Andree, 1983; De Hart, 1990; Hutsebaut, 1995; Jongsmā-Tieleman, 1991; Lanser-Van der Velde, 2000; Van der Slik, 1992; Vergouwen, 2001),

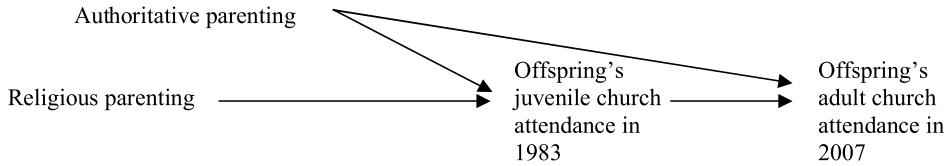


FIGURE 1 Conceptual model.

little explicit attention has been paid to parenting style. As far as we know, this issue has been addressed only in the studies of Jongsmā-Tieleman (1991), Vergouwen (2001), and Taris and Semin (1997)—and moreover, these latter Dutch researchers actually studied a British sample of mother–adolescent pairs. The findings are also far from uniform. Whereas Jongsmā-Tieleman reported weak positive effects of what she called a democratic parenting style on juvenile church attendance, Vergouwen also detected effects of authoritarian parenting, and Taris and Semin even found that a high quality of family interaction may affect a child’s religious commitment negatively if the mother’s religious commitment is low.

As in the U.S. studies just discussed, we wanted to know whether an authoritative parenting style enhances the effectiveness of religious parenting practices, using the offspring’s church attendance as an important criterion of religious commitment. To this end we used a panel dataset containing information about the respondents’ juvenile and adult church attendance. This has the additional advantage of indicating whether the possible effects of authoritative parenting last well into adulthood. In this way our study is designed to expand the as-yet limited and diffuse understanding of the role of parenting in the transmission of religion in the Dutch context. Indeed, given the marked differences between the Dutch and American religious landscapes, comparisons between the two may advance insights into potential culture-specific aspects of religious transmission. The current study addresses the following research question: *Does authoritative parenting affect the offspring’s adult and juvenile church attendance, over and above the effect of religious parenting practices?* This research question is illustrated in Figure 1.¹

METHOD

Participants

The present study partially replicates a study carried out by De Hart (1990) in 1983 into the religious and political activities of Dutch teenagers. De Hart carried out a random sample survey

¹In this study we consider the transmission of religion as a one-way process from parent to child. This is actually a rather limited perspective: Nowadays, especially, bidirectionality is stressed in socialization research. In other words, not only do parents influence children but children may also influence parents (Glass et al., 1986; Kohn, 1983). Because our main interest concerns the effect of parenting style on religious transmission, however, it seems justifiable to focus on parental influence and disregard bidirectionality. We have also disregarded the influence of peers, though this may be important in shaping the religiosity of teenagers (Gunnoe & Moore, 2002). The reason for disregarding it is simply that we lack information about peer influence. Unfortunately, no questions were asked about peers at the time when our respondents were first questioned as youngsters in 1983 (Wave 1).

among 3,532 Dutch secondary-school students who at that time were in the higher grades of preuniversity (VWO) or precollege (HAVO) programs. De Hart collected a sample that was considered representative of the whole population of higher grade VWO and HAVO students in the Netherlands. Using the old address file from 1983, 834 of these students were traced in 2006. In the first half of 2007 a questionnaire was sent to these 834 former participants, inquiring after several dimensions of their parental upbringing as well as their current religious beliefs and practices. By the end of July 2007, 474 completed questionnaires had been returned—a response rate of 56.8% relative to the 834 questionnaires we sent. This study thus includes 474 respondents, with an average age of 39.7 years, who were interviewed both in 1983 and in 2007. It is important to note that only those former students were contacted who had, in 1983, agreed in writing to participate in future research.

Because De Hart's original sample was considered representative of the whole population of higher grade VWO and HAVO students in the Netherlands, it is interesting to enquire whether the present subsample is still a random subsample of the original 1983 sample. Comparisons of gender, church attendance, and religious affiliation have revealed that this is not the case. Compared to the overall sample from 1983, our subsample in 2007 contains significantly more women and also more churchgoers than one would expect to find on the basis of the 1983 sample. Only when it comes to religious affiliation, the actual numbers of Dutch Reformed, Catholics, and Re-Reformed pretty well resemble the numbers expected on the basis of the 1983 sample.

Although De Hart's original sample was never intended to be representative of all Dutch secondary-school students of that time—it was only representative of those attending the higher levels of secondary education—it is still interesting to study the correspondence of our subsample with the Dutch population aged around 40.² This gives us a better insight into the specific profile of our subsample. To this end, comparisons were made of such general characteristics as gender, income, marital status, and education. We also, by comparing church attendance and religious affiliation, studied its correspondence with the general Dutch population in respect of involvement in institutional religion. Compared to the general Dutch population, then, in our subsample women are overrepresented, both the lowest and the highest income categories are overrepresented, marriage rates are higher, divorce rates lower, and the level of education much higher. In addition, our subsample also contains more churchgoers and, in particular, more Dutch Reformed.

As originally intended by De Hart, our subsample is representative of highly educated, native Dutch persons around 40 years of age. Generally speaking, this is the less religious part of the Dutch population, which is also very prone to religious disaffiliation (CBS, 2009). Hence the fact that our subsample contains an above-average number of churchgoers makes it a very suitable one for researching the possible impact of parenting on the preservation of religious commitment into adulthood. The other sociodemographic characteristics, which reveal the specific profile of our subsample when compared to the general Dutch population (gender, income, marital status, and education) are included in our analyses as controls.

²We used the data set of the study on Social and Cultural Trends in the Netherlands (SOCON) in 2000 and only compared respondents in the same age group as those in the subsample (Eisinga et al., 2000). With regard to the SOCON data set, this means that only respondents born between 1957 and 1962 ($N = 162$) were selected.

Measures

The same respondents were questioned in 1983 (Wave 1) and in 2007 (Wave 2). In 1983, De Hart (1990) questioned them about their religious affiliation, the religious upbringing given them by their parents, and their level of church attendance. Information regarding the parenting style of the respondents' parents, the respondents' adult church attendance and the sociodemographic control variables was collected in 2007 as part of the second wave.

Religious affiliation. In 1983 the respondents were asked to state their religious affiliation. The choice offered was 1 (*Catholic*), 2 (*Dutch Reformed*), 3 (*Re-Reformed*), 4 (*other Christian denomination*), 5 (*no affiliation*). We included religious affiliation because, as stated in the introduction, there is evidence that religious affiliation influences the child-rearing propensities of parents (Bartkowski, 2007; Ellison & Sherkat, 1993; Mahoney et al., 2001; Wilcox, 1998). In this respect we consider our respondents' religious affiliation as teenagers to be a valid indicator of the religious affiliation of their parents, which was not directly assessed in 1983. For further analyses, this variable was recoded into four dummy variables: Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Re-Reformed, and other Christian, with "no affiliation" as the reference category.

Religious parenting. Under this heading, several measures were used to determine the extent to which the respondents' upbringing had been a religious one. Given the importance attached to parental modeling in processes of religious transmission, paternal and maternal church attendance are pinpointed as important indicators. Here the questions posed were "How often does your father/mother attend church or religious services?" The response categories were 1 (*never*), 2 (*less than three times a year*), 3 (*once in two or three months*), 4 (*sometimes weeks in succession and sometimes not for weeks*), 5 (*less than twice a month*), 6 (*about twice a month*), and 7 (*at least three times a month*). Similarly, information regarding Bible reading and prayer in the family was considered important. The questions posed were "Are Bible reading/saying grace habitual practices in your family?" For both questions, the response scale ran from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*). Given the overlap with regard to content and the relatively strong association ($r = .56, p < .000$) between these questions, they were combined into a single variable labeled "Religious practices in the family." Apart from visible religious behavior and practices in the family, the child's perception of parents as religious persons is also a crucial one in the religious transmission process (Alma, 1999; Hutsebaut, 1995). In this regard we took the religious saliency of the father and mother as indicators, together with the importance they attached to the religious upbringing of their children. Saliency was measured by means of the question, "Is religion an important factor in the life of your father/mother?" The question used to determine the importance of a religious upbringing was "Is religious education an important factor in your family?" The response scale for all three questions ran from 1 (*of no importance*) to 5 (*very important*). Finally, we considered two other vital aspects of religious transmission: the degree of religious agreement between parents and child and the degree of religious autonomy granted. We included these aspects following an insight of Grusec (1997; cf. also Grusec & Davidov, 2008; Grusec & Goodnow, 1994) who found, in the field of moral education, that moral values are more successfully transmitted if the child feels them to be self-generated rather than imposed from the outside. As regards religion, the first aspect was measured by the following question: "Do you agree with your parents in matters of religion?"

The second aspect was measured by asking, “Do your parents leave you free to choose your own religious beliefs?” For both questions the scale ran from 1 (*absolutely not*) to 5 (*absolutely*).

In sum: Under the heading *religious parenting*, the following information, gathered in 1983, is considered indicative of a religious family upbringing: paternal and maternal church attendance, the frequency of religious practices (Bible reading and prayer) in the family, religious saliency of the father and the mother, the importance parents attached to a religious upbringing, religious agreement between parents and child, and the degree of religious autonomy granted to the child.

Respondents' juvenile and adult church attendance. The respondents' church attendance as youngsters in 1983 and as adults in 2007 was measured by the following question: “How often do you go to church or attend religious services?” The response categories were 1 (*never*), 2 (*less than three times a year*), 3 (*once in two or three months*), 4 (*sometimes weeks in succession and sometimes not for weeks*), 5 (*less than twice a month*), 6 (*about twice a month*), and 7 (*at least three times a month*).

Authoritative parenting. Authoritative parenting was assessed in retrospect. To enhance the validity of the procedure, the questionnaire urged respondents to cast their minds back and consider very carefully how closely each item applied to their own upbringing. We used an instrument devised by Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn, and Dornbusch (1991; cf. also Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994), which consists of three measures assessing the three dimensions of authoritative parenting: responsiveness (warmth), strict control (firmness), and psychological autonomy. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which the respondents perceived their parents as caring and supportive. This dimension was measured in terms of 12 items such as, “My parents showed that they loved me” (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$). Strict control or firmness concerns the extent to which the respondents' parents used to monitor their children's whereabouts. Five items were used to measure this dimension, such as, “If you went out on a Saturday night, did your parents want to know where you were going?” (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$). Finally, psychological autonomy concerns the extent to which respondents perceived their parents as nonmanipulative and noncoercive, allowing their offspring to express individuality in the family. This dimension was measured in terms of eight items such as, “My parents were aloof and unfriendly if I did something they did not like” (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$). The response scales for responsiveness and psychological control varied from 1 (*completely inapplicable*) to 5 (*completely applicable*) and for strict control from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*).

According to the original protocol of Steinberg et al. (1991), the scores on these three scales, with psychological autonomy scored in reverse, should be combined to construct a single measure of authoritativeness. Following this protocol, respondents are raised authoritatively if they score above the sample median on all three scales and nonauthoritatively if they score below the sample median on any of the scales. However, this is a rather rough measure of authoritativeness, leading to a loss of information concerning the relationship between responsiveness, strict control, and psychological autonomy and the offspring's church attendance. We therefore decided not to construct a single measure of authoritativeness but to use the scales separately as three distinct dimensions of authoritative parenting. Instead of using a typological dichotomy (authoritative or not), we use a dimensional conceptualisation (responsiveness, strict

control, and psychological autonomy) of authoritative parenting as advocated by, for instance, Snider et al. (2004).

Control variables. As already stated, this study includes the following control variables: gender, marital status, income, and education. Respondents could record their marital status as 1 (*married*), 2 (*not married, single*), 3 (*living with a partner to whom one is not married*), and 4 (*divorced*). This variable was recoded into three dummy variables with “divorced” as the reference category. Income was measured by the question “What is your monthly income?” The response scale ran from 1 (*less than 2,000 Euro*) to 8 (*more than 5,000 Euro*). Finally, education was measured by means of the question “What is the highest level of secondary education you completed?” Here the response scale varied from 1 (*junior general secondary education/MAVO*) to 6 (*university*).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Correlational Analyses

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics regarding the aforementioned variables. The figures show that, on average, the respondents were raised in a moderately religious environment. Their parents attended church on an irregular basis, and Bible reading and prayer were certainly not daily activities in most families. However, given the high standard deviations, differences between families may be large. Despite these modest levels of religious activity, according to the respondents themselves religion was not unimportant to their parents and certainly not to their mothers. Similarly, respondents report that their parents did not consider their religious upbringing unimportant. But again, differences between families may be large given the fairly high standard deviations. Similarly, there was not much religious conflict in the families, as the respondents generally agreed with their parents in matters of religion and reported that they were granted religious autonomy. As regards their own religious commitment, more than 45% of the respondents stated that even as youngsters in 1983 they had no religious affiliation and reported a level of church attendance much lower than that of their parents—hence a modest level of church attendance, which decreased further over the next 24 years. When it comes to the dimensions of authoritative parenting, respondents in general perceived their parents as caring and supportive, monitoring their whereabouts and also allowing them to express their individuality in the family. Table 2 presents the bivariate correlations between the core variables of this study. It shows the respondents’ juvenile church attendance to be strongly associated with church attendance by the father ($r = .77, p < .001$) and mother ($r = .80, p < .001$), with religious activities in the family ($r = .62, p < .001$), with the religious saliency of the father ($r = .56, p < .001$) and mother ($r = .59, p < .001$), and with the importance attached by parents to a religious family upbringing ($r = .67, p < .001$). Furthermore, juvenile church attendance is weakly associated with religious agreement between parents and child ($r = .11, p < .05$) as well as with responsiveness ($r = .10, p < .05$). Thus a warm, loving relationship with one’s parents is positively though weakly associated with juvenile church attendance. However, there is also a negative relationship between juvenile church attendance and the degree of religious autonomy granted ($r = -.44, p < .001$). This could indicate that juvenile church attendance is

TABLE 1
Descriptives

<i>Core Variables</i>	<i>Wave</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Religious affiliation					
Catholic	1	25.9			
Dutch Reformed	1	13.1			
Re-Reformed	1	10.1			
Other Christian	1	4.2			
No affiliation	1	45.9			
Respondents' church attendance					
Juvenile church attendance	1		1–7	3.60	2.47
Adult church attendance	2		1–7	2.33	1.73
Religious parenting					
Church attendance (father)	1		1–7	4.17	2.59
Church attendance (mother)	1		1–7	4.42	2.54
Religious practices in the family	1		1–5	2.50	1.56
Religious saliency (father)	1		1–5	3.34	1.38
Religious saliency (mother)	1		1–5	3.54	1.26
Importance of religious upbringing	1		1–5	3.05	1.31
Religious agreement parents–child	1		1–5	3.39	0.93
Religious autonomy granted	1		1–5	4.18	0.93
Authoritative parenting					
Reponsiveness	2		1–5	3.67	0.54
Strict control	2		1–5	3.72	0.98
Psychological autonomy	2		1–5	3.63	0.63
<i>Control Variables</i>					
Female	1	58.0			
Married	2	63.0			
Not married (single)	2	10.0			
Living together	2	23.0			
Divorced	2	3.0			
Income	2		1–8	3.76	2.48
Education	2		1–6	4.91	1.28

Note. Wave 1: Variable measured in 1983; Wave 2: Variable measured in 2007.

in part a matter of parental coercion—an interpretation supported by the fact that the granting of religious autonomy is negatively related to paternal ($r = -.51, p < .001$) and maternal ($r = -.50, p < .001$) church attendance. In other words: the more frequently parents attend church, the less religious autonomy they grant their children, perhaps forcing them to attend church.

Most of these variables, with the exception of responsiveness, were also significantly associated with the respondents' adult church attendance. However, the strength of the associations clearly decreased with the years, indicating a declining effect of the respondents' religious upbringing as they mature.

Finally, as regards the three dimensions of authoritative parenting, these are largely unrelated to the aspects of religious parenting. Only three associations are statistically significant. First, there is a weak association between strict control and the importance attached by parents to

TABLE 2
Pearson Correlations (*r*)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Juvenile church attendance	—												
2. Adult church attendance	.47***	—											
3. Church attendance (father)	.77***	.37***	—										
4. Church attendance (mother)	.80***	.36***	.89***	—									
5. Religious practices in the family	.62***	.37***	.62***	.61***	—								
6. Religious saliency (father)	.56***	.29***	.73***	.62***	.55***	—							
7. Religious saliency (mother)	.59***	.28***	.66***	.70***	.55***	.79***	—						
8. Importance of religious upbringing	.67***	.34***	.68***	.67***	.64***	.77***	.77**	—					
9. Religious agreement parents-child	.11*	.14**	-.12**	-.14**	.04	-.14**	-.13**	-.04	—				
10. Religious autonomy granted	-.44***	-.13**	-.51***	-.50***	-.32***	-.34***	-.38***	-.47***	.27***	—			
11. Responsiveness	.10*	.02	.02	.04	.05	.04	.06	.04	.19***	.07	—		
12. Strict control	.05	-.06	.01	-.04	.04	.06	.04	.10*	.00	-.08	-.07	—	
13. Psychological autonomy	.00	.02	-.05	-.02	-.02	-.06	-.03	-.05	.19**	.15**	.66***	-.26***	—

Note. Several correlations are very high, which increases the danger of multicollinearity in the subsequent analyses. We decided nonetheless not to collapse variables into more composite scales. Conceptually there is a difference, we believe, between parental church attendance as an instance of religious modeling, the practice of religious activities in the family, and the way a child perceives its parents' religious commitment. These aspects of parental religiosity may have different effects on their offspring's church attendance (cf., e.g., Gunnoe & Moore, 2002; Myers, 1996), which could be overlooked by using composite scales. Similarly, we decided not to combine paternal and maternal church attendance or religious saliency into composite scales for parental church attendance or parental religious saliency. Although the correlations between these variables are high ($r = .89, p < .001$, and $r = .79, p < .001$, respectively), the use of composite scales would prevent us from detecting possible differences between the two parents' influence on their offspring's church attendance. A final reason for not using composite scales is that none of the correlations is above the critical value of .90. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$; $***p < .001$.

the religious upbringing of their children ($r = .10, p < .05$). This shows that, in proportion to the importance parents attach to the religious upbringing of their children, they are also more interested in monitoring the children's whereabouts. Furthermore, the granting of religious autonomy is positively associated with responsiveness ($r = .19, p < .001$) and psychological autonomy ($r = .19, p < .01$). These associations show that families where children are allowed to choose their own religious beliefs are also characterized by warmer and more loving as well as less manipulative relationships between parents and child. At the same time, however, these high-quality family relationships seem to be associated with lower levels of church attendance among children, because religious autonomy is negatively associated with juvenile church attendance.

Multivariate Analyses

To continue our exploration of whether the dimensions of authoritative parenting help to explain variance in juvenile and adult church attendance, regression analyses were conducted. First we studied the determinants of the respondents' juvenile church attendance in 1983. Table 3 presents the results of hierarchical linear regression analysis. Religious affiliation was entered in the first block; paternal and maternal church attendance in the second block; religious family practices, religious saliency, the importance of a religious upbringing, religious agreement between parents and child, and religious autonomy were entered in the third block; and the three dimensions of authoritative parenting in the fourth block. Gender, the only relevant control variable for juvenile church attendance, was entered in the fifth block but did not add additional explained variance. We therefore report the uncontrolled results only.

In line with earlier findings by Vermeer et al. (2011), juvenile churchgoing depends mainly on maternal church attendance and to a lesser degree on paternal church attendance. This confirms a basic insight established in many previous studies: that religious modeling is essential in the transmission of religion. Next to religious modeling, involvement in a religious community is an important factor as well as making the child aware of the importance one attaches to a religious upbringing. Finally, juvenile church attendance is enhanced by religious agreement between parents and child. The religious saliency of parents and the maintenance of religious practices in the family do not seem to matter in this respect. Surprisingly, there is no significant effect of authoritative parenting over and above religious modeling. None of the three dimensions of authoritative parenting contributed to explain juvenile church attendance.

Table 4 presents the results of the hierarchical linear regression for adult church attendance in 2007. The variables were entered in almost the same order as for the regression for juvenile church attendance, except that juvenile church attendance was entered as an additional independent variable in the second block. The fifth block now contained all the control variables. Once again, entering the control variables in the fifth block did not add additional variance. Therefore only the uncontrolled results are reported in Table 4.

The results clearly show that juvenile church attendance is the most powerful determinant of adult church attendance. Being affiliated to a Christian community as a teenager also contributes to adult church attendance (Model 1), but this effect almost completely disappears as soon as juvenile church attendance is brought into the equation (Model 2). The only people who differ from the reference category are members of the Dutch Reformed Church. All other religious variables, including paternal and maternal church attendance, are insignificant, confirming that

TABLE 3
 Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis for Juvenile Church Attendance in 1983

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
No affiliation (reference category)				
Catholic	.52 ^a *** (2.87) ^b	.22*** (1.20)	.19*** (1.07)	.19*** (1.07)
Dutch Reformed	.41*** (2.75)	.22*** (1.46)	.14*** (0.93)	.14*** (0.96)
Re-Reformed	.56*** (4.44)	.27*** (2.15)	.19*** (1.49)	.19*** (1.52)
Other Christian	.32*** (3.47)	.14*** (1.47)	.09** (0.95)	.09** (0.99)
Church attendance (father)		.22** (0.21)	.19** (0.18)	.20** (0.19)
Church attendance (mother)		.44*** (0.43)	.39*** (0.38)	.39*** (0.34)
Religious practices in the family			.09* (0.14)	.08 (0.13)
Religious saliency (father)			-.04 (-0.06)	-.04 (-0.07)
Religious saliency (mother)			-.04 (-0.07)	-.04 (-0.07)
Importance of religious upbringing			.14** (0.28)	.14** (0.27)
Religious agreement parents-child			.15*** (0.41)	.15*** (0.38)
Religious autonomy granted			-.06 (-0.14)	-.06 (-0.15)
Responsiveness				.04 (0.18)
Strict control				.04 (0.10)
Psychological autonomy				.01 (0.03)
Constant	2.06	0.14	-0.91	-1.92
Adj. R^2	.44	.72	.75	.76
N	359	359	359	359

Note. ^aStandardized regression coefficient (β); ^bUnstandardized coefficient (B);
 * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, and *** $p < .001$.

the effect of parental modeling does not last until adulthood. Next to religious affiliation and juvenile churchgoing, there is also a weak negative effect of strict control. Those whose whereabouts as youngsters were more strictly monitored by their parents are less likely to go to church as adults. The other dimensions of authoritative parenting are insignificant in predicting adult church attendance. In sum, those who went to church as youngsters and those whose parents did not strictly monitor their whereabouts are the most likely to continue attending church as adults.

TABLE 4
Hierarchical Linear Regression Analysis for Adult Church Attendance in 2007

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
No affiliation (reference category)				
Catholic	.25 ^{a,***} (1.00) ^b	.05 (0.18)	.06 (0.23)	.05 (0.21)
Dutch Reformed	.33 ^{***} (1.60)	.17 ^{**} (0.83)	.14 [*] (0.67)	.13 [*] (0.62)
Re-Reformed	.29 ^{***} (1.67)	.06 (0.36)	.03 (0.16)	.02 (0.10)
Other Christian	.21 ^{***} (1.65)	.08 (0.65)	.07 (0.53)	.06 (0.45)
Church attendance (father)		.14 (0.09)	.08 (0.06)	.09 (0.06)
Church attendance (mother)		-.13 (-0.09)	-.09 (-0.06)	-.12 (-0.09)
Juvenile church attendance		.41 ^{***} (0.30)	.37 ^{***} (0.27)	.38 ^{***} (0.28)
Religious practices in the family			.09 (0.10)	.10 (0.12)
Religious saliency (father)			.07 (0.10)	.07 (0.10)
Religious saliency (mother)			-.03 (-0.04)	-.03 (-0.05)
Importance of religious upbringing			-.01 (-0.01)	.01 (0.01)
Religious agreement parents-child			.06 (0.11)	.06 (0.11)
Religious autonomy granted			.04 (0.08)	.04 (0.07)
Responsiveness				-.02 (-0.07)
Strict control				-.11 [*] (-0.20)
Psychological autonomy				-.01 (-0.02)
Constant	1.63	1.03	0.13	1.20
Adj. R^2	.15	.24	.24	.24
N	348	348	348	348

Note. ^aStandardized regression coefficient (β); ^bUnstandardized coefficient (B);
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, and *** $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

In this study we addressed the question, Does authoritative parenting have an additional effect on the juvenile and adult church attendance of offspring over and above the effect of religious parenting practices? This question, we find, has a negative answer. Our analyses showed that

juvenile churchgoing by offspring depended mainly on parental and more specifically maternal modeling, whereas their adult church attendance was mainly an effect of juvenile church attendance. Thus, youngsters whose mothers went to church were more likely to become churchgoers themselves, whereas those who went to church as youngsters were more likely to continue going to church as adults. But this process of religious transmission was not influenced by parenting style. None of the three dimensions of authoritative parenting contributed to the variance in juvenile church attendance, whereas there was only a weak negative effect of strict control on adult church attendance. However, the latter is more likely to be a negative effect of authoritarian parenting—that is, parents relying only on strictness rather than on authoritative parenting, which is understood in this study as combining the three dimensions warmth, control, and psychological autonomy. No simultaneous effect of these three dimensions on the offspring's church attendance was observed. At least with regard to our sample of highly educated, native Dutch persons around 40 years of age, the study does not corroborate the idea that an authoritative parenting style promotes the transmission of religion. How do we account for this finding?

In the first place, the effect of parenting style might be seen as relative to the influence of other factors. Although several U.S. studies pointed to a positive association between the quality of the parent-child relationship and the child's religiosity, other studies revealed that this association almost disappears or becomes nonsignificant when the influence of parental church attendance (Hoge & Petrillo, 1978) or peer religiosity (Gunnøe & Moore, 2002) is taken into account. As these latter studies showed, religious role models—be they parents or peers—are far better determinants of youthful church attendance than the quality of the parent-child relationship or parenting style. Clearly, our finding corroborates these latter studies and thus could be interpreted as further evidence for the importance of parental modeling as against the importance of parenting style when it comes to the transmission of religion.

This still does not explain why even the correlational analysis barely shows any significant correlations between the dimensions of authoritative parenting and the offspring's church attendance (cf. Table 2). This is a rather unexpected result. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), children are most likely to imitate those models with whom they sympathize and identify. Consequently we would expect to find several strong bivariate correlations between the church attendance of offspring and the three dimensions of authoritative parenting, but clearly we did not. This leads us to reflect on the dependent variable of our study: church attendance.

Church attendance is only one aspect of religion and therefore only one out of various aspects of religious transmission. Troll and Bengtson (1979) pointed out that parent-child agreement with regard to religion may relate to three different elements: religious affiliation, religious beliefs, and religious behavior. They also showed that the level of parent-child agreement differs with regard to these elements. Consequently the effect of authoritative parenting may well relate to other aspects of the offspring's religiosity rather than to mere church attendance. The fact that we found no effect of authoritative parenting might be due to the specific operationalization of religion in terms of church attendance that characterizes our study. In her study of religious transmission in Dutch families, Vergouwen (2001), for instance, focused on the relationship between certain aspects of parenting and the "religious style" of the youngsters. She found that authoritative parenting especially endorses autonomous-reflexive faith; authoritarian parenting is more likely to nurture synthetic-conventional faith.

Whereas synthetic-conventional faith involves the uncritical and conformist adoption of the community's faith, autonomous-reflexive faith involves the critical evaluation of prior beliefs to achieve a personal appropriation of a religious tradition (cf. also Fowler, 1981). An authoritative parenting style might therefore result in intrinsic and self-regulated religion rather than church attendance—particularly in the Netherlands, where the link between church membership and religious orthodoxy became stronger after 1985 (Becker & De Hart, 2006). Moreover, Dutch church attendance dropped significantly as from 1970, so that our respondents grew up in a cultural climate where regular church attendance was the exception rather than the rule. It is not improbable that those respondents who in 1983 still went to church regularly were more or less forced to do so by their parents, which is not in accord with an authoritative parenting style. Hence it is possible that our respondents grew up in a cultural epoch in which commitment to the church was not really compatible with an authoritative parenting style geared to self-determination and self-regulation (Abar et al., 2009); bear in mind the negative associations we found between the degree of religious autonomy granted, on one hand, and juvenile church attendance and most other aspects of religious parenting, on the other (cf. Table 2). This much, at least, is clear: The place that institutionalized religion occupies in the lives of Dutch as opposed to American teenagers is so different (cf., e.g., Bartkowski, 2007, for a portrayal of American teenagers) that this might in part explain why the facilitating role of authoritative parenting in the transmission of religion is so different for Dutch and American samples.

The considerations just presented relate mostly to juvenile church attendance. As regards adult church attendance, the absence of any effect of authoritative parenting might be further explained by the fact that the overall influence of parents on children declines as the children grow up. For instance, Glass et al. (1986) found that the importance of parental attitudes as determinants of children's attitudes with regard to politics, gender issues, and religion decreases with age, whereas the importance of inherited social status increases slightly. That is to say, as the child matures, similarity in attitude between parents and child is not so much a matter of socialization as of the child sharing his or her parents' social status and accepting the accompanying values. Similarly, studying the effect of family processes on adolescent religiosity, Day et al. (2009) recently found that the magnitude of this effect already differs when 16-year-olds are compared with 20-year-olds. Despite many points of difference from our own study, studies like these clearly show that the lasting influence of family socialization processes on the development of a child cannot be taken for granted. From this perspective, then, it is not so surprising that the various aspects of both religious and authoritative parenting hardly predicted additional variability in adult church attendance.

Finally, to conclude this article, we should note two limitations of our study that might help to explain why we observed no effect of authoritative parenting on the church attendance of offspring. First, we used only one-source and retrospective data. That is to say, we questioned children only to assess their parents' parenting style, and as part of our longitudinal research design we did this in retrospect. In 1983 no information was collected concerning parenting style, and so we were forced to do this in 2007. Although we explicitly instructed our respondents to cast their minds back and reflect on the way their parents raised them, it is a moot point whether we really succeeded in capturing the emotional climate of their family upbringing 24 years ago. Although it is not uncommon to use one-source and/or retrospective data in socialization research of this kind (cf. Abar et al., 2009, or Snider et al., 2004), Myers

(1996) and also Flor and Knapp (2001) have been rather critical of this procedure and claimed that one-source and retrospective data may invalidate research findings. The second limitation concerns our sample. As already noted, it specifically represents highly educated, native Dutch persons around 40 years of age, that is, the less religious part of the Dutch population, which is also more prone to religious disaffiliation. Consequently, although our sample contains an above-average number of churchgoers for this part of the Dutch population, it may still be too secular for studying the role of parenting style in religious transmission processes in the Dutch context. Perhaps a more religious sample of, for instance, orthodox Christians or Muslims might be more appropriate in this regard. At this point, all we can do is acknowledge these possible limitations and concede that a certain amount of measurement bias as well as a too-secular sample might be part of the reason why we established no effect of authoritative parenting on church attendance.

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