Parental involvement in partner choice: The case of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands

Pascale I. van Zantvliet, *Tilburg University*

Matthijs Kalmijn, *Tilburg University*

Ellen Verbakel, *Tilburg University*

Abstract

This study contributes to previous research on partner choice by providing more insight into third party influence. More specifically, the study aims to describe and explain parental involvement among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands. Analysis of the large scale national data of the Netherlands Longitudinal Life-course Study (NELLS) shows that parental involvement is modest among Turkish and Moroccan, but relatively high when compared to levels of parental involvement among the native Dutch. Furthermore, analyses reveal variation within the Turkish and Moroccan group. Our study shows that more independent children are less likely to experience parental involvement and that parental involvement is lower in dating and cohabitation. Furthermore, our study suggests that parental involvement has several consequences for the life course, including the type of partner that is chosen and union development.

Keywords: Mate selection, Parental influence, Intermarriage, Immigrants

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Introduction

The choice of a partner is a decision affecting many aspects of life. Not surprisingly, scholars have focused on the mate selection process. The sociological literature on partner choice has pointed to opportunities, preferences and the influence of third parties as explanatory factors of partner choice (Kalmijn, 1998). While considerable research has been devoted to the effect of opportunities and preferences, rather few studies have empirically tested to what extent third parties, such as family and friends, influence partner choice. Yet, third party influence has been an important explanation for high rates of endogamy and, in particular, for the high endogamy rates within ethnic minority groups (Kalmijn and Van Tubergen, 2010; Van Tubergen and Maas, 2007). Therefore, parental involvement may be an obstacle for integration of ethnic minorities in the host society.

In this paper, we examine factors explaining parental involvement in the partner choice of Turkish and Moroccan immigrant groups in the Netherlands. Similar to most other Western societies, partner choice in the Netherlands is generally considered to be an autonomous choice, in which parents have no decision power (Buunk *et al.*, 2010). However, even in Western societies, parental involvement may be common in certain ethnic groups, such as the Indians in the US (Khandelwal, 2002). Qualitative studies suggest that a similar pattern occurs for Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands (Hooghiemstra, 2003; Sterckx and Bouw, 2005).

High parental involvement for Turkish and Moroccan immigrants could be expected given that parental involvement in partner choice was traditionally high in Turkey and Morocco (Fox, 1975; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 1995; Sterckx and Bouw, 2005; Timmerman *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, the majority of the first generation immigrants came from rural regions, where parental involvement was particularly high (Fox, 1975). The first question we will address in this study is to what extent parents have been involved in the partner choice of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands. Quantitative Dutch studies that answer this descriptive question are very rare; one exception (Esveldt and Schoorl, 1998) supported the claim of parental involvement by reporting that in 1994 almost 40

per cent of the marriages of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants living in the Netherlands was arranged by the parents. We improve upon previous studies by using a more recent, large scale national dataset – the Netherlands Longitudinal Life-course Study (NELLS) – which contains data about partner choice and parental involvement among natives and first and second generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands (De Graaf *et al.*, 2010b).

Our second question is how we can explain variation in parental involvement within the Turkish and Moroccan group? The answer to this question increases our understanding of who is most likely to experience parental involvement, and hence, to be supposedly most likely to form a union with an in-group partner. We will examine characteristics of the parents, child, and the union. An interesting feature of this study is the explicit introduction of dating unions and cohabitation. It has been suggested that parental involvement is lower for dating (Joyner and Kao, 2005) and cohabitation (Kogan, 2010) compared to marriage. If this is indeed true, parental involvement in partner choice becomes relevant in life course research. If dating unions go together with weaker parental control and hence are more likely to be exogamous, later – and more serious – steps in the relational career are also more likely to be exogamous.

The family, marriage and spouse selection

Before turning to our hypotheses, we will sketch the workings of parental involvement in partner choice in general and of Turks and Moroccans in particular. Parents can organize their influence in two ways. The first is to control the process that eventually results in the selection of the partner. This can be done directly by arranging the marriage and indirectly, for instance, by constraining the meeting opportunities of their child with potential partners. A second method is to use sanctions if the partner that is chosen by their child does not meet their approval. Traditionally, Turks and Moroccans opted for the first method. A study conducted in Turkey in 1966 suggests that approximately three quarters of first marriages had been arranged (Fox, 1975).

The choice of Turks and Moroccans to control the process of mate selection rather than sanctioning partner choice is related to their adherence to the rules of the Islam and the importance of

the family (Milewski and Hamel, 2010). Since the Islam only allows sex within marriage, unions other than marriage are not accepted because they pose a threat to remaining a virgin until marriage. As a result, early marriage is encouraged to limit temptations. This implies that the choice for a partner generally is a definite choice with long term consequences for the couple as well as their family. Marriage binds two families (Timmerman, Lodewyckx and Wets, 2009). Because family ties and family solidarity are highly valued by Turks and Moroccans (Merz *et al.*, 2009), it is very important that both families agree with the spouse choice and this motivates Turkish and Moroccan parents to control the mate selection process.

We will briefly describe how parents control was traditionally manifested in the mate selection process. We rely on ethnographic and quantitative studies conducted in the country of origin (Davis and Davis, 1989; Tekçe, 2004)and on interviews with Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands (Brouwer, 1997; Hooghiemstra, 2003; Sterckx and Bouw, 2005; Timmerman, Lodewyckx and Wets, 2009). In both the Turkish and Moroccan culture, parents search a respectable partner for their son or daughter. Marriage negotiations are usually initiated by the father of the groom once a respectable partner is found. During the negotiation period, the future bride and groom are allowed to get to know each other as long as a chaperone is present. If either the future bride or groom opposes the marriage, the father can be informed. However, even though they have the right to make their opinion known and the father can take their opinion into consideration, they have no right of choice. The final decision about the marriage is made by the father. The period of engagement may last for a few weeks or several years. In this period of engagement, the couple enters a civil marriage and Muslims have a wedding ceremony conducted by the imam. The wedding feast marks the moment that the couple is truly considered husband and wife. Only afterwards are the newlyweds allowed to spend the wedding night together.

There are limited ways in which children can oppose to a forced marriage. For the future bride these include running away with her boyfriend or getting pregnant. These alternatives do, however, come at a cost. Girls whose virginity can no longer be guaranteed face bad prospects on the marriage market. Families may sanction the girl's action by disowning her, breaking off contact, or, in extreme

cases, killing the girl to protect the family honour (Brouwer, 1997). The high costs of these alternatives will often prevent girls from using them. Less is known about the ways in which future grooms can obstruct a forced marriage. The costs of obstructing a forced marriage are probably mainly financial and social.

Theory and hypotheses

The occurrence of parental involvement in partner choice may be understood by considering the purpose of parental involvement, the importance of realizing this purpose, and the likelihood that parental involvement is effective. We will elaborate on each of these factors by discussing parental preferences, union type, and child's independence.

Parental preferences

Parental involvement in partner choice is motivated by parents' preference for certain characteristics of their child's partner. The literature on intermarriage suggests that parents generally prefer a partner from their own ethnic group in order to maintain homogeneity and internal cohesion of the group (Kalmijn, 1998). Relationships between the parents and the partner and in-laws are more easily established, because communication and communal activity is facilitated when interacting with similar others (McPherson *et al.*, 2001). The successful establishment of these relationships contributes to the continuity of the parent-child relationship (Sussman, 1953) and to the cohesion of the group in general. Furthermore, an endogamous union ensures the intergenerational transmission of values and norms. Parental preferences for an ingroup partner may also arise from pressures from the ethnic community in which endogamous marriages are more respected than exogamous marriages. Consequently, the choice of an outgroup partner is accompanied by the loss of a good family name. To avoid this, parents exercise control to ensure that the child marries within the group.

We expect that integration in Dutch society weakens parents' preferences for endogamy. Structural integration, indicated by a higher level of education and participation in the labour market, as well as cultural integration, indicated by the adoption of Dutch customs and abandoning customs

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from the country of origin, indicate that the social distance between immigrants and natives is relatively small. In that case, choosing an ingroup partner is less important. In addition, pressure from the ethnic community is less effective because integrated parents will receive support from out-group members. In sum, we expect that because of weaker endogamy preferences, *parental involvement in partner choice is lower when parents are well-integrated (Hypothesis 1).*

Union type

Next, parental involvement is expected to depend on the type of union. Endogamy preferences might be stronger for marriage than for dating or cohabitation. Several studies have confirmed a so-called winnowing process, in which unions become more homogamous if relationships develop into union types that are characterized by a higher level of commitment (i.e., from dating to cohabitation to marriage) (Blackwell and Lichter, 2000; Blackwell and Lichter, 2004; Schoen and Weinick, 1993). Blackwell and Lichter (2000) argued that levels of homogamy in cohabitation are lower, because cohabitation is used as a means to evaluate potential marriage candidates. However, this does not explain why exogamy is also higher among the large group of cohabiters who view cohabitation as an alternative to marriage instead of a precursor to marriage (Smock, 2000).

We propose an alternative explanation for this winnowing process. Cohabitation, and to an even greater extent marriage, will be regarded as more permanent unions. This long term horizon means there is more at stake and this will intensify the importance of controlling partner choice. From the parents' point of view, the 'risks' associated to cohabitation and marriage include stronger judgment by the community and, perhaps more importantly, the likelihood of offspring. Following the norm of endogamy ensures approval of the community and the intergenerational transmission of customs and traditions. Our hypothesis reads *parental involvement is highest for marriages, lower for cohabitation, and lowest for dating unions (Hypothesis 2).*

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Independence

A third set of factors explaining variation in parental involvement is related to the characteristics of the child, which partly determine whether parental involvement will succeed. Partner choice remains – at least to some extent – a matter of the children themselves. Some children prefer more autonomy (i.e., in this study, decisional independence (Van Petegem *et al.*, 2012)) than other children, for instance because they believe that parental authority is no longer legitimate (Kuhn and Laird, 2011). At the same time, a preference for autonomy needs to be accompanied by the capacity to make decisions without having to consult others. Some children may be better able to prevent and refuse the participation of their parents in their partner selection process than others. In sum, the degree to which children prefer autonomy and have the capabilities to make independent decisions affect the likelihood that they will actually experience parental involvement in the choice of their partner. In subsequent paragraphs, we develop more specific hypotheses. We set out how several individual characteristics of the child promote preferences and ability for autonomy and, thus, decrease parental involvement.

The literature on autonomy consistently shows an increase with age (Bosma *et al.*, 1996; Smetana, 1988). An important developmental period in this respect is the period between adolescence and adulthood, the so-called independent life stage (Rosenfeld and Kim, 2005) or emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). During this period, the child is increasingly expected to take responsibility for one's actions, to make independent decisions, and to become financially independent (Arnett, 2000). Children who enter marriage at a young age are more dependent upon their parents at the moment of partner selection and this increases parental power to be involved in their partner choice (Goode, 1963). Such an association is illustrated by the young age, especially of women, when entering arranged marriages (Fox, 1975) and the low average age at first marriage in societies where arranged marriages are common (Desai and Andrist, 2010; Dixon, 1971). Correspondingly, we hypothesize that *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans whose union started at a later age (Hypothesis 3).* An alternative explanation for such an association is that entering a union at a young age may also be a consequence of third party influence. Unfortunately, this causality problem cannot be resolved with the data used here. We will keep this in mind when interpreting the results.

Independent decision making is also related to the opportunities of family members to monitor a child's behaviour. A partner can be chosen more freely in case the family has no or few opportunities to monitor and interfere in this choice. This is illustrated by Rosenfeld and Kim (2005) who show that living independently and further away from one's parents and the community where one grew up increases the likelihood of entering a non-traditional union. In line with this argument of fewer monitoring and increased independence, we expect that *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans who have no family living in the Netherlands (Hypothesis 4).*

Education is an important resource in gaining independence, because education enhances the independence of children in several ways. First, education provides a child with skills and knowledge. These skills and knowledge allow for gaining financial independence and foster an independent outlook (Thornton *et al.*, 1984). They provide a child with the ability to convincingly question norms and traditions, such as the participation of parents in partner choice. Besides, because of these skills and knowledge, parents have more confidence that their children make responsible choices, which relaxes parental monitoring. Second, school attendance exposes children to activities and ideas that are not controlled by the family. For example, children read about individual participation in partner choice. Such learning experiences create greater independence between children and the parental generation (Thornton and Fricke, 1987) and affect attitudes by becoming more supportive of individual participation in union formation (Barber, 2004). Third, schools offer opportunities to interact with potential partners, which may stimulate greater self-participation in partner choice (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). In sum, we hypothesize that *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans who have attained a higher level of education (Hypothesis 5).*

Finally, social networks play a role in becoming more independent from one's parents. Dutch friends are likely to endorse the Western ideal of autonomous partner choice both in their attitudes and their behaviour (Buunk, Park and Duncan, 2010). This may promote children's preferences for more autonomy in their partner choice. In addition, Dutch friends may provide support for refusing parental involvement and for dealing with the consequences of refusal. These arguments lead us to expect that *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans who have Dutch friends (Hypothesis 6).*

Data and methods

Data

The hypotheses are tested using the Netherlands Life Course Survey (NELLS) (De Graaf, Kalmijn, Kraaykamp and Monden, 2010b). The NELLS is a large scale Dutch panel survey designed to provide more insight into social cohesion, norms and values, and inequality. A unique feature of this dataset is the oversampling of individuals of Turkish and Moroccan descent. The study employed a two stage stratified sampling method. In the first stage, 31 municipalities stratified by region and degree of urbanization were randomly selected. The four big cities were added to this selection to allow for obtaining a representative sample of Turks and Moroccans. In the second stage, individuals were randomly selected from the population registry based on their age and own and parents' country of birth. In this stage, individuals of Turkish and Moroccan descent were oversampled. The first wave was conducted between 2008 and 2011 and consisted of a face-to-face interview and a self-completion questionnaire. Both interview and questionnaire were administered in Dutch. The overall response rate was 52 per cent, which is common for similar surveys in the Netherlands. In total, 5,312 respondents were interviewed (De Graaf *et al.*, 2010a). We selected first and second generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants who had a partner at the time of being interviewed and had not been married at the time of their migration. This selection resulted in a total analytical sample of 1,191 respondents.

Measurements

Our dependent variable is *parental involvement.* Respondents were asked "To what extent did your parents (or other family members) play a role in choosing their partner?". Answer categories were: no role, a small role, a large role, or partner was chosen by parents (or family). In the ordered logit model, the response categories 'a large role' and 'partner was chosen by parents (or family)' were collapsed. Parental involvement may be underreported because of social desirability and to avoid cognitive dissonance. It is likely that respondents indicated a large role of the parents instead of admitting that the partner was chosen by the parents. In our sample, only 55 respondents (3.7%) indicated that their partner was chosen.

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All parental characteristics are reported by the respondent. *Father's education* indicates the highest level of education completed by the father and is coded into three categories: low (no school attended or completed primary school only), intermediate (all levels of secondary education and intermediate vocational education) and high education (tertiary vocational education and university). Missing values (n = 186; 13%) were imputed with 'intermediate education'. We include a dummy variable to control for this imputation.

Mother employed indicates that the mother had a paid job before the respondent finished secondary school for at least 12 hours a week.

We include two measures about parents' customs when the respondent was 12-14 old. *Islamic customs of the parents* counts the number of Islamic customs performed by their parent(s), which were measured by reading the Koran, fasting, wearing a headscarf, not drinking alcohol, not eating pork, and visiting the at least Mosque at least once a month (Loevinger's H = 0.52). The scale *Dutch customs of the parents* counts the number of the following customs that were performed by the parents: receiving native Dutch at home, reading Dutch newspapers, watching Dutch television shows, and eating Dutch dishes (Loevinger's H = 0.77) .

Union type is measured by asking respondents whether they currently had a partner and whether they had entered cohabitation and marriage. We distinguish three types of unions: dating, unmarried cohabitation and marriage.

Age at start current union is the age at starting cohabitation for those who are currently cohabiting and the age at marriage for those who are currently married. We used age at marriage for those currently married to avoid underestimation of the effect of union type. The data provide no information about the union timing of respondents who were dating. Based on large scale data in the Netherlands (Dykstra *et al.*, 2004), we assume that dating unions lasted for at least two years before resulting in either cohabitation or marriage. Hence, all respondents who were currently dating were assigned their age minus two years as their age at start of the union.

A proxy for the possibilities to monitor a child's mating behavior is the presence of a *family network in the Netherlands*. Respondents who migrated to the Netherlands by themselves (without

parents) and who had no family members already living in the Netherlands are assumed to have no family network in the Netherlands. Respondents born in the Netherlands and those whose family members migrated to the host country before or together with the respondent are assumed to do have a family network in the Netherlands. We assume that the network had not changed substantially by the time of entry into union.

Respondent's *educational level* is the highest level of education the respondent has ever attended. We focus on attendance rather than completion because increasing independence starts with attendance. We constructed three categories: low, intermediate, and high education.

Each respondent provided information about his/her personal network by answering questions about the persons with whom respondents had discussed important personal matters in the last six months. Respondents were allowed to name a maximum of five persons and could include family members. *Proportion of Dutch network members* indicates the number of Dutch network members divided by the total number of persons mentioned. We keep in mind that this variable does not measure the at the time of union formation when discussing the results. Retrospective data on networks were not collected because such measures have limited validity.

Control variables

We include *gender* to examine the differences in parental involvement in the partner choice of girls and boys. *Origin group* is measured by the country of birth of the respondent's parents, following the classification of the sampling procedure (CBS, 2010). The country of the foreign-born parent determines the origin group. If both parents were born abroad, but in different countries, the origin group of the respondent is determined by mother's country of birth. We also control for *immigrant generation.* First generation immigrants were born abroad, have at least one foreign-born parent and migrated to the Netherlands after they reached the age of 13. Those who were born in the Netherlands or migrated to the Netherlands before reaching age 13 and have at least one foreign-born parent are classified as second generation immigrant (Rumbaut, 2004). Partners whose parents were both born in the Netherlands are classified as being (native) Dutch, irrespective of partner's country of birth and

age at migration. Finally, *birth year* is included to check for cohort effects and is centered around the mean (mean$_{\text{birth year}}$ = 1975).

-- Table 1 about here --

Methods

Parental involvement is estimated using ordered logistic regression analysis. Ordered logistic regression analysis is the appropriate method for analyzing responses with three or more ordered levels and is an extension of the binary logistic regression model (McCullagh, 1980). The model estimates the odds that parental involvement is higher than a certain level and assumes that the coefficients are equal for each level of parental involvement. A Wald test shows that the proportional odds assumption was only violated for the performance of Dutch customs. Therefore, we will also present the coefficients of Dutch customs that were obtained with a partial proportional odds model (Williams, 2006).

Results

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 provides the answer to our descriptive research question. We present the level of parental involvement by origin group and migrant generation. The majority of the Turks and Moroccans perceive that their parents were not involved in their partner choice; proportions indicating no involvement vary from 57 per cent among first generation Turks to 77 per cent of second generation Moroccans. At the same time, this also means that a substantial minority did experience parental involvement. Arranged unions are, however, rare: slightly more than 2 per cent in the second generation and 3.4 and 5.4 per cent in the first generation Turks and Moroccans respectively. Although this suggests that parental involvement does not play a major role in partner choice among Turks and Moroccans, the figures show that parental involvement in these groups is substantially larger than among the native Dutch. Furthermore, the results suggest that parental involvement is higher among

Turks than Moroccans, but this difference only reaches significance when comparing the second generation.

Differences between generations of immigrants are pronounced. The proportion of respondents who reported that parents played at least a small role in their partner choice is about twice as large in the first generation as in the second generation; this decline in parental involvement over generations seems to be larger for Moroccans.

-- Table 2 about here --

Figure 1 shows the type of partner that is chosen, i.e., the partner's characteristics with regard to generation and origin group, by parental involvement. The graph confirms our assumption that higher parental involvement increases the likelihood of choosing a partner from the own origin group. Furthermore, higher parental involvement more frequently results in a union with a first generation immigrant compared to a union with a second generation partner. As expected, interethnic unions are most common among children who indicate that their parents were not involved in their partner choice.

-- Figure 1 about here --

Ordered logistic regression analysis

The results of the ordered logistic regression analyses are presented in Table 3. The first model estimates the effect of parental characteristics on parental involvement. All control variables have a significant effect. Turks, women, first generation immigrants, and older birth cohorts have a higher likelihood of higher parental involvement. The effect of sex is substantial: the odds of higher parental involvement are 1.8 times higher for women than for men ($e^{0.597} = 1.817$). Turning to the effects of parental characteristics, we find that father's education and Islamic customs have significant effects. Higher educated fathers have 65.9 per cent lower odds of higher parental involvement compared to the odds of lower educated fathers ($e^{-1.076} = 0.341$). Lower parental involvement in partner choice is also more likely if parents retained fewer Islamic customs. The odds of higher involvement decreases by

26.7 per cent for each unit decrease in the number of Islamic customs ($e^{0.237}$ = -1.267). By contrast, the number of Dutch customs does not affect parental involvement. These results suggest that parental involvement is better explained by considering whether or not parents hold strong cultural ties to their group, as indicated by maintaining many Islamic customs, than by considering whether or not they are culturally integrated in the host society, as indicated by adopting Dutch customs. We found no significant effect of mother's employment status. Possibly, mother's employment signals financial needs rather than cultural integration. By and large, the findings from this model tend to support our expectation that better integrated parents are less likely to be involved in their child's partner choice.

-- Table 3 about here --

In Model 2, we examine whether parental involvement is more likely for cohabitation and even more likely for marriage compared to the choice of a dating partner. The results partially support this expectation. The likelihood of higher parental involvement is highest for marriage. Compared to dating unions, the odds of higher parental involvement are 3.2 times larger for marriage ($e^{1.167}$ = 3.212). Contrary to our expectation, the results suggest that parental involvement is not more, but less likely for cohabitation compared to dating (although this effect is insignificant). We come back to this in the conclusion.

The effects of characteristics related to a child's independence are presented in Model 3. We expected that being more independent decreases the likelihood of parental involvement. The results convincingly support this expectation. With regard to age, we find that children whose union started at an older age are less likely to experience parental involvement. The odds of higher parental involvement decreases by 9.4 per cent ($e^{-0.099}$ = 0.906) for each year increase in starting age. A closer examination of this effect in additional analyses shows that the effect is mainly the result of the significantly lower likelihood of parental involvement for children entering their union at a relatively late age compared to the average age to enter a union. In addition to this effect of age, the analyses reveal that children who were born more recently are less likely to experience higher parental

involvement. The likelihood of parental involvement is half as high for those being born ten years later ($\exp^{(-0.069*10)} = 0.502$). We expected that education lowers parental involvement because it affects both preferences and capabilities for autonomy. The results confirm this expectation by showing that the odds are 31 per cent lower for intermediate-educated children ($e^{-0.369} = .691$) and are almost half as high for high-educated children ($e^{-0.674} = 0.510$) compared to low-educated children. Finally, we find a positive effect of having a Dutch social network. Having a higher proportion of Dutch network members lowers the likelihood of higher parental involvement. The odds of higher parental involvement are 53.4 per cent ($e^{-0.764} = 0.466$) smaller for children whose network is completely Dutch compared to children whose network is completely non-Dutch.

Interestingly, the results no longer show a significant difference between men and women in parental involvement once we control for individual characteristics. Additional analyses show that girls' lower level of education partly explains the gender difference. The relatively young age at union entry, however, is the dominant explanation for the observation that parental involvement is more likely for girls.

The effects of parental, union, and children's characteristics are modeled simultaneously in the last model. The results reveal that differences in parental involvement are mainly explained by differences in the characteristics of the child. The effects of age at entry, education and having a Dutch network remain important determinants of parental involvement. We find support for our hypothesis that parental involvement is highest for marriage and this difference is partly explained by age at starting the union because those who marry are relatively young. With respect to the impact of parental characteristics we must conclude that only a highly educated father significantly diminishes the odds of parental involvement. Maintaining Islamic customs has no independent effect, this effect is apparently mediated by the individual characteristics.

Conclusion and discussion

This study has analyzed parental involvement in partner choice among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands. The descriptive results confirm the idea that parental involvement is

more common in these immigrant groups than in the native population. However, arranged unions are rare and parental involvement has decreased over immigrant generations. The most important explanation for variation in parental involvement in immigrants' partner choice is the child's preference and ability for independence, indicated by educational level, age at start union, and network composition. This conclusion offers an additional explanation for the lower endogamy rates of higher educated immigrants reported in earlier studies (Kalmijn and Van Tubergen, 2006). Usually, opportunities and preferences are offered as explanations for endogamous mating of the higher educated. Our study suggests that the smaller role of third parties is another one: endogamy is less likely for higher educated immigrants because they experience less parental involvement, which in turn appears to be associated with stronger levels of endogamy.

Another interesting finding is the different role parents play in different relationship types: parental involvement is less likely in the stage of choosing a dating partner than a marriage partner. We interpreted this cross-sectional finding in terms of strategic behavior by the parents: the costs of an undesired partner choice of their child are higher in more serious relationship stages. However, life course research should demonstrate whether parental involvement indeed increases over individuals' relational careers.

We also found that in cohabiting unions parental involvement had been lowest. Even though this difference is insignificant, it tends to support previous research stating that cohabiters form a selective group of more independent and less traditional individuals (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel, 1990; Surra, 1990). This seems particularly true for cohabiting Turks and Moroccans, who may have to deal with strong disapproval . Cohabitation in the Turkish and Moroccan group is rare (only 6% of our sample cohabits), because a large proportion considers cohabitation not to be an acceptable union type (De Valk and Liefbroer, 2007). An interesting question in future research would be how the development of dating unions is affected by parental involvement and children's independence. This study shows that dating unions emerge without much parental control, which explains why they are more likely to be interethnic (Joyner and Kao, 2005). These interethnic unions are likely to meet strong disapproval. Do such dating unions dissolve or do they develop into cohabitation in which

parental involvement has also been shown to be low? The level of a child's independence may play a decisive role in the likelihood of the proposed life course paths. Union dissolution may be expected for children who accept parental involvement, while cohabitation seems more likely for independent children who reject parental involvement. Finally, one might study the consequences of partner choice in dating unions for later partner choice and parental involvement therein. The odds of interethnic marriages may increase because parents have had the opportunity to get to know an out-group partner and as a result reduce their involvement in the choice for a marriage partner (cf. contact theory that predicts that interethnic contact reduces prejudice). On the other hand, interethnic dating may also encourage parental involvement because parents may judge that without their involvement the child is not able to find an – in their view – acceptable partner. Our results are more in line with the latter suggestion, but we suggest that a life course approach and panel data should be used to further contribute to our understanding of interethnic relationships and the role of third parties.

A longitudinal design would also be advantageous in some other respects. Our cross-sectional data allowed us to study intact unions only. Dissolution risks of arranged unions may be higher because of lower union satisfaction (Xiaohe and Whyte, 1990), but one could also argue that dissolution risks are lower because of third party pressure to stay together, even when union satisfaction is low. To our knowledge, this issue has not been explored and, therefore, we are unable to tell how including intact unions only may have affected our results. Secondly, we would get a better understanding of the role of independence if we could disentangle the preference for autonomy and the capabilities to be autonomous by considering the role of attitudes prior to union formation. Finally, we suggest future research to use an improved measure for parental involvement. In this study's measurement, individuals may not admit that parents were involved in their partner choice in order to avoid cognitive dissonance or because they assume that parental involvement is socially undesirable.

The insights we have gained with regard to parental involvement provide insight into the integration process of immigrants. The analyses show that parental involvement has become less likely for the younger cohorts of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. Moreover, the increasing levels of independence of immigrants, illustrated by increasing age at first marriage (Schoenmaeckers *et al.*,

1999), rising levels of education (Crul and Doomernik, 2003) and a growing preference for cohabitation (De Valk and Liefbroer, 2007), suggest that parental involvement may further decline. Such a decline affects integration by narrowing differences in parental involvement between immigrants and the native population and, more importantly, by giving room to more interethnic unions. Such unions are not only an indicator of integration in itself (Gordon, 1964), it has been suggested (Martinovic *et al.*, 2009) that interethnic unions may also promote integration.

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Table 1. Parental involvement by origin group and generation status.

	None		Small		Large		Partner chosen by parents	
	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.
Moroccan, 1st generation	61	171	20	57	13	37	5	15
Moroccan, 2nd generation	77	248	15	49	6	19	2	7
Turkish, 1st generation	57	136	25	59	14	34	3	8
Turkish, 2nd generation	71	249	18	62	10	34	2	6
Dutch	96	1779	4	68	1	12	0	3
Total	85	2583	10	295	4	136	1	39

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

	N	Mean / proportion	SD	Min	Max
Parental involvement	1191	1.46	0.719	1	3
None	804	0.68			
Low	227	0.19			
High or partner chosen by parents	160	0.13			
Parental characteristics					
Father's education					
Low	789	0.66			
Intermediate	346	0.29			
High	56	0.05			
Mother employed during childhood	234	0.20			
Islamic customs parents at age 12/14	1191	4.34	1.058	0	6
Dutch customs parents at age 12/14	1191	1.77	1.536	0	4
Child's characteristics					
Age start current union	1191	24.33	5.297	12	45
No family living in the Netherlands	1109	0.14			
Educational level					
Low	182	0.15			
Intermediate	729	0.61			
High	280	0.24			
Proportion Dutch network members	1191	0.16	0.313	0	1
Union characteristics					
Union type					
Dating	133	0.11			
Cohabiting	74	0.06			
Married	984	0.83			
Controls					
Moroccan	603	0.51			
Female	634	0.53			
Birth year (centered: 1975)	1191	0.01	6.906	-15	18
Second generation	674	0.57			

Listwise N = 1191

Table 3. Ordered logistic regression of parental involvement on parental, union, and child's characteristics.

	b/se		b/se		b/se		b/se	
Moroccan	-0.346	*	-0.173		-0.022		-0.136	
	0.13		0.13		0.13		0.14	
Female	0.597	***	0.457	***	0.178		0.189	
	0.13		0.13		0.14		0.14	
Second generation	-0.449	**	-0.41	**	-0.416	**	-0.337	
	0.17		0.13		0.16		0.18	
Cohort (centered: 1975)	-0.050	***	-0.036	***	-0.069	***	-0.052	***
	0.01		0.01		0.01		0.01	
Father's education (ref: low)	ref						ref	
Intermediate	-0.322						-0.175	
	0.18						0.19	
High	-1.076	**					-0.875	*
	0.38						0.40	
Mother employed during childhood	-0.193						-0.051	
	0.19						0.19	
Islamic customs parents at age 12/14	0.237	***					0.133	
	0.07						0.08	
Dutch customs parents at age 12/14	0.017						0.000	[a]
	0.05						0.06	
Union type (ref: dating)			ref				ref	
Cohabiting			-1.005				-0.853	
			0.59				0.60	
Married			1.167	***			0.779	*
			0.30				0.32	
Age start current union					-0.099	***	-0.085	***
					0.02		0.02	
No family living in the Netherlands					-0.283		-0.199	
					0.20		0.21	
Educational level (ref: low)					ref		ref	
Intermediate					-0.369	*	-0.341	
					0.18		0.19	
High					-0.674	**	-0.579	*
					0.22		0.23	
Proportion Dutch network members					-0.764	**	-0.595	*
					0.25		0.25	
cut1								
constant	1.598	***	1.693	***	-2.277	***	-0.726	
	0.36		0.32		0.41		0.66	
cut2								
constant	2.801	***	2.989	***	-1.019	*	0.546	
	0.36		0.33		0.41		0.66	
N	1191		119		1191		1191	

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (two-tailed tests)

Note: analyses have been controlled for imputation of father's education and age start current union (coefficients (insignificant) not presented in Table)

[a] *Partial proportional odds model. No role vs. small / large role / chosen, b = 0.023, se = 0.06, p = 0.688.*
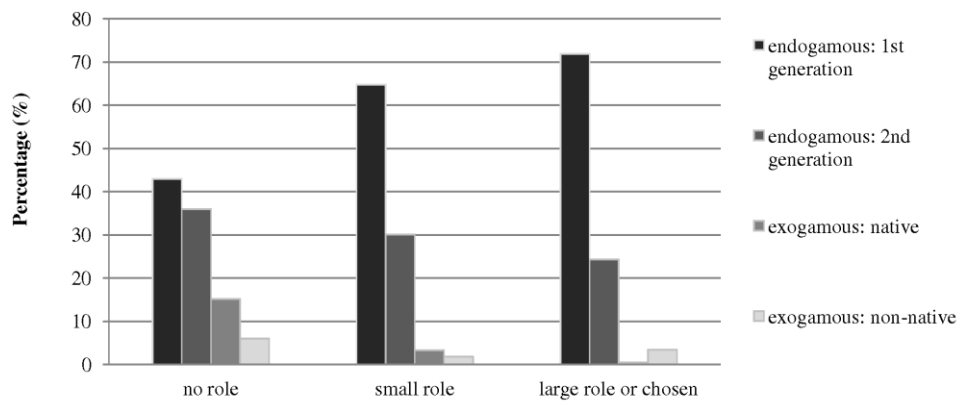 *No / small role vs. large role / chosen, b =-0.087, se = 0.07, p = 0.218.*

Figure 1. Partner choice by parental involvement, weighted by generation status of respondent