

Parental Involvement in Partner Choice: The Case of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands

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Abstract: This study describes and explains parental involvement in partner choice among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands. It thus contributes to previous research on third-party influence on partner choice. The study provides quantitative findings on the actual extent of parental involvement in partner choice among immigrant groups compared with the native population in the Netherlands. Analysis of the data, which are from the large-scale Netherlands Longitudinal Life-Course Study, shows that parental involvement is modest among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants, but relatively high when compared with the levels of parental involvement found among the native Dutch. Furthermore, analyses reveal variation in parental involvement within the Turkish and Moroccan groups. Parental involvement is greater among children with lower-educated parents. But this effect is counteracted by a child's higher educational attainment and a later age on formalizing the union. Potential implications of parental involvement for endogamous partner choice are discussed.

Introduction

This study focuses on parental involvement in partner choice within Turkish and Moroccan immigrant groups in the Netherlands. As in most Western societies, partner choice in the Netherlands is nowadays generally considered to be the purview of the partners themselves, with parents having little influence and no decision power (Buunk *et al.*, 2010). However, even in societies where autonomous partner choice is the norm for the majority, parental involvement may be common among certain religious and ethnic groups, such as the Indians in the United States (Khandelwal, 2002). Qualitative studies suggest that a similar pattern occurs among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands (Hooghiemstra, 2003; Sterckx and Bouw, 2005).

High parental involvement in partner choice might be expected among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants because parents in Turkey and Morocco are traditionally involved in spouse choice (Fox, 1975; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 1995; Sterckx and Bouw, 2005; Timmerman

et al., 2009). Moreover, most first-generation immigrants came to the Netherlands from rural regions, where parental involvement was particularly high (Fox, 1975). This study therefore begins by asking to what extent are parents involved in partner choice within the Turkish and Moroccan immigrant groups in the Netherlands, and how does this compare with parental involvement among the native Dutch. Little quantitative Dutch research is available to answer this descriptive question. One exception (Esveldt and Schoorl, 1998) supports the claim of high parental involvement. It reports that in 1994 parents arranged about 40 per cent of the marriages among the Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in their sample. We improve on previous studies by using a more recent large-scale national data set: the Netherlands Longitudinal Life-Course Study (NELLS). This data set provides insights, from the perspective of the child, into parental involvement in the partner choice of Dutch natives and of first- and second-generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands (De Graaf *et al.*, 2010a). The current study, furthermore, seeks to

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explain variation in parental involvement within the Turkish and Moroccan immigrant groups. Doing so increases our understanding of whose partner choice is more likely to be influenced by parents.

Involvement of parents in partner choice is often cited as a reason for endogamy in general and for high rates of endogamy within specific ethnic minority groups in particular (Van Tubergen and Maas, 2007; Kalmijn and Van Tubergen, 2010). Hence, part of the relevance of studying parental involvement lies in its expected implications for intermarriage, which is a classic measure of immigrant integration (Gordon, 1964; Lieberman and Waters, 1988).

The study of parental involvement is also relevant to a number of areas of public debate. Gender inequalities, honour-related violence, and the practice of arranged marriage, for example, are often derided in public discourse, as they are considered irreconcilable with Dutch values and the ideal of individual freedom (Prins and Saharso, 2008). Debates tend to be dominated by the notion of (perceived) differences between immigrants and the native majority population. This focus reinforces boundaries between groups and may have implications for immigrant integration (Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2009).

The current study puts the issue of parental involvement into perspective by providing empirical evidence of actual levels of parental involvement and explanations for them, both of which are lacking in the current literature.

Theory and Hypotheses

The occurrence of parental involvement in partner choice among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants can be understood by considering preferences of parents for such involvement and the likelihood that parental involvement will be effective. We elaborate on each of these factors by discussing explanations for parental preferences and children's own desire for autonomy and their ability to exercise independence. First, however, the background and strategies of parental involvement are discussed.

Parental Involvement in Context

Anthropological and historical evidence suggests that the degree to which parents determine their child's choice of partner differs between cultures (e.g. Buunk *et al.*, 2010) and may change over time (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). For instance, parental control in the process of partner choice is generally higher in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures (Buunk *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore,

as a result of social change, many societies have witnessed a transformation of the marital process from arranged marriages towards love marriages, in which partner choice is based on mutual affection and determined primarily by the partners concerned (Thornton, 2001). Some four decades ago, arranged marriages were still rather common within the Turkish and Moroccan cultures (Fox, 1975). This cultural heritage of high parental involvement might still be observable today, with parents playing a large role in the partner choice of their children. Qualitative research suggests that nowadays arranged marriages are rare within the Turkish and Moroccan immigrant communities, but families still use other strategies to influence spouse selection (Hooghiemstra, 2003; Stercx and Bouw, 2005). The choice of a partner can be thought of as a process in which parental involvement might occur at different stages. In the first stage, parents might control the search for a partner, for instance, by constraining their child's opportunities to meet potential partners (Goode, 1959; Talbani and Hasanali, 2000; Hooghiemstra, 2003; Stercx and Bouw, 2005; Mounts and Kim, 2009). In later stages, parents might make threats or implement sanctions if the partner chosen by their child does not meet with their approval. Sanctions could range from negative comments and lack of support if relationship problems arise to breaking off contact, disownment, or in exceptional cases, the use of violence (Brouwer, 1997; Brenninkmeijer *et al.*, 2009). If sanctions are successful and union dissolution follows, the process of partner choice and parental involvement starts anew.

Parental Preferences

Involvement in partner choice is motivated by several objectives. Besides parents' desire for their children to marry early for a variety of reasons (Goode, 1959), parental involvement in partner choice is motivated by several objectives. Parents become involved in their child's partner choice to guarantee that the child marries a suitable partner. This is certainly relevant among Turks and Moroccans, as they highly value family ties and family solidarity (Merz *et al.*, 2009) and view marriage as a bond between two families (Timmerman *et al.*, 2009).

Parental involvement might also be motivated by a sense of acting in accordance with one's culture. Some immigrant parents might be especially likely to hold on to the cultural heritage of high parental involvement. Specifically, immigrants who maintain the habits of their country of origin are also likely to continue other practices from the origin country (Maliopaard *et al.*, 2009), such as parental involvement in partner choice. At the same time,

immigrants who are more exposed to normative orientations of the destination country, for example, through national and local media, might align their parental involvement to that of the native population. Such normative orientations and habits relate to the cultural dimension of integration (Esser, 2006; Van Tubergen and Maas, 2006). The current study defines cultural integration as a stronger cultural emphasis on the destination country than on the community or country of origin (Hagendoorn *et al.*, 2003). We expect that *parental involvement in partner choice is lower if immigrant parents are culturally more strongly integrated into the host society (Hypothesis 1)*.

Furthermore, parental involvement is expected to be less pronounced among highly educated parents. Highly educated individuals are likely to place more value on autonomy as a result of it being an important factor in their own success (Kohn, 1963; Dornbusch *et al.*, 1987; Weininger and Lareau, 2009). In the Netherlands, another explanation for less parental involvement among highly educated parents is their greater exposure to Dutch orientations because the highly educated tend to be better integrated into the Dutch economic and social structure than lower-educated immigrants (Martinović, 2013). This leads us to expect that *parental involvement in partner choice is lower among immigrant parents who are more highly educated (Hypothesis 2)*.

Independence: Child's Desires and Abilities

Parental involvement may be explained by considering not only the parents' perspective, but also that of the child. In general, individuals are expected to differ in their desire to take independent decisions. In addition, people differ in the areas in which they feel they have the right to make independent decisions (Helwig, 2006). One of the realms that could be claimed for independent decision-making is the choice of one's partner. Within the Turkish and Moroccan groups, children differ in the degree to which they consider parental involvement in partner choice acceptable and desirable (Sterckx and Bouw, 2005). Children who prefer choosing their own partner need skills and resources to exercise autonomy and limit the pressure that parents can exert. Thus, the degree to which children want to be autonomous and have the ability to make independent decisions affects the likelihood that they will actually experience parental involvement in their choice of partner. We develop specific hypotheses in this regard later. We set out how certain characteristics and resources of the child promote a desire and ability for autonomy, thus reducing the likelihood of parental involvement.

Studies consistently show that autonomy increases with age in both individualist and collectivist cultures (Smetana, 1988; Bosma *et al.*, 1996; Stewart *et al.*, 1999; Helwig, 2006). An important developmental period in this respect is that between adolescence and adulthood, the so-called independent life stage (Rosenfeld and Kim, 2005) or emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). During this period, children are increasingly expected to take responsibility for their actions, to make independent decisions, and to become financially independent (Arnett, 2000). Children who enter marriage at a young age are, at least financially, more dependent on their parents at the moment of partner selection, and this increases parents' power to be involved in the choice of a partner (Goode, 1963). This association is illustrated by the young age at which, especially women, enter into arranged marriages (Fox, 1975) and the low average age of first marriage in societies where arranged marriages are common (Dixon, 1971; Desai and Andrist, 2010). The negative association between age at formalizing the union and experiencing parental involvement might be explained as follows. Parents might deliberately get involved in partner choice early on as a strategy to increase the effectiveness of their involvement. In such a case, early marriage might be a consequence of parental involvement. Not all parents use such a strategy—or do so successfully. As set out above, desire and ability to make independent decisions increase with age. As a result, the later parents try to get involved in partner choice, the more capable children are of limiting parents' involvement in their choice of partner. Correspondingly, we hypothesize that *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans whose union started at a later age (Hypothesis 3)*. Unfortunately, we are unable to resolve the causality problem of these arguments with the data used here. We will keep this in mind when interpreting the results.

Autonomous decision-making is also dependent on the possibilities of family members to monitor a child's behaviour. Children are freer to choose their own partner in situations where the family has little or no opportunity to monitor and interfere in this choice. Rosenfeld and Kim (2005) 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. We expect that *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans who have no family living in the Netherlands (Hypothesis 4)*.

Education enhances children's desire for autonomy and the ability to exercise independence. First, education exposes children to ideas and activities that are not controlled by the family. For example, at school, children

read about people choosing their own partners, and they work together in mixed-sex teams. Such learning experiences instil greater independence in children from the parental generation (Thornton and Fricke, 1987) while also increasing children's support for autonomous decision-making regarding union formation (Barber, 2004). Schools offer opportunities to interact with potential partners as well, which might also stimulate greater autonomy in partner choice (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). In addition, children acquire skills and knowledge through education. These skills and knowledge foster an independent outlook and prepare children to gain financial independence (Thornton *et al.*, 1984). They also provide children with the ability to convincingly question norms and traditions, such as parental participation in partner choice. 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 independent from one's parents (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). Through social learning, children's peers influence their behaviour (Biddle *et al.*, 1980), and this also occurs with respect to union formation (Huschek *et al.*, 2010). Dutch friends are likely to endorse the Western ideal of autonomous partner choice in both their attitudes and their behaviour (Buunk *et al.*, 2010). This might induce children to seek autonomy in their choice of partner. In addition, Dutch friends may provide support in refusing parental involvement and in dealing with the consequences of such 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 NELS (De Graaf *et al.*, 2010a). NELS is a large-scale Dutch panel survey designed to provide insight into social cohesion, norms and values, and inequality. A unique feature of this data set is the oversampling of individuals of Turkish and Moroccan descent. NELS used a two-stage stratified sampling method. In the first stage, 31 municipalities stratified by region and degree of urbanization were randomly selected. The four largest cities in the Netherlands were added to this selection to obtain a representative sample of Turkish and Moroccan groups. In the second stage, individuals were randomly selected from the population registry based on their age and their 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. We use information from the face-to-face interviews only. Both interviews and questionnaires were administered in Dutch. The overall response rate was 52 per cent, which is comparable with similar surveys in the Netherlands. In total, 5,312 respondents were interviewed (De Graaf *et al.*, 2010b).

For the descriptive analysis to answer our first research question, 'To what extent are parents involved in partner choice in the Netherlands?', we selected Dutch natives who were married and first and second generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants who were married at the time of the interview but had not been married at the time of their migration ($N_{Native} = 1,012$; $N_{Turks} = 487$; $N_{Moroccans} = 495$). A subsample including only the Turkish and Moroccan immigrants ($N = 982$) was used for the multivariate analysis that seeks to explain variation in parental involvement within the Turkish and Moroccan immigrant groups. Table 1 presents details of the respondents in this analytical subsample.

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 your partner?' Answer categories were 'no role', 'a small role', 'a large role', and '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. In our sample, only 36 respondents (3.7 per cent) indicated that their partner had been chosen by their parents. Parental involvement may be underreported, however, for reasons of social desirability and to avoid cognitive dissonance. It is therefore plausible that respondents indicated a large role of the parents instead of admitting that the partner was chosen by the parents.

All parental characteristics were reported by the respondent. Cultural integration is measured by parental practices when the respondent was 12–14 years of age. *Islamic customs of the parents* counts the number of the following Islamic customs performed by the parent(s): 'reading the Koran', 'fasting', 'wearing a headscarf', 'not drinking alcohol', 'not eating pork', and 'visiting the mosque at least once a month' (Loevinger's $H = 0.53$). *Dutch orientation of the parents* counts the number of ways that parents were introduced to Dutch conventions: 'receiving native Dutch at home', 'reading Dutch

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of analytical subsample of Turks and Moroccans (N = 982)

	Mean/proportion	SD	Range
Parental involvement			
None	62.5		
Low	21.9		
High or partner chosen by parents	15.6		
Parental characteristics			
Father's education			
Lower education	68.8		
Intermediate education	14.5		
Higher education	5.6		
Information missing	11.0		
Mother's education			
No or primary education	82.7		
At least secondary education	6.9		
Information missing	10.4		
Islamic customs parents at age 12/14	4.4	0.99	0–6
Dutch orientation parents at age 12/14	1.3	1.21	0–3
Child's characteristics			
Age formalizing current union	24.0	4.81	12–41
No family living in the Netherlands	15.1		
Educational level			
No or primary education	17.3		
Lower secondary education	30.6		
Lower tertiary education	23.6		
Higher secondary education	6.7		
Higher tertiary education	21.9		
Proportion Dutch network members	0.1	0.29	0–1
Controls			
Moroccan	50.4		
Female	54.5		
Birth year (centred: 1974)	–0.19	6.64	–14–16
Second generation immigrant	51.5		

newspapers', and 'watching Dutch television shows' (Loevinger's $H = 0.81$).

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' (tertiary professional education and university). Because of the relatively large number of cases with missing values on this variable ($n = 108$; 11 per cent), we included a dummy not to lose these cases.

Variation in *mother's education* is low. Therefore, we compare mothers with no schooling or primary education only (reference category) to mothers with at least secondary education. In addition, we include a dummy

to indicate that information about mother's education is missing ($n = 102$; 10.4 per cent).

Age at formalizing union is the age at which the respondent entered into marriage or age at cohabitation if the respondent cohabited before marriage.

A proxy for the possibility of monitoring a child's mating behaviour is the presence of *family in the Netherlands*. Respondents who were born in the Netherlands are assumed to have family in the Netherlands (score 1). Foreign-born respondents were asked whether they had parents or other family members in the Netherlands before they migrated. Additionally, they were asked whether they migrated simultaneously with one or both parents. Respondents who migrated without parents and had no parent or other family

member living in the Netherlands before migration are assumed to lack a family network in the Netherlands (score 0). All other foreign-born respondents are classified as having family members in the Netherlands (score 1). We assume that this network had not changed substantially by the time of formalizing the union.

Respondent's *educational level* is the highest level of education that the respondent had attended. We focus on attendance rather than completion because increased independence starts with attendance. We distinguish five categories: 'primary school or lower', 'lower secondary education', 'lower tertiary education', 'higher secondary education', and 'higher tertiary education'.

Each respondent provided information about his or her personal network by answering questions about with whom they had discussed important personal matters in the last 6 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. In discussing the results, we keep in mind that this variable does not measure the network at the time of union formation. Retrospective data on networks were not collected because such measures have limited validity.

Control Variables

We include *sex* to control for the generally greater parental involvement in the partner choice of girls than boys, as reported in prior studies (Sterckx and Bouw, 2005; Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). *Origin group* refers to the country of birth of the respondent's parents, classifying respondents in the same fashion as in the sampling procedure. Respondents whose parents were both born in the Netherlands are classified as (native) Dutch, irrespective of their own country of birth and age at migration. If one parent was born abroad, origin group is determined by the country of the foreign-born parent. If both parents were born abroad, but in different

countries, the origin group of the respondent is determined by the mother's country of birth. In the main analysis, we control for *immigrant generation*. First-generation immigrants were born abroad, have at least one foreign-born parent, and migrated to the Netherlands after they had reached 13 years of age. Those who were born in the Netherlands or migrated to the Netherlands before reaching 13 years of age and having at least one foreign-born parent are classified as second-generation immigrants (Rumbaut, 2004). Finally, *birth year* is included to control for cohort effects and is centred on the mean year of birth of the respondents in our analytical sample (i.e. 1974).

Methods

Parental involvement is estimated using ordered logistic regression analysis. This is an extension of the binary logistic regression model and the appropriate method for analysing responses with three or more ordered levels (McCullagh, 1980). The model compares the odds of experiencing parental involvement greater than level *i* to the odds of experiencing parental involvement equal to or less than level *i*, where *i* refers to one of the three levels of parental involvement. The model assumes that the change in proportional odds as a result of a one unit change in the predictor variable is equal across all possible comparisons. A Wald test showed that the proportional odds assumption was violated only for the effect of the child having attended higher tertiary education. Therefore, for higher tertiary education we also present the coefficients obtained using a partial proportional odds model in a note to Table 3 (Williams, 2006).

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 provides the answer to our descriptive research question. It presents the level of parental involvement by

Table 2 Parental involvement by origin group

	None		Small role		Large role or partner chosen by parents	
	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>
Moroccans	67	323	20	99	15	73
Turks	60	291	24	116	16	80
Native Dutch	96	967	4	38	1	7
Total	79	1581	13	252	8	160

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100 because of rounding off.

χ^2 (Turks vs. Moroccans) = 3.267, $P = 0.195$. χ^2 (Turks and Moroccans vs. natives) = 335.496, $P < 0.000$.

origin group. The majority of the Turks and Moroccans indicate that their parents were not involved in their partner choice. Proportions indicating no involvement vary from 59.8 per cent among Turks to 65.1 per cent among Moroccans. Looking more closely at those who experienced parental involvement, we see that a slight minority indicates high parental involvement. In addition, parental involvement is slightly greater among Turks than among Moroccans, but the differences between the groups are not significant [χ^2 (Turks vs. Moroccans) = 3.267, $P = 0.195$]. The groups do, however, differ significantly from natives: parental involvement is substantially greater among them than among the native Dutch [χ^2 (immigrants vs. natives) = 335.496, $P = 0.000$]. A closer look at the data reveals that parental involvement is significantly greater among the first generation than among second-generation Moroccans and Turks [χ^2 (first generation vs. second generation) = 13.136, $P = 0.001$].

Ordered Logistic Regression Analysis

Table 3 presents the results of the ordered logistic regression analysis. The first model estimates the effect of parental characteristics on parents' involvement in partner choice. Most control variables have a significant effect. Respondents who are Turkish, a woman, and belong to an older birth cohort are likely to have experienced greater parental involvement in their choice of partner. The effect of sex is substantial: the odds of greater parental involvement are 1.7 times larger for women than for men ($e^{0.519} = 1.671$). Turning to the effects of parental characteristics, we find that father's education and Islamic customs have significant effects. Highly educated fathers have 64.6 per cent lower odds of greater parental involvement compared with the odds of lower-educated fathers ($e^{-1.038} = 0.354$). Greater parental involvement in partner choice is furthermore more likely if parents hold on to more Islamic customs. The odds of

Table 3 Ordered logistic regression of parental involvement on parental and child's characteristics ($N = 982$)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Moroccan	-0.332*	-0.14	-0.104	-0.14	-0.174	-0.15
Female	0.519***	-0.14	0.085	-0.15	0.132	-0.15
Second generation immigrant	-0.350*	-0.17	-0.339*	-0.16	-0.283	-0.19
Cohort (centred; 1974)	-0.046***	-0.01	-0.054***	-0.01	-0.054***	-0.01
Father's education (ref=lower education)						
Intermediate education	-0.273	-0.21			-0.148	-0.22
Higher education	-1.038**	-0.36			-0.808*	-0.37
Information missing	-0.182	-0.27			-0.188	-0.28
Mother's education (ref=no or primary)						
Mother at least secondary education	-0.168	-0.32			-0.014	-0.33
Information missing	0.269	-0.28			0.191	-0.28
Islamic customs parents at 12-14 years of age	0.186*	-0.08			0.120	-0.08
Dutch orientations parents at 12-14 years of age	0.013	-0.07			-0.025	-0.07
Age starting relationship			-0.090***	-0.02	-0.087***	-0.02
No family network in the Netherlands			-0.207	-0.21	-0.149	-0.21
Proportion Dutch network members			-0.532*	-0.27	-0.507	-0.27
Child's education						
Lower secondary education			-0.321	-0.21	-0.284	-0.21
Lower tertiary education			-0.491*	-0.22	-0.420	-0.22
Higher secondary education			-1.161***	-0.34	-1.064**	-0.34
Higher tertiary education			-0.735**	-0.22	-0.607** ^a	-0.23
Cut1						
Constant	1.227**	-0.38	-2.313***	-0.46	-1.724**	-0.61
Cut2						
Constant	2.462***	-0.38	-1.029*	-0.45	-0.432	-0.60

Note. No/small role vs. large role chosen, $B = -1.193$, $SE = 0.34$, $P = 0.000$.

^aPartial proportional odds model. No role vs. small/large role chosen, $B = -0.479$, $SE = 0.24$, $P = 0.035$.

* $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$ (two-tailed tests).

greater involvement increase by 20.4 per cent for each additional Islamic custom practised ($e^{0.186} = 1.024$). However, orientation towards Dutch conventions has no effect on parental involvement. These results provide partial confirmation of Hypothesis 1. They suggest that parental involvement is better explained by considering whether parents maintain strong cultural ties to their group of origin, as indicated by maintaining Islamic customs, than by considering their degree of exposure to Dutch conventions. Hypothesis 2 is confirmed for fathers' education, but not for mothers' education. The effect of the mother's education is in the expected direction, but it is not significant.

Model 2 presents the effects of characteristics related to children's desire for autonomy and their ability to exercise independence. We expect being more independent to reduce the likelihood of parental involvement. The results convincingly support this expectation. With regard to age, we find that children whose union was formalized at an older age are less likely to have experienced parental involvement (*Hypothesis 3*). The odds of greater parental involvement decrease by almost 10 per cent ($e^{-0.090} = 0.914$) for each year of age increase in formalization of the union. Closer examination of this effect shows that the effect derives mainly from a significantly lower likelihood of parental involvement for children entering their union at a relatively late age compared with the average age of entering a union. This suggests that the results are not primarily a consequence of parental pressures to marry early. Our expectation that education lowers parental involvement is confirmed (*Hypothesis 5*). Results show that the odds of greater parental involvement decrease with higher education. The odds are 38.8 per cent lower for children with lower tertiary education ($e^{-0.491} = 0.612$) compared with children who attended no or primary school. The difference in odds is even larger when children who attended higher secondary education and higher tertiary education are compared with children who attended no or primary school: odds ratios are 0.313 and 0.479, respectively ($e^{-1.161} = 0.313$ and $e^{-0.735} = 0.479$). Finally, we find a positive effect of having a Dutch social network. Having a larger proportion of Dutch network members lowers the likelihood of greater parental involvement (*Hypothesis 6*). The odds of greater parental involvement are 41.0 per cent ($e^{-0.532} = 0.587$) less for children whose network is completely Dutch compared with children whose network is completely non-Dutch. No support was found for Hypothesis 4: Turks and Moroccans who have no family in the Netherlands were not less likely to experience greater parental involvement.

Interestingly, once we control for individual characteristics, the results no longer show a significant

difference between men and women in parental involvement. Additional analyses indicate that women's lower level of education partially explains the sex difference in extent of parental involvement. The relatively young age at union entry, however, is the dominant explanation for observing that greater parental involvement is more likely for women. These results suggest that parental involvement in partner choice is similar for men and women if women succeed in gaining the same level of independence. We come back to this in the conclusion.

The effects of parental and children's characteristics are modelled simultaneously in the full model (Model 3). The results show that both parental and children's characteristics affect the extent of parental involvement. The effects of parental education, age at formalizing the union, and child's education are only slightly smaller in this model. Furthermore, results show that second-generation immigrants experience similar levels of parental involvement if parents' background characteristics are controlled for. The effect of maintaining Islamic customs is no longer significant and is found to be mediated by age at which the union is formalized.

Separate analyses by sex suggest that the estimates do not differ significantly by sex. Analyses by group of origin reveal that the effect of the child's education holds only for Moroccans. We return to this finding too in the conclusion.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study analysed parental involvement in partner choice among Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands. The descriptive results confirm that parental involvement is more common among these immigrant groups than among the native Dutch population. Reports of arranged unions are not common in our data, although we note that such reports may be biased downward. Still, we do see a clear reduction in parental involvement over immigrant generations. Both parental and children's characteristics explain variation in parental involvement. Parental involvement is greater among children with lower educated parents. At the same time, children who want more autonomy and have more capacity to exercise independence are less likely to experience parental involvement in their choice of partner.

Parental involvement is greater among children with a lower-educated father compared with children whose father was more highly educated. Our explanation for this finding is that highly educated parents have a less positive attitude towards parental involvement. We found weak support for the proposition that greater cultural integration leads to reduced parental

involvement. No effect was found for exposure to Dutch orientations. Maintaining Islamic customs was found to have an indirect effect only. In line with previous research, which found that more religious parents prefer early marriage (De Valk and Liefbroer, 2007b), we found that children whose parents strongly adhere to the rules of Islam are more likely to marry at a younger age, and this in turn increases the likelihood of greater parental involvement.

A second conclusion of this study is that parental involvement is lower for children who are more capable of independent decision-making in general. Children who attended a higher level of education and those who entered their union at a later age experienced less involvement of parents in their partner choice. In this regard, this study produced two interesting insights. First, the effect of education holds only for Moroccan immigrants. This might reflect the suggestion from other research that family loyalty and group cohesion is generally higher within the Turkish group (Güngör *et al.*, 2011). In addition, there are indications that family honour is protected more vigorously among Turks (Brenninkmeijer *et al.*, 2009). Perhaps this explains why Turks, regardless of their educational level, accept and appreciate parental involvement in partner choice. Second, sex differences in parental involvement disappear when the child's independence is controlled for. Gaining independence might, however, be more of a struggle for girls than for boys. Our study suggests that parents' strong adherence to Islamic customs could be one explanation for this. Both of these findings warrant being addressed in future research. Use of longitudinal data could help to disentangle the effect of personal desire for autonomy and ability to exercise independence and differential development of these traits among boys and girls.

A longitudinal design would also help to overcome some of the limitations of this study. Our cross-sectional data allowed us to examine intact unions only. Dissolution risk may be higher for arranged unions because of lower union satisfaction (Xiaohe and Whyte, 1990). But one might also argue that dissolution risk is lower for arranged unions because of third-party pressure to stay together, even when union satisfaction is low. In addition, the perception of parental involvement might change depending on union satisfaction. To our knowledge, these issues have not been explored longitudinally. We are, therefore, unable to determine whether this may have affected our results. In that respect, we suggest using behavioural measures of parental involvement. In the current study's measurement, individuals may not have admitted that parents were involved in their choice of partner to avoid cognitive dissonance or

because they assumed parental involvement to be socially undesirable.

An interesting topic for future research would be to examine whether parental involvement increases over individuals' relational careers. In other words, 'Does parental involvement differ by union type?'. Parental involvement in partner choice may be more pronounced in cohabitation and marriage because of the generally long-term character of such unions. Examination of our data (not shown) provides preliminary support for this idea, indicating that, in contrast to marriage, dating unions emerge without much parental control. This may have implications for the characteristics of the partner that is chosen (Joyner and Kao, 2005). The present large-scale survey data show that greater parental involvement is associated with a higher likelihood of choosing an in-group spouse. Parents may intensify their involvement because of opposition to out-group partner choice (Hense and Schorch, 2010; Huijnk *et al.*, 2012). However, it might also be that parental involvement was more effective among those children who eventually marry an in-group partner. Our study suggests that a child's level of independence may play a decisive role herein. We recommend that a life-course approach and panel data be used to further increase our understanding of the role of third parties in partner choice.

To conclude, our analyses show that parental involvement has become less likely among the younger cohorts of Turkish and Moroccan descent. Moreover, the increasing levels of independence among immigrants, illustrated by the rising age at first marriage (Schoenmaeckers *et al.*, 1999), rising levels of education (Crul and Doornik, 2003), and a growing preference for cohabitation (De Valk and Liefbroer, 2007a), suggest that parental involvement may decline further in future generations.

Notes

1. For immigrants, marrying an in-group partner in the destination country might be a way to maintain homogeneity and internal group cohesion (Kalmijn, 1998). It may, furthermore, ensure the intergenerational transmission of values and norms from the country of origin and maintain a good family name (Munnikma *et al.*, 2012).
2. Note that children's partner preferences are often similar to parents' preferences. Thus, parental involvement does not automatically imply that children dislike involvement of their parents and

that parental coercion is needed. Parental involvement may also signal approval for the choice of a certain partner, which is important for many Turkish and Moroccan immigrants (Sterckx and Bouw, 2005).

3. The correlation matrix is available online as a supplement (Supplementary Table A1).
4. Supplementary Figure A1 (in online supplement) shows the ethnic background of the partner by parental involvement. The graph indicates that greater parental involvement is associated with a higher likelihood of choosing a partner from one's own group of origin. Furthermore, greater parental involvement occurred more frequently in unions with a first-generation immigrant compared with unions with a second-generation partner. Intergroup unions are most common among children who indicate that their parents were not involved in their partner choice.

Supplementary Data

Supplementary data are available at *ESR* online.

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