

Early Partner Choices of Immigrants: The Effect of Preferences, Opportunities and Parents on Dating a Native

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This study focuses on the partner choices of immigrant adolescents who are involved in a romantic relationship. We formulate hypotheses about the effect of immigrants' preferences, parental influence and structural effects of the school and neighbourhood on the likelihood of dating a native partner versus a non-native partner. Using unique data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries (CILS4EU) which was conducted in over 100 schools in each country among adolescents of around 14-year-old and their parents (n = 1896), we show, first, that more conservative immigrant adolescents are less likely to date a native partner. In addition, parental influence is demonstrated by gender-specific effects of religious background and by positive effects of parents' social and structural integration. Meeting opportunities with natives at school and in the neighbourhood are prominent factors in explaining the choice of dating a native partner.

Keywords: Dating; Immigrants; Partner Choice; Adolescence

This study examines to what extent adolescent immigrants date with natives and how these choices can be explained [immigrants defined as those who are born abroad as well as descendents of foreign-born (grand)parents]. Romantic relationships between immigrants and natives can be seen as an indicator that immigrants are socially incorporated in the host society (Gordon 1964; Lieberson and Waters 1988). Hence, this research offers an extension to the literature on the social integration of immigrants, which usually studies intergroup friendships and networks, neighbourhood relationships and intermarriage (e.g., Vermeij, van Duijn, and Baerveldt 2009;

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Vervoort, Scholte, and Scheepers 2011; Van Tubergen and Maas 2007; Schaeffer 2013). Moreover, this study is an important contribution to the field of partner choice research. The shift from studying intergroup partner choice in adulthood to intergroup partner choice in adolescence is necessary for a better understanding of adult partner choice for two reasons.

First, from a life course perspective it can be argued that early life experiences determine later life experiences. In this respect, it is found that women who select their first partner from outside their own group are more likely to intermarry later in life (King and Bratter 2007). Hence, intergroup partner choice in early life is likely to be a (partial) explanation for intergroup partner choice in later life, but, to this day, we know little about this first stage of the romantic career. The relationship between early partner choice and adult partner choice could be both direct and indirect. A direct influence emerges when first partners become spouses later in life. An indirect effect emerges when intergroup dating in adolescence affects characteristics that are commonly put forward as explanations for partner choice in adulthood: preferences, meeting opportunities and third parties (Kalmijn 1998). For instance, contact theory (Allport 1954) predicts that positive intergroup relations, such as dating unions, diminish prejudice by reducing intergroup anxiety and increasing empathy with the out-group (Pettigrew and Tropp 2008; Pettigrew et al. 2011; Levin, Taylor, and Caudle 2007). Based on contact theory, it is expected that intergroup dating most likely increases positive out-group attitudes and, thus, increases the odds of intermarriage.

Second, some explanatory factors of intermarriage in adulthood may to a large extent be defined in adolescence, affecting early as well as later partner choice. It is most accurate to measure these explanatory factors early in life, but the timing of measurement (in adolescence or in adulthood) becomes especially relevant when the determinants cannot be observed anymore in adult life. For instance, schools are important meeting places for friends and partners; the resulting social network not only delivers romantic partners in adolescence, but may also partly define the network that future partners are selected from. Another example is parental influence, which may manifest itself predominantly in adolescence, but which may have an enduring effect on partner choices in later life. The fact that some determinants of out-group partner choice can only be observed in early life implies that potentially important explanatory mechanisms of partner choice in adulthood are missed in regular research. This study will explicitly examine those when explaining dating behaviour of immigrant adolescents.

Despite the relevance of studying early partner choice, research on the causes of intergroup dating among adolescents has been limited. Thus far, studies show that intergroup dating is more likely if (perceived) opportunities for out-group contact are higher (Fujino 1997; Shibazaki and Brennan 1998; Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan 1995; Wang and Kao 2007), preferences for interacting with out-group members are stronger (Shibazaki and Brennan 1998; McClintock 2010; Levin, Taylor, and Caudle 2007) and societal and parental disapproval for intergroup contact is perceived to be

lower (Shibazaki and Brennan 1998; Edmonds and Killen 2009). We contribute to these studies in two important ways. First, we introduce a new population. The majority of existing studies have analysed university students; we focus on adolescents. By studying adolescents we are able to examine the very first stages of the relationship career and to find out whether the theoretical framework of opportunities, preferences and third parties (Kalmijn 1998) is also useful in explaining intergroup dating among adolescents. Second, we introduce new national contexts, namely European countries. To our best knowledge, research on adolescents' dating partners has been conducted solely in the USA. These studies mostly address interracial unions. However, racial boundaries in partner choice appear to be less evident in a western-European context (Model and Fisher 2002). By contrast, linguistic and religious boundaries appear to be more relevant (Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2006). We extend previous work beyond the USA by studying the choice of a native partner by immigrant adolescents in England, Germany, The Netherlands and Sweden.

We use the first wave of a unique new data-set, the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries (CILS4EU), which was designed to increase insight into the structural, cultural and social integration of immigrant children (Kalter et al., 2014). The data were collected in over 100 schools in each country among adolescents of around 14-year-old and their parents. Detailed information was gathered about the values and attitudes of early adolescents and their parents, as well as the ethnic composition of multiple social contexts in which adolescents spend their time. In sum, CILS4EU provides unique opportunities to gain a better understanding of early partner choices of immigrant adolescents.

Theoretical Framework

Preferences of the Adolescent

Both immigrants and natives hold preferences for certain characteristics in a partner. In general, individuals prefer to interact and establish relationships with similar others (Kalmijn 1998; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Cultural similarity enhances personal attraction, because it confirms one's worldview, provides opportunities for joint activities and facilitates mutual understanding (Kalmijn 1998). Accordingly, it is found that immigrants who are culturally more similar to the native majority are more likely to intermarry (Dribe and Lundh 2011). A preference for similar others, i.e., homophily, is already observed in adolescence (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001). Adolescents' partner choice also reflects a preference for a partner who resembles themselves and holds similar values (Simon, Aikins, and Prinstein 2008; Connolly and McIsaac 2009). Furthermore, these relationships are more likely to last, because ties between similar persons dissolve at a lower rate (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001; Wang, Kao, and Joyner 2006).

In this study, we examine attitudes towards gender roles, family values (such as tolerance of divorce) and religiosity to capture a person's cultural orientation. We

focus on these specific attitudes, because these distinguish strongly between immigrants and natives. In addition, they are relevant for relationship dynamics now and later in life (Huschek, de Valk, and Liefbroer 2011; Güngör, Fleischmann, and Phalet 2011). The attitudes may be organised on an ideological dimension of cultural conservatism versus cultural progressiveness. In contrast to cultural conservatism, cultural progressiveness pertains to a high level of individual choice and self-determination (Vollebergh, Iedema, and Raaijmakers 2001; Middendorp 1978). We expect that progressive immigrants are more likely to date a native. Besides that progressive people are more likely to do non-traditional things (such as choosing an out-group partner), preferences for cultural similarity found our argument. A preference for cultural similarity may affect the likelihood of dating a native partner for two reasons. First, studies show that these attitudes are generally more conservative within the immigrant group than in the native group: religiosity is higher (Diehl, Koenig, and Ruckdeschel 2009), family values are more conservative (De Graaf et al. 2011; De Valk and Liefbroer 2007) and gender roles are more traditional (De Graaf et al. 2011; De Valk 2008). Even though diversity within these groups is acknowledged, the probability of finding a partner who holds conservative attitudes is expected to be relatively high within the immigrant group. By contrast, immigrants whose values are more progressive, and thus more similar to the values of the majority of the native group, are more likely to find a partner within the native group. Second, if similarity indeed increases attraction, immigrants who have more progressive attitudes are more attractive for the majority of the natives.

Hypothesis 1: Immigrant adolescents whose cultural orientation is more conservative are less likely to date a native partner.

Parental Influence

Parents may influence the partner choice of their child both through socialisation and through parental involvement. As a result of socialisation, the values that children hold, for example their attitudes towards family patterns and intermarriage, are significantly shaped by the values and attitudes of their parents (Huijnk and Liefbroer 2012; De Valk and Liefbroer 2007). Furthermore, the intergenerational transmission of religion affects adolescents' religiosity (Jacob and Kalter 2013). However, even after taking the cultural orientation of adolescents into account, we expect parents to directly influence the partner choice of their children. Parents may be actively involved in the partner choice of their child in various ways. Examples of parental involvement in adolescents' dating behaviour are constraining opportunities to meet potential partners, guiding partner choice through giving advice, voicing support or disapproval, and using sanctions such as house arrest and withdrawing financial support (Mounts 2002; Madsen 2008).

These attempts of parents to influence the partner choice of their child are motivated by parents' preference for a suitable partner. In-group members are more likely to be preferred than out-group members (Kalmijn 1998). Below, we will argue

how immigrant parents' integration in the cultural, social and structural domain of the destination country may each decrease parents' opposition to the choice of a native partner.

Immigrant parents who highly value the culture from their origin country probably discourage the choice of a native partner, because it threatens the intergenerational transmission of the group's culture (Xie and Goyette 1997) as well as the child's solidarity with the ethnic group (Kalmijn 1998). One of the aspects of culture that may be particularly important is religion. The native population in the countries under study is predominantly not religious or of Christian faith (Diehl, Koenig, and Ruckdeschel 2009; Voas and Bruce 2004; Driessen 2007). Immigrant parents who belong to a religion other than Christianity can, thus, be considered weakly integrated in the cultural domain. Such differences in religion may create strong group boundaries between immigrants and natives as a result of opposition to interreligious unions. Immigrant parents who belong to a religion other than Christianity probably reject the majority of natives as a suitable partner for their child, and for their daughters in particular (Hooghiemstra 2003), whereas immigrant parents who are not religious or of Christian faith, and thus, more strongly integrated in the cultural domain, are less likely to reject a native partner because such a union is less likely to be interreligious.

Opposition to a native partner may also be weakened by parents' social integration. Parental intermarriage is a very strong signal of parental approval of a relatively close relationship with out-group members. Moreover, intergroup contact, which is likely related to intermarriage, reduces intergroup anxiety and increases affective empathy (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Pettigrew et al. 2011; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008). These, in turn, lower social distance (Binder et al. 2009), increase the likelihood of establishing a personal relationship with out-group members (Swart et al. 2011) and result in more positive attitudes towards the out-group (Swart et al. 2011). Furthermore, parents who have an out-group partner themselves may be less likely to worry about the family reputation if their child dates a native partner (Munniksma et al. 2012).

Last, parental education and parents' socio-economic status, both aspects of their structural integration, may influence the partner choice of their children. Higher educated parents and parents with a higher socio-economic status may have more positive attitudes towards natives, because they feel more accepted by the native group (Brüß 2005). In line with this idea, studies show that opposition towards intermarriage is lower among the highly educated (Huijnk and Liefbroer 2012; Huijnk, Verkuyten, and Coenders 2012; Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2006). The more positive stance of the higher educated towards intermarriage could additionally be explained by their larger frame of reference and greater open-mindedness towards non-traditional behaviour (Van den Akker, Van der Ploeg, and Scheepers 2012; Jaspers, Lubbers, and de Graaf 2007).

As a result of socialisation, adolescents whose parents are weakly integrated may form less favourable attitudes towards the choice of a native partner themselves. In

addition, their parents are more concerned with their choice of partner, which makes it more likely that parents are actively involved in the dating behaviour of their child (Kan, McHale, and Crouter 2008; Van Zantvliet, Kalmijn, and Verbakel 2014). Parental involvement has proven effective: perception of parental disapproval negatively appears to affect involvement in interethnic relationships (Edmonds and Killen 2009) as well as the stability of such relationships (Wang, Kao, and Joyner 2006).

Hypothesis 2: Immigrant adolescents whose parents are weakly integrated in the destination country are less likely to date a native partner than immigrant adolescents whose parents are strongly integrated in the destination country.

Social Context and Meeting Opportunities

Partner choice cannot fully be explained by individual preferences and parental involvement alone. Social relations depend on social structures (Blau 1977). The realisation of preferences may be constrained by the meeting opportunities of the social context: relationships are only possible with those people one has the opportunity to meet (Verbrugge 1977). Moreover, more meeting opportunities increase the likelihood of forming a relationship. Research indeed shows that group size is an important determinant of intergroup relations: immigrants who belong to large immigrant groups are less likely to intermarry (Van Tubergen and Maas 2007). Moreover, scholars have argued that it is important to take variation in group size at the (local) level of the marriage market into account (e.g., Harris and Ono 2005). Kalmijn and Van Tubergen (2010) showed that immigrants are more likely to intermarry if the relative size of the in-group in a state is smaller. Similar effects of relative group size on intergroup relations have been found at the municipality level (Martinović 2013) and at the neighbourhood level (Martinović, Van Tubergen, and Maas 2009).

The neighbourhood and the school also affect the social relations of adolescents, as has been shown by studies on intergroup friendships (DuBois and Hirsch 1990; Hallinan and Smith 1989; Moody 2001; Vervoort, Scholte, and Scheepers 2011). A limited number of studies have investigated both contexts (Mouw and Entwisle 2006; Vermeij, van Duijn, and Baerveldt 2009). Simultaneous estimation of these effects is a valuable improvement, because it excludes the possibility that an effect of neighbourhood composition (that is estimated without taking school composition into account) reflects an effect of the school composition and vice versa. These studies show that the effect of the neighbourhood and the school are complementary. Vermeij, van Duijn, and Baerveldt (2009) showed that the neighbourhood played a larger role in affecting the relative preference for an in-group over an out-group relationship.

Following the adolescent friendship literature, we focus on the neighbourhood and the school, because adolescents spend a large amount of their time in these contexts

and a substantial proportion of peers important to them are met in these contexts (Kiesner, Kerr, and Stattin 2004), including the partner (De Valk 2008).

Hypothesis 3a: The likelihood of dating a native is higher if the proportion of natives in the neighbourhood is higher.

Hypothesis 3b: The likelihood of dating a native is higher if the proportion of natives at school is higher.

The composition of adolescents' social contexts may also have an effect as a result of socialisation. Intergroup contact increases out-group acceptance, and this increased acceptance extends beyond the social context in which intergroup contact takes place (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Pettigrew et al. 2011; Pettigrew and Tropp 2008; Vermeij, van Duijn, and Baerveldt 2009). To sum up, the composition of social contexts may have an effect (1) as a result of meeting opportunities and (2) as a result of socialisation. By testing the interaction between school composition and whether the partner goes to the same school, the two underlying mechanisms are disentangled. If only meeting opportunities play a role, the effect of school composition should be positive for those whose partner goes to the same school and absent for those whose partner does not go to the same school. If socialisation plays a role as well, the effect of school composition should also be positive for those whose partner does not go to the same school. We expect both meeting opportunities and socialisation to play a role, leading to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: A higher proportion of natives at school has a positive effect on the likelihood of dating a native by immigrant adolescents, and this effect is stronger if the partner goes to the same school.

Methods

Participants and Procedures

We use the data of the first wave of the CILS4EU, which was collected in the school year 2010–2011 in England, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden among pupils of around 14-year-old. Using comparable designs and measures, the survey aims to answer key questions about the structural, cultural and social integration of the children of immigrants in these countries (Kalter et al., 2014).

A stratified three-stage sample design was used that allowed for oversampling schools with a high proportion of pupils with an immigrant background (descriptive statistics are weighted with the sampling weight that is provided in the data-set). In the first stage, schools were sampled from a comprehensive national school list with probability proportional to size. The second stage sampled at least two classes of the target grade (i.e., 10th grade in England, 9th grade in Germany, 3rd grade in the Netherlands and 8th grade in Sweden). In the third stage, pupils enrolled in these classes were sampled. The sampled pupils completed an extensive questionnaire at school (parental consent was required). Response rates of pupils ranged from 80.5 in

Table 1. Overview sample selection by country.

Selection criteria	Total	England		Germany		The Netherlands		Sweden	
		N	% Selected ^a	N	% Selected ^a	N	% Selected ^a	N	% Selected ^a
Original sample	18716	4315		5013		4363		5025	
Immigrants	7655	1756	40.7	2408	48.0	1419	32.5	2072	41.2
Dating	1926	332	18.9	882	36.6	334	23.5	378	18.2
Valid information on background partner	1869	315	94.9	860	97.5	331	99.1	363	96.0

^aThe percentage is calculated by dividing the number of respondents after selection by the number of respondents before the selection step (e.g., 1756/4315 = 0.407).

England to 94.5 in the Netherlands. Parents were also invited (via mail and over phone) to participate in the survey. The survey was available in several minority languages. Parental response of adolescents with an immigrant background ranged from 29.0% in England to 76.1% in Germany. Parental characteristics were also reported by the child, which allows us to also study the partner choice of immigrant adolescents whose parents did not participate.

From the initial sample of adolescents, three selections were made: respondents who are immigrants, respondents who are dating and respondents who have valid information on the immigrant background of the partner. As can be seen from Table 1, each of these selections reduces the number of cases in a somewhat different way for each country. The numerical dominance of Germans in the resulting sample is mainly a consequence of the higher proportion of dating adolescents, which is predominantly caused by a higher average age of the German sample (see Table A1). To deal with the issue of numerical dominance of Germans, we weight the sample by the inverse of the proportion in our sample (country weight) so that each country has the same weight in the regression analysis.

Measures

Our dependent variable indicates whether the adolescent has a native partner or a non-native partner. The respondent is considered to be dating if he/she answered affirmatively to the question ‘Do you currently have a boyfriend/girlfriend?’. The national origin of the partner was measured by asking the adolescent what the background of his/her partner was. The definition of ‘background’ was left to the respondent and might refer to the parents only or to the (great)grandparents as well. The adolescent is classified as having a native partner if he/she ticked the box ‘White British’, ‘German’, ‘Dutch’, or ‘Swedish background’ in England, Germany, the Netherlands or Sweden, respectively. In addition, adolescents indicated whether their partner went to the same school or not.

Traditional gender roles of adolescents were assessed by asking whether the following tasks should be done mostly by the man, mostly by the woman or by both about the same: (1) take care of the children, (2) cook, (3) earn money and (4) clean the house. We constructed a scale by counting the number of times the adolescent followed the traditional task division, i.e., taking care of the children, cooking and cleaning should be done mostly by the woman, and earning money should be done mostly by the man (Loevinger's $H = 0.51$). *Conservative family values* indicate that adolescents were less likely to approve of the following behaviour: (1) living together as a couple without being married, (2) divorce, (3) abortion and (3) homosexuality. Adolescents scored each behaviour on a 4-point scale (1 = *always OK*, 2 = *often OK*, 3 = *sometimes OK* and 4 = *never OK*). We use the average score over items ($\alpha = 0.77$). *Importance of religion* indicates how important religion was to the adolescent on a scale from 1 = *not at all important* to 4 = *very important*.

Cultural integration of parents was measured by *parent's religion*. Religion refers to the religion of the responding parent. If this information was missing, religion refers to the religion of the adolescent, assuming that parents have the same religion. We distinguish between no religion, Christianity, Islam and other religion. Other religion is a diverse but relatively small group.

As a measure of social integration, we include a dummy *parents in mixed union*. The dummy indicates that one of the parents has an immigrant background and the other parent is a native.

As a measure of structural integration, we include, first, *parents' education*. Parents' education refers to the educational level of the highest educated biological/adoptive parent. The responding parent specified the highest education completed by themselves and by their partner on a scale with answer categories: 1 = *no school leaving certificate*, 2 = *degree below upper secondary school*, 3 = *degree from upper secondary school* and 4 = *university degree*. If information about the education of the mother or father was missing (or referred to a non-biological/non-adoptive parent), we used the respective information provided by the child. Adolescents indicated for the biological mother and biological father separately whether they had finished primary school, had finished upper secondary school and had finished university. *Parents' socio-economic status* refers to the parent with the highest socio-economic status. Based on type of job, self-employment status, and the job description, the occupation of each parent was classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) 2008. These ISCO 2008 were provided in the dataset. We recoded the ISCO 2008 scores to the International Socio-Economic Index (ISEI) 2008 (Ganzeboom, 2010; Ganzeboom, De Graaf, and Treiman 1992; Ganzeboom and Treiman 2012). As with parental education, missing information about the education of the mother or father was replaced by the information provided by the child. Socio-economic status was centred around the mean (ISEI = 45).

Adolescents provided information about *the share of natives in their neighbourhood*. The item is measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *none or almost none* to 5 = *almost all or all*. The use of a subjective measure for neighbourhood

composition may result in an upward bias of the neighbourhood effect, because natives in the neighbourhood may only be noticed by the selective group who actually has contact with natives (e.g., adolescents with a native partner). We are able to construct an objective measure of *proportion native pupils at school*. Based on the generational status of each pupil (see controls below), we know the number of native and non-native pupils in the selected classes in each school. The measure is calculated based on participating pupils only. In the Netherlands, the correlation between our constructed measure and a measure that is based on all pupils in the school was almost perfect ($r = 0.96$). This latter measure is not used because it is not available for the other countries. The correlation between neighbourhood and school is 0.34, and, thus, allows for simultaneous estimation.

Several controls were included. *Country* dummies are included to capture any country differences that are not yet taken into account by the cultural and structural characteristics of adolescents and their parents. *Generational status* distinguishes between third-generation, second-generation and first-generation immigrants. The third generation consists of adolescents who were born in the survey country themselves, whose parents were both born in the survey country *and* who have at least two grandparents who were born abroad. Adolescents belonging to the second generation were born in the survey country and have at least one parent who was born abroad. The first generation consists of adolescents who are born abroad and have at least one parent who is born abroad. A dummy is included for *girls*, with boys being the reference category. In addition, we run our analyses by sex and test for significant differences in the estimates between boys and girls. Because it has been suggested that the choice of an out-group declines with increasing age (Joyner and Kao 2005), we also control for *age*. To avoid list-wise deletion of cases, we impute missing values with country-specific means and include dummy variables to take this imputation into account. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics before imputation. Note that these values are weighted with the sampling weight to correct for the three-stage stratified sampling procedure.

Analytical Strategy

We specify a two-level random-intercept logit model with adolescents and their parents nested in schools. We estimate the odds ratio of having a native partner versus having a non-native partner. Our level-2 measure, proportion of natives at school, is centred around the grand mean (i.e., 0.37).

Our sample only includes respondents who were involved in a romantic relationship. This selection may shape our resulting sample. To gain more insight into the selectivity of our sample and to correct for a potential selection bias, we apply Heckman's two-stage model of sample selection bias. First, we estimate a probit regression model for the probability of being in a romantic relationship. The proportion of opposite-sex friends and the proportion of older friends are used as identifying instruments in the selection equation. This model informs us about the selectivity of our sample and enables us to calculate the Inverse Mills Ratio. This

Table 2. Descriptive statistics analytical sample by sex before imputation of missing values.

	Boys and girls			Boys		Girls	
	Valid N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Dating a native (0–1)	1869	0.50		0.58		0.44	
Country							
England	1869	0.25		0.04		0.05	
Germany	1869	0.63		0.27		0.24	
The Netherlands	1869	0.07		0.63		0.63	
Sweden	1869	0.04		0.06		0.08	
Age (13–18)	1856	14.83	0.73	14.92	0.73	14.75	0.73
Girl (0–1)	1867	0.52		0		1.00	
Generational status							
First generation	1869	0.24		0.06		0.06	
Second generation	1869	0.59		0.58		0.59	
Third generation	1869	0.17		0.19		0.14	
Traditional gender roles (0–4)	1869	1.81	1.41 ^a	1.99	1.45	1.65	1.36
Conservative family values (1–4)	1843	2.70	0.82 ^a	2.9	0.77	2.52	0.83
Importance of religion (1–4)	1852	2.60	1.07	2.6	1.14	2.62	1.01
Parents' religion							
No religion	1856	0.18		0.21		0.15	
Christianity	1856	0.45		0.41		0.48	
Islam	1856	0.27		0.25		0.29	
Other religion	1856	0.10		0.12		0.07	
Parents in mixed union (0–1)	1869	0.33		0.33		0.34	
Parents' highest education (1–4)	1750	2.88	0.82	2.97	0.81	2.80	0.81
Parents' socio-economic status (std) (–37–42)	1653	–0.69	16.34	0.8	16.53	–2.02	16.06
Native share neighbourhood (1–5)	1850	3.58	1.13	3.63	1.15	3.52	1.12
Native proportion school (0.00–0.98)	1869	0.55	0.24	0.55	0.25	0.55	0.23
Partner goes to same school (1–4)	1849	0.33		0.31		0.35	

Note: Children of immigrants longitudinal survey in four European countries v1.1.0. Weighted values (using sampling weight).

^aSignificant difference between boys and girls ($p < 0.05$).

measure is included in the logistic regression model and estimates the likelihood of the partner being a native if these non-dating immigrants would have had a partner.

Results

Dating among Immigrants

Dating appears to be a common experience among immigrant adolescents: about a quarter of the immigrants (26.3%) has a partner. Table 3 presents the results of the multilevel probit analysis on dating and provides some answers to the question which immigrants are dating.

Table 3. Multilevel probit regression of dating versus not dating.

	Boys and girls			Boys			Girls		
	<i>b</i>	SE	OR	<i>b</i>	SE	OR	<i>b</i>	SE	OR
Country (ref. = Sweden)									
England	-0.064	0.06	0.94	-0.068	0.09	0.93	-0.097	0.09	0.91
Germany	0.428***	0.06	1.53 ^a	0.293***	0.08	1.34	0.502***	0.08	1.65
The Netherlands	0.063	0.07	1.07	0.010	0.09	1.01	0.107	0.09	1.11
Age	0.245***	0.03	1.28	0.233***	0.04	1.26	0.275***	0.04	1.32
Girl	0.099	0.07	1.10						
Generational status (ref. = first generation)									
Second generation	-0.110**	0.04	0.90	-0.135*	0.06	0.87	-0.081	0.06	0.92
Third generation	0.058	0.06	1.06	0.095	0.09	1.10	0.026	0.09	1.03
Traditional gender roles	0.042***	0.01	1.04 ^a	0.016	0.02	1.02	0.090***	0.02	1.09
Conservative family values	-0.064*	0.03	0.94	0.001	0.04	1.00	-0.081*	0.04	0.92
Importance of religion	0.036	0.02	1.04 ^a	0.132***	0.03	1.14	-0.047	0.03	0.95
Parents' religion (ref. = Christianity)									
No religion	0.048	0.06	1.05	0.070	0.08	1.07	0.033	0.08	1.03
Islam	-0.110*	0.05	0.90	-0.054	0.07	0.95	-0.073	0.07	0.93
Other religion	-0.157**	0.06	0.85	-0.068	0.08	0.93	-0.259**	0.09	0.77
Parents in mixed union	0.009	0.05	1.01	-0.081	0.07	0.92	0.129	0.07	1.14
Parents' highest education	-0.011	0.02	0.99	-0.015	0.03	0.99	-0.010	0.03	0.99
Parents' socio-economic status	-0.003*	0.00	1.00	-0.001	0.00	1.00	-0.005**	0.00	1.00
Native share neighbourhood	-0.058***	0.02	0.94	-0.074***	0.02	0.93	-0.023	0.02	0.98
Native proportion school	-0.096	0.09	0.91	-0.133	0.12	0.88	-0.103	0.12	0.90
Proportion other-sex friends	0.035	0.08	1.04	-1.104***	0.12	0.33	1.184***	0.12	3.27
Proportion of older friends	-0.099	0.08	0.91	-0.093	0.11	0.91	-0.195	0.12	0.82
Constant	-4.145***	0.43	0.02	-3.286***	0.60	0.04	-4.629***	0.62	0.01
Intra-class correlation	0.014			0.018			0.015		
N	7655			3800			3855		

Note: Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries v1.1.0. Weighted values (using country weights).

^aSignificant difference between boys and girls ($p < 0.05$).

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Immigrants who live in Germany are more likely to date than immigrants in other countries, even after taking age into account. Age in itself also increases the likelihood of having a partner. The results are less clear about differences in the cultural orientation of those who are dating compared to those who are not dating. Girls who hold traditional gender roles are more likely to be romantically involved, but having conservative family values decreases the likelihood of dating. Boys who are more religious are more likely to be dating.

Parental influence on dating is small if adolescents' cultural orientation is taken into account. Immigrants whose parents are Muslim or belong to a religion other than Christianity are less likely to be dating compared to immigrants with Christian parents. Immigrants are slightly less likely to date if parents have a higher socio-economic status.

The ethnic composition of the neighbourhood is relevant for the dating behaviour of immigrants. Immigrant adolescents who live in a neighbourhood where the share of natives is higher are less likely to have a romantic partner (significant for boys only). This finding suggests that if meeting opportunities to find an in-group partner are restricted, immigrant adolescents are more likely to choose not to date.

The Choice of a Native Partner versus a Non-native Partner

Overall, one out of two immigrants who are dating has a native partner (see Table 2). More detailed descriptive analyses show some interesting variation in partner choice between groups. First, the percentage of immigrants with a native partner ranges from 47.1% in Germany to 55.7% in Sweden ($F_{(1.93, 808.15)} = 1.54, p = 0.215$). Second, the percentage of immigrants with a native partner is significantly higher in later immigrant generations (first generation 37.2%, second generation 50.4%, third generation 69.8%; $F_{(1.93, 808.15)} = 8.08, p < 0.001$). Third, boys are more likely to choose a native partner than girls (57.7% of the boys who are dating versus 43.7% of the girls who are dating ($F_{(1.93, 808.15)} = 10.15, p < 0.01$)).

The variance in partner choice at the individual and school level is estimated in the null model (not shown). About 24% of the variation in partner choice is between schools (intra-class correlation = $\tau_0^2 / (\tau_0^2 + 3.29) = 1.02 / (1.02 + 3.29) = 0.237$; Snijders and Bosker 1999). Once the null model takes the proportion of native pupils in school into account, only 4.0% of the variance in partner choice can be attributed to differences between schools.

Table 4 presents the results of the multilevel logistic regression analyses. The partner choice of immigrant adolescents was expected to be partly explained by their own values and attitudes and the results generally support this hypothesis. Family values affect the partner choice of both boys and girls: having more conservative family values decreases the likelihood of dating a native partner. Furthermore, having traditional gender role attitudes decreases the likelihood of dating a native partner for boys only. Last, a negative effect of importance of religion on the likelihood of dating a native partner is found for girls only. Boys' opinion about the importance of religion does not significantly affect partner choice, but an additional analysis shows

Table 4. Multilevel logistic regression of dating a native versus a non-native partner.

	Boys and girls			Boys			Girls		
	B	SE	OR	b	SE	OR	b	SE	OR
Country (ref. = Sweden)									
England	-0.462***	0.11	0.63 ^a	-0.771***	0.12	0.46	0.118	0.14	1.13
Germany	0.063	0.47	1.07	-0.926***	0.15	0.40	0.010	0.17	1.01
The Netherlands	-0.539***	0.12	0.58 ^a	-1.388***	0.13	0.25	0.224	0.15	1.25
Age	0.327	0.25	1.39 ^a	0.145	0.07	1.16	-0.091	0.08	0.91
Girl	-0.868***	0.11	0.42						
Generational status (ref. = first generation)									
Second generation	0.026	0.14	1.03	0.074	0.10	1.08	0.246*	0.12	1.28
Third generation	0.507***	0.12	1.66	0.268	0.14	1.31	0.756***	0.16	2.13
Traditional gender roles	0.009	0.05	1.01	-0.090**	0.03	0.91	-0.032	0.04	0.97
Conservative family values	-0.277***	0.08	0.76	-0.142*	0.06	0.87	-0.187***	0.07	0.83
Importance of religion	-0.079	0.05	0.92 ^a	0.059	0.06	1.06	-0.347***	0.06	0.71
Parents' religion (ref. = Christianity)									
No religion	-0.076	0.11	0.93 ^a	0.357*	0.15	1.43	-0.576***	0.12	0.56
Islam	-0.546***	0.14	0.58 ^a	-0.013	0.11	0.99	-0.969***	0.14	0.38
Other religion	-0.678***	0.20	0.51 ^a	0.021	0.13	1.02	-0.988***	0.19	0.37
Parents in mixed union	0.882***	0.08	2.42 ^a	1.056***	0.13	2.87	0.538***	0.11	1.71
Parents' highest education	0.091*	0.04	1.10	0.082	0.05	1.09	0.100	0.06	1.11
Parents' socio-economic status	0.004	0.00	1.00	0.014***	0.00	1.01	0.004	0.00	1.00
Native share neighbourhood	0.169*	0.07	1.18 ^a	0.124***	0.04	1.13	0.428***	0.04	1.53
Native proportion school	1.898***	0.18	6.67	2.152***	0.20	8.60	1.925***	0.23	6.86
Partner goes to same school	-0.115	0.07	0.89 ^a	-0.300**	0.09	0.74	0.123	0.11	1.13
Native proportion school × partner same school	1.636***	0.26	5.13	1.827***	0.38	6.22	1.344***	0.39	3.83
Inverse Mills Ratio	1.712	1.43	5.54	0.380	0.24	1.46	-0.460	0.24	0.63
Constant	-6.869	5.36	0.00	-2.684*	1.29	0.07	0.539	1.40	1.71
Intraclass correlation	0.000			0.000			0.000		
N	1869			901			968		

Note: Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European Countries v1.1.0. Weighted values (using country weights).

^aSignificant difference between boys and girls ($p < 0.05$).

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

that their religious behaviour does: boys who pay more religious visits are less likely to date a native ($b = -0.184$, $p < 0.001$).

Parental influence on partner choice is demonstrated, first, by a gender-specific effect of parental religion. Descriptive statistics show that, for boys and girls, having a native partner is less common among those whose parents belong to the Islam (17.6%) or another religion (39.3%) compared to those with Christian (62.1%) or non-religious parents (75.7%) ($F_{(2.44, 1019.12)} = 28.57$, $p < 0.001$). No differences were found within the Christian group between Catholics and Protestants. The regression results show that, even after taking adolescents' attitudes into account, these differences persist for girls. The odds of dating a native for a girl with parents belonging to Islam or a religion other than Christianity are about a third of the odds for a girl with Christian parents. Surprisingly, having non-religious parents is also associated with a lower likelihood of dating a native compared to having Christian parents for girls. Inspection of the origin countries of these non-religious girls showed diversity and offered no straightforward explanation for this unexpected finding. For boys, we only find a significant difference between having non-religious parents compared to having Christian parents: immigrant boys with non-religious parents are more likely to have a native partner. Parental influence on partner choice is also demonstrated by the impact of parents' social integration. Parents who themselves are in a mixed union increase their child's likelihood of dating a native: their odds of dating a native are 2.4 times greater than for immigrant adolescents whose parents are both immigrants. The impact of parents' structural integration is demonstrated by a higher likelihood of dating a native partner when parents' education (for boys and girls) and socio-economic status (for boys only) are higher.

The strongest support is found for the structural explanation of partner choice. Table 4 shows, first, a positive effect of the proportion of natives in the neighbourhood. The odds of dating a native partner for immigrants who live in a neighbourhood where the majority is native (score = 4) are 40.2% greater than for immigrants living in a neighbourhood where natives are a minority (score = 2) ($\exp^{1.69 \times 2} = 1.402$). The difference of a one step increase in neighbourhood share is larger for girls (53.4%) than for boys (13.2%). In addition to the effect of the neighbourhood, we find that the school affects partner choice. The main effect of school composition in Table 4 applies to immigrants whose partner does not go to the same school. The positive effect tells us that the higher the proportion of natives in school, the more likely immigrants are to date a native partner, even if the partner does not attend the same school. This implies that the school affects the partner choice of adolescence as a result of socialisation. The interaction effect demonstrates that the effect of school composition is significantly stronger for immigrants whose partner goes to the same school, reflecting an effect of meeting opportunities. The effects are strong. For example, the odds ratio of dating a native when going to a school with 30% natives compared to a school with 80% natives is 2.6 for adolescents whose partner does not go to the same school ($\exp^{1.898 \times 0.5} = 2.583$). The odds ratio increases to 5.6 if the partner does go to the same school ($\exp^{(1.898+1.636) \times 0.5} = 5.583$).

The effects of neighbourhood and school composition complement each other. Comparison of the effect size of the school and the neighbourhood reveals that the school has a larger effect than the neighbourhood regardless of whether the partner goes to the same school. $\exp^{(1.898 + 1.636) \times 0.24} = 2.335$ compared to $\exp^{1.898 \times 0.24} = 1.577$ compared to $\exp^{1.69 \times 1.13} = 1.210$). In sum, we find strong support for structural explanations for partner choice; the social context shapes meeting opportunities and has a socialising impact on partner preferences.

Discussion

By focusing on the partner choices of immigrant adolescents, this study has addressed an important topic that, so far, has received little attention in the field of partner choice research and the field of intergroup relations of immigrants. Using unique large-scale European data about immigrant adolescents, more insight is gained in the very first stages of the relationship career and explanations for early partner choice. Building on the literature on intermarriage, we developed hypotheses about the effect of adolescents' preferences, parental influence and structural effects of the school and the neighbourhood on the likelihood of choosing a native versus a non-native partner.

The theoretical framework of preferences, parental influence and structural constraints has proven fruitful for explaining the partner choice of immigrant adolescents. All three factors affect the likelihood of immigrants dating a native partner. We find modest support for the idea that conservative immigrants are less likely to date a native. Immigrants who are conservative regarding family issues and more religious immigrants are less likely to date native. Gender role attitudes only had an effect on partner choice for boys. Perhaps, having a partner with less traditional gender role attitudes than oneself may be more a problem for immigrant boys than for immigrant girls.

We also provide modest support for parental influence on their child's partner choice. Immigrant adolescents are more likely to have a native partner if their parents are culturally, socially and structurally more strongly integrated in the receiving society. Each of these aspects has an effect net of the other types of integration. Culturally, parents' religion appears to result in strong group boundaries for girls. Immigrant girls with Muslim parents or parents belonging to a religion other than Christianity are relatively unlikely to choose a native partner. This may primarily be a result of opposition to interfaith unions as has been suggested by qualitative research (Sterckx and Bouw 2005; Hooghiemstra 2003). The intergenerational transmission of religion and religiosity leads to a continued orientation towards the cultural heritage (Güngör, Fleischmann, and Phalet 2011) and may be further strengthened by the partner choice of the current (and possibly later) generations of immigrants. Future research might investigate whether relationships with non-natives are with a partner from the same ethnic or religious group. Social integration of parents positively affects the choice of a native partner. Parents who are in a mixed union themselves

implicitly tell children that intergroup relationships are accepted. Furthermore, native partners may be met via parents' friendship network. Together, this results in a higher likelihood of dating a native by their children. Some support for the effect of structural integration of parents was found. The choice of a native partner is more likely if parents are higher educated. Socio-economic status increased the likelihood of dating a native partner for boys only.

Strong support was found for the structural explanation of partner choice in early adolescence. By simultaneously estimating the effect of the school and their neighbourhood, this study is one of the few to simultaneously take the effects of multiple contexts into account. Having a native partner is more likely when meeting opportunities with natives, both in the neighbourhood and in the school, are larger. The effect of the school persists when the effect of the neighbourhood is also taken into account, and vice versa. Furthermore, the effect of school composition also applies to adolescents whose partner does not go to the same school. Thereby, we provide evidence that school composition not only has an effect as a result of meeting opportunities, but also as a result of socialisation. Hence, the positive effect of intergroup contact provided at school on out-group acceptance extends beyond the context in which intergroup contact takes place (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). These findings suggest that ethnic segregation in neighbourhoods and at schools constrain the social integration of immigrant adolescents. This may have implications for future policy.

In line with the intermarriage literature (e.g., Van Tubergen and Maas 2007; Hartung et al. 2011), dating a native partner appeared less common among immigrant girls than among immigrant boys. A possible explanation is that parental acceptance of intergroup relations is particularly low for immigrant girls (Munnikma et al. 2012; Hooghiemstra 2003) and, accordingly, parental involvement in partner choice is higher for immigrant girls than for immigrant boys (Hartung et al. 2011). Parents' religion had a strong effect on the partner choice of girls, but not for boys. Other explanations of out-group partner choice were rather similar for boys and girls.

A key contribution of this study is the shift of focus from marriage to dating. Factors that are better observed during adolescence, such as school composition and parental influence, have the expected effect on partner choice. Ideological boundaries and structural constraints decrease the likelihood of dating a native partner in adolescence, in a similar way as they are known to affect intermarriage in western-Europe (Dribe and Lundh 2011; Van Tubergen and Maas 2007; González-Ferrer 2006; Muttarak and Heath 2010). In sum, our study suggests that precursors to intermarriage may already be observed in adolescence. Scholars are encouraged to study the implications of first partner choice for the rest of the romantic career.

The present study has some limitations. First, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, we could not control for adolescents' attitudes towards natives before they enter a dating relationship. It is plausible that attitudes towards natives are partly shaped by partner choice. Future research might employ the panel character of the CILS4EU data to provide more insight into such effects. Second, our sample was

restricted to immigrant children. The implication of this decision is that the results of our study do not generalise to natives. Moreover, it only tells one side of the story. The formation of intergroup dating unions does not only depend on the willingness of immigrants to date a native, but equally so upon the willingness of natives to date an immigrant. Third, it was beyond the scope of this paper to fully employ the cross-national character of our data. Our analyses showed interesting differences in dating behaviour and partner choice between the countries in this study: England, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. These differences, as well as differences in explanations for partner choice between countries, deserve further theoretical elaboration and investigation.

Overall, this study highlights the relevance of preferences, parental influence and meeting opportunities in the early partner choice of immigrant adolescents. Opportunities for out-group contact provided by the school and the neighbourhood are a prominent factor for understanding early partner choices of immigrant adolescents. These opportunities are, however, not used to the same extent by everyone. Preferences and parental influence appear to be significant for determining who translates these opportunities for out-group contact into actually dating a native partner and who does not.

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Table A1. Descriptive statistics analytical sample by country before imputation of missing values.

	Valid N	All countries		England		Germany		The Netherlands		Sweden	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Dating a native (0-1)	1869	0.50		0.55		0.47		0.60		0.56	
Country											
England	1869	0.25									
Germany	1869	0.63									
The Netherlands	1869	0.07									
Sweden	1869	0.04									
Age (13-18)	1856	14.83	0.73	14.62	0.59	14.96	0.76	14.82	0.69	14.19	0.45
Girl (0-1)	1867	0.52		0.48		0.51		0.58		0.58	
Generational status											
First generation	1869	0.24		0.32		0.22		0.22		0.24	
Second generation	1869	0.59		0.45		0.65		0.55		0.59	
Third generation	1869	0.17		0.23		0.13		0.23		0.16	
Traditional gender roles (0-4)	1869	1.81	1.41	1.56	1.54	1.99	1.35	1.58	1.25	1.11	1.37
Conservative family values (1-4)	1843	2.70	0.82	2.41	0.85	2.87	0.76	2.62	0.73	2.12	0.84
Importance of religion (1-4)	1852	2.60	1.07	2.42	1.09	2.70	1.05	2.65	0.96	2.47	1.23
Parents' religion											
No religion	1856	0.18		0.25		0.13		0.31		0.29	
Christianity	1856	0.45		0.45		0.46		0.38		0.38	
Islam	1856	0.27		0.16		0.32		0.24		0.25	
Other religion	1856	0.10		0.14		0.09		0.06		0.08	
Parents in mixed union (0-1)	1869	0.33		0.39		0.30		0.46		0.30	
Parents' highest education (1-4)	1750	2.88	0.82	3.04	0.82	2.77	0.80	3.08	0.70	3.29	0.82
Parents' socio-economic status (std) (-37-42)	1653	-0.69	16.34	4.46	17.02	-3.15	15.41	2.90	15.77	0.03	18.58
Native share neighbourhood (1-5)	1850	3.58	1.13	3.62	1.22	3.58	1.06	3.58	1.34	3.35	1.27
Native proportion school (0.00-0.98)	1869	0.55	0.24	0.52	0.26	0.54	0.22	0.67	0.23	0.54	0.25
Partner goes to same school (1-4)	1849	0.33		0.33		0.33		0.28		0.32	

Note: Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Survey in Four European countries v1.1.0. Weighted values (using sampling weight).