



European  
Sociological Review

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Journal:	<i>European Sociological Review</i>
Manuscript ID:	ESR-2012-059.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Mate selection, Parental influence, Immigrants

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Manuscripts

Review

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3 **Parental involvement in partner choice: The case of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands**  
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8  
9 **Abstract**

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11 This study contributes to previous research on third party influence in partner choice. More  
12 specifically, the study aims to describe and explain parental involvement among Turkish and  
13 Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands. Analysis of the large scale national data of the Netherlands  
14 Longitudinal Life-course Study (NELLS) shows that parental involvement is modest among Turkish  
15 and Moroccan immigrants, but relatively high when compared to levels of parental involvement  
16 among the native Dutch. Furthermore, analyses reveal variation in parental involvement within the  
17 Turkish and Moroccan group. Parental involvement is higher among children with lower educated  
18 parents, but educational attainment of the child and later age at formalizing the union counteract this  
19 effect. Potential implications of parental involvement for endogamous partner choice are discussed.  
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29 *Keywords:* Mate selection, parental influence, immigrants  
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## Parental involvement in partner choice: The case of Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands

### Introduction

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

High parental involvement for Turkish and Moroccan immigrants could be expected given that parental involvement in spouse choice was traditionally high in Turkey and Morocco (Fox, 1975; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn, 1995; Sterckx and Bouw, 2005; Timmerman *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, the majority of the first generation immigrants came from rural regions, where parental involvement was particularly high (Fox, 1975). The first question we will address in this study is to what extent parents have been involved in the partner choice of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands and how this compares to parental involvement among the Dutch. Quantitative Dutch studies that answer this descriptive question are very rare; one exception (Esveldt and Schoorl, 1998) supported the claim of high parental involvement by reporting that in 1994 about 40 per cent of the marriages of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in their sample was arranged by the parents. We improve upon previous studies by using a more recent, large scale national dataset – the Netherlands Longitudinal Life-course Study (NELLS) – which contains data, from the perspective of the child, about parental involvement in the partner choice of natives and first and second generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands (De Graaf *et al.*, 2010a).

Our second question is how variation in parental involvement within the Turkish and Moroccan immigrant group can be explained. The answer to this question increases our understanding

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3 of whose partner choice is more likely to be influenced by parents. Parental involvement of immigrant  
4 parents has often been mentioned as an explanation for endogamy in general and for high rates of  
5 endogamy within specific ethnic minority groups in particular (Kalmijn and Van Tubergen, 2010;  
6 Van Tubergen and Maas, 2007). Hence, part of the relevance of studying parental involvement lies in  
7 its expected implications for intermarriage, which has been a classic measure of immigrant integration  
8 (Gordon, 1964; Lieberson and Waters, 1988). In addition, this study is relevant for the public debate  
9 on the position of immigrants that has intensified in the last decade. Gender inequalities, honour-  
10 related violence, and the practice of arranged marriage are some of the issues that are considered  
11 irreconcilable with Dutch values and ideals of individual freedom (Prins and Saharso, 2008). The  
12 notion of differences between immigrants and the native majority population dominates in the public  
13 discourse. A focus on (perceived) differences reinforces boundaries between the groups and may have  
14 implications for immigrant integration (Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2009). This study puts the issue of  
15 parental involvement in perspective by providing empirical evidence for actual levels of parental  
16 involvement and related explanations that are currently lacking.  
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### 33 **Theory and hypotheses**

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35 The occurrence of parental involvement in partner choice may be understood by considering  
36 preferences of parents for parental involvement and the likelihood that parental involvement is  
37 effective. We will elaborate on each of these factors by discussing explanations for such parental  
38 preferences and a child's preference and ability for independence; the latter, we argue, determines the  
39 effectiveness of parental involvement. First, however, the background and strategies of parental  
40 involvement are discussed.  
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### 50 **Parental involvement in context**

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52 Anthropological and historical evidence suggests that the degree to which parents determine the  
53 partner choice of their child differs between cultures (e.g., Buunk, Park and Duncan, 2010) and may  
54 change over time (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). For instance, parental control in the process of partner choice  
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3 is generally higher in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures (Buunk, Park and Duncan,  
4 2010). Furthermore, as a result of social change, many societies have witnessed a transformation of  
5 the marital process from arranged marriages towards love marriages, in which partner choice is based  
6 on love and primarily determined by the partners (Thornton, 2001). Some decades ago, arranged  
7 marriages were still common within the Turkish and Moroccan culture (Fox, 1975). This cultural  
8 heritage of high parental involvement might still be observed today with parents playing a large role  
9 in the partner choice of their children. Qualitative research suggests that, although parents nowadays  
10 only rarely arrange the marriage of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants, other strategies are still used  
11 to influence the selection of a spouse. The choice of a partner can be thought of as a process with  
12 parental involvement occurring at different stages. In a first stage parents may control the search for a  
13 partner, for instance by constraining the meeting opportunities of their child with potential partners  
14 (Goode, 1959; Hooghiemstra, 2003; Mounts and Kim, 2009; Sterckx and Bouw, 2005; Talbani and  
15 Hasanali, 2000). In later stages, parents may (threaten to) use sanctions if the partner that is chosen by  
16 their child does not meet their approval. Such sanctions could range from negative comments and a  
17 lack of support in case of relationship problems to breaking off contact, to disownment, or, in  
18 exceptional cases, to the use of violence (Brenninkmeijer *et al.*, 2009; Brouwer, 1997). In case  
19 sanctions are successful and union dissolution follows, the process of partner choice and parental  
20 involvement therein starts over.

### 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 *Parental preferences*

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44 Parental involvement in partner choice may be motivated by several objectives. Besides early  
45 timing of marriage for a variety of reasons (Goode, 1959), an important motive for parents to be  
46 involved in their child's partner choice is to guarantee that their child marries a suitable partner.<sup>1</sup> This  
47 is certainly relevant for Turks and Moroccans who highly value family ties and family solidarity  
48 (Merz *et al.*, 2009) and view marriage as a bond between two families (Timmerman, Lodewyckx and  
49 Wets, 2009). Parental involvement might also be motivated by the feeling of acting in accordance  
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3 Some immigrant parents might be more likely to hold on to the cultural heritage of high  
4 parental involvement than other immigrant parents. More specifically, it could be expected that  
5 immigrants who hold on to the habits of the country of origin are also more likely to continue other  
6 practices from the origin country (Maliapaard *et al.*, 2009), such as parental involvement. At the same  
7 time, immigrants who are more often exposed to normative orientations of the destination country, for  
8 example through the national and local media, may be more likely to align parental involvement to the  
9 native Dutch level. Normative orientations and habits both relate to the cultural dimension of  
10 integration (Esser, 2006; Van Tubergen and Maas, 2006). In this study, cultural integration is defined  
11 as a stronger cultural emphasis on the destination country than on the (community of) origin country  
12 (Hagendoorn *et al.*, 2003). In sum, we expect that *parental involvement in partner choice is lower if*  
13 *immigrant parents are culturally more strongly integrated in the host society (Hypothesis 1).*  
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25 Furthermore, higher educated parents might place more value on the autonomy of their child  
26 (Dornbusch *et al.*, 1987; Weininger and Lareau, 2009) and this may reduce their likelihood of parental  
27 involvement in partner choice. Another explanation for lower parental involvement among higher  
28 educated parents is greater exposure to Dutch orientations as the higher educated are generally better  
29 integrated in Dutch social structure than the lower educated. This leads us to expect that *parental*  
30 *involvement in partner choice is lower if immigrant parents are higher educated (Hypothesis 2).*  
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#### 40 *Independence: preferences and ability of the child*

41 Parental involvement may not only be explained by considering the preferences of the parents, but  
42 also by taking the characteristics of the child into account. In general, differences in the degree to  
43 which individuals prefer to make independent decisions may be expected. In addition, individual  
44 differences exist in the areas in which individuals feel they have the right to make independent  
45 decisions (Helwig, 2006). One of the areas that may be claimed for independent-decision making is  
46 the choice of one's partner. Within the Turkish and Moroccan group, children differ in the degree to  
47 which they consider parental involvement in partner choice acceptable and desirable (Sterckx and  
48 Bouw, 2005). Children who prefer to choose their partner by themselves need skills and resources for  
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3 independence to limit the coercion that parents can exercise.<sup>ii</sup> In sum, the degree to which children  
4 prefer autonomy and have the ability to make independent decisions affect the likelihood that they  
5 will actually experience parental involvement in the choice of their partner. In subsequent paragraphs,  
6 we develop more specific hypotheses. We set out how certain characteristics and resources of the  
7 child promote preference and/or ability for autonomy and, thus, decrease parental involvement.  
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13 Studies consistently show that autonomy increases with age in both individualist and  
14 collectivist cultures (Bosma *et al.*, 1996; Helwig, 2006; Smetana, 1988; Stewart *et al.*, 1999). An  
15 important developmental period in this respect is the period between adolescence and adulthood, the  
16 so-called independent life stage (Rosenfeld and Kim, 2005) or emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000).  
17 During this period, the child is increasingly expected to take responsibility for one's actions, to make  
18 independent decisions, and to become financially independent (Arnett, 2000). Children who enter  
19 marriage at a young age are, at least financially, more dependent upon their parents at the moment of  
20 partner selection and this increases parental power to be involved in their partner choice (Goode,  
21 1963). Such an association is illustrated by the young age, especially of women, when entering  
22 arranged marriages (Fox, 1975) and the low average age at first marriage in societies where arranged  
23 marriages are common (Desai and Andrist, 2010; Dixon, 1971). This negative association between  
24 age at formalizing the union and experiencing parental involvement might be explained as follows.  
25 Parents may deliberately get involved in partner choice at an early age as a strategy to increase the  
26 effectiveness of parental involvement. In such a case, early marriage might be a consequence of  
27 parental involvement. Not all parents (effectively) use such a strategy. As set out above, preferences  
28 and capabilities to make independent decisions further increase with age. As a result, the later parents  
29 try to get involved in partner choice, the stronger the preferences and the better the capabilities of  
30 children to limit involvement of parents in their partner choice. Correspondingly, we hypothesize that  
31 *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans whose union started at a later age*  
32 *(Hypothesis 3)*. Unfortunately, we are unable to resolve the causality problem of both arguments with  
33 the data used here. We will keep this in mind when interpreting the results.  
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3 Independent decision making is also related to the opportunities of family members to  
4 monitor a child's behaviour. A partner can be chosen more freely in case the family has no or few  
5 opportunities to monitor and interfere in this choice. This is illustrated by Rosenfeld and Kim (2005)  
6 who show that living independently and further away from one's parents and the community where  
7 one grew up increases the likelihood of entering a non-traditional union. In line with this argument of  
8 fewer monitoring and increased independence, we expect that *parental involvement is lower among*  
9 *Turks and Moroccans who have no family living in the Netherlands (Hypothesis 4).*  
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17 Education enhances both the preference for and ability of autonomy of children. First,  
18 education exposes children to ideas and activities that are not controlled by the family. For example,  
19 at school children read about individual participation in partner choice and work together in cross-sex  
20 teams. Such learning experiences create greater independence between children and the parental  
21 generation (Thornton and Fricke, 1987) and affect attitudes by becoming more supportive of  
22 individual participation in union formation (Barber, 2004). Schools also offer opportunities to interact  
23 with potential partners, which may stimulate greater self-participation in partner choice (Ghimire,  
24 Axinn, Yabiku and Thornton, 2006). In addition, children acquire skills and knowledge through  
25 education. These skills and knowledge foster an independent outlook and allow for gaining financial  
26 independence (Thornton *et al.*, 1984). They provide a child with the ability to convincingly question  
27 norms and traditions, such as the participation of parents in partner choice. In sum, we hypothesize  
28 that *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans who have attained a higher level of*  
29 *education (Hypothesis 5).*  
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44 Finally, social networks play a role in becoming more independent from one's parents  
45 (Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). Through social learning, peers exert influence on behaviour (Biddle  
46 *et al.*, 1980), and this also occurs with respect to union formation (Huschek *et al.*, 2010). Dutch  
47 friends are likely to endorse the Western ideal of autonomous partner choice both in their attitudes  
48 and their behaviour (Buunk, Park and Duncan, 2010). This may promote children's preferences for  
49 more autonomy in their partner choice. In addition, Dutch friends may provide support for refusing  
50 parental involvement and for dealing with the consequences of refusal. These arguments lead us to  
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3 expect that *parental involvement is lower among Turks and Moroccans who have Dutch friends*  
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5 (*Hypothesis 6*).  
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## 8 9 **Data and methods**

### 10 11 *Data*

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13 The hypotheses are tested using the Netherlands Life Course Survey (NELLS) (De Graaf, Kalmijn,  
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15 Kraaykamp and Monden, 2010a). The NELLS is a large scale Dutch panel survey designed to provide  
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17 more insight into social cohesion, norms and values, and inequality. A unique feature of this dataset is  
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19 the oversampling of individuals of Turkish and Moroccan descent. The study employed a two stage  
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21 stratified sampling method. In the first stage, 31 municipalities stratified by region and degree of  
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23 urbanization were randomly selected. The four largest cities were added to this selection to allow for  
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25 obtaining a representative sample of Turks and Moroccans. In the second stage, individuals were  
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27 randomly selected from the population registry based on their age and own and parents' country of  
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29 birth. In this stage, individuals of Turkish and Moroccan descent were oversampled. The first wave  
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31 was conducted between 2008 and 2011 and consisted of a face-to-face interview and a self-  
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33 completion questionnaire (we used information from the face-to-face interviews only). Both interview  
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35 and questionnaire were administered in Dutch. The overall response rate was 52 per cent, which is  
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37 common for similar surveys in the Netherlands. In total, 5,312 respondents were interviewed (De  
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39 Graaf *et al.*, 2010b). For the descriptive analysis that answers our first research question, we select  
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41 natives who were married and first and second generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants who  
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43 were married at the time of being interviewed and had not been married at the time of their migration  
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45 ( $N_{Native} = 1,012$ ;  $N_{Turks} = 487$ ;  $N_{Moroccans} = 495$ ). A subsample, including only the Turkish and  
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47 Moroccan immigrants ( $N = 982$ ), is used for the multivariate analysis that answers our second  
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49 research question. Detailed information about the respondents in this analytical subsample is  
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51 presented in Table 1.  
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### 54 55 56 *Measurements* 57 58 59 60

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3 Our dependent variable is *parental involvement*. Respondents were asked “To what extent did your  
4 parents (or other family members) play a role in choosing your partner?”. Answer categories were: no  
5 role, a small role, a large role, or partner was chosen by parents (or family). In the ordered logit  
6 model, the response categories ‘a large role’ and ‘partner was chosen by parents (or family)’ were  
7 collapsed. In our sample, only 36 respondents (3.7%) indicated that their partner was chosen by their  
8 parents. Parental involvement may be underreported because of social desirability and to avoid  
9 cognitive dissonance. It is plausible that respondents indicated a large role of the parents instead of  
10 admitting that the partner was chosen by the parents.  
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19 All parental characteristics are reported by the respondent. We include three measures about  
20 parents’ customs when the respondent was 12-14 old as indicators of cultural integration. *Islamic*  
21 *customs of the parents* counts the number of Islamic customs performed by their parent(s), which  
22 were measured by reading the Koran, fasting, wearing a headscarf, not drinking alcohol, not eating  
23 pork, and visiting the Mosque at least once a month (Loevinger’s  $H = 0.53$ ). The scale *Dutch*  
24 *orientation of the parents* counts the number of ways in which parents were introduced to Dutch  
25 orientations: receiving native Dutch at home, reading Dutch newspapers and watching Dutch  
26 television shows (Loevinger’s  $H = 0.81$ ).  
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35 *Father’s education* indicates the highest level of education completed by the father and is  
36 coded into three categories: low (no school attended or completed primary school only), intermediate  
37 (all levels of secondary education and intermediate vocational education) and high education (tertiary  
38 vocational education and university). Because of the relatively high number of missing values on this  
39 specific variable ( $n = 108$ ; 11%), we included a dummy in order not to lose these cases.  
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46 Variation in *mother’s education* is low. Therefore, we compare mothers with no or primary  
47 education (reference category) to mothers with at least secondary education. In addition, we include a  
48 dummy to indicate that information about mother’s education is missing ( $n = 102$ ; 10.4%).  
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52 *Age at formalizing union* is the age at which the respondent entered marriage or age at  
53 cohabitation if the respondent entered cohabitation before marriage.  
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3 A proxy for the possibilities to monitor a child's mating behaviour is the presence of *family in*  
4 *the Netherlands*. Respondents who were born in the Netherlands are assumed to have family in the  
5 Netherlands (score 1). Foreign-born respondents were asked about the presence of parents and other  
6 family members in the Netherlands before migration. Additionally, they were asked whether they  
7 migrated simultaneously with (one of) their parents. Respondents who migrated without parents and  
8 had no parents or other family members living in the Netherlands before migration are assumed not to  
9 have a family network in the Netherlands (score 0). All other foreign-born respondents are classified  
10 as having family members in the Netherlands (score 1). We assume that this network had not changed  
11 substantially by the time of formalizing the union.  
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21 Respondent's *educational level* is the highest level of education the respondent has ever  
22 attended. We focus on attendance rather than completion because increasing independence starts with  
23 attendance. We distinguish five categories: primary school or lower, lower secondary education,  
24 lower tertiary education, higher secondary education and higher tertiary education.  
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29 Each respondent provided information about his/her personal network by answering questions  
30 about the persons with whom the respondent had discussed important personal matters in the last six  
31 months. Respondents were allowed to name a maximum of five persons and could include family  
32 members. *Proportion of Dutch network members* indicates the number of Dutch network members  
33 divided by the total number of persons mentioned. We keep in mind that this variable does not  
34 measure the network at the time of union formation when discussing the results. Retrospective data  
35 on networks were not collected because such measures have limited validity.  
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#### 45 *Control variables*

46 We include *sex* to control for the generally higher parental involvement in the partner choice of girls  
47 than boys that has been reported in prior studies (Ghimire, Axinn, Yabiku and Thornton, 2006;  
48 Sterckx and Bouw, 2005). *Origin group* is measured by the country of birth of the respondent's  
49 parents, in line with the classification of the sampling procedure (CBS, 2010). The country of the  
50 foreign-born parent determines the origin group. If both parents were born abroad, but in different  
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3 countries, the origin group of the respondent is determined by mother's country of birth. In the main  
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5 analysis, we also control for *immigrant generation*. First generation immigrants were born abroad,  
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7 have at least one foreign-born parent and migrated to the Netherlands after they reached the age of 13.  
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9 Those who were born in the Netherlands or migrated to the Netherlands before reaching age 13 and  
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11 have at least one foreign-born parent are classified as second generation immigrant (Rumbaut, 2004).  
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13 Respondents whose parents were both born in the Netherlands are classified as being (native) Dutch,  
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15 irrespective of partner's country of birth and age at migration. Finally, *birth year* is included to check  
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17 for cohort effects and is centered on the mean year of birth (i.e., 1974) of the respondents in our  
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19 analytical sample.<sup>iii</sup>  
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23 -- Table 1 about here --  
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## 26 27 *Methods*

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29 Parental involvement is estimated using ordered logistic regression analysis, which is an extension of  
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31 the binary logistic regression model and the appropriate method for analyzing responses with three or  
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33 more ordered levels (McCullagh, 1980). The model estimates the odds that parental involvement is  
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35 higher than a certain level and assumes that the coefficients are equal for each level of parental  
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37 involvement. A Wald test showed that the proportional odds assumption was only violated for the  
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39 effect of the child having followed higher tertiary education. Therefore, we also present the  
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41 coefficients of higher tertiary education that were obtained with a partial proportional odds model as  
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43 note in Table 3 (Williams, 2006).  
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## 46 47 **Results**

### 48 49 *Descriptive analysis*

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51 Table 2 provides the answer to our descriptive research question. We present the level of parental  
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53 involvement by origin group. The majority of the Turks and Moroccans feel that their parents were  
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55 not involved in their partner choice; proportions indicating no involvement vary from 59.8 per cent  
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3 among Turks to 65.1 per cent among Moroccans. Looking more closely at those who experienced  
4 parental involvement, we see that a slight minority indicates high parental involvement. In addition,  
5 parental involvement is slightly higher among Turks than Moroccans, but these group differences are  
6 not significant. Both groups do however differ significantly from natives: parental involvement is  
7 substantially higher than among the native Dutch. A closer look at the data reveals that parental  
8 involvement is significantly higher in first generation than in second generation Moroccans and Turks  
9 ( $\chi^2$  (1<sup>st</sup> generation vs. 2<sup>nd</sup> generation) = 13.136,  $p$  = 0.001).  
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### 25 *Ordered logistic regression analysis*

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27 The results of the ordered logistic regression analysis are presented in Table 3. The first model  
28 estimates the effect of parental characteristics on parental involvement. Most control variables have a  
29 significant effect. Turks, women, and older birth cohorts have a higher likelihood of higher parental  
30 involvement. The effect of sex is substantial: the odds of higher parental involvement are 1.7 times  
31 higher for women than for men ( $e^{0.519} = 1.671$ ). Turning to the effects of parental characteristics, we  
32 find that father's education and Islamic customs have significant effects. Higher educated fathers have  
33 64.6 per cent lower odds of higher parental involvement compared to the odds of lower educated  
34 fathers ( $e^{-1.038} = 0.354$ ). Higher parental involvement in partner choice is more likely if parents hold  
35 on to more Islamic customs. The odds of higher involvement increase by 20.4 per cent for each  
36 additional Islamic custom ( $e^{0.186} = 1.024$ ). However, orientation towards Dutch customs has no effect  
37 on parental involvement. These results suggest that parental involvement is better explained by  
38 considering whether or not parents hold strong cultural ties to their group, as indicated by maintaining  
39 Islamic customs, than by considering whether or not they are exposed to Dutch customs. The effect of  
40 mother's education is in the expected direction, but do not reach significance.  
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-- Table 3 about here --

The effects of characteristics related to a child's preference and ability of independence are presented in Model 2. We expected that being more independent decreases the likelihood of parental involvement. The results convincingly support this expectation. With regard to age, we find that children whose union was formalized at an older age are less likely to have experienced parental involvement. The odds of higher parental involvement decreases by almost 10 per cent ( $e^{-0.090} = 0.914$ ) for each year increase in age at formalizing the union. A closer examination of this effect shows that the effect is mainly the result of the significantly lower likelihood of parental involvement for children entering their union at a relatively late age compared to the average age to enter a union. This suggests that the results are not primarily the consequence of parental pressures to marry early. Our expectation that education lowers parental involvement was confirmed. Results showed that the odds of higher parental involvement decrease with higher education. The odds are 38.8 per cent lower for children with lower tertiary education ( $e^{-0.491} = .612$ ) compared to children who attended no or primary school. The difference in odds is even larger when children who followed higher secondary education and higher tertiary education are compared to 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 higher proportion of Dutch network members lowers the likelihood of higher parental involvement. The odds of higher parental involvement are 41.0 per cent ( $e^{-0.532} = 0.587$ ) smaller for children whose network is completely Dutch compared to children whose network is completely non-Dutch.

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

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3 partner choices of men and women are similar if women succeed in gaining the same level of  
4 independence. We will come back to this in the conclusion.  
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7 The effects of parental and children's characteristics are modelled simultaneously in the full  
8 model (Model 3). The results show that both parental and children's characteristics affect differences  
9 in parental involvement. The effects of parental education, age at formalizing the union and child's  
10 education only slightly decline in size. Furthermore, results show that second generation immigrants  
11 experience similar levels of parental involvement if parents' background characteristics is controlled  
12 for. The effect of Islamic customs no longer reaches significance and was found to be mediated by the  
13 age at which the union is formalized.  
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21 Separate analyses by sex suggest that the estimates do not differ significantly by sex.  
22 Analyses by origin group reveal that the child's education effect only holds for Moroccans. We come  
23 back to this in the conclusion.  
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### 29 **Conclusion and discussion**

30 This study has analysed parental involvement in partner choice among Turkish and Moroccan  
31 immigrants in the Netherlands. The descriptive results confirm the idea that parental involvement is  
32 more common in these immigrant groups than in the native population. In our data, reports of  
33 arranged unions are not common, although we note that such reports may be biased downward. Still,  
34 we do see a clear decrease in parental involvement over immigrant generations. Both parental and  
35 children's characteristics explain variation in parental involvement. Parental involvement is higher  
36 among children with lower educated parents. At the same time, children who prefer and have more  
37 capacities to be independent are less likely to experience parental involvement.  
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48 Parental involvement is higher among those children whose father has a low education  
49 compared to those children whose father is higher educated. Our explanation for this finding is that  
50 higher educated parents are less positive towards the use of parental involvement. We found weak  
51 support for a negative effect of cultural integration on parental involvement. Exposure to Dutch  
52 orientations had no effect. Maintaining Islamic customs was found to have an indirect effect only. In  
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3 line with research showing that more religious parents prefer early marriage (De Valk and Liefbroer,  
4 2007b), we found that children whose parents adhere strongly to the rules of Islam are more likely to  
5 marry at a younger age and this in turn, increases the likelihood of higher parental involvement.  
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9 A second conclusion of this study is that parental involvement is lower for children who are  
10 better capable of independent-decision making in general. Children who have followed a higher level  
11 of education and who entered their union at a later age experience lower involvement of their parents  
12 in their partner choice. Two interesting insights related to this finding arise in this study. Firstly, the  
13 effect of education only holds for Moroccan immigrants. Research suggests that family loyalty and  
14 group cohesion is generally higher in the Turkish group (Güngör *et al.*, 2011). In addition, it has been  
15 suggested that the honour of the family is protected with greater effort among Turks (Brenninkmeijer,  
16 Geerse and Roggeband, 2009). Perhaps this explains that Turks, regardless of their educational level,  
17 accept and appreciate the involvement of parents in their partner choice. Secondly, once the child's  
18 independence is controlled for, sex differences in parental involvement are no longer found. Gaining  
19 independence might, however, be more a struggle for girls than for boys. Our study suggests that  
20 strong adherence of the parents to Islamic customs could be one explanation for this. Both issues  
21 deserve to be addressed in future research. Using longitudinal data could help disentangling the effect  
22 of preferences and capabilities for autonomy and how these develop differently for boys and girls.  
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37 A longitudinal design would also help to overcome some of the limitations of this study. Our  
38 cross-sectional data allowed us to study intact unions only. Dissolution risks of arranged unions may  
39 be higher because of lower union satisfaction (Xiaohe and Whyte, 1990), but one could also argue  
40 that dissolution risks are lower because of third party pressure to stay together, even when union  
41 satisfaction is low. In addition, the perception of parental involvement might change depending on  
42 union satisfaction. To our knowledge, these issues have not been explored longitudinally and,  
43 therefore, we are unable to tell whether this may have affected our results. Related to this, we suggest  
44 to use behavioural measures of parental involvement. In this study's measurement, individuals may  
45 not admit that parents were involved in their partner choice in order to avoid cognitive dissonance or  
46 because they assume that parental involvement is socially undesirable.  
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3 An interesting topic of future research would be to examine whether parental involvement  
4 increases over individuals' relational careers. In other words: does parental involvement differ by  
5 union type? The long term horizon of cohabitation and marriage may intensify the importance of  
6 finding a suitable partner. Examination of the data (not shown) provides preliminary support for this  
7 idea by showing that, in contrast to marriage, dating unions emerge without much parental control.  
8 This may have implications for the characteristics of the partner that is chosen (Joyner and Kao,  
9 2005). The present large scale survey data show that higher parental involvement is related to a higher  
10 likelihood of choosing an in-group spouse.<sup>iv</sup> Parents may increase parental involvement because of  
11 opposition to out-group partner choice (Hense and Schorch, 2010; Huijnk *et al.*, 2012), but it might  
12 also be that parental involvement is more effective among those who eventually marry an in-group  
13 partner. Our study suggests that the level of a child's independence may play a decisive role therein.  
14 We recommend that a life course approach and panel data should be used to further increase our  
15 understanding of the role of third parties in partner choice.  
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29 To conclude, our analyses show that parental involvement has become less likely for the  
30 younger cohorts of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. Moreover, the increasing levels of  
31 independence of immigrants, illustrated by increasing age at first marriage (Schoenmaeckers *et al.*,  
32 1999), rising levels of education (Crul and Doornik, 2003) and a growing preference for  
33 cohabitation (De Valk and Liebroer, 2007a), suggest that parental involvement may further decline in  
34 future generations.  
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43 <sup>i</sup> For immigrants, marrying an in-group partner in the destination country might also be an important way to  
44 maintain homogeneity and internal cohesion of the group (Kalmijn, 1998), ensure the intergenerational  
45 transmission of values and norms from the country of origin, and maintain a good family name (Munniksma,  
46 Flache, Verkuyten, Veenstra, 2012).

47 <sup>ii</sup> We would like to point out that children's partner preferences are often similar to parent's preferences. Thus,  
48 parental involvement does not automatically imply that children dislike involvement of their parents and  
49 parental coercion is needed. Parental involvement may also signal approval for the choice of a certain partner,  
50 which is important for many Turkish and Moroccan immigrants (Sterckx & Bouw, 2005).

51 <sup>iii</sup> The correlation matrix is available online as an additional supplement (Table A1).

52 <sup>iv</sup> Figure A1 (online additional supplement) shows the ethnic background of the partner by parental involvement.  
53 The graph shows that higher parental involvement is related to a higher likelihood of choosing a partner from  
54 the own origin group. Furthermore, higher parental involvement more frequently occurred in unions with a first  
55 generation immigrant compared to unions with a second generation partner. Intergroup unions are most common  
56 among children who indicate that their parents were not involved in their partner choice.  
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Table 1. Descriptive statistics of respondents

	N	Analytical subsample <sup>a</sup>		
		Mean / proportion	SD	Range
Parental involvement	1064	1.5	0.75	1 - 3
<i>None</i>	675	62.5		
<i>Low</i>	226	21.9		
<i>High or partner chosen by parents</i>	163	15.6		
<i>Parental characteristics</i>				
Father's education	1064			
<i>Low</i>	723	68.8		
<i>Intermediate</i>	150	14.5		
<i>High</i>	65	5.6		
<i>Information missing</i>	126	11.0		
Mother's education	1064			
<i>No or primary education</i>	867	82.7		
<i>At least secondary education</i>	81	6.9		
<i>Information missing</i>	116	10.4		
Islamic customs parents at age 12/14	1041	4.4	0.99	0 - 6
Dutch orientation parents at age 12/14	1041	1.3	1.21	0 - 3
<i>Child's characteristics</i>				
Age formalizing current union	1058	24.0	4.81	12 - 41
No family living in the Netherlands	1057	15.1		
Educational level	1064			
<i>No or primary education</i>	181	17.3		
<i>Lower secondary education</i>	325	30.6		
<i>Lower tertiary education</i>	249	23.6		
<i>Higher secondary education</i>	72	6.7		
<i>Higher tertiary education</i>	237	21.9		
Proportion Dutch network members	1012	0.1	0.29	0 - 1
<i>Controls</i>				
Moroccan	1064	50.4		
Female	1064	54.5		
Birth year (centered: 1974)	1064	- 0.19	6.64	-14 - 16
Second generation	1064	51.5		

<sup>a</sup>Valid N = 982

Table 2. Parental involvement by origin group

	None		Small role		Large role or partner chosen by parents	
	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.
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.

$\chi^2$  (Turks vs. Moroccans) = 3.267,  $p = 0.195$ .  $\chi^2$  (Turks and Moroccans vs. natives) = 335.496,  $p < 0.000$ .

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	-0.350*	-0.17	-0.339*	-0.16	-0.283	-0.19
Cohort (centered; 1974)	-0.046***	-0.01	-0.054***	-0.01	-0.054***	-0.01
Father's education (ref = low)						
Intermediate education	-0.273	-0.21			-0.148	-0.22
High education	-1.038**	-0.36			-0.808*	-0.37
Missing education	-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
Missing education	0.269	-0.28			0.191	-0.28
Islamic customs parents at age 12/14	0.186*	-0.08			0.120	-0.08
Dutch orientations parents at age 12/14	0.013	-0.07			-0.025 <sup>a</sup>	-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**	-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

<sup>a</sup>Partial proportional odds model. No role vs. small / large role / chosen,  $b = -0.479$ ,  $se = 0.24$ ,  $p = 0.035$ .

No / small role vs. large role / chosen,  $b = -1.193$ ,  $se = 0.34$ ,  $p = 0.000$

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