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Summary

Marrying a stranger

Distance and nearness in the relationships of young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin in mixed marriages

Mixed marriages involving young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin

This research focuses on ethnically mixed couples with one spouse of Turkish or Moroccan origin in the Netherlands. These mixed couples are fairly unusual. Of the larger ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands, Turkish and Moroccan migrants and their descendants are the least likely to intermarry with other ethnic groups. Moreover, in present-day Dutch society, marriages between spouses of Turkish or Moroccan origin and indigenous Dutch persons are somewhat controversial (more so than any other kind of mix). As the perceived differences between the spouses – their different religion, ethnic culture and social class – are conflated, they are considered to be marriages between opposites and as such are highly susceptible to marital conflict, opposition from family and friends and failure. The literature on the family formation processes of Turks and Moroccans calls their endogamy characteristic and generally neglects the exceptions to the rule. In this study, by contrast, I seek to gain a better understanding of these exceptional mixed couples.

How and under which circumstances do young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin find a spouse from a different ethnic group? What are the conditions for a successful mixed marriage?

What distinguishes an exogamous young persons' partner choice and courtship practices from those of their endogamous peers?

In the sociological and anthropological literature we find explanations for the strict endogamy of Turkish and Moroccan migrants and their descendants. Based on an inversion of these theories, I derived hypotheses for explaining their exogamy.

This book relates how interdependent relationships between parents and adult children, between spouses and between friends influence a mixed marriage, and vice versa. I reconstructed the possible trajectories of men and women of Turkish and Moroccan origin towards a mixed marriage and the strategies of mixed couples for dealing with opposition to their marriage from their loved ones.

Data and methods

This research is a *focussed ethnography*: an ethnography which is limited to one specific aspect of a group's social and cultural life. My findings are based on three sources of data. The most important source were 28 in-depth interviews with mixed couples in which one spouse is of Turkish or Moroccan origin. This sample is not representative of the wider population. In theoretical sampling, which I have used in this research, extrapolation of results to a larger population is based on investigating cases at the opposite ends of the spectrum. I selected cases on the continuum of heterogeneity of the spouses (more or less divergent characteristics apart from their different ethnicity), and on the continuum of conflict (on the subject of the marriage) between the couple and their parents. I selected couples from different generations, age groups and educational levels. Most of my informants of Turkish and Moroccan origin are children of migrants who moved to the Netherlands in the 1960 and 70s, and they have grown up in the Netherlands. I also interviewed a few first-generation migrants who migrated to the Netherlands as adults (sometimes in order to marry a Dutch woman) because I wanted to compare the reactions of migrant parents with those of parents living in Turkey or Morocco. As the spouses' evaluations of their relationship and of the influence of the 'outside world' change over time and over the various stages of their marriage and life course, I interviewed couples who were engaged to be married, couples who had recently married, couples who had been married for a longer period and had children, and couples who were separated. Especially after a divorce or separation, the parties involved in a mixed marriage re-evaluate their relationship with their partner, with their parents/in-laws and with their friends.

Each of the interviews was conducted with a mixed couple or with one of the partners of a (former) mixed couple. We talked about their marriage and the reactions of their family and friends to the fact that it was an ethnically mixed marriage. The interviews lasted several hours and usually took place in the home of the mixed couple. What started out as a formal interview more often than not developed into an informal 'kitchen table conversation', in which I also shared some of my experiences with my own mixed relationship and family. The informal setting of the kitchen table interviews enhanced the rapport with my interlocutors and provided an opportunity to broach topics that belong to the intimate life of the family. This approach resulted in intensive fieldwork sessions with mixed couples, and very rich data. I stayed in touch with some of my interlocutors and was thus able to follow developments in their relationship for several years.

Internet forums provided a second source of data. The Internet is the first source of information that couples themselves turn to when they have questions about their situation or are simply seeking moral support. Since 2001 I have been reading a few popular forums aimed at young Dutch people of Turkish or Moroccan origin. Topics are posted on these forums on a daily basis on issues such as partner choice, mixed marriages, migration marriages, etc. Through their interactions on these forums, young people construct new, shared moral frameworks regarding partner choice and (mixed) marriage, which the sensitive researcher can tap into. One of the Internet forums I visited frequently is www.seni-seviyorum.nl, which is aimed at Dutch and Flemish women who are in a relationship with a Turkish or Kurdish man. This website functioned as a spontaneous, virtual focus group in my research. Because I wanted to conform to this web community's code of conduct, I registered and participated actively in the discus-

sions, rather than reading posts anonymously. On occasion I posted topics myself, initiating discussions on my hypotheses and research ideas, and used the reactions as data in the same way that one would use the data from an online focus group. This generated a few issues about informed consent and protection of privacy which I address in the main text of this book (§ 1.4.3).

My final source of data consists of about a hundred in-depth qualitative interviews with both endogamous young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin and migrant parents of young people of marrying age, also of Turkish and Moroccan origin. I gathered this data during a previous research project (with Carolien Bouw), in the period 2003-2005. The results of that research were published as Sterckx and Bouw (2005). *Liefde op Maat. Partnerkeuze van Turkse en Marokkaanse jongeren*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis. These interviews serve as the basis for my comparison of endogamous and exogamous young people.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. They were coded extensively and analysed both deductively (starting from my theoretical framework) and inductively (inspired by spontaneous findings from the data).

Theoretical framework

In the scientific literature, the endogamy of migrant groups is well documented. Ethnic intermarriage appears either as the result of a lack of co-ethnic spouses or of the diminishing social and cultural distance between groups - immigrant assimilation - which means that in the long run ethnically mixed marriages have a tendency to 'disappear' (and become normal marriages). From the theories that explain ethnic endogamy, we can derive hypotheses as to why and how members of minorities end up marrying outside their own ethnic group. In all the theories discussed below, we have to take into account the influence of social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, the composition of the family (and birth order of the children), the size of the group and its geographical concentration. These social positions intersect and interact with each other. Mixed couples cross several social divides; they are by definition 'outsiders within': through their experiences, our society's hidden mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion become visible, as do the conditions under which they can be overcome.

By inverting the theories that explain the endogamy of migrants of Turkish and Moroccan origin and their descendants, I arrive at the following hypotheses as to why and how they find spouses with a different ethnic background:

1. The assimilation hypothesis is based on the assumption that people marry people who are like them. Marriage partners are usually of the same class, religion, ethnic group, educational level, and so on. Even where they differ on one aspect, they are the same in another. In present-day Dutch society, marriages between Dutch natives and persons of Turkish or Moroccan origin are seen as marriages between opposites. Therefore: the more (potential) spouses are able to overlook differences and find similarities, or to downplay inequalities and focus on equalities, the more opportunities there are for mixed marriages to occur. I call this the *erasing differences hypothesis*.

2. The *contact hypothesis* states that there have to be sufficient opportunities for potential spouses of different ethnic background to meet. The more contact there is between men and women of different ethnic groups, the more opportunities there are for mixed marriages to occur; but also, the more social control and resistance to intermarriage there is in the groups concerned (*emancipation paradox*), as they try to preserve their own cultural heritage.

3. The traditional marriage culture of Turkish and Moroccan migrants is directed toward close endogamy. Formal, traditional courtship protocols attribute control over the family formation process to family elders, who direct it towards the traditional ideal of close endogamy (cousin marriages). Traditional Turkish and Moroccan courtship allow very little room for sentiments such as love (for the future spouse) or sexual attraction. Therefore: the more individualised young peoples' courtship practices are, the more opportunities there are for mixed marriages to occur. From earlier research I know that the majority of young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin stick to very formalist and traditionalist courtship protocols, handing control over the family formation process to their parents at various points in the process. Therefore: the more young people take their partner choice and courtship into their own hands, the more they follow personal sentiment rather than family-oriented logic, and the more likely it is that they will end up in a mixed marriage. I call this the *individualisation of courtship hypothesis*.

4. Members of Turkish and Moroccan extended families have vested interests in the endogamy of the family's adult children. Those interests are: keeping together family possessions; maintaining and reinforcing mechanisms of intra-family solidarity and care; protecting and enhancing bonding social capital; maintaining the status of parents within the family and among the parents' peers. Family members will oppose mixed marriages all the more vehemently when they depend on the family to provide them with material support and care; when acquiring bridging social capital is only possible at the expense of losing bonding social capital; when they are in fear of losing status and authority within the family; when they are in fear of losing status and reputation among their (non-family) peers. The more family members (especially parents) rely on family capital, the more they will oppose a mixed marriage. Therefore: the less parents (and other family members) depend on family capital, the less need there is to fight the mixed couple's marriage plans, the better the couple's chances of success. (*emancipation from the family hypothesis* part 1)

5. The more dependent adult children are on material and emotional support from their parents and other family members, the greater the parents' say over the children's partner choice. In general, children become less dependent on their parents as they grow older, acquire their own income and independent housing. The most important factor in the process of gaining more autonomy in the family formation process is becoming less dependent on the family's emotional and moral support. In other words: young people who are able to distance themselves emotionally from the family, who have alternative networks to provide them with emotional and moral support for their (marital) choices, are

more resilient to parental influence and emotional pressure. The more young people are at a distance from the family, the more they can resist the mechanisms of control by the family, and the more mixed marriages there will be. (*emancipation from the family hypothesis part 2*)

6. It is crucial to the success of mixed marriages that the spouses are able to muster sufficient emotional and moral support for their choice of spouse. When the family is opposed or even in conflict over the mixed marriage, that support has to come from a network of friends which is supportive of the mixed marriage. Young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin in the Netherlands often have cousins as their best friends, all the more so when they are young girls. The nearer the network of friends is situated to the family network, the less likely it is that the network will be mixed (and thus provide opportunities for meeting a spouse of different ethnic origin) or supportive of mixed marriages. In order for mixed marriages to come about and be successful, therefore, young people have to be able to exchange the family network for a network of friends at sufficient distance from the family, which offers emotional and moral support for a mixed marriage. I call this the *shifting between networks hypothesis*.

The empirical chapters

Chapter 2. Dimensions of difference and mixedness

In this chapter I investigate the *erasing differences hypothesis*. I investigated which – apart from their different ethnicity – are the objective and perceived differences between the spouses in the mixed couples in my sample. It transpired that difference and the subsequent inequality between spouses is a source of tension and conflict between them and between the couple and their social environment. The popular notion that difference and inequality between the partners leads to marital failure is therefore a self-fulfilling prophecy. It helps that the spouses in my sample have a lot in common to begin with. In the course of their relationship they moreover become more similar, often as a result of a conscious effort to 'close the gap' between them. They try to erase the initial perceived differences between them and thus reduce their distance from the norm in (Dutch) society that partners should be equals.

The couples in my research see themselves as ethnically mixed and are treated as such by their family and friends. In so far as we can identify objective differences between the spouses, I found that the similarities in terms of educational level, occupational status, lifestyle and religion are paramount. Often, the spouses are not even visibly different. This is relevant, because a couple who are not noticeably mixed (at first glance) can pass as 'normal' and avoid discrimination and slights by strangers (something which visibly mixed couples do experience). It is hard to distinguish between the spouses' class position, although this is an important aspect on which they might be unequal. With a spouse of Turkish or Moroccan origin, this is due to the fact that their (parents') migration interfered with their status in society. For their part, quite a few of the spouses of Turkish and Moroccan origin are upwardly mobile when compared with their parents. There is one characteristic which, if the partners differ in this respect, does amount to manifest inequality: nationality. Couples where one spouse is a marriage migrant from Turkey or Morocco are in different legal positions, e.g. as regards

the right to travel to and reside in the Netherlands and start a family there. At the beginning of the relationship, in particular, this can lead to tension and possibly strife. The migrant partner is dependent on his or her spouse for residency in the Netherlands, and the Dutch spouse is suspicious of the migrant's motives for the marriage: there is a possibility that the chance to migrate to a European country was the stronger driver.

Being an ethnically mixed couple is a kind of stigma. This one aspect of their social identity completely dominates the interaction between the couple and the people around them. They constantly have to address the stereotypical images that exist regarding their kind of mixed relationship. The spouses experience social pressure to reduce the perceived distance between them, to conform to the norm of equality or at least to socially accepted inequality, i.e. where the man's position is superior to that of the woman (female hypergamy). This means that in the case of a marriage between an indigenous Dutch woman and a migrant from Turkey or Morocco, the socially accepted power imbalance between the sexes is inverted. This inequality can be 'righted', compensated for by referring to the fact that the man is a newcomer to Dutch society: his 'full potential' might well be equal to that of his wife, but because of his migration and possible discrimination in Dutch society it remains obscured (for now).

Erasing differences demands emotion work from the spouses and at least a willingness to emphasize in the way they present themselves to the outside world that the man is in no way inferior to his wife. The couple 'performs' equality. How the couple goes about this depends on the audience they face and which characteristics are of symbolic value to that audience. To an audience of higher-educated peers, the couple will emphasize their equality in terms of educational level. To a religious audience, a similar approach to Islam offers possibilities to claim equality. Gender inequality is compensated for by the representation of the couple's division of household work: at least in the eyes of visitors, the wife will be in charge of domestic chores. Or else – but this is only of value to an audience of higher-educated Dutch natives, he stresses his role as a modern, emancipated husband.

Distance and nearness between spouses are not static givens but develop over the course of their relationship. Furthermore, achieving the equality which brings about greater nearness, demands emotional effort from the partners, for which spouses are not always able to muster the energy. Particularly when there are marital tensions, they find it hard to overcome differences and the distance between them grows. In the event of a separation, the spouses find that outsiders attribute this to the cultural or religious differences between them. Thus, the stereotype offers a ready explanation for the failure of the marriage. The display of equality then turns into a display of difference.

Chapter 3. Limits to coincidence

In this chapter I compare the courtship practices of young endogamous and exogamous persons of Turkish and Moroccan origin. The hypothesis I investigate is that exogamous young people abandoned traditionalist courtship practices and took control of the rituals leading up to marriage into their own hands. I expected that in their actions on the marriage market they were guided more by personal sentiment than by loyalty to the family. Specifically, I asked mixed couples whether they had been sexually active before marriage (versus the norm of virginity upon marriage), whether or not they had followed the traditional order of family formation, whether they had cohabited before marriage and whether or not the man had formally asked for his wife's hand in marriage.

As it turns out, my interlocutors had followed different trajectories leading up to marriage. I brought the number of possible scenarios down to three. It proved possible for people to switch from one scenario to another but always, men have more room for manoeuvre in this respect than women. Earlier, I stated that endogamous young persons stick to traditionalist and formalist courtship protocols. The trajectories of exogamous young persons follow three alternative scenarios that diverge to a greater or lesser degree from the traditionalist protocols. First, there are the *protocol-leavers*: these young persons have little moral objection to sex before marriage. They have abandoned the traditional order of engagement, marriage and having children. They cohabited or had children outside marriage and marriage itself is only one of several options. We find protocol-leavers mostly among men of Turkish and Moroccan origin in a mixed relationship, and among a few emancipated young women. The latter are women who do not have to keep up a reputation of chastity to their family and their Turkish and Moroccan peers, because their actions earlier in life mean they have already lost it or because they have distanced themselves from the social circles in which a chaste reputation matters. Here we see the effect of double moral standards at work: young men almost always start out in a mixed relationship as protocol-leavers – though a number of them return to a more traditionalist trajectory later in life. A female protocol-leaver does not have this option, and once she starts down this path, she is more or less destined for a mixed marriage. To the more traditionalist men of her own background, she is no longer a suitable wife.

Other young women of Turkish and Moroccan origin in a mixed relationship find it hard to escape the traditional repertoire of courtship and marriage. They are *protocol-followers*: in fact, they would rather not diverge from the traditional trajectory. Despite this, falling in love and embarking on a relationship with a man of different ethnicity meant they immediately had to adjust their plans. Because they anticipate the rejection of their chosen partner by their family and friends, they keep the relationship a secret. Torn between love for their partner and love for their parents and family, most of these women end up in a long-term clandestine relationship, which de facto means a traditional courtship is no longer possible. If her partner is sensitive to the dilemma his girlfriend faces, she might salvage some of the rituals belonging to traditional courtship. A few of the couples in my sample had at a certain point 'staged' a traditional ritual of the man asking the woman's father for his daughter's hand in marriage. A number of the young men of Turkish and Moroccan origin in my sample can also be regarded as *protocol-followers* because they too had expected to get married the traditional way. When they met their future spouse of different origin, they abandoned the traditionalist repertoire, but continued to struggle with the feeling they were doing something wrong.

A third scenario is that of the young people who arrange their own marriage. I have called them *neo-formalists*. These young persons invent new protocols with regard to dealing with the opposite sex and courtship, based on what they see as the proper, Islamic way of getting married. Their courtship repertoire has much in common with the traditional repertoire, with one key difference: they initiate the process and limit the role of the family throughout. An imam or an Islamic guardian takes over the role of the parents. The neo-formalist young people aspire to a purely Islamic lifestyle, and they have stripped away what they see as contaminations of the true faith by Turkish and Moroccan ethnic culture. The ideal of a purely Islamic lifestyle also leads them to value religious endogamy above ethnic endogamy. Some even prefer a non-Turkish or non-Moroccan convert to Islam for a spouse.

The neo-formalists show that it is primarily the individualisation of courtship that leads to more mixed marriages. The other aspects of a more modernistic courtship – sentimentalization and informalization – are absent from their trajectories to marriage. The neo-formalists pose an interesting challenge to theories on the modernization of Western courtship. They have constructed a courtship repertoire which is highly modern and individualist, yet also strictly formal and devoid of romantic sentiment. Also, they find legitimation for this repertoire in their faith, whereas secularization is considered one of the factors that brought about the transition of family formation in modern Western society.

Chapter 4. Not the ideal picture

This chapter deals with the reactions to the mixed marriage of family members on both 'sides' of the couple. I started from the assumption that partner choice and mixed marriage involve a conflict of interest (between the spouses and their respective families). From studying the reactions of both parents and parents-in-law to the mixed couple, I identify the various interests they have vested in the endogamous partner choice of their children. For migrant parents of Turkish and Moroccan origin, a mixed marriage by one of their children poses a threat both to their social capital and their symbolic capital (status). Most of these parents rely heavily on bonding family capital, and an endogamous marriage is an extension of that. In terms of status, we can distinguish between the parents' status within the family and their status in their social network outside the family. When their children reach marrying age, the parents – traditionally – 'come to power', becoming the elders of a new extended family unit. A son or daughter-in-law from a different ethnic culture is a source of uncertainty: this person might not fit in, might not be able to participate in the rituals of family life and might furthermore be the reason for their own child to distance him or herself from family life. Outside the family, a child entering into a mixed marriage is a (potential) blemish to the parents' reputation, especially when that child is a daughter who marries outside the family's own group. It is a sign that the son or daughter concerned has been disobedient and has not learned to put the family interests ahead of their own personal interests. As a mixed relationship – in the eyes of the conservative community – involves active sexuality, an exogamous daughter's reputation is ruined by her choice of spouse and, by proxy, also that of her parents (and siblings). For the parents of the non-Turkish or non-Moroccan spouse, their child's mixed marriage is equally a source of worry. The parents of the spouses in my sample expressed their concerns about the happiness of their child in a mixed marriage. A few of them were also worried that their child might convert to Islam. But for these parents, too, 'what people will say' can be a cause for concern. In this chapter I argue that parents of whatever ethnic origin who belong to a *'closed world'*, which is homogenous and usually conservative, in which status is based on ascribed characteristics (such as ethnicity and religion), have the most status to gain or lose through their children's marital choices. Parents, again of whatever origin, who move in an *'open world'*, in which status is based more on individual achievement (through higher education, occupation and income) and which is more heterogeneous, are most concerned when their children want to marry someone associated with the 'closed world'. To most native Dutch parents, a Turkish or Moroccan son or daughter-in-law is, at least in the first instance, a representative of the 'closed world'. Those migrant parents of Turkish and Moroccan origin who live in an 'open world' share the

same fear when their child wishes to marry a co-ethnic partner from the 'closed world'. They prefer them to marry outside their ethnic group rather than marry a co-ethnic person with the 'wrong' background. In the sociological and historical literature, the distinction between the 'closed' and 'open' world is usually linked to the distinction between 'rural' and 'urban'. Migrants of Turkish and Moroccan origin have formed communities within the major Dutch cities, with a moral framework and culture that has the hallmarks of a closed, rural community. In this book I argue that this has to do with their (lack of) socioeconomic opportunities and access to the regular mechanisms of status pertaining to dominant (urban) culture. As a result they have cultivated 'being a real Turk/Moroccan' or 'being a pious Muslim' as an alternative status mechanism.

Chapter 5. Love as a tug of war

In this chapter I investigate the interdependence between exogamous young persons and their parents and compare it to that of their endogamous peers and their parents. I study the interaction rituals by which they announce their mixed relationship and marriage plans to their parents, as well as the conflict that arises with regard to this choice of spouse. From there I reconstruct the power dynamics between the generations.

Exogamous young persons have achieved or created room for manoeuvre vis-à-vis their parents: the space in which to make choices that their parents would not approve of, with a mixed marriage as a result.

Creating room for making your own choices has a material, a moral and an emotional dimension. These young people have adopted a different moral framework from that of their parents and the (closed) community in which they grew up, and they are willing to face the conflict with their parents that might arise as a result of the choices they make.

Having access to independent housing and an independent income are important conditions for creating room for manoeuvre. First of all it means the young people concerned can withdraw from parental control and explore their mixed relationship. In the event of conflict with their parents, young people who have access to those resources can literally distance themselves from their parents and resist parental pressure. Not all young people have the same opportunities to secure their own housing and income; this is more difficult for the very young, for girls and for the lower-educated. Yet the unfavourable socioeconomic position of many migrant parents also means that adult children become financially independent earlier in life than children of middle or upper-class parents, and that some of these parents are more dependent on their adult children than vice versa. We can attribute the fact that there are not more mixed marriages, and that most young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin stick to traditionalist courtship protocols, to the fact that they are intensely loyal to their parents. Therefore, I argue that gaining emotional distance is more important for the success of mixed couples than becoming independent from parents. To achieve that, exogamous young persons must have access to a network of friends who can offer alternative emotional and moral support.

Chapter 6. Pathways to emancipation

In this final chapter I investigate the opportunities for young people of Turkish and Moroccan origin to find networks of friends and peer groups that are supportive of a mixed marriage. I distinguish between four cultural repertoires to which young Dutch persons of Turkish and Moroccan origin refer and on which they model their lifestyle and the moral frameworks by which their peer groups live. The four cultural repertoires

all have distinctive views on sexuality, especially sex before marriage, on partner choice, on marriage and especially on mixed marriages.

First, the *traditionalist repertoire* is the one that stays closest to traditional Turkish and Moroccan family formation and marriage culture. It is the repertoire of young people who live in the 'closed world', who have a very homogenous network of co-ethnic friends (who are often also kin) and very few friends with a different background. Younger persons, girls and also those of Turkish origin are most likely to follow the traditionalist repertoire and live in the 'closed world'. Referring back to chapter 3, we could call these youths 'protocol-followers'. It is very unlikely that they will end up in a mixed marriage.

The repertoire of the pure Islamic lifestyle is the repertoire of young Muslims of all ethnic backgrounds, but especially among Moroccans, and of all educational levels, but especially highly educated young women. The *Islamic repertoire* can lead to ethnically mixed marriages provided both spouses are Muslims. Converts to Islam are considered to have special appeal as spouses, because their approach to a religious lifestyle is not 'contaminated' by ethnic (Turkish or Moroccan) culture. Yet the strict abstention policy of the young Muslims also means that they do not enter into romantic relationships before marriage, so that the potential (convert) Islamic spouse of different ethnic origin is most likely to remain an abstract idea.

The *'tough street kid'* repertoire can be found among lower-educated young men (and a few young women). The young men who adhere to this repertoire pride themselves in having (as many as possible) sexual relationships with women of other origin, but not falling in love or becoming 'ensnared' in a marriage to one of them. Some sexual and romantic relationships do prove to be lasting, but a former 'street kid' in a mixed marriage can always revert to a more traditionalist repertoire and abandon his mixed marriage in favour of a co-ethnic spouse.

The *'liberated young women'* repertoire is not restricted to women only, but I have given it this name because it has the strongest consequences for the women following it. This is the repertoire of the true 'protocol-leavers'. Women who set off down this path become unacceptable spouses in the eyes of their co-ethnics in the closed world. Therefore, it almost destines them to a mixed marriage.

Friends are not always supportive of a mixed marriage. This depends on their cultural repertoire and how this relates to mixed marriages, but also on the dynamics of sexual competition and rivalry. Friends often express resentment towards the rival with a different ethnic background because he or she steals away the best potential spouses to whom the friend, as a co-ethnic, is more entitled. I have called this mechanism the *emancipation paradox*.

Conclusions

I have formulated four theories concerning mixed marriages involving one spouse of Turkish or Moroccan origin, which stand in a hierarchical relationship to one another.

The first is the *performing equality theory*: mixed marriages come about and continue to exist when the partners succeed in convincing themselves, each other and their family and friends that there is sufficient common ground for a successful marriage. In order to convince these audiences the spouses, both individually and as a couple, draw on every possible aspect of their social identity to emphasize the similarities between them and

downplay and compensate for the differences. In my research for this dissertation this proved to be the primary explanation for the occurrence of mixed marriages. This conclusion has important consequences for the hypothesis that mixed marriages are a driver for or an indicator of immigrant assimilation. Neither is the case. Reducing the distance between the spouses means enlarging the distance between the couple and the rest of society. This mechanism is most manifest in mixed marriages between two Muslims in which one spouse has converted to Islam, or in those couples which emphasize their migrant background, their shared non-Dutch status, in order to reduce the distance to a peer group of people of migrant background. Performing equality diminishes the opposition of loved ones to the mixed marriage and therefore gives it a fighting chance, but does not advance immigrant assimilation, nor is it an indicator of it.

The second explanation for the occurrence of mixed marriages stems from the first and concerns the *shifting between networks theory*. Those who are able to move from one network (with one cultural repertoire) to another can make a mixed relationship last because they can look for a network which will provide moral and emotional support for a mixed marriage.

This brings us to the third explanation, the *emancipation from the family theory*. Parents who do not depend on their adult children, give them room to manoeuvre; and children who are not dependent on their parents, have room to manoeuvre and make their own choices. Emotional support from a network of friends outside the sphere of the family, is vital to the success of mixed relationships: only then can loyalty shift from the vertical relationship between parents and children to the horizontal relationship between the spouses and between friends. The opportunities for shifting to a supportive network are directly dependent on upward social mobility (through more education, more income and more access to a wider variety of heterogeneous networks). Upward social mobility leads to more, lasting mixed relationships. The concentration of migrants and their descendants in the lower socioeconomic strata of society indicates that only few have these opportunities.

This explanation is linked directly to the fourth theory: more contact between people of different ethnicity leads to more mixed relationships, but those relationships in turn lead to more opposition (*contact theory* and *emancipation paradox*) from peers: peers and parents resist the 'creaming off' of the marriage market by ethnic strangers. The combination of the shifting between networks theory and the contact theory and emancipation paradox means that exogamous young persons end up at a distance from the social circles from which they originated. They are not a role model to others.

There are clear differences between the sexes in terms of opportunities for a mixed marriage: men can emancipate from the family, leave the traditionalistic repertoire and return to it later in life. Women cannot turn back: for them, the consequences of abandoning the traditionalistic repertoire are more severe, so they will not do so easily. Those who venture on the path of a mixed marriage remain lonely forerunners. They are the exception, and their frequent failure feeds the stereotypical image which states that mixed marriages are doomed to fail.

Wat hebben jongvolwassenen die buiten de eigen kring trouwen met elkaar gemeen en waarin verschillen ze van hen die hun partner binnen de eigen gelederen zoeken? Dat is de centrale vraag die Leen Sterckx zich in deze studie stelt. Door het omdraaien van stellingen die het trouwen binnen eigen kring lijken te verklaren construeert Sterckx hypothesen waarvan ze één voor één nagaat of die van toepassing zijn op het buiten de eigen groep trouwen en het blijven voortduren van zo'n relatie.

Haar conclusie is: gemengde huwelijken komen tot stand en blijven bestaan wanneer de partners erin slagen zichzelf, elkaar en hun omgeving ervan te overtuigen dat er voldoende gemeenschappelijkheid is voor een succesvolle huwelijksrelatie, ondanks alle verschillen, ondanks de soms heftige reacties van de sociale omgeving. Daarbij benutten de gemengde paren alle aspecten van sociale identiteit om overeenkomsten op te zoeken of te bewerkstelligen en verschillen mee te compenseren.

Op basis van deze uitkomsten van haar onderzoek doet Sterckx ook uitspraken over de veel gehoorde vervolgvraag of gemengde relaties motor of maatstaf voor culturele integratie zouden zijn. Geen van beide, concludeert ze.

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