

# The Universality of Parent-Offspring Conflict over Mate Choice: A Study in Suriname

Abraham P. Buunk<sup>1\*</sup>, Glenn L. Leckie<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Groningen, The Netherlands, and Universidad Católica del Uruguay.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Psychology, Anton de Kom University, Paramaribo, Suriname.

**Corresponding Author:** Department of Psychology, University of Groningen, The Netherlands, and Universidad Católica del Uruguay. E-mail: a.p.buunk@rug.nl

**Received Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022;      **Acceptance Date:** 08<sup>th</sup> August 2022;      **Published Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022 ;

Copyright: © 2022. Abraham P. Buunk et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

## Abstract

A number of studies have shown parents tend to have a relatively stronger preference for children to pair with mates with characteristics signaling high parental investment and cooperation with the in-group, whereas children tend to have a relatively stronger preference to pair with mates with characteristics signaling genetic quality. The present research among 500 adults from the five major ethnic groups in Suriname showed that in all groups the same parent-offspring conflict was observed as had been found previously in Argentina, Japan, Kurdistan, North America, the Netherlands, and Uruguay. This result provides additional support for the universal character of this type of conflict. In addition, the present research expanded previous work by showing that married individuals as well as individuals without a steady relationship perceived that their parents found a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group more unacceptable a than those in a steady relationship and those living together, and that individuals living in the urban area perceived it as more unacceptable to the parents when their partner is characterized by a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group than individuals living in rural areas.

**Keywords:** arranged marriage, mate choice, parental investment, parent-offspring conflict, Suriname,

## 1. Introduction

Social psychological and evolutionary theories of human mate choice often assume that individuals throughout human history have had autonomy in their mate choice (e.g., Buss, & Schmitt, 1993; Gangestad, & Simpson, 2000). However, free-choice mating is cross-culturally and historically in fact quite rare. In most cultures and throughout history, parents and the community have exerted a considerable influence on the mate choice of their offspring. Data from 190 hunting and gathering societies – usually considered to represent the conditions under which humans evolved –, showed that in the vast majority of these societies, marriage was arranged by parents and other kin; only in 4% of societies courtship was the primary form of marriage (Apostolou, 2007). Even in Western cultures, where free mate choice the ideal basis of marriage, parents may use a variety of tactics to control and influence the mate choice of their children. Sixty years ago, Goode (1959, p. 45) observed that “parents threaten, cajole, wheedle, bribe, and persuade their children to ‘go with the right people’ during both the early love play and the later courtship phases”. There is cross-culturally a substantial negative correlation between the presence of arranged marriage and the emphasis on romantic love (Williams, White, & Ekaidem, 1979). Arranged marriages have traditionally been – and still are – common in many Asian and Middle Eastern countries. For example, studies published at the end of the 19th century showed that in Japan still 25% to 30% of all marriages were arranged (Applbaum, 1995), and that in Turkey still many marriages were arranged by the families (Hortaçsu & Oral, 1994). Even more so, in a study of second-generation South Asian immigrants living in North America, about 25% of the participants indicated that their parents would likely arrange their marriage (Talbani, & Hasanali, 2000).

Of course, arranged marriages do often not exclude that children do not have any say in the choice of a marital partner, for example by influencing the parents’ decisions. Most likely,

parents have an evolved tendency to control the mate choice of their offspring because they often do not agree with the characteristics valued by their offspring in a mate (Park, Buunk, & Dubbs, 2009). In many species, mate choice is based on at least two considerations: first, the genetic quality of the potential mate (e.g., the absence of bad mutations), and, second, the potential of the mate to make parental investments in one’s offspring. These may be considered as two important factors that play a role in human mate choice. A young individual usually prefers a mate with genetic quality, expressed in, for example, physical attractiveness, health, intelligence and creativity (cf. Apostolou, 2021; Gangestad, & Simpson, 2000). However, parents may perceive that this child runs the risk of attracting a low-investing partner. Consequently, they may expect that they themselves may have to provide many investments in the offspring of this child, or that their grandchildren have relatively low chances of survival and of obtaining social status (Buunk, Park, & Dubbs, 2008; Gangestad, & Simpson, 2000).

The implication of the perspective outlined here is that, as noted by Apostolou (2007; 2021), conflicts that arise between parents and children in mate choice are likely to revolve around mate characteristics that connote genetic quality versus parental investment—mating individuals are more likely to prefer the former characteristics and parents the latter. Parents’ preferences may also reflect a desire for in-laws from the same cultural group who promote in-group and family cohesion, who will help them in their old age, and who will socialize their grandchildren in a culturally appropriate manner. As noted by Trivers (1974, p. 261), “Parents may also use an offspring’s marriage to cement an alliance with an unrelated family or group, and insofar as such an alliance is beneficial to kin of the parent in addition to the offspring itself, parents are expected to encourage such marriages more often than the offspring would prefer”. Indeed, virtually universal criteria that parents tend to impose are that the future spouse should come from the same ethnic group, the same religious group, and the same (or higher) social class (Murstein, 1974).

Children will often resist this, and Apostolou (2015) showed that children, and especially daughters, may use a variety of manipulative tactics to induce their parents in accepting the relationship they want.

### **3. 1. Evidence for parent-offspring conflict over mate choice**

There is now considerable evidence for the widespread prevalence of parent-offspring conflict over the mate choice of the offspring. Buunk, Park, & Dubbs (2008) and Park, Dubbs, and Buunk (2009) directly addressed parent-offspring conflict by designing a methodology to overcome an inadequacy associated with simply asking individuals or their parents to indicate their preferences—they are likely to provide highly similar responses (e.g., a woman and her parents may both indicate that they would prefer a man that is attractive rather than ugly, and from the same ethnic group rather than different). The methodology developed by Buunk et al. (2008) was designed to closely track the mating trade-offs: Individuals of mating age were presented with a list of traits, formulated to represent the *undesirable* variant of trait variables (e.g., physically unattractive, different religious beliefs) and were asked to indicate whether this would be *more unacceptable* to themselves or to their parents. When an undesirable variant of a trait is perceived as more unacceptable to self, this indicates that the desirable variant of the trait (e.g., physical attractiveness) is relatively more important for offspring. When an undesirable variant of a trait is perceived as more unacceptable to parents, this indicates that possessing the desirable variant of the trait (e.g., same religious beliefs) is relatively more important for parents.

Data gathered across several samples of young people from divergent cultural backgrounds (Americans, Dutch, Kurdish, Argentineans, Uruguayans, Japanese and exchange students from many different countries studying in the Netherlands) provided a quite consistent picture: Most of the undesirable variants of mate

characteristics connoting a lack of genetic quality were considered more unacceptable to the participants themselves, and most of the undesirable variants of mate characteristics connoting parental investment and cooperation with the in-group were considered more unacceptable to the parents (Buunk, Park, & Dubbs, 2008; Buunk, & Castro Solano, 2010; Dubbs, Buunk, & Taniguchi, 2013; Park, Dubbs, & Buunk, 2009). Characteristics that recurred as especially unacceptable to children included lacking a sense of humor, being physically unattractive and having a bad smell; characteristics that recurred as especially unacceptable to parents included being divorced and having a different ethnic and religious background. In other words, traits such as sense of humor, physical attractiveness and good smell are desired especially by offspring; traits such as no prior marriage and similar ethnic background are—at least according to offspring’s reports—desired especially by parents.

While most evidence came from studies among young people, Dubbs, and Buunk (2010) studied a sample of parents and asked for the conflict over mate choice with their children, and found the same type of conflict as reported by young people: parents perceived characteristics indicating a lack of genetic quality as being more unacceptable to the child, while characteristics indicating a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the ingroup were more unacceptable to themselves. To complement previous research, in the present research, we also examined the degree of parent-offspring over mate choice in a sample of adults from Suriname, but asked to what extent they had experienced a conflict over mate choice with *their* parents. There was an additional reason to conduct this study. As, according to Buunk, Park, and Dubbs (2008) and Apostolou (2007), the nature of parent-offspring conflict over mate choice has a universal character, it would be relevant to replicate the findings of previous studies in different populations than the populations that were originally examined. The country of Suriname is theoretically especially interesting as it includes ethnic groups originally coming from

Southeast Asia, where parents tend to exert a considerable influence on the mate choice of their offspring, in the most extreme case as arranged marriages. There is evidence that in such marriage system other characteristics are valued than in systems favoring free mate choice. For example, one study in India found that religion, social class, education, family, and caste were, in descending order, perceived as the most important characteristics in the arranged marriage system. In contrast, in the love-based marriage system, the traits that were considered most important were an outgoing personality, physical attractiveness, and athleticism (Sprecher, & Chandak, 1992). On one study, Indian young people considered the traditional values of the arranged marriage system—such as caste, family economic status, and family background—to be the least important characteristics; instead, they emphasized personality traits such as honesty, kindness, and broadmindedness (Rao, & Rao, 1976). There is evidence that this pattern continues among immigrant groups from these cultures. For example, one study showed that Hindu women living in the UK indicated that their parents would never accept a son-in-law from outside of their caste or culture (Bhopal, 1997), and a second-generation Indian American woman revealed her reasons for marrying within her own socio-cultural group: “To this day, [my mother] has not forgiven my brothers for marrying [European] Americans” (Das Gupta, 1997, p. 584). In a study in The Netherlands, among native Dutch as well as among Turkish and Moroccan young people, a considerable preference was found for marrying within one’s own ethnic group (Buunk, 2015).

## 1.2. Ethnic Groups in Surinam

The present study included the five largest ethnic groups in Surinam, with sizes varying from 13% to 27% of the population. These groups differ considerably in their familial and marital practices.

**Maroons.** About 22% of the population are referred to as Maroons, and are the descendants of slaves from Africa who fled slavery from the plantations and settled inland (Helman, 1977). The Maroon community is known as a closed group that has kept its traditions, standards and values (Landveld, 2005), and consists of various tribes who lived originally in the jungle in small villages, but are now also living in the capital. Their social organization is based on matrilineal kinship in which the role of the mother is crucial: The name of the mother and not the father is passed on to the children. Girls in the village are already prepared from a very young age onwards to engage in reproduction (Landveld, 2005). Originating from African cultures, polygyny is allowed – often with wives living in different villages.

**Creoles.** The term Creoles is currently used in Suriname to describe individuals settled in the city, descending from interbreeding between former slaves from Africa and mostly Dutch Europeans. The Creole community constitutes about 16% of the population and includes many single-parent households, where the mother is the breadwinner and head of the family. The father is often absent amongst others due to work related factors, and many men have concubines. This kind of relationship originates from the 17th and 18th century, when white men took black concubines as housekeepers, who also fulfilled their sexual needs. Although marriages are not uncommon within the Creole community, cohabitation is institutionalized and recognized by private employers and the Government (Tanner, 1974).

**Hindustani.** The largest ethnic group in Suriname, forming about 27% of the population, are the Hindustani, who descend from contract workers who came from India to Suriname in 1873. As they were free to express their cultural ways after working hours, their Indian culture has been well preserved (Bloemberg, 1995). Although some Hindustani are Muslims or Christians, the vast majority of them profess Hinduism. Marriage in this ethnic group is an essential event in a person’s life and is viewed as



a sacred, long lasting and lifelong connection between two people, with a strong role of the parents (Ramdas, 2006). Characteristic is the extended family that may live in the same house and may consist of three or even four generations, including daughters in law (Lalmahomed, 1992). Women are often not considered equal, yet tend to tolerate their position out of fear of consequences, particularly the fear of losing support from their family.

**Javanese.** The Javanese are the fourth largest population of Suriname (14%), and were brought to Suriname as contract workers from Indonesia between 1890 and 1939. One of the core values of the Javanese community is *rukun* (literally harmony): Keeping peace or harmony among each other and having good relationships with one another (Helman, 1977). Characteristic is the joint-family system, consisting of parents, children, grandchildren, spouses and other live-in family members of both husband and wife. Due to the unequal sex ratio among the Javanese, women often feel free to end relationships and to form new relationships or have extra sexual relations. They also feel free to enter into loose relationships with different men (Suparalan, 1976).

**Mixed.** This increasing group of individuals consists of people with ancestors of different ethnicity and currently constitutes about 13% of the population. They are descendants of the various ethnic groups already mentioned as well as the indigenous people and Chinese. A person who identifies themselves as mixed can be born to parents who both have a different ethnic background or one or both of them are also mixed. Being of mixed descent is an identity itself: These people see themselves as a mixed person and take an active role in choosing their identity (Crosson, 2014).

## 2. Method and Materials

### 2.1. Sample

The sample consisted of 500 participants, aged 25 to 50 years,  $M = 36.56$ ,  $SD = 7.79$ . There were

approximately equal numbers of randomly selected participants in each ethnic group, that is, 102 Creoles (20.4%), 95 East Hindustani (19.0%), 98 Javanese (19.6%), 102 Maroons (20.4%), and 103 people of Mixed descent (20.6%). There were 243 men (48.6%) and 257 women (51.4%). About half (248) of the participants (49.6%) came from rural areas, and the other half (252) from the capital Paramaribo (50.4%). The level of education completed was generally low: a large minority (43.5%) had elementary school education or less, 29.6% a lower level of high school, 20.7% a higher level of high school and only 6.2% a higher education. In terms of religion, the majority were Christians (Catholics 21.8% and Protestants 34.9%), followed by Muslims (18.5%), Hindu's (17.1%), other religions (2.4%), with only 5% reporting no religion. With respect to civil status, 29.3% of the sample was married, 34.4% living together, 14.6% with a steady partner but not living together, 4.2% with several or changing partners, and 13.7% did not have a steady partner. Of the respondents, 11.6% had no income, 17.4% earned less than 1000 Surinamese dollars (S\$), 38.0% between 1000 and 2000 S\$, 14.8% between 2000 and 3000 S\$, 4.8% between 3000 and 4000 S\$, and 4% more than 4000 S\$. The value of 1000 Surinamese dollars at the time of the interview was equivalent to around US\$ 450, or € 400,-. As reported in previous analyses of the present data, there were significant differences between the ethnic groups in demographic variables. There was a relatively high percentage of housekeepers among the Hindustani (28%, as compared to less than 20% for all other groups), and a somewhat elevated level of unemployment among the Maroons (9%, as compared with 5% or less for the other groups). Only among the Hindustani was the majority legally married (over two-third of the respondents), whereas among the Maroons fewer than 10% were legally married, with the figures for the Javanese and Mixed between these extremes. Among the Maroons the majority was living together without being married, but also among the Creoles, Javanese and Mixed, about a third or more were living together.

## 2. 2. Procedure

A random sample was drawn from the five largest ethnic groups using figures from the General Bureau of Statistics (GBS, 2012) in Surinam. Based on the highest concentration of ethnicity according to the GBS, the following areas were chosen: the Paramaribo district as urban area, and Saramacca, Commewijne, Marowijne (Moengo) and Para as rural areas. Next, streets in these areas were selected randomly and all houses in these streets visited. For each ethnic group in the urban sample, data collection stopped when 50 participants consisting of 25 men and 25 women were interviewed. The same procedure was followed in the rural sample. Interviewers were of the same ethnic group as the respondents. Participants were individually interviewed privately at their homes between October 2015 and December 2015. Interviews were conducted in Dutch, in line with common practice regarding survey interviews conducted in Surinam. At the start of the interview participants were told that their answers would be dealt with respectfully and recorded anonymously. Some respondents needed reassurance that their answers could not be traced back to them. None of the responders refused to answer any questions. When the interview was completed participants were given a ballpoint pen (without a logo) for their participation.

## 2. 3. Measures

**Parent-Offspring conflict.** The measure was created by Buunk, Dubbs and Park (2010) on the basis of five studies that originally included 22 items (Buunk, et al., 2008a; Buunk et al., 2008b; Park, et al., 2009). The current measure included the six traits reflecting genetic quality that were consistently shown to be more unacceptable to the child (*physically unattractive, physically unfit, overweight, bad smell, lacks creativity, and lacks a sense of humor*) and the six traits that were consistently shown to be more unacceptable to the parents (*bad family background, lower social class than self, different ethnicity, different religious beliefs, divorced, and poor*). Thus, the questionnaire contained 12-items, six traits

indicating poor genetic quality and six traits indicating a lack of parental investment and of cooperation with the in-group. All traits were formulated to represent the undesirable variant of the trait variable. The questions were posed emphasizing that when you search for a partner for a love relationship, there are certain characteristics that you pay attention to, but that also your parents find certain characteristics important. The questions were described to deal with potential differences in opinion between oneself and one's parents about the characteristics a partner or potential partner must have, or must have had. Each question was posed in the following manner: "If I would choose a [physically unattractive] partner, this is or was ..." followed by a 7-point scale on which the possible answers ranged from (1) "much more unacceptable to myself" through (4) "equally unacceptable to both myself and my parents" to (7) much more unacceptable to my parents". The scale for genetic quality had a reliability of  $\alpha = .75$ , and the scale for parental investment and cooperation with the in-group had a reliability of  $\alpha = .76$ , and neither alpha could be raised by omitting an item.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Main analyses

first did an ANOVA with mate choice conflict (i.e., unacceptability of genetic quality versus parental investment and cooperation with the in-group) as a within subjects factor, and gender and ethnic group as between subjects factors. This analysis showed a highly significant within subjects effect of mate choice conflict,  $F(1, 439) = 234.23, p = .000$ . This effect indicated that a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group ( $M = 21.86, SD = 5.93$ ) was considered more unacceptable to one's parents, or rather less unacceptable to oneself, than a lack of genetic quality ( $M = 17.23, SD = 6.03$ ). Put differently, a lack of genetic quality was considered more unacceptable to oneself than to

one's parents. There was a marginally significant main effect of ethnic group,  $F(4, 439) = 2224, p = .065$ , that was qualified by a significant interaction between mate choice conflict and ethnic group,  $F(4, 439) = 2.41, p = .049$ . The main effects of gender,  $F(1, 439) = .25, p = .62$ , and the interaction effect between gender and ethnic group were not significant,  $F(4, 439) = .64, p = .64$  were not significant. There was a marginally significant three-way interaction,  $F(4, 439) = 2.23, p = .065$ , that we further ignore.

To clarify the interaction between ethnic group and mate choice conflict, we examined with a MANOVA the effects of ethnic group on the unacceptability to the parents of a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group, as well as of a lack of genetic quality. Whereas there was no significant effect of ethnic group on genetic quality,  $F(4, 475) = 1.61, p = .17$ , the effect on parental investment and cooperation with the in-group was significant,  $F(4, 447) = 2.94, p = .02$ . As shown in Table 1, for the Hindustani the unacceptability to the parents of a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group was higher than in all other groups, albeit only significantly higher than among the Creoles and Maroons. For the Javanese this form of unacceptability was also significantly higher than among the Creoles. Remarkably, although the overall effect of ethnic group on the unacceptability of a lack of genetic quality was not significant, for the Javanese the unacceptability to the parents of a lack of genetic quality was significantly higher than among the Creoles and Maroons.

### 3.2. Additional analyse.

We did a number of additional exploratory analyses. First, we examined the effects of civil status. Whereas there was no significant effect of civil status on genetic quality,  $F(4, 443) = 1.31, p = .27$ , the effect on parental investment and cooperation with the in-group was significant,  $F(4, 417) = 3.64, p = .006$ . As is shown in Table 2, for the married respondents and for those without a steady relationship the unacceptability to the parents of a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group was higher than

among the other respondents. Married individuals as well as individuals without a steady relationship perceived a higher level of this type of unacceptability than those in a steady relationship and those living together. When controlling for age of the participants and ethnic groups the effects remained the same (data available from the author). Second, we examined the effect of urban versus rural residence. There was no significant effect of residence on genetic quality,  $F(1, 478) = 1.68, p = .20$ , for individuals living in the urban area (i.e., the capital Paramaribo),  $M = 17.58, SD = 5.94$ , for individuals living in rural areas,  $M = 16.87, SD = 6.11$ ). However, the effect on parental investment and cooperation with the in-group was significant,  $F(1, 450) = 8.08, p = .005$ . Among individuals living in the urban area, the unacceptability to the parents of a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group ( $M = 22.65, SD = 5.88$ ) was higher than among individuals living in rural areas ( $M = 21.07, SD = 5.88$ ). This effect remained the same when controlling for ethnic group, and there was also no interaction between ethnic group (data available from the author) finally, income level was not at all related to both variables  $p > .30$ .

## 4. Discussion

While it has been known for a long time that parents have played—and continue to play—an important role in human mating, and that there may arise serious conflicts between parents and their offspring over mate choice, only recently has a research tradition emerged examining this issue. We hypothesized that parents and their children may often be in conflict with respect to mate preferences, especially with respect to mate characteristics that strongly signal either genetic quality or parental investment and cooperation. Using a methodology that was used in our previous studies, and expanding results obtained in countries as diverse as The Netherlands, Argentina, Iraq, Japan and Uruguay (Buunk et al., 2008; Dubbs et al., 2003; Park et al., 2009), the present study demonstrated that, across five

**Table1.**

**Differences between Ethnic Groups in Unacceptability of Characteristics of partner to parents vs. Oneself**

	<b>Genetic Quality</b>	<b>"Parental Investment and Cooperation with the In-group"</b>
	<b>M (SD)</b>	<b>M (SD)</b>
Maroons	16.63 (5.50) b	21.07 (5.78) a
Creoles	16.58 (5.38) a	20.63 (5.05) b, c
Hindustani	16.92 (6.42)	23.29 (6.49) a, b
Javanese	18.40 (5.97) a, b	22.38 (6.31) c
Mixed	17.60 (6.54)	22.06 (5.93)

**Note.** Groups with the same subscript in the same column differ significantly from each other.

**Table2.**

**Relation between Civil Status and Unacceptability of Characteristics of partner to parents vs. oneself**

	<b>Genetic Quality</b>	<b>Parental Investment and Cooperation with the In-group</b>	<b>n<sup>2</sup></b>
	<b>M (SD)</b>	<b>M (SD)</b>	
Married	18.15 (7.00)	23.05 (6.17) <sub>a,b</sub>	137
Several relationships	15.55 (4.97)	21.47 (4.78)	21
Steady relationship <sup>1</sup>	16.80 (5.55)	20.94 (5.74) <sub>a,c</sub>	73
No steady relationship	17.35 (4.94)	23.19 (7.20) <sub>c,d</sub>	64
Living together	16.98 (5.92)	21.83 (5.36) <sub>b,d</sub>	172

**Note.** <sup>1</sup> Not living together with partner. <sup>2</sup> The number of respondents in these analyses are slightly lower due to missing values. Groups with the same subscript in the same column differ significantly from each other.

heterogeneous ethnic groups in Suriname, traits connoting a lack of genetic quality tended to be more unacceptable to children, and traits connoting a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group tend to be more unacceptable to parents. There were no

differences between the ethnic groups. However, among the Hindustani, and to a somewhat lesser extent among the Javanese, the unacceptability to the parents of a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group was higher than in all other groups. The finding for the Hindustani is



in line with studies showing that among immigrants from South Asia in Western societies, parents try to a considerable degree to influence the mate choice of their children and have strong objections against out-group marriages (e.g., Bhopal, 1997; Das Gupta, 1997; Dugsin, 2001; Hynie, Lalonde, & Lee, 2006; Lalonde, Hynie, Pannu, & Tatla, 2004; Talbani, & Hasanali, 2000). These findings suggest that the Hindustani – who originate from India, where arranged marriages occur often norms that are prevalent in their country of origin still are salient, in line with what other findings from this project indicate (Buunk et al., 2020).

A number of findings make new contributions to the literature. First, we studied a sample of adults and asked them about their own preferences as opposed to those of their parents. Given the fact that most studies in this area have been done among young people, our findings suggest that the perceived conflict is not just a conflict that is limited to young adults of an age in which mating is salient, but rather is a consistent phenomenon that not dependent on the age on which people are questioned. A second new contribution is that this phenomenon may, independent of ethnic group, be dependent on civil status, as married individuals as well as individuals without a steady relationship perceived that their parents found a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group more unacceptable a than those in a steady relationship and those living together. These findings are not easy to interpret. It may be that married individuals have undergone conflicts with their parents over their mate choice more than other individuals with a partner, and that such conflicts are still rather salient. In a similar vein, it may be that those without a relationship have not been able to find a mate that fulfills the relatively high criteria of their parents. Finally, it is noteworthy that individuals living in the urban area perceived it as more unacceptable to the parents when their partner is characterized by a lack of parental investment and cooperation with the in-group than individuals living in rural areas. The very least these findings suggest is that parents in rural areas are not more conservative than parents in urban areas in terms of requiring

their offspring to marry someone from their own group.

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, our research constitutes an additional step in demonstrating that, across diverse cultures, there is a quite consistent pattern of mate characteristics considered especially important by children versus their parents. It must be noted however, that more research, especially with an experimental design, is necessary as such designs may produce results that are not completely in line with those obtained in survey studies (for example, Bovet, Raiber, Ren, Wang, & Seabright, 2018). Nevertheless, the findings underline the many observations from diverse cultures and historical periods that there are often clashes between parents and their offspring over the mate choice of the latter. The consequences of this for the nature of sexual selection among humans need to receive more theoretical and empirical attention (but see Apostolou, 2014). Moreover, the findings may have consequences for legislative issues, for example, the necessity to install and enforce laws that support the freedom of individuals to choose their own spouse, independent of interference by their parents. The present findings underline again that, although evolutionary approaches to human mating have been rather fruitful, an important consideration seems to be missing from these approaches—the fact that parents and children often clash over with whom their children should marry. Other authors have noted this limitation as well. For instance, Gangestad, and Simpson (2000, p. 626) asserted “some of the female preferences we discuss exist because women could choose some of their mates in evolutionary history (even if their choices were constrained much of the time)”, emphasis and parentheses in the original). It is time to consider what exactly the implications are for people to have their choices constrained much of the time.

**Acknowledgment:** the authors thank Dahiria Pollack and Dascha Dipokarto for their help in collecting the data.

**Funding:** the research was in part funded by a Academy Professor Grant from the Netherlands Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences to Abraham P. Buunk.

## 6. References

1. Applbaum, K.D (1995). Marriage with the proper stranger: arranged marriage in metropolitan Japan. *Ethnology*. 34 (1): 37–51.
2. Apostolou, M (2007). Sexual selection under parental choice: The role of parents in the evolution of human mating. *Evolution and Human Behavior*. 28 (6): 403–409.
3. Apostolou, M. (2014). *Sexual selection under parental choice. The evolution of human mating behavior*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.
4. Apostolou, M (2021). Parent–offspring conflict. In T. K. Shackelford (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of evolutionary psychology: Foundations of evolutionary psychology*. (pp. 155–169). London: Sage.
5. Bhopal, K (1997). South Asian women within households: Dowries, degradation and despair. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 20 (4): 483–492.
6. Utrecht: Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap.
7. Bovee J, Raiber E, Ren W, et al. (2018). Parent–offspring conflict over mate choice: An experimental study in China. *British Journal of Psychology*. 109 (4): 674–693.
8. Buss, D M, Schmitt, D P. (1993). Sexual Strategies Theory: An Evolutionary Perspective on Human Mating. *Psychological Review*. 100 (2): 204–232.
9. Buunk, A.P (2015). My parents know best: No mating with members from other ethnic groups. *Interpersona. An International Journal on Personal Relationships*. 9 (1): 100-113.
10. Buunk, AP, Castro Solano A. (2010). Conflicting preferences of parents and offspring over criteria for a mate: a study in Argentina. *Journal of Family Psychology*. 24 (4): 391-399.
11. Buunk AP, Park JH, Dubbs SL. (2008). Parent-offspring conflict in mate preferences. *Review of General Psychology*, 12 (10): 47-62.
12. Das Gupta M. (1997). “What is Indian about you?”: A gendered, transnational approach to ethnicity. *Gender and Society*. 11 (5): 572-596
13. Dubbs SL, Buunk AP, Taniguchi H. (2013). Parent-offspring conflict over mate choice in Japan. *Japanese Psychological Research*. 55 (3): 241–253.
14. Dugsin R. (2001). Conflict and healing in family experience of second-generation emigrants from India living in North America. *Family Process*. 40 (2): 233-241.
15. Gangestad SW, Simpson JA. (2000). The evolution of human mating: Trade-offs and strategic pluralism. *Behav Brain Sci*. 23 (4): 573–587.
16. Goode WJ. (1959). The theoretical importance of love. *American Sociological Review*, 24 (1): 38–47.
17. Helman, A. (1977). *Cultureel mozaïek van Suriname [Cultural mosaic of Surinam]*. Zutphen, The Netherlands: De Walburg Pers.
18. Hortaçsu N. Oral A. (1994). Comparison of couple- and family-initiated marriages in Turkey. *J Soc Psycho*. 134 (2): 229-239.

19. Hynie M, Lalonde R.N, Lee N. (2006). Parent-child value transmission among Chinese immigrants to North America: The case of traditional mate preferences. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 12 (2): 230-244.
20. Lalonde RN, Hynie, M, Pannu, M, et al. (2004). The role of culture in interpersonal relationships: Do second generation South Asian Canadians want a traditional partner? *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. 35 (5): 503-524.
21. Murstein, B. I. (1974). *Love, sex, and marriage through the ages*. New York: Springer.
22. Park JH, Dubbs SL, Buunk AP. (2009). Parents, offspring and mate-choice conflicts. *Review of General Psychology*. 12 (1): 47-62.
23. In H. Høgh-Oleson, J. Tønnesvang & P. Bertelsen (Eds.), *Human characteristics – Evolutionary perspectives on human mind and kind* (pp. 352 – 365). Cambridge: Cambridge University Scholars.
24. Ramdas S. (2006). *Overspel binnen de orthodoxe Hindoegemeenschap in Suriname: een cultuursociologische benadering [Adultery in the orthodox Hindu community in Surinam: a cultural sociological approach]*. Paramaribo: Vaco.
25. Rao VV, Rao VN. (1976). Arranged marriages: An assessment of the attitudes of the college students in India. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*. 7 (3): 433–453.
26. Sprecher S, Chandak R. (1992). Attitudes about arranged marriages and dating among men and women from India. *Free Inquiry in Creative Sociology*. 20 (1): 59–70.
27. Suparalan P. (1976). *The Javanese in Surinam: Ethnicity in an ethnically plural society*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
28. Talbani A. Hasanali P. (2000). Adolescent females between tradition and modernity: Gender role socialization in South Asian immigrant culture. *Journal of Adolescence*, 23 (5): 615–627.
29. Tanner, N. (1974). *Matrifocality in Indonesia and Africa and among black americans*. In
30. M. Rosaldo L. Lamphere (Eds.), *Woman culture & society* (pp. 129-156).
31. TriversR. (1974). Parent-offspring conflict. *American Zoologist*, 14 (1): 249-264.