Hilde Bras

INTENSIFICATION OF FAMILY RELATIONS?

Changes in the choice of marriage witnesses in the Netherlands, 1830-1950

Abstract

This study examines whether and why a process of intensification of family relations took place during the long nineteenth century by investigating Dutch marriage couples' selection of witnesses. The results show that during the period 1830-1950, lateral kin (siblings, siblings-in-law and cousins) were increasingly selected as marriage witnesses, at the expense of professional witnesses and patronage relations. This 'lateralization' process accelerated after 1890, with the take-off of industrialization and urbanization in the Netherlands and continued at least until 1950. The intensification of kin ties was not only related to economic development and social class formation, it was part of a broader cultural process of familiarization, which started among the urban bourgeoisie in the western part of the Netherlands, but spread to other regions and social groups.

The development of kinship in Europe between the Middle Ages and the present day has often been discussed in terms of a decline or contraction towards the modern nuclear family. Recent research shows, however, that kinship systems and the significance of specific kin relations have varied over time in highly non-linear ways. Historians have pointed to a number of distinct structural shifts in the configurations of kin across Europe.[1] The nineteenth century would have witnessed such a transition. From the middle of the nineteenth century in many European societies, co-residence with family and kin increased, cousin marriages and sibling-set exchange marriages rose to a high point and funerals and weddings became increasingly ritualized family occasions.[2] It has been argued that these phenomena testify

1. David Warren Sabean, Simon Teuscher, and Jon Mathieu (eds.), *Kinship in Europe. Approaches to long-term development (1300-1900)* (New York and Oxford 2007).

2. Steven Ruggles, *Prolonged connections. The rise of the extended family in nineteenth-century England and America* (Madison 1987); Jan Kok, 'A life-course approach to co-residence in the Netherlands, 1850-1940', *Continuity and Change* 25:2 (2010) 285-312. Leonore Davidoff, 'Close marriage in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century middle strata, in: F. Ebtehaj,

to an intensification of family and kin relations.[3] At least among the higher and middle classes, a new cultural ideal would have spread whereby people consciously attached more importance to family and kin and to the newly invented rituals and practices of family life. During one of the most dynamic periods of economic development, social class formation and demographic transition, it has been argued that Europe became a 'kinship-hot' society.[4]

The intensification of family and kin relations has been explained in several ways. It is understood as a result of the economic salience of kin ties because of changing capitalist productive relations and social class formation,[5] the spread of familialism connected to an increasing emphasis on domesticity,[6] and the rise of egalitarian peer relations, romantic love, and the inception of a youth phase.[7] We do not know, however, whether the observed changes in familial sociability can indeed be related to such shifting preferences or whether they were the consequence of changing opportunities to associate with kin. And if changing preferences were at the root of this shift, what ideals were then actually changing, and why? Who were the 'innovators' of these new familial practices, and to what extent did an altered family ideal spread to other social groups, to urban as well as to rural areas?

Most research on family relations during the long nineteenth century has been based on qualitative sources such as diaries, letters, and autobiographies.[8] These studies, although insightful and inspiring, necessarily focus on the higher and middle classes for which such ego documents are most readily available. Moreover, explanations that account for shifts in familial sociability have traditionally been formulated for the Anglo-Saxon world, although

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B. Lindley and M. Richards (eds.), *Kinships matters* (Oxford and Portland 2006) 19-46; Hilde Bras, Frans van Poppel and Kees Mandemakers, 'Relatives as spouses. Preferences and opportunities for kin marriage in a Western society', *American Journal of Human Biology* 21 (2010) 793-804; Jon Mathieu, 'Kin marriages: Trends and interpretations from the Swiss example', in: Sabean et al., *Kinship in Europe,* 211-230.

3. John R. Gillis, *A world of their own making. Myth, ritual, and the quest for family values* (Cambridge, Massachusets 1996); Sabean et al., *Kinship in Europe;* Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family fortunes. Men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (New York 1986).

4. David Warren Sabean and Simon Teuscher, 'Kinship in Europe. A new approach to long term development', in: Sabean et al., *Kinship in Europe,* 3.

5. Sabean, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870* (Cambridge 1998) 449-489; Sabean et al., *Kinship in Europe.*

6. Gillis, *A world of their own making.*

7. Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a history. How love conquered marriage* (New York 2005); Bart Van de Putte, *Partnerkeuze in de 19de eeuw. Klasse, romantiek, geografische afkomst en de vorming van sociale groepen op de huwelijksmarkt* (Leuven 2005).

8. See for instance: Davidoff and Hall, *Family fortunes.* Leonore Davidoff, 'Kinship as a categorical concept: A case study of nineteenth-century English siblings', *Journal of Social History* 39:2 (2005) 411-428. But cf. Ruggles, *Prolonged connections.*

recent research has started to investigate shifting kinship patterns in other parts of Europe.[9] In order to examine whether a new cultural ideal arose, which spread broadly among social groups, across regions and over time, a source is needed that is more generally quantifiable and comparable. In this article, I study whether and why a process of intensification of family relations took place in nineteenth-century Netherlands by examining marriage couples' selection of witnesses.

A small body of historical research on the choice of marriage witnesses has already yielded intriguing results for several European societies.[10] Between the Middle Ages and the beginning of the nineteenth century, most marriage witnesses did not bear a familial relation to the couple, particularly in the urban context.[11] They were either professional witnesses wandering the streets in search of some extra money, clerks involved in the registration of the marriage, or patronage relations, such as local notables, shopkeepers, or important friends of the parents of the couple. Family and kin only represented a small proportion of all witnesses. However, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, the percentage of close family witnesses, and particularly of lateral kin such as brothers, brothers-in-law and male cousins, rose dramatically, particularly in the higher and middle classes. This rise happened mainly at the expense of the choice for professional witnesses.[12]

Previous research, however, has not systematically investigated the changing preference for lateral-kin witnesses. Moreover most studies have been relatively small-scale, focusing only on a few villages or towns and covering a

9. See for new studies on changing kinship patterns in Europe the chapters in the volume, Sabean et al., *Kinship in Europe*.

10. Vincent Gourdon, 'Les témoins de mariage civil dans les villes européennes du XIXe siècle: quel intérêt pour l'analyse des réseaux familiaux et sociaux?', *Histoire, économie & société* 27:2 (2008) 61-87. Idem, 'Réseaux des femmes, réseaux de femmes. Le cas du témoinage au mariage civil au XIXe siècle dans les pays héritiers du code Napoléon (France, Pays-Bas, Belgique), *Annales de Démographie Historique* 2 (2006) 33-55. Frans van Poppel and Marloes Schoonheim, 'Measuring cultural differences between religions using network data. An example based on nineteenth-century Dutch marriage certificates', *Annales de Démographie Historique* 1 (2005) 173-197. Koen Matthijs, 'Changing patterns of familial sociability: Family members as witnesses to (re)marriage in nineteenth-century Flanders', *Journal of Family History* 31:2 (2006) 115-143. Cyril Grange, 'The choice of matrimomial witnesses by Parisian Jews: Integration into greater society and socio-professional cohesion (1875-1914)', *The History of the Family* 10 (2005) 21-44. Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaughsson and Loftur Guttormsson, 'Cementing alliances? Witnesses to marriage and baptism in early nineteenth-century Iceland', *The History of the Family* 5:3 (2000) 259-272. Leslie Page Moch, 'Networks among Bretons? The evidence for Paris, 1875-1925', *Continuity and Change* 18:3 (2003) 431-455.

11. Gourdon, 'Les témoins de mariage civil', 69-72.

12. Van Poppel and Schoonheim, 'Measuring cultural differences', 182. Gourdon, 'Les témoins de mariage civil', 83-86; Matthijs, 'Changing patterns', 124-138.

limited time horizon. The present study expands on prior studies by explaining the rising trend of familial witnesses, and particular the intriguing choice for lateral kin, through assessing several explanations that could account for this development. Hypotheses are tested on a large-scale, national representative dataset of the Netherlands with more than 60,000 marriages covering different regions, urban and rural areas, municipalities with different opportunity structures, infrastructural facilities and demographic regimes, and couples belonging to different social classes, religious groups and originating from different family structures.

The following section starts with a discussion of a number of different – though not necessarily consistent – explanations that have been given to account for the intensification of family relations during the long nineteenth century. I then derive specific hypotheses for marriage couples' choice of witnesses in the Netherlands. Next, a sketch of the data sources, measures and methods is given. Descriptive statistics on the types of witnesses and on trends in the choice of marriage witnesses in the Netherlands between 1830 and 1950 are then presented. Subsequently, multivariate models are tested to examine what factors determined couples' specific choice for lateral-kin witnesses. In the concluding section, the results are considered in terms of what they add to our knowledge of the so-called 'kinship transition' in nineteenth-century Europe.

Explanations for changes in familial sociability during the long nineteenth century

Patterns of marriage couples' selection of witnesses, like general patterns of personal association, might be thought of as resulting from the interplay of the preferences of individuals for certain characteristics in a person, the influence of the social group of which they are members, and the opportunities to associate with certain categories of personal relations.[13] A first explanation emphasizing preferences posits that a process of strengthening kin relations between the end of the eighteenth and the late nineteenth century was related to social class formation, political modernization and the dynamics of capitalist productive relations.[14] With the development of industrial capitalism, entrepreneurship, and land markets in the course of the nineteenth century,

13. Matthijs Kalmijn, 'Intermarriage and homogamy: Causes, patterns, trends', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998) 395-421.

14. David Warren Sabean, 'Kinship and class dynamics in nineteenth-century Europe', in: Sabean et al., *Kinship in Europe*, 301-312. Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds between. Historical perspectives on gender & class* (Cambridge 1995) 214. Christopher Johnson, 'Kinship, civil society, and power in nineteenth-century Vannes' in: Sabean et al., *Kinship in Europe*, 258-283.

Ill. 1 Wedding dinner of August Wilhelm Thiel and Anna Maria Kost. 22 april 1898. Stadsarchief Amsterdam, Collection Jacob Olie

lateral ties connecting families of similar social standing would have become increasingly relevant, particularly for the propertied classes. Population pressure and social differentiation caused a process of social class formation. Ties between members of the same social class were established most importantly through marriage. In this way, dense networks between related families of equal social standing would have developed. Such lateral relations enabled families to generate capital, gain access to credit, coordinate management skills, secure succession to office, and consolidate property. The goal of kin groups was not only to piece plots of land together or accumulate wealth, but would have been part of a wider system of maintaining the political and social hierarchy. According to David Sabean and Simon Teuscher, the nineteenth century could be characterized as a 'kinship-hot' society, where 'enormous energy was invested in maintaining and developing extensive, reliable, and well-articulated structures of exchange among connected families over many generations'.[15] A shift in kinship regimes would have taken place from structures consisting mainly of vertical and patron-client relations to horizontal kinship alliance systems. This lateral system would have lasted until the first decades of the twentieth century. Because of the introduction of new systems of credit, the growth of limited liability companies and the rise of a managerial class, the economic salience of lateral-kin ties would have sloped off again.

The intensification of family relations during the nineteenth century has also been related to the cult of domesticity and the accompanying process of 'familiarization'.[16] According to Mary Jo Maynes, 'establishing a proper family life was an engrossing and contentious enterprise in nineteenth-century Europe. Middle-class families across the continent enthusiastically practiced domesticity; self-conscious familialism was a central component of their social and cultural identity'.[17] The growing preference for the cultivation of family ties fitted, according to John Gillis, in the context of an increasing age-conscious society, where standardization and rationalization of life were the consequences of the growth of industrial capitalism and an expanding nation-state. Family time, in the sense of the cultivation of family occasions, would have provided a kind of subjective, cyclical time, a 'time out of time' from these standardizing forces that increasingly regulated the course of life.[18] Women

15. Sabean and Teuscher, 'Kinship in Europe', 3.
16. The term familiarization was first used by family historian and sociologist Koen Matthijs. Matthijs, 'Changing patterns', 115.
17. Mary Jo Maynes, 'Class cultures and images of proper family life', in: David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli (eds.), *Family life in the long nineteenth century 1789-1913* (New Haven and London 2002) 195-226, 193.
18. Gillis, *A world of their own making*, 81-87. Idem, 'Making the family: The invention of family time(s) and the reinvention of family history', *Journal of Family History* 21:1 (1996) 4-21.

played a central role in the construction of 'family time'. They were the kin keepers, facilitating communication among family members, creating female-centred kin networks, and keeping track of the numerous birthdays, weddings and family gatherings. In middle-class milieus, but also in working-class districts, a *mum* culture would have developed, characterized by strong mother-daughter relationships. This culture was comprised of close contacts and mutual involvement of mothers and their married daughters, who often lived in each other's neighbourhood.[19] The mother figure, particularly the mother of the bride, also became a pivotal figure at marriage ceremonies, with the bride and her family taking charge of the wedding. This was particularly the case for the working classes; in upper-class weddings, the father of the bride remained important as well.[20]

An increased sociability among age peers, including siblings, siblings-in-law and cousins, might also have been related to a broader transformation of the life phase of young adulthood and a new approach to marriage. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, most youngsters spent the phase between childhood and adulthood in apprenticeship or life-cycle service. Adults controlled the entry and exit to this life phase, while youngsters remained economically semi-dependent. With industrialization and the growth of job opportunities in factories and services, many working-class children now earned their own wages, giving them more freedom from the authority of their parents. A working-class youth culture arose, including leisure time and an ethos of consumption.[21] Age peers became important in the socialization of youngsters. In bourgeois milieus on the other hand, parental control over the marriage of their offspring continued throughout the nineteenth century. Delayed inheritance and the need to be able to provide a decent living before one could marry still kept youth under parental supervision. This did not prevent middle-class youngsters from spending more time with age peers; boys in the increasingly age-graded educational system and girls with the numerous female kin at home. Groups of siblings and cousins frequented balls, picnics, and spent weekends over at each other's house. In this way,

19. Robert Roberts, *The classic slum: Salford life in the first quarter of the century* (Harmondsworth, UK 1973). See also: Matthijs, 'Changing patterns', 137.

20. Matthijs, 'Changing patterns', 137. Gillis, *A world of their own making*, 87. John R. Gillis, *For better, for worse. British marriages, 1600 to the present* (New York and Oxford 1985) 292-297.

21. Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Historical descriptions and prescriptions for adolescence', *Journal of Family History* 17:4 (1992) 346. Christien Brinkgreve and Ali de Regt, 'Adolescentie als opgave. Ontwikkelingen in een levensfase 1750-1990', in: Ineke van der Zande (ed.), *Het is meisjes menens. Inleiding meisjesstudies* (Amersfoort and Leuven 1991) 15-35. John R. Gillis, *Youth and history. Tradition and change in European age relations 1770-present* (New York and London 1974).

intimate ties between familial age peers developed.[22] The rise of a less instrumental and more egalitarian view on marriage and partner selection might have reinforced this stress on age peer relations.[23] A new marriage pattern developed, which included earlier and more universal marriage and a smaller spousal age gap than had been common in the traditional West-European Marriage Pattern with its advanced ages at first marriage, its large share of never-married and its relatively large age differences between husband and wife.[24] According to Van de Putte and colleagues, the new marriage pattern was associated with a cultural shift by which emotionalism, sentimentalism and romantic love instead of economic considerations became the basis for partner choice.[25] It might be envisaged that as people increasingly sought out age peers as their marriage partners, they may also have selected age peers as witnesses to their marriage ceremony.

Apart from changing preferences, a decrease in the social control of marriage may have played a role. Social control refers to collective evaluations of what ought to be and involves the application of sanctions to induce a specific behaviour.[26] In most European societies, norms regulating nuptiality and fertility were closely linked to larger social structures in which the restraint to marry was embedded within religious or ancestral communitarian codes.[27] As a result of secularization, religious and community prescriptions and customs stipulating the choice of certain patronage relations as marriage witnesses lost their force. Moreover, with secularization, a shift in attention from life's religious destinations to people's own origins took place. This concretely meant that people became more concerned with their family pasts and childhoods. The idealization of one's childhood reinforced 'prolonged connections' with siblings and parents, which, according to Steven Ruggles, partly clarifies the rise in co-residence with kin during the nineteenth century.[28] According to Gillis, the decline of religious and community control of marriage and the

22. That the sibling and cousin relationship became increasingly intensified is also evident in the historical novels of this period, see: Valerie Sanders, *The brother-sister culture in nineteenth-century literature. From Austen to Woolf* (New York 2002) and in contemporary ego documents, see: Davidoff, 'Kinship as a categorical concept'.

23. Bart Van de Putte et al., 'The rise of age homogamy in 19th century Western Europe', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71 (2009) 1234-1253; Coontz, *Marriage, a history*, 161-215. Bart Van de Putte, *Partnerkeuze in de 19de eeuw*, 335-397.

24. Koen Matthijs, 'Mimetic appetite for marriage in nineteenth-century Flanders: Gender disadvantage as an incentive for social change', *Journal of Family History* 27:2 (2002) 101-127.

25. Van de Putte et al.,'The rise of age homogamy', 1237.

26. Margaret Mooney Marini, 'Age and sequencing norms in the transition to adulthood', *Social Forces* 63:1 (1984) 229-244, 232.

27. Ron Lesthaeghe, 'On the social control of human reproduction', *Population and Development Review* 6:4 (1980) 527-548, 530.

28. Ruggles, *Prolonged connections*, 133.

emphasis on family bonds would first have taken place among the Protestant middle classes.[29]

Finally, it has been argued that it was merely changed opportunities to associate with kin that explain changes in familial sociability. First of all, the development of transport and communication networks in the course of the nineteenth century would have stimulated possibilities for cultivating familial bonds. Although increased rural-urban and long-distance migration might have dispersed family and kin groups, the expansion of train and tram networks enabled migrants to return home regularly and keep in contact with kin. Second, heightened family interaction might also have resulted from the growing size of kinship networks. Because of declining mortality and still high fertility, large families were common during this period. Thus, people simply had more siblings and cousins to associate with. Only in the course of the twentieth century, when birth control spread, did family size decline substantially and kin groups diminish in size.

Studying the choice of marriage witnesses: hypotheses for the Netherlands, 1830-1950

Previous authors have given several explanations to account for changes in familial sociability during the long nineteenth century, stressing shifting preferences, altered social control, and changed opportunities. The explanations given reinforce but also partly oppose each other. The present study advances on earlier research on the intensification of family ties by carefully operationalizing and testing different hypotheses for an important indicator of changing family relations, that is, couples' choice of marriage witnesses. More specifically, this study analyses developments in the selection of lateral kin as witnesses (siblings, siblings-in-law, and cousins), as prior research has shown that the most important shift during this period was the increased importance of horizontal family relations. The selection of marriage witnesses was in principal free, in the sense that it was not imposed by law or other regulations;[30] it thus represents *chosen* patterns of sociability. A particular set of witnesses illustrates those with whom people had contact, but also who was excluded. It gives information about the social networks of people and about the role of kin, or other personal relations, in those networks. Furthermore, information on marriage witnesses, such as incorporated in marriage certificates, are available for the whole population regardless of social class, religion or region; only those who never married are not included. Therefore,

29. Gilis, *A world of their own making*, 53.

30. Except that for large parts of the nineteenth century, women were excluded from being selected as a witness.

the choice of marriage witnesses is a good proxy for studying broader cultural processes of changing kinship and family relations. But what expectations with regard to the different explanations might be formulated for the Netherlands?

The first explanation stated that the intensification of family relations was connected to economic development and the rise of industrial capitalism. Following the idea that a process of social class formation took place by which the propertied classes wanted to distinguish themselves from other social groups by actively building reciprocal relations among related families, it might be expected that particularly the higher and middle classes and the farmers would have selected close family witnesses. Inviting close family to witness might have been less lucrative for the lower social classes (urban and rural labourers). For these social groups strengthening patronage relations, i.e. ties with employers or local notables, might have been more advantageous in terms of future life chances. Thus, if the hypothesis of social class formation is true, a higher percentage of kin witnesses might be expected for the propertied classes as compared to the working classes. Industrialization came relatively late to the Netherlands, taking off from the mid-nineteenth century, but gathering momentum around 1890.[31] In the inland provinces, the pace of industrialization and the growth of the tertiary sector were considerably slower than in urbanized Holland. Thus, if the economic salience of kin ties played a role, we would expect a strong increase in the percentage of lateral-kin witnesses, particularly among the propertied classes, with the western part of the Netherlands leading in the rising choice of family witnesses. Moreover, it might be expected that the choice for lateral kin declined again in the twentieth century when family firms were replaced by limited liability companies and kin lost their importance in providing credit and personnel for companies and trade networks.

Secondly, if a process of familiarization lay at the root of intensified family bonds, it might be expected that the higher and middle classes, where the cult of domesticity and the idealization of the family originated, would initially select the highest share of family witnesses. However, it is also thought that a process of cultural diffusion took place. This means that 1) a strong effect of time (i.e. marriage year) might be expected, with the proportion of kin witnesses increasing over time, and 2) this habit gradually trickled down to other social groups with social differentials in the selection of witnesses attenuating over time. For the cultivation of close family bonds, the presence of parents was very important. Particularly mothers would have mattered; as 'kin keepers' they maintained the family ties. Above all, the bride's mother

31. Jan Luiten van Zanden and Arthur van Riel, *The strictures of inheritance. The Dutch economy in the nineteenth century* (Princeton and Oxford 2004).

would have been important.[32] Thus, it is expected that couples of whom the parents, and particularly the bride's mother, were present chose relatively more lateral witnesses. Moreover, it is surmised that couples who were educated (e.g. literate), and particularly literate brides – as women were most important in the cultivation of family ties – more fervently stimulated the bourgeois ideal of the family and therefore relatively more often selected family witnesses.

If a preference for sociability with age peers related to the rise of adolescence, youth cultures and a more egalitarian view on marriage and partner selection played a role, it could be expected that the younger couples married and the smaller the age gap between the spouses, the larger the share of lateral family witnesses present at the marriage ceremony.

During the nineteenth century, Civil Codes provided rules on matrimonial matters in the Netherlands. An adapted version of the Code Napoleon was first introduced in the Netherlands in 1809. In 1811, the Code Napoleon was substituted by the French Civil Code, which was replaced by the Dutch Civil Code in 1838. As contracting a civil marriage was obligatory in the Netherlands, community and religious influences on the choice of civil marriage witnesses likely diminished as the century progressed. This might have been true for all religious groups, but probably more so for liberal Protestants, who were more focused on individualized family bonds, than for Catholics and Orthodox Protestants. Thus, liberal Protestants likely selected relatively more family witnesses than Catholics and Orthodox Protestants did.

If the intensification of family relations was related to changed opportunities for kin interaction because of the expansion of infrastructure and transport opportunities, we would expect couples marrying in urban places, which were generally better connected than rural places, or those marrying in municipalities with a train station to have had a higher share of family witnessing the marriage ceremony. However, regional differences abounded in terms of infrastructure, but also in terms of the circulation of new ideas and information. The western and middle provinces (Randstad) had intensive contacts with the outside world through their well-developed transportation network, their seaports, and their highly market-oriented agricultural and commercial activities. In the inland provinces, the road and rail network was much less developed. Moreover, the extensive network of waterways that connected the west with outside markets was missing in the peripheral inland provinces.[33] Thus, on the basis of infrastructural opportunities and economic structure, couples in the west might have selected a higher proportion of kin witnesses than those in the south and east.

32. Gillis, *For better, for worse*, 292-297.
33. Van Zanden and Van Riel, *The strictures of inheritance*, 53-54.

Finally, if kin availability played a role, brides and grooms who had more older siblings and particularly more older brothers (as women could not be selected until 1927), would have likely had relatively more lateral-kin witnesses. Except for the actual numbers of siblings, period and regional effects might also capture differences in the number of kin. During the nineteenth century, kin availability increased as a result of unchanged high fertility levels and declining mortality rates. Post and colleagues showed that the number of siblings in the Netherlands aged 20-40 increased from 2.1 in 1830, rising steeply from 1890 to a high point of 3.7 in 1920. The average number of cousins increased from 9.5 in 1830 to more than 12 in 1930, the number of nieces and nephews from 5 to 6 and the number of aunts and uncles from 1 to more than 3.[34] Thus, on the basis of kin availability, we would expect a rising trend in family witnesses as of 1890. Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, mortality was much higher in the coastal than in the inland provinces. This reversed in the 1870s when mortality rates declined drastically in the coastal areas, but the same development lagged behind in the inland provinces.[35] The fall of birth rates began in the extreme northwest of the country and gradually spread from there to the southeast.[36] Particularly in the south, fertility remained high well into the twentieth century. Thus, in the eastern provinces and particularly in the south, more lateral kin might have been found among marriage witnesses.

Data, measures and methods

To study the choice of marriage witnesses, data on more than 17,000 couples included in the database of the Historical Sample of the Netherlands (HSN) was used. The HSN contains all information available in the Dutch civil and population registers for a half percent sample of all Dutch men and women (so-called Research Persons) born between 1812 and 1922.[37] For the purpose of this study, Research Persons and their spouses who married between 1830 and 1950 in different municipalities of the Netherlands were selected. The

34. Post et al., 'Reconstructing the extended kin-network in the Netherlands with genealogical data: Methods, problems, and results', *Population Studies* 51 (1997) 263-278.

35. Frans van Poppel and Erik Beekink, 'De "gezondheid" van Nederland. Sterftetrends en sterfteverschillen in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw', in: E. Beekink et al. (eds.), *Nederland in verandering. Maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen in kaart gebracht 1800-2000* (Amsterdam 2003).

36. Onno W.A. Boonstra and Ad M. van der Woude, 'Demographic transition in the Netherlands. A statistical analysis of regional differences in the level of development of the birth rate and of fertility, 1850-1890', *A.A.G. Bijdragen* 24 (1984) 1-57.

37. Kees Mandemakers, 'Building life course data sets from population registers by the Historical Sample of the Netherlands (HSN)', *History and Computing* 14:1-2 (2006) 87-101.

most important source from which data was derived were the marriage certificates. In a marriage record, information on the occupations, ages, places of birth, and the literacy of the bride and groom are included. Moreover, there is data on the presence of the parents (alive or dead), their occupations, ages and literacy. Furthermore, of two to four witnesses the relation to the couple, ages, places of residence, occupations and literacy are known. The Napoleonic code and the initial Dutch civil code stipulated that four witnesses were needed in order to contract a marriage. This changed by law in 1913 when only two witnesses became obligatory. Women were not allowed to act as a marriage witness until 1927.[38] As the data set covers the period 1830 to 1950, there is thus primarily information on male witnesses.[39] For a number of marriage couples, also information from the population registers on 1) the religious denomination of the bride and the groom (N=3,162) and 2) the number of siblings at age 15 of either the groom or bride (depending on who was sampled as the Research Person) (N=4,025) was added.

Ill. 2 A female marriage witness signs the marriage certificate of her brother and sister-in-law, 5 oktober 1949. Beeldbank Zeeland (photographer: Hans Warren)

38. R.F. Vulsma, *Burgerlijke stand en bevolkingsregister* ('s-Gravenhage 1988) 51.
39. Only 0.4 percent (N=258) of all marriage witnesses in the data set were female. Thus, no distinction was made in the choice for male versus female witnesses in this study.

In the multivariate analyses, the dependent variable is the percentage of lateral-kin witnesses. A series of indicators was constructed to operationalize the different explanations. First, the occupational group of the bridegroom was taken as an indicator of the social class formation explanation, which predicts an economic advantage to the cultivation of lateral kinship ties by particularly the propertied classes. The social class of the marriage couple was charted on the basis of the occupation of the groom given in the marriage record. We coded all occupations with a scheme called HISCO (Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations).[40] The occupational categories were further classified into an abridged version of a historical social class scheme proposed by Van Leeuwen and Maas, known as HISCLASS. The following seven categories were employed in the analyses: higher managers and professionals, lower managers and professionals combined with clerical and sales people, foremen and skilled workers, farmers and fishermen, lower-skilled workers, unskilled workers, and farmworkers.[41]

Subsequently, indicators were included related to the familiarization hypothesis stressing the importance of social class, the diffusion effect of familiarization over time, the presence of the parents at the marriage ceremony and the literacy of the couple. First of all, the diffusion effect of familiarization was captured by the year of the marriage and, alternatively, by a dichotomous variable charting whether the marriage took place before or after 1890. If the effect of the variable year of marriage persists after controlling for all other variables, additional support is provided for the hypothesis that familiarization is an explanation for the trends observed.[42] The vital status of the parents of the bride and groom were included. Four categories were constructed: both of the bride's (or groom's) parents were alive, only the mother was alive, only the father was alive, and both parents were deceased. Furthermore, the literacy of the bride and the groom, evident from the ability to put a signature on the marriage certificate, was included as familiarization might have taken place more often among the educated.[43]

40. Marco H.D. van Leeuwen, I. Maas, and A. Miles, *HISCO. Historical International Standard Classification of Occupations* (Leuven 2002).

41. Marco H.D. van Leeuwen and I. Maas, 'A short note on HISCLASS'. Accessed at http://historyofwork.iisg.nl/docs/hisclass-brief.doc, 5 April, 2006.

42. See for this operationalization of familiarization, Matthijs, 'Changing patterns', 133.

43. Three categories were constructed: bride/groom was literate, bride/groom was illiterate, literacy bride/groom unknown.

A third set of measures is related to the explanation that centres on changes in the phase of adolescence, and the rise of less instrumental marriage and partner selection. I included the marriage ages of the bride and groom and the age difference between the spouses, assuming that the younger one married and the smaller the age gap between the spouses, the more often lateral, same-generation kin were selected as witnesses.

To test whether differences in the social control of marriage played a role, the religious denomination of the couple was included.[44] Five categories were constructed: spouses that were both liberal Protestant, spouses that were both Roman Catholic, couples of which at least one spouse was Orthodox Protestant, couples that were mixed Catholic-Protestant, and a rest category of couples who had another religion or no religion.

As an indicator of changed opportunities related to the expansion of transport and communication networks, the degree of urbanization of the place of marriage was included. A dichotomous variable was created, classifying municipalities into urban or rural based on the population size and the percentage of the population working in agriculture.[45] Moreover, a dichotomous variable was created to chart the presence of a train station in the place of marriage in the year of marriage. Family and kin of migrated brides and grooms might have had fewer opportunities to attend the wedding. Therefore, two dichotomous variables were constructed indicating whether the bride or the groom had migrated between their places of birth and marriage or not. A variable was created charting the region in which the marriage was contracted, capturing infrastructure, demographic regime and supply of kin. Five regions were distinguished: the Northwest (North Holland), the Southwest & Middle (Zeeland, South Holland and Utrecht), the North (Friesland, Groningen, and Drenthe), the East (Overijssel and Gelderland) and the South (North Brabant and Limburg). Finally, the availability of siblings (the numbers of older brothers, younger brothers, older sisters and younger sisters) of the bride or the groom (depending on who was the Research Person) was measured, using information on the parental household from the municipal population registers.

44. This was done in a separate analysis for those couples for whom this information was available from the population registers.

45. Places with a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants were classified as rural, places with a population of more than 20,000 as urban, and places with a population between 5,000 and 20,000 were classified as rural if more than 40 percent of the male labour force worked in agriculture and as urban when this was less than 40 percent.

Table 1 *Descriptive statistics of the variables according to period*

	1830-1889	*1890-1950*	*p*
Couple characteristics (N)	6,101	11,020	
Occupational group groom			<.0001
Higher managers and professionals	0.82%	1.60%	
Lower managers and professionals	9.94%	16.84%	
Foremen and skilled workers	17.91%	12.65%	
Farmers	13.91%	15.09%	
Lower skilled workers	11.41%	12.52%	
Unskilled workers	9.07%	13.47%	
Farm workers	27.25%	8.14%	
Occupation unknown	9.69%	19.63%	
Literacy groom			<.0001
Groom literate	89.82%	98.94%	
Groom illiterate	10.05%	0.82%	
Groom's literacy unknown	0.13%	0.24%	
Literacy bride			<.0001
Bride literate	78.85%	98.61%	
Bride illiterate	21.02%	1.31%	
Bride literacy unknown	0.13%	0.08%	
Marriage age bridegroom	27.39	27.15	0.004
Marriage age bride	25.23	24.92	<.0001
Age difference couple	4.21	3.59	
Vital status bride's parents			<.0001
Both bride's parents alive	42.91%	59.95%	
Only mother bride alive	25.39%	18.60%	
Only father bride alive	15.92%	13.97%	
Both parents bride deceased	15.78%	7.48%	
Vital status bridegroom's parents			<.0001
Both bridegroom's parents alive	38.35%	54.71%	
Only mother bridegroom alive	26.01%	20.38%	
Only father bridegroom alive	17.25%	14.35%	
Both parents bridegroom deceased	18.39%	10.56%	
Migration status bridegroom (birth vs. marriage place)			<.0001
Bridegroom is migrant	20.14%	30.36%	
Migration status bride (birth vs. marriage place)			0.015
Bride is migrant	15.24%	12.71%	

	1830-1889	*1890-1950*	*p*
Region			<.0001
Northwest	9.30%	16.30%	
Southwest & middle	17.30%	34.00%	
North	38.20%	17.30%	
East	25.00%	16.20%	
South	10.30%	16.30%	
Municipality characteristics (N)			
Urban	22.60%	39.50%	<.0001
Train station (0..1)	14.40%	38.60%	<.0001

Source: Historical Sample of the Netherlands, Release 2007.

Table 1 gives descriptive information on the different variables used. A comparison between the periods 1830-1889 and 1890-1950 shows that major changes in terms of industrialization, transport facilities and fertility took place. Clearly, after 1890 the proportion of grooms in the occupational group of lower managers and professionals was much larger, while the share of farmworkers had declined. Moreover, during the latter period the percentage of literate brides and grooms had risen, while the average marriage age and the age difference between the spouses had somewhat declined. The fact that mortality decreased during the latter period can be observed from the higher percentage of parents that were still alive at the marriage of their child. Finally, after 1890 more couples married in an urban place and in places with a train station.

Trends in the choice of marriage witnesses in the Netherlands between 1830 and 1950

Who were chosen as marriage witnesses? Table 2 shows the main types of witnesses that could be identified from the marriage certificates: 1) vertical kin, 2) lateral kin, 3) acquaintances, 4) persons about whom it was explicitly stated that they were not kin-related to the couple, and 5) persons for whom no relation to the couple was given. Strikingly, the largest group, about 43 percent of all witnesses, bore no kin relationship to either the bride or the groom. This group would have mainly consisted of professional witnesses, local individuals who wandered the streets and acted recurrently as witnesses in order to earn some extra money, as well as clerks and registrars.[46] However, a third of all witnesses that had no kin ties to the couple were recorded as being 'related' to the groom, the bride or to both. It is highly likely that these witnesses

46. Van Poppel and Schoonheim, 'Measuring cultural differences', 173-197.

were in fact people that stood in a hierarchical relation to the couple, such as important relations of the parents, employers, or local notables. Such ties could be beneficial for the future well-being of the couple. Patronage ties had been very important in Europe between the Middle Ages and the beginning of the nineteenth century, but – particularly in the entrepreneurial middle classes – their significance was gradually replaced by lateral-kin ties from the end of the eighteenth century.[47]

The second largest group, more than a quarter of all witnesses, consisted of lateral kin. Brothers and brothers-in-law made up 90 percent of this group. Lateral kin were a bit more often related to the groom than to the bride. Almost eight percent of all witnesses were kin that stood in a vertical relation to the couple, mainly uncles (almost 80 percent of this group); fathers did not figure often as a witness. Vertical kin were somewhat more often related to the bride than to the groom. Five percent of all witnesses was labelled an 'acquaintance'. Most likely, this group partly overlapped with the category 'no kin relation' and was related to the couple in patronage-like ways. Finally, for more than 16 percent of all witnesses, no relation to the couple was given.

Table 2 *Relationship between witnesses and bride and groom (N=61,246)*

	Related to whom					
Relationship	*Bride*	*Groom*	*Bride and groom*	*Relation unknown*	*Total*	*In %*
Grandfather	160	86	0	0	246	
Grandfather-in-law	4	0	0	0	4	
Grandmother	2	2	0	1	5	
Father	249	310	1	0	560	
Father-in-law	17	20	0	1	38	
Stepfather	88	105	1	0	194	
Mother	4	7	0	0	11	
Stepmother	1	3	0	0	4	
Uncle	2069	1516	22	5	3,612	
Great-uncle	15	3	0	0	18	
Uncle-in-law	171	95	0	5	271	
Great-uncle in-law	1	0	0	0	1	
Aunt	4	7	0	1	11	
Aunt-in-law	1	1	0	0	2	
Total vertical kin	2,686	2,155	24	13	4,878	7.96

47. Guido Alfani and Vincent Gourdon, 'Entrepreneurs, formalisation of social ties and trust building in Europe (14th-20th centuries)', Dondena Working Paper, No. 25. Accessed at www.dondena.unibocconi.it/wp25, September 30, 2011.

Relationship	*Related to whom*				*Total*	*In %*
	Bride	*Groom*	*Bride groom*	*Relation unknown*		
Brother	5,221	5,395	9	3	10,628	
Brother-in-law	1,942	2,085	11	1	4,039	
Half brother	63	79	1	0	143	
Stepbrother	2	4	0	0	6	
Sister	109	97	1	0	207	
Sister-in-law	9	6	0	0	15	
Half sister	2	1	0	0	3	
Cousin (m) or nephew	610	624	8	0	1,244	
Cousin (m) /nephew in law	46	41	1	1	89	
Great-cousin (m)	32	15	2	0	49	
Great-cousin in-law	4	2	0	0	6	
Cousin (f) or niece	4	0	0	0	4	
Total lateral kin	8,044	8,349	33	5	16,431	26.83
(Good) acquaintance	936	1,127	939	21	3,023	
Servant/nanny	2	1	1	1	5	
Neighbor	88	67	5	0	160	
Total acquaintances	1,026	1,195	945	22	3,188	5.21
No kin relation	67	45	8,560	18,015	26,687	43.57
No relation given	1,341	1,212	922	6,587	10,063	16.43
Total	13,164	12,956	10,484	24,642	61,246	100.00
In %	21.49	21.15	17.12	40.23	100.00	

Source: As in table 1.

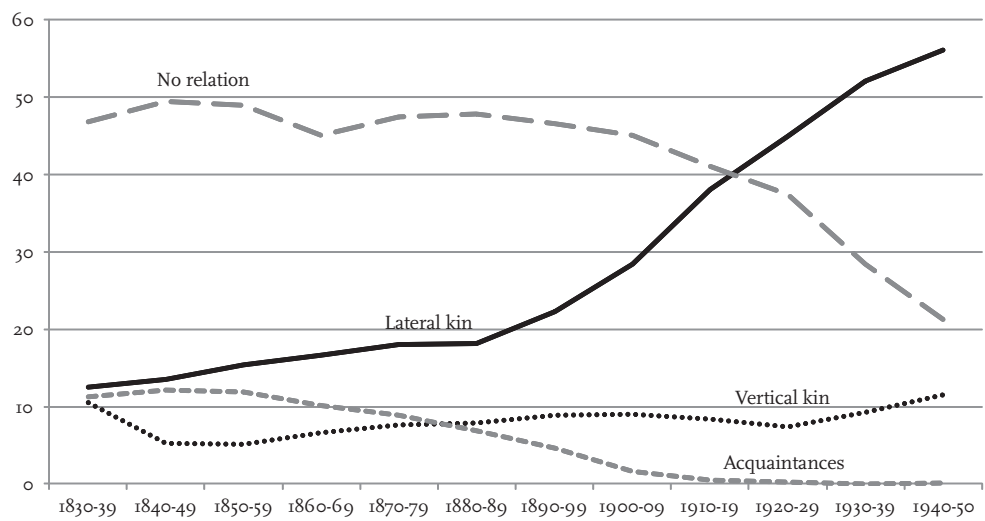
How did the choice of marriage witnesses evolve over time? Figure 1 presents time trends for the percentage of the four main types of witnesses in sets of witnesses or witness networks.[48] Around 1830, almost 50 percent of all witness networks consisted of people that held no kin relation to the couple; presumably, many of these witnesses were hierarchical relations. Vertical kin, lateral kin, and acquaintances each comprised a bit more than ten percent of the witnesses present. Over the whole period, covering more than a hundred years, the most striking aspect is the steep rise in the share of lateral kin who were asked to witness the wedding, particularly from 1890 onwards. The percentage of witnesses who bore no kin relation or who were listed as acquaintances declined in a similar manner. The fact that

48. The category 'no relation given' is not included in this graph.

the proportion of acquaintances decreased accordingly shows that these witnesses probably fell in the same category as those bearing 'no kin relation' and largely consisted of hierarchical non-kin relations. Around 1920, brothers(-in-law) and cousins surpassed non-kin-related individuals as marriage witnesses. The share of vertical kin, mostly comprising uncles as we saw earlier, remained surprisingly constant.

In short, the time trends show an intensification of family ties as evident in the specific choice for familial witnesses. But not all close family acquired a more important role in the marriage ceremony. It was particularly familial age peers, e.g. brothers, that did so. And this process of 'lateralization' did not stop at the turn of the twentieth century, but continued at least until the middle of the twentieth century. Moreover, a similar fall in non-kin relations took place, a phenomenon which has also been observed for godparenthood.[49]

Figure 1 *Time trends in the choice of marriage witnesses (in %) in the Netherlands, 1830-1950 (N=17,124 couples)*



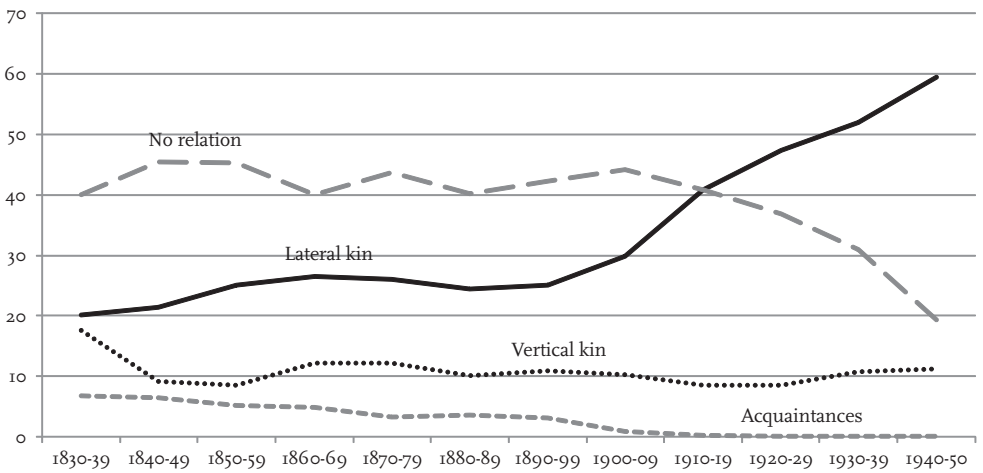
Source: As in table 1.

The familiarization thesis stated that family ties would first be intensified among the urban bourgeoisie. To what extent did the cities and the countryside diverge in the trend of lateralization? A comparison of figures 2a and 2b shows that the growth of the proportion of horizontal relations was quite similar in both urban and rural areas. However, it should be noted that in

49. Alfani and Gourdon, 'Entrepreneurs, formalisation of social ties'.

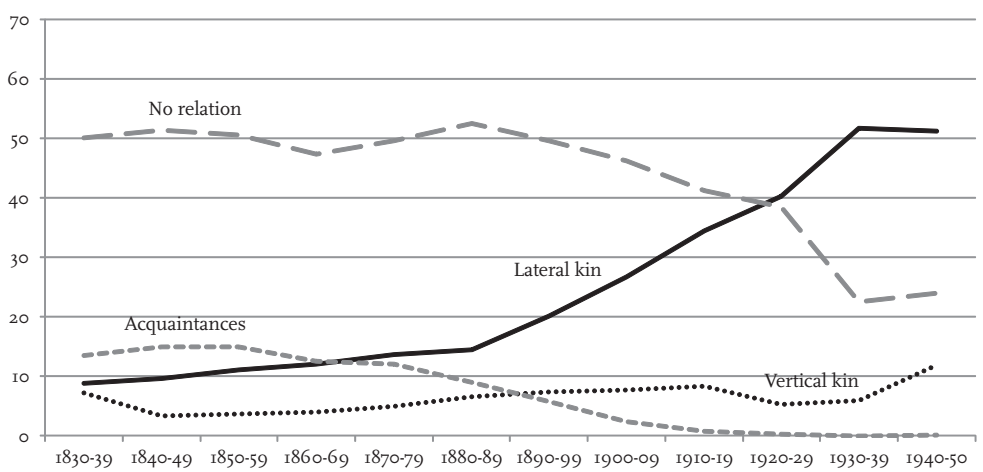
these graphs other influences on the percentage of lateral kin are not controlled for.

Figure 2a *Time trends in the choice of marriage witnesses (in %) in the Netherlands, 1830-1950: urban areas*



Source: As in table 1.

Figure 2b *Time trends in the choice of marriage witnesses (in %) in the Netherlands, 1830-1950: rural areas*

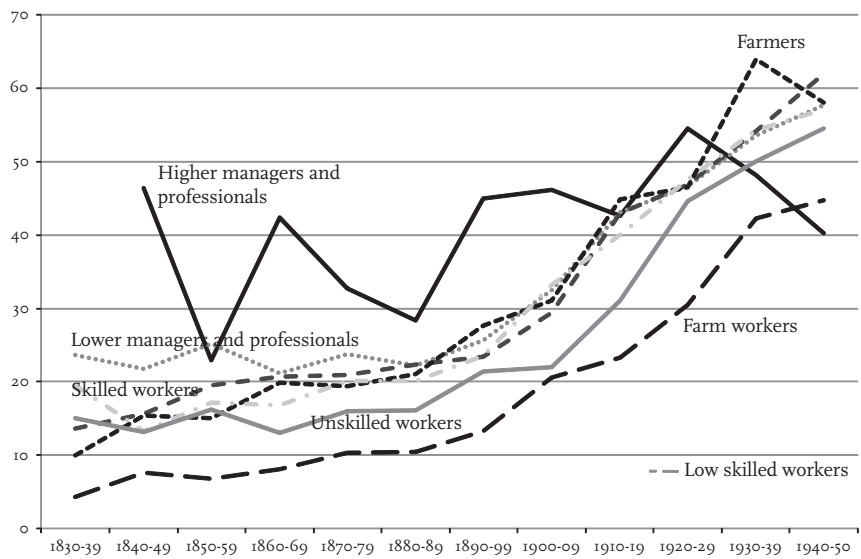


Source: As in table 1.

Parallel time trends are also visible for the different social classes (see figure 3). It is clear that in all social groups, brothers(-in-law) and cousins were being increasingly selected as marriage witnesses. However, disparities in the proportions of lateral kin between social classes remained visible over time.

The higher and middle classes had the highest proportion of kin at their marriage, with farmers, skilled and lower skilled workers closely following, while the unskilled workers and the farmworkers clearly had lower levels of familial age peers present.

Figure 3 *Time trends in the percentage of lateral kin as marriage witnesses in the Netherlands, 1830-1950: by social class*



Source: As in table 1.

Determinants of the choice of lateral kin as marriage witnesses

We now turn to the main question: how should the intensification of family relations be understood – assuming that the rising trend of lateral-kin witnesses indicates such a development? Table 3 presents the results of the multilevel linear regression analyses.[50] The unstandardized regression estimates (B) show to what extent the variables (or the categories of a variable) have a positive or a negative effect on the percentage of lateral kin in witness networks and whether that effect is significant or not (when $p<0.05$), even when controlling for other variables. The results of the different categories of

50. Because couples marrying in the same municipality experienced the same circumstances to a larger degree and were thus more alike than couples from different places, hierarchical multilevel analysis was applied. Multilevel analysis takes both levels (of the couple and of the municipality) into account simultaneously. Joop Hox, *Multilevel Analysis. Techniques and applications* (Mahwah NJ 2002).

a variable are in comparison to the omitted reference category. Three models were estimated: 1) a model with a continuous variable capturing time (year of marriage), 2) a model with time as a dummy variable [before 1890 (0); after 1890 (1)], and 3) a model including interactions with the time dummy. The last model was estimated in order to investigate how the effects of the different variables on witness selection changed over time.

A first explanation that has been given for the intensification of family relations centralizes changing preferences for lateral-kin relations as a result of economic development and social class formation. Under the changed conditions of industrial capitalism, family ties would have been highly useful, particularly for the propertied classes. The results for the variable measuring the groom's occupational group in models 1 and 2 closely reflect the results of the trend graphs of figure 3. In comparison to the reference group of foremen and skilled workers, the group of higher managers and skilled workers choose a significantly higher percentage of lateral kin. Lower managers and professionals, and farmers selected a significantly higher share of lateral kin as well. On the other hand, unskilled workers and farmworkers had significantly lower proportions of brothers(-in-law) and cousins as witnesses compared to the reference group. The fact that the propertied classes clearly chose higher shares of lateral-kin witnesses confirms the explanation that links marriage strategies and social class formation.

The fact might, however, also point to familiarization as an explanation. But in contrast to the explanation that emphasises the economic salience of kin ties, with the familiarization hypothesis, positing that the ideal of the family was a descending cultural good that diffused over time, a strong effect of time is also expected. The significant effect of the variable period (in both models 1 and 2) confirms such an explanation. Indeed, the year in which the marriage took place is one of the strongest predictors of the percentage of lateral-kin witnesses. Model 2, with time as a dummy distinguishing the period before and after 1890, fits the data even better, capturing the acceleration of familiarization from the last decade of the nineteenth century, as was also visible in the trend graphs. The familiarization explanation also argued that women, as kin keepers, were key to the intensification of family relations. Given the centrality of women in the construction and spread of the new family ideal, it was expected that the absence of the mothers of the bride and groom, and particularly of the bride's mother, resulted in lower proportions of lateral-kin witnesses. The results show that couples whose mother or both parents had died selected significantly lower shares of lateral kin than couples of whom both parents were still alive. It was also assessed whether the groom's and bride's ability to read and write influenced familial sociability. Literacy might have been particularly important for women, who are thought to have played a major role in the spread of the new ideal of the family and – when educated – would have been even more likely to do so. The results

confirm this hypothesis. Couples with a literate groom or specifically literate a bride choose relatively more lateral kin than couples that were illiterate.

To what extent was the choice for brothers(-in-law) and cousins related to the inception of a phase of adolescence and modern marriage patterns? The results show that the percentage of lateral kin increased with the ages at which the bride and groom married, which is an unexpected result. The age difference between the spouses, however, had a significant negative effect as was expected. The larger the age gap between the spouses, the lower the percentage of lateral kin. Thus, the choice for familial age peers as witnesses was related to marrying an age peer as a spouse.

Opportunities for choosing kin also played a role in explaining the percentage of lateral-kin witnesses. Migrated grooms and brides had relatively fewer lateral kin observing their wedding. This might be the consequence of the specific networks of migrants, which were more dispersed, or of the fact that patronage relations might have been more important for migrants in terms of integration and future prospects. The presence of a train station in the place of marriage resulted in a higher share of close family witnesses (only in model 2).[51] Furthermore, the hypothesis was that in urban areas – because of the large presence of urban bourgeoisie – the ideal of family intimacy might have been more widespread. Moreover, cities were better connected, thus allowing for kin to be present. The results show that – when controlling for other factors influencing the percentage of lateral kin – couples who married in urban areas indeed had lateral kin witnessing their marriage more often.[52]

Finally, a variable region was included to control for regional differences in infrastructure or, alternatively, kin supply. The results show that in the urbanized and industrialized western part of the Netherlands ('the Randstad'), including the Northwest, Southwest and Middle regions, relatively more lateral-kin witnesses were present at the marriage ceremony than in other regions. The regional dummies thus do not seem to catch spatial differences in the availability of kin but, more likely, regional disparities in economic development and infrastructure.

In model 3, interaction terms were included to test whether the effects of some of the variables were different for couples who married before 1890 than for those who married after 1890 when the choice of lateral kin had diffused to a larger part of the population.[53] The list of significant interaction terms

51. The difference in the effects between models 1 and 2 can be explained by the fact that the distribution of the variable 'train station present in the marriage year' is highly skewed. Railways and train stations were only constructed after ca. 1860. Therefore, model 2 (with time as a dummy) fits the data better.

52. Note that this result contrasts with the uncontrolled descriptive trend graphs (figures 2a and 2b) which did not show such a large difference.

53. Only significant interaction terms have been kept in this model.

shows that this was the case for several of the variables. First of all, before 1890 marriage couples of whom the groom was a farmworker selected lateral kin relatively less often than the reference group of foremen and skilled workers. However, after 1890 this negative effect of being employed as a farmworker was aggravated. Thus, rural labourers seem to have lagged behind in the process of familiarization, particularly after 1890.[54] The results also show that couples who married after 1890 selected an even higher share of lateral-kin witnesses if the bride was literate than those with literate brides marrying before 1890. In the same vein, the effect of the absence of the bride's mother, of the bride's parents, of the groom's father and of both the groom's parents was much more negative after 1890 than before. Thus, with the spread of the ideal of the family, the actual presence of parents at the marriage ceremony became more important. Moreover, the influence of migration of the bride in terms of the share of kin witnesses is more negative after 1890 than before. On the other hand, the influence of marrying in the South and East as compared to the Southwest and Middle is less negative for couples marrying after 1890 than for those who wedded before that year. Thus, regional differences started to diminish by the end of the nineteenth century, most likely because of the integration of the Netherlands. However, marrying in an urban context had an even more positive effect on the proportion of lateral-kin witnesses for couples that married after 1890 than for those that married before.

54. For example: couples with grooms that were farmworkers and who married before 1890 (dummy=0) have a regression coefficient of -2.661 (the main effect of farmworkers); couples with grooms that were farmworkers and that married after 1890 (dummy=1) have a regression coefficient of -2.661+(-6.274)=-8.935 (main effect + interaction effect).

Table 3 *Multilevel linear regression analysis of % lateral kin in witness networks, models 1-3 (N=17,227 couples; N=1,040 municipalities)*

	Model 1 (time continuous)			*Model 2 (time as dummy)*			*Model 3 (interactions with time)*		
	B	*SE*	*p*	*B*	*SE*	*p*	*B*	*SE*	*p*
Intercept	-635.938	22.513	<.0001	-0.285	2.429	0.906	0.444	2.600	0.864
Period (1830..1950)	0.343	0.012	<.0001						
1890-1950 (before 1890=ref.)				10.571	0.659	<.0001	-2.671	3.015	0.376
Occupational group groom									
Higher managers and professionals (Foremen and skilled workers=ref.)	6.650	2.136	0.002	7.455	2.169	0.001	7.476	2.158	0.001
Lower managers and professionals	3.277	0.833	<.0001	4.019	0.845	<.0001	3.992	0.842	<.0001
Farmers	4.097	0.937	<.0001	4.377	0.952	<.0001	4.517	0.948	<.0001
Lower skilled workers	-0.317	0.844	0.707	0.140	0.857	0.870	0.037	0.853	0.966
Unskilled workers	-5.700	0.908	<.0001	-5.377	0.923	<.0001	-5.419	0.919	<.0001
Farm workers	-5.687	0.884	<.0001	-5.777	0.808	<.0001	-2.661	1.178	0.024
Occupation unknown	0.774	0.977	0.428	0.736	0.993	0.458	0.725	0.988	0.463
Literacy groom									
Groom literate (illiterate=ref.)	1.561	1.318	0.236	3.198	1.337	0.017	3.822	1.337	0.004
Groom literacy unknown	-6.239	5.705	0.274	-4.034	5.792	0.486	-2.646	5.765	0.646
Literacy bride									
Bride literate (illiterate=ref.)	3.390	1.000	0.001	6.698	1.010	<.0001	5.482	1.081	<.0001
Bride literacy unknown	2.639	7.993	0.741	3.737	8.118	0.645	10.667	8.151	0.191
Marriage age groom	0.439	0.071	<.0001	0.575	0.072	<.0001	0.587	0.071	<.0001

	Model 1 (time continuous)			*Model 2 (time as dummy)*			*Model 3 (interactions with time)*		
	B	*SE*	*p*	*B*	*SE*	*p*	*B*	*SE*	*p*
Marriage age bride	0.428	0.067	<.0001	0.440	0.068	<.0001	0.443	0.068	<.0001
Age difference couple	-0.296	0.084	<.0001	-0.399	0.085	<.0001	-0.396	0.085	<.0001
Presence of parents bride									
Only mother bride alive (both alive=ref.)	0.604	0.622	0.331	-0.404	0.630	0.522	-0.359	0.629	0.568
Only father bride alive	-1.486	0.707	0.036	-2.264	0.718	0.002	0.048	1.145	0.967
Both parents bride deceased	-2.332	0.849	0.006	-3.912	0.860	<.0001	-1.714	1.168	0.142
Presence of parents groom									
Only mother groom alive (both live=ref.)	-0.611	0.617	0.321	-1.650	0.625	0.008	0.448	0.985	0.649
Only father groom alive	-1.783	0.702	0.011	-2.451	0.712	0.001	-2.279	0.710	0.001
Both parents groom deceased	-2.806	0.786	<.0001	-4.309	0.796	<.0001	-0.778	1.129	0.491
Migration status of couple									
Groom is migrant (sedentary=ref.)	-1.285	0.357	<.0001	-1.029	0.363	0.005	-0.972	0.361	0.007
Bride is migrant (sedentary=ref.)	-2.683	0.367	<.0001	-2.828	0.372	<.0001	-1.358	0.673	0.043
Region									
Northwest (Southwest & middle=ref.)	8.145	2.344	0.001	7.743	2.387	0.001	8.658	2.377	<.0001
North	-16.7001	0.731	<.0001	-19.657	2.047	<.0001	-21.227	2.047	<.0001
East	-4.727	1.883	0.012	-7.495	1.916	<.0001	-14.980	2.081	<.0001
South	-11.750	1.781	<.0001	-11.60	1.813	<.0001	-15.211	2.313	<.0001
Municipality characteristics									
Urban (rural=ref.)	7.063	1.223	<.0001	9.369	1.240	<.0001	5.788	1.522	<.0001
Train station present (no train station=ref.)	-1.713	0.968	0.077	3.821	0.964	<.0001	2.676	1.006	0.008

	Model 1 (time continuous)			*Model 2 (time as dummy)*			*Model 3 (interactions with time)*		
	B	*SE*	*p*	*B*	*SE*	*p*	*B*	*SE*	*p*
Interaction terms									
Farm workers * after 1890							-6.274	1.439	<.0001
Bride literate * after 1890							13.445	2.805	<.0001
Only father bride alive * after 1890							-3.732	1.422	0.009
Both parents bride deceased * after 1890							-4.488	1.620	0.006
Only mother groom alive * after 1890							-3.153	1.220	0.010
Both parents groom deceased * after 1890							-6.329	1.478	<.0001
Bride is migrant * after 1890							-2.012	0.794	0.011
South * after 1890							4.721	1.938	0.015
East * after 1890							12.531	1.386	<.0001
Urban * after 1890							3.660	1.318	0.005
Chi2 (df)		2482(29)	<.0001		1878(29)	<.0001		2084(3)	<.0001

Source: As in table 1.

The Protestant middle classes would have encountered less social control in the choice of marriage witnesses, compared to other denominations, and would at the same time have been more focused on individualized family bonds. A variable charting the combined religious denomination of both spouses is included in table 4. Clearly, the hypothesis is confirmed by the Dutch data; Liberal Protestants had significantly higher shares of lateral kin to witness their marriage than Catholics did. Like Catholics, also couples of mixed Catholic-Protestant background had significantly lower shares of siblings among their witnesses than Liberal Protestants did. Apparently, mixed marriages were not conducive for good family relations.

Table 4 *Multilevel linear regression analysis of % lateral kin in witness networks including religion (N=3162 couples; N=520 municipalities)*

	B	*SE*	*p*
Intercept	-761.375	85.227	<.0001
Period (1830..1950)	0.410	0.045	<.0001
Occupational group groom			
Higher managers and professionals (Foremen and skilled workers=ref.)	18.173	5.171	<.0001
Lower managers and professionals	3.835	1.949	0.049
Farmers	3.263	2.924	0.264
Lower skilled workers	-1.222	2.071	0.555
Unskilled workers	-6.084	2.067	0.003
Farm workers	-2.543	2.700	0.346
Occupation unknown	-5.338	2.572	0.038
Literacy groom			
Groom literate (illiterate = ref.)	-2.628	6.945	0.705
Groom literacy unknown	-1.611	16.088	0.920
Literacy bride			
Bride literate (illiterate=ref.)	-3.400	5.347	0.525
Bride literacy unknown	13.287	26.369	0.614
Marriage age groom	0.309	0.234	0.187
Marriage age bride	0.514	0.214	0.016
Age difference couple	-0.183	0.277	0.510
Presence of parents bride			
Only mother bride alive (both alive=ref.)	-3.166	1.643	0.054
Only father bride alive	-2.346	1.893	0.215
Both parents bride deceased	-1.867	2.901	0.520

	B	*SE*	*p*
Presence of parents groom			
Only mother groom alive (both live=ref.)	0.187	1.635	0.909
Only father groom alive	0.027	1.841	0.988
Both parents groom deceased	-4.017	2.420	0.097
Migration status of couple			
Groom is migrant (sedentary=ref.)	-2.779	0.886	0.002
Bride is migrant (sedentary=ref.)	-2.422	0.922	0.009
Region			
Northwest (Southwest & middle= ref.)	23.465	4.706	<.0001
North	-18.642	3.967	<.0001
East	5.451	4.279	0.203
South	7.178	4.184	0.086
Context characteristics			
Urban (rural=ref.)	11.418	3.336	0.001
Train station present (no train station=ref.)	2.034	3.281	0.535
Religion			
Roman Catholic (Liberal protestant=ref.)	-5.825	1.935	0.003
Orthodox protestant	-1.068	1.723	0.535
Mixed Catholic-Protestant	-7.533	2.281	0.001
Other religion or no religion	-4.325	3.255	0.184
Chi2 (df)			

Source: As in table 1.

Finally, we tested whether the availability of siblings might explain the proportion of lateral kin chosen as witnesses. In general, individuals from large families might have had more possibilities of inviting a sibling to the wedding. It could thus be that marriage couples who had more siblings(-in-law) to choose from did so accordingly. Table 5 contains variables charting the numbers of older and younger brothers and sisters of the spouse of whom information from the population registers was available. Although we have information on one marriage partner only, it can immediately be observed that the more older brothers available, the higher the percentage of lateral kin in the witness network. The number of sisters and of younger brothers did not significantly influence the proportion of lateral kin. Clearly, the availability of older brothers, who could be asked to act as a witness, was very important.

Table 5 *Multilevel linear regression analysis of % lateral kin in witness networks including number of siblings of one of the spouses (N=4025 couples; N=620 municipalities)*

	B	*SE*	*p*
Intercept	-517.559	71.177	<.0001
Period (1830..1950)	0.271	0.038	<.0001
Occupational group groom			
Higher managers and professionals (Foremen and skilled workers=ref.)	12.205	4.299	0.005
Lower managers and professionals	2.320	1.683	0.168
Farmers	2.388	2.237	0.286
Lower skilled workers	-1.354	1.801	0.452
Unskilled workers	-4.859	1.805	0.007
Farm workers	-2.586	1.934	0.181
Occupation unknown	-2.663	2.223	0.231
Literacy groom			
Groom literate (illiterate=ref.)	0.531	4.806	0.912
Groom literacy unknown	-4.071	15.655	0.795
Literacy bride			
Bride literate (illiterate=ref.)	3.174	3.931	0.419
Bride literacy unknown	19.539	24.646	0.428
Marriage age groom	0.833	0.193	<.0001
Marriage age bride	0.465	0.181	0.010
Age difference couple	-0.466	0.230	0.043
Presence of parents bride			
Only mother bride alive (both alive=ref.)	-3.176	1.356	0.019
Only father bride alive	-2.494	1.538	0.105
Both parents bride deceased	-2.354	2.232	0.291

	B	*SE*	*p*
Presence of parents groom			
Only mother groom alive (both live=ref.)	-1.018	1.339	0.447
Only father groom alive	-1.624	1.514	0.283
Both parents groom deceased	-3.108	1.935	0.108
Migration status of couple			
Groom is migrant (sedentary=ref.)	-3.039	0.750	<.0001
Bride is migrant (sedentary=ref.)	-3.177	0.765	<.0001
Region			
Northwest (Southwest & middle= ref.)	16.622	4.196	<.0001
North	-17.921	3.471	<.0001
East	4.828	3.895	0.215
South	0.629	3.497	0.857
Context characteristics			
Urban (rural=ref.)	11.747	2.741	<.0001
Train station present (no train station=ref.)	3.370	2.889	0.243
Number of siblings			
Number of older brothers	2.135	0.401	<.0001
Number of younger brothers	-0.511	0.375	0.174
Number of older sisters	0.256	0.416	0.539
Number of younger sisters	-0.426	0.373	0.254
Chi2 (df)			

Source: As in table 1.

Conclusion and discussion

It has been argued that an intensification of family and kin relations took place during the long nineteenth century. However, previous research has dealt mostly with the Anglo-Saxon world and has not empirically tested a wide range of explanations that can account for such a trend. The central question of this paper was whether an intensification of family relations actually took place in the Netherlands and how this process could be explained. Specifically, it was investigated to what extent 1) changing preferences, related to the economic relevance of kin ties, the rise of the ideal of the family, or the inception of adolescence and modern marriage motivations, 2) altered social control as a consequence of secularization, and 3) changed opportunities resulting from improved infrastructure and the enlarged availability of kin explained the choice for lateral-kin witnesses in the Netherlands between 1830 and 1950. On the basis of a representative data set of the Netherlands

with information on more than 17,000 marriage couples, their parents and their witnesses, these hypotheses were tested.

The results show that during the period 1830-1950, Dutch couples increasingly selected lateral kin (siblings(in-law) and cousins) as marriage witnesses. This 'lateralization' process accelerated particularly after 1890 and continued at least until 1950. How can this trend be explained? The results indicate that several explanations together account for this rise. The observed changes were primarily the result of shifting preferences to associate with kin. That particularly the urban higher and middle classes and the farmers chose lateral kin as witnesses at their weddings shows that marriage strategies related to capitalist productive relations and social class formation played a role. However, lateralization continued well after the heyday of family firms. Moreover, a process of cultural diffusion took place whereby over time the choice for brothers(-in-law) and cousins increasingly spread to other social groups. Finally, familial age peers were particularly selected when the mother (of the bride) was still alive and when the bride was literate, pointing to the important role of women in cultivating family relations. The presence of parents at the marriage ceremony and the role of educated brides became even more important after 1890 when the family ideal and cult of domesticity became more widespread. These findings point out that apart from the economic usefulness of kin ties, particularly for the propertied classes, a broader cultural shift of 'familiarization' took place, which must be regarded as the main key to a better understanding of the intensification of family relations during this period.

However, other factors played a role as well. The fact that couples who married age peers also selected familial age peers more often as witnesses shows that the developments in the life phase of adolescence and the rise of emotional and less instrumental marriage motivations were relevant as well. Secondly, differences in social control also influenced witness selection. Liberal Protestants, one of the most secularized denominations in the Netherlands, chose more family as witnesses than Catholics and Orthodox Protestants did. Finally, the observed changes were also partly a matter of opportunities; having many older brothers, being autochthonous and thus having local family networks, marrying in urban communities, or marrying in places with a train station led to higher shares of kin witnesses.

The development of kinship in Europe between the Middle Ages and the present day has often been discussed in terms of a decline or contraction towards the modern nuclear family. Recent research, including the present study, shows that kinship systems and the significance of specific kin relations have varied over time. Historians have pointed to a number of distinctive structural shifts in configurations of kin across Europe. This study has shown such a kinship transition for the Netherlands taking place during the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The findings of this study show that

this kinship transition was not only related to economic development and the rise and demise of family firms, particularly in the western part of the Netherlands, but was particularly related to a broader cultural shift that also affected other regions, those dependent on wage work, the working classes, and rural people.

Future research is needed to confirm whether the results of this study also hold true for other European societies. Moreover, prospective studies might dive deeper into the specific drivers of this transition. Women would have played an important role in the cultural construction and spread of the new ideal of the family and in the maintenance of kinship ties. The outcomes of this study point to the key position of women and particularly of educated women. More research is needed however to know how women intensified kin ties, what their exact role was in kinship networks and how education influenced their kin-keeping positions. It is also intriguing to know what happened in the twentieth century. Did another 'kinship transition' take place, whereby a preference to associate with family and kin gradually declined again, to be replaced for instance by a growing importance of friends, acquaintances and non-familial age peer relations?

About the author

Hilde Bras is associate professor at the department of history of Radboud University Nijmegen. She has published on sibling relationships in the nineteenth and twentieth century and on kinship and social and demographic behavior. Currently she is leading the VIDI-project *The power of the family. Family influences on long-term fertility decline in Europe, 1850-2010* (www.ru.nl/hlcs/the_power_of_the_family).

E-mail: h.bras@let.ru.nl.