Sensitive parenting in Turkish ethnic minority families

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Chapter 1

General introduction

General introduction

In Europe, the Turkish group represents the largest ethnic minority group. The continuing growth of this group is mostly due to the increase of the second-generation, i.e., those who were born in the host country but have at least one parent born in Turkey (CBS, 2012, 2014a; Crul, 2008). It has been shown that second-generation immigrants generally identify more with their culture of origin than with that of the host society (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001), and this also appears to be true for the Turkish immigrants in European countries such as the Netherlands (Forum, 2012). Turkish immigrants first came to the Netherlands as invited guest workers in the period 1960-1970. The majority of these immigrants were recruited from rural areas of the lowest socioeconomic regions in Turkey. Although their initial intention was to eventually return to Turkey, most of them decided to stay and brought their families to the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands in 2013, the percentage of children under the age of 5 was twice as large in the second-generation Turkish-Dutch population compared to the Dutch population (CBS, 2014a). Despite the growth of the second-generation Turkish immigrant children and parents in the Netherlands, little research has focused on parenting in early childhood in this group. Since culture plays an important role in shaping parenting (Bornstein et al., 2010; Harkness & Super, 1996; Keller et al., 2009), we cannot assume that our knowledge about parenting that is almost entirely based on samples from Western cultures, can be generalized to migrants with a non-Western cultural background. Most research and parenting support programs aimed at families with young children in Western countries focus on sensitive parenting, but the relevance of this construct to Turkish migrant families has rarely been addressed. In addition, family support is generally provided by professionals from the host society with a Western educational background. Thus, to optimize the effectiveness of family support and youth care services for the large group of Turkish minorities in Europe, it is important to know more about sensitive parenting in this population in terms of its perceived importance and its predictors.

Sensitivity is defined as a mother's ability to perceive child signals, to interpret these signals correctly, and to respond to them promptly and appropriately (Ainsworth, Bell, & Stayton, 1974). Although sensitive parenting will often go together with warmth (e.g. Lohaus, Keller, Ball, Voelker, & Elben, 2004; Oppenheimer, Hankin, Jenness, Young, & Smolen, 2013; Spinrad et al., 2012), the latter is conceptually different from sensitivity because it only refers to the affective quality of the interaction as shown in smiling, positive voice tone, and physical affection, and is known to also occur without sensitive responsiveness (Mesman & Emmen, 2013). The overall aim of this dissertation is to examine parental beliefs about parental sensitive behaviors, and potential predictors of sensitive parenting in Turkish ethnic minority families, such as socioeconomic status, ethnic and religious identity and ethnic and religious socialization.

Family functioning in ethnic minorities

Ethnic minorities generally experience more difficulties in family life compared to majorities (Flink et al., 2012; Mesman, Van IJzendoorn, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2012). Several factors seem to play a role in these difficulties, such as socioeconomic status (Mesman et al., 2012) and acculturation stress (Emmen et al., 2013). Although their educational levels are increasing (CBS, 2014b), ethnic minorities are generally overrepresented in lower socioeconomic classes (Barnard & Turner, 2011; CBS, 2012). When compared to the majority group, their highest obtained educational qualification as well as job level (and hence, income) tend to be lower. Socioeconomic status is thus a confounder in studies in which parenting beliefs and behaviors of minority parents are examined. Socioeconomic status of parents is generally considered to play an important role in parenting practices (McLoyd, 1990; Mesman et al., 2012; Mistry, Biesanz, Chien, Howes, & Benner, 2008), and has been found to be related to sensitivity beliefs in minority families (Emmen, Malda, Mesman, Ekmekci, & Van IJzendoorn, 2012; Mesman et al., 2012). The Family Stress Model provides an explanation for the effects of socioeconomic status on parenting (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). In this model socioeconomic strains are seen as stressors, which in turn cause lower levels of positive parenting. The applicability of this model is shown for ethnic minorities (Benner & Kim, 2010; Conger et al., 2002), and specifically in Turkish minority families (Emmen et al., 2013).

Another factor that may play a role in family functioning of minority families is their cultural background. Acculturation refers to the process that migrated families undergo when they come into contact with the host society (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002). During the process of acculturation, events such as discomfort with unfamiliar norms and conflicting acculturation strategies within a family could cause acculturation stress (Berry, 2006; Leidy, Guerra, & Toro, 2010). Acculturation stress has been found to be related negatively with positive parenting in general (Kim, Chen, Li, Huang, & Moon, 2009; Leidy et al., 2010; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008), and with sensitive parenting in particular (Emmen et al., 2013).

Cultures can be broadly divided into collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1994). Turkey is considered to have a more collectivistic background (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) and the Netherlands is considered to have a more individualistic background (Hofstede, 2001). In collectivistic cultures, dependence, obedience, and having strong family and social ties are highly valued. In individualistic cultures, autonomy, independence, self-control, exploration, and taking individual responsibility are highly valued. However, several studies have shown that collectivism and individualism are not mutually exclusive and can co-occur (Kagitcibasi, 1990; Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Authoritarian parenting includes expecting children to behave appropriately and to obey to rules by, for instance, restricting unwanted behaviour by demanding and physical interference and without providing explanations (Baumrind, 1966). It has been shown that parents from a Turkish cultural background generally show more authoritarian values and

parenting behaviors (e.g., Pels, Nijsten, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2006), which is consistent with their shared focus on obedience rather than independence. However, a recent study showed no differences in authoritarian control of second-generation Turkish and Dutch families in the Netherlands, controlled for maternal education (Yaman, Mesman, Van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Linting, 2010). It could be the case that parenting practices of second-generation Turkish immigrants are changing from authoritarian control to more use of inductive reasoning (Pels et al., 2006). In addition, it has been shown that an authoritarian parenting style in collectivistic cultures is not necessarily associated with less warmth and more rejecting parenting behaviors (e.g. Dekovic, Pels, & Model, 2006; Rudy & Grusec, 2001, 2006). In Turkish immigrant families in Belgium it was shown that perceived higher parental control was not related to lower warmth (Gungor & Bornstein, 2009).

In the traditional Turkish culture, teaching patriotism and respect for authority are important (Kagitcibasi, 1970). There are some differences in parenting of sons and daughters, valuing sons over daughters. Girls have less freedom compared to boys and are expected to help with housework and learn housekeeping skills (Kagitcibasi & Sunar, 1992). However, recently girls and boys are treated more equally (Citlak, Leyendecker, Schoelmerich, & Harwood, 2008; Wissink, Dekovic, & Meijer, 2006; Yaman et al., 2010). In the Turkish culture children are dependent on their parents and when children get older the parents depend on their children, illustrative of the interdependence orientation in Turkish culture (Kagitcibasi, 1987). Punishment-oriented parental discipline seems to be most common, especially in families from rural and lower socioeconomic backgrounds, while verbal reasoning is rarely used as a parenting strategy (Kagitcibasi, 1996; Kagitcibasi & Sunar, 1992). However Turkey is considered to be a collectivistic country, differences within Turkish families are present when comparing different socioeconomic strata (Goregenli, 1997; Sunar & Fisek, 2005) and rural-urban settlements (Nacak, Yagmurlu, Durgel & Van de Vijver, 2011). For instance, in families with a lower socioeconomic status and from urban areas, compliance to parents and close family ties are highly valued, while higher educated Turkish parents in urbanized areas highly value autonomy-oriented parenting and close family ties (Imamoglu, 1998; Kagitcibasi, 2007; Sunar, 2002; Yagmurlu, Citlak, Dost, & Leyendecker, 2009). In addition, high educated parents from urban areas encourage their children to be autonomous and economically independent and to develop their cognitive skills.

It is shown that however expectations and parenting behaviors could differ as an effect of socioeconomic status, warmth is still observed in high levels regardless of socioeconomic status and rural-urban settlement (Nacak et al., 2011; Yagmurlu et al., 2009). In addition, warmth is also observed in Turkish immigrant mothers regardless of their acculturation status (Yagmurlu & Sanson, 2009). It is suggested that warmth could be an aspect of parenting which does not change with the educational background or sociopolitical attitudes (traditionalists vs. modernists) of parents (Kagitcibasi, 2010; Baumrind, 1978). However, parental educational level, and income, are found to be related positively to other

aspects of positive parenting such as maternal sensitivity (e.g. Berlin, Brady-Smith, & Brooks-Gunn, 2002; Chaudhuri, Easterbrooks, & Davis, 2009).

The Family Change Model (Kagitcibasi, 1990) distinguishes three types of family interaction models. The first one is interdependence which can be linked to collectivism. This family type is more common in rural societies, where the intergenerational interdependence is functional and contains dependence, obedience, and having strong family and social ties. The independence family model is more common in Western, urbanized societies, and can be linked to individualism. Intergenerational autonomy, individuation, and independence are of major importance in this model. The last family model is psychological interdependence and includes family types in societies that undergo major socioeconomic changes. It is suggested that this is also applicable for immigrant families, because they undergo social change as a result of acculturation, which refers to the process which migrated families undergo when they come into contact with the host society. In psychological interdependence, urbanization results in increasing importance of autonomy, while relatedness (psychological closeness) remains important (Kagitcibasi & Ataca, 2005). The psychological interdependence family type seems to characterize the Turkish (second-generation) families in Europe (Durgel & Yagmurlu, in press), and specifically in the Netherlands.

Consistent with the Family Change Model (Kagitcibasi, 1990) Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands show integration in several public domains such as school and work, and maintain traditional Turkish values in private domains such as family relations (Arends-Toth, 2003). For instance, Turkish immigrant parents in the Netherlands show obedience-oriented parenting and controlling behaviors in their parenting practices (Nijsten, 2006). A study on socialization goals of Turkish immigrant and German mothers in Germany showed that German mothers valued independence, the ability to control negative impulses, and to be socially skilled (Durgel, Leyendecker, Yagmurlu, & Harwood, 2009). The Turkish mothers valued children's respectful and well-mannered behavior and close family ties more, but they also valued autonomy, and family integrity and closeness. In both groups, mothers with a higher educational level showed more goals related to autonomy and emotional well-being of the child. Lower educated mothers showed more goals related to close family ties and showing respectful behavior. Education thus also plays a role in socialization goals. This was also the case in a study on goals on conformity and autonomy (Nijsten et al., 2006). Turkish parents valued conformity strongly and autonomy at lower levels. However, higher educated Turkish parents valued conformity less and autonomy more (Nijsten et al., 2006; Phalet & Schonpflug, 2001). In another study on maternal expectations and child-rearing practices of Turkish immigrant and Dutch mothers in the Netherlands and Turkish mothers in Turkey, the first group showed an in-between pattern regarding child-centered behaviors compared to the Dutch mothers in the Netherlands and Turkish mothers in Turkey (Durgel, Van de Vijver, & Yagmurlu, 2013). In other words: the parenting pattern of Turkish immigrant mothers seems to undergo a transformation from the Turkish to the Dutch cultural pattern.

Again the predictive value of education was shown for developmental expectations and parenting practices in general. Compared to ethnic background and immigration history, education was a more consistent predictor. These studies supported the psychological interdependence family model (Kagitcibasi & Ataca, 2005).

Sensitive parenting in minority and majority families

In studies on family life and parenting, several domains can be distinguished, including parenting styles (McDermott & Barik, 2014) and socialization goals (Carra, Lavelli, Keller & Kärtner, 2013). In studies on early childhood, maternal sensitivity is one of the most commonly observed parenting behaviors (Mesman & Emmen, 2013). It has been shown that sensitivity is related to positive outcomes in children in several areas of functioning such as secure attachment, self-regulation, and cognitive competence (e.g., Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van IJzendoorn, & Juffer, 2003; Bernier, Carlson, & Whipple, 2010; Eisenberg et al., 2001; Kochanska, 2002). Most of the studies on observed sensitivity have been conducted in Western majority samples, but there is some evidence for the potential universality of the beneficial effects of maternal sensitivity (Mesman et al., 2012). However, studies have also shown lower sensitivity levels of ethnic minority parents compared to majority parents (Barnett, Shanahan, Deng, Haskett, & Cox, 2010; Mesman et al., 2012; Pungello, Iruka, Dotterer, Mills-Koonce, & Reznick, 2009; Van IJzendoorn, 1990). These differences generally diminish (Van IJzendoorn, 1990; Yaman et al., 2010) or disappear when socioeconomic status is taken into account (Mesman et al., 2012). In addition to socioeconomic status, diverging beliefs about parenting (Barnett et al., 2010; Harwood, Schoelmerich, Schulze, & Gonzalez, 1999) could possibly explain lower sensitivity levels in minority families.

Sensitivity beliefs in minority and majority families and professionals

Parents from different cultural backgrounds have been shown to differ in socialization goals, which are the qualities that parents value and want their children to develop when they grow up (Harwood, Schoelmerich, Ventura-Cook, Schulze, & Wilson, 1996). For instance, parents from a Turkish cultural background generally value and show more intrusive behaviors, such as demands without explanation, high-power control strategies and low autonomy encouragement than Dutch parents, controlling for maternal education (Yaman et al., 2010). In addition, families with a non-Western cultural background tend to value child obedience more than parents from Western cultural backgrounds (e.g., Harwood et al., 1999; Kagitcibasi, 2007). Whereas sensitivity refers to observing and reacting to child signals in a child-centered way, authoritarian parenting is more parent-centered and (although it does not exclude warm parenting), it is generally not conducive to sensitive parenting. Thus, the question is whether parents from different cultural backgrounds would also differ in sensitivity beliefs, i.e. the extent to which they regard sensitivity in child-rearing as an important part of good parenting. Previous studies on socialization goals generally focus on

very concrete qualities that parents want their children to develop. Sensitive parenting, however, is a more abstract construct that refers to a large variety of concrete behaviors as long as they represent prompt and appropriate responding to children's signals. This openness to different behavioral manifestations of the same underlying construct might leave more room for intercultural agreement than very specific behaviors that are more likely to vary between groups (Mesman, Oster, & Camras, 2012).

The assessment of sensitivity beliefs across cultural groups is important, since early parenting interventions generally focus on enhancing maternal sensitivity because of the importance of sensitivity in fostering optimal child development (e.g., Haltigan, Roisman, & Fraley, 2013). Family therapists and other youth care professionals work with parents from different cultural backgrounds. Forming a positive alliance between the treatment provider and the person receiving the treatment is crucial for effective interventions. Alliance refers to the collaborative nature of the interaction between a patient and therapist or counselor, the affective bond between them, and the ability to agree on treatment goals and tasks (Kazdin, Marciano, & Whitley, 2005).

For interventions to be effective, knowledge of the culture of the parent is shown to be important (Knipscheer & Kleber, 2004; Sue, 1998). In line with this, it is suggested to match therapist and patient on ethnicity (Zane et al., 2005). However, in multicultural societies this is not always possible (Knipscheer & Kleber, 2004). It has been shown that child care facilities have difficulties reaching immigrant families (NJI, 2014), and immigrant parents make less use of parent support programs. By providing information regarding sensitivity beliefs of mothers and professionals, institutions could use this information in reaching minority families. Studies have shown positive relations between alliance and therapeutic change (Kazdin et al., 2005; Knipscheer & Kleber, 2004).

In addition, instead of a cultural match, the cognitive match, which refers to the match between therapists and patients in how they conceptualize treatment goals and means for resolving problems, seems to be more relevant (Sue, 1998). This means that therapists and patients have the same ideas and goals regarding the provided intervention. No studies have been conducted yet on the cognitive match between therapists and parents with different cultural backgrounds regarding sensitivity beliefs. One recent study on sensitivity beliefs of minority and majority mothers showed strong convergence (Emmen et al., 2012), however, little is known about whether sensitivity beliefs between cultural groups of mothers and professionals providing treatment converge. The finding that sensitivity beliefs across cultural groups of mothers converge and support the cross-cultural applicability of the sensitivity construct (Mesman & Emmen, 2013), suggests convergence on sensitivity beliefs between mothers and professionals as well. The aim of the first empirical study in the current dissertation is to test whether there is convergence on sensitivity beliefs of mothers and professionals with a majority and minority status.

Sensitivity beliefs in relation to sensitive behaviors

An important issue in social psychology is the question whether attitudes about a certain issue predict people's behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) assumes that behaviors are the result of intentions and perceived behavioral control (the perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behavior). Intentions are derived from the attitude toward the behavior (the evaluation of the behavior), the subjective norm (the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior) and the perceived behavioral control. A literature review showed that the results of studies assessing the relation between attitudes and behaviors are mixed, with some studies reporting strong positive relationships and others reporting weak relations (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Carra et al., 2013; Cooke & Sheeran, 2004; Crano & Prislin, 2006).

Regarding attitudes and behavior in parenting, and even in pregnancy, studies have shown significant, though weak, positive relations. Thus, parental attitudes about child-rearing are not necessarily translated into corresponding parenting behaviors. In a study with self-reported parenting styles, authoritarian and authoritative parents were shown to display different parenting behaviors in more challenging child-rearing contexts, and authoritarian parents showed more negative behaviors in difficult situations (Coplan, Hastings, Lagacé-Séguin, & Moulton, 2002). In another study, unrealistic developmental expectations of parents were related to negative attitudes about their own child and lower parenting quality in the home environment (Dagget, O'Brien, Zanolli, & Peyton, 2000). Furthermore, pregnant mothers' negative maternal attitudes about parenting and child-rearing predicted lower sensitivity towards their children at the ages of 12 to 15 months in an ethnically diverse sample (Kiang, Moreno, & Robinson, 2004).

Studies examining the relation between parental attitudes and behaviors have not included assessments of maternal (beliefs about) sensitivity in different ethnic groups. However, while convergence on sensitivity beliefs specifically has been found across majority and minority groups (Emmen et al., 2012), minority mothers generally behave less sensitively compared to majority parents (Mesman et al., 2012). In a recent study on socialization goals and parenting behaviors of immigrant and native mothers in Italy it has been shown that socialization goals of the native Italian mothers were significantly associated with parenting behaviors whereas this was not the case in the immigrant group (Carra et al., 2013). The authors argue that it could be that socialization goals and parenting behaviors of immigrant mothers are affected by the experience of migration, given the recent migration (around seven years ago) of these mothers to the host society. In addition, studies have shown diverging parenting behaviors in different cultures (Bornstein et al., 1992; Kärtner et al., 2008). However, it has also been shown that the overall level of prompt responding (maternal contingency) is comparable across cultures, regardless of the differences in behavioral repertoires (Kärtner, Keller, & Yovsi, 2010). Assessing the relation between sensitivity beliefs and sensitive behaviors in minority and majority families could provide information about the translation of beliefs into behaviors in different groups. Since previous studies have

shown cross-cultural convergence regarding sensitivity beliefs, but show differences in sensitive behaviors across cultural groups, the relation between beliefs and behaviors could differ between groups. Furthermore, the convergence between sensitivity beliefs and sensitive behaviors is important to the design of parenting interventions, because this could provide information about both the cognitive and behavioral aspects that are relevant to enhancing parental sensitivity. The aim of the second empirical study in the current dissertation is to examine the relation between sensitivity beliefs and sensitive behaviors in Turkish minority and Dutch majority families.

Ethnic and religious views on child-rearing in relation to sensitivity

Ethnic minorities generally identify more with their ethnic and religious origin compared to identification with characteristics of the majority group (Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Migrated Turkish families have been shown to often maintain strong links to Turkish culture, accompanied by collectivistic family values, limited contact with the host community, a preference for Turkish marriage partners, and maintenance of the Turkish language between generations (Crul & Doomernick, 2003). For instance, in a study on acculturation attitudes of Turkish mothers with preschool-aged children in Australia (Yagmurlu & Sanson, 2009), three types of attitudes were distinguished, mothers who showed preference for Turkish and Australian ways of living (integration), mothers who preferred separation from the Australian values to protect the Turkish culture (separation), and mothers who showed positive attitudes toward both cultures but did not value Australian manners to the same extent as they valued Turkish manners (intermediate). It was found that, a quarter of the mothers showed attitudes towards separation, more than a quarter showed attitudes towards integration and nearly half of the parents showed positive attitudes toward both cultures.

Studies have shown that ethnic background and religion are related. Of the Turkish minorities in the Netherlands it is estimated that a major proportion (87%) is Muslim (Forum, 2012). Ethnic identity is a person's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to group membership (Rotheram & Phinney, 1986). The intergenerational transmission of ethnic identity occurs through ethnic socialization which refers to parental communication on information, values, and perspectives about ethnicity to children (Hughes et al., 2006; Quintana & Vera, 1999). Ethnic identity has been found to be positively related to maternal warmth (Caldwell, Zimmerman, Bernat, Sellers, & Notaro, 2002), and ethnic socialization has been found to be positively related to positive and involved parenting (Frabutt, Walker, & MacKinnon-Lewis, 2002), and academic involvement at home and at school (McKay, Atkins, Hawkins, Brown, & Lynn, 2003). Ethnic identity and socialization may play a more salient role in child-rearing behaviors of minority parents compared to majority parents, because ethnic identification of minorities can be seen as a strategy to cope with uncertainty and rejection (Hogg, 2000; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). (Turkish) minorities and Muslims have been shown to experience discrimination (Forum, 2012) and ethnic identification could be seen as a way to

cope with this discrimination by focusing on the own group (Hogg, 2000; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). In a study on acculturation and parenting in Turkish immigrant mothers in Australia those with attitudes supporting integration seemed to be more disconnected from traditional Turkish child-rearing patterns (Yagmurlu & Sanson, 2009). In addition, all mothers indicated using inductive reasoning (providing explanations to show the effect of own behavior on others), which is a discipline pattern more common in individualistic cultures, in their child-rearing practices. However, mothers who supported integration showed more induction compared to mothers who preferred separation from the host society. This shows the importance of assessing the influence of ethnic identity and integration attitudes on parenting practices.

Through ethnic and religious socialization, parental ethnic identity and religiosity are transmitted to children. Religious identity refers to the extent to which a person feels connected to his/her religion and interprets religion as part of his/her identity and religious socialization refers to parental attempts to transmit their religious beliefs, ideas, and related behavioral requirements to their children. Studies assessing religiosity of parents in relation to their parenting behaviors have shown diverging results. Parents with an authoritative parenting style emphasize discussion, explanation and clear communication, whereas parents with an authoritarian parenting style restrict unwanted behavior without explanation and by demanding and physical interference (Baumrind, 1966). Regarding religiosity and parenting style some studies show positive relations with an authoritative parenting style and promoting autonomy (Gunnoe, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999; Vermeer, 2011). It is suggested that this could be the case because religious parents have been found to combine their demandingness with responsiveness (Gunnoe et al., 1999). Further, involvement in a group in which religious messages regarding parenting are provided could offer resources for parents to improve their child-rearing by promoting for instance, unconditional love and patience (Pearce & Axinn, 1998).

In contrast, in a short review positive relations of religiosity with corporal punishment and an authoritarian parenting style in conservative protestants are shown (Socolar, Cabinum-Foeller, & Sinal, 2008). The demandingness and the use of corporal punishment are used to have authority over children and to discipline children. It is suggested that authoritarian parenting can induce obedience in children, which is important for religious parents (Socolar et al., 2008). Nearly all studies on religiosity and parenting have been conducted in Christian samples, and it remains unclear whether any of these findings can be generalized to other religious groups. In addition, studies on ethnic background and religion in relation to the quality of parent-child interactions generally focus on adolescents. The relations between ethnic and religious identity and ethnic and religious socialization with parenting behaviors have rarely been studied in early childhood. Since ethnic background and religiosity are intertwined and both have been found to be related to parenting it is important to assess in which manner ethnicity-related and religious-related variables are related to sensitive parenting in Turkish minorities. The assessment of ethnicity-related and

religion-related factors in relation to parenting could provide information that may be used in interventions. For instance, if ethnicity and religiosity are related (positively or negatively) to parenting practices the focus in interventions could be on reinforcing or weakening ethnicity-related and religion-related factors which interact with parenting practices. The aim of the third empirical study in this dissertation is to assess the relations between ethnic identity and socialization and religious identity and socialization with sensitive parenting.

Overview of the aims of this dissertation

The overall aim of this dissertation is to examine sensitivity beliefs and sensitive behaviors in Turkish ethnic minority families and factors that are related to sensitive parenting in those families. First, a cross-cultural comparison between mothers and professionals from majority and minority groups in the Netherlands and a majority group in Turkey is made regarding sensitivity beliefs. Second, the relation between sensitivity beliefs and sensitive behaviors of Turkish ethnic minority mothers and Dutch majority mothers is examined. Third, the relations between ethnic identity, ethnic socialization, religious identity and religious socialization with sensitive parenting in Turkish ethnic minorities are studied. By focusing on sensitivity in Turkish families, the goal is to provide information which will be useful for child care facilities to reach immigrant parents. In addition, the findings could be used to determine whether minority specific family interventions are needed. In this dissertation, sensitive behaviors are assessed by observational measures, which are rarely used in studies with minorities. By including a Muslim sample it is also aimed to contribute to the literature on the relation between religion and parenting, in which generally Christian families are included. In the last chapter the main findings of the studies are summarized and integrated in a general discussion. The following hypotheses are tested in this dissertation:

1. Beliefs about the ideal sensitive mother of mothers and professionals with a Turkish minority, Turkish majority and Dutch majority background converge with the notion of the highly sensitive mother (Chapter 2).
2. The perceived importance of sensitivity in child-rearing and actual sensitive behaviors are related in Turkish minority as well as in Dutch majority mothers, however this relation is expected to be weaker in the Turkish minority group (Chapter 3).
3. Turkish minority mothers' ethnic identity and ethnic socialization are positively related to maternal sensitivity (Chapter 4).
4. Turkish minority mothers' religious identity and religious socialization are related to maternal sensitivity, although the direction of this relation is unclear due to inconsistent results in the literature (Chapter 4).