

## Spousal Choice among the Children of Turkish and Moroccan Immigrants in Six European Countries: Transnational Spouse or Co-ethnic Migrant?

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Postprint / Postprint

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Carol, S., Ersanilli, E., & Wagner, M. (2014). Spousal Choice among the Children of Turkish and Moroccan Immigrants in Six European Countries: Transnational Spouse or Co-ethnic Migrant? *International Migration Review*, 48(2), 387-414. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12068>

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**Article — Accepted Manuscript (Postprint)**

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**Provided in Cooperation with:**  
WZB Berlin Social Science Center

*Suggested Citation:* Carol, Sarah; Ersanilli, Evelyn; Wagner, Mareike (2014) : Spousal Choice among the Children of Turkish and Moroccan Immigrants in Six European Countries: Transnational Spouse or Co-ethnic Migrant?, International Migration Review, ISSN 1747-7379, Wiley-Blackwell, Hoboken, NJ, Vol. 48, Iss. 2, pp. 387-414, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/imre.12068>

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## **Spousal Choice among the Children of Turkish and Moroccan Immigrants in Six European Countries: Transnational Spouse or Co-ethnic Migrant?<sup>1</sup>**

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Transnational marriages of migrants in Western Europe tend to be seen as hampering integration. In response, policies have been tightened, despite little knowledge on transnational marriages and the effects of such measures. This paper investigates the role of individual preferences and contextual factors such as family reunification policies, group size and development levels of the regions of origin in partner choice of the children of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants. We draw on a novel dataset collected in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Our findings suggest that transnational marriages are partly associated with contextual factors such as a rural origin and family reunification policies. The analysis indicates higher rates of transnational marriages under open family reunification policies, providing tentative evidence of policy effects. On the individual level, the choice of a partner from the parents' origin country is associated with religiosity.

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<sup>1</sup> We gratefully acknowledge the inspiring and helpful comments by Katharine Charsley, the members of the department "Migration, Integration and Transnationalization" at the WZB – in particular Ruud Koopmans, Merlin Schaeffer and Celine Teney – and the editors and the two anonymous reviewers of International Migration Review.

Immigrants' spousal selection has long been receiving scholarly attention. Most previous research focused on inter-ethnic marriages, which are often regarded as the strongest measure of social integration (Lieberson and Waters, 1988). However, the choice is not only between a native partner from the receiving country and a partner from the country of origin, but also between a partner from the country of origin and the co-ethnic community living in the receiving country. The migrant populations that resulted from guest-worker recruitment in Western Europe have grown to include a significant adult second generation. Nevertheless, national statistics from several countries suggest that the children of guest-worker immigrants, in particular those from Muslim-majority countries such as Turkey and Morocco, often do not marry co-ethnics living in the same country, but choose a partner from their parents' country of origin (Timmerman, Lodewyckx, and Wets, 2009). This characteristic has also been found in a number of surveys showing that a third to more than half of the children of Turkish and Moroccan migrants marry a person from the country of origin of their parents (Hooghiemstra, 2001; Çelikaksoy, Skyt Nielsen, and Verner, 2003; Milewski and Hamel, 2010; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2011). This pattern is especially prominent in Turkish communities where networks tend to be denser than those of Moroccan communities (Crul and Doornik, 2003).

Several explanations have been put forward for the continuing importance of transnational marriages. With other migration routes closed off, transnational marriage is one of the most important channels of migration to Western Europe (Nauck, 2009). Some scholars argue that this leads to pressures on the second generation to choose a spouse from the country of origin, in order to help relatives and friends (e.g. Lucassen and Laarman, 2009). Others have suggested that the preference for a transnational spouse is a consequence of a negative view of the local co-ethnic community as spoiled and too western (Charsley, 2006; Timmerman, Lodewyckx, and Wets, 2009). Receiving societies have implemented policies that impose requirements on the sponsor and the incoming spouse in an attempt to reduce transnational marriages, particularly marriages of convenience and forced marriages (e.g. Schmidt *et al.*, 2009; European Migration Network, 2012). Yet, there is little empirical evidence to support the assumptions that transnational marriages result from ethnic retention or that more restrictive family formation requirements actually influence spousal choice. One of the few studies on the effects of these policies was conducted by

Leerkes and Kulu-Glasgow (2011) in the Netherlands and suggests that restrictions do lead to a decrease in transnational marriages.

The possibilities for examining transnational marriages are compromised by a lack of data; only few countries collect statistics that allow a proper examination of the prevalence of transnational marriages and changes therein.<sup>2</sup> Many countries underestimate the extent of transnational marriages because they only register the citizenship of the sponsor of the marriage migrant, however, a significant proportion of the second generation holds the citizenship of the receiving country. Cross-national surveys that include second generation and naturalized migrants and therewith allow investigating how policies shape marriage migration remain rare. A study by Huschek, Liefbroer, and de Valk (2012) aimed to assess policy influences on marriage behavior of the Turkish second generation by comparing one cohort across a range of European cities. However, because they do not distinguish between partners who are first-generation migrants and came as a spouse (marriage migrant) and those who immigrated for other reasons and got married after having lived in the country of residence for some time, their analyses tells more about generational status of the partner than about transnational marriages. We expand on previous research by investigating the development of transnational marriage rates not only across countries, but also for different points in time and across two ethnic groups.

In this paper, we examine the choice for a transnational spouse among the in-between and second generation of Turkish and Moroccan descent by looking at the impact of factors at four different levels: receiving country (policy), individual, country of origin, and co-ethnic community level (see Van Tubergen, 2005). For the analysis, we use data from the “Six Country Immigrant Integration Comparative Survey” (Ersanilli and Koopmans, 2013). This survey was conducted among people of Turkish origin in Austria, Sweden, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands and people of Moroccan origin in the latter four of these countries, and designed to maximize cross-national comparability. Turks are the largest immigrant group in Europe and are known to have a high transnational marriage rate. Moroccans form a significant immigrant group in several countries including France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Large-scale migration to Western-Europe for both groups

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<sup>2</sup> For the remainder of this article, “transnational marriage” refers only to marriage with people from the country of origin (of the parents).

started in the 1960s, and by now, there is a significant second generation. Because the six countries of study have over the years pursued different family migration policies, the cross-national and cross-time perspective allows a more thorough investigation of the impact of policies on rates of transnational marriages.

For individual level determinants of spousal choice, previous research suggested that the preference for a transnational spouse is related to the wish for a spouse who is more religious, and that these preferences may play a stronger role for men than for women (e.g. Lievens, 1999; Çelikkaksoy, Skyt Nielsen, and Verner, 2006; Charsley, 2006; Timmerman, Lodewyckx, and Wets, 2009). However, most previous studies were not able to directly operationalize this factor and mainly had to rely on education as a proxy for attitudes. Because our data come from an immigrant survey and not from a general population census, we are able to look at the role of religiosity more closely.

To investigate the role of the country of origin, characteristics of the respondents' regional origins will be examined. Community effects are investigated by looking at the effect of the size and concentration of the co-ethnic community.

Following this introduction, we start by presenting a theoretical overview of spousal choice and its implications for the explanation of transnational marriage behavior. This overview encompasses the theory on assortative mating, structural constraints, and third-party influence. Based on these theories, we formulate hypotheses for mechanisms at the different levels. After a description of the dataset and operationalizations, we present our results. The paper concludes with a discussion of the importance of immigration policies for spousal choice and transnational ties for immigrant children.

### *THEORIZING SPOUSAL CHOICE: INDIVIDUAL PREFERENCES, THIRD PARTIES, AND STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS*

To explain transnational marriage behavior of the children of Turkish and Moroccan migrants, we take Kalmijn's (1998) classification of explanations for marriage behavior as a starting point. He distinguishes individual preferences, the marriage market as a structural constraint, and the interference of "third parties" as explanatory factors. The latter includes the

family, communities, religious groups, and the state, all being able to assert control. In the following, we will develop hypotheses for each of the three sets of explanatory factors.

### *Personal Preferences*

The dominant theory of spousal choice of immigrants and natives alike is “homophily” or positive assortative matching. Individuals tend to search for someone who has similar education, attitudes, and values (Lazarsfeld, Merton, and Berger, 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001). Our paper focuses on homophily in terms of religiosity. The preference for a marriage within one’s religious group is widespread across religions (e.g. McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001). A marriage within one’s religious group promises higher levels of emotional and material support. Previous research suggests that the choice of a transnational spouse can be explained by the wish for a spouse who is not “spoiled” by Western values. A spouse from the country of origin is expected to be more religious (Lievens, 1999; Charsley, 2006; Timmerman, Lodewyckx, and Wets, 2009). Results from a study by Çelikaksoy, Skyt Nielsen, and Verner (2006) in Denmark suggest that the children of Turkish migrants are willing to marry a spouse with a lower level of education in exchange for an “unspoiled” spouse from the country of origin. Indeed, the World Value Survey shows that people in Morocco and Turkey tend to be more religious than people living in Western European countries, whereas migrants living in these countries take an intermediate position between natives in Western Europe and people in their origin countries (Inglehart and Norris, 2009).

Studies have shown lower rates of inter-ethnic marriages and higher rates of transnational marriages for groups from countries with a large Muslim majority (e.g. González-Ferrer, 2006; Kalmijn and van Tubergen, 2006; Kalter and Schroedter, 2010). Beck-Gernsheim (2007) has pointed out the need to investigate how Islam affects transnational marriage rates. Possibly growing up and living in Western Europe is seen as affecting religiosity; it can be hard to maintain religious practice if the majority population not only has a different religion but is also highly secularized. Marrying a partner from the country of origin who has a stronger religious socialization can then be a way of strengthening religious identity. So far, few studies on transnational marriages have been able to investigate the effect of religiosity, and the results that do exist are mixed:

while Huschek, Liefbroer, and de Valk (2012) found some support for a relationship between religious upbringing and spousal choice, Milewski and Hamel (2010) found no influence of childhood religiosity for the Turkish second generation in France. As a spouse from the country of origin is expected to be more religious than a co-ethnic living in the same country (Lievens, 1999; Charsley, 2006; Timmerman, Lodewyckx, and Wets, 2009), we hypothesize that *a stronger religious identity is associated with a higher likelihood of entering a transnational marriage (H1).*

However, the preference for a transnational spouse may not be the same for women and men. Lievens (1999) suggested that Moroccan and Turkish women's choice of a transnational spouse can also be seen as a way to achieve autonomy. By marrying someone whose parents do not live in the same country, women are able to liberate themselves from the direct influence of in-laws. In addition, they also have an advantage over their husbands both language-wise and culturally. There has been some evidence of this in a study by Timmerman, Lodewyckx, and Wets (2009) who carried out qualitative interviews with Turkish migrants and their descendants. In her quantitative study, González-Ferrer (2006) found no support for Lievens' hypothesis, but her data only allowed a rough test with education as a proxy of traditionalism, as no direct measures were available. To add to this debate, we will test the hypothesis that *the choice for a transnational spouse is less associated with religious identity for women than for men (H2).*

### *The Country of Origin and Local Community*

Personal preferences are not the only factor that shapes spousal choice. People are exposed to pressures and constraints from a range of "third parties", including relatives and the co-ethnic community (Kalmijn, 1998). Transnational marriages, especially with a partner from the same region of origin, have also been discussed as a result of existing (transnational) social networks and the pressures within these networks (Surkyn and Reniers, 1997; Hooghiemstra, 2001). In Turkey and Morocco, a union is often not just a tie between two people, but between two families. Marriage within the social network of the parents gives security about the character of the in-laws. Some of these marriages are consanguineous (Hooghiemstra, 2001; Huschek, Liefbroer, and de Valk, 2012) which is seen as guarantying reliable relationships (Shaw, 2000). Furthermore, the interest in transnational marriages can be economically motivated. Many of the regions of



origin of Turkish and Moroccan migrants are still relatively poor. Migrants and their children are thus in the position to help out acquaintances and family by opening up migration to Western Europe through family formation. Turks from rural areas and economically less developed regions are known to show a strong solidarity towards people back home and maintain stronger social bonds (Wilpert, 1992; Georgas, 2006). For the Turkish second generation, Husc hek, Liefbroer, and de Valk (2012) found that respondents from rural Anatolia have a greater likelihood to marry transnationally, and that the majority of these marriages were arranged. Based on this literature, we expect that *people with a rural origin are more likely to marry a spouse from the country of origin (H3)*.

Not only ties to the community in the country of origin can influence the choice of a transnational partner. The size of the ethnic community in the country of residence is regarded as a structural constraint affecting the opportunities for meeting a suitable co-ethnic partner (Blau, 1977; Lieberman and Waters, 1988). Strassburger (2003) has pointed out that the choice of a transnational partner sometimes results from a lack of appropriate partners in the receiving country.

As Kalmijn (1998) noted, the co-ethnic marriage market has been approached in different ways: focusing on the entire population at the national level (González-Ferrer, 2006; Kalmijn and van Tubergen, 2006; Muttarak and Heath, 2010) or on its regional distribution (Husc hek, Liefbroer, and de Valk, 2012). We argue that for meeting opportunities, the local level is more important than the national level. People of Turkish descent who live in Alsace in France are, for example, unlikely to regularly run into co-ethnics who live a nearly 4-h car drive away in Lyon. These considerations lead to the hypothesis that *the larger the proportion and size of the co-ethnic community in the place of residence, the lower the likelihood of transnational marriage (H4)*.

Previous studies have shown that the gender ratio in the respective group affects the choice of a co-ethnic partner (González-Ferrer, 2006). However, since we study marriage behavior among the children of immigrants, we assume an equal distribution of males and females in contrast to first-generation immigrants.

### *The Role of the Country of Residence*

Another “third party” in spousal choice is the state (Kalmijn, 1998). States have responded differently to the wish of their residents to marry a

partner from abroad (Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel, 2012). The countries studied vary in the requirements concerning the minimum age of the spouses, the income of the sponsor, the residence permit of the sponsor, and cultural requirements for family reunification (e.g. language tests). Significant changes in the age requirement mostly took place during the last decade; all of the six countries either introduced or tightened the age requirement for family reunification. Transnational marriages are mostly restricted to couples where both partners are at least 18 or even 21 years old. Moreover, in all countries except Belgium and Sweden, sponsors have to demonstrate that they have a sufficient income to support their spouses. With regard to the residence requirement, countries largely differ across time. Differences appear with regard to the length of stay and the residence permit at the time of application. In addition to the aforementioned requirements, the Netherlands, France, and Germany recently restricted marriage migration by requiring language skills from the transnational spouses.<sup>3</sup> The implementation of stricter requirements for family reunification might directly affect spousal choice by creating barriers that may lead to a transnational marriage being postponed until the requirements can be met or it being abandoned altogether. It is also possible that the requirements and the debates surrounding their implementation have an indirect effect on spousal choice by fostering a change in attitudes towards transnational marriages.

Mainly due to a lack of data, few studies have explored the effects of national policies related to immigration and marriage. Huscsek, Liefbroer, and de Valk (2012) found that the Turkish second generation in Germany, a country with a strict policy concerning family reunification, has a lower likelihood of marrying a first-generation partner than those in Sweden, where the family reunification policies are much more liberal. However, that study does not clearly identify marriage migrants, neglects time trends and is based on a sample limited to one or two large cities in each country of study. Focusing on the effects of one family reunification criterion, the income requirement, a recent study by Leerkes and Kulu-Glasgow (2011) suggests that the tightening of this requirement has led to a decrease of transnational marriages in the Netherlands over the 32-month period of the study. We will therefore test the hypothesis that *more liberal family formation policies are associated with a higher likelihood to marry a transnational spouse (H5)*.

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<sup>3</sup> For more detailed information please see <http://www.wzb.eu/sites/default/files/mit/indicators.xls>.

## *DATA, VARIABLES AND METHOD*

### *Data*

For our analysis, we use the Turkish and the Moroccan sample of the “Six Country Immigrant Integration Survey” (SCIICS). This telephone survey was conducted in 2008 among people of Turkish descent in France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Austria and people of Moroccan descent in the first four of these countries (the Moroccan immigrant community in Austria and Sweden is too small for a telephone survey). To increase cross-national comparability, the target group was limited to people who immigrated before 1975 and their descendants. Up until then, all six countries had comparable immigration policies for people from Turkey and Morocco. Migration started with labor recruitment via national employment agencies in Turkey and Morocco that had waiting lists of applicants. This stream was supplemented by nominal recruitment (companies requesting specific workers by name, mostly on recommendation of other workers) and “tourist migration” (de Haas, 2003; Akgündüz, 2008). These latter two forms are prone to chain migration; however, Akgündüz (2008) has argued that migration via the Turkish employment agency was also often strongly regionalized due to the role of village cooperatives and onward migration taking place after initial recruitment.

The extent of chain migration may affect transnational marriage rates. It can either have a positive effect if the existence of strong network ties facilitates transnational marriage, or a negative effect if previous chain migration has allowed families to regroup in the countries of residence reducing the “need” for transnational marriages. Cross-national differences in chain migration might thus potentially confound policy effects. It has been estimated that France has received the highest share of “tourists” among pre-1975 migrants from Turkey (Muus, Penninx, and Van Amersfoort, 1983), but there is no information on whether this means France has received more chain migration or a higher concentration from certain regions of origin. For Sweden, however, it is known that as a consequence of chain migration, a disproportionately large section of the Turkish migrants come from the Kulu district of the Konya province, similarly Belgium is believed to have an overrepresentation of migrants from the Emirdağ district of the Afyon province (Akgündüz, 1993).

There are some indications that migration outside the recruitment agencies was more common for Moroccan than for Turkish migrants (Reniers, 1999; de Haas, 2003), but to our knowledge, there are no studies suggesting a high share of chain migration or a difference in the role of chain migration across destination countries.

Migration patterns have led to an uneven distribution of migrants from different regions of origin across destination countries. As regional background may affect integration patterns, to further increase cross-national comparability, regional selection criteria were used in SCIICS. Half of the Turkish and half of the Moroccan sample in each country come from a restricted number of regions of origin. For the Moroccan group, the restricted sample comes from the north of the country that used to be a Spanish protectorate. For Turkey, the regional filter focused on provinces in Anatolia. The present study thereby allows a closer investigation of country of destination effects.

In all countries, an onomastic (name-based) sample was drawn from online telephone books. To improve the coverage of the sample, mobile phone numbers were included as much as possible. For more details on the study design see Ersanilli and Koopmans (2013).

Across all countries and immigrant groups, more than 6,000 people were surveyed. We exclude the first generation of immigrants from our analysis as most of them either married before migration or came as transnational spouses themselves. For this paper, we have only selected respondents of the in-between and second generation who are married<sup>4</sup> to a person from the same country of origin who migrated before or after the marriage, or belong to the second generation. Furthermore, we considered only respondents who married up to the age of 45. Inter-ethnic marriages were excluded from the analyses, both because of their low prevalence and because several of our hypotheses refer only to the choice between a local

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4 For Turkish children of migrants, 88.9 percent of the in-between generation and 54.4 percent of the 2nd generation were married at the time of the survey. For Moroccan children of migrants, this was 74.1 and 34.9 percent. By excluding people who are cohabiting without being married, we might overestimate the relative prevalence of transnational marriages. However, the share of cohabiting couples in the sample is very low at 1.8 percent of children of Turkish immigrants and 2.3 percent of children of Moroccan immigrants.

co-ethnic and a transnational spouse.<sup>5</sup> This leaves us with 1,718 respondents of Turkish and 790 respondents of Moroccan origin.

### *Variables*

Our dependent variable, *transnational marriage*, is a dummy coded 1 if the respondent's spouse lived in Turkey/Morocco at the time of marriage, and coded 0 if the spouse already lived in the receiving country at the time of marriage. This means the reference category includes all partners belonging to the second, the in-between generation, or the first generation who were already living in the receiving country at the time of marriage.

*Religiosity* is measured by a mean-based scale of religious identification, consisting of three items ("To what extent do you (1) feel related to Muslims, (2) do you feel Muslim, and (3) are proud of being Muslim?")<sup>6</sup>, each ranging from 1 "not at all" to 5 "completely". Cronbach's alpha is 0.83 for the Turkish sample and 0.70 for the Moroccan sample. We chose an attitudinal variable as these are known to show greater variation (Diehl and Koenig, 2009) and are better comparable for men and women than measures of religious practice as Muslim men and women have different religious requirements.

*Rural origin* is measured with a dummy variable that is 1 if the respondent was born in a village or – for the second generation – his/her parents were born in a village.

As indicators for the size of the *local co-ethnic community*, we include the proportion of the own ethnic group as well as the size of the co-ethnic community in the current place of residence (in the natural log of 10,000s) in the year before marriage.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that the current place of

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<sup>5</sup> We have rerun our models with inclusion of inter-ethnic marriages in the reference category. All coefficients remain in the same direction, though the significance level changes for several variables. A stronger religious identity raises the likelihood for transnational marriages among men of Turkish descent; the difference between men and women becomes insignificant. The absolute number of co-ethnics in the place of residence is no longer important in the group of Turkish descent, and the difference between Sweden and the Netherlands becomes insignificant. For respondent of Moroccan descent, those who live in France have a lower likelihood to marry transnational compared to the Netherlands at the 0.1 significance level.

<sup>6</sup> The vast majority of respondents in the SCIICS data set are Muslims. However, we find a small minority of 13 Assyrian Christians among the Turkish migrants. As religion may have a different impact on this subgroup, Assyrian Christians were excluded from the analysis.

<sup>7</sup> This information is based on an adjustment of the size of the co-ethnic community in the place of residence at the time of the survey by the inverse growth rate of the community as the year before marriage based on national level data.

residence differs from the place where respondents lived when they got married. However, as Lievens (1999) has argued, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of people did not move to another city since their marriage.

To investigate the effects of *family reunification policies*, we include dummies for the receiving countries, taking the Netherlands as the reference category. Alternatively to the country dummies, we use direct measures of policies developed by Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel (2012) to build a family formation policy index comprising requirements for (1) the age of the migrant spouse (2) the income of the sponsor, (3) his/her legal status (residence permit), and (4) cultural requirements, for example, language skills or civic knowledge. The indicator is measured at four points in time 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2005<sup>8</sup> and ranges from very restrictive (score of – 1) to very liberal (score of 1). The scores were assigned as follows:

1. age requirement: no requirement = 1; age 16 = 0.5; age 18 = 0; age 21 = – 0.5; age 24 = – 1,
2. income requirement: no income requirement or welfare benefits can be counted as income = 1; simple income requirement (minimum wage or equivalent) = 0; strict requirement (significantly above minimum wage or equivalent) = – 1,
3. residence requirement: only residence permit = 1; at up to 1 year of stay = 0; more than 1 year of stay or quota system = – 1,
4. cultural requirement: no requirement = 1; language requirement (A1, A1 minus, course) = 0; cultural requirement beyond only language = – 1.

The lowest index score for the countries and years in the dataset is 0, the highest 1. Each respondent was assigned the value of the policy index score prior to the year of marriage. Respondents who married before 1990 are assigned the index score for 1980; those who married between 1990 and 1999 are assigned the score for 1990, those who married between 2000 and 2004 the one for 2000, and respondents who married in or after 2005 received the score of the policy indicator in 2005.

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8 In their paper, Koopmans *et al.* use 1980, 1990, 2002 and 2008 as measurement points. Using their coding rules and information on the year of policy changes, we calculated scores for 2000 and 2005.

All models are controlled for *gender* (0 = male, 1 = female), generation (0 = in-between generation [born in Turkey, migrated before the age of 18], 1 = 2nd generation [born in the country of residence]) *education* (low: lower secondary education or less, medium: upper secondary education and vocational training, high: tertiary education), the *age at marriage*<sup>9</sup>, year of marriage, and for the Turkish sample, whether they belong to the *Alevi* religious minority.

Because several previous studies have found different effects for education across gender (e.g. Çelikaksoy, Skyt Nielsen, and Verner, 2006; Dale and Ahmed, 2011), we include interaction terms for gender with education. Descriptive statistics by country and ethnic group are displayed in the Appendix.

### *Method*

We ran three logistic regressions models, separately for Turkish and Moroccan origin groups. The first model includes socio-demographic variables including the interaction between education and gender, explanatory variables on the origin and local co-ethnic community level and the country dummies. In the second model, religious identification is added to investigate the effect of religion on spousal choice. Finally, in the third model, we include interactions between gender and religious identification. For all variables that include an interaction effect with gender, the “main effect” in the table is the effect for the reference category, males. The standard errors were clustered by place of residence and region of origin.

### *RESULTS*

Table 1 presents the results of the logistic regression analyses.

Starting out with some general findings on socio-demographic variables, in line with early assimilation theories, the second generation has significantly lower likelihoods of choosing a spouse in their parents’ country of origin than the in-between generation. Next to generational affiliation, age at marriage matters. Table 1 reveals that transnational marriages take place at a higher age than marriages among co-ethnics. Three explanations for this finding are possible. Firstly, stricter requirements for fam-

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9 The question on age of marriage from which the year of marriage has been calculated refers to the first marriage, which, in some cases, may be different from the current marriage.

ily reunification necessitate the accumulation of economic resources what might delay transnational marriages. Moreover, countries have certain age requirements. After Denmark raised the age for transnational marriages to 24 years, marriage took place at a later age (Schmidt *et al.*, 2009). As a third possibility, a higher marital age could be the result of a longer partner search due to a lack of appropriate partners in the local marriage market (see Strassburger, 2003). The role of preferences and opportunities will be further discussed below.

**TABLE 1**  
**LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF TRANSNATIONAL MARRIAGE: ODDS-RATIOS**

	Turkish Migrants			Moroccan Migrants		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
2nd generation	0.68**	0.68*	0.69*	0.56**	0.56**	0.55**
Age at marriage	1.07**	1.08***	1.08***	1.05***	1.06***	1.06***
Year of marriage	0.97*	0.97**	0.97*	0.99	0.99	0.99
Female	0.60**	0.60**	0.30*	0.33***	0.34***	2.78
Lower education (Ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Secondary education	0.81	0.82	0.82	0.73	0.78	0.81
Tertiary education	0.46**	0.47**	0.46**	0.47*	0.49*	0.50*
Secondary education* female	1.43	1.41	1.43	1.77	1.66	1.60
Tertiary education* female	3.13**	3.12**	3.30**	2.01***	1.98***	1.90***
Alevi	1.51*	1.78**	1.80**	—	—	—
Village	1.49**	1.48**	1.48**	0.99	1.00	1.01
Proportion of co-ethnics	0.97	0.97	0.96	0.94	0.94	0.93
Ln (no. of co-ethnics)	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.92	0.92	0.93
Sweden	1.66**	1.75***	1.75***	—	—	—
Netherlands (Ref.)	1	1	1	1	1	1
Belgium	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.89	0.88	0.89
France	1.33	1.34	1.34	0.78	0.80	0.79
Germany	0.38***	0.40***	0.41***	0.25***	0.26***	0.26***
Austria	0.76	0.75	0.76	—	—	—
Religious identity		1.19*	1.10		1.50***	1.89*
Religious identity*female			1.16			0.64
N	1718	1718	1718	790	790	790
-2 Loglikelihood	-974.3***	-971.8*	-971.2	-486.1***	-482.4**	-481.4

Two-tailed tests: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .  
Ln, natural logarithm.



We predicted that people who strongly identify with their religion are more likely to choose a transnational spouse (H1) and that this effect would be stronger for men than for women (H2). Our analysis confirms the first hypothesis. For both the Turkish origin and the Moroccan origin groups, the likelihood of transnational marriages increases with the degree of religious identification (Model 2). Model 3 shows that the interaction effect between gender and religious identification is insignificant for both groups, meaning, the role of religious identification in shaping spousal choice does not vary significantly across genders, rejecting the second hypothesis (H2).

As mentioned above, previous analyses showed an interaction effect between education and gender, which was interpreted as an effect of traditionalism playing out differently across gender. The interaction between education and gender in our models replicates previous results; women with higher education are more likely to have a transnational spouse than those who only have primary or lower secondary education, whereas for men, the odds of choosing a transnational partner decrease with education. A comparison of Model 2 and Model 3 with Model 1 shows that the estimated interaction effects of gender and education remain significant after the inclusion of religiosity and its interaction term with gender. This challenges the idea in previous research that the effect of education on spousal choice can merely be interpreted as a proxy for traditionalism (see also Baykara-Krumme and Fuß, 2009).

The homophily principle suggests that highly educated women seek an equally educated partner. As the level of education of most children of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants is still relatively low, these women may need to turn to their country of origin to find a highly educated, co-ethnic husband. As the SCIIICS dataset does not include information on the level of education of the partner, we are unable to establish whether these transnational marriages are a case of positive or negative educational matching (*cf.* Çelikaksoy, Skyt Nielsen, and Verner, 2003) and therefore cannot explore whether, for women, a transnational partner is a strategy for finding an equally highly educated spouse.

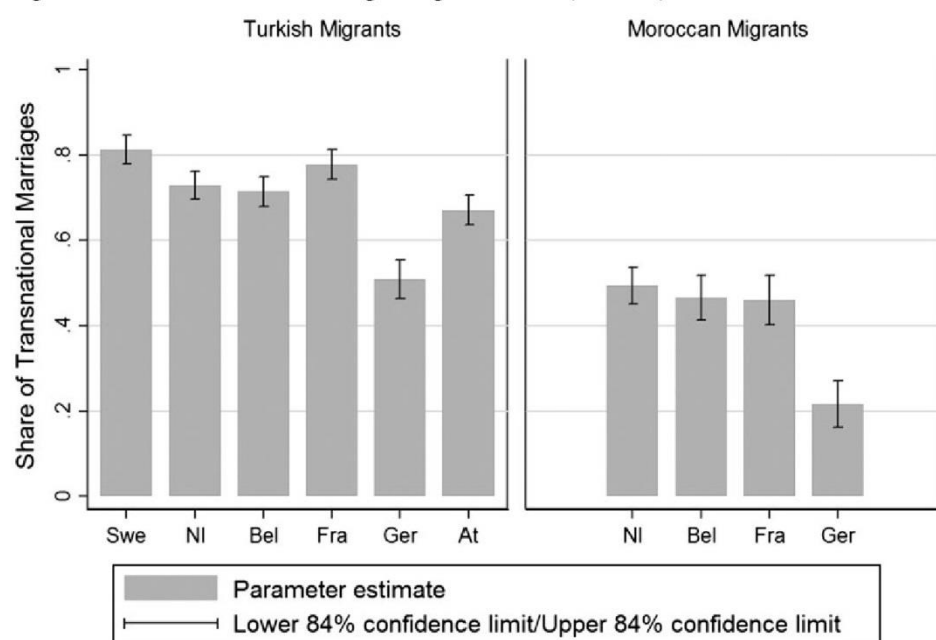
When investigating the role of personal preferences in spousal choice, it is important to take into account the presence of different religious streams and minorities within the Turkish and Moroccan migrant population. We therefore checked whether the marriage patterns of ethnic minorities such as Alevis and Kurds within the Turkish group and Berbers within the Moroccan group differed significantly from the majority group

(results available from the authors upon request). Although we do not find any differences between Kurdish and Berber compared to the majority of Turkish and Moroccan migrants, Alevi, who differ in their cultural traits from Muslims from the Sunni branch (Sökefeld, 2008), show a higher likelihood to marry transnationally. Because of different cultural traits they might try to distance themselves from Sunni migrants, which form the majority of Muslim migrants, or attempt to preserve their cultural traits. Alternatively the higher transnational marriage rate is a reflection of the smaller co-ethnic community; there may be too few Alevi to find an appropriate partner in the country of residence.

For country of origin-level factors, we hypothesized that coming from a more rural region of origin positively influences the chance to marry a transnational spouse (H3). Indeed people of rural Turkish origin are 1.5 times more likely to marry transnationally than those with urban origins; however, we do not find this pattern for the Moroccan origin group.

Previous research has provided evidence that the opportunities to meet potential spouses matter (e.g. González-Ferrer, 2006; Kalter and Schroedter, 2010). The estimated coefficients are in the expected direction (a higher proportion or size of co-ethnics in the place of residence decreases the likelihood of marrying a transnational partner) but insignificant. However, it

Figure I. Controlled Average Marginal Effects by Country, with Standard Error Bars

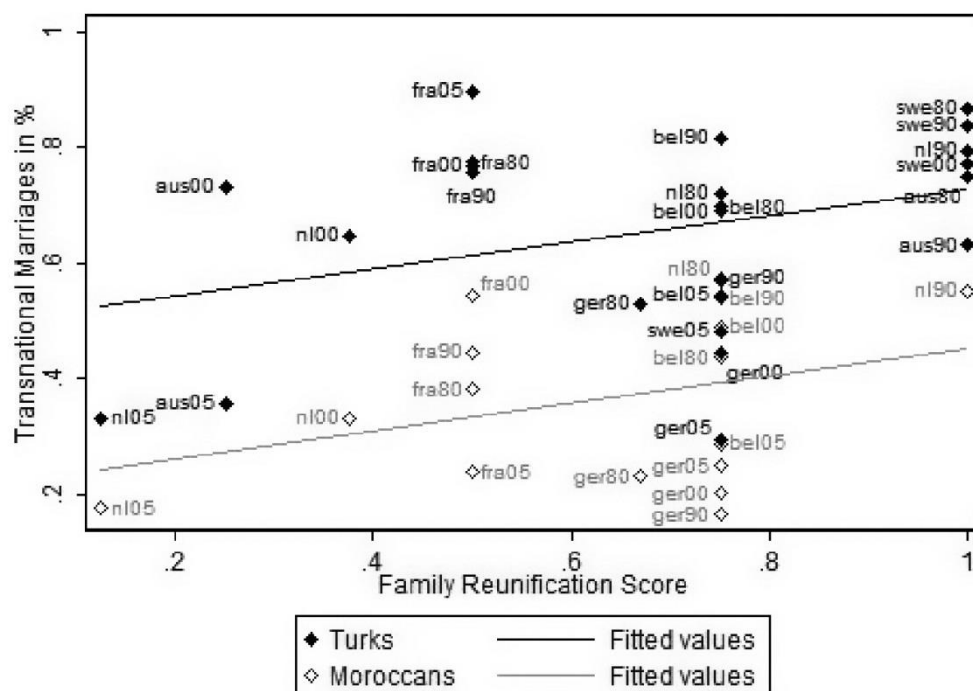


should be noted that the inclusion of country dummies in the models may pick up some of the effect of the co-ethnic community size as this varies quite strongly across countries (see Appendix). When omitting the country dummies, the absolute number of co-ethnics does significantly decrease the likelihood of a transnational marriage for both groups (results available from the authors upon request).

Finally, we turn to the effects on the country of residence level. To ease the comparison of the differences between all countries in the model, Figure I displays the average marginal effects and 84 percent confidence interval of the country dummies controlling for all variables in the first model. The proportion of transnational marriages differs significantly (at the 0.05 level) between any two countries if their 84 percent confidence intervals do not overlap (Julious, 2004). Furthermore, Figure I shows that Moroccans have lower proportions of transnational marriages in all countries, which may result from weaker network ties to the country of origin (Surkyn and Reniers, 1997).

The figure reveals that transnational marriages are significantly less likely for descendants of Turkish and Moroccan migrants living in Germany compared to all other countries.

**Figure II.** Plot of Transnational Marriage Rate against Family Reunification Policy Score by Period and Country



One might easily counter that the finding for the Turkish origin group is due to the fact that the Turkish community in Germany is much larger than in all other countries. Yet, we find the same pattern for Moroccans, even though the Moroccan community in Germany is much smaller. Sweden, which has had the most liberal policies in the past decades (Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel, 2012), has a significantly higher share of transnational marriages among the children of Turkish migrants (~80 percent) than all other countries (60–70 percent) except France. To control for composition effects, we have added dummies for region of origin (results not shown), but this does not change the pattern in the cross-national differences. The difference between Sweden and the Netherlands for the Turkish sample seems unexpected because both long had liberal policies. However, the Netherlands has been putting up much higher barriers over recent years, which may explain the result. It is therefore useful to have a look at changes in policies and spousal choice over time.

Figure II displays the relationship between the share of transnational marriages and the score of the family reunification indicator by country and the two origin groups for four points in time.

The horizontal axis displays the score of family reunification policies and the vertical axis the rates of transnational marriages, after controlling for all variables from model 1 except year of marriage. To give an example, when the family reunification score in the Netherlands was the most restrictive in 2005 at 0.125, the predicted rate of transnational marriage for Moroccans was below 20 percent.

The scatter plot and regression lines suggest that there is indeed a relationship between the rate of transnational marriages and family reunification policies; with the rate being higher when policies are more liberal. Even though the proportion of transnational marriages among children of Turkish migrants is higher, the parallel regression lines for the Turkish and Moroccan samples indicate that family reunification policies have a similar impact on both groups. Some care should be taken with interpreting the 2005 estimates; because the data were collected in early 2008; the sample does not contain many post-2005 marriages (ranging from 9 to 26 cases per country-group).

Closer examination of trends within and across countries shows that, for the Netherlands, the pattern found is in line with earlier findings by Leerkes and Kulu-Glasgow (2011), showing a decrease in transnational marriages as policies become stricter. A similar pattern is found in Sweden, where a modest decline in transnational marriages from 1980 to

2000 becomes a steep decrease with stricter policies at the 2005 measurement point.

The prevalence of transnational marriages for children of Turkish migrants in France for 2005 is higher than expected. Though this could be due to the relatively low number of observations for this data point, it can also point to a change in the community dynamics that is causing a strengthening of ties with Turkey.

For both groups, the prevalence of transnational marriages in Germany is below the regression line for all time points. This suggests that, in addition to family reunification policies, other factors are pushing down the transnational marriage rate in Germany. One possibility is the less secure residence status that immigrants and their children in Germany long had due to relatively strict naturalization rules. However, plotting the predicted marriage rates against an index that includes a wider range of indicators including citizenship access from Koopmans, Michalowski, and Waibel (2012) does not yield a better fit.

## *CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION*

Transnational marriages are high on the political agenda across European countries of immigration. Yet, few studies have investigated which factors drive the decision for a spouse from the parents' country of origin versus a spouse from the co-ethnic community in the country of residence. By employing a novel dataset, we explored which factors at the individual, country of origin, co-ethnic community, and receiving country level influence the choice of a transnational spouse rather than a co-ethnic living in the same country.

The findings demonstrate that the transnational marriage market is still important, though increasingly less so. At the individual level, the spousal choice of Turkish and Moroccan migrants is driven by similar factors. For both groups, we found intergenerational change, with regard to partner preferences, with the second generation, being more likely to find a partner in the country of residence. This fits with findings from other studies on the changing nature of transnational behavior of later generations (Levitt and Waters, 2002). At the same time, unions between second or in-between generation members were in both groups associated with lower levels of religious identity. Transnational marriages, by contrast, are associated with higher degrees of religious identification in both groups irrespective of gender. This suggests that preferences for a transnational

marriage may indeed be an expression of a desire for strengthening the connection to the country of origin. A limitation of our survey is that religiosity was measured at the time of survey, not at the time of marriage. Since partners are known to become more alike during the course of their marriage (Kalmijn, 1998), this may create a problem of reversed causality (Kalmijn and van Tubergen, 2006). Longitudinal research could help to shed further light on the causal relation between attitudes and spousal choice and the role of homophily in spousal choice of immigrants and their descendants. Longitudinal studies would also be able to look at the relation between labor market participation and spousal choice and investigate whether the greater likelihood to marry transnationally with an increase in age can be traced back to the accumulation of economic and human capital or a lack of appropriate partners.

A similar question surrounds the interaction of gender with education in spousal choice. Our analyses confirmed previous findings of an interaction between gender and education (e.g. Lievens, 1999); Turkish and Moroccan women with tertiary education have an increased likelihood compared with those with no more than lower secondary education to marry transnationally, whereas we find the opposite pattern for men. Our findings question the reduction of the educational level to a proxy of traditional orientation as has previously been suggested, as results remained significant when controlled for religiosity. Hence, another mechanism might be at play. The pattern seems in line with the analyses by Strassburger (2003), which show that the choice of a transnational partner can also result from a lack of appropriate partners in the receiving country. Since the level of education of most children of Turkish and Moroccan immigrants is still relatively low, highly educated women may need to turn to their country of origin to find a co-ethnic husband with the desired similar level of education. For highly educated men, this problem is less relevant, as it is more common to marry a woman with lower education. Alternatively, even if women manage to obtain a higher education, they could still be more bound by the preferences of their parents than men are (see González-Ferrer, 2006) or prefer a transnational spouse as a way to free themselves from control by their in-laws (Lievens, 1999). Further research on the role of homophily should look for information on the education level of the partner.

Besides commonalities in the marriage practices between Turkish and Moroccan immigrant children, differences emerge. The rates of transnational marriages among children of Turkish immigrants are higher than

among children of Moroccan immigrants. Moreover, other studies have shown that Moroccan migrants experience significantly higher risks of divorce in transnational marriages compared to Turkish migrants (Eeckhaut *et al.*, 2011). These differences might in part be due to the more tight-knit networks in the Turkish community together with different levels of religiosity and values (Crul and Doornik, 2003). The tight-knit networks are not unique to the Turkish community in Europe; a study showed the Turkish second generation in Australia to be one of the least prone to marry outside of their ethnic group (Khoo, Birrell, and Heard, 2009). At the level of the country of origin, another difference between the two groups appeared; we found only partial support for the expectation that the place of origin affects the likelihood of transnational marriage; we found a positive effect of rural versus urban origins only for the Turkish group. Given these results, the role of both country (and within country, region) of origin characteristics and transnational connections deserves more critical attention in future research.

Turning to contextual influences in the country of residence, at first sight, the results from our analysis do not support the hypothesis that the size and concentration of the ethnic community decreases transnational marriage rates. Yet, without controlling for country of residence, we find tentative evidence that a larger co-ethnic community is negatively related to transnational marriage rates flowing from the increased opportunities to meet a local co-ethnic spouse.

A key contribution of this study lies in its cross-national character. To our best knowledge, this is the first study that includes multiple groups in multiple countries, enabling a first assessment of the role of country-level factors such as family reunification policies. With just one country and one group, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which family reunification policies affect marriage behavior. This study has explored the role of policies by following a two-step strategy with, firstly, adding country dummies to regression models and, secondly, by plotting the rates of transnational marriage over time, countries, and origin groups against a direct measure of family reunification policies. The resulting plot suggested a positive relationship, meaning higher rates of transnational marriages under more liberal family formation policies. As the estimates for the period 2005–2008 are based on a low number of cases, more research is needed to confirm whether the downward trend found in our analyses is continuing or has even accelerated in response to further policy restrictions that most of the countries in the analyses have implemented since 2005. For the Netherlands, data from

the Dutch statistics office from 2011<sup>10</sup> show that the drop in transnational marriages continued, suggesting that stricter policies lead migrants not so much to postpone transnational marriages but more to abandon them. The extent to which this is due to failure to meet the requirements or (also) to a change of attitudes remains open to investigation.

While the analyses give some support for the hypothesis that stricter family reunification policies lead to fewer transnational marriages, the cross-national comparison also shows that this relationship is not straightforward and other national level factors are likely to play a role. While the expected time trend can be found in the Netherlands and Sweden, Germany consistently stands out as having lower rates of transnational marriages than expected based on its policies, a result in line with the results on the Turkish second generation of the study by Huschek, Liefbroer, and de Valk (2012). In France on the other hand, the Turkish community persistently shows high rates.

The SCIICS design minimizes the likelihood that these country differences arise because of different compositions of immigrant groups across the countries of study. One factor that could not be fully controlled for is the difference in the extent to which chain migration played a role in pre-1975 migration streams. Available studies suggest some differences in recruitment processes across countries, though, to our knowledge, there is no systematic data on the extent of chain migration. Belgium and Sweden, which are known for high chain migration among Turkish migrants, show significantly different rates of transnational marriages. For outlier Germany, the data that is available for Turkish migration do not suggest that Germany had exceptionally high or low shares of pre-1975 migration types that are prone to chain migration such as nominative recruitment or spontaneous migration. The source of the cross-national differences is therefore likely to lie elsewhere. One possibility is that the policy scores tell only part of the story because implementation practices vary over time and can be influential in diminishing or increasing constraints on transnational marriages (Menski, 1999). Thus, future research should not only gather information on the implementation process, but also aim to include a larger number of groups and countries. Several studies on the Turkish community in Australia have suggested that there is a slightly lower degree of cultural maintenance than in Europe as a consequence of

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<sup>10</sup> CBS statline, <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/dossiers/allochtonen/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2012/2012-3715-wm.htm> Last accessed on June 9th 2013.



Australia's multicultural policies (Yagmurlu and Sanson, 2009; Yağmur and van de Vijver, 2012). However, the lower degree of cultural maintenance in Australia may also be due to planned settlement (Humphrey, 2009) in contrast with the temporary migration intentions of many of the guest-workers in Europe. It would therefore be interesting to extend this study to a wider range of settlement contexts such as Australia. This would add to the literature on transnational behaviors and help to explain whether migrants who plan to stay permanently differ from those who plan to stay temporarily.

Summing up, the tentative conclusion in this paper is that national policies do play a role in decisions on transnational marriages; however, individual characteristics and community dynamics are likely to be at least equally influential. The cross-national and multi-group design of our study is an important step forward and provides a starting point for future research on policy effects on trends and patterns in transnational marriage.

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**TABLE A1**  
**DESCRIPTIVES OF VARIABLES PER COUNTRY (TURKISH IMMIGRANT CHILDREN), MEAN (SD)**

	Netherlands <i>N</i> = 333	Germany <i>N</i> = 260	France <i>N</i> = 252	Belgium <i>N</i> = 352	Austria <i>N</i> = 295	Sweden <i>N</i> = 226
Turkish Migrants						
Transnational marriage	0.73 (0.44)	0.55 (0.50)	0.78 (0.41)	0.71 (0.45)	0.68 (0.47)	0.81 (0.39)
2nd generation	0.18 (0.38)	0.28 (0.45)	0.26 (0.44)	0.38 (0.48)	0.26 (0.44)	0.34 (0.47)
Age at marriage	21.3 (3.42)	21.3 (3.45)	21.4 (2.81)	21.5 (3.42)	21.0 (2.96)	21.0 (3.63)
Year of marriage (mean)	1991 (7.52)	1991 (8.13)	1994 (7.23)	1990 (8.60)	1992 (8.51)	1990 (9.85)
Year of marriage -1989	0.46 (0.50)	0.46 (0.50)	0.29 (0.45)	0.48 (0.50)	0.35 (0.48)	0.45 (0.50)
Year of marriage 1990–1999	0.39 (0.49)	0.38 (0.49)	0.45 (0.50)	0.34 (0.48)	0.43 (0.50)	0.36 (0.48)
Year of marriage 2000–2004	0.13 (0.34)	0.12 (0.32)	0.19 (0.40)	0.11 (0.32)	0.17 (0.37)	0.13 (0.34)
Year of marriage 2005–2008	0.03 (0.16)	0.04 (0.20)	0.07 (0.25)	0.06 (0.24)	0.05 (0.22)	0.06 (0.23)
Female	0.55 (0.50)	0.58 (0.49)	0.58 (0.50)	0.54 (0.50)	0.44 (0.50)	0.58 (0.49)
Low education	0.60 (0.49)	0.39 (0.49)	0.37 (0.48)	0.48 (0.50)	0.46 (0.50)	0.67 (0.47)
Upper secondary education	0.30 (0.46)	0.54 (0.50)	0.56 (0.50)	0.39 (0.49)	0.51 (0.50)	0.19 (0.39)
Tertiary education	0.10 (0.30)	0.07 (0.25)	0.07 (0.26)	0.13 (0.33)	0.03 (0.16)	0.15 (0.35)
Alevi	0.05 (0.23)	0.14 (0.35)	0.05 (0.21)	0.05 (0.21)	0.09 (0.29)	0.01 (0.09)
Religious identity	4.58 (0.79)	4.20 (0.98)	4.56 (0.67)	4.64 (0.60)	4.66 (0.60)	4.30 (1.03)
Village	0.63 (0.48)	0.60 (0.49)	0.76 (0.43)	0.67 (0.47)	0.77 (0.42)	0.79 (0.41)
Proportion of co-ethnics	1.65 (0.99)	2.47 (1.36)	1.34 (1.30)	1.90 (1.62)	2.37 (1.51)	0.94 (1.04)
No. of co-ethnics in place of residence in 10,000	0.49 (0.63)	1.60 (1.84)	0.10 (0.15)	0.28 (0.42)	1.38 (1.92)	0.08 (0.11)

Originally published in:

International Migration Review, Vol. 48 (2014), Iss. 2, pp. 413

**TABLE A2**  
**DESCRIPTIVES OF VARIABLES PER COUNTRY (MOROCCAN IMMIGRANT CHILDREN), MEAN (SD)**

Moroccan Migrants	Netherlands <i>N</i> = 270	Germany <i>N</i> = 126	France <i>N</i> = 139	Belgium <i>N</i> = 255
Transnational marriage	0.51 (0.50)	0.24 (0.43)	0.42 (0.50)	0.43 (0.50)
2nd generation	0.20 (0.40)	0.17 (0.38)	0.31 (0.46)	0.44 (0.50)
Age at marriage	23.4 (4.10)	23.0 (4.12)	23.2 (4.27)	23.2 (4.28)
Year of marriage (mean)	1994 (7.21)	1995 (9.41)	1994 (8.82)	1992 (9.75)
Year of marriage -1989	0.24 (0.43)	0.25 (0.43)	0.27 (0.45)	0.38 (0.49)
Year of marriage 1990–1999	0.50 (0.50)	0.39 (0.49)	0.42 (0.50)	0.34 (0.47)
Year of marriage 2000–2004	0.19 (0.39)	0.28 (0.45)	0.20 (0.40)	0.18 (0.38)
Year of marriage 2005–2008	0.07 (0.25)	0.09 (0.28)	0.10 (0.30)	0.10 (0.30)
Female	0.56 (0.50)	0.62 (0.49)	0.70 (0.46)	0.56 (0.50)
Low education	0.41 (0.49)	0.25 (0.44)	0.24 (0.43)	0.35 (0.48)
Upper secondary education	0.41 (0.49)	0.67 (0.47)	0.54 (0.50)	0.42 (0.50)
Tertiary education	0.18 (0.39)	0.07 (0.26)	0.22 (0.42)	0.22 (0.41)
Religious identity	4.72 (0.52)	4.63 (0.52)	4.66 (0.57)	4.75 (0.55)
Village	0.54 (0.50)	0.44 (0.50)	0.50 (0.50)	0.52 (0.50)
Proportion of co-ethnics	1.67 (1.29)	0.63 (0.45)	2.11 (1.48)	2.47 (1.76)
No. of co-ethnics in place of residence in 10,000	0.71 (1.00)	0.24 (0.31)	0.25 (0.45)	1.87 (2.10)