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Mixing and Matching on the Marriage Market:

determinants of mixed marriages of Europeans versus non-Europeans in
Belgium.

Suzana Koelet
  Interface Demography (Free Univeristy of Brussels – VUB)

Helga de Valk
  Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI)
  Interface Demography (Free Univeristy of Brussels – VUB)

All correspondence to:
Suzana Koelet
Interface Demography
Pleinlaan 5, 1050 Brussels, BELGIUM
skoelet@vub.ac.be
Tel. +32 26148132

Extended abstract

Background

Over the years intermarriage has been approached as an indicator for the integration of minority groups into the host country. The bulk of intermarriage studies in Europe concentrate on marriages of a "guestworker" type of immigrant population or typical marriage migrants from developing (or at least less developed) countries, with the main ethnicity in a country (Kalmijn & Van Tubergen 2006; Gonzalez Ferrer 2006). Nevertheless, over the past three decades scholars have started to pay greater attention to the intensification and complex interconnectivity of local and global processes (Constable 2009), trying to better cover the cosmopolitan aspect of family research (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2010). In an interconnected world, family research has to deal with the emergence of ever more forms of personal life and relationships that reach beyond national borders. This shift has moved the focus from integration to transnationalisation in intermarriage. The focus on intermarriages of non-European or more specifically non-Western migrants has however remained almost unchallenged.

This contradicts the current demographic situation where almost 40% of the foreign population in Europe has of European nationality (Vasileva 2011). The possibilities of free movement and mobility in an integrating Europe, have made it increasingly easy for Europeans to travel, make contacts and maintain relationships across frontiers. Among the young and educated - a highly marriageable group - European exchange programs have successfully promoted international mobility. In literature on transnationalisation we moreover find a raised interest for a very specific group of highly mobile Europeans: the free movers or Eurostars (Favell 2003, 2008), a privileged group of generally higher educated European migrants that stem from middle or higher class. Their mobility is not so much motivated by economic necessity, but is free and driven by personal or professional reasons. These 'fortunate migrants' (Lindenfeld, Varro 2008) are very distant from the groups usually analyzed in intermarriage research. Cosmopolitanism is no exclusive province of the European elite though. Nevertheless, European migrants can be discerned in a number of characteristics from the usual groups considered in intermarriage research, social status being only one of them (Gaspar 2008, 2009).

In this paper we test the generality of the findings of traditional intermarriage research for the specific group of European migrants (cfr. Braun, Recchi 2008 for Western Europeans). Intermarriage studies focus not only on the influence of individual characteristics like socio-economic or cultural status (Qian & Lichter 2001; Kulzycki, Lobo 2002), but also on structural or contextual factors (Anderson & Seanz 1994; Klein 2001), or a combination of both (Hwang et al. 1994, 1997; Lievens 1998; van Tubergen & Maas 2007). The contextual factors considered are very nation-based (cfr. size of minority groups in the country, sex ratio, residential segregation, internal status diversity etc.), while the local marriage market might well not be the relevant market for these European migrants. Many of the European binational marriages are for example between partners of neighboring nationalities (Cortina et al. 2011).

Data

We use the 2001 Belgian Census data and apply multinomial logistic regression analysis to explore the differences in determinants for Europeans and non-Europeans in Belgium to marry either uni-nationally or bi-nationally. In the case of bi-national marriages, a further distinction is made between marriages to a native partner, a European partner or a non-European partner. The direct comparison between Europeans and non-Europeans in the analysis allows us to test the generality of findings of traditional intermarriage research for the specific group of European migrants.

Of all 27 EU countries, Belgium has one of the largest shares of European non-nationals in the population, after Luxemburg, Cyprus and Ireland (6.2% in 2008, Vasileva 2009). Brussels, the informal capital of Europe, attracts a lot of Europeans that work at European institutions or multinationals (Huysseune, Jans 2008; Gatti 2009). The demographic evolution in Brussels is nevertheless characterized by a duality: there are growing numbers of affluent foreigners working for international institutions as well as immigration of (European and non-European) migrant workers.

European and non-European bi-national marriages in the Census are identified based on country of birth of the partners, a discriminator used by preference in intermarriage research. The logistic regression includes only recently married couples to account for possible selective attrition if bi-national marriage and divorce are related. We furthermore exclude from the analysis couples who married before

migration to Belgium. Variables in the logistic regression refer to the individual level (education, age at migration, timing of marriage in relation to migration), the group level (cultural and religious fractionalization in the ethnic group, index of dissimilarity) and the structural level (generational and educational composition within the ethnic group, group size, sexratio). We have moreover constructed some variables that provide information on the couple's characteristics (age and educational difference in the couple, nationality, marriage order and type of union).

Preliminary findings

First results show that the determinants of partner choice have different effects for Europeans and non-Europeans (see table 1 for foreign men and table 2 for foreign women in annex).

On the individual level, the model illustrates how for European migrants in Belgium the odds to marry a native partner compared to a partner of the own group do not unequivocally rise with education, as is the case for non-Europeans. The relation between education and intermarriage describes rather an inverted U-shape with low odds to marry a native partner at both ends of the educational ladder. The highest educated Europeans are moreover not only more likely to marry within their own group than with a native partner, but are also more likely to marry someone of a different foreign European origin than their own. Furthermore, age at migration has a larger effect on the partner choice of Europeans than of non-Europeans, meaning that young age will lead them more often to marry outside the own group (with a Belgian partner) than inside the own group, than for non-Europeans. Marriage migration, on the other hand, is a factor that is much more relevant when studying the partner choice of non-Europeans.

On the group level we see that in general social segregation of specific origin groups within the host country (indicated by the dissimilarity index – Duncan & Duncan 1955), raises the odds of an ingroup marriage in comparison to a marriage with a native partner. High cultural and religious fractionalization in the home country on the other hand leads to less ingroup marriages in comparison to marriages with native partners. Remarkably, the host country effect is larger for non-European migrants, while the home country effect is larger for European migrants.

Another interesting conclusion pertains to the structural level. A typical determinant of intermarriage like groupsize of the own nationality group in the host country, is

less important for the partner choice of European partners than for non-European partners. The size of the second generation in the host country is less relevant as well. Europeans on the other hand are more likely to be influenced by the sex imbalance in their own origin group or the educational imbalance while making partner choices.

In the paper we will further explore the gender differences in these results. For foreign women it is moreover possible to also test the effect of relationship order and cohabitation on partner choice.

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Table 1: Multinomial logistic regression model of partner choice for foreign-born men (reference category: bi-national marriage with a native partner), N=22,759, Nagelkerke = 0.303

MEN	Uninational marriage			Binational marriage					
				European foreign partner			Non-European foreign partner		
	Exp(B)			Exp(B)			Exp(B)		
	Non-European	European	diff.	Non-European	European	diff.	Non-European	European	diff.
Origin (Ref: non-European)	0	1.429	-	0	1,648	-	0	3.525	-
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL									
Educational level (Ref: diploma tertiary education in university)									
No diploma	**5.568**	**1.599**	**	1.295	0.674	**	**3.600**	0.947	**
Diploma primary education	**3.896**	0.947	**	1.220	**0.430**	**	**2.131**	**0.569**	**
Diploma secondary education	**1.821**	**0.598**	**	0.784	**0.347**	**	1.386	**0.610**	**
Diploma tertiary education outside university	1.222	0.845	**	1.001	**0.504**	**	1.102	0.741	-
Age at migration (in years)	**1.025**	**1.051**	**	**1.024**	1.032	-	**1.025**	**1.025**	-
Timing of marriage after migration (dummy, 1= marriage migrant)	**6.894**	0.951	**	**3.282**	**1.806**	**	**5.149**	**1.480**	**
GROUP LEVEL									
Dissimilarity index (0-100)	**1.012**	1.010	-	0.994	0.996	-	**0.978**	1.017	**
Cultural fractionalization (0-1)	**0.400**	**0.004**	**	0.800	**0.176**	*	1.164	0.608	-
Religious fractionalization (0-1)	**0.692**	**0.399**	*	1.574	0.509	**	**2.368**	0.557	**
STRUCTURAL LEVEL									
Generational composition (2nd/1st generation)	**0.088**	**0.453**	**	1.468	0.843	-	1.759	**0.616**	**
Groupsize (natural log)	1.170	1.070	-	**0.883**	**0.668**	**	**0.799**	0.901	-

Sexratio (natural log)	**1.240**	**2.166**	*	1.144	0.467	*	0.872	0.521	-
Educational similarity	**2.187**	**11.728**	**	3.321	3.322	-	0.293	0.582	-
CONTROLS									
Belgian nationality	**2.608**	**2.235**	-	**1.694**	0.867	-	**2.260**	1.715	-
Educational homogamy	**0.321**	**0.569**	**	**0.703**	0.809	-	**0.531**	0.836	**
Age homogamy	**0.473**	0,909	**	1.196	0.926	-	**0.658**	0.805	-

Table 2: Multinomial logistic regression model of partner choice for foreign-born women (reference category: bi-national marriage with a native partner), N=23,834, Nagelkerke = 0.306

WOMEN	Uninational marriage			Binational marriage					
				European foreign partner			Non-European foreign partner		
	Exp(B)			Exp(B)			Exp(B)		
	Non-European	European	diff.	Non-European	European	diff.	Non-European	European	diff.
Origin (Ref: non-European)	0	1.059	-	0	4,852	*	0	79.416	**
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL									
Educational level (Ref: diploma tertiary education in university)									
No diploma	**2.241**	1.182	**	0.665	**0.509**	-	1.329	0.882	-
Diploma primary education	**1.732**	**0.780**	**	0.821	**0.353**	**	1.252	**0.684**	**
Diploma secondary education	**1.657**	**0.516**	**	0.830	**0.380**	**	1.372	0.689	**
Diploma tertiary education outside university	1.067	0.796	*	0.961	**0.450**	**	1.376	**0.683**	**
Age at migration (in years)	1.007	**1.050**	**	**1.056**	1.030	**	**1.022**	0.995	**
Timing of marriage after migration (dummy, 1= marriage migrant)	**3.097**	0.871	**	**2.113**	1.226	**	**4.378**	0.786	**
GROUP LEVEL									
Dissimilarity index (0-100)	**1.026**	1.005	**	0.999	0.990	-	**1.026**	1.005	*
Cultural fractionalization (0-1)	**0.277**	**0.003**	**	0.374	**0.195**	-	2.005	0.247	**
Religious fractionalization (0-1)	1.146	0.639	*	1.731	**0.456**	**	**2.505**	0.534	**
STRUCTURAL LEVEL									
Generational composition (2nd/1st generation)	**0.424**	**0.407**	-	1.029	0.865	-	**1.990**	**0.541**	**

Groupsize (natural log)	**1.341**	1.097	**	0.967	**0.802**	**	**1.073**	1.051	-
Sexratio (natural log)	**4.491**	**12.296**	**	**1.669**	**2.237**	-	**1.517**	1.776	-
Educational similarity	0.816	**18.549**	**	0.508	0.764	-	0.694	1.348	-
CONTROLS									
Belgian nationality	**2.206**	1.437	-	0.925	0.659	-	**1.846**	1.332	-
Educational homogamy	1.107	1.033	-	0.989	0.811	-	0.932	0.937	-
Age homogamy	**0.761**	**0,674**	-	**0.708**	0.879	-	0.975	**1.304**	-