Timing preferences for family formation among immigrant and majority groups in Europe

Jennifer A. Holland
Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute

Helga A.G. de Valk
Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute
and *Vrije Universiteit Brussel*

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Abstract

Timing preferences for family life transitions are indicative of how individuals perceive the life course. They provide insight into differential values and ideals across groups and are an innovative measure of immigrant adaptation. We use data from the European Social Survey (Round 3, 2006) to assess timing preferences for marriage and having a first child, for men and women of immigrant and majority group origin in 25 European countries. We build individual-level models to explore how timing preferences vary by immigrant status and regions of residence and origin. We find that both regions of residence and origin shape preferences, although the pattern and strength of the association vary by among immigrants. Results suggest that cultural and sociopolitical contexts play a role in determining timing preferences for all members of a society, irrespective of origin.

Key words: family formation, preferences, age norms, immigrant families, adaptation

Introduction

Family formation is a key stage in the life course. Forming a partnership, establishing a joint household, getting married, and bearing and raising children are significant transitions for young adults. The timing of these events is governed by values, ideals and norms about what is the best way to organize family life. These timing preferences provide insight into the meaning individuals attach to these family life course events and may reflect broader family life course regimes. Dramatic changes in the timing and experience of many family-life behaviors in recent decades have been well documented in many regions of the world (for example, see: Bumpass 1990, Goode 1963, Leete 1987, Lesthaeghe 2010, Lesthaeghe & Van de Kaa 1986, Rosero-Bixby et al. 2009, Sobotka & Toulemon 2008). However, less is known about the timing preferences underlying these behavioral changes and the degree of uniformity of these preferences across and within populations.

In this paper we explore timing preferences for two key family life transitions, marriage and parenthood, across 25 European countries using data from the third round of the European Social Survey (ESS, 2006). In addition to assessing variation of timing preferences across these countries, we are particularly interested in the degree of variation within populations. Over the past 50 years European populations have become more diverse. In most countries there are large and growing shares of first- and second-generation migrants, from an increasingly diverse range of sending countries. So too have socio-political changes within Europe increased the flows of immigrants between European countries. This diversity across European countries provides a unique natural laboratory to describe the variation or uniformity in family life course regimes by countries of residence and origin. We ask, to what extent do predominant family formation timing preferences differ for majority and immigrant populations across Europe?

Our approach to studying the family life course of majority and immigrant populations is innovative in several respects. Previous research has demonstrated variation in the timing of family behaviors but the extent to which this variation is also evident and consistent with respect to timing preferences is not known. Because behaviors may be affected by exogenous structural and constraining

factors, they need not correspond directly to timing preferences. Family formation timing preferences provide greater insight into underlying family life course regimes than measures of behaviors, thus generating a more nuanced understanding social distance and integration of immigrant populations in Europe.

Using nationally representative data for a wide range of countries allows us to capture diversity in family formation timing preferences across Europe. So too do we take into account the diversity of migrant populations within European regions. Whereas previous research tended to focus on a single migrant generation and often a single country or region of origin (for instance, see: De Valk & Milewski 2011, Huschek et al. 2010, Milewski & Hamel 2010, Sassler & Qian 2003), here we consider the timing preferences of both first and second generation migrants from a -range of sending countries. Furthermore, we are able to explore the interplay between regions of origin and destination in determining family formation timing preferences of individuals with a migrant background.

Finally, we consider variation in timing preferences for both men's and women's family formation. The ESS survey employed an innovative split ballot design, whereby half of the respondents were randomly assigned female and male versions of the timing questions, respectively. Although this design does not allow us to identify differences in gendered preferences at the individual-level, it provides a macro-level measure of how timings standards for men and women vary across majority and immigrant groups from diverse regions of residence and origin.

Theory and hypotheses

Timing of family life events

The timing of major family formation events is crucial in the evolvement of the individual life course. Previous studies have emphasized that the timing of family transitions is related to later life outcomes, such as educational attainment and family stability (Furstenberg 2003, Furstenberg 1998, Furstenberg Jr. et al. 1989, Hofferth et al. 2001). In the sociological life course literature it has been argued that timing of transitions is shaped by several factors (Brückner & Mayer 2005, Mayer 2004). Different institutional

contexts may lead to different orderings and timings of events over the life course across countries and across subpopulations within countries (Buchmann 1989). Social norms for the age grading and ordering of events in the transition to adulthood are also important for directing the occurrence of life course events (Marini 1984, Settersten 1997). Although the existence of age norms has been contested as a result of individualization processes in Western societies, several studies have indicated that individuals do not have full autonomy over organizing their life courses and that ideals and norms continue to play a role (Billari & Liefbroer 2007, Heckhausen 1999, Settersten 2007). Norms that were previously imposed and enforced by institutions, such the family or the Church, seem to be replaced by more subtle forms of expectations (Liefbroer & Billari 2010). Today norms may be maintained in cultural scripts of the life course and reflected in institutional arrangements (Bourdieu 1996, Neyer & Andersson 2008, Settersten Jr. 2003). Expectations about the appropriate ages for experiencing major transitions may be particularly influential for decisions that are perceived to be main markers in the transition to adulthood in the family domain, such as marriage and childbearing.

Timing preferences may reveal the meanings individuals attach to particular life course events and reflect underlying family life course regimes. Therewith they provide insight into values and ideals in the family domain. Instead of capturing what people do, timing preferences measure what people perceive is the *best* way to organize family life (Thomson 2011). Although our understanding into the mechanisms and extent to which preferences impact behavior is still developing, studying timing preferences is crucial for insight into the best perceived way of structuring the life course.

Previous work has shown that the dominant perceptions on the life course and timing of events for men and women are not always uniform and, in some cases, reflect a double standard (Deutsch & Saxon 1998, Liefbroer & Billari 2010, Rijken & Liefbroer 2010). Earlier studies already pointed to the fact that age norms and deadlines are more pronounced and at earlier ages for women than for men, particularly in the family domain (Billari & Micheli 1999, Settersten & Hägestad 1996). At the same time, men and women also do have different ideas about the ideal life course. Overall men are found to be more traditional in their views on family life arrangements and norms on union formation (Liefbroer &

Billari 2010). It is essential to give attention to the way that gender shapes timing preferences, in particular, and norms, more generally. Furthermore, the gendered nature of family formation timing preferences may not be uniform across all contexts or individuals, varying by structural- and individual-level factors associated with gender egalitarian values or, more generally, the status of women in society (Pampel 2011, Widmer & Ritschard 2009).

Migrants and timing preferences

European populations are becoming ever more diverse, as first- and second-generation migrants constitute a large and growing share of the population. Moreover, the socio-cultural differentiation between countries of origin and settlement may be increasing. Whereas prior to the end of the 20th century immigrant sending countries tended to share colonial or cultural ties with the country of residence, today migration flows are increasingly global in nature (Castles & Miller 2003, Massey et al. 1998). Socio-political changes within Europe have led to increasing flows of migrants between European countries. With the centerpiece European Union policy of free movement of workers across borders and the expansion of the European Union (most recently in 2004 and 2007), intra-European flows nowadays constitute an important share of migration.

Differences or similarities between immigrant and majority groups in union and family formation timing preferences provides an indicator of the normative, cultural, or general social distance between groups, as well as an innovative and nuanced measure of the degree to which immigrants are incorporated in the "social and cultural fabric" of their new country of residence (Bean & Stevens 2003, Bourdieu 1990, Kadushin 1962, Kalmijn 1998, Simmel 1955, Szalay & Maday 1983). Where behaviors may be more resistant to influence and slower to adapt, preferences with regard to the transition to adulthood can be a good indicator of changes and processes of convergence or divergence. They may point to more subtle processes of 'boundary shifting/blurring' in the socio-cultural domain rather than 'boundary crossing' as indicated by, for example, intermarriage (Kalmijn 1998, Kalmijn & Van Tubergen 2010, Pagnini & Morgan 1990, Sassler & Qian 2003, Van Tubergen & Maas 2007). In this way broader

patterns of timing preferences for family formation behaviors may provide a better understanding of adaptation and social distance between immigrant and majority populations (Glick 2010, Sassler & Qian 2003).

Immigrants occupy a socio-cultural middle ground between their country of origin and country of destination/residence. Their family life timing preferences are likely shaped by influences of socialization on both sides (De Valk & Liefbroer 2007, De Valk & Milewski 2011, Foner 1997, Lesthaeghe 2002, Nauck 2001). The distinction between effects of country of origin and destination is often made when theorizing about the position of migrants in their new home country and has been used to study labor market position, language skills and educational attainment (Van Tubergen 2005, 2010). With regard to family formation, migrants are affected by the dominant family life patterns in their country of origin. Cultural norms and practices may be transmitted and maintained by family and friends from the same origin in both the home and host country. Family life preferences are also shaped by the dominant patterns and practices in the country of residence. Migrants settling in a new country may encounter very different expectations regarding the life course than those to which they were socialized in their countries of origin. Contextual and institutional factors in the host society, such as educational and political institutions, majority cultural outlets, such as the media, and social networks, will influence migrant timing preferences in a similar fashion to majority populations (Bernhardt et al. 2007, De Valk & Liefbroer 2007, De Valk & Milewski 2011, Huschek et al. 2010).

The degree of incorporation and level of shared ideas, values and norms of a migrant's countries of origin and residence can be expected to be related to the socio-cultural distance between the two countries: the larger the social distance, the more difficult adaptation may be and the larger the expected gap between majority and immigrant timing preferences and behaviors (e.g., Kalmijn & Van Tubergen 2010). As such, it is important to be attentive to the diversity of family formation preferences among majority populations across Europe, as well as across the countries of origin. The interaction of these influences may be an important aspect in shaping timing preferences among migrant populations as was also shown for structural integration of migrants in society (e.g., Van Tubergen 2005).

Reconciling residence, origin and gender

In order to capture the diversity of family life course regimes across European countries, as well as the socio-cultural distance between countries of origin and residence for migrant subpopulations, we make use of the concept of the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) (Cherlin 2004, Lesthaeghe 2010, Surkyn & Lesthaeghe 2004, Van de Kaa 2002). The SDT encompasses both shifts in values toward individualism, secularism, and gender egalitarianism, as well as broader family behavioral changes: family formation, including both marriage and childbearing, occurs at later ages, unmarried cohabitation has become more common, and there is greater diversity in family life course trajectories (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002, Billari & Liefbroer 2010, Buchmann 1989, Giddens 1991, Lesthaeghe & Van de Kaa 1986, Sobotka & Toulemon 2008, Van de Kaa 2002).

While the experience of some aspects of the SDT changes has been nearly universal in Europe, the magnitude of change is varied across countries (Sobotka & Toulemon 2008). The Scandinavian countries are often considered forerunners of family change, as altered patterns of family formation and family life were first to appear in this context as early as the 1960s (Andersson 2008). Patterns of delayed family formation and the emergence of new family forms emerged in most Western, Southern and Anglophone European countries and in Anglophone countries outside of Europe in the 1970 and 1980s, followed in more recent decades by Eastern European countries (Sobotka & Toulemon 2008). We postulate that residing in particular regions of Europe will be associated with different family formation timing preferences: residents of Eastern European regions, where the SDT is less evident in Europe, will likely prefer the youngest ages for family formation (Hypothesis 1a); residents of Western, Northern, and Southern Europe, where the SDT is most evident in Europe, will likely prefer the oldest ages for family formation (Hypothesis 1b); and timing preferences of residents of Anglophone Europe will fall in between (Hypothesis 1c). We expect that these patterns of timing preferences across regions of residence will be evident for both majority and immigrant populations (Hypothesis 2).

With respect to immigrant subpopulations in these European contexts, we classify social distance between regions of residence and origin by the degree to which the SDT is evident. As with Europe, evidence of the SDT has been demonstrated in the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Bumpass 1990, Lesthaeghe & Neidert 2006, Surkyn & Lesthaeghe 2004, Van de Kaa 2002), however there is little or only mixed evidence for SDT family change outside these Western contexts (Cliquet 1991, Coleman 2004, Lesthaeghe 2010, Rosero-Bixby et al. 2009). As such, we expect that immigrants from regions where the SDT is less evident (Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean) will prefer younger ages for family formation (Hypothesis 3a) as compared to majority populations in Europe and immigrants from regions where the SDT is most evident (Europe and the Anglophone countries in North America and Oceania) (Hypothesis 3b).

It is possible that aspects of heterogeneity in region of origin and region of residence may operate differently by the gender of the target of the timing preference. As previously discussed, it is indeed important to model timing preferences for men's and women's family formation separately. However, we do not have theoretical priors to generate hypotheses about differential associations between regions of residence and origin and the gendered nature of timing preferences.

Data

We use data from the European Social Survey (Round 3, 2006), a cross-sectional survey of attitudes, beliefs and behavior patterns (European Social Survey 2006, 2011, Jowell 2007). Round 3 covered 25 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. The ESS is representative of the population of each participating country that is aged 15 or older, living in private households, and has resided in the country for at least one year. Inclusion in the survey sample is not contingent upon nationality, citizenship, or legal status; despite this, however, we may expect disproportionately higher non-contactability and non-response rates among immigrants, particularly more

recent arrivals and those with language barriers (Stoop et al. 2010). In addition to the main survey, Round 3 included a module covering the organization of the life-course and, in particular, questions about ideal ages for a range of family life-course behaviors. This module had a split ballot design, whereby half of the respondents were randomly assigned female and male versions of the timing questions, respectively. For instance, one-half of the respondents received a question pertaining to the timing of marriage for women: "In your opinion, what is the ideal age for a girl or woman to get marriage and live with her husband?" The other half was asked the same question, but pertaining to men.

In total there were 47,099 respondents, with approximately 1,000 to 3,000 respondents per country. Response rates ranged from 46.0% in France to 73.2% in Slovakia, with an average of 63.5%. We excluded respondents missing information about immigrant status (n = 847), split ballot assignment (n = 3) or information on other covariates (n = 943), for a pre-analysis sample of 45,306. For analyses of ideal ages for marriage and parenthood we further restricted the sample to those respondents who provided a numeric response (marriage: N = 37,689; parenthood: N = 39,400).

Immigrant status and country of origin is defined based on the country of birth of the individual and their parents. For the second generation we classify country of origin first according to the country of birth of the mother and, if the mother was born in the country of residence, then according to the country of birth of the father. Approximately 14 % of the two analysis samples are identified as a first- or second-generation immigrant. Shares of first generation migrants surveyed in each ESS country were similar to 2005 United Nations figures on immigrant shares at the population level (United Nations DESA Population Division 2009).

Method

We evaluate timing preferences of majority and immigrant populations using Ordinary Least Squares regression. Because we expect that ideal ages for women's family formation behaviors will be younger than those for men and to investigate how aspects of heterogeneity may operate differently by the gender

of the target in the split ballot, we model timing preferences for men's and women's family formation separately.

We include categorical indicators for region of residence: Western (reference), Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Anglophone Europe.[i] We further differentiate immigrants by region of origin: Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe, Anglophone countries (including Anglophone Europe, North America and Oceania), Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Western Asia, other regions of Asia (including East, Southeast and South Asia), and Latin America and the Caribbean (relative to majority population respondents).[ii] For information on origin and residence, we use regional rather than country categories because of small country sample sizes for immigrants in the ESS.

We tested various specifications of immigrant generation in order to account for differences in the association between region of origin and timing preferences for first and second generation immigrants; the best fitting model included an additive term capturing second generation status, however, suggesting that second generation status is proportional across regions of origin. We conducted exploratory analyses that differentiated first generation migrants by duration of residence but found no evidence of a clear pattern of association nor did inclusion improve the fit of our models.

Family life preferences of both majority and migrant populations may be related to and influenced by socioeconomic status (for instance, see: Becker 1981, Hajnal 1982, Kalmijn 2011, Oppenheimer 1988). As such, in all models we include measures of respondent's educational attainment, parents' education, and current economic activity. Highest level of education completed by the respondent is converted across survey countries into a series of categorical variables based on the International Standard Classification for Education. These variables correspond to less than secondary education (reference), lower secondary, upper secondary or some post-secondary education, and tertiary education. To capture socioeconomic background we include a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent's mother or father completed tertiary education. Finally, we take account of current economic status by including two variables indicating if the respondent was enrolled in education and if the respondent was in paid work in the 7 days prior to interview. These last two variables are not mutually

exclusive; respondents can report that they participated both in education and paid work, either activity, or neither activity.

In all models we include a variety of indicators of respondents' demographic characteristics. Age at interview is captured categorically: 14 to 24 years old (reference), 25 to 34 years old, 35 to 44 years old, 45 to 54 years old, 55 to 64 years old, and 65 years or older. We distinguish respondent's marital status as never married or in a civil partnership (reference), currently married or in a civil partnership, or previously married or in a civil partnership. This last category includes both those widowed and divorced. Finally, we include an indicator for whether the respondent has ever had children. Descriptive statistics for the analysis sample can be found in Tables 1 and 2.

(Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Key Independent Variables, by immigrant status)

(Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Additional Independent Variables, by immigrant status)

Descriptive Results

Majority vs. Immigrant Subpopulations

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the ideal ages for family formation events for split ballot questions about men and women among majority and first- and second-generation immigrant populations. We find few differences comparing mean age preferences for marriage and parenthood across immigrant status and sex. Majority and first-generation migrants report nearly identical ages for men's marriage, slightly over 25.5 years old, while second generation migrants prefer slightly older ages of marriage for men (26 years old). First generation migrants report the youngest age preferences for women's marriage (23.5 years old), followed by majority populations (23.7 years old) and second generation migrants (23.9 years old). So too are similar age preferences reported for fatherhood: first generation migrant and majority populations report an average ideal age of 26.8 years and second generation migrants preferring

slightly older ages (27.1 years old). Age preferences for motherhood are uniform across majority and migrant subsamples (approximately 24.9 years old).

(Table 3: Ideal ages for family formation events men and women, by immigrant status)

Regression Results

Differences in the individual characteristics of majority and immigrant respondents may obscure variation in timing preferences for marriage and parenthood across subgroups. Regression results exploring variation in timing preferences by region of residence and origin, standardized for immigrant generation, socioeconomic, and demographic characteristics, are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6. Coefficients on the standardizing variables are omitted from the tables but are available upon request.

(Table 4: Ideal ages for men's and women's family formation events, ordinary least squares regression coefficients *on region of residence*)

(Table 5: Ideal ages for men's and women's family formation events, ordinary least squares regression coefficients *on region of origin*)

(Table 6: Ideal ages for immigrant background men's and women's family formation events, ordinary least squares regression coefficients on *region of residence*)

Regions of Residence

The Table 4 presents estimation coefficients for categorical variables accounting of region of residence. We find a consistent pattern of timing preferences for both family formation behaviors for men and women across regions of Europe. The oldest age preferences are held by residents of Southern Europe, who prefer ages ranging 1 to 7 months older than those living in Western Europe, although, in the case of

motherhood, Southern European age preferences are not statistically distinguishable from those of Western Europeans. We observe younger age preferences relative to Western Europe in the other European regions: younger ages are preferred by residents of Anglophone, Northern and Eastern Europe, in order from oldest to youngest. These findings reflect our first hypothesis (a-c) on regional variation.

In order test Hypothesis 2 and check for the robustness of these results on the association between region of residence and timing preferences for migrants, we replicated this analysis for a subsample consisting only of immigrants (Table 6). Because the majority population respondents comprise approximately 86% of the full sample, the findings regarding regions of residence as presented in Table 4 may be driven by the association for the majority population. However, we find that the hierarchy of the magnitude of coefficients on regions of residence observed for the full sample is also evident for immigrants with respect to men's marriage and fatherhood: those living in Eastern Europe prefer the youngest ages followed by those living in Northern and Anglophone Europe, and, finally, the oldest ages for family formation preferred by those living in Western and Southern Europe. Unlike with the full models, where we were able to distinguish those living in Western and Southern Europe, in this restricted models the differences are not statistically significant. For timing preference for women's family formation among migrants, we find considerably less differentiation across regions of residence than in the models including majority populations. For the immigrant subsample we can only statistically distinguish between those immigrants residing in Northern and Eastern Europe as preferring younger ages for women's marriage and only those in Eastern Europe prefer younger ages for motherhood, all else equal.

Region of Origin

The Table 5 presents estimation coefficients for categorical variables accounting of region of origin for the pooled majority and immigrant sample; these results correspond to a test of our hypotheses (3a and 3b) on adaptation and social distance between country of origin and residence. With respect to marriage, those born in Western and Northern Europe are statistically indistinguishable from majority populations

in their timing preferences for men's and women's marriage. Those migrants from Southern Europe prefer the oldest ages for marriage compared to majority populations, all else equal. Migrants from Anglophone regions also prefer older ages with respect to men's marriage timing. Migrants from Eastern Europe systematically prefer younger ages for men's and women's marriage, as compared to majority populations (about 7 months younger). Interestingly, among migrants from regions where the SDT is most evident, the signs and magnitudes of variation in age preferences across regions of origin are largely similar for men and women.

Among migrants originating in regions where the SDT is less evident, we see more variation in preferences for women's than men's marriage. Among migrants from both Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, we find evidence of younger age preferences for women's marriage (approximately 9 months and 7.5 months younger, respectively), but age preferences for men's marriage are not statistically different from majority populations (although the sign for men's marriage is negative, as expected). So too among migrants from regions of Asia, excluding Western Asia, we find younger age preferences for women's but not men's marriage as compared to majority populations (about 13 months younger). Among migrants from Western Asia we find younger age preferences for both men's (11 months) and women's (nearly 18 months) marriage. Age preferences for men's and women's marriage seem to converge among migrants with origins in Latin America and the Caribbean; these migrants prefer ages of marriage about 7 months younger for men and 7 months older for women, relative to majority populations.

Turning to the findings for timing preferences for father- and motherhood, we find similar results among migrants from regions where the SDT is more advanced. Again the oldest age preferences are observed among migrants from Southern Europe. Migrants from Northern and Anglophone Europe are indistinguishable from majority populations in their parenthood timing preferences, while Western European migrants are indistinguishable with respect to fatherhood timing but prefer older ages for women's parenthood (4 months older). As with marriage and contrary to our Hypothesis 3a, we find evidence of younger age preferences among migrants from Eastern Europe relative to majority populations.

Among migrants originating in regions where the SDT is less advanced, we again find evidence of younger preferences for women's parenthood among migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa (about 11 months), Western Asia (11.5 months), and other regions of Asia (7.5 months), relative to majority populations. Unlike in the models of marriage, Northern African migrants' preferences for women's parenthood are indistinguishable from majority populations. So too are preferences for fatherhood indistinguishable from the majority among migrants from all regions of Africa and Asia. Again, we find seemingly converging age preferences for men's and women's parenthood among migrants with origins in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Taking the results for marriage and parenthood together, there is clear gender differentiation in timing preferences for family formation among migrants from most regions where the SDT is less advanced (excepting Latin America and the Caribbean): while there are few differences between migrant and majority timing preferences for men, there are notably younger ages are preferred for women's family formation.

Discussion

In this paper we examine ideal timing preferences for two key life course events, marriage and parenthood, and aim to better understand an aspect of European diversity. We explored how age preferences vary across region of residence and, among those of immigrant background, region of origin, standardizing for a number of socioeconomic and demographic individual characteristics. Europe is an interesting laboratory for this cross-national study, as context and welfare state arrangements, which influence life course decisions, vary between countries.

In our work, we found evidence to support our hypothesis that context matters for family formation timing preferences. In line with our expectation and previous studies of behavior, we found substantial variation across regions of residence (for majority and immigrant populations) and the pattern of association was largely consistent with our Second Demographic Transition (SDT) categorization (H1a-c): the oldest age preferences were held among those living in Southern Europe and the youngest

preference held by those residing in Eastern Europe. At the same time, absolute differences across regions of residence were not large, suggesting relative uniformity in timing preferences for marriage and childbearing. Thus, life course regimes, as embodied by welfare state policies and institutions, may exert only moderate influence on individual-level timing preferences but may be of greater important for behavioral outcomes. For instance, one finding that contradicted our hypothesis: we found relatively younger age preferences among those residing in Northern Europe. Because patterns of later family formation were first observed in these countries as early as the 1960s (Andersson 2008), it is surprising that Northern European residents' timing preferences for family events were often younger than among residents of Western and Southern Europe. While individuals may perceive younger ages for family formation as preferable, exogenous factors or individual life experiences may result in a delay of behaviors. A targeted analysis of both timing preferences and behaviors in the Nordic (and other) countries may be particularly warranted to better understand the mechanisms behind this result.

The strength and pattern of association between residential context and timing preferences were not fully robust to an analysis of the immigrant subsample, for which had expected to find the same patterns of association across regions of residence. Patterns of timing preferences for men were consistent between migrant and majority populations. However, there was more uniformity in the preferences for women's family formation among migrants across regions of residence: we could only distinguish those living in Eastern (marriage and motherhood) and Northern European (marriage only) as preferring younger ages. This finding suggests that, while structural and social factors in regions of residence affect both majority and migrant timing preferences, this effect of the region of residence is smaller for migrants' timing preferences for women's family formation than majority populations' preferences. This potentially reflects the fact that immigrants were socialized into the dominant values and ideals of their region of origin as well. Our finding that this dual influence is gendered suggests that timing preferences for women are more ridged than those for men and continue to be important also into the second generation. This is consistent with previous work that found that there may be stronger norms for women regarding family life transitions in non-Western countries (Nauck 2002, Oropesa 1996).

Region of origin matters for the family formation timing preferences of migrant subpopulations in Europe. We tested for differences across regions of origin, categorizing regions by degree of socio-cultural distance, as proxied by evidence of Second Demographic Transition (SDT). We found some evidence in support of the hypothesis among migrants from regions where the SDT is most evident (H3a): migrants from most regions of Europe and from Anglophone countries demonstrated either older age preferences or preferences indistinguishable from those of majority populations. Only migrants from Eastern Europe stood out in this category as preferring uniformly younger ages for men's and women's marriage and childbearing. Results for regions where the SDT is less evident were more diverse. With only a few exceptions, we found that migrants from these regions prefer younger ages for marriage and childbearing for women. Findings were less consistent for men's marriage and childbearing: evidence of younger age preferences for men's family formation was only found among migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean (for both marriage and parenthood) and Sub-Saharan Africa (for marriage only). Although we cannot definitively determine causal mechanisms underlying these finding, the gender differentiation in timing preferences for family formation may stem from differential expectations about other aspects of men's and women's lives, such as educational and labor force participation, and how these aspects relate to family formation. The gendered pattern among migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean was a notable exception: migrants from this region seemed to favor relatively similar ages for men's and women's family formation. This result may reflect a different meaning attached to marriage and childbearing in this context, where unmarried, long-term cohabitation and extra-marital births are common and institutionalized (Coleman 2004).

A further key finding regarding family formation timing preferences of migrants from diverse regions of origin is that, while we do find evidence of variation across these groups, the magnitude of the variation is quite small: we can speak only of differences in months, not years. In models of marriage and parenthood for both men and women, differences between majority and migrant age preferences are almost always less than one year, excepting preferences for women's marriage among West Asian migrants (17 months younger) and among migrants from other regions of Asia (13 months younger)

relative to their majority counter parts. Indeed, preferences for ideal ages of marriage and parenthood are relatively uniform across subpopulations. This may indicate the adaptation of migrants to the ideals existing in their region of settlement. A second possibility, migrants may be a selective group: they may hold different values, norms, and preferences than individuals residing in their regions of origin, or migrants may select a region of residence based on shared (or similar) values, norms, and preferences. Further, it is possible that the small magnitude of variation could suggest that family formation behaviors are quite universal and institutionalized. A more thorough analysis on values and ideals of migrants and non-migrants in countries of origin and destination could shed further light into this issue. Furthermore, we might expect to observe greater differentiation in timing preferences in less-standardized family behaviors, such as non-marital cohabitation or home leaving.

We should be cautions in interpreting these findings in terms of the relative importance of regions of origin and residence. Differential migration patterns may affect the composition of the immigrant stock in regions of residence. Survey non-response associated with poor language skills or other sources of social exclusion (for instance, education or employment status) may lead to an underestimation of differences in timing preferences between first- and second-generation migrants and majority populations. Moreover, the degree to which dominant preferences in the region of residence shape first-generation immigrant timing preferences may be influenced by unobserved pre- and post-migration characteristics, as well as intentions to stay in the country of residence (Van Tubergen 2010).

In these analyses we focus on respondent reports of numeric ideal ages for marriage and parenthood. In addition to offering a numerical response, respondents could also reply that there was "no ideal age" or that the behavior was "never" acceptable. Future analyses of the propensity of respondents to offer different categories of non-numeric responses may help us to better understand different norms regarding these family formation behaviors among majority and immigrant populations.

We were limited in our ability to explore country- and sub-country-level patterns of timing preferences by small country-of-origin-specific sample sizes for immigrants in the European Social Survey. As immigrants constitute an ever larger share of European populations, future innovative

research into immigrant adaptation and integration necessitates better attention to maximizing response-rates and oversampling of immigrant sub-populations. Nevertheless, the results presented here offer a valuable starting point for cross-national investigations of immigrant and majority population preference, values and norms, social distance, and immigrant adaptation in the family life domain.

Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Key Independent Variables, by immigrant status

	Majority	First-generation	Second-generation
	Mean[a]	Mean[a]	Mean[a]
Region of residence			
Western Europe	.26	.35	.36
Eastern Europe	.38	.32	.44
Northern Europe	.16	.13	.10
Southern Europe	.12	.09	.04
Anglophone Europe	.08	.12	.07
Region of Origin			
Majority	1.00	.00	.00
Immigrant			
Regions where SDT most evident			
Western Europe	.00	.12	.16
Eastern Europe	.00	.33	.41
Northern Europe	.00	.04	.05
Southern Europe	.00	.13	.16
Anglophone (Europe, N. America, Oceania)	.00	.08	.06
Regions where SDT less evident			
Northern Africa	.00	.05	.03
Sub-Saharan Africa	.00	.06	.02
Western Asia	.00	.06	.03
Asia, excluding Western Asia	.00	.09	.05
Latin America, Caribbean	.00	.05	.01
Total (*n*)	38,713	3,512	3,081

[a] Range 0/1.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Additional Independent Variables, by immigrant status

	Majority	Immigrant	
		First-generation	Second-generation
	Mean[a]	Mean[a]	Mean[a]
Socioeconomic characteristics			
Highest level of education completed (respondent)			
Less than lower secondary	.14	.11	.06
Lower secondary	.20	.19	.17
Upper secondary, Post-secondary, non-tertiary	.42	.35	.46
Tertiary	.25	.35	.31
Mother or Father completed tertiary education?	.17	.24	.26
Respondent enrolled in education in last 7 days	.10	.07	.15
Respondent in paid work in last 7 days	.52	.54	.58
Demographic characteristics			
Female	.54	.56	.54
Age			
14 to 24	.14	.09	.20
25 to 34	.15	.18	.17
35 to 44	.17	.20	.20
45 to 54	.17	.18	.19
55 to 64	.16	.15	.12
65+	.21	.20	.13
Marital status			
Never married, never civil partnership	.27	.21	.34
Currently married, civil partnership	.54	.57	.46
Previously married, civil partnership	.20	.23	.20
Any children	.70	.73	.64
Total (*n*)	38,713	3,512	3,081

[a] Range 0/1.

Table 3: Ideal ages for family formation events men and women, by immigrant status

	Men			Women		
	Mean[a]	SD[a]	% non-numeric[b]	Mean[a]	SD[a]	% non-numeric[b]
Ideal age to marry and live with spouse						
Immigrant status						
Majority	25.5	3.5	.16	23.7	3.4	.17
First-generation immigrant	25.6	3.5	.16	23.5	3.6	.18
Second-generation immigrant	26.0	3.8	.17	23.9	3.6	.19
Ideal age to become a parent						
Immigrant status						
Majority	26.8	3.5	.14	24.8	3.3	.12
First-generation immigrant	26.8	3.7	.14	24.9	3.6	.13
Second-generation immigrant	27.1	3.5	.14	24.9	3.4	.13

Note: Target of split ballot question: Men: N = 22,481; Women: N = 22,825.
[a] Mean and standard deviation reflect only those providing numeric responses to questions on ideal ages.
[b] Range 0/1. The non-numeric category includes reports of "no ideal age," "never," and refusal. Non-numeric categories were not prompted by the interviewer, but were accepted as valid responses.

Table 4: Ideal ages for men's and women's family formation events, ordinary least squares regression coefficients on *region of residence*

	Marry and live with spouse				Become a parent			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
Constant	24.79	***	23.69	***	25.61	***	24.86	***
	(.138)		*(.130)*		*(.136)*		*(.123)*	
Region of residence								
Western Europe	.00		.00		.00		.00	
Eastern Europe	-1.37	***	-2.28	***	-1.32	***	-2.20	***
	(.064)		*(.061)*		*(.063)*		*(.057)*	
Northern Europe	-.90	***	-.69	***	-1.05	***	-.83	***
	(.079)		*(.075)*		*(.077)*		*(.071)*	
Southern Europe	.41	***	.22	*	.61	***	.09	
	(.094)		*(.087)*		*(.092)*		*(.082)*	
Anglophone Europe	-.65	***	-.29	**	-.63	***	-.45	***
	(.100)		*(.096)*		*(.099)*		*(.090)*	
N	18,802		18,887		19,339		20,061	
Adjusted R2	.0941		.162		.0974		.1549	

+p <.1; *p <.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Note: All models are standardized by respondent's immigrant generation status and region of origin, highest level of education completed, mother/father completed tertiary education, enrollment in education (past 7 days), employed (past 7 days), gender, age, marital status and own children. (Standard errors in parentheses.)

Table 5: Ideal ages for men's and women's family formation events, ordinary least squares regression coefficients on *region of origin*

	Marry and live with spouse				Become a parent			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
Constant	24.79	***	23.69	***	25.61	***	24.86	***
	(.138)		*(.130)*		*(.136)*		*(.123)*	
Regions of origin where SDT most evident								
Majority Population	.00		.00		.00		.00	
Western Europe	.09		.17		-.13		.36	*
	(.195)		*(.187)*		*(.188)*		*(.170)*	
Eastern Europe	-.54	***	-.60	***	-.63	***	-.53	***
	(.132)		*(.123)*		*(.131)*		*(.117)*	
Northern Europe	.11		-.39		.25		.23	
	(.303)		*(.288)*		*(.295)*		*(.278)*	
Southern Europe	.64	***	.81	***	.71	***	.54	***
	(.182)		*(.181)*		*(.179)*		*(.169)*	
Anglophone (Europe, N. America, Oceania)	.76	**	.16		.36		.24	
	(.269)		*(.236)*		*(.263)*		*(.225)*	
Regions of origin where SDT less evident								
Northern Africa	-.18		-.75	*	.03		.19	
	(.320)		*(.297)*		*(.312)*		*(.274)*	
Sub-Saharan Africa	-.17		-.64	*	-.37		-.95	***
	(.299)		*(.306)*		*(.292)*		*(.282)*	
Western Asia	-.91	**	-1.47	***	-.30		-.97	***
	(.311)		*(.275)*		*(.311)*		*(.264)*	
East, Southeast, South Asia	-.05		-1.10	***	-.02		-.63	**
	(.249)		*(.219)*		*(.247)*		*(.208)*	
Latin America, Caribbean	-.64	+	.59	+	-.64	+	.75	**
	(.355)		*(.312)*		*(.343)*		*(.297)*	
N	18,802		18,887		19,339		20,061	
Adjusted R2	.0941		.162		.0974		.1549	

+p <.1; *p <.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Note: All models are standardized by respondent's region of residence, immigrant generation status, highest level of education completed, mother/father completed tertiary education, enrollment in education (past 7 days), employed (past 7 days), gender, age, marital status and own children. (Standard errors in parentheses.)

Table 6: Ideal ages for immigrant background men's and women's family formation events, ordinary least squares regression coefficients on *region of residence*

	Marry and live with spouse		Become a parent	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Constant	24.87***	23.47***	25.73***	24.95***
	(.420)	*(.400)*	*(.406)*	*(.375)*
Region of residence				
Western Europe	.00	.00	.00	.00
Eastern Europe	-1.49***	-2.33***	-1.51***	-2.13***
	(.194)	*(.185)*	*(.190)*	*(.174)*
Northern Europe	-.94***	-.52*	-1.18***	-.24
	(.270)	*(.248)*	*(.263)*	*(.232)*
Southern Europe	.04	.18	.04	-.11
	(.312)	*(.288)*	*(.298)*	*(.269)*
Anglophone Europe	-.79**	-.25	-1.09***	.03
	(.298)	*(.270)*	*(.292)*	*(.252)*
N	2,669	2,733	2,752	2,909
Adjusted R2	.1364	.1854	.1295	.1729

+p <.1; *p <.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Note: All models are standardized by respondent's immigrant generation status and region of origin, highest level of education completed, mother/father completed tertiary education, enrollment in education (past 7 days), employed (past 7 days), gender, age, marital status and own children. (Standard errors in parentheses.)

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[i] Countries of residence are categorized as follows:
Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland;
Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine;
Northern Europe: Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden;
Southern Europe: Cyprus, Portugal, and Spain; and
Anglophone Europe: Ireland and United Kingdom.

[ii] Countries of origin for first and second generation migrants are categorized as follows:
Western Europe: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, and Switzerland;
Eastern Europe: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, former Czechoslovakia, former German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, former Soviet Union, and Ukraine;
Northern Europe: Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and Åland Islands;
Southern Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Malta, Portugal, former Serbia and Montenegro, Spain, and former Yugoslavia;
Anglophone: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States;
North Africa: Algeria, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, and Tunisia;
Sub-Saharan Africa: Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Comoros, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, Mayotte, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Réunion, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe;
West Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen;
East, Southeast and South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, North Korea, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar (Burma) , Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam; and
Latin America and the Caribbean: Argentina, Aruba, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.