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INTERGENERATIONAL CONTACT IN EUROPEAN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES IN BELGIUM

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Abstract

This paper focuses on transnational family relations among European migrants in Belgium. European migrants represent a large and growing share of immigrants in many European countries including Belgium. Although they have been at the hearth of EU mobility policies for many years now, this group of migrants has been studied scarcely. Very little is known on European migrant families and the impact of European mobility and transnationality on these families. Knowing more about the ways in which mobility within Europe affects family life is crucial within the context of an aging European population. The current paper aims for the first time to provide insight into the family relations of European migrants by studying this group of migrants in Belgium. More specifically, it focuses on the intergenerational contact between individual migrants and their parents. The central first question is what the effect is of the different context for migration and mobility of European and non-European migrants concerning their intergenerational contact. Second we investigate the diversity within the group of European migrants. Third we explain main determinants for intergenerational contact of European migrants building on insights of family sociology and migration studies. We use the first wave of the Belgian Generations and Gender Survey. The data include information on contact of individual migrants with their parents (both type and frequency of contact) and includes a wide range of relevant individual and family background characteristics that will be used for explaining transnational contact among European families in the multivariate analyses of the study.

Introduction and literature

Being one of the pillars of demographical and sociological research, migration has traditionally received ample attention in the literature. In Belgium this research predominantly focuses on (first and second generation) migrants from outside Europe, especially Morocco and Turkey. Nowadays a majority (68%) of all people with a foreign nationality in Belgium originates from a European Union country (Koelet, De Valk, & Willaert, 2011). These European migrants predominantly come from neighboring countries such as France and the Netherlands, ... with recently a strong increase of new EU member state citizens such as Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian migrants (CGKR, 2012). 31% of recent immigrants in Flanders come from Eastern Europe, 26% from Western Europe and 7% from Southern Europe (Lodewijckx, 2013).

Intra-European mobility differs fundamentally from migration from outside Europe, if only because the Schengen Agreement allows European citizens to move freely between European countries (European Commission, 2009). Intra-European mobility is even encouraged by EU policy and mobility projects, whereas policy

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measures aimed at migration from outside the European Union are rather restrictive. But despite the fact that European migrants make out a significant share of the Belgian population and are relevant from a European mobility policy perspective, they have been largely absent in the literature field of both migration and the family. A focus on non-European migrant groups remains, even though international migration is expected to decrease in coming years and European mobility is expected to keep a strong position (Planbureau & Statistiek, 2013).

Studying the impact of European mobility on individuals and their families is even more relevant in light of the discussion on ageing societies throughout Europe. As the share of older people is growing, the sustainability of our modern welfare state is discussed, and care responsibilities and provision of support within the family network is reconsidered. Insight in intergenerational contact is regarded as highly important, but existing studies in Europe mainly address majority populations and give limited attention to minority groups. Those who do, primarily focus on non-European origin groups and argue that the migration move is a disruptive event for family relations. The same might however apply for European migrants, for whom the migration move itself might be easier to realize given free movement within the EU, but where different family relation systems across Europe as well as distance might have similar implications for maintaining ties with their parents.

This study aims to help fill this knowledge gap by focusing on intergenerational contact between migrants of European origin living in Belgium and their parents, more specifically their mothers, as they are typically the primary care giver and main kin keeper within the family. We use two different but complementary measures of intergenerational contact - face-to-face contact and telephone contact - and take on a double comparative approach. On the one hand we compare the intergenerational contacts of European migrants with those of the native majority group and of other non-European migrant origins. On the other hand we diversify within the group of European migrants by analyzing different migrant generations. We explain differences and similarities in contact between adult children and their mothers by covering both life course stage, socio-economic position of the parent and child and migrant specific characteristics. We use recent data from the Belgian Generations and Gender Survey and apply quantitative statistical methods to study intergenerational contact in national and transnational families. This complements earlier research on this topic, which focuses more on explorative qualitative analyses.

The article studies migrants living in Belgium. Being the capital of Europe, Belgium hosts many political institutions as well as headquarters of international companies. This results in a large international European community mainly in and around the Brussels capital region. Belgium is also a transit country and has larger neighboring countries with shared languages facilitating mobility between these countries. This makes Belgium an interesting case study and starting point for research on European migrants. The Gender and Generation Program also includes survey data from a number of other European countries, which allows for European comparisons in future work.

Theory and hypotheses

On a political and policy level EU mobility receives ample attention and is even actively stimulated and encouraged because of the expected positive effects for the European economy as well as in the light of the Europeanization of citizens. The European mobility project, however, can only be successful if it is embedded in both an encouraging familial and social context. Mobile European families after all face important challenges as they are expected to establish social networks in the country of residence as part of their local integration process and at the same time keep contact with their family in their home country, fulfilling intergenerational duties. Earlier

research, mainly among non-European migrants, shows that despite migration and the resulting geographical distance, most of them feel strong obligations to take care for their relatives in their home country (e.g. Baldassar, 2008; Spitzer, Neufeld, Harrison, Hughes, & Stewart, 2003), and develop transnational, long-distance care strategies (e.g. contact, coordinating local help, financial help, regular visits...) (Kilkey & Merla, 2011). In some specific cases care for the family is even the main reason for migration (Kilkey, Plomien, & Perrons, 2013). Knowledge on European migrants and their families is nevertheless rather limited and literature is fragmented, even though the differences in the economic necessity of migration, opportunities for mobility and the geographical dispersion of family networks between European and non-European migrants create a very different transnational context.

In this article we focus on intergenerational contact between migrants and their mothers. Frequency of contact with the family is often used as an indicator of the strength of intergenerational exchange and the potential support for older people (Tomassini, Kalogirou, Grundy et al. 2004). It is considered an essential element of the care relation (Bengtson, Roberts 1991). Care is understood here as a reciprocal and multidirectional relation that encompasses both the aspects of 'caring for' and 'caring about' (Reynolds, Zontini, 2006; Ackers and Stalford, 2004; Finch and Groves, 1983). 'Caring for' refers to the hands-on caregiving on a personal level. Besides this concrete care work, family members (can) also 'care about' each other, a notion closely related to 'kin work' (di Leonardo 1992). 'Caring about' encompasses contact and emotional support and refers to emotional functions connected with sociability, advice, comfort and self-validation (Reynolds, Zontini 2006). Face-to-face contact is often a precondition in the case of 'caring for' a family member, while 'caring about' can more easily be exercised from a distance. So where face-to-face contact allows for practical and emotional support, telephone contact can equally realize one's own need fulfillment and contribute to the need fulfillment of other family members. It is important to study both forms of care in relation to the spatial distribution of transnational family members (Bryceson, Vuorela 2002).

Intergenerational contact and geographical distance

When looking at the family network and the exchange of support between generations, many authors have focused on geographical distance. Some of them see geographical proximity as the basic opportunity structure for intergenerational support, irrespective of other individual characteristics (Glaser & Tomassini, 2000). Fokkema et al. (2008) find a negative correlation between geographical distance and contact frequency in Western-European countries: the closer the distance, the more contact there is. They also find that contact frequency is related to sex (daughters uphold more frequent contacts especially with mothers), number of siblings (more siblings is more overall contact and less per sibling), education (negative correlation) and religiosity (positive correlation).

Geographical distance itself depends on both personal micro-level factors as cultural and societal factors. For example, in countries where the availability of formal care facilities for elderly or for children is limited, practical support has to be provided by the family, which is facilitated by geographical proximity (Zechner, 2008). Also highly educated adults and those with a higher income tend to live significantly further away from their parents compared to lesser educated and those with a low income (Fokkema et al., 2008; Tomassini et al., 2004). This could be explained by the necessity of moving away for educational or work opportunities. Divorced fathers live on average further from their parents, but this effect is not significant after controlling for other characteristics (Fokkema et al., 2008). Geographical proximity tends to also increase with age and the number of siblings increases the probability to have at least one of them living close to the parents (Fokkema et al., 2008).

Despite this individual variability, more than 84% of people aged 50+ in Europe,

have at least one child living closer than 25 km (Fokkema, ter Bekke, & Dykstra, 2008, p. 16) and parent-child contact in all European countries is considered high, notwithstanding differences between the more familialistic South and the more individualistic North (Reher 1998; Tomassini, Kalogirou, Grundy et al. 2004; Hank 2013). Dykstra and Fokkema's (2010) have developed a typology of relationships between parents and their adult children that is applicable to all Western European countries and demonstrate that more familialistic and more individualistic families are found within each of these countries.

Intergenerational contact and migration

The typology developed by Dykstra and Fokkema (2010) also suggests that there is a link between geographical distance and low family obligation norms. Two of the distinguished household types, the "supportive-at-a-distance" and the "autonomous" household type, are characterized by a long distance move away from the parents and low family obligation norms. The literature on transnational families nevertheless shows that long distance can go hand in hand with strong family obligations. When living far away, family members still feel obliged and prepared to help and assist their family (Gierveld et al., 2012). Distant caregivers can moreover make an important contribution to the caring process through letters, phone calls and caregiving visits (Vellekoop Baldock 2012). Even when geographical distance to the parents proves too long for regular visits, transnational families can express their requests for help, receive psychological support and organize practical support (by others) using modern telecommunication tools, which are nowadays more wide-spread and of low cost. This mediated interaction can be experienced as an imperfect, unsatisfactory compensation for the lack of co-presence. Still, new social media, allow people to use telephone, sms, see and mail each other in alternated way, creating a sort of 'connected presence' in which small gestures or signs of attention become as important as messages with more content (Licoppe, Smoreda 2005; Madiamou 2013). As such, geographical distance does not need to form a barrier to being a close family (Goulbourne, Chamberlain 2001; Goldbourne 2002).

Although frequent visits home remain the most important way in which kin connections are kept, the easiest and most frequent way in which caring about is articulated in transnational families is through telephone calls (Reynolds, Zontini 2006). Modern communication means allow people to re-negotiate the constraints of geographical distance (Licoppe, Smoreda 2005). The digital divide however restricts the access to, use of or knowledge of specific groups of information and communication technologies (e.g. in Belgium, as much as 21% of the households do not have internet connection). For traditional communication by telephone, high costs of long distance calls can alike constrain the intensity of communication.

European/non-European migrants

The separation distance to the left-behind family is on average much smaller for European than for non-European migrants. Even so, research has shown that the strong negative correlation between distance on the one hand and frequency of contact and ability to provide the more intensive forms of personal care on the other, is particularly strong when parents and children live nearby (Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaheer et al. 2004). At longer distances, as Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaheer et al. (2004) put it, "*the evidence is not strong that those who live 150 kilometres apart are any more capable of providing emotional, social and practical support than those who are 1,500 kilometres away*". This is supported by a number of American and European studies (Greenwell and Bengtson 1997; Grundy and Shelton 2001; Hallman and Joseph 1999; Roberto, Allen and Blieszner 2001). While none of these take migration as a starting point for their analysis, it does suggest that the geographical distance between adult migrants and their parents might be as disruptive for European migrants as for non-European migrants. The above-

mentioned studies however also find a co-variation with income and socio-economic status (Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaher et al. 2004), which might make the lived experience of separation different for both migrant groups.

In the 1960's Litvak distinguished between the working class individual, typified by close geographic proximity to the parents and frequent family contact, and the middle class and occupational mobile individual, typified by relatively great distance but still frequent family contact. According to Greenwell and Bengtson (1997), this model is no longer adopted to the changes in work and family life that make it difficult for both middle and working class individuals to accumulate the career and financial resources that lead to control over their geographic location. The increased international migration is a typical example of people looking further, even across the border, in search of better opportunities. This holds both for economic migrants from non-European and Eastern-European countries who come to the West in the hope to improve their material conditions, as well as for privileged, often higher-educated and highly mobile European migrants who move to another European country in search for an improved quality of life.

The European migrants however can generally boast on a more privileged position than the non-European migrants (Gaspar 2008). Most non-European migrants belong to the working class. In Belgium, almost half of all non-European immigrants are low skilled. Barely a quarter holds a higher education diploma (De Keyser, Delhez, Zimmer 2012). Without neglecting the diversity within both the European and non-European migrant groups, relatively more European migrants belong to the middle or upper-middle class. They have left their country in search of specialized education, not available near home, or of middle-class occupations located in geographic-specific labor markets. The principle of free movement in the EU moreover also allows for a wider variety of reasons for migration (De Keyser, Delhez, Zimmer 2012). Europeans, in contrast to non-Europeans, can more easily migrate in search of love, adventure or self-development. Upon arrival, they succeed more easily in attaining a comparable labor market position to that of the native population, while the position of non-European foreign-born persons on the labor market is problematic, not in the least in Belgium (De Keyser, Delhez, Zimmer 2012). The employment rate of non-European immigrants in Belgium is the lowest of all Member States, namely 45,8% for 2011 (a difference of almost 20 percentage points compared to persons born in the country of residence). The greater economic and mobility opportunities of European migrants equips them with better and more resources than non-European migrants to allow frequent contact with the family in the country of origin when needed. Greenwell and Bengtson (1997) demonstrate that working class middle-aged children have more difficulties to adjust to the intergenerational distance caused by mobility and that intergenerational contact is in their case more constrained by the increased resource limitations. Working class children also have less telephone contact with parents than middle class children.

Besides these structural differences (geographical distance, resources, mobility regulations etc.), there might also be a cultural differentiation between European and non-European migrants, more specifically with regard to family values and norms. When considering the differences in contact frequency between natives, European migrants and non-European migrants, it is important to control for these effects of culture (Rosenthal 1986). Research has shown that there are differences in family solidarity between ethnic categories; migrants from certain non-western countries have stronger family solidarity norms than the native born in western countries (Rosenthal, 1986; Mulder, Kalmijn 2006). Nevertheless, there are variations within European and non-European immigrant groups as well. Most non-European migrants in Belgium for instance come from Morocco or Turkey. Whereas Turks are more inclined to fall back on close family networks with a high degree of solidarity and social control, Moroccans are more individualistic and more inclined to break with traditional role models (Dagevos, 2001a; Lesthaeghe, Surkyn, & Van Creanem, 2000; de Valk 2006). Also in Europe,

mentioned differences between the more familialistic South and more individualistic North, testify of this within variance. The typology developed by Dykstra and Fokkema (2010) moreover shows that different types of family solidarity are even present within individual countries.

Religiosity (more specifically in relation to Christianity and Islam) is often used in research as an indicator for strong family values (Dykstra, Kalmijn, Knijn et al. 2006; Merz, Özeke-Kocabas, Oort et al. 2009). People who identify themselves as being religious are more likely to have frequent contact with their children and parents than those who do not consider themselves to be religious. As Europe is considered as more secular than the rest of the world (Davie 2000), expected differences in religiosity between non-European and European migrants, might lead to differences in contact frequency with the mother between both groups.

Intergenerational contact and the second (/in-between) generation

Finally, when studying migrant family care relations, it is important to take into account not only the consequences for the migrant's own family and care relations but also the consequences for the next generation, both born in the country of origin or in the new country of migration (in-between or second generation). We need to understand if and how the parents' decision to move away from the local family network also affects the family and caring networks of their children. Migration might have an impact on the ascending solidarity between the migrant and his parents, but also on the descending solidarity relations with the migrant's children.

Several authors have stressed the weakened contact between the second generation of immigrant populations and the family in the country of origin. Language barriers and a general lack of knowledge on the families' home area and their cultural complexities, make this contact more difficult (Bryceson, Vuorela 2002). But migration can on the other hand have a positive impact on the contact between second-generation migrants and their parents. The need for care and the dependency on children's support is higher for migrant parents, especially at older age. A move in early adulthood in particular detaches them to a greater or lesser extent from their own parents' and siblings' generation and leaves them with an attenuated kin support network (Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaheer et al. 2004).

In the case of non-European migrants, however, the need for intergenerational support from the children might be smaller, since migration is more often matched by subsequent moves of relatives and peers through chain migration, which might broaden the kin support network. Also, higher fertility rates, adds to the kin network. A higher number of siblings has been demonstrated to reduce the contact frequency per sibling. Moreover, there is evidence of a wider generation gap in values regarding intergenerational solidarity with the non-European second generation due to acculturation (Merz, Özeke-Kocabas, Oort et al. 2009). Since second-generation non-European migrants continue to struggle with educational and labor market disadvantages and perceived discrimination, they might nevertheless find themselves needing more financial and emotional support from their parents than many European second generation migrants.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature on intergenerational contact and support exchange, and the specific interest in European migrants, we can formulate a number of hypotheses. We formulate separate hypotheses for the two modes of contact (face-to-face and telephone) and the two migrant generations. The possibility to differentiate between face-to-face and telephone contact is one of the main advantages in our data in comparison with other surveys, such as SHARE (e.g. Hank, 2007). When focusing on migrants of different origin the distinction between face-to-face contact and telephone contact is an important improvement in the study of intergenerational contact since

telephone contact can be assumed to be less influenced by geographical distance than face-to-face contact.

Our first set of hypotheses compares native Belgians, first generation European migrants and first-generation non-European migrants with regards to contact with the mother. We expect migration to lead to a physical distance between migrants and their parents that reduces the possibility of face-to-face contact (H1a). Despite more expensive international phone calls, compensation due to reduced face-to-face contact might nevertheless arise, what in turn could lead to more frequent phone contacts (H1b).

- H1a: European and non-European first generation migrants have less face-to-face with their mother than native Belgians.
- H1b: European and non-European first generation migrants have more telephone contact with their mother than native Belgians.

Larger distances and fewer material and legal opportunities for mobility are likely to reduce contact possibilities even further for non-European migrants than for European migrants (H2a). The average lower educational level and higher family values of non-European migrants might nevertheless lead them to phone more frequently to their mothers (H2b).

- H2a: European first generation migrants have more face-to-face contact than non-European first generation migrants.
- H2b: European first-generation migrants have less telephone contact with their mother than non-European first generation migrants.

Multivariate analyses will be needed to account for the differences in SES, educational attainment and religiosity(/family norms) between the groups and to better understand the differences in face-to-face contact with the mother for natives, European migrants and non-European migrants.

The final two sets of hypotheses are related to differences between second generation European and non-European migrants and the native population. Here, we do not expect different effects for face-to-face and telephone contact. Hypothesis 3 is based on the attenuated kin support network of migrant parents.

- H3: European second-generation migrants have more face-to-face and more telephone contact with their mother than native Belgians.

Hypothesis 4a assumes that non-European migrant parents have a larger kin support network in the receiving country than European migrant parents due to chain migration and higher fertility rates. Hypothesis 4b assumes that higher emotional and financial support needs for second generation non-European migrants might lead to more frequent face-to-face contact with the mother than for European migrants.

- H4a: European second-generation migrants have more face-to-face and telephone contact with their mother than non-European second-generation migrants.
- H4b: European second-generation migrants have less face-to-face and telephone contact with their mother than non-European second-generation migrants.

Again, multivariate analysis, will have to account for differences in distance, SES, educational attainment and religiosity(/family norms) between the groups, but also for the number of siblings of the second-generation migrant.

Data and Methods

Data

For the analyses in this paper, we are using the Belgian wave 1 Generations and Gender Survey data. The GGS is a large-scale socio-demographic survey conducted within the framework of the international Generations and Gender Programme (GGP)(Vikat et al., 2007). In Belgium the survey was financed by Statistics Belgium, the Studiedienst van de Vlaamse regering, the Institut Wallon de l'Evaluation, de la Prospective et de la Statistique and the Belgian Federal Science Policy. The scientific support was provided by researchers of the University of Ghent, University of Antwerp, Université Catholique de Louvain, Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering and coordinated by the Free University of Brussels.

The survey data were collected between 2008 and 2010, using face-to-face CAPI interviews. The sample is representative for the Belgian non-institutionalized population and contains information on 7,163 individuals. Migrants are well represented in the GGS dataset: 1,690 individuals have a 'migrant background' based on their country of birth and that of their parents we can distinguish between those who were born abroad (first generation) and those who were born in Belgium but had one parent born abroad (second generation). A small majority of migrants in the sample (55%, n=935) has a European background. As this dataset includes both migrants and 'non-migrants', a comparison by origin is possible. In order to optimize analyses, a random subsample was taken from the Belgians in the dataset to get more comparable group sizes for the immigrant and non-immigrant groups, resulting in a total sample size of 2,596 individuals for our analyses.

We differentiate between first and second generations migrants, and migrants from de EU27 and from outside the EU27. First generation migrants are defined as those who were born abroad (see Table 1). If the respondent was born in a EU 27 country, he was categorized as "1st generation EU", otherwise "1st generation non-EU". If the respondent was born in Belgium but at least one of his parents was born abroad, he was a migrant of the second generation. If one of the parents was born elsewhere in Europe except Belgium, it is a '2nd generation migrant EU', otherwise it is a '2nd generation migrant non-EU'. If the respondent and both his parents were born in Belgium, he is of Belgian origin.

Table 1: Sample by migration status

	Frequency	Percent
1st generation non-EU	478	18,4%
1st generation EU	416	16,0%
2nd generation non-EU	277	10,7%
2nd generation EU	519	20,0%
Belgian origin	906	34,9%
Total	2596	100,0%

As the Generations and Gender Survey was designed for studying intergenerational relations, information on parent-child relations and their characteristics are fully available. Only individuals with at least one of their (biological) parents alive were selected. Co-resident children-parent dyads (n=289) as well as those whose parents were not alive at the time of the survey (n=916) were excluded from our analysis.

In the analyses the 'child' is the main respondent who answered questions about the contact to his parents. This means that we can focus on the characteristics of the respondent, however we do also have information on the parents' demographics and living situations.

The control variables in the multivariate models are: sex, educational attainment ('maximum secondary education' versus 'tertiary education'), age of the respondent and

number of siblings. As a measurement of socio-economic status, we have added two variables: one of them ('SES') asks the respondent if he has enough financial resources to live comfortably (yes/no), and the other one asks if the respondent has enough financial resources to travel at least once a year (yes/no). Then also attitudes towards intergenerational care duties were included (e.g. 'do parents have to help their children financially when needed').

Two indicators for intergenerational contact with biological and adoption mothers are available: 'How often do you see your mother?' and 'How often do you phone your mother?'. Respondents could in both cases fill in a number of contacts per week/month/year. These numbers were recoded to a frequency per week and then categorized in 5 categories: "Never", "Few times per year", "Few times per month", "One or more times per year" and "Daily or more". In order to perform the ordinal regression, this variable was recoded to a categorical variable with three categories: "never", "less than once a week", "once a week or more".

Methods

For the analysis of intergenerational contact and the influence of several socio-demographic variables, ordinal regression models are used. The dependent contact variable is in both cases (face-to-face contact and telephone contact) a categorical variable with three categories: 'once or more a week', 'Less than once a week', 'never'. Ordinal regressions can be seen as an extension of logistic regression models in which the dependent variable is an ordinal variables. Parameters can be interpreted similarly. However, we start with some descriptive findings.

Results

Descriptive findings

We start with a descriptive analysis of the frequency of contact of European and non-European first generation migrants with their mothers and compare this to the frequency of contact of the native population. Table 1 shows the difference in frequency of face-to-face contact with the mother for native Belgians and first generation migrants. While seven out of ten native Belgians see their mother at least once a week (!), a large share of first generation migrants sees their mother at most a few times a year. The difference with the native population is large for both European and non-European migrants, but there are significant differences between these groups. 83% of non-European migrants see their mother no more than a few times a year, whereas this is the case for only half of all European migrants. The difference is mainly due to the group who never gets to see their mother. While migration does not seem to prevent European migrants from meeting their mother (6% as compared to 5% in the native population), nearly a third of all first-generation non-European migrants never visits or never receives a visit from their mother. Almost a third of Europeans who have migrated to Belgium succeed in seeing their mother a few times a month and 15% sees their mother one or more times a week. The relatively limited geographical distances within Europe facilitate this contact, compared to transnational contact with family members outside Europe, especially when European migrants come from neighboring countries (Table 3). 67% of the first generation European migrants in the GGP survey come from one of the neighboring countries.

Table 2: Contact frequency with the mother for first generation European and non-European migrants compared to the native Belgian population (Sign: ** $p < 0.00$, * $p < 0.05$)

	1st generation non-EU	1st generation EU	Belgian origin
Face-to-face contact**			
Never	32,2%	5,5%	4,6%
A few times per year	51,0%	44,8%	5,3%
A few times per month	9,1%	30,1%	19,9%
One or more times per week	6,3%	15,3%	56,7%
Daily or more	1,4%	4,3%	13,5%
Total	208	163	453
Telephone contact**			
Never	3,8%	8,6%	13,9%
A few times per year	4,3%	3,7%	2,6%
A few times per month	25,0%	14,7%	14,6%
One or more times per week	57,2%	60,1%	55,0%
Daily or more	9,6%	12,9%	13,9%
Total	208	163	453

Table 3: Face-to-face contact frequency with the mother for first generation European migrants from bordering and other EU-countries (Sign: ** $p < 0.00$, * $p < 0.05$)

	1st generation EU (bordering countries)	1st generation EU (other countries)
Face-to-face contact*		
Never	4,5%	7,5%
A few times per year	37,3%	60,4%
A few times per month	35,5%	18,9%
One or more times per week	19,1%	7,5%
Daily or more	3,6%	5,7%
Total	110	53

Migration seems to have a clear impact on the face-to-face contacts of European migrants with their mothers and this does not seem to be compensated by more frequent telephone contact. The strong significant effect of migration on call frequency in Table 2 is fully attributable to the non-European group. Less non-European migrants never call their mother compared to native Belgians (4% vs. 14%). In comparison to natives, they will more often call their mother a few times per month (25% compared to 25%). But the cost of long-distance calls also refrains some first generation non-European migrants from calling their mother everyday (10% vs. 14%). So, even for this group, compensation strategies do not seem to include more regular calls. There is moreover a clear positive correlation between face-to-face contact and telephone contact for all three groups (non-Europeans: .269**, Europeans: .251**, natives: .572**). The correlation between both types of contact is less strong for first generation migrants than for the native population.

Table 4 goes one step further and examines whether the effect of adult migration on parent-child contact carries through in the next generation (the in-between² and second generation). Since migrants have a smaller family network in their new country of residence, they might be more dependent on their children for care and emotional support, and vice versa. As they have fewer opportunities to turn to the generation above them, they might turn more often to the generation below. There are however no

² The 'in-between' generation are those first generation immigrants that migrated before their 16th birthday. Because of their young age of migration, we can expect that they migrated together with their parents, and thus they live together with their parents in Belgium.

significant differences in the frequency of face-to-face contact between adult children and their mother in native families and families of in-between and second generation European and non-European migrants. A larger share of in-between and second generation Europeans as compared to natives nevertheless call their mother at least on a daily basis (24% vs. 14%). These tables are nevertheless only descriptive tables, and other variations between the groups, other than origin, might explain the differences found. In the next section we will control for sex, educational level, number of siblings, age of the mother, children in the household, distance between mother and child, whether there is a partner, socio-economic status and living arrangement of the mother.

Table 4: Contact frequency with the mother for in-between and second generation European and non-European migrants compared to the native Belgian population (Sign: ** $p < 0.00$, * $p < 0.05$, ns: $p > 0.05$)

	In-between and 2nd generation non-EU	In-between and 2nd generation EU	Belgian origin
Face-to-face contact (ns)			
Never	8,8%	5,7%	4,6%
A few times per year	9,3%	4,8%	5,3%
A few times per month	17,3%	17,6%	19,9%
One or more times per week	49,6%	58,8%	56,7%
Daily or more	15,0%	13,1%	13,5%
Total	226	335	453
Telephone contact*			
Never	16,1%	13,8%	13,9%
A few times per year	1,8%	0,6%	2,6%
A few times per month	13,5%	12,6%	14,6%
One or more times per week	52,0%	49,2%	55,0%
Daily or more	16,6%	23,7%	13,9%
Total	223	333	453

Multivariate models

Given the specific trends we find in the descriptive tables, we further investigate these trends in multivariate models where we can control for a number of background and context variables. We use ordinal regression models to test our hypotheses. The dependent variable is the ordinal variable expressing the frequency of face-to-face contact with the mother, and the frequency of contact with the mother by telephone in 3 categories: 'Never', 'Less than once a week' and '1 or more times per week'. The reference category is '1 or more times per week'. Thus the models express the chances of less or never having contact with the mother.

Table 5: Dependent variable in multivariate models

	Face-to-face contact		Telephone contact	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Never	136	9,8%	167	12,1%
Less than once a week	496	35,8%	247	17,9%
1 or more times per week	753	54,4%	966	70,0%
Total	1385	100%	1380	100%

In the following multivariate ordinal regression models, differences between Belgians and first and second generation (including the 'in-between' generation) migrants concerning face-to-face contact and telephone contact are examined. In Table 6 Belgians are compared to first generation migrants from within the EU and outside the EU. In ordinal regression model 1a only migratory status is included as independent variable. In this model we see that first generation migrants have significantly more

chance to have less face-to-face contact with their mother. For first generation non-EU migrant, this is even 25 times higher compared to the Belgians, for first generation EU migrant this is 6 times higher. This confirms the trend that was found in the descriptive tables: face-to-face contact with mothers is the less frequent amongst non-EU migrants, somewhat more frequent among EU migrants and the most frequent among the reference group of the Belgians. In model 1b extra variables are added to control for, especially some variables describing the socio-economic context of the migrant. This is necessary given the different socio-economic profile many migrants have. The pattern among migrants however stays, and some extra variables also seem to influence face-to-face contact frequency with the mother: Men have significantly more chance to have less contact with the mother, and also a higher number of siblings results in less contact. This is conform earlier research. Also the economic possibility to travel is significant: those having enough financial resources to travel at least once a year, have significantly less chance to have less contact with the mother. So a higher socio-economic position leads to more contact. This is somewhat different in comparison with previous studies. When extending the model with some cultural context factors, educational level and attitudes towards intergenerational duties, the same conclusions stay.

Table 6: Parameter estimates ordinal regression model – comparison Belgians and 1st generation migrants (N=803; Sign: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, ns: p>0.05)

	Model 1a - Face-to-face contact		Model 1b - Face-to-face contact (socio-ec. context)		Model 1c - Face-to-face contact (cultural context)	
	Exp(B)	Std. Error	Exp(B)	Std. Error	Exp(B)	Std. Error
1st generation non-EU	25,078***	0,213	17,584***	0,230	17,082***	0,245
1st generation EU	6,835***	0,195	6,699***	0,199	6,566***	0,202
Belgian	1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.
Man			1,707***	0,152	1,706***	0,153
Woman			1,000	.	1,000	.
Age			0,997	0,641	0,996	0,007
Number of siblings			1,105**	0,033	1,111**	0,034
Low SES			1,197	0,177	1,245	0,181
High SES			1,000	.	1,000	.
Economic possibilities to travel			0,622*	0,191	0,629*	0,195
Max. secondary education					0,863	0,158
Tertiary education					1,000	.
Attitudes - intergenerational					0,993	0,133

Table 7: Parameter estimates ordinal regression model – comparison Belgians and 1st generation migrants (N=802; Sign: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, ns: p>0.05)

	Model 2a - Telephone contact		Model 2b - Telephone contact (socio-ec. context)		Model 2c - Telephone contact (cultural context)		Model 2d - Telephone contact (face-to-face contact)	
	Exp(B)	Std. Error	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Std. Error	Exp(B)	Std. Error
1st generation non-EU	0,942	0,178	0,958	0,210	1,200	0,228	0,476**	0,272
1st generation EU	0,777	0,201	0,786	0,206	0,882	0,210	0,643	0,233
Belgian	1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.
Man			1,514**	0,154	1,551**	0,155	1,385*	0,161
Woman			1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.
Age			1,405***	0,007	1,034***	0,007	1,036**	0,008
Number of siblings			0,989	0,035	0,985	0,036	0,943	0,039
Low SES			1,052	0,186	1,048	0,190	0,945	0,199
High SES			1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.
Economic possibilities to travel			0,751	0,200	0,782	0,203	0,983	0,216
Max. secondary education					1,550**	0,164	1,554*	0,171
Tertiary education					1,000		1,000	.
Attitudes - intergenerational					1,331*	0,138	1,332*	0,143
No face-to-face contact							13,929***	0,301
Less than once a week face-to-face contact							1,996**	0,201
At least once a week face-to-face contact							1,000	.

Table 6 presents similar models as table 6 but this time for telephone contact with the mother. In the basic model 2a we do not find a significant effect for migrants. This model indicates that 1st generation migrants in Belgium, whether they are from within or outside the EU, do not call their mother less or more frequent than native Belgians do. So there seems to be no compensation of the differences in face-to-face contact. When adding socio-economic contact factors to the model, resulting in model 2b, there still is no effect of migrants. Other variables, such as age and sex of the migrants, are again significant: men have less contact with their mothers, and so do older respondents. Less educated, here defined as not tertiary, have more chance to have less contact with their mother. Also those with stronger attitudes concerning intergenerational duties seem to have more telephone contact. In the last model we also control for the frequency of the face-to-face contact, to see if there is some compensation of face-to-face contact with telephone contact. This model 2d reveals that the frequency of face-to-face contact has a significant effect on telephone contact with the mother: those having never face-to-face contact with their mother, also have a higher chance to have no contact, or very limited contact with their mother by telephone. And interestingly, when controlling for face-to-face contact, it seems that first generation migrants from outside the EU, have significantly less chance to have less telephone contact. So migrants from outside the EU seem to have significantly more telephone contact with their mother in comparison to the native Belgians in the sample.

In Table 8 the same models are tested as in table 6, but this time for the comparison between native Belgians and second generation migrants (and the 'in-between' generation). In all models 3a, 3b and 3c, migratory status never seem to have a significant influence, in contrast to models 1a, 1b and 1c for the first generation

migrants. This could be explained by the fact that many second generation migrants have their parents living relatively close, in Belgium, just as the Belgians, the reference group in these models. They also do not have more contact with their parents than Belgians. Similar to the models 2a, b and c are sex and age significant: men have less contact than women, and older migrants have somewhat less contact than younger migrants.

Table 8: Parameter estimates ordinal regression model – comparison Belgians and 2nd generation migrants (N=1014; Sign: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, ns: p>0.05)

	Model 3a - Face-to-face contact		Model 3b - Face-to-face contact (socio-ec. context)		Model 3c - Face-to-face contact (cultural context)	
	Exp(B)	Std. Error	Exp(B)	Std. Error	Exp(B)	Std. Error
2 nd generation non-EU	1,342	,170	1,328	,190	1,408	,195
2 nd generation EU	0,527	,158	0,922	,162	0,960	,165
Belgian	1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.
Man			1,486**	,138	1,517**	,140
Woman			1,000	.	1,000	.
Age			1,016*	,007	1,014*	,007
Number of siblings			1,037	,034	1,046	,034
Low SES			1,105	,164	1,171	,168
High SES			1,000	.	1,000	.
Economic possibilities to travel			0,883	,180	0,864	,184
Max. secondary education					0,833	,150
Tertiary education					1,000	.
Attitudes - intergenerational					1,267	,128

Table 9 gives the models for telephone contact with mothers by second generation migrants, in comparison to native Belgians. Very similar results were found as for face-to-face contact. Second generation migrants, whether they are from within or outside the EU, have similar contact frequencies with their mothers as Belgians have. This is even the case when we control for a number of characteristics that define the socio-economic and cultural context of the respondent.

Table 9: Parameter estimates ordinal regression model – comparison Belgians and 2nd generation migrants (N=1009; Sign: ***p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, ns: p>0.05)

	Model 2a - Telephone contact		Model 2b - Telephone contact (socio-ec. context)		Model 2c - Telephone contact (cultural context)		Model 2d - Telephone contact (face-to-face contact)	
	Exp(B)	Std. Error	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Exp(B)	Std. Error	Exp(B)	Std. Error
2 nd generation non-EU	1,042	,173	1,154	,195	1,254	,201	1,054	0,214
2 nd generation EU	0,845	,157	0,864	,164	0,865	,168	0,853	0,177
Belgian	1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.
Man			2,102***	,141	2,192***	,144	2,138***	0,152
Woman			1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.
Age			1,028***	,007	1,027***	,007	1,019**	0,007
Number of siblings			1,025	,034	1,012	,035	1,007	0,037
Low SES			0,793	,172	0,808	,175	0,736	0,187
High SES			1,000	.	1,000	.	1,000	.
Economic possibilities to travel			0,535***	,183	0,570**	,186	0,689	0,202
Max. secondary education					1,502*	,157	1,484*	0,165
Tertiary education					1,000	.	1,000	.

Attitudes - intergenerational					1,449**	,131	1,451**	0,139
No face-to-face contact							31,753***	0,335
Less than once a week face-to-face contact							1,935***	0,166
At least once a week face-to-face contact							1,000	.

Conclusion and discussion

In this paper we aimed to investigate the intergenerational contact of migrants in Belgium with their mothers. By distinguishing several migrant groups (EU versus non_EU and 1st and 2nd generation versus native Belgians) and distinguishing face-to-face and telephone contact, we hoped to reveal some patterns in transnational family behaviour and we tried to contribute the quantitative research on this topic.

The descriptive results of our analyses revealed clear differences between migrants and Belgian: Face-to-face contact between first generation migrants and mothers seems to be very closely connected to geographical distance, as we could expect. The non-EU migrants have the least frequent contact with their mothers, followed by EU-migrants and EU-migrants from neighbouring countries. The first generation migrants have the least contact, with the highest percentage of those never having face-to-face contact with their mother. Belgians on the other hand have the highest percentages of those having daily face-to-face contact. In the multivariate models, this effect stays regardless other socio-economic and cultural context factors. For telephone contact by first generation migrants, the situation is less pronounced. The descriptive analyses indicate some smaller effect where Belgian have the most frequent telephone contact. The first generation migrants from the EU have somewhat less frequent contact, but with also a relatively high percentage of individuals that have never contact with their mother. Those first generation migrants from outside the EU have the least frequent telephone contact with their mother, but also a low percentage of 'no contact'. Concerning the first generation migrants we can conclude that especially face-to-face contact is very different for the migrants and Belgians. These differences seem to be mainly due to the geographical distance that inhibits frequent contact for those living far away from their mother. So hypothesis 1a can be confirmed. Hypothesis 1b, stating that migrants compensate this low face-to-face contact frequency with a higher frequency of telephone contact is not supported. In the descriptive analyses this was found, but in the multivariate models, the effect disappeared after controlling for background variables.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b focused on the difference between first generation migrants from the EU and from outside the EU. Hypothesis 2a is confirmed: first generation migrants from outside the EU have less frequent contact with their mother than first generation migrants from within the EU. Hypothesis 2b that expected a difference in telephone contact frequency was not found. The differences between first generation EU and non-EU migrants in telephone contact frequency were not significant.

Hypothesis 3 and 4 concern second generation migrants in Belgium. Hypothesis 3 suggests that European second generation migrants have more face-to-face and more telephone contact with their mother than native Belgians given the attenuated kin support network of migrant parents. Hypotheses 4a and 4b focus on the differences between second generation migrants from within and outside the EU. Non of them was confirmed. The descriptive analyses and the multivariate models did not find significant differences between the second generation migrants and the native Belgians. They seem to have very similar contact frequencies with their mothers, nevertheless their differences in geographical distances.

This study confirms that the family is not in crisis. Even migrants seem to keep in close contact with their mother and thereby providing the opportunity to exchange support and to maintain the social network. Our findings also confirm the importance of making a difference between face-to-face contact and telephone contact. This study however also has some limitations. As is typical for cross-sectional research, this study is not able to examine causality, only correlations. Secondly although the GGS data make a valuable distinction between face-to-face contact and contact by telephone, it does not include explicitly other contemporary forms of contact such as voIP services (e.g. Skype) or online chat services (e.g. Facebook). Given the integration and availability of these low-cost services, it could be argued that they are of increasing importance. Thirdly this study focuses on the relation between migrants and their parents. This is of course an important aspect in the family and social network, especially when thinking of intergenerational support exchange, but other aspects of the transnational family network and the social network of the migrant, like contact with siblings and other family members, could not be taken into account. Finally we have made a distinction between EU and non-EU migrants. It would be interesting to make an even more detailed distinction between several countries or regions of origin. It would also have been interesting to add interaction effects to the models. Due to low numbers, this is not possible with these data.

In future research we plan to make an international comparison of intergeneration contact by migrants, using the international comparative GGS data. By increasing the number of cases in the sample, we also hope to refine our statistical models, including adding interaction effects and modelling the variation between countries.

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