Migrants' fertility: the influence of partner choice on the fertility of the second generation in Belgium

Lisa Van Landschoot, Helga A.G. de Valk, Didier Willaert, and Jan Van Bavel

Extended abstract

Introduction

Research on the fertility behavior of migrants seeks to clarify and explain the impact of migration on the reproductive behavior of migrants by questioning whether they retain the fertility behavior of the country of origin after migration, or whether they adapt or convert to the fertility behavior of the majority population resident in the country of destination. Trying to find an answer to these questions, scholars use at least one of the following hypotheses: the adaptation or assimilation hypothesis, the disruption hypothesis, the socialization hypothesis, the selection hypothesis and/or the hypothesis of the interrelation of events. These hypotheses are especially relevant for the first generation migrants as they try to explain the impact of migration on the childbearing behavior of migrants.

Less research is done on the fertility behavior of the children of immigrants and in particular, little is known on how this behavior might be the outcome of specific life course decisions. Nevertheless, it is important to examine the childbearing behavior of second generation migrants as their population size gradually increases and they consequently take up an important position in many European countries. Therefore, instead of looking at the population who experienced a migration and analyze how this life changing event might influence their fertility behavior, this paper focusses on the population with foreign origin already present in the country of destination and analyses how the partner choice of the second generation migrants in Belgium is related to their fertility behavior.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Analyzing migrants' fertility, and in particularly the impact of migration on fertility uses at least one of the following hypotheses: (1) *the adaptation hypothesis or assimilation hypothesis* assumes that couples moving from high-fertility countries to low-fertility countries will gradually adapt their fertility behavior to the patterns found in the country of destination (Andersson, 2004; Kulu, 2005; Mayer & Riphahn, 2000); (2) *the disruption hypothesis* states that fertility will decline preceding,

during and shortly after migration due to the stress and/or difficulties related to the move itself, but will be compensated once settled (Ford, 1990; Goldstein & Goldstein, 1981); (3) *the socialization hypothesis* stresses the importance of the norms, values and behavior dominant during childhood (Kahn, 1988); (4) *the selection hypothesis* predicts similarity with the majority population in the country of destination because migrants already had similar childbearing intentions before migration (Kahn, 1988) and; finally, (5) *the hypothesis of the interrelation of events* assumes that the elevated fertility after migration is not the result of catching-up (as assumed by the disruption hypothesis), but because migration and union- and family formation are often related to one another (Andersson, 2004; Mulder & Wagner, 1993).

Although the five hypotheses concerns the influence of migration on fertility, and therefore are mainly relevant for the first generation immigrants, the hypothesis of adaptation and assimilation is also applicable for the second generation migrants: over time, and over generations, migrants and their descendants will adapt to the norms and values dominant in the country of destination (Mayer & Riphahn, 2000). Therefore, researchers supporting the assimilation hypothesis expect that (1) the boundaries between the migrant groups and the majority population will gradually diminish; (2) that consequently migrants will integrate in the host country, which will be expressed in an increasingly occurrence of mixed marriages (e.g. Coleman, 1994; Hooghiemstra, 2001); and (3) fertility will adapt to the childbearing behavior of the host society (Kang Fu, 2008).

Nevertheless, other research has shown that people have the tendency to marry within their own group and with someone who is close in status (Kalmijn, 1998; Milewski & Hamel, 2010). Translated to the partner selection of the second generation migrants, this means that they have the tendency to marry someone from their own origin group, regardless whether he or she is born in the host country (respectively someone from the second generation already in the country, or a first generation migrant, whether or not migrated for marriage) (Milewski & Hamel, 2010). Especially choosing a first generation partner is interpreted as insuring the traditional values and is therefore seen as the opposite of assimilation (González-Ferrer, 2006; Hooghiemstra, 2001). Nevertheless, several studies have already shown that second generation migrants (more) often choose to marry someone from the country of origin (e.g. Hooghiemstra, 2001). This is particularly true for descendants of Turkish immigrants living in different European countries (González-Ferrer, 2006; Lievens, 1999; Lodewijckx, 2010).

Lievens (1999) found in his research on family-forming migration from Turkey and Morocco to Belgium, that marrying a marriage partner from the country of origin should not be equated to reinforcing the traditional values. On the contrary, he found that Turkish men and women hold

different underlying motivations for marrying someone born in Turkey. Whereas the men wants to secure the traditional norms and values, he emphasizes that especially highly assimilated women decide to marry a partner born and raised in Turkey in order to realize her modern goals. Turkish women are traditionally expected to move in with her in-laws after marrying their son. If a woman decides to marry with someone from the country of origin, she manages to escape this habit. Moreover, given the fact that men are not allowed to live with the parents of the wife, she can maintain her own household. Secondly, given the fact that her husband does not know the country and therefore has to rely on her, she might take advantage of the situation and modify the traditional male-female power distribution (Lievens, 1999).

Even though there is already much information on the different factors that determine the partner choice, little is known on how this choice might affect the fertility behavior of these different couples. Therefore, this article wants to analyze how the partner choice among the second generation in Belgium affects their fertility, using following hypotheses:

Union formation with:

(1) a native partner (exogamy). Following the assimilation hypothesis, partnering a native Belgian partner is seen as evidence of integration. If we extrapolate this, one could assume that the fertility behavior of a mixed couple will resemble the fertility behavior dominant in Belgium (Kang Fu, 2008).
(2) a second generation migrant from the own origin group (endogamy). The fertility behavior is expected to be in between the fertility behavior of the host society and that of their parents (the first generation migrants).
(3) a first generation migrant from the own origin group (endogamy). Given the assumption that second generation migrants decide to form a union with a first generation migrant from their country of origin as a mean to secure the traditional norms and values, the fertility will be as high as the fertility of their parents (the first generation). Following Lievens (1999) a further distinction is made:
    a. to the extent that men form a union with a first generation woman to secure the traditional behavior, we expect that the fertility behavior will be equal to the fertility behavior of the first generation, and,
    b. for women, who might decide to start a relationship with a first generation migrant in order to realize her modern perspectives in life, we expect that the fertility behavior will be similar to the fertility behavior of the host country.

Data

In order to find an answer to the main research question and test the derived hypotheses, this paper uses the data from the 2001 Belgian Census, collected on the first of October 2001. These data provides us a range of information on respondents' personal detail such as his or her nationality, family -and household formation, as well as information on the standard socio-economic factors of all residents legally present at the time of census. These data enables us to determine to which generation the respondent belongs to. A first generation migrant is operationalized as someone with foreign origin, born outside Belgium and immigrated to Belgium at 19 years or older. Someone of the 1.5 generation has the same characteristics as a first generation migrant with the exception that this person moved to Belgium between the ages 7 and 18 year. A second generation migrant is someone of foreign origin either born outside Belgium and immigrated before age 7, or born in Belgium. To determine the origin of the respondent, information on the current nationality (census 2001) and nationality at birth are combined.

In our analyses we distinguish by origin based on the most important migrant groups present in Belgium. The most important groups of European origin are those with a French, Italian, Dutch or Spanish origin, whereas men and women with a Turkish or Moroccan origin are the two most important non-Western origin groups in Belgium (Centrum voor gelijkheid van kansen en voor racismebestrijding, 2012).

In 2001, there were 10,284,186 inhabitants in Belgium of which 945,720 were of the second generation. Among them, 206,434 were in a relationship (marriage: 176,061 and cohabitation: 30,379). Among those of the second generation in union: 37,662 were together with a partner of the first generation; 11,999 with someone of the 1.5 generation; 47,734 with a partner of the second generation, and 109,039 of the partners were natives.

Preliminary descriptive results

Table 1 and 2 gives an overview of the absolute and relative number of unions among second generation men and women taking into account the origin of both partners, as well as to which generation the other partner belongs to. These numbers reveal that men and women of the second generation of European origin are most often in a relationship with a native Belgian partner. The difference between men and women is particular visible among those with a Turkish or Moroccan origin. Second generation male Turks form less often a union with Belgian women compared to their Moroccan counterparts (respectively 10.5% and 21.4%). Men of Turkish origin clearly prefer

relationships with women of the same origin of the first -or 1.5 generation and to a lesser extent with someone of the second generation. Out of the in total 7,019 engagements, 2,995 were with a Turkish woman of the first generation, 1,828 with someone of the 1.5 generation and, 1,070 with a woman of Turkish origin of the second generation. The contrast over the different generations among Moroccan second generation men is less pronounced: 2,530 decided to form a union with a Moroccan woman of the first generation, 711 with someone of the 1.5 generation and finally, 1,641 with someone of the same origin group born in Belgium of immigrated before the age of 7 (in total, there were 7,052 couples where the Moroccan man is someone of the second generation) (Table 1). As Table 2 indicates, the distribution is slightly different for women. Although Moroccan women marry almost twice as often with a native Belgian man compared to the Turkish women of the second generation, the percentages are lower compared to men (respectively 11.4% and 6.3%). Moreover, both Turkish and Moroccan women clearly prefer to marry a first generation migrant of their own origin group. Of the in total 6,929 unions were the Turkish woman was someone from the second generation, 4,668 are formed with a first generation Turk, 485 with a 1.5 generation and 1,070 with someone of the second generation. For Moroccan women there were 6,634 unions with a first generation migrant of the same origin group, 668 with a Moroccan 1.5 generation man and 1,641 with a second generation Moroccan (out of the in total 10,880 couples in 2001).

Table 1. Absolute and relative number of unions among second generation men by origin and generation, 2001.

	2nd generation men									
Women	French	Dutch	Italian	Spanish	EU15	Non-EU15	Turkish	Moroccan	Others	Total
Native Belgian	8,100 *(78.5%)*	8,227 *(84.8%)*	23,463 *(54.3%)*	3,118 *(55.6%)*	6,142 *(71.5%)*	4,909 *(67.6%)*	735 *(10.5%)*	1,511 *(21.4%)*	2,216 *(63.3%)*	58,421 *(57.1%)*
1st generation endogamy	708 *(6.9%)*	556 *(5.7%)*	1,760 *(4.1%)*	232 *(4.1%)*	511 *(5.9%)*	576 *(7.9%)*	2,995 *(42.7%)*	2,530 *(35.9%)*	518 *(14.8%)*	10,386 *(10.2%)*
1.5 generation endogamy	141 *(1.4%)*	58 *(0.6%)*	1,552 *(3.6%)*	129 *(2.3%)*	126 *(1.5%)*	112 *(1.5%)*	1,828 *(26.0%)*	711 *(10.1%)*	67 *(1.9%)*	4,724 *(4.6%)*
2nd generation endogamy	447 *(4.3%)*	293 *(3.0%)*	12,420 *(28.7%)*	1,039 *(18.5%)*	537 *(6.2%)*	629 *(8.7%)*	1,070 *(15.2%)*	1,641 *(23.3%)*	179 *(5.1%)*	18,255 *(17.8%)*
Others	928 *(9.0%)*	568 *(5.9%)*	4,040 *(9.3%)*	1,092 *(19.5%)*	1,278 *(14.9%)*	1,036 *(14.3%)*	391 *(5.6%)*	659 *(9.3%)*	520 *(14.9%)*	10,512 *(10.3%)*
Total	10,324	9,702	43,235	5,610	8,594	7,262	7,019	7,052	3,500	102,298

Source: Belgian Census 2001, authors' calculation.

Table 2. Absolute and relative number of unions among second generation women by origin and generation, 2001.

	2nd generation women									
Men	French	Dutch	Italian	Spanish	EU15	Non-EU15	Turkish	Moroccan	Others	Total
Native Belgian	8,433 *(73.4%)*	6,669 *(81.9%)*	18,449 *(44.0%)*	2,883 *(49.4%)*	5,344 *(67.0%)*	4,435 *(67.2%)*	436 *(6.3%)*	1,239 *(11.4%)*	2,730 *(63.0%)*	50,618 *(48.6%)*
1st generation endogamy	1,284 *(11.2%)*	632 *(7.8%)*	4,453 *(10.6%)*	252 *(4.3%)*	753 *(9.4%)*	400 *(6.1%)*	4,668 *(67.4%)*	6,634 *(61.0%)*	768 *(17.7%)*	19,844 *(19.1%)*
1.5 generation endogamy	151 *(1.3%)*	66 *(0.8%)*	3,317 *(7.9%)*	300 *(5.1%)*	159 *(2.0%)*	129 *(2.0%)*	485 *(7.0%)*	668 *(6.1%)*	64 *(1.5%)*	5,339 *(5.1%)*
2nd generation endogamy	447 *(3.9%)*	293 *(3.6%)*	12,420 *(29.6%)*	1,039 *(17.8%)*	5,37 *(6.7%)*	6,29 *(9.5%)*	1,070 *(15.4%)*	1,641 *(15.1%)*	179 *(4.1%)*	18,255 *(17.5%)*
Others	1,177 *(10.2%)*	478 *(5.9%)*	3,304 *(7.9%)*	1,364 *(23.4%)*	1,188 *(14.9%)*	1,008 *(15.3%)*	270 *(3.9%)*	698 *(6.4%)*	593 *(13.7%)*	10,080 *(9.7%)*
Total	11,492	8,138	41,943	5,838	7,981	6,601	6,929	10,880	4,334	104,136

Source: Belgian Census 2001, authors' calculation.

These differences are also visible for the average number of children per union (Table 3 and 4). Mixed couples between a native Belgian and a second generation man or woman of European origin have an average number of children between approximately 1.50 and 2 children (as a comparison, the average number of children for native Belgian couples is 1.92 in 2001).

In line with the partner choice, differences are visible between the second generations of Turkish or Moroccan origin. Overall, the average number of children is lower when a Turk or Moroccan forms a couple with a native Belgian man or woman, compared to the couples were one of the partners has a European origin and the other is a native Belgian. Turkish and Moroccan men have on average 1.43 and 1.42 children if the partner is a native Belgian and those numbers are even lower if the woman of the exogamous couple is of Turkish a Moroccan origin: 1.31 and 1.43. On the contrary, both for second generation Turks and Moroccans men and women, the average number of children is the highest if the partner is a first -or 1.5 generation migrant of the same origin group. The average number of children falls between these two extremes if they are in a relationship with someone of the same origin group born in Belgium or immigrated before they were 7 years old: 1.53 when both partners are second generation Turks and 1.68 when both partners are second generation Moroccans.

Table 3. Average number of children for second generation men and their partner by origin and generation, 2001.

Women	2nd generation men								
	French	Dutch	Italian	Spanish	EU15	Non-EU15	Turkish	Moroccan	Others
Native Belgian	1.84	1.93	1.67	1.64	1.79	1.85	1.43	1.42	1.66
1st generation endogamy	2.04	2.06	2.07	1.93	1.77	1.73	1.94	1.89	1.89
1.5 generation endogamy	2.10	1.87	2.19	1.95	2.11	2.03	2.06	2.00	2.25
2nd generation endogamy	2.05	2.26	1.73	1.77	1.92	1.89	1.53	1.68	1.98

Source: Belgian Census 2001, authors' calculation.

Table 4. Average number of children for second generation women and their partner by origin and generation, 2001.

Men	2nd generation women								
	French	Dutch	Italian	Spanish	EU15	Non-EU15	Turkish	Moroccan	Others
Native Belgian	1.89	1.89	1.52	1.58	1.74	1.76	1.31	1.43	1.50
1st generation endogamy	2.15	2.01	2.18	1.93	2.06	2.03	1.81	1.90	1.96
1.5 generation endogamy	2.22	1.94	2.20	2.07	2.28	2.19	2.28	2.86	1.67
2nd generation endogamy	2.05	2.26	1.73	1.77	1.92	1.89	1.53	1.68	1.98

Source: Belgian Census 2001, authors' calculation.

Further research

These preliminary descriptive findings suggest that there is a correlation between the partner choice and the average number of children born in each couple. Further research seems appropriate. Therefore, we want to analyze in more detail how the transition into parenthood among the second generation in Belgium for the different origin groups might be affected by partner choice, using event history methods. We will analyze the transition to the first birth as well as subsequent parity progressions.

References

Andersson, G. (2004). Childbearing after Migration: Fertility Patterns of Foreign-born Women in Sweden. *International Migration Review*, *38*(2), 747–775.

Centrum voor gelijkheid van kansen en voor racismebestrijding. (2012). Migratie en migrantenpopulaties in België. Retrieved from www.diversiteit.be/?action=publicatie_detail&id=157&thema=4

Coleman, D. A. (1994). Trends in Fertility and Intermarriage among immigrant populations in Western Europe as Measures of Integration. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, *26*, 107–136.

Ford, K. (1990). Duration of Residence in the United States and the Fertility of U.S. Immigrants. *International Migration Review*, *24*(1), 34–68.

Goldstein, S., & Goldstein, A. (1981). The impact of Migration on Fertility: an "Own Children" Analysis for Thailand. *Population studies*, *35*(2), 265–284.

González-Ferrer, A. (2006). Who Do Immigrants Marry? Partner Choice Among Single Immigrants in Germany. *European Sociological Review*, *22*(2), 171–185.

Hooghiemstra, E. (2001). Migrants , Partner Selection and Integration : Crossing Borders ? *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, (32), 609–626.

Kahn, J. R. (1988). Immigrant Selectivity and Fertility Adaptation in the United States. *Social Forces*, *67*(1), 108–128.

Kalmijn, M. (1998). Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *24*, 395–421.

Kang Fu, V. (2008). Interracial-Interethnic Unions and Fertility in the United States. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *70*(August), 783–795.

Kulu, H. (2005). Migration and Fertility: Competing Hypotheses Re-examined. *European Journal of Population*, *21*(1), 51–87.

Lievens, J. (1999). Family-Forming Migration from Turkey and Morocco to Belgium: The Demand for Marriage Partners from the Countries of Origin. *International Migration Review*, *33*(3), 717–744.

Lodewijckx, E. (2010). Gezinsvorming bij tweede generatie Turken en Marokkanen. Een verschillende start al naargelang ze huwen met een huwelijksmigrant of met iemand van de tweede generatie? *Studiedienst van de Vlaamse Regering*.

Mayer, J., & Riphahn, R. T. (2000). Fertility assimilation of immigrants: Evidence from count data models. *Journal of Population Economics*, *13*(2), 241–261.

Milewski, N., & Hamel, C. (2010). Union Formation and Partner Choice in a Transnational Context: The Case of Descendants of Turkish Immigrants in France. *International Migration Review*, *44*(3), 615–658.

Mulder, C. H., & Wagner, M. (1993). Migration and marriage in the life course: a method for studying synchronized events. *European journal of population*, *9*(1), 55–76.