Partner and family relations in the context of European integration and intra-EU mobility

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Europe's migration policies and opportunities for internal cross-border mobility have evolved profoundly since the Second World War (Boswell & Geddes, 2011). Especially with the creation of the European Union, European citizens have been offered unprecedented opportunities to be mobile across member state borders, in this dissertation referred to as intra-EU mobility. EU policy makers have typically approached intra-EU mobility in a positive way, as a useful tool for European economic and social integration (McCormick, 2014). However, it could be suggested that intra-EU mobility may also interfere with the private lives of European citizens, by creating opportunities but also posing challenges for partner and family relationships. Nevertheless, there is limited research on family and partner relations from a specific intra-EU mobility perspective. To fill this gap in the research knowledge, in this dissertation I will look at selected topics on the intersection between family and partner relations and intra-EU mobility. Using insights from the life course paradigm (Elder, Johnson, Crosnoe, 2003), I study how and to what extent intra-EU mobility and partner and family relations are intertwined and which consequences this may have.

The migration and mobility landscape in post-war Europe has been strongly determined by the European integration process. With the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993, the freedom of movement and residence for persons in the EU was introduced and became one of the cornerstones of the European Union (European Communities – Council, 1992; Koikkalainen, 2011; Recchi, 2015). The goals of the European free movement are twofold (Gaspar, 2009). On one hand, intra-EU mobility is an essential instrument for the creation of a European single market and thereby contributing to making the EU the "world's most dynamic and competitive economy", as formulated in the Lisbon Agenda 2000. On the other hand, intra-EU mobility can also be seen as a way to reinforce European integration on an individual and social level and to create a higher identification with, appreciation of and political support for the European project (Favell & Recchi, 2009, Favell, Recchi, Kuhn, Jensen & Klein, 2011; Mazzoni et al. 2018; Gaspar, 2010). The right of free movement stipulates that "Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to

the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaty and by the measures adopted to give it effect." (Council of the European Communities, 1992, Article 8a). This free movement was innovative in the sense that migration was no longer exclusively formulated as focusing on labour migration, but also allowing mobility for a range of other reasons including education, pleasure, personal development, retirement, etc. (Gaspar, 2008). In this way, the EU can be seen as "world's best research laboratory on legal, transnational migration" (Koikkalainen, 2011), resulting in "a new map of European migration" (King, 2002) with a more diverse intra-European mobility landscape. This has inspired me to go beyond studying intra-EU mobility from a labour market perspective but to apply a family perspective. The "open-border policy" within the EU still creates many opportunities for mobility of individuals and families to date and is often associated with positive attitudes and high appreciation by EU citizens. This strongly contrast with the much more restrictive "closed-border policy" towards migration from outside the EU and the related much more negative attitudes among the EU citizens about migration of third-country nationals (Eurostat, 2020d; Boswell & Geddes, 2011).

Intra-EU mobility can be very diverse in terms of, among others, permanency of mobility, destination of mobility and drivers for mobility (Recchi, Salamońska, Rossi & Baglioni, 2014). Although difficult to accurately measure, Recchi (2015) has shown that mobile Europeans, in diverse forms, are since the 1990s an important and continuously growing group. With 37% of all foreign-born inhabitants of the European Union (close to 66 million people) originating from another EU member state in 2019 (Eurostat, 2020a), European mobile citizens are also a large share of the migrant population across Europe. Despite the context of an EU with open internal borders, mobility is not always 'frictionless' and may even be disruptive (Koelet & de Valk, 2016). For example, being mobile within the EU can interfere with family life, as reported in the Special Eurobarometer (e.g. Special Eurobarometer 337 – Eurostat, 2014). Intra-EU mobility may challenge individuals to rethink and reorganise existing family relations or let new families develop, be it locally, transnationally or a combination of both. Or vice versa, family relationships may influence mobility decisions within the EU. Nevertheless, in

research there is a dominant focus on non-EU migrants when it comes to migration and families (Castro-Martin & Cortina, 2015; Bailey & Boyle, 2004; Gaspar, 2010; Braun & Recchi, 2008).

Also in Belgium, although intra-EU mobile citizens account for 46% of the total foreign-born population (Eurostat, 2020a), the research on migrants and their families tends to focus on those coming from outside the EU, such as the Moroccan and Turkish origin groups (e.g. Van Pottelberge & Lievens, 2018; Yilmaz, Van de Putte & Stevens, 2019; Dupont, Van Pottelberge, Van de Putte, Lievens, & Caestecker, 2017). Although these studies yield interesting and very relevant findings, they cannot necessarily simply be applied to EU mobile citizens, given the different context. Research that specifically investigates the impact of intra-EU mobility on families by taking into account the unique characteristics of intra-EU mobility is much needed now that intra-EU mobility is such a large share of all migrations that are taking place (Bailey & Boyle, 2004). Most existing studies on intra-EU mobility have predominantly focused on economy and labour-market oriented aspects related to the move both in terms of reasons and outcomes of the mobility (e.g. Black, Engbersen, Okólski & Panţîru, 2010; Currie, 2007; Janta, Ladkin, Brown & Lugosi, 2011; Friberg 2012; Coyle, 2007). However, like all migration moves, it should be acknowledged that intra-EU mobility could equally have an important impact on the individual when it comes to family life and related challenges (e.g. Ryan & Sales, 2013; Bell & Bivand Erdal, 2015; Koelet & de Valk, 2016; Moskal & Tyrrell, 2016; Kloc-Nowak, 2018; Shmulyar Gréen & Melander, 2018). In this way, we aim to look at the private domain (partner relations, family) rather than the public domain (labour market) when talking about intra-EU mobility. The scarce existing literature on family life and partner relations of intra-EU mobile citizens starts from qualitative research methods (e.g. Ryan & Sales, 2013; Ryan, Sales, Tilki, Siara, 2009; Moskal, 2011; Moskal & Tyrrell, 2016; Gaspar, 2010). These qualitative in-depth studies help to increase our awareness and knowledge, and they provide useful insights by exploring specific topics and cases. Using quantitative datasets may further contribute and extend what we know by aiming to identify more generalisable trends and unravel the related mechanisms. With this

dissertation, I aim to contribute to the growing body of quantitative studies on this topic (e.g. Kleinepier, de Valk & van Gaalen, 2015).

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the impact of intra-EU mobility on European citizens and their family and partner relations is still insufficiently studied and largely ignored in earlier research. Therefore, the central research question in this dissertation is: How are family and partner relations shaped and challenged in a context of intra-EU mobility? By using the term intra-EU mobility, I explicitly refer to a broad range of situations where persons undertake their right of free movement, not being limited to long term or permanent migration (cf. definition by European Commission – Migration and home affairs), taking different types of movement, duration and temporality into account. The aim is to get a better insight in the relations between intra-EU mobility and partner and family relations. I will do so by using a quantitative research approach in order to obtain knowledge that is representative for and generalisable to broader contexts in society. Starting from a life course perspective, I acknowledge the complex dynamics of contextual influences in which individuals take decisions and actions throughout their lives. In this dissertation, I will mainly focus on Belgium which is a good case study as an EU member state with high numbers of European migrants and with a long history in the European integration project (cf. infra).

This dissertation consists of four empirical chapters. Each chapter focuses on a specific research question derived from the main research question. In the first chapter, I will look at the effect of intra-EU mobility on partner choice, more specifically I will examine whether student mobility, such as an Erasmus stay abroad, influences the probability of engaging in a European binational relationship, which is defined as a couple where partners were born in different EU member states. The second chapter again focusses on European binational couples and analyses where partners in these binational couples meet and how this meeting context might be related to their intra-EU mobility. The third empirical study investigates whether partnership relations and study motivation, affect the probability of aspirations of studying abroad among students. In the fourth and last

empirical chapter, the focus is on a later stage in the life course. When being mobile within the EU, people are challenged to manage family relations transnationally. Therefore, this final empirical chapter investigates the differences between non-migrant and different EU and non-EU migrant groups in intergenerational communication frequencies.

In what follows, I will describe (1.1) the policy context that has created the current intra-European mobility opportunities and present some descriptive facts and figures on the current intra-EU mobility, (1.2) the introduction of the theoretical and conceptual framework used in this dissertation, followed by (1.3) an outline of the empirical chapters and the data used.

1.1. Study context: Mobility within the European Union

In this section, I first provide an overview of the historical and policy background of European integration and what this means for intra-EU mobility policy, followed by some statistical setting-the-scene of the current intra-EU mobility.

1.1.1. The first steps of the European integration process

European integration can be defined as "the product of the selective pooling of national sovereignty, or ultimate jurisdiction over a body politic, by post-war European nation-states" (Peterson, 2001, p.4923). In practice, this European integration has been a process that started in the 1950s and which is continuing to this day. Although different political visions exist on how European integration should be implemented and developed, Reho (2017) identifies four goals of EU integration: peace (political goal), security (geopolicital goal), prosperity (economic goal) and identity (cultural goal). The European integration has developed through a number of successive treaties between the Member States, gradually constructing the juridical and institutional framework of the European Union as we know it today. To understand the current intra-EU mobility

policy situation, it is necessary to understand how it is linked to the different initiatives taken in this step-by-step integration process.

The first steps towards a more integrated Europe, also referred to as 'the European project', were taken in post-war Europe in the 1950s. They resulted from a need for economic development and were perceived as a way to establish long-term political stability and peace on the European continent after World War II and a continuing threat of East-West confrontation (McCormick, 2014). This would be done through first of all intensified international cooperation and later on also the development of a supranational policy level, resulting in increasingly blurred national borders (McCormick, 2014). With the Treaty of Paris in 1951, the European Coals and Steel Community (ECSC) was founded. Although limited to the specific domain of the coal and steel industries in six member states (Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Italy), it was the first successful European integration initiative. The ECSC included the opportunity for specialised workforce recruitment across national borders and consequently already provided opportunities for specific groups of workers to participate in the labour market in another participating country (article 69[1], Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, 1951; Recchi, 2005; Favell & Recchi, 2014). In 1957, the Treaty of the European Economic Community (Treaty of Rome) was signed. With this treaty, a much more ambitious step in European integration was taken by founding the European Economic Community (EEC)[2]. The EEC mainly focused on the creation of a common market for all participating countries. This included free movement of goods, persons, capital and services. Although Article 48 of this treaty referred to freedom of movement of persons for the first time, these persons were in fact defined as exclusively those active on the labour market[3]. This perfectly

[1] Article 69: "Member States undertake to remove any restriction based on nationality upon the employment in the coal and steel industries of workers who are nationals of Member States and have recognised qualifications in a coalmining or steelmaking occupation, subject to the limitations imposed by the basic requirements of health and public policy."

[2] Also the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC), also known as Euratom was founded, but remained a much smaller initiative in scope than the ECC

[3] "This shall involve the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States, as regards employment, remuneration and other working conditions. 3. It shall include the right, subject to limitations justified by reasons of public order, public safety and public health: (a) to accept offers of employment actually made; (b) to move about freely for this purpose within the territory of Member States; (c) to stay in any Member State in order to carry on an employment in conformity

fitted within the market-oriented approach of European integration at that time. In the following years, the implementation of a European common market, including the freedom of movement, was systematically further elaborated (See Recchi, 2005 for a more detailed description of the process). By the end of the 1980's, the European Economic Community had also grown, to twelve member states: Belgium, France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, United Kingdom, Greece, Portugal and Spain. With the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986, the next ambitious goal was set to remove all barriers for the creation of a single market by 1992. Around the same time, the Schengen Area also came into practice (1985), removing internal border controls and harmonising external border control. As a result, the 'debordering' within the EU coincided with a 'rebordering' of the external border of the EU and its surveillance (Yndigegn, 2011). In 2004, the EU saw its largest expansion of member states in its history. With the accession of 10 mainly Central and Eastern European countries to the existing union of 15. The population size of the EU increased with about 20% (Databank World Development Indicators, 2020). Despite some transitional measures to limit disturbances of national labour markets, the enlargement immediately impacted intra-EU mobility, with a new strong East-to-West migration flow (Recchi, 2016).

1.1.2. Free movement of citizens: one of EU's cornerstones

Following on the various preceding European treaties, the European Union was formally established in 1992 with the Treaty on the European Union (Maastricht Treaty, coming into force on 1st November 1993), an important step in the European integration process. In the light of European mobility, a major novelty was the introduction of European citizenship. Each person with the nationality of one of the Member States automatically also received European citizenship (Article 8; Council of the European Communities, 1992). This European citizenship, being supplementary to the national citizenship, came with a number of rights. One of these rights, and cornerstones of EU

with the legislative and administrative provisions governing the employment of the workers of that State; and (d) to live, on conditions which shall be the subject of implementing regulations to be laid down by the Commission, in the territory of a Member State after having been employed there. 4. The provisions of this Article shall not apply to employment in the public administration."

citizenship (Favell & Recchi, 2014), is that "Every citizen of the Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in this Treaty and by the measures adopted to give it effect." [4](Council of the European Communities, 1992, Article 8a). This right of free movement in the EU was unprecedented in scope and scale and is still in many ways unique in the world (Favell & Recchi, 2014; Koikkalainen, 2011; Barbulescu, Lafleur & Stanek, 2015). In 2004, the different regulations and conditions for the free movement were consolidated in directive 2004/38/EC on 'the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within other member states' (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2004; Marzocchi, 2020). EU citizens have "the right of residence on the territory of another Member State without any conditions or any formalities other than the requirement to hold a valid identity card or passport", although for periods longer than three months, some extra conditions may apply (Chapter III, European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2004). Important in this directive is that the right of free movement does not only include individuals, but also entails their close family members[5]. Despite the freedom of movement and residence, there are also a number of additional conditions that apply to mobile Europeans. For example, if not working or being self-employed, EU citizens and their families should have a health insurance and sufficient resources to 'not become a burden on the host member state's social assistance system'. However, after five years of uninterrupted legal residence, EU citizens get the right of permanent residence in the host member state without additional conditions[6].

[4] This right is since the Treaty of Nice also part of the Charter of fundamental rights of the European Union (Article 45; European Parliament, 2000). In this charter, free movement is defined as "the right of EU citizens and legally resident third-country nationals (in accordance with the Treaty establishing the European Community) to move and reside freely within the territory of the EU Member States".

[5] Family members are defined as "the spouse (also of the same sex), the registered partner, direct descendants who are under the age of 21 or are dependants and those of the spouse or registered partner; and dependent direct relatives in the ascending line and those of the spouse or registered partner" (Article 2; European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2004; Marzocchi, 2020).

[6] which they might lose again when staying two successive years outside the host member state. EU citizens can also be refused the right of entry or residence based on public health, public security or public policy.

Since its introduction, free movement of citizens has been very instrumental to the European integration process, as can be found in several policy strategies and goals formulated by the European Commission in recent years.
First of all, free movement of citizens is a crucial element in the economic conception of the EU, by contributing to the creation of a competitive single market. In the Lisbon Agenda (March, 2000; see Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2009) the EU formulated the aim to be the most "competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world able to maintain economic growth and optimal levels of social cohesion" (Rodriguez, Warmerdam & Triomphe, 2010, p.11). Intra-EU mobility was seen as an important tool to reaching this ambitious goal. The same is true for the Europe 2020 strategy, setting out a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century, that formulated strategies for an economy that aimed for 'smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', including a number of goals that are linked to intra-EU mobility (European Commission, 2010).
In addition to its economic function, intra-EU mobility is also believed to contribute to the social and cultural EU integration. In the 1970's, the concept of a People's Europe was introduced to bring the people closer to the European project, making the European project more tangible and aiming to create a European identity and culture (Adonnino, 1985; Shore, 2001). Although the term 'People's Europe' is not in use anymore in official EU communications, it was the start of the development of the cultural and social element of European integration. European policy makers have understood that intra-EU mobility could have an influence on attitudes towards the EU and European identification. Citizens who are mobile are believed to identify themselves more as European citizens and thereby reinforce European social integration (e.g. Fligstein, 2008; Gaspar, 2010; Recchi, 2012). Several researchers have also found a link between mobility experiences and stronger European identifications (e.g. Recchi, 2015; Mazzoni et al., 2018), even in the case of relatively short periods abroad such as Erasmus exchanges (Van Mol, 2014). Therefore, the integration of individuals and creating

European citizens is not only a result of European integration but also a tool to increase further support for this European integration process (Baldoni, 2003).

Many initiatives have been taken over the past decades to stimulate and increase intra-EU mobility for different identified target groups, such as the Comenius programme[7], the Leonardo da Vinci programme[8], the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions research fellow programme[9] and the EURES programme[10]. However, the best and most well-known example is the Erasmus programme, that, together with the Bologna process[11], contributes to the internationalisation of higher education in the EU. Erasmus, which stands for 'European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students', started in 1987 and aimed to "achieve a significant increase in the number of students from universities […] spending an integrated period of study in another Member State" (Article 2; Council of the European Communities 1987). Although the original founding documents contained a strong economic motivation [12], framing student mobility in an employability and adaptability context, the social integration aspect of Erasmus was also mentioned: "to strengthen the interaction between citizens in different Member States with a view to consolidating the concept of a People's Europe". Since the Erasmus programme started in 1987, it has always had a prominent place within the EU policy as it perfectly fits in the different objectives formulated in policy strategies such as Europe 2020 Strategy and the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and

[7] "The Comenius programme supported cooperation among all those active in pre to secondary school education in Europe with the objective to increase mobility, build partnerships between schools in different Members States, encourage language learning, enhance teacher training and improve pedagogical approaches." (European Commission, 2020aa). The Comenius programme started in 2007, and is part of the Erasmus+ programme since 2014.

[8] "Leonardo da Vinci focused on vocational education and training. It addressed both the learning and teaching needs in the sector, namely trainees in vocational education, teachers and trainers, institutions and educational bodies, enterprises, associations, social partners and bodies relating to either lifelong learning or the labour market." (European Commission, 2020b). The Leonardo Da Vinci programme ran from 2007 until 2013. From 2014 it was integrated in the Erasmus+ programme.

[9] "The Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions support researchers at all stages of their careers, regardless of age and nationality. The MSCA also support cooperation between industry and academia and innovative training to enhance employability and career development." (European Commission, 2020c).

[10] "Launched in 1994, EURES is a European cooperation network of employment services, designed to facilitate the free movement of workers." (European Commission, 2020s)

[11] "Under the Bologna Process, European governments engage in discussions regarding higher education policy reforms and strive to overcome obstacles to create a European Higher Education Area. Bologna reform is key to building the necessary trust for successful learning mobility, cross-border academic cooperation and the mutual recognition of study periods and qualifications earned abroad. " (European Commission, 2020e).

[12] "in order that the Community may draw upon an adequate pool of manpower with first-hand experience of economic and social aspects of other Member States"; "with a view to securing the competitiveness of the Community in the world market"),

Training (ET2020). From the beginning of the programme till its 30th birthday in 2017, more than 4,400,000 higher education students had made use of the programme to study abroad (European Commission, 2019). Since 2014, the Erasmus programme continues under the name Erasmus+.

1.1.3. Intra-EU mobility in numbers

It is often argued that migration and cross-border mobility is difficult to grasp in numbers in a complete and accurate way, and thereby tends to be underestimated (Poulain, 2008). Especially intra-EU mobility suffers from this problem (Recchi, 2005). With the freedom of movement in the EU, many moves are not registered as an official registration (or visum/work permit) is often not required (Castro-martin & Cortina, 2015). Additionally, due to the flexibility of intra-EU mobility regulations, the mobility is potentially also very volatile or, as Recchi (2005, p.17) calls it, "*bite–and–go migration*", making it even more difficult to describe in statistics. As such the available statistics are indicative and most likely underestimate or undercount the actual number of moves.

Looking at administrative population/census data available via Eurostat, we see that at the start of 2018, 12% of all inhabitants of the European Union were first generation migrants, i.e. those born in a country other than the country of residence. With 36% of them born in another EU Member State, intra-EU migrants are a substantial share of the total migration landscape in the EU (Van Mol & de Valk, 2016). In absolute terms this refers to about 21 million individuals on a total population of more than 500 million that can be categorised as intra-European migrants, when using country of birth to define EU mobile citizens (Eurostat, 2020a). In Belgium, the share of intra-EU migrants among the foreign-born population is even larger, with 46% being born in another EU Member State (Eurostat, 2020a). Immigration and emigration flow statistics also show similar patterns; 30% of all immigrants in 2017 originated from another EU Member State (Eurostat, 2020b). For Belgium, this percentages was 42% of all inward migrants. When people from EU Member States emigrate, a majority of them (58%) move to another

Member State (Eurostat, 2020c). For Belgium, this percentage is even higher with 70 % of all those leaving the country emigrating to other EU Member States (Eurostat, 2020c).

Based on Labour Force Survey (LFS) data (European Commission, 2018), we get a first idea on the partner and family relations of intra-EU mobile citizens[13]. In general, the household size and composition of nationals and mobile citizens do not show large differences, but an overall variation is found between the EU Member States. In terms of marital status, we find half of the intra-EU mobile citizens in the LFS to be married (53%), while 37% is single and the other 10% is divorced, separated or widowed. For those mobile Europeans living with their partner in the same household (93% of the couples), 30% live with a national of the country they moved to (European binational couples, based on nationality), whereas 65% lives with another intra-EU mobile citizen ('mover couple'). The European binational couples are found to be typically higher educated than the uninational couples or 'mover couples', while in general intra-EU mobile citizens are typically lower educated than nationals.

Using representative survey data from the Eurobarometer, we also get an indication of past or aspired future mobility. About 10 percent of Europeans has some direct experience of living and working abroad in the past (inside or outside the EU) (Special Eurobarometer 337, Eurostat, 2014). This percentage raises to 17% for those who completed their education after age 20. Although these numbers do not show a high prevalence of intra-EU mobility, as also Favell & Recchi (2009, p.3) suggest, it is of high symbolic importance given that EU movers can be considered the prototype of "highly Europeanised citizens [that are] the human face of EU integration". About 17% of the respondents indicated envisaging working abroad at some point in the future. Besides direct mobility experience, many Europeans (41%) had a friend or relative that experienced living and/or working abroad. In this way, intra-EU mobility is present in the lives of many EU citizens (Special Eurobarometer 337, Eurostat, 2014). Nevertheless,

[13] Most analyses in the Labour Force Survey focus on working-age individuals (age 20 – 64). Analyses on couples focus on those aged 30-50.

despite the opportunities to be mobile, the majority of all Europeans are not mobile. But the group of mobile Europeans is significant and is theoretically interesting from a European integration perspective. Based on the limited information we have on family and partner relations of mobile Europeans, it may be valuable to better understand the link between being mobile in Europe and these family and partner relations.

1.2. Theories and concepts: A life course approach to intra-EU mobile citizens and their family relations

In this dissertation, I will use the Life Course Paradigm (LCP) as a theoretical conceptual framework to explore the intersection of family and partner relations with intra-EU mobility (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003; Macmillan & Copher, 2005). Understanding intra-EU mobility and its link with partner and family relationship is crucial to exploring the role of the EU as laboratory for accessible mobility. The LCP framework acknowledges the complexity of the numerous interpersonal, structural, and historical context factors that influence and shape individual behaviour in life through a number of principles "*that collectively define the primary analytic and conceptual themes of life course studies*" (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003, p.4). The Life Course Paradigm can help us understand the very diverse and complex relations between family and partner relations and intra-EU mobility. In the following two sections I present two principles of the Life Course Paradigm that may be relevant for studying and understanding the potential link between intra-EU mobility and partner and family relations, and contribute to the structure of this dissertation. Firstly, I will cover the potential opportunities related to intra-EU mobility by showing how intra-EU mobility could influences partner choice. Second, I will look at potential challenges in partner and family relations that can be linked to intra-EU mobility.

1.2.1. Opportunities for partner relations in an intra-EU mobility context

The principle of 'Time and place' in the Life Course Paradigm can be understood as the fact that the behaviour and decisions of individuals throughout their lives are always

embedded in historical times and places that create a context of opportunities and constraints. Applied to the research in this dissertation, it is mainly the unique mobility context that exists within the juridical and political framework of the EU that sets a specific context for partner and family relations. Therefore, I believe intra-EU mobility may influence partner choice, as I will elaborate further in the next paragraphs.

There is a long tradition in the social sciences to study the partners people choose for intimate relationships, how this partner choice process takes place, and what the effects are of specific partner choices (Merton, 1941; Kennedy, 1944; Marcson, 1950; Eckland, 1968; Kiesler & Baral, 1970; Rosenthal, 1970; Murstein, 1971; Blau, 1977; Blau, Blum & Schwartz, 1982; Mare, 1991; Stephan & Stephan, 1991; Kalmijn, 1993; Schoen & Weinick, 1993; Qian, 1998; Schwartz & Mare, 2005; Kalmijn, De Graaf, Janssen, 2005; Blossfeld, 2009; Schwartz, 2013; Furtado & Trejo, 2013; Tegunimataka, 2020). People typically choose a partner within the own social group (endogamy) that shows similarity on the basis of origin, religion, ethnicity, educational level, language, etc (homogamy). This would increase the probability of having a common worldview, similar interests and similar ideas about life (Kalmijn, 1998). Even though endogamy is the norm, there are also couples formed where partners are distinctly different at some of these points, i.e. heterogamy. These so-called mixed couples are interesting to study as they show how boundaries between social groups dissolve over time. They are especially relevant in a migration and mobility context as they are highly valued because they are closely linked to the integration of migrants (Kalmijn, 1998), or as Kalmijn (1998, p. 397) states: "*It is not just a reflection of the boundaries that currently separate groups in society, it also bears the potential of cultural and socioeconomic change*". They could be seen as "*the litmus test of immigrants' integration into the mainstream society*" (Rodríguez-García, 2015, p. 13). These 'barrier-breaking' relationships cross boundaries between different social and cultural groups in society (González-Ferrer, 2006; Hooghiemstra, 2001; Lucassen & Laarman, 2009; Rodríguez-García, 2015). Numerous studies have confirmed associations between mixed couples and (social and economic) integration of migrants, and even their children (e.g. Gordon, 1964; Rodríguez-García, 2015; Kalmijn,

1998; Kalmijn, 2010; Dribe & Lundh, 2003; Meng & Gregory, 2005). The relationship between intermarriage and integration is, however, multidimensional and therefore complex (Rodríguez-García et al., 2015).

Many studies on mixed unions in Europe have focused on relationships between European natives and non-EU migrants (Gaspar, 2010). However, in an intra-EU mobility context, intermarriage is usually applied by studying European binational couples, referring to (marital) unions between citizens from different member states inside the EU (Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2009; Gaspar, 2010; Koelet, et al., 2012, Van Mol & de Valk, 2016; Koelet & de Valk, 2014; Haandrikman, 2014). Similar to studies in interethnic unions, intra-EU marriages are also seen as symbols of social integration as they show how the European integration process is happening "from below" through formation of intimate relationships of its citizens (Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2009; Gaspar, 2010). Despite the vastness of literature on mixed couples as proof and symbol of successful integration between different social groups in societies (e.g. Carol, 2016; Esteve & Bueno, 2012; Huschek, Liefbroer & de Valk, 2012; Hartung, Vandezande, Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2011; Hooghiemstra, 2003; Lievens, 1998; Hannemann et al, 2018), European binational couples only received limited attention and comparative European studies are scarce (Castro-martin & Cortina, 2015). Our knowledge on EU binational couples is fragmented and limited to a number of nation-specific studies (Slany & Zadkowska, 2017).

To understand how intra-EU mobility may influence partner choice and the choice for a European binational partner, I use the concepts described by Kalmijn (1998). He describes marriage patterns in terms of the interplay of three general factors: structural opportunities and constraints of meeting potential partners, the role of 'third parties' in influencing the partner choice and individual preferences to partner with specific characteristics. We may apply these factors to explain how intra-EU mobility could influence partner choice.

The first factor, meeting opportunities, refers to the 'supply side' perspective of partner choice: only those individuals who are structurally available to meet can be chosen as a partner. In these meeting opportunities, a distinction can be made between a micro-level and macro-level approach (Kalmijn & Flap, 2001). Whereas the macro-level approach focuses on the 'marriage market' in terms of the demographical and geographical availability of potential partners (group size, sex-ratio and residential segregation of different origin groups in society) (e.g. Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2006; Haandrikman et al., 2008; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2006; Van Tubergen & Maas 2007; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2010; Blau & Schwartz 1984; Kalmijn, 1998), the micro-level approach looks at specific social settings and places where partners meet, such as school and the workplace (e.g. Blau, 1977; Feld, 1982; Blau & Schwartz, 1984; Bozon & Héran, 1989; Kalmijn & Flap, 2001; Lampard, 2007; Haandrikman, 2010; Bozon & Rault, 2012). As many meeting places for potential partners are socially segregated, meeting places as such may influence endogamy and homogamy patterns. It could be argued that the opportunities for intra-EU mobility may influence partner choice through the structural aspect of partner choice by extending local marriage markets to international, cross-border marriage markets, especially when the mobility is undertaken at an age when family formation is likely to occur (cf. Gaspar, 2010; Kofman 2004; Braun & Recchi 2008). Increased intra-EU mobility would then in the long run result in less borders between European nationals, through an increase of the opportunities for the formation of European binational couples (Gaspar, 2008).

A second factor that influences partner choice refers to the personal preferences of the individual (Kalmijn, 1998). This is what Kalmijn & Flap (2001) also refer to as 'the demand-side perspective' of partner choice. Kalmijn (1998) mainly defines personal preferences in terms of socioeconomic and cultural resources a potential partner has to offer. More specifically, socioeconomic resources refer to a preference that potential partners with higher education, high status jobs and higher income would be perceived as more attractive. Cultural resources then refer to language, cultural capital, attitudes, values, life styles, on so on, where a partner who is more similar would be perceived as

more attractive (cf. homogamy). Cultural similarity "*enables them to develop a common lifestyle (…) that produces social confirmation and affection*" (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 400), and "*enlarges opportunities to participate in joint activities, and similarity of knowledge creates a common basis for conversation, which enhances mutual understanding*" (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 399). When looking at the cultural resources that form the basis of personal preferences towards European binational couples, we argue that intra-EU mobility contributes to the accumulation and developments of 'mobility capital', defined as "*a subcomponent of human capital, enabling individuals to enhance their skills because of richness of the international experience gained by living abroad*" (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002, p. 51) or *"the knowledge amassed through international mobility that increases one's potential ability to move abroad and to assimilate into national and transnational structures. It may relate to the modification of existing forms of capital (social, cultural, linguistic, economic, or human) or it may involve the acquisition of a new type of capital resource altogether (mobility capital)*" (Scott & Cartledge, 2009, p 76). This 'internationalness' or 'cosmopolitan attitudes' can be linked to own previous mobility experiences (Mau, Mewes & Zimmermann, 2008), but also influences from parents (Weenink, 2008) and linguistic skills (Scott & Cartledge, 2009). In the literature, several authors have described the emergence of a new group of highly educated, highly skilled intra-EU mobile citizens with international 'European lifestyles' (Gaspar, 2009; Braun & Recchi, 2008) that strongly differ from the low-skilled labour migrants typically studied.

A third factor in partner choice is the potential influence of so-called 'third parties', broadly referring to the influence of other people than the partners, by creating social and cultural norms and expectations through group identification and group sanctioning (Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2006). Also 'third parties' are believed to contribute to in-group union formation. These can be expressed and passed on via different mechanisms; through group identification, direct control and group sanctioning, or more implicitly, via socialisation of attitudes during childhood (e.g. Carol, 2016; Carol, Ersanilli & Wagner, 2014; Carol, 2014; Lucassen & Laarman, 2009; Kalmijn, 1998). Parents are typically seen as a potentially important influencing factor in partner

choice through socialisation and parental involvement, reinforcing endogamous unions for their children (Van Zantvliet & Kalmijn, 2013; Huijnk and Liefbroer 2012; De Valk and Liefbroer 2007; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2006). In the context of intra-EU mobility, we believe that parents may influence the choice of a European binational partner through socialisation during childhood. As personal preferences and third parties are difficult to differentiate in practice and as they influence each other, Kalmijn & Van Tubergen (2010, p.461) have argued to speak about "cultural arguments" in partner choice, in contrast to the "structural arguments" such as meeting opportunities.

1.2.2. Constraints for family relations in an intra-EU mobility context

The second principle from the life course paradigm that I will use in my empirical studies is the principle of 'linked lives' (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003). This principle stresses the interdependency of individuals through networks of shared relationships. It refers to the idea that individual's actions and decisions are embedded in a network of social relations rather than being isolated acts (Fischer and Malmberg, 2001; Hagen-Zanker, 2008; Haug, 2008; Ryan & Sales, 2013; Souto-Otero et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2018). These linked lives can range from the closest and most intimate relationships, such as partners and family members, to friends, acquaintances, and colleagues. Several researchers have, on the one hand, pointed out that linked lives can have a positive effect on migration, and by extension also intra-EU mobility. For example, social networks may help individuals to inform and organise their own migration (e.g. White & Ryan, 2008; Ryan, 2009; Bell, 2012). Many researchers also acknowledge the potential challenges linked lives pose to individuals in a migration context (e.g. Carling & Collins, 2018; Williams et al., 2018). I will investigate two specific cases where linked lives challenge intra-EU mobility. First, I will look at how having a romantic partner relationship is related to study abroad aspirations among students, and second I will study intergenerational care among intra-EU migrants.

Family relations have been found to have a potential retaining effect on migration and mobility due to 'social embeddedness' or 'location-specific social capital' (Haug, 2008;

Fischer & Malmberg, 2001). This means that being more linked and socially embedded in one location, for example through family bonds, having a partner or children, is typically believed to impede migration as moving or migrating would imply the disturbance of these local social ties (Cairns & Smith, 2009; Vidal and Kley, 2010). Most existing studies focus on couples that are already well established and have a registered cohabitating union or are married, or who have children together. As a result, these studies focus on the later stages in the life course where union and family formation is clearly shaped. This implies that it can be questioned whether this constraining effect also applies to other (earlier) life course moments or for other types of migration, for example to student mobility among higher education students who are at a stage in life where partner relationships are typically early and have not yet been officialised or registered. Research on student mobility decisions has often identified the lack of financial resources as a crucial obstacle for student mobility. Due to the focus on this economic aspect of student mobility, the potential influence of linked lives on student mobility seems to be overshadowed. While a push-pull approach is still very common in research on student mobility, we will introduce the aspirations/ability model to investigate student mobility and as such bring in also the linked lives in private life that may influence mobility decisions (Carling, 2002). The aspiration/ability model starts from the premise that "people migrate because they have the aspiration to and the ability to do so." (Carling, 2018, p.1). In the model, aspirations refer to "*a conviction that migration is preferable to non-migration; it can vary in degree and in the balance between choice and coercion*"[14] (Carling & Schewel, 2018, p. 946). Ability then refers to the practical feasibility, and the obstacles and opportunities that can occur when aiming to realise migration. In a general migration context, immigration policies typically are considered as the most important obstacles under the concept of 'ability' (Carling, 2002; Carling & Schewel, 2018). In the context of intra-EU mobility, we argue that the existing policies are facilitating student mobility mainly through affecting 'ability', for example

[14] Following this definition, the concept of aspirations can be linked to related concepts as preference, desire, wish, positive inclination, attitudes, etc.

through the provision of grants. By focusing on study abroad aspirations, we take a step back and investigate how linked lives may affect these aspirations through cognitive and social mechanisms. The aspiration/ability model states that both aspiration and ability can be influenced at different levels. For aspirations, two levels are distinguished. At the macro level, the emigration environment is the societal context that is similar to everyone and that sets the scene for people to aspire to mobility, and more specifically to evaluate the understanding of individuals of this emigration context. In terminology of the life course paradigm, this would be the 'Time and place' principle, the EU as supranational policy level encouraging student mobility. At the micro level, we would look at individual characteristics to explain the difference between those aspiring mobility versus those aspiring immobility. Carling (2002) suggests the importance of social relationship in both the micro and macro level. In this way, also the LCP concept of 'linked lives' is present in this model, although not explicitly elaborated.

Linked lives may not only affect intra-EU mobility decisions, but also have an impact during the mobility or after migration and may influence the way intra-EU mobility is experienced. A second topic of challenges in family relations in an intra-EU mobility context is providing intergenerational care, another important aspect of family life next to partner relationships (Smith, 1998). Irrespective of origin of migrants and geographical distance between generations, most people perceive strong family relations and responsibilities. Parent-child relations are often strong and intergenerational care is often perceived important, also in a migration context (Bordone & de Valk, 2016; Bucx et al., 2008; Dykstra and Fokkema, 2010; Fokkema et al., 2008; Treas and Gubernskaya, 2012; Baldassar, 2008; de Jong Gierveld et al., 2012; Rooyackers et al., 2014; Baldock, 2000; Zechner, 2008). Intergenerational relations, and specifically care, are ideally organised in geographical co-presence (Baldassar, 2008). Overall, it is indeed shown that among the majority population, the geographic distance between adult children and their elder parents is typically relatively small even though it depends on the life course stage that influences the need for support and the resource to support (Smith, 1998). Among international migrants, geographical distance is

usually greater and may thus create an extra challenge to intergenerational care provision and a need to organising it differently (e.g. Falicov, 2005; Rooyackers et al., 2014). As regular visits are not always possible due to geographical distance, time limitations and financial restrictions, new forms of intergenerational relations and care are shaped. As the geographical distance to parents inhibits frequent face-to-face contact, it thereby may also decrease the possibilities to provide practical support. Rooyackers et al. (2014) however confirmed that emotional support, regardless whether practical support is provided, remained important in mother-child relations across the life course and among immigrants of diverse origin, even when the conditions are sometimes challenging (e.g. Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Peng & Wong, 2013). While frequent visits home remain the most important way in which transnational kin connections are kept (e.g. Bell & Erdal, 2015), the easiest and most frequent way in which 'caring about' is articulated is through letters and telephone calls (Baldock, 2000; Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Wilding, 2006). In this context, intergenerational contact frequency is an important proxy for intergenerational care and any giving and receiving of support or identifying the need for support (e.g. Bengtson and Roberts, 1991; Tomassini et al., 2004; De Vries and Kalmijn, 2008; Glaser and Tomassini, 2000), even though high contact frequencies do not necessarily reflect a high relationship quality or high levels of intimacy (e.g. Fokkema et al., 2008; Walker and Thompson, 1983). We argue that the effect of intra-EU mobility is dual. On one hand, the intra-EU mobility policy may facilitate the management of intergenerational context transnationally. On the other hand, providing intergenerational care transnationally remains a challenge for all migrants, both EU and non-EU.

1.3. Research outline & data

In this section, I introduce the empirical studies that will be elaborated in chapters 2 through 5. All four studies aim to contribute to the overarching research question of this dissertation: How are family and partner relations shaped and challenged in a context of intra-EU mobility? I do so by formulating four sub-questions, each being the focus of

one empirical chapter. Large scale quantitative data covering EU mobility are scarce, especially when focusing on the aforementioned topic of family and partner relationships. Therefore, I have selected and used a number of different datasets to answer each specific sub-question. I would argue that the combined use of multiple datasets in this dissertation is necessary for a rich and detailed insight in the complex reality of family and partner relations in an intra-EU mobility context throughout the life course.

Each chapter is elaborated as a self-contained journal article and thus is structured with its own introduction, theoretical background, data and methods section, overview of results, and concluded with a discussion and conclusion section. Hereafter, I briefly introduce the empirical studies, complemented with a concise description of the data used.

In Chapter 2, we focus on intra-European partnership formation in three European countries: Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Intra-European mobility has been actively promoted and stimulated by the European Commission given that exchanges and relationships between Europeans of different descent are seen as a core indicator of the success of the European project. In this paper, we address the question of the extent to which intra-EU mobility fosters partnerships between Europeans of different descent. We suggest that intra-European mobility can create opportunities both to meet partners from other European countries and to accumulate the necessary capital (economic, cultural, linguistic, mobility) to engage in a relationship with a foreign European. We use the Belgian, Swiss and Dutch datasets of the EUMARR survey on European (binational) couples. The EUMARR survey data were collected in 2012 within the framework of the project “Towards a European Society: Single Market, Binational Marriages, and Social Group Formation in Europe (EUMARR)”, a research project supported by the European Science Foundation (grant no. EUI2010-04221). The EUMARR data are unique given its focus on European couples, with a strong representation of European binational couples, a group that is often underrepresented

in other general socio-demographic survey data. In this chapter, we study the choice of native men and women to engage in a relationship with either a foreign-born European partner or a partner from the own native country. In the analyses in this study, we use binary logistic regression models to estimate odds of engaging in a European binational couple, in which both partners are born in a different EU Member State, versus engaging in a uninational couple, in which both partners are born in the same EU Member State.

Chapter 3 continues on the study of European binational couples. While in Chapter 2, we already looked into individual factors that contribute to the formation of European binational couples, in this chapter we focus on the 'meeting and mating' context of partners in European binational couples. Despite their importance from a European integration perspective, hardly anything is known on how and where European binational partners meet each other. Nevertheless, previous studies already highlighted the importance of opportunities for meeting a potential partner for the partner choice process (Kalmijn, 1998). The existing literature on meeting places and opportunities for romantic partners has two major gaps. First of all, the majority of these studies mainly focussed on partner choice patterns in the general majority group population. As a result, our knowledge on where European binational couples meet is limited. Secondly, many studies on meeting opportunities for partners have looked at the micro-level social context of meeting (e.g. bars, work, and school). As European binational couples are closely connected to European mobility – by definition, we expect at least one of the partners to have been mobile during their lifetime – we take a more geographical 'places' approach. We will look at the country of meeting, and the link with this country for both partners. Given our focus on European binational couples, we again use the EUMARR survey data from three EU member states: Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain. This unique dataset allows for a profound study of meeting context of partners in a European binational couple. Since the data also include uninational couples, we can make a comparison between both groups (binational and uninational couples). Logistic regression models are applied to investigate different meeting places and contexts.

In Chapter 4, we look at the study abroad aspirations of higher education students in Belgium. We argue that romantic partner relationships may have an impeding effect on study abroad aspirations. Additionally, we also include study motivations as another competing factor in this mobility decision process. As literature shows us that female students are more likely to study abroad compared to male students, and this gender difference is still largely unexplained, we pay special attention to gender differences in our analyses. The academic literature on study abroad has so far largely ignored the influence of romantic relationships and study motivation in the development of aspirations to participate in temporary learning experiences in another country. However, we argue that young adults might take considerations about investments in individual development (via academic training and thus study motivation) and romantic relationships into account in the study abroad decision-making process. Consequently, we apply a life course perspective analysing the relevance of a romantic partner and study motivation for study abroad aspirations among first year university students. We used data from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel Student Survey 2016 ('VUB Student Survey 2016'). The VUB Student survey is a cross-sectional dataset including 603 freshmen, collected in 2016 among recently started first year bachelor students in broad Social Sciences and Humanities[15]. The survey covers a broad set of questions, including questions on the socio-demographic background of the students, education, religion, health, attitudes, media use, political attitudes, travel experience, etc. The data are collected very early in the higher education study trajectory of these adolescents, making them even more interesting for studying aspirations rather than behaviour. We use logistic regression analyses to estimate odds for study abroad aspirations of the respondents.

In Chapter 5, we do not focus on intra-EU mobility as such, but on one of the consequences. When intra-EU mobile citizens reside in a country other than their home country, new challenges in relation to family develop. Similar to what non-European

[15] This includes bachelor students in political sciences, communication sciences, sociology, economy, law, psychology, educational sciences, criminology, and history.

migrants experience, European mobile citizens are also confronted with the challenge of maintaining and managing relations with their families, often across borders, and to meet the expectations of intergenerational care. This can be strongly impeded due to the geographical distance to their families as has been extensively documented for non-western migrants across Europe. In this paper, we focus on contact frequencies that different origin groups in Belgium have with their biological mother, where contact is seen as a major precondition for further intergenerational care and solidarity. We do this by making comparisons between different groups of first generation European migrants, Belgian natives, and non-European migrants. In the analyses, we differentiate in the analyses between face-to-face and telephone contact. In this way, we account for communication that is linked to geographical proximity or travel opportunities (face-to-face contact) and communication that is not hampered by distance. For the analyses in this study, we use the cross-sectional Generations and Gender Survey data from the Belgian GGS programme wave 1 (De Winter et al., 2011). The Belgian GGS is set up within the framework of the international Generations and Gender Programme (Vikat et al., 2007). The data for Belgium were collected between 2008 and 2010, and resulted in a representative sample of the Belgian non-institutionalised population and includes a total of 7,163 respondents (De Winter et al., 2011). The data cover information on both type and frequency of contact between individuals and their biological parents and include a wide range of individual and family background characteristics.

In the last chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 6, I will summarise the empirical findings of the four previous chapters, and reflect on the consequences of these studies for the general research question and the implications for the existing literature. Additionally, I will also address some of the limitations of this dissertation in order to formulate recommendations for future research. I will conclude by formulating some policy advise based on the results of this study.

Table 1-1: Overview of the studies

Chapter	Research question	Data
2	Does intra-European mobility during childhood and (early) adulthood foster European binational partnerships?	EUMARR survey
3	Where and in which context do partners in European binational couples meet each other?	EUMARR survey
4	Does a romantic relationship and study motivation influence the study abroad aspiration of students?	VUB Student Survey 2016
5	How much contact do intra-EU migrants have with their mother in comparison to native Belgians and non-EU migrants?	Generations & Gender Survey Belgium (wave 1)

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CHAPTER 2

BEYOND L'AUBERGE ESPAGNOLE. THE EFFECT OF INDIVIDUAL MOBILITY ON THE FORMATION OF INTRA-EUROPEAN COUPLES

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Abstract

This paper focuses on intra-European partnership formation in three European countries: Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Intra-European mobility has been actively promoted and stimulated by the European Commission (e.g. free movement of persons, the Erasmus student exchange program, etc.). One of the reasons for this promotion is that exchanges and relationships between Europeans of different descent are seen as a core indicator of the success of the European project. In this paper we address the question to what extent intra-European mobility fosters partnerships between Europeans of different descent. Intra-European mobility can create opportunities both to meet partners from other European countries and to accumulate the necessary capital (economic, cultural, linguistic, mobility) to engage in a relationship with a foreign European. We use original data on European (bi-national) couples, collected in 2012 in the three countries (EUMARR survey), to study the choice of native men and women to engage in a relationship with either a foreign-born European partner or a partner from the own native country. We apply a broader life course perspective that captures migration and mobility experiences prior to the relationship as causal antecedents leading to an intra-European partnership. Results based on logistic regression models suggest that there is an individual effect of long stays abroad and short mobility experiences in (early) adulthood on having an intra-European partner (in comparison to a native partner).

2.1. Introduction

Since the foundation of the European Union (EU) particular emphasis has been placed on intra-European mobility[16]. The free movement of persons granted by European citizenship is one of the pillars of the EU. Endeavors to promote mobility within the EU originally reflected economic interests. The objectives now have broadened to include non-economic aims, e.g. to enable inhabitants to learn about other European countries and to come into contact with its citizens. Several programs established by the European Commission to improve social integration (e.g. Erasmus student exchange program, Leonardo da Vinci) have further increased opportunities for EU citizens to meet and likewise have stimulated different forms of social exchange (Koikkalainen 2013, p. 87).

In this article we address the question to what extent intra-European mobility fosters partnerships between Europeans from different countries. Romantic partnerships (and marriages in particular) are often regarded as the litmus test of social integration for the reason that they are among the closest personal relationships people have. Most likely they are intimate, exclusive and (intended to be) long lasting. Their impact is felt beyond the couple because they bring together the family and friends of both partners. Intra-European couples and their children also play a brokering role for further interethnic contact within the neighborhood community (Martinovic et al. 2009; Schaeffer 2013). As such, partnerships where both partners are from different countries often lead to other kinds of relationships between different nations, partly across borders. Against the backdrop of this assumption that intra-European spatial mobility generally can lead eventually to the formation of an integrated community of states (Deutsch et al. 1957; Fligstein 2008), intra-European partnerships can serve as a particularly meaningful indicator of the success of the European project.

[16] It is noteworthy that in discussions on free movement of EU citizens, the positively connoted term 'mobility' is often preferred over 'migration', with the first also referring to a wider range of relocations including non-permanent types of migration such as seasonal work and cross-border commuting for employment (e.g. Favell 2008; Santacreu et al. 2009).

Previous research has provided insights into the reasons why individuals in intra-European partnerships move abroad (Gaspar 2008, 2012); however, very little is known about the impact mobility has on the formation of these unions. Our paper helps to fill this gap by studying if and how previous individual mobility experiences influence one's choice for a foreign-born European partner rather than a native partner. For our analyses we make use of recently gathered original data on European couples from the EUMARR project (2012). As the sample does not include single Europeans or non-European couples, we will not pronounce ourselves on the effect of mobility on other possible partnership outcomes.

Our paper contributes to the understanding of these issues with regard to three European countries. In addition to two founding members of the EU, Belgium and the Netherlands, we have included Switzerland, which, while not an EU state, is nevertheless a part of the Schengen area. We believe that the described processes apply not only to EU but to European countries generally, especially if they are closely interwoven with the EU, as is the case for Switzerland (cf. Schroedter and Rössel 2014).[17] Mobility within Europe does not exclude non-EU members.

The article is structured as follows: we start with an overview of European mobility (2.); then we sketch the most important theoretical approaches explaining partner choice and the formation of (binational) partnerships (3.). In section 4, we develop our hypotheses with a focus on the impact of European mobility on the resulting types of partnerships. After describing our data and our methodological approach, we present the results of our analyses, which demonstrate that cultural background and mobility experiences during (early) adulthood do influence the chances of intermarriage. The main results are summarized and discussed in the final section.

[17] In that respect, a central point for our argumentation is the adoption of free movement for EU citizens in Switzerland, which has been in force since June 2002 (for more details cf. EDA, 2014). This not only includes the freedom to move to and work in Switzerland (with only minor qualifications) but also easier access for those who commute across borders to work in Switzerland. In February 2014 a referendum of the Swiss electorate decided to restrict the freedom of movement also for EU citizens. The constitution demands that the referendum has to be implemented within three years (EDA, 2014), but how it will be implemented has to be awaited.

2.2. European mobility

The right of every EU citizen to move freely and reside anywhere within the European Union is one of the pillars on which the EU (and the European Single Market) is built. EU citizens can move for educational purposes, for employment, to follow their partner, or to find a nice place to stay after retirement – without the need of a residence or work permit. From the early days, this right has served a mainly economical purpose: to keep a balance between supply and demand on the labor market, to improve innovation and exchange of knowledge, to create sustainable growth and the like (European Commission 2010, p. 2; Koikkalainen 2013, p. 86ff.). The ability to recruit workers and employees from other EU member states has reduced the need to admit third-country immigrants from outside the EU to fill economic needs (Pascouau 2013).

The concept of a European citizenship (arts. 17-22 EC) was officially introduced after the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), giving mobility a broader meaning: mobility became a way to create European citizens (Baldoni 2003, p. 9). Since then, many initiatives have been launched to encourage and support European mobility with the intention – beyond the desired economic advantage – of fostering cultural exchange and developing a European identity. Over the last decades this has resulted in many programs often targeted at young people, such as Comenius, Leonardo da Vinci, and Marie Curie scholarships, the student exchange programs Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus, and the development of EURES, a European employment service. But still, especially within the current difficult economic context with very high unemployment rates in some member states, economic growth remains the central starting point in many European mobility discussions (European Commission 2010, p. 10).

EU citizens in the main appreciate and support the freedom to move within the Union. Data from the Standard Eurobarometer 80 (Autumn 2013) show that 57% of all European citizens indicate that the free movement of people, goods and services within the EU is the most positive result of the European Union (European Commission 2013b, p. 38), confirming the results of earlier surveys (e.g. Eurobarometer 67, 2007). Moreover,

the Special Eurobarometer 337 from 2010 (European Commission 2010) has shown that most of the resident population of the EU above age 15 are convinced that this mobility, indeed, contributes positively to European integration (60%), the labor market (50%) and the economy (47%). 36% of them also consider it good for families, whereas 29% believe that it is bad for families (with 30% being neutral) (European Commission 2010, p. 72).

Despite European policy encouraging intra-European mobility and its positive evaluation by most EU citizens, official statistics indicate that less than three percent of all European citizens live outside their own country of birth (Benton and Petrovic 2012, p. 2; European Commission 2013a, p. 44; Recchi and Favell 2009, p. 2; Mau and Büttner 2010, p. 547). This number, however, should be seen in perspective. Because of the freedom to move, mobile Europeans are difficult to monitor administratively, given that official registration is not required for short stays in other EU member states. Therefore, many kinds of mobility such as cross-border commuting and working, training on the job and seasonal labor are underestimated in official statistics. Survey data from the Special Eurobarometer 337 of 2010 show that about 10% of the EU member state residents over 15 have lived and worked abroad at some time in their lives, and 41% answered that they had a friend or relative who has lived or worked in another country (European Commission 2010; Benton and Petrovic 2012). Admittedly, these numbers also include movement into non-EU countries. At any rate, Europeans represent only a minority of the total group of foreigners in many European countries: on average 38% of all foreigners in the EU have European origins (Benton and Petrovic 2012, p. 2). Yet there are some exceptions, for example Belgium. But although the numbers of EU citizens residing long term in other EU countries are still low, they nevertheless have grown since 1985 in most EU member states (Mau and Büttner 2010, p. 547).

There is no real 'prototype' of the mobile European since the Europeans are very diverse with respect to their motives for migrating (e.g. labor, quality of life, retirement) as well as with respect to country of origin and destination (e.g. Recchi and Favell 2009, p. 3,

please note that their results refer to Western Europeans). The research literature, however, indicates that international experience in the form of previous employment or training abroad increases the likelihood that they will consider moving abroad in the future (European Commission 2010, p. 53). Half of those who do migrate exhibit previous migration experience (Recchi and Favell 2009, p. 5). On the other hand, factors such as having children, having a partner, being a member of a dual-earner household and owning a house inhibit mobility (Benton and Petrovic 2012, p. 11).

It has been demonstrated that, despite the dominance of economic objectives in intra-European mobility policy, family and love seem to be the most important motives for EU citizens to move within the European Union (30%), closely followed by work (25%) and quality of life (24%) (Santacreu et al., 2009), although regional variation exists. Seven percent indicate 'study' as their main motive for migrating. Motives for moving also depend strongly on gender, reflecting traditional gender patterns: for men, work is the most important motive (33% compared to 18% among women); whereas for women, family/love gets the highest score ('following their partner': 37% compared to 21% among men) (Recchi and Favell 2009, p. 5). Discouraging effects are also apparent, mainly in regard to the individual`s social life. 'Leaving home' is most often mentioned (39%) as a reason not to move abroad for work; 27% are concerned about imposing big changes on their families, while 21% do not want to leave their friends behind (European Commission 2010, p. 111).

Another form of (short-term) intra-European mobility concerns tourism. Based on the Eurobarometer 392 that was carried out among EU member state residents in January 2014 (European Commission 2014), seven in ten European residents left their home for at least one night at least once in 2013. Travelers are found to be typically younger (age category 15-39), highly educated, employed, and more often living in an urban environment. About 33% of all European residents who went on a longer holiday (at least four nights) in 2013 did so to visit family, friends or relatives. A majority of those taking holidays went to destinations in their own country (57%), but a large percentage (54%)

also went on holidays in another EU member state. The most popular EU holiday destinations in 2013 were Spain, France, Italy, Germany and Austria. About 26% of the respondents made no overnight journeys abroad in 2013; financial restrictions were given as the main reason for not going on vacation, mentioned by 44% of the respondents. Concerning the development of intra-European tourism, it has been reported that especially short-term stays, i.e. less than three days, have increased (Mau and Büttner 2010, p. 555).

In sum, we can conclude that the opportunities for Europeans to meet Europeans from other countries have increased over the last decades. Although permanent settlement in other European countries is still rather low, there are various possibilities for non-permanent movement (e.g. for vacation, business trips or seasonal employment) which are widely taken up by Europeans and for which a positive trend can be observed.

2.3. Partnerships between Europeans

While the opportunities for EU citizens (or Europeans generally) to meet potential partners from other European countries have increased in the last decades, the changed opportunity structure has not resulted so far in a noticeable rise in intermarriages between European nationals (within the total group of marriages) (Koelet et al. 2012). One explanation for this could be that many of the partnerships go unnoticed for the reason that official statistics generally relate to marriage records and do not monitor cohabiting couples. Because EU citizens do not need to marry in order to get a residence or work permit, they may be less prone to legalize their partnerships compared to couples involving a non-EU national. In Switzerland, for instance, we observe an increase in the latter type of couples over the last decades (Schroedter and Rössel 2014). Generalized trends for EU and non-EU cross-border[18] marriages (EU and non-EU), in addition, do not show a clear picture: increasing, decreasing, and stable trends in these marriages are apparent in different European countries (Lanzieri 2012). Even so, Lanzieri

[18] These are marriages between partners born in different countries.

(2012, p. 116) concludes that as the size of the foreign community in a country plays an important role in intermarriages, expected population developments point to a possible increase in these marriages in Europe in the future. Several factors may nevertheless intervene, thus making any forecast uncertain.

Although the macro approaches indicate that the effect of European mobility on European intermarriage statistics is (still) small or even non-existent, the question remains how and to what extent individual mobility experiences affect individual partner choices and more specifically the choice of a foreign European partner versus a native partner. Does individual mobility create opportunities favoring European intermarriage, and/or does it help to accumulate capital necessary to engage in a relationship with a foreign European partner? Insight into this process is needed if we want to draw further conclusions regarding the future trends of European intermarriage. This is even more so as the macro structure is not simply a given or stable entity but is affected by individual decisions (e.g. to move to a partner in another country). Thereby, the movement of individuals plays a role in recreating the structural opportunities within their social environment.

In the next section, we outline the theoretical background of this micro-analysis, starting with a general theoretical framework on partner selection (opportunities, third parties and preferences). Our main focus is on the influence of intra-European mobility on the formation of intra-European couples (rather than native couples). However, the effect of mobility that we expect and will describe in more detail in the following often applies not only to intra-European couples in the European context but to the formation of binational partnerships in general.

2.4. Mobility and partner choice

In the sociological literature on (homogamous) partner choice, three main bundles of influencing factors have been identified: structural parameters of the marriage market, the role of third parties, and individual preferences (Kalmijn 1998). At each of these

levels, (European) mobility may influence partnership formation in various ways. In this section, we discuss the three bundles separately, followed in each case by an interpretation of these insights in relation to the impact of mobility.

Opportunities

The choice of a partner is strongly constrained by the opportunities to meet someone suitable. Important structural parameters for finding a partner from a specific social group are the size and the gender ratio of the group as well as its spatial concentration (Blau 1994; Blau and Schwartz 1984; Kalmijn 1998), not to forget the availability of single individuals who are interested in forming a partnership. Besides this, the individual`s position within the social strata together with the social differentiation, heterogeneity and inequality of a population are also important (Blau 1994; Simmel 2009). Finally, it is essential that the individuals actually meet, i.e. that they frequent the same social spaces (Blau 1977, p. 46ff; Blau and Schwartz 1984; Bozon and Héran 1989; Feld 1982; Kalmijn and Flap 2001). The 'foci of activity' (Feld 1981, 1982), such as schools, universities, workplaces, neighborhoods, as well as associations and leisure facilities, often have a rather homogenous membership structure (e.g. in terms of education), which is only moderately influenced by the general population structure.

It is obvious that (European) mobility changes these structural parameters, by changing the 'usual' surrounding as well as the locality of an individual's marriage market, providing new opportunities for encounters. Mobile individuals enlarge or replace local marriage markets with 'new' potential partners they may not have otherwise met. The more often individuals move about, and the longer they stay in other countries, the greater the number of opportunities to meet potential (foreign) partners.

In addition, processes of modernization and globalization are assumed to have extended the range of marriage markets in the last decades. This assumption rests on cheaper and faster modes of transportation, a better connectedness among different world regions, and last but not least the possibilities made available by the Internet. The

latter made it more likely that individuals from different regions or countries can establish contact without actually having met before, dissolving barriers set by geographic space. Online forums and Internet dating websites make it easy to get to know people from other places. Moreover, the Internet facilitates staying in contact with someone living far away once two people have met in real life (e.g. on vacation). That combined with the cheaper modes of transportation means relationships may develop even across greater geographical distances. Additionally, Internet dating is known to bring together more 'unconventional' partnerships (e.g. Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012).

Third parties

A second bundle of influencing factors which can be found at the group level is primarily related to social norms (Kalmijn 1998). Social norms can exert a strong – direct and indirect – influence on partner choice. Social norms of endogamy, i.e. the preference for members of one's own social group (e.g. religious or ethnic) over members of another, can directly impact relationship formation since it may restrict or reduce contact with members of other social groups. Norms operate indirectly in that they shape identification with one's own social group and the perception of others as acceptable marriage candidates. Even if not internalized, social norms can exert significant power if violations are enforced and sanctioned by others – peers, friends, family or society. Accordingly, the broader and more diverse the social networks of individuals, the lesser the effect of social norms represented by only some interactants within the network.

In the case of European mobility, the European legal framework can be understood as a 'third party' facilitating access to and the availability of other European citizens as potential mates. The creation of European citizenship in Maastricht as a means to promote European identification (European Commission 1997) and the subsequent efforts of the EU both to stress the bonds between EU citizens and to define Europe in positive terms have, moreover, aimed to improve the relationships between citizens of different European countries. Both the necessity and the success of this European social integration goal have been fiercely debated (Greven 2000), but there is evidence that this

policy has reinforced distinctions made between an own European in-group and a non-European out-group (Licata and Klein 2002).

Preferences

The third bundle of factors is located at the individual level. At the basis of individual preferences in certain characteristics in a partner lies the maximization of two universal goals: physical well-being and social well-being (Lindenberg 1989, Ormel et al. 1999). In modern societies, basic physical needs are mainly fulfilled by the accumulation of socio-economic resources. As most individuals are interested in partners highly endowed with socio-economic resources, while at the same time disapproving of individuals with less endowment in comparison to themselves, a similarity of partners in respect to socio-economic resources is likely to result. Educational homogamy is a typical example, although choosing a partner with a similar level of education can also fulfill an emotional need as education often goes hand in hand with certain lifestyles, leisure preferences, values and worldviews. Behavioral confirmation in particular is more easily and cost-efficiently achieved in a social environment where the individual`s attitudes, tastes and values are shared. The similarity of partners can thus be a mere by-product of the mechanisms of the marriage market (optimizing human and financial capital) but also the result of an individual preference for shared cultural experiences (shared cultural capital). Closely linked to cultural capital in shaping personal preferences for intermarriage is the role of linguistic capital. The process of relationship formation usually starts with an initial, rewarding interaction. In such cases a common language (even if not spoken fluently) is often helpful. With respect to binational partnership formation, this means that individuals who either share the same mother tongue with their foreign counterparts or who speak the language in question have an advantage. The more (foreign) languages one speaks and the greater the ability to speak the respective languages, the easier it is to get into contact with other nationals and the greater the likelihood of this resulting in a fulfilling interaction.

Mobility experiences (e.g. longer stays abroad or shorter holiday trips abroad) can result in improved foreign language skills or raise interest in learning a new language (Rössel and Schroedter 2014). They can, however, also work as a facilitating factor for intermarriages as they broaden the horizon of the mobile individual (much like education does (Hjerm 2001; Breugelmans 2004)), which often goes along with more openness and more open-mindedness towards new experiences, people and cultures. This in turn can make a partnership with someone of a different nationality more likely. Longer or extensive mobility experiences in childhood can already affect the young, fostering competencies for interacting with people from different cultures. In a qualitative study among international students Carlson (2011) found a positive association between previous mobility experiences and stays abroad for study purposes. An international family background, international orientation and traveling – or what one of the interviewees called 'internationalness' – increased the odds of a study term abroad.

Murphy-Lejeune (2002) speaks in this context of 'mobility capital'. She defines mobility capital as 'a subcomponent of human capital, enabling individuals to enhance their skills because of richness of the international experience gained by living abroad' (Murphy-Lejeune 2002, p. 51). Those having acquired mobility capital can then be seen as a migratory elite, open to new cultural environments based on their previous mobility experiences or previous contact with other cultures. Kaufmann and his colleagues have coined the term 'motility' as the capacity to be mobile in geographic and social space (Kaufmann et al. 2004). Motility describes the individual's access to movement (i.e. different forms and degrees of mobility), the competences to use these movements and the appropriate mastering of these forms of movement in relation to own values. Hence, motility is also considered as a form of capital that can be used to acquire other types of capital and is thereby related to a new form of social inequality. Mau et al. (2008) further found in a quantitative study a positive association between border-crossing experiences and the development of 'cosmopolitan attitudes' of openness towards foreigners. Furthermore, mobile individuals were more likely to agree that foreigners would enrich the society. Weenink (2008) stresses the importance of the parents in

passing on 'cosmopolitanism' and mobility capital to their children by their own mobility behavior and the choices and international ambitions they have for their children. In many cases the educational choices they make for their children are crucial (Weenink 2008; Igarashi and Saito 2014).

In short, mobility provides individuals with mobility capital which can work as a facilitating factor for binational marriages through individual preferences: the experiences of mobility or traveling seems to be associated with more openness and interest in other cultures as well as a weakening of the assumed in-group preference. We assume that mobility fosters the latter, but the effect is not unidirectional. More interest in other cultures, for instance, will also make traveling more likely. Not least, preferences for certain characteristics in a partner can directly give rise to mobility.

2.5. Hypotheses

The theoretical framework of the previous section can be translated into a number of hypotheses which will then be tested in the empirical analysis. We focus mainly on the effect of mobility but start with a series of hypotheses derived from the relevant background variables discussed above.

Education: We expect education to be positively associated with the probability of an intra-European binational marriage (H_1). On the one hand, the assumption builds on individual preferences as the more highly educated are usually more open-minded regarding other cultures (cf. e.g. Rössel and Schroedter 2015 on cosmopolitan cultural consumption). Besides, people with higher educational degrees are assumed to experience less intellectual and psychological cost in adapting to new contexts (Braun and Recchi 2008, p. 77). For the highly educated it might also be very important to find a partner with the same level of education. In order to find a homogamous partner in educational terms, other characteristics of the mate (such as e.g. his/her nationality) might become secondary. Schools, universities and work places are also very effective marriage markets.

Linguistic capital: Our general hypothesis is that linguistic capital increases the chance of a binational intra-European partnership since it may enable individuals to overcome language barriers in (initial) encounters (H_2) (on foreign languages as capital or facilitator of capitals cf. e.g. Díez Medrano 2014; Gerhards 2012; Weenink 2008). Foreign language skills enable verbal communication with people from other countries as a necessary precondition to the establishment of a partnership. In more detail, we expect that people who were brought up bilingual have a higher probability of a binational match (H_{2a}). Moreover, the more (foreign) languages one speaks, the more likely a binational partnership should be (H_{2b}). We also hypothesize that individuals who speak English have a greater propensity to have a binational partner (H_{2c}). English should serve as a kind of 'lingua franca' for the reason that an average of 51% of all EU residents are able to speak it, 13% as their native language, 38% as a foreign language (European Commission 2012).

Mobility: Generally, we expect a positive effect of mobility (H_3). This is for various reasons as discussed in the theoretical part. On the one hand, we expect that mobility creates new opportunities to get to know people that one probably would not have met otherwise. This operates in geographical terms but also through preferences for certain cultural resources that go along with specific lifestyles and foci of activity. On the other hand, mobility experience should broaden the horizon and create more open-mindedness that should support the formation of binational partnerships. This is even more so as it is known that young people`s identification with Europe is higher, the more European countries they have visited (Kuhn 2011; Roeder 2011; Rother and Nebe 2009; Spannring et al. 2008). Accordingly, other Europeans should be experienced as more familiar and might even be regarded as members of the same (in-)group of 'Europeans'. Although these mechanisms should apply to all mobility experiences, we expect them to be more effective the longer the stays abroad have been and the greater the number of different European countries visited. Accordingly, we differentiate between effects of shorter visits/trips abroad and longer stays abroad, with the latter assumed to be more effective for binational partnership formation.

The following hypotheses apply to *short trips*: The higher the number of (different) European countries and continents visited in childhood, the higher is the probability of a binational partnership to another European (H_{3a}). This hypothesis builds on childhood mobility experiences that could be understood as a form of socialization with regard to dealing with cultural diversity in general. The same should apply to general mobility experiences as an adult: the higher the number of (different) European countries and continents visited as an adult, the higher is the probability of a binational partnership to another European (H_{3b}). With respect to *longer stays abroad*, we assume that the higher the number of long stays abroad in European countries, the more likely is a binational partnership with a European (H_{3c}). Moreover, the reason for a long stay abroad should play a role, too. We expect long stays related to educational or occupational reasons especially to have a positive effect on the formation of binational partnerships since schools, universities and work places are known to be effective marriage markets (Kalmijn and Flap 2001) (H_{3d}).

Additionally, stressing the importance of mobility and its influence on the opportunity structure, we hypothesize that a European binational marriage is more likely if the couple has not met in the country of residence of the individual being considered (H_4). We further expect that a binational marriage is more likely if the partners meet on the Internet since the structural opportunities should not matter as much online as in real life (H_5). However, a positive correlation may as well result from individual preferences for a mate with characteristics that are not common in potential partners in the local marriage market (e.g. skin colors or more traditional gender roles).

Table 2-1: Overview of expected effects

	Variable	Effect
H_1	Education	+
H_{2a}	Raised multilingual	+
H_{2b}	No. of foreign languages	+
H_{2c}	English	+
H_{3a}	Mobility diversity in short trips as a child	+
H_{3b}	Mobility diversity in short trips as an adult	+
H_{3c}	Number of long stays abroad	+
H_{3d}	Long stay abroad for educational or work related reason	+
H_4	Met in country of residence	–
H_5	Couple met online	+

2.6. Methods and Data

Our analysis is based on data from an online survey which was conducted in the context of the project 'Toward a European Society: Single Market, Binational Marriages, and Social Group Formation in Europe (EUMARR)' in 2012. We use survey data from five different cities in Belgium (Antwerp, Brussels), the Netherlands (Amsterdam, The Hague) and Switzerland (Zurich). The inquiry was addressed to persons in mono- and binational partnerships (both marital and non-marital), defined by the (first) citizenship of both partners at the time of the survey. The sample included nationals from the respective countries and nationals from the EU-27 countries who were living together with their partner. The basic samples were drawn randomly from several predefined strata of people from the population register of the relevant city by the registration office.[19] Mono-national couples included only individuals holding the citizenship of the respective country (Belgian-Belgian in Belgium, Dutch-Dutch in the Netherlands, and Swiss-Swiss in Switzerland). Binational couples included in each case a national of the

[19] For more details on the respective surveys see: de Valk, Koelet and Sanctobin 2013 for Belgium; Heering, van Solinge and van Wissen 2013 for the Netherlands; Schroedter and Rössel 2013 for Switzerland.

respective country and a national from one of the EU-27 countries. Whereas in Switzerland the sample of EU-27 partners to Swiss is representative for Zurich, in Belgium the top five nationalities of EU-27 citizens married to natives (French, Dutch, Italian, German, and Spanish) were sampled to limit the diversity in the sample, supplemented with binational couples including a Polish partner to ensure the inclusion of new EU-27 member state nationals. In the Netherlands the four most frequent combinations were selected (German, British, Polish, Dutch) plus a group of mixed couples from diverse other EU-27 countries. In each couple one of the partners was chosen at random. All selected individuals were contacted by mail. They were invited to participate in the online survey in at least two languages (Belgium: Dutch, French, English; the Netherlands: Dutch, English; Switzerland: English, German). The questionnaire of the survey could also be filled out in the respective languages. At increasing time intervals, reminders were sent to the sampled individuals. The final reminder included a questionnaire, which could be filled in by hand and returned free of charge. By following this procedure, response rates between 32 to 40 percent were achieved in each country[20].

Whereas the EUMARR sample differentiates between binational and mono-national couples based on nationality, in this paper we base our definition of intermarriage – or more precisely intra-European couples – on country of birth. This definition ensures that we concentrate on people in similar partnership constellations in each country, whereas a focus on the citizenship of the partners might have resulted in biased groups due to different naturalization policies in the respective countries. This comes at the expense of second generation migrants. However, our arguments on mobility and opportunity structures are especially relevant for predicting partnerships between two persons who have grown up in different countries.

[20] The overall response rates are 32.2% for Belgium, 37.1% for the Netherlands and 40.5% for Switzerland.

We focus on the native-born respondents with either a native-born or a foreign-born European partner (EU-27)[21] in the EUMARR sample. Native-born respondents who are single or with a non-European partner were not included in the EUMARR study. It is thus important to bear in mind that we are studying the specific effect of international mobility on the formation of intra-European couples in comparison to native couples (see more on this in the discussion). As sampling procedures in the EUMARR project varied slightly between the countries, we restrict our analyses to those native-born respondents who belong to a couple where both partners are aged 30 to 45 and have provided valid information concerning their sex and country of birth. After these selections, the number of respondents in our harmonized dataset equals 1,782; 43% of these native-born respondents are intermarried to a European partner (table 2-2). The data used for the descriptive and explanatory tables are not weighted as population data for this specific group of natives, at least those in intra-European relationships, are not available.

Table 2-2: Partner choice per country, percentages in row

Natives with a…	native-born partner	foreign-born European partner	Total	N
Belgium				
Antwerp	43.0	57.0	100.0	193
Brussels	42.2	57.8	100.0	187
Total	42.6	57.4	100.0	380
Switzerland				
Zurich	69.7	30.3	100.0	953
The Netherlands				
Amsterdam	38.1	61.9	100.0	226
The Hague	45.6	54.4	100.0	223
Total	41.9	58.1	100.0	449
Total	56.9	43.1	100.0	
N	1,014	768		1,782

Source: Belgian, Dutch and Swiss EUMARR survey 2012

[21] The vast majority of the foreign-born partners come from (other) EU-27 countries.

Our control and independent variables include several individual characteristics as described in detail below. *Education* discerns between four categories: low, middle, high and very high. As the sample contains essentially highly educated people, low education relates to secondary degrees and less. Middle education represents higher educational degrees obtained outside of university, while high education relates to tertiary education. Individuals who possess very high education completed a PhD or equivalent degree.

Multilingual raised individuals indicate that they have been brought up speaking more than one language. Furthermore, we account for the *number of foreign languages fluently spoken* that were learned prior to the current partnership. The respondents were asked to indicate all languages – apart from their mother tongue – which they spoke at the time of the survey and whether they had learned to speak them before or after meeting their current partner.[22] The variable we use in the analyses also includes the second or third language indicated by respondents brought up multilingual when asked for their mother tongue. The number of foreign languages is restricted to four and more languages, since this was the maximum number of (foreign) languages that could be registered in some of the questionnaires. Moreover, we include *English language abilities* (learned prior to the couple`s first meeting).

In the next step, we will describe the indicators we use for mobility capital. First, we look at short stays abroad. In the questionnaire short stays were defined as those lasting at least one night away but not lasting longer than three months. We differentiate between mobility before the age of 16 and mobility from the age of 16 onwards until living with the current partner. In order to avoid problems raised by multicollinearity of the variables of interest, we decided to run cluster analyses for short-term mobility in childhood and adulthood. For the short stays in the childhood (until the age of 16), we did a two-step cluster analysis (with Log-likelihood as distance measure and BIC as clustering criterion) based on two variables: the number of continents the respondent visited and the

[22] The question was followed by an annotation indicating that by 'speaking a language' we mean that one can have a long conversation with native speakers of that language.

number of European countries visited.[23] The continents are restricted to five, including Europe, America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania. The numbers of European countries that have been visited are limited to 34. The first cluster analysis for short-term mobility in childhood resulted in three different categories: a category with individuals who had visited a limited number of European countries before their 16th birthday, those who had visited many European countries, and the last category including individuals who had visited many European countries as well as many world regions. For the short stays abroad as an adult (age 16 until living with the current partner) an identical procedure was applied, resulting in three similar clusters: low mobility individuals, high mobility individuals mostly within Europe, and high mobility individuals with many continents visited.

Additionally, we account for the *numbers of longer stays in European countries abroad before the first meeting* of the partner. Longer stays are all visits that lasted three months or more. As we have information on both the year of first meeting and the year and duration of stays, but not on the exact day and month of both events, we include all stays that started before or in the very year the partners met for the first time. In doing so, most of the stays that resulted from or in the course of the partnership formation should be excluded. A few respondents who indicated they had been on a longer stay abroad but did not specify the date of their stay were coded zero (not missing) for the reason that it was not clear whether their stay had been before or after the couple had met.

Our data also enable us to differentiate between motives for remaining abroad for longer periods. The reported motives are 'to be with the partner', 'work', 'school/study', parental family's 'decision', 'other family reasons' and 'other reasons'. Only the most common motives 'school' (17.0%) and 'work' (7.2%) are withheld; the other motives are referred to as 'other reasons'.

[23] Originally, we also included the number of travels additionally to the diversity of travels but this variable did not add to the quality of the clusters.

Furthermore, we control for the age and sex of the respondent as well as for the country where the survey was conducted (Belgium, Switzerland or the Netherlands) and migration background. Migration background is represented by having at least one parent born abroad. The parents of most of the (native-born) respondents with a migration background in our sample have their origin in Europe (83%), mainly in countries that are members of the EU-27 (45%). Less than three percent of the cases were excluded due to one or more missing values in the covariates. An overview of the control and independent variable is presented in table 2.3.

Table 2-3: Variable descriptives for control and independent variables

	% (* means)	N
Country		
Belgium	21.3	380
The Netherlands	25.2	449
Switzerland	53.5	953
Age*	37.8	1,782
Gender		
Male	48.5	864
Female	51.5	918
Migration background		
No	74.4	1,325
Yes	25.7	457
Education		
Low	15.6	278
Middle	20.7	368
High	54.7	975
Highest	9.0	161
Languages		
Not raised multilingual	82.4	1,468
Raised multilingual	17.6	314
No. of foreign languages*	2.12	1,782
Short stays as child		
Few countries in Europe	39.4	702
Many countries, mainly Europe	22.8	406
Many countries and continents	37.8	674

	% (* means)	N
Short stays as adult		
Few countries in Europe	24.4	434
Many countries, mainly Europe	31.3	558
Many countries and continents	44.3	790
Long stays abroad in Europe		
Not for work	92.8	1,653
For work	7.2	129
Not for educational reasons	83.1	1480
For educational reasons	17.0	302
Not for other reasons	93.6	1,667
For other reasons	6.5	115
First meeting		
Not in country of residence	17.3	309
In country of residence	76.4	1,362
Online	6.2	111

Source: Belgian, Dutch and Swiss EUMARR survey 2012

2.7. Empirical results

We start the analyses with descriptive results referring to the mobility experiences of the native partner in our sample. Subsequently, the effect of mobility on intermarriage is tested in a multivariate model, controlling for the demographic and cultural background variables.

Table 2-4 presents the diversity of European countries visited during short stays abroad for intermarried and not intermarried natives in Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland. As mentioned in the methods sections, we differentiate short term mobility before the age of 16 from short term mobility after 16 but before the partnership. The descriptive results seem to point to the importance of short stay travels during adulthood for choosing a foreign partner. In all three surveyed countries, the diversity of visited European countries and continents after age 16 is higher for natives in an intermarriage than in a native relationship. For mobility as a child (before age 16), the differences between intermarried and native couples are much smaller and less clear.

Table 2-4: Mobility: Diversity of European countries visited during short stays abroad, percentages in columns

	Belgium		The Netherlands		Switzerland		Total	
	Intermarriage		Intermarriage		Intermarriage		Intermarriage	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
As a child								
Few countries in Europe	45.0	44.5	30.3	32.2	41.3	40.5	39.8	38.8
Many countries, m. Europe	42.0	36.7	52.7	50.2	31.3	30.4	37.0	38.9
Many countries & continents	13.0	18.8	17.0	17.6	27.4	29.1	23.2	22.3
As an adult								
Few countries in Europe	51.9	28.9	31.9	17.2	21.1	14.5	28.0	19.5
Many countries, m. Europe	32.1	49.1	48.4	49.0	43.7	42.2	42.7	46.5
Many countries & continents	16.1	22.0	19.7	33.7	35.2	43.3	29.3	34.0

Source: Belgian, Dutch and Swiss EUMARR survey 2012, results from cluster analyses

In the next step, we look at longer stays in other European countries lasting three months and more. Table 2-5 shows the percentage of the respondents who had at least one longer stay in another European country before meeting their partner and the respective reasons for the stays. Natives with a European partner have lived in another European country more often before meeting this partner. Both stays for work and stays for education seem to influence partner choice, at least at this descriptive level. 10% of the natives in an intra-European couple spent some time in a foreign European country for work as compared to 5% of the natives in a native couple. European stays for education are also more common among the intermarried natives than among those that married a native partner (resp. 22% and 13%).

Table 2-5: Mobility: Long stays abroad in another European country and reasons for at least one long stay abroad, in percentages*

	Belgium		The Netherlands		Switzerland		Total	
	Intermarriage		Intermarriage		Intermarriage		Intermarriage	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
At least one stay abroad (% in col.)	20.4	31.7	16.5	34.9	23.6	32.9	21.8	33.2
Work	5.6	10.1	3.2	10.7	5.1	10.4	4.8	10.4
Education	8.2	20.2	10.1	23.8	15.2	21.8	13.1	22.0
Parental decision	5.6	2.8	2.7	1.9	1.5	2.8	2.4	2.5
Other reason	3.7	4.1	1.6	2.7	4.2	4.5	3.7	3.8
N	162	218	188	261	664	289	1.014	768

Source: Belgian, Dutch and Swiss EUMARR survey 2012, * each stay in a European country counted separately but the same reason is counted only once

The descriptive results suggest that mobility indeed plays a role in the formation of a partnership with another European. In the next step, we examine whether the results also hold when several factors are controlled for.

To study the effects of mobility on the probability of engaging in an intra-European partnership, a binary logistic regression is applied. Table 2-6 presents the probability for a native to have a foreign-born European partner (vs. a native partner). The independent variables are introduced stepwise in the models. For the comparison of the nested models, we present the average marginal effects (AME) and their 95% confidence intervals. The AME values indicate the average change of the independent variable on the probabilities of intermarriage (Cameron and Trivedi 2010, p. 343f).[24] In each of the four models, we control for country, given the differences in the sample composition. We also control for age, although the age range in our sample is rather small: 30 to 45 years, gender and migration background.

[24] For continuous variables, the marginal effect indicates to what extent the probability of Y=1 increases if x increases one unit. For dichotomous variables, the marginal effect indicates the average effect of x at a discrete change from 0 to 1.

Our first model introduces all variables except the mobility variables. Women tend to have a much lower probability for intermarriage as compared to men, on average almost 11 percentage points lower.[25] For natives with a migration background we find a negative effect: they are less prone to enter into a relationship with a foreign European partner. The effect is pronounced when linguistic capital is controlled for. In regard to education, we observe a slightly significant effect (results not reported), but this positive effect of education on intermarriage to another European partner disappears when we account for the number of foreign languages spoken. The linguistic measures, being brought up multilingual and speaking multiple foreign languages, both reveal the assumed positive effect on intermarriage. Every foreign language an individual speaks fluently before meeting his/her partner increases the chance of a foreign European partner by an average of 5 percentage points. English proficiency had the expected positive effect, too. Results are not reported as almost everyone who spoke at least one foreign language was proficient in English (94%), so both variables could not be added in one model. The number of languages was given primacy as it had more explanatory power.

[25] This result is rather unexpected as intermarriage is usually found to be more likely among native women than among native men (e.g. Kalmijn 1998, p. 412). An explanation might lie in the composition of our sample in respect to the involved nationalities as well as to the average high level of education and the urban context.

Table 2-6: Binary logistic regression of natives' probability to have a partner from another European country (vs. a native) in Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland

	Model 1		Model 2	
	AME	CI	AME	CI
Country (Rf. CH)				
Belgium	0.26***	[0.20,0.32]	0.29***	[0.23,0.35]
The Netherlands	0.24***	[0.18,0.30]	0.26***	[0.21,0.32]
Age	-0.00	[-0.01,0.00]	-0.00	[-0.01,0.00]
Gender (Rf. Male)	-0.11***	[-0.15,-0.06]	-0.10***	[-0.14,-0.05]
Migration background (Rf. No)				
Yes	-0.13***	[-0.19,-0.08]	-0.12***	[-0.18,-0.07]
Education (Rf. High)				
Low	-0.04	[-0.11,0.02]	-0.02	[-0.09,0.05]
Middle	-0.05	[-0.11,0.01]	-0.04	[-0.10,0.02]
Highest	0.01	[-0.07,0.09]	0.01	[-0.07,0.09]
Languages				
Multilingual raised	0.09**	[0.03,0.16]	0.09**	[0.03,0.16]
No. of foreign lang.	0.05***	[0.03,0.07]	0.04***	[0.02,0.07]
Short stays as child (Rf. Few countries in Europe)				
Many countries, m. Europe			-0.05*	[-0.10,-0.00]
Many countries & continents			-0.02	[-0.08,0.04]
Short stays as adult (Rf. Few countries in Europe)				
Many countries, m. Europe			0.11***	[0.05,0.16]
Many countries & continents			0.15***	[0.08,0.21]
Long stays abroad in Europe				
For work				
For educational reasons				
For other reasons				
Meeting (Rf. in CoR)				
Not in CoR				
Online				
Statistics				
x^2	214.45		238.41	
Pseudo r^2	0.09		0.10	
AIC	2243.85		2227.90	
BIC	2304.20		2310.19	
N	1,782		1,782	

Source: Belgian, Dutch and Swiss EUMARR survey 2012; Abbreviations: Rf. = Reference category; CH = Swiss; m. Europe = mainly in Europe; CoR = Country of residence

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 2-6 (continued): Binary logistic regression of natives' probability to have a partner from another European country (vs. a native) in Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland

	Model 3		Model 4	
	AME	CI	AME	CI
Country (Rf. CH)				
Belgium	0.29***	[0.23,0.35]	0.26***	[0.21,0.32]
The Netherlands	0.26***	[0.20,0.32]	0.18***	[0.13,0.24]
Age	-0.00	[-0.01,0.00]	-0.00	[-0.01,0.00]
Gender (Rf. Male)	-0.10***	[-0.15,-0.06]	-0.07**	[-0.11,-0.03]
Migration background (Rf. No)				
Yes	-0.12***	[-0.18,-0.07]	-0.09***	[-0.14,-0.04]
Education (Rf. High)				
Low	-0.01	[-0.07,0.06]	0.00	[-0.06,0.07]
Middle	-0.03	[-0.09,0.03]	-0.03	[-0.08,0.02]
Highest	0.02	[-0.06,0.09]	0.02	[-0.06,0.09]
Languages				
Multilingual raised	0.10**	[0.03,0.16]	0.07*	[0.01,0.13]
No. of foreign lang.	0.03**	[0.01,0.06]	0.03**	[0.01,0.05]
Short stays as child (Rf. Few countries in Europe)				
Many countries, m. Europe	-0.05*	[-0.10,-0.00]	-0.05*	[-0.09,-0.00]
Many countries & continents	-0.02	[-0.08,0.04]	-0.03	[-0.08,0.03]
Short stays as adult (Rf. Few countries in Europe)				
Many countries, m. Europe	0.10***	[0.04,0.15]	0.09***	[0.03,0.14]
Many countries & continents	0.13***	[0.07,0.19]	0.11***	[0.05,0.17]
Long stays abroad in Europe				
For work	0.13**	[0.04,0.22]	0.05	[-0.04,0.13]
For educational reasons	0.12***	[0.06,0.18]	0.07*	[0.01,0.13]
For other reasons	-0.02	[-0.11,0.07]	-0.06	[-0.14,0.02]
Meeting (Rf. in CoR)				
Not in CoR			0.51***	[0.46,0.56]
Online			0.18***	[0.09,0.27]
Statistics				
x^2	265.57		532.75	
Pseudo r^2	0.11		0.22	
AIC	2206.74		1943.56	
BIC	2305.48		2053.27	
N	1,782		1,782	

Source: Belgian, Dutch and Swiss EUMARR survey 2012; Abbreviations: Rf. = Reference category; CH = Swiss; m. Europe = mainly in Europe; CoR = Country of residence

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

In model 2, we add the two measures referring to short stays abroad, derived from cluster analyses: short stays as a child (before the age of 16), and short stays as an adult (after the age of 16 until living with the actual partner). The first variable tests the 'socialization effect', while the effect of the second variable is assumed to rest more on the opportunity structure. Short term mobility as a child seems to have only a small effect, insofar that natives who have visited many countries as a child, although mainly within Europe, have a lower probability to enter a relationship with a foreign European partner, after controlling for the other variables. Accordingly, a 'socialization effect' cannot be observed in different nations. The strongest effect of short stays can be found for mobility at a later age. There we find that being more mobile, especially if the mobility is more diverse (i.e. more countries and more visited regions in the world, traveling outside Europe), increases the chance of finding a partner born in another EU country. An increase of the probability of, on average, 15 percentage points can be found for natives who visited many countries in Europe and many other continents as well, compared to natives who have had only a low mobility range. This effect should result primarily from the changed opportunity structure during travels abroad.

Model 3 adds variables referring to long stays abroad. Long stays abroad also represent a different and probably more diverse set of potential partners. Again, strong, significant, positive effects are found: a stay abroad for educational or work related reasons tends to positively increase the chances for intermarriage. Both seem to be equally important. The effect of the 'other'-category does not appear significant, meaning that on average there is no difference between those who have lived in another European country for reasons not related to work or study and those who have not lived in another European country at all. We also tested for the number of long stays abroad in European countries (not reported in the table). Here, we find an average marginal effect of 7, i.e. every stay abroad heightens the probability of finding a foreign European partner by 7 percentage points. Due to collinearity issues, we could not include both the number of long stays abroad and the main reasons for doing so in the model.

In the last model (4) we account for the place where the partners met for the first time. This variable is not introduced here as an explanatory variable in the prediction of intermarriage, as of course meeting place is closely associated with partner choice. Rather, it must be considered as an intermediary variable that was added in this last model to better understand how mobility works in fostering intermarriage. Important here is that when we introduce this variable, it strongly reduces the effect of long stays, even more so for work than for study. This implies that the long stays for work in another European country mainly create good opportunities for meeting a future partner in this foreign country; for short stays and long stays for education, on the other hand, it also opens up opportunities for entering into a relationship with a foreign partner in the traveler's own country of residence later on. After all, the variable clearly demostrates how important mobility is for partnership formation: individuals who met their partners abroad, i.e. not in the country of residence, are – on average – 51 percentage points more likely to end up in an intermarriage with another European. Moreover, we also find that natives who met their partner online have a markedly increased chance of engaging in an intermarriage.

2.8. Summary and discussion

Mobility is one of the keywords in the European story. The goal of this paper has been to study how mobility experiences during adulthood and early adulthood can influence intermarriage, assuming that this in the long term would result in a more integrated, transnational Europe. Therefore, we made use of the EUMARR data, providing unique data to get a better insight into the phenomenon of intermarriage and the social context in which this takes place. The data allow us to study a specific aspect of the problem, namely how previous mobility experiences influence the choice of native men and women for either a foreign-born European partner or a native born partner. Based on the theoretical framework that was elaborated in the beginning of this paper, a number of hypotheses were formulated and then tested in the results section.

Our first hypothesis predicted that education would be positively associated with the probability of an intra-European binational marriage (H_1). This hypothesis was not supported. We found no significant differences between the educational levels – at least not after accounting for the number of languages spoken. This is not surprising as our sample contains essentially highly educated people, and within this group language proficiency is often high, in contrast to the less educated group.

Based on the literature, we also assumed an influence of linguistic capital. It is argued that speaking multiple languages helps to overcome both linguistic and cultural barriers and thereby increases the chance of a binational intra-European partnership (versus a mono-national partnership) (H_2). Three sub-hypotheses were formulated regarding the probability of a European intermarriage: one specifying a positive effect for being raised bilingual (H_{2a}), one for speaking a larger number of foreign languages (H_{2b}) and the last one referring to the importance of English. All sub-hypotheses, and thereby also hypothesis 2, were confirmed. Linguistic capital, indeed, seems to positively influence the probability of intermarriage (versus a partnership to a native). The strongest effect was found for being raised multilingual, which might indicate the advantage of a shared mother tongue for building a relationship.

The third set of hypotheses relates to the main focus of our paper. Hypothesis 3 states that we expect higher levels of mobility prior to the relationship with the current partner to have a positive effect on the probability of an intra-European partnership rather than a native partnership. Several theoretical reasons were given for this effect: increased opportunities to meet a partner with a different nationality, the development of more open-minded attitudes towards people with culturally different backgrounds, and with a special reference to mobility within Europe, increased identification with Europe. Four sub-hypotheses were differentiated, each referring to a specific kind or aspect of mobility. H_{3a} states a higher level of mobility during childhood positively influences the probability of a binational rather than a native partnership. H_{3b} refers to the same effect for short-term mobility in (early) adulthood. In our analyses, H_{3a} is falsified while we find

empirical evidence for H_{3b}. This suggests that short stays abroad (and more precisely the diversity in places) have a positive influence on the probability of intermarriage, but that these are significant mainly when experienced during adulthood, and not as a child. During this period in life (after leaving the nest and before meeting the partner), choices for short trip destinations are less influenced by third parties and made more consciously, which might also reveal a more cosmopolitan life style. Socialization does not seem to be the central underlying mechanism, except that it might perhaps exert a secondary influence on the choices for destinations later in life.[26] More research is needed to understand this process. Furthermore, we took into account long stays in other European countries. We hypothesized that the more long stays abroad in other European countries individuals experienced during their life, the higher the probability they would intermarry with a European rather than a native partner (H_{3c}). Moreover, we expected especially long stays related to educational or occupational reasons to have a positive effect on the formation of intra-European partnerships because schools, universities, and work places are known to be effective marriage markets (H_{3d}). Based on our analysis, we can confirm the positive influence of long stays abroad, for number of stays as well as for both school and work motives. Adding meeting place to the analysis also shows that long stays for work in other European countries foster intra-European partnership mainly by opening up a foreign marriage market to the native mobile person, i.e. by creating opportunities to meet potential partners abroad. This is also the case for long stays for study motives; however, these kinds of experiences, very much stimulated by current EU policies through programs within the framework of Erasmus Plus, also seem to open other paths to intermarriage, both in the local and in the foreign marriage market. This might be an indication that these experiences also have a lasting effect on preferences in addition to opportunity structures.

In the fourth and fifth hypotheses, we assumed that the meeting place is a central parameter in explaining the opportunity for the formation of an intra-European

[26] However, we did not account for the kind of the trips, which could matter, too. Vacations in resorts isolated from the everyday life of the native residents might be less influential than first hand experiences.

partnership. We expected that such a relationship would be more likely if the couple had not met in the country of residence of the respondent (H_4). Furthermore, a first meeting on the Internet would also make a foreign European partner (versus a native partner) more likely (H_5). For both H_4 and H_5 very strong and significant effects were found in the analysis.

This study has aimed to contribute to the literature on intermarriage and more specifically intermarriage in the European context. We have focused on the potential effect of the acquired capital of individuals concerning mobility, combined with other factors such as cultural background and language skills. The main idea was that individuals with more diverse mobility experiences have an increased probability to intermarry with a European partner rather than to marry a native partner. On the one hand, this can be established through the opportunity structure and a heightened chance to meet other Europeans. On the other hand, the hypothesis rests on the assumption that mobility leads to more openness towards and more familiarity with other cultures. In our analyses we found evidence for both these processes. As a result of this study, we conclude that European mobility plays an important role in the formation of intra-European partnerships. This effect mainly builds on the opportunities to meet a partner of another nationality. Natives in intra-European partnerships have often met their partner abroad. Also the accumulated mobility capital in adulthood is of importance. The positive effect of linguistic capital supports this conclusion. Other theoretical mechanisms, such as socialization through extensive traveling in childhood, do not get much empirical support.

Some limitations of this study should be discussed. First, a possible effect of self-selection could not be controlled for with the data at hand: people who travel abroad more often or who stay abroad for longer periods of time might be more open-minded even before traveling, so that the causal mechanism is not mobility but, for instance, some individual predisposition. Further research has to clarify whether self-selection reduces the effect of mobility on intermarriage. Undoubtedly, the effect of mobility will

not vanish as a great deal of it results from the changed opportunity structure, i.e. from meeting the partner abroad. In that respect, the EU policy of fostering intra-European mobility is a useful tool for enhancing European integration through the creation of opportunities for different Europeans to meet. Second, the demonstrated effect of mobility on intermarriage refers to those who do find a (European or native) partner. With the data at hand we are not able to cancel out the possibility that mobile persons might also have a heightened chance of staying without a partner or having a less stable partnership. In this case, mobility might even result in less intra-European intermarriage overall (in terms of absolute numbers). Further research could follow up the questions whether mobility impedes the search for a partner and increases the risk of staying alone or breaking up with a partner. Another promising alley for further research concerns the individual motives for mobility. Certain preferences could foster travels or stays in other countries or at least the choice of the respective country. The positive effect of Internet dating might provide some support for this suggestion.

2.9. References

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CHAPTER 3

HOW DID EUROPEAN BINATIONAL COUPLES MEET? PATTERNS AND DETERMINANTS STUDIED IN THREE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

European binational relations are often considered as an indicator of European integration but hardly anything is known about how these partners meet each other. Our aim in this study is to understand how and where intra-European binational couples meet and to what extent characteristics of the partners and the couple influence these meeting contexts. Furthermore, we compare patterns and determinants of meeting place and context across three different EU countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain), to identify if and how these could be linked to the differential migration and mobility background in these countries. We use data from the unique EUMARR survey, including rich information on individuals in uninational and intra-European binational relationships. Results show that most intra-European binational couples meet each other in one of the partners' birth country indicating that one of the partners moved to that country before or after meeting. The motives of the non-native partner for being in the country of meeting suggest very similar meeting contexts compared to uninational couples. In only a minority of cases were both partners mobile at the moment of first meeting and so far, our data shows that online meetings are also limited. Although each of the three study countries has its own migration and mobility characteristics, the meeting contexts or determinants do not differ substantially, nor do we find differences between origins of the migrant partner in the couple.

3.1. Introduction

There is an extensive scientific literature studying couple formation and partner choice (e.g. Eckland, 1986; Buss & Barnes, 1986; Howard, Blumstein & Schwartz, 1987; Mare, 1991; Schoen & Weinick, 1993; Blackwell & Lichter, 2000; Schwartz & Mare, 2005; Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2006; Huschek, de Valk & Liefbroer, 2012). Different factors have been suggested as having an influence on partner choice and couple formation among which the opportunity to meet potential partners is one of the most crucial (Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn & Flap, 2001; Houston et al., 2005; Belot & Francesconi, 2013). Kalmijn and Flap (2001, p. 1289) summarize it as "mating requires meeting". Meeting opportunities include both the structural availability of potential partners in the population, often referred to as the 'marriage market', and the practical opportunities for meeting on social occasions and specific locations (Kalmijn & Flap, 2001). With the ongoing European integration process, in which intra-European mobility is facilitated and promoted by the European Union, we expect marriage markets and the potential meeting occasions for individuals to be extended and internationalised. Studying meeting opportunities can then help to improve our understanding of the formation of mixed unions between partners from different origins or ethnicity, also referred to as intermarriages. These unions across borders or nationality groups are often studied as an indicator for, and contributor to social and economic integration after migration (e.g. Gordon, 1964; Rodríguez-García, 2015; Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn, 2010; Dribe & Lundh, 2003; Meng & Gregory, 2005). In the European Union (EU) context, where integration of different countries has been strived for, European binational couples are then seen as a symbol and indicator of European integration 'from below' (Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2009).

Intra-EU mobility may contribute to meeting opportunities for and the formation of European binational couples in two different ways. On one hand, intra-EU mobility may result in increased meeting opportunities by creating a more extended international marriage market of potential partners (e.g. Schroedter et al., 2015). On the other hand, the EU has promoted intra-EU mobility through specific thematic mobility programmes,

such as Erasmus+, which may contribute to the creation of social contexts that are traditionally linked to partner formation (cf. infra). Despite the acclaimed importance of binational union formation from an EU integration perspective, studies on where and how these partners meet are still rare. We could expect that meeting opportunities of European binational couples are different from those of uninational couples, given that for European binational couples, meeting assumes geographical border-crossing mobility of at least one of the partners during the life course and thus this mobility element should be fully acknowledged and studied. Therefore, we need to study the link between intra-EU mobility and European binational couples, through a better understanding of meeting of these couples.

Our aim in this paper is to understand the meeting places and contexts of intra-European binational couples. First, we will study the different meeting contexts that exist for European binational couples and to what extent these meeting contexts can be explained by characteristics of the couple and its individual partners. Second, we compare these patterns in meeting contexts for three different EU countries, aiming to identify if these could be linked to the differential migration and mobility backgrounds of these countries. After all, although European policy measures and legislation facilitate mobility among all citizens, considerable differences still exist between EU member states in terms of migration and mobility histories. We use the EUMARR survey data for Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain for the quantitative analyses on meeting context of European binational couples.

3.2. Background

Internal cross-border mobility has played a central role in the European integration process. Intra-EU mobility, that resulted from the EU's freedom of movement following the Maastricht Treaty (European Communities – Council, 1992), aims to contribute to a dynamic European economy and reinforce identification with and political support for the European project through mobility opportunities available to all EU citizens (e.g.

Favell & Recchi, 2009, Favell, Recchi, Kuhn, Jensen & Klein, 2011; Gaspar, 2010). Together with the Schengen agreement, it has created unprecedented opportunities to be mobile within the European Union. Currently, a significant share of mobility and migration in Europe relates to these intra-EU moves, with 36 percent of the total foreign-born population in the EU originating from another EU country (Eurostat, 2020a). Intra-EU mobility is, however, very diverse and described by King (2002) as a new map of European migration. Next to the traditional low-skilled 'guest-worker' migrants, several authors have shown the emergence of a new type of highly-skilled Europeans characterised by an international and mobile lifestyle (Favell, 2003; Favell, 2008, Gaspar 2008; Recchi & Favell, 2009; Gaspar; 2009; Favell, 2013). Together with mobile students, these so-called European 'free movers' form an emerging group of mobile individuals within the EU (Gaspar, 2008). Many of the movers are, however, relatively young and as such also in the age of forming relationships and starting a family. Favell & Recchi (2009, p.3) stress the symbolic importance of these mobile Europeans as they can be considered as "the human face of EU integration".

In this context of European integration and intra-EU mobility opportunities, scholars have been increasingly interested in the phenomenon of European binational couples (Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2009; Gaspar, 2010; Gaspar, 2011; Gaspar, 2012; Brahic, 2013; Koelet & de Valk, 2014; Medrano et al., 2014; Schroedter et al., 2015; Van Mol, et al., 2015; Brahic, 2018; Medrano, 2020). Whereas research on mixed couples in the US mostly focuses on interethnic and interreligious mixed couples, European binational couples can be defined as mixed couples where both partners originate from another EU member state, based on the country of birth or nationality of the partners (Gaspar, 2008). In line with theories on intermarriage where mixed couples are typically linked to social and economic integration of migrants (e.g. Gordon, 1964; Rodríguez-García, 2015; Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn, 2010; Dribe & Lundh, 2003; Meng & Gregory, 2005; Song, 2009; Djurdjevic & Girona, 2016), also European binational couples are seen as an indicator of European integration in the private emotional sphere which is often distinguished from integration at the institutional level like the labour market (Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2009;

Gaspar, 2010). Gaspar (2008, p.15) describes European binational couples as "an unintended consequence of EU institutional and political actions that is contributing to the European social integration process, either through daily conjugal mechanisms of cultural (re)adaptation or the upbringing given to the offspring". European binational couples are distinctive from mixed couples with a non-EU national, given that the former are less restricted by legal or procedural difficulties of acquiring residence and related restrictions compared to binational couples with partners from non-EU countries (Gaspar, 2008). Where and how European couples meet is, however, so far underexplored but could give indications on the extent to which mobility is also driving couple formation.

Meeting opportunities are identified as a key structural element in the development of partner relationships: in order to form a couple, potential partners must be available and able to meet (e.g; Blau, 1977; Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn & Flap, 2001; Haandrikman, 2010; Belot & Francesconi, 2013). Meeting opportunities for partners have been studied extensively. Studies have investigated the 'marriage market', as the available pool of potential partners in demographical or geographical terms: just meeting people is not enough, they also have to be potential partners in terms of sex, age, and geographical proximity, etc. (e.g. Gonzalez-Ferrer, 2006; Haandrikman et al., 2008; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2006; Van Tubergen & Maas 2007; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2010; Blau & Schwartz 1984; Kalmijn, 1998; Haandrikman & van Wissen, 2012). Other studies focused on the places and social contexts of the first meeting of a romantic partner (e.g. Blau, 1977; Feld, 1982; Blau & Schwartz, 1984; Bozon & Héran, 1989; Kalmijn & Flap, 2001; Lampard, 2007; Wöhler & Brüderl, 2009; Haandrikman, 2010; Bozon & Rault, 2012). Several studies have shown that couples typically meet in the local area where they live, which can be described as spatial homogamy (Coleman & Haskey, 1986; Haandrikman, Harmsen, van Wissen, & Hutter, 2008; Haandrikman, 2008; Haandrikman & van Wissen, 2012; Kalmijn & Flap, 2001). This type of 'spatial homogamy' is confirmed to be relevant also when controlling for other types of homogamy (Haandrikman & van Wissen, 2012). At the same time, meeting potential partners at greater distance requires more

investment of time and cost for at least one of the partners (Haandrikman & van Wissen, 2012). These studies on the geographical aspect of meeting places often start from the assumption that both partners originate from the same country of residence (Braun & Recchi, 2008). When looking at meeting opportunities for migrants and mobile individuals, the mobility as such may be an important additional parameter. Meeting between partners from different birth countries assumes mobility of at least one of the partners during the lifetime but the relation between the mobility and couple formation may vary. On the one hand, couple formation may result in mobility and migration (e.g. Östh, Van Ham & Niedomysl, 2009). For example, the marriage market can be extended by the individual in search of a partner abroad that is then 'imported'. This approach can mostly be found in studies on marriage migration with non-EU partners, where marriage is often a motive and even a tool for immigration. On the other hand, it is also often argued that increased (cross-border) mobility of individuals, together with accessible transportation and communication, may create extra meeting opportunities and mobility and thus result in binational unions. It could be assumed that where there are higher levels of mobility, more individuals have the opportunity to meet potential partners from abroad. In this way, the mobility extends the local marriage market to an international marriage market (Gaspar, 2010; Kofman 2004; Braun & Recchi 2008; Schroedter, 2015; Haandrikman, 2010; Niedomysl, Östh and Van Ham, 2010). The latter is the assumption we start from in this study when looking at where binational partners meet compared to uninational partners and across different European countries.

We do so by studying two dimensions in more detail, following theoretical suggestion from previous literature. First, we look at the (spatial) location where partners meet each other, more specifically, the country where partners meet for the first time. Collet and Régnard (2011) studied binational couples consisting of a non-European partner (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey) and a French partner and found that when the French partner had no migration background at all (respondent and both parents born in France), 55% of the couples met in France and 37% met in the country of the immigrant partner. Most non-European binational couples living in France also met in

France. When the French partner or one of their parents was born abroad, the chances of meeting in a country other than France or in the country of the immigrant partner were much higher. The question then arises if we can expect similar patterns for European binational couples. We could expect that the intra-EU mobility increases meeting opportunities across member state borders, and this may result in higher likelihoods of meeting in European countries other than the one where the partners originate from.

Second, we look at the motive for the mobility as it can give insight on the context in which mobility took place and how it is related to couple formation. For example, Braun & Recchi (2008) suggest that free movers may be more mobile out of curiosity and therefore are more interested and open for making contact with local people. Research has shown that partners meet each other at a variety of places and social occasions. Bozon and Heran (1989) were among the first to study the meeting places of partners in detail. A large variety of meeting places were identified, differentiating between 'private places' (friends, family, private parties), 'public places' (e.g. parties, street, shops, café, parks, cinema, …) and 'select places' (clubs and societies, school, workplace). Similar research confirmed the diversity in meeting places, but also found an increasing importance of the educational and work setting in meeting a partner, especially for higher socio-economic groups and younger generations (Bozon & Rault, 2012; Lampard, 2007; Haandrikman, 2010). Although these studies do not provide information on (specific) migrant groups, we expect a similar variety in meeting context for European binational couples. Motives of mobilities may contribute to meeting opportunities, not only by extending the marriage market internationally, but also by creating specific social settings that are known as typical meeting contexts. For example, we do see that educational contexts and work contexts, two meeting contexts often mentioned in research, are both settings for which intra-EU mobility is actively encouraged by EU mobility programmes (e.g. Erasmus+). Therefore, we expect educational and work context to be also important meeting contexts for European binational couples.

One meeting context that should be mentioned in brief is dating via the Internet. Over the last few decades, Internet dating has gained popularity as an alternative to dating in real life (e.g. Allen, 2011; Sautter, Tippett & Morgan, 2010), especially for individuals who face a thin marriage market such as those from the LBGTQ+ community, older people or people from racial or religious minorities (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). Additionally, partners do not necessarily need geographical proximity to meet. In a world that is increasingly globalised, this virtual meeting context could also be relevant for European binational couples. We could therefore expect that binational couples are more likely to meet via Internet than uninational couples.

Trends and patterns in binational couples cannot be isolated from other migration patterns (Lanzieri, 2012), consequently we may expect that meeting contexts for intra-European binational couples also potentially are influenced by country-specific migration contexts. As we will study European binational couples in three countries, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain, it is important to be aware of the migration and mobility context in each of these countries which is partially different and may thus result in different patterns. Belgium has been part of the European integration process since the 1950's. With Brussels as EU's capital, Belgium is home to many European migrants working at the EU institutions and multinationals in the Brussels area. Border effects also play an important role, given the small size of the country, and neighbouring countries showing relatively high cultural closeness, including shared languages. This results in a relatively high proportion of EU migrants (46% of the foreign-born population). Historically, Belgium has mainly seen immigration. In the 1950's with labour migrants from Southern-European countries such as Spain and Italy as well as several non-European Mediterranean countries (Petrovic, 2012; Van Mol & de Valk, 2016). After the oil crisis in the 1970's this labour migration reduced and was followed by chain migration of family members mainly for the non-EU migrants from the previous migration wave. Following the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990's, the number of migrants from Eastern European countries to Belgium increased, especially after the accession of several Eastern-European countries in the 2000's, with a new inflow of

large groups of Poles and Bulgarians. In recent years, the financial crisis again made Belgium an attractive destination country for EU migrants from regions more heavily affected by the crisis such as Spain, Portugal and Greece. According to statistics on registered marriages in 2009 (Koelet et al., 2012), 6.7% of all registered marriages in Belgium are European binational marriages. The Netherlands has also been part of the European project since the early days and can for decades now be categorised as an immigration country. Like Belgium, net migration has overall been positive but immigration is not as prominently characterised by European migrants. In recent decades, however, European migrants outnumbered non-Europeans with migration from Eastern-European member states, in particular Poland. Historically, the Netherlands has similar trends of immigration after World War II compared to Belgium (Van Mol & de Valk, 2016). However, in the Netherlands there is a larger share of the non-migrant population being mobile (compared to Belgium and Spain); the percentage of those who have ever lived and worked abroad is the highest in our study countries, with 16% compared to 10% for Spain and 8% for Belgium (Special Eurobarometer 337: June 2010). The percentage of inhabitants in the Netherlands that envisage working abroad at some time in the future is also significantly higher at 22% compared to the European average of 17% (Eurobarometer June 2010). High levels of knowledge of foreign languages in the Netherlands are often suggested to add to this effect; 77% of Dutch citizens speak at least two languages (mother tongue plus at least one other language), for Belgium this is 50% and in Spain, it is as low as 18%. Nevertheless, the percentage of European binational marriages in the Netherlands is lower compared to Belgium, with 4.7% in the Netherlands compared to 6.7% in Belgium (Koelet et al., 2012). Spain joined the European Communities, the predecessor of the EU, in 1986. Spain has, with 12.3% non-nationals, the largest migrant population, based on nationality, in our study countries (Belgium 9.7% and the Netherlands 3.9%). However, most of the immigrants in Spain are of non-EU origin. Spain was for many decades characterised as an emigration country: in the 1950s and 1960s, many Spaniards migrated to Northwestern European countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands to settle as labour migrants

(Van Mol & de Valk, 2016). After the oil crisis in the, 1970s many of them returned and Spain started to attract immigrants from non-European countries. In the last decade, mainly due to the economic crises, again many Spaniards chose to migrate to Western European countries looking for work. Almost half of the respondents of the Special Eurobarometer (337: June 2010) indeed indicated that they would move for better working conditions. On the other hand, 'leaving home' is mentioned as the most important discouraging reason for not working abroad. In Spain, this percentage is much higher compared to Belgium and the Netherlands (63% compared to respectively 37% and 34%) (Special Eurobarometer 386, Europeans and their languages, 2012). Spain is a popular travel destination, a popular destination for retirement immigration and a popular destination country for Erasmus student exchange. At the same time, 2.7% of the Spanish marriages is binational, thereby having the lowest percentage in our comparison (Koelet et al., 2012).

3.3. Data & methods

3.3.1. Data

The data used in this study were collected within the framework of the EUMARR-project "Towards a European Society: Single Market, Binational Marriages, and Social Group Formation in Europe"[27]. This project included an international comparative survey among European binational and uninational couples in Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland, fielded in 2012. For the purpose of our study of intra-EU mobility, we excluded the Swiss data here. The main objective of the EUMARR survey was to study characteristics of binational couples, defined as couples consisting of partners with a different European nationality. Both married and unmarried couples were included. The nationalities of the partners in the sampled binational couples are limited to a selection of the most common origins within European binational couples for each country, supplemented by common combinations with partners from new EU member states.

[27] The EUMARR research project was supported by the European Science Foundation (grant no. EUI2010-04221)

This ensured the most optimal representation of binational couples with partners from old and new EU member states[28]. Uninational couples from each country of interview were also included as a control group. All respondents were couples in which both partners were between 30 and 45 years old at the moment of the interview.

The national samples were clustered in metropolitan areas in order to find sufficient numbers of potential couples for the study[29]. For each country, the capital was selected, plus a major city in the context of European migration (Belgium: Brussels & Antwerp; Spain: Madrid & Barcelona; the Netherlands: The Hague & Amsterdam)[30]. The response rate for Belgium was 32.2% (de Valk et al., 2013, p.21), for the Dutch survey 37.1% (Heering et al., 2013, p. 14) and for Spain 12.3% (Diez Medrano et al., 2012, p.12; this lower response rate for Spain is due to the less detailed sampling frame, see Diez Medrano et al. 2012). Within each sampled couple, only one of the partners (randomly selected) was interviewed. The survey was distributed as web survey, and available in at least two languages for each country[31]. A paper survey was available on request. Several reminders were sent to respondents at certain time intervals to maximize the response rate. The final reminder included a paper survey that could be filled in by hand and returned free of charge.

For this study, European binational couples are defined as couples of which one partner was born in the country of interview (i.e. Spain, Belgium or the Netherlands), and the other partner in another EU member states. This definition of binational couples using country of birth avoids possible bias due to different pathways for naturalisation in the different countries. We compare these binational couples with uninational couples for which both partners were born in the country of interview. Consequently, couples with a partner born outside the EU were excluded from the analyses, as were uninational

[28] In Belgium, the most common combinations are Belgian-French, Belgian-Dutch, Belgian-Italian, Belgian-German, Belgian-Polish, Belgian-English; in the Netherlands the selected couples are Dutch-German, Dutch-English, Dutch-Polish and Dutch-other EU; and in Spain Spanish-English, Spanish-Italian, Spanish-French, Spanish-GR, Spanish-Portuguese, Spanish-Romanian, Spanish-Bulgarian.
[29] binational couples are more often living in an urban context
[30] An extensive discussion of the sampling methods used can be found in de Valk et al., 2013, (Belgium), Heering et al., 2013 (the Netherlands) and Diez Medrano et al., 2012 (Spain).
[31] Belgium: Dutch, French, English; the Netherlands: Dutch, English; Spain: Spanish, Catalan, English.

couples for which both partners were born outside the country of interview. Due to the fact that same-sex couples were not sampled in Spain, we excluded same-sex unions for the purpose of our analyses. After these additional selections, our study sample comprises 1,786 respondents: 541 in Belgium, 626 in the Netherlands and 619 in Spain[32].

3.3.2. Measures on meeting and mobility

The EUMARR survey includes information on whether the couple had met in real life or on the Internet. For those couples that met offline, the survey also collected information on two contextual aspects of the first meeting of the couple. The first refers to the country where the couple met for the first time at the start of their relationship. For reasons of comparison between countries, we categorized the country information: 'birth country of both partners', 'birth country of one of the partners' and 'third country, different from the countries of birth of the partners'. The second measurement of meeting context indicates the main reason for being in the country of meeting at the moment of first meeting. The respondent had the choice between five categories: home country, study reasons, work reasons, on holiday, and 'other'. These five categories refer to different motives of mobility, but also imply different degrees of 'permanency' of the mobility. Referring to the destination country after migration as 'home country' could be seen as an indication of the intention of a long-term stay or strong integration. Being abroad for study of work reasons are usually contexts that imply mid- to long-term (several months). A holiday context, on the other hand, can usually be linked to short-term mobility. Using several exploratory analyses including cluster analyses and multiple correspondence analyses based on the information of both partners, we created a typology of five categories of meeting contexts: home-home, home-work, home-study, home-holiday & home-other or in a third country. A sixth minor category

[32] In the multivariate models, the sample size was further reduced to 995 (Spain: 272, Belgium: 330, the Netherlands: 393) due to missing values in the covariates

with a variety of more diverse meeting contexts or meeting contexts with incomplete information, were left out the analyses here.

Covariates

In the multivariate analyses that follow, the variable 'married' indicates that the partners are married (ref. = cohabiting, not married). For individual characteristics, we have chosen to look at the non-native partner as the reference person in the couple. So, the variable sex refers to the sex of the non-native partner (ref. = female). We include the age of the non-native partner, and the age of the non-native partner at the first meeting. Educational level of the non-native partner is expressed in three categories: 'primary and secondary education' (reference category), 'tertiary education – short cycle and bachelor', and 'tertiary education – master and Phd'. The origin of the non-native partner is also included. In order to differentiate between different origins in a concise way, we created the categories 'neighbouring country of the country of residence', 'other EU15 country' and 'other EU27 country' (ref. = neighbouring country). In line with the differences in migrant population in the three countries, the sample reflects this diversity across the study countries; In the Belgium sample, 74.7% of the non-native partners in the binational couples (n=328) originate from a neighbouring country. In the Netherlands, this is 29.3% (n=393) and in Spain 24.3% (n=272). To control for country differences, Spain and the Netherlands are included as control variables, with Belgium as reference. Table 3 1 presents the distribution of the independent variables in the sample.

Table 3-1: Sample characteristics by country of residence

		Country of residence		
		Spain	Belgium	The Netherlands
Binational couple	No	52.6	29.1	30.2
	Yes	47.4	70.9	69.8
Meeting internet?	No	97.8	89.5	95.1
	Yes	2.2	10.5	4.9
Total sample		**644**	**564**	**688**
Sex non-native partner	Women	57.7	57.3	69.5
	Men	42.3	42.7	30.5
Educational level non-native partner	Primary - secondary	32.7	13.4	16.3
	Tertiary short cycle & bachelor	44.1	25.6	29.3
	Tertiary master-doctor	23.2	61.0	54.5
Married	No	43.4	57.9	18.3
	Yes	56.6	42.1	81.7
Origin non-native partner	Neighbour country	24.3	74.7	29.3
	Other EU15	41.2	19.8	53.2
	Other EU28	34.6	5.5	17.6
Age non-native partner	Mean (std. dev.)	37.07 (4.04)	37.25 (3.73)	38.00 (3.92)
age first meeting non-native partner	Mean (std. dev.)	27.03 (4.67)	26.75 (5.19)	25.80 (4.49)
Total sample binational couples		**272**	**328**	**393**

Source: EUMARR; calculations by authors

Methods

We use cross-tabulations for exploratory bivariate analyses. For the multivariate analyses, we estimate binary logistic regression models to compare the different groups in the typology. The 'home-home'-category is always used as the reference category. Characteristics of the couple and the non-native partner are included as covariates.

3.4. Results

The literature has suggested the upcoming importance of the Internet as a way of meeting between romantic partners. Therefore, we briefly explored the share of couples that had met online versus having met offline for the first time (table 3-2). In this part of the analyses, both uninational couples and binational couples are included for the purpose of comparison.

Table 3-2: First meeting online for uninational and binational couples, by country (%)

		Uninational	Binational
Spain	Meeting online	1.8	2.6
	N	339	305
Belgium	Meeting online	8.5	11.3
	N	164	400
The Netherlands	Meeting online	2.4	6.0
	N	208	480
Total**	Meeting online	3.5	6.9
	N	711	1185

*Source: EUMARR; calculations by authors. *=<.05; **<.01, ***<.001*

The results clearly show that only a minority of the uninational and binational couples in the survey met online (5.6%, n=1896). However, there are significant differences between countries (x^2=39.776; df=2; p<.001), with meeting online being more common in Belgium than in Spain or the Netherlands: In Spain 2.3% met online, in the Netherlands, this is 4.8% and in Belgium it is as high as 10.8%. Apart from the clear country differences, differences are found between uninational and binational couples within country: in all three countries in this study, it seems that binational couples more often met online than uninational couples, but these differences are not significant (p<.05).

We continue with a descriptive analysis of meeting contexts of couples in Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands. First of all, the country of first meeting is studied, making a distinction between country of birth of one of the partners versus having met in a third

country (different from the birth countries of the partners). In the following analyses (table 3-3), we only focus on the binational couples, given the finding that almost all uninational couples in our sample (95.2%) have met in the country where they lived at the moment of being interviewed, being the home country of both partners.

Table 3-3: Country of first meeting by country of residence (%)

	Country of residence			Total
	Spain	Belgium	The Netherlands	
Birth country of one of both partners	87.5	81.7	74.0	80.3
Third country	12.5	18.3	26.0	19.7
Total N	**272**	**328**	**393**	**993**

Source: EUMARR; calculations by authors. $\chi^2 = 19.013; df = 2; p < .001$

For all countries, the majority of the couples met each other in the country of birth of one of them (80.3%). This suggests that in most cases, there is only one of two partners that was mobile at the moment of first meeting. About a fifth of the couples (19.7%) met in a third country. Most remarkable difference is the relatively high percentage of Dutch couples that met in a third country (26.0%), compared to Belgian (18.2%) and Spanish (12.5).

The distribution of the typology of meeting contexts by country is presented in table 3-4. In this typology both country of meeting and reasons of being there are combined.

Table 3-4: typology of meeting contexts (%)

	Country of residence			Total
	Spain	Belgium	The Netherlands	
Home-home	24.3	16.2	13.7	17.4
Home-work	27.9	27.4	21.1	25.1
Home-study	14.0	17.1	17.0	16.2
Home-holiday & home-other	17.6	15.2	17.3	16.7
Third country	11.4	16.8	25.2	18.6
Other categories (incl. missing)	4.8	7.3	5.6	5.9
Total	272	328	393	993

Source: EUMARR; calculations by authors. $\chi^2 = 35.621; df = 10; p < .001$

The category 'home-home' refers to couples for which both partners indicate that they met for the first time in a country they both identify as their home country. Although one partner being mobile could be assumed for binational couples, still 17.4% of the European binational couples fall into the home-home category. This implies that both partners define the country of meeting as their home country, although one of them was born abroad. It could be argued that this could be seen as an example of binational couples with non-native partners that seem to have migrated with the intention to stay or who migrated at a younger age before the couple was formed. To explore this, we conducted additional analyses on the age of migration of the non-native partners in this category which showed a very broad range, going from very young ages to only shortly before meeting the partner. So, calling the destination country after migration 'home country' does not necessarily reflect a longer stay, but may instead reveal something about the intention of staying permanently in the country. This home category is much higher in Spain (24.3%), compared to the other countries (16.2% in Belgium and 13.7% in the Netherlands).

'Home-work' is the most common category in Spain and Belgium with respectively 27.9 and 27.4 percent of couples falling in this category. The categories 'Home-study' and 'home-holiday & home-other' vary substantially between the countries, but still represent

a good part of the meeting contexts. 18.6 percent of the European binational couples have met in a third country. Again, we find diversity between the countries with 11.4% of the European binational couples in Spain having met in a third country compared to 16.8% in Belgium and even 25.2% in the Netherlands.

Multivariate analyses

In the pooled multivariate analyses, we estimated a set of binary logistic regression models in which we compare the different categories for the meeting context and study the influence of several socio-demographic characteristics of the couples (table 3-5) In all models, the 'home-home'-category is the reference as we assume it to be the category closest related to long-term/permanent migration. The non-native partner in the couple is chosen as the reference person for the socio-demographic covariates, as described before. We present findings on the pooled models only as additional country level analyses (not shown) revealed that the factors found to be important in the pooled models were similar across all countries.

Model A in table 3-5 refers to the odds ratios of having met in a third country compared to having met in the home country of both partners. We find the odds of partners with a higher education having met in a third country are higher. This is especially true for those with a master or doctoral degree (O.R. = 4.525). The odds decrease when having met at older age (O.R. = 0.918). This suggests that meeting in a context where both partners are mobile at the moment of meeting, is more linked to younger couples. Although in the Netherlands, higher odds could be expected based on the descriptive results, this effect does not reach the 5% significance level even though the country gradient as found before is reflected also in these multivariate results. Model B compares the odds of having met in a home-work context versus the home-home context. Again, a strong positive effect for the highly educated is found (O.R. = 2.109). Additionally, also origin of the non-native partner (i.e. country of birth) affects the odds: Having met in a home-work context is found to be more probable for couples born in a EU member state not neighbouring to the country of residence, or was part of the EU 15 (O.R. = 2.242). Again,

we don not find any significant country difference. Findings from Model C suggest that home-study as a meeting context is more likely for highly educated, both at the bachelor (O.R. = 3.764) as at the master of doctoral level (O.R. = 10.601). This may reflect the likelihood that one of the partners was taking part in a study exchange. This type of meeting context is also linked to meeting at a younger age, confirming the suggested explanation of exchange programmes during studies in higher education. Finally, in Model D we compare a home-holiday/other-context to the reference group with a home-home meeting context. Apart from a negative effect for age of the non-native partner at first meeting, none of the covariates seems to be linked to explain belonging to this category suggesting there are no differences between this category and the reference group (home-home) a significant result. Additional analyses controlling for age homogamy and educational homogamy (not shown) did not result in significant effects either.

Table 3-5: Logistic regression models for meeting contexts of European binational couples – odds ratios

	Model A third country vs. home-home		Model B home-work vs. home-home	
	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.
Man (ref=woman)	0.774	0.304	1.015	0.945
Educational level (ref: primary-secondary)		0.000		0.000
Educational level: bachelor	1.634	0.154	0.793	0.395
Educational level: master-PhD	4.525 **	0.000	2.109 **	0.010
Married (ref=unmarried)	1.337	0.270	1.013	0.952
Origin non-native partner (ref: neighbouring country)		0.059	-	0.039
Origin non-native partner: EU15	1.348	0.286	1.598°	0.089
Origin non-native partner: EU28	0.528	0.131	2.242 *	0.012
Age of non-native partner at first meeting	0.918 **	0.001	1.015	0.519
Country (ref: Belgium)		0.037		0.314
Country: Spain	0.748	0.423	0.629	0.130
Country: the Netherlands	1.604	0.134	0.737	0.314
Constant	3.443	0.105	0.686	0.592
	n=358 -2LL: 420.801 Nagelkerke R^2: 0.252		n=423 -2LL: 546.090 Nagelkerke R^2: 0.081	

*Source: EUMARR; calculations by authors; ° = p<0.1; * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01*

Table 3-5 (continued): Logistic regression models for meeting contexts of European binational couples – odds ratios

	Model C home-study vs home-home		Model D home-holiday/other vs. home-home	
	O.R.	Sig.	O.R.	Sig.
Man (ref=woman)	0.965	0.899	0.923	0.737
Educational level (ref: primary-secondary)		0.000		0.453
Educational level: bachelor	3.764**	0.002	0.823	0.497
Educational level: master-PhD	10.601 **	0.000	1.160	0.627
Married (ref=unmarried)	0.896	0.702	1.516°	0.087
Origin non-native partner (ref: neighbouring country)		0.209		0.329
Origin non-native partner: EU15	0.719	0.283	1.309	0.352
Origin non-native partner: EU28	0.476 °	0.087	1.656	0.140
Age of non-native partner at first meeting	0.817 **	0.000	0.945 **	0.008
Country (ref: Belgium)		0.337		0.314
Country: Spain	1.571	0.237	0.623	0.153
Country: the Netherlands	1.644	0.161	0.883	0.694
Constant	33.404 **	0.000	3.504	0.061
	n=334 -2LL: 357.284 Nagelkerke R^2: 0.361		n=340 -2LL: 449.023 Nagelkerke R^2: 0.084	

Source: EUMARR; calculations by authors; ° = p<0.1; * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01

3.5. Conclusion & discussion

European binational couples are an interesting group when it comes to processes of European integration as they can be seen as a symbol of European integration at the most intimate individual level. However, the link between increased intra-EU mobility opportunities and the ways and places where these couples are formed remain unexplored. In this paper, we study the formation of European binational couples by investigating where the couples met and link these meeting places to characteristics of the partners and the couples living in three countries with different mobility histories.

In a first step, the country where the partners met each other for the first time was determined. Second, also the reason of being in the country of meeting was analysed. Taking an approach in which meeting contexts were defined as country of meeting and the motive of being in that country at that moment is especially relevant for this group of European binational couples as by definition, at least one of the partners has been mobile before the first meeting. To ease the interpretation, a typology was made differentiating five specific meeting contexts based on the different reasons for being in the country of meeting, thereby giving suggestion to the expected permanency of the European mobility, going from short-term mobility as a holiday to more permanent intentions to migrate. In this way, our study contributes both to the existing literature on the broader topic of union formation processes and the literature on intra-European mobility.

European binational couples are often linked to increased meeting opportunities through intra-EU mobility. However, our results show that in many cases it is only one partner that is mobile. Both partners meeting in a country that was not their country of birth (so-called 'third country') only occurs among a minority of the couples. Although the multivariate analyses do not show strong significant country difference, the descriptive results suggest that meeting in a third country is more common among intra-European binational couples in the Netherlands. We believe that this can be explained by the relatively high migration and mobility that are typically found for the

Netherlands (e.g. Special Eurobarometer 337: June 2010). This specific situation with two mobile partners is also more often found when the partners met at a young age, suggesting a link between higher mobility patterns as young adult for both partners and the subsequent relationship formation.

In most European binational couples, only one of the partners was abroad at the moment of first meeting. Interestingly, it were not just the uninational couples who met in a home-home context but also for partners in binational couples this was common, although one of both partners in these couples was born abroad. This may suggest they migrated already at a young age and that, by the time of the interview, they considered the country as ' home' and the mobility as such was not necessarily motivated by the relationship. This is important to note as in studies in which interethnic unions with non-European partners are studied it is often assumed that partners came to the country for the purpose of the relationship. The fact that this is less common among the European binational couples hints at the fact that migration regulations and restrictive laws are indeed less important for these couples.

In addition, it is clear that work and study are two clear reasons why to the non-national partner arrived in the country and where they met their partner. Both motives refer to mobility typically lasting a few months or longer but without the explicit intention of staying permanently. Our findings clearly show that these two meeting contexts are more common among higher educated, with a specific strong effect for study reasons (meeting in a 'home-home' context was clearly more common among lower educated couples). These higher educated are in the literature often seen as privileged mobile citizens (cf. 'free-movers'). Additionally, meeting in a home-study context was also linked to meeting at a younger age which seems to suggest that student mobility exchange programmes, such as Erasmus, are a strong facilitator for this type of meetings (cf. Schroedter et al., 2015). Our finding that study and work are important ways of meeting a partner for European binational couples also suggests, in general, that meeting

contexts are not that different from the meeting contexts of uninational couples and that couple formation follows an educational rather than a mobility gradient.

We also included a specific meeting context in which geographical proximity or distance does not matter and where mobility initially is not needed: meeting online. Clear country differences were found concerning Internet meeting with the highest occurrence in Belgium. Nevertheless, despite the fact that few couples met online, this was much more common among binational couples than among uninational couples in all three study countries. This confirms earlier findings that online dating and meeting is more popular among couples that face 'narrow marriage markets'. The differences between the countries could be explained by a different country of origin of the non-native partners, but also by the differential availability of the internet at the moment of first meeting in the three countries in this study. Most of the unions in the sample started between 1996 and 2006. Given the increased popularity and omnipresence of the Internet since then, we could expect an even stronger share of internet meeting among meeting contexts nowadays.

Finally, although we expected that the three countries would differ in the ways in which couples are formed given their different migration and mobility histories, few differences were observed. Only the Netherlands stand out with their higher mobility, reflected in a higher probability in meeting in a third country. In Spain, the European binational couples more often meet in 'home-home' meeting contexts, suggesting less mobility.

Although our analyses add to the literature, some limitations should be mentioned which need to be addressed in future work. Although the survey data is unique in set-up and coverage the data in Belgium, Spain and the Netherland logically only contain information about couples that decided to reside in these countries. Couples who decided to move abroad after meeting and couple formation, could not be included. In order to overcome this issue, longitudinal data collection with a migration system perspective would be preferable, in which all couples would be interviewed that met in a specific country, irrespective of their migration or mobility during the relationship. This

would give an even more complete picture of the complexity of partner choice in a mobility context. Secondly, the data also focus on binational couples that still exist: couples whose unions have been dissolved before the data collection are logically not included. This may result in both an un- and an overestimation of certain meeting patterns if specific couples are more or less likely to separate/divorce. More in depth analyses of union dissolution among European binational couples could shed light on the composition of this group and how it may affect our findings. Meeting online also deserves further elaboration in future research. Given the strong evolution of the impact of the Internet on society, an in-depth analysis of online dating and how it influences potential mixed couple formation is interesting and relevant. A more detailed insight in the effects of partner and couple characteristics would be important to further our understanding of European binational couple formation. The data used in this study did for, example, not allow for a full inclusion of mobility or migrant background of both partners.

Despite these limitations our paper does show that European binational couples, just like those in a uninational relationship, often meet via study or work. This is an important finding as it suggests the same meeting places are relevant for both. It, however, also points to a potentially increasing dichotomy in society between those who are highly educated and mobile and those who are not. Whether this stimulates European integration or rather hampers European societies is to be seen.

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CHAPTER 4

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY ASPIRATIONS: THE ROLE OF ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AND ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

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Abstract

The academic literature on the determinants of international student mobility so far has largely ignored the influence of romantic relationships and study motivation in the development of aspirations to participate in temporary learning experiences in another country. However, young adults might take considerations about investments in individual development (via academic training and thus study motivation) and romantic relationships into account in their decision-making process. Consequently, we apply a life course perspective analysing the relationships between having a romantic partner, study motivation and aspirations to participate in an international exchange programme among first-year university students, based on a survey conducted among 603 freshmen in Brussels. As female students are more likely to participate in student exchanges compared to male students, we pay special attention to gender differences. Our results show that a romantic relationship is negatively correlated with aspirations to participate in an international student exchange among female students. In contrast, intrinsic academic motivation is significantly associated with such aspirations among female and male students. Overall, our findings indicate the need for the consideration of different life-course domains in academic studies on international student mobility.

4.1. Introduction

Over the past decade, scholarly work on the determinants of international student mobility (hereafter ISM) significantly expanded in different fields (see e.g. Hagen-Zanker, 2008; Netz, 2015; Souto Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, De Wit, & Vujić, 2013; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014; Vossensteyn et al. 2010). At the micro-level, ISM is found to be mainly driven by a mixture of developmental, leisure, travel, personal and experiential goals (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Lesjak et al, 2015; Vossensteyn et al., 2010). However, most studies overlook life course factors and rely on retrospective information regarding students' (eventual) mobility decisions. In this paper, in contrast, we argue that higher education students are at the crossroads of several life-course transitions which should be taken into account in studies on ISM-decision making processes. With the term 'international student mobility', in this paper we refer to higher education students' temporary learning experiences abroad, resulting 'in progress toward an academic degree at a student's home institution, excluding degree-seeking studies at a foreign institution' (Ogden, Streitwieser, & Van Mol, 2020: xxvi). In the European literature on international student exchanges, this is often called 'credit mobility' (see e.g. Breznik & Skrbinjek, 2020; Souto-Otero et al. 2013; Teichler, 2012; Vossensteyn et al. 2010). In this paper, we particularly focus on students' aspirations to participate in the European Erasmus+ exchange programme for higher education students, providing insight into the factors that may influence higher education students' ISM decision-making process at an early stage.

The contribution of our paper to the academic literature is threefold. First, we focus on to what extent romantic relationships of higher education students play a role in eventual ISM-aspirations. After all, life course studies have stressed the relevance of the people around the individual in the development of migration and mobility decisions (often referred to as the 'linked lives' principle) (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003; Fischer & Malmberg, 2001; Haug, 2008). Existing studies on the role of the family on ISM-decisions also suggest that families can play a sometimes subtle yet important role

(Cairns, 2014; Souto Otero et al., 2013). Furthermore, studies that looked at immobility decisions and control for relationship status suggest that having a romantic partner may influence decisions not to participate in international exchange opportunities (e.g. Netz, 2015; Van Mol, 2014). The existing empirical literature, however, has not yet paid full attention to the importance of romantic relationships for ISM-aspirations. This is unfortunate, as especially in early adulthood, when decisions to participate in international exchange programmes are made, romantic partnerships are an important part of some individuals' life and development (Zarrett et Eccles, 2006; Collins & Welsh & Furman, 2009). Consequently, in this paper we specifically focus on the relationship between students' involvement in romantic relationships and aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme.

Second, aspirations to participate in international exchange programmes might also correlate with study motivations. After all, from a human capital perspective, participation in such exchanges can be considered to be an additional investment to develop specific knowledge, skills and competences (Becker, 1975). As such, motivations in terms of the determination to acquire such knowledge, skills and competences likely play a crucial role in the decision-making process. Relying on self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci 1985, 2000), which distinguishes between internal and external orientations of motivation, we therefore investigate whether different types of self-determined study motivation during a student's study career are associated with aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme.

Third, we explicitly analyse the role of having a romantic relationship as well as study motivations on aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme from a gender perspective. With the term gender, we refer to individuals' biological sex and its associated cultural and social role expectations. As such, we do not refer to gender identity, i.e. whether an individual identifies as masculine, feminine or both, or to a simple binary biological variable that neglects the cultural and social expectations associated with sex differences. It is well known that women are overrepresented in international

exchange programmes, irrespective of their field of study (Böttcher et al., 2016; Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010; Li, Olso and Frieze, 2013; Redden, 2008). Today, this unequal gender balance remains unexplained and is identified as one of the major gaps in research on the determinants of ISM decisions (King & Raghuram 2013, Salisbury et al. 2010). By focussing on ISM aspirations of female and male students, we aim to provide potential explanations for the existence of this gender gap, particularly addressing the potential differential role that romantic relations and study motivation may have for male and female students in developing aspirations to study temporarily abroad.

In sum, our study thus sheds light on how social (and in particular romantic) relations as well as study motivations relate to aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme, with specific attention to gendered processes. Our analyses rely on unique survey data collected among all first-year bachelor students from the wider social sciences and humanities at a higher education institution in Brussels, Belgium (Vrije Universiteit Brussel).

4.2. Background

4.2.1. Aspirations as key concept for understanding international student mobility

In this paper, our first conceptual starting point comes from the literature on international migration, which focuses both on temporary and permanent forms of migration, and wherein participants in international exchange programmes are conceptualised as a specific group of migrants, because of the migration-related dynamics they undergo (see for example Van Mol 2014: 34-35; Van Mol & Michielsen, 2015). [33] In line with such theoretical conceptualisations, studies on international

[33] The empirical and theoretical academic literature in the field of migration studies focuses on a wide array of international migration forms, which vary in terms of length (short-term and long-term), types of migrants, as well as origin and destination countries. For example, there is a large literature that focuses on the mobility of expats between developed countries, or highly skilled migrants that move within the European Union for shorter time periods. Given this varied nature of the international migration nature, it can be an informative starting point for studies on international student exchanges as well.

migration dynamics have great potential for informing studies on the decision-making processes, experiences, and outcomes of international exchange students. In migration studies, decision-making processes are often conceptualised as step-wise processes (Van Mol, Snel, Hemmerechts & Timmerman 2018). Carling (2002) developed the two step aspirations/ability model, in which migration is seen as the result of people's aspirations to migrate and then the ability to do so. Migration can be desirable, and preferred over staying ('aspiration') but having migration aspirations may or may not result in actual mobility due to structural constraints or variation in individual capabilities, referred to as 'ability'. So far these concepts and notions, as developed by Carling (2002), have not been regularly applied to ISM (for an exception on degree seeking mobility, see Lombard 2019). However, it is a valuable frame for our study population of first year BA students who just started higher education and did not yet participate in an international exchange programme.

4.2.2. Life course perspective: Linked lives

In this paper, we use the life course perspective as our second conceptual starting point to understand study abroad aspirations of higher education students. The life course approach provides a framework for understanding the complexity of contexts and development of individual lives (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003). According to this framework, individual decisions are embedded in time and place as well as social relations (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003; Macmillan & Copher, 2005). For our study, we focus on the notion of 'linked lives', explained as the 'interdependency and socio-historical influences that are expressed through the network of shared relationships' (Elder et al., 2003, p.13; Mayer, 2001). Briefly, it acknowledges the interdependency of individuals in their aspirations, decisions and actions. After all, wider family and social contexts are likely to influence geographical mobility while individual agency in life course decisions is acknowledged (Haug, 2008; Fischer and Malmberg, 2001; Hagen-Zanker, 2008; Ryan & Sales, 2013; Souto-Otero et al., 2013; Williams et al., 2018).

The life course concept of 'linked lives' has been applied in migration research (Wingens et al 2011) and as such is closely related to the concepts of 'social embeddedness' or 'location-specific social capital' (Haug, 2008; Fischer & Malmberg, 2001). In migration studies, having more social capital or being more socially embedded in one location is typically believed to impede having migration aspirations as moving would imply the disturbance of these local social ties (Cairns & Smith, 2009; Vidal and Kley, 2010). A recent study by Williams et al. (2018) also showed that individuals who attach great importance to being with family, have lower intentions to migrate. A similar finding was reported in an earlier study on post-graduation mobility (Frieze, Hansen and Boneva, 2006).

Romantic partners are a specific and influential case of 'linked lives' and can thus be expected to play an important role in the migration decision making process. In his study on German degree mobile students, Carlson (2013) also refers to this as the 'partnership project'. The literature on both international and internal mobility has empirically shown the influence of partners on moving aspirations, intentions and behaviour (e.g. Mulder & Wagner 1993; Kley 2011; De Jong, 2000), for short- and long-term mobility experiences. For higher education students who are in the phase of making choices in different life domains, like education, work, and family life, we may expect that having a romantic partner may also shape their life-aspirations, including aspirations to participate in an international exchange programme during their studies. Although higher education students are in a life phase where they are still relatively free from constraints, a number of studies on barriers to participation in the Erasmus programme have indicated that family and personal relationships are one of the most important barriers to participation in the Erasmus programme (Beerkens et al. 2016; Souto-Otero et al. 2013; Vossensteyn et al. 2010). More specifically, having a partner seems to deter students from participation in educational experiences abroad (Netz, 2015; Van Mol, 2014; Brandenburg, 2014; Van Mol and Timmerman, 2014; Carlson, 2013; Bröckl, 2012). However, most studies on ISM-decisions that include romantic relationships have merely treated this as a control variable without aiming to understand the role these

relationships already play in forming aspirations and the potentially gendered effects they may have. Based on the existing literature reviewed above, we hypothesize that among higher education students, romantic relationships are negatively associated with aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme (*Hypothesis 1*). Additionally, we also expect the relative importance of romantic relationships to differ between female and male students. We elaborate on this in the section on gendered dynamics.

4.2.3. Self-determined motivations

A third conceptual starting point for this paper comes from psychology, more precisely self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which is helpful for conceptually understanding how study motivations might relate to aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme. In self-determination theory, two broad motivational categories are differentiated, namely intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation refers to 'doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable and is linked to the inherent human curiosity, and eagerness to learn' (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.55). Extrinsic motivation could be explained as 'doing something because it leads to a separable outcome', e.g. through external pressure or control (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Various levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are associated with educational characteristics, for example, educational achievement, school attendance, school drop-out, classroom conduct, satisfaction at school, etc. (e.g. Vansteenkiste et al. 2006; Vecchione et al., 2014; Ratelle et al., 2007; Valleran & Bissonnette, 1992). In the context of higher education, it can be expected that students' study motivations also correlate with their aspirations to study temporarily abroad. After all, participation in study abroad programmes can be considered as an additional investment of students in the development of their competences, knowledge and skills. Students who show high study motivations can hence be expected to be more likely to make such additional investments. Given the previous literature which shows that particularly intrinsic motivation is relevant in predicting educational outcomes, we hypothesise that particularly intrinsic study

motivations correlate with aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme (*Hypothesis 2*).

4.2.4. Gendered dynamics

Although a gender gap in international exchange participation is observed in Australia, Europe and the United States, few studies have paid attention to the potentially gendered nature of the decision making process to participate in an international exchange. Salisbury et al. (2010) stressed the importance of gender-specific analyses, arguing that social and cultural capital might differently affect the ISM decision-making process of male and female students. This has also been suggested in the broader international migration literature, where it has been indicated that social embeddedness may be particularly relevant for immobility decisions of women. The mechanisms that are suggested to be responsible for this relate to the potentially different attitudes and norms towards the responsibilities of female roles within family and relationships; women are often seen as the kin-keeper in the family (e.g. Kley, 2011; Fischer & Malmberg, 2001; Hadler, 2006). The few available studies that focus on the gender gap in ISM report that female students are more likely to value the opinions of parents, friends and relatives regarding study abroad (Presley et al. 2010; Shirley 2006). Furthermore, a study among Australian higher education students who combined study and a family indicated that female students, in particular, experienced more conflicts between their role as a student and their family roles as a parent and partner (Stone & O'Shea 2013). Overall, this leads us to expect that the inhibiting effect of a romantic relationship on aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme will be stronger for female students than it is for male students (*Hypothesis 3*).

Finally, we may also expect a gendered effect on the link between academic motivations and aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme. It has consistently been shown that under the influence of various mechanisms and actors during childhood (e.g. parents, teachers), educational motivations develop in gendered fashion from the start of the school career (Meece et al., 2006). For example, in an Italian study on

predictors of students' performance, Vecchione et al. (2014) found that the predictive value of intrinsic motivation is stronger for female students, while male students seem more strongly influenced by external regulation (as a subcategory of extrinsic motivation). Consequently, we hypothesise the correlation of intrinsic motivation with aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme to be stronger among female students compared to male students (*Hypothesis 4*).

In sum, in this paper we focus on how aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme are influenced by romantic relationships and study motivations, whereby we expect gender to act as a moderator.

4.3. Data & methods

4.3.1. Data

We use a unique cross-sectional student survey dataset from 2016 that was collected (paper-pencil) among first year bachelor students in Social Sciences and Humanities at a higher education institution in Brussels (Belgium). By focusing on students from a single institution, comparability among the sampling units is guaranteed as the same institutional rules on participation in the Erasmus+ programme apply. The response rate of the survey was 57 per cent (N = 1,080). Given the different life stage that older students might be in and which might affect their mobility aspirations, we restricted the sample to respondents under the age of 26, without children. We additionally limit our analyses to those students who are studying full-time (for whom studies is their main activity). Applying these restrictions provides us with a total analytical sample of 603 respondents.

4.3.2. Variables

4.3.2.1. Dependent variable

Our dependent variable is aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme, which was measured by the question 'Do you have the intention to go on an Erasmus mobility during your studies?'.[34] The possible answer categories were: 'Yes, definitely', 'Yes, probably', 'No, probably not', 'No, definitely not', 'Do not know', 'I do not know the Erasmus mobility programme'. We recoded the answers into a variable with three categories: (0 = 'No probably not' and 'No, definitely not'; 1 = 'Yes, definitely' and 'Yes, probably'; 2 = 'Do not know' and 'I do not know the Erasmus mobility programme').

4.3.2.2. Independent variables

As we focus on the relationship between ISM aspirations and romantic relationships, a first dichotomous variable measures whether the respondent had a romantic relationship at the time of the survey (0 = no, 1 = yes). This is a self-reported relationship status, with only a reference to 'boyfriend/girlfriend'. The relationships have a median duration of 18.5 months. Second, we use two continuous measures of students' academic motivations, based on a principal component analysis (PCA) on nine statements. For each item respondents could rate their level of agreement on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The PCA identified 2 main components: component 1 refers to intrinsic academic motivations (Cronbach's alpha = .700) and component 2 to extrinsic academic motivations (Cronbach's alpha = .751). In our analyses, we use sum scales of the two components as independent variables, with higher values indicating higher academic motivations.

[34] This question is literally translated from the original Dutch/Flemish version. It should be noted that in Dutch, the word 'aspiration' is not commonly used. Instead, the word 'intention' is generally used to describe what individuals have in their minds to do in the future. Although we acknowledge the conceptual differences between aspirations and intentions in English, in this case we feel reassured to assume that we measure aspirations here and not intentions, particularly as we asked these questions to a sample of freshmen.

Third, gender - referring to individuals' biological sex and its associated cultural and social roles - is included as a dichotomous variable (0 = female, 1 = male).[35]

4.3.2.3. Control variables

Several variables that – based on the background section – are expected to correlate with aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme are included as control variables. First, age is measured by a continuous variable indicating single years. Second, the ISM-literature clearly indicates that socio-economic background plays an important role in ISM- decisions, with students from a lower socio-economic background being less likely to participate (for a recent overview, see Netz et al, 2020). Therefore, we include two indicators for socioeconomic status of the student: a measurement of study financing and educational attainment of the mother. Parental educational attainment, and especially that of the mother, is considered as a good measurement for socioeconomic status of young adults, and is additionally found to be related to academic achievement (Entwislea & Astone, 1994; Hoff, et all., 2002). Study financing is measured by a dichotomous variable indicating how the student finances his/her studies (1 = full parental financial support), 0 = (partial) financing in a different way (e.g. part-time student job, grants, etc.)). 62.6% of the respondents indicates that their studies are fully paid by their parents. Educational background of the mother is measured with three categories (1 = low (up to lower secondary education degree), 2 = medium (up to higher secondary education degree), 3 = high (tertiary education degree)). 62.2% of all mothers has a tertiary degree. We compared our sample with a representative study of 18-30year olds in Belgium the JOP survey (2013)[36] and find that in our sample there are slightly fewer young adults with higher educated parents. In the JOP survey 76% of respondents who are having a university degree themselves have a parent with a higher education degree. With regard to migrant background the

[35] Acknowledging the diversity and importance of gender identifications, apart from being male or female, respondents could also indicate the option 'other' in order to grasp different gender identifications. However, only 2 respondents ticked this box, which does not allow for any meaningful analyses on this group.
[36] https://www.jeugdonderzoeksplatform.be/files/FF_Studeren.pdf

percentages of our sample and the JOP survey are matching (42 % of young adults has a migrant background). Third, we included a measure for the importance expressed by the respondents about weekly contact with the parents to control for family centrality (Frieze et al., 2006), ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 5, (very important). We combined the variables for both parents (if applicable) in a single variable, indicating the average score. Fourth, as previous experiences living abroad also show to increase the likelihood of participating in international exchange programmes during a higher education degree (e.g. King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Saarikallio-Torp & Wiers-Jenssen, 2010; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014) we included two variables measuring the 'international biography' of respondents. First, a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent had lived abroad for three months in his/her life or not (0 = no, 1 = yes). Second, a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent has family living abroad (0 = no, 1 = yes), as respondents with family abroad might be more internationally oriented. Although table 4-1 indicates that only a minority of our respondents already lived abroad themselves, about two third has family members living abroad, which is probably related to the fact that almost half of our respondents have a migration background, reflecting the population diversity in terms of origin in Brussels: nearly 62 percent of the population in Brussels is of foreign origin (Petrovic, 2012). Consequently, we also control for ethnic origin (0 = respondent and both parents are born in Belgium, 1 = respondent or at least one parent is born abroad), as previous research is inconclusive on whether ethnicity matters or not (see e.g. Netz et al. 2020). An overview of descriptive statistics is provided in table 4-1.

Table 4-1: Descriptive statistics of the sample (n=603)

Variable	Mean	SD	Range	N
Intrinsic academic motivation	4.11	.55	1-5	602
Extrinsic academic motivation	3.26	.87	1-5	603
Age (centered around age 18)	.86	1.28	0-7	603
Importance weekly contact with parents	4.46	.73	1-5	562
		%	Range	N
Study abroad aspirations			0-1	597
No		22.1		
Yes		65.0		
Do not know		12.9		
Romantic relationsip			0-1	599
No		67.1		
Yes		32.9		
Gender			0-1	603
Male		67.0		
Female		33.0		
Study finance through parents			0-1	572
Partially/not financed by parents		37.4		
Fully financed by parents		62.6		
Educational level mother			1-3	564
Low		14.7		
Medium		23.0		
High		62.2		
Lived abroad			0-1	603
No		83.9		
Yes		16.1		
Family living abroad			0-1	603
No		38.3		
Yes		61.7		
Migration background			0-1	603
No		57.9		
Yes		42.1		

4.3.3. Analytic strategy

Given that our dependent variable has three categories, we use multinomial logistic regression models. We use 'not having aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme' as reference. We start with models based on the pooled data and continue with separate analyses by gender.

4.4. Results

4.4.1. Descriptive analysis

A majority of the respondents, 65 per cent, expressed an aspiration to participate in the Erasmus mobility programme (Table 4-1). When examining the relationship between romantic partnerships and these aspirations, we see a clear pattern: those who are involved in a relationship have lower aspirations compared to those without a partner (59.5 and 67.8 per cent, respectively). However, this relationship is not statistically significant (x^2 = 5.427, p = .066). In line with our expectations, higher intrinsic academic motivation correlates with having aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme (F=12.894(2, 594), p<.001). For extrinsic academic motivation, we do not find a significant relationship (F=0,315(2,594), p=.730). Furthermore, we also find a significant association (x^2 = 26.806, p < .001) between gender and ISM aspirations. 71.9% of the female students indicated they aspire to participate in the Erasmus+ programme, whereas the percentage for male students is 50.8%.

4.4.2. Multivariate analysis

Next, we present multinomial logistic regressions on ISM aspirations (table 4-2). In model I, the relationship between being involved in a romantic relationship and aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme is investigated, controlling for confounding variables. In line with hypothesis 1, students involved in a romantic relationship have a significant lower propensity to consider participation (OR=.606, p<.05*). No statistically significant relationship between being in a romantic relationship

and ISM aspirations is found among respondents who did not yet know whether or not to participate in the Erasmus programme (OR=.724, p>.05).

Model II focuses on the relationship between academic motivation and aspirations to become mobile. The odds ratio of 3.064 (, p<.001) indicates – in line with hypothesis 2 – that a higher intrinsic motivation score is significantly associated with students' aspiration to participate in the Erasmus+ programme, and this does not hold for extrinsic motivations (OR=1.174, p>.05). This relationship is also found among those who do not yet know whether to go abroad or not: this group of students has higher intrinsic motivation levels compared to those who do not want to go abroad at all (OR=2.038, p<.05*).

Model III then investigates the relationship between gender and ISM- aspirations, and shows that male students have significantly lower odds for ISM aspirations (OR = .344, p<.05), confirming hypothesis 3. Again, such relationship is not detected for students who did not yet know whether to participate in the Erasmus+ programme or not (OR=.788, p>.05).

The full model (model IV) confirms each of the reported previous results: female students (OR=.361, p<.05) and those with intrinsic study motivation (OR=2.693, p<.001) are more likely to participate in the Erasmus+ programme, whereas those in a romantic relationship (OR=.536, p<.05) are less likely to have such aspirations.

Table 4-2: Multinomial logistic regressions on the propensity to participate in the Erasmus+ programme during the higher education degree (reference category = no, odds ratios)

	Model I		Model II	
	Romantic relationships		Academic motivations	
	Yes	Do not know	Yes	Do not know
Independent variables				
Romantic relationships (ref: no)	.606*	.724		
Academic motivations				
Extrinsic motivation			1.174	1.128
Intrinsic motivation			3.054***	2.038*
Gender (ref: female)				
Control variables				
Age	.876	.802	.857	.789
Study fully financed by parents (ref: no complete parental financing)	.842	1.080	.877	1.116
Educational level mother (ref: low)				
Medium	1.251	1.028	1.366	1.097
High	2.567**	1.136	3.273**	1.355
Importance weekly contact with parents	.945	1.129	.876	1.063
Lived abroad (ref: no)	1.206	.886	.962	.755
Family living abroad (ref: no)	1.791*	2.127*	1.537	1.930
Migration background (ref: no)	1.418	.863	1.542	.927
N	499		499	
R^2 (Nagelkerke)	.078		.137	
Chi-square Likelihood ratio Test (df., p)	33.228 (18, .016)		59.688 (20, <.001)	
-2LL	580.346		786.969	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
* p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ . 001.

Table 4-2 (continued): Multinomial logistic regressions on the propensity to participate in the Erasmus+ programme during the higher education degree (reference category = no, odds ratios)

	Model III Gender		Model IV Full model	
	Yes	Do not know	Yes	Do not know
Independent variables				
Romantic relationships (ref: no)			.536*	.690
Academic motivations				
Extrinsic motivation			1.203	1.132
Intrinsic motivation			2.693***	1.990*
Gender (ref: female)	.344***	.788	.361***	.824
Control variables				
Age	.888	.800	.890	.798
Study fully financed by parents (ref: no complete parental financing)	.844	1.070	.884	1.104
Educational level mother (ref: low)				
Medium	1.214	1.012	1.366	1.103
High	2.622**	1.152	3.164**	1.303
Importance weekly contact with parents	.865	1.110	.806	1.059
Lived abroad (ref: no)	1.182	.858	1.169	.851
Family living abroad (ref: no)	1.746*	2.118*	1.574	1.969
Migration background (ref: no)	1.517	.907	1.330	.844
N	499		499	
R^2 (Nagelkerke)	.121		.187	
Chi-square Likelihood ratio Test (df., p)	52.290 (18, <.001)		83.399 (24, <.001)	
-2LL	569.988		776.992	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
* p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .01; *** p ≤ . 001.

As a final analytical step, we tested whether the main effects we found hold by gender (table 4-3). Model I replicates the full model as shown in table 4-2 (model IV), in order to facilitate comparison with the gender-specific models II and III. The models clearly show that intrinsic motivation is positively correlated with aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ exchange programme for both male (OR=3.579, p<.05) and female (OR=1.850, p<.05*) respondents. Interestingly, the odds for intrinsic motivation are much higher among the male students in our sample. As such, hypothesis 4, which stated that the relationship between intrinsic motivations and study abroad aspirations would be stronger among female students compared to male students, is rejected. Interestingly, when conducting separate analyses for male and female students regarding the association between being involved in a romantic relationship and aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme, we find that the significant relationship in the full model can primarily be attributed to the female respondents. It is only for women that being in a romantic relationship results in lower aspirations (OR=.358, p<.01). Although not reaching significance, being in a romantic relationship for women also results in lower odds of not knowing whether or not to aspire to participate in the Erasmus+ exchange programme (OR=.420, p>.05). This suggests that being in a romantic relationship for women excludes the option of participation. For the models in which we compare those who 'do not know' with those having no aspirations for participation separately by gender, we do not find significant results for any of our independent variables.

Table 4-3: Multinomial logistic regressions on the propensity to participate in the Erasmus+ programme during the higher education degree (reference category = no, odds ratios)

	Model I Total sample		Model II Women		Model III Men	
	Yes	Do not know	Yes	Do not know	Yes	Do not know
Independent variables						
Romantic relationships (ref: no)	.536*	.690	.358**	.420	.985	1.083
Academic motivations						
Extrinsic motivation	1.203	1.132	1.248	1.431	1.177	0.883
Intrinsic motivation	2.693***	1.990*	1.850*	1.328	3.579**	2.581
Gender (ref: female)	.361***	.824	/	/	/	/
Control variables						
Age	.890	.798	.816	.482*	.932	1.086
Study fully financed by parents (ref: no complete parental financing)	.884	1.104	1.445	1.795	.516	.843
Educational level mother (ref: low)						
Medium	1.366	1.103	1.078	1.545	2.247	.555
High	3.164**	1.303	2.719*	1.773	4.457*	.802
Lived abroad (ref: no)	1.169	.851	2.331	.985	.494	.619
Family living abroad (ref: no)	1.574	1.969	1.736	2.162	1.365	1.749
Importance weekly contact with parents	.806	1.059	.766	.642	.702	1.912
Migration background (ref: no)	1.330	.844	1.240	.780	1.703	.820
N	499		336		163	
R^2 (Nagelkerke)	.187		.175		.248	
Chi-square Likelihood ratio Test (df., p)	83.399 (24, <.001)		49.772 (22, .001)		39.262 (22, .013)	
-2LL	776.992		460.685		286.816	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < . 001

4.5. Conclusion and discussion

In this study, we focused on whether and how romantic relationships, academic motivations and gender – referring to students' biological sex and its associated cultural and social role expectations – are related to aspirations to participate in the international exchange programme Erasmus+, among a sample of freshmen at a higher education institution in Brussels, Belgium. Based on our analyses, the following three major conclusions can be drawn.

First, our findings clearly indicate that being in a romantic relationship is negatively correlated with aspirations to participate in an international exchange programme for female students. This finding is in line with the international migration literature (e.g. Mulder & Wagner 1993; Kley 2011; De Jong, 2000). Nevertheless, for international migration, the retaining effect of a partnership is often explained as making the decision process more complex because the partner (and often children) also form part of a single household. The romantic relationships higher education students are engaged in, however, are often not (yet) formalized by marriage or registered partnership, no children are involved (by selection in our sample), and these students are usually not sharing the same household with their partner. As such, our results clearly illustrate the importance of considering romantic relationships in ISM decision making processes, even when partners do not share the same household. They also indicate that women may be much more inclined to plan their individual aspirations in line with that of the partner while men are more driven by their own aspirations irrespective of having a partner or not.

Second, our results showed that higher intrinsic study motivations are significantly and positively associated with aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ programme. The important role of intrinsic academic motivation on such aspirations might be explained from the angle of personal development motivations which are often mentioned as the main personal motivations for participating in international exchange programmes (e.g. Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014). We found intrinsic motivation important for both male

and female students, but it had particularly high relevance for male students. It seems that it is a selection of male students with very high intrinsic motivation (and with highly educated mothers) who are particularly likely to aspire to participate in international exchange programmes. For them, this may be an investment in themselves as well as a way to invest in future job opportunities.

Third, in line with the documented gender gap in the likelihood of participation in international exchange programmes, female students in our sample expressed higher aspirations for participation compared to male students. At the same time, being in a romantic relationship seems to lead to lower aspirations only among female students. These gender-specific effects are puzzling and suggest that there is a dichotomy between women who aspire to participate in ISM and related individual development in contrast to others who are already in a romantic relationship at a relatively young age which they prioritize over individual aspirations. As such, our results potentially indicate the influence of gender socialisation on ISM decision-making processes. Our findings suggest that in a period when family and partner commitments are typically assumed to be still low priorities and students are very early in the study abroad decision making process, female students are still more influenced by potential conflict between educational goals and relationship expectations.

Our findings may also provide relevant information for practitioners. In line with other studies see, for example, Beerkens et al., 2016; Souto-Otero et al., 2013; Van Mol, 2014; Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014), we show that personal relationships are one of the most important barriers for participation in – specifically – the Erasmus+ programme. The study of Beerkens et al. (2016) revealed that respondents who indicate having 'home ties' – which included work and family/relationship commitments –were also more likely to indicate an Erasmus+ stay to be too long. Today, the minimum period for participation in the Erasmus+ programme is three months. Based on our findings, one may consider the possibilities for organizing shorter study stays abroad within the

framework of the programme, as well as for other international exchange programmes across the world. This allows for a more inclusive participation in these programmes.

Finally, some limitations of this study should be mentioned. First of all, this study focuses on aspirations to participate in the Erasmus+ program. This implies that we do not know whether the findings also hold true for real participation. For example, the fact that we find romantic relationships as an impeding effect for aspirations to participate among female students while female students are still more participating in studyabroad programs challenges us to further elaborate this relationship by studying the full decision-making process. In addition, students in our sample are surveyed in the first weeks of their university career when participation in an international exchange program is for most of them still rather abstract, as participation in the Erasmus+ program is only possible in the third bachelor year and master. It is a moment when studying abroad is, for most, not yet a topic they thought of. The high percentage of aspirations to participate in the program among our sample (65%) shows an initially positive and open attitude toward participation. However, over time, students may be tempered in the realization of their aspirations by the barriers encountered during the mobility decision process ("ability"). Second, our measure of a romantic relationship did not provide us with more detailed information on relationship characteristics such as the characteristics of the partner (e.g., gender), the duration of relationship, or whether partners where living apart, cohabiting, or were married. Our study only gives an indication of the relationship between having a partner and study-abroad aspirations. Future studies could expand on studying relationship characteristics in more detail, including partner negotiation dynamics as well as into the role of heterogeneous gender attitudes and identifications. This latter would also allow to go beyond the common binary male/female approach, and pay full attention to diversity in relationships and genders. Finally, it would be important to expand the analyses to a more dynamic analyses over time (on the potentially changing role and effects of a romantic relationship) which is not possible with our cross-sectional data. Linked to this, it would be interesting to develop more research into how relationships change, adapt, or are

formed as a result of migration. Third, by covering also general academic motivation, we aimed to include a measure of importance of self-development/investment, which can be important for the decision making on ISM as well as on partner relationships. Our findings suggest that this aspect is very important for women and even more so for men. Having said that, the measure is just giving a first insight into how students balance different dimensions of their lives and the importance given to academic development. It is clearly worthwhile for future studies to expand on this further and to understand how academic motivations remain of importance or not over time.

In conclusion, the results of our study indicate the need for a more comprehensive linked lives approach, including romantic relationships as well as more gender-sensitive analyses in research on decision-making processes regarding participation in an international exchange program. Decision-making processes do not take place in a social vacuum: Our results strongly suggest higher education students take the social context into account when making such decisions, in which male and female students' decision-making process might unfold differently.

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CHAPTER 5

INTERGENERATIONAL CONTACT IN EUROPEAN TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES: THE CASE OF BELGIUM

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Abstract

European migrants are confronted to maintain relations with their families across borders and to meet the expectations of intergenerational care. This can be a challenge due to the geographical distance to their families as has been documented for non-western migrants across Europe. In this paper, we focus on European citizens living in Belgium. The focus on European migrants is especially interesting given the large and increasing share of them in European migrant populations, and the specific policy context of the European Union. We make use of the Belgian Generations and Gender Survey to examine the contact frequencies with the biological mother of different groups of first generation European migrants in Belgium and compare these to Belgian natives and non-European migrants. Additionally, we study face-to-face and telephone contact in a similar comparative way. Results indicate two important factors influencing contact frequency. First of all, geographical proximity is of importance for maintaining contact and especially for European migrants it determines the face-to-face contact frequency with their mothers in another European country. Secondly, the European mobility policy, characterized by the free movement of persons, strongly influences the differences in contact between EU and non-EU migrants.

5.1. Introduction

Intergenerational relations are, apart from partner relationships, one of the most important aspects of family life, and thereby they form an important potential support system (Smith, 1998). These family relations are ideally maintained in a real geographical co-presence (Baldassar, 2008). For many migrants, however, this is not possible. Migration is believed to strongly influence the way family life, and its intergenerational relations, is organized (e.g. Falicov, 2005; Rooyackers et al., 2014; Silver, 2011) and thereby poses a challenge for long-distance intergenerational contact and care exchange. Additionally, the psychological and emotional challenges linked to migration might even increase the need for having strong family links and having family close by. The social vulnerability of migrants due to the migration has shown to be an important risk factor for their well-being (Prilleltensky, 2008).

Several studies have looked at this challenging effect of long distances in transnational care and contact relations between migrants from outside the EU and their relatives in the countries of origin. However much less is known on migrants who are mobile within Europe. Research by Warnes, Friedrich, Kellaher et al. (2004: 320) suggests that distance is important in all families irrespective of migration and that 'the evidence is not strong that those who live 150 kilometers apart are any more capable of providing emotional, social and practical support than those who are 1,500 kilometers away'. This is supported by a number of studies on internal migrants in both North America and Europe (Greenwell and Bengtson, 1997; Grundy and Shelton, 2001). Despite the numerical importance of European migrants both in Belgium as well as in several other European countries (Van Mol and de Valk, 2015) hardly anything is known on the effect of migration for intergenerational contact and relations among this group. Transnational relations among European migrants have so far not been studied using large scale quantitative data due to the limited availability of suitable datasets.

In this study, we expand on the existing literature and study intergenerational contact for European migrants residing in Belgium. We use the Belgian Generations and Gender

survey, a unique dataset that includes sufficient numbers of European migrants to allow for a meaningful cross-group comparison on different dimensions of contact (GGS; De Winter et al. 2011). We take a multi-comparative approach covering two types of intergenerational contact, namely face-to-face and telephone contact, among four groups: EU-migrants from neighboring countries, other EU-migrants, non-EU-migrants and non-migrants. Previous literature has extensively documented women as typical primary care giver and main kin keeper within the family (e.g. Bordone, 2009; Dykstra, 1990; Fokkema et al., 2008). Our analyses therefore focus on intergenerational contact between the individual adult child and his/her mother irrespective of the location of the mother (which can be in Belgium or abroad) as reported by the child. Furthermore, we explain differences and similarities in contact by covering life course stage, socio-economic position and migrant specific characteristics. The analyses provide a first exploration of intergenerational relations of European migrants, a so far understudied but important and increasing group across Europe.

5.2. Belgium and European migration

Belgium is the ideal case for studying European migrants. 68% of all people with a foreign nationality in the country originate from another EU member state (Koelet et al., 2011). They often come from neighboring countries such as France and the Netherlands with recently a strong increase of citizens from new EU member states (CGKR, 2012). Also in other northwestern European countries, the majority of newly arriving migrants are often of European descent in recent decades (de Valk and Van Mol, 2015). Their share in society is even expected to become more pronounced in the coming years (Federaal Planbureau, 2013).

Intra-European mobility differs fundamentally from migration from outside Europe. This is mainly due to a very different legal context and migration policy. The Schengen Agreement allows European citizens to move freely between European countries (European Commission, 2009). Intra-European mobility is furthermore encouraged by

EU policy and mobility projects, whereas policy measures aimed at migration from outside the European Union are rather restrictive. Differences in economic necessity of migration and opportunities for mobility can make the lived experience of separation very different for both groups. Many European migrants leave their home countries in search of education, not available near home, or for occupations located in geographic-specific labor markets. The EU principle of free movement also allows for a wider variety of reasons for migration, such as love, adventure and self-development (cf. De Keyser et al., 2012; Greenwell and Bengtson, 1997).

5.3. Theoretical background

5.3.1. Contact and intergenerational care

Intergenerational contact is an often-used indicator for the strength of intergenerational care and the potential support for older people (Tomassini et al., 2004), even though high contact frequencies do not necessarily reflect a high relationship quality or high levels of intimacy (e.g. Fokkema et al., 2008; Walker and Thompson, 1983). Nevertheless, frequent contact enables people to give and receive support, but more importantly, also allows for identifying the need for support (De Vries and Kalmijn, 2008; Fokkema et al., 2008).

Many authors consider contact as an essential element of the care relation (e.g. Bengtson and Roberts, 1991). The latter encompasses aspects of both 'caring for' and 'caring about' (Ackers and Stalford, 2004; Reynolds and Zontini, 2006). 'Caring for' refers to the hands-on caregiving on a personal level. Geographical proximity and face-to-face contact are often a precondition allowing for practical and emotional support (Glaser and Tomassini, 2000). Family members (can) also 'care about' each other, a notion closely related to 'kin work' (di Leonardo, 1992). 'Caring about' can more easily be exercised from a distance and is also found to be dominant in transnational families (Zechner, 2008). It encompasses emotional support and refers to emotional functions connected with sociability, advice, comfort and self-validation (Reynolds and Zontini,

2006). Many family models and theories on intergenerational relations have developed over time to explain how intergenerational contact and support exchange are related to geographical proximity (see Smith, 1998 for an overview). Most of these theories agree on the fact that the way family relations adapt to the geographical distance strongly depends on social class. Social class is believed to influence mobility and settlement choice, and thereby affects the distance to the parents. The distance between adult children and their parents depends both on the life course of the adult children (cf. Lin-Rogerson model) and the parents (cf. the Litwak-Longino model), as described in Smith (1998), given that the life course stage influences the need for support and the resource to support. Despite most empirical studies show that on average the distance between adult children and their parents is relatively small, not exceeding 'commutable distance' (Smith, 1998) and the distance is closely related to changes in private life (e.g. household composition) and labour market (Wagner and Mulder, 2015). However, none of these theories explicitly refer to the effects of international, long-distance migration.

Irrespective of distance, most people perceive strong family duties, and parent-child relations are often intense (Bordone & de Valk, 2016; Bucx et al., 2008; De Vries and Kalmijn, 2008; Dykstra and Fokkema, 2010; Fokkema et al., 2008; Treas and Gubernskaya, 2012). Across Europe, face-to-face parent-child contact is high (Hank, 2013; Reher, 1998; Tomassini et al., 2004). Nevertheless, some studies report a decrease in face to face contact frequency (e.g. de Vries and Kalmijn, 2008; Smith, 1998) which has been related to a shift in types of contact, especially among the highly educated. De Vries & Kalmijn (2008) and Treas & Gubernskaya (2012) find a shift from close distance face-to-face contact to more mediated ways of communication, such as by telephone. This trend was found across Europe, regardless of the family system (from more individualistic to familialistic orientation as was previously described by e.g. Kalmijn and Saraceno, 2008). These recent trends clearly call for studying contact in its different dimensions.

5.3.2. Intergenerational contact in migrant families

Maintaining contact with parents transnationally is a challenge for those who migrate: regular visits are not always possible due to time limitations and financial restrictions. In the case of international migration travel expenses can be considerable. The geographical distance to parents inhibits frequent face-to-face contact and thereby also decreases the possibilities to provide practical support. Research has also shown differences in family solidarity between migrant groups with generally stronger familial obligations among migrants from certain non-western countries in comparison with the native born in western countries (Kalmijn, 2006; Rosenthal, 1986). Baldassar (2008) found in an Italian study that the emotions and physical experiences of longing and missing, nonetheless motivate family members to keep contact between kin, even when the context or the available resources are limited. Earlier studies also found that irrespective of origin, most migrants (and also the children of immigrants) feel strong obligations to take care of relatives in the origin country (Baldassar, 2008; Gierveld et al., 2012; Rooyackers et al., 2013; Spitzer et al., 2003) and they indeed contribute to the caring process (Baldock, 2000; Goulbourne and Chamberlain, 2001; Zechner, 2008). These intergenerational transnational relationships include family duties in both directions: from child to parent if (elder) parents would need care, or parental duties from parents to their children. Rooyackers et al. (2014) confirmed that emotional support, regardless whether practical support is provided, remained important in mother-child relations across life and among immigrants of diverse origin, even when the conditions are sometimes very challenging (e.g. Hondagneu-Sotela & Avila, 1997; Peng & Wong, 2013). While frequent visits home remain the most important way in which transnational kin connections are kept, the easiest and most frequent way in which 'caring about' is articulated is through letters and telephone calls (Baldock, 2000; Reynolds and Zontini, 2006; Wilding, 2006). Baldassar (2008) points out that there is a preference for telephone contact over written contact (letters, e-mails) because of the stronger emotional value of hearing each other's voice. Internet-supported communication can provide a solution for the high costs related to long distance calls. While the digital divide

might still restrict access to, use of or knowledge on information and communication technologies for specific groups (e.g. Mahler, 2001), modern telecommunication tools nowadays are more widespread and low of cost and allow people to re-negotiate the constraints of geographical distance (Licoppe and Smoreda, 2005; Wilding, 2006). This results in the establishment of what Falicov (2005) calls 'richly interconnected systems', characterized by several forms of co-presence (Baldassar, 2008) in which long-distance care strategies develop (Kilkey and Merla, 2014).

5.3.3. Individual variation in intergenerational contact

The intensity of contact and support exchange in family relations varies between individuals and depends on individual characteristics, resources and life course phase. In this paper, we will exclusively focus on characteristics of the respondents in the survey, so the migrants living in Belgium. Women are found to be the typical kin keepers in the family, resulting in more intergenerational contact compared to men (Fokkema et al., 2008). This is the case not only for face-to-face contact, but also for other forms of contact (De Vries and Kalmijn, 2008). However, a higher educational level is linked to less geographical proximity and as a result less face-to-face contact (De Vries and Kalmijn, 2008). Several studies have found that these lower levels of face-to-face contact can be compensated by other means of communication (Bordone, 2009; Fokkema et al., 2003; Kalmijn, 2006). Economic resources (indicated by income) is on the one hand reported to influence intergenerational contact since especially face-to-face contact requires sufficient financial resources. On the other hand, Fokkema et al. (2003) do not find a restrictive effect of low income on keeping social contact in general. Given that the balance of giving and receiving intergenerational support can vary strongly over the life course, it is also important to take age of the individual (and therewith indirectly of the parent into account).

Furthermore, the position of the individual in the family can be relevant for intergenerational contact. The more siblings the person has, the more care tasks can be divided and the less contact per sibling is needed (Bordone, 2009; De Vries and Kalmijn,

2008; Fokkema et al., 2003; Fokkema et al., 2008; Kalmijn and Saraceno, 2008). Having children also tends to increase contact frequency with the own parents linked to child-care provision by the grandparents (Bucx et al., 2008). The effects of having a partner on intergenerational contact are inconclusive: Bucx et al. (2008) found that those who are cohabiting or married tend to have lower contact frequencies, especially when there is often contact with the parents of the partner, whereas De Vries and Kalmijn (2008) did not find any effect across different European countries. Despite our focus on contact with the mother, we conducted similar analyses for the father in order to see whether the same determinants are of importance for contact with mother and father (tables not included). Most trend we found were very similar to the results for the mother.

Research on intergenerational contact frequencies has until now mainly focused on the general population, without taking into account the origin of the individual. In this explorative paper, we explicitly look at the situation of European migrants compared to those living in Belgium who were not mobile (non-migrants). Based on the existing literature on intergenerational contact, we formulate two main hypotheses. Given the centrality of intergenerational contact and care we expect all respondents to aim for frequent contact. However, we assume that there is diversity in the type of contact. First of all, we expect that the origin of the respondent, operationalized as the country of birth, will influence the contact frequency: the larger the distance, the less face-to-face contact there will be (H1). We expect this to be a gradient in contact frequency which will be highest for migrants from closeby EU countries, and decrease for European countries further away followed by those from non-EU countries. For telephone contact we expect that there is no difference between non-migrants and migrants from within the EU (H2a). At the same time, we expect lower phone contact frequency for non-EU migrants compared to EU migrants due to the higher costs involved (H2b). Regarding life course stage, gender, education, income, siblings and partner we expect that results from previous studies on the majority group (as outlined in the previous section) will equally apply for migrants. Since these are control variables in our model we do not translate

this into specific hypothesis. We nevertheless expect that H1 and H2 (a and b) hold even when controlled for these individual background characteristics.

5.4. Data

For the empirical analyses, we use the Belgian wave 1 (2010) Generations and Gender Survey data (GGS)[2]. The GGS is a large-scale socio-demographic survey conducted within the framework of the international Generations and Gender Programme (Vikat et al., 2007). The data for Belgium were collected between 2008 and 2010, using face-to-face CAPI interviews. The sample is representative for the Belgian non-institutionalized population and includes a total of 7,163 respondents (De Winter et al., 2011), with a response rate of 41%. The data cover information on both type and frequency of contact between individuals and their biological parents and include a wide range of individual and family background characteristics.

Migrants are well represented in the Belgian GGS dataset: 809 respondents were born abroad and can, in line with the commonly used statistical standards, be labeled as 'first generation migrants'. Our study sample was not selected on age of migration to Belgium. Additional analyses showed that there was no effect of age at migration and therefore we included the maximum sample size in the effects that are reported here. Since we are interested in the effect of migration on intergenerational contact across borders we did not include children of immigrants in our analyses (n=881).

Among our study sample of migrants, we distinguish three different regions of origin: those from Belgium's neighboring EU countries (the Netherlands, France, Germany, Luxemburg; n=193), European migrants from another EU 27 member state (n=172) and migrants born outside the EU27 (n=444). For comparison, we also include a group of native Belgians in our analyses based on a rather restrictive definition: we selected only those who themselves and both parents were born in Belgium. We randomly selected a subsample of 906 respondents of Belgian origin out of the total of 5,473 Belgian natives

to optimize the comparability of accuracy of estimations in our analyses. This results in an initial sample of 1,715 individuals as a starting point for our analyses.

Since we are interested in intergenerational contact with the mother, only those whose biological mother was alive at the time of the interview are included. Furthermore, co-resident child-parent dyads were excluded from the analysis as intergenerational contact may have a very different meaning when living in the same household. These selections result in a final sample of 922 respondents covering 110 respondents from EU neighboring countries, 85 from other EU countries, 273 from non-EU countries, and 454 Belgians. All analyses were furthermore conducted for contact with the biological father (tables not included). Overall, the findings for fathers are very similar to those found for the mother.

5.4.1. Dependent variable

The dependent variables in this study are measurements of contact frequency between the respondent and his or her biological mother. The data allow us to differentiate between face-to-face contact and telephone contact. This is a main advantage of our data in comparison to other surveys, such as SHARE (e.g. Hank, 2007). The two indicators for intergenerational contact are based on the questions: 'How often do you see your mother?' and 'How often do you phone your mother?'. For both questions, respondents could fill in a number of contacts and specify whether this frequency was expressed in weeks, months or years. We converted the frequency variables to number of contacts per week and then categorized them first in 5 categories. On theoretical grounds, we reduced the categories to those who have contact from those who have not. Based on the distribution of respondents' answers, we further distinguish between two clear separate groups: those who have contact maximum once a week and those who have contact more than once a week (cf. Bordone, 2009). By finally comparing the two 'extremes' of the three categories of contact, 'Never/less than once a year' (0), and 'More than once a week' (2) with 'Less than once a week' (1), we avoid passing judgment on the value of specific contact frequencies. We additionally created a combined

variable expressing contact, without differentiating between face-to-face contact and telephone contact. In this combined variable, we take for each respondent the maximum value of face-to-face and telephone contact.

5.4.2. Key explanatory variables

In our multinomial logistic regression models, we control for socio-demographic characteristics of the respondent that are known to be determinants of intergenerational contact (overview in table 5-1). These variables can also account for potential compositional differences between the different origin groups. We include sex (1=male/ 0=female ref.) and a continuous as well as polytomous specification of age of the respondent. Two measures of socio-economic status of the migrant are also included: educational level (1=tertiary education/ 0=secondary education or less ref.) and 'financial resources to go on holiday annually'. To construct the SES measure we rely on the question whether the respondent had enough financial resources to go on holiday at least once a year (1=yes/ 0=no ref.). Life course and household characteristics of the respondent are moreover taken into account. We control for the presence of children (1=yes/ 0=no ref.) and a partner in the household (1=yes/ 0=no ref.), as well as the number of siblings of the respondent. Finally, a variable measuring intergenerational support obligations is included. The sum scale is based on 9 items measuring intergenerational care duties such as 'Parents ought to provide financial help for their adult children when the children are having financial difficulties', 'Children should have their parents to live with them when parents can no longer look after themselves' and 'Children should adjust their working lives to the needs of their parents' (5 point Likert-scales). The result is a scale from 0 to 5 where higher scores refer to stronger familial obligations. Overall reliability of the scale is good: Cronbach's alpha is .81, ranging from .74 for neighbouring EU countries to .86 for other EU countries.

Table 5-1: Independent control variables

	Neighbouring EU country (n=110)	Other EU country (n=85)	Non EU country (n=273)	Native Belgian (n=454)
	%	%	%	%
Educational level: tertiary	50.0	31.8	34.6	45.0
Male	41.8	37.6	45.4	44.7
Financial resources for annual holiday (no=ref.)	78.2	70.6	61.4	83.8
Children in the household	50.0	57.6	70.7	68.9
Has a partner	90.0	82.4	81.0	89.9
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Age	42.57 (11.20)	42.74 (12.13)	39.37 (10.41)	41.97 (10.54)
Number of siblings	2.35 (2.42)	2.95 (2.29)	4.38 (2.69)	1.94 (1.83)
Intergenerational attitudes	2.68 (0.52)	3.02 (0.71)	3.23 (0.63)	2.58 (0.53)

Source: GGS Belgium, Wave 1, Authors own calculations

5.5. Results

We start with a bivariate analysis of the face-to-face contact (table 5-2). For all migrant groups in this study the percentage of those that don't see their mothers annually or even never is significantly higher ($p<.001$) in comparison with the 4.6% of the Belgian natives that don't see their mothers annually or even never. This share of those born in neighboring EU countries is 5.5% and only slightly (but significantly) higher than the percentage of the native Belgians. Percentages however rise to 9.4% for migrants from other EU member states and are highest for non-EU migrants of whom more than a quarter do not see their mothers at least once a year (26.7%). For Belgian natives the proportion seeing their mothers several times a week are highest (43.9%), and significantly higher ($p<.001$) than the three migrant groups. 14.5% of the respondents born in neighbouring EU countries have 'more than once a week face-to-face contact'

with their mother, compared to 18.8% of the other EU migrants and 14.7 of the respondents born outside the European Union.

The percentages of seeing the mother on a weekly base for the migrant groups were lower than the percentage of the native Belgians, but still considerable. Additional analyses (not included), show that this is mainly due to first generation migrants who migrated at a young age and who are more likely to have migrated with their parents to Belgium. When selecting only first generation migrants who migrated after their sixteenth birthday, percentages are clearly lower although not negligible; 10.5%, 8.6% and 6.6% of migrants from neighbouring EU countries, other EU member states, and non EU migrants respectively see their mother more than weekly. We however included them for optimizing the sample size. This descriptive analysis confirms hypotheses H1 on the gradient by geographical distance: the larger the distance for EU migrants, the lower the face-to-face contact frequency. For those from outside the EU we indeed find the lowest face-to-face contact frequencies.

Table 5-2: Face-to-face contact with mother by origin of respondent (percentages)

	Less than once a year/ never	Once a week or less	More than once a week
Belgian native (n=453)	4.6	51.4	43.9
Neighbouring EU country (n=110)	5.5	80.0	14.5
Other EU country (n=85)	9.4	71.8	18.8
Non EU country (n=273)	26.7	58.6	14.7
Total (n=921)	11.7	58.8	29.4

Pearson chi-square = 155.143, df = 6, p<.001
Source: GGS Belgium, Wave 1, Authors own calculations

In the second step, we analyse telephone contact between respondents and their mothers by origin (Table 5-3 5-3). Of all groups, it is most often the case that Belgian natives have no telephone contact with their mothers throughout the year (13.9%). This group is followed by migrants from neighboring EU countries (10%), and only then by

migrants from other EU countries (5.9%) or non-EU countries (7%). The pattern is less clear for very frequent phone contact. 44.8% of Belgian natives talk to their mothers on the phone at least several times a week. This share is remarkably higher among migrants from other countries in the EU (49,4%). Migrants from the Belgian neighboring countries have less frequent contact (39.1% at least several times a week) while the lowest share is found among the non-EU migrant group (34.1%). Additional analyses controlling for age of migration do not change these patterns. The descriptive results only partially support H2a. Although we find lower percentages of never telephone contact in Belgium, decreasing depending on the distance to the country of origin (H1). For frequent contact, however, the pattern is less clear and the lower percentage of frequent contact for neighboring EU country versus Belgian natives is remarkable.

Table 5-3: Telephone contact with mother by origin of respondent (Percentages)

	Less than once a year / never	Once a week or less	More than once a week
Belgian native (n=453)	13.9	41.3	44.8
Neighbouring EU country (n=110)	10.0	50.9	39.1
Other EU country (n=85)	5.9	44.7	49.4
Non EU country (n=270)	7.4	58.5	34.1
Total (n=918)	10.8	47.8	41.4

Pearson chi-square = 43.443, df = 6, p<.001
Source: GGS Belgium, Wave 1, Authors own calculations

In order to analyse the extent to which intergenerational contact is related to the origin of the person or the result of composition effects of the groups we examine contact between migrants and their mothers in multinomial logistic regression models, controlling for a number of socio-demographic indicators. Table 5-4 shows the results of the multinomial logistic regressions with face-to-face contact frequency as the dependent variable in which 'weekly contact or less' is the reference category and compared to 'never' and 'more than once a week' contact.

With respect to never face-to-face contact, EU migrants do not seem to differ significantly from the Belgian natives. The direction of the effects however is in line with what we found in the descriptive analysis. Only non-EU migrants differ significantly from Belgian natives: they have 3.04 times higher odds of not annually meeting their mother as compared to having weekly contact or less. The decreasing effect sizes of the netto effects compared to the bruto effects indicate compositional effects. The effects of the control variables mostly confirm what could be expected based on previous studies. Respondents with no tertiary degree and with many siblings have higher odds to have no face-to-face contact at all with their mothers, respectively 1.74 and 1.11. On the other hand, having a partner and having sufficient financial resources to travel at least once a year significantly reduce the odds never meeting the mother. Other socio-demographic life course indicators (age and children in the household) and intergenerational family attitudes have no effect. These results do not confirm hypothesis H1: for low contact frequencies, there is no difference depending on distance, also for high frequency ('more than once a week') we only see that more than weekly face-to-face contact is lower for EU migrants in comparison to Belgians, but again there is no difference by distance. However, non-EU migrants have significantly more often no face-to-face contact or less than annually contact.

Table 5-4: Multinomial regression parameters - dependent variable: Face-to-Face contact frequency with mother; reference category: once a week or less

	Less than once a year / never contact			More than once a week contact		
		95% CI (OR)			95% CI (OR)	
	OR	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	OR	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Origin group (Belgian native=ref.)						
Neighbouring EU country	0.67	0.25	1.77	0.22***	0.12	0.39
Other EU country	1.03	0. 42	2.55	0.23***	0.13	0.43
Non EU country	3.04**	1.61	5.74	0.24***	0.15	0.39
Non-tertiary education (tertiary=ref.)	1.74*	1.04	2.92	1.93***	1.38	2.70
Men (Women=ref.)	1.38	0.87	2.19	0.73~	0.53	1.01
Age	1.03	0.88	1.22	0.91	0.81	1.02
Age^2	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00~	1.00	1.00
Number of siblings	1.11*	1.020	1.22	0.95	0.88	1.03
Intergenerational attitudes	0.94	0.64	1.37	1.32~	0.99	1.76
Financial resources for annual holiday (no=ref.)	0.46**	0.28	0.75	1.08	0.72	1.62
Children in household (no children=ref.)	0.94	0.54	1.63	1.21	0.81	1.79
Has a partner (no partner = ref.)	0.57~	0.31	1.04	0.60*	0.37	0.98
Pseudo R^2 Nagelkerke	0.25					

p<.10=~; p<.05=*; p<.01=**; p<.001***
n=899
Source: GGS Belgium, Wave 1, Authors own calculations

With respect to very frequent contact, defined as contact 'more than once per week', we find that migrants living in Belgium, regardless of origin, have much lower odds to have frequent face-to-face contact as compared to having weekly contact or less than native Belgians. This seems to be an overall effect of migration since the different origin groups do not significantly differ from each other (extra analyses not shown). With respect to

frequent face-to-face contact, having no tertiary education almost doubles the odds to have very frequent contact (1.93). This is remarkable as those without tertiary education also have the highest odds for no face-to-face contact. This suggests a dichotomy in this educational group that reinforces these two extreme types of contact. Also, having stronger attitudes towards intergenerational duties significantly increase the odds of having very frequent contact (1.32). Men and respondents with a partner have lower odds ratios for very frequent intergenerational contact (0.73 and 0.60 respectively), while at the same time having a partners also lowers the odds for never having contact. This again suggests that for some having a partner on the one hand can reinforce while for others on the other hand it hinders contact with the mother.

Interaction effects were tested between origin group and the control variables in additional analyses (not included in tables but available upon request from the first author). None of these models revealed major differences in the effects found for the control variables, except for some minor effects for non-European migrants: the odds of very frequent face-to-face contact are higher for non-European men than for other migrant men in comparison to Belgian men; and the effect of having more siblings is also stronger for non-European migrants than for other migrants in comparison to Belgians. Table 5-5 shows the results of the multinomial logistic regression models for telephone contact. Like in the previous analyses we compare those who have 'never' and 'more than once a week' contact with their mother with those who have contact 'once a week or less' (reference category). For the odds of 'never' compared to 'once a week or less' we find a significant effect of migrant origin: migrants from other (non-neighboring) EU-countries or from non-EU countries have significant lower odds of not having had any contact with their mothers over the phone (respectively 0.36 and 0.50). This result does not exactly follow the hypothesized effect (H2a). Education and financial resources have a similar effect as in the previous analyses. Those with no tertiary education have almost twice the odds of not annually talking to their mothers compared to those with a tertiary degree (1.86). Also, having sufficient financial resources to travel at least once a year decreases the probability to have no annual

contact (0.49). The younger the individual is, the more likely to have no annual telephone contact (.84). This age effect is not linear, indicated by the significant squared age indicator, even if the quadratic term has only a minor effect (1.004, rounded off to an odds ratio of 1 in the table). The odds to have no telephone contact further decrease when the respondent has more supportive attitudes towards family duties (0.58). None of the other control variables (number of siblings, having children in the household, or having a partner) seems to be related to the odds of having no contact compared to those who have regular contact.

Comparing those with more than weekly contact to those who have less regular contact, we find no significant differences between Belgians and European migrants, regardless of whether they were born in a neighbouring or in another EU country, confirming hypothesis 2a. Only for the non-European migrants we observe a lower probability of having weekly contact compared to the Belgian natives, confirming hypothesis 2b. Few sociodemographic life course indicators seem to be relevant for more intense contact. We found only an effect of gender and number of siblings. Men have significant less intense (more than weekly) contact with their mothers (0.39), and the odds to have more than weekly contact decreases with a higher number of siblings (0.91). Additional analyses were performed to test interactions between origin group and the control variables. Again, no major differences in the reported effects of the control variables were found.

Table 5-5: Multinomial regression parameters - dependent variable: Telephone contact frequency with mother; reference category: once a week or less

	Less than once a year / never contact			More than once a week contact		
		95% CI (OR)			95% CI (OR)	
	OR	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	OR	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Origin group (Belgian native=ref.)						
Neighbouring EU country	0.66	0. 31	1.38	0.72	0.45	1.15
Other EU country	0.36~	0.13	1.01	1.01	0.60	1.70
Non EU country	0.50*	0.25	0.98	0.63*	0.42	0.94
Non-tertiary education (tertiary=ref.)	1.86*	1.11	3.10	0.91	0.67	1.24
Men (Women=ref.)	1.004	0.63	1.60	0.39***	0.29	0.53
Age	0.84*	0.72	0.99	0.93	0.84	1.04
Age^2	1.002*	1.000	1.004	1.001	0.999	1.002
Number of siblings	0.92	0.83	1.03	0.91**	0.84	0.98
Intergenerational attitudes	0.58*	0.38	0.89	1.09	0.84	1.41
Financial resource to travel (no=ref.)	0.49**	0.29	0.84	1.02	0.71	1.48
Children in household (no children=ref.)	1.58	0.88	2.83	1.01	0.71	1.45
Has a partner (no partner = ref.)	0.87	0.42	1.77	1.10	0.70	1.74
Pseudo R^2 Nagelkerke	0.15					

p<.10=~; p<.05=*; p<.01=**; p<.001***
n=896
Source: GGS Belgium, Wave 1, Authors own calculations

Additionally, to the separate analyses for face-to-face and telephone contact, we also looked at contact as a combination of face-to-face contact and telephone contact by taking the maximum score of both contact variables. By and large the results described above for the two separate indicators are also reflected (with a few minor exceptions) in the pooled analyses.

5.6. Conclusion and discussion

Literature on intergenerational care and solidarity is ample but so far studies have largely neglected European migrants and their specific position when it comes to intergenerational contact. Especially in a context of an ageing population and a mobility-oriented supranational policy, it is key to get a better understanding of the levels of contact, and its determinants. Intra-European migrants are confronted with the challenge to keep contact with the family and fulfilling intergenerational care, despite the migration process and the resulting geographical distance. This study aimed to give insight into the frequency of intergenerational contact, as an important precondition for any other kind of intergenerational support, among European first-generation migrants, in comparison to native Belgians and non-European migrants. We implicitly tested the effect of geographical distance by differentiating between migrants from neighboring countries and other EU countries. Furthermore, we examined different dimensions of contact (face-to-face and telephone contact).

In general, we can conclude that intergenerational contact is frequent among all origin groups, as we can see for both the separate analyses for face-to-face contact and telephone contact, as well as for the combined contacts measure (cf. appendix). This holds in particular for telephone contact where 41% of all respondents have at least one contact moment per week (29% have at least weekly face-to-face contact). Even though not everybody has weekly contact the share of respondents with no contact at all in the past year is very low among all origins (overall less than 10%). This is in line with international comparative research on intergenerational support exchange (Bordone and de Valk, 2016).

Despite these general patterns that are very similar across groups we also find differences for the frequency of face-to-face contact and telephone contact between the migrant groups in our study. We see a clear pattern for face-to-face contact. When looking at very frequent contact, defined as face-to-face contact more than once a week, we find that native Belgians have the highest odds. This seems to imply that

geographical distance indeed inhibits very frequent contact given that the distance for non-Belgians to their parents is simply too large to pay frequent visits. Although the actual distance differs strongly between the defined migrant groups, they apparently all live 'too far' which confirms earlier research (Warnes et al., 2004).

However, for those with 'no face-to-face contact at all', our findings suggest that it is not so much distance but rather the opportunity to travel and be mobile within the Schengen zone that matters. Our analyses show that whereas European migrants do not differ from Belgians it is especially the non-EU migrants who have a three times higher odds for never having face-to-face contact with their mother, even after controlling for financial resources to travel at least once a year. Given that the difference is mainly found between EU-citizens (including native Belgians and EU migrants from neighboring countries and further away) and non-EU migrants, suggests that, easy travel with barriers within the EU as promoted with the EU mobility policy is decisive here. These findings confirm our first hypothesis.

When looking at very frequent telephone contact, defined as talking on the phone more than once a week, we find that only non-EU migrants have significantly lower odds compared to native Belgians, confirming hypotheses H2a and H2b. This could be explained by the higher telephone cost for international calls outside Europe. At the same time, the odds for no annual telephone contact are significantly lower for this group, as well as for migrants from other (not-neighboring) EU countries. This might be linked to these groups lower odds for face-to-face contact, indicating a compensation effect that we are unfortunately unable to test with our data.

This study also has limitations that give way to suggestions for further research. First, the dataset used in his study allows examining first generation migrants originating from within and outside the EU. Group sizes are too small to differentiate further in terms of specific countries or regions. Even if the intergenerational attitudes included in the study might function as a sort of proxy for cultural differences, future research on the specific situation of migrants coming from different countries or regions outside and

within the EU is recommended, given that these migrants experience different migration context, might migrate for different reasons, and regulations are different. After all, even within the EU, mobility policies do differ (e.g. the fact that not all EU countries are part of the Schengen area while some countries outside the EU are). Second, our data allow differentiating between face-to-face and telephone contact separately. This is an advantage compared to other surveys with more limited measures. The data unfortunately do not include the increasingly important new ways of communication via the internet such as chat services, social networks, or voice over IP services (VoIP, e.g. Skype) (e.g. Bacigalupe, 2012). Although we did look briefly at a combined measure of contacts, it would be interesting to further elaborate possible compensation effects between different types of contacts. Third, we do not have exact information on the place of residence of the mother. Since we are focusing on first generation migrants, we assume most of the migrants' mothers live in their country of origin. This might not always be the case. And given that individuals typically live relatively close to their parents and family members (Mulder & Kalmijn, 2006), knowing the exact location of residence of the mother would increase the level of precision in the claims we make. For instance, migrants who have migrated at young age mainly did so with their parents. Fourth, although in literature the importance of the bond with the mother is often stressed, this relation is only one of the many possible important family and social contacts an individual may have. For future work, it would be interesting to involve contact with other family members and the broader social network as well. Also and fifth, the care needs or health situation of the mother could be included in the analysis. We have explored the effect of the variable 'the mother is limited in her daily tasks' and did not find strong influences in the models, except for some control variables. Our data do not include additional health indicators but this would be an important aspect for future studies in light of ageing populations combined with increased mobility across Europe. In this paper, we also focused on contact frequency and modality as such. It could be interesting to further elaborate the role of contact within the broader context of transnational relations and care exchange, as this is rapidly changing in a globalized

world (e.g. Erel, 2012; Benitez, 2011), and the value and perceptions of this intergenerational contact in different cultures. Finally, it should be noted that this study looks at intergenerational contact from the perspective of the respondent, the 'child', and not the mother. This does not necessarily imply that this contact is always and only initiated by the child.

Overall our study shows that the vast majority of people keeps in touch with their mother via face-to-face contacts or telephone contacts, despite different origins, migration histories, family cultures, and care provision systems in origin countries. The differences between migrant groups however suggest that the European mobility policy, the financial resources, the individual characteristics, and the geographical distance with the mother contribute to organization of the care relations in transnational family relations.

5.7. References

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CHAPTER 6

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Family and partner relations of migrants in Europe have been extensively studied in the social sciences. However, intra-EU mobile citizens are still generally underrepresented in these studies. This is remarkable for three reasons. First of all, mobile Europeans are a significant group in the migrant population in Europe, representing 37% of the foreign-born population that is officially registered (Eurostat, 2020a) and potentially an even greater share given the many other types of (often unregistered) mobility. Secondly, mobile Europeans are generally seen as an important indicator of and contributor to EU integration (Favell & Recchi, 2009, Favell, Recchi, Kuhn, Jensen & Klein, 2011), and consequently, a good understanding of this group is crucial in further discussions on EU integration processes via citizen's mobility. And thirdly, the EU 'free mobility area' can be considered as an interesting 'laboratory setting' in which no formal borders apply but moving may still impact people's lives. As such studies on non-EU migrants are not necessarily directly applicable to the specific group of intra-EU mobile citizens, given the very different mobility and migration context. Whereas non-EU immigration policies show to be very restrictive, intra-EU mobility offers largely available mobility opportunities, less focused on exclusive economic reasons (Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2010). Also the attitudes and perceptions towards intra-EU mobility strongly differ from non-EU migration (Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2010). Therefore, the main research question of this dissertation was: How are family and partner relations shaped and challenged in a context of intra-EU mobility? I have used the Life Course Paradigm (LCP; Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003; Macmillan & Copher, 2005) as the theoretical framework for exploring the complex intersection of family and partner relations with intra-EU mobility and to structure the specific research topics of this dissertation. On the one hand, I looked at opportunities for partner choice that follow from intra-EU mobility as it creates new or diversified opportunities for encountering potential partners. In this approach, intra-EU mobility is explored as an application of the 'time and place' principle of the Life Course Paradigm. On the other hand, I looked at the Life Course Paradigm principle of 'linked lives', to study the challenges that intra-EU mobility may pose to partner and family relations and vice versa.

In the following sections, I will present a summary of the main findings of the empirical studies (Section 6.2), interpret and discuss these findings in relation to the theoretical framework (Section 6.3), and make a critical reflection and give perspectives on future research (Section 6.4). I will end with concluding remarks (Section 6.5).

6.1. Summary of findings

6.1.1. Beyond l'Auberge Espagnole. The effect of Individual mobility on the formation of intra-European couples

The first empirical study of this dissertation (Chapter 2) aimed to contribute to the literature on intermarriage in the European context. More specifically, it focused on the influence intra-European mobility in childhood and early adulthood may have on European binational partnership formation. The research question then was formulated as "does intra-European mobility during childhood and (early) adulthood foster European binational partnerships?". For this study, we made use of the EUMARR survey data that were collected as part of the research project "Towards a European Society: Single Market, Binational Marriages, and Social Group Formation in Europe", for three countries: Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland. We estimated binary logistic statistical models in which we looked at the average marginal effects (AME) for the formation of a European binational union versus the formation of a uninational union. Different measurements of mobility experiences, as a child and in early adulthood, were included in the statistical models, controlling for demographic and cultural background variables. Two major theoretical mechanisms were elaborated. On the one hand, we argued that intra-European mobility may create increased opportunities for meeting partners from other European countries. On the other hand, intra-European mobility may also contribute to the formation of intra-European binational couples through the development of cultural, linguistic, and mobility capital that has been acquired through socialisation.

The statistical analyses in this study gave support for the hypothesis that individual mobility experiences may affect individual partner choices and more specifically the choice of a foreign European partner versus a native partner. Also, the hypothesised positive effect of linguistic capital was supported. First of all, we looked at the diversity of destinations in short stays abroad (i.e. stays shorter than three months), before age 16, and between age 16 and the first meeting with the partner. We assumed effects of mobility before age 16 to be mostly linked to socialisation, whereas after age 16 also meeting opportunities could be part of the theoretical explanation. Short stays abroad mainly showed significant effects after age 16.Additionally, we found a positive influence of long stays abroad, defined as stays abroad preceding the first meeting with the partner that lasted for at least three months, on the odds for the formation of a European binational couple. Especially a stay abroad for educational or work-related reasons tended to positively correlate with the odds for engaging in European binational partnerships. Adding long stays abroad and the context of these long stays abroad to the analysis suggested that long stays for education or work in other European countries foster intra-European partnership mainly by opening up a foreign marriage market to the native mobile person, i.e. by creating opportunities for meeting potential partners abroad. The mechanism of socialisation via intra-EU mobility only found limited support.

6.1.2. Meeting contexts of intra-European binational couples in Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain

In the second study (Chapter 3), we further elaborated on the factor of meeting opportunities in partner choice. Although previous studies already highlighted the importance of opportunities to meet a potential partner in the partner choice process (Kalmijn, 1998), hardly anything is known on the meeting of intra-European binational partners specifically. The scientific knowledge of meeting contexts of partners is mainly focusing on a general non-migration population. The research question thus was: “Where and in which context do intra-European binational couples meet each other?”. To what extent do they differ from those in a uninational union across countries and if

so why? We used EUMARR survey data from Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain to answer these questions, and estimated several bivariate logistic regression models to calculate the odds in comparing specific meeting contexts of European binational couples.

The analyses showed that only a small minority of all couples had met online, a meeting context where mobility and geographical proximity do not necessarily matter. Still, the data suggested that meeting online was more common among European binational couples compared to uninational couples in the three study countries, although this effect did not reach significance. The large majority of couples had met offline. The analyses showed that having first met in a country that was not the country of birth of both partners is not very common, and is mainly found more often among higher educated and younger couples, and this is slightly more common in the Netherlands. In most European binational couples, only one of both partners had been mobile at the moment of first meeting. For them, we examined in which country they first met, and why both partners were in that country at the moment of first meeting. Based on these meeting contexts of both partners, a typology with a number of dyads was elaborated: home-home, home-work, home-study, home-holiday. Interestingly, it were not just the uninational couples who typically met in a home-home context but also for partners in binational couples this was a common meeting context. This may indicate that the mobile partner migrated already at a young age or long before the first meeting, and that, by the time of the interview, they considered the country as their home country (although not being born there). In that case the mobility as such was not necessarily motivated by the relationship. In Spain, the European binational couples more often met in 'home-home' meeting contexts, suggesting less mobility. Especially home-work and home-study showed significant results. Having met in a home-work context was found to be more probable for couples born in a EU member state that was not neighbouring to the country of residence. Home-study as a meeting context was more likely for highly educated, both on bachelor as on master or doctoral level. We suggest an influence of study exchange programs as an explanation for this finding. This type of meeting

context was also linked to meeting at a younger age, confirming the suggested explanation of exchange programmes during studies in higher education. The analyses did not reveal major country differences in meeting contexts for European binational couples.

6.1.3. International student mobility aspirations: the role of romantic relationships and academic motivation

The third empirical study (Chapter 4) looks at the thesis topic from a different angle. Whereas the two previous studies investigated how intra-EU mobility could create opportunities in terms of partner choice and the formation of intra-European binational couples, this study uses a reverse approach by investigating if partner relationships could also affect intra-EU mobility. More specifically, we looked at the potential effect of a romantic relationship on the aspirations to participate in a study abroad programme, such as the Erasmus+ programme, among a sample of freshmen at a higher education institution in Brussels, Belgium. Additionally, we also looked at the effect of academic motivations, as another aspect in the lives of the target group of this study. The academic literature on study abroad has so far largely ignored the influence of romantic relationships and study motivation, and the potential competition between both aspects, in the development of aspirations to participate in temporary learning experiences in another country. The resulting research question was: “Does a romantic relationship and study motivation influence the aspiration to study abroad of first year students?”. Additionally, as literature shows us that female students are more likely to study abroad compared to male students, and this gender difference is still largely unexplained, we paid special attention to gender differences in our analyses. To answer the research question, we used the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) Student survey 2017 which covers a sample of first bachelor students. We used multinomial logistic regression models to estimate the odds for aspiring to study abroad.

The analyses showed that students involved in a romantic relationship had significant lower odds for having aspirations to study abroad. As we separated analyses for female

and male students, we interestingly found that this association could exclusively be attributed to the female respondents. It was only for women that being in a romantic relationship resulted in significant lower aspirations to study abroad. Although not reaching significance, being in a romantic relationship for women also meant that they were less likely to know whether or not to aspire to participate in the Erasmus+ exchange programme. This suggested that being in a romantic relationship seems to exclude the option of study abroad, apart from the individual's evaluation of the ability to study abroad, however, only for female students. Despite the hampering effect of a romantic relationship on aspirations to study abroad among female students, female students were still found to have significant higher odds to have aspirations to study abroad compared to male students. Higher intrinsic academic motivation scores were found to be significantly associated with having aspirations to study abroad while this was not the case for extrinsic academic motivations. Higher scores for intrinsic motivation were related to higher odds for aspirations to study abroad for both male and female respondents, although odds for the effect of intrinsic motivation were much higher among the male students in our sample than among female students. In summary, this paper shows that even during early adulthood, partner relations may already affect intra-EU mobility aspirations of higher education students. At the same time, academic motivations also influence these aspirations.

6.1.4. Intergenerational contact in European transnational families: the case of Belgium

The last empirical study of this dissertation (Chapter 5) focused on the consequences intra-EU mobility could have on family relations. In this study, we focused on contact frequencies that Belgian residents have with their mother, comparing Belgian natives with first-generation EU and non-EU migrants. Intergenerational contact is then being seen as the most basic form of, and a major precondition for further intergenerational care and solidarity. The research question in this study asked "How much contact do intra-EU migrants have with their mother in comparison to native Belgians and non-EU

migrants?". We differentiated in the analyses between face-to-face and telephone contact frequencies. In this way, we accounted for communication that is linked to geographical proximity or travel opportunities (face-to-face contact) and communication that is not hampered by geographical distance (telephone contact). We used the Generation and Gender Survey Belgium to estimate multinomial logistic regression models with *face-to-face contact frequency* and *telephone contact frequency* as dependent variables. For each type of contact frequency, we made two comparisons: those 'never having contact or less than annually' (low frequency) versus 'having at least annual but not weekly contact', and those having contact 'more than once per week' (high frequency) versus those 'having at least annual but not weekly contact'. The models were controlled for a number of socio-demographic background variables.

In general, the descriptive analyses indicated that intergenerational contact is frequent among all origin groups. The multivariate analyses showed that only non-EU migrants differed significantly from Belgian natives with much higher probabilities of 'never having face-to-face contact or less than annually', even after controlling for financial resources for annual holiday. With respect to high face-to-face contact frequency, defined as 'more than once per week', we found that migrants living in Belgium, whether being EU or non-EU migrants, had significant lower odds of having frequent face-to-face contact as compared to having 'weekly contact or less' than native Belgians. This seemed to be an overall effect of migration since the different origin groups did not significantly differ from each other. For the odds of 'never having telephone contact or less than annually' we found a significant effect of migrant origin: migrants from non-neighbouring EU-countries or from non-EU countries had significant lower odds compared to Belgians. Also stronger intergenerational attitudes and having the financial resources to travel annually lowered the odds of 'never having telephone contact or less than annually'. For the high telephone contact frequency group, we found no significant differences between Belgians and European migrants, regardless of whether they were born in a neighbouring or in another EU country. Only for the non-European migrants did we observe lower odds of having high frequencies of telephone contact compared to

Belgian natives. In this study, we got more insight in how migrants keep intergenerational contact in different ways: face-to-face contact that is limited by geographical distance, ease of travel and financial resources versus telephone contact that is much more accessible and less sensitive to geographical distance or mobility opportunities. Similarly to what is described in the literature about non-European migrants, also intra-EU migrants are thus confronted with the challenge to maintain and manage local and transnational relations with their families, and to meet the expectations of intergenerational care.

Table 6-1: Summary of findings

Chapter	Research question(s)	Summary of the main findings
2	Does intra-European mobility during childhood and (early) adulthood foster European binational partnerships?	Yes, we mainly find support for the effect on the formation of European binational partnerships for short-term mobility after age 16 and before the first meeting with the partner, and long-term mobility before the first meeting with the partner. Results suggest the importance of intra-EU mobility through the creation of meeting opportunities.
3	Where and in which context do European binational couples meet each other?	We find that most European binational couples meet in the country that is the home country of one of the partners, implying mobility of only one partner in the couple. A first meeting when partners are mobile is less common. Being in the country of first meeting for the mobile partner can often be linked to work and study-related motives.
4	Does a romantic relationship and study motivation influence students' aspirations to study abroad?	Yes, both show a significant influence. Having a romantic relationship seems to inhibit aspirations to study abroad, mainly among female students. Intrinsic academic motivations were found to have a strong positive effect. Among male students this effect is even stronger than for female students.
5	How much contact do intra-EU migrants have with their mother in comparison to native Belgians and non-EU migrants?	Most people, migrant or native, have regular contact with their mother in some way, being face-to-face or via telephone. All migrant groups had lower probabilities for frequent face-to-face contact compared to Belgian natives. Especially non-EU migrants have the highest probabilities of never having face-to-face contact with their mother, significantly higher than Belgian natives. Never having telephone contact was less probable among all migrant groups in comparison to the Belgian natives. For frequent telephone contact, only non-EU migrants had significant less frequent contact than the other groups.

6.2. Interpretation of the main findings

Since the start of the European integration process in the 1950s, intra-EU mobility has developed as a fundamental pillar of European integration, mainly driven by economic purposes. However, the findings of this dissertation support the idea that this intra-EU mobility cannot be disconnected from the lives of Europeans and their most intimate relationships: intra-EU mobility affects families and vice versa. This intersection of family and partner relations on the one hand and intra-EU mobility on the other turns out to be a complex system of interdependencies and influences through many different mechanisms. It is difficult, but important, to gain better understanding of this complex system when aiming to discuss and further understand intra-EU mobility and EU integration.

At the start of this dissertation, the life course paradigm was introduced as the central conceptual framework linking the four empirical chapters. Two of its main principles were elaborated in connection to the central topic of this dissertation: 'time and place' was linked to the potential facilitating context of the EU for partner choice and relationship formation, and the 'linked lives' principle was used to explain the challenges for family and partner relations in an intra-EU mobility context. In this section, I will reflect on the findings and the theoretical concepts used in the empirical chapters. I found that existing theories proved to be useful for understanding the studied processes, but also showed the relevance and added value of the life course paradigm in studying the intersection between intra-EU mobility, and family and partner relations.

In the first two empirical studies (Chapters 2 and 3), I studied the formation of European binational couples. I referred to Kalmijn's distinction of influences differentiating three general factors that may influence partner choice: structural meeting opportunities, the influence of 'third parties', and personal preferences (Kalmijn, 1998). I used this typology to explore the potential influence and contribution of intra-EU mobility on the formation of European binational couples.

First of all, I looked at the structural opportunities for meeting potential partners. Meeting opportunities are stated to be a crucial aspect in partner choice, and could also easily be linked to the 'time and place' principle of the life course paradigm: the European Union has created a historically unprecedented context of international meeting opportunities for potential partners through the active facilitation and promotion of intra-EU mobility in a very broad sense. I expected that the formation of European binational couples would be positively influenced by the mobility experiences that are the result of these mobility opportunities within the EU. I found support for this assumption in both chapter 2 and in 3. In chapter 2, I found a clear positive effect of mobility experiences after age 16 on the formation of European binational couples, especially for long-stay mobility which was defined as mobility for a duration longer than three months. I also found that it was mainly mobility in the context of work or study that could be linked to meeting a binational partner. Especially the mobility for study (e.g. Erasmus+) is typically at a moment in life where the first steps of family formation take place. In Chapter 3, where I further elaborated on the idea of meeting opportunities for binational couples, I again found support for meeting that resulted from being abroad for work or study reasons. Both work and study mobility are exactly two domains the EU focuses on in its mobility policies and programmes. Although work and study mobility programmes typically serve a mainly economic goal, in this way long stays for work or study in other European countries also seem to affect partnership formation by opening up a foreign marriage market to the mobile person and thus, on the long run, may contribute to bottom-up EU integration.

The second factor in partner choice refers to personal preferences. Kalmijn (1998) mainly discusses personal preferences in terms of the socio-economic and cultural resources of the individual. We added the concepts of linguistic and mobility capital in our study to explain preferences and indirectly explain cultural homogamy in couples. When trying to explain preferences or openness to potential partners from another EU member state, analyses showed some support for primary socialisation of 'mobility capital' through travel experiences during childhood and early adulthood. I also

concluded that more (diverse) mobility experiences during childhood and early adulthood, lead to an increased probability to engage in a European binational couple rather than in a uninational relationship. However, this effect of travel experience was not necessarily focused on or limited to intra-EU mobility. Non-EU mobility experiences also seem to add to this mobility capital. We found that also linguistic capital increases the probability of a binational intra-European partnership. Multilingualism, and especially being raised multilingual, which could be seen as a proxy of migratory/cultural background of the individual rather than the direct result of intra-EU mobility experiences, seems to contribute to personal preferences. It may indicate that the parents of the individual are socialising their children to be open to 'otherness' or themselves are already a culturally or ethnic mixed couple which increase the probability of exogamy (Van Zantvliet & Kalmijn, 2013). This effect of cultural and migration background should be further explored, as it can help to better understand the levels of homogamy within European binational couples. As we already know from scientific literature, mobility may lead to more mobility (e.g.Recchi & Favell 2009) and this dissertation showed that also in partner choice, mobility and intercultural experiences over the life course may contribute to even more mobility and interculturality later on in life.

The third and last factor described by Kalmijn refers to 'third parties'. Kalmijn mainly explains 'third parties' in terms of influence by communities, families, religious groups, etc. towards endogamy through group identification or by group sanctioning. In this dissertation, we did not focus on these third parties, and mainly interpreted 'third parties' as the influence of parents in the development of mobility capital through socialisation, as already elaborated under 'personal preferences'. The influence of parent throughout childhood in building mobility and linguistic capital can be seen as the influence of 'linked lives' from a life course perspective.

To summarise so far, the findings in this dissertation contribute to the literature by trying to explain how intra-EU mobility could influence European binational couple formation.

The conclusions in the empirical chapters fit Kalmijn's three factors of partner choice. The importance of meeting opportunities, the structural argument of partner choice, was in particular demonstrated. It is interesting to see that the importance of different factors may depend on a broader context. Whereas my research stresses the importance of meeting opportunity, Kalmijn & Van Tubergen (2010) for example found for a study in the US that it were mainly the cultural forces (personal preferences and third parties) that are more important than structural forces like meeting opportunity. This supports my argument that the framework of Kalmijn (1998) would benefit from the Life Course Paradigm, to make it a more dynamic model and to explicitly add context-sensitivity. For example, we could argue that European binational couples are culturally closer to each other compared to mixed unions with non-EU migrant, and thus the cultural component is less decisive among European mixed couples than non-European couples. Or as another example, we found that long stays abroad such as Erasmus+ create meeting opportunities for European binational couple formation. Of course, the timing of these mobility experiences in the lives of the individuals are then crucial, as Erasmus stays abroad typically take places at a moment in life when partnership formation is one of the key developments. The Life Course Paradigm can help to explain and frame much of these variations.

In the second part of this dissertation, potential challenges in the domain of partner and family relations in an intra-EU mobility context were examined. Whereas I found that intra-EU mobility may contribute to European integration through couple formation, intra-EU mobility may also challenge individuals, couples and families. Studies on mobility and moves within national borders (internal mobility) has extensively shown that partner relations can inhibit migration (e.g. De Jong, 2000; Kley 2011; Benton & Petrovic, 2013). This effect is usually explained as partners (and children) being part of one household and thereby making the migration decision process more complex and increase the local embeddedness. In Chapter 4, I investigated if a similar inhibiting effect of partnership relations was applicable for students and their study mobility aspirations. I analysed how aspirations to study abroad take form in the context of two in some way

competing central aspects of young students lives: their professional development in their academic studies and partnership formation. On one hand, personal development of young people includes the development of intimate relationships. On the other hand, these higher education students have also their professional life to develop through their studies. Being in a romantic relationship showed to have a negative correlation with aspirations of studying abroad, particularly for female students. This could be linked to the 'linked lives' factor of the Life Course Paradigm, where decisions of individuals are acknowledged to be socially embedded. As such, my results clearly illustrate the importance of considering romantic relationships in study abroad and migration-decision making processes, even at a moment in the life course when these relationships are not (yet) officialised by marriage or registered partnership, no children are involved (by selection in our sample), and most of these students are typically not sharing the same household with their partner. At the same time, the results also showed that higher intrinsic study motivations are significantly and positively associated with aspirations to study abroad, especially for male students. Both in terms of the inhibiting effect of romantic relations and the positive effect of intrinsic motivations, we suggest that socialisation may play an important role in the formation of educational goals and relationship expectations and the potential conflict between both. Salisbury et al. (2010) already suggested a potential different way social and cultural capital influences student mobility decisions among male and female students as an explanation of gender differences in student mobility. In this study, the aspirations/ability model was presented to explicitly differentiate between aspirations versus ability. This theoretical model acknowledges that both the notions 'aspirations' and 'ability' are sensitive to personal preferences and context factors. Although this model gives way to a very interesting approach of mobility and immobility, it leaves much freedom to the interpretation of context factors. In this respect, I believe that the Life Course Paradigm offers a good extension to the aspirations/ability model. The addition of linked lives as a specific context factor makes the influence of romantic partners on study abroad aspirations explicit.

The last (and fourth empirical) study showed that not only can partner relations be inhibiting for intra-EU mobility, but also the other way around: intra-EU mobility can challenge individuals to manage their family relations. In this study, I take this one step further in time in the life course and look at exchange of intergenerational support of adults and their elderly mothers. This study aimed at giving insight into the frequency of intergenerational contact with the mother, as an important precondition for any other kind of intergenerational support, and the way it takes place: through face-to-face or telephone contact. Thereby, I implicitly tested the effect of geographical distance by differentiating between migrants from neighbouring EU countries, other EU countries as well as non-EU countries. I explicitly thematised contrasting the EU versus non-EU migration context. This is important, because literature on intergenerational care and solidarity is ample but has so far largely neglected European migrants and their specific position when it comes to intergenerational contact. The pattern I found for face-to-face contact suggested that geographical distance may indeed inhibit very frequent contact given that the distance for non-Belgians to their parents is often simply too large to pay frequent visits. Although the actual distance differs strongly between the defined migrant groups, they apparently all live 'too far away' which confirms earlier research that states that starting from a certain distance, the inhibiting effect of geographical distance does not increase in line with the distance (Warnes et al., 2004). For those not having any face-to-face contact, our findings also suggest that it is not distance but rather the opportunity to travel and be mobile within the Schengen zone that matters. My analyses show that whereas European migrants did not differ from non-movers (Belgians), it were especially the non-EU migrants who have a much higher probability for never having face-to-face contact with their mother, even after controlling for financial resources to travel at least once a year. Given that the difference is mainly found between EU-citizens (including native Belgians and EU migrants from neighbouring countries and further away) and non-EU migrants, this suggests that easy travel with fewer barriers within the EU as a consequence of EU's mobility policy may here be decisive in allowing intergenerational contact. When looking at very frequent

telephone contact, we find that only non-EU migrants had significantly lower odds compared to non-movers (native Belgians). This could be explained by the higher telephone cost for international calls outside Europe. At the same time, the odds for no annual telephone contact were significantly lower for non-EU migrants, as well as for migrants from other (not-neighbouring) EU countries. This might indicate a compensation effect, where impossibility of face-to-face contact is compensated with telephone contact, but we were unfortunately unable to explicitly test this with our data. The differences between migrant groups, however, suggest that the European mobility policy together with the financial resources, the individual characteristics, and the geographical distance with the mother contribute to organisation of the care relations in transnational family relations.

In summary, I conclude that when using the different theoretical and conceptual frameworks (Kalmijn's three general factors for partner choice, the aspirations/ability model) throughout this dissertation, they are by and large of a more static nature. As such it seems very valuable to link them with the Life Course Paradigm principles. The Life Course Paradigm offers a more dynamic perspective which is needed to better understand the processes studied here as by definition moving is not static neither is it affecting only one stage in life. The LCP principles allow for a more profound and explicit study of the contextual factors, and it adds a dynamic approach to the so far often rather static theories.

I started this dissertation by looking at the special context of intra-EU mobility in contrast with non-EU mobility. I found that similar theories and concepts can be used and applied to intra-EU mobility as they were used before for non-EU mobility and migration. The aspiration/ability model and the partner choice model of Kalmijn are equally valid in an intra-EU mobility context as in a general migration context. This basically also implies that mobile Europeans may not face the legal barriers of migration but are otherwise facing similar challenges as migrants coming from outside the EU. Using them with a life course approach seems to further enrich these theories. As the Life Course

Paradigm looks at lives as being influenced by historical and biographical contexts, it has the power to strengthen existing theories and is further proof for policy changes and new trends in intra-EU mobility over time. At the same time, it recognises individual choice and decision-making and interdependencies of these individual choices with significant others.

6.3. Critical reflections and perspectives for future research

In each empirical chapter of this dissertation, limitations of the specific study were identified and discussed. In this section, I aim to present a number of overarching thoughts and reflections on limitations of this dissertation. These reflections give way to suggestions for further research which I have organised around five overarching general reflections which I will briefly discuss.

First of all, this dissertation was structured starting from the principles of the Life Course Paradigm (Elder, Johnson & Crosnoe, 2003; Macmillan & Copher, 2005). The Life Course Paradigm was used as a very flexible framework acknowledging the complexity of relations and contextual influence on individual actions and behaviours. I focused on two principles, *time and place* and *linked lives*. However, the Life Course Paradigm, next to *linked lives* and *time and place*, also formulates the principles of *life-span development*, *timing* and *agency*. By applying a focus on *linked lives* and *time and place*, we did not give full explicit attention to these other principles, although sometimes implicitly present in the studies.

The *life-span development* and *timing* were implicitly present by the choice of the topics in the empirical studies. The *life-span development* principle refers to the idea that developmental processes do not stop at age 18 but happen over a lifetime. Whereas psychological and social development during childhood have been extensively studied, adults continue developing, changing, being influenced, etc. The principle of timing states that timing in a person's life is important for understanding influence of context

facts. Mobility experiences may for example have a whole different meaning and may be experienced totally different as a child, during early adulthood, or at later ages. For example, in Chapter 4, student mobility aspirations were studied, in which I looked at life aspects that are very central at that point in the life course of students: partnership formation and studies. Timing is a crucial underlying idea in this study. In Chapter 2, I looked at how binational couple formation could be the results of earlier mobility experiences during childhood and early adulthood. This is in line with Scott & Cartledge (2009) who confirmed the importance of timing of mobility in the life course in function of family formation. In Chapter 5, we looked at intergenerational contact between adults and their elder parents at a later stage in life.

The notion of agency was also implicitly present in a number of my studies. This principle states that, even considering structural opportunities and constraint, individuals still make their own choices. For example, I made reference to the 'personal preferences' in the typology of Kalmijn (1998), and I used academic motivation as a measure of importance of self-development/investment which can be important for the decision-making. In my view, this principle of *human agency* especially deserves more explicit attention in future research. I would suggest a further elaboration in data collection efforts of agency by including, for example, personality traits that shape personal preferences of individuals (e.g. Paulauskaitė, Seibokaite, & Endriulaitiene, 2010; Frieze, Hansen & Boneva, 2006, Boneva & Frieze, 2001). So, studying family and partner relation in an intra-EU mobility context would benefit from a more comprehensive linked lives approach, applying all LCP principles in an interdisciplinary way.

Secondly, there is something to say about European binational couples and their level of homogamy. This dissertation often refers to European integration. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2020) defines integration as "*the incorporation as equals into society or an organisation of individuals of different groups (such as races)*". In other words, integration is all about bringing groups together and crossing borders between groups. In the discourse around European integration, these group borders are defined by the

national borders of the EU member states. On one hand, these borders indeed still define specific political and juridical national contexts, even after several decades of EU integration. On the other hand, it could also be argued that, from an individual and social perspective, this 'nation approach' is in some way artificial. Crossing a national border does not necessarily imply anything about geographical distance, language, religion, cultural distance, etc. It could even be argued that what we defined as European binational couples may show more homogamy than the term suggests: couples may share languages, culture, religion, and even a shared high level of an intra-European 'internationalness', according to the concepts of 'Eurostars' or 'free movers' (Gaspar, 2008; Gaspar, 2010; Favell, 2003; Favell, 2008). It is argued that this group of highly educated Europeans shares certain international, denationalised lifestyles that comes with stronger European feelings (Gaspar, 2008; Favell, 2008). European binational couples could then indicate the emergence of an intra-European homogamy linked by specific lifestyles, values and behaviours that are part of a new 'European social class' (see also Díez Medrano, 2008). Also in research on ethnic interracial mixed couples, Song (2009, p.338) already noted this problem by saying "if the boundaries between groups are in flux and are fundamentally messy, how are we to know which marriages count as incidents of intermarriage?". In my empirical chapters on European binational couples, I already controlled for linguistic capital of individuals and a measurement of migration background. We explained this as part of the cultural capital built during childhood, but this too could be further explored and framed as part of the linguistic and cultural homogamy among binational couples. In my studies, I also mainly focused on first generation migrants, based on country of birth. It would be useful to take a closer look at the broader cultural and migratory background of the partners, and their parents and grandparents, as we can assume that this may help to explain cultural homogamy within European binational couples. Thus, in future research, more attention should be given to the social, cultural and migratory background characteristics of partners in European binational couples, in order fully to explore their level of homogamy, rather than focusing on the mixed character of their relationship.

A third point of reflection refers to the issue of causality which has been much discussed when using statistical analyses of cross-sectional data. As I have used cross-sectional data in all empirical chapters, it should be noted that the associations found do not necessarily imply causality. Although this is not problematic as such, the complexity of the reality that goes beyond these statistical associations must be kept in mind. Reality may rather be seen as a systemic phenomenon, with multiple interactions and mechanisms between the individual, the *linked lives* and the historical environment shaped by *time and place*, rather than a series of causal relations. For example, as is shown in this dissertation, the EU integration process has led to the creation of increased mobility opportunities. These mobility opportunities then seem to contribute to the formation of European binational couples through the creation of meeting opportunities. European binational couples are seen as a proof of EU integration. This reinforcing effect of EU integration seems to be supported in this dissertation. It would be interesting for several of the studies in this dissertation, to expand the analyses to more dynamic analyses over time with individual data collected over the life course, therewith fully being able to tackle the causality issue, but also the effects of the life course and lifespan.

A fourth reflection refers to the concept of mobility. Throughout this dissertation, intra-EU mobility has been linked to an appreciation from an EU integration perspective, as it promotes interaction between European citizens from different Member States. Also in the Standard Eurobarometer 90, 83% of Europeans said to be in favour of "the free movement of EU citizens who can live, work, study and do business anywhere in the EU", thereby being the EU policy receiving the most public support (Eurostat, 2020d). This open-border policy within the EU and the associated positive attitudes strongly contrast with the much more restrictive policy towards migration from outside the EU, and the negative attitudes (Standard Eurobarometer autumn 2018). In the Special Eurobarometer 486 from 2019 (Eurostat, 2019e), immigration is even mentioned as the most important issue the EU is currently facing (32%), followed by terrorism (25%) and climate change (20%). Given that mobility is appreciated because of its contribution to

European integration, the assumption could be made that immobility is not linked to European integration or is even perceived in a more negative way. But immobility should not be problematic as such, since also those being immobile can interact with mobile citizens (Recchi, 2012). The reality is even that, although King (2009, 2018) speaks about the EU as a 'mobilities framework', where mobility in all its variation is becoming the new normal, the large majority of the European population is not mobile within the European Union (especially when not taking into account holiday travelling). In Chapter two, I found that intra-EU mobility may contribute to the formation of European binational couples, however, in Chapter 3, we saw that European binational couples typically meet in the home country of one of the partners. This implies that in most cases, one of the partners was not mobile at the moment of meeting. Consequently, intra-EU mobility could foster European binational couples, but this mobility is not necessary for both partners. Although this dissertation focused on intra-EU mobility, I would say that is equally important to fully understand and accept decisions to be mobile and decisions to be not mobile. Future research should incorporate and discuss this in a more systematic way. In Chapter 4, the aspirations/ability model (Carling, 2002) was presented as a way to approach mobility. However, this model is 'par excellence' a model for investigating mobility and immobility as two acceptable alternative outcomes of a mobility decision process. The question is then how we also can value and study immobility from a perspective of EU integration, as mobility of some individuals does not only affect the individual but also their environment. A good example is student mobility among higher education students, as was studied in Chapter 4. The EU strongly focuses on mobility of students and tries to encourage it by providing financial support through grants. By using the aspirations/ability model, we could argue that financial support mainly contributes to the 'ability' of studying abroad. By looking at aspirations as one major factor in the decision to study abroad, in addition to 'ability', we saw that some students already do not have any aspirations to study abroad, apart from the practical 'ability' concerns, and that romantic relationship may affect these aspirations. Continuing on the valorisation of immobility in EU integration, it is also noted that higher education

institutions increasingly are looking for 'internationalisation at home' as an alternative to achieve 'internationalness' among those not being mobile. This is a good example of the importance of combining internationalness and immobility.

A fifth and last reflection I wish to make is about the data available to study intra-EU mobile citizens. As already noted in the introduction of this dissertation, studies about migrant populations and migration typically suffer from limitations in availability of data and underrepresentation of certain mobile groups. Also for intra-EU mobility, forming a complete view of mobile Europeans is a challenge. In this dissertation, I explicitly have chosen to use several existing large-scale quantitative datasets to investigate intra-EU mobile citizens, thereby often going to the limits of the datasets. For example, in Chapter 5, we aimed to gain more insight in intergenerational contact of large EU migrant groups, although it was not possible to differentiate in terms of specific countries or regions of origin due to the sample size. There was also information about face-to-face contact and telephone contact, but Internet communication was not explicitly mentioned or measured thus leaving some question on how the full 'communication mix' through different communication channels takes place. For the inhibiting effect of a romantic relationship in study abroad aspiration in Chapter 4, I found that this effect mainly holds for female rather than male students. Future studies could expand on studying relationship characteristics in more detail, including partner negotiation dynamics as well as into the role of heterogeneous gender attitudes and identifications within couples. The EUMARR survey, used in Chapters 2 and 3, may also pose a selection effect, as the dataset may not include those binational couples that moved abroad, or those whose relationship already ended before the data collection. Regarding the data I have used in this dissertation, I also find that higher educated people were generally overrepresented (this is the case in Chapters 2 and 3 due to the sample of the EUMARR survey and in Chapter 4 due to our focus on potential Erasmus+ students). Kalmijn (1998) already found that highly educated individuals from minority groups have more universalistic views on life than lower educated persons, and are less influenced by their family or community of origin, and therefore intermarry more frequently. This means

that some of our findings may not be directly transferrable to the larger group of mobile Europeans. However, the focus on highly educated mobile Europeans is also interesting as such, as existing research is still often focused on traditional non-qualified migrants, rather than the high-qualified 'free movers' (Gaspar, 2010). Nevertheless, it remains relevant to see if the results found for highly educated mobile Europeans are equally applicable to the lower educated. So, in summary, it has been shown to be difficult to get insight in the heterogenous group of intra-EU mobile citizens with their diverse mobilities using quantitative data. In the fast changing and developing trends of mobility in Europe, it is also challenging to find data that cover recent trends of intra-EU mobility. In any case, it calls for a more comprehensive data collection sensitive to international migrants to and within Europe.

6.4. Concluding remarks

Although I find many aspects still need to be studied in detail, as pointed out in the previous section, this dissertation has contributed to the advancement of the scientific knowledge and understanding of family and partner relations in an intra-EU mobility context. Each of the studies in the empirical chapters also illustrated the importance and relevance of the intersection of family and partner relations, and intra-EU mobility. Consequently, I argue that family and partner relations should be considered a crucial aspect in future scientific and policy discussions on intra-EU mobility. As partner and family relations are part of the individual's private life, it may be perceived as a difficult domain to intervene through policy measures. Nevertheless, some policy recommendations can be formulated.

We found support for the fact that intra-EU mobility might foster the formation of European binational couples, and thereby contribute to European integration at the individual level, through socialisation and even more through the creation of meeting opportunities between citizens of different member states. As I found that especially mobility in relation to studies and work created important meeting contexts for new

partner relations, the policy programmes of the EU seem to be useful as they also typically focus on these two domains. However, I also found that intra-EU mobility can be hampered by partner relations. Even among higher education students, a group that is typically considered as unbound, partner relations already suggested to inhibit mobility aspirations, especially among female students. Therefore, I would advise policy makers to also organise shorter study stays abroad within the framework of the Erasmus programme that conflict less with union and family formation processes that are taking place in this stage of life.

As we have seen that partner and family relations are closely connected to intra-EU mobility in many ways, we can assume that these also develop over time along with political and societal changes in intra-EU mobility. Throughout this dissertation, the approach to intra-EU mobility has, on the whole, been rather positive and optimistic, as contributing to EU integration. However, the EU as 'ever closer union' is under pressure. Nationalist and populist political movements oppose the optimistic vision on intra-EU mobility with euroscepticism, making intra-EU mobility more controversial than before (Barbulescu, Lafleur, & Stanek, 2015; Boswell & Geddes, 2011). The global COVID-19 crisis that struck Europe in 2020 has even more placed intra-EU mobility under pressure (Robin-Olivier, 2020). It is difficult to finish a PhD dissertation on intra-EU mobility without mentioning this crisis, and its potential effects on intra-EU mobility. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic (World Health Organisation, 2020). Multiple EU Member States reacted to the pandemic by closing their national borders and initiating border controls as part of their public health strategy, as is also foreseen in the European regulations (Article 27, Directive 2004/38/EC). The European Union quickly expressed the concern for maintaining the freedom of movement and keeping the border controls indiscriminatory and limited to the strict minimum (European Commission, 16-03-2020). In the following weeks, Member States started gradually to take initiatives to open up the borders again. This was not done without hesitation or difficulty: each country made its own decision, sometimes based on bilateral agreements, and borders could easily be closed again

based on the further evolution of the pandemic. At the moment of writing, it is still unclear how this situation will develop over the next months (or even years), and what the consequence will be of these temporary limitations in intra-EU mobility for the European Union and its citizens. On the one hand, based on the results in this dissertation, we could expect that limiting and slowing down intra-EU mobility has potential consequences for many Europeans. In the short term, it may get families into troubles when, for example, partners living across borders cannot see each other, transnational family contacts are impeded, and seasonal workers are not able to commute between their place of residence and their place of employment or just lose their jobs. In the long run, I would argue that reduced levels of intra-EU mobility, due to confinement or just reluctance to mobility because of fear for contamination, may also affect the 'European marriage market' and consequently European integration. On the other hand, I would say that this period of strongly reduced intra-EU mobility opportunities may also increase individuals' appreciation of intra-EU mobility. The COVID-19 crisis has been a shock to most of us. For a whole generation, this is the first time they are confronted with internal European borders at this scale. This crisis shows how free movement within the European Union has become part of our way of living, through tourism, cross-border family visits, study abroad, etc. By experiencing a strong reduction in intra-EU mobility, many Europeans may realise its importance and value. So, even in times of political debate on (further) European integration (e.g. Medrano, 2012; Recchi, 2019) or global health crises, the support for the EU among the general public seems to be important, and intra-EU mobility may contribute to the continuing acceptance and the embracing of the EU.

6.5. References

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Samenvatting

De mogelijkheden voor Europeanen om zich te verplaatsen binnen Europa hebben zich fundamenteel ontwikkeld in het kader van het Europese integratieproces dat we sinds de jaren 1950 kennen. Vooral met de oprichting van de Europese Unie (EU) en de introductie van het vrij verkeer voor Europese burgers binnen het grondgebied van de lidstaten, hebben Europese burgers nooit eerder geziene mogelijkheden gekregen tot mobiliteit over de landsgrenzen van de lidstaten heen. Deze vorm van mobiliteit benoem ik in deze dissertatie als 'intra-EU mobiliteit'. Europese beleidsmakers zien deze intra-EU mobiliteit als een belangrijk instrument voor het bevorderen van de economische integratie, voor het versterken van Europese integratie op individueel en sociaal niveau, alsook voor het creëren van een sterkere identificatie met, appreciatie van en politieke steun voor het Europese project.

De meeste bestaande studies inzake intra-EU mobiliteit focussen op het economische domein, met onder andere arbeidsmarktgerelateerde onderwerpen. Maar men kan vermoeden dat intra-EU mobiliteit ook een belangrijke impact heeft op het familieleven en de partnerrelaties van mensen. Intra-EU mobiliteit kan immers kansen creëren voor partner- en familierelaties maar levert mogelijk ook uitdagingen op. Desalniettemin is er maar beperkt onderzoek naar familie- en partnerrelaties dat specifiek start vanuit een intra-EU mobiliteitsperspectief. Het meeste onderzoek in Europa rond migratie en partner- en familierelaties richt zich op migranten van buiten de EU, terwijl mobiele Europeanen toch ook een wezenlijk deel van de migratiepopulatie in Europa uitmaken. Aangezien we weten dat intra-EU en niet-EU migratie heel verschillende praktische en juridische contexten kennen (met mobiliteit zonder formele grenzen binnen de EU versus een zeer restrictief migratiebeleid voor personen van buiten de EU) kan vermoed worden dat conclusies uit wetenschappelijke studies over niet-EU migranten niet noodzakelijk ook rechtstreeks toepasbaar zijn op mobiele EU burgers. Daarenboven worden mobiele Europeanen gewoonlijk ook gezien als een belangrijke indicator van EU

integratie. Bijgevolg is een goed begrip van deze groep cruciaal in verdere wetenschappelijke en beleidsdebatten.

In deze dissertatie was het mijn doel om de wetenschappelijke kennis en inzicht te vergroten in de hiervoor benoemde leemte. De overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag van deze dissertatie was dan ook: Hoe worden familie- en partnerrelaties gevormd en welke uitdagingen zijn er voor deze relaties in een context van intra-EU mobiliteit? In elk van de vier empirische hoofdstukken van deze dissertatie werd de overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag uitgewerkt in een concrete, specifieke sub-vraag. Ik heb gebruik gemaakt van het levensloopparadigma (Life Course Paradigm) als theoretische leidraad om de intersectie tussen familie en partnerrelaties en de context van intra-EU mobiliteit te onderzoeken. Aan de ene kant heb ik gekeken naar de opportuniteiten die intra-EU mobiliteit creëert met betrekking tot partnerkeuze. In deze benadering werd intra-EU mobiliteit benaderd als een toepassing van het 'time and place'-principe binnen het levensloopparadigma. Anderzijds onderzocht ik de uitdagingen die intra-EU mobiliteit creëert voor partner- en familierelaties, hetgeen ik heb benaderd vanuit het 'linked lives'-principe. Grootschalige kwantitatieve datasets voor statistische analyse met een specifieke focus op intra-Europese mobiliteit zijn schaars, zeker wanneer men geïnteresseerd is in familie- en partnerrelaties. Daarom heb ik ervoor gekozen verschillende complementaire datasets te gebruiken doorheen deze dissertatie. De combinatie van meerdere datasets is nodig om verschillende aspecten van mijn overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag te kunnen bestuderen en zo tot een meer alomvattend begrip te komen van familie- en partnerrelaties in een intra-EU mobiliteitscontext. In deze dissertatie heb ik gekozen me voornamelijk op België te richten aangezien het een goede gevalstudie is, vanwege de lange geschiedenis in het Europees integratieproject en het relatief hoog aantal Europese migranten in dit land.

In de eerste twee empirische studies van deze dissertatie (hoofdstukken 2 en 3) onderzocht ik de mogelijke bijdrage van intra-EU mobiliteit tot de vorming van Europese binationale koppels. Europese binationale koppels werden in deze dissertatie

gedefinieerd als koppels waarvan beide partners in een verschillend Europees land werden geboren. Intra-Europese mobiliteit werd in het verleden, en wordt nog steeds, actief gepromoot en gestimuleerd door de Europese commissie gegeven dat contacten en relaties tussen Europeanen van verschillende afkomst worden gezien als een belangrijke indicator voor het succes van het Europese integratieproject. Voor dit onderzoek maakten we gebruik van de EUMARR survey uit 2012. Deze survey richt zich specifiek op Europese koppels, waarbij we de vergelijking konden maken tussen Europese binationale koppels en Europese uninationale koppels (koppels waarvoor beide partners in hetzelfde Europese land zijn geboren).

In de eerste empirische studie (hoofdstuk 2) bestudeerde ik of intra-Europese mobiliteit tijdens de kindertijd en jeugdjaren van invloed is op de vorming van een Europees binationaal koppel. Voor deze studie gebruikte ik gegevens uit de EUMARR-survey voor België, Nederland en Zwitserland. De bevindingen van deze studie toonden onder andere aan dat individuele mobiliteit inderdaad gerelateerd kan worden aan de keuze voor een Europese partner versus een partner van het eigen geboorteland. Zo bleek een verblijf in het buitenland van minstens drie maanden een positieve invloed te hebben op de kans om later in het leven te kiezen voor een Europees binationale partnerrelatie, vooral wanneer deze een mobiliteitservaring plaats vond in het kader van onderwijs of werk. Deze motieven voor mobiliteit, namelijk werk en onderwijs, zien we ook terug in de mobiliteitsprogramma's en bijhorend beleid van de EU. Op die manier lijken deze programma's dus relatievorming te beïnvloeden door het creëren van een buitenlandse huwelijksmarkt voor Europese mobiele burgers en dragen ze op de lange termijn bij tot een bottom-up EU integratie.

Tot op heden is er amper iets geweten over de plaats en de context waarin Europese binationale partners elkaar ontmoeten. Daarom ben ik in de tweede empirische studie (hoofdstuk 3) verder ingegaan op deze ontmoetingsplaatsen en -contexten van partners in Europese binationale koppels. Ik gebruikte hiervoor opnieuw de EUMARR survey data, dit keer voor België, Nederland en Spanje. De analyses toonden dat enkel een kleine

minderheid van alle koppels elkaar online leerde kennen. De data suggereerden echter wel dat dit vaker voorkomt bij binationale koppels dan bij uninationale koppels. De overgrote meerderheid van de koppels heeft elkaar echter offline ontmoet. Voor deze koppels heb ik de reden onderzocht voor beide partners waarom ze in het land waren op het moment dat zij hun partner voor het eerst ontmoetten. Gebaseerd op de redenen van beide partners om in het land van de eerste ontmoeting te zijn, ontwikkelde ik een typologie met een aantal dyades (thuis-werk als een partner het land van eerste ontmoeting beschouwt als zijn/haar thuisland, en de ander er was voor werk, thuis-studie als de tweede partner in het land was voor studiedoeleinden, enzovoort). Vooral thuis-werk en thuis-studie kwamen naar voor als belangrijke ontmoetingscontexten van Europese binationale koppels. Thuis-studie als ontmoetingscontext was bovendien meer waarschijnlijk voor hoog opgeleiden (minimum een bachelordiploma), en zij die elkaar ontmoetten op jongere leeftijd. Dit suggereert een invloed van studieuitwisselingsprogramma's. De analyses toonden dat een eerste ontmoeting tussen beide partners in een land dat niet het thuisland was van beide partners, hetgeen mobiliteit van beide partners impliceert op het moment van de eerste ontmoeting, vaker voorkwam bij hoger opgeleide en jongere koppels. Landenverschillen bleken in deze studie maar een beperkte rol te spelen. Deze studie toonde vooral aan dat in Europese binationale koppels gewoonlijk maar één van beide partners mobiel was op het moment van hun eerste ontmoeting. Tegelijk vonden we dat enkele ontmoetingscontexten van Europese binationale koppels, zoals werk en studie, niet zo sterk verschillen van ontmoetingscontexten zoals we die ook vinden bij uninationale koppels. Ontmoetingen in een context van werk en studie kaderden we in het intra-EU mobiliteitsbeleid waar mobiliteit voor werk- en studieredenen een centrale rol inneemt.

In het tweede deel van deze dissertatie keken we naar potentiële uitdagingen in de intersectie van partneren familierelaties en de intra-EU mobiliteitscontext. In de derde empirische studie (hoofdstuk vier) onderzocht ik bij eerstejaarsstudenten aan een Brusselse universiteit de verbanden tussen het hebben van een partnerrelatie en studiemotivatie enerzijds, en aspiraties om in het buitenland te studeren anderzijds. De

academische literatuur omtrent studeren in het buitenland, bijvoorbeeld in het kader van Erasmus+, had tot nog toe beperkte aandacht voor de invloed van romantische relaties en studiemotivatie, en de mogelijke competitie tussen beide aspecten, in de ontwikkeling van aspiraties voor studentenmobiliteit. Ik gebruikte de gegevens van de Vrije Universiteit Brussel Studentensurvey 2016. De statistische analyses toonden aan dat studenten die een partnerrelatie hadden minder aspiraties bleken te rapporteren om een deel van hun studies in het buitenland te doen, en dit bleek voornamelijk het geval bij vrouwelijke studenten. Dit toont hoe belangrijk het is om rekening te houden met deze relaties in de studie van het beslissingsproces om in het buitenland te studeren, zelfs op een moment in de levensloop wanneer deze relaties in de meeste gevallen (nog) niet geformaliseerd zijn door huwelijk of geregistreerd partnerschap, er geen kinderen zijn in de relatie, en de meeste studenten nog niet in hetzelfde huishouden wonen als hun partner. Tegelijk toonden de resultaten ook dat een hogere intrinsieke studiemotivatie lijkt bij te dragen tot aspiraties voor studentenmobiliteit, in het bijzonder bij mannelijke studenten, terwijl dit niet het geval was voor extrinsieke studiemotivatie. Intrinsieke motivatie is de motivatie die vanuit de persoon zelf komt, terwijl bij extrinsieke motivatie er een aspect speelt van externe beloning of bevestiging. Dit suggereert dat een partnerrelatie hebben de optie om in het buitenland te studeren lijkt te verhinderen voor vrouwelijke studenten, los van de individuele evaluatie van de mogelijkheid om in het buitenland te studeren of de studiemotivatie. Ondanks dit negatieve effect van een partnerrelaties op aspiraties voor studentenmobiliteit bij vrouwelijke studenten, hebben vrouwelijke studenten nog wel steeds een hogere kans om aspiraties voor studentenmobliteit te rapporteren dan hun mannelijke collega's.

Gelijkaardig aan wat niet-Europese migranten ervaren, kan men zich afvragen of ook Europese mobiele burgers geconfronteerd worden met de uitdaging om de relaties met hun familie te onderhouden, en tegemoet te komen aan de verwachting omtrent intergenerationele zorg. Daarom keek ik in de vierde empirische studie (hoofdstuk vijf) naar de frequentie van intergenerationeel contact tussen volwassenen en hun moeder. Intergenerationeel contact wordt algemeen gezien als een belangrijke voorwaarde voor

het kunnen uitwisselen van enige andere vorm van intergenerationele steun. Ik keek naar zowel communicatie die gelinkt is aan geografische nabijheid of mogelijkheid tot reizen (face-to-face contact) als communicatie die niet gehinderd wordt door geografische afstand (telefonisch contact). Daarenboven testte ik ook het effect van geografische afstand met de moeder door het differentiëren tussen EU-migranten uit buurlanden, EU-migranten uit niet-buurlanden, en niet-EU migranten. Voor de analyes in deze studie gebruikte ik de cross-sectionele data van de Belgische Generations and Gender Survey (1ste golf) die een representatieve steekproef bevat van inwoners van België. Uit dit onderzoek kwam naar voor dat geografische afstand inderdaad frequent face-to-face contact verhindert omdat voor niet-Belgen de afstand tot hun ouders waarschijnlijk vaak eenvoudigweg te groot is voor regelmatige bezoeken. Voor diegenen die nooit face-to-face contact hadden, leek het er op dat het niet zozeer de afstand is, dan wel de opportuniteit om vrij te kunnen reizen en mobiel te zijn binnen de EU die belangrijk is. De resultaten toonden immers dat het vooral de niet-EU migranten zijn die beduidend hogere kansen hebben op nooit face-to-face contact met hun moeder, zelfs na controle voor de financiële mogelijkheden om te reizen. Wanneer we keken naar telefonisch contact, vond ik dat alleen niet-EU migranten significant minder waarschijnlijk zijn om zeer frequent contact te hebben met hun moeder dan Belgen, waarschijnlijk te wijten aan hogere telefoonkosten voor oproepen buiten de EU. De bevindingen in deze studie suggereren dat het laagdrempelig reizen zonder grenzen binnen de EU, zoals gepromoot binnen het EU mobiliteitsbeleid, een bepalende factor is voor de manier waarop het intergenerationeel contact wordt georganiseerd.

De resultaten in deze dissertatie kunnen in drie punten worden samengevat. Ten eerste tonen de verschillende studies aan dat intra-EU mobiliteit weldegelijk samenhangt met het leven van Europeanen en hun meeste intieme relaties: intra-EU mobiliteit beïnvloedt families, en families beïnvloeden intra-EU mobiliteit. Deze intersectie van familie- en partnerrelaties aan de ene kant, en intra-EU mobiliteit aan de andere blijkt een complex systeem te zijn van onderlinge afhankelijkheid en beïnvloeding via verschillende mechanismen. Het is niet eenvoudig maar wel belangrijk om een beter inzicht te krijgen

in dit complexe systeem indien we een beter begrip willen krijgen van de rol van intra-EU mobiliteit in EU integratie via familie- en partnerrelaties. Ten tweede heb ik in de empirische hoofdstukken verschillende theorieën en concepten gebruikt die gewoonlijk worden gebruikt voor migratie van buiten de EU naar Europa. In ieder van de hoofdstukken bleken deze ook bruikbaar en geldig voor de studie van intra-EU mobiliteit. Dit impliceert dat, ook al worden Europese mobiele burgers misschien minder geconfronteerd met restrictieve grenzen en complexe immigratiewetgeving dan migranten van buiten de EU, ze toch vergelijkbare uitdagingen in het domein van familie- en partnerrelaties ervaren. Ten derde laten mijn studies zien dat het toepassen van een levenloopperspectief van toegevoegde waarde is. Door een levensloopbenadering te hanteren, kunnen we bestaande theorieën verrijken door expliciet de historische en biografische contextfactoren op te nemen, en op die manier een meer dynamisch perspectief te verkrijgen op de processen doorheen de levensloop.

Ondanks de bijdrage van deze dissertatie tot de wetenschappelijke literatuur, blijven er nog een aantal aandachtspunten over voor toekomstig onderzoek. Ten eerste gebruikte ik in deze dissertatie het 'time and place'- en het 'linked lives'-principe van het levensloopparadigma. Wanneer we echter familie- en partnerrelaties bestuderen in een intra-EU mobiliteitscontext zou het waardevol zijn om een meer alomvattende levensloopbenadering te hanteren, waarbij men aandacht heeft voor alle principes van het levensloopparadigma (linked lives, time and place, life-span development, timing en agency), al dan niet vanuit een meer interdisciplinair perspectief. Ten tweede zou het nuttig zijn om ook meer aandacht te besteden aan de culturele en migratieachtergrond van de partners in Europese binationale koppels, en die van hun ouders en grootouders. Ondanks het gemengde karakter van de Europese binationale koppels (op basis van geboorteland), vermoeden we immers een zekere mate van culturele homogamie. Terwijl landsgrenzen tussen lidstaten uiteraard nog steeds een belangrijk deel van de nationale politieke en juridische context bepalen, is dit landenperspectief vanuit een individueel en sociaal aspect veel artificiëler. Het oversteken van een landsgrens zegt immers niet noodzakelijk iets over geografische afstand, taal, religie, etc. Europese

binationale koppels zijn gemengde koppels op basis van hun geboorteland, maar zijn misschien veel minder 'gemengd' op vlak van culturele kenmerken. Een derde punt van reflectie gaat over de causaliteit in ons onderzoek. Ook al wijzen de analyses in de empirische hoofdstukken op statistische samenhang en suggereert dit soms causale relaties, de realiteit is naar alle waarschijnlijkheid eerder te beschrijven als een systemisch fenomeen, met meerdere interacties en mechanismes tussen individuen, linked lives en de historische context vormgegeven door time and place. Daarom lijkt het me zinvol om de analyses in deze dissertatie, die volledig gebaseerd zijn op cross-sectionele data, verder uit te breiden naar meer dynamische longitudinale analyses met uitgebreide biografische informatie over de levensloop heen. Een vierde bedenking gaat over het concept 'mobiliteit'. Doorheen deze verhandeling werd intra-EU mobiliteit steeds gelinkt aan een appreciatie ervan in het kader van Europese integratie. Dit hoeft echter niet te betekenen dat niet mobiel zijn daarom problematisch is, aangezien bijvoorbeeld ook mensen die niet mobiel zijn binnen de EU contact kunnen hebben met mobiele EU burgers. Ik zou dan durven ook stellen dat toekomstig onderzoek uitvoerig stil dient te staan bij niet enkel mobiliteit maar ook immobiliteit van EU burgers. Als laatste reflectie verwijs ik graag naar het feit dat studies over migrantenpopulaties en migratie vaak lijden onder een gebrek aan beschikbare statistische data. Dit is ook van toepassing op studies omtrent intra-EU mobiliteit. Het is een uitdaging om een volledig beeld te krijgen van mobiele Europeanen door een beperkte beschikbaarheid van kwantitatieve gegevens die gedetailleerde statistische analyse toelaten. Daarom heb ik er in deze dissertatie ook expliciet voor gekozen om meerdere dataset te gebruiken. Desondanks botste ik ook daarbij op de statistische limieten van de gebruikte databronnen. Dit is dan ook een oproep voor een wetenschappelijke dataverzameling die meer oog heeft voor internationale mobiliteit in al haar vormen, zowel van buiten de EU als binnen de EU.

Dit proefschrift heeft bijgedragen tot de verbetering van de wetenschappelijke kennis van familie- en partnerrelaties in een context van intra-EU mobiliteit. Ik vond steun voor het feit dat intra-EU mobiliteit kan bijdragen tot de vorming van Europese binationale

koppels, en zo mogelijks een effect kan hebben op Europese integratie op het individuele niveau. Daarnaast leveren de combinatie van partner- en familierelaties en intra-EU mobiliteit soms ook extra uitdagingen op. Echter, de relatie tussen intra-EU mobiliteit en partner- en familierelaties hangt ook af van de manier waarop de EU in de toekomst verder zal ontwikkelen op politiek en sociaal vlak. De EU als 'ever closer union' staat immers onder druk door bijvoorbeeld nationalistische en populistische politieke bewegingen, en zelfs de recente COVID19 crisis. Dit alles zal dan ook de intersectie met partner- en familierelaties mee beïnvloeden. Wat we wel zeker kunnen stellen is dat familie- en partnerrelaties een cruciale factor zijn en moeten blijven in toekomstige wetenschappelijke debatten en beleidsdiscussie over intra-EU mobiliteit.

About the author

Tom De Winter was born on 24 March 1986 in Duffel, Belgium. He obtained a Master of Science in Communication Sciences at KU Leuven, and a Master of Science in Statistics (Quantitative Analysis in the Social Sciences) at KU Leuven and HUBrussel. In 2009, he started his academic career as a junior researcher, joining the research group Interface Demography at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. In these first years, he was involved in the Generations & Gender Programme, a social science research infrastructure initiative launched by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). In 2013, Tom started his double PhD degree research project on partner and family relations in the context of European integration and intra-EU mobility at Vrije Universiteit Brussel and University of Groningen. He combined this PhD trajectory with an appointment as teaching assistant for bachelor and master courses in statistics and research methodology.

Dankwoord

Deze doctoraatsdissertatie is niet enkel het tastbare resultaat van 7 jaar onderzoek, maar het staat voor mij ook symbool voor het traject dat ik afgelopen 7 jaar aflegde. Een doctoraat is immers een lang en soms moeizaam, maar steeds boeiend en leerrijk traject. Het is een proces van schrijven en herschrijven, met ups en downs, met momenten van succes maar ook momenten van frustratie, een proces van bijna opgeven en toch doorgaan. En het is net dat traject dat dit doctoraat zo waardevol voor mij heeft gemaakt. Het heeft me immers gevormd als onderzoeker, maar zeker ook als mens. Gelukkig stond ik er al die tijd niet alleen voor. Tijdens de afgelopen 7 jaar ontmoette ik enorm veel mensen die me elk op hun eigen manier hebben geïnspireerd, hebben bijgedragen tot mijn doctoraat of er voor me waren met de nodige *moral support*. Het is dan ook quasi onmogelijk om een exhaustieve opsomming te maken van al deze mensen. Maar een aantal personen wil ik hier toch in het bijzonder bedanken.

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