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Union Formation Patterns of Moroccan Migrants in Europe: a comparison between the Netherlands and Spain

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to compare union formation patterns of Moroccan immigrants in Europe by applying a cross-national comparative perspective. Our study focuses on similarities and changes in union formation patterns of labour migrants coming from the same country of origin but moving to different countries at different points in time. We choose to compare Moroccan migrants and their patterns of union formation in two destination countries namely Spain and the Netherlands. These countries are interesting case studies as the Netherlands is a country to which many Moroccan labour migrants moved in the 1960s and early 1970s. Moroccan migration to Spain is clearly more recent and more intense than to Netherlands. We are first of all interested to see what characterizes Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands and Spain in particular with regard to their union formation history. Second, we want to shed light on both the timing of union formation and the level of intermarriage of Moroccan migrants in both countries. Finally, we aim to explain differences and similarities in union formation patterns between Moroccan migrants in Spain and the Netherlands by focusing on individual -, partner - and context characteristics.

Research questions

The study of intermarriages among migrant groups is well established in migration research. Much less is known on other aspects of union formation and its patterns among migrants. In addition most studies on intermarriage focus on one host country only. In our work we aim to

expand on this research in two ways. First of all our study includes one migrant group in two different host countries. Second, we go beyond the patterns of intermarriage and include other aspects of the union formation process, like timing of the marriage. We are interested to see how union formation and migration are related. By using data from the same origin group, Moroccan migrants, with a long migration history to Europe we want to get more advanced insight into the links between migration and the process of union formation.

The first research question we address is: What are the union formation patterns of Moroccan migrants in Spain and the Netherlands? We aim to study how and to what extent Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands are following different patterns than those of Moroccan origin in Spain. This will be done by focusing on differences or similarities regarding two aspects of union formation namely timing of the marriage and levels of intermarriage. Our second research question is: how and to what extent are both choices (migration and union formation) related for Moroccan migrants? Finally we question how can we explain differences in timing of marriage and intermarriage among Moroccan migrants? We will assess whether the same or different factors are important for union formation of Moroccan migrants in Spain and the Netherlands.

Data

This research, which is part of a project in progress, is based on two national datasets which offer unique chances for cross-national comparison. We combine information from the Spanish Survey *Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes (ENI 2007)* and the Dutch survey *Sociale Positie en Voorzieningen gebruik Allochtonen (SPVA 2003)*. The ENI, conducted by the National Statistical Institute, offers a sample of 15,464 immigrants of different origins, of which 1,655 are Moroccan, 1,051 men and 604 women. The survey offers detailed information on immigrants' individual and household characteristics, together with retrospective information on migration and partnership histories for respondents and partially for household members as well. The SPVA is a survey that was conducted in the Netherlands at regular three year intervals between 1988 and 2003. The survey focused on the four largest immigrant groups in the Netherlands among which the Moroccan population. The 2003 round of the survey includes 1,056 Moroccans of which 756 men and 300 women. The survey includes background information on the partner and partnership history as well as on individual characteristics, family formation, migration and settlement history, household composition and the current position in Dutch society.

Both surveys sample from register data and migrants are defined based on country of birth. Given the similarities in definition of the Moroccan population and the information gathered in both surveys, the data allow for unique comparisons on Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands and Spain. We include all Moroccan migrants in our sample as we are interested in the interrelationship between union formation and migration. Patterns of union formation will be described for Moroccan migrants in Spain and the Netherlands separately. For our analyses on determinants of timing of union formation and intermarriage we will pool the data from Spain and the Netherlands in order to be able to test our hypotheses.