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MOBILITY INTENTIONS OF STUDENTS: THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY AND DATING RELATIONS

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Introduction

One of the pillars of the European Union is the right of every EU citizen to move freely and reside anywhere within the European Union. This right is highly appreciated by EU citizens: in the Eurobarometer 80 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[1]. European policy makers have encouraged European mobility in order to among others stimulate European integration. This is for example reflected in the student exchange programme for higher education Erasmus+. By giving students in higher education the opportunities to study abroad for at least a few months, policy makers hope to broaden the horizon of these students, and to stimulate European integration. In 2012-2013 about 270,000 students went abroad on Erasmus student exchange[2].

Although this program starts from the assumption of free mobility for all, the migration literature has pinpointed several determinants for migration and mobility[3]. Previous studies found that international experience (e.g. previous employment or training abroad) increase the likelihood that European citizens will consider moving abroad in the future[4]. Half of those who do migrate exhibit previous migration experience[5]. Also family has been identified as an important factor for migration intentions and decisions: family relations are found to be a decisive factor in being mobile, or to not being mobile. Despite this reported importance of family on migration decisions in general, the existing literature on student mobility and its determinants has not yet paid full attention to the influence of family. As far as they have been studied they usually focus on parental background characteristics and no attention has been paid to (dating) partner relations. This is surprising as students are in a phase of life in which both family relations and partner relations are key in their lives. It is also in this phase of young adulthood when partner (dating) relationships often emerge and many find their partners during studies.

In this study we aim to explore the effects of family and dating relationships on mobility intentions of university students. We explore to what degree they influence both intentions

[1] European Commission (2013b). Public opinion in the European Union. Standard Eurobarometer 80. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb80/eb80_first_en.pdf. Accessed 20 August 2014.

[2] European Commission (2014). Erasmus: Facts, Figures & Trends. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/statistics/ay-12-13/facts-figures_en.pdf on 15/12/2015.

[3] E.g. Zaiceva, A., & Zimmermann, K. F. (2008). Scale, diversity, and determinants of labour migration in Europe. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, *24*(3), 428–452. doi:10.1093/oxrep/grn028; Nivalainen, S. (2004). Determinants of family migration: short moves vs. long moves. *Journal of Population Economics*, *17*(1), 157–175. doi:10.1007/s00148-003-0131-8

[4] European Commission (2010). Geographical and labour market mobility Report. Special Eurobarometer 337. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_337_en.pdf. Accessed 20 August 2014.

[5] Recchi, E., Favell, A. (Eds.) (2009). *Pioneers of European Integration: Citizenship and Mobility in the EU*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

for Erasmus mobility and mobility intentions after graduation.

Data & methods

For the empirical analyses in this study, data were used from the student survey 2015, an annual survey conducted within the context of a course of sociology among the first bachelor students at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Of the 1108 students registered for this course, 656 participated, resulting in a response rate of 59%. All questionnaires were completed on the same day. The students in this group, most of them originating from the Brussels region, have very different backgrounds regarding to mobility and migration, making them the perfect sample when taking into account migration and mobility background. Given the high number of interviewed respondents from several courses in human and social sciences, this sample could be considered as representative for first year university students. The dataset consists of a set of questions regarding socio-economic background of the student, family background, mobility intentions and relationship status which allows us to investigate our research questions.

Most first year students in Belgium are 18 years old when starting at university right after secondary school. However, the sample does also include a smaller group of older students. Given the very different life situation of the latter, we exclude them of the following analyses. So we focus on generation students, being the students that started tertiary education for the first time right after having finished secondary education. We set 22 years as a maximum age. This results in a total sample of 507 respondents.

The main concept of interest in this study is mobility intentions. The data allow us to differentiate between two types of intentions: intentions to be mobile during studies and intentions to be mobile after study. Both intentions are expressed in dummy variables (0: no intention to be mobile; 1: intention to be mobile).
In the multivariate models, we include several independent variables. First of all we have a number of socio-demographic control variables: sex, age (centered around age 18), highest educational level of the mother (ref: no degree of primary or lower secondary; 1: higher secondary; 3: tertiary). Concerning family, four measurements are included: generation (ref: Belgian; 1: first generation migrant; 2: second generation migrant), having family abroad in the EU (0: no; 1: yes) and having family abroad outside the EU (0: no; 1: yes). The last variable about family measures whether the student has a dating partner. We intentionally use the word 'dating partner' given that in most cases this relationship is not yet officialised by (registered) cohabitation or marriage. These relationships have an average duration of 24 months, which could be seen as considerable at this young age.

Preliminary results
In our first descriptive results, a crosstabulation is shown between the intention to go abroad on a student exchange (Erasmus+) and the intentions to move abroad after studies. This descriptive table confirms a relationship between the intentions to be mobile during the studies, and the intentions to be mobile after the studies. This relationship between both variables is found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 20.505; df = 2; p < .001$). Students with the intention to go on Erasmus seem to be more inclined to also go abroad after graduation (24.1% versus 4.6%).

		Intention to move abroad		Total
		No	Yes	
Intention to go on Erasmus student exchange	**Not certain yet**	90,2%	9,8%	51
	No	95,4%	4,6%	87
	Yes	75,9%	24,1%	369
Total		80,7%	19,3%	507

We however also want to know the determinants behind both types of mobility intentions. Therefore we estimate binary logistic regression models. In the following logistic regression model (n=422), the intention to go on Erasmus is chosen as independent variable. The regression model suggests that male student have lower intentions to go on Erasmus compare to female students (p<.01). This is in line with the statistics on Erasmus that show that about 60% of all students on Erasmus are female. Those with a higher educated mother also have a much higher adds ratio (2.431) compared to those with low educated mothers (p<.05)). Also this finding is consistent with earlier studies. The family situation, and more specifically the internationalness of the family, also determines to a certain degree mobility intentions: having family living in another EU member states makes the odds increase by factor 1.86 (p<.05). Having a dating partner seems to have an impeding effect: having a dating partner results in a decrease of the odds to go abroad during studies.

	Odds	95% C.I.	
		Lower	Upper
male	,513**	,314	,837
Age (centered around 18	,841	,600	1,180
Highest education level mother (ref.: primary and lower secondary)			
Higher secondary education	1,699	,853	3,381
Tertiary education	2,431*	1,070	5,525
Family living abroad in EU	1,860*	1,052	3,290
Family living abroad outside EU	1,356	,688	2,669
Migrant (ref.: Belgian)			
1st generation migrant	2,903	,769	10,961
2nd generation migrant	,676	,307	1,489
Dating partner	,606*	,379	,967
Constant	1,424		

*=p<.05; **=p<.01; ***=p<.001

The second regression model presented shows the results for a similar model with mobility intentions after graduation as dependent variable. In this model only first generation migrants (i.e. not born in Belgium) have a much higher odds compared to the Belgians (i.e. respondent and parents all born in Belgium).

	Odds	95% C.I.	
		Lower	Upper
male	,903	,502	1,623
Age (centered around 18	,974	,689	1,377
Highest education level mother (ref.: primary and lower secondary)			
Higher secondary education	1,834	,780	4,310
Tertiary education	1,891	,727	4,920
Family living abroad in EU	1,522	,788	2,938
Family living abroad outside EU	,913	,446	1,870
Migrant (ref.: Belgian)			
1st generation migrant	4,243***	1,739	10,351
2nd generation migrant	1,177	,492	2,816
Dating partner	,924	,527	1,621
Constant	,086		

*=p<.05; **=p<.01; ***=p<.001

A more detailed analyses will be presented in the final paper, aiming to disentangle more into detail the differences in determinants for the two types of mobility intentions.

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