Is There a Retreat from Intermarriage?

Evidence from a Traditional Immigrant Country

Gina Potarca

Laura Bernardi

Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research LIVES,

University of Lausanne

ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND

With growing migration flows across Europe, mixed marriages have started to take off. Their prevalence indicates how porous the socio-cultural distance between the natives and immigrants is. In Switzerland, a country with an ever-increasing and changing immigrant population, both natives and immigrants have more open preferences towards intermarriage than in other countries. Little is known however about the actual trends and patterns in marital choices.

OBJECTIVE

We explore the role of origin group and birth cohort in the emergence and dissolution of mixed marriages in Switzerland.

METHODS

Using data from the 2013 Swiss Family and Generations Survey, and examining both immigrants and natives, we fit competing risks models for entry into first and second marriage, and Cox proportional hazards model for entry into divorce.

CONCLUSIONS

We find evidence of an ethnically segregated marriage market, with migrants from neighboring Western European countries having higher chances of getting and staying married to a native spouse. Results reflect variation in both cultural and human capital across origin groups, as well Switzerland's integration policies. Generational trends towards less exogamy among young immigrants are suggestive of the transformation of marriage market conditions over the last decades.

CONTRIBUTIONS

While previous research on mixed unions in Europe largely focused on a single partnering transition, we present a more comprehensive picture of mixed marriages by examining outcomes of both occurrence and longevity. This expands our understanding on the resilience

of certain ethnic/ nativity boundaries across the life course, and not only in connection to a single event or transition.

Keywords: mixed marriage, immigrant, cultural distance, transitions, marriage, divorce

1. Introduction

Interethnic unions, particularly intermarriage, defined as the marital union between two individuals of different ethnic ancestries, has been subject to extensive empirical research in the U.S., given its increasing multicultural and racially mixed society (Burton et al. 2010). As intermarriage scholars often point out, the prevalence and determinants of mixed marriages serve as indicators of the persistence of group boundaries and of the social and cultural distance between ethnic/ racial groups (Fu 2001; Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2010; Lucassen and Laarman 2009). Recent patterns of mixed marriage in the U.S. point to the persistence of a racial hierarchy in partner preferences (Fu 2001), with the degree and the type of ethnic mixing not occurring by chance, but rather corresponding to different trajectories of integration (Alba and Nee 2003) that usually place Blacks at the bottom and Hispanics and Asians in the racial middle. While trends in mixed unions are thoroughly documented in the U.S. literature, research on interethnic partnerships in Europe and elsewhere remains scarce. The massive immigration flows across Europe during the recent decades has positioned interethnic integration and immigration as a core topic on the political agenda.

Switzerland, among other Northern and Western European countries (e.g., France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden) represents a so-called traditional host country. It has a long history of immigration initiated after the Second World War, which includes mass migration flows coming from Southern European countries (mainly Italy, Spain, and later, Portugal), driven by labour market demands. After the mid-1980s, migrants also arrived from former Yugoslavia, Albania, and Turkey (Lagana et al. 2014). Swiss immigration history also includes highly skilled immigration flows from both neighboring Western European countries (e.g., Germany, France, and Austria) and worldwide, given the high density of international firms and administrations headquarters (ib.). Switzerland nowadays has one of the highest stocks of the foreign-born population in Europe. In 2014,

the share of residents with foreign background accounted for 22% of the total population, higher than the EU average of 10% (Eurostat 2015). When assembling both the foreign-born and the native-born with at least one immigrant parent, the percentage of the population that has some migrant background in Switzerland exceeds 40% (OECD/ European Union 2015).

However, traditional rigid and restrictive immigration legislation and policies in Switzerland are on the verge of being reinforced at the time of writing as a consequence of a popular poll in 2014 demanding more restrictive immigration policies. Notwithstanding its resistance to multiculturalism and integration of foreign residents (Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006), and the asymmetrical power relations that often describe binational marriages (Riaño 2011), there is evidence of a relatively high rate of intermarriage in Switzerland (Lanzieri 2012), as well as greater openness towards intermarriage among both natives and migrants (Carol 2013), compared to other immigration countries. Despite the importance of these trends and the particular case of Swiss immigration, little is known about the specific dynamics of mixed marriages in Switzerland in terms of their occurrence or stability. It is unclear whether a changing marriage market and a shifting institutional context would encourage a retreat from intermarrying among younger generations (Qian and Lichter 2011) similar to the slowing down of mixed marriages between Whites and growing immigrant groups (e.g., Asians, Hispanics) in the U.S.

In this study, we ask the following questions: Which immigrant groups are more prone to enter mixed marital unions with natives in Switzerland? And which ones are more likely to exit them? Are younger generations of both Swiss immigrants and natives more or less prone to form and dissolve an exogamous marriage[1]? We are thus interested in inter-group and inter-cohort differences in the emergence and longevity of mixed marriages in Switzerland, a national context with a large and ever-rising immigrant population, as well

[1] Intermarriage, interethnic marriage/ union and exogamous marriage are used interchangeable throughout the text to refer to marital unions between different-ethnicity spouses.

as strengthening of restrictive immigration rules. The analyses are done separately for native and immigrant respondents, and aim at testing different hypotheses related to cultural distance, assimilation, opportunity structure, exogamy, and normalization of divorce, as complementary potential explanations for changing dynamics in mixed partnership formation and dissolution. We specifically focus on marriage instead of cohabitation since the crossing of ethnic/ nativity boundaries in marital unions has deeper implications for partners' well-being in general (Van Mol and de Valk, 2016), and for immigrants' legal integration and acquisition of specific citizenship rights in particular (de Valk and Medrano, 2014).

Our study advances the literature in several specific ways. First, we document the latest trends in mixed marital unions within a European context using up-to-date large-scale Swiss data from the 2013 Family and Generations Survey. Second, we engage in a all-inclusive two-sided examination of intermarriage in Switzerland, by looking at the (inter)marital choices of both natives and immigrants. Third, previous research on mixed marital unions between immigrants and natives largely focused on prevailing mixed marriages (e.g., Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2006). But gaining a more realistic and comprehensive picture of mixed marital unions and understanding their role in immigrant integration requires the examination of more than one partnership transition at a time and focusing not only on formation, but also on the timing of dissolution associated with such unions (Fu and Wolfinger, 2011; Kulu and González-Ferrer 2014; Soehl and Yahirun 2011). A high rate of intermarriage can indicate openness to cross ethnic/ nativity boundaries, but a more reliable indicator of the social inclusion of newcomers is whether such unions are preferred over other types of arrangements, and also how durable they are. Accordingly, we examine three types of events: 1) entry into first marriage, 2) dissolution of first marriage and, 3), entry into second marriage. We analyze first and second marriage formation separately given the increasing share of divorcees as marriage market candidates

(Prioux 2006), and the differences that scholars already noticed between first and second marital union decisions (e.g., Shafer and James 2013). Investigating whether belonging to a certain origin group is linked to first and second (inter)marriage entry differently would expand our understanding on the resilience of certain ethnic/ nativity boundaries across the life course, and not only in connection to a single event or transition.

2. Background

In this section, we characterize the formation and dissolution of mixed marriages in Switzerland as shaped by origin and cohort group, two factors that we propose enable or constrain marital union formation and ending in various ways.

2.1 Trends across origin groups

As previously noted, Switzerland hosts one of the largest stocks of both recent and long-settled migrants in Europe. With many new arrivals in the last 10-15 years, its immigrant population has particularly diversified in terms of geographical and cultural background, as well as socio-economic status (Fibbi et al. 2007; Lagana et al. 2014). Historically, the first influx of immigrants included Italian families who arrived between 1950 and 1970 under "guestworker" programs. The Southern European immigrant population soon expanded to also accommodate Spanish and, later, Portuguese unskilled workers. The mid 80s witnessed the immigration of another group coming from the Balkans whose share increased substantially in the 90s on the backdrop of the disintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the armed conflicts in the area. Immigrants from the Balkans (e.g., Kosovars, Bosnians, Serbs, Albanians, Macedonians, Turks, etc.) now represent one of the largest foreign communities in Switzerland (Gross 2006). Finally, the most recent inflow of immigrants occurred with the gradual introduction of freedom of movement with the

member countries of the European Union (Liebig et al. 2012). This drew a considerably large influx of highly educated skilled workers from the neighboring countries of Germany, France, and Austria (OECD/ European Union 2015). The three main immigrant groups considered in this paper (i.e., 1) Southern Europeans, 2) former Yugoslavs and Turks, and 3) neighboring Western Europeans) thus differ not only in history of migration and length of time spent in Switzerland, but also in cultural identity and socio-economic ranking compared to the native population. These discrepancies should also translate in different propensities to intermarry with natives. Immigrants from ex-Yugoslavia and Turkey are expected to form exogamous marriages with natives as first union the least, and dissolve their marital union with natives the most, given weaker socio-cultural integration due to less malleable cultural traits, such as stronger endogamy norms, and religion (Lievens 1998). They are also the group that registers more negative labor market outcomes, including higher unemployment risks (Lagana et al. 2014) or greater discrimination in hiring practices (Fibbi et al. 2007). At the other side of the spectrum, immigrants from neighboring Western European countries not only benefit from language and cultural similarity with the native Swiss, and friendlier integration and citizenship policies (Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006), but also perform much better on the labor market (Lagana et al. 2014) and thus hold a higher-ranked mate value and higher chances to intermarry and stay married with natives. Compared to these first two immigrant groups, we consider immigrants from Southern Europe to hold an intermediate position in terms of cultural and economic distance from local mainstream, and therefore to have higher chances to intermarry and remain married with natives than ex-Yugoslavs and Turks, but lower compared to Western Europeans. Moreover, Southern European migrants, particularly Italians, would be at a lower risk of separation due to their Catholic background, cultural norms against union dissolution and exposure to lower divorce rates (Rosina and Fraboni 2004) in their origin country. We broadly refer to these expectations as *cultural distance hypotheses*. Given that second marriages are usually found to be more exogamous

with respect to various traits than first ones (e.g., Shafer 2013), we expect between origin group differences in propensity to intermarry (a native) to be less noticeable for the entry into second marriage.

2.2 Trends across birth cohort

We also anticipate particular cohort differences in the occurrence and stability of marriages that cross national origin boundaries. First, in accordance to the assimilation hypothesis predicting progressively higher rates of intermarriage for subsequent generations of immigrants (Gordon 1964), members of younger cohorts were found to be more likely to enter mixed marital unions than those belonging to earlier generations (Muttarak and Heath 2010; Wang 2012). This trend could be linked to changing preferences in favor of interethnic contact and increased approval of intermarriage, as well as greater opportunities for interaction across ethnic lines, sustained by rising ethnic and racial diversity (Joyner and Kao 2005). Nonetheless, there is also empirical evidence pointing to the contrary, namely a stagnation and even decrease in exogamous marriages across cohorts (González-Ferrer 2006; Qian and Lichter 2011). This has been related to the substantial growth of immigrant populations occurring in recent decades and the coming of age of second- and third-generations, which caused a 'replenished' stock of ethnic minorities (Jiménez 2008), and thus allowed for more opportunities of choosing an endogamous rather than an exogamous partner (Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2006; Qian and Lichter 2011). Members of larger minority groups can also better identify with the in-group and are subject to more control from third parties, leading to a more prominent inclination towards marrying a co-ethnic (Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2006). Moreover, the advent of online dating as mainstream channel for finding a partner in the last decade and the over-representation of minority groups among Internet daters (Potârcă and Mills 2015) means an easier access and more possibilities for selecting a partner from your own group. Finally, as opposed to the more

open and risk-prone pioneering immigrants, those from later cohorts may favor familiarity over novelty. Therefore, we expect immigrants from recent cohorts to be less prone to forming exogamous marital unions with Swiss partners than their counterparts from earlier cohorts, particularly when belonging to groups whose size has been continuously expanding throughout recent decades (e.g., Southern Europeans).

Natives from later cohorts, on the other hand, are expected to be more likely to enter exogamous marital unions, given the ethnic diversification of the marriage pool and increasingly favorable attitudes towards inter-partnering among their peers (Carol 2013). One recent study indeed revealed that younger natives residing in several Western European countries, including Switzerland, are more likely to intermarry than older ones (Carol 2016). We refer to the above stated propositions as *marriage market opportunities hypotheses*.

When it comes to the propensity to exit the first marital union, we first expect individuals (both Swiss and non-Swiss) in exogamous marriages to be more likely to divorce than those in endogamous arrangements, as the *exogamy hypothesis* repeatedly confirmed by previous research indicates (Bratter and King 2008; Kalmijn et al. 2005; Milewski and Kulu 2013). Moreover, we put forward a *normalization of divorce hypothesis* in anticipating intermarried individuals from more recent cohorts to have a higher risk of dissolving their union than those from previous generations (Bratter and King 2008), on the background of more societal permissiveness towards divorce in general and dissolving ill-fitted unions in particular (Halman and Ingen, 2015).

3. Data and methods

3.1 Data source

We use data from the 2013 Family and Generations Survey (originally *Enquête sur les familles et les générations* (*EFG*) 2013), conducted by the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) as part of a new census of the Swiss population. Its sample includes approximately 10,000

permanent residents in Switzerland, aged 15 to 79 years (the reference date being the first January 2013). The *EFG* aims to provide data on the current state and evolution of families and more generally on the relationship between generations. Among others, the survey also collected information on ethnic origin, migratory status, and retrospective information on union history referring to partners with whom the respondent cohabited (and was married or not) in the past. The data were collected through computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI), followed by additional online or paper questionnaires (CAWI/ PAPI). The interviews were held in three languages: German, French, and Italian. To conduct the *EFG*, the FSO started with a randomly drawn sample of 34,818 people in the sampling frame for surveys of individuals and households. A total of 17,288 persons (50%) participated in the survey. To account for the sample design, the data were weighted and calibrated. After excluding cases with missing information on either one of our variables of interest, the analyses included in this study were carried on a final sample of 13,033 respondents. We decided to exclude respondents born after 1989, given their higher chance of having incomplete partnership histories.

3.2 Measurement of variables

The dependent variables used in our analyses are the occurrence of *first* and *second marriage* (with a different number of categories depending on origin background, see details below), and the occurrence of *first divorce*. Type of first and second union is coded as 'endogamous' if respondent's and partner's origin match, or exogamous if their origins are different. Among immigrants, we distinguish between two types of exogamous marital unions: with natives and with immigrants from another ethnic group than their own.

Respondent's origin and generation type (for immigrants) were computed based on extensive information on current nationality, nationality at birth, country of birth, both parents' country of birth, and whether childhood was mostly spent in Switzerland or

abroad. If the individual has current Swiss nationality, was born Swiss and at least one of his or her parents were born in Switzerland, the respondent was coded as 'native'. If both parents were born abroad and the respondents migrated to Switzerland after the age of 16, he or she was coded as 'first generation' and receives the specific origin of the country where the mother was born (in case parents had been born in different foreign countries). If both parents were born abroad and respondents came to reside in Switzerland between the ages of 6 and 16, they are coded as '1.5 generation' and are given mother's country of birth as origin. If both their parents were born abroad and they came to reside in Switzerland before the age of 6 (or were born in Switzerland), respondents are coded as 'second generation' and are assigned mother's country of birth as origin.

Since the first spouse can be either a current or a previous partner, we gauge *partner's origin* by looking at either current or part spouse's background. *Current partner's origin* is only measured via the following variables: current nationality, nationality at birth (either Swiss or foreign), and country of birth. If the partner is currently a Swiss national and had Swiss or double nationality at birth, irrespective of country of birth, he/ she is categorized as 'native'. If the partner has a non-Swiss nationality at birth, then information on country of birth is used to gauge partner's immigrant origin. *Previous partners' origin* was measured solely by inquiring information on their current nationality. Therefore, if the precedent partner had Swiss nationality, he/ she was coded as 'native', whereas if previous partner had non-Swiss nationality, he/ she was categorized as foreign-origin.

For both respondents and their partners, we distinguish between five *origin* groups: 1) natives, 2) Southern Europeans (originating from Italy, Spain, Portugal or Greece), 3) ex-Yugoslavs and Turks, 4) Western Europeans (from Germany, France or Austria), and 5) other countries.

We distinguish between 5 cohort groups, namely respondents born between: 1) 1940-1949, 2) 1950-1959, 3) 1960-1969, 4) 1970-1979, and 5) 1980-1989.

Control variables include: gender, education (with categories: 1) low, 2) medium, 3) high), age at first marriage (in years), linguistic region (with categories: German, French, Italian, and Romansh), and for immigrants only, the timing of marriage (with options: 1) marriage before migration, 2) marriage after migration). For the analyses of first divorce and second marriage formation we also include two extra predictors, namely number of children born while previously married, and type of first marriage.

3.3 Analytical plan

The analyses include event history models that focus on three types of transitions: entry into first marriage, exit from first marriage, and entry into second marriage. The transition to first marital union is analyzed within a competing risks framework, treating endogamous and exogamous unions (recall there are two types of exogamous unions for migrants, with natives or with other immigrants) as alternative risks. Time of exposure was measured in years, starting at age 15 and censoring at the interview, at age 45, or at a competing event. For migrants, we estimate three competing risks (proportional sub-distribution hazards) regressions with the other two outcomes treated as competing risks, while also including various covariates. For natives, we estimate two competing risks regressions with the other outcome treated as competing risk, including a series of variables.

For exit from first marital union, we followed respondents who experienced the transition to first partnership from the starting year of the union until its dissolution (through). Observations were censored at time of interview, 20 years after the start of the union, or at partner's death. To analyze the transition out of first union, we use single decrement models, more specifically Cox proportional hazard models that also control for a series of variables of interest.

To investigate the formation of the second marital union, we targeted respondents who had experienced a break-up or partner's death in their first union. We observed this

group of individuals from the end of their first partnership till the year they entered a second union. Observations were censored at the interview date, 20 years after the end of their first union, or in case a competing event occurred. Similar to entry into first marital union, we estimate a set of either three (for migrants) or two (for natives) competing risks models.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Descriptive results

Table 1 displays weighted percentages for our time-invariant predictor variables, by origin. Information on migratory background reveals that there are 36.8% non-native respondents, with 11.6% coming from Southern Europe, 9.6% from neighboring Western European countries, and 5.5% from former Yugoslavia and Turkey. The sex ratio among native respondents is highly balanced, whereas there appears to be an over-representation of men among immigrants originating from Southern Europe and especially from former Yugoslavian countries and Turkey, and slightly higher numbers of women among neighboring Western Europeans and other immigrants. The previous two groups (i.e., Western Europeans and others) are particularly highly educated, to a higher degree than both other groups of immigrants and natives. The lower educated are over-represented among respondents with a Southern European background, whereas natives and those from ex-Yugoslavia and Turkey are more likely to hold intermediate educational degrees. When it comes to birth cohort, natives are highly represented among older generations (a cumulative 40.1% belong to the 1940-49 and 1950-59 cohorts). On the other hand, respondents of foreign-origin are much younger, particularly those from ex-Yugoslavian countries and Turkey, with 64.6% of them being born between 1970 and 1989. In terms of regional distribution, Southern Europeans are particularly represented in the French and Italian

speaking parts of Switzerland, while ex-Yugoslavs and Turks as well as Western Europeans are highly numerous in the Swiss German region. Furthermore, reflecting the nature of recent waves of immigration to Switzerland, respondents from Western Europe and other countries are more likely to be first generation immigrants. The second generation seems to be over-represented among Southern European respondents, whereas 1.5 generation immigrants are more numerous among ex-Yugoslavians and Turks. Furthermore, the majority of immigrants who started their first marriage did so after moving to Switzerland, but respondents from neighboring Western European countries are more likely than other groups to have started their marital union abroad. Finally, respondents from Former Yugoslavia and Turkey are among the youngest on average in our sample, and declare having the smallest number of children born during the first marriage.

TABLE 1

4.2 Multivariate analysis: Competing risks and Cox regression models

Table 2 reports the estimates of a competing risks analysis predicting entry into first union, for the sub-sample of foreign-origin respondents. Model 1 includes main effects, whereas Model 2 adds an interaction between origin and birth cohort. Table 3 reports the estimates of a competing risks analysis predicting the entry into second union for immigrants. Nonetheless, only a model with main effects is estimated in Table 3, given a smaller sample size of foreign-origin respondents who are at risk of second marital union formation. Recall that we proposed that immigrants from former Yugoslavia and Turkey have a lower risk of intermarrying with natives (as either first or second marriage), whereas those from Western Europe have higher chances of entering marital unions with natives. First, results in Table 2 show that migrants originating from Western Europe (and other countries) are indeed significantly more likely to enter a first mixed marriage with a Swiss native. Compared to Southern Europeans, immigrants from former Yugoslavia and Turkey

are not less likely to marry a native when it comes to their first marital choice. Additional analyses (available upon request) that set the Western European group as baseline indicate that ex-Yugoslavians and Turks have a significantly lower risk of marrying a Swiss compared to this group. These results give confirmation to our *cultural distance hypotheses*. Second, findings in Table 3 reveal no significant differences between origin groups when it comes to the risk of intermarrying a native as second marital decision, as expected. Nonetheless, setting the Western European group as reference category once again reveals that individuals from Former Yugoslavia and Turkey are significantly less prone to forming a second marital union with a native. Moreover, as seen in Table 3, respondents with this particular background have significantly higher chances of starting an endogamous second marriage.

TABLE 2 and TABLE 3

We also hypothesized immigrants from recent cohorts to be less prone to forming exogamous marital unions with natives than their counterparts from earlier cohorts, particularly when belonging to larger size groups (e.g., Southern Europeans). As expected, results in Table 2 indicate that individuals belonging to younger cohorts are significantly and progressively less likely to have a Swiss native as first spouse. Table 3 furthermore shows that there is no significant contrast between cohort groups when it comes to the propensity to enter a second marital union with a native. To test the second half of our theoretical proposition, we investigate the interaction between origin and cohort included in Model 2 (only in Table 2). We notice that the direction and significance of main effects remains unchanged, indicating that the more compelling inter-cohort differences are indeed found among Southern Europeans, who represent the largest immigrant group in Switzerland. Though non-distinguishable from Southern Europeans, ex-Yugoslavs and Turks born in more recent years are also less likely to marry Swiss natives. We also see that, as opposed to all other groups, younger cohorts of immigrants from the heterogeneous

'others' category are in fact significantly more likely to start an exogamous first marriage with a native. Despite the lack of significant differences, effect sizes indicate that younger generations of Western Europeans are also more prone to have a native Swiss first spouse.

For the native group, we posited that Swiss natives from later cohorts are more likely to enter exogamous marital unions compared to older cohorts. Table 4 and Table 5 present the results of additional competing risks analyses predicting the entry into first and second marriage respectively for the sub-sample of native respondents. Findings in Table 4 suggest that Swiss natives born in the 60s, 70s, and 80s have a significantly higher propensity to intermarry than older cohorts. Moreover, native respondents who are born in more recent years are significantly less likely to enter an endogamous first marital union. In Table 5 we notice no significant inter-cohort differences among natives when it comes to second marital union formation. Results therefore partially confirm our *marriage market opportunities* prediction.

TABLE 4 and TABLE 5

Concerning the risk of divorce, we first hypothesized that exogamous marriages are more prone to dissolve than endogamous one. Table 6 reports the results of three Cox regression models examining the dissolution of first marital union among foreign-origin respondents. Model 1 estimates main effects, Model 2 adds an interaction between type of union and cohort, whereas Model 3 supplements the basic analysis with an interaction between type of union and origin group. A Cox proportional hazard model predicting exit from first marriage among native respondents is further reported in Table 7. Findings in both Table 6 and Table 7 give confirmation to the *exogamy hypothesis* in showing that exogamous marriages (particularly those between natives and immigrants) are significantly more at risk of ending in divorce compared to endogamous ones.

TABLE 6 and TABLE 7

We also hypothesized that the gap between the intermarried and those in

endogamous marital unions in terms of risk of divorce is larger among younger cohorts compared to older ones. Results in Table 6 (Model 2) show no significant differences between cohorts when it comes to the differential risk of divorce between endogamous and exogamous (with native) marriages. Results in Table 7 (Model 2) similarly indicate no significant differences between birth cohorts when it comes to the risk of divorce of exogamous marriages among natives. Therefore we find weak support for the *normalization of divorce hypothesis.*

Finally, we posited that immigrants from ex-Yugoslavia and Turkey dissolve their marital union with natives the most, while those from Western Europe the least. To examine this, we inspect results in Table 6 (Model 3). The interaction between type of union and origin is highly significant and we notice that respondents from former Yugoslavia and Turkey who married a native are significantly more likely to divorce. On the other hand, immigrants from neighboring Western European countries are significantly less at risk of dissolving their marriage with a native spouse, confirming once again our *cultural distance* hypothesis.

5. Conclusions

This study set out to examine the formation and dissolution of mixed (as opposed to endogamous) marriages in Switzerland, across various origin sub-groups and cohorts. The Swiss migration landscape is notably compelling given that Switzerland has one of Europe's lengthiest traditions with immigration, it accommodates large segments of both low- and high-skilled immigrants, while currently reinforcing restrictive immigration policies. Using recent data on extensively recorded partnership histories, we first specifically analyzed entry into first and second marital union in a competing risks framework. We then carried on with modeling exit from first marriage using Cox proportional hazard regression. Focusing on

both the propensity to enter an exogamous marriage and the risk of it dissolving ensures a more encompassing understanding of which immigrant groups manage to not only cross ethnic boundaries in marital choices, but to also remain in such partnership arrangements in the long-run. Marital pairings between individuals with an immigrant background and native Swiss were of particular focus to this study, given that marrying and staying married with a native is more than often regarded as ultimate proof of immigrant integration (Alba and Nee 2003; Gordon 1964). Nevertheless, additional analyses available from authors, looking at cohabiting partnerships reveal similar results.

Results point to the existence of an ethnically segregated marriage market, with immigrants from former Yugoslavia and Turkey having both lower chances of starting an exogamous marriage with a native (either first- or second-order) and a higher risk of divorcing their Swiss spouse. At the opposite side of the spectrum, immigrants originating from neighboring Germany, France or Austria have better chances of marrying a Swiss and are more likely for their union to remain intact. Finally, the Southern European group appears to rank in the middle, not distinguishable from ex-Yugoslavs and Turks when it comes to propensity to marry a native, but when do having a Swiss spouse, being less likely to divorce them. Such ethnic divisions are similar to hierarchies empirically observed both in the U.S. (e.g., Bratter and King 2008; Bonilla-Silva 2004; Fu 2001) and other European contexts (e.g., Dribe and Lundh 2011a; Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2010; Milewski and Kulu 2013). Being culturally more proximate to the native population, as well as having higher-ranked educational credentials and a favorable labor market performance (Lagana et al. 2014), Western European migrants establish themselves as the most integrated minority group on the Swiss marriage market. This also reflects the integration policies and discourse promoted by the Swiss state, which favors skilled and culturally proximate EU citizens in terms of immigration rights and access (Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006). Though not directly tested within this study, results confirm the salience of both human capital and cultural

similarity (Dribe and Lundh 2011b) as traits that boost a migrant's mate value and (inter)partnering prospects.

In addition, both immigrants and natives who experienced an exogamous partnership as their first union have lower chances of entering an endogamous second union, which is suggestive of selection effects and a consistent tendency not to conform to endogamy standards throughout the life course.

Finally, the data indicate that, contrary to linear assimilationist claims (Gordon 1964), younger migrants are progressively less (and not more) likely to enter a mixed marriage with a Swiss native compared to older generations, particularly in the case of Southern European and ex-Yugoslavs and Turks[2]. This suggests that younger cohorts of (especially non-culturally proximate) immigrants might indeed react to the transformation of marriage market conditions and novel opportunities of interaction over the last decades, as well as to the increasingly adverse migration policies promoted by Switzerland. Thus, similar to the U.S., there seems to be a certain 'retreat' in readiness to marry natives (Qian and Lichter 2011) among growing Swiss immigrant populations. The opposite generational trend noticed among natives (i.e., a greater propensity to out-marry among younger generations) could reflect increased willingness to tolerate differences in values, religious or sexual practices, compared to the more culturally constrained immigrants (Carol 2016). Moreover, significant changes in Swiss citizenship laws in the last two decades, including the possibility of holding Swiss nationality among native women who married a foreigner, could also drive natives' increased openness to intermarry.

The lack of comprehensive information on the population composition (i.e., relative group size, sex ratio) in each year that events of transitioning into marriage occurred prevent us from explicitly testing whether immigrants withdraw from marrying natives as a consequence of abundant structural opportunities for in-marriage. However, since previous

[2] Supplementary analyses show that this finding is valid for both men and women.

studies indicate that the self-reported preference for a Swiss partner is decreasing for younger generations (see Potârcă and Mills 2015, supplementary material), we are inclined to conclude that it is a matter of shifts at the level of both attitudes and marriage market opportunities. Future studies should examine data on complete partnership trajectories for the immigrants born in the 80s, who are more at risk of being affected by recent demographic and attitudinal shifts, but were between 24 and 33 years old at time of interview and might still experience family formation transitions later on. Our data however already indicate a withdrawal from intermarrying among immigrants born in the 70s, whose trajectories were much closer to completion.

Among other limitations to our study, we also record the inability to distinguish between imported (i.e., residing in country of origin) and local (i.e., residing in Switzerland) co-ethnic partners, particularly among ex-Yugoslavians and Turks. Since their choices and preferences for importing spouses seem to have altered in recent years in other European countries (Germany: González-Ferrer 2006; Belgium: van Kerckem et al. 2013), it would be fruitful to examine this pattern among young generation of Swiss immigrants. Finally, the literature could also be expanded by directly investigating whether education can make certain ethnic/ nativity boundaries in marriage less rigid, on the background of expanding education, but enduring traditional gender roles (Afonso and Visser 2014) and dissimilar returns to education among different immigrant groups in Switzerland (Liebig et al. 2012).

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Table 1: Weighted descriptive statistics for the variables used in the analysis of formation and dissolution of mixed marriages in Switzerland (*N* = 13,033)

	Total sample	Native	Southern Europe	Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey	Western Europe	Others
			% column			
First marriage	71.5	68.5	76.2	77.2	65.5	68.8
Divorce	20.1	17.4	15.9	19.6	21.7	24.4
Second marriage	39.3	38.2	32.1	40.7	41.8	42.7
Gender						
Male	49.7	49.9	52.7	57.4	45.6	44.5
Female	50.3	50.1	47.3	42.7	54.4	55.5
Education						
Low	11.0	6.7	33.8	18.7	4.0	14.6
Medium	51.8	56.1	44.6	59.6	44.4	35.4
High	37.3	37.2	21.7	21.7	51.7	50.0
Birth cohort						
1940-49	15.4	18.6	10.7	4.3	14.6	7.6
1950-59	19.1	21.5	17.6	8.8	15.0	15.4
1960-69	24.4	23.4	28.7	22.4	29.1	21.9
1970-79	21.6	18.3	27.0	26.1	23.9	31.6
1980-89	19.5	18.2	16.1	38.5	17.5	23.5
Linguistic region						
German	62.0	76.4	47.0	80.1	74.6	57.4
French	31.3	19.8	37.7	15.2	23.9	39.6
Italian	6.5	3.4	15.1	4.7	1.0	3.0
Romansh	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.0
Generation type[a]						
First generation	69.4		54.6	62.7	77.8	82.0
1.5 generation	8.1		8.1	18.6	4.4	6.0
Second generation	22.5		37.3	18.7	17.8	12.0
Timing of first marriage[a]						
Before migration	26.3		18.8	24.0	35.5	28.8
After migration	73.7		81.2	76.0	64.5	71.2
			Mean (standard deviation)			
Age at first marriage	27.01 (0.13)	27.44 (0.08)	26.10 (0.02)	24.57 (0.30)	28.14 (0.25)	28.65 (0.25)
Number of children from first marriage	0.27 (0.01)	0.31 (0.01)	0.25 (0.03)	0.20 (0.03)	0.32 (0.03)	0.28 (0.03)
N (unweighted)	13,033	8,686	1,555	554	1,042	1,196
%	100.0	63.2	11.6	5.5	9.6	10.1

Note: Weighted data by *wtelpers*.

[a]for immigrant respondents only (N = 3,079)

Source: FSO Family and Generations Survey (2013).

Table 2: Competing risks analysis of first union formation among immigrant respondents

	Exogamous (with native) first union				*Exogamous (with other immigrant) first union*				*Endogamous first union*			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2		Model 1		Model 2	
	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.
Origin (Southern Europe = ref.)												
Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey	0.949	(0.205)	1.489	(0.672)	1.656*	(0.205)	8.503**	(0.749)	0.605***	(0.119)	0.093***	(0.604)
Western Europe	2.861***	(0.124)	2.077**	(0.250)	1.344	(0.175)	3.437*	(0.498)	0.439***	(0.094)	0.281***	(0.242)
Others	3.782***	(0.118)	2.220**	(0.264)	2.196***	(0.160)	3.064*	(0.518)	0.247***	(0.112)	0.332***	(0.256)
Birth cohort (1940-49 = ref.)												
1950-59	0.859	(0.135)	0.666	(0.229)	0.980	(0.215)	2.411	(0.480)	1.499**	(0.128)	1.166	(0.166)
1960-69	0.692**	(0.130)	0.527**	(0.230)	1.262	(0.197)	2.088	(0.458)	1.712***	(0.125)	1.390*	(0.155)
1970-79	0.522***	(0.138)	0.336***	(0.239)	1.223	(0.199)	2.655*	(0.470)	1.950***	(0.132)	1.849***	(0.155)
1980-89	0.282***	(0.203)	0.210***	(0.381)	0.788	(0.249)	2.168	(0.557)	2.491***	(0.143)	1.842***	(0.176)
Origin × birth cohort interaction												
Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey × 1950-59			0.851	(0.802)			0.078**	(0.874)			10.130***	(0.652)
Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey × 1960-69			0.842	(0.751)			0.242	(0.819)			5.761**	(0.644)
Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey × 1970-79			0.587	(0.784)			0.208	(0.820)			4.081*	(0.651)
Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey × 1980-89			0.397	(0.903)			0.101*	(0.894)			12.347***	(0.631)
Western Europe × 1950-59			1.444	(0.312)			0.269*	(0.621)			1.835*	(0.298)
Western Europe × 1960-69			1.375	(0.297)			0.535	(0.548)			1.556	(0.277)
Western Europe × 1970-79			1.702	(0.315)			0.290*	(0.573)			1.607	(0.277)
Western Europe × 1980-89			1.310	(0.547)			0.212	(0.826)			1.419	(0.380)
Others × 1950-59			1.522	(0.316)			0.630	(0.593)			0.638	(0.347)
Others × 1960-69			1.614	(0.314)			0.863	(0.561)			1.126	(0.301)
Others × 1970-79			2.253**	(0.311)			0.641	(0.565)			0.682	(0.303)
Others × 1980-89			2.170	(0.472)			0.612	(0.666)			0.449*	(0.399)

Gender (male = ref.)												
Female	1.008	(0.079)	1.016	(0.082)	0.898	(0.110)	0.901	(0.111)	0.941	(0.072)	0.946	(0.070)
Education (high = ref.)												
Medium	0.898	(0.089)	0.897	(0.089)	0.827	(0.115)	0.824	(0.117)	0.978	(0.092)	0.993	(0.086)
Low	0.603**	(0.161)	0.591**	(0.162)	0.418***	(0.189)	0.437***	(0.189)	1.404**	(0.105)	1.355**	(0.101)
Generation (1.5 generation = ref.)												
First generation	0.792	(0.138)	0.742*	(0.141)	1.143	(0.236)	1.124	(0.238)	1.276	(0.147)	1.423*	(0.146)
Second generation	1.456*	(0.150)	1.419*	(0.154)	1.321	(0.252)	1.325	(0.251)	0.639**	(0.165)	0.653**	(0.164)
Age at marriage	0.908***	(0.005)	0.909***	(0.006)	0.942***	(0.006)	0.942***	(0.006)	0.861***	(0.007)	0.855***	(0.007)
Timing of marriage (before migration = ref.)												
After migration	6.442***	(0.188)	6.280***	(0.192)	1.033	(0.141)	1.025	(0.145)	0.409***	(0.088)	0.403***	(0.081)
Linguistic region (German = ref.)												
French	0.935	(0.085)	0.932	(0.085)	1.250*	(0.107)	1.254*	(0.108)	0.848*	(0.074)	0.858*	(0.072)
Italian	1.346**	(0.109)	1.325**	(0.109)	1.093	(0.168)	1.111	(0.168)	0.727***	(0.091)	0.705***	(0.091)
Romansh	2.077	(0.431)	2.004	(0.438)	0.783	(0.991)	0.843	(1.001)	0.608	(0.605)	0.590	(0.601)
N observations	*4,347*				*4,347*				*4,347*			
N events	*1,165*				*592*				*1,509*			
N competing events	*2,101*				*2,674*				*1,757*			
N censored	*1,081*				*1,081*				*1,081*			

Note: Weighted data by *wtelpers*. SHR = subhazard ratio
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Source: FSO Family and Generations Survey (2013).

Table 3: Competing risks analysis of second union formation among immigrant respondents

	Exogamous (with native) second union		Exogamous (with other immigrant) second union		Endogamous second union	
	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.
Origin (Southern Europe = ref.)						
Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey	0.283	(0.692)	0.517	(0.654)	5.694***	(0.501)
Western Europe	1.585	(0.404)	0.399	(0.563)	2.331	(0.514)
Others	2.308	(0.438)	0.795	(0.495)	2.114	(0.532)
Birth cohort (1940-49 = ref.)						
1950-59	0.961	(0.379)	0.288*	(0.537)	1.075	(0.544)
1960-69	0.545	(0.390)	0.768	(0.477)	1.964	(0.474)
1970-79	0.812	(0.405)	0.891	(0.483)	3.457*	(0.488)
1980-89	0.346	(1.068)	0.416	(1.181)	3.723	(0.813)
Gender (male = ref.)						
Female	1.26	(0.251)	0.733	(0.290)	0.288***	(0.336)
Education (high = ref.)						
Medium	1.25	(0.286)	0.595	(0.326)	0.628	(0.366)
Low	0.822	(0.455)	0.228**	(0.561)	2.229	(0.413)
Generation (1.5 generation= ref.)						
First generation	0.874	(0.585)	1.173	(0.590)	10.572	(1.315)
Second generation	1.169	(0.663)	0.776	(0.640)	6.576	(1.385)
Type first union (endogamous = ref.)						
Exogamous with native	0.804	(0.320)	0.800	(0.398)	0.294***	(0.322)
Exogamous with other immigrant	0.497	(0.421)	1.791	(0.374)	0.320**	(0.412)
Number of children from first marriage	0.782	(0.135)	0.962	(0.194)	0.643*	(0.184)
Linguistic region (German = ref.)						
French	0.943	(0.261)	0.539	(0.335)	1.183	(0.323)
Italian	0.671	(0.449)	0.652	(0.486)	1.515	(0.447)
Romansh	11.851*	(0.409)	0.000***	(1.177)	0.000***	(1.142)
N observations	*587*		*587*		*587*	
N events	*100*		*71*		*76*	
N competing events	*147*		*176*		*171*	
N censored	*340*		*340*		*340*	

Note: Weighted data by *wtelpers*. SHR = subhazard ratio
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Source: FSO Family and Generations Survey (2013).

Table 4: Competing risks analysis of first union formation among native respondents

	Exogamous first union		Endogamous first union	
	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.
Birth cohort (1940-49 = ref.)				
1950-59	1.234	(0.125)	0.964	(0.063)
1960-69	1.858***	(0.120)	0.848*	(0.066)
1970-79	2.548***	(0.132)	0.701***	(0.075)
1980-89	1.719**	(0.187)	0.481***	(0.121)
Gender (male = ref.)				
Female	0.965	(0.080)	0.930	(0.043)
Education (high = ref.)				
Medium	0.704***	(0.083)	1.080	(0.044)
Low	0.679*	(0.162)	1.045	(0.111)
Age at marriage	0.925***	(0.006)	0.845***	(0.005)
Linguistic region (German =				
French	1.724***	(0.081)	0.716***	(0.056)
Italian	2.502***	(0.101)	0.572***	(0.086)
Romansh	0.000***	(0.231)	1.610***	(0.075)
N observations	*8,686*		*8,686*	
N events	*1,039*		*5,400*	
N competing events	*5,400*		*1,039*	
N censored	*2,247*		*2,247*	

Note: Weighted data by *wtelpers*. SHR = subhazard ratio
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Source: FSO Family and Generations Survey (2013).

Table 5: Competing risks analysis of second union formation among native respondents

	Exogamous second union		Endogamous second union	
	SHR	S.E.	SHR	S.E.
Birth cohort (1940-49 = ref.)				
1950-59	0.800	(0.336)	0.884	(0.188)
1960-69	1.012	(0.329)	0.779	(0.197)
1970-79	0.418	(0.556)	1.029	(0.279)
1980-89	0.693	(1.113)	0.374	(1.001)
Gender (male = ref.)				
Female	0.447**	(0.285)	1.037	(0.144)
Education (high = ref.)				
Medium	0.671	(0.276)	0.945	(0.165)
Low	0.432	(0.871)	1.203	(0.260)
Type first union (endogamous = ref.)				
Exogamous	1.394	(0.314)	0.465***	(0.217)
Number of children from first marriage	0.800	(0.118)	0.898	(0.064)
Linguistic region (German = ref.)				
French	1.233	(0.296)	1.217	(0.160)
Italian	1.592	(0.318)	1.053	(0.216)
Romansh	0.000***	(0.968)	0.000***	(0.890)
N observations	965		965	
N events	104		293	
N competing events	293		104	
N censored	568		568	

Note: Weighted data by *wtelpers*. SHR = subhazard ratio
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Source: FSO Family and Generations Survey (2013).

Table 6: Cox proportional hazard model predicting first divorce among immigrant respondents

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	HR	S.E.	HR	S.E.	HR	S.E.
Origin (Southern Europe = ref.)						
Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey	1.744**	(0.175)	1.756**	(0.175)	1.248	(0.269)
Western Europe	1.294	(0.148)	1.277	(0.149)	2.358***	(0.220)
Others	1.510**	(0.146)	1.478**	(0.149)	1.912**	(0.226)
Birth cohort (1940-49 = ref.)						
1950-59	1.494	(0.224)	1.563	(0.374)	1.517	(0.216)
1960-69	2.636***	(0.207)	1.982	(0.354)	2.708***	(0.201)
1970-79	5.515***	(0.218)	4.763***	(0.354)	5.606***	(0.209)
1980-89	4.131***	(0.345)	2.887*	(0.488)	4.523***	(0.337)
Type of union (endogamous= ref.)						
Exogamous with native	1.778***	(0.134)	1.372	(0.418)	1.960**	(0.222)
Exogamous with other immigrant	1.279	(0.140)	1.047	(0.533)	1.884*	(0.249)
Type of union × birth cohort interaction						
Exogamous with native × 1950-59			0.858	(0.495)		
Exogamous with native × 1960-69			1.659	(0.456)		
Exogamous with native × 1970-79			1.343	(0.457)		
Exogamous with native × 1980-89			0.911	(0.853)		
Exogamous with other immigrant × 1950-59			1.058	(0.617)		
Exogamous with other immigrant × 1960-69			1.336	(0.572)		
Exogamous with other immigrant × 1970-79			1.057	(0.581)		
Exogamous with other immigrant × 1980-89			3.816	(0.730)		
Type of union × origin interaction						
Exogamous with native × Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey					3.276**	(0.373)
Exogamous with native × Western Europe					0.410**	(0.297)
Exogamous with native × Others					0.754	(0.301)

Exogamous with other immigrant × Ex-Yugoslavia & Turkey					0.875	(0.465)
Exogamous with other immigrant × Western Europe					0.293**	(0.387)
Exogamous with other immigrant × Others					0.711	(0.332)
Gender (male = ref.)						
Female	1.003	(0.107)	1.005	(0.107)	1.044	(0.107)
Education (high = ref.)						
Medium	1.249	(0.119)	1.235	(0.119)	1.282*	(0.118)
Low	1.039	(0.165)	1.011	(0.165)	1.129	(0.180)
Generation (1.5 generation= ref.)						
First generation	1.325	(0.220)	1.333	(0.224)	1.189	(0.214)
Second generation	1.478	(0.232)	1.457	(0.235)	1.426	(0.230)
Timing of marriage (before migration = ref.)						
After migration	0.589***	(0.119)	0.597***	(0.119)	0.662***	(0.122)
Age at first marriage	1.053***	(0.012)	1.055***	(0.012)	1.048***	(0.012)
Number of children from first marriage	2.118***	(0.045)	2.113***	(0.045)	2.076***	(0.044)
Linguistic region (German = ref.)						
French	1.124	(0.102)	1.113	(0.101)	1.111	(0.104)
Italian	1.280	(0.130)	1.244	(0.131)	1.337*	(0.129)
Romansh	2.323	(0.945)	2.290	(0.917)	2.426	(0.837)
N observations			*3,225*			
N events			*619*			

Note: Weighted data by *wtelpers*. HR = hazard ratio
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Source: FSO Family and Generations Survey (2013).

Table 7: Cox proportional hazard model predicting first union dissolution among native respondents

	Model 1		Model 2	
	HR	S.E.	HR	S.E.
Birth cohort (1940-49 = ref.)				
1950-59	1.487**	(0.122)	1.431**	(0.131)
1960-69	2.334***	(0.118)	2.295***	(0.127)
1970-79	3.653***	(0.141)	3.520***	(0.152)
1980-89	6.465***	(0.260)	5.417***	(0.346)
Type of union (endogamous= ref.)				
Exogamous	1.416**	(0.106)	1.234	(0.292)
Type of union × birth cohort interaction				
Exogamous × 1950-59			1.232	(0.359)
Exogamous × 1960-69			1.093	(0.339)
Exogamous × 1970-79			1.201	(0.360)
Exogamous × 1980-89			1.684	(0.542)
Gender (male = ref.)				
Female	0.852*	(0.082)	0.853	(0.082)
Education (high = ref.)				
Medium	1.196*	(0.087)	1.194*	(0.087)
Low	0.946	(0.171)	0.94	(0.171)
Age at first marriage	1.023*	(0.010)	1.024*	(0.010)
Number of children from first marriage	2.074***	(0.029)	2.080***	(0.029)
Linguistic region (German = ref.)				
French	1.1	(0.090)	1.101	(0.090)
Italian	1.118	(0.144)	1.118	(0.142)
Romansh	0.707	(0.752)	0.706	(0.752)
N observations		*6,385*		
N events		*1,014*		

Note: Weighted data by *wtelpers*. HR = hazard ratio
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Source: FSO Family and Generations Survey (2013).