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## **Falling in love with(in) Europe: European bi-national love relationships, European identification and transnational solidarity**

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**Falling in love with(in) Europe. An investigation into the link between European bi-national love relationships, European identification and transnational solidarity.**

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**Introduction**

Over the last fifty years, the European integration process expanded considerably. Initially, the European integration process was mainly directed at economic integration, with the idea that increased economic interdependency would prevent Europe from another devastating war. Since the late sixties, however, politicians became increasingly aware that mere economic integration was not a sufficient basis upon which to build a European society. This awareness led to a progressive ‘Europe-ification’ of the cultural and social spheres of citizens’ daily life. A notorious moment in this evolution was the European Summit in Copenhagen in 1973, where a ‘Declaration concerning European identity’ was adopted. This declaration reflected the idea that an economic and political community should be supported by a common – in this case supranational – identity in order to legitimate its existence. Given the importance attached to the development of such common identity feeling, it is not surprising to notice that the European Commission has been trying ‘to give substance to the idea of European citizenship’ and ‘to invigorate the idea of European civil society’ for a considerable time (Rumford, 2007: 4). In this paper, we focus on the relationship between transnational social contact, individuals’ identification as a European and feelings of

transnational solidarity. More specifically, we investigate bi-national union formation in the European Union and its relationship with European identification and transnational solidarity. After all, bi-national couples can be considered to be the icon of European cultural and social integration (van Wissen and Heering, 2014), as these couples are exposed to different European cultures on a regular (often daily) basis. In this paper we thus investigate whether union formation within the European Union potentially contributes to the development of a European society from below.

Scholars such as Deutsch et al. (1957) and Lijphart (1964) already argued in the 1950s and 1960s that increased levels of European identity could potentially be fostered through transnational social contacts between individuals across international borders. More recently, the suppression of international borders and the creation of the common market significantly increased citizens' possibilities to live, work and/or travel in other European countries. With the introduction of the right to freedom of movement, the possibilities of establishing and maintaining such transnational social ties within Europe increased. Consequently, the establishment of the right to freedom of movement also considerably enlarged the partner market of Europeans, as the possibility to meet a partner from abroad has been greatly enhanced (Haandrikman, 2014; Niedomysl et al., 2010). Nevertheless, empirical insights into patterns of European bi-national marriages and relationships, as well as into its effects are only recently emerging (Díez Medrano et al., 2014; Koelet et al., 2011).

Apart from one (brief) reference to the link between bi-national union formation and the development of a sense of European identity (Gaspar, 2009: 11), there are to our knowledge no studies specifically addressing this relationship. Indeed, there is still much to explore when it comes to 'the cultural impact of mixed (European) couples, considering their strategic role as laboratories of re-elaboration of bi-national identity and the construction of new meanings, languages and styles of social interaction' (Santacreu et al., 2009: 57).

Whereas general demographic patterns of Euro-marriages have been documented recently (de Valk and Díez Medrano, 2014), there is still little empirical evidence on the effects of such unions. Moreover, existing research tended to exclusively focus on marriages, leaving aside other forms of official and unofficial love bonds such as cohabitation, which are nevertheless spreading around Europe (Kasearu and Kutsar, 2011; Hiekel, 2014). In this paper, we aim to explore two potential effects of European bi-national relationships. More specifically, we investigate whether such relationships lead to an enhancement of partners' identification as a European, as well as an increased attitude of transnational solidarity. Given the continuous exposure of these couples to European 'otherness', it can be expected they easily develop a sense of European identity and feelings of solidarity towards other Europeans. Our analyses are based on the Dutch data of the EUMARR study. According to Statistics Netherlands, 27.38 per cent (984,106 individuals) of the total foreign population in the Netherlands originated from another EU-country in 2014 (Statline, 2014: authors' own calculations). Given these numbers as well as the fact that the image of the EU in the Netherlands is close to the European average (see Recchi and Salamońska, 2014), it is a relevant case-country for investigating the assumed links between bi-national relationships and identity formation.

The article is structured as follows. In the first section, we review the existing literature on intermarriage in a migration context, love migration within the European Union and towards the Netherlands, and we discuss the link between European identity, transnational solidarity and intermarriage. Subsequently, the methodology is explained. Section three presents and discusses the analyses, based on a stepwise OLS regression. Finally, the conclusions are presented and discussed in light of the European integration process.

### **Intermarriage in a migration context**

Love relationships between individuals from different groups are not self-evident, as there is a tendency for homophily in social life. A whole range of studies show that individuals prefer partners they consider to be similar in terms of, for example, age, education, occupation, race, and religion (McPherson et al., 2001; Blossfeld, 2009; Niedomysl et al., 2010). Nevertheless, mixed relationships are often considered ‘a classical indicator of the formation of social ties and communities’ (van Wissen and Heering, 2014), as marriage not only creates intimate ties ‘between partners but also among families and social groups’ (Blossfeld, 2009: 514).

Generally, the degree of intermarriage is taken as an indicator of distance or proximity between the migrant and host community, declining importance of ethnic and/or cultural differences, and social integration (Haandrikman, 2014; Qian and Lichter, 2007; Kalmijn, 1998; Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; Lucassen and Laarman, 2009). From this viewpoint, romantic relationships between two individuals from different cultures will occur when boundaries between social groups ‘are no longer perceived as significant’ (Yodanis et al., 2012: 1022). Given the supposed link between interethnic marriage, cultural distance/proximity and integration, the study of intermarriage has been of interest for migration scholars since a long time (see for example Alba and Nee, 2003; Cohen, 1977; Hwang et al., 1997; Kitano et al., 1984; Muttrarak and Heath, 2010; Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn and Tubergen, 2006).

Most of the studies conducted in Europe, however, focused on interethnic relationships between individuals from countries that are considered to be relatively distant from the host society’s culture. Moreover, there has been a tendency to focus on transnational relationships and/or marriage migration of immigrants with native partners (e.g. Mahler, 2001; Beck-Gernsheim, 2007; Timmerman et al., 2009; ter Wal et al., 2008) or between individuals from a non-European culture with an EU-national (see for example van Huis, 2007). Studies into European bi-national couples, as mentioned earlier, are still scarce (Koelet et al., 2011; Díez Medrano et al., 2014).

## **Love migration and mobility within the European Union and towards the Netherlands**

Love is often a key factor in migration decisions (Mai and King, 2009), and love migration and mobility form an intrinsic part of the ‘new map of European migration’ today (King, 2002). There is now ample evidence that, apart from economic motives, social and cultural reasons are important drivers of intra-European mobility, including love and relationships (see for example Verwiebe, 2014; Gilmartin and Migge, 2013; Santacreu et al., 2009). The studies of Santacreu et al. (2009) and Verwiebe (2014), for example, indicate that family and marriage-related reasons figure among the most prominent reasons to move within Europe. Moreover, in the study of Santacreu et al. (2009: 57), 61.6 per cent of those who moved to another European country for family-related reasons, was married or living together with a citizen of the country of destination. Despite the apparent importance of love as a motive for intra-European mobility, however, the number and share of European bi-national marriages remains remarkably stable in most European countries, in sharp contrast with bi-national marriages involving at least one non-European partner (de Valk and Díez Medrano, 2014).

Love migration can hardly be considered as a ‘new’ phenomenon in the Netherlands. There are many historical antecedents that date back several centuries, in many cases related to the position of the country in an international trade network (van Wissen and Heering, 2014). For example, one third of all marriages in the city of Amsterdam in the seventeenth, and one fourth in the eighteenth century involved a foreign immigrant, predominantly from Germany (Page Moch, 2003: 54). Today, the main migration motive of immigrants from EU-member states in the 18-40 years old group is labour (65.84 per cent), followed by family formation (15.88 per cent) and study (11.21 per cent), according to numbers of Statistics Netherlands (Statline, 2011; author(s)’s own calculations).<sup>1</sup> However, it should be remarked that these numbers are incomplete and based on estimations, as EU-citizens do not need a

residence permit (Statistics Netherlands, 2014), probably underestimating the importance of affective reasons for EU-mobility towards the Netherlands. After all, these numbers focus on migrants' principal motive as recorded in official statistics, neglecting the linkages between or mix of reasons that often show to exist among European migrants (see for example Verwiebe, 2014; Gilmartin and Migge, 2013).

According to van Wissen and Heering (2014), the number of Dutch-EU12 marriages follows the European trend, remaining relatively stable around 30 per cent of all bi-national marriages contracted in the Netherlands. The increasing tendency for unmarried cohabitation, however, partly compensates this stable trend. According to numbers of Statistics Netherlands (Statline, 2013; author(s)'s own calculations)<sup>2</sup>, the share of unmarried cohabitating partners on the total number of households consisting of several persons increased from 11.88 to 18.73 per cent between 1995 and 2013. In the same period, the share of married cohabiting partners decreased from 78.84 to 69.43 per cent. In other European countries such trends can be observed as well (see for example Hiekel, 2014). The major nationality combinations of Dutch-EU12 marriages are Dutch-German (25 per cent), Dutch-British (21 per cent) and Dutch-Belgian (16 per cent), followed by Dutch-Italian, Dutch-French and Dutch-Spanish marriages, which together count for around eight per cent of Dutch-EU12 marriages (Van Wissen and Heering, 2013: 130).

### **European identity, transnational solidarity and intermarriages**

Most research on the linkages between intra-European mobility and European identity focused on individuals' expression of self-identity, which is generally divided into identification *as* a European, and identification *with* Europe. This can largely be attributed to limitations of the available data, as many studies use Eurobarometer data (for an overview of limitations, see Aldrin, 2011). In this paper, we depart from the idea that a sense of European

identity 'should not be regarded equally as identification with the EU and its institutions' (Van Mol, 2013: 211). After all, European identity might be 'a raw cultural category of reference available to the entire public' (Schilde, 2014: 664), transcending the political entity of the European Union. As a result, we investigated individuals' broader identification as a European instead of their attachment to the European Union. Nevertheless, investigating citizens' identification with Europe or as a European only tells us something about the emotional (Nissen, 2003) or affective/evaluative element of European identity (Kaina and Karolewski, 2013). As such, it does not grasp the highest level of identification, namely concrete behaviour or behavioural intentions in function of such identity (Kaina and Karolewski, 2013: 31). Kaina and Karolewski (2013) refer to such behavioural intentions as the 'conative' element of European identity, revealing solidarity, loyalty and trust towards other group members. Nissen (2003), on her turn, refers to such intentions as the utilitarian component of European identification, which 'can be expressed through a willingness to support others in an attitude of solidarity' (Nissen, 2003: 758). Consequently, intentions and/or attitudes of solidarity can be considered to form an intrinsic part of collective identities going beyond identification at the individual level, as they call 'attention to the degree to which social cohesion exists within and between groups' (Hunt and Benford, 2004: 450). Solidarity points to a sense of loyalty and interest, and implies that individuals will act once opportunities arise to improve or ensure the well-being of members of their group (Hunt and Benford, 2004; Klandermans, 2014). Research into this 'conative' or utilitarian element of European identity, however, remains very limited to our knowledge. Therefore, apart from the emotional/affective element, we also investigate the conative element of European identity.

The extensive literature on interethnic marriages and identity indicate that close relationships can have an effect on the individuals' identification patterns. Studies that

investigate this link mainly look at whether both partners keep their own culture, whether natives adopt the partners' culture or vice versa (Epstein and Lindner Pomerantz, 2013), or whether multicultural identities, whereby individuals move freely within and between cultures, are developed through such relationships (Yodanis et al., 2012). In line with theories of social identity (e.g. Jenkins, 2008), it can be hypothesised that for European bi-national couples, daily social interaction leads to increased levels of identification as a European. After all, research into European identity formation among young individuals in international settings confirmed that social interaction plays an important role in the development of such identities (see for example Van Mol, 2013; Savvides, 2006). As bi-national couples are continuously exposed to 'European otherness' in their relationship, it is imaginable they dialectically negotiate their identification schemes. Therefore, we expect individuals in a bi-national relationship to score higher on their identification as a European compared to individuals in a uni-national (Dutch) relationship (*Hypothesis 1*).

As we argued previously, however, behavioural intentions that are the result of individuals' identification as a European represent the highest level of European identity. Therefore, we also investigate whether individuals in bi-national relationships are more likely to be solidary with other European countries in times of crisis. An exploration of the relationship between European identity and concrete attitudes and/or actions can indicate whether people are willing to support a shared cause at the European level, indicating the emergence of 'real' collective identities. In the aftermath of the European Union's financial and economic crisis, it is not unthinkable that citizens' solidarity feelings towards other European countries decreased. Recent research shows, for example, that citizens of European countries hit particularly hard by the crisis, such as Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain, started to see the EU in a less positive light compared to the period before the crisis (Recchi and Salamońska, 2014). Furthermore, these authors revealed that such decrease also

occurred in other European countries, including the Netherlands. This, however, might be less the case among bi-national couples, given their continuous exposure to at least two European national cultures in everyday life. Therefore, we expect individuals in a bi-national relationship to be more solidary with other European countries compared to individuals in a uni-national relationship (*Hypothesis 2*).

## **Methodology**

### *Data*

The presented results are based on the international collaborative research project EUMARR, funded by the European Science Foundation, and conducted in Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland. The project aims to measure trends in bi-national marriages between citizens of the European Union and examines the extent to which these bi-national couples have a different lifestyle and worldview. The research project was not limited to marriages, but also included co-habitation as unmarried cohabitation is preferred by 27.6 per cent of bi-national couples in the Netherlands (van Wissen and Heering, 2014: 133).<sup>3</sup> The survey was directed towards men and women forming part of a European bi-national couple, as well as a control group of individuals in a uni-national relationship. Bi-national couples are defined as couples consisting of two partners of a different nationality.

The Dutch data, on which this paper is based, was collected through an online questionnaire in two internationally oriented cities: The Hague and Amsterdam. The choice for these two cities was based on the fact that European migrants tend to live in the largest cities in the Netherlands in the western part of the country, with these two cities as clear examples. Therefore, we assume that the selectivity because of sampling these cities is limited. Couples were sampled through the Population Registers at the municipalities of The Hague and Amsterdam, as in this register, for each individual registered at an address the

first- and surname, birth date, place and country of birth, nationality, information on parents and children, and marital status is recorded. For each sampled address that fulfilled the sampling criteria (including specific European nationalities and age range), one person in the couple was randomly chosen as our (potential) respondent. This could be either the European or Dutch partner in the couple. Finally, a control group of uni-national Dutch couples that fulfilled the age range of the sampling design was randomly sampled as well.

The overall response rate was 37.1 per cent ( $n = 946$ ). This response rate is in line with what similar surveys among migrant populations have reported in the Netherlands (e.g. Groenewold, 2008; Groenewold and Lessard-Phillips, 2012), as well as across Europe (e.g. Feskens et al., 2006). The surveyed men and women and their partners all belong to the age group of 30 to 45 years. This age criterion was applied for securing a homogeneous sample including respondents who started their unions in a unified Europe where the abolishment of internal borders started to be effective. In this regard, these couples were thus exposed to a European Union wherein travelling as well as settling abroad has been increasingly facilitated. For older individuals, this might be not the case, and including them would thus potentially affect the outcome indicators we were interested in. Furthermore, compared to older individuals, people in this age range were expected to be less affected by recall bias in terms of the specific migration and relationship histories related to their current union that were questioned in the study. The lower age limit was established as for the different case-countries in the project this is the age when most young adults have entered a stable union with a partner. Including younger respondents in the sampling frame would have covered many who have not yet started a union and/or joint household with their partner. The average age of survey respondents was 38.9 years.

We filtered respondents with a first nationality from a non-EU country out, as such respondents potentially identify in a different way with Europe (Quintelier et al., 2014), as

well as respondents that were not eligible because they did not fit the age-criterion of 30-45. As a result, the final sample consists of 898 cases. The two biggest bi-national groups are the Dutch-German and the Dutch-UK couples, followed by Dutch-French, Dutch-Belgian, Dutch-Spanish and Dutch-Italian couples, which is in line with the overall composition of European bi-national couples in the Netherlands (see van Wissen and Heering, 2014). Ninety-three per cent of the respondents completed the questionnaire online. The remainder used the on paper questionnaire that was sent to them on request. Respondents could answer the questionnaire in three languages: Dutch, English and French.

*Dependent Variables: European identification and transnational solidarity*

Respondents' identification as a European was measured by the question 'On a scale of 0 to 10, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statement': 'I feel European', on an 11-point-Likert scale, ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 10 (Strongly Agree). Our measure of European transnational solidarity is based on the question 'The government in this country proposes a special contribution to assist another region in a European country that has experienced a natural catastrophe. Please indicate how much of your yearly earnings you would be prepared to donate to help assist economically this region/country', also measured on an 11-point-Likert scale, ranging from 0 (none) to 10 (a great deal). We acknowledge such measure might be dependent upon the income of respondents. In order to control for this possible caveat, however, we tested whether the interaction between income and European identification influence the reported models on European transnational solidarity, which was not the case. Finally, although our cross-sectional data do not allow for causal interpretations, the analysis can shed light on the relationship between forming part of national or bi-national relationships and the emotional/affective and conative/utilitarian component of European identification.

### *Independent variable: national versus bi-national couples*

As we aim at comparing Dutch-EU couples and Dutch couples, we constructed two dummy variables, distinguishing the three different combinations of our sample (Dutch – Dutch / Dutch – EU / EU – Dutch). The distinction between Dutch nationals that partnered with an EU-national (Dutch-EU) and EU-nationals that partnered a Dutch national (EU-Dutch) is made as there might exist differences between both groups in terms of their attachment to Europe. The Dutch nationals that partnered an EU-national, for example, are still exposed on a daily basis to the dynamics of their home country outside the household, potentially influencing their identification patterns. The surveyed EU-nationals living in the Netherlands, in contrast, are continuously exposed to another European culture. The Dutch national couples are used as the reference category, as they were defined as the control group in the research design. Exploring the bivariate correlation between couple type and European identification on the one hand, and between couple type and European solidarity on the other, we find a correlation coefficient of 0.181 ( $p < .01$ ) between couple type and identification as a European, and 0.082 ( $p < .05$ ) between couple type and European transnational solidarity.

### *Control variables*

The included control variables can be divided into three categories, namely (1) background characteristics; (2) parental influence; and (3) international travel experiences.

The individual background characteristics consist of four variables. First, gender is included as a dichotomous variable (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*), as women appear to be less enthusiastic about the European Union compared to men (Nelsen and Guth, 2000). Second, it has been reported that individuals from higher socioeconomic strata are more likely to identify as a European (Citrin and Sides, 2004). Therefore, we included respondents'

individual income and education as control variables. Individual income is based on the respondents' individual total income, after tax and compulsory deductions, weekly estimate, grouped in 10 categories ranging from 1 (less than €210) to 10 (€1090 or more). The respondents' education is measured by an ordinal level variable ranging from 1 (less than primary) to 9 (doctoral or equivalent). We recoded this variable into three categories, based on the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011), namely a low (ISCED level 0-4), medium (ISCED level 5-6) and highly (ISCED level 7-8) educated group. Fourth, we control for respondents' age, as younger people show to feel more European (Citrin and Sides, 2004; Fligstein, 2008).

We controlled for parental influence since European identity shows to be intergenerationally transmitted (Quintelier et al., 2014). As we do not have direct measures of parents' orientations towards Europe, we used knowledge of foreign languages as a proxy. After all, knowledge and proficiency of foreign languages reflects an individual's transnational human capital (de Valk and Díez Medrano, 2014), and second-language proficiency shows to be correlated with higher levels of European identity (Fligstein, 2008). The parental language variables are based on the question 'When you were a child, how many languages did your father/mother speak other than his mother tongue? By speaking other languages we mean, that he/she can/could have a long conversation in another language with native speakers of that language.' (0 = 0 languages, 6 = More than 5 languages).

Furthermore, we included control variables for international experiences throughout the life-course. These variables were included since findings from studies investigating the relationship between international experiences – mainly the Erasmus programme – and European identification, were mixed (e.g. King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003; Kuhn, 2012; Sigalas, 2010; Van Mol, 2013; Mitchell, 2014). International experiences during respondents' childhood/youth are measured by two variables. First, a dummy variable reflecting whether

respondents' lived in another EU-country during their childhood/youth. This variable is based on the question 'Please write down all the countries in which you have lived for at least three consecutive months, other than your country of birth', which was limited to the reason 'parental family's decision', and to EU-countries (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). Second, respondents' travel experiences during childhood and youth are included by a continuous variable based on the question 'About how many times did you travel outside your country of residence before age 16?'. We divided this variable into three categories based on tertile values, namely low travel (0-8), medium (9-18), high (19+), and an extra category 'missing', as 255 respondents did not provide this information. Lastly, it has also been suggested that traveling abroad is 'a predictor of how one feels about the European project' (Fligstein, 2008: 155). As a result, we also controlled for more recent international travel experiences, more specifically in the last year. Two variables are included, based on the question 'How many times have you travelled to another country in the past twelve months? Please include only short trips lasting between at least one overnight stay and up to three months.' We differentiated between travels to neighbouring countries of the Netherlands and other EU-countries. We also divided these variables into three categories based on tertile values, namely low (0-1), medium (2-3), high (4+), and an extra category 'missing'. An overview of the variables is presented in table 1.<sup>4</sup>

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE.

### *Method*

A stepwise OLS regression analysis was conducted, with European identification as the dependent variable in the first, and European transnational solidarity in the second analysis. At stage one, we introduced the dummy variables on the respondent's relationship. At stage two, the control variables were added. In our analysis of European transnational solidarity,

we added European identification and the interaction between European identification and relationship type at stage two, before introducing the control variables in stage three. Ordinal logistic regressions revealed identical results, and are not reported. Previously to the regression analysis, interrelationships between variables were examined through bivariate correlations. Only weak correlations between the variables exist. Subsequently, we tested for multicollinearity diagnostic statistics. High Tolerance values (ranging from .851 to .992) and low VIF values (ranging from 1.008 to 1.175) indicate no multicollinearity between the variables.

## **Analysis**

### **Descriptive statistics**

Table 2 provides a descriptive overview of the dependent variables in the analysis by union type. As can be seen noted, there seems to exist a difference in identification as a European between individuals in a uni-national and those who in a bi-national relationship, with those in a bi-national union scoring higher. This finding will be explored further on in this article. No clear gender differences can be observed concerning respondents' identification as European.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE.

Second, we also investigate whether being in a bi-national relationship increases the likelihood of transnational solidarity with other European countries. As table 2 shows, regardless of union type, respondents responded fairly similar to their intended solidarity with other European countries in case of a natural catastrophe. Nevertheless, a gender difference

seems to exist among surveyed EU-nationals, with women scoring higher on intended transnational solidarity compared to men.

### **The nexus between bi-national relationships, identification as a European and transnational European solidarity**

The stepwise OLS regression analysis is presented in table 3. Model I includes only the dummy variables on couple type, and shows a highly significant correlation between union type and European identification. Introducing the control variables in Model II, this correlation persists. The full model shows, moreover, that individuals' educational level is positively correlated with feeling European, which is in line with the expectations.

Furthermore, women are more likely to identify as a European compared to men. It can also be noticed that travels before the age of 16 are significantly related to such identification.

Considering recent travel experiences, no significant correlation with identification as a European exists, except when respondents' frequently travelled to other EU-countries in the past twelve months (four times or more). The combined independent variables account for 12.2 per cent of the variance in European identification. In sum, forming part of a bi-national relationship, educational level, gender, travel experiences before the age of 16 and frequent travels to other EU-countries in the past twelve months are all related to higher levels of feeling 'European'. The results thus confirm hypothesis 1, namely that there is a significant association between forming part of a bi-national couple and identifying as a European.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE.

Hypothesis 2, which postulated that bi-national couples show more willingness to transnational European solidarity in case of a natural catastrophe, however, was not

confirmed by the analysis when controlling for confounding factors. As can be noticed in Model I, there is a significant relationship between relationship type and intended European transnational solidarity. When we add identification as a European and the interaction of such identification with couple status, however, this correlation disappears (Model II). In the full model (Model III), only gender is significantly correlated with intended European transnational solidarity. However, it can also be noted that the effect size of transnational solidarity is much higher for Dutch people in a bi-national relationship compared to EU-nationals living in the Netherlands. This might indicate that especially those individuals in bi-national relationships that live in their home-country become increasingly solidary with other European countries. Nevertheless, these results suggest that whereas a significant relationship exists between being in a bi-national relationship and European identification, such identification does not necessarily lead to increased intended European transnational solidarity.

## **Conclusions**

In this paper, we investigated whether individuals in European bi-national love relationships identify more as Europeans and show more intended European transnational solidarity compared to individuals in uni-national unions. The findings showed that forming part of a bi-national relationship is indeed strongly associated with a stronger sense of feeling European. This equally holds for the surveyed EU-individuals as for the Dutch individuals with an EU-partner. Moreover, the association remains after controlling for possible confounding factors. It can hence be hypothesised that bi-national couples might become more European through their day-to-day exposure to European ‘otherness’ in their relationships, links to the international networks of their partners, and eventual (frequent) visits to the home-country. The significant relationship between frequent travels to other EU-

countries over the last 12 months and identification as a European support this argument. Furthermore, the analysis revealed significant gender differences. The women of our sample show to have a stronger sense of feeling European compared to men. This finding might be due to the selectivity of our sample, which consists mainly of higher educated individuals. After all, studies investigating the relationship between gender and public attitudes towards Europe revealed that educational level plays a significant level in women's attitudes towards European integration, whereas for men this is not the case (Nelsen and Guth, 2000).

Forming part of a bi-national relationship, nevertheless, does not seem to be related to increased expressions of European transnational solidarity. Whereas a statistically significant difference between bi-national and national couples concerning their solidarity with other European countries was detected, this correlation did not hold after controlling for confounding factors. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that our sample consists of fairly highly skilled people, who have the potential to contribute a significant part of their salary to other European countries in times of crisis. If even this group does not (yet) show increased solidarity feelings, the emergence of a European society whereby members deliberately undertake actions to ensure and/or improve the well-being of other members when opportunities arise still seems far away.

Finally, some limitations of our analysis should be mentioned. Firstly, the study is limited to national Dutch couples or bi-national couples with one of both partners being Dutch. As differences in identification patterns exist across Europe (see for example Citrin and Sides, 2004), it remains questionable whether the presented results can be extrapolated towards other European countries and/or Europe as a whole. Moreover, in our research design, one of both partners lives in her/his country of origin. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to investigate situations whereby both European partners live in a country different from their own. Furthermore, our data does not allow a comparison of non-EU

nationals and EU-nationals married to Dutch partners. Such analysis, however, would be interesting as it would help to confirm or falsify the presented results regarding exposure to European otherness and the development of a sense of European identity. Therefore, such comparisons are a promising venue for future research projects. Secondly, the results are based on a rather narrow measure of identification, which does not allow to investigate whether individuals refer to Europe as a cultural community or the political project of the European Union. This, however, is important, as there is a difference between a sense of citizenship and a sense of communal identity (Mayer and Palmowski, 2004). Consequently, it is recommendable that future research, involving other case-countries and with a more extensive set of measures on European identity further investigate the presented findings. Third, transnational European solidarity can be assumed to significantly vary across Europe. Solidarity feelings might be highly country-specific. Citizens from countries that suffered hard under the current European economic crisis might, for example, express a greater willingness for European transnational solidarity compared to citizens from countries that only moderately felt the effects of the crisis, or vice versa. Research data from other countries included in this study, namely Belgium, Spain and Switzerland, might shed light on this issue and improve our understanding of the relation between identification as a European and attitudes, aspirations and actions which express European identification in everyday life. Lastly, our analysis does not allow for causal interpretations. It hence remains the question remains whether bi-national couples' higher identification as a European is the result of their close relationship with an EU-national, or whether such European identification was already present before.

In conclusion, whereas our analyses show that a specific group of Europeans that can be expected to have a higher likelihood of disposing of a European identity indeed score higher on the affective/emotional component of European identity compared to individuals in

uni-national unions, this is not the case for the conative/utilitarian component of such identity. As such, it seems that if a European society is to emerge from below, there is still a long way to go. The presented findings suggest that emotional attachments to Europe do not automatically result in behavioural intentions or concrete behaviour. Nevertheless, solidarity with and commitment to other populations might be crucial if a European society aims to be built on social cohesion.

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### **Notes**

1 Statistics Netherlands provides absolute numbers on migration motives. We converted these numbers to percentages.

2 Statistics Netherlands provides the absolute numbers of different households. We converted these numbers to percentages.

3 We investigated bivariate correlations between type of relationship and our two dependent variables. These analyses, however, were not significant. As a result, we did not distinguish between married and co-habiting individuals in the analysis.

4 Additionally, we also investigated whether the length of relationship and having children is correlated with a sense of European identity and transnational solidarity. These analyses, however, were not significant. Given the limited theoretical grounds to include these variables in our models, they are not reported. Nevertheless, results can be obtained on simple request to the corresponding author.

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Table 1: Range and mean score of the included variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>s</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>n</b>
European identification	7.74	2.46	0	10	845
European solidarity	3.06	2.13	0	10	697
Individual income	6.53	2.77	1	10	807
Age	38.9	4.09	31	46	898
Languages father	1.23	1.16	0	6	872
Languages mother	1.14	1.12	0	6	879
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>n</b>
Relationship type	Dutch-Dutch	24.9	1	3	224
	Dutch-EU	36.5			328
	EU-Dutch	38.5			346
Gender	Male	45.3	0	1	407
	Female	54.7			491
Education	Low	17.2	1	3	153
	Medium	31.1			277
	High	51.8			462
Living abroad	No	95.8	0	1	853
	Yes	4.2			37
Youth travel < 16	Low	24.4	1	4	219
	Medium	23.5			211
	High	23.7			213
	Missing	28.4			255
Recent travel neighbouring countries	Low	36.9	1	4	331
	Medium	25.8			232
	High	28.4			255
	Missing	8.9			80
Recent travel EU-countries	Low	26.9	1	4	242
	Medium	33.2			298
	High	32.3			290
	Missing	7.6			68

*Note:* Percentages are valid percentages.

*Source:* [HIDDEN FOR PEER REVIEW]. Author(s)'s own calculations

Table 2: Mean scores on European identification and European transnational solidarity

	Identification as a European		European transnational solidarity	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>n</i>
Dutch couples	7.0	206	2.7	186
Men	6.8	95	2.8	89
Women	7.1	111	2.6	97
Dutch-EU	7.8	313	3.2	262
Men	7.8	196	3.1	167
Women	7.7	117	3.4	95
EU-Dutch	8.2	326	3.2	249
Men	8.0	97	2.7	75
Women	8.3	229	3.4	174

*Source:* [HIDDEN FOR PEER REVIEW]. Author's own calculations.

Table 3: Stepwise OLS regression analysis on identification as a European and European transnational solidarity

	Identification as a European		European transnational solidarity		
	<b>Model I</b>	<b>Model II</b>	<b>Model I</b>	<b>Model II</b>	<b>Model III</b>
	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Full Model</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Identification</i>	<i>Full model</i>
Intercept	7.036 (.171)***	2.931 (1.011)**	2.729 (.160)***	2.098 (.475)***	0.563 (1.028)
Relation (ref: Dutch-Dutch)					
Dutch-EU	0.825 (.223)***	0.735 (.221)***	0.534 (.212)*	0.577 (.676)	0.487 (.691)
EU-Dutch	1.140 (.220)***	1.104 (.228)***	0.473 (.213)*	0.089 (.704)	0.042 (.722)
Identification				0.089 (.063)	0.066 (.066)
Dutch-EU*Identification				- 0.014 (.087)	0.004 (.088)
EU-Dutch*Identification				0.035 (.088)	0.031 (.090)
SES					
Income		0.033 (.033)			0.059 (.034)
Education (ref: low)					
Medium		0.632 (.120)*			0.221 (.286)
High		1.171 (.253)***			0.343 (.280)
Age		0.040 (.021)			0.018 (.021)
Gender (ref: men)		0.420 (.188)*			0.471 (.194)*
Parents					
Father languages		0.073 (.105)			0.108 (.105)
Mother languages		0.040 (.107)			0.088 (.106)

International experience					
Lived abroad		- 0.411 (.420)			- 0.203 (.421)
Youth travels (ref: low)					
Missing		0.856 (.237)***			0.116 (.251)
Medium		0.677 (.245)**			- 0.169 (.249)
High		0.698 (.254)**			- 0.368 (.257)
Recent travels (ref: low)					
Bordering EU-countries					
Missing		- 0.154 (.372)			0.279 (.384)
Medium		0.058 (.213)			0.022 (.219)
High		0.006 (.219)			0.155 (.221)
Other EU					
Missing		- 0.533 (.403)			0.053 (.431)
Medium		0.123 (.219)			- 0.084 (.226)
High		0.617 (.231)**			- 0.083 (.238)
Observations	775	775	641	641	641
$R^2$	.034	.122	.011	.023	.050
$\Delta R^2$	.034***	.088***	.011*	.012	.027

*Notes:* Reported values are unstandardized coefficients with standard errors between parentheses. \*\*\*  $\geq .001$ ; \*\*  $\geq .01$ ; \*  $\geq .05$

*Source:* [HIDDEN FOR PEER REVIEW]. Author's own calculations.