

Disentangling Union Formation Patterns of Moroccans in Spain

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Background and hypotheses.-

Most research on union formation patterns of international migrants has regarded the prevalence of intermarriage as a key indicator of structural assimilation (Lievens 1999, Qian et al 2001, Rosenfeld 2002, Sassler 2005). From the migrant point of view, the factors that make individuals marry out of their group can be classified into three main levels: individual (i.e. age, education, occupation, years since immigrated), social/cultural (i.e. family and social norms, religion), and structural (i.e. sex ratio, spatial segregation, group size) (Kalmijn 1998). Once individual characteristics and marriage market constraints are controlled, differences in intermarriage by nativity are often attributed to cultural norms originated in the country of origin. Several theoretical approaches compete for explaining the propensity of ethnic minorities to marry within or outside their ethnic group. We consider three main theories: assimilation, segmented assimilation and social exchange. For the classical assimilation theory, assimilation of a structural type produces primary group affiliations between members of the minority groups and the majority (e.g., mixed marriages). The celebration of mixed marriages is understood, then, as key to the structural assimilation between groups. As education, socioeconomic status, facility in speaking the majority language or years of residence increase, prevalence of intermarriage will also increase. Second and subsequent generations should display reduced propensities toward unions within their own group (Alba et al. 1997). But these factors do not exercise the same influence among all minorities, nor do all minorities, when out-marriage occurs, take a partner from the majority group. Some authors have interpreted this evidence to formulate a theory of "segmented assimilation" (Portes et al. 1993). Finally, the social exchange theory predicts that individuals who belong to a minority ethnicity expect to use socioeconomic status as an element of exchange or counterweight to the social disadvantages derived from ethnic or racial condition (Merton 1941).

In this sense, this paper examines competing hypothesis regarding union formation and intermarriage patterns of Moroccans in Spain consistent with the classical and segmented assimilation and the social exchange theoretical frameworks. In the last two decades, Spain has become a country of international immigration. Since the mid 1980s and until very recently, Moroccans have been by large the most important flow of international migrants to Spain. According to Spanish official statistics, in 2005 there were almost 400.000 Moroccans with legal residence permit living in Spain. Neither naturalized citizens nor individuals without legal permit are included in this figure. Compared to any other immigrated community, Moroccans have been widely studied by Spanish researchers. However, little attention has been devoted to union formation and prevalence of intermarriage. Moroccans are often portrayed as a closed community where intermarriage rarely occurs and where social and cultural norms, based on their religious beliefs, are strongly enforced (Aparicio et al. 2005, Pumares 1996). Even after migration occurs, the family of origin exerts influence over the immigrants' lives. And, in this sense, the decision of who to marry is not exempted. Some authors argue that due to the improvement of communication and transportation technologies, current immigrants may be closely attached to their families of origin compared to the first immigrants. As well, as the Moroccan community strengthens in Spain in particular areas, also due to family reunification,

we may predict a higher degree in in-marriage. Moreover, women are supposed to have less propensity to intermarriage because asymmetrical limitations by gender due to cultural norms.

This vision contrasts with the fact that according to the 2001 Spanish census, 45,6 % of Moroccan men that were in union were married to a Spanish born and citizen (second generation of Moroccans living in the same household than their parents were considered as part of the Moroccan community). Females show a similar but slightly lower proportion, 42,4% (see Table 1). Faced with this evidence, we examine the prevalence of intermarriage of Moroccan population with special attention to gender and regional variations. After controlling for demographic characteristics and marriage market constraints, both dimensions permit us to tease out the effects of cultural norms. Regional variations are of particular interest because Moroccans are not homogeneously distributed over Spain. Spanish provinces and municipalities differ significantly in the duration and presence of the Moroccan community and, thus, aggregated or “national” views of their levels of intermarriage may be misleading.

Data and descriptive findings.-

Our data come from the 5 % Spanish sample of census microdata for 2001, from which we have selected all households with at least one Moroccan. Moroccans are defined according to their country of birth, citizenship and parental birthplace. Any individual born in Morocco and/or with Moroccan citizenship and/or at least one of his parents was born in Morocco belongs to the so-called Moroccan community. Because the Spanish 2001 census does not provide parental birthplace information, this information has been retrieved for those individuals that reside with their parents in the same household. This is an obvious limitation of the study that cannot be addressed with the current data. The census is a source that relates to a moment in time and not to the life course. The fact that marital status is not known at the time of migration is also a limitation of the source. Another possible bias stems from the fact that couples from mixed backgrounds may be more likely to separate or divorce at younger ages than others, and thus the incidence of homogamous unions may be slightly exaggerated. In contrast, intermarried couples could be overstated if the census did not totally succeed in capturing irregular migration as some authors have pointed out for previous censuses (Pumares 1996). We provide a critical assessment of the main drawbacks in the existing Spanish official statistics and, more specifically, in the census. All in all, prior research has shown that the historical perspective in migration in Spain is short and the descendants of immigrants are only now being born. Therefore, it's very important to take into account that the conditions in which we are observing the immigrants are highly conditioned by the recent nature of their arrival and the characteristics of the migration process itself.

Using the census data, we estimate two models. The first predicts the likelihood of being in union and the second predicts the likelihood of being in an intermarried union with Spanish born and citizens. Although our main interest is in intermarriage, the likelihood of being in union is also relevant to understand full patterns of union formation. We use logistic regression models for both outcomes. Table 1 summarizes some of the descriptive results of this research. First, it displays the basic characteristics of Moroccan males and females selected for this study. Second, it shows the proportion of men and women being in union at the time of the census (marital and consensual together). Third, it describes the the prevalence of intermarriage for each category by sex.

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Table 1. Characteristics of the Moroccan population, percentage in union, and percentage in intermarriage, Spain 2001.

	%		% in union		% intermarriage	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>Age</i>						
0 to 15	20,9	27,4	0,0	0,0	-	-
16 to 24	19,9	18,6	2,5	16,0	32,8	11,4
25 to 34	26,4	18,0	19,0	47,2	32,0	23,1
35 to 44	17,0	15,1	47,7	59,2	38,5	40,7
45 and more	15,9	20,9	64,3	51,4	58,5	67,7
<i>Years since immigrated</i>						
Since birth	30,7	39,0	1,1	1,6	42,9	56,4
Less than 1 year	4,9	3,2	11,4	47,7	5,8	8,8
1 to 4 years	18,5	12,7	13,9	48,6	14,4	9,2
5 to 9 years	7,2	6,1	29,2	55,4	24,1	15,2
10 or more years	25,6	25,4	51,6	53,3	45,1	52,7
Year of arrival = Year of birth	13,2	13,7	38,1	43,6	76,4	76,0
<i>Marital / Union Status</i>						
In union						
Married, spouse present	22,7	30,0	-	-	44,2	41,3
Consensual union	2,0	2,2	-	-	62,7	58,7
Not in union						
Single	59,8	53,1	-	-	-	-
Married, spouse absent	13,5	6,0	-	-	-	-
Divorced / Separated	1,5	3,6	-	-	-	-
Widow	0,5	5,1	-	-	-	-
<i>Spanish Citizenship</i>						
Citizen	36,3	50,7	29,6	26,7	79,2	79,3
Not a citizen	63,7	49,3	20,5	35,8	18,0	14,2
<i>Birth place</i>						
Morocco	75,8	68,4	31,1	45,0	45,5	42,1
Spain	23,9	31,1	0,8	1,1	58,3	71,0
Other	0,3	0,5	10,0	10,6	25,0	20,0
<i>Generation</i>						
1st	71,0	63,2	33,2	48,5	45,6	42,2
2nd	29,0	36,8	0,9	1,4	45,2	55,3
<i>Schooling</i>						
Illiterate	14,9	20,9	12,0	22,5	7,6	12,3
Less than primary	21,0	18,3	22,0	31,9	21,2	26,2
Primary	44,0	39,2	23,6	35,4	45,4	48,8
Secondary	12,7	13,5	32,4	31,5	68,9	60,5
University	6,7	7,9	42,6	31,6	76,1	71,0
<i>Province</i>						
Barcelona	17,9	17,4	25,4	33,6	29,7	24,4
Madrid	15,1	15,3	25,1	29,6	49,9	41,9
Murcia	6,1	3,5	12,6	29,2	32,3	28,6
Alacant	4,4	3,8	25,9	37,0	52,5	47,6
Malaga	6,7	9,6	29,0	28,6	66,3	67,4
Ceuta and Melilla	6,0	9,4	30,3	29,6	42,0	46,5
Others	43,8	41,0	22,3	31,3	48,1	45,2
<i>Number of nuclei in the household</i>						
None	26,0	12,5	-	-	-	-
1	65,6	77,8	32,4	35,7	47,3	44,3
2	7,0	8,3	33,1	36,4	34,3	30,1
3 +	1,4	1,4	24,4	29,5	17,1	5,6
<i>Number of non-kin members in the household</i>						
None	66,5	76,7	29,5	33,4	51,6	48,6
1	15,0	12,7	14,9	24,0	19,0	16,0
2 +	18,5	10,6	10,5	23,8	16,2	12,1
<i>Total</i>	100% (12420)	100% (8831)	23,8	31,2	45,6	42,4

Source: Own production from INE Census 2001 Spain.