Tying the Knot in Language-Divided Belgium.

A Research into Marriage Partner Choice in Flemish Municipalities along the Language Border with Wallonia, 1798-1938.

Wieke Metzlar, prof. dr. Koen Matthijs and dr. Paul Puschmann

1. Introduction

Marriage is often seen as the ultimate union between two individuals. However, this union goes further than a simple connection between two people, as marriage is a result of contact between persons, families and eventually communities. Marriage, moreover, reflects an assumed idea of equality, as people tend to marry a partner with a similar background – either culturally, ethnically, racially, linguistically, geographically or social-economically - due to personal preferences and pressure from their social circle. The presence or absence of mixed marriages can therefore be used as an indicator of contact between certain groups or communities and can therefore reflect integration and disintegration. For this reason, studying marriage patterns from the past can give insight in processes of social in- and exclusion and group formation.[1]

During the nineteenth century, meeting opportunities became increasingly framed within national borders as a result of the rise of national education, (sport)associations, media and other communication networks. This led to a convergence of the local marriage markets into a national marriage market. However, the nation-building process took a different path in Belgium.[2] Since the foundation of the Belgium Kingdom in 1830, a linguistic dispute between the French-speaking Walloon and Dutch-speaking Flemish community caused an alienation between Flanders and Wallonia. Ultimately, at the end of the twentieth century, several state reforms turned Belgium from a unitary into a federal state.[3] The demographic, cultural, social and economic dissimilarities between Wallonia and Flanders seem to have stimulated in-group over out-group contact in contemporary Belgian marriage and remarriage markets. Today, both Flemings and Walloons are more likely to marry an immigrant than a fellow Belgian from across the language border.[4] But have the language quarrels, the unequal economic development between Flanders and Wallonia and the rise of the Flemish national movement caused both groups to drift apart or were Flemings and Walloons never attracted to each other to begin with?

The aim of this study is to gain insight into the process and dynamics of partner selection in Flemish municipalities along the French-Dutch language border in the nineteenth and early twentieth

---

[1] Marco H.D. van Leeuwen, Ineke Maas, Sasika Hin and Koen Matthijs, 'Socio-economic modernization and enduring language barriers. Choosing a marriage partner in Flemish communities, 1821-193' *History of the Family* 24:1 (2019) 94-122, there 94-98.

[2] Hans Knippenberg and Ben de Pater, *De eenwording van Nederland. Schaalvergroting en integratie sinds 1800* (tweede druk; Nijmegen 1990) 9-16; Willibrord Rutten, 'Twee nationaliteiten op één kussen. Huwelijk en partnerkeuze in de Zuid-Limburgse grensstreek in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw' in: Jan Kok and Marco H.D. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Genegenheid en gelegenheid. Twee eeuwen partnerkeuze en huwelijk* (Amsterdam 2005) 159-180; Van Leeuwen et al., 'Socio-economic modernization and enduring language barriers', 94-122.

[3] Rolf Falter, 'Een aparte weg naar het federalisme' in: Kas Deprez and Louis Vos (eds.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000.* (1999) 218-235, there 218-223; Harry van Velthoven, *Waarheen met België? Van taalstrijd tot communautaire conflicten. Een selectie uit 35 jaar wetenschappelijk onderzoek* (tweede druk; Brussel 2011) 319-322.

[4] Statbel, Huwelijken meer cijfers, https://statbel.fgov.be/nl/themas/bevolking/huwelijken-en-echtscheidingen/huwelijken/plus (05-03-2021).

century. Municipalities located along the language border were geographically close to Wallonia, which created plenty of opportunities for Flemings to meet a potential Walloon partner. For this reason, marriages between Flemings and Walloons in these settings are more likely to reflect preferences in partner selection instead of meeting opportunities. By focusing on local marriage markets, this paper attempts to gain insight in local contact between Flemings and Walloon in a context of a developing language struggle and the alienation between of the Flanders and Wallonia during the nineteenth century. First, this paper will explore temporal developments – e.g. changing political regimes and shifting power balances between Flanders and Wallonia – and geographical differences in the share of marriages between the linguistic communities. Subsequently it will examine the role of factors as gender, socio-economic and migration status in order to determine which Flemish individuals were more likely to marry someone from across the Belgian language border.

2. Historical context

The Belgium nation-state was created during the nineteenth century. The area had been annexed by France since 1792, and after the defeat of Napoleon, the Congress of London decided to unite the Southern and Northern Netherlands into the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Both the Southern and Northern provinces benefited from the economical conjunction in this new Kingdom of the Netherlands. However, in the Southern provinces of the Netherlands, the attention increasingly became drawn towards differences – for example in religion and socio-economic status – between the Northern and Southern provinces in the kingdom and the religious, linguistic and educational policies of king William I evoked more and more resistance in the southern areas.[5] The unrest in the Southern provinces grew and this ultimately resulted in the exclamation of the independent Kingdom of Belgium in 1830.

The creation of the imagined community of Belgium drew attention towards the languages Belgians spoke. The Belgian territory had been crossed by the Romance-Germanic language border since the Middle Ages, which led to the existence of two linguistic groups within the newly created nation.[6] This linguistic border did not only exist on a spatial level, but also on socio-economic level. In the Northern provinces of Flanders, the lower middle classes spoke mainly Dutch dialects (as the language was not standardized yet).[7] These Dutch-speaking Flemings represented in numbers the majority of the Belgians. Walloons who lived in the Southern provinces were mainly French-speaking. However, partly as a result of a policy of 'frenchification' during the French annexation, the upcoming

---

[5] Pieter Saey, Christian Kesteloot and Christian Vandermotten, ' Ongelijke economische ontwikkeling aan de basis van de federalisering', in: Kas Deprez and Louis Vos (eds.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000* (1999) 207-217; Ann Marynissen, 'De lange weg naar een Nederlandse standaardtaal' in: Gert de Stutter (ed.), *De vele gezichten van het Nederlands in Vlaanderen. Een inleiding tot de variatietaalkunde* (Leuven 2017) 74-75.

[6] Marynissen, 'De lange weg naar een Nederlandse standaardtaal', 60-79.

[7] Ibid, 72-76.

middle classes and higher classes in both Southern and Northern regions preferred French, which led to French being the lingua franca on the administrative and political level.[8]

During the nineteenth century, the already existing socio-economic imbalance between Dutch-speaking Flemings and French-speaking Walloons increased. Due to the unequal development of the two regions – Wallonia was characterized by a strong expansion of industry during the first half of the century, whereas Flanders remained a mainly rural region – differences between Flanders and Wallonia were enlarged.[9] The extension of the nation-state contributed to a further increasement of these differences, as the growth of the tertiary sector led to the growth of the administration – which used French as its language. Thus French had become the language of education, public life and social promotion, while Dutch was associated with a more disadvantaged, lower class position. [10]

The social dimension of this language question became visible in Brussels during the nineteenth century. In most municipalities along the linguistic border, the boundaries between Dutch- and French-speaking areas remained relatively stable. The capital city of Brussels however turned from a mainly Dutch-speaking city into a predominantly French-speaking city.[11] As a result of the different social position of both languages, Dutch-speaking citizens became increasingly marginalized in social and public life. Flemings in Brussels therefore could choose between language assimilation or the acceptance of a minority position. At the end of the century, Dutch-speaking Flemings therefore not only had become a social and political minority in Brussels, but also a numeric one.[12]

The increased marginalized and disadvantaged position of Flemings in Belgium led to the founding of the Flemish Movement at the end of the nineteenth century, in which Flemish intellectuals aimed for political and social emancipation of their linguistic community.[13] During the first half of the twentieth century, the Flemish Movement achieved several political successes, for instance the defining of the linguistic territories and official bilingualism in education and administration, of law and the army and most importantly bilingualism in Brussels. Despite the collaboration of parts of the movement with the Germans during the First and Second World War – which heavily discredited the movement – the Flemish Movement remained an influential political force. [14] The counterpart of this movement – the Walloon Movement – got stronger during the second half of the twentieth century. As the economic center of Belgium gradually shifted towards the North, Walloons increasingly feared for their position.

---

[8] G.J. Ashworth, 'Language society and the state in Belgium', *Journal of Area Studies* 1:1 (1980) 28-33.
[9] Saey, Kesteloot and Vandermotten, 'Ongelijke economische ontwikkeling aan de basis van de federalisering', 23-29.
[10] Louis Vos, 'Van België naar Vlaanderen' in: Kas Deprez and idem (ed.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000*. (1999) 91-103, there 93.
[11] Kris Deschouwer, *The Politics of Belgium. Governing a Divided Society* (Hampshire 2009) 22-24.
[12] Machteld de Metsenaere and Els Witte, 'Taalverlies en Taalbehoud bij de Vlamingen te Brussel in de negentiende eeuw', *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 105:1 (1990) 1-38.
[13] Vos, 'Van België naar Vlaanderen' 93-95.
[14] Ibid, 96; Deschouwer, *The Politics of Belgium*, 31-35.

The French-speaking community always had been a numeric minority, but for the first time, they had become an economic minority as well.[15]

The Flemish fear of further frenchification of Flemish territory around the city of Brussels and the Walloon fear for the position of their community caused them to agree on fixing the linguistic border in 1963 by law.[16] By using the principle of territoriality (the geographical location determines the language of the territory) four linguistic territories were created: The Dutch territory of Flanders, the mainly French territory of Wallonia, the bilingual French-Dutch territory of Brussels and a German territory in the East part of Wallonia. Municipalities with a considerable share of a linguistic minority became municipalities with language 'facilities', which allowed the minorities to communicate with public authorities in their own language.[17] From the 1970's onwards, several state reforms have decentralized the Belgium nation-state and have created a high degree of autonomy for the territories and linguistic communities. The reforms turned Belgium at the end of the twentieth century from a unitary into a federal nation-state, based on the use of language.[18]

3. Status quaestionis: partner choice in the nineteenth and early twentieth century

In the past years, the motives, possibilities and boundaries of partner choice in the nineteenth and twentieth century have been studied. On the one hand, studies argue that during this period the share of homogeneous relationships – with the partners sharing a common social-economic, cultural or demographical background – increased, whereas other studies conclude that relationships during these years became more heterogeneous – with more dissimilar characteristics. These studies have focused on several aspects of partner choice, such as preferences, meeting opportunities and factors such as social status, gender or migration status.

For centuries, marriage was predominantly an instrumental institution, as it was based on primarily economic and political motivations. However, this vital function of marriage gradually faded in Europe, as a result of economic, political and cultural changes during the seventeenth and eighteenth century.[19] Edward Shorter argued that this led to the emergence of romantic love in the partner choice in the nineteenth century. The historian described romantic love as "the capacity for spontaneity and empathy in an erotic relationship". As a result, he argued that the instrumental marriage was gradually replaced by the romantic marriage during the nineteenth century.[20] Researches have argued contradictorily on the effect of romantic love on the nature of relationships. On the one hand, romantic love would transcend differences and boundaries, which could lead to an increase of heterogeneous

---

[15] Deschouwer, *The Politics of Belgium,* 35-37.
[16] Ibid, 42-45.
[17] Falter, 'Een aparte weg naar het federalisme', 218-223.
[18] Deschouwer, *The Politics of Belgium,* 38-40 and 46-55.
[19] Paul Puschmann, 'Love, sex and sexuality. Balancing economic considerations, socio-cultural expectations, and personal desires' in: Idem (ed.), *A cultural history of marriage in the age of empires, 1800-1920* (Londen en New York 2020) 117-138.
[20] Edward Shorter, *The making of the modern family* (New York 1975).

marriages. Others, on the other hand argue that marriage became perceived as a union between two equals, which resulted in an increase of homogeneous relationships.[21]

Although romantic love led to more individualization in partner choice, marriage was not the simple outcome of love between two random individuals. Partner choice can be seen as a process that consciously and unconsciously filters potential partners from a pool of people.[22] Van Leeuwen, Maas and Mandemakers argued that this limitation of choice can be divided in three levels. The first level consists of the preferences of the individual: do the persons share interests and are they for instance physically attracted to each other? The second level contains the influence of the social context of an individual, such as the family, friends and (social) organizations, which contribute to the third level: the meeting opportunities.[23] Within this filtering process, people and their environment have particular preferences – e.g. in age, religion, culture or social background – which influence the nature of preferred relationships (homogeneous or heterogeneous).

Where romantic love can be mostly associated with changes in the choices of individuals, modernization theorists, such as Susan Watkins and others, argue that the nineteenth century processes of nation building and industrialization predominantly affected the other two levels: the social context and meeting opportunities.[24] The idea of the nation-state and the rise of national media caused people from more distant areas to feel related, as they were no longer habitants of a specific town or province, but of a whole nation-state. Moreover, the nation-state created new social contexts – e.g. in the army, education or national (sport) associations – where people from different backgrounds met, which resulted in an increase of (geographic) heterogeneous marriages.[25] At the same time, industrialization further increased the meeting opportunities of individuals, for instance by the creation of new workplaces and the rise and expansion of communication and transport networks. On the one hand, these processes may result in an increase of heterogeneous relationships.[26] However, as Knippenberg and De Pater argued, integration processes also tend to bring differences between people – e.g. in religion or language – to the foreground. Integration – and thereby homo- or heterogenization – therefore strongly

---

[21] Puschmann, 'Love, sex and sexuality', 117-122; Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a history. How love conquered marriage* (New York 2005) 1-23.

[22] Kees de Hoog, 'Partnerselectie. Manoeuvreren tussen sociale druk en individuele vrijheid' in: Jan Kok and Marco H.D. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Genegenheid en gelegenheid. Twee eeuwen partnerkeuze en huwelijk* (Amsterdam 2005) 85-102.

[23] Marco H.D. van Leeuwen, Ineke Maas and Kees Mandemakers, 'Het kiezen van een huwelijkspartner 1840-1940. De rol van de familie' in: Jan Kok and Marco H.D. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Genegenheid en gelegenheid. Twee eeuwen partnerkeuze en huwelijk* (Amsterdam 2005) 63-84.

[24] Knippenberg and De Pater, *De eenwording van Nederland,* 9-16; Rutten, 'Twee nationaliteiten op één kussen', 159-180; Van Leeuwen et al., 'Socio-economic modernization and enduring language barriers', 94-98.

[25] Susan Cotts Watkins, *From Provinces into Nations. Demographic integration in Western Europe, 1870-1960* (New Jersey 1991) 3-8.

[26] Peter Ekamper, Frans van Poppel and Kees Mandemakers, 'Widening horizons? The geography of the marriage market in nineteenth and early-twentieth century Netherlands' in: E. Merchant, G. Deane, M. Gutman and K. Sylvester (ed.), *Navigating Time and Space in Population Studies* (Dordrecht 2011) 115-160, there 116-124.

depends on spatial dimensions in a society: whenever major differences exist, people tend to choose in-group marriage over out-group.[27]

As hetero- or homogeneity can appear on several levels – for instance on geographic, socio-economic, cultural or linguistic level – it is possible that relationships can have both heterogeneous and homogeneous characteristics. Furthermore, dissimilarities on the one aspect tend to stimulate a stronger preference for similarities on the other; in order to overcome adverse differences, people tend to search for resemblances in other domains.[28] In social and psychological sciences, this is referred to as the 'social exchange theory': behavior and choices of people are seen as a constant analysis of costs and benefits, at which costs are experienced as less disadvantaged if they are opposed by sufficient advantage in other domains.[29] Differences between persons therefore do not immediately have to avert a relationship, provided that similarities on other levels compensate these disadvantages for both partners. Ekamper, Van Poppel and Mandemakers for example showed in their study that higher classes were more likely to marry geographical heterogeneous, as the number of suitable higher class partners in the nearby geographical area was generally limited and this induced people from the higher classes to broaden their geographical scope in their search for a partner from the same higher class. The advantages of a status homogeneous marriage thus might have compensated the 'costs' of the geographical heterogeneity.[30] The 'social exchange theory' might also give an explanation for the decrease of marriages between the Dutch-speaking working classes and French-speaking middle classes in nineteenth century Brussels. The linguistic and social heterogeneity might have been perceived as insurmountable costs, which might have prevented (marriage) contact between the two groups.[31]

Partner choice thus can be seen as a complicated process, to which numerous factors (un)consciously contribute. To date, no final answer can be given to the question whether relationships became more heterogeneous or homogeneous during the nineteenth century. The romanticization of marriage may have individualized partner choice, which could in principle lead to more heterogeneity. However, as it was also found that in the nineteenth century people also tended to look for a partner who mirrors their characteristics or interests, part of the relationships become more homogeneous in nature during the nineteenth century. But also modernization may have a twofold outcome: the increase of meeting opportunities may have resulted in more out-group marriage contact, while differences within society also may result in the preference of in-group over out-group contact. As heterogeneity on one domain stimulates homogeneity on the other, the social exchange theory might give more insight in motivations of partner choice in (linguistic) heterogeneous marriages.

---

[27] Kippenberg and De Pater, *De eenwording van Nederland,* 9-16.
[28] Van Leeuwen et al., 'Socio-economic modernization and enduring language barriers', 94-122.
[29] George C. Homans, 'Social behavior as exchange', *American Journal of Sociology* 6:63 (1958) 597-606, aldaar 604-606.
[30] Ekamper, Van Poppel and Mandemakers, 'Widening horizons?', 116-124.
[31] Paul Puschmann, Nina van den Driessche, Per-Olof Grönberg, Bart van de Putte and Koen Matthijs, 'From outsiders to insiders? Partner choice and marriage among internal migrants in Antwerp, Rotterdam & Stockholm, 1850-1930', *Historical Social Research* 40:2 (2015) 319-358.

4. Language borders and marriage markets

Both visible and invisible borders can influence local marriage markets, as they might affect meeting opportunities and may cause social in- or exclusion. Susan Watkins studied changes in demographic behavior in Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth century in the light of the process of nation-building. Watkins argued that market integration, state formation and nation building – all institutional processes – influenced daily life and ultimately behavior of the individual as nuptiality and fertility. Due to the national framing of for instance education and media, meeting opportunities increasingly became imbedded within a national context. The former visible provincial boundaries became less relevant in the new nation-states and the national borders became the new rigid borders between communities.[32] Willibrord Rutten studied in this context of nation-building the developments in marriage patterns in municipalities along the Dutch-Belgium border after the separation of the province of Limburg in a Dutch and Belgium part. Rutten concluded that the split of Limburg by a national border caused the former local marriage market in the province of Limburg to grow apart into two (almost) separate marriage markets. The historian also accredited the change to more nationally framed meeting opportunities as the cause of the separation of the former united marriage market.[33]

Watkins argued that in past Western European societies, demographic diversity was visible on provincial level. The creation of the (imagined) nation-state in the nineteenth century caused the national marriage markets to converge which resulted in demographic diversity on a national level. However, few exceptions to this trend exist. Belgium, for example, was a nation divided by politics and language, which reduced contact between communities and resulted in more demographic diversity within the country. Watkins, however, argued that during the latter nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the two Belgian regions became increasingly economically united which might have resulted in some level of integration. The contradictorily developments of the Belgium state – the integration on economic level and the disintegration on political and linguistic level – can have a twofold outcome: on the one hand, this process of nation-building could have converged the Flemish and Walloon marriage markets into one Belgium marriage market, but the lack of uniformity in politics and language might also have averted this convergence and even have stimulated segregation.[34]

Bilingualism or multilingualism in communities does not always immediately result in segregation in marriage markets. However, shifting political contexts can emphasize existing linguistic borders within nations. Heidy Müller studied contact between the four linguistic communities in Switzerland. Müller argued that before 1914, divisions in contact were mainly defined by confessional differences. During the First World War, however, the French-speaking Swiss community sympathized with the Belgians and German-speaking community with the Germans. The international conflict

---

[32] Watkins, *From provinces into nations,* 114-128 and 134-137.
[33] Rutten, 'Twee nationaliteiten op één kussen', 159-180.
[34] Watkins, *From provinces into nations,* 134-137; De Metsenaere and Witte, 'Taalverlies en taalbehoud bij de Vlamingen te Brussel in de negentiende eeuw', 1-38.

therefore drew attention from the confessional differences towards differences between linguistic communities, which resulted in scarce contact between the linguistic groups in contemporary Switzerland.[35]

Apart from shifting political contexts, shifting power balances may also emphasize differences between linguistic communities and may therefore avert or stimulate out-group contact. In the case of Belgium, social differences between the French- and Dutch-speaking communities increased, as French became more associated with higher status and public life while Dutch increasingly had become the language of the lower classes in the Northern provinces of Belgium.[36] Richard Bourhis referred to this situation as 'diglossia', which consists of bilingualism in a society with particular preferences in the use of language in different contexts.[37] Susan Gal also emphasized the link between bilingualism and the social-economic position of a language. Gal studied the case of the Austrian bilingual community of Oberwart. She argued that the Hungarian language in the community became perceived as the language of farmers, which caused especially women to prefer a marriage with a German-speaking man. Due to the lack of potential partners, Hungarian-speaking men turned towards other local marriage markets, where women were willing to marry a Hungarian-speaking man. However, the offspring of these linguistic heterogeneous marriages were often raised in German, as the mother only spoke German and the father spoke both Hungarian and German. The case of Oberwart thus shows that the social-economic position of a language can cause changes in partner choice, which ultimately can result in a decrease of a linguistic community in a society.[38]

The example of Oberwart furthermore shows that in addition to social-economic associations, gender differences may also play a role in the tendency to marry linguistically heterogeneous. Marloe Schrover also argued that female Finnish migrants in nineteenth-century America were more likely to marry linguistically exogeneous – despite the fact that they had plenty of Finnish men to choose from – as a marriage with an American man helped them to adopt a new identity.[39] As the ascribed social status of a women thus is intertwined with the status of the man, it is possible that the changes of a linguistic heterogeneous marriage for Dutch-speaking Belgians in the municipalities along the language border differed per gender: for French-speaking women, a marriage with a Dutch-speaking man may result in

---

[35] Heidy Müller, 'De taalsituatie in Zwitserland', *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* (1997) 43-59.

[36] De Metsenaere and Witte, 'Taalverlies en taalbehoud bij de Vlamingen te Brussel in de negentiende eeuw', 1-38; Paul Puschmann and Koen Matthijs, 'Social inclusion among Flemish and Walloon migrants in Brussels, 1795-1914. Patterns of assortative mating in a context of changing political regimes, growing inequalities and shifting language practices and policies' (2016).

[37] Richard Bourhis, 'Social psychological aspects of French-English relations in Quebec. From vitality to linguicism' in: Idem (ed.), *Decline and Prospects of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec* (2012) 313-378.

[38] Susan Gal, 'Peasant men can't get wives. Language change and seks roles in a bilingual community', *Language in Society* 7:1 (1978) 1-16.

[39] Marlou Schrover, 'Huwelijk, gender, migratie en integratie. Partnerkeuze van Duitsers in Utrecht in de negentiende eeuw' in: Jan Kok and Marco H.D. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Genegenheid en gelegenheid. Twee eeuwen partnerkeuze en huwelijk* (Amsterdam 2005) 135-158, there 139.

a downfall of her social position, while the social status of a French-speaking man may at the same time not be affected by the social status of his bride.

Another invisible border which played a role on the marriage market was the migration status of an individual. Puschmann et al. for example showed in 'From insiders to outsiders?' that internal migrants in the cities of Antwerp, Rotterdam and Stockholm often faced marginalization on the marriage market, which resulted in more in-group marriages over out-group marriages. The social unbalance between Flemings and Walloons might have strengthened the marginalization of migrants on local marriage markets. In 'Social inclusion among Flemish and Walloon migrants in Brussels 1795-1914' the researchers argued that the social inclusion of Flemish migrants in Brussels was complicated by the upcoming language quarrels. The 'costs' of their migration background could not be compensated by their social status – as Flemings were perceived as lower-ranked – which increased their marginalization on the marriage market.[40]

Existing research on language borders and marriage markets thus has focused on shifting political contexts, differences in social status of the language and gender differences. In the case of Belgium, a twofold outcomes in the development of the national marriage market in the nineteenth and early twentieth century is possible. On the one hand, the process of nation-building, could result in a converging trend in the national marriage market and thus in an increase of marriages between French- and Dutch-speaking persons. However, the increasing differences in social positions between the linguistic communities, on the other hand may have complicated this process and resulted in a preference of in-group contact over out-group contact.

5. Hypotheses

Based on previous research, several hypotheses have been formulated. Regarding the question whether the share of mixed Flemish-Walloon marriages in the Flemish border municipalities increased or decreased, two competitive hypotheses have been composed:

According to modernization theorists as Watkins and Rutten, a converging trend within the national marriage market is expected as a result of the increased nationally imbedded meeting opportunities. In the context of the Belgian nation-building process, hypothesis 1a is expected: *As a result of the nation-building process, the share of marriages between Flemings and Walloons in the Flemish border municipalities increased during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.*

Developments within the Belgian national marriage market may however have been complicated by the language quarrels between the two main linguistic communities in the newly created nation-state. The unequal status of the language and linguistic communities therefore may have resulted in a divergent trend in the local marriage markets along the French-Dutch language border, which leads to hypothesis 1b: *As a result of the upcoming language quarrels between the French and Dutch*

---

[40] Puschmann and Matthijs, 'Social inclusion among Flemish and Walloon migrants in Brussels'.

communities, the share of Flemish-Walloon marriages within the Flemish border municipalities decreased during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In addition to temporal developments, this research aims to gain insight in factors that may have influenced the tendency to marry across the language border. Gal and Schrover showed with their studies that women tend to marry more often out of their own group than men if it provides a certain benefit – e.g. in social status or new identity. As women partly received their ascribed status through their partner, Flemish women were perhaps more likely to search for a Walloon partner. Walloon women, on the other hand, might have had less tendency to search for a Flemish partner, as the lower social status of his linguistic community might result in a downfall of her own social status. Given these gender differences, hypotheses 2 states as follows: *Flemish women are, compared to Flemish men, more likely to marry with a Walloon from across the language border.*

Whereas the gender-hypothesis may partly be a result from an overall unequal social balance between the two linguistic communities, social status of the individual may also have played a role in the tendency to marry across the language border and the success rate of finding a desired partner. From the perspective of a Walloon, a Fleming with a higher social status might compensate the idea of a socially 'downwards' marriage, which might have made him a more attractive partner compared to other Flemings. Flemish higher social classes often used French as their main language and had more meeting opportunities than other Flemings, which may have even further increased their chances of finding a Walloon partner. Other social classes, as for example Flemish farmers, were according to the social exchange theory less attractive partners from the perspective of Walloons, as they had less benefits to balance out a socially downwards marriage. These lower classed Flemish may also have been more bound to the grounds they lived and worked on, which lowered their meeting opportunities and their tendency to marry a more distant partner. As a result, hypothesis 3 argues as follows: *Flemings from higher social classes were more likely to marry a fellow Belgian from across the language border, whereas Flemings from lower social classes may have had a less tendency and less chances of marrying a Walloon individual.*

The last hypothesis relates to the migration status of an individual. Migrants often faced marginalization on local marriage markets, which stimulated in-group contact over out-group contact and resulted in two separated marriage markets: a native and migrant one. The chances of Flemings with a migration background marrying with a fellow Walloon migrant might have been higher in the Flemish border municipalities. This results in hypothesis 4: *As a result of marginalization of migrants on local marriage markets, Flemings with a migration background had higher chance of marrying a Walloon partner compared to native Flemings in the border municipalities.*

6. Data and methodology

This paper is based on data of marriage certificates from the area that nowadays is known as the Beglian province of Flemish Brabant. In 1792, French revolutionists implemented with the Code Napoleon the

civil marriage, with standardized marriage certificates. These certificates contain social-demographical information – e.g. place of birth, place of residence, age, occupation, witnesses, et cetera – which make them an interesting source for historic-demographical research.[41] As marriage was not an institute which was exclusively practiced by particular groups, it is possible to study people from various social strata and backgrounds by focusing on marriage certificates.

This research only focusses on marriages that took place in municipalities along the Northern, Dutch-speaking side of the French-Dutch language border. Due to geographical proximity, the opportunities of meeting a person from the other linguistic communities were higher in these municipalities. The share of marriage between people from the French and Dutch communities therefore are more likely to reflect particular preferences in partner choices in these local marriage markets. However, as the database only contains marriage certificates from the Dutch side of the language border, results from this study might be biased and might mostly relate to partner choice and marriage patterns in the Dutch-speaking communities.

The dependent variable in this paper focusses on the type of marriage that took place. As the marriage certificates do not contain information on the language the persons spoke, this study has made use of a proxy of language: if a person was born on the Northern side of the language border, the person is classified as Dutch-speaking and thus a Fleming. A person born on the Southern side of this border is marked as French-speaking and thereby a Walloon. By making use of this assumption, it is possible that in some cases, the mother tongue of an individual is not estimated correctly. It was required that the place of birth of both the groom and bride were known on the marriage certificate. As the district of Brussels already during the nineteenth century was bilingual, persons born in this area were left out in this paper. By only selecting years which contained at least 100 marriage certificates, the sample that had been created consists of 78.854 marriage certificates over the period between 1798 and 1938.

In addition to the places of birth of the partners the following variables of both the groom and bride have been selected for this study: date of birth (or age if noted), date of marriage, marital status, social status, migration status, presence of a signature. First, this paper will analyze the share of the different types of marriages over time and will focus on local differences between the marriage markets in the municipalities. Next, basic descriptive analyses will be presented, focusing on gender, social status and migration. Finally, a logistic regression will be conducted, including, gender, socio-economic status, age and migration status in order to determine which Flemish individuals were more likely to marry a person from across the language border

---

[41] Koen Matthijs, *De mateloze negentiende eeuw. Bevolking, huwelijk, gezin en sociale verandering* (Leuven 2001) 22-24.

7. Developments over time

This paper will firstly examine developments over time in the share of linguistic heterogeneous in the Flemish border municipalities. Figure 1 shows the course of four types of marriages: mixed Flemish-Walloon marriages, exclusively Walloon marriages in the Flemish municipalities and marriages between two Flemish partners. The fourth category contains all other types of marriages - e.g. with a partner from Brussels or a foreign country. The vast majority of the marriage certificates contained marriages between two exclusively Flemish partners: during the first decennium of the research period, 75% of the marriages took place between two Flemings and this share even increased during the next decennia. The decrease of the share of exclusively Walloon and 'other' marriages might have been caused by the end of the French period (1795-1814), as the defeat of Napoleon might have stopped the French and French-speaking (inter)national movements. This might have resulted in a change of the local meeting opportunities and therefore might have resulted in an increase of exclusively Flemish marriages. However, it is also possible that the marriage certificates indicate who were willing to register their marriage, instead of the type of relationships people took part in in the border municipalities. During the French period, the Code Napoleon stated that people should register their civil marriage. French-speaking Walloons and foreigners might have been more likely to obey the French rule, which might have resulted in a registered higher share of exclusively Walloon or 'other' marriages.

Figure 1 shows that in the municipalities along the linguistic border, Flemings never had a strong tendency to marry a fellow Belgian from across the language border. The share of linguistically mixed marriages fluctuated between five and ten percent and peaked between 1810 and 1819. A gradual decrease of the share of mixed marriages started during the period of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and continued until the 1870's. Modernization theorists argued that the process of nation-building
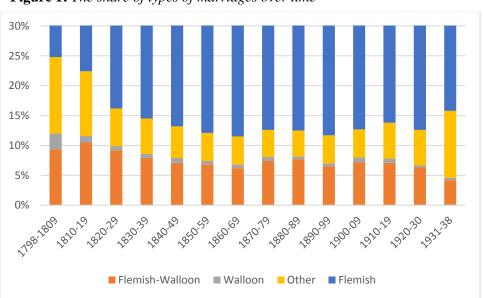
Figure 1: *The share of types of marriages over time*

Source: Flemish Brabant and Brussels. Data Set Release 2020.05 (Centre of Sociological Research, Research Group Family and Population Studies, KU Leuven).

converged local marriages markets into one national marriage market. The further decrease of the mixed marriages in the early years of the Belgian Kingdom however does not align with this theory, as a converge of the marriage market would result in an increase of Flemish-Walloon marriages. The results of the temporal course of the types of marriages therefore do not align with hypothesis 1a; the Belgian nation-building process did not converge local marriage markets into a national marriage market.

The decrease of marriages between the two linguistic communities from the 1830's onward might therefore reflect increased tensions between Flemings and Walloons. Until 1830, both Flemings and Walloons lived under foreign rule – first the French and later the Dutch. After the Belgian Independence, internal differences between the linguistic communities – both in social status and in economic developments. Wallonia strongly industrialized and Flanders remained mainly rural. The frenchification of the Belgian public life may also have contributed to a more complicated relationship between the two linguistic communities. Hypothesis 1b – regarding the language quarrels complicating the integration of the Belgian national marriage market – seems therefore suitable for the interpretation of the developments in the marriage market in the Flemish border municipalities.

In light of the political developments, one would expect a further decrease of mixed marriages from the 1880's onwards, as the Flemish agitation towards the French language and the social position of the French linguistic community were explicitly formulated by the foundation of the Flemish Movement. Figure 1 however, shows an opposite development: between the 1870 and 1889 the share of Flemish-Walloon marriages in the border municipalities increased. According to Watkins, economic integration can be a factor of national unity and might have balanced out the political disintegration. As the industry in Wallonia expanded in the latter part of the nineteenth century, more Flemings worked in municipalities across the language border, which may have increased contact between the two linguistic groups.[42]

---

[42] Matthijs, *De mateloze negentiende eeuw,* 51-60; Watkins, *From provinces into nations*, 129-137.

Table 1: *The share of types of marriages per social class of the groom*

	Type of marriage	Higher education and status	(Lower) skilled workers	Farmers	Unskilled (farm) workers	Unspecified unskilled workers	Unknown
Average	Flemish	71,2%	84,8%	92,1%	89%	86,9%	83%
	Flemish-Walloon	14,8%	7,9%	4,8%	6,2%	6,4%	8,8%
	Walloon	2,1%	0,8%	0,3%	0,6%	0,6%	1%
	Other	21%	6,5%	2,9%	4,3%	6,1%	7,1%
1870-1879	Flemish	70,1%	85,9%	91,8%	89,8%	90,4%	81,8%
	Flemish-Walloon	17,1%	7,7%	5,1%	6,1%	6%	11,2%
	Walloon	2,5%	1%	0,3%	0,6%	0,2%	0%
	Other	10,2%	5,4%	2,8%	3,6%	3,4%	7%
1880-1889	Flemish	67,6%	86,4%	93,1%	90,8%	90,2%	84,9%
	Flemish-Walloon	20,5%	7,7%	4,5%	5,6%	6,8%	7,3%
	Walloon	2,1%	0,5%	0%	0,3%	0,5%	1,2%
	Other	9,8%	5,3%	2,4%	3,4%	2,5%	6,5%

Source: Flemish Brabant and Brussels. Data Set Release 2020.05 (Centre of Sociological Research, Research Group Family and Population Studies, KU Leuven).

The increase of mixed marriages between Flemings and Walloons therefore would be expected to take place in predominantly lower classes, as these Flemings worked in the Walloon industries. Table 1 shows the percentual distribution of types of marriages per social class of the grooms. During the entire research period 6,2% of the grooms from the class 'Unskilled (farm) workers' and 6,4% of 'Unspecified unskilled workers' took part in a Flemish-Walloon marriage. The table however shows that between 1870 and 1889 an increase in the share of mixed marriages with grooms from higher classes took place (17,1% and 20,5%) instead of the expected lower classes.

Perhaps, the increase in mixed marriages in these higher classes was a reaction to the agitation of the Flemish Movement towards the French language. During the first years of the Flemish Movement, the movement existed of predominantly Flemish intellectuals with primary cultural emancipation of the Dutch language as its goal. However, as this political movement might have been broadly supported by lower-classed Flemings, the reaction of Flemish higher classes might have differed. Many higher-placed Flemings already used French as their main language. The influx in Flemish-Walloon marriage may therefore have been a way for Flemish higher social classes to distance themselves from the ambitions of the Flemish Movements, as these classes would not benefit from a potential emancipation of the Dutch language.

8. Geographical differences

In order to examine contact between the two linguistic communities on a very local level, the marriage patterns per border municipality have been categorized in four new categories: (1) marriages between

two Flemings from the concerned municipality, (2) marriages containing a Flemish partner from the concerned municipality and a partner from a directly adjacent Flemish municipality and (3) marriages that consisted of a Flemish partner from the concerned municipality and a partner from a directly adjacent Walloon municipality. The category 'Other' (4) consists of marriages that took place in the concerned border municipality with for example a partner from another Belgian province or non-adjacent municipality. By examining only marriages between partners from directly adjacent municipalities, certain aversions or preferences on the marriage markets can ben investigated. From a theoretical perspective, the chance of meeting a person from a directly adjacent Flemish municipality or directly adjacent Walloon municipality were similar. Differences in the shares of these marriages – with a Flemish or Walloon partner – might therefore give insight on the level of local (marriage) contact in the Flemish border municipalities.

Table 2: *The share of types of marriages per Flemish border municipality*

Municipality	Both partners from concerned municipality	Partner from adjacent Flemish municipality	Partner from adjacent Walloon municipality	Other	Number of certificates
Bever	44,7%	26,3%	11,4%	17,5%	2428
Herne	47,0%	28,5%	5,2%	19,2%	5851
Pepingen	43,5%	36,0%	1,9%	18,6%	3341
Halle	52,6%	17,5%	2,9%	27,0%	11265
Beersel	48,1%	25,2%	0,9%	25,8%	8289
Sint-Genesius-Rode	49,6%	19,4%	2,8%	28,2%	3730
Hoeilaart	50,0%	16,2%	2,2%	31,6%	2351
Overijse	47,4%	16,1%	3,2%	33,2%	4379
Huldenberg	59,4%	15,7%	2,8%	22,2%	3984
Oud-Heverlee	47,9%	25,5%	1,7%	24,8%	1940
Bierbeek	50,7%	26,7%	0,7%	22,0%	4107
Boutersem	43,5%	28,5%	0,1%	27,9%	2276
Hoegaarden	47,4%	15,9%	7,8%	28,9%	2798
Tienen	48,7%	17,9%	0,7%	32,7%	16529
Landen	58,3%	17,0%	6,8%	18,0%	5586

Source: Flemish Brabant and Brussels. Data Set Release 2020.05 (Centre of Sociological Research, Research Group Family and Population Studies, KU Leuven).

Table 2 shows the percentages of the four types of marriages in the Flemish border municipalities. The percentages show that a sharp difference in the percentage of marriages with a partner from an adjacent municipality between the French- and Dutch-speaking communities in the Flemish border municipalities existed. Flemings were the most likely to marry a partner from the same municipality. Whenever they married with a partner from an adjacent municipality, they had a strong preference for a partner from an adjacent Flemish municipality compared to adjacent Walloon municipalities. The proportions of Flemish-Walloon marriages were the lowest in the municipalities of

Beersel, Bierbeek Boutersem and Tienen: less than one percent of all marriages took place with a partner from a directly adjacent Walloon municipality. In Bever, Hoegaarden and Landen the highest proportions of mixed marriages took place (11,4%, 7,8% and 6,8% respectively).

The small proportions of some of the municipalities might be explained through their geographical location; the municipality of Boutersem, for example, contains a very small area that directly borders with a Walloon municipality. The higher proportions of mixed marriages in the municipalities of Bever, Hoegaarden and Landen might be explained by their historical context: the municipality of Hoegaarden, for example, has been an enclave of the French province of Luik until the French period. The municipalities of Bever and Landen were also former parts of French-speaking areas. With the legislation of the linguistic border in 1963, the municipalities became part of the Dutch-speaking province of Flemish Brabant and the municipalities became officially Dutch-speaking. As Bever contained a large French-speaking minority, the municipality became a so-called 'facility municipality', with French facilities in the Dutch-speaking municipality.[43] Given the historical context, the division between the French- and Dutch-speaking communities might have been perceived as less sharp in these municipalities, which might have resulted in a higher degree of contact with adjacent French municipalities and thus a higher share of mixed marriages. However, it is also possible that due to the historical background the municipalities of Bever, Hoegaarden and Landen contained relatively large linguistic minorities of French-speaking persons. Due to the proxy of language, marriages between a partner from Bever and from Wallonia have been categorized as 'Flemish-Walloon'. It is, however, possible that in reality, these marriages took place between two persons from the French-speaking community and should therefore be qualified as in-group marriages instead of as out-group marriages.

9. Gender, social status and migration status

Apart from the differences in historical backgrounds of the municipalities, other factors – e.g. gender differences, social status or migration status – might have influenced the likeliness and chances of the individual to marry a partner from across the language border. Table 3 shows the origins of partners of

Table 3: *Origins of partners of Flemish grooms and brides.*

	Flemish groom	Flemish bride
Flemish partner	95,2%	91,5%
Walloon partner	2,5%	5,3%
Foreign / other partner	2,3%	3,2%
Total	71311	74219

Source: Flemish Brabant and Brussels. Data Set Release 2020.05 (Centre of Sociological Research, Research Group Family and Population Studies, KU Leuven).

---

[43] Falter, 'Een aparte weg naar het federalisme', 218-222.

Flemish grooms and brides. Flemish brides married in 5,3% of all marriages with a Walloon partner, versus 2,5% of the Flemish grooms that married across the language border. Although it is possible that these results confirm hypothesis 2 – that compared to Flemish men, Flemish women had higher chances to marry across the language border – the gender differences might also be a result of a bias in the source material. The studied marriage certificates contained more Flemish brides (N=74.219) than Flemish grooms (N=71.311). At the time, it was common use to marry in the place of residence of the bride. As this study only contains marriage certificates from the Northern, Flemish side of the language border, the higher proportion of mixed marriages with a Flemish bride might be caused by missing data (of Flemish men that married in Walloon municipalities) instead of gender differences.

Table 4: *Share of types of marriages per social class of the groom and bride*

	Type of marriage	Higher education and status	(Lower) skilled workers	Farmers	Unskilled (farm) workers	Unspecified unskilled workers	Unknown
Groom	Flemish	71,2%	84,8%	92,1%	89%	86,9%	83%
	Flemish-Walloon	14,8%	7,9%	4,8%	6,2%	6,4%	8,8%
	Walloon	2,1%	0,8%	0,3%	0,6%	0,6%	1%
	Other	21%	6,5%	2,9%	4,3%	6,1%	7,1%
Bride	Flemish	82,8%	85,1%	91,9%	87,1%	88,1%	83,9%
	Flemish-Walloon	8,4%	8,4%	5,4%	6,3%	6,3%	8,3%
	Walloon	1%	1%	0,3%	0,7%	0,8%	0,9%
	Other	7,8%	7,8%	2,4%	5,9%	4,9%	6,9%

Source: Flemish Brabant and Brussels. Data Set Release 2020.05 (Centre of Sociological Research, Research Group Family and Population Studies, KU Leuven).

The social status of the individual however might have had a greater influence on the likeliness and chances of marrying across the language border. The social exchange theory might give interesting insights in the role of social status in the chances of finding a partner from the other linguistic community. Table 4 shows the proportions of the types of marriages per social class for the groom and bride. The largest differences in the proportions were found in the status of the groom: in the highest social class, 14,8% of the marriages was mixed versus 4,8% in the class of 'farmers'. In the two highest social classes of the bride, the highest shares of mixed marriages were found, although the differences between the social classes were less large compared to the social status of the groom.

The social exchange theory might give deeper insights in the results of table 3: as the Flemish community was perceived as lower-classed compared to the Walloon community, the Flemish individual had to offer other 'benefits' in order to balance out the social downwards marriage from the perspective of the Walloon partner. A higher social status of an individual might have compensated this unbalance, which thus heightened the chances of a mixed marriage for persons from the higher social

classes. However, as stated before, higher Flemish classes often used French as their main language. Marriages that have been classified as 'mixed' in this paper might in reality thus have been in-group marriages instead of out-group marriages.

Both women and men from the class of 'farmers' had the least share of mixed marriages. On the one hand, this might have been caused by their status, which made them a less attractive potential partner from the perspective of the Walloon individual. On the other hand, persons from this social class might also have a less tendency to marry geographical exogenous, as they were more bound to their grounds. This might have resulted in a lower proportion of more geographically distant Flemish-Walloon marriages. Although the third hypothesis – regarding the social status of the individual and the chances and tendency to marry across the language border – can be confirmed by the results from table 4, it is not possible to conclude whether these different proportions per social class were caused by the tendencies of the individuals themselves, or their attractiveness as potential partner from the perspective of the 'other'.

The results of the social backgrounds of the groom and bride moreover give further insights in gender differences and the chances to marry across the language border. As the social status of a women at that time often was linked to the social status of her husband, the social status of an individual female might have had less impact on her chances of marrying across the language border. This might have been translated into fewer differences in percentages of Flemish-Walloon marriages between the social classes of the brides. The social status of the groom however, might have played a larger role, as his social status might have been decisive in the social status of the married couple. This might have resulted into larger differences in the share of mixed marriages between the male social categories. Men from higher social classes had more 'benefits' to offer compared to men with a lower social status, which might have increased the chances of a Flemish-Walloon marriage for higher-classed men.

The social status of the Flemish individual in particular might thus have played a decisive role in the share of mixed marriages in the border municipalities, as it might have been a factor of major importance on their attractiveness as a partner from Walloon perspectives. However, the low share of mixed marriages in the border municipalities might also be a result of marginalization of Walloon migrants on the local Flemish marriage markets. Table 5 therefore shows the proportions of different types of marriages per migration status. The migration status of the individual has been determined by the place of birth and residence that have been noted on the marriage certificate. If these places were similar, the person has been classified as a native. The category 'other' consists of all other movements – e.g. interprovincial migration in provinces other than Flemish-Brabant.

The results in the table show that of all Flemings, Flemish men that had moved to Wallonia had the highest proportions of mixed marriages (5,6%). Due to the proxy of language, this type of marriage has been classified as an out-group marriage. However, the fact that these individuals lived in a Walloon municipality at the time of their marriage, might indicate that they have been part of the French-speaking community. The use of the place of birth to determine the spoken language of an individual might

therefore overestimate the share of mixed marriages, as a marriage between two French-speaking persons is better typified as in-group contact instead of out-group contact. The largest part of Walloons that married in the Flemish municipalities married a Flemish partner (84,6% of the grooms and 71,9% of the brides). These classified out-group marriages however might thus also have been in-group marriages between a Walloon and a French-speaking person that was born in a Flemish municipality, which might have resulted into an overestimation of the out-group, Flemish-Walloon marriages.

Considerable percentages of Walloon males and females that married with a fellow Walloon in the examined Flemish border municipalities (respectively 12,4% and 22,9%) were found. These in-group marriages between Walloon migrants might confirm the hypothesis regarding the marginalization of migrants on the local marriage markets. However, interesting differences in the proportions of mixed marriages of local Flemish and local Walloon migrants were found. If hypothesis 4 is true, the share of Flemish-Walloon marriages should also be significantly higher for Flemings that migrated within the province of Flemish-Brabant. The results in table 5 however, show the opposite: the shares of mixed marriages of these types of migrants were among the lowest: Flemish local migrants were thus more likely to marry a fellow Fleming. The largest proportions of Flemish-Walloon marriages with Flemish migrants were among those that had similar places of birth and residence (natives) outside the province of Flemish-Brabant, but married in one of the border municipalities – which resulted into a migrant status. 4,5% of these male migrants and 12% of these female migrants married with a Walloon.

The results of the different categories give further insight in who might have been perceived as 'the other' and who thus might have been socially included or excluded: local Flemish migrants might not have been perceived as true 'others' on the local marriage market – as they were part of the same linguistic community and were no distant migrants – which translated in relatively similar chances of marrying in-group or out-group as fellow native Flemings. Walloons on the other hand were part of the other linguistic community which might have made them a more visible 'other'. The native Flemings outside the province of Flemish-Brabant might also have had less ties with the local Flemish community, which might have resulted in larger marginalization of social life and might therefore have caused them to be part of the same, more separated marriage market of Walloon migrants.

Table 5: *Share of types of marriages per migration status*

Type of marriage		Native Fleming	Flemish migrant in Flemish-Brabant	Inter-provincial Flemish migrant	Walloon migrant	Flemish migrant to Wallonia	Flemish migrant to Brussels	Flemish native outside Flemish-Brabant	Other	Born in Brussels or foreigner	Unknown
Groom	Flemish	95,4%	95,8%	94,0%	0,0%	92,8%	94,0%	94,4%	89,3%	0,0%	94,40%
	Flemish-Walloon	2,4%	2,2%	3,3%	84,6%	5,6%	3,2%	4,5%	4,8%	0,0%	2,90%
	Walloon	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	12,4%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0%
	Other	2,2%	2,0%	2,6%	3,0%	1,7%	2,8%	1,2%	5,9%	100,0%	2,70%
	Total	51300	11495	2663	4680	719	794	1930	1301	2862	1154
Bride	Flemish	91,3%	93,5%	91,0%	0,0%	88,7%	91,8%	87,0%	86,2%	0,0%	91,80%
	Flemish-Walloon	5,5%	3,7%	5,6%	71,9%	9,0%	5,5%	12,0%	6,3%	0,0%	6,00%
	Walloon	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	22,9%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,00%
	Other	3,3%	2,8%	3,4%	5,1%	2,3%	2,7%	1,0%	7,5%	100,0%	2,30%
	Total	55938	11638	2295	2528	177	202	1175	893	2107	1811

10. Logistic regression

In order to further examine factors as social and migration status, but also the role of education (literacy) and age, it will be examined which Flemish individual was more likely to marry out-group (Flemish-Walloon) compared to Flemings that married in-group (exclusively Flemish). The dependent variable measures out-group marriages versus in-group marriages from the perspectives of the Flemish groom and bride. The independent variables were social status, migration status, literacy, age and age differences between the partners. Model 1 only includes the social status of the groom and bride. In model 2, the migration status of both partners was included. Model 3 contains information on the literacy of the partners and Model 4 was expanded with variables measuring age of the partners and age differences between them, to allocate changing structures in age at marriage during the nineteenth century. The reference categories of categorical data were chosen by their size: the largest groups were chosen as references. The data sample contained more marriages with a Flemish bride, compared to the number of marriages with a Flemish man, due to the fact that at the time persons often married in the place of residence of the bride.

The majority of the *odds* in the regressions were negative: Flemings in the Flemish border municipalities had a stronger tendency and higher chances of an in-group marriage with a fellow Fleming compared to an out-group marriage with a Walloon from across the language border. Controlled for the other effects, Flemish men from the highest social class had compared to in-group marriages the highest *odds* of an out-group marriage (,442). The results for the highest female social class were not significant. However, from the perspective of the Flemish bride, grooms from the highest social classes had the highest *odds* (,852) on a Flemish-Walloon marriage, compared to an exclusive Flemish marriage.

The results from the regression moreover show negative *odds* on a migrant status of the Flemish groom and bride (-,196 and -,361) on a Flemish-Walloon marriage compared to an exclusive Flemish marriage, compared to a native status. The results on the effects of literacy were not significant in the regression of the Flemish groom. From the perspective of the Flemish bride, both illiteracy caused negative *odds* on a marriage with a Walloon, compared to marriages with a Fleming and compared to literate grooms and brides. The results of the fourth model, that contained the age of the groom and bride and age differences between the partners produced few statistically significant results. Flemish brides had slightly positive *odds* on a mixed marriage, compared to an in-group marriage, with an older partner, compared to marriages with a partner of the same age.

		Model 1 B	Model 1 p	Model 2 B	Model 2 p	Model 3 B	Model 3 p	Model 4 B	Model 4 p
Constant		-3,580	,000	-5,244	,000	-5,273	,000	-5,403	,000
Social status groom	*Ref. Lower skilled workers*								
	Higher education and status	,442	,000	,344	,000	,359	,000	,333	,000
	Farmers	-,279	,001	-,375	,000	-,387	,000	-,432	,000
	Unskilled (farm) workers	-,033	,649	-,018	,807	-,031	,678	-,025	,735
	Unspecified Unskilled workers	,167	,013	,024	,733	-,012	,869	-,008	,917
	Unknown	,206	,157	-,061	,717	-,081	,631	-,044	,793
Social status bride	*Ref. Lower skilled workers*								
	Higher education and status	,128	,225	-,287	,009	-,281	,011	-,289	,010
	Farmers	-,462	,000	-,217	,063	-,210	,072	-,210	,074
	Unskilled (farm) workers	,269	,001	-,575	,000	-,575	,000	-,557	,000
	Unspecified Unskilled workers	-,261	,012	-,313	,004	-,328	,002	-,337	,002
	Unknown	-,195	,015	-,295	,000	-,282	,001	-,287	,001
Migration status groom	*Ref. Native Fleming*								
	Migrant			-,196	,001	-,202	,000	-,217	,000
	Unknown			-,023	,916	-,053	,811	-,058	,798
Migration status bride	*Ref. Native Fleming*								
	Migrant			3,48	,000	3,474	,000	3,455	,000
	Unknown			2,263	,000	2,242	,000	2,222	,000
Literacy groom	*Ref. literate*								
	Illiterate					,013	,843	,002	,972
Literacy bride	*Ref. literate*								
	Illiterate					,093	,130	,060	,340
Age groom								,034	,087
Age groom^2								,000	,141
Age bride								-,036	,078
Age bride ^2								,000	,077
Age difference	*Ref. Same age*								
	Groom >2 years older							,118	,125
	Bride >2 years older							,200	,022

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
		B	p	B	p	B	p	B	p
Constant		-2,584	,000	-3,069	,000	-2,994	,000	-3,544	0,000
Social status groom	*Ref. Lower skilled workers*								
	Higher education and status	,862	,000	,648	,000	,609	,000	,578	0,000
	Farmers	-,653	,000	-,495	,000	-,473	,000	-,505	0,000
	Unskilled (farm) workers	-,382	,000	-,622	,000	-,570	,000	-,565	0,000
	Unspecified Unskilled workers	-,406	,000	-,415	,000	-,311	,000	-,315	0,000
	Unknown	,067	,477	,019	,854	,061	,558	,058	0,581
Social status bride	*Ref. Lower skilled workers*								
	Higher education and status	-,091	,215	-,132	,079	-,143	,057	-,156	0,041
	Farmers	-,210	,003	-,233	,001	-,243	,001	-,259	0,000
	Unskilled (farm) workers	-,575	,000	-,502	,000	-,524	,000	-,518	0,000
	Unspecified Unskilled workers	-,184	,010	-,218	,003	-,169	,021	-,178	0,015
	Unknown	,013	,801	-,012	,814	-,050	,344	-,058	0,274
Migration status groom	*Ref. Native Fleming*								
	Migrant			1,488	,000	1,503	,000	1,486	0,000
	Unknown			,794	,000	,885	,000	,890	0,000
Migration status bride	*Ref. Native Fleming*								
	Migrant			-,362	,000	-,344	,000	-,355	0,000
	Unknown			-,200	,117	-,121	,339	-,123	0,332
Literacy groom	*Ref. Literate*					-,142	,005	-0,152	0,003
Literacy bride	*Ref. Literate*					-,187	,000	-0,207	0,000
Age groom								0,024	0,110
Age groom^2								0,000	0,188
Age bride								0,003	0,849
Age bride ^2								0,000	0,642
Age difference	*Ref. Same age*								
	Groom >2 years older							0,149	0,005
	Bride >2 years older							0,127	0,043

The results of the analyses, show that during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the share of mixed Flemish-Walloon marriages gradually decreased. Large differences in the tendency to marry with a partner from directly adjacent Walloon or Flemish municipalities between the Flemish border municipalities were found. These differences presumably occurred due to differences in historical contexts: the municipalities with the largest shares of Flemish-Walloon marriages were part of French-speaking entities before the legislation of the linguistic border. The classified out-group marriages in these municipalities however, should in fact be classified as in-group marriages, as it is possible that these Flemish municipalities contained relatively large minorities of French-speaking individuals.

The descriptive analyses and logistic regressions gave further insights in the chances and tendencies of an individual to marry a fellow Belgian from across the language border. Flemings from higher social classes had compared to other social classes higher chances of an out-group marriage. Although the Flemish community was perceived as socially lower-classed, the higher status of the Flemish individual might have balanced out this perception and might therefore have increased the chances of an out-group marriage of these individuals compared to other Flemish social classes. It is, however, also possible that these higher-placed Flemings were French-speaking, which made the mixed marriages in practice from a linguistic perspective in-group instead of out-group. The results of the social status furthermore gave insights in gender differences: The social status of the Flemish individual might have played a larger role for men than women, as the shares of mixed marriages differed more between the social classes of Flemish men compared to Flemish women. The migration status of the individual might also have played a role, as certain migrants might have faced marginalization on the marriage markets in the Flemish border municipalities – e.g. more distant Flemish migrants – which might have increased their chances of marrying a fellow, Walloon migrant.

11. Conclusion

Ever since the Belgian independence, the share of marriages between persons from the French-speaking Walloon community and Dutch-speaking Flemish community has gradually decreased. Due to major nineteenth-century processes of industrialization and nation-building, contact within the nations increased in Western European nation-states. These processes ultimately have led to the integration of these states with fewer demographic diversity on provincial level and larger differences on nation level. However, the Belgian case might be an exception: due to the unequal economic developments, social unbalance between Flanders and Wallonia and developing language quarrels, the Belgian nation-state might have developed into an opposite trend: instead of a national integration that was expected to be the result of the creation of a unitary state, the creation of Belgium as a nation-state lead to a turn around into a federal state at the end of the twentieth century.

By using the share of mixed marriages as an indicator of contact between individuals and ultimately communities, patterns of local contract could be studied. The examination of individual characteristics has given a further insight in the chances and tendency of individuals to marry a fellow

Belgian from the other linguistic community, compared to in-group marriages. Moreover, by examining the overall developments in the trend of mixed marriages between Walloons and Flemings, further insights in the unique nation-building process of the Belgian state were given. Although the language quarrels between the Flemish and Walloon communities presumably have further complicated contact between the communities, the share of marriages between persons from these groups was never large. Already before the creation of the Belgian nation-state, the Flemish and Walloon communities were mainly separated, with few (marriage) contact between them on a local level. The unequal economic developments of the two regions and the increasing social unbalance between Flemings and Walloons might have increased the already existing aversion towards each other. These developments might have contributed to the growing apart of Flanders and Wallonia, which resulted into the creation of the Belgium federal state, with a high level of autonomy for the regions and little (marriage) contact between Flemish and Walloon Belgians nowadays.

Literature

Ashworth, G.J., 'Language society and the state in Belgium', *Journal of Area Studies* 1:1 (1980) 28-33.

Bourhis, Richard, 'Social psychological aspects of French-English relations in Quebec. From vitality to linguicism' in: Idem (ed.), *Decline and Prospects of the English-Speaking Communities of Quebec* (2012) 313-378.

Coontz, Stephanie, *Marriage, a history. How love conquered marriage* (New York 2005).

Deschouwer, Kris, *The Politics of Belgium. Governing a Divided Society* (Hampshire 2009).

Ekamper, Peter, Frans van Poppel and Kees Mandemakers, 'Widening horizons? The georgraphy of the marriage market in nineteenth and early-twentieth century Netherlands' in: E. Merchant, G. Deane, M. Gutman and K. Sylvester (ed.), *Navigating Time and Space in Population Studies* (Dordrecht 2011) 115-160.

Falter, Rolf, 'Een aparte weg naar het federalisme' in: Kas Deprez and Louis Vos (ed.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000.* (1999) 218-235.

Gal, Susan, 'Peasant men can't get wives. Language change and sex roles in a bilingual community', *Language in Society* 7:1 (1978) 1-16.

Homans, George C., 'Social behavior as exchange', *American Journal of Sociology* 6:63 (1958) 597-606.

Hoog, Kees de, 'Partnerselectie. Manoeuvreren tussen sociale druk en individuele vrijheid' in: Jan Kok and Marco H.D. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Genegenheid en gelegenheid. Twee eeuwen partnerkeuze en huwelijk* (Amsterdam 2005) 85-102.

Knippenberg, Hans and Ben de Pater, *De eenwording van Nederland. Schaalvergroting en integratie sinds 1800* (tweede druk; Nijmegen 1990).

Leeuwen, Marco H.D. van, Ineke Maas, Saskia Hin and Koen Matthijs, 'Socio-economic modernization and enduring language barriers. Choosing a marriage partner in Flemish communities, 1821-193' *History of the Family* 24:1 (2019) 94-122.

Leeuwen, Marco H.D. van, Ineke Maas and Kees Mandemakers, 'Het kiezen van een huwelijkspartner 1840-1940. De rol van de familie' in: Jan Kok and Marco H.D. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Genegenheid en gelegenheid. Twee eeuwen partnerkeuze en huwelijk* (Amsterdam 2005) 63-84.

Matthijs, Koen, *De mateloze negentiende eeuw. Bevolking, huwelijk, gezin en sociale verandering* (Leuven 2001).

Marynissen, Ann, 'De lange weg naar een Nederlandse standaardtaal' in: Gert de Stutter (ed.), *De vele gezichten van het Nederlands in Vlaanderen. Een inleiding tot de variatietaalkunde* (Leuven 2017) 74-75.

Metsenaere, Machteld de, and Els Witte, 'Taalverlies en Taalbehoud bij de Vlamingen te Brussel in de negentiende eeuw', *BMGN: Low Countries Historical Review* 105:1 (1990) 1-38.

Müller, Heidy, 'De taalsituatie in Zwitserland', *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde* (1997) 43-59.

Puschmann, Paul, Nina van den Driessche, Per-Olof Grönberg, Bart van de Putte and Koen Matthijs, 'From outsiders to insiders? Partner choice and marriage among internal migrants in Antwerp, Rotterdam & Stockholm, 1850-1930', *Historical Social Research* 40:2 (2015) 319-358.

Puschmann, Paul, and Koen Matthijs, 'Social inclusion among Flemish and Walloon migrants in Brussels, 1795-1914. Patterns of assortative mating in a context of changing political regimes, growing inequalities and shifting language practices and policies' (2016).

Puschmann, Paul, 'Love, sex and sexuality. Balancing economic considerations, socio-cultural expectations, and personal desires' in: Idem, *A cultural history of marriage in the age of empires, 1800-1920* (Londen en New York 2020) 117-138.

Rutten, Willibrord, 'Twee nationaliteiten op één kussen. Huwelijk en partnerkeuze in de Zuid-Limburgse grensstreek in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw' in: Jan Kok and Marco H.D. van

Leeuwen (ed.), *Genegenheid en gelegenheid. Twee eeuwen partnerkeuze en huwelijk* (Amsterdam 2005) 159-180.

Saey, Pieter, Christian Kesteloot and Christian Vandermotten, ' Ongelijke economische ontwikkeling aan de basis van de federalisering', in: Kas Deprez and Louis Vos (ed.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000* (1999) 207-217.

Schrover, Marlou, 'Huwelijk, gender, migratie en integratie. Partnerkeuze van Duitsers in Utrecht in de negentiende eeuw' in: Jan Kok and Marco H.D. van Leeuwen (ed.), *Genegenheid en gelegenheid. Twee eeuwen partnerkeuze en huwelijk* (Amsterdam 2005) 135-158.

Shorter, Edward, *The making of the modern family* (New York 1975).

Velthoven, Harry van, *Waarheen met België? Van taalstrijd tot communautaire conflicten. Een selectie uit 35 jaar wetenschappelijk onderzoek* (tweede druk; Brussel 2011).

Vos, Louis, 'Van België naar Vlaanderen' in: Kas Deprez and idem (ed.), *Nationalisme in België. Identiteiten in beweging 1780-2000* (1999) 91-103.

Watkins, Susan Cotts, *From Provinces into Nations. Demographic integration in Western Europe, 1870-1960* (New Jersey 1991).

Statbel, Huwelijken meer cijfers, https://statbel.fgov.be/nl/themas/bevolking/huwelijken-en-echtscheidingen/huwelijken/plus (05-03-2021).

Data
Flemish Brabant and Brussels. Data Set Release 2020.04 (Centre of Sociological Research, Research Group Family and Population Studies, KU Leuven).

Appendix

Border municipality	Directly adjacent Flemish municipality	Directly adjacent Walloon municipality
Bever	Herne, Geraardsbergen, Galmaarden	Lessen, Opzullik
Herne	Bever, Galmaarden, Gooik, Pepingen	Edingen
Pepingen	Herne, Gooik, Lennik, Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, Halle	Edingen, Roosbeek, Tubeke
Halle	Pepingen, Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, Beersel	Tubeke, Kasteelbrakel, Eigenbrakel
Beersel	Halle, Sint-Pieters-Leeuw, Drogenbos, Linkebeek, Sint-Genesius-Rode	Eigenbrakel
Sint-Genesius-Rode	Beersel, Linkebeek, Hoeilaart	Eigenbrakel, Waterloo
Hoeilaart	Sint-Genesius-Rode, Overijse	Terhulpen
Overijse	Hoeilaart, Tervuren, Huldenberg	Terhulpen, Rixensart, Waver
Huldenberg	Overijse, Tervuren, Bertem, Oud-Heverlee	Waver, Graven
Oud-Heverlee	Huldenberg, Bertem, Leuven, Bierbeek	Graven
Bierbeek	Oud-Heverlee, Leuven, Lubbeek, Boutersem	Bevekom
Boutersem	Bierbeek, Lubbeek, Tienen, Hoegaarden	Bevekom
Hoegaarden	Boutersem, Tienen	Bevekom, Geldenaken, Heilissem
Tienen	Hoegaarden, Boutersem, Lubbeek, Glabbeek, Kortenaken, Linter, Landen	Heilissem
Landen	Tienen, Linter, Zoutleeuw, Sint-Truiden, Gingelom	Heilissem, Lijsem, Hannuit