

Transnational involvement and social integration

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***Abstract** In this article we offer a quantitative examination of the extent to which migrants from various countries are involved in transnational activities and have transnational identifications. The study is based on a survey of 300 immigrants (from the USA, Japan, Iraq, former-Yugoslavia, Morocco and the Dutch Antilles) living in the Netherlands. The respondents are deliberately chosen to include different categories of immigrants. Transnational activities constitute a substantial part of their lives and are to a large extent socio-cultural. Many migrants also transfer money abroad. Professional economic activities were rare and mainly limited to the American group. As a whole, our respondents identify more with other compatriots living in the Netherlands than with people living outside the Netherlands. The research also found that transnational involvement in general does not impede ‘immigrant integration’. Migrant groups that are known as poorly integrated into Dutch society are not more involved in transnational activities and have no stronger identifications with the country of origin than other groups. However, within the Moroccan and Antillean groups those respondents with the weakest labour market position identify more strongly with the country of origin than others. Strong identifications with compatriots living elsewhere and withdrawal from Dutch society may reinforce their poor labour market integration*

1. Introduction

In this article we examine how transnational involvement of immigrants living in the Netherlands relates to their incorporation or integration into Dutch society. As various authors have observed, the old concept of immigration that immigrants settle permanently and assimilate in the host country has lost significance. The modern transmigrant is at home in several different social worlds, speaks several languages, participates in cross-border social networks and political movements, and sometimes makes a living with transnational economic activities. But what do these transnational activities and identifications of modern ‘transmigrants’ imply for their incorporation or integration into the host society? This is the central research question in this article. Using survey data of 300 immigrants in the Netherlands coming from six different Western and non-Western countries we examine their transnational involvement and whether this impedes their integration into Dutch society.

There are two central concepts in our argument, transnationalism and immigrant incorporation or integration. The concept of ‘transnationalism’ came up in the early 1990s when anthropologists noticed intense interactions between sending and receiving countries of international migrants (Glick Schiller et al. 1992). As Glick Schiller and Fouron (1999: 344) state, ‘transnational migration is a pattern of migration in which persons, although they move across international borders, settle, and establish relations in a new state, maintain ongoing social connections with the polity from which they originated. In transnational migration people literally live their lives across international borders. Such persons are best identified as “transmigrants”.’ The

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result is the genesis of ‘transnational communities’, ‘transnational social fields’ and ‘transnational social spaces’ (Faist 2000; Guarnizo et al. 2003; Vertovec 1999). For modern transmigrants, primary social connections and identifications are less in relation to social groups in a national context than to transnational communities.

Concepts such as transnationalism and transmigrants have led to several debates (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Levitt et al. 2003; Portes et al. 1999, 2002; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). One debate deals with the novelty of the phenomenon. Various authors argue that transnational activities and lasting solidarity with sending countries have always existed (Gerbner 2000). However, as Portes and others convincingly argue, modern transportation and communication technologies have allowed transnational activities and movements to reach a scope and intensity that were impossible in former times (Portes et al. 1999, 2002). A second debate deals with the actors behind transnationalism. Who are the transmigrants? Some authors want to confine the notion of transnationalism ‘to a new class of immigrants, economic entrepreneurs or political activists who conduct cross-border activities on a *regular* basis’ (Guarnizo et al. 2003: 1212). Others argue that transnationalism may not be restricted to professional connections and activities, and that lasting family ties and remittances have a huge impact on both sending and (immigrant communities in) receiving countries (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Staring 2001). Lastly, some authors argue that bodily geographic mobility is not a necessary requirement for transnational involvement. Besides migrants who regularly travel back and forth on a professional or nonprofessional basis, there are also migrants who live primarily in the country of origin or the host country, but whose lives and identities are still integrally entwined with the people, social relations and resources in other countries (Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Levitt 2003; Vertovec 2001). These distinctions between professional and nonprofessional activities and between bodily geographic and non-bodily geographic mobility will be taken into account in our operationalization of forms of transnational involvement.

Both adherents and critics of the notion of transnationalism draw attention to the limited empirical basis of these theories. Reflections on transnationalism and transmigrants are often either theoretical or based on qualitative case studies. As these case studies tend to focus on migrants who *are* involved in transnational activities, they give the impression that transnationalism has become the major form of immigrant incorporation. Studies of random samples of migrants who may or may not be involved in transnational activities are rare and limited to the USA (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Portes et al. 2002). Our research focuses on a European country and, what is more important, an advanced welfare state, the Netherlands. This difference in institutional context may influence what transnational activities and transnational identifications imply for immigrants. In the USA, with marginal social security, transnational economic activities may be a crucial alternative income strategy for immigrants. In European countries like the Netherlands many non-Western immigrants live on social security. For them, (non-economic) transnational activities and strong transnational identification may function as a comforting safe haven that in effect impedes their incorporation in the host society. This is where the second concept, immigrant incorporation or integration, comes into view.

The question of whether transnational activities and identifications impede or support the incorporation of immigrants into the host society has to our knowledge not been examined extensively. Before elaborating on the relationship between transnationalism and immigrant integration, we have to make some remarks about the latter concept in general. How immigrants adapt to their new environment has always been important in sociological research. Sociologists refer to assimilation, acculturation,

incorporation and integration (Alba and Nee 1997; Engbersen 2003; Esser 2003; Gordon 1964; Vermeulen and Penninx 2000). 'Immigrant integration' in general refers to the incorporation of new elements (immigrants) into an existing social system. There is a general consensus that integration is a multi-dimensional concept, although authors differ on what the relevant dimensions of integration are. Many authors distinguish socio-economic aspects of integration ('social positioning') from social and cultural aspects (interethnic relations, cultural adjustment and shared norms). Here we follow a distinction widely used in Dutch migration literature between structural integration on the one hand and social and cultural integration on the other. The former refers to the social position of migrants in the host society, particularly in terms of their level of education and position in the labour market. Social and cultural integration refers, on the one hand, to informal social contacts of immigrants with native Dutch people and, on the other, to the extent to which immigrants endorse the host society's prevailing moral standards and values (Vermeulen and Penninx 2000; see also Dagevos 2001). Empirical research shows that structural and cultural dimensions of integration are strongly related. Migrants with good social positions (high education, stable job) generally also have more informal contact with native Dutch people and more often endorse 'modern' ideas and values than other migrants (Dagevos 2001; Odé 2002).

Despite limited knowledge on the relation between transnationalism and integration, the current prevailing political view is that the two are at odds. The terrorist attacks on New York and Washington (2001), Madrid (2003) and London (2005), which can be interpreted as incidents of transnational political activism, have strengthened this point of view. Since 2001, Western states have increasingly been raising questions about the allegiance and political *bona fides* of their immigrant residents (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). In the Netherlands, for instance, the government opposes dual citizenship because it deems unacceptable the resulting double loyalties of migrants. Migrants should choose their host country (in this case the Netherlands).¹ Transnational activities (like sending remittances) and a continuing identification with the sending country or with internationally dispersed migrant communities (the so-called diaspora) are often perceived as an impediment to immigrant integration into the host country.

In academic literature, one can find two opposing assumptions about the relationship of transnationalism and integration. One position is that transnational economic activities, such as international trade, may constitute an alternative income strategy particularly for underprivileged immigrants (Portes et al. 1999). More generally, in a study on transnational entrepreneurs in the USA, Portes and others show that transnational entrepreneurs have strong connections with their compatriots, both in the USA and the country of origin, but are also very well integrated into American society. In other words, migrants' strong transnational involvement and integration into the host country do not rule each other out (Portes et al. 2002). On the other hand, this may differ according to class: 'Those [immigrants] who have income, education, and language skills are more likely to be able to choose transnational activism, while those with less social and cultural capital are more likely to be forced into it' (Levitt 2003: 183). For underprivileged migrant groups, continuing transnational identifications and retaining the customs of the home country may rather impede adequate incorporation into the host country (Joppke and Morawska 2003; Levitt 2003; Morawska 2003).

In this article we examine empirically how various migrant groups' patterns of transnationalism relate to their integration into Dutch society. Before doing so, however, we will describe the transnational activities and transnational identifications of

our respondents in detail. To start, we have to define the concept of transnationalism more precisely. Concepts like ‘transnational fields’ or ‘transnational communities’ are rather vague for empirical research. Here we use the term *transnational involvement*, which includes both *transnational activities* and *transnational identifications*. The former refers to migrants’ cross-border activities and practices. The latter refers to the extent to which migrants living in the Netherlands identify with compatriots living outside the country (in the sending country or in the international diaspora). We explain the precise operationalization of transnational activities and identifications in the subsequent section. Next, we describe the transnational activities of our respondents, their transnational identifications and finally we return to the central research question about the relationship between transnational involvement and immigrant integration.

2. Research, definitions and operationalizations

This article is based on a survey of 300 respondents from six different immigrant groups living in the Netherlands. The survey consisted of structured questions on the respondents’ involvement in various transnational activities, transnational identifications, and various facets of their integration into Dutch society. As we wanted to paint as varied a picture of migrants as possible, we interviewed migrants from three different categories: older immigrant groups or ‘ethnic minorities’ in the Netherlands (Morocco and Dutch Antilles, former Dutch colonies in the West Indies); more recent immigrants from what count as ‘typical refugee countries’ (former Yugoslavia, Iraq); and so-called ‘new labour migrants’ and their partners from prosperous Western countries (the United States, Japan).

We interviewed 50 people from each immigrant group. In most cases junior researchers who came from the respective migrant groups carried out the interviews. Respondents were selected and approached by the so-called snowball method. In other words, at the end of each interview respondents were asked whether they knew of any other potential respondents in their community. The interviewers also looked for respondents in their private social networks, which guaranteed access to them. The disadvantage, however, is that interviewed respondents cannot be considered representative of whole immigrant populations. Another point worth mentioning is that not every respondent is a typical example of the category to which he or she belongs. For instance, one in four Moroccan respondents and one in five respondents from former Yugoslavia were second-generation. The latter group consists of children of the first wave of Yugoslavian immigrants who came to the Netherlands in the 1960s as guest workers. There was practically no one from the second generation among the Iraqi, Japanese and American respondents. The advantage of including children of immigrants in the sample is that we obtained more variation in the period of residence in the Netherlands.

Due to their different migration backgrounds, the groups also differed in terms of social position. For example, more than three-quarters of the American and Japanese respondents have high levels of education. The same goes for almost half the Iraqi respondents, but for less than a quarter of the Yugoslavian, Antillean and Moroccan respondents. More than 80 per cent of the American and Japanese respondents are formally employed. The share of working respondents is the lowest in the Moroccan group (only 36 per cent), but this is also because we interviewed a number of students in this group. In the other groups (Yugoslavs, Antilleans and Iraqis), the share of working people varies from 50 to 60 per cent.

Transnational activities and identifications

In this article we focus on two dimensions of transnationalism – *transnational activities* and *transnational identifications*. These two dimensions together give us insight into the transnational involvement of migrants. By *transnational activities* we mean cross-border activities of an economic, political or socio-cultural nature. In operationalizing these dimensions, we draw inspiration from a study by Al-Ali et al. (2001) of Bosnian and Eritrean refugees, in which the authors develop an empirically founded typology of transnational activities. This typology distinguishes between transnational activities aimed at the country of origin and activities aimed at the host country. The former involve cross-border activities in the true sense of the word, such as money transfers, or visits to and political participation in the country of origin. Then there are transnational activities within the host country: visiting cultural events with artists from the country of origin, participating in meetings that many compatriots attend, or mobilizing political support for parties or movements in the country of origin. Our questions on transnational activities were strictly confined to cross-border activities between the country of origin and the host country, and did not concern activities or contacts within the internationally dispersed migrant communities or diaspora.

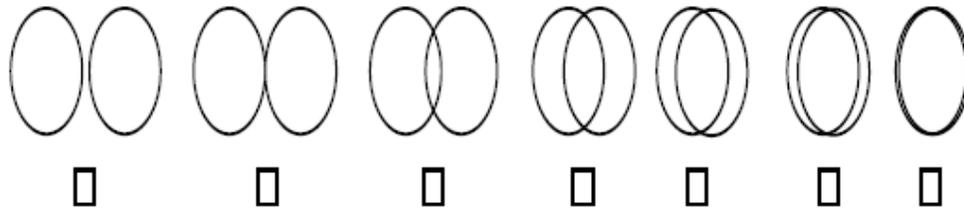
A second key concept is *transnational identification*. This refers to the extent to which migrants living in the Netherlands identify with compatriots outside the country (cross-border identifications). Operationalizing the concept of ‘transnational identification’ is based on some elementary notions from socio-psychological, sociological and anthropological literature. An essential point of departure is that people construct their social identities (Bauman 2004; Jenkins 1996; Verkuyten 1999). These social identities indicate how people define themselves in relation to their social environment. It is not about what distinguishes one individual from the other, but about what is shared with others. The social identity of a person refers to two basic questions in life: (1) *to whom do I belong?* and (2) *how should I behave?* These two key questions relate to the group dimension and the normative dimension of social identity respectively (Douglas 1978, 1996; Wildavsky 1987, 1989). Our research, however, focuses on *ethnic* identifications, namely the extent to which people feel related to a particular ethnic group and orient themselves towards the norms and values of that group. We examined the extent to which respondents identify with native Dutch residents, with compatriots living in the Netherlands, or with compatriots living either in the country of origin or elsewhere outside the Netherlands. It is only in the latter two cases that *transnational* identifications occur. Strong identifications with compatriots living in the Netherlands indicate strong ethnic identifications, but not transnational identifications.

In the survey, we used two different tools to measure the respondents’ ethnic identifications. First, we presented the respondents with 50 statements about to whom they feel close, are proud of, are occasionally ashamed of, whose norms and values are taken into account, and with whom they agree on ‘the important things in life’. For every question the respondents could indicate how they viewed their relations *vis-à-vis* (1) native Dutch people, (2) compatriots living in the Netherlands, (3) compatriots living in the country of origin, and (4) compatriots in third countries. On the basis of our respondents’ answers to the statements we distinguished the two dimensions of social identities that were already mentioned: the group dimension and the normative dimension. Some questions focused on how close respondents feel to persons belonging to various other groups, others referred to on whose norms and values the respondents orient themselves. It appeared that both dimensions could indeed be distinguished quite well in the respondents’ answers. That is why we constructed two scales representing both dimensions of identification (group dimension

and normative dimension).²

One limitation of using the survey questions method is, however, that it partly depends on the respondents' language skills (although many were interviewed in their own language) and on their own (partly culturally determined) interpretation of the questions. To avoid these problems, we added a second, non-verbal method for establishing ethnic identifications. The respondents were asked to indicate graphically how close they felt to native Dutch people, compatriots in the Netherlands, compatriots in the country of origin, and compatriots elsewhere. The respondents could indicate whether they saw their relationship with another category as two separate circles, as two completely overlapping circles, or as something in between these two extremes (see Figure 1). The outcomes of this so-called circle score can be interpreted as the degree to which respondents feel close to various groups of people. Here again, a strong sense of closeness with compatriots living outside the Netherlands (in the country of origin or elsewhere) is considered as transnational. Finally, we calculated a total score of identifications by adding up the outcomes of all measurements.³

Figure 1: Ethnic identifications (circle score)



As mentioned above, we distinguish a structural and a socio-cultural dimension of integration. The structural one was measured by using various characteristics of the respondents (educational level, employment status, living on social benefits). The socio-cultural one was measured by using the respondents' answers relating to their contact with native Dutch people (number of native Dutch in social network) and to their identifications with native Dutch people.

3. Transnational activities

Table 1 shows to what extent respondents of various migrant groups are involved in all kinds of transnational activities. A distinction is made between economic, political and socio-cultural activities.

Everyday economic activities such as sending money or goods to the country of origin, home ownership or donations to charities in the country of origin occur relatively often, although distinctions can be made between the various migrant groups in this respect. This type of support of family and/or relatives in the country of origin is found very often among Moroccans, Iraqis and Yugoslavs, but much less often among Americans, Japanese and Antilleans. The main reason why Americans and Japanese migrants do not support family and/or relatives in their country of origin is no doubt that the latter do not rely on the support of overseas relatives.

Professional economic activities such as investments in, business dealings with, or business trips to the country of origin were relatively rare among our respondents. Only US and Japanese respondents have regular business contact with their country of

origin. However, since our US and Japanese respondents are predominantly highly skilled with good positions in the business world they can hardly be typified as a new ‘class of immigrant transnational entrepreneurs’ in the sense of Portes et al. (2002). Our US and Japanese respondents in part are employees of large transnational corporations travelling around the world for business.

Table 1: Overview of transnational activities per migrant group (in percentage of the group total)

	Morocco (N= 50)	Dutch Antilles (N= 50)	Iraq (N= 50)	(former) Yugoslavia (N= 50)	Japan (N= 50)	USA (N= 50)
<i>Everyday economic activities</i>						
Transfers money to family	40	16	72	62	2	4
Sends goods to country of origin	28	14	4	54	12	14
Owens house in country of origin	16	8	14	46	24	14
Contributions to charities in country of origin	12	2	30	26	0	26
Total (Involved in at least one activity)	54	28	78	82	32	42
<i>Professional economic activities</i>						
Invests in companies in country of origin	2	2	6	0	10	24
Conducts trade with country of origin	4	2	0	0	8	2
Visits country of origin for business	0	8	0	2	14	32
Total (Involved in at least one activity)	4	10	6	2	22	50
<i>Political activities</i>						
Reads newspapers from country of origin	10	58	62	70	54	66
Keeps in touch with politics in country of origin	70	56	80	76	64	96
Member of political party in country of origin	2	6	24	0	6	20
Participates in demonstrations related to country of origin	4	6	52	58	4	6
Total (Involved in at least one activity)	72	76	88	94	82	100
<i>Sociocultural activities in country of origin</i>						
Visits family/friends in country of origin	90	78	36	92	72	86
Frequent contacts with family in country of origin	72	82	94	92	92	98
Member of social organization in country of origin	2	4	22	0	6	16
Total (Involved in at least one activity)	94	96	94	96	96	100
<i>Sociocultural activities in the host country</i>						
Member of organization related to country of origin	16	16	62	8	18	16
Attends meetings with primarily compatriots	50	60	62	60	38	16
Visits cultural events	56	44	28	34	66	56
Total (Involved in at least one activity)	86	90	96	84	88	68

The figures in this table indicate the percentage of respondents reporting the activity concerned.

The other immigrant groups participate much less in transnational business activities. Immigrant groups with the weakest labour market positions (Moroccans and Antilleans) participate least in these activities. There is also a significant positive relation between involvement in transnational business activities and having a formal job. We may conclude that 'immigrant transnational entrepreneurship' as an alternative route to social success for migrants is rare in the Netherlands.

Political activities relating to the country of origin occur frequently among all migrant groups. The majority of respondents read newspapers from their country of origin, keep up-to-date with the politics of or are members of a political organization in their country of origin and/or occasionally take part in demonstrations against the politics in their country of origin. All US respondents are engaged in at least one of these transnational political activities. That Americans, Yugoslavs and Iraqis are quite up-to-date with political developments in their countries of origin is partly due to extensive media coverage in the Netherlands. Iraqis and Yugoslavs often take part in demonstrations relating to the country of origin. More than half of both groups indicate that they do so occasionally (the empirical research was conducted *before* the 2003 Iraq war). Moroccans are the least involved in transnational political activities. Transnational *socio-cultural activities* are also very frequent. We distinguish between activities in the country of origin and activities in the Netherlands. The former involve, for example, visiting and maintaining contacts with family and friends in the country of origin or being a member of public organizations in the country of origin. In all groups, at least nine out of ten respondents are involved in this type of activity. Almost three-quarters of the US respondents have intensive contact with family and friends at home (at least once a week). Moroccans have the least frequent contact with their families. Nonetheless, half of all Moroccan respondents (including a substantial number of second-generation migrants) contact their country of origin at least once a month.

Last, transnational socio-cultural activities in the Netherlands include going to meetings attended mainly by compatriots, supporting cultural activities featuring artists from the country of origin, and joining migrant or other organizations in the Netherlands with connections to the country of origin. This type of socio-cultural activity occurs very frequently among our respondents. For example, more than half the Moroccan, Antillean, Iraqi and Yugoslav respondents mentioned they occasionally go to meetings that are primarily attended by compatriots. The Japanese and Americans do this much less frequently. Generally, Americans seem to be the least involved in this type of transnational socio-cultural activities in the Netherlands. One conclusion is that transnational activities constitute a substantial part of the lives of migrants in the Netherlands. This goes for all the migrant groups that participated in our survey. A large majority of our respondents maintains intensive contact with family and friends in the country of origin, attend meetings or cultural activities in the Netherlands related to the country of origin, are up-to-date with, and sometimes active in, the politics of the country of origin, and send money and goods to the country of origin on a regular basis. Only the Japanese and Americans do so much less. However, this should not be seen as a sign of less transnational involvement on the part of these migrant groups as they do participate very frequently in other transnational activities.

The second finding is that socio-cultural transnational activities prevail among most of the migrants, followed by political and everyday economic activities. Transnational entrepreneurship is rather rare. We know transnational entrepreneurship exists among migrants in the Netherlands, but apparently not on a large enough scale that it shows up in a limited quantitative survey (Van Tillaart 2001). Third, we

observed considerable differences between the migrant groups with respect to the nature and scope of transnational activities. These differences seem to be related partly to the nature of the migration to the Netherlands. For example, migrants from typical refugee countries (like Iraq and former Yugoslavia) are more strongly involved in political activities, and migrants from groups with many highly skilled labour migrants are involved in international trade. If we add up all the different transnational activities, we see that former Yugoslavs and Americans participate most strongly in transnational activities. The Japanese, Moroccans, and especially the Iraqis and Antilleans are comparatively much less involved in transnational activities (cf. Table 2). These findings already say something about the supposed relationship between transnational involvement and integration into Dutch society. It is untrue that the immigrant groups often mentioned as being poorly integrated into Dutch society (Moroccans, Antilleans) show more transnational involvement: quite the contrary. Fourth, we examined whether the differences in transnational activities between the various migrant groups result from differences in personal characteristics of the respondents. This indeed proves to be the case to some extent (cf. Table 2). Model 1 in Table 2 again shows the already mentioned differences in transnational activities between migrant groups. In Model 2, we included personal characteristics in the analysis that indeed make a difference. Whereas Moroccan respondents in Model 1 were significantly less involved in transnational activities, these differences become smaller (and no longer significant) in Model 2. That Moroccans are less involved in transnational activities can therefore be partly explained by personal characteristics of respondents, especially their age of migration. Migrants who came to the Netherlands at an older age participate more – *ceteris paribus* – in transnational activities. This is especially true for Moroccan respondents. The Moroccan respondents who came to the Netherlands at a young age (or were born in the Netherlands) are less involved in transnational activities, and that explains why Moroccans in general participate less in transnational activities than former Yugoslavs and Americans. Antilleans and Iraqis remain significantly less involved in transnational activities, even if we take into account the personal background of the respondents in these groups.

Finally, we would like to point out that the absence of significant differences might also be an interesting finding. When transnational activities are indeed an impediment to immigrant integration, one would expect particularly poorly-educated, unemployed social security recipients to be involved in such activities. Following traditional assimilation theories (Alba and Nee 1997) one would also expect transnational involvement to decrease with the length of stay in the host country. However, this is not the case. Transnational activities occur equally among all migrants, independent of level of education, social status and length of stay. Only when we look at the social backgrounds of the actors by type of transnational activity do we see some striking differences. Professional economic activities occur significantly more frequently among the highly-educated respondents with formal paid jobs. What you see here is a sort of Matthew effect ('Ye who have, will be given'), which was also found in a study on informal labour (Pahl 1987). People who participate in the formal labour market benefit more from the informal economy than the unemployed do. In our study we found that immigrants with good jobs in the host country are more involved in transnational business activities than poor unemployed migrants.

Table 2: Involvement in transnational activities (linear regression: coefficients are betas)

	Model I	Model II
<i>Country of origin (compared with USA)</i>		
Yugoslavia	0.10	0.17*
Japan	-0.21**	-0.20**
Morocco	-0.28**	-0.11
Iraq	-0.32**	-0.27**
Antilles	-0.35**	-0.24**
<i>Background characteristics</i>		
Sex		0.01
Length of stay		-0.01
Age of migration		0.27**
Education		-0.03
Dutch nationality		-0.02
Formal, paid job		0.02
Social benefit		-0.05
Explained variation (\hat{R})	0.20	0.25

4. Transnational identifications

The second main question in our analysis deals with ethnic and transnational identifications. With whom do our respondents identify? Transnational identifications are defined as cross-border identifications, that is if migrants living in the Netherlands identify more strongly with people outside the country (either in the country of origin or in some other country) than with other Dutch residents (native Dutch people or compatriots living in the Netherlands). As explained before we distinguish between two dimensions of identification: a group dimension (*to whom do I belong?*) and a normative dimension (*whose norms and values are important to me?*). Furthermore, we asked respondents to describe their relationship with other groups graphically (the circle score) and finally we calculated a total score of identification with various groups by adding up the outcomes of all these measures of identification. All outcomes are summarized in Table 3.

Second, our respondents in general identify more with co-ethnics living in the Netherlands than with people still living in the country of origin. This is a first indication that transnational identifications are less common than phrases like ‘transnational spaces’ or ‘transnational communities’ suggest. There is no cross-border social space in the sense of migrants identifying more with compatriots living outside the country than with Dutch residents (either native Dutch or compatriots living in the Netherlands). On the contrary, respondents who identify strongly with their own ethnic groups in the Netherlands are also more focused on compatriots in the country of origin and vice versa.⁴ Ethnic identifications are more prominent than transnational identifications among immigrants.

Table 3: Ethnic and transnational identification by group of origin

	Morocco (N= 50)	Dutch Antilles (N= 50)	Iraq (N= 50)	(former) Yugoslavia (N= 50)	Japan (N= 50)	USA (N= 50)
<i>Group dimension</i>						
Native Dutch	3.0	2.9	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.4
Compatriots in The Netherlands	3.9	3.6	4.0	4.0	3.5	2.9
Compatriots in country of origin	3.6	3.6	4.0	4.1	3.5	3.3
Compatriots in other countries	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.9	3.4	3.2
<i>Normative dimension</i>						
Native Dutch	2.6	2.7	2.4	2.8	2.9	3.2
Compatriots in The Netherlands	2.9	2.9	3.4	3.0	2.9	2.4
Compatriots in country of origin	2.7	2.9	3.1	3.0	2.9	2.6
Compatriots in other countries	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.5
<i>Feels close to (circle score)</i>						
Native Dutch	2.1	1.8	1.6	2.2	2.0	3.0
Compatriots in The Netherlands	3.1	2.3	2.1	2.9	2.4	2.6
Compatriots in country of origin	2.3	2.6	2.4	3.1	2.6	2.6
Compatriots in other countries	1.8	1.7	1.5	2.1	1.7	1.8
<i>Total score identification</i>						
Native Dutch	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.6	2.5	3.2
Compatriots in The Netherlands	3.2	2.8	2.9	3.2	2.8	2.6
Compatriots in country of origin	2.7	2.9	3.0	3.3	2.9	2.8
Compatriots in other countries	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.8	2.4	2.3

Note: The numbers in the table are scores on a scale from 1 up to 5.

Third, the weak identification with the diaspora is salient. This is most apparent from the data in the bottom half of the table (data from the so-called circle scores and total scores). Identification with compatriots in other countries is not as strong as identification with compatriots living either in the Netherlands or in the country of origin. The transnational identifications of most respondents primarily relate to the country of origin: ‘bilateral’ transnational identifications prevail over ‘multilateral’ or ‘cosmopolitan’ transnational identifications.

We might conclude that transnational identifications are important, but less important than sometimes assumed. It is certainly untrue that space has lost its meaning in late-modern society and that contemporary migrants function in transnational communities rather than in their country of residence, as adherents of transnationalism sometimes argue (Faist 2000). Migrants primarily identify with their own ethnic group, living either in the Netherlands *or* in their countries of origin. Of course, there are still strong identifications with friends and relatives in the country of origin. But, as we argued before, this is hardly something new in contemporary society. Furthermore, identifications with the diaspora are relatively weak.

To what extent are these differences in transnational identifications (identifications with compatriots living in their respective countries of origin) between migrant groups the result of different personal characteristics of migrants (including involvement in transnational activities)? Again, we use regression analysis to answer this

question (Table 4).

Model 1 (in Table 4) shows almost no differences in the extent to which respondents from various migrant groups identify with compatriots in the country of origin. Respondents from almost all groups score equally high (or low) as the US reference category. The only exceptions are respondents from former Yugoslavia. Their identifications with compatriots in the country of origin are significantly stronger than with all other groups. The picture changes very little when personal characteristics are added to the analysis (Model 2). It turns out that transnational identifications are negatively related to both length of stay in the Netherlands and to having a formal job. In other words, more recent immigrants and respondents without a formal job have stronger transnational identifications. It should be noted that the educational level has no independent effect on transnational identifications. Stronger transnational identifications are not related to lower levels of education but occur just as frequently among the higher educated.

Table 4: Identification with compatriots in the country of origin (linear regression: coefficients are betas)

	I	II	III
<i>Country of origin (compared to USA)</i>			
Morocco	-0.04	-0.03	0.01
Antilles	0.03	0.05	0.08
Iraq	0.06	-0.02	-0.05
Yugoslavia	0.20**	0.22**	0.07
Japan	0.01	0.01	0.09
<i>Background characteristics</i>			
Sex		0.02	0.00
Length of stay		-0.17*	-0.22**
Age of migration		0.13	0.01
Education		-0.09	-0.06
Dutch nationality		-0.04	-0.00
Formal, paid job		-0.16*	-0.18*
Social benefit		0.06	0.08
<i>Transnational activities</i>			
Professional economic activities			-0.04
Everyday economic activities			0.16*
Political activities			0.18**
Social-cultural activities in country of origin			0.19**
Social-cultural activities in The Netherlands			0.09
Explained variation (\hat{R})	0.04	0.15	0.26

Model 3 shows that transnational identifications are also related to involvement in transnational activities. The more respondents are involved in transnational activities (especially transnational political activities and socio-cultural activities in the country of origin) the stronger their transnational identifications. After adding this factor to the analysis, the initial stronger transnational identifications among Yugoslav respondents disappear. In other words, the stronger transnational identifications among the

Yugoslavian group (observed in Model 1) can be fully explained by the Yugoslav respondents being more involved in the relevant transnational activities (as we saw in the previous section).

We may conclude that there are few differences in the strength of transnational identifications between the various migrant groups. This also implies that migrant groups that are often mentioned as poorly integrated into Dutch society (Moroccans, Antilleans) have no stronger identifications with the country of origin than members from other migrant groups. The strength of transnational identifications is primarily related to the length of stay in the Netherlands, the formal job status and to involvement in (some) transnational activities. Migrants with a shorter residence in the Netherlands, without a formal job and who are more involved in transnational activities have stronger transnational identifications.

5. Transnational involvement and integration

We now return to the central question of whether transnational activities and identifications impede migrants' successful integration into Dutch society. Retaining ties with the country of origin or with internationally dispersed migrant communities, financial investments in the country of origin and double citizenship are often perceived as an impediment to integration. The implicit assumption is that transnational involvement and immigrant integration are mutually exclusive phenomena. However, one could also assume that migrants' continuing transnational involvement goes hand in hand with integration (Berry and Sam 1996; Verkuyten 1999). In this section we examine the possible relationship between transnational activities and identifications on the one hand and structural, social and cultural aspects of integration on the other.

Transnational involvement and structural integration

The structural dimension of integration can be defined as the full participation of migrants in the central societal institutions (especially the educational system and the labour market). Structural integration of migrants can be measured in terms of their level of education and labour market participation. We already observed that there is only a weak empirical relationship between the transnational activities and identifications of migrants on the one hand and the level of structural integration on the other. Respondents with low levels of education are not more (or less) involved in transnational activities nor do they identify more (or less) strongly with their countries of origin than highly educated respondents. Working respondents do not participate more (or less) in transnational activities than non-working respondents and social security recipients. The only exception was that non-working respondents have stronger transnational identifications than working respondents (Tables 2 and 4). A closer look at type of transnational activity and migrant group in the correlation between transnational involvement and structural integration reveals interesting differences. We already mentioned that highly educated working respondents are more involved in professional economic activities. Therefore we could say that professional economic activities are related to (and probably presuppose) successful structural integration. Migrants in established social positions who work for international companies are in a position to develop such transnational business activities.

Furthermore, the correlation between transnational activities and identifications on the one hand and the degree of structural integration on the other differs between one migrant group and another (Table 5). US respondents, especially those who are well integrated structurally, participate more in transnational business activities and

political activities. By contrast, Moroccan and Antillean respondents, namely the least integrated migrant groups in the structural sense, appear to have stronger transnational identifications. The latter seems to confirm the fear that strong transnational identifications might go hand in hand with (or even impede) structural integration into Dutch society, at least as far as these groups are concerned. On the other hand, we saw that poorly structurally integrated Moroccans and Antilleans do not participate more in transnational activities than their better-integrated compatriots.

Table 5: Correlation between transnational activities and identities and integration in the labour market by group of origin

	Dutch		(former)			
	Morocco	Antilles	Iraq	Yugoslavia	Japan	USA
Everyday economic activities	-0.12	0.06	0.19	-0.25	-0.02	0.11
Professional economic activities	-0.15	0.14	-0.07	-0.18	0.18	0.40**
Political activities	-0.28	-0.07	0.20	-0.01	-0.02	0.40**
Social-cultural activities in The Netherlands	-0.04	0.08	0.37**	0.13	-0.09	0.01
Social-cultural activities in country of origin	-0.17	-0.18	0.28*	0.00	-0.13	0.00
Transnational ties general	-0.29	-0.06	0.32	-0.10	-0.08	0.25
Identification country of origin	-0.40**	-0.38**	-0.22	0.11	-0.28*	-0.27
Identification ethnic group in other countries	-0.32*	-0.25	-0.14	0.18	0.07	0.04

To sum up, there is no unequivocal relation between migrants' transnational activities and structural integration. Transnational activities occur both among migrants with good and with marginalized social positions (in terms of educational level and labour market participation) in the host society. The explanation may be that transnational activities result from two contrasting factors. First, it should be noted that transnational activities always cost money and therefore are in part dependent on the respondents' financial means (Al-Ali et al. 2001). Unemployed respondents on social security may well have a great need for transnational activities, but lack the financial means with which to engage in them. That the least structurally integrated of our respondents, the Moroccans and Antilleans, identify strongly with the country of origin but do not develop many transnational activities seems to indicate this. Conversely, employed migrants with the means to develop transnational activities may not feel such a strong need to do so. The ultimate effect is that transnational activities occur equally often among migrants with good economic positions in Dutch society as among poorly integrated migrants. Second, one should realize that we interviewed both migrants in marginal social positions who are involved in transnational activities and employees from international companies (or their partners). In Portes's (2000) words, we are dealing here both with 'transnationalism from above' and 'transnationalism from below'. Both categories of respondents are engaged in transnational activities in their own way. Participation in transnational activities is not restricted to certain social classes of migrants.

Transnational involvement and social and cultural integration

Two indicators operationalize social and cultural integration: the degree to which migrants have informal contact with native residents and the degree to which they approve of typical Western or modern ideas and values on the other. Our survey

contained several questions about the respondents' social networks. The cultural aspect of integration is measured by the extent to which migrants identify with native Dutch people. Are respondents who are involved in transnational activities and have strong transnational identifications less integrated into Dutch society in a social and cultural sense?

Table 6 shows the two indicators of social and cultural integration: the number of native Dutch in the social network of respondents and the degree of identification with native Dutch people. It shows first that Moroccans and to a lesser extent Iraqis and Yugoslavs have significantly fewer native Dutch people in their social networks than the US reference category. Antilleans and Japanese hardly differ from the Americans. In the table the influence of factors such as personal characteristics, involvement in transnational activities and the strength of transnational identifications is already taken in account. None of the factors has any influence on the number of native Dutch in the social networks of migrants. The only factor of influence, again, is the length of stay in the Netherlands. Migrants who live in the Netherlands longer have more informal contact with the native Dutch. We may conclude that social integration (informal contact with native residents) is not related to transnational involvement (either measured by transnational activities or by transnational identifications).

The last column in Table 6 shows the extent to which the respondents from various migrant groups identify with native Dutch people. We already indicated that US respondents are the most assimilated in Dutch society in the sense that they identify strongly with native Dutch people. All other migrant groups identify significantly less with the native Dutch than the US reference category. This is especially true of Moroccan, Antillean and Japanese respondents, but to a lesser degree also of Iraqi and Yugoslav respondents. Here also the length of stay in the Netherlands appears to be an important factor. Migrants who live longer in the Netherlands have stronger identifications with the native Dutch than migrants who arrived more recently. All other of our respondents' personal characteristics (educational level, labour market participation, living on social benefit and having Dutch citizenship) appear to be not related to cultural integration.⁶

Our question was whether migrants' cultural integration is related to transnational involvement. The bottom half of Table 6 shows that this is the case, but in an unexpected way. The more respondents are involved in social-cultural activities in or with the country of origin (such as visiting friends and relatives back home), the less they identify with native Dutch people. More unexpected are the following outcomes. Participation in transnational economic activities and identifications with compatriots in different countries (the internal diaspora) appears to be positively related to cultural integration. In other words, respondents who are involved in transnational economic activities and who identify strongly with compatriots in the international diasporas also identify more strongly with native Dutch people. Particularly the last outcome indicates that migrants appear to be quite able to live in two different worlds. Identifications with internationally dispersed ethnic communities and with native Dutch people do not rule each other out.

Table 6: Determinants of social-cultural integration (number of native Dutch in the social network and the degree of identification with native Dutch) (multiple regression in betas)

	Number of native Dutch in social network	Identification with native Dutch
<i>Group of origin (compared to the USA)</i>		
Morocco	-0.40**	-0.35**
Antilles	-0.18	-0.41**
Iraq	-0.23*	-0.47*
Yugoslavia	-0.23*	-0.23*
Japan	-0.10	-0.36**
<i>Background characteristics</i>		
Sex (male=1)	0.05	-0.04
Length of stay	0.32**	0.18**
Age of migration	0.01	0.08
Education	0.08	-0.03
(also) Dutch nationality	-0.03	-0.03
Formal, paid job	0.13	0.03
Social benefit	-0.03	-0.03
<i>Transnational activities</i>		
Everyday economic activities	0.02	-0.07
Professional economic activities	0.08	0.12*
Political activities	-0.08	0.01
Social-cultural activities in/with country of origin	-0.08	-0.19**
Social-cultural activities in The Netherlands	-0.04	0.09
<i>Transnational identities</i>		
Identification country of origin	-0.08	0.01
Identification Diaspora	0.10	0.24*
Explained variation (\hat{R})	0.28	0.27

6. Discussion

Many studies on transnationalism or transmigrants are either theoretical or based on qualitative empirical research, with the quantitative work being currently limited to the USA (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Portes et al. 2002). We offer a quantitative examination of the extent to which migrants from a variety of countries participate in transnational activities and have transnational identifications. Our study is based on a survey of 300 immigrants from a variety of countries living in the Netherlands. Some respondents come from the Netherlands' classical ethnic minorities (Moroccans, Antilleans), others are migrants from typical refugee countries (Iraq, former Yugoslavia), and others again are new labour migrants (or their partners) from prosperous Western countries like Japan and the USA. Our central research question was whether

or not transnational activities and identifications impede the successful integration of migrants into Dutch society.

We found that transnational activities constitute a substantial part of the lives of migrants in the Netherlands. Transnational activities are not confined to particular migrant groups or to a particular type of migrant. It turned out that transnational *identifications* weaken the longer the migrants live in the Netherlands. However, involvement in transnational *activities* hardly diminishes with increased length of stay, which suggests that these occur in part for reasons other than transnational identification (for example, because of familial obligations). Transnational activities are to a large extent socio-cultural (family visits, contacts with relatives in the country of origin). Many migrants (especially the respondents from Iraq, former Yugoslav and Morocco) also transfer money to their countries of origin. Respondents from refugee countries are also relatively more often involved in transnational political activities. Professional economic activities were rare among our respondents and were largely limited to the American group. Transnational identifications – when migrants identify more closely with friends and relatives outside the Netherlands (either in the country of origin or elsewhere) than with Dutch residents (either among their own ethnic group or native Dutch persons) – seemed to be less important. Our respondents in general identify more strongly with compatriots living in the Netherlands than with compatriots living abroad. Americans are a notable exception. They identify more strongly with native Dutch people and with compatriots back home than with fellow Americans living in the Netherlands. Generally, involvement in transnational activities goes hand in hand with strong identifications with relatives/compatriots in the country of origin. The identifications with migrants living elsewhere were comparatively less important. No empirical evidence was found for the significance of internationally dispersed migrants (diaspora). In other words, ‘bilateral’ transnational identifications prevail over ‘multilateral’ or ‘cosmopolitan’ transnational identifications.

Are migrants’ transnational activities and identifications an impediment to their integration into Dutch society? Or does strong transnational involvement not necessarily obstruct immigrant integration? Can migrants retain strong ethnic and transnational ties *and* be well integrated into Dutch society at the same time? The outcomes of our survey show that neither position can be maintained as such. Generally, our findings support the assumption that transnational involvement does not necessarily impede integration. We saw for instance that, of all the examined migrant groups, the former Yugoslavs and Americans are most involved in transnational activities. In the Dutch context, these are certainly not the least integrated migrant groups. As regards identification with the country of origin, we saw few differences between the various groups (except that former Yugoslavs identify more strongly with the country of origin than other groups). If transnational involvement constitutes an impediment for immigrant integration one would expect the strongest transnational involvement among Moroccans and Antilleans, the migrant groups that are often mentioned as being poorly integrated. However, Moroccans and Antilleans are neither more involved in transnational activities nor identify more strongly with the country of origin than the other groups.

Second, also at the individual level, there is no indication that transnational involvement is related to the various factors that together determine the degree of integration. There is no correlation whatsoever between the transnational activities of migrants and their social positions. More highly educated respondents and respondents with jobs engage in just as many transnational activities (though different ones) as the poorly educated, unemployed respondents on social security. We also found no correlation between identification with the country of origin and migrants’ levels of

education. What we did find was that working respondents identify significantly less with the country of origin than non-working respondents. There was also hardly any relation between transnational activities and identifications on the one hand and the migrants' social and cultural integration on the other. Transnational involvement does not go hand in hand with less (or more) personal contact or identification with native Dutch people. Respondents involved in transnational business activities and with strong identifications with international diasporas tend to identify even more strongly with native Dutch people.⁷ We should add, however, that the latter two phenomena do not occur very often. Only strong socio-cultural activities in or with the country of origin (like visiting relatives) appear to be related to less identification with native Dutch people.

All these findings largely support the assumption that transnational activities and identifications do not need to constitute an impediment to integration. However, one outcome does point in another direction, showing that the concern expressed by some authors and politicians that transnational involvement of migrants impedes their integration into Dutch society is not entirely unjustified. Groups that are (perceived to be) culturally different from mainstream society appear to have a harder time combining transnational involvement with cultural integration. For example, among Moroccans and Antilleans – migrant groups that also have the weakest labour market positions – we observed that strong identifications with the country of origin go hand in hand with poor structural and cultural integration. Our analysis does not explain what the causes are. However, our hypothesis is that migrants in weak labour market positions tend to withdraw from Dutch society and feel more strongly related with the country of origin (Engbersen et al. 1993). The availability of modern means of communication reinforces this process of social seclusion. Although, generally speaking, transnational involvement does not constitute an impediment to successful integration into Dutch society, the situation for specific marginalized groups of migrants may actually be quite different.

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Notes

1. The former multicultural orientation of Dutch politics has recently come under pressure. One example is that the Netherlands has explicitly said farewell to multiculturalism as a cornerstone of Dutch integration policy (Entzinger 2003; Snel 2003; Snel et al. 2004: 2).
2. The *group dimension* of identification is measured by five questions: I feel strongly related with ..., I have an emotional bond with ..., I am involved with ..., I am proud off ..., I feel personally attacked when other people are negative about Respondents were asked to position themselves *vis-à-vis* native Dutch people (Alpha 0,75), compatriots living in the Netherlands (Alpha 0,80), compatriots in the country of origin (Alpha 0,81) and compatriots in the international Diaspora (Alpha 0,79). The *normative dimension* of identification is measured by four questions: to determine my own norms and values I take the opinions of ... into account, about important things in life I think the same as ..., to know what is good and valuable I look at ..., I compare my own ideas about life (upbringing, male-female-relationships) especially with the opinions of Again respondents were asked to position themselves *vis-à-vis* native Dutch people (Alpha 0,79), compatriots living in the Netherlands (Alpha 0,84), compatriots in the country of origin (Alpha 0,86) and compatriots in the international diaspora (Alpha 0,84). The high values of the alphas legitimate the construction of two scales.

3. The *total score* is each time the average of the circle score, on the one hand, and the average score on the basis of the 40 statements, on the other. This score probably gives the best summary of the strength or weakness of the different group identifications.
4. There is a strong connection between the degree of the migrants' identification with their own groups in the Netherlands and their identification with compatriots in the country of origin ($r = 0.64$).
5. A similar analysis using the degree of identification with compatriots elsewhere as the dependent variable does not lead to substantially different outcomes.
6. This outcome contradicts the findings of other studies about integration of migrants and so-called ethnic minorities in the Netherlands. Relevant studies invariably show strong relations between structural and cultural aspects of integration (Dagevos 2001; Odé 2002). Our findings may differ because we surveyed different migrant groups, for instance Japanese migrants who are integrated in a structural sense (measured by educational level and labour market participation), but not in a cultural sense.
7. The reason is probably that especially American respondents are involved in these transnational business activities and they are rather close to the native Dutch.

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