Differences in family structure between immigrants groups and consequences for children's well-being

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Introduction

The study of immigrants in Europe has focused on the structural, social, and cultural dimensions of integration (Esser, 2009; Kalter & Granato, 2002; Levels, Dronkers, & Kraaykamp, 2008; Van Tubergen & Van de Werfhorst, 2007). For each of these dimensions, demographic characteristics of immigrants play an important role. Within the dimension of cultural integration, for example, authors have studied changing fertility differences between natives and immigrants (Milewski, 2010). Within the dimension of social integration, authors have studied intermarriage between immigrants and natives (Dribe & Lundh, 2011; Van Tubergen & Maas, 2007). Recently, there is also growing interest in the marriage formation of immigrants, both with respect to the (often early) timing of marriage (Huschek, Liefbroer, & de Valk, 2010) and the transnational nature of the marriage market (Kalter & Schroedter, 2010). One important but relatively neglected demographic aspect is family structure. For natives, there have been dramatic changes in family structure, with increasing numbers of children who experience the divorce of their parents and who grow up at least part of their youth in a single parent home. To what extent are there differences between immigrants and natives in this respect and what are the consequences of such differences for the life chances of immigrants?

Previous studies and theoretical considerations lead us to expect large differences in family structure, both between immigrants and natives and among immigrant groups themselves. First, there are cultural differences between groups. In some groups such as Africans and Caribbeans, the culture is matrifocal and there is much emphasis on the extended family. As a result, marriage is less highly valued and single parenthood in these groups is common (Morgan, McDaniel, Miller, & Preston, 1993; Stack, 1974). In other groups, marriage is culturally more important than it is among natives. In most Arab countries, for example, marriage has long been early and universal and divorce is strongly disapproved of, although these patterns are now undergoing change (Goode, 1963, 1993; Rashad, Osman, & Roudi-Fahimi, 2005). Structural factors play a role for group differences in family structure as well. High levels

of unemployment among immigrant groups may make marriage less feasible for immigrant women (Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, & Landry, 1992). Although this does not per se lead to more single parenthood, it is possible that with a shortage of suitable marriage candidates, some immigrant women decide to put motherhood before marriage (Edin & Kefalas, 2005). Another structural factor has to do with the immigration process itself. Some immigrants live in single parent homes because one of their parents died in a civil war, mothers may enter the destination country while the father stays behind, and married fathers may not be living with the family because of prolonged periods of employment in the origin country (Landale, Thomas, & Van Hook, 2011). There is also a growing number of young adolescents who enter the country as orphans but the volume of this immigration is probably still limited (Olde Monnikhof & Tillaart, 2003). Cultural and structural factors can also work in different directions. For example, Turkish families are strong supporters of the institution of marriage but in a nontrivial number of Turkish families, the (married) father is absent.

The first goal of this contribution is to describe differences in family structure between immigrant groups. We offer a more comprehensive analysis of these differences than has been presented in the past. To realize this, we use newly collected data on more than five-thousand students in about four-hundred secondary schools in Germany, Sweden, England, and the Netherlands, i.e., the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (Kalter et al. 2012). In these countries, first and second generation immigrants are present from all parts of the world, including the Middle East, South America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. Some larger groups are present in multiple countries such as the Turks (in Germany and the Netherlands) and the Iraqis (in Sweden and the Netherlands). Other groups are not exactly the same across destination countries but share important features, such as the Jamaicans in England and the Antilleans and (black) Surinamese in the Netherlands. Good information is available on family structure, on the marital status of parents, as well as on the relationship with the father in case the father is absent.

A second issue concerns the consequences of family structure for children's well-being. Many studies have shown that children from single parent families fare less well than children from intact families. Negative effects are found for a range of outcomes, including well-being, behavior problems, school grades, school dropout, idleness, marital dissolution, and teenage pregnancy (Amato & Cheadle, 2008; Fischer, 2004; Fomby & Cherlin, 2007; Jonsson & Gähler, 1997; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Pong, Dronkers, & Hampden-Thompson, 2003). An important question is whether the effects of family structure on child well-being are different for natives and immigrants and whether they vary among immigrant groups themselves. If effects of family structure are similar across groups, differences in the

prevalence of single parenthood are immediately relevant for understanding ethnic and racial inequality. The lower school achievement of children in black immigrant groups , for example, could then in part be attributed to the fact that single parenthood is more common among these children's families. If, on the other hand, effects are smaller in groups where single parenthood is more common— a possibility which will be discussed theoretically below—consequences for inequality will be relatively minor. What seems to be a problem is then in fact not a problem.

Some previous studies have examined effects of family structure for different ethnic and racial groups, but most of these come from the United States. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) find smaller effects of single parenthood on the risk of high school dropout and the risk of divorce for blacks than for whites (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Heard (2007) finds smaller effects of exposure to single parenthood on students' grade point average for blacks than for whites (Heard, 2007). Thomas et al. find that the effect of single parenthood on delinquency of adolescents is smaller for blacks than for whites (Thomas, Farrell, & Barnes, 1996). There are also contrasting findings, however. For example, Sun and Li (2007), using longitudinal data, find few significant racial differences in the effects of parental divorce on child's behavioral problems and school achievement (Sun & Li, 2007).

There are few European studies of the problem. An exception is a study by Kalmijn (2010) who compared people from Surinamese and Antillean origins (Caribbeans) in the Netherlands to the native Dutch. He found similar effects of parental divorce on adult children's socioeconomic outcomes but weaker effects for Caribbeans on children's demographic behavior, such as the risk of divorce, leaving home, and contact frequency with the father (Kalmijn, 2010b). For Caribbeans, Kalmijn even found a positive effect of parental divorce on the frequency of contact with the mother. Qualitative studies of problem behavior among black Surinamese in the Netherlands also suggest weaker effects of single parenthood on child well-being and point to high levels of involvement of children in the extended family (Distelbrink, 2000).

Our second research question is to what extent the effects of family structure on the well-being of children differ between immigrant groups and natives as well as among different immigrant groups. We consider two aspects of well-being. The first is what we call subjective well-being, which is the degree to which the child feels positively about him or herself and his or her life. This is the most direct approach to well-being but it ignores more objective signs of how the child's life is going. Children can deny negative feelings, they can underreport them to us, or they can fail to recognize such feelings in the proper way. For this reason, we also look at problem behavior of the child, e.g., skipping classes, using alcohol, and engaging in minor delinquent behavior. Problem behavior is often seen as an

additional indicator of well-being in research on parental divorce (Fomby & Cherlin, 2007). Problem behavior can be underreported as well but the combination of a subjective and an objective approach seems attractive. Using multilevel regression, we examine effects of family structure on well-being for natives and immigrants and, using interaction effects, we examine how these effects differ across immigrant groups.

Background and hypotheses

Most studies have demonstrated that there are negative effects of parental divorce and living in a single parent home on child outcomes. These effects are found in the U.S. and in Europe, they are found for a wide range of outcomes, and they hold up in more stringent longitudinal designs, suggesting that selection bias does not play a dominant role (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale, & McRae, 1998; Cherlin et al., 1991; Dronkers, 1999; Fischer, 2004; Jonsson & Gähler, 1997; Manski, Sandefur, McLanahan, & Powers, 1992; McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Sigle-Rushton, Hobcraft, & Kiernan, 2005; Strohschein, 2005). The effects are not always very large, however, and there is also considerable heterogeneity in the effects. The effects are typically explained in terms of changes in economic resources of the family on the one hand, and changes in parenting practices on the other hand (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994; Thomson, Hanson, & McLanahan, 1994). Single parent families have fewer economic resources than two-parent families and this deficit may translate into lower well-being of the children in these families. For parenting practices, the argument is that the role of the father is reduced after divorce while mothers may find it more difficult to raise the children on their own. This can lead to a lower degree of support on the one hand, and less control of the child's behavior on the other hand. Since the combination of support and (authoritative) control is an important condition for a healthy development of the child, changes in parenting practices may lead to changes in the child's well-being.

In the present paper, the focus is not only on the effect of single parenthood at the individual level, but also at the contextual level. Immigrant groups vary in the degree to which single parenthood occurs, and this may have implications for child well-being as well as for the effect of single parenthood. When looking at single parenthood at the contextual level, there are both positive and negative perspectives in the literature. The positive perspective can be summarized with the so-called institutionalization hypothesis, i.e., the notion that the effects of single parenthood and divorce on child well-being are weaker in contexts where such family forms and behaviors are more common. This

general argument has not only been made for variations among immigrant and ethnic groups, in particular for blacks (Kalmijn, 2010b; Thomas, et al., 1996), but also for variation across countries (Dronkers & Harkonen, 2008; Kalmijn, 2010a) and across time periods (Sigle-Rushton, et al., 2005). Several reasons have been suggested to explain the institutionalization hypothesis.

One argument concerns the role of normative (dis)approval. The more common single parenthood is in a group, the less normative disapproval there is of that behavior in the group. Disapproval has important consequences for children's well-being. If their family situation is regarded as deviant, this may negatively affect their self-esteem. Disapproval may also lead to social exclusion which further reduces well-being because contact with others is an important determinant of well-being. In addition, when there are more children from single parent families, children who live in such families can discuss the problems they experience with other children who have similar experiences. Because family disruption can be a traumatic experience for children, sharing experiences is important for their well-being.

A second argument is that in groups where single parenthood is more institutionalized, mechanisms have been developed that may compensate for the effects of single parenthood and divorce. In the case of African Americans, Jamaicans in Britain and Caribbeans in the Netherlands, for example, it has been argued that the culture is matrifocal. Because mothers play a more important role in the upbringing of children than fathers in this culture, the loss of the father as a social resource could be less problematic. Moreover, greater emphasis on extended family, and in particular on grandmothers, but also on aunts and nieces, may reduce some of the negative social consequences of single parenthood (Stack, 1974). Other family members in these groups are more likely to provide support and control, thereby compensating for the negative effects of single parenthood. The support system is believed to transcend the boundaries of the extended family; other non-kin members of the social network are socially regarded as kin ('fictive kin') and in that role, may provide help and support to children as well (Stack, 1974).

A second theoretical perspective emphasizes the more negative aspects of single parenthood. In studies of neighborhood effects, it has long been argued that the prevalence of single parenthood in a neighborhood—typically measured as the number of female headed households—is one of the key elements of structural disadvantage of an area, along with poverty rates and levels of unemployment (Bellair, 2000; Ross, 2000; Sampson, 1988). Studies have long found a link between structural disadvantage and delinquency at the aggregate level. Recent studies have also found effects of neighborhood disadvantage at the aggregate level on well-being at the individual level, even after

controlling for individual measures of disadvantage (Ross, 2000). Moreover, studies that the different aspects of neighborhood advantage show that the percentage of single parents in an area has an independent negative effect on problem behavior of adolescents (Sampson & Groves, 1989). In research where schools are regarded as contexts, similar effects have been found. Pong (1998) found that in schools with a high proportion of students from single parent families, students had lower mathematics and reading scores than in other schools, even when controlling for the family structure of the individual student (Pong, 1998). Part of this effect appeared to be due to the socioeconomic composition of schools, but even after controlling for these other school effects, Pong found a significant negative effect of single parenthood at the aggregate level on individual achievement.

Several explanations have been suggested to explain the hypothesis of structural disadvantage. The most important argument is based on the idea of social control. Because the mother is at work more often and hence, less often available for her children, and because the father is absent, there is less social control over the child's life. At the contextual level, this may also play a role because in a neighborhood or context where other families are also single parent families, the child may receive less control from these families. Research suggests that the amount of control at the contextual level is an important risk factor, not only for child well-being but also for risky behaviors such as early sexual intercourse (Browning, Leventhal, & Brooks-Gunn, 2005). Moreover, Sampson (1989) showed that the effect of single parents on delinquency rates is in part mediated by the degree to which there are unsupervised youngsters out on the street, a finding that clearly supports a social control interpretation. Less social control of children may lead to more problem behavior and possibly to lower subjective well-being as well. Although these arguments have been made most often for neighborhoods and schools, they can be generalized to immigrant groups, assuming that social networks and patterns of interaction are ethnically segregated.

The two perspectives outline above seem contradictory. To some extent, the arguments can be reconciled by pointing to the fact that the structural disadvantage hypothesis is about main effects whereas the institutionalization hypothesis is about interaction effects. Nevertheless, there are still contradictory elements in the underlying reasoning. One interpretation of the institutionalization hypothesis is that other family members and other women in the network provide more support in case a problem such as single parenthood arises. The hypothesis of structural disadvantage points to the fact that most of these other women—in the family or the wider network—are also more likely to be single parents. If the negative effect of single parenthood is based on a decline in support and control, more single parents in the community cannot be an advantage. Following this line of reasoning, the

interaction effect should be the other way around, with an increasing disadvantage of single parenthood when more families in a group are single parents. Hence, either the explanation in terms of support and control is invalid or the institutionalization hypothesis is invalid.

The problem can in part be solved by pointing to the other mechanism behind the institutionalization hypothesis, i.e., arguments about norms. It is possible that children in single parent families feel better if there are more children like themselves. They can share experiences and they do not receive disapproval in the social network—for them, single parenthood is a normal experience. This mechanism also suggests declining disadvantages of living in a single parent home when there are more single parent families. Moreover, it is not inconsistent with a negative main effect of single parenthood at the aggregate level. Two scenarios are now possible. In the first, there are no negative main effects of single parenthood at the contextual level in combination with significant interaction effects. In this case, we can think of single parenthood in a group as protective factor for children's life chances. This scenario fits the institutionalization hypothesis and is inconsistent with the hypothesis of structural disadvantage. In the second scenario, there are both negative main effects of single parenthood at the contextual level and significant interaction effects. In this case, we can think of single parenthood in a group as a relative advantage only. This scenario fits the hypothesis of structural disadvantage and is consistent with a more limited interpretation of the institutionalization hypothesis.

There is also a third and more economic hypothesis about the effect of single parenthood. It is well-known that single parent families are poor more often than two-parent families. Although this is also true in immigrant groups and racial minorities (Kalmijn, 2010b; Page & Stevens, 2005), the strength of this effect may vary. More specially, we could argue that in settings where the economic position of men is more precarious, the loss of the father will be less detrimental. In groups where single parenthood is more common, such as Africans and Caribbeans, the degree of unemployment among men tends to be high as well. In the United States, unemployment and low wages among young black men have even been regarded as one of the structural causes of single parenthood (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Lichter, et al., 1992). Hence, our expectation is that when male unemployment in a group is higher, the negative effects of single parenthood on children's well-being will be lower. This interaction effect needs to be studied in combination with the interaction effect with the prevalence of single parent families as these two are positively correlated.

Data

The data for CILS4EU were collected in four countries. About 100 secondary schools were chosen per country and two (randomly chosen) classes in each school were used (Kalter et al., 2012). The focus was on 14-year olds (10th grades in England, 9th graders in Germany, 3rd grades of secondary schools in the Netherlands, and 8th grades in Sweden). Schools with high proportions of immigrants were systematically oversampled so as to ensure a large enough sample of immigrants. Data will not be weighted in the analysis as weights are not yet available. In the present paper, we are looking at two types of children: natives (i.e., native born children of two native born parents) and immigrants (the native born children of immigrants and foreign born children who came to the destination before or during the school ages). Children with one native born and one foreign born parent are included in the immigrant group.[2]

Immigrant groups are defined on the basis of country of birth of parents.[3] The data contain about 125 different immigrant groups. In the descriptive part of the analyses, the groups are collapsed into regions that are relatively homogeneous and that contain sufficient numbers of cases for descriptive purposes. We distinguish seven regions, following often used classifications of world regions: Eastern Europe, the larger Middle East (including North Africa), Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. An alternative is to focus on specific immigrant groups (e.g., Turks, Jamaicans), but that would imply a severe loss of data. If we would limit the analysis to groups with 100 cases or more, for example, we lose 39% of the cases.

In the explanatory part of the paper, we use a cross-classified multilevel regression model where children are simultaneously nested in immigrant groups and schools. In these models, we use characteristics of schools and characteristics of immigrant groups as independent macro-level variables (next to individual-level variables). The models contain random intercepts as well as random slopes for the effects of family structure. Intercepts and slopes are allowed to vary across schools and groups. To test our hypotheses, we interact the effect of family structure with characteristics of schools and characteristics of immigrant groups.[4] Differences between destination countries are treated with dummy variables and not included as an additional level.

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[2] A variable for mixed parentage still needs to be added the models.
[3] We realize that there is no one-to-one correspondence between ethnic and national origins since ethnic groups may live in multiple countries and different ethnic groups may live in the same country.
[4] The default model for the covariance structure of the random effects is currently chosen; this still needs to be explored.

Measures of well-being

The first scale measures subjective well-being and consists of eight items: feeling worried, feeling anxious, feeling depressed, feeling worthless, having good qualities, being proud of oneself, self-acceptance, and optimism about one's life. The reliability is good (alpha = .82) and similar for immigrants and natives (.81 and .83). The items can be subdivided into the dimensions of self-esteem and depressive symptoms but for the sake of parsimony, we disregard that distinction. The second scale measures problem behavior and has eight items: skipping lessons, coming late to school, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, using drugs, damaged property, stealing things, having been drunk. Note that drinking and smoking are regarded as problematic at the ages we look at (14-15). The reliability is good (.89) and similar for natives (.88) and immigrants (.89). Note that some of these items will be less applicable to Muslim children (drinking and smoking). Gender differences are also present. Girls have lower well-being than boys (t = 7.6), but boys have more problem behaviors (t = 36.2). The latter difference is large than the former.

Independent variables

Family structure is the main independent variable. Detailed information is available on who lives in the household and what the relationship is with the child. For descriptive purposes, we use two typologies, one based on family structure and one based on marital status. We discuss details of the typology in the descriptive part of the paper. At the individual level, we control for sex and age. The parental characteristics included are: mother's education, whether or not the mother works, the number of siblings, the number of books in the home, and whether the child has its own room.[5]

At the aggregate level, we use the share of broken families (i.e., households in which the child is not living with both biological parents) in a group or in a school as independent variables. For immigrant groups containing fewer than 30 cases, we rely on the region-specific average. Using data on single parenthood in the country of origin was considered but proved to be impractical. Divorce rates are available more widely but since there are many never married mothers, especially among Caribbeans, this measure was considered less valid. To measure economic characteristics of groups, we use the percentage of fathers without work in a group. High levels of unemployment and single parenthood

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[5] Father's characteristics were not included since this is often missing for children not living with a father.

often go together in a group (r = -.54). As an additional school-level characteristic, we include the percentage of (non-western) immigrants in a school.

Results

In Figure 1 we present five types of family structure and we examine how common they are in the different origin regions. The vertical line is the proportion for natives so we can easily make comparisons. When we focus on two-parent families, we see that about two-thirds of the native children live in a two-parent family. For Africans, Caribbeans, and Latin Americans, this is considerably lower. For example, only 40% of the Caribbean children are living in a two-parent family. In some other groups, such as Asians, two-parent families are equally common as they are among natives. Yet in other groups, for instance, Middle Eastern groups, two-parent families are even more common than they are among natives. Hence, differences exist in both 'directions.' If children are not living in a standard family, how are they living? Most native children are either living in a single parent family (17%) or in a stepfather family (12%). When we look at immigrant groups, stepfather families are relatively less common whereas single parent families are relatively more common. Families without (own) parents occur more often in almost all immigrant groups; between 10% to 20% of children living in non-standard families are living without any biological parent.

Now let us look at the way children enter into a broken family, given that they do live in such a family. In Figure 2, we see that for natives, divorce is the dominant route into a non-standard family. For all immigrant groups, this is a less common route although even for immigrants, this is the most common reason for living in a broken home. Especially striking is the higher occurrence of never-married mothers among Caribbeans, Latin Americans, and to a lesser extent, Africans. Nonetheless, the share of never married mothers is still smaller than the share of divorced mothers in these groups. American research has found the opposite pattern for African Americans where never married mothers are the dominant group (Bianchi & Casper, 2002). We further see the role of immigration in the differences. For example, the death of a parent is more common in virtually all groups (varying from 10% to 15% of the non-standard families), as is a father who is living abroad (varying from 5% to 15%).

Finally, we present some descriptive information on what these differences imply for the role of fathers in the child's life. Living in a single parent family does not always imply a weak role of the father because children may still have frequent contact due to visitation and custody arrangements or some

form of co-parenting. How does this work out for the different groups? To answer this question, we focus on children who do not live with their biological father. The top panel in Figure 3 includes families in which the father died, the bottom panel excludes these families. Among natives, 20% of the children living without a father never have contact, among most immigrant groups, this is around 30% or more. Similarly, about 45% of native children living without a father have at least weekly contact with the father, but this is much lower for most immigrant groups, with the exception of the Middle Eastern groups. Hence, overall, fathers are not only absent more often in the households of Caribbean, Latin American, and African immigrants, when they are absent, they also have weaker ties with their children. These differences do not change much when leaving out children living with a widowed mother although the percentage who never have contact of course declines.

Family structure effects

In Table 2, we first test effects of family structure. We estimate multilevel models where pupils are the level-1 units and schools the level-2 units. We control for school characteristics and selected parent characteristics, as reported by the pupils. Models are presented separately for natives and immigrants. The results clearly show that living in a non-standard family is associated with lower child well-being. This is true for both subjective well-being and problem behavior. Moreover, the effects are found for virtually all non-standard types of families. There is some variation in the strengths of the effects, however. In general, we see that living with a stepparent, compared to living with a single parent, is associated with lower well-being. Hence, stepparents do not help, even though they often contribute considerable financial resources to the household (DeWilde & Uunk, 2008). Differences between single father and single mother families are small. For immigrants, we see that children in single father families are doing somewhat less well than children in single mother families. This is not observed for natives. Living without either biological parent is associated with more problem behavior than living with a single parent. This is a heterogeneous group but the number of cases is too small to examine this further. Important to note is that the sizes of most effects are small to modest.[6]

When looking at the magnitude of the effects, they seem more or less similar for natives and immigrants. We tested differences in the five family structure effects between groups. For problem behavior, not one interaction effect is significant. For subjective well-being, two interaction effects are

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[6] The dependent variables are standardized so that the effect of a dummy variable is comparable to Cohen's d, the most commonly used measure of effect size.

marginally significant: Living with a mother and stepfather and living with a biological father are more detrimental for immigrant children. Overall, these results do not suggest that the effects of family structure on child well-being are very different for immigrants and natives, at least not when we examine immigrants as one group.

There are several effects of the control variables, but only a few of these are substantial in size. For subjective well-being, the most important effects are observed for gender, education, and destination country. Girls have lower well-being than boys and children with lower educated parents have lower well-being. Children in Sweden report the highest level of well-being, English children the lowest. German and Dutch children are in between and similar. For problem behavior, the most important effects are observed for age, own room, and again destination country. Older children and children with their own room report more problem behavior. There is no effect of socioeconomic background. English children report the most problem behavior; differences between the other countries are modest. The school context also matters. When there are more children from broken homes in a school, the children in these schools display more problem behavior. This result is consistent with earlier studies for the U.S. (Pong, 1998). The percentage of immigrants in school has mostly positive effects: The more immigrants there are, the higher the level of well-being and the less problem behavior among immigrants. The effects are not large, however, with the exception of the positive effect of immigrant composition on the well-being of immigrants. This effect suggests that immigrants benefit in a social and emotional sense from being with many other immigrants at school.

We now examine the various ways in which children can end up in a broken home. In Table 3, we focus on children living with either their own father and mother or their own mother only (with or without a stepfather). We make a distinction between mothers who are divorced, mothers who never married, families in which the father died, and families in which the father is living abroad. We see that children from never-married mothers have somewhat lower subjective well-being and report more problem behavior than children from divorced mothers. This difference is only significant for problem behavior of immigrants (Chi-2 = 4.01, p = .045). More important is that the children from never-married mothers are apparently not doing better, as one might expect given the fact that they have not experienced a parental divorce. Children in families where the father died are also quite similar to children in divorced families. Hence, it seems that father absence is the main driving force here. Earlier we saw that the stepfather is not advantageous for well-being either, and hence, does not compensate for father absence. Interesting to observe is that there are no negative effects among immigrants of a father who is living abroad. This can be expected given the fact that this will often be a temporary and

emotionally less problematic situation. For natives, this effect cannot be estimated because the number of children with fathers abroad is too small.

In Table 4, we present interaction effects of family structure by region of origin. To simplify matters, we focus on the contrast between children in a broken home and children in a two-parent family. Deleting children from father homes and non-parent homes does not affect the overall results, probably because there are not so many of these special types of families. The effect of living in a broken home for most regions is similar to the effect for natives. Two exceptions are noteworthy. For Caribbeans, the effect of living in a broken home on subjective well-being is significantly smaller. Calculations show that the effect of living in a broken home for this group is absent (-.212 + .249 = .037). In addition, we see that for both Caribbeans and Africans, the effect of living in a broken home on problem behavior is significantly smaller. Only small effects remain for these groups if we combine main effects and interaction effects.

In Table 5, we address this issue in a multivariate framework using crosslevel interaction effects. All variables are centered so that main effects have a clear interpretation in the interaction models. First, we see that there are no significant interaction effects of living in a broken home with the level of unemployment in a group. This suggests that a strictly economic interpretation of the group differences is not plausible. Next, we see significant interaction effects of living in a broken home and the relative share of broken homes in a group. The interaction effect is positive for subjective well-being and negative for problem behavior. Both these interactions show that the effect of living in a broken home is less detrimental the more common such families are in a group. This is in line with our general expectations. For problem behavior, we also see main effects of the contextual variable: The more broken homes there are in an immigrant group, the more problem behavior. Interesting is that this effect is also observed for the school level. For well-being, these contextual effects are not observed, suggesting that the interpretation in terms of control is more plausible than the interpretation in terms of support. After all, it is plausible that problem behavior is more dependent on social control whereas subjective well-being is also strongly dependent on support from parents.

To understand the interactions better, we present expected values in Figure 4. The graphs show the relationship between well-being and the proportion broken homes for children from intact and broken families. To facilitate the comparison between the two outcomes, we reversed the scale for problem behavior so that high values reflect low problem behavior. For subjective well-being, we see a small and non-significant slope for children from intact families. The line for broken families is below the line for intact families and has a positive slope, thereby approaching the line for intact families. In other

words, living in a broken home is associated with lower well-being but this effect becomes smaller when there are more broken homes in the group. The group-level appears to work as a protective factor, in line with the institutionalization hypothesis. The pattern for problem behavior, presented at the bottom of the figure, is more complicated. There is a negative and significant slope for intact families, showing that an increase in the group-level of broken homes has a negative effect on these children. This is in line with the hypothesis of structural disadvantage. Children from broken families are always below those from intact families in terms of well-being, but they are not further harmed by having many peers in the group from broken homes. This results in a *relative* improvement when there are more broken families in a group. This in line with a more narrow interpretation of the institutionalization hypothesis, as we will discuss below.

Conclusion

Data from a large number of immigrant children in four Western European countries show that children in some immigrant groups—especially immigrants from African, Latin American, and Caribbean origin— are less likely to live with both their biological parents. Children from Middle Eastern origins, in contrast, are more likely than natives to live with their biological parents. For most groups, we find that when children do not live with both their biological parents, they are less likely than natives to live with a stepparent and they also have less frequent contact with their biological father than natives. Hence, the role of the biological father seems somewhat weaker for immigrants than for natives. For children from African, Latin American, and Caribbean origin, the role of the biological father is especially weak: Here more frequent single parenthood is combined with less frequent contact with the father. For immigrant groups, divorce is not the only cause of single parenthood, widowhood is more common as well, as are never married mothers (especially among Latin American and Caribbean groups). These findings are to some extent comparable to the situation of African Americans in the U.S.

There are modest but significant negative effects of living in a broken home on children's subjective well-being and problem behavior. Differences between different types of broken homes are modest. Living with stepparents is not associated with higher well-being. Moreover, well-being is lower regardless of whether the mother is divorced, widowed, or never married. These effects apply equally to natives and immigrants, at least when we look at immigrants as a whole.

Using cross-level interaction effects (group x individual), we find that when there are more children from broken families in a group, the effect of living in a broken home is less detrimental. This applies to both subjective well-being and problem behavior. Although this seems in line with the institutionalization hypothesis, we also find a negative main effect of single parenthood at the group-level: The more children from broken homes there are in a group, the more problem behavior a child displays, even after controlling for his or her individual characteristics and family situation. This finding is in line with the hypothesis of structural disadvantage, a notion suggested by neighborhood research. For subjective well-being, no negative main effect was found. That there is no evidence for the hypothesis of structural disadvantage for subjective well-being is consistent with the idea that structural disadvantages work via a decline in social control (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Social control probably affects behavioral problems more than subjective well-being.

When we put these findings together, we need to qualify the institutionalization hypothesis. One interpretation was that groups in which broken families are common, are also groups that have stronger social networks and stronger extended families, often with a strong matrifocal element (Stack, 1974). Support and control from these groups would then compensate for the disadvantages of single parenthood, just as Stack thought they would compensate for poverty (1974). We think this mechanism is inconsistent with the hypothesis of structural disadvantage. More single parents in a person's context, means less social control in the context, and hence, more problems. It is difficult to see then how children of single parents would benefit from other single parents. Since the hypothesis of structural disadvantage is accepted, we conclude that other interpretations of the institutionalization hypothesis are more plausible. More specifically, we argue that living in a group with many broken families leads to more acceptance of that behavior and more sharing of experiences among children themselves. Because parental divorce is often an emotionally problematic experience, this acceptance and sharing of experiences, can lead to a smaller disadvantage in well-being for these children. This is also what we found for subjective well-being: Living in a group with many single parents is not negative for children from intact families but it is positive for children living in a broken home.

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Table 1.- Descriptive data on variables used in the analyses

	n	m	s.d.	min	max
Problem behavior	15186	.000	1.000	-1.153	6.536
Well-being	16815	.000	1.000	-4.527	2.013
Broken home	16941	.312	.463	.000	1.000
Stepparent	16941	.098	.298	.000	1.000
No parent	16941	.030	.170	.000	1.000
Father household	16941	.030	.170	.000	1.000
Parent abroad	16941	.007	.085	.000	1.000
Parent(s) died	16941	.027	.161	.000	1.000
Girl	16941	.502	.500	.000	1.000
Child age	16941	14.450	.649	12.000	18.000
Mothers education*	16273	.500	.248	.081	.949
Mother works	16941	.734	.442	.000	1.000
# siblings*	15959	1.460	1.262	.000	10.000
Ln # books in home*	15301	4.180	1.241	2.526	6.215
Own room in home*	15463	.654	.476	.000	1.000
% immigrants in school	16941	.359	.288	.000	1.000
% broken homes in school	16941	.312	.120	.037	.800
% unemployed in group	16941	.116	.072	.032	.401
% broken homes in group	16941	.309	.091	.132	.754

* Missings imputed at mean in regressions and dummy-variables for being missing included.

Table 2.- Multilevel regression of child well-being on family structure

	(1) Subjective well-being Natives	(2) Subjective well-being Immigrants	(3) Problem behavior Natives	(4) Problem behavior Immigrants
Single mother	-0.189*	-0.158*	0.254*	0.199*
	(0.025)	(0.033)	(0.028)	(0.035)
Single father	-0.099	-0.293*	0.249*	0.273*
	(0.066)	(0.091)	(0.075)	(0.100)
Mother + stepfather	-0.226*	-0.344*	0.260*	0.285*
	(0.030)	(0.053)	(0.033)	(0.058)
Father + stepmother	-0.337*	-0.488*	0.141	0.253~
	(0.081)	(0.119)	(0.089)	(0.130)
No bio parent	-0.225*	-0.139*	0.381*	0.310*
	(0.058)	(0.062)	(0.063)	(0.068)
Girl	-0.582*	-0.416*	-0.079*	-0.087*
	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.027)
Child age	-0.004	-0.031	0.223*	0.118*
	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.021)
Mother education	0.278*	0.170*	0.082~	0.036
	(0.043)	(0.046)	(0.047)	(0.049)
Mother works	0.071*	-0.004	-0.025	0.098*
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.028)
# siblings	0.005	0.046*	0.032*	0.026*
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.010)
# books	-0.021*	-0.012	-0.048*	-0.006
	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.009)	(0.012)
Own room	0.066*	0.142*	0.124*	0.180*
	(0.021)	(0.027)	(0.023)	(0.028)
Germany	0.192*	0.265*	-0.221*	-0.210*
	(0.036)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.075)
Netherlands	0.165*	0.356*	-0.091*	-0.115
	(0.038)	(0.048)	(0.046)	(0.079)
Sweden	0.512*	0.658*	-0.229*	-0.140*
	(0.035)	(0.043)	(0.042)	(0.071)
% immigrants in school	0.159*	0.429*	-0.032	-0.195*
	(0.059)	(0.053)	(0.070)	(0.089)
% broken homes in school	0.053	0.192	0.465*	0.327
	(0.110)	(0.127)	(0.132)	(0.214)
Constant	-0.245*	-0.193*	0.101*	0.038
	(0.028)	(0.036)	(0.033)	(0.056)
Variance				
Between schools (σ)	.158	.155	.209	.403
Within schools (σ)	.903	.898	.958	.902
N	10822	5993	10012	5174
R^2	.143	.149	.077	.045

Standard errors in parentheses ~ *p* < .10, * *p* < .05

Table 3.- Multilevel regression of child well-being on marital status of mother

	(1) Subjective well-being Natives	(2) Subjective well-being Immigrants	(3) Problem behavior Natives	(4) Problem behavior Immigrants
Mother divorced	-0.189*	-0.195*	0.245*	0.243*
	(0.022)	(0.033)	(0.024)	(0.035)
Mother never married	-0.304*	-0.380*	0.329*	0.413*
	(0.080)	(0.118)	(0.088)	(0.123)
Father died	-0.281*	-0.198*	0.202*	0.071
	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.085)	(0.083)
Father abroad	(-0.358)#	-0.013	(0.036)#	0.028
	(0.323)	(0.105)	(0.362)	(0.115)
Other situation	-0.311*	-0.334*	0.446*	0.295*
	(0.077)	(0.096)	(0.085)	(0.106)
N	10217	5595	9460	4832

Standard errors in parentheses   ~ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$
Note: Only children living with a mother or a mother and a father.
Too few cases for a reliable estimate.

Table 4.- Multilevel regression of child well-being in family structure by region

	Subjective well-being	s.e.	Problem behavior	s.e.
Eastern European (vs. Native)	.135*	(.030)	.001	(.035)
Latin American (vs. Native)	.045	(.078)	.196*	(.086)
Asian (vs. Native)	.030	(.037)	-.118*	(.041)
Large Middle East (vs. Native)	.213*	(.025)	-.160*	(.028)
African (vs. Native)	.334*	(.041)	-.147*	(.046)
Caribbean (vs. Native)	.199*	(.055)	.042	(.059)
Broken home (Native)	-.212*	(.019)	.274*	(.021)
x Eastern European	-.062	(.060)	-.086	(.069)
x Latin American	-.031	(.141)	-.080	(.155)
x Asian	-.089	(.075)	.024	(.082)
x Large Middle East	-.040	(.049)	-.013	(.055)
x African	.095	(.074)	-.147~	(.084)
x Caribbean	.249*	(.095)	-.206*	(.101)
Girl	-.524*	(.015)	-.081*	(.016)
Child age	-.015	(.013)	.179*	(.014)
Mother education	.214*	(.031)	.054	(.034)
Mother works	.034~	(.018)	.024	(.020)
# siblings	.019*	(.006)	.029*	(.007)
# books	-.018*	(.007)	-.035*	(.007)
Own room	.088*	(.016)	.149*	(.018)
Germany (vs. England)	.209*	(.029)	-.210*	(.043)
Netherlands (vs. England)	.233*	(.031)	-.104*	(.044)
Sweden (vs. England)	.578*	(.029)	-.190*	(.041)
% immigrants in school	.293*	(.039)	-.056	(.055)
% broken homes in school	.088	(.086)	.335*	(.123)
Constant	-.331*	(.023)	.163*	(.031)
Variance between schools (σ)	.137		.245	
Variance within schools (σ)	.907		.944	
N schools	465		435	
N students	16815		15186	
R^2	.159		.043	

Standard errors in parentheses
~ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$

Table 5.- Multilevel regression of child well-being with random effects of single parenthood

	(1) Problem behavior	(1) Problem behavior	(1) Subjective well-being	(1) Subjective well-being
Immigrant	-.026	-.026	.041	.041
	(.111)	(.110)	(.234)	(.234)
Girl	-.084*	-.084*	-.524*	-.524*
	(.016)	(.016)	(.015)	(.015)
Child age	.176*	.176*	-.061*	-.061*
	(.013)	(.013)	(.012)	(.012)
Broken home	.212*	.211*	-.188*	-.187*
	(.034)	(.034)	(.028)	(.028)
Mother education	.044	.044	.218*	.218*
	(.035)	(.035)	(.032)	(.032)
Mother works	.013	.013	.065*	.065*
	(.020)	(.020)	(.018)	(.018)
# siblings	.033*	.033*	.013*	.013*
	(.007)	(.007)	(.006)	(.006)
# books	-.039*	-.039*	-.010	-.010
	(.007)	(.007)	(.007)	(.007)
Own room	.148*	.148*	.088*	.088*
	(.018)	(.018)	(.017)	(.017)
% immigrants in school	-.125*	-.125*	.348*	.349*
	(.043)	(.043)	(.039)	(.039)
% broken homes in school	.331*	.330*	-.027	-.026
	(.092)	(.092)	(.084)	(.084)
x Broken home		.027		-.040
		(.154)		(.145)
% broken homes in group	.518*	.518*	-.170	-.170
	(.166)	(.166)	(.241)	(.241)
x Broken home	-.571*	-.572*	.456*	.459*
	(.232)	(.233)	(.210)	(.211)
% unemployed in group	-.400	-.400	1.163*	1.163*
	(.319)	(.319)	(.513)	(.513)
x Broken home	-.233	-.233	.110	.109
	(.391)	(.392)	(.331)	(.332)
Constant	.011	.010	-.026	-.025
	(.104)	(.104)	(.228)	(.227)
Group variance				
Effect broken home (σ)	.040	.059	.040	.040
Intercept (σ)	.226*	.102*	.226*	.226*
School variance				
Effect broken home (σ)	.199*	.168*	.199*	.199*
Intercept (σ)	.226*	.238*	.226*	.225*
N	15186	15186	16815	16815
R^2				

Standard errors in parentheses.
~ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$

Figure 1.- Types of family stucture by immigrant group

Two-parent family

Group	Proportion
eastern europe	0.69
latino	0.45
asian	0.67
middle east+	0.82
african	0.56
caribbean	0.41

Single mother (conditional)

Group	Proportion
eastern europe	0.52
latino	0.49
asian	0.44
middle east+	0.70
african	0.64
caribbean	0.57

Mother + stepfather (conditional)

Group	Proportion
eastern europe	0.27
latino	0.28
asian	0.27
middle east+	0.10
african	0.11
caribbean	0.21

Father only (conditional)

Group	Proportion
eastern europe	0.10
latino	0.07
asian	0.09
middle east+	0.10
african	0.09
caribbean	0.10

No-parent (conditional)

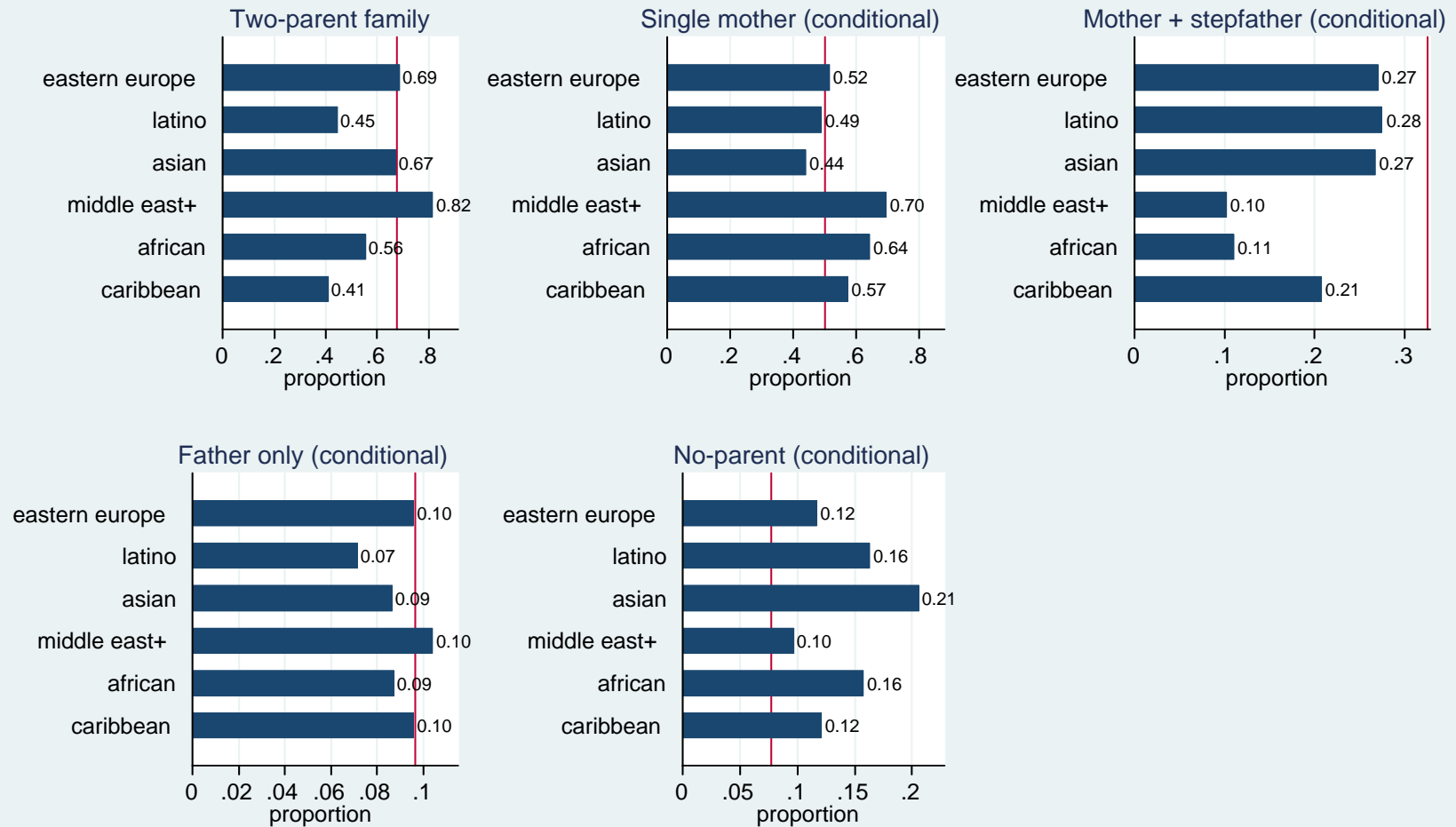| Group	Proportion
eastern europe	0.12
latino	0.16
asian	0.21
middle east+	0.10
african	0.16
caribbean	0.12

24

Figure 2.- Reasons for non-standard family by immigrant group
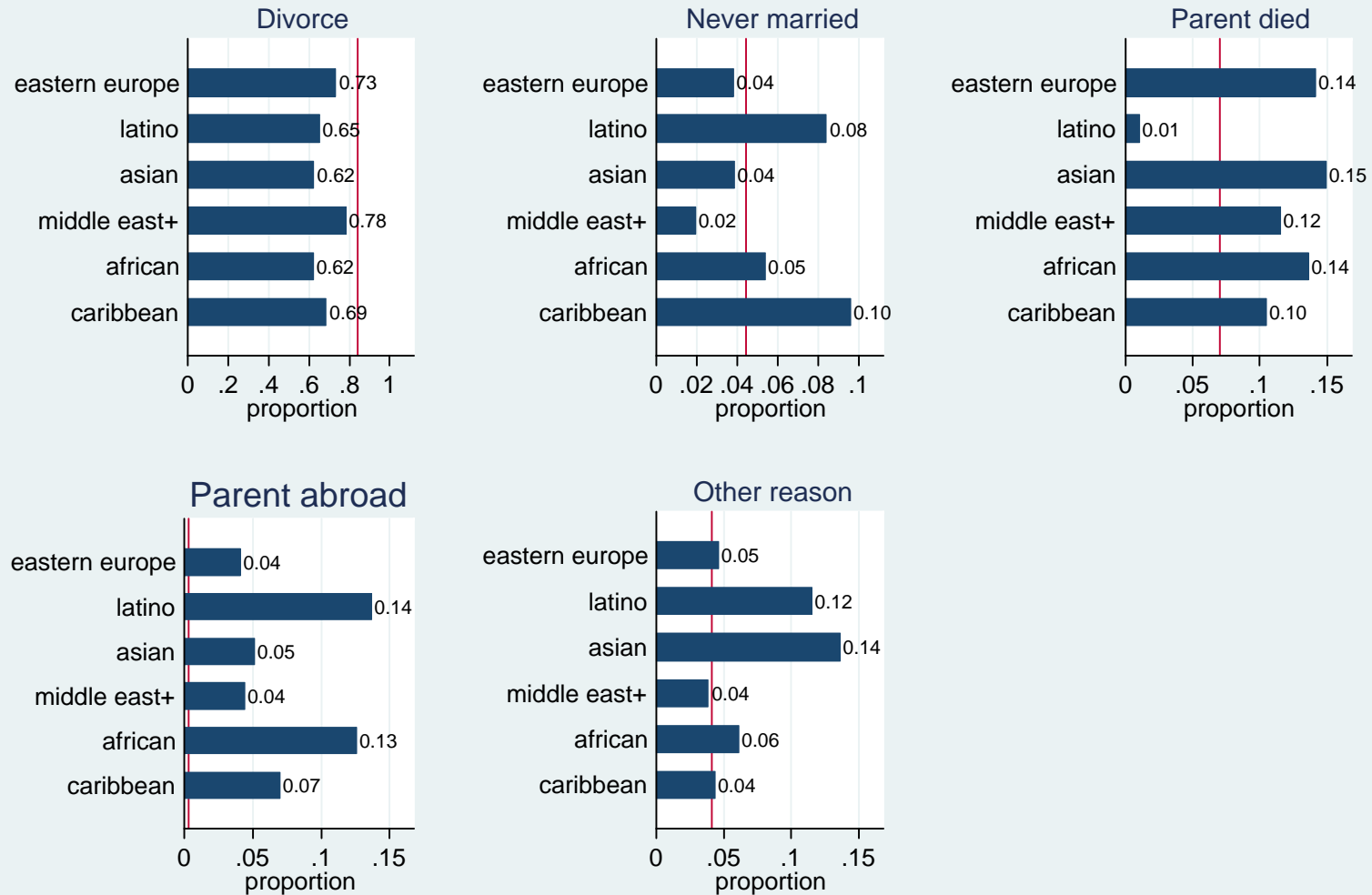
Figure 3.- Father-child contact for absent father homes

Never contact

	proportion
eastern europe	0.38
latino	0.32
asian	0.34
middle east+	0.29
african	0.31
caribbean	0.30

Weekly contact

	proportion
eastern europe	0.29
latino	0.26
asian	0.32
middle east+	0.38
african	0.29
caribbean	0.29

Never contact excl widows

	proportion
eastern europe	0.30
latino	0.31
asian	0.29
middle east+	0.24
african	0.25
caribbean	0.25

Weekly contact excl widows

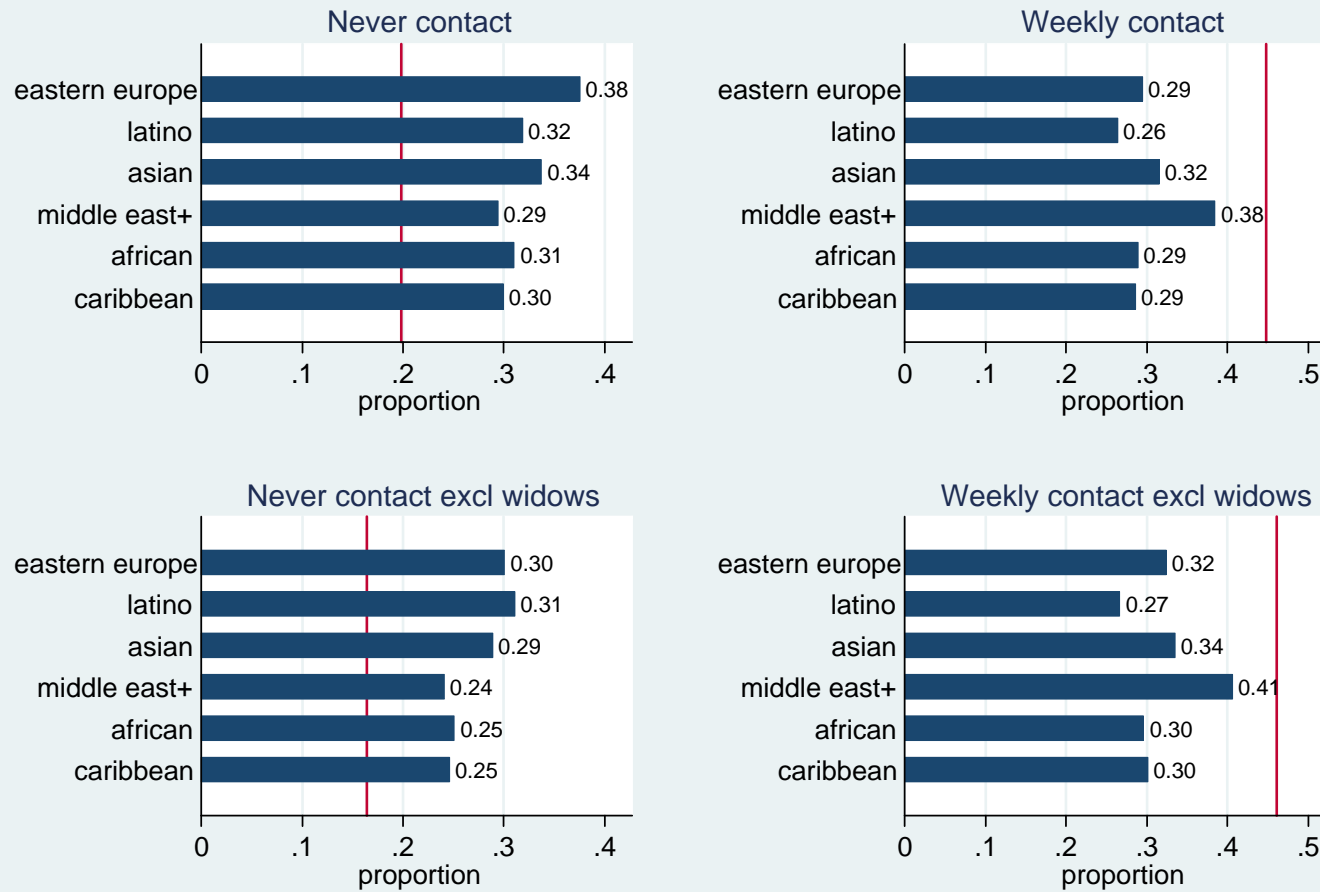|	proportion
eastern europe	0.32
latino	0.27
asian	0.34
middle east+	0.41
african	0.30
caribbean	0.30

Figure 4.- Interaction effects of broken homes at the individual and group level