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Reaching the Limits of Secularization? Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch Muslims in the Netherlands 1998–2006

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This research note focuses on Muslim minorities living in a secular context, the Netherlands. The question is whether mosque attendance among Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch changed between 1998 and 2006, testing mechanisms of religious decline and religious vitality. Elaborating on previous research of the same Muslim groups, this study examines a longer time span and adds contextual-level explanations. Whereas previous research reported a linear trend towards secularization over time and over generations, in recent years the trend has become more complex. The revival of religious attendance among the second generation is most striking. Forces of secularization such as educational attainment and generational replacement gradually lose their predictive power. Over time, processes of secularization are therefore not inevitable.

Keywords: *Muslim migrants*; *religious practice*; *second generation*; *secularization*.

INTRODUCTION

In this contribution, we assess changes in mosque attendance between 1998 and 2006 among the two largest Muslim groups in the Netherlands, the Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch. We build on earlier research by Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn (2008) on religious change among Dutch Muslims in the period 1998–2004. These authors conclude that over time there is increasing secularization (both in religious behavior and attitudes)[1] among Muslims living in the relatively secular Dutch environment. In addition, they find that it is especially the second generation and the higher educated Muslims who are less religious, although compositional changes in these factors do not explain the secularizing trend. Recent quantitative studies among the second generation in Western European countries have shown relatively high levels of religious involvement (Fleischmann and Phalet 2012; Güngör, Fleischmann, and Phalet 2011), and also qualitative studies indicate relatively strong importance of religion in the lives of young Muslims (De Koning 2008). These findings do not seem to point to continuing secularization. It is therefore the question whether the conclusion of Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn (2008) of continued secularization is still warranted. The more so because Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn (2008) provide

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[1] We also assessed the trend for religious attitudes, but for reasons of brevity, we will only report the findings on mosque attendance because outcomes were comparable.

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evidence that the secularizing trend was actually only found among the Turkish-Dutch—though that finding received relatively little attention. In this research note we examine how the trend in mosque attendance proceeds in more recent years. Whereas many studies were able to take into account either the first or the second generation at a single point in time, we study trends in mosque attendance among both first - and second-generation immigrants.

Previous Research

Previous research identifies population change as an important factor influencing trends in religious attendance. When the proportion of an on average less religious group grows or decreases over time, this may cause changes in the average level of religious adherence over time (composition effects). We distinguish between factors that have been associated with religious decline and factors that have been associated with religious continuity and vitality. These factors may be at work at the same time (Van Tubergen 2006).

Religious Decline

Religious membership and religious practice among the native Dutch, as among other Western Europeans, is limited. In the Dutch public discourse, normative secularization is therefore seen as central to immigrant integration (Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn 2008). Integration is expected to work especially through generational replacement because individuals growing up in the receiving society are imbued with its values from an early age (Alba and Nee 2003). In the Netherlands, generational replacement has been associated with religious decline among Muslim minorities (Maliepaard, Lubbers, and Gijsberts 2010; Phalet and Ter Wal 2004). In addition, obtaining higher education has been associated with lower levels of religious participation both among majority and minority populations (Phalet and Haker 2004; Te Grotenhuis and Scheepers 2001; Van Tubergen 2006), in line with more general ideas of modernization and rationalization (Berger 1967; Tschannen 1991). It is therefore expected that the second generation and the higher educated Muslims attend the mosque less frequently than first-generation, lower educated Muslims. Because the second generation has grown relative to the first, and educational levels have risen in the decade of our research (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2010), this would have led to lower average levels of mosque attendance among the Muslim population.

Religious Vitality

Religious decline is not inevitable, especially not when religious minorities are socialized in religious families and communities, where religious norms and practices are strongly reinforced (Fleischmann and Phalet 2012). Previous research has indicated that also the ethnoreligious composition of the local context contributes to immigrant religious vitality (Smits, Ruiter, and Van Tubergen 2010; Smith, Sikkink, and Bailey 1998). The presence of ethnic in-group members in the local environment creates the opportunity for religious practice to be enacted together, but also allows for better reinforcement of religious norms (Coleman 1990). Finally, the presence of places of worship in the vicinity facilitates religious attendance (Smits, Ruiter, and Van Tubergen 2010). We look at the presence of ethnic rather than religious group members and mosques because different Muslim groups in the Netherlands almost exclusively organize their mosques along ethnic lines, in their respective languages (Van Oudenhoven et al. 2008).

In addition to the local context, certain life stages have also been associated with religious (re)vitalization. Whereas young people are often found to be less religious, when they start settling down (i.e., marrying and having children) religious practice often increases. This has been found both among Christians (Firebaugh and Harley 1991) and Muslims as well as other religious groups (Van Tubergen 2006). It is therefore expected that Muslims who live in

neighborhoods with many ethnic in-group members and/or a mosque, and Muslims who are married and/or have children will attend the mosque more frequently than Muslims who live in neighborhoods with few ethnic in-group members and without a mosque, and who are single, without children. Again, because segregation in Dutch cities increased (Vervoort and Dagevos 2011), and because the second generation started forming families in the period that we study (De Valk 2006), we expect this has led to higher average levels of mosque attendance.

We will first estimate the gross trend in mosque attendance, to see whether the secularizing gross trend reported by Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn (2008) persists. After having established the trend, we will include the factors mentioned above to test their explanatory value. Any net trend that persists after including the relevant factors indicates additional factors that influence attendance. This will be explored further in the discussion section of the article.

Data and Methods

The Muslim community in the Netherlands is currently estimated to consist of approximately 825,000 individuals (approximately 5 percent of the total Dutch population). The largest Muslim groups are the Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch, of which a little less than half were born in the Netherlands (Van Herten 2009). Both ethnic groups came to the Netherlands originally as "guest workers" in the 1960s and 1970s, and are still characterized by socioeconomic disadvantages (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2010).

We pooled four large-scale datasets collected in the Netherlands between 1998 and 2006. We used the same three surveys as Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn (2008), and added the follow-up survey from 2006, "Survey Integration of Minorities" (Dagevos et al. 2007). Regarding the measures we use, question wording and response categories in the four surveys are identical. All data were collected by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP). Response rates ranged from 45 percent to 52 percent for Moroccan-Dutch, and from 51 percent to 61 percent for Turkish-Dutch, which is comparable to other research among minority groups. In each survey around 1,000 respondents for each ethnic group were interviewed based on representative population samples.[2]

Measures

Only individuals who regard themselves as Muslim answered the question on *mosque attendance* (over 95 percent of the total sample). Muslim respondents were asked how frequently they attend the mosque: (1) never, (2) several times a year, (3) several times a month, or (4) weekly or more.

For year of survey, the year 1998 is taken as the reference category, and other years are added as dummies. Second generation is determined by country of birth (1 = born in the Netherlands; 0 = born abroad). All second-generation respondents have one or two parents who were born in either Turkey or Morocco. For education, the highest level of completed education (either in the Netherlands or abroad) was indicated on a four-point scale (no education/primary school; lower secondary; higher secondary; tertiary). We used the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm estimation to impute the 4 percent missing values on this variable. To take life stages into account, dummies are included for being single with no children, having a partner but no children, having

[2] We constructed a time series for the 11 cities (smaller and larger cities from all parts of the country, including the four largest Dutch cities) that were included in all datasets. A large percentage of all non-Western immigrants in the Netherlands lives in these 11 cities. To correct for possible selectivity in response rates, when estimating the gross trend and descriptive statistics, the data are weighted using ethnicity, age, sex, marital status, size of the city, and migration generation. After the weights are applied, the data are representative for those ethnic groups in the Netherlands. Weights are generally low, implying that respondents do not differ strongly from the population on these characteristics. In the regressions weights were not applied.

children, and living with one's parents. Of the married respondents, the vast majority (around 95 percent) is married to someone from the same ethnic group. We include the percentage of co-ethnics per neighborhood (four-digit zip code)[3] per survey year and the presence of a mosque of one's ethnic group per year per neighborhood (computed on the basis of Landman 2006; Moskeewijzer 2009; Sonneveld 2009 and own research). Finally, we control for age (range 15–65), gender, ethnicity, and participation in the labor market (being employed [working more than 12 hours a week], being unemployed, being a student, and being inactive). Finally, we also included a category for those who did not fill out this question (6.9 percent).

To test our model, we apply multilevel analysis in MLwiN, which takes into account that individuals are nested in neighborhoods (Hox 2010). A two-level model fits the data better than a model with only one level (Δ –2 LL = 80.71, $p < .0001$) and is most fitting to test effects of neighborhood composition and presence of mosques, though most of the variance is located at the individual level (4 percent of the variance is located at the neighborhood level).

Results

Our first aim is to see whether we can distinguish a trend over the years in mosque attendance.[4] Of all individuals who refer to themselves as Muslim ($N = 7{,}414$), 47 percent never attend the mosque or do so only a few times a year. There are significant differences in frequency of attendance between the years ($F[3, 7409] = 46.52$, $p < .001$). In the periods 1998–2002 and 2002–2004 mosque attendance declined significantly. Between 2004 and 2006, no significant differences were found, indicating stabilization. The trend is similar across both ethnic groups, although among the Moroccan-Dutch, the decline stops as of 2002 and slopes up again in 2006—though not significantly—whereas for the Turkish-Dutch mosque attendance stabilizes as of 2004.

We estimate a number of models with which we try to explain the changes over the years (Table 1). We include the variables in three steps, starting with year and a random slope for year to test whether the trends are the same across neighborhoods (Model A); adding all variables that are expected to lead to religious decline as well as controls (Model B); and finally adding variables expected to lead to religious vitality (Model C). Because the gross trend in religiosity is mostly downward, it is to be expected that the trend cannot be explained by variables included in Model C. However, it is possible that these factors work as suppressor effects, and therefore they should be taken into account. In a last step, we examine whether the effects of the most important determinants of mosque attendance (generation, education, ethnicity, and gender) have been stable over time, by taking up interactions (Model D).

After starting in Model A with the dummies for year and their random slope, we take up generation and education in Model B. The predictors are significant in the expected direction: the second generation and higher educated attend the mosque less frequently. These predictors, together with the controls, explain about half the trend over time, although the shape in the trend (decline, stabilization) is still the same. The strong effect of gender can be explained by the fact that mosque attendance is not a prerequisite for women, the way it is for men.[5] In Model C, we

[3] On average, there are 23 respondents per year per zipcode area, the minimum being 1 and the maximum 92. An average zipcode area has 3,800 inhabitants (Wittebrood and Van Dijk 2007). The dataset includes 294 zip code areas.

[4] A one-way ANOVA shows that there are significant differences between the years on the percentage of respondents regarding themselves as Muslim ($F[3, 7592] = 4.786$; $p < .01$) Post hoc tests indicate that in 2004, fewer respondents called themselves Muslim than in 1998 and 2002. 2006 does not differ from any of the other years. Although there have been slight changes over time, the percentage of Muslims has always remained above 95 percent.

[5] We tested the models separately for men and women because mosque attendance may have a different meaning for both sexes. However, because findings are generally valid across gender, we decided to present one model including both groups.

Table 1: Multilevel analysis of mosque attendance in the Netherlands (scale 1–4; 1 = never and 4 = daily)

	Model A	Model B	Model C	Model D
Constant	2.797(.027)**	3.173(.037)**	2.732(.053)**	2.611(.056)**
Year (1998 = ref)				
2002	−.194(.038)**	−.091(.034)**	−.152(.034)**	−.053(.053)
2004	−.427(.045)**	−.234(.043)**	−.285(.042)**	.035(.068)
2006	−.401(.048)**	−.215(.044)**	−.295(.045)**	.019(.071)
2nd generation		−.204(.041)**	−.029(.047)	−.179(.070)**
Year *2nd generation (1998 = ref)				
2002 *2nd generation				.016(.089)
2004 *2nd generation				.385(.107)**
2006 *2nd generation				.647(.110)**
Education		−.155(.015)**	−.088(.015)**	−.146(.023)**
Year *education (1998 = ref)				
2002 *education				.061(.032)
2004 *education				.142(.040)**
2006 *education				.099(.044)*
Employment status (inactive = ref)				
Looking for work		−.251(.049)**	−.069(.049)	−.085(.049)
In school		−.249(.054)**	.063(.061)	.065(.060)
Working		−.285(.033)**	−.126(.034)**	−.122(.034)**
Unknown		−.170(.056)**	−.023(.057)	−.021(.056)
Turkish (Moroccan = ref)		.209(.026)**	.198(.026)**	.310(.040)**
Year *Turkish (1998 = ref)				
2002 *Turkish				−.139(.061)*
2004 *Turkish				−.205(.075)**
2006 *Turkish				−.341(.080)**
Female		−.794(.027)**	−.711(.028)**	−.532(.042)**
Year *female (1998 = ref)				
2002 *female				−.036(.061)
2004 *female				−.553(.076)**
2006 *female				−.542(.079)**
Age			.020(.001)**	.021(.001)**
Family status (single = ref)				
Living with partner but has no children			.259(.057)**	.250(.057)**
Living with one's child(ren)			.357(.044)**	.357(.044)**
Living with one's parents			.307(.060)**	.335(.060)**
Mosque available			.063(.036)	.056(.036)
% Co-ethnics			.008(.002)**	.008(.002)**
2 LL	23369.454	22216.174	21900.658	21707.019
Variance neighborhood level	.044(.010)**	.030(.007)**	.021(.006)**	.024(.006)**
Random slope 2002	.037(.018)	.024(.014)	.027(.014)	.030(.014)*
Random slope 2004	.031(.026)	.033(.023)	.029(.022)	.021(.020)
Random slope 2006	.043(.031)	.032(.026)	.045(.027)	.036(.025)
Variance individual level	1.366(.023)**	1.172(.020)**	1.124(.019)**	1.094(.019)**

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$, two-sided tests.
Note: $N = 7{,}348$; all coefficients are unstandardized.

see, as expected, that older people, people who are married and/or have children, and people living in areas with many co-ethnics attend the mosque more frequently. The availability of a mosque does not seem to play a role in the frequency of attendance. Upon further inspection it is shown that the presence of a mosque is only related to the religious attendance of women. In areas with a mosque, the difference in frequency of attendance between men and women is diminished by a third. Seemingly, women mainly attend mosques when there is one in the vicinity, whereas men

take more efforts to travel, likely because mosque visits for them is a prerequisite. Comparing Model C to Model B, we see the size of the effects of survey year increase again. This is an indication that forces like segregation actually suppress the downward trend for the earlier years of our sequence. As we can see from the absence of a random slope for year, this trend over time is largely the same across neighborhoods.

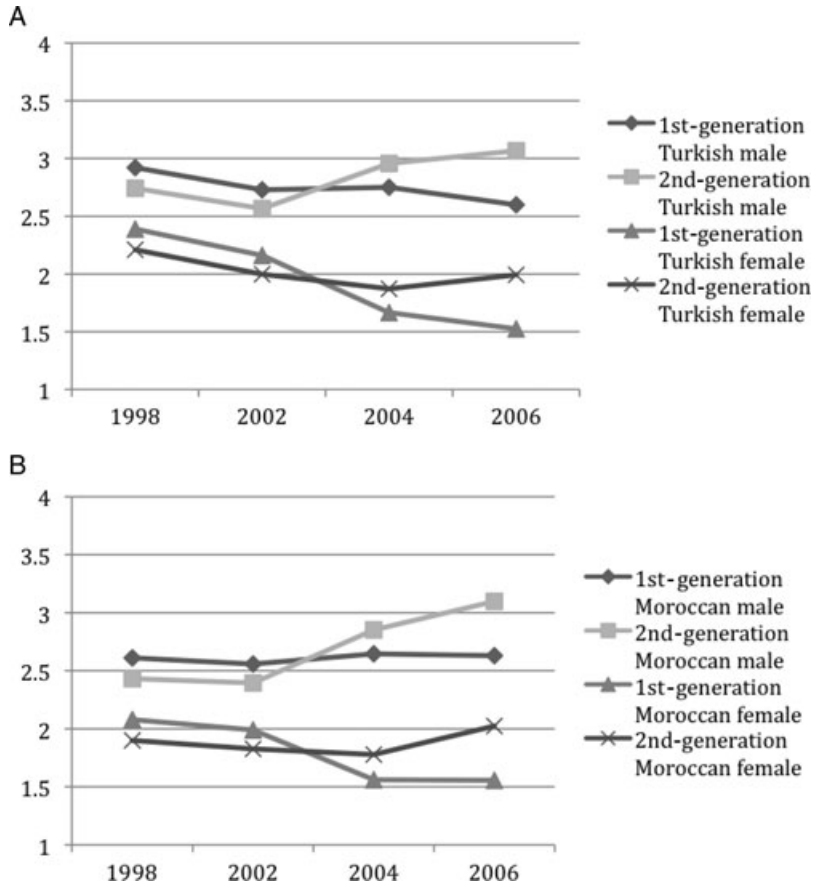
This is not to say that the trend is equal for all groups. Model D shows that the trend over time differs across ethnic groups, generations, gender, and educational level. Differences between Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch attendance rates, which were quite pronounced in 1998 (Turkish-Dutch attended the mosque more frequently), disappear over time. The opposite happens for men and women: the already substantial initial difference between men and women doubles between 1998 and 2006. Differences between generations become more pronounced in later years, as the second generation (starting out with lower attendance rates) overtakes the first. Because there are many different trends taking place at the same time, we plotted the net trend of the Turkish- and Moroccan-Dutch controlling for age, education, and neighborhood composition, on the basis of gender and generation (see Figures 1A and B). From these pictures, a clear image emerges: it is the second-generation men, especially those of Moroccan descent, who increasingly visit the mosque. On the other hand, it is the first-generation women, especially those of Turkish descent, whose mosque attendance diminished. The second-generation women and first-generation men of both ethnic groups are relatively stable in their religious practice over time. A last finding is that the negative effect of education on religious practice also diminishes over the years, and in 2004 and 2006 is close to zero. In the final model, 22 percent of the variance at the individual level, and 60 percent of the variance at the neighborhood level, is explained. Because the neighborhood level makes up only 4 percent of the variance, a total of 24 percent ($.96 \times .22 + .04 \times .60$) of the variance in the model is explained.

Discussion

We found that among Dutch Muslims, the overall linear decline in mosque attendance presented by Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn (2008) halted in 2004, after which the frequency of mosque attendance stabilized. This qualifies earlier claims of secularization over time among Muslim immigrants (Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn 2008; Phalet and Ter Wal 2004). The religious decline among Muslim immigrants in secular host societies, which was predicted by scholars of migration and religion (Bruce 2011; Inglehart and Norris 2009; Van Tubergen 2006), is not confirmed by our data. Members of the second generation, who were originally much less inclined to attend a mosque, show a revival over time. Importantly, this cannot be explained by the fact that the second generation on average is getting older and is settling down. The secularizing effect of education also diminished over the years (also when controlling for generational replacement). So even if generational replacement and educational attainment were related to a decrease in religiosity in the early late 1990s and early 2000s, it seems that these forces previously seen as "driving secularization" (Phalet and Ter Wal 2004) lost power in predicting religious attendance. Mosques, rather than being places mainly first-generation (Turkish-Dutch) men visit, increasingly attract higher educated, second-generation (Moroccan-Dutch) men. Qualifying this as a general religious revival would be too strong: mosque attendance is not increasing among the Muslim population as a whole. However, the lack of generational and educational differences in later years indicates that a downward trend among the Muslim population in the future is doubtful.

Phalet, Gijsberts, and Hagendoorn (2008) suggested that one of the reasons for religious vitality could be the (increased) ethnic residential segregation of Islamic groups; they did, however, not test this. Our research supports this notion: Muslims who live surrounded by co-ethnics attend the mosque more frequently than Muslims in neighborhoods with fewer ethnic in-group members.

Figure 1
(A) and (B) net trend in mosque attendance (scale 1–4; 1 = never and 4 = daily)



Note: $N = 7{,}348$. Trend controlled for age, education, and neighborhood composition.

Ethnic segregation in neighborhoods leads to stronger embeddedness within the ethnoreligious group, which in turn is tied to maintenance or even increased importance of religious practice. These findings are in line with earlier work on social integration among the majority (nonmigrant) population (e.g., Welch and Baltzell 1984). However, changes in segregation and increases in the number of mosques cannot explain the revival of religious practice among certain groups in society, most notably the Moroccan-Dutch second generation.

What could be an alternative explanation for the halting secularization in specific subgroups? Possibly, the increasingly strained relations between the (secular) majority and Muslim minorities in the Netherlands have played a role. At the end of 2004, Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh was killed by a native-born Muslim of Moroccan descent. In this period, attitudes towards Muslims became more overtly negative (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007). The perceived clash between Islamic (immigrant) and secular (Dutch) values has increasingly been played out in national politics, culminating in high percentages voting for Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom (PVV), which is known for its anti-Muslim sentiments, in the 2006 elections. Although anti-Muslim attitudes were by no means new, they increased in strength (Jaspers, Van Londen, and Lubbers 2009). Especially for groups that do not feel included in society, religion may form an alternative reactive identity (Cesari 2002; Roy 2004). That processes of labeling and othering, in combination with religious socialization, strengthen the religious identity of young Muslims

has been shown previously (De Koning 2008; Ketner 2008). Our findings suggest that these processes may also extend to religious practices in the communal domain. Especially the higher educated second generation perceives most exclusion and discrimination in the Netherlands, and mostly so the Moroccan-Dutch (Tolsma, Lubbers, and Gijsberts 2012). It may therefore not be coincidental that it is especially these groups in which an increase in religious practice is found. To truly test whether feelings of exclusion or discrimination lead to increases in religiosity, we encourage the international science community to collect longitudinal data on a broad range of religious indicators (including religious identification), and on experiences with and/or general perceptions of discrimination and exclusion. By doing so, relations between feelings of exclusion and increasing religious importance can be established more firmly.

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