Marriage-Related Migration to the UK

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Spouses form the largest single category of migrant settlement in the UK, but research and policy making on marriage-related migration to Britain provides incomplete coverage of the phenomenon, having been dominated by a focus on the South Asian populations that are among the largest groups of such migrants. By bringing together immigration statistics with information from academic and third-sector sources, this article attempts to provide a more balanced and nuanced portrayal of patterns and practices of marriage-related migration to the UK. In doing so, it reveals important nationality and gender differences in migration flows and considers how varying marriage practices, social and political contexts, and policies of both receiving and sending countries may work to influence marriage-related migration streams. It also exposes the limitations and lacunae in existing research on this diverse form of migration, highlighting the danger that immigration policy made on the basis of partial evidence will produce unexpected consequences.

INTRODUCTION

Spouses are the largest single category of migrant settlement in the UK (39% in 2008, Home Office, 2009), but the limited nature of research on family and marriage-related migration has been widely recognized (Kofman, 2001; Migration Advisory Committee, 2009). While work in this area has been expanding in recent years, it is by no means comprehensive and is characterized by a focus on certain issues and regions of
origin, while others remain markedly under-researched. The majority of available research concerns South Asian populations whose migration has long been addressed through the lens of kinship. Such ethno-national stereotyping of migration channels has led to the neglect of the important role of marriage in the migration trajectories of other groups. In this article, we review the available evidence to construct a much more comprehensive portrait of marriage-related migration to the UK than has previously been available, focusing on the largest nationality groups of spousal migrants. The complex and varied picture that emerges challenges stereotypical view of marriage-related migration to Britain, casting light on the variety of processes involved, links with other forms of migration, and gendered dynamics.

The issue of marriage-related migration has been gaining increasing political importance across Europe in recent years, with considerable tightening of spousal immigration regulations in countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands. In Britain, the issue has not received comparable political and public attention to date, but after recent public policy consultations, the raising of the minimum age of spousal migration, and (under the coalition government) the introduction of pre-entry English language requirements for spouses increases to probationary periods and income requirements, it seems that Britain is following the example of its neighbors in seeking to tighten restrictions on spousal immigration. In this context, the uneven availability of evidence described in this article, and examples from recent British history and elsewhere in Europe, suggest a danger that legislation designed on the basis of partial information will have unforeseen consequences for the welfare of citizens and their spouses, or for other migration flows.

This article therefore has four sections. In the first, we outline the terminology and data employed in this research. The second section provides an overview of trends in spousal settlement in the UK, to set in context the third section, in which we deal with the evidence on marriage-related migration from the 14 major countries of origin, grouped by region. The final section discusses the implications of the material presented here for future research and policy making in this area.

1 Cf. Beck-Gernsheim (2007) on the focus of European research on groups of non-European, non-Christian origin.
2 With an exemption for applicants from English-speaking countries.
TERMINOLOGY AND DATA

The material covered in this article spans governmental, academic, and third-sector sources. A range of terminology to describe marriage-related migration exists in each of these fields. In terms of the legal immigration process, would-be spousal migrants to the UK apply for a visa that is referred to as “limited leave to enter” or “indefinite leave to enter” as a spouse of someone settled, or being granted settlement, in the country. “Settlement” here refers to the acquisition of the right of permanent residence. Spousal visa holders may themselves apply for settlement after a probationary period (increased recently from 2 to 5 years). The available statistical data on immigration, published in the annual “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom” reports, thus cover the following: issue of visas (limited or indefinite leave to enter); admissions (passengers given leave to enter); extensions of leave to remain (temporary right of residence); and grants of settlement. Admissions data distinguish between those entering as spouses, civil or unmarried partners, or fiancé(e)s (with the intention of marrying while in the UK), and those who arrive as the dependants of other categories of visa holder (this category includes spouses, children, and other dependants). In this report, we principally draw upon statistics of Grants of Settlement, as these include those who enter on another form of visa and later “switch” to the spousal settlement route after marrying while in the UK. Figures are also available on issues of residence documentation to European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and their family members, but as the information is less detailed than and not comparable with that on non-EEA migration, we do not include them in our discussion.

In the academic literature, numerous categorizations of migration related to marriage have been proposed, and conventional academic terminology varies according to region. Among the most commonly used categories are family formation (also sometimes called marriage migration), family reunification/reunion, tied migration (where one spouse accompanies another), and transnational marriage. These do not always map directly onto visa routes or the presentation of immigration statistics, creating difficulties for analysis, but nevertheless have utility in describing some situations or contrasts. However, as Kofman (2004) notes, categories in this field are fluid and interacting: some overlap, while the boundaries between others are less clear in practice.

Owing to confines of space, use of references is selective and does not reflect the full extent of research undertaken. A full list of literature consulted can be obtained from the first author.
Given these ambiguities, and acknowledging inter-linkages between categories, we use the terms “marriage-related migration” and “spousal migration” as umbrella terms encompassing all situations where marriage plays a substantial role in an individual’s migration. In the following discussion, “spousal settlement” refers to migrants granted permanent residence rights on the basis of marriage and (for those nationalities captured by immigration statistics) corresponds to the statistical category of “grants of settlement” to husbands and wives in the UK Border Agency statistics employed below.

GENERAL TRENDS IN SPOUSAL SETTLEMENT

Since the 1997 abolition of the Primary Purpose Rule, under which applicants had to prove that their marriage was not primarily motivated by immigration, the number of spouses granted settlement in the UK has been increasing, rising from 30,190 in 1994 to 57,390 in 2008. However, such

4For the sake of simplicity, fiancé(e)s and civil partnerships are included in this conceptualization.

5The statistics on spousal settlement throughout this article are from the Home Office “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom” reports and command papers for the years 2000–2008 (and supplementary excel tables) available from http://rds.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration-asylum-stats.html, http://www.official-documents.gov.uk and www.archive2.official-documents.co.uk. All numbers are rounded to the nearest 5. Statistics on total grants of settlement and total grants of settlement to spouses for 2000–2008 are drawn from “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom,” main excel tables, Table 4.3. Statistics on total grants of settlement and total grants of settlement to spouses for 1993–2000 are drawn from the Home Office “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom, 2003” (http://www.archive2.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm63/6363/6363.pdf, Table 5.3). Statistics for particular nationality groups are drawn from the following: “Control of Immigration Statistics 2008,” Supplementary excel Table 4c; “Control of Immigration Statistics 2007,” Table 5.1; “Control of Immigration Statistics 2006,” Table 5.1; Command Paper “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom” 2005, Table 5.1; Command Paper “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom” 2004, Table 5.1; Command Paper “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom” 2003, Table 5.1; Command Paper “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom” 2002, Table 6.1; Command Paper “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom” 2001, Table 6.1; Command Paper “Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom” 2000, Table 6.1.

6Figures for spousal settlement between 1993 and 2002 include EEA nationals, while those from 2003 onwards exclude them, in line with changes in the categorizations used by UKBA statistics. Accession state nationals are included or excluded according to their accession date. Swiss nationals are excluded from June 1, 2002. Data from 2003 also exclude dependants of EEA and Swiss nationals in confirmed relationships and granted permanent residency.

7Data from 1997 onwards include unmarried and civil partners in the category “spouse.”
settlement has not increased proportionately with other types of migration, as can be seen in Figure I. In 1995, spouses constituted 59% of all grants of settlement, but had fallen to 39% by 2008.

The overall upwards trend in grants of settlement to spouses is characterized by peaks and troughs. A robust analysis of these trends is complicated by the time lag between migration and settlement, the varying length of time taken to process applications and appeals, and changes in immigration rules and procedures (see Appendix). Despite this, likely factors contributing to some significant general trends can be identified.

The sharp fall in overall spousal grants of settlement in 2004 is most likely related to the 2003 raising of the probationary period between spousal entry and settlement from 1 to 2 years. Hence, many grants to spouses would have been delayed by an additional year, so this abrupt decrease was temporary. The dip in 2007 could be attributed to a combination of the 2007 introduction of the “Knowledge of Life in the UK” test for those wanting to gain settlement, a change in the qualifying period for settlement in employment-related categories from 4 to 5 years in 2006 (delaying grants to main applicants and their dependants), the Immigration (European Economic Area) Regulations 2006 that created alternative routes for spouses of those who could exercise rights to free movement under European law, and the introduction of the “Certificates of Approval” (CoA) requirement in 2005 (under which migrants had to
apply for a certificate from the Home Office before marrying in the UK).\textsuperscript{8,9} The latter was intended as a measure to combat marriages of convenience for immigration purposes, as irregular migrants and those with limited time remaining on their visa would not be granted a certificate. “Sham” marriages are the subject of increasingly policy attention in the UK, but as empirical evidence on such practices is scarce, and given confines of space, we do not address the issue in this article (but see Charsley and Benson, 2012).

Changes in marriage-related migration flows are also likely to be influenced by changes in the nature or volume of other sources of immigration, so that an influx of migrants in one year may lead to a later increase in spouses applying to join them. The time between such events is, however, likely to vary greatly. Isolating the particular configurations of changing conditions in receiving and origin countries responsible for changes to total spousal settlement figures would be a complex task, but certain causal relationships can be suggested when examining the profiles of particular sending countries. Home Office statistics document over 70 countries of origin of spousal migrants to the UK, but many of these represent rather small numbers of actual migrants. In the remainder of this article, we focus on the 14 countries of origin that account for the largest numbers of marriage-related migrants (>1,100 in 2008). These are shown in Table 1, in descending order of numbers of grants of settlement.

Wives make up the majority (60%) of spousal migrants to Britain (see Figure II), but the gender ratios demonstrate considerable variation between national groups, so that wives account for 93% of Thai and 84% of Chinese spouses, but only 33% of Philippine spousal settlement.\textsuperscript{10} Research on marriage-related migration globally has tended to focus on migrant wives, with a comparative lack of research on male marriage migration (but see Gallo 2006, George 2005, and in the British context Charsley, 2005; McGregor, 2007; Ahmad, 2008; Pasura, 2008).

\textsuperscript{8}This is consistent with more detailed statistics, showing that most of this decrease was in those settled “on the basis of marriage” rather than at the same time as their spouse (“Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 2007,” Table 5.3).

\textsuperscript{9}This system came to an end in 2011 after being judged discriminatory by the High Court and House of Lords. It did not apply to marriages taking place in the Church of England. See Appendix for further details.

\textsuperscript{10}Marked differences in the countries of origin of immigrant husbands and wives have also been reported in a recent study using Swedish data (Niedomysl, Osth, and van Ham, 2010).
MARRIAGE-RELATED MIGRATION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Table 1

| Country of Origin | Grants of Settlement, 2008 |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| India             | 8,860                     |
| Pakistan          | 7,050                     |
| Philippines       | 3,220                     |
| Bangladesh        | 2,880                     |
| South Africa      | 2,520                     |
| China             | 2,455                     |
| U.S.              | 1,875                     |
| Nigeria           | 1,840                     |
| Turkey            | 1,735                     |
| Ghana             | 1,520                     |
| Thailand          | 1,195                     |
| Zimbabwe          | 1,175                     |
| Australia         | 1,170                     |
| Sri Lanka         | 1,130                     |

Figure II. Spousal Grants of Settlement by Category, All Nationalities, 1993–2008

MARRIAGE-RELATED MIGRATION BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

South Asia/Indian Subcontinent

In regional terms, the Indian subcontinent (particularly India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—see Figure III) has long accounted for the largest proportion

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11It should be noted that these reviews often describe general patterns, but should not be taken to imply homogeneity within these national groups (Breger and Hill, 1998).
of spousal migrants to Britain and represented a third of all grants of settlement in 2008. Unsurprisingly, most research on marriage-related migration to the UK has focused on South Asian populations. Patterns of marriage-related migration to Britain are diverse, reflecting the region’s varied culture, religion, and migration histories (e.g., Ballard, 1990; Charsley and Shaw 2006), but some common patterns and issues exist.

The historical colonial relationship between Britain and the Indian subcontinent has strongly influenced migration histories, as this region became a source of labor migrants for Britain’s post-war economy (Commonwealth citizens held privileged immigration rights until the 1962 immigration reforms). This was initially predominantly male labor migration, but many wives and children were later brought to Britain – predominantly during the 1960s and 1970s for Indians and Pakistanis, and the 1980s for Bangladeshis (Gardner and Shukar, 1994; Coleman, 1995; Gardner, 2006). As these children and the generations born in Britain have reached marriageable age, “homeland” marriages have been occurring, but appear to be more prevalent among some ethnic/national and religious groups.

In much of South Asia, love before marriage is not considered a prerequisite for a successful union (although love marriages or “love-cum-arranged” marriages where parents arrange a match suggested by their
children do occur – Mody, 2002). In most of the region, brides conventionally move to their husband’s households, so that it has been suggested that for Punjabi women, “womanhood implies travel” (Bradby, 2000:236). However, conventions of husbands moving to the wife’s household exist in some parts of India (e.g., Busby, 2000), and even where residence in the husband’s household is the norm, some men may live with their in-laws for pragmatic reasons (see Charsley, 2005). Transnational marriage appears to act to balance the gendered mobility entailed by marriage, as relatively equal numbers of wives and husbands from the Indian subcontinent enter the UK (in 2008, the proportion of wives were 52% for India, 56% for Pakistan, and 54% for Bangladesh). Substantially more wives than husbands from Sri Lanka are granted settlement (81% wives), but this case is unusual in the region given the significance of refugee migration.

Some British immigration regulations seem to have been particularly aimed at South Asian spousal migrants or have had particular impacts on this group. The Primary Purpose Rule had disproportionately affected South Asian applicants (Sachdeva, 1993; Menski, 1999) leading to increased applications for entry clearance after its abolition, particularly from husbands and male fiancés. Most reported cases of forced marriage, which has been cited as justification for recent regulation changes including the raising of the minimum age for spouses to 21, concern those with South Asian (particularly Pakistani) backgrounds. It has also been suggested that the extension of the probationary period before migrants can apply for settlement leaves some South Asian wives vulnerable to domestic violence. While an exemption to the probationary period exists for domestic violence cases, proving such cases is often difficult, and the immigrant spouse has no recourse to public funds during the period of the appeal (Wilson, 2006; Anitha et al., 2008).

Significant differences exist, however, between South Asian groups in marriage-related migration trends, as can be seen in Table 1. India recently overtook Pakistan as the single largest national group of spouses granted settlement. A recent review of the Labour Force Survey 1992–2005 found 24% of British Indians were married to migrants (Dale, 2008). Since the 1980s, these have probably been predominantly British-born Indians marrying in their parental or grandparental homeland (perhaps particularly Sikh: Singh and Tatla, 2006), but marriage-related migration is likely to be diversifying in parallel with broader Indian migration flows that now include highly skilled science-oriented migrants, service sector workers, and unskilled migrants (Batnitzky, McDowell, and
Dyer, 2007; Xiang, 2007, 2008), challenging conventional understandings of the phenomenon as simply second-generation “homeland” marriages. Significant numbers of spouses enter the UK as dependants of Indian students, although this may change after recent changes in the terms of student visas. A smaller but significant number enter as dependants of point-based migrants. Marriage-related migration route appear to be patterned by gender, with women more likely to be settled on the basis of marriage to a resident spouse, while more men are settled at the same time as a migrant partner. Transnational marriage continues among many ethnic and religious groups, often involving at least an element of familial “arrangement,” with spousal selection influenced by concerns of household socioeconomic mobility, and often involving dowry (e.g., Coleman, 1995; Raj, 2003; Ballard and Gardner, n.d.). Within the Indian diaspora, a hierarchy of marriage partners, in which country of residence plays a role, may exist (Mand, 2003; Voigt-Graf, 2005). The UK and India are only two nodes in this hierarchy, which may also produce marriage-related out migration from the UK.

Pakistanis are probably the most studied group of marriage-related migrants to Britain, with research detailing issues including transnational marriage rituals and the gendered experiences of migrant spouses (Charsley, 2005, 2006, 2007; Werbner, 2010). Marriage has long been established as the main form of Pakistani migration to Britain. Estimates of the proportion of British Pakistanis married to Pakistani nationals vary between 48% of men and 57% of women (Dale, 2008), 57.6% (in Bradford 1992–1994), and 71% of marriages (in Oxford) (Shaw, 2001:327). The majority of these unions are arranged or semi-arranged marriages between cousins or more distant relatives – rates of consanguineous marriage appear to be higher in transnational than intra-national marriages (Shaw, 2001:327). Motivations may include the opportunity to invigorate ties to much missed relatives in Pakistan, demonstrate family honor, maintain family assets, further the immigration of kin, and desire for a religiously observant spouse (Ballard, 1989; Shaw, 2001; Shaw and Charsley, 2006). Migration Watch UK (2004, 2005) link the practice to segregation and lack of integration, but insufficient research exists to test this assertion. Contemporary diversification of Pakistani immigration, which now includes substantial numbers of temporary migrants, irregular migrants, and students (Harriss and Shaw, 2009;

12Throughout this article, data on settlement category are taken from the aforementioned 2008 Home Office immigration statistics.
Rana, 2009), is likely to lead to diversification of marriage-related settlement. The recent decline in overall numbers suggests some decrease in popularity of transnational marriages, but the very marked drop in numbers of spouses granted settlement in 2004–2005 is likely to be the combined result of the extension of the probationary period with disruption to consular services in Pakistan in the wake of 9/11.

The literature on Bangladeshi marriage-related migration is much more limited, but suggests similarities with the Pakistani case. Since the 1980s, migration to Britain from Bangladesh has predominantly been through marriage into the settled British Bengali community (Gardner and Shukar, 1994; Gardner, 2006). These transnational marriages, which are often arranged, are made possible through existing transnational kinship ties and (anecdotally) a significant portion may be cousin marriages (Gardner, 1995, 2006).

The Sri Lankan case is exceptional in the region, due to the importance of refugee migration. From the 1950s, growing inter-ethnic tensions spurred the migration of Tamils to the UK, particularly as students. From 1983, civil war between the government and Tamil insurgents provoked large refugee movements to South India, the UK, and elsewhere (van Hear, 2006). Asylum applications have constituted most Sri Lankan migration to the UK (most are Tamils). Applications approached 4,000 in the early 1990s, falling in the mid 1990s but peaking again at over 6,000 in 2000 after new offensives, before dropping during a short-lived cease-fire in 2002–2004. Marriage-related migration appears to follow trends of asylum applications, though with a lag of some years. A rise in spousal migration in 2005–2006 may correspond to the peak in asylum claims around 2000, but given the length of asylum processing time, the lag period may be longer. Evaluations of trends are, however, complicated by the social pressure on men to ensure the marriages of their sisters before their own, “working for my sisters” to cover dowry and wedding expenses for marriages which may take place within Sri Lanka or the diaspora (Fuglerud, 1999; Lindley and Van Hear, 2007). Hence, a male refugee may arrange the marriage of a sister within the UK or elsewhere, and then perhaps also himself marry transnationally. Many Sri Lankan marriages are arranged, sometimes through brokers of various kinds. Marriage has also become one common route of moving people out of danger in Sri Lanka, although this motivation intersects with traditional marriage practices. Tamils favor marriage to close relatives where possible and preferably successive cousin marriage, so that property exchanged at marriage remains within the extended family. Against this background, dowries traditionally circulate within local
family networks, but partners with permanent residence abroad request higher dowry payments, so dowries now circulate transnationally (Fuglerud, 1999).

East Asia

Research on marriage-related migration within the East Asian region has been expanding in volume in recent years (e.g., Piper and Roces, 2003; Constable, 2005), but this expansion has not been reflected in work on Britain. The following section is thus reliant to a significant degree on research conducted with East Asian migrants elsewhere. Although there is a lack of research, marriage migration does loom large in public perceptions of Thai migrants to the UK (Sims, 2008), providing a further example of the ethnic stereotyping of marriage-related migration.

The Philippines has recently overtaken Bangladesh as the third largest national group in marriage-related settlement. Since 2003, the proportion of husbands entering the UK has increased significantly, to 67% in 2008, representing a dramatic masculinization from a previous pattern more akin to that of Thailand (below). The literature on marriage-related migration from the Philippines overwhelmingly focuses on marriage between Filipinas and foreign men, facilitated by the growth of international introductions agencies (Constable, 2003a), rather than family reunification (for a notable exception see DeJong, Davis Root, and Abad, 1986). Contemporary global Filipina female labor migration for work as domestic laborers and nurses is well documented. In the UK, the recent international recruitment drive for nurses attracted many Filipina migrants (Brush, Sochalski, and Berger, 2004; Choy, 2004; Brush and Sochalski, 2007; Buchan, 2007), making it likely that the masculinization of marriage-related migration is largely composed of husbands of migrant women nurses, a suggestion supported by 2008 statistics showing the vast majority of husbands gained settlement at the same time as their wives. Labor migrants or students may also find Western partners within destination countries (MacKay, 2003; Nakamatsu, 2003), and Constable argues that for Filipinas the relationship between marriage and migration is complex, because they “do not only marry to emigrate, they also emigrate to achieve the desired goal of marriage” (2003b:175; cf: Lauser, 2008). Marriage-related migration has not, however, been a focus for research on the Filipino population in the UK.
The recent rise in the numbers of Chinese migrants entering Europe through official channels, particularly family-based chain migration (Ceccagno, 2003; Laczko, 2003), is reflected in the steep rise in Chinese marriage-related settlement depicted in Figure IV. Limited research exists on this practice (Lee et al., 2002), but combined with statistical evidence, and research from other countries, suggests various intersections of marriage and migration. Spouses may follow or accompany labor or student migrants who later settle, single migrants may meet a spouse in the UK, Chinese immigrants may marry transnationally (facilitated by networks of family and friends), and correspondence marriages occur between Chinese women and Western men (Constable, 2003a,b; Laczko, 2003; Thuno, 2003a,b; Siu, 2005; Cooke, 2007; Lévy and Lieber, 2009). It is also possible that the “astronaut” families documented elsewhere of Hong Kong and Taiwanese men who have returned to work in Asia (Ong, 1999; Waters, 2002) also exist in Britain. Chinese marriage-related migration is highly gendered (84% wives in 2008), and most women gained settlement on the basis of marriage to a settled partner, while men often obtain settlement at the same time as migrant wives. The 2008 statistics reveal a large proportion of Chinese dependants granted entry clearance as the dependants of work permit holders and students. Since 2000, China has featured as one of the top ten

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13 And irregular migration (Laczko, 2003).
countries of origin of asylum seekers to the UK, and some of those granted refugee status may bring spouses to join them.

In contrast to the probable diverse constitution of Chinese marriage-related migration, it is likely that most Thai spouses gaining settlement are women marrying non-Thai men, with couple formation facilitated by both introduction agencies and international travel.\(^\text{14}\) Thailand is a major holiday destination for British nationals, and 73% of the million-plus British tourists visiting Thailand between 1980 and 1986 were men (Truong, 1990:173 –174 in Davidson, 1995). The sex tourism industry is part of the attraction for some and may form part of the background for some transnational relationships, but prostitution in Thailand is reportedly unlike the more commodified, brief exchanges in Europe and may be more open-ended, involving continued contact, further visits and sending of remittances to Thailand (Davidson, 1995:49). Thai migration to Britain is dramatically patterned by this highly gendered form of marriage-related migration (93% of spouses granted settlement in 2008 were women). Between 2003 and 2006, only 19% of Thai migrants granted entry clearance to the UK did so as wives or fiancées, rather than as students, workers, or other dependants, but settlements in the category of “wife” make up 55–75% of total grants of UK settlement to Thai nationals. Home Office statistics also show that the majority of Thais naturalizing as UK citizens between 1997 and 2007 did so through marriage, and two-thirds of grants of citizenship to Thai nationals between 2001 and 2006 were on the basis of marriage. As a result of the dominance of female marriage-related migration, 2001 census data show that 72% of the 16,256 Thai people in the UK were women (Sims, 2008:2), demonstrating the dramatic effect marriage-related migration can have on the characteristics of an ethnic group.

Africa

Despite the fact that marriage-related migration of Africans to the UK constitutes a significant proportion of marriage-related migration (in 2008, over 12% of grants of spousal settlement issued were to nationals of South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, and Zimbabwe - see Figure V), little research appears to exist on this topic. As van Dijk notes, “[T]here is limited

\(^{14}\)Although European research has drawn attention to the variety of Thai female migration for factory work, domestic labor and sex work, as well as “mail-order” brides (Mix and Piper, 2003).
literature on the meaning of African marriage systems in a globalizing world … a lacuna that is remarkable given the increasing transnational nature of the ways in which marriages are arranged in African communities” (2004:442).

Nigerians have been migrating to Britain since the colonial era, principally for higher education, but often staying on as highly skilled workers. Europe-bound migration diversified following the economic decline and increasing political tensions in the 1980s (De Haas, 2006). The UK continues to attract relatively highly skilled migrants (cf. Hernandez-Coss and Bun, 2007), particularly health workers (Connell et al., 2007; Healy and Oikelome, 2007), but also students and increasing numbers of asylum seekers – Nigerians were the fifth largest group of asylum seekers in Europe in 2004 (Carling, 2005). The majority of Nigerian migrants to Britain originate from southern parts of the country (Hernandez-Coss and Bun, 2007). Literature on Nigerian migration to the UK is limited, with no direct research on marriage-related migration. In Nigeria, wives conventionally move to live with husbands (Watts, 1983), but Reynolds (2006) has argued that cultural expectations of African women’s household responsibilities may drive professional women to migrate to the UK, U.S., and Canada, so the relatively gender-balanced flow of migrant spouses (43% wives in 2008)
may include husbands of such women. As in the Ghanaian case below, Pentecostal churches may play a role in some transnational marriages.

Emigration from Ghana grew sharply from the 1970s in response to economic and political turmoil: initial migration streams were to oil-rich Nigeria, then to other parts of Africa, and then in the 1980s to Europe, the U.S., and Canada. This migration was mainly for employment and education, but asylum migration was also prominent, particularly in the 1990s (Van Hear, 1998). The majority of arrivals have been men, but significant numbers of women also migrate, particularly to work in the health sector. Ghanaian spousal settlement is fairly balanced in gendered terms (48% women in 2008). While no research evidence on Britain was located, several types of marriage have been documented for Ghanaian men in the Netherlands, including the following: formalized relationship with a wife still in Ghana, additional customary marriage, relationships with the Ghanaian woman who “cooks his food,” and contractual marriages in the host country sometimes involving large sums of money and exploitative relations involving marriage brokers (Van Dijk, 2004:454). The scale of such practices is unknown. Recently established Pentecostal churches – in Ghana, the UK, and elsewhere in Europe – play a role in the increasing transnationalization of Ghanaian marriage. Many Ghanaians are attracted to these churches by their international networks and cosmopolitan outlook, and messages of success and prosperity (Van Dijk, 2004:442).

Zimbabwean migration to the UK, Europe, and North American began in the 1960s. Since the late 1990s, substantial numbers of asylum seekers, refugees, economic migrants, and students have arrived in Britain. Although there are no precise figures, estimates suggest that there are more than 200,000 Zimbabweans living in the UK (Pasura, 2008:89–90). There is some literature on highly skilled Zimbabwean migrant workers in the UK care industry (McGregor, 2007, 2008) but little on the relationship between their migration and marriage. Pasura (2008) notes the breakdown of traditional marriages as a result of migration and the development of “move in” (as opposed to marriage) households in Britain – the latter motivated by desires to regularize immigration status and combat loneliness because the introduction of visa requirements in 2002 limited family reunification. In contrast to the general pattern of dips in numbers in 2004 and 2006, grants of spousal settlement to Zimbabweans rose steadily from 2000 to 2005 with only slight decreases in these years. This relatively stable increase may be related to the substantial volume of
asylum applications received from Zimbabweans over the last few years: Zimbabwe has featured as one of the top ten nationalities of asylum seekers since 2000.

Despite the fact that South Africans constitute the fifth largest group in terms of grants of settlement through marriage, no literature appears to exist on South African marriage-related migration to the UK. The UK is a primary destination for South Africans, and since the late 1990s, such migrants have tended to be skilled professionals, many employed in finance and business (Dodson, 2002; Sveinsson and Gumuschian, 2008). There has also been significant exchange of young working holiday makers – although South Africans are not included in the 2008 “Youth Mobility” scheme replacing working holiday visas, which may impact on future settlement trends. The 2001 census records the majority (90%) of South African migrants to the UK as white, but many have British or EEA passports, or are eligible for UK ancestry visas, making size or demographic profile of South African population in the UK hard to ascertain (Sveinsson and Gumuschian, 2008).

U.S. and Australia

US nationals constitute the seventh largest group of marriage-related migrants granted settlement (Figure VI) but are, like many other white English-speaking migrant groups, rarely mentioned (let alone problematized) in the UK migration literature. Spouses account for approximately half of total grants of settlement issued to U.S. citizens between 2000 and 2008, the majority
granted settlement on the basis of marriage, rather than “at the same time” as their spouse. These figures suggest more “family formation/reunification” than “dependant migration,” but are not conclusive. At 73% women (2008), this is among the most markedly gendered marriage-related migration flows to the UK. A tendency for women to follow male partners (so-called tied migrants) rather than vice versa has been documented both in the UK and in the U.S., so it is possible that similar processes are at work on an international level. If this is the case, there may be a parallel out-migration of British wives joining American husbands overseas.

A similar lack of evidence exists concerning Australian marriage-related migration (Figure VI), although there is more research on other forms of Australian migration. The UK is the most popular destination for Australians, accounting for nearly 21% of all Australian emigrants in 1996–2006 (Hugo, 2006:108). An estimated 183,000 Australians (nearly 24% of the total Australian diaspora) live in the UK or Ireland, with the majority in London (Fullilove and Flutter, 2004:15–6; Hugo, 2006:109). Some may hold British passports or entitlement to Ancestry visas. Migration to the UK (e.g., on a working holiday) is often considered a “rite of passage” – the “big OE” (overseas experience) (Hugo, 2006; Conradson, 2009). As with migration from other more developed countries, this movement is “at times only loosely related to economic factors” (Conradson and Latham, 2005:289). Most Australian expatriates are aged 25–44, relatively highly skilled and concentrated in high-demand occupations (Fullilove and Flutter, 2004:13). In the early 2000s, the popularity of the U.S. appears to have increased relative to the UK (ibid. p.18), consistent with fewer grants of spousal settlement after 2003. Hence, Australian marriage-related migration to the UK may be a combination of spouses traveling with work permit holders and marriage between Australian nationals and UK citizens or settled migrants. Given the volume of
young people from Australia, spending time in the UK, and vice versa, is likely that some such relationships result from travel/working holidays in either direction.

Turkey

Sitting at the edge of Europe, labor migration from Turkey since the 1960s has resulted in large and well-studied ethnic populations in many European countries, but the small Turkish population in Britain is the focus of less research. The European literature documents an initial largely male Turkish migrant labor force, followed by female marriage migration, although contemporary Turkish spousal migration to Britain (Figure VII) - and other European countries (Beck-Gernsheim, 2007) - demonstrates a fairly even gender balance. Cultures of migration exist between particular destinations and areas of origin in Turkey, facilitated by transnational networks and family obligations, and recent increases in the Turkish populations in Europe have largely resulted from marriages between migrants and the 1.5 or second generation and spouses from Turkey (Böcker, 1994; Lievens, 1999; Schoenmaeckers, Lodewijckx, and Gadeyne, 1999; Timmerman, 2006, 2008; Timmerman, Lodewyckx, and Wets, 2009; Timmerman and Wets, 2009). If Turkey were to join the EU, opening up more routes to legal migration, the impact on marriage-related migration would provide a fascinating test case for the role of immigration considerations in the volume of transnational marriages.

DISCUSSION

While research on marriage-related migration is patchy and limited, available governmental statistics also suffer from significant limitations. A far greater range of statistical information relevant to marriage-related migration is available in some other countries, giving rise to fascinating work on topics including the trajectories of marriage-related migrants in Australia (Khoo, 2003), transnational marriage fields in Sweden (Niedomysl, Osth, and van Ham, 2010), and divorce among transnationally married couples in Denmark (Liversage, 2012). In Britain, fundamental issues arise in the task of simply enumerating flows of marriage-related migration. The expansion of the EEA has reduced the number of countries from which visas are required and therefore the coverage of spousal immigration and settlement statistics. Partial statistics may be available
from other sources, but do not give a full picture of how spousal migration may continue, increase, or change character under new political conditions. Moreover, the nationality of migrants may not reflect their full migration trajectory. Numbers of Somali spousal migrants in the settlement figures appear low, for example, but there is anecdotal evidence that some Somali refugees gain residency or citizenship elsewhere before onward migration through marriage to Britain (Lindley and Van Hear, 2007). The true extent of Somali marriage-related migration to Britain is thus unclear. The EC free movement directive (2004/38) that allows spouses to accompany EC exercising their right to free movement between member states (as famously exemplified in the “Surinder Singh” case of a British citizen moving to another European country to obtain previously denied spousal migration, before returning with his wife to live in Britain) further complicates the statistical picture – as Beck-Gernsheim notes, the categories here are “fuzzy” (2007:273–4). Finally, no evidence is available on the volume of marriage-related emigration from Britain.

Such limitations aside, this article provides a more comprehensive picture of marriage-related migration patterns for the UK and of the relevant literature, than has hitherto been available. Although it suggests that trends in this type of migration are difficult to analyze or predict, given the multiplicity of sources and influences, and the variation in time lags between other forms of migration and subsequent spousal settlement, it clearly demonstrates the wide range of marriage practices and relationships with other forms of migration involved in marriage-related migration to Britain. These range from logics of social mobility maximization in South Asian arranged marriages to opportunities presented by travel and communication technologies in the “globalization of marriage fields” (Niedomysl, Osth, and van Ham, 2010), and the marital diasporas that may eventually result from conflict-related refugee dispersal. It is also clear that marriage-related migration may play a significant role in shaping the characteristics of ethnic groups in Britain, supporting the case made recently by Thomas Cooke that “family migration should move front and center” in migration research (2008:262).

Given the confines of a journal article, however, this portrait is necessarily incomplete, covering only national groups selected for their numerical prominence in the immigration statistics. Nevertheless, it also demonstrates that the overwhelming focus on South Asia in the research on marriage-related migration to Britain has been at the expense of a broader understanding of this type of migration and that there is an
urgent need to expand attention to encompass other national/ethnic groups. Chinese, Filipino, American, and African groups emerge as particularly numerically significant but understudied populations of marriage-related migrants. As the case of the masculinization of spousal migration from the Philippines clearly demonstrates, marriage-related migration is, like other migration flows, dynamic in both volume and character, presenting challenges for researchers and policy makers attempting to keep abreast of the situation. This dynamism undermines conventional understandings of the principal characteristics and issues of marriage-related migration to Britain, where policy debate has focused on South Asian groups and forced marriage, while public interest in “mail order brides” from other ethnic groups has been evinced by a flurry of television documentaries. In contrast, the complex and dynamic picture presented here demonstrates the considerable variation in the intersections of marriage and migration that can coexist both between and within national/ethnic groups. In this context, attempts to use nationality as a proxy for different forms of marriage migration (cf. Khoo, 2001) are likely to be both inaccurate and prone to reliance on stereotype.

Reviewing the evidence on marriage-related migration with this broader vision (in both ethnic and temporal terms) allows us to comment on British regulation of this form of immigration – long recognized as a prime challenge for migration regulation given Human Rights declarations and European legislation on migrants’ rights to marry and to family life. The fact that spousal settlement, although still increasing, has not kept pace with increases in other forms of migrant settlement suggests that successive new restrictions on marriage-related migration may have had some impact – although such effects are hard to disentangle from the effects of EU expansion.

It is also clear, however, that changes in immigration regulations (whether or not directed at family migration) can have unforeseen consequences for marriage-related migration, and sometimes negative impacts on migrants and their families. Qualitative research on the effects of the 1962 Commonwealth immigration restrictions documents their part in transforming previously predominantly male, temporary/circular migration from Pakistan into family reunification and settlement, by reducing alternative entry routes, and opportunities for circular migration (e.g., Shaw, 2000:30–7). The recent raising of the minimum age for both migrant and sponsoring spouses to 21 was portrayed as combating coerced marriages of the young, but research raises the fear that young people may still be forced
into marriage, but kept abroad until they reach the age at which they can sponsor their spouse (Hester, Chantler, and Gangoli, 2008), while young couples whose marriages were demonstrably not contracted under duress complained at enforced separation. Recent Danish research has also traced unintended effects of the new restrictions on spousal migration (which have been cited approvingly in British policy consultation documents). Increased minimum ages, a “combined attachment” regulation requiring couples demonstrate greater ties to Denmark than to the country of residence of the other spouse, and other restrictions, may have led some to postpone rather than avoid transnational marriage, to an increase in unregulated religious marriages, and created new communities of cross-border marital commuters in neighboring Sweden where spousal immigration requirements are more lenient (Schmidt et al., 2009). If Britain follows its European neighbors in tightening controls on marriage-related migration, the lack of a more complete and balanced evidence base on this diverse form of immigration may increase the risk of further unforeseen consequences resulting from new legislation. Substantial new empirical research in this numerically important and dynamic field is thus urgently needed.

APPENDIX: CHANGES TO SPOUSAL MIGRATION LEGISLATION

| Year | Event |
|------|-------|
| 1980 | Conservative Government introduces “Primary Purpose Rule” (requirement to prove that immigration was not the primary purpose of a marriage) |
| 1992 | Surinder Singh Case in European Court of Justice gives family members rights to accompany EEA nationals moving within EEA |
| 1997 | New Labor Government abolishes Primary Purpose Rule |
| 2000 | Third country nationals (non-EEA) can stay in UK on basis of marriage to UK/EEA national or permanent resident (provisos of Immigration Rules and Immigration Regulations 2000) |
| 2001 | Legal duty on registrars to report suspicion of marriages of convenience for immigration purposes |
| 2003 | Probationary period before settlement can be granted to those entering as spouses increased from one to 2 years. Age at which a person may act as sponsor for a marriage visa raised from 16 to 18 |
| 2004 | Age at which a person may enter the UK as spouse raised from 16 to 18 |
| 2005 | Introduction of Certificates of Approval (CoA) requirement for any marriage involving non-EEA nationals subject to immigration control and UK citizens. The measure was intended to prevent marriages of convenience for immigration purposes, but does not apply to those marrying in Anglican church in England and Wales |

15In media coverage of a joint test case concerning Amber & Diego Aguilar, and Shakira Bibi and Suhayl Mohammed, it was noticeable that the story was illustrated with pictures of the white rather than the Asian couple.
2006 The Immigration (EEA) Regulations 2006 transpose the UK’s obligations under European Community law (via the Free Movement Directive 2004/38 EC) into domestic legislation. New rights of residence were created including the ability of EEA nationals and their family members to acquire permanent residence under European law for the first time. Qualification period for grants of settlement to those in employment-related categories increased from 4 to 5 years. High Court judgement that CoA scheme was disproportionate and unlawfully interfered with Article 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Surinder Singh European Court of Justice ruling (on family members of EEA nationals) incorporated into British immigration regulations

2007 Adults aged over 18 but under 65 who apply for settlement need to provide evidence that they have passed either the Life in the UK test or an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course. CoA guidance changed to allowed applicants without valid leave to enter or remain (i.e., irregular migrants) to apply for a COA

2008 House of Lords ruling that CoA scheme is incompatible with ECHR. Age at which person can enter the country as a spouse raised from 18 to 21 [for both partners]

2009 Suspension of fee for CoA to comply with House of Lords ruling

2010 New restrictions on students and their dependants working. Dependents are only allowed to work if the main applicant is pursuing study at degree level or above. Students on courses of less than 6 months are not allowed to bring in dependants. Pre-entry basic English language requirement for spousal immigrants introduced (with exceptions for some majority English-speaking countries)

2011 CoA scheme abolished.

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