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## Measuring Transnationality of Immigrants in Germany: Prevalence and Relationship with Social Inequalities

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**Transnationality of immigrants in Germany: Prevalence and relationship with social inequalities**

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# **Measuring transnationality of immigrants in Germany: Prevalence and relationship with social inequalities<sup>1</sup>**

**Keywords:** migrants, transnationality, inequality, Germany, capital, heterogeneity

## **Abstract**

The scope of immigrant's transnational ties and the relationship to their social position is subject to a controversial debate that suggests a dualistic picture. On the one hand, globalization theorists argue that an elite of highly educated and economically most successful professionals intensively engages in and benefits from transnationality. On the other hand, most scholars in migration and assimilation studies hold that it is the most underprivileged immigrants who maintain strong ties across state borders, which in turn furthers their marginalization. Yet, to date, very little systematic research has been conducted into the nexus between social inequalities and transnationality. This paper aims to fill this gap. Using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), we show that the economic, cultural and social forms of capital are related to transnationality in different ways, rather than reflecting one uniform pattern.

## **Introduction**

The relationship between people's transnational ties and practices and their social position is subject to a controversial debate both in academia and in the public discourse. This debate suggests a dualistic picture, indicating that there is a group of highly educated and professionally successful people who move across borders easily, have the relevant skills for cross-border communication and exchange at their disposal and are intensively transnational. Their transnational education and career paths secure them a position at the upper end of the social ladder (Sklair 2001; Weiß 2006). Assimilation theories, however, have sometimes suggested that it is the less privileged immigrants in particular who maintain strong transnational ties to their 'old homes'. This may allow them to draw on resources through their cross-border networks and exchanges and thus help them meet their daily needs, but it will eventually lead them into a social mobility trap. For this group, transnationality is likely to further contribute to a marginalized status in the immigration country (Esser 2003, 16; Esser 2004, 48, 50; cf. Wiley 1970) and is therefore considered to be 'bad' (Portes 1999, 468).

Surprisingly little effort has been devoted to exploring the scope of transnationality in contemporary society and the relationship with social inequalities systematically. Apart from the fact that this dualistic picture emerges from research which is either focused on transnational elites, expatriates and highly skilled professionals or on poor and marginalized migrants with a view to social integration, two major problems arise. First, different studies often investigate very different kinds of transnational practices. They generally apply a broad and generic understanding of 'transnationalism' rather than considering

transnationality as a heterogeneity; that is, a difference between individuals and groups (Faist, Fauser, and Reisenauer 2013), akin to age, gender or ethnicity. Some authors investigate cross-border career paths or transnational economic entrepreneurialism (e.g. Kreutzer and Roth 2006; Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002); others are concerned with political involvement across borders (e.g. Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003); and still others examine personal ties and contacts (e.g. Mau and Mewes 2008; Mau 2010; Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006). Since people are involved in different transnational dimensions – economic, political, cultural, familial – to different degrees (see Levitt 2003), the relationship with social inequalities is also likely to vary across these dimensions.

Second, quantitative studies that can help us understand transnationality across different social groups are still rare. There are some studies from the United States (e.g. Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002; Waldinger 2008) and from Europe (e.g. Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006; Schunck 2011; Mau and Mewes 2008). However, they are mostly concerned with the social integration of migrants and often include only few aspects relevant to social inequalities.

This is the first paper using quantitative methods to investigate the scope of transnationality and the question of social inequalities among migrants in Germany, one of Europe's largest immigration countries. Germany's foreign-born immigrant population amounts to 10.6 million, or 12.9 per cent of the total population (Statistisches Bundesamt 2013). Our analysis concentrates on this group and distinguishes migrants who differ in their capital endowment, which in turn may be related to differential engagement with transnationality. The next section provides a more detailed discussion on the nexus of social inequalities and

transnationality. Subsequently, the usage of these two key concepts for our analysis will be briefly defined. This is followed by a description of the data and the items later used for the empirical analysis. The conclusion specifies possible directions for future research.

### **The debate on social inequalities and transnationality**

Insights into the relationship between social inequalities and transnationality come from different strands of research. First, according to the research on global talents and transnational elites, it is the comparatively small group of internationally and well-educated and economically successful professionals – generally neither labelled nor viewed as migrants but rather as cosmopolitans – who benefit most from transnational living and working environments and are able to make good use of their skills in international labour markets (Sklair 2001; Koehn and Rosenau 2002; Carroll 2010). This view is widely shared among many globalization theorists (Bauman 1998; Beck 2008).

Second, the research on immigrants' integration and 'ethnic' social inequalities investigates the (often inferior) position of migrants and their children, or of particular ethnic groups (generally measured by country of birth or origin). This research takes into account resources specific to these groups, including some characteristics more specifically related to the country of origin. In Germany, for instance, proficiency in the German language greatly influences the educational and labour market success of migrants, while proficiency in the language of the country of origin contributes no specific benefit (Esser 2006). Similarly, the composition of friendship networks is also an important factor, with

co-ethnic ties being rather detrimental (Kalter 2006). While ethnic resources and networks may provide some advantages and allow migrants to find a job more easily, it is assumed that this is of little and only short-term benefit and eventually contributes to further marginalization. However, these studies are not specifically interested in transnational ties and practices. Where cross-border aspects in the form of shuttling immigrant children were considered (measured by stays of at least six months or longer in the country of origin), it was not the stay abroad but the proficiency in the language of the immigration country – in this case, German – that was found to make a difference (Diehl 2002).

Partly as a critique of classical assimilation theories, a transnational perspective emerged in migration research that provides a more optimistic picture, which is frequently an overtly positive assessment on migrants' pathways out of marginalization. Scholars in this vein argue that although migrants have been increasingly confronted by ever more limited opportunities for social mobility since the 1970s and have been experiencing racial and ethnic discrimination, they can rely on transnational ties for socio-cultural and economic purposes (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992; Portes 1996; Smith and Guarnizo 1999, Faist 2000). From this perspective, transnational economic enterprises, for example, offer migrants opportunities that are otherwise not available. Through political and socio-cultural engagement – in the form of civic associations, for instance – the creation of more positive self-images and collective solidarity is considered to provide a 'protective layer against discrimination and contempt commonly found in the host society' (Portes 1999, 471). Here, migrants' involvement with transnationalization is believed to generate alternative routes to

social mobility and as a means of political involvement for those facing the risk of downward mobility.

Yet, the Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project (CIEP) revealed that transnational engagement is not merely a characteristic of the most marginalized and deprived migrants (see Landolt 2001; Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo 2002; Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002; Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003). On the contrary, those who are well-established and better educated and who have longer periods of residence in the immigration country are more likely to be involved in cross-border exchanges. In particular, they are represented among the transnational entrepreneurs, involved in hometown committees or business activities, and thus in more public forms of transnationality. The number of such individuals is relatively small, while more migrants from all social strata maintain looser forms of association and private activities across borders in their daily lives (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo 2002), not only in the United States but also in Europe (Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006; Schunck 2011).

Apart from a few successful individuals, however, transnational ties and loyalties may further reinforce the marginalization of already marginalized migrants (Morawska 2003; Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006, 288). This may deepen social inequalities even more (Levitt 2003). This latter scenario has been termed 'reactive transnationalism', fostered by marginalization and experiences of discrimination, while the first (successful) form is 'resource-dependent', since it relies on a certain level of economic, cultural and social capital, which in turn facilitates further upward mobility (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo 2002; Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002). Here, again, the picture is dualistic.



Against this background, two competing hypotheses can be distinguished in the debate on the relationship between social inequalities and transnationality. The first hypothesis maintains that higher levels of capital go hand in hand with more transnationality. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that resources, such as a higher income, better educational achievements and a denser social network – capital which, in the case of migrants, supports settlement and upward mobility – is positively correlated with, and in fact supportive for, transnational involvement. Conversely, this transnationality is also beneficial in a globalized world. Thus, both globalization research and parts of migration studies suggest that those who are better off should be more transnational. We take up the notion of a resource-dependent model to describe this hypothesis.

The second hypothesis argues that lower levels of capital are characteristic of those with transnational ties and practices. It is assumed that the lower the income, particularly when it reflects downward mobility, the lower the level of educational and occupational skills, and the more limited a person's network, the greater his or her transnational involvement will be. Since other alternatives for attaining status and prestige are not available, transnationality is a welcome option. Here, transnationality can lead to further marginalization. We use the notion of reactive transnationalism to refer to this possibility.

### **Defining key concepts**

#### *From transnationalism to transnationality*

Transnational migration research has introduced generic terms such as 'transnationalism' and 'transmigrants', yet usually investigates only selected

aspects, such as economic, political and socio-cultural activism (Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002); travel, remittances and identification (Waldinger 2008); the duration of visits abroad (Schunck 2011) or includes both activities and identification (Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006). Some of this literature shows that transnational engagements often do not cluster (Levitt 2003; Waldinger 2008; Schunck 2011), with certain migrants showing a higher propensity to send remittances, while others are more likely to travel ‘back home’ for visits, for example. Furthermore, a number of qualitative analyses show that people are involved in transnational practices in various social fields to different degrees (Itzigsohn et al. 1999). This indicates that transnationality can be considered along a continuum of different degrees of intensity (Levitt 2001; Itzigsohn et al. 1999; Fauser and Reisenauer 2013).

We therefore suggest considering transnationality a marker of heterogeneity. Like other heterogeneities that characterize individuals and groups (cf. Blau 1977), the notion of transnationality must be analytically distinguished from its consideration as a resource (or an obstacle) per se (Faist, Fauser, and Reisenauer 2013). Thus, people may be transnational to different degrees in different fields, which in turn will be associated with different amounts of resources.

### *Social inequalities*

Research in the field of transnationality is often not specifically interested in social inequalities but most frequently investigates one particular social class or, again, chooses selective aspects expressing an individual’s resources or capital.

Studies of migrants' assimilation, for instance, examine whether progressive integration, along with settlement, adaptation and upward mobility, lead to a decrease in transnationality. These studies generally cover structural integration but tend to neglect other inequality items such as income or level of education (Waldinger 2008).

In this paper, inequalities are defined as the opportunities to access generally existing and desirable social goods and positions which, when limited, negatively affect the life chances of the persons or groups concerned (Massey 2007). Here, we consider inequalities in their plurality and as related to chances and capabilities, rather than specific outcomes (Therborn 2006: 5). We approach this idea by defining an individual's position as measured by classical indicators of stratification, drawing on Bourdieu's capital theory (1983). His forms of capital – economic, cultural and social capital – can be regarded as the basis for an individual's opportunities to partake in certain fields, such as the labour market, education, health or politics. This understanding does not consider the outcome of inclusion in these fields but concerns the degree of opportunities for participation in them. Unlike much of the social inequality research, we will not only take the forms of capital to determine an individuals' overall social position; we will also look into them separately. This allows us to see whether and in what way each of the three forms of capital is related to transnationality (Faist 2014).

### **Data, variables and analysis**

So far, insights into transnational practices of migrants have relied on data from a small number of specific groups, making it unclear as to what degree the findings

can be generalized (Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002; Waldinger 2008; Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006). Our analysis uses the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), an annual representative longitudinal study of private households in Germany which started in 1984 and currently surveys over 10,000 households including 20,000 individuals (Wagner, Frick and Schupp 2007). Immigrants are over-sampled. Topics covered include household composition, occupational biographies, employment, earnings, and health satisfaction.

The analysis population consists of foreign-born SOEP sample members (first-generation migrants) who took part in the panel at least in the year when the respective indicator of transnationality was surveyed for the last time (usually 2010; see Table 1). Since not all variables we used to operationalize capital were surveyed in the year when the respective transnationality indicator was measured, in the bivariate and multivariate analyses the analysis population is reduced to cases for which information from earlier waves could be imputed.

In the survey year 2010, the members of our sample were on average 49 years old and had been living in Germany for 26 years. 23 per cent had arrived as children, and 54 per cent were women. More than a fifth were ethnic Germans (*Aussiedler*), 15 per cent had been born in Turkey and 14 per cent in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, and 8 per cent had come from Italy. The remaining 41 per cent had originated from all over the world.

#### *Dependent and independent variables*

We assess the association between forms of capital (independent variables) and transnationality (dependent variables). The dependent variables draw on items in

the SOEP data set that we grouped into the following domains of transnationality: financial exchanges (sending remittances); personal relations (family and contacts to friends abroad and recent visits to the country of origin in the last two years); identification (feeling of attachment to the country of origin); cultural practices (regular use of the native language and reading newspapers in that language). The items for cultural practices were included because use of language is assumed to reflect an interest in matters of everyday life and the politics of the country of origin (see Table 4 in the appendix for more details about the generation of the variables).

Independent variables concern the three forms of capital. Economic capital is reflected in the financial means available to a person, that is, the net household income and the net household wealth, both weighted by the modified OECD equivalence scale (DIW Berlin 2011). Cultural capital is measured by educational achievement and occupational status based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations of 1988 (ISCO-88) (Elias 1997). This usage of cultural capital is thus limited to its institutionalized form, more akin to the idea of human capital and its role on the labour market (Coleman 1988), although it is a broader concept in Bourdieu's theory. Social capital refers to resources available to individuals through their social relations and networks, which in turn allow for the conversion of other forms of capital and thus for access to advantageous positions and goods. According to Bourdieu (1983), the value of social capital is dependent on the scope of the network and the amount of cultural and economic capital network members possess. We operationalize this by taking regular meetings with friends as a measure for scope (considered the 'frequency of social

contact’) and the educational position of the three best friends as a measure for capital accessible through network members (expressing ‘social network resources’’).

### *Analysis*

We first describe the frequency of transnational practices among immigrants in Germany. This is followed by a bivariate analysis to determine whether a positive or negative association between different forms of capital and transnationality exists. We then run a series of logistic regression models to test whether significant associations revealed in the bivariate analysis are merely due to confounding correlations or if they remain substantial. There the household panel character of the SOEP was reflected by using cluster robust standard errors. Finally, based on the regression results, we predict the probability of transnational behaviour for two social groups: the ‘poorer’ immigrants who possess little capital volume, and those who are very well-off, that is, the upper social strata. All results are weighted using cross-sectional weights according to the year of measurement of the respective transnational item. These weights compensate for the initial sampling probabilities, selective refusal in the first wave and selective attrition in the long run of the panel (Kroh 2014).

## Findings

### *Prevalence of transnationality among immigrants in Germany*

Immigrants in Germany perform practices in the diverse dimensions of transnationality to different degrees (Table 1). Whereas only 9 per cent of immigrants send remittances across the border, 80 per cent maintain contacts to friends and acquaintances abroad and 34 per cent have a spouse, parents or children living abroad. About two thirds visited their country of origin at least once in the last two years, 45 per cent feel strongly attached to their country of origin. Slightly more, 54 per cent, predominantly speak the language of their country of origin at home, or at least in equal proportion to German; and 56 per cent read newspapers in the language of their country of origin at least occasionally. Only the sending of remittances is a less common transnational activity. Thus, altogether, transnationality is an important characteristic of the immigrant population in Germany.

[Table 1 about here]

### *The relationship between capital and transnationality*

Overall, our bivariate results show that capital is positively associated with transnationality when it comes to the sub-forms of financial exchanges and personal relations (Table 1): the higher the capital endowment, the more frequent the transnational practice. For identification, the picture is somewhat mixed, while for cultural transnationality, we find a negative relation.

The proportion of immigrants in the upper income group who send remittances (18.2 per cent) is four times that of those in the lowest group (4.7 per cent). The relationship between wealth and sending remittances is similar, albeit less pronounced. Hence, economic capital shows a consistent positive relation to financial transfers. Those who are economically better off are more likely to contribute financially to the social situation of their significant others across the border. Similarly, highly educated (16.5 per cent), and employed (white collar: 13.3 per cent; blue collar: 10.8 per cent), immigrants are twice as likely to send remittances as the less educated immigrants (7.4 per cent), and those who are not working (6.2 per cent), respectively. The relation between social capital and transnationality is less consistent. Immigrants who have at least one better-educated friend send remittances more frequently (12.3 per cent) than those with a who do not have these ‘social network resources’ at their disposal (8.3 per cent). Only with regard to the frequency of social contacts – our second measure for social capital – we find no significant association.

Personal ties reveal a similar picture. Economic capital has an overall positive relationship here as well. In particular, maintaining contacts to friends abroad and recent visits are significantly positively associated with income. Also, the most wealthy immigrant group visits the country of origin significantly more frequently than the two less wealthy groups do (85 and 66 per cent respectively). In addition, those with a larger amount of cultural capital are likely to have part of their family abroad. Interestingly, local and transnational networks are not incompatible, nor are they in competition: most of the immigrants who meet with



friends, relatives or neighbours at least once a week reported recent visits to their country of origin as well as contacts abroad.

Transnational identification, measured as a strong feeling of attachment to the country of origin, relates significantly only to income and frequency of social contacts. This relationship with income is U-shaped, with those immigrants in both the lower and upper income groups identifying with their respective country of origin more frequently than those in the middle income group. The more sociable immigrants also report transnational identification more often.

With regard to cultural aspects, immigrants who possess little economic, cultural or social capital are significantly more likely to speak the language of the country of origin most of the time and to read newspapers in that language. The only exceptions here are the positive associations of frequency of social contacts with language and newspaper reading, which are not significant.

### *Multivariate analysis*

When controlling for country of origin, length of stay in Germany, citizenship, age, sex, marital status and whether children live in the same household, and for the capital forms among each other, the relationship between capital and transnationality turns out to be weaker across all associations (Table 2). The probability of sending remittances (model 1) remains related to economic capital, that is, the higher the household income, the higher the odds to send remittances to someone living outside Germany. Immigrants in the middle income group are almost four times more likely to send remittances (OR=3.95, SE=1.76) than those in the lowest income group. For those in the upper group, the odds are even

almost seven times higher (OR=6.79; SE=3.98). Also, educational degree still shows a significantly positive relation to sending remittances. Immigrants with at least a high school diploma are three times more likely to send remittances than the less educated immigrants (OR=3.29; SE=1.26). The fact that a person does not participate in the labour market reduces the odds of sending remittances by more than half (OR=0.45; SE=0.19).

[Table 2 about here]

As regards personal ties overall, we observe significant associations with economic and social capital. There is a significant positive relation between the odds of visiting the country of origin (model 4) and income, that is, the higher the income, the more likely visits to the country of origin are. In comparison to bivariate results, the positive relation of income and maintaining contact with persons abroad (model 2) loses significance (third income tercile: OR=1.68; SE=0.59), whereas the positive relation of income and having close family members abroad (model 3) becomes significant (third income tercile: OR=2.01; SE=0.51). The relationship between wealth and maintaining contact with persons abroad, as well as the relationship between wealth and the odds of having visited the country of origin in the last two years, are U-shaped (models 2 and 4), whereas the middle wealth group engages in transnationality practices significantly less frequently than the lowest wealth group. We also find that social capital in the form of the intensity of social contact is still positively associated with maintaining contact to and visiting persons abroad (models 2 and 4). This

indicates that immigrants who count on a solid network locally also count on cross-border ties.

In the multivariate model, the significant relation between income and attachment to the country of origin (model 5), found in the bivariate results, disappears, although the tendency remains (third income tercile: OR=1.55; SE=0.53). Transnational identification is associated with a higher level of education (of the persons themselves and of their friends), high income and labour market position. Thus, economic, cultural and social capital show a positive relation with identification with the country of origin (or at least a tendency towards such a relation). Such attachments can thus not be considered a sign of marginalization or exclusion in the immigration country.

When it comes to the regular use of the language of the country of origin (model 6), the negative association remains, yet with the exception of income which is no longer significant. Still, immigrants who are less well-endowed with capital tend to use their native language more frequently than the well-endowed (third income tercile: OR=0.73; SE=0.27). The negative relationship between capital and language use (model 6) remains for the groups with high and medium levels of wealth, but is significant only for the latter, which are almost half as likely to use the language of their origin country as the low wealth group (OR=0.53; SE=0.14).

Overall, none of the forms of capital plays a role when it comes to reading newspapers in the native language (model 7): neither are the associations significant, nor do they consistently go in one direction.

*Residency, age at migration and citizenship*

Since the influence of the duration of stay in Germany on the maintenance of transnational ties is a contested issue, we shall give particular consideration to this question in our analysis. Classical assimilation theory implies that those ties would become weaker in the course of residency in the new country (Gordon 1964). Yet, the analysis here shows no association between length of stay and the majority of the aspects of transnationality studied here. Only with regard to identificational (model 5) and cultural (model 6+7) aspects of transnationality is there a negative correlation with the length of stay, that is, the longer the stay, the less frequent the use of that language (OR=0.85; SE=0.04). A decline in the use of and proficiency in the original mother tongue has normally been interpreted as a sign of weakening transnational relations of migrants (Alba and Nee 2003: 145-153). Although it is true that language is a necessary, perhaps indispensable, basis for transnational relations, especially within families and among kin, this obviously does not imply its regular use – in contrast to the idea of rather enclosed ethnic and hence transnational communities. Further distinctions can be observed for the group of those who migrated as children, which is also negatively associated with almost every dimension of transnationality, for example remittances (model 1; OR=0.35; SE=0.18). Similarly, holding German citizenship reduces the probability to be transnational. This supports assumptions of classical assimilation theory concerning adaptation over time only partly. It stresses the roles of acquisition of citizenship and age at migration. The duration of residence, perhaps the indicator most strongly reflecting assumptions on assimilation,

however, is related to transnationality only concerning its identificational and cultural aspects but not as regards social ties and financial exchanges.

#### *Comparing social categories*

We next constructed two social categories that are defined by the volume of the three forms of capital, which each of them possess, locating individuals at the upper or lower end. The lower category is composed of all those respondents in the lowest income or wealth group who have a low level of education or work in a blue-collar job and who have either low social network resources or report low ‘frequency of social contact’. The opposite applies to the composition of the upper category. Nine respondents who fulfilled both definitions were assigned to the higher category. Both predicted probabilities were estimated as average marginal effects of the other control variables.

[Table 3 about here]

On average, only 6 per cent of the immigrants in the lower social category send remittances to someone living abroad, compared to 18 per cent of those in the upper social category. The proportion among the well-off is also higher when we look at personal transnational relations (contacts, family and visits) and identification-related attachment to the country of origin. Although the difference in the field of financial exchanges is greatest, it is still remarkable in all other aspects of transnationality. For the two cultural items, speaking and reading newspaper in one’s native language, the opposite is true: these transnational

activities are engaged in more frequently among those in the lower social group. In particular, speaking the language of the country of origin regularly is more than twice as frequent among the lower than among the upper social strata. Hence, transnational practices are engaged in to significant degrees by both the upper and the lower social categories among immigrants, albeit in different domains.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Our findings speak to the widespread existence of transnationality among immigrants in Germany. Depending on the transnational practice concerned, this varies strongly, from 80 per cent who maintain regular contact to friends abroad to 9 per cent who transfer money across the border. This should be kept in mind when speaking about transnational life-worlds. Recent quantitative studies have revealed that several practices of a more public nature, such as transnational business or cross-border political engagement, are rare (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller 2003); such research appears to underestimate involvement in other spheres. In turn, research that has looked into cross-border contacts shows that these exist among many migrants (Snel, Engbersen, and Leerkes 2006) tending to overestimate the extent of transnationality. Some studies have also shown that migrants entertain transnational practices in some social realms and not in others, and hence the practices do not cluster (Levitt 2003; Waldinger 2008; Schunck 2011). Our results show that they also vary in degree even within one realm, here of private affairs.

Are those engaged in the different practices, then, the most established or the most deprived? Our main question has been whether transnationality is

specific to the upper social category, which is able to draw on relevant resources to this end, or whether it is the lower social category, responding to social exclusion by orienting their lives towards the country of origin. Transnational practices that may be considered ‘reactive’ (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo 2002) are specifically observed in relation to usage of language; here the multivariate analysis confirms the bivariate results and thus is the only robust finding in this regard. Immigrants with few economic, cultural and social resources tend to rely more on their native language than on German. This supports a prominent argument of scholars in assimilation theory (Esser 2004). However, use of language is the only practice that displays this relationship with capital. When other aspects of transnationality are taken into consideration, it is usually the upper social category that is more transnational. In addition, use of language is also the indicator most weakly connected to transnational practices in a cross-border sense since it may be used in local everyday life exclusively. Further, our results show a negative relationship between length of stay and the use of language of the origin country.

Several of our results support a resource-dependent interpretation (Itzigsohn and Giorguli Saucedo 2002). The availability of both economic and cultural capital is positively associated with various transnational practices, although some of the significant relationships disappear when controlling for other influences. Yet the trend remains the same. In particular, economic capital plays an important role when sending remittances and visits abroad are considered, practices which involve financial costs. Availability of social capital goes along with several transnational practices in the personal realm, as well as

with transnational identification, although to a lesser extent. We also find that local and transnational networks are not mutually exclusive. Our analysis shows that rather than reflecting one uniform pattern, different forms of capital are related to transnationality in different ways. Often, larger amounts of capital go along with more intense transnationality.

We thus find indications for both our hypotheses. However, which of the two hypotheses is supported depends upon the specific form of the transnational tie or practice. Therefore, over-simplifying statements on the relationship between social inequalities and transnationality fall short. Resource-demanding practices, such as financial exchanges and maintaining personal relations, are engaged in more frequently by immigrants who are better off, whereas some of the transnational practices which reflect cultural aspects are more frequent among immigrants who belong to the lower category.

Our study has limitations. Due to its sampling strategies and its panel character, the SOEP tends to over-represent the more established waves of immigration into Germany. Thus, our results can also be read as an account of transnationality among established migrants, whereas many transnational studies have concentrated on migrants who have arrived more recently, who are often considered to be somehow more transnational by nature. Moreover, our sample was too small to assess differences in transnational practices between migrants from different countries of origin or different migrant groups. However, findings were not substantially different when we removed the subgroup of “resettlers” (ethnic Germans) from the analysis (data not shown).



There are at least two key issues that require further research. First, whereas the bivariate models show many significant relationships, these often disappear in the logistical regression, indicating that many explanations relate to control variables and unobserved heterogeneities. Further research and more specific data sets are necessary to learn more about the inequality–transnationality nexus. Second, although our hypotheses and analytical models have taken transnationality as the explanandum, the causality remains unclear as a matter of fact of the cross-sectional analysis. So far, we know that those with more capital are in many ways the more transnational, but we do not know which is the cause and which the effect. Longitudinal analysis and qualitative methods provide a helpful path which our next steps will try to use to contribute to a better understanding of the implications of one of the most important markers of heterogeneity in contemporary society, transnationality.

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Table 1: Prevalence of transnationality among immigrants in Germany and bivariate association between capital and transnationality items (in per cent)

		Transnationality items						
		Financial exchange	Personal relations			Identification	Culture	
		Remittances	Contact abroad	Family abroad	Visits to Co	Attachment to Co	Language of Co	Newspaper of Co
Year of measurement		2010	2009	2006	2010	2010	2010	2010
Frequencies among immigrants		9.4	80.1	34.4	67.8	44.7	53.8	55.9
Economic Capital	Income							
	First tertile	<b>4.7</b>	<b>78.2</b>	32.4	<b>63.3</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>63.2</b>	<b>60.3</b>
	Second tertile	<b>12.3</b>	<b>80.9</b>	34.9	<b>70.0</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>51.4</b>
	Third tertile	<b>18.2</b>	<b>84.1</b>	40.8	<b>76.8</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>34.9</b>	<b>51.7</b>
	Wealth							
	First tertile	<b>7.7</b>	80.3	32.5	<b>65.6</b>	44.7	<b>60.1</b>	<b>59.3</b>
Cultural Capital	Second tertile	<b>10.6</b>	75.8	33.9	<b>64.2</b>	44.9	<b>43.7</b>	<b>57.7</b>
	Third tertile	<b>12.4</b>	86.3	30.2	<b>84.8</b>	40.7	<b>36.2</b>	<b>46.6</b>
	Education							
	Low	<b>7.4</b>	79.3	<b>33.6</b>	68.9	44.1	<b>57.5</b>	<b>57.6</b>
	High	<b>16.5</b>	82.4	<b>38.0</b>	64.0	46.9	<b>39.7</b>	<b>50.1</b>
	Occupation							
Social Capital	Blue collar	<b>10.8</b>	79.3	<b>35.6</b>	66.1	41.7	<b>58.0</b>	53.6
	White collar	<b>13.3</b>	82.4	<b>41.2</b>	68.5	46.6	<b>38.5</b>	50.5
	Non working	<b>6.2</b>	79.3	<b>31.0</b>	68.5	45.6	<b>59.7</b>	60.5
	Social network resources							
	Low	<b>8.3</b>	78.5	<b>32.5</b>	67.6	44.4	<b>60.1</b>	<b>57.6</b>
	High	<b>12.3</b>	80.8	<b>38.5</b>	67.2	43.8	<b>39.2</b>	<b>52.9</b>
	Frequency of social contacts							
	Low	9.6	<b>78.1</b>	33.2	<b>64.8</b>	<b>43.2</b>	51.9	55.9
	High	9.0	<b>82.8</b>	35.8	<b>70.4</b>	<b>46.2</b>	55.5	56.3

Data source: SOEP. Co=country of origin; weighted results; bold→Pearson Chi<sup>2</sup> p<=0.05



Table 2: Logistic regressions of capital on transnationality items, Odds ratios (standard errors)

		Transnationality items						
		Financial exchange	Personal relations			Identification	Culture	
		Remittances (model 1)	Contact abroad (model 2)	Family abroad (model 3)	Visits to Co (model 4)	Attachment to Co (model 5)	Language of Co (model 6)	Newspaper of Co (model 7)
Economic Capital	Income (ref: First tertile)							
	Second tertile	3.95** (1.76)	1.03 (0.28)	1.43+ (0.27)	1.78* (0.52)	0.91 (0.26)	0.82 (0.24)	0.94 (0.27)
	Third tertile	6.79** (3.98)	1.68 (0.59)	2.01** (0.51)	2.81** (1.06)	1.55 (0.53)	0.73 (0.27)	1.01 (0.36)
	Wealth (ref: First tertile)							
	Second tertile	0.68 (0.28)	0.60* (0.15)	0.93 (0.20)	0.52* (0.16)	0.80 (0.23)	0.53* (0.14)	1.12 (0.34)
	Third tertile	0.57 (0.26)	1.44 (0.58)	0.87 (0.28)	1.84 (0.73)	0.71 (0.24)	0.57 (0.23)	0.59 (0.21)
Cultural Capital	Highly educated	3.29** (1.26)	1.03 (0.34)	0.82 (0.18)	0.73 (0.21)	1.48 (0.41)	0.75 (0.24)	0.81 (0.23)
	Occupation (ref: Blue collar)							
	White collar	0.85 (0.40)	1.43 (0.43)	1.20 (0.26)	1.02 (0.36)	1.33 (0.38)	0.82 (0.26)	1.67 (0.54)
Social Capital	Non working	0.45+ (0.19)	0.65 (0.19)	0.82 (0.15)	0.87 (0.26)	0.85 (0.24)	1.08 (0.31)	1.35 (0.41)
	Well connected	0.58 (0.22)	1.41 (0.38)	1.23 (0.23)	1.35 (0.37)	1.15 (0.28)	0.87 (0.22)	1.21 (0.30)
	Intensive social contact	1.14 (0.36)	1.91** (0.42)	1.23 (0.18)	2.15** (0.54)	1.27 (0.28)	1.27 (0.29)	0.91 (0.19)
Controls	Migrant group (ref: Turkey)							
	Resettlers	0.52 (0.38)	0.57 (0.24)	0.31** (0.10)	0.23** (0.11)	0.16** (0.08)	0.14** (0.07)	0.13** (0.05)
	Ex-Yugoslavia	1.33 (0.74)	1.60 (0.84)	0.75 (0.22)	0.42+ (0.19)	0.57 (0.20)	0.51+ (0.20)	0.55 (0.21)
	Italy	0.20 (0.20)	1.58 (1.00)	0.55+ (0.17)	1.31 (0.87)	1.66 (0.77)	0.64 (0.28)	0.60 (0.27)
	All others	0.59 (0.33)	0.67 (0.27)	0.90 (0.22)	0.44* (0.17)	0.51* (0.16)	0.12** (0.04)	0.20** (0.07)

	YSM/YSM <sup>2</sup>	0.91/1.00 (0.05)/(0.00)	0.99/1.00 (0.04)/(0.00)	0.94/1.00 (0.03)/(0.00)	1.01/1.00 (0.06)/(0.00)	0.88*/1.00* (0.04)/(0.00)	0.85**/1.00+ (0.04)/(0.00)	0.89*/1.00+ (0.04)/(0.00)
	Migrated until the age of 12	0.35* (0.18)	0.26** (0.08)	0.36** (0.10)	0.46* (0.15)	0.96 (0.30)	0.73 (0.23)	0.51* (0.15)
	Being naturalized	0.68 (0.27)	0.22** (0.07)	0.24** (0.05)	0.41** (0.11)	0.51** (0.13)	0.87 (0.27)	0.73 (0.18)
	Age group (ref: up to 39 years)							
	40 to 64 years	1.93 (0.90)	0.75 (0.22)	1.47+ (0.33)	1.23 (0.45)	2.16* (0.69)	2.91** (1.01)	1.44 (0.44)
	65 years and above	1.83 (1.27)	0.56 (0.22)	0.68 (0.26)	1.06 (0.53)	4.31** (2.25)	5.90** (3.13)	1.39 (0.65)
	Female	1.26 (0.32)	1.07 (0.19)	1.36* (0.19)	0.86 (0.18)	0.78 (0.13)	1.04 (0.21)	0.49** (0.09)
	Married	1.19 (0.45)	1.91** (0.46)	1.05 (0.22)	1.67* (0.39)	1.29 (0.32)	1.94* (0.54)	1.66* (0.41)
	Children under 17 in household	1.39 (0.53)	1.16 (0.33)	1.62* (0.30)	1.22 (0.35)	1.81* (0.47)	1.70+ (0.48)	0.94 (0.23)
Constant		0.12* (0.13)	9.39** (6.92)	1.69 (0.91)	1.57 (1.53)	2.95 (2.48)	18.23** (17.20)	21.10** (19.70)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>		0.16	0.20	0.19	0.18	0.14	0.21	0.14
N		1.230	1.426	1.834	1.025	1.025	883	1.025

Data source: SOEP. Co=country of origin; YSM=Years since migration (YSM<sup>2</sup>: YSM squared); weighted results; p<=0.1, \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

Table 3: Predicted probabilities of transnational activities among immigrants in Germany in subsamples with low and high capital endowment, based on regression analysis (probabilities in per cent and *N*)

	<b>Transnationality items</b>						
	<b>Financial exchange</b>	<b>Personal relations</b>			<b>Identification</b>	<b>Culture</b>	
<b>Capital endowment</b>	Remittances	Contact abroad	Family abroad	Visits to Co	Attachment to Co	Language of Co	Newspaper of Co
Lower social category	6.1 (655)	76.0 (654)	30.1 (597)	61.0 (655)	39.4 (655)	61.2 (655)	58.5 (655)
Upper social category	18.9 (183)	84.0 (183)	36.2 (163)	74.0 (183)	45.8 (183)	23.2 (183)	43.2 (183)

Data source: SOEP. Co=country of origin; weighted results

Table 4: Variable generation and descriptive statistics

Items	Description	Original variable name (data set/survey year→imputation)	Generation	Descriptive Statistics <sup>1</sup>
<b>Transnationality Items</b>				
Remittances	Sends remittances abroad	bap15501, bap15504, bap15505, bap15508, bap15509, bap15512, bap15513, bap15516, bap15517, bap15520, bap15521 (bap/2010)	0=to non or only persons living in Germany remittances are sent 1=at least to one person living abroad remittances are sent	0=90.6 1=9.4
Contact abroad	Has regular contact with friends abroad	zp148 (zp/2009)	0=no 1=yes	0=19.8 <sup>2</sup> 1=80.2 <sup>2</sup>
Family abroad	Has spouse, children or parents abroad	wp11702, wp11707, wp11709, wp11716, wp11719 (wp/2006)	0=neither spouse, mother, father, daughter, son are living abroad 1= at least one of spouse, mother, father, daughter or son is living abroad	0=65.5 <sup>3</sup> 1=34.5 <sup>3</sup>
Visits to Co	Has visited country of origin in the last two years	bap148, bap148 (bap/2010)	0=never or at least not in the last two years visited country of origin 1= in the last two years visited country of origin	0=32.2 1=67.8
Attachment to Co	Feels attached to country of origin	bap143 (bap/2010)	0=feels less than strongly attached to country of origin 1=feels strongly and very strongly attached to country of origin	0=55.2 1=44.8
Language of Co	Regularly speaks language of country of origin	bap133 (bap/2010)	0=speaks mostly German at home 1=speaks both German and language of country of origin and mostly language of country of origin at home	0=46.1 1=53.9
Newspaper of Co	Reads newspaper in language of the country of origin	bap141 (bap/2010)	0=reads only German newspapers or no newspaper at all 1=reads at least sometimes newspapers of the country of origin	0=44.0 1=56.0
<b>Capital items</b>				
Income	Household annual income	i111102\$, w11101\$, d11106\$, h11101\$, y11101\$ (\$pequiv/2006, 2009, 2010)	Tertiles of equivalence weighted annual household income	Tertile 1=51.5 (0-<11,970) Tertile 2=31.4 (11,970-<18,549) Tertile 3=17.1 (18,549-152,000)
Wealth	Household wealth	w011ha (hwealth, svyyear==2002→2006) w011ha (hwealth, svyyear==2007→ 2009, 2010)	Tertiles of equivalence weighted household wealth	Tertile 1=60.6 (-153,333-<527) Tertile 2=26.0 (527-<38,760)

				Tertile 3=13.4 (38,760-9,475,000)
Education	Achieved educational degree is casmin 2c-gen or above	casmin\$ (\$pgen/2006, 2009, 2010)	0=no 1=yes	0=78.4 1=21.6
Occupation	Occupational status	is88\$ (\$pgen/2006, 2009, 2010)	1=blue collar (isco88 6100/9980 and -1) 2=white collar (isco88 1110/5220 and 110) 3=non working (isco88 -2)	1=27.3 2=26.7 3=46.0
Social network resources	At least one friend achieved a degree equal to or above casmin 2c-gen	wp11619, wp11620, wp11621 (wp/2006→2009, 2010)	0=low 1=high	0=66.8 1=33.2
Frequency of social contacts	Regularly meets friends, relatives or neighbours	vp0305 (vp/2005→2006) zp0305 (zp/2009→2010)	0= meets friends, relatives or neighbours less often than once a week 1=meets friends, relatives or neighbours at least once a week	0=57.3 1=42.7
<b>Control Items</b>				
Migrant group	Country of birth or status of entry	corigin (ppfad) biimgrp (bioimmig)	Turkey Resettlers Ex-Yugoslavia Italy All others	15.5 21.6 13.6 8.1 41.2
YSM/YSM <sup>2</sup>	Years since migration/ Years since migration squared	immiyear (ppfad) survey year	ysm=survey year-immiyear	26.3 (12.8)
Child migrant	Migrated until the age of 12	immiyear, gebjahr (ppfad)	Age at migration=immiyear-gebjahr 0=age at migration 12 and above 1=age at migration up to 12	0=77.2 1=22.8
German citizenship	Being naturalized	nation\$ (\$pgen/2006, 2009, 2010)	0=no 1=yes	0=57.4 1=42.6
Age group	Age group	gebjahr (ppfad)	up to 39 years 40 to 64 years 65 years and above	29.9 50.4 19.7
Female	Sex	sex (ppfad)	0=male 1=female	0=45.6 1=54.4
Married	Family status	\$famstd (\$pgen/2006, 2009, 2010)	0=other family status 1=married	0=31.6 1=68.4

Children	Children under the age of 17 living in the household	typ1hh\$ (\$hgen/2006, 2009, 2010)	0=no 1=yes, at least one	0=64.3 1=35.7
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Data source: SOEP. Co=country of origin; <sup>1</sup> if not otherwise marked percentages or *means (standard deviation)* refer to the survey year 2010; <sup>2</sup> survey year 2009; <sup>3</sup> survey year 2006; \$ is a place holder for wave specific prefix or suffix (letters or numbers) in the SOEP terminology