

Mixed couples in European countries – Who is in a union with a migrant?

Abstract

Previous research links integration and union (marriage or non-marital cohabitation) between migrants and natives. Classical assimilation theory sees mixed unions as both a means to and a result of immigrants' integration processes into host societies. However, almost nothing is known about the native partners. We focus on detailing the patterns and determinants of natives in mixed unions. We use the first wave of the "Generations and Gender Survey" for logistic regression models. Our sample includes 91774 persons from 15 European countries.

We discuss the migration histories in Europe, and expect to find in Western Europe more mixed unions. Reflecting homogamy preferences and social exchange theory, we think that men have a higher chance for mixed unions.

Our findings show that a few natives, mostly from Western Europe, are in a mixed union. The difference between men and women is not, if they are in a mixed union but with whom.

1 Introduction: Natives, Europe and gender

One effect of migration on host societies is a changing opportunity on partner markets, like it can be observed in rising numbers of intermarriages (Qian & Lichter, 2011). Our research interest is, to get a better understanding of the natives in Europe being in an intimate relationship with migrants. Previous research links integration and union between migrants and natives. Furthermore, in assimilation theory numbers of marriages between majority and minority groups are seen as an indicator to and a result of immigrant' integration into host societies (Alba & Nee, 1997; Aldridge, 1978; Gordon, 1964). But still almost nothing is known about the native partners of these couples. So first of all, we ask in this paper, *'who are the natives in mixed couples?'*.

We can observe rising and changing migration flow in Europe and even more mixed couples along Europe. To a certain degree, the share of migrants affects the possibilities of mixed marriages (Lanzieri, 2012), and the migrant percentage at the population is higher the longer the history of immigration to a country is. Furthermore, the possibilities of the European Union and the process of unification lead to new forms of intra-European couples (Gaspar 2008, 2009). So, our second question is, *'are there differences in determinants and frequencies of natives in mixed couples across Europe?'*.

Previous research showed single men and women have preferences for similar partners and are subject to conditions of third parties (Kalmijn, 1998). This is one reason for a high frequencies of endogamous couples. Another reason can be found in the tendencies of singles to "sort along class line" (Choi & Tienda 2017: 302). Next to class, former research gave advices for the influence of gender and gender-roles. Partner choices are a gendered process and can be understand as a possibility to express gender identities (Huschek et al., 2011). Even more, we can observe a gendered attitude toward mixed couples in the U.S.A., and to the process of partnership formation (Ferber, 1998; Herman & Campbell, 2012). Taking these differences and similarities of preferences for partners, we thirdly ask, *'are there differences in determinants and frequencies of natives across gender?'*.

Over the time, there were changing migration flows and changes in distance and proximity between migrants and natives. In former centuries, European colonial powers lead to intermarriages with residents (Hoerder, 2002). Additionally, contact between European citizens seems to be "one of the key dimensions of European integration" (Favell & Recchi, 2009: 2). We asked at least for the dimension of cultural distance, *'are there differences in the partner choices of natives in mixed couples thinking about the cultural background of their partners?'*.

We understand a mixed union in this paper, as an intimate relationship (marriage or non-marital cohabitation) between a native and a migrant. A native is in this case, a person born and living in the country, where his/her parents were born and living. A migrant is a person, who is living permanently in another country than his/her country of birth.

2 Theoretical background: European perspectives and gendered partner choices

On an empirical level less is known about the European natives in these mixed partnerships. Some studies for Europe (Glowsky, 2011, González-Ferrer et al, 2018, Haandrikman, 2014, Medrano et al., 2014, Schroedter & Rössel, 2014, van Wissen & Heering, 2014) tried to give first hints for mixed mating in different European countries. They described the possibilities of status exchange, the effect of gender, age and age at union formation focusing on different European countries and showed that the country context influenced chances and barriers for mixed couples.

Davis (1941) examined the role of class and thought about intermarriages as a possibility for status exchange. In this theory, it is assumed that partner choices depend on the possibility to get higher status in society by exchanging wanted goods with the partner. Kalmijn (1998) otherwise outlined the tendency to marry within social groups or to marry persons, who were close to the own social status. Especially, the role of cultural resources, like values, opinions and taste, were aspects of a preference to marry similar persons.

3 Empirical Analysis

We used the Generations and Gender Survey (GGS), an international survey to get a better understanding of family relations coordinated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE, 2005), which contented data collected between 2002 and 2013 (Vikat et al., 2007). The GGS sample we used here, gave information about 15 European countries. It enabled a comparison of older members of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Sweden) and new members (Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia and Lithuania) and even about non-member states (Georgia and Russia) or states, which were not members at the year of the interviews (Bulgaria and Romania). We used the first wave of the GGS. In this wave the sample consists of 167207 persons. Because our research interest was only about natives in couples, we excluded singles and migrants (both first generation and second generation). So our analytical sample contained 91774 persons. In detail we found

43229 men and 48545 women aged between 18 and over 70 years. At which the mean age of the men was 48 years and the women had a mean age of 44,7 years.

Our dependent variable was constructed for giving information, whether the natives were part of a mixed couple (1) or not (0). We established a multivariate model for logistical regression, in which we introduced stepwise the independent variables. We displayed odd ratios. We started the model with the countries. Our second model consists of the individual determinants gender, educational level, first partnership or not, and the age at union formation. Our third model was extended by couple characteristics. We added educational and age differences between the partners and the marital status.

Thinking about possible gender differences not only as differences between but also as differences in gender, we estimated the described model also in two gender-separated models. These models consisted of the same variables and followed the same stepwise process.

In the same way we established for the question of cultural distance a multivariate model for logistical regression, which is build up like the model for the determinants of the native partner. One change is made in the third step, we added to the couple characteristics the question whether it is a migration for the union or not. Finally, we looked for gender stratified models, with the same variables and the same process of modeling.

4 Results

In a first bivariate overview of our sample we see, only 3.2% of the natives are part of a mixed couple. In table 1, we show some findings from our logistic regression models. At this point, we show only the third step including country context, individual determinants and couple characteristics. We show results for country, gender and age at union formation. All results are under control of the other variables.

Furthermore, we find that in former colonial powers the natives are more likely to get in a couple with non-European partners and that women have a higher chance for non-European partner than native men. Another gendered effect is the birth cohort, we could see, that the younger the natives are, and especially the younger native women are, the higher is the chance for a non-European partner.

Table 1: Logistic Regression - Determinants for natives in mixed couples¹

Natives in mixed couples no (0) / yes (1)				
		complete	only women	only men
Variable	Characteristics	OR	OR	OR
Country	Germany	1	1	1
	Austria	1.737***	1.586***	2.028***
	Belgium	1.354***	1.401*	1.316*
	France	1.079	0.963	1.317
	Netherlands	0.929	0.894	0.983
	Sweden	1.323**	1.186	1.452**
	Italy	0.682***	0.581**	0.770
	Czech Republic	0.961	1.362*	0.618**
	Poland	0.404***	0.474***	0.330***
	Estonia	1.224	1.248	1.231
	Lithuania	0.862	1.026	0.736*
	Bulgaria	0.224***	0.239***	0.209***
	Romania	0.036***	0.054***	0.022***
	Georgia	0.347***	0.203***	0.466***
	Russia	1.526***	1.839***	1.222
Gender	Women	1		
	Men	0.988		
Age at union formation	20 - 29	1	1	1
	younger than 20	0.859*	0.836*	0.881
	30 - 39	1.585***	1.516***	1.579***
	40 - 49	1.788***	1.343*	2.246***
	50 - 59	2.516***	1.773**	3.297***
	60 and older	1.907**	1.452	2.448***
	No Information	1.284*	1.420**	1.104
N		91774	48545	43229
Nagelkerkes R ²		0.088	0.093	0.094

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

¹ under control of educational level; birth cohort; order of partnership; educational differences to partner; age differences to partner; union type

5 Conclusion

To summarize our findings, we find differences in Europe, in detail differences between older and newer members of the European Union. We find little differences between gender and we find a relevant influence of union timing. Some of these aspects can be explained in terms of status exchange. Additionally, we find cultural distances between European countries and between Europe and the Global South to be influential for the mate selection of European natives

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