

Employment arrangements in mixed couples: Is an egalitarian arrangement more or less likely when a native is married to a migrant?

Extended abstract

Research question

Background

In assimilation theory research, being in a mixed union – i.e., in a couple in which one partner is a native and the other is a migrant – is seen as an indicator that a migrant is integrating into the host society (Gordon 1964), or is starting to integrate more deeply into other parts of the society (Alba & Nee 1997). The overall number of mixed couples has been rising (Lanzieri 2012), and the question of which migrants (González-Ferrer 2006) and which natives (Glowsky 2011) are intermarrying becomes more and more relevant. However, less is known about the native partners, and about whether being in a mixed union affects their other life domains and their later life course. It has, for example, been shown that in terms of employment (Meng & Gregory 2005), being in a mixed union can have disadvantages for natives. Moreover, the link between integration and intermarriage has been challenged in some recent research (Song 2009; Milewski & Gawron 2019).

For our research question on the arrangements in mixed unions, one focus of our theoretical considerations is on gender relations and inequalities. The gender-based division of labor is one of the main indicators of the ongoing system of gender inequality (Evans 2017). These inequalities are the result of the formation of a society and the socialization of its members, which tend to produce and reproduce inequality and a hierarchy of male and female roles. The gender-based division of society and the labor market leads to men being primarily responsible for paid labor and women being mainly responsible for housework and child care (Gottschall 2000). This unequal division of labor may become even more pronounced if a couple has a child and the female partner leaves the labor market (Craig & Mullan 2010). Nevertheless, more and more couples are engaged in employment arrangements other than the classical male-breadwinner model (Tölke & Wurth 2013; Trappe et al. 2015). We investigated the employment arrangements and the division of labor in partnerships in which one of the partners was a migrant. We contribute to the existing research on intermarriage by taking into account the influence of the European Union, which supports more liberal approaches to gender roles and gender equality (Walby 2004), and determines the legal conditions under which migrants are permitted to participate in the labor market. Whereas European migrants have the right to free movement and to

full labor market participation, the employment options open to non-European migrants are more limited. We also take into account the differences in the gendered employment arrangements in the two parts of Germany (i.e., the prevalence of the male breadwinner model in western Germany and the egalitarian model in eastern Germany), and the differences in the shares of migrants in the population, both today and in the past, using a sample of western and eastern Germans, while controlling for the region.

The extent to which migrants are incorporated into the labor market is another indicator of their level of integration, and influences their employment arrangements alongside the attitudes of their partner and their economic resources and outcomes (van Tubergen 2008). On the one hand, classical theories of household economics assume that a household benefits when the partners agree to a gendered division of labor (Becker 1981). On the other hand, an individual's social capital, which is influenced by whether the person or his or her partner is a migrant, can affect the extent of his or her labor market participation (Bernasco et al. 1998). These considerations become even more important or more subject to change when policies on non-European migration change.

Working hypotheses

We work with competing hypotheses regarding the gendered aspects of family, labor market participation, and migration (Kofman et al. 2015). On the one hand, in mixed unions involving a first generation migrant from a non-European country, we expect to find that a classical male breadwinner model is more common if the male partner is a native, and that an egalitarian model is more common if the female partner is a native. On the other hand, for unions in which one of the partners is a migrant, we expect to find that, overall, both men and women tend to follow a more egalitarian model. In terms of the differences between eastern and western Germany, we assume that native men in a mixed couple in eastern Germany are more likely to be following the male breadwinner model, and that these results are clearer than they are for their counterparts in western Germany. For women, we expect to find clearer results for women in western Germany, and that following an egalitarian model is common among women in eastern Germany in both endogamous and mixed unions.

Data and methods

For our analysis, we draw on the scientific use file of the German Microcensus for 2013 (Destatis 2014). The microcensus is a sample that is representative of the whole German resident population. In investigating our research question regarding the employment arrangements of couples, we concentrate on natives of working ages (18 to 67, neither partner is retired) who are living with their partner in a heterosexual union. Our samples consist of 47,969 native men (7.1% in a mixed union) and 47,102 native women (5.4% in a mixed union).

Our dependent variable refers to employment arrangements, constructed as male-breadwinner, semi-male-breadwinner, egalitarian division of labor, and other arrangements. We use a multinomial logistic regression that estimates average marginal effects. We add stepwise the socio-demographic characteristics of the native partner, the migrant partner, and the couple; especially in relation to heterogamy and homogamy.

First results

Tables 1 A and B show our first descriptive results for men and women. For our hypothesis regarding structures and gender inequality, we find that male-breadwinner arrangements are more common among natives in mixed than in non-mixed couples, and that there are differences by gender. The differences between natives in endogamous and exogamous unions are bigger among men than among women. Hence, our results show that an egalitarian division of labor is less common among men and women in mixed unions. Our multivariate analysis supports these findings for men in eastern and western Germany and for women in eastern Germany. We find that mixed couples are more likely to be in a male-breadwinner arrangement, and are less likely to be in an egalitarian arrangement, after controlling for the socio-demographic characteristics of the partners and of the couple.

Table 1 A: Employment arrangements of native men in endogamous and mixed unions

Employment arrangements	Endogamous unions		Mixed unions	
	%	N	%	N
male breadwinner	28.8	12825	38.3	1303
semi-male breadwinner	25.6	11392	21.3	724
egalitarian	38.5	17138	31.7	1078
other	7.2	3215	8.6	294
<i>Total</i>	<i>92.9</i>	<i>44570</i>	<i>7.1</i>	<i>3399</i>

Source: Calculations based on German Micro census SUF 2013.

Table 1 B: Employment arrangements of native women in endogamous and mixed unions

Employment arrangements	Endogamous unions		Mixed unions	
	%	N	%	N
male breadwinner	28.8	12825	30.8	780
semi-male breadwinner	25.6	11392	21.7	549
egalitarian	38.5	17138	33.0	835
other	7.2	3215	14.5	368
<i>Total</i>	<i>94.6</i>	<i>44570</i>	<i>5.4</i>	<i>2532</i>

Source: Calculations based on German Micro census SUF 2013.

Discussion

In the following, we discuss the implications of these findings for our understanding of immigrant integration and union formation among natives. Our results indicate that being in a mixed union is associated with a re-traditionalization of gender roles for men, and with more variety in arrangements for women. We therefore have to consider how forming a mixed union affects not only the integration

process of the migrant partner, but the outcomes of the native partner. Moreover, we should think about whether the formation of mixed unions, in conjunction with the structures of the host society, hinders or fosters gender (in-) equality. We should also consider how these differences in employment arrangements might influence the power relations between the partners (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2013). Finally, we should take into account the different patterns in western and eastern Germany, and look at how the regional context influences gender (in-) equality among natives, as well as the integration of immigrants.

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