

1. FINAL PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY REPORT

1.1 Project objectives

This project aims to conduct a cross-national analysis of interethnic partnerships in the European Union (EU). The study focuses on partnerships (both marriage and cohabitation) between natives (native-born members of majority population in the host society) and immigrants because interethnic union has long been regarded as an indicator of immigrants' integration. This research explores two main themes: 1) trends and patterns of interethnic partnerships; and 2) socioeconomic well-being of offspring of interethnic unions.

1.2 Work carried out

The major work done to realise the objectives of the project is as follows:

- 1) Literature review of empirical studies of interethnic partnerships in various European countries.
- 2) Empirical analysis of interethnic partnership formation and outcomes of mixed ethnic children using both cross-sectional and longitudinal data mainly from the UK (due to data availability and quality)

1.3 Main results

The main findings of the project can be summarized as follows:

1) Trends and patterns of interethnic partnerships

- Immigrants with the following characteristics have higher chance of forming an interethnic partnership with a native member:
 - Born in the host country or immigrated to the host country at young age
 - Having mixed ethnic background (one native-born parent and one immigrant parent)
 - Having higher educational qualification
 - Living in a residential area with higher number of native population
 - Having no religion
 - Coming from a cultural background where arranged marriage is not commonly practiced
- Interethnic partnerships tend to be formed in the following contexts:
 - Cohabitation or remarriage as opposed to first marriage
 - Partnerships formed in recent periods e.g. more common in the 1990s as compared to the 1950s

2) Wellbeing of offspring of interethnic unions

- Children of two immigrant parents have poorer outcomes than children of two native-born parents
 - Poorer access to health services
 - Lower cognitive scores (based on vocabulary and numeracy tests designed for young children)
 - Lower chance of being in employment
- Mixed ethnic children (children of one native-born parent and one immigrant parent) have similar outcomes to children of two native-born parents

These results suggest that interethnic partnerships do not occur at random. The likelihood for an immigrant to form a union with a native partner depends on individual, community and macro-structural factors. Individually, those who are socioeconomically integrated (e.g. have high education and live in non-ethnically segregated neighbourhood) and have been socialized in the host country context (e.g. the second generation) are more likely to have a native spouse. The results also show that interethnic partnerships are becoming more common in European society especially with the rise of the number of second generation and mixed ethnic children.

The analysis of the outcomes of mixed ethnic children shows that they are less disadvantaged than children of two immigrant parents. This is because mixed ethnic children benefit from growing up with 1) an immigrant parent who is relatively integrated; and 2) a native parent who naturally possesses human, cultural and social capital of the host country. Mixed ethnic children thus achieve similar outcomes to children of two native-born parents.

1.4 Conclusions

In migration research intermarriage is commonly regarded as a solid indicator of immigrants' integration. The findings of this project fall along this line of argument: integrated immigrants are more likely to be in an interethnic partnership and having a native partner further promotes integration of intermarried immigrants and their offspring. However, this is not to suggest that a policy should be oriented towards promoting a partnership between immigrant and native populations for partner selection is an individual and intimate process. This project argues that interethnic contacts such as in school and neighbourhood could reduce ethnic segregation and help enhance integration of immigrants.

1.5 Potential impact

With the increasing number of immigrants including their native-born second generation children in the EU, policy should be directed towards promoting both social and economic integration. This study shows that incorporation of immigrants into mainstream institutions such as school can naturally provide venues where individuals with different cultural background interact. Addressing educational disadvantages especially of the second generation and promoting life-long learning especially for immigrant adults would not only enhance economic integration but also social integration into the host society.