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Weekly Report

Inter-ethnic Partnerships: Key Characteristics, And What They Reveal About Successful Integration

Partnerships between immigrants and native-born citizens are commonly viewed as the product of successful social integration, as well as a possible driving force of economic success. Thus, immigrants living in inter-ethnic partnerships have on average a higher level of education, better occupational status, and higher income than those living in intra-ethnic relationships.

Data from the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) show that immigrants in relationships with native Germans describe themselves on average as particularly communicative and open. However, in this area there is no difference between Germans in inter-ethnic relationships and those in German-German partnerships. Similarly, readiness to take risks and general life satisfaction are not above average among Germans in inter-ethnic relationships. By contrast, immigrants in inter-ethnic relationships evaluate themselves as particularly willing to take risks and interested in politics. In addition, they see themselves as less often subject to discrimination than immigrants living in intra-ethnic partnerships.

Marriages and marriage-like partnerships between immigrants and native-born citizens are commonly considered to be an indicator of a high level of social integration. For this reason, especially in traditional immigration nations like the United States, studies analyzing marriages between persons of different ethnicity have a long history.¹ Against the backdrop of the current political debate concerning the successful integration of immigrants as well as Germany's status as an immigration nation, it is important to examine in greater depth the connections between inter-ethnic partnerships and the social integration of immigrants in Germany.

Only a small fraction of Germans live in inter-ethnic partnerships

As numerous studies have shown, the probability of meeting a native partner rises the lower the age of an individual at the time of immigration and the longer the immigrant has resided in the country. Accordingly, inter-ethnic partnerships are

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¹ See e.g. Kalmijn, M.: Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends, In: Annual Review of Sociology Vol 24, 1998, 395-421

Text Box

A Review of Important Terminology**Immigrant Status**

A person is designated as an immigrant if he/she was not born in Germany, does not have German citizenship, or at least one parental unit was not born in Germany or does not have German citizenship. This definition is very comprehensive and is based on the terminology used in Germany to distinguish between persons with and without an immigrant background, as applied since 2005 in the German Microcensus. This definition includes foreigners of German descent who have returned to Germany from, among other places, Eastern Europe and Russia, often as a legacy of displacement in the Second World War (depending on the date of immigration, these immigrants are alternatively called *Aussiedler* or *Spätaussiedler*).

German/Native Citizen

Persons are designated as being Germans or native citizens if they were born in Germany, have German citizenship and both of their parents were born in Germany and are German citizens.

Immigrant Generation

Persons are considered to belong to the first immigrant generation if they were not born in Germany, regardless of their age at the time of immigration. Persons are considered to belong to the second immigrant generation if they were born in Germany but do not have German citizenship (citizenship is not a birthright in Germany, as it is in the US and UK) or whose parents were not born in Germany or are not German citizens.

Partnership

A partnership is defined as a partnership-like cohabitation of two persons of different genders in one household. This definition thus includes both formal marriage and cohabitation.

Inter-Ethnic and Intra-Ethnic Partnerships

Partnerships are only designated as inter-ethnic if they are between immigrants and native German citizens. Partnerships within immigrant groups—for example, between two immigrants of Turkish origin or between a

Polish man and a Ukrainian woman—are designated as intra-ethnic partnerships, even though the individuals may have different ethnic roots. German-German partnerships are also included in the designation of intra-ethnic partnerships.

Study Data

The German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) is an annual, representative, recurring survey of Germany's population conducted by the German Institute of Economic Research (DIW Berlin) in collaboration with the testing company "Infratest Sozialforschung." In the 2008 survey year, the sample included almost 11,000 households, consisting of over 20,000 individuals. Conducted in West Germany since 1984 and all of Germany since reunification in 1990, the survey collects a broad range of data on education, income, life satisfaction, and political opinion. In selected years, data on personality characteristics are also collected. Individuals from former "recruitment countries" (i.e. countries from which Germany obtained laborers in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s) were initially over-represented in the first wave of the SOEP in 1984. The immigration experienced in Germany since the 1990s—particular from the return of ethnic Germans, so-called *Aussiedler* or *Spätaussiedler* (see "Immigrant Status" above)—was incorporated by means of a new sample. Corrections were made for differences in sampling design and the over-sampling of specific groups through the special weighting of the data.¹

The "Big Five" Personality Traits

The "Big Five" factors of personality are five broad measures of individual character: openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism (emotional stability), and extraversion. These factors are a model for the basic structure of all expressions of personality, and capture personality differences between individuals, as expressed through different modes of behavior and experience. The Big Five were surveyed for the first time in the 2005 SOEP survey year.

¹ Wagner, G.G., Frick, J.R., Schupp, J.: The German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP): Scope, Evolution and Enhancement. In: Schmollers Jahrbuch, Journal of Applied Social Studies Vol. 127(1), 2007, 139-169.

more common among second-generation than first-generation immigrants. Aside from personal preferences and the influence of third parties, the factors influencing the choice of a partner are primarily a

reflection of the structural characteristics of the marriage market, including in particular the diversity of immigrant groups in the country in question, ethnic group size, as well as the gender ratio within ethnic

groups. For example, the smaller an ethnic group and the more unequal the gender ratio within this group, the likelier it is for inter-ethnic partnerships to occur. Conversely, the probability of marrying a native citizen falls for members of larger ethnic groups, since with increased group size, the possibility of finding an appropriate partner within the group also increases. In relationship to Germany, this is particularly evident among the population with a Turkish background (Table 1).

According to information from the 2005 SOEP, the majority of native Germans (60 percent) live in German-German partnerships.² Only 3.6 percent of German men and only 2.8 percent of German women live in inter-ethnic relationships. By contrast, among immigrant groups the share of inter-ethnic partnerships is much higher: 15.4 percent of immigrant men and 17.8 percent of immigrant women live in a household with a German partner.³

If one breaks down the immigrant population according to country of origin—particularly with regard to the countries from which Germany recruited guest workers in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s (Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Italy)—then there are significant differences in the choice of partners. For example, men and women of Turkish origin—the largest non-German ethnic group, representing some 22 percent of the immigrant population—are the least likely to live in inter-ethnic partnerships: Only 4 percent of men and 3.4 percent of women of Turkish origin live in relationships with native Germans. By contrast, particularly Italian men (21 percent) and women from the former Yugoslavia (11.9 percent) frequently live together with native Germans.⁴ German men most often report relationships with women from Austria (12.4 percent), Romania (9.4 percent), the Czech Republic (8.5 percent), Poland (8.2 percent), and Russia (7.8 percent), whereas German women report relationships with men from Austria (14.2 percent), Italy (10.9 percent), Poland (8.6 percent) and Great Britain (8.2 percent).

² Since the personality characteristics that will be relevant later on are only available for 2005, this year will serve as a basis for all the statistics that are presented. This guarantees a uniform design for the information.

³ All information is weighted and relates to persons between 20 and 65 years of age.

⁴ These figures generally match those from the 2005 German Micro-census; see Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend: Der Mikrozensus im Schnittpunkt von Geschlecht und Migration—Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer sekundär-analytischen Auswertung des Mikrozensus 2005: Universität Bremen/Arbeitsbereich Interkulturelle Bildung in Kooperation mit dem Statistischen Bundesamt, Wiesbaden, Forschungsreihe Band 4, 49; or Schroedter, J.: Binationale Ehen in Deutschland. In: Wirtschaft und Statistik 4/2006, Wiesbaden.

Table 1
Family Status and Type of Partnership

In percent

	Single	German partner	Immigrant Partner
Men¹			
German	35.9	60.6	3.6
Immigrant	32.4	15.4	52.2
<i>Among these, from</i>			
Turkey	17.2	4.0	78.7
Former Yugoslavia ²	30.8	12.5	56.7
Italy	40.3	21.0	38.7
Women¹			
Germans	34.9	62.3	2.8
Immigrants	32.1	17.8	50.1
<i>Among these, from</i>			
Turkey	16.6	3.4	80.0
Former Yugoslavia ²	31.0	11.9	57.1
Italy	40.6	8.7	50.7

¹ Persons between 20 and 65 years of age, weighted number.

² Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Kosovo-Albania.

Sources: SOEP (2005); Calculations by DIW Berlin.

DIW Berlin 2010

Women and men of Turkish origin very rarely live together with German partners; by contrast, every fifth man of Italian origin has a German partner.

Partnerships with German natives more frequent among second generation

Looking at differences between first and second immigrant generations—and consequently, social integration over time—among most ethnic groups there is a clear tendency for more inter-ethnic partnerships in the second generation (Table 2). The average share of inter-ethnic partnerships in the second generation—particularly among immigrants of Turkish origin—is more than double the rate in the first generation.

Most second-generation immigrants are significantly younger than those in the first generation—men are an average of 12 years younger, and women 13 years. The majority do not live together with a partner.

If one considers only persons in partnerships, the disparity between generations becomes even more apparent. Thus, among second-generation immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, 30.7 percent of men and 42.7 percent of women live in inter-ethnic partnerships. Among the first generation, the corresponding figures are only 17.5 percent for men and 15.7 percent for women.

Table 2
Family Status and Partnership Type for Immigrants by Generation

In percent

	1. Generation			2. Generation		
	Single	German partner	Immigrant Partner	Single	German partner	Immigrant Partner
Men¹						
Total	25.2	14.3	60.5	63.5	20.2	16.3
Among these, from						
Turkey	9.0	3.0	88.0	54.0	8.9	37.1
Former Yugoslavia ²	21.0	13.8	65.2	79.6	6.3	14.2
Italy	24.4	18.3	57.3	70.9	26.3	2.8
Women¹						
Total	25.3	18.0	56.7	62.2	17.1	20.8
Among these, from						
Turkey	9.4	3.3	87.3	45.1	4.2	50.8
Former Yugoslavia ²	22.3	12.2	65.5	76.5	10.0	13.4
Italy	20.0	7.7	72.3	71.2	10.3	18.5

¹ Persons between 20 and 65 years of age, weighted number.

² Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Slovenia and Kosovo-Albania.

Sources: SOEP (2005); Calculations by the DIW Berlin.

DIW Berlin 2010

Second generation immigrants more frequently live in inter-ethnic partnerships than people in their parent's generation. Because of their low average age, there is a large share of single individuals in this group.

Immigrants in inter-ethnic partnerships are better educated

At the individual level, educational achievement is the single most decisive factor for the formation of inter-ethnic partnerships. It is generally assumed that a partner will be preferred who has a similar educational status. Furthermore, immigrants with higher education levels are better able to both conform with the prevailing customs in their adopted nation as well as come in contact with potential local partners.⁵ A high level of education is considered in the literature to be a driving factor behind inter-ethnic partnerships. This is also reflected by the SOEP data.

As shown in Figure 1, among immigrants in inter-ethnic partnerships, 22.6 percent of men and 22.5 percent of women have a university or technical college diploma, as opposed to only 14.8 percent of immigrant men and 13.1 percent of immigrant women living in intra-ethnic partnerships.

For German women as well, the proportion holding university and technical college diplomas is significantly higher in inter-ethnic partnerships (25.7 percent), than for women in partnerships with German

men (16.7 percent). For German men, by contrast, the differences in education level run in the opposite direction. Only 17.8 percent of German men who are in relationships with immigrant women are graduates of a university or technical college, as opposed to 24.5 percent of men in German-German partnerships. Thus, both men and women immigrants in inter-ethnic relationships are generally better educated than immigrants in intra-ethnic partnerships. For the native German population, this statement only is true for women.

Immigrants living in inter-ethnic partnerships are better positioned in the labor market

A similar pattern is seen for participation in the labor force and for occupational status according to the partner's origin. Thus, immigrant women living in inter-ethnic partnerships appear to be particularly well integrated in the German labor market. Among women immigrants who are living with another immigrant, 53.9 percent are not gainfully employed. For women who are living together with a native German, this figure is 46.5 percent. For men, no differences in labor market participation can be shown according to the origin of the partner.

Moreover, among male and female immigrants, those who live with native German partners have a better occupational status. As shown in Figure 2, the share of male immigrants in management positions in the group living in inter-ethnic relationships is significantly greater at 16.7 percent than for immigrants who are in relationships with another immigrant (8.9%).⁶ For immigrant females, as well, the proportion of individuals in management positions is twice as high among those in inter-ethnic relationships (6.8 percent) than among those in intra-ethnic relationships (3.1 percent). Thus, immigrant women and men living in inter-ethnic relationships more frequently participate in working life and are better positioned in the labor market than immigrant men and women in intra-ethnic partnerships.

Among German partners, the discrepancies in labor market participation and occupational status are less significant. Thus, while the proportion of men in German-German relationships who are gainfully employed (79.8 percent) is lower than among German men in inter-ethnic partnerships (85.2 percent), there is no significant variation among women. In addition, in contrast to the situation for the immigrant population, the occupational status of native

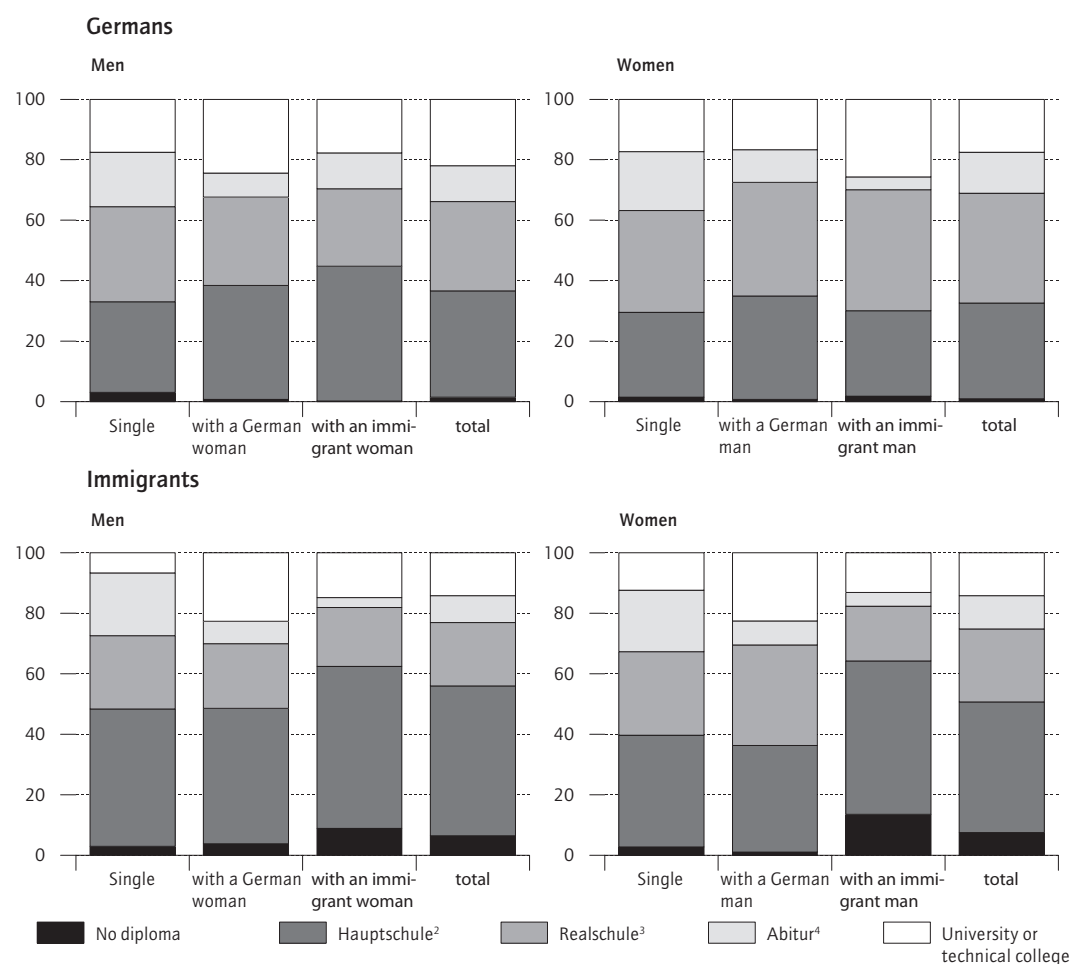
⁵ Factors related to education, such as adaptability, removal from ethnic enclaves and the preference for a similar educational level are investigated in detail, for example, in Furtado, D.: Human Capital and Interethnic Marriage Decision. IZA DP No. 1989, 2006.

⁶ Individuals who are unemployed, retired or still engaged in their education were not considered here.

Figure 1

Family Status¹ and Partnership Type by Highest Educational Level Attained

In percent



¹ Persons between 20 and 65 years of age, no longer in school, weighted figures.

² Lower secondary educational diploma from a Hauptschule, the lowest category of secondary school; departure from school at 15-16.

³ Lower secondary educational diploma from a Realschule, the second best category of secondary school; departure from school at 16-17.

⁴ Upper secondary school diploma from a Gymnasium, the best category of secondary school, entitling enrollment at university; departure from school at 18-19.

Sources: SOEP (2005); Calculations by DIW Berlin.

DIW Berlin 2010

Immigrant men and women in inter-ethnic partnerships more frequently have earned higher level educational diplomas and less frequently have no school diploma of any kind; for Germans, no such relationship can be demonstrated.

Germans in inter-ethnic relationships is significantly worse than that of persons in German-German partnerships. Among men in German-German partnerships, 16.2 percent are employed in management positions, as opposed to only 8.7 percent of German men in relationships with immigrant women. In addition, only 4.2 percent of German women who are in a relationship with an immigrant man are employed in a management role, compared to 6.7 percent of women living with a German partner. Thus, German partners in inter-ethnic relationships occupy a worse position in the labor market than their German-German counterparts.

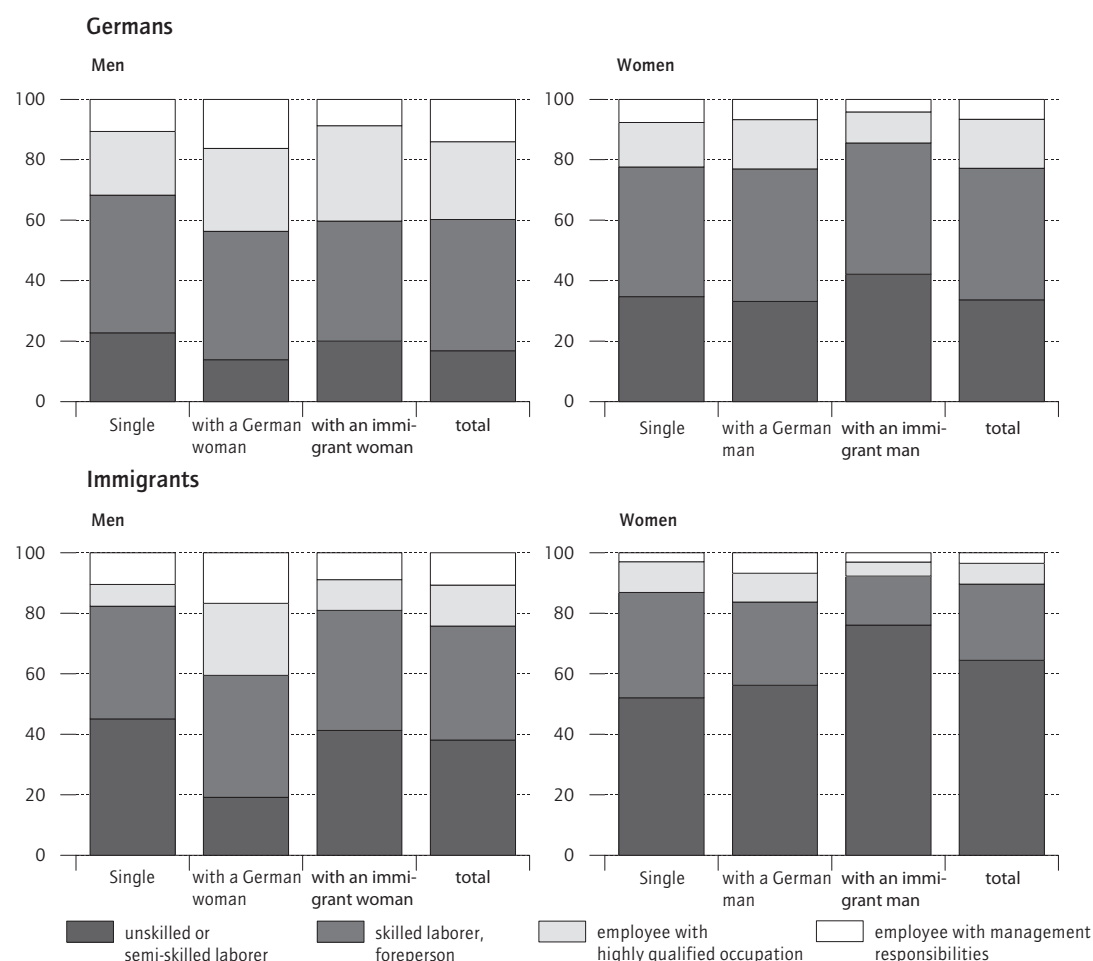
The differences in occupational status are also reflected in gross monthly earnings. Thus, the average income of immigrants in inter-ethnic relationships is significantly higher than that of immigrants in intra-ethnic relationships (Table 3).⁷ Accordingly, immigrant men in partnerships with German women earn more than immigrant men living in relationships

⁷ The findings are based upon gross monthly wages from paid employment. As a result, they do not include data about income from self-employment. Only those persons were considered who were actively participating in the labor market, that is, full-time, part-time or marginally employed. Not considered were persons who were not gainfully employed, as well as retired persons, students, interns, and conscientious objectors performing civil service.

Figure 2

Family Status¹ and Partnership Type by Occupational Status

In percent

¹ Persons between 20 and 65 years of age, no longer in school, weighted figures.

Sources: SOEP (2005); Calculations by DIW Berlin.

DIW Berlin 2010

Immigrant men and women in inter-ethnic partnerships more frequently have earned higher level educational diplomas and less frequently have no school diploma of any kind; for Germans, no such relationship can be demonstrated.

with immigrant women. The income of German men in inter-ethnic partnerships, however, is lower on average than that of men in German-German relationships. For German women and immigrant women, the income variations according to the origin of the partner are not significant.

As we have seen, immigrant men and women who are in inter-ethnic relationships tend to be better educated, participate more frequently in the labor market, are employed in management positions more frequently, and, on average, earn more than

immigrant men and women in intra-ethnic partnerships. In this way, one can speak of the successful economic positioning of immigrant men and women who live in inter-ethnic relationships. For native Germans, by contrast, living in an inter-ethnic partnership is not seen to be associated with any economic advantage.

The question remains open as to whether the native German partner is responsible in a causal sense for the better position of immigrant men and women in inter-ethnic partnerships. It is more probable instead

that individuals living in inter-ethnic relationships represent a specific sub-group that is differentiated from individuals living in intra-ethnic partnerships not only in terms of educational level and commitment to work but also in terms of other personal characteristics. These characteristics are hard to observe and just as hard to measure, but they may have a large influence on both the choice of partner and success in the labor market. The German partner may thus merely be an outer reflection of other qualities and attitudes.

The following section will explore how individuals in inter-ethnic relationships differ from other immigrants in terms of the personality traits, as measured by the “Big Five” model.

Personality traits and the Big Five model

In 2005, data on personality traits, opinions, and feelings were collected within the scope of the German Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP). The following traits were measured: individual communicative ability, agreeability, originality, imaginativeness, work attitudes, attitudes toward worry and stress, self-restraint, cordiality, as well as the value placed on artistic and aesthetic experiences (Table 4).⁸ Survey participants evaluated their own personality in the above areas on a scale of one (minimum) to seven (maximum). In accordance with the “Big Five” personality model that is used in the fields of psychology and sociology to analyze personality structures, a factor analysis of these responses was conducted and the data were then grouped into an aggregate value for each of five traits: conscientiousness, openness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (emotional stability).⁹

Immigrants in inter-ethnic relationships are more open to experience; no differences found among native Germans

On average, Germans in inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic partnerships do not differ in terms of their Big Five personality characteristics. Thus, there is no statistically significant difference between the responses provided by German men in relationships with immigrant women and German men in relationships with native German women. German woman, as

Table 3

Average Earned Income According to Partnership Type

In euros			
Germans¹			
Men with			
German partner	3 309	significantly higher	
Immigrant partner	2 839		
Women with			
German partner	1 733	no significant difference	
Immigrant partner	1 618		
Immigrants¹			
Men with			
German partner	3 215	significantly higher	
Immigrant partner	2 721		
Women with			
German partner	1 213	no significant difference	
Immigrant partner	1 227		

¹ Persons between 20 and 65 years of age, excluding retired persons, students, interns, conscientious objectors performing civil service and the unemployed; weighted figures.

Sources: SOEP (2005) Calculations by
DIW Berlin.

DIW Berlin 2010

Immigrant men in inter-ethnic partnerships earn significantly more; however, for German men the effect is reversed.

Table 4

Big Five Personality Traits

	Most important statements ¹
Openness to experiences	I have lively fantasies I am original, and contribute new ideas I value artistic, aesthetic experiences
Extraversion	I am communicative, talkative I can let myself go, am social I am reserved
Neuroticism (emotional stability)	I easily become nervous I worry a lot I am relaxed, can deal well with stress
Agreeableness	I am considerate and friendly with others I can forgive I can sometimes be a bit rude with others
Conscientiousness	I work hard I accomplish tasks effectively and efficiently I am rather lazy

¹ Possible responses on a scale from: 1 (strongly disagree) through 7 (strongly agree).

Source: Presentation of DIW Berlin.

DIW Berlin 2010

Big Five personality traits are each compiled from a number of different individual statements.

well, also show no statistically significant differences with respect to the Big Five traits (Table 5).

Among immigrant men and women, however, there are clear personality differences between those in inter-ethnic relationships and those in intra-ethnic

⁸ For further information about the SOEP survey and the assignment of variables, see Gerlitz, J.Y., Schupp, J.: Zur Erhebung der Big-Five-basierten Persönlichkeitsmerkmale im SOEP. Research Notes 4/2005, DIW Berlin.

⁹ For further information about the factor analysis, see Überla, K.: Faktoranalyse—Eine systematische Einführung für Psychologen, Mediziner, Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftler. 2. Auflage, Berlin und Heidelberg 1971.

Table 5

Big Five Personality Traits and Selected Additional Attributes of Immigrants

	Difference between inter-ethnic partnerships and immigrant couples ¹	
	Men	Women
Big Five²		
Openness to experiences	positive	positive
Extraversion	–	positive
Agreeableness	negative	–
Neuroticism (Emotional stability)	–	–
Conscientiousness	–	–
Additional Attributes³		
Risk affinity	positive	positive
Interest in politics ⁴	negative	negative
Satisfaction with life	–	–
Sense of Being Discriminated Against (in percent)		
With a German partner		
Often	3.1	6.0
Seldom	26.2	28.7
Never	70.7	65.3
With an immigrant partner		
Often	5.1	5.7
Seldom	44.8	37.9
Never	50.2	56.4

¹ Persons between 20 and 65 years of age, weighted figures. Differences shown are statistically significant.

² Averages from a factor analysis.

³ Averages from the respective statements.

⁴ Scale 1 = "very interested" ... 4 = "not interested".

Sources: SOEP (2005); Calculations by DIW Berlin.

DIW Berlin 2010

Immigrant men and women evaluate themselves as more open and risk taking; in addition, they see themselves as less often subject to discrimination than immigrants in intra-ethnic partnerships.

relationships. Thus, immigrants living with German partners see themselves as more imaginative and more original, and generally regard themselves as *more open to experience* than immigrant men and women in intra-ethnic relationships. Similarly, the average values for *extraversion* diverge between immigrant women in inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic partnerships, and these differences are statistically significant. Immigrant women living in inter-ethnic relationships see themselves as especially outgoing and sociable.

In connection with *conscientiousness* and emotional stability (*neuroticism*), immigrant men and women show no significant differences based on the origin of their partner. Regarding their *agreeableness*, however, it is above all immigrant men in intra-ethnic partnerships that see themselves as more considerate and more sociable than immigrant men in inter-ethnic relationships. For immigrant women, there is no significant difference in their statements about *agreeableness* on the basis of their partner's origin.

Immigrant men with German partners are more interested in politics

Aside from data on the Big Five personality traits, the SOEP collects information about attitudes toward risk, interest in politics, general life satisfaction, and perceived discrimination. This information can help to provide a more precise picture of individuals in inter-ethnic partnerships. In these areas, as well, there is a significant difference between immigrant men and women in inter-ethnic partnerships and those in intra-ethnic partnerships. The former see themselves as more open to risk and, on average, show a greater interest in political events. In addition, they feel less often discriminated against. No significant differences are found in relation to general life satisfaction. Germans in inter-ethnic partnerships do not differ from those in German-German relationships, either in terms of their attitudes towards risk, life satisfaction, or interest in political matters.

Conclusions

The analysis discussed in this report shows that immigrant men and women in inter-ethnic partnerships have a higher level of education, are more frequently engaged in gainful employment, more often have a higher occupational status, and, on average, earn more than immigrant men and women in intra-ethnic partnerships. Moreover, according to their self-assessments, immigrant men and women living in inter-ethnic relationships are more open to experiences and are especially communicative. They also rate themselves as more open to risk and more interested in politics. Inter-ethnic relationships can thus be seen as an expression of successful social and economic integration in Germany.

Of course, inter-ethnic partnerships are not always associated with a better economic status and different personality characteristics, as we see when comparing native Germans in intra- and inter-ethnic partnerships. In contrast to immigrant men and women, native Germans in inter-ethnic relationships are not better positioned on average in the German labor market than natives in German-German partnerships. While Germans in relationships with immigrant women are more often gainfully employed, they are less often employed in management positions and, on average, earn less than individuals in German-German relationships. There are no differences between Germans concerning their self-reported Big Five personality traits, attitudes toward risk, or general life satisfaction.

Thus, inter-ethnic partnerships are first and foremost an index of the successful integration of immigrant men and women. Yet they are also of considerable significance for ethnic tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Germany. For this reason, we should seek to create conditions that promote partnerships between native Germans and resident immigrants. While a key factor in this regard is education, the promotion of openness among the native German populace and the creation of structures that lead to better acceptance and toleration are also essential. We must encourage both native Germans and immigrants to dismantle barriers if we are to foster cultural diversity and acceptance throughout society.

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