

## A Longitudinal Study of Interethnic Contact in Germany

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This article provides a longitudinal account of interethnic contact in Germany from the immigrants' perspective. The focus is on contact in leisure time between Turkish, ex-Yugoslav, Greek, Italian or Spanish immigrants, and native Germans. The aim is to identify time-constant and time-varying characteristics that can explain changes over the life-course in immigrants' interaction with the natives. We rely on panel data, which make it possible to trace changes in interethnic contact over time for individuals.

### Scientific Innovations

There are three innovative aspects of this article, all of which are related to the dynamic understanding of interethnic contact. First of all, individual changes in the level of interethnic contact over time can be studied. The main assumption of the dynamic approach is that immigrants can increase or decrease the number of their native friends or the intensity of interaction with them. By following actual individuals over time it is possible to study fluctuations in interethnic contact.

Secondly, the article will examine whether a causal relationship can be established between the characteristics of immigrants and their interethnic contact. With panel data it can be tested if, for example, immigrants' language proficiency reported at the first interview predicts the level of interethnic contact reported at the next interview 1 or 2 years later, after controlling for current contact. This question about causality has not been addressed yet in studies on interethnic contact. Up to now, only cross-sectional analyses have been conducted.

Thirdly, an emphasis will be put on the distinction between time-constant and time-varying characteristics of immigrants that might influence the development of interethnic contact. By time-constant characteristics it is meant ascribed attributes, such as ethnicity, or other fixed traits that might have an effect on migration experience, but cannot be changed after migration. An example of the latter is the level of education completed in the home country. Time-varying characteristics can mainly be understood as achieved, post-migration traits. An immigrant can gradually learn German language, marry a German person, or move to a less segregated neighbourhood. This distinction between time-constant and time-varying characteristics is important for two reasons. Firstly, we expect that for time-constant characteristics the direction of causality is rather straight-forward and could therefore be estimated well with cross-sectional data (contact with Germans cannot change ethnicity or the level of education obtained in the home country), whereas this is more difficult when it comes to time-varying characteristics (language proficiency can be the cause as well as the consequence of interethnic contact). The second argument for this distinction is that post-migration characteristics can be regulated by governmental policies in the attempt to increase interethnic contact, which is why it is important to identify the relevant ones.

### Theoretical Approach

In his well-established review of the literature on ethnic intermarriage Kalmijn (1998) relies on a theory about the role of preferences, opportunities, and third parties when discussing marital choices. Given that marriage is a form of social contact, and that the underlying mechanism driving all forms of contact should be comparable, in this article the arguments about preferences, opportunities and third parties will be extended to the study of interethnic contact at leisure time. They will be used for deriving hypotheses about time-constant and time-varying determinants that could have a long term effect on the development of interethnic contact.

One argument based on the concept of *preference* is that people build up their social circle by choosing acquaintances, friends and partners who are similar to them. Social networks of every type are guided by the principle of homophily, or preference for interaction with similar others (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). Research on ethnic intermarriage has

shown that people prefer having partners from the same cultural background, the ones with complementary values and a similar worldview, because such partners can offer more emotional support and understanding (Kalmijn, 1998). In a series of psychological experiments Byrne (1971) demonstrated that cultural similarity is indeed a favourable condition for the development of personal attraction. Another preference argument is that people favour to interact with others who are also socio-economically attractive (Kalmijn, 1998).

Apart from the preference for similar others, the presence of members of preferred ethnic groups plays a crucial role in bringing about interethnic contact (Blau, 1977). This is the domain of *opportunities*. When there are many natives around, the opportunity to meet them is high. In such a context immigrants are structurally conditioned to interact with natives, even if they have an intrinsic preference for coethnics. Conversely, immigrant communities that comprise more members and are more spatially segregated provide ample opportunity for meeting coethnics, thereby decreasing the chance to interact with the natives (Blau and Schwartz, 1984). In a study of the Detroit Metropolitan Area Laumann (1973) found a .82 correlation between the size of the immigrant group and the number of coethnic friends. Mouw and Entwisle (2006) show that children living in racially mixed neighborhoods tend to develop interracial friendships at school. Apart from meeting chances, fluency in the language of the native population also opens up opportunities for interethnic contact. Immigrants who master the language can more easily get engaged in contact with natives.

Finally, *third parties* also play a role in the establishment of interethnic contact: such contact is more likely to take place when it is approved by third parties, such as the family, the immigrant community or the state. These are the parties that are not directly involved in interethnic contact in question, but they can either encourage it or discourage it (Kalmijn, 1998). They set the norms of behaviour that have an influence on the establishment of interethnic contact (Pettigrew, 1998). These norms can shape preferences of individual migrants, or otherwise convert into constraints. If individuals internalize the norms promoted by third parties, these norms can convert into their preferences, making them voluntarily opt for coethnic friends. On the other hand, if the norms are not internalized, they can become individuals' constraints because third parties have the power to sanction undesirable behaviour.

Thus, it can be argued that preferences, opportunities and third parties are not entirely independent forces guiding interethnic contact, but that they are interconnected, which makes it often difficult to disentangle them completely. For this reason, the hypotheses about the effect of a number of time-constant and time-varying attributes on interethnic contact will be derived from a combination of arguments from the three theories.

### Main Hypotheses

Looking at the time-constant characteristics, it is expected that, Turkish immigrants will develop less interethnic contact over time compared to other groups. Furthermore, those who enter at a younger age will develop more contact with Germans, and the same prediction holds for immigrants with higher achieved education in the home country. We also predict less interethnic contact for immigrant women compared to immigrant men. Here is an example of the reasoning we use for deriving our hypotheses: "Interethnic contact might be related to age at the time of migration. Young immigrants are more flexible in adjusting to new social contexts and quicker at learning the second language than older immigrants (Chiswick & Miller, 2001). Thus, they have more *opportunity* for interethnic interaction. Besides, they get less socialized into their own culture by *third parties*, such as educational institutions and media, because they leave the home country at an earlier age. Therefore, they internalize less the home country's norms, and are more likely to accept the norms of the receiving society. It is expected that *immigrants who enter at a younger age will develop more interethnic contact over time.*"

From the time-varying characteristics, it is expected that immigrants who have been living longer in the host country, who are more proficient in German language, who have obtained a higher level of education in the host country, who enjoy a higher employment status, have a

German partner and live in less segregated areas will develop more interethnic contact over time. Again we illustrate with the following example how we derived the hypotheses about time-varying characteristics: “Immigrants who go to school or university in Germany learn in class about German culture, which might make them accept German customs and values, and therefore also *prefer* interaction with natives. Moreover, they have a greater *opportunity* to meet German people. This is especially the case in higher levels of education, where immigrants are mainly surrounded by German peers. Research in the Netherlands (Hagendoorn et al, 2003; Van Tubergen & Maas, 2006) and in Germany (Von Below, 2007) has shown that immigrants are indeed more concentrated in lower-level educational institutions and are underrepresented at universities, meaning that there is more opportunity for higher educated ones to meet the natives. For these reasons it is expected that *immigrants with a higher level of education obtained in the host country will develop more interethnic contact over time.*”

### Data and the Method

The data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP), collected by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), will be analysed. This enormous survey contains a randomly selected, nationally representative sample of households, in which every adult member was interviewed. It was launched in 1984 and since then it has been repeated annually by approaching the same individuals, as well as the newcomers in already participating households and earlier participants who have moved out and formed their own households. Since it was from the start envisioned as a longitudinal study, a lot of effort was invested in keeping a high response rate throughout the waves.

Next to the German households, separate immigrant samples were drawn for GSOEP. This study relies exclusively on “sample B”, which includes households whose heads belong to one of the five major groups of guest-workers – Turks, ex-Yugoslavs, Greeks, Italians or Spaniards. These are the groups that have already been established in the country for a long time, and whose individuals’ life-courses could be traced for the purpose of studying changes in interethnic contact over time. Only foreign residents of what was then known as Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) took part in the survey. The data were collected by means of face-to-face interviews conducted by bilingual interviewers. In addition to the questions encountered in the main German sample, the questionnaires for the guest-worker sample comprise immigrant-specific topics, such as the year of arrival, re-migration intentions and measures of integration, so this dataset offers an exceptional opportunity to test the abovementioned hypotheses. However, questions about interethnic contact were asked only in selected years, mainly biannually, which is why the current analysis is restricted to nine waves. These include every second year in the period from 1985 to 1999, with the exceptional addition of 1986.

To create one pooled panel dataset, we matched the answers on all independent variables measured at the first interview (1985) with the answers on interethnic contact measured at the following interview (1986). This was accordingly done for all other consecutive survey years, and the resulting eight sub-panels were combined into one large pooled panel dataset. Respondents who participated three times in the panel appear twice in the pooled dataset: for example, those who were present in 1985-1986-1987 are registered both as belonging to the 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 sub-panels. This means that there are more cases in the pooled panel than that there are actual respondents. It is important to note that the majority of immigrants who participated in GSOEP were not interviewed immediately after their arrival in Germany. Instead, they had already been living in the country for various numbers of years. This means that the first measurement time ( $t_1$ ) does not necessarily represent the moment of entry to the country. The pooled dataset consists of 11,281 cases.

First, a descriptive analysis will be conducted to examine whether there are any aggregate changes in interethnic contact over time for the five groups of immigrants, and for how many respondents contact increases, decreases or stagnates between each two measurement occasions.

The next step will be to explain the changes in interethnic contact for individuals over time. A panel analysis will be conducted, with interethnic contact at time two as the dependent variable, and all the characteristics at time one, including interethnic contact at time one, as predictors. This is the test of the dynamic hypotheses. It will be examined whether the scores on these characteristics predict later scores on interethnic contact, after controlling for the previous level of contact. After having examined the longitudinal model, the results will be compared to those from a traditional cross-sectional model. To test the hypotheses, mixed linear analysis in SPSS will be used. This analysis gives estimates of respondent variance, thereby controlling for the fact that 11,281 cases that are present in the panel are not all different people.

### Expected Findings

We expect that, when contrasting the improved longitudinal model with the static cross-sectional one, the coefficients for time-constant, pre-migration characteristics will be more comparable than the coefficients for time-varying, post-migration characteristics, because in the case of the latter causality might also work in the other direction.

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