

*The Intermarriage Mental Health Premium.  
Does Marrying a Native Increase Immigrants' Well-being?*

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Intermarriage, particularly marriage with natives, is universally believed to be the ultimate proof of assimilation and the bridging of social and cultural gaps between native and immigrant groups. Nonetheless, empirical evidence of the actual consequences of intermarriage on the integration of individuals with a foreign background is limited. Existing studies that do examine the potential rewards of intermarriage find that entering a marital union with a native provides immigrants a premium, albeit not large, in terms of labor market performance and earning levels. However, little is known about the spillover effects of intermarriage on other non-economic aspects of integration, such as mental health. We seek to understand the merits, other than of economic nature, of marrying a native and how it can contribute to immigrants' subjective well-being. Taking on a dynamic approach, we examine the extent to which having a native spouse increases immigrants' satisfaction with life over time. Using German Socio-Economic Panel data on a sample of 600 German first- and second-generation immigrants, we estimate repeated-measures mixed models that uncover changes in life satisfaction before and after the transition to (inter)marriage. Results confirm theoretical expectations regarding a long-term hindering effect of intermarriage on immigrants' subjective well-being. There is however strong evidence of an anticipating (or rather a selection) positive effect occurring years before marriage. Finally, we also found particular differences between origin groups in trajectories of well-being shortly after intermarriage, as well as in the long run, depending not only on cultural proximity to the host country, but also on their social and economic integration, as well as inherent differences in life satisfaction among ethnic minorities. As opposed to Turkish or Eastern European immigrants, the Southern European immigrants married to a native are distinctively happier than those in endogamous unions both before and several years after marriage.