

# The Impact of Childhood Immigrant Exposure on Adult Inter-marriage

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# Question 1

- ▶ Does immigrant contact in childhood increase the likelihood of inter-ethnic interaction in adulthood?
- ▶ Two opposing hypotheses explain inter-ethnic relations: the 'contact hypothesis' (Allport et al., 1954) and the 'group-threat' hypothesis (Quillian, 1995).
- ▶ Previous literature has shown that inter-ethnic contact can have important negative and positive effects. The effect depends on the form of contact:
  - ▶ long-lived and intense interaction: usually + effects
  - ▶ more superficial interaction: usually - effects

## Question II

- ▶ In this paper we...
  - ▶ measure the effect of increased childhood intergroup interaction on outcomes in adulthood.
  - ▶ use quasi-random changes in cohort immigrant shares in childhood neighborhoods as the source of variation in the exposure to immigrants.
  - ▶ find that increased exposure to immigrants in childhood 1) has a positive effect on the likelihood of inter-ethnic romantic relationships in adulthood and 2) has no effect on the ethnic composition of later residential or labor market choices.

# Setup

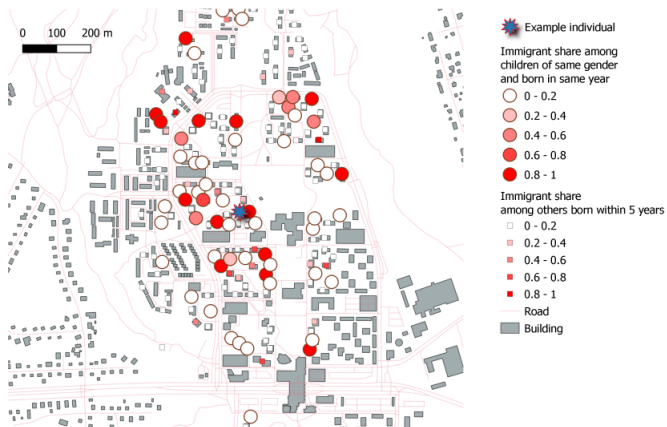
- ▶ Sorting into neighborhoods is obviously non-random.
- ▶ How, then, can we have quasi-random variation in childhood immigrant exposure?
- ▶ The identification relies on the assumption that the share of immigrants of exactly the same age and gender within a given neighborhood is as good as random.
- ▶ We use very detailed geographical information on childhood neighborhoods; we are able to see very closely where each individual grew up.

# Neighborhood I

- ▶ What is a neighborhood?
- ▶ We construct a unique neighborhood for every location on which we have information.
- ▶ A location's neighborhood is then defined as the closest set of locations that contain one hundred people per birth cohort.

# Neighborhood II

FIGURE 1: EXAMPLE OF A COHORT IN A NEIGHBORHOOD



Notes: To preserve anonymity, this figure doesn't display an actual cohort but instead generates a synthetic cohort based on the real data for a collection of 11 cohorts. In particular, for each location, we calculate the average number of immigrants and non-immigrants per cohort, and then generate a random cohort by drawing from Poisson distributions with these means.

# Sample

- ▶ We restrict our attention to the groups that face the most discrimination and prejudice: immigrants from Africa and Western Asia.
- ▶ There is significant variation in the immigrant share of cohorts. We limit the sample to cohorts that have at least 1 percent share of immigrants.
  - ▶ This increases statistical power as it excludes a larger number of individuals who are very unlikely to meet potential immigrant partners as adults.
- ▶ The estimation sample includes individuals born between 1977 and 1999 who are not from the selected immigrant group themselves; 236 515 individuals.

# Empirical strategy

$$Y_i = \beta_t ImmShare_i + I_l + I_{cg} + \epsilon_i$$

where

- ▶  $Y_i$ : immigrant share of all  $i$ 's spouses/labor market outcome.
- ▶  $ImmShare_i$ : immigrant share in  $i$ 's geographically close cohort. We also estimate another model where we look at same and opposite gender peers separately.
  - ▶ This exposure variable is the immigrant share of  $i$ 's geographically close cohort. This is calculated as the mean immigrant share in an individual's 100 geographically closest peers in the years an individual is between 5 and 15 years old.

Controls:

- ▶  $I_l$  is a set of location fixed effects
- ▶  $I_{cg}$  a set of birth cohort by gender fixed effects



# Empirical strategy

$$Y_i = \beta_t ImmShare_i + I_l + I_{cg} + \epsilon_i$$

What if variation in  $ImmShare_i$  is driven by changes over time in the general immigrant share in a location?

Additional controls:

- ▶  $S(C_5)$ : share of immigrants of both genders in the cohort within 5 years, split up into 10 splines: controls for other confounding variables correlated with the cohort immigrant share
- ▶  $I_{lt}$  location-specific trends: more flexible but reduces amount of variation since number of locations in the sample is relatively small.

# Main results I

TABLE 2: IMPACTS OF COHORT IMMIGRANT SHARE ON PROBABILITY OF COHABITING WITH AN IMMIGRANT PARTNER

	Full sample		Men		Women	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Cohort immigrant share	0.0248 (0.0166)	0.0274 (0.0207)	0.0234 (0.0166)	0.0206 (0.0243)	0.00938 (0.0335)	0.0275 (0.0457)
Cohort immigrant share - same gender	0.0281*** (0.0106)	0.0304** (0.0132)	0.0175* (0.01000)	0.0180 (0.0135)	0.0356* (0.0214)	0.0274 (0.0308)
Cohort immigrant share - opposite gender	-0.00114 (0.00983)	-0.00120 (0.0131)	0.00618 (0.0120)	0.00464 (0.0189)	-0.0212 (0.0197)	0.00214 (0.0288)
$f(11\text{-year imm share})$	Y		Y		Y	
Location specific trends		Y		Y		Y
Observations	236515	236515	112136	112136	107423	107423
Locations	34842	34842	23399	23399	22729	22729
Dep. var. mean	0.0104	0.0104	0.00382	0.00382	0.0175	0.0175

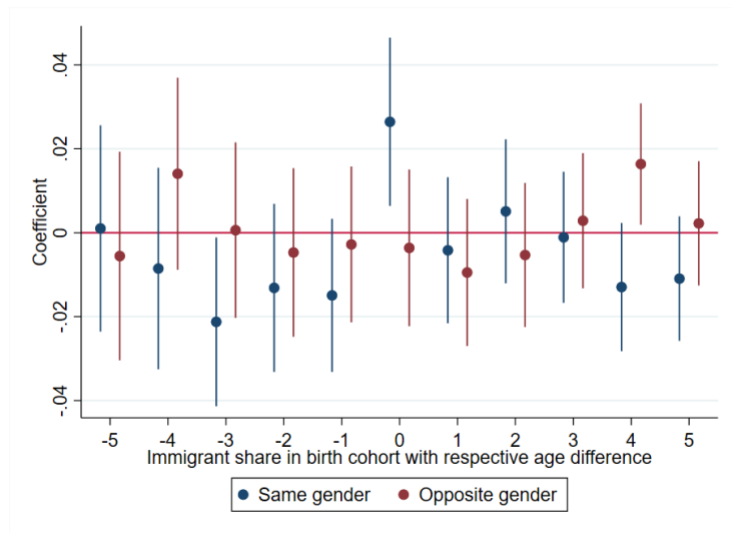
*Notes:* The dependent variable takes the value one if an individual has cohabited with an immigrant partner, and zero otherwise. A cohort is a group of children born in the same year as the individual living in a nearby location between the ages of 5 and 15 - see Section 3.C for more details. Childhood location and cohort-gender fixed effects are included in all columns. In columns 1, 3, and 6 we additionally include ten linear splines of the average immigrant share among children in the same area born within 5 years of the individual. In columns 2, 4, and 6 we include childhood location trends. Standard errors are clustered by childhood location. \*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .01$

## Main results II

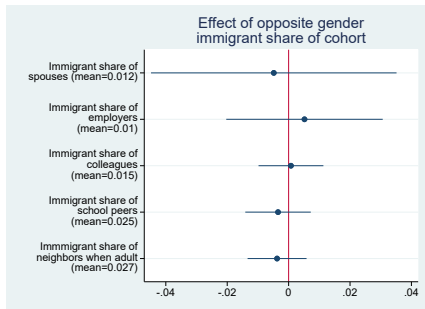
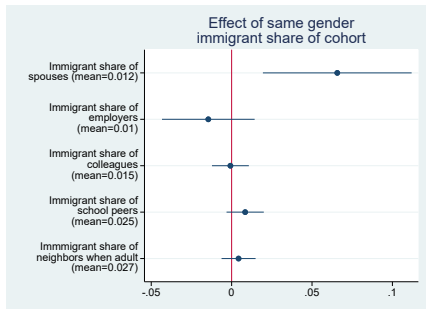
- ▶ Effect size: The magnitude of the estimated coefficient is substantial.
- ▶ The mean immigrant share in the included cohorts is 0.03 with a SD of 0.036. Therefore, increasing the immigrant share in an individual's cohort by one standard deviation increases the likelihood of them having an immigrant partner by 0.1 percentage points - i.e. 10% of the sample mean.
- ▶ This is very close to the magnitude found in Merlino et al. (2019) who look at similar variation where the ethnic minority in question is blacks in the US.

# Graphical analysis

FIGURE 2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDHOOD COHORT IMMIGRANT SHARE AND ADULT COHABITATION, BY AGE AND GENDER DIFFERENCE



# Results: labor market outcomes



# Discussion

- ▶ The finding on romantic relationships is in line with previous literature.
- ▶ The choice of spouse is different from the other outcomes: colleagues, school peers or neighbors are more difficult to choose.
- ▶ Individuals in the sample are relatively young. Effect on labor market outcomes/lack of power?

## References I

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