Status Exchange? Remarriage and Intermarriage

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Abstract

Individuals seeking to remarry often face a more restricted marriage market compared with those searching for marriage for the first time. Marriage market constraints after divorce mean that individuals must often "cast a wider net" that includes potential partners of different ages, education, racial backgrounds, or nativity status. In this paper, we identify marriages formed in the previous year from 2008 to 2010 microfiles of the *American Community Surveys.* We examine whether remarried couples are more likely to cross racial/ethnic or nativity boundaries to form intermarriage than first married couples. We formulate hypotheses based on status exchange theories. Our results reveal that remarried individuals are more likely to form white-minority marriages than first married couples. In addition, marriages involving at least one person who has been previously married (i.e., divorced) are more heterogeneous in marriage order, educational attainment, and age than those couples in which both spouses are in first marriages. These results suggest strong status exchange in intermarriage among the remarried.

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The rapid rise of interracial marriage signals declines in social distance among racial/ethnic

groups and improvement in racial/ethnic relations (Alba and Nee 2003; Bean et al., 2004).

Indeed, intermarried husbands and wives break racial/ethnic boundaries to form unions, connect

families and friends of two different racial/ethnic groups, and bear mixed-race children that

further blur racial/ethnic boundaries. Such marital unions tend to be homogamous in

characteristics such as age and educational attainment, following the pattern of racially

endogamous marriages (Fu 2001; Gullickson 2006; Qian and Lichter 2007; Rosenfeld 2005). In

other words, most racially intermarried couples have similar status and are social equals. Yet,

previous studies on interracial marriage do not distinguish between remarriage and first

marriage. We do not know whether remarriage is more likely to be interracial than first marriage

or how other forms of assortative mating patterns (e.g., by nativity) may vary between first

marriage and remarriage.

The distinction between first marriage and remarriage is important. Divorced persons, after

all, have more limited marital partners compared with first marriage (Sweeny 2010). Children

from a previous marriage may also curtail marital search activities or create disincentives among

potential marital partners. The pool of marriage-eligible partners for previously-married persons

varies by race/ethnicity: Asian Americans have the lowest divorce rates among all racial/ethnic

groups; among the divorced, remarriage is less common among African Americans and

Hispanics than among whites (Schoen and Standish 2001; Sweeny 2002). In addition, men are

often advantaged in remarriage markets due to gender differences in age preferences (Davidson

2001). Depressed remarriage market conditions may require casting a wider net to find a spouse,

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perhaps someone who is different on many attributes, including race/ethnicity, nativity, age, and educational attainment.

Previous studies on interracial marriage often do not make a distinction between first marriage and remarriage because census data have no information on marriage order. The release of recent *American Community Surveys* (ACS) makes it possible to distinguish marriages by order. The ACS data of 2008, 2009, and 2010 include information on marriage order and marriage timing. The ACS data thus provide an unprecedented opportunity to compare intermarriage and assortative mating patterns among first married and remarried couples, who formed their marital unions in the previous year. Our paper has several objectives. First, we examine whether remarried individuals are more likely to form interracial marriages than first married individuals. Second, we explore whether remarried interracial couples are more likely to form heterogeneous unions based on age, educational attainment, and nativity status.

Status Exchange

Men and women seek the best partner possible. Social scientists view mate selection process analogous to the matching of employers and employees in labor markets (England and Farkas 1986; Oppenheimer 1988). In labor markets, job searchers seek the best job possible, subject both to jobs available and their skills and credentials. Finding the best job among all possible potential job offers is both costly and time-consuming so job seekers decide on a minimally acceptable match, the so-called "reservation wage." Searchers reject job offers below the reservation wage and accept the first offer at or above the reservation wage. Similarly, marriage-seekers have in mind a "reservation quality partner" – analogous to setting the "reservation wage" by job seekers. This is the minimally acceptable marital partner given their own qualifications.

Indeed, like marries like is the norm in the United States. Individuals tend to marry someone of similar ages, same racial or ethnic groups, same levels of educational attainment, similar family background, etc. (Mare 1991; Qian 1997; Rockwell 1976; Vera, Berardo, and Berardo 1985). This tendency is relatively stable among first marriages. Yet, for remarriage, men and women with difficulty finding a partner above "reservation quality partner" may cast a wider net and tend to form heterogamous marriages. Divorced women with children, for example, are disadvantaged in marriage markets and have to lower their standards regarding prospective mates. Divorced men, on the other hand, may marry outside their racial/ethnic group or immigrants if they want to marry someone younger. This means that remarriage-seeking men and women with certain traits have to lower "their reservation quality partner." We hypothesize that remarried men and women are more likely to exchange their status than men and women in their first marriages.

Data and Methods

Data are drawn from three years of *American Community Surveys* (2008, 2009, and 2010). The ACS has now replaced the long form of the decennial census and the data for these three years include questions on the number of marriages and whether the marriage occurred in the previous year. Thus, we are able to create samples of married couples of all ages who married in the past year. Given that more than half of newly formed remarried relationships in the early 2000s involved one spouse who was never previously married (Kreider 2005), We classify marriage type as 1) both couples are first married, 2) one is first married and the other is remarried, and 3) both are remarried. The three year pool sample consists of at least 52 thousand newly formed marriages for our analysis.

For our purposes, we distinguish among several ethnoracial populations: non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, American Indians, Hispanics, and Asians. Hispanics include individuals of any race, but must identify themselves as someone of "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." We will explore how multiracial individuals should be classified in our analyses (Qian and Lichter 2007).

We propose to apply log-linear models to compare parameters of racial endogamy and exogamy (interracial marriage) between first married and remarried individuals. We will then apply logistic regression models to explore how status exchange exists among remarried and first married intermarried and intramarried couples.

Preliminary Results

Our preliminary analysis demonstrates that remarriages are more likely to be interracial than first marriages for most of the racial/ethnic groups. Figure 1 presents the results comparing percent intermarried with whites among U.S.-born minorities. The percent married with whites among African Americans does not vary by marriage order (both first married, one first married and the other remarried, and both remarried). However, the difference by marriage order is very strong among intermarried white/Asian American couples. For example, the percent intermarried was 25% among first married white/Asian American couples, 48% among first married/remarried white/Asian couples, and 51% among remarried white/Asian American couples. Two factors are in play. One is that there are few Asian American divorcees, who may find it more difficult to remarry endogamously than exogamously. Two is that never married Asian American women, especially immigrants, may form marital unions with previously married white men. Similar patterns exit among white/American Indian and white/Hispanic couples, although the differences

by marriage order were smaller. Our statistical modeling will further tease out how different

factors contribute to higher levels of intermarriage among remarried individuals.

Figure 1. Intermarriage with Whites among U.S.-Born Minorities Married in the Previous Year by Marriage Order, 2008-10
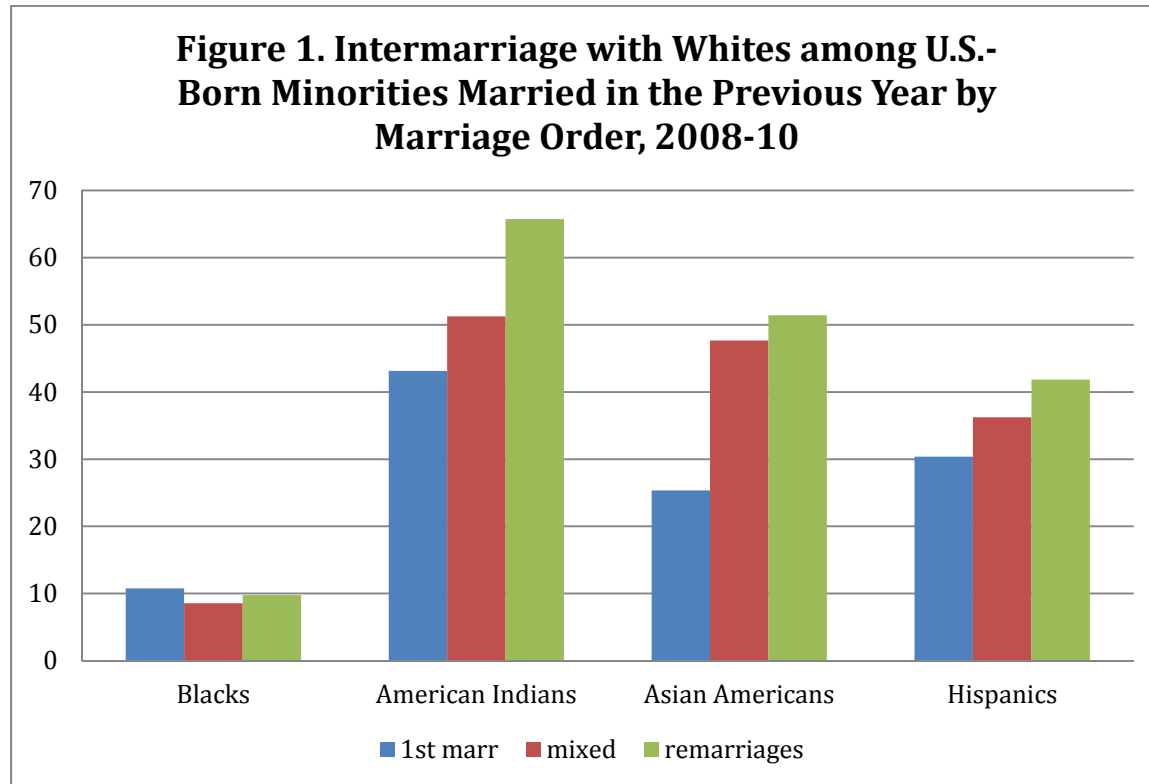
Tables 1 and 2 provide a further breakdown by gender among the U.S. born and the foreign

born – whether the remarried spouse is the husband and wife. The results reveal interesting

gender and nativity differences, which need further investigations. Another important finding

that we will explore is marriages across nativity boundaries. For example, remarried Asian

Americans, regardless of gender, have low percentages of marrying U.S.-born Asians (15.6% for

men and 17.1% for women), but have high percentages of marrying foreign-born Asians (22.2%

for men and 24.4% for women).

Next Steps

To our knowledge, the newly-available marriage and remarriage data from the ACS has not been previously used to study interracial unions. Our paper will build on the descriptive statistics by modeling the assortative mating patterns by marriage order based on log-linear models. The statistical modeling will control for marginal distributions of men and women in a given marriage order.

We will then introduce logistic regression models to predict whether interracial marriage is more likely to be higher marriage order, involve couples who differ by age, educational attainment, and nativity status than intraracial marriage. In addition, we will explore how gender and race interact in assortative mating patterns by marriage order. Our research focuses on a population of remarried couples that have not received much demographic attention, even as the share of marriages involving remarriages has increased dramatically over the past 25 years or so.

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Table 1. Percentage Distributions of U.S.-born Couples Married in the past Year by Marriage Order, 2008-10 (Biracials are Excluded)

	Men Married with Women of								Women Married with Men of							
	Same Race								Same Race							
	US born	Foreign Born	white	black	Indian	Asian	Hispanic	*N*	US born	Foreign Born	white	black	Indian	Asian	Hispanic	*N*
U.S. Born																
<u>Both Are First Marriages</u>																
White	90.2	2.3		0.5	0.4	2.2	4.3	19916	89.8	2.5		1.6	0.5	1.0	4.6	20007
African American	73.7	3.8	15.4		0.2	1.1	5.9	1883	84.4	6.1	5.5		0.0	0.6	3.4	1644
American Indian	50.8	0.5	44.7	0.0		0.5	3.5	199	50.0	0.0	41.6	2.5		0.5	5.5	202
Asian American	41.6	30.0	23.6	0.9	0.0		3.9	457	28.3	38.8	26.5	1.6	0.0		4.8	672
Hispanic	47.7	15.8	31.3	2.1	0.5	2.6		2203	42.7	22.6	29.6	4.0	0.2	0.9		2460
<u>One First Marriage and the Other Remarriage</u>																
White	90.0	2.4		0.7	0.6	1.9	4.5	5000	88.1	2.7		2.3	0.7	1.0	5.2	5110
African American	72.2	4.1	16.6		0.7	1.3	5.0	233	85.9	5.8	5.3		0.3	0.2	2.5	569
American Indian	32.2	3.4	55.9	3.4		0.0	5.1	59	31.7	0.0	46.7	10.0		3.3	8.3	60
Asian American	15.6	22.2	55.6	0.0	0.0		6.7	45	17.1	24.4	39.0	12.2	0.0		7.3	41
Hispanic	39.8	15.9	39.8	2.4	0.6	1.5		467	36.1	23.1	33.0	6.8	0.4	0.8		516
<u>Both Are Remarriages</u>																
White	89.4	3.0		0.7	0.7	2.5	3.7	11933	92.2	2.6		1.3	0.8	0.3	2.9	11573
African American	78.0	3.4	12.5		0.5	1.6	4.1	1121	86.0	5.5	6.8		0.0	0.1	1.6	1016
American Indian	24.4	0.0	66.9	0.8		3.2	4.7	127	25.0	0.8	64.5	4.0		0.0	5.6	124
Asian American	15.7	49.0	29.4	0.0	0.0		5.9	51	6.4	27.8	60.3	2.4	0.0		3.2	126
Hispanic	39.4	14.3	41.6	1.4	0.8	2.5		635	36.0	15.7	42.1	5.3	0.4	0.4		694

Table 2. Percentage Distributions of Foreign-Born Couples Married in the past Year by Marriage Order, 2008-10 (Biracials are Excluded)

| | Men Married with Women of | | | | | | | | Women Married with Men of | | | | | | | |
| | Same Race | | | | | | | | Same Race | | | | | | | |
	US born	Foreign Born	white	black	Indian	Asian	Hispanic	N	US born	Foreign Born	white	black	Indian	Asian	Hispanic	N
Foreign Born																
Both Are First Marriages																
White	53.4	35.6		1.1	0.3	4.1	5.5	944	52.0	37.4		1.9	0.1	1.6	7.0	898
African American	29.3	46.3	15.3		0.6	2.1	6.5	341	27.3	59.9	7.2		0.0	0.8	4.9	264
American Indian	0.0	0.0	66.7	0.0		0.0	33.3	3	33.3	0.0	66.7	0.0		0.0	0.0	3
Asian American	21.2	67.9	8.7	0.7	0.1		1.5	1231	30.0	67.9	22.3	1.3	0.1		3.5	1335
Hispanic	23.6	62.1	12.4	1.0	0.0	0.9		2353	17.1	71.4	9.0	1.7	0.2	0.7		2045
One First Marriage and the Other Remarriage																
White	59.7	28.3		2.6	0.0	3.4	6.0	233	56.1	30.8		3.3	0.0	2.8	7.0	214
African American	28.7	48.7	13.0		0.9	1.7	7.0	115	28.9	57.7	10.3		0.0	0.0	3.1	97
American Indian	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2
Asian American	6.6	66.2	21.2	0.7	1.3		4.0	151	4.6	46.3	39.4	2.8	0.0		7.0	216
Hispanic	21.0	58.9	16.8	1.9	3.3	1.9		567	15.1	68.3	13.9	1.4	0.2	1.0		489
Both Are Remarriages																
White	58.1	27.6		1.4	0.4	6.8	5.8	515	65.5	25.8		1.8	0.2	0.9	5.8	551
African American	25.0	61.2	8.0		0.0	1.3	4.5	224	19.5	70.3	8.2		0.5	0.0	1.5	195
American Indian	33.3	0.0	66.7	0.0		0.0	0.0	3	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0		0.0	0.0	1
Asian American	12.0	78.1	8.6	0.3	0.0		1.0	292	4.5	41.0	47.1	3.2	0.7		3.4	556
Hispanic	39.4	14.3	14.0	1.3	0.3	0.9		763	11.0	63.8	22.2	2.3	0.4	0.4		528