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Marrying into the American Population:

Cross-Nativity Marriages in the United States

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Abstract

Early in the 20th century, cross-nativity marriages between immigrants and native-born Americans were considered by scholars to be a requirement for the "fusing" of the foreign immigrant groups with the American population. In the paper, we describe patterns of cross-nativity marriage during the last half of the 20th century. Our results suggest that cross-nativity marriages are a complex, but increasingly common phenomenon that appears to be affected by immigration policy, the increasing ease of international travel and study, and the military deployment of American men and women overseas. We then investigate cross-nativity marriages using 2000 U.S. census data. These analyses confirm the importance of military service while also showing complex sex-specific and race-specific patterns of cross-nativity marriage. They also suggest that cross-nativity marriage operates like other indicators of assimilation into the American population: cross-nativity marriage is more common among immigrants who enter the U.S. earlier in life and among those who have been in the United States the longest.

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Introduction

Early in the 20th century, scholars considered marriage between the foreign and "native" stock (i.e., native-born Americans) as evidence of amalgamation or integration of foreign groups into the American population (Bossard 1939; Carpenter 1927). In fact, Drachsler (1920) argued that a thorough-going assimilation of the foreign groups recently introduced through immigration would *require* frequent crossing of the generational divisions to 'fuse' the foreign groups into the 'American' (native-born) population. But cross-nativity marriages — and their role in the social and cultural integration of immigrant groups — disappeared from view as low levels of immigration during the middle half of the 20th century helped turned scholars' attention to patterns of racial and ethnic intermarriage within the native-born generations.

At the turn of the 21st century may be, however, cross-nativity marriages may be an important facet of the integration of immigrants and immigrant groups. Levels of immigration, once again, are high whether considering the absolute numbers of immigrants entering the country or the numbers relative to the size of the native-born population. Marriages between immigrants and native-born Americans are likely to be marked by (or to be a marker of) a rapid pace of the political, social, and cultural integration of the foreign-born spouse. Immigrants with American citizen spouses are eligible for citizenship after only three years of residency rather than five. Immigrants in cross-nativity marriages earn

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significantly higher incomes than immigrants in endogamous marriages even after taking

human capital endowments into account (Meng and Gregory 2005). The offspring of

marriages involving a native-born American parent are either granted or are eligible for

American citizenship whether the child is born in the U.S. or not[1] and so the children of

cross-nativity marriages are politically integrated with only minor efforts on their parents'

part. Children with a native-born American parent are also very likely to learn English as a

first (and only) language (Stevens 1985), and to identify themselves as "American" (Portes

and Rumbaut 2001). Cross-nativity marriages are also responsible for more than their

proportional share of inter-racial marriages in the American context (Bean and Stevens

2003; Qian, Blair and Ruf 2001) and so are responsible for helping to blur the social

boundaries between racial groups in the American context.

In this paper we first describe how the immigration policy and foreign policy of the

United States fosters marriages between native-born (or naturalized) Americans and people

born abroad and then present data showing that the absolute numbers of immigrants

entering the country as spouses (or fiancées) of Americans have been large and appear to be

increasing. We then present analyses based on 2000 U.S. census data showing that the

probability of immigrants having a native-born American spouse varies by gender, time

period of entry into the United States, and race. Unlike previous research we consider

marriages stretching across the full age range of adulthood and are therefore also able to

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[1] Parents who are American citizens may submit an N-600 application form for derivative

citizenship for their foreign-born children; they may also apply for American passports

for their children.

show that cross-nativity marriages are partly attributable to marriages contracted before or near the time of immigration and partly attributable to marriages contracted (or enduring) well after the immigrant entered the country. Finally, we also show that in at least several respects, the processes involved in the production of cross-nativity marriages are similar to other processes of assimilation or integration: immigrants are more likely to be involved in a cross-nativity marriage the younger they were when they entered the United States and the longer they have lived in the country.

Correlates of Cross-Nativity Marriage

There are at least three different major pathways leading to the formation of marriages between native-born American citizens and other nationals—non-Americans visiting or immigrating to the United States followed by the formation of relationships with Americans in the country, Americans traveling abroad and forming relationships with non-Americans who then immigrate to the United States, and cross-national relationships initiated under the guidance or at the behest of a third party. Each of these pathways is shaped by a different set of considerations.

Cross-Nativity Marriages, U.S. Immigration Policy and Foreign Policy.

Among the cross-nativity couples who initiated their relationship before or around the time the foreign-born partner formally entered the country, provisions of U.S. immigration policy governing the entry of spouses and fiancées of Americans come into play. Some of these provisions were originally prompted by the large numbers of relationships between Americans and foreign nationals occurring because of the

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participation of American men in major wars and conflicts outside of the United States during the 20th century. To accommodate these relationships, the 1945 War Brides Act, for example, waived visa requirements for foreign nationals who married members of the American Armed Forces during World War II and the 1946 Fiancées Act facilitated the admission of the fiancées of members of the American Armed Forces. Non-quota admission status was granted to the Chinese wives of American citizens in 1946, and in 1947, non-quota status was extended to wives of other nationalities then racially ineligible for admission (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service 2004a). The overhaul of U.S. immigration policy in the early 1960s (codified in the 1965 Immigration Act) included an emphasis on family reunification, which explicitly favored the entry of relatives of American citizens. Since then, U.S. citizens, whether native-born Americans or permanent resident aliens who have become naturalized citizens, can in most cases sponsor spouses as "immediate relatives of U.S. citizens," a category that is not numerically limited.

Although the accommodation of cross-national relationships is now an integral part of immigration policy and the specific policy provisions designed to accommodate the spouses of American soldiers are no longer key, the continuing participation of Americans in military operations overseas still serves as a potentially large source of cross-national marriages. Over the last several decades, the U.S. has retained large military bases in Germany, the Republic of Korea, and Japan, as well as relatively large bases in some of the NATO countries (U.S. Department of Defense 2001). The presence of U.S. military bases scattered across the world has resulted in large numbers of women continuing to migrate to the U.S. as wives of American servicemen (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990). Research based

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on the 1980 U.S. census suggested, for example, the presence of over 40,000 "war brides" from Japan, China, the Philippines, India, Korea, and Vietnam (Saenz, Hwang and Aguirre 1994). The interplay of immigration and foreign relations policy thus provide the opportunities for native-born Americans, especially male military personnel, to meet prospective partners abroad and then to sponsor their entry into the country (e.g., Heaton and Jacobson 2000)

Cross-nativity marriages may also be the result of non-Americans traveling to the United States and entering as permanent residents, short-term visitors, or as undocumented aliens without any direct anticipation of forming a marital relationship with a native-born American. A large majority of entrants, matter what their status at time of entry into the country, are adults and because immigration policy favors relatives, many bring other family members with them on secondary visas. A significant minority of entrants are thus children. Slightly less than 20% of immigrants who were legally admitted to the country at the turn of the 21st century, for example were less than age 20 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2003) and so still very likely to be single. Because those who spend their early years in the United States are likely to grow up participating in friendship and social networks involving native-born Americans, the possibility of marrying an American is ever-present.

Along with the increases in the number of very young immigrants admitted to the country, which were part and parcel of the general increases in the numbers of immigrants admitted, there have been large increases over the last century in the numbers of short-term visitors admitted to the United States to work or study for a limited amount of time.

Between 1985 and 2000, for example, the number of international students admitted for full-time study almost doubled, from 342,000 to 649,000 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2004). Many short-term visitors become engaged or married to native-born Americans and apply for an adjustment of their visa status to that of a permanent resident.

Some adult migrants, however, do not enter the country on a valid visa or their visa expires while they are still in the country. Because undocumented aliens face numerous obstacles to full participation in the nation's major social institutions, they are strongly motivated to regularize their legal status. One well-known strategy is to marry an American citizen to provide the grounds for applying for permanent residency (Curiel 2004).

Another pathway leading to the formation of cross-nativity relationships involves an intermediary. Some foreign nationals enter the United States as the brides or grooms (or fiancé(e)s) of U.S. citizens, the result of relationships begun under the auspices of marriage agencies. Such agencies, many of which use the internet to advertise the attractions of prospective spouses living in countries such as Russia, the Philippines, and Argentina, may be responsible for several thousand fiancées and new spouses entering the U.S. each year (Scholes 1999). Some marriages between Americans living in the United States and persons living abroad are also arranged or sponsored by families or national-origins communities because many foreign-born parents prefer that their native-born American sons and daughters marry compatriots (e.g., Foner 1997; Montero 1981).

Figure 1, based on data from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (formerly the Immigration and Naturalization Service), shows the total numbers of

immigrants legally admitted to the United States by year of entry and the numbers admitted as spouses of U.S. citizens (who may be either native-born American citizens or foreign-born naturalized citizens) from 1965 to 2002. In general, the proportion of immigrants who were admitted as spouses of U.S. citizens has climbed over the course of the last third of the century, hovering around 10% in the late 1960s, 15% in the 1970s, 22% in the mid-1980s and in the late 1990s and followed by an increase around the turn of the 21st century. (The sharp decline in the proportions during the early-1990s was more a function of the large increase in numbers of aliens who gained permanent resident status following the provisions of IRCA.) The drift upwards during the last portion of the twentieth century in the proportions of immigrants admitted to permanent residency as spouses of U.S. citizens may reflect the increasing ease of foreign travel and thus the greater likelihood of Americans initiating marital relationships abroad. It may also be a byproduct of the large increases over the last half of the 20th century in the numbers of non-Americans working and studying in the United States on short-term visas.

(Figure 1 about here)

The Citizenship and Immigration Service (CIS) data describing the marital characteristics of immigrants legally admitted to the country are, however, limited in numerous ways. They refer only to immigrants who are legally admitted, and the information on those married to U.S. citizens refers only to relationships begun before the year of admission. We therefore turn to U.S. census data, which allow the description of the national origins, race, and nativity characteristics of married foreign-born persons and their spouses who lived in the United States in 2000.

Immigrant Characteristics: Education, Race, Year of Entry and Military Service

Levels and patterns of intermarriage are affected, in general, by demographic and structural opportunities for people to meet potential partners with specific characteristics, preferences for partners with specific characteristics, and social institutions that encourage or discourage certain marriages (Kalmijn 1998). Patterns of cross-nativity marriages may thus be affected by demographic and structural factors operating in the immigrants' countries of origin as well as in the American context, by the operation of social and familial institutions that may stretch around the world, and by personal preferences for partners with specified attributes that were formed and perhaps modified in several different societies. When referring to cross-nativity marriages in the United States, the migration of the foreign-born spouse is an issue as well as whether the marriage occurred well before, was linked to, or occurred after the foreign-born spouse migrated to the United States.

The complexity of the contexts and the processes involved in the production of cross-nativity marriages yields a variety of vantage points from which to study it. Which individuals in a given society have the opportunity, the proclivity and the motivation to marry an American rather than a compatriot? Which Americans have the opportunity, proclivity, and motivation to marry a non-American rather than another American? In this paper, we compare the attributes of immigrants residing in the United States who are a member of a cross-nativity marriage with those immigrants who are not.

One of the most important personal characteristics involved in marriage patterns is educational attainment. Because the American population is relatively well educated, and

educational homogamy is one of the most commonly observed patterns of marriage (Mare 1991), it seems likely that immigrants who marry native-born Americans are among the better educated. Individuals who are more highly educated are generally more open to marriages with members of other socially and culturally defined groups. In addition, immigrants who are more highly educated are more likely to have completed some or all of their education in the United States — perhaps the result of coming to the country specifically to attend an American college or university program.

Another particularly important dimension of marriage markets is race (Kalmijn 1993; Qian 1997). Although rates of interracial marriage have been increasing in the United States, most marriages still take place within racial groups. More specifically, Qian and Lichter's (2001) analysis suggests that this is true for young foreign-born adults in the United States with racial minority immigrants being likely to marry same-race immigrants or same-race native-born Americans. Because the American native-born population is dominated by whites, there are more opportunities for white (or European descent) immigrants to meet and marry white Americans, whether in the United States or abroad then there are for racial minority immigrants to marry within their own group. In addition to considering race (as defined through the U.S. census categories), geographic origins, which may be related to the presence of U.S. military operation, and other types of political or national ties may also be strongly related to the probability of immigrants being involved in a cross-national marriage.

Year of (first) entry into the U.S. may also be strongly related to the odds of an immigrant having a native-born spouse for numerous reasons. When considering cross-

sectional data, year of entry becomes a measure of length of residence and immigrants'

length of residence in the United States is strongly related to other dimensions of

integration such as the acquisition of English language skills (Espenshade and Fu 1997) and

residential mobility and location (White and Sassler 2000). If cross-nativity marriage is

akin to other processes of assimilation, year of entry should be strongly associated with the

probability of cross-nativity marriage with immigrants who entered earlier in time being

more likely to be in a cross-nativity marriage.

Age at entry into the United States is also potentially strongly related to the

probability that an immigrant has contracted a marriage with a native-born American.

Immigrants who entered the United States as young children, often designated the "1.5"

generation, are both socially and culturally integrated into American society than

immigrants who enter the country at older ages. Those who enter at younger ages are very

likely to be very fluent in English (e.g., Stevens, 1999) and they are often better educated

than their parents. Moreover, the younger an immigrant at the time of entry into the United

States, the less likely that he or she was married to a foreign national at time of entry into

the United States.

Military service is almost certainly a major predictor of marriage between an

immigrant to the United States and a native-born American for several reasons. Americans

who serve in the U.S. military are often posted overseas, because of national conflicts or

peacekeeping missions. The common stereotype focuses on young men serving overseas

and meeting and marrying a foreign-born woman. However, women have served overseas

in the U.S. military over the last century and the recent increases in the proportion of

military personnel who are women ensure increasing numbers have the parallel opportunities to meet potential spouses while overseas. In addition, the U.S. military, one of the most thoroughly racially integrated social institutions in U.S. society (Segal and Segal 2004), currently prides itself on combating racism and ethnocentrism through training and education[2]. Military personnel, and those who have served in the U.S. military may therefore be more open to the possibility of marriage to a foreigner whether the opportunity arises overseas or in the American context during or after completion of military service.

Cross-Nativity Marriages in 2000

We rely on data from public use sample files to investigate predictors of cross-nativity marriage among immigrants in the United States at the time of the census (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2003). Because the 2000 U.S. census data do not include information on timing of marriage, or marital status at time of entry into the country, or number of times the person has married, it is impossible to determine which of the marriages extant at the time of the census occurred before the foreign-born spouse migrated to the U.S., which marriages are closely linked to the act of migration, or which occurred after arriving in the United States. Some immigrants, for example, may been married well before migrating to the United States, entered the country as a derivative immigrant, divorced their spouse, and then re-married a native-born American in the United States. The data also bear the impact

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[2]   Spickard (1989) discusses the onsite obstacles to (racial) intermarriage thrown up by American base commanders and chaplains in Japan and Korea during the 1940s and 1950s.

of processes involved in the endurance or dissolving of cross-nativity marriages contracted before the time of the census. (Kalmijn et al (2005) present data showing that the odds of divorce for cross-national couples in Europe are higher than those for couples in which both spouses are of the same nationality, presumably because of the greater social and cultural difficulties associated with cross-national marriages.)

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for immigrant men and women in the United States who were married at the time of the 2000 census. About one fifth of foreign-born men have a native-born American wife and a slightly higher percentage, 23%, of foreign-born women have a native-born husband. The sample of immigrant men and women are, on average, fairly well educated — the average number of years of education is almost 12 – although the standard deviation is quite large. The data on "year of entry" refer to the self-reported time span during which the person came to live in the United States. The percentages of immigrants having entered the country around the middle of the 20th century are low because of low levels of immigration during that time and the ravages of mortality as the mid-century entry cohorts aged in the American context. The percentages steadily increase through to the late 1980s because of the general increases in levels of immigration and then drop a bit during the 1990s for men but continue to increase for women.

(Table 1 about here)

The continent of origin of the immigrant men and women reflects the large immigration streams from Asia and Central or South America during the last several decades as well as the still significant remnants of immigration (plus some very recent immigration) from Europe and Canada. About a fifth are from Europe or Canada, over a

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quarter are from Asia, and almost half are from Central or South America. The racial and

Hispanic origins of the immigrants overlap with the continents of origin, albeit imperfectly.

Because of the overlap, over 40% of the immigrant men and women label themselves as

Hispanic in origin, about a quarter as Asian, a quarter as white, and less than 5% as Black,

leaving very small percentages to identify themselves as of some 'other' race or of complex

racial origins.

The data on military service in the U.S. refers to whether or not the immigrant or the

immigrant's spouse ever served on active duty in the U.S. armed forces – with the inclusion

of information about the immigrants' spouses military service being presented as an

indicator of one of the pathways into a cross-nativity marriage. (Unfortunately, information

about service in the armed forces of another country is not available in the 2000 U.S.

census). The information on military service shows a very marked sex-specific pattern.

While about 7% of married immigrant men (but only .6% of the immigrant women) have

served in the U.S. military, less than 1% of the immigrant men have wives who served in

the U.S. military and 14% of the immigrant women have husbands who served in the U.S.

armed forces.

The statistics presented in Tables 2 and 3 are from logistic models predicting the

logged odds of a married foreign-born man and woman, respectively, having a native-born

American (rather than foreign-born) spouse. For both men and women, the coefficients for

time period of immigration in Model 1 show a strong trend. Immigrants who entered the

country earlier in the 20th century have higher probability of having a native-born spouse.

This trend is in contrast to the pattern observed in Figure 1, which presented the year-

specific proportions of immigrants entering the country as spouses of American citizens. The explanation for the contrast lies in (a) data issues such as the slightly different definitions of cross-national marriages as well as the inclusion of undocumented aliens in the census, (b) processes affecting the longevity of cross-nativity marriages, and (c) the formation of cross-nativity marriages after time of entry. The strength of the trend in the census data does suggest, however, that immigrants who entered the U.S. earlier in time — and who have thus lived longer in the U.S. — are more likely to have married a native-born American. This pattern thus evokes cross-nativity marriage as one form of integration of immigrants into American society.

(Tables 2 and 3 about here)

Model 2 in Tables 2 and 3 helps confirm this conclusion by adding in the variable "age at immigration," a well-recognized indicator of the ease with which immigrants acculturate to, and are integrated into, American society. For both sexes, age at immigration is negatively related to the odds of having a native-born spouse. Immigrants who enter the country at older ages are significantly less likely to have a native-born spouse with the effect being stronger for foreign-born men than for foreign-born women. Model 2 in the two tables also include effects for educational attainment.[3] For both sexes, the coefficient is positive suggesting that more highly educated immigrants are more likely to have American-born spouses than their less educated counterparts.

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[3] The effects for age at immigration and educational attainment are stable whether added in separately or together.

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The next two models in each of Tables 2 and 3 include race and Hispanic origin, and continent of origin for men and women respectively. The coefficients show complex sex-specific patterns. Men and women born in Europe or Canada are significantly more likely to have native-born American spouses than are men and women from an Asian or a Central or South American country — but the differences are much larger for men[4]. When continent of origin is replaced by American race/Hispanic origin categories, the sex-specific pattern is intensified. White immigrants are much more likely to have an American native-born spouse than Asian immigrants and this is particularly so for immigrant men. In a parallel fashion, Black immigrants are much less likely than white immigrants to have a native-born American spouse and the contrast is particularly marked for women.

Because this pattern may be produced, in part, by the geography of U.S. military involvement, we add in the variables indicating the role of the immigrant's and his or her spouse's service in the military. For immigrant men, the coefficients for both variables are statistically significant and are positive. Serving in the U.S. military is positively associated with the logged odds that an immigrant man has a native-born American (rather than foreign-born) wife. In addition, if an immigrant's wife served in the U.S. military (although this refers to a very small proportion of couples), his wife is more likely to be native-born. For immigrant women, serving in the U.S. military is immaterial with respect

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[4] The differences between men and women with respect to region of origin and race are statistically significant. See Liao (2004) for a description of how to calculate the Wald statistics.

to the odds of having a native-born husband. However, the odds of an immigrant woman having a native-born American husband are substantially higher if her husband served in the U.S. military.

Figure 2 graphs the strong differences between immigrant men and women in the probabilities of having a native-born American spouse according to their own and their spouse's service in the U.S. military. (The percentages were calculated using coefficients from Model 5 for white foreign-born men and women with average levels of educational attainment and ages at immigration and who entered during the last half of the 1980s.) Foreign-born women are much more likely to have a native-born spouse if their spouse ever served in the U.S. military (compare the first and second set of columns). Men, on the other hand, are significantly more likely to have an American-born wife if he, himself, served in the U.S. military (compare the first and third set of probabilities). This may reflect the fact that service in the U.S. military is a route to permanent residence and American citizenship for some foreign-born men and women; it may also reflect their integration into U.S. society at an earlier age. Finally, the probabilities of a foreign-born man having an American wife are further enhanced if he served in the U.S. military and she did as well (last set of columns) – although this set of circumstances refers to very few couples.

(Figure 2 about here)

Figure 3 returns to the complex sex-specific relationships involving race and Hispanic origin, now net of the effects of military service. The figure shows the probabilities by race and Hispanic origin of married immigrant men and women having a

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native-born American spouse after controlling for all other characteristics including military service. (The probabilities were calculated from the coefficients in Model 5, Tables 2 and 3, and refer to men and women who entered the country in 1985-1989, in couples in which neither spouse served in the military, and both are "average" on all other characteristics.) White immigrant men and women, especially white immigrant men, are more likely than immigrants of other races to have American spouses: about a quarter of white immigrant men have American wives. With one striking exception and one mild exception, immigrant men are more likely than their female counterparts to have an American spouse no matter what their race or Hispanic origin. Black immigrant men, in particular, are much more likely to have an American-born spouse than are Black immigrant women. The striking exception to this sex-specific pattern concerns Asian immigrants. Asian men are much less likely to have a native-born American wife than Asian women are to have a native-born American husband. (The mild exception refers to immigrant men and women of some 'other' race; their probabilities of being in cross-nativity marriages are about equal.)

(Figure 3 about here)

The strong differences across men and women in the probabilities of having military experience as well as strong differences in the relationship between military service and the odds of being in a cross-nativity marriage suggest that there are different pathways into cross-nativity marriage for immigrant men and women. We therefore investigated the relationships between military service and cross-nativity marriage more closely. Model 6 in Tables 2 and 3 shows the interaction between educational attainment and the military

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experience of the immigrant's spouse. The coefficients suggest opposite effects of educational attainment for men and women when conditioned on whether their spouse ever served in the military service. Although, in general, more highly educated immigrant men and women are more likely to have native-born American spouses than less educated immigrants, the effect of education is mitigated for immigrant women with spouses with military experience whom they likely met overseas.

Further analysis shows that the dampening of the relationship between education and the odds of cross-nativity marriage is most apparent for Asian women. Figure 4 shows the probabilities of White, Asian, and Hispanic women being in a cross-nativity marriage conditioned by their education and whether their husband ever served in the military service. (The probabilities were generated by presuming the women entered the U.S. in the late 1980s, and were 25 years old at time of entry.) The coefficients used to generate the race- and education-specific probabilities were obtained from a logistic model containing the full set of interaction terms between race, education, and whether or not the husband served in the military. The results for women of other races showed the same general pattern as those presented in the figure.) The figure shows very clearly that foreign-born women, whether White, Asian, or Hispanic, are much more likely to have a native-born American husband if the husband has military experience. Moreover, the relationship between educational attainment and the probability of having a U.S.-born husband is less positive for Asian women than for White or Hispanic women and, in fact, is negative for those who probably met their husbands while he served in the military. The route to

marriage with a native-born American thus appears to differ across race for foreign-born women.

(Figure 4 about here)

Summary and Implications

Cross-nativity marriages have been a neglected component of intermarriage patterns in the United States although cross-nativity marriages are common and they may provide a vehicle for the easy social and political incorporation of the foreign-born spouse and the couple's children. The analyses based on data from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service here first suggest that the absolute number and proportion of immigrants entering the country each year as spouses of American citizens has been drifting upwards since the middle of the 20th century, perhaps because of the growing ease of international travel and the increasing numbers of foreign nationals working and studying in the United States on short-term visas. Immigration and foreign relations policy appear to play a role in the formation of the large numbers of cross-nativity marriages, by providing the opportunities for native-born Americans, especially male military personnel, to meet prospective partners abroad and to sponsor their entry into the country. The marketplace for foreign brides (and some foreign grooms), possibly propelled by new technology, may also play a small role in the general increases in the numbers of immigrants entering the country as spouses of American citizens.

The cross-sectional analyses based on U.S. census 2000 data investigated the relationships between a foreign-born person's personal characteristics such as race and

education and the odds that he or she had a native-born American spouse. The results first suggested that the common stereotype of cross-nativity marriages, comprised primarily of a discrete set of (native-born) American men with (foreign-born) Asian wives, is too limiting. First, cross-nativity marriages are not a rare phenomenon — about a fifth of all married immigrants have a native-born American spouse. Second, cross-nativity marriages are almost perfectly even with respect to gender: the percentage of married foreign-born men in the United States who have American wives (20%) is almost as high as the percentage of married foreign-born women who have American husbands (23%). Third, cross-nativity marriages are not more common among Asians than among immigrants of other races: it is white foreign-born men and women who are the most likely to have native-born American spouses.

The analyses also implied a variety of pathways into cross-national marriages between Americans and others; they also leave open the very plausible possibility that the pathways are associated with different outcomes. If a life-cycle framework is used to organize the pathways, the first involves an immigrant child entering the country and growing up in an American context amid social networks largely composed of American native-born citizens: Marriage to an American then becomes a likely occurrence. Cross-nativity marriage thus behaves like other processes of immigrant assimilation: those who spend more of their early formative years in the United States are more likely to be more strongly socially and culturally integrated into the American population.

A second pathway involves higher educational attainment. In almost all cases (with an important exception discussed below), more highly educated immigrant men and women

are more likely to have a native-born American spouse than their less educated compatriots. The relationship may reflect the general importance of education in assortative mating. The relationship may also encompass a pathway to cross-nativity marriage created through international travel or study abroad on the part of both young adult Americans abroad or non-Americans in the United States.

A third pathway, also most often taken in young adulthood, is constructed by a particularly important American institution: the military. Because the U.S. military regards itself as an expeditionary force, a large proportion, about a quarter, of its personnel are stationed abroad at any one time (Segal and Segal 2004). The results here show that military service strongly predicts the odds of cross-nativity marriages, especially between foreign-born women and American men. The presumption is that many of these couples met overseas and the relationship resulted in the immigration of the foreign national into the United States. The strength of the relationship observed in the census data probably understates the impact of military service in the formation of marriages across national lines. Some marriages between native-born Americans and foreign nationals result in the couple residing overseas – who are therefore not captured by the U.S. censuses or by immigration statistics. An allied pathway, which also has a strong sex-specific component and is likely to be more commonly used in young adulthood, involves "mail-order" brides, although rough estimates suggest that only a small percentage of visas granted to fiancées are the result of third party match-making organizations (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service 2004b).

The final pathway is a quieter one because it is associated with processes of assimilation occurring over time. In general, the longer immigrants have lived in the United States, they more likely they are to be in marriages with native-born Americans net of the effect of age at entry. It thus appears that some immigrants enter the U.S. either single or married to a non-American and then later in life marry a native-born American. Cross-nativity marriage thus behaves in a second way like other processes of assimilation: immigrants who have been in the United States longer are more likely to be socially and culturally integrated.

The contrast between Asian women and women of other racial descents in the odds of, and the role of education and military service in the prediction of the odds of cross-national marriage, suggest that the pathways into cross-national marriage are strongly gendered as well as conditioned by complex national-level geographic contexts outside of the United States. For example, the "double marriage squeeze," the result of a low ratio of men to women following high rates of mortality and emigration of men, observed in countries such as Thailand (Goodkind 1997) and Vietnam (Thai 2005) may result in the resident women viewing marriage to an American man as an attractive option.

These pathways into cross-nativity marriage have a large number of implications. First, the pathways into cross-nativity marriage may strongly determine a variety of outcomes for both partners. Other research has suggested that, in general, cross-nativity marriage leads to quicker and surer integration into American society for the foreign-born partner, whether speaking of political, cultural, linguistic, or socioeconomic dimensions. It seems likely that this conclusion especially pertains to foreign nationals who move into a

cross-nativity marriage because of high levels of educational capital, travel or study abroad, early entry and socialization in the United States or through processes of self-selection in which non-Americans who are particularly comfortable in American society are more likely to meet and marry Americans.   However, the recent attention paid to spousal abuse in marriages involving "mail-order" brides is good reason to pause when issuing blanket conclusions about the merits of cross-national marriage for the individuals involved (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service 2004b). In addition, the greater likelihood of cross-nativity marriage between American men with military experience and Asian women who are less versus more educated raises issues of exploitation of women with relatively few personal resources who are living in a country foreign to them.

Some research also suggests that marriages between American men and women of other nationalities may involve downward socioeconomic mobility on the part of the foreign-born spouse, perhaps because migrating to the U.S. is in and of itself perceived as a benefit (Thai 2005). It is also clear that some foreign nationals seek out American partners for the express purpose of obtaining legal residence in the United States. Some of the various pathways into cross-national marriage may therefore better be tinged by the possibility of exploitation or the reaping of benefits for either or both the foreign-born and the American-born spouses.

Finally, the pervasiveness of cross-national marriages in the United States, alongside the strong race-related and gender-specific pathways (and probably outcomes) have implications for the integration of racial and ethnic groups. Processes of assimilation are often considered as occurring between generations with the second or later generations

behaving differently from the foreign-born generation in some way, perhaps by obtaining more education or being more fluent in English or living in neighborhoods outside of the immigrant gateway cities. But the analyses presented here clearly show that processes of marital integration begin in the first generation and that the likelihood varies strongly across race (and gender). The rapidity of the integration of foreign nationals of selected races into American society through cross-national marriage is shaping mainstream American society and its racial contours in ways that have not received much recent scholarly attention.

The continuing high levels of immigration, the ease of sponsoring fiancées and spouses codified in U.S. immigration policy, the increasing ease of international travel, the substantial growth in study abroad, including foreign nationals visiting the U.S. to study and Americans "studying abroad," and even the role of technology in purveying information about prospective brides (and grooms) of other nationalities for native-born Americans, suggest that the gentle upward trends in the absolute and relative numbers of cross-nativity marriages in the last half of the 20th century is likely to continue into the 21st. The gendered, race-specific paths into cross-national marriages may be associated with different outcomes for the individuals and racial groups involved. Perhaps it is time to reconsider more closely the ways in which marriages between the foreign and the "native American stock" help integrate individuals and racial groups into mainstream American society.

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Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Married Immigrants, 2000

	Male	Female
	Percent	*Percent*
Spouse is native-born? (yes =1)	19.7	23.0
Year of immigration		
1995 to 2000	13.1	17.0
1990 to 1994	14.3	16.9
1985 to 1989	16.2	15.0
1980 to 1984	15.2	12.9
1975 to 1979	11.9	10.5
1970 to 1974	9.1	8.4
1965 to 1969	6.6	6.2
1960 to 1964	4.6	4.6
1950s	6.0	5.8
Before 1950	3.2	2.5
Continent of origin		
Europe or Canada	21.1	22.2
Asia	27.6	29.6
Central or South America	48.1	45.5
Other	3.2	2.7
Race and Hispanic Origin		
White[a]	25.6	25.9
Black[a]	4.6	4.1
Asian[a]	23.1	25.9
Some other race[a]	.7	.7
Hispanic	43.1	40.7
Two or more major race groups[a]	2.9	2.8
Military service		
Respondent (yes=1)	6.9	.5
Spouse (yes=1)	.6	14.1
	Mean (SD)	*Mean (SD)*
Years of education	11.79 (5.12)	11.51 (4.65)
Age at immigration	25.70 (12.94)	24.82 (11.97)
N	355,545	371,086

Notes: (*a*) Non-Hispanic.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Coefficients of a Married Male Immigrant Having a Native-Born Versus Foreign-Born Spouse

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Constant	-2.018*	-.580*	.261*	.212*	.221*	.227*
Year of immigration						
1995 to 2000	*a*	*a*	*a*	*a*	*a*	*a*
1990 to 1994	.208*	-.030	.037	.039	.041	.041
1985 to 1989	.122*	-.307*	-.204*	-.188*	-.200*	-.200*
1980 to 1984	.187*	-.405*	-.263*	-.250*	-.260*	-.260*
1975 to 1979	.487*	-.218*	-.136*	-.065	-.136*	-.136*
1970 to 1974	.748*	-.054	-.028	.006	-.036	-.037
1965 to 1969	1.018*	-.185*	.062	.104*	.043	.042
1960 to 1964	1.361*	.440*	.181*	.239*	.141*	.141*
1950s	1.803*	.858*	.378*	.436*	.300*	.300*
Before 1950	2.404*	1.160*	.629*	.677*	.482*	.481*
Age at immigration	–	-.068*	-.072*	-.072*	-.071*	-.071*
Years of education	–	.057*	.060*	.062*	.060*	.059*
Race and Hispanic Origin						
White[b]	–	–	*a*	–	*a*	*a*
Black[b]	–	–	-.546*	–	-.572*	-.572*
Asian[b]	–	–	-2.050*	–	-2.057*	-2.057*
Some other race[b]	–	–	-.511*	–	-.531*	-.531*
Hispanic	–	–	-.902*	–	-.890*	-.891*
Two or more major race groups[b]	–	–	-.861*	–	-.867*	-.868*

(Table 2 continued)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Continent of origin						
Europe or Canada	–	–	–	*a*	–	–
Asia	–	–	–	-1.626*	–	–
Central or South America	–	–	–	-.887*	–	–
Other	–	–	–	-.144*	–	–
Military service						
Respondent	–	–	–	–	.381*	.379*
Spouse	–	–	–	–	1.225*	.289
Years of education * Military service of spouse	–	–	–	–	–	.073*
Model Chi-square	24,413	50,667	68,444	64,260	69,494	69,521
df	9	11	16	14	18	19

Notes: (*a)* Omitted category. (*b)* Non-Hispanic. * Significant at .001 level. N = 355,545

Table 3: Logistic Regression Coefficients of a Married Female Immigrant Having a Native-Born Versus Foreign-Born Spouse

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Constant	-1.923*	-2.274*	-1.261*	-1.166*	-1.252*	-1.438*
Year of immigration						
1995 to 2000	*a*	*a*	*a*	*a*	*a*	*a*
1990 to 1994	.100*	.072*	.091*	.088*	.011	.014
1985 to 1989	.201*	.105*	.149*	.159*	-.006	-.003
1980 to 1984	.385*	.199*	.239*	.245*	.024	.026
1975 to 1979	.681*	.424*	.406*	.426*	.097*	.095*
1970 to 1974	1.010*	.722*	.696*	.686*	.266*	.260*
1965 to 1969	1.284*	.965*	.812*	.791*	.281*	.277*
1960 to 1964	1.765*	1.442*	1.177*	1.146*	.447*	.438*
1950s	2.123*	1.801*	1.360*	1.316*	.435*	.427*
Before 1950	2.511*	2.092*	1.551*	1.502*	.331*	.317*
Age at immigration	–	-.032*	-.038*	-.038*	-.053*	-.054*
Years of education	–	.105*	.086*	.088*	.097*	.112*
Race and Hispanic Origin						
White[b]	–	–	*a*	–	*a*	*a*
Black[b]	–	–	-1.087*	–	-1.089*	-1.085*
Asian[b]	–	–	-.765*	–	-.919*	-.934*
Some other race[b]	–	–	-.362*	–	-.376*	-.378*
Hispanic	–	–	-.910*	–	-.761*	-.746*
Two or more major race groups[b]	–	–	-.702*	–	-.759*	-.763*

(Table 3 continued)

|	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Continent of origin						
Europe or Canada	–	–	–	*a*	–	–
Asia	–	–	–	-.871*	–	–
Central or South America	–	–	–	-1.007*	–	–
Other		–	–	-.689*	–	–
Military service						
Respondent	–	–	–	–	.034	.057
Spouse	–	–	–	–	2.660*	3.639*
Years of education * Military service of spouse	–	–	–	–	–	-.079*
Model Chi-square	34,586	52,695	60,375	61,146	110,899	111,500
df	9	11	16	14	18	19

Notes: (*a)* Omitted category. (*b)* Non-Hispanic. * Significant at .001 level. N = 371,086

Figure 1. Total Immigrants Admitted to the U.S. and Numbers Admitted as Spouses of U.S. Citizens by Year of Entry, 1965-2003
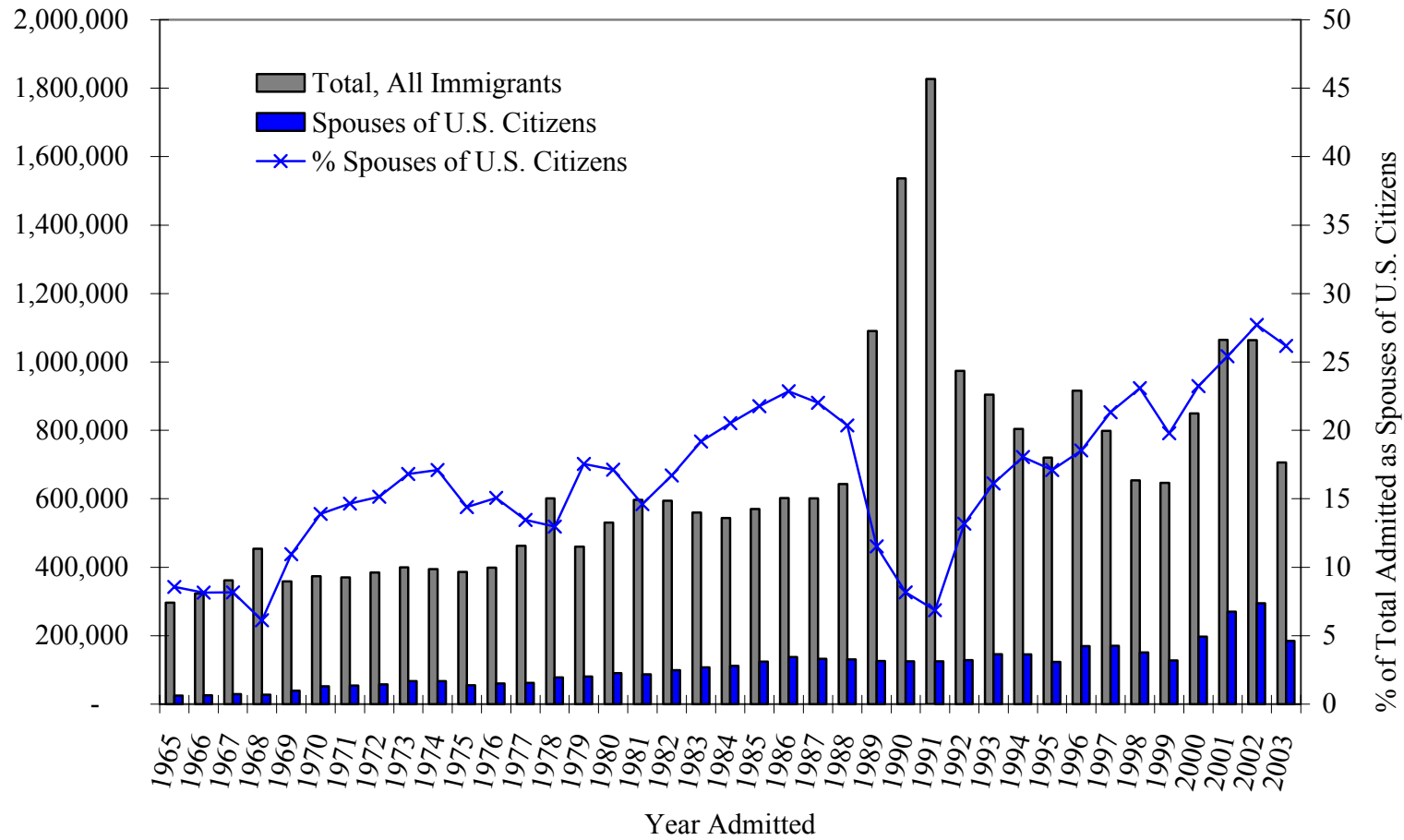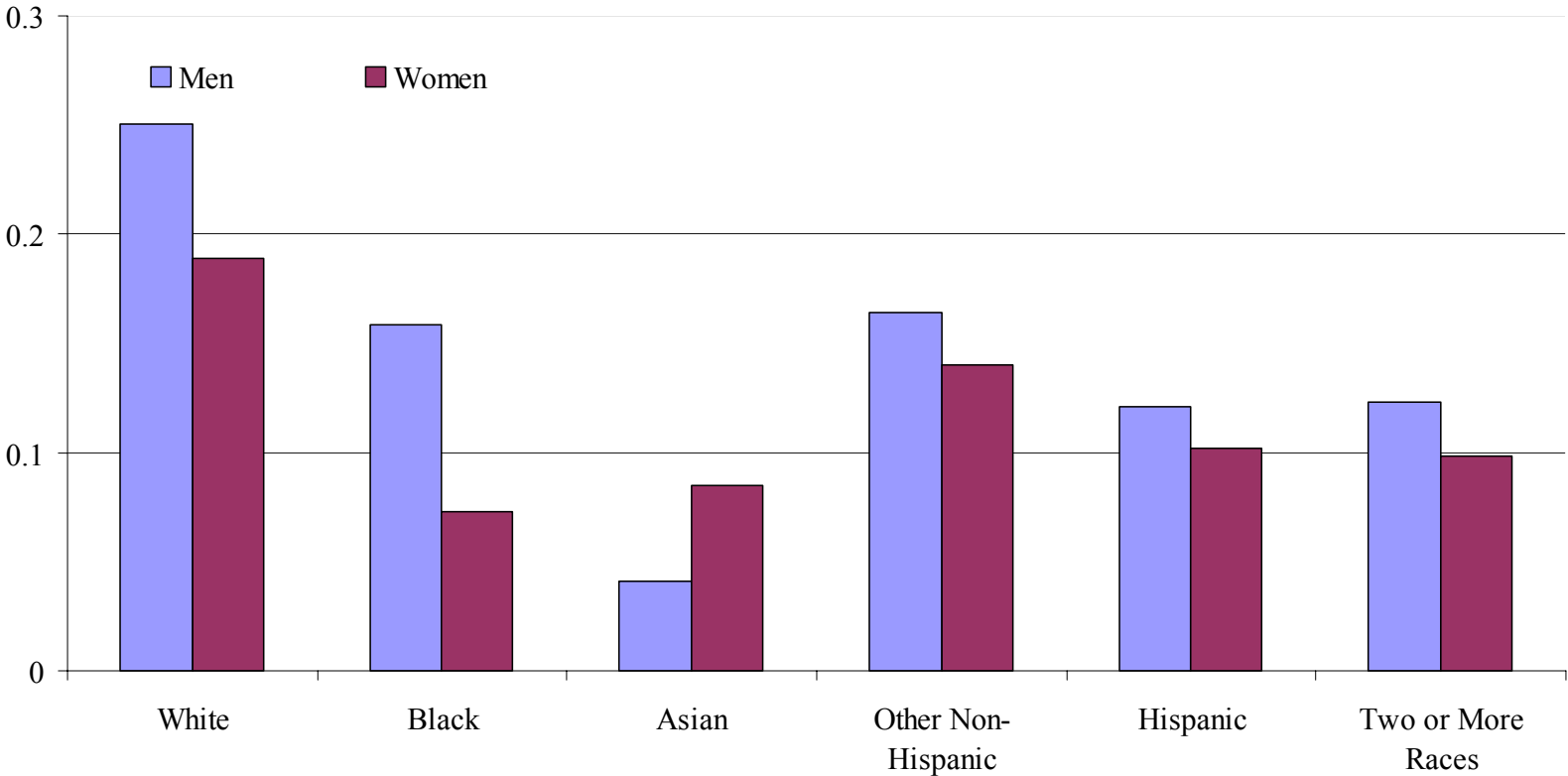

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security (various years)

Figure 2. The Probability of a Married Immigrant Having a Native-born Spouse by Own and Spouse's Service in the Military
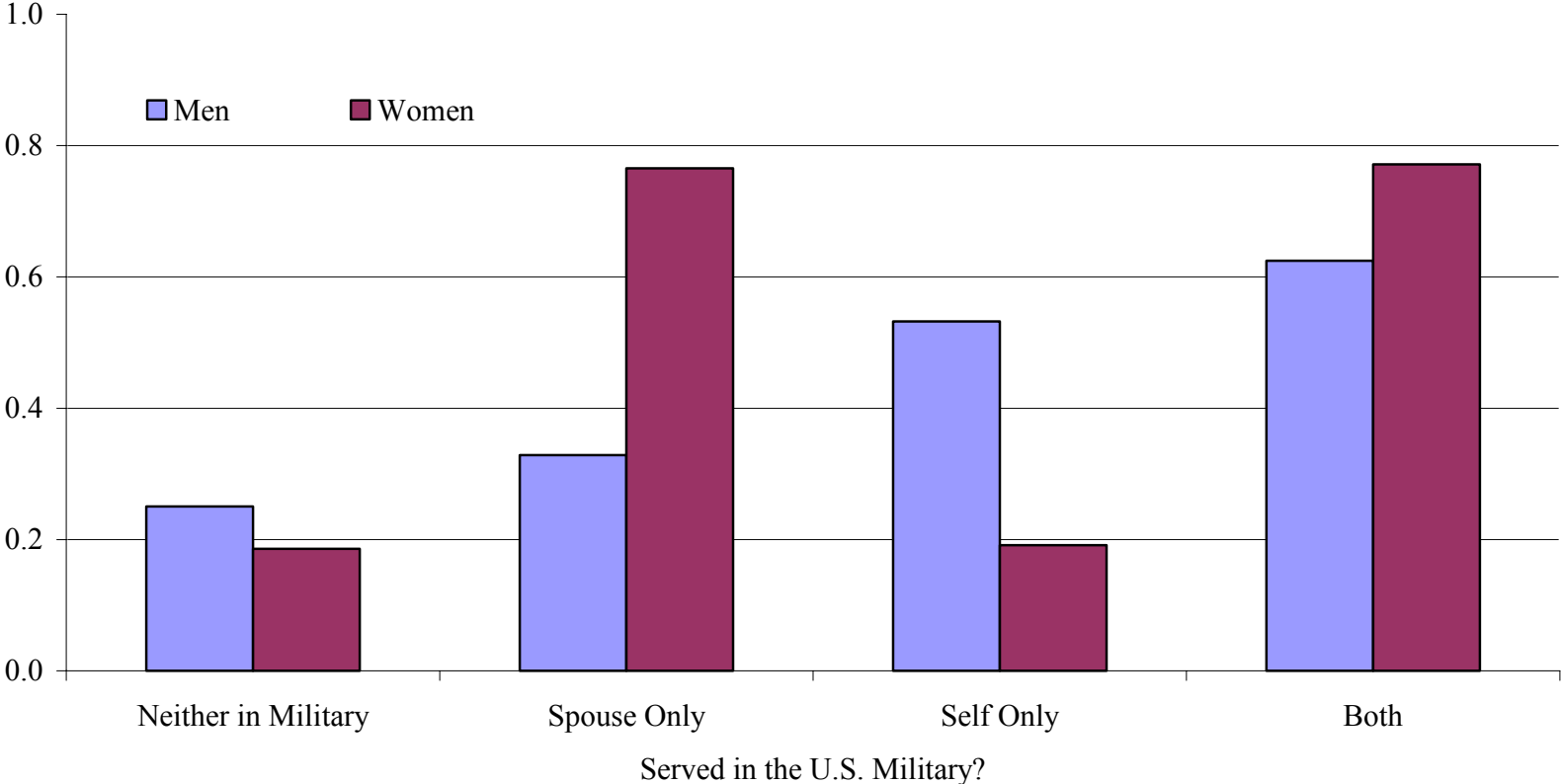
Note: See text for calculation of probabilities.

Figure 3. The Probabilities of a Married Immigrant Having a Native-born American Spouse by Gender and Race/Hispanic Origin

Note: See text for calculation of probabilities.

Figure 4. Probabilities of Foreign-born Women having a U.S.-born Husband by Race and Military Service