# *Interracial, Interethnic, and Intergenerational Marriages: National Origin Differences*

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## *Introduction:*

Social scientists depend upon exogamy as a key measure of social distance between groups. Thus, the extent to which immigrant groups marry into the dominant ethnic group of the receiving society is used to reflect the degree to which the new arrivals or their children have assimilated (e.g. Gordon, 1964). This perspective assumes there is one group with whom all national origin groups will marry. However, this perspective was premised primarily on the experiences of European immigrants who came to the U.S. in the early twentieth century (Alba and Nee 1997). Although early European migrants were ethnically diverse, immigrants today are perceived as more racially distant from one another. Further, continued migration from Asia and Latin America refills the immigrant marriage markets today in a way that could not continue under more restrictive legislative environments in the mid twentieth century. Thus, more recent revisions to the assimilation theory acknowledge other potential paths to incorporation in a multi-ethnic and multi-racial society. In such a milieu, reduced social distance could include intermarriage with others within the same strata of the racial/panethnic hierarchy while still retaining social distance from other parts of the racial/ethnic system (Portes and Zhou, 1993; Rosenfeld, 2002).

Racial and ethnic intermarriage is one indicator of social distance for groups with recent migration histories from the dominant group. Another measure of intermarriage, intergenerational marriage, may also indicate a greater integration of some migrant groups relative to others. Immigrants who marry natives become eligible for naturalization more quickly and may face greater access to social networks and resources in the United States than those who marry other immigrants (Bean and Stevens, 2003). Recent studies of generational endogamy in the United States find that immigrants are more likely to marry other immigrants from the same racial group than natives or other racial minorities (Qian and Lichter, 2001). Nevertheless, minority immigrants provide an ample supply of marriageable partners for their native-born counterparts. There is evidence that intermarriage between the native- and the foreign-born minorities increased while interracial marriage between Latinos and whites and between Asian Americans and whites declined somewhat in the 1990s (Bean and Stevens, 2003; Qian and Lichter,

2004). Intergenerational marriage, however, rarely crosses racial lines. This suggests that immigration may indeed reinforce the color line in the United States.

Immigrants from Latin America and Asia are diverse in national origins. Limited opportunities for contact among people of different countries in Latin America and Asia indicate social distance among immigrants of different national origins. This is more likely to be the case for Asian immigrants. While Latinos (Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, for example) may share the same language and religion, the only commonality among Asians (Chinese and Filipinos, for example) may be their immigration status. However, racial classification in the United States uses pan-ethnic labels (Latino or Asian) to classify anybody from Latin America as Hispanic (or Latino) and from Asia as Asian. American society's perception that all Latinos and Asian Americans each belong to one pan-ethnic group leads those from Latin American and Asian origins to redefine their own racial and ethnic identities. Native-born Latinos and Asian Americans are more likely to identify themselves as Latino or Asian rather than Mexican or Chinese compared to their foreign-born counterparts (Espiritu 1992; Padilla 1985). For the native-born, interethnic marriage within their own pan-ethnic groups becomes more common than for the foreign born (Qian, Blair, and Ruf 2001; Qian and Cobas 2004).

As a result of pan-ethnic classification for Latinos and Asian Americans in the U.S., most research on interracial marriage are based on pan-ethnic definitions, thus, ignoring important national origin differences (Qian 1997; Qian and Lichter 2001). Few studies have compared generational and racial/ethnic intermarriage across national origin groups. Those that have find greater interethnic marriage and some evidence of panethnic marriage patterns in later generations with lower levels in the first generation (see Qian, Blair and Ruf, 2001; Bean and Stevens, 2003). In this paper, we propose to focus on Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, and Chinese, four national origin groups from Latin America and Asia. Our goal is to compare national origin group differences in intermarriage patterns with whites, with other racial minorities, and with other national origin groups within their own pan-ethnic group. We are especially interested in how nativity and length of stay in the U.S. play a role in intermarriage patterns.

***Hypotheses:***

In this paper we ask how patterns of intermarriage vary across generation status groups and whether these patterns differ by national origin? In other words, when predicting intermarriage, is the "generation gap" stronger than the "national origin gap" and are these gaps the same distance for all national origin groups? Mexican, Puerto Rican, Filipino, and Chinese groups are ideal for this purpose. They have a long immigration history in the United States and still represent the largest share of immigrants from Latin America and Asia. (Puerto Ricans stand apart as U.S. citizens who nonetheless face some of the same conditions confronting international migrants to the United States. For example, Puerto Ricans, different from other American citizens, mostly speak Spanish in Puerto Rico. They remain a distinct group in the mainland. Thus, we include them here for comparison with the other national origin groups who are not American citizens when they arrive.) These groups allow us to compare the interethnic

and intergenerational marriage patterns for two distinct subgroups from both the "Asian" and the "Hispanic" panethnic groups. We formulate several hypotheses based on the strength of ties to the origin for each group, the historical reception and the residential proximity of groups within the United States.

First, we predict that variation in intermarriage by nativity will be greatest among Mexican, Chinese and Filipino origin individuals. Given the concentration of the population in limited marriage markets and the fluidity of ties to the island, we suspect Puerto Ricans will have the least amount of variation in intermarriage by nativity.

Second, patterns of generational intermarriage will vary so that some immigrant groups will be more likely to marry outside their generation, nationality and race than others. Immigrants and natives of the same national origin group will be most likely to marry one another when the social distance between them is smaller. We hypothesize that Filipinos will experience the greatest likelihood of marriage between their native and foreign-born because the social distance among them is the smallest. Also, there is less variation in SES and a smaller language barrier for Filipinos than the other groups. On the other hand, the social distance among Chinese may be greater, given the large language barrier that exists between natives and immigrants (English or different Chinese dialects). Our specific expectations by generation status are show in the table below:

| | Mexican | Puerto Rican | Chinese | Filipino |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marriage across generation? | Mid-level likelihood | Likely to be common | Least likely | Likely to be common |

Our specific expectations for national origin, panethnic and racial intermarriage by generation status are shown in the following table. Similarity of language, socioeconomic status and geographic distribution are all expected to influence patterns by national origins. For example, since the "Asian" panethnicity is so linguistically and economically diverse, less panethnic intermarriage is expected than for the "Hispanic" groups:

| | Marriage Type | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Generation | Same national origin | Same pan-ethnicity | Out of Ethnic Group: Whites | Out of Ethnic Group: Blacks |
| Immigrant | Puerto Rican<br>Mexican<br>Chinese | Mexican | Filipino | Puerto Rican |
| Native | Puerto Rican | | Filipino<br>Chinese<br>Mexican | |

***Migration and Patterns of Intermarriage: Four Groups***

For our analyses, we choose four national origin groups with diverse experiences and large presence in the United States. Here we briefly review the migration histories and marriage patterns in the United States of Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Chinese and Filipinos.

*Puerto Ricans*

The Puerto Rican case is an interesting contribution to the literature on immigrant adaptation in the United States. Because they are not technically foreign citizens, Puerto Ricans face fewer barriers to entrance and departure to the mainland United States and, to some extent, have greater access to the marriage market in both the sending and receiving communities than other immigrant groups. At the same time, Puerto Ricans are much less geographically dispersed in the United States than some other national origin groups and remain an economically disadvantaged minority.

The family formation patterns of Puerto Ricans also tend to differ from that of other Hispanic groups. Their non-marital fertility levels are closer to those of African Americans than other Hispanic groups. Puerto Ricans are also more accepting of cohabitation than Mexican Americans and other Hispanic groups (Oropesa, 1996). Thus, we might expect the marriage patterns among Puerto Ricans, regardless of generation status, to be most similar to African Americans and their marriage rates with African Americans should be highest among the other groups we compare here.

*Mexicans*

The Mexican origin population in the United States has a long history of replenished migration. The flow of immigrants has fluctuated for over a century, but in the post-1965 period, Mexico has been the largest source of migrants to the United States (Glick and Van Hook, 1998). Mexican-origin individuals face a certain amount of ambiguity regarding their racial/ethnic position in the United States (Gutierrez, 1995). Some may consider their nationality as their sole identity while others identify themselves as Black, Native American or White. The segmented assimilation theory has been most often applied to the Mexican case with the assumption that this group is particularly likely to assimilate into a minority position in the United States. So the question of intermarriage among Mexican Americans and Mexican immigrants is an interesting test case for scholars of post-1965 adaptation patterns.

The Mexican origin population in the United States exhibits a relatively high degree of endogamy but considerable variations exist by generation. Rosenfeld (2002) demonstrates that Mexican Americans do marry non-Hispanic Whites at higher rates than they marry non-Hispanic Blacks, somewhat challenging the expectations of segmented assimilation. Mexican immigrants, on the other hand, exhibit lower levels of intermarriage even when educational composition is taken into account (Rosenfeld, 2002). Bean and Stevens (2003) report that approximately 20% of Mexican born wives in the United States were married to US born men while 24% of Mexican born men were married to US born wives.

*Chinese*

The Chinese origin population also has a long history of migration to the United States. Restrictions in the 19th century created a migrant stream dominated by men. Subsequent legislation virtually stopped Chinese migration to the United States in the early 20th century. Since 1965, however, China has become one of the larger sources of migration to the United States. This migration is fairly diverse, drawing professionals as well as low-skilled workers. As migration has increased so too has the geographic dispersion of the Chinese origin population. Although easily identifiable "Chinatowns" still serve as a landing point for many in major cities from New York to Los Angeles and San Francisco, considerable suburbanization has occurred drawing many first and second generation Chinese beyond these traditional ethnic niches (Alba et al, 1999; Alba, Logan and Stults, 2000).

Studies of intermarriage have rarely looked within "Asian" subgroups. Those that have find Chinese Americans are not as likely to marry whites as Filipinos but do have relatively high rates of interethnic marriage when compared to other Asian groups (Qian, Blair and Ruf, 2001). There is less intergenerational marriage among Chinese immigrants than other national origin groups. According to Bean and Stevens' (2003) calculations, only 10 percent of Chinese born wives were married to men born in the United States and only 9 percent of Chinese born husbands were married to women born in the United States.

*Filipinos*

In the post-1965 era, the Philippines have been a significant and often under-studied source of migration to the United States. Filipino migration is second only to Mexican migration in size during this period. While many Filipino migrants are low skilled, low-wage workers, a sizable component of this migrant pool are educated professionals often specifically recruited for their contribution to health-related fields in the United States. Family reunification policy has also increased the size of the Filipino population in the United States since 1965 (Espiritu, 1996).

Filipinos have much higher ethnic intermarriage rates with whites than other Asian subgroups (Qian, Blair, and Ruf, 2001). Generational intermarriage is differentiated by gender among Filipinos. According to Bean and Stevens' calculations (2003), nearly 32 percent of Filipino born wives were married to men born in the United States while only 14 percent of Filipino born husbands were married to women born in the United States. This may be a result, in part, of the gender imbalance in the selection of immigrants with more single women in the migration stream.

## *Data and Methods*

We employ data from the 2000 US Census because it contains sufficient numbers of cases of relatively small national origin groups. We identify Chinese and Filipinos based on the race question and Mexicans and Puerto Ricans based on the Spanish origin question. For the first time in the census history, Americans were able to mark one or more racial categories in the 2000 Census to classify their race. We will use this information to identify whether Chinese or Filipinos are mixed-race individuals. For

Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, we will rely on the race question to indicate whether they are self-identified as white.

Censuses no longer ask questions about the date of the first marriage or the order of the current marriage. Thus, our sample therefore contains currently married couples of varying marriage durations and orders. The sample may be biased because marital disruption differs by marriage duration and order (Jacobs and Furstenberg 1986; Kitano, Yeung, Chai, and Hatanaka 1984). To reduce potential bias, we include only married couples aged 20-34 at the time of the census. These couples are likely to have formed unions recently and are less likely to have experienced disruptions compared to older couples.

Our objective is to examine marriages contracted in the United States. The censuses, however, do not allow us to distinguish marriages contracted within the U.S. from those contracted overseas. To reduce the number of marriages contracted overseas, we limit the sample to persons who immigrated to the U.S. under age 20. These immigrants were likely to be single when they came to the United States. A large share undoubtedly came to the United States when they were children or relatively young. They are more likely than older immigrants to have adopted the cultural values and norms of the host society as they proceeded through the public education system. These young immigrants were subject to marriage market conditions in the United States when they searched for mates.

Our final sample consists of 35,548 Mexicans, 4,157 Puerto Ricans, 2,181 Filipinos, and 3,021 Chinese. Multinomial logistic regressions are employed to predict to whom an individual is married. We predict whether an individual is married to someone of (1) the same national origin; (2) the same panethnicity (Asian or Hispanic); (3) other racial minorities; or (4) whites. To control for nonindependence, we run models for men and women separately. The key predictors include national origin (Chinese, Filipinos, Mexicans, or Puerto Ricans), generation status (native-born, approximate age at arrivals), language (little or no English, speak English well or very well), education (high school or less, some college, college and more), spouses' generation status (native-born, approximate age at arrival), and spouses' education (high school or less, some college, college and more). To control for regional marriage market conditions (different racial and ethnic compositions), we limit our analysis to areas where these four groups have greater shares (New York, Los Angles, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, and Houston). After examining the main effects, we will explore potential interactions. Finally, we will include cohabiting couples into the analysis to see how the patterns may differ for these four groups between cohabiting and marriage relationships.

**Preliminary Results**

Table 1 presents basic characteristics of our study sample (men and women aged 20 to 34 in 2000). Approximately four fifth of Chinese and Filipinos have at least some college education. In contrast, only about one fifth of Mexican men and one quarter of Mexican women had at least some college. Puerto Ricans were more evenly divided in whether they had some college or not. Most Chinese, Filipinos, and Mexicans were foreign born (ranging from 72% to 85%) while most Puerto Ricans were native-born. For the foreign-born, more Chinese immigrated in recent years than Filipinos and

Mexicans. Puerto Ricans came to the mainland at a steady pace, without ups and downs across the years. The ability to speak English is lowest for Mexicans, followed by Chinese. Over 90 percent of Filipinos and Puerto Ricans speak English well or very well. Tentatively, we limited our analyses to six metropolitan areas.

Table 2 presents parameter estimates from multinomial logistic regression predicting type of marriage for men and women, separately. These results suggest some preliminary findings: 1) there existed strong sex differences in intermarriage with whites by national origin – Filipino, Mexican, and Puerto Rican men are more likely than Chinese men to marry whites, but only Filipino women tend to be more likely to marry whites than Chinese women. 2) Filipinos, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans tend to be more likely to marry other racial minorities compared to Chinese. 3) Panethnic interethnic marriage is lowest for Mexicans. 4) Education is in the predicted direction – more highly educated men and women are more likely to cross their national origins to marry compared to their less educated counterparts. 5) Generation is an important predictor. The native-born are more likely to be intermarried than the foreign-born. 6) English speaking ability is a very strong predictor.

As of now, we simply use metropolitan area as one of the controls. We plan to use multilevel models to tease out within metropolitan area and between metropolitan area variations. In addition, we will refine our analyses by introducing more variables in the model, especially the characteristics of the spouses.

**Conclusion and Discussion**

Clearly, our preliminary results have demonstrated the needs to move beyond the analyses of racial and ethnic differences in intermarriage at the pan-ethnic level. Strong national origin differences are evident in marriage with whites, other racial minorities, and other ethnic groups of the same pan-ethnic groups.

National origin differences in marriage crossing generational boundaries, ethnic boundaries, and racial boundaries suggest that the meanings of assimilation can be different from one national origin group to another. Classical assimilation model is helpful but fails to capture the dynamics of integrations in American society for racial and ethnic minorities.

Table 1. Percentage of Males and Females' Education, Nativity, Length in US, Language, and Metropolitan Area by Group, Age 20-34.

| | Males | | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Chinese | Filipino | Mexican | Puerto Rican | Chinese | Filipino | Mexican |
| **Education** | | | | | | | |
| HS or less | 22.1 | 15.2 | 78.8 | 56.2 | 20.0 | 12.8 | 74.9 |
| Some Col. or more | 77.9 | 84.8 | 21.2 | 43.8 | 80.0 | 87.2 | 25.1 |
| **Nativity** | | | | | | | |
| Foreign Born | 85.3 | 79.1 | 77.0 | 33.4 | 85.2 | 80.4 | 71.6 |
| Native Born | 14.7 | 20.9 | 23.0 | 66.6 | 14.9 | 19.7 | 28.4 |
| **Length in US** | | | | | | | |
| Native Born | 14.7 | 20.9 | 23.0 | 66.6 | 14.9 | 19.7 | 28.4 |
| 2.5 yrs | 19.9 | 10.6 | 10.4 | 6.2 | 26.8 | 14.9 | 16.9 |
| 8.5 yrs | 23.4 | 19.4 | 19.8 | 6.3 | 23.6 | 23.3 | 24.2 |
| 13.5 yrs | 17.3 | 20.3 | 27.5 | 6.6 | 13.8 | 16.4 | 16.6 |
| 18.5 yrs | 14.0 | 10.8 | 11.3 | 5.6 | 10.4 | 10.4 | 6.1 |
| 20 or more | 10.8 | 18.0 | 8.1 | 8.6 | 10.6 | 15.3 | 7.8 |
| **Language** | | | | | | | |
| English Speaking | 84.3 | 98.5 | 66.2 | 95.6 | 83.7 | 98.5 | 58.6 |
| Little or Non-English Speaking | 15.7 | 1.5 | 33.9 | 4.4 | 16.3 | 1.5 | 41.4 |
| **Metropolitan Area** | | | | | | | |
| Miami | 1.7 | 1.7 | 1.3 | 15.5 | 1.9 | 1.8 | 1.4 |
| San Francisco | 22.9 | 29.5 | 8.3 | 1.7 | 24.2 | 29.6 | 8.2 |
| Chicago | 7.3 | 10.8 | 15.7 | 11.0 | 7.3 | 11.5 | 15.6 |
| Houston | 4.4 | 2.4 | 15.2 | 1.4 | 4.7 | 2.2 | 15.2 |
| Los Angeles | 25.8 | 38.7 | 55.1 | 4.6 | 24.7 | 38.4 | 55.4 |
| New York | 37.9 | 16.9 | 4.3 | 65.8 | 37.2 | 16.5 | 4.3 |
| N= | 1,438 | 980 | 17,749 | 2,034 | 1,583 | 1,201 | 17,799 |

Table 2. Multinomial Logistic Regressions of Intermarriage Pairings by Sex and Partner Ethnicity, Age 2(

| | Males | | | Females | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Marriage With:** | Whites | Other Minorities | Same Panethnic | Whites | Other Minorities |
| **Ethnicity** | | | | | |
| (Chinese) | | | | | |
| Filipino | 1.034 ** | 1.547 *** | 0.267 * | 0.711 *** | 1.675 *** |
| Mexican | 0.913 ** | 1.904 *** | -0.391 *** | -0.351 *** | 0.135 |
| Puerto Rican | 1.713 *** | 2.529 *** | 1.279 *** | 0.030 | 1.369 *** |
| **Education** | | | | | |
| (HS or less) | | | | | |
| Some College or more | 0.748 *** | 0.919 *** | 0.393 *** | 1.204 *** | 0.856 *** |
| **Time in U.S.** | | | | | |
| (Natives) | | | | | |
| New Arrivals (<10 years) | -1.317 *** | -1.785 *** | -0.689 *** | -1.616 *** | -1.844 *** |
| Late Arrivals (>=10 years) | -1.431 *** | -1.455 *** | -0.346 | -1.147 *** | -0.969 *** |
| **Language** | | | | | |
| (Little or Non-English) | | | | | |
| Speaks English | 2.073 *** | 1.530 *** | 0.483 *** | 2.212 *** | 1.563 *** |
| **Metropolitan Area** | | | | | |
| (New York) | | | | | |
| Miami | 0.627 * | 0.624 *** | 0.952 *** | 0.518 ** | 0.939 *** |
| San Francisco | 1.074 *** | 0.637 *** | 0.284 ** | 0.333 ** | 0.614 *** |
| Chicago | 0.471 ** | 0.360 *** | 0.119 | 0.205 | 0.128 |
| Houston | 0.222 | 0.178 ** | 0.030 | -0.125 | 0.239 |
| Los Angeles | -0.002 | 0.009 | 0.321 *** | -0.198 | 0.238 |
| *N=* | *349* | *1,395* | *1,761* | *1,600* | *685* |
| Deviance | 3513.74 | | | 4574.51 | |
| df | 36 | | | 36 | |

***$p$<.001; **$p$<.01; *$p$<.05

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