Who Marries Immigrants? Marriage Trends among America's New Second Generation

Abstract and Preliminary Analysis[1]

Daniel T. Lichter, *Cornell University*
Julie H Carmalt, *Cornell University*
Zhenchao Qian, *Ohio State University*

Background

For Asian Americans and Hispanics, the 1990s brought unprecedented declines in intermarriage with whites, which stands in sharp contrast to the exceptionally large increases in intermarriage observed in prior censuses (Qian and Lichter 2007; Lichter et al. 2007). The retreat from intermarriage largely reflects the growth in less-educated and skilled immigrant populations, who are often less "attractive" as marital partners to the majority white population. At the same time, natives are increasingly marrying their foreign-born counterparts.

The substantive implication is clear: Growth in minority group size promotes in-group contact and interaction while reinforcing cultural and ethnic solidarity and marital endogamy. One hypothesis, which we test here, is that the recent influx of new immigrants has apparently provided an expanding marriage market for second-and third-generation Asians and Hispanics, reinforced cultural and ethnic identity, and slowed the process of marital assimilation.

In this paper, we use data from the March Current Population Survey (1994-2006) to identify second-generation Asians and Hispanics who marry (1) foreign-born pan-ethnics; (2) native-born pan-ethnics; and (3) whites. A working assumption is that marriages to foreign-born pan-ethnics (vis-à-vis marriage to either native-born minorities or to whites) both challenge straight-line assimilation theory and represent a possible departure from full social and economic incorporation of new immigrant groups into American society. We focus on trends over 1994-2006 in the share of second generation Asians and Hispanics who "return" to their cultural roots by marrying their first-generation pan-ethnic counterparts.

Data

Our data come from 108,178 married couples identified in the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series March Current Population Survey (IPUMS-CPS) for years 1994 - 2006. Starting in 1994, the IPUMS-CPS collected information on respondents' birthplace and the birthplace of respondents' parents. This information, coupled with detailed information about respondents' race and ethnicity allows us to examine detailed racial and ethnic patterns of

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[1] If accepted in the session on the "Demography of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders," the title of the paper will be changed to acknowledge "second generation Asians" and the analyses will focus primarily on Asians, with Hispanics providing a comparison group.

intermarriage among first, second, and third-plus generation immigrants over time. We distinguish between non-Hispanic Whites, non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. Hispanics include individuals of any race but who identified themselves as of Hispanic origin. These racial categories are based on self-designations based on responses to two questions about race and Hispanic origin in the March CPS.

Because the IPUMS-CPS does not collect information explicitly about respondents' spouses, our data consist of information on married men and women, residing in the same household and whose information could be linked, not to all married couples in the sample. We attempt to minimize potential selection biases resulting from examining only intact marriages by restricting the sample to married couples age 20 – 34. We assume this young sample reflects respondents in first marriages. First generation immigrants are defined as respondents who were born abroad to foreign-born parents, and who immigrated to the United States before age 20. We applied this age restriction in order to examine marital assimilation occurring within the United State: We assume our sample of first generation immigrants were single at the time they immigrated to the United States. Second-generation immigrants are defined as respondents who were born in the United States and reported one or more foreign-born parents. Respondents who were native born and reported both of their parents were native born make up our sample of "third-plus" generation of immigrants.

Preliminary Analysis

Table 1 provides some preliminary analyses of shares of marriages, disaggregated by nativity, generation, and race/ethnicity of each partner. These data provide the core information for our analyses.

Our analyses will proceed in three stages. First, we will show trends in the share of second-generation Asians and Hispanics who marry first-generation and third-generation pan-ethnics over 1994-2006. We will use 3-year averages for this purpose. Second, we will fit log-linear models that control for the changing marginal distributions of Asians and Hispanics across generations. The proposed analyses will reveal the extent to which changing marriage patterns between natives and immigrants reflect changes in the marriage pool. Finally, we will evaluate the extent to which changes in native-foreign intermarriage patterns reflect changes in the educational mix of native and foreign-born Asians and Hispanics over the study period.

Implications

For Asian Americans and Hispanics, socioeconomic mobility has provided avenues for some highly educated individuals to cross social and racial boundaries through intermarriage, but rapid immigration over the past decade has slowed the pace of marital assimilation. The future is uncertain. As we illustrate in this paper, the continuing influx of immigrants from Asia and Latin America may slow intermarriage and reinforce racial/ethnic identities, especially among the second generation who are at a marital crossroad (i.e., whether to marry native or immigrant co-ethnics).

Percentage distributions of second generation marriages by race of husbands and wives ages 20-34, by year

	Second Generation Asian Wives					Second Generation Asian Husbands				
	All years	1994-1996	1997-1999	2000-2001	2002-2006	All years	1994-1996	1997-1999	2000-2001	2002-2006
Foreign born[1], same race	13.79	5.18	7.22	19.18	17.76	21.13	16.98	27.40	43.55	14.68
Native born, same race	30.69	18.34	16.93	21.40	43.23	34.32	21.12	25.23	18.54	45.31
Non-Hispanic white (any gen)	45.71	68.63	57.24	53.36	29.42	34.59	47.10	47.36	32.16	27.90
All other races (any gen)	9.80	7.84	18.61	6.06	9.59	9.97	11.80	100.00	5.75	12.10
Total	99.99	99.99	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.01	97.00	199.99	100.00	99.99

	Second Generation Hispanic Wives					Second Generation Hispanic Husbands				
	All years	1994-1996	1997-1999	2000-2001	2002-2006	All years	1994-1996	1997-1999	2000-2001	2002-2006
Foreign born[1], same race	33.64	28.96	34.58	39.05	33.96	21.21	20.44	22.84	23.21	19.98
Native born, same race	45.55	46.55	43.14	44.35	46.79	52.73	59.34	42.13	56.74	50.86
Non-Hispanic white (any gen)	16.97	22.28	19.58	12.07	13.72	24.25	19.31	32.80	16.23	27.77
All other races (any gen)	3.84	2.21	2.70	4.53	5.54	1.81	0.91	2.22	3.82	1.39
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.01	100.00	100.00	99.99	100.00	100.00

Note: Weighted percents. Some columns do not sum to 1 due to rounding error.

[1] Immigrated before age 20.