

Extended Abstract

Marital Assimilation or Not? Marriage Markets, Ethnoracial Diversity, and Marital Endogamy Among U.S. Hispanics

Zhenchao Qian, The Ohio State University

Daniel T. Lichter, Cornell University

Dmitry Tumin, The Ohio State University

Introduction

Intermarriages among ethnoracial groups since the 1970s have increased rapidly as a share of all marriages in the United States. Much of the growth reflects high rates of intermarriage among America's most rapidly growing immigrant populations, including Hispanics. Perhaps paradoxically, rates of intermarriage between Hispanics and whites have stalled or even reversed over the past decade or so, despite increasing in prior decades (Qian and Lichter 1997, 2011). The current "retreat from intermarriage" presumably reflects growing numbers of Hispanics—both native-born and foreign-born—who are available to marry each other rather than "marrying out" to whites or other minority populations. But rates of intermarriage also depend on shifts in the spatial distribution of the population of ethnoracial minorities. The availability of partners of different ethnoracial groups is a necessary (but insufficient) condition for intergroup social interaction, friendship and intimacy, and marriage. Indeed, Harris and Ono (2004) argued that studying interracial marriage nationally may misrepresent obvious geographical constraints on

interracial marriage, and may even exaggerate evidence of social distance between races. They demonstrated that social distance among racial groups, at least as measured by interracial marriages, declined when local racial composition was taken into account.

In this paper, we use data on recent marriages from the 2009-2011 *American Community Survey* to examine how local marriage market conditions shape patterns of intermarriage among America's fastest growing pan-ethnic population—Hispanics. Because Hispanics exhibit large differences in residential patterns across metropolitan areas, our study focuses on marriage market conditions in the 25 most populated metropolitan areas in the United States. Our study has two main objectives. First, our analysis explores variations in Hispanic intermarriage patterns nationally and across metropolitan areas of different kinds (e.g., gateways or new destinations). Second, we examine how local marriage market characteristics shape patterns of intermarriage among Hispanics. Here we focus on structural opportunities and constraints, including racial diversity, residential segregation, and racial economic equality, variously measured. Our goal is to explore how local marriage market conditions affect the incorporation of Hispanics into American society through assortative mating. We estimate Hierarchical Linear Models (HLM) for this purpose.

Background

Shares of racial minorities in large cities increased rapidly in the 1990s, thanks in large part to the influx of ethnoracial minority immigrants into the United States. Recent changes in the racial composition of most U.S. cities have played an important but under-appreciated role in intermarriage patterns among Hispanics. On the one hand, increases in ethnoracial diversity may promote greater intergroup contact and intermarriage among Hispanic ethnic groups. On the

other hand, increases in America's Hispanic population may reinforce distinctive cultural traditions and foster marital endogamy. Because newly arrived immigrants from Latin America replenish the demographic supply of potential partners, many natives of the same race and ethnicity may marry immigrants rather than the majority group or other native co-ethnics (Lichter, Carmalt, and Qian 2010). In this respect, declining marital assimilation may indicate a demographic pause in immigrant integration and incorporation.

Some studies use classical assimilation theory to explain long-term increases in ethnoracial assimilation and intermarriage in American society (Gordon 1964). Intermarriage or marital assimilation suggests that minority groups have adopted the cultural patterns of the host or majority population, such as its language and customs, and that they have become incorporated, both economically and politically, into mainstream society. For example, European immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century were an ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse population. After a generation or two, however, ethnic boundaries weakened; interethnic marriage became commonplace, as group differences in education and labor market opportunities narrowed; and language and residential barriers were reduced or eliminated among European immigrants of different national origins (Lieberson 1980; Pagnini and Morgan 1990). Yet, for more recent immigrant groups, who have arrived during a period of substantial immigration, this prospect of steadily increasing intermarriage with the majority group is less certain.

Marriages between Hispanics and other racial groups suggest that racial barriers to social interaction and intimacy are breaking down and that marital partners of different ethnoracial backgrounds accept each other as social equals. The rise in interracial marriage signals improved race relations and the incorporation of racial minorities into American society (Alba and Nee

2003; Besharow and Sullivan 1996). Local marriage markets represent arenas of social interaction among potential marriage partners. Racial heterogeneity or diversity in each locale places constraints on interracial marriage. Two conditions determine the degree of racial heterogeneity: the number of racial groups into which the population is divided and the distributions of persons among them (Blau 1977). The number of racial groups living in each large metropolitan area is similar, but the distributions are likely to be very different. Racial heterogeneity arguably weakens barriers to intermarriage (Blau 1977). Particularly, a racially diverse metropolitan area provides native-born Hispanics with more opportunities for social contacts and promotes greater interracial contact, friendship, and marriage, as compared to metropolitan areas with racially homogenous marriage markets.

We also hypothesize that the social distance between Hispanics and other groups is reflected in two additional key indicators: racial residential segregation and racial income inequality. Hispanic segregation from whites limits opportunities for intergroup contact, friendship, and romantic relationships. Conversely, residential integration with blacks suggests a greater likelihood of marriages between Hispanics and blacks, an issue we address in this study. Divergent patterns of segregation from whites and blacks may reinforce classic patterns of marital assimilation or, alternatively, lead to a new kind of segmented assimilation, if Hispanics increasingly out-marry to other racial and ethnic minorities, such as African Americans.

Similarly, more income equality between Hispanics and whites suggests greater economic incorporation of Hispanics with the white population. We hypothesize that metropolitan marriage markets with lower levels of Hispanic-white inequality will have higher rates of intermarriage between Hispanics and whites. Greater equality between groups suggests the likelihood of more crosscutting social circles between the Hispanic and white populations.

The opposite is true if Hispanic and blacks were located similarly in the local stratification system or at the bottom of the income hierarchy. In the latter case, Hispanics would be less likely to marry whites and more likely to marry blacks.

Meanwhile, Hispanics are racially diverse and include those from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and other Latin American countries. A larger presence of Hispanics increases awareness of panethnic pan-ethnic identities and promotes not only co-ethnic marriages but also marriages with Hispanics of other national origins. Residential proximity and educational or income equality have facilitated interethnic marriage among Asian groups (Okamoto 2007). These factors may play a similar role for Hispanics, especially in metropolitan areas in which Hispanics are segregated residentially and economically.

Data and Analysis

We use data from the 2009, 2010, and 2011 *American Community Surveys* (ACS). Replacing the long form of the decennial census, the ACS includes information about whether the marriage occurred in the past year. Consequently, we are able to identify all newly formed marriages, which allows us to link these marriages with current marriage market conditions. In order to study only marriages formed in metropolitan areas, we exclude individuals who married before they migrated to the metropolitan area in which they currently reside.

Because of our focus on Hispanics' intermarriage patterns, we only analyze recent marriages in which at least one spouse is Hispanic. Hispanics may self-identify as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or any others from Latin America. Nativity is used to examine differences in intermarriage between immigrant and U.S.-born Hispanics. We also control for other factors that define the demographic and socioeconomic makeup of Hispanics in new marriages,

including race (white, black or all others), age (a continuous variable), educational attainment (less than high school, high school or equivalent, some college, college or more), personal income (a continuous variable, adjusted for inflation to 2010 US dollars), and labor force participation (not in labor force, employed, or unemployed).

We have selected the 25 largest metropolitan areas for this analysis. They include New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, Philadelphia, Washington, Miami, Atlanta, Boston, San Francisco, Phoenix, Riverside, Detroit, Seattle, Minneapolis, San Diego, Tampa, St. Louis, Baltimore, Denver, Pittsburg, Charlotte, Portland, and San Antonio. These metropolitan areas are diverse in nativity, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Some are gateway cities for Hispanic immigrants while others are Hispanic immigrants' new destinations. For each metropolitan area, we examine how racial composition, exposure index of Hispanics to whites or blacks, Hispanics' immigrant share, and racial/ethnic income inequality influence intermarriage patterns of Hispanics.

We apply two-level multinomial logistic regression to estimate the relative impact of individual characteristics as well as metropolitan factors on the probability that a Hispanic person is involved in a specific marriage type. Marriage type was defined on the basis of marrying (from the Hispanic spouse's point of view) 1) a co-ethnic, 2) a co-pan-ethnic, 3) white, 4) black, or 5) any other spouse, with 1) as the reference group. The level-1 model includes educational attainment, national origin, race, income, labor force participation, among the others. The level-2 model includes metropolitan level characteristics such as racial/ethnic compositions, educational compositions, immigrant concentrations, Hispanic exposure to other racial groups, racial/ethnic inequalities in economic status, and race/ethnicity-specific sex ratios.

Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of marriages formed in the previous year, which involve at least one Hispanic spouse, using data spanning the years 2009-2011. Among U.S. born Hispanics, 39.3% of men married co-ethnic women while 36.1% of women married co-ethnic men. Significantly, more than 60 percent were involved in intermarriages. More than 10% married their foreign-born counterparts, about 11% married spouses of other Hispanics groups, and 30% married whites. Intermarriages with other racial/ethnic minorities (blacks or Asians) were much less frequent. Among foreign-born Hispanics, over half married their foreign-born co-ethnics. One notable finding is that foreign-born Hispanics had much greater percentages of marriages with those of other Hispanic groups (co-panethnic pan-ethnic marriages). It appears that pan-ethnic identity is stronger among immigrants than among natives – a pattern which may be attributable to their shared Spanish language and Catholic religion. It is also highly plausible that Hispanic immigrants, regardless of national origin, are likely to settle in areas where they have opportunities to meet each other. This is an empirical question that we will examine with our statistical models.

Table 2 includes descriptive statistics of the variables that we include in our multilevel models. Most Hispanics, 61.5% among men and 63.2% among women, were classified as white and only 2% of men and women self-identified as black. Although Hispanic wives tend to have more years of schooling than their male counterparts, women's median personal income was only about half that of men. Part of the reason is a much greater percentage of women not in the labor force (30.3% for women versus 8% for men).

Table 3 provides a glimpse of differences in racial/ethnic composition, Hispanics' exposure indices, income inequality, and Hispanics' immigrant concentration among select

metropolitan areas. These metropolitan areas are racially diverse. Except for Chicago, whites are no longer the majority group. The percent of the population who are Hispanic ranged from 20.7% in Chicago to 54.1% in San Antonio. The uneven spatial distribution of racial diversity is likely to lead to different Hispanic intermarriage patterns among these metropolitan areas.

Exposure measures the degree of potential contact between two groups (e.g., the average percent white in the metropolitan neighborhoods in which Hispanics live). Table 2 reports indices of Hispanics' exposure to whites and to blacks, respectively. These exposure indices are relatively low. In Chicago, neighborhood exposure of Hispanics to whites was 37.3, indicating that the average Hispanic person lived in a neighborhood that was 37.3% white. Because Hispanics make up the majority in San Antonio, the exposure index to whites was relatively low (26.2). Overall, Los Angeles shows the lowest Hispanic exposure to whites. In terms of median household income, Hispanics clearly are more similar to blacks than to whites. Finally, 16.2% of Hispanics in San Antonio were foreign born while 66.1% of Hispanics in Miami were immigrants. Strong variation among these metropolitan areas suggests diverse marriage market conditions for Hispanics.

We then present how Hispanics' intermarriage with pan-ethnic groups, whites, and blacks varies among the select metropolitan areas. Figure 1 shows percent of Hispanics marrying whites. Hispanic women had the highest percentage in New York while both Hispanic men and women had the lowest percent in Miami. Figure 2 shows percent of Hispanics marrying blacks. The percent was highest among women in Houston and very low in other areas (1-2%). Figure 3 suggest that the percent of marriages with people of other Hispanic groups was high in Miami and low in New York. These descriptive analyses suggest strong variation in intermarriage

across U.S. metropolitan areas. Our proposed multilevel statistical modeling will tease out the respective influences of metropolitan-level variation and individual-level differences.

Discussion and Conclusion

Patterns of intermarriage among Hispanics vary among metropolitan areas. Racial composition, residential exposure of Hispanics to whites and other minorities, racial/ethnic income inequality, and immigrant concentration among metropolitan areas define various marriage market conditions, which shape patterns of intermarriage. A goal of this study is to examine variation in intermarriage among Hispanics in metropolitan areas while taking into account differences in marriage market conditions. Our preliminary analyses clearly support the hypothesis that growing ethnoracial diversity, residential segregation, and racial inequality provide uneven marriage market opportunities and constraints for intermarriage between Hispanics and other population groups. Indeed, as America moves toward a majority-minority society, future national patterns of inter-group contact and marital assimilation will first be seen in America's racially diverse metropolitan areas.

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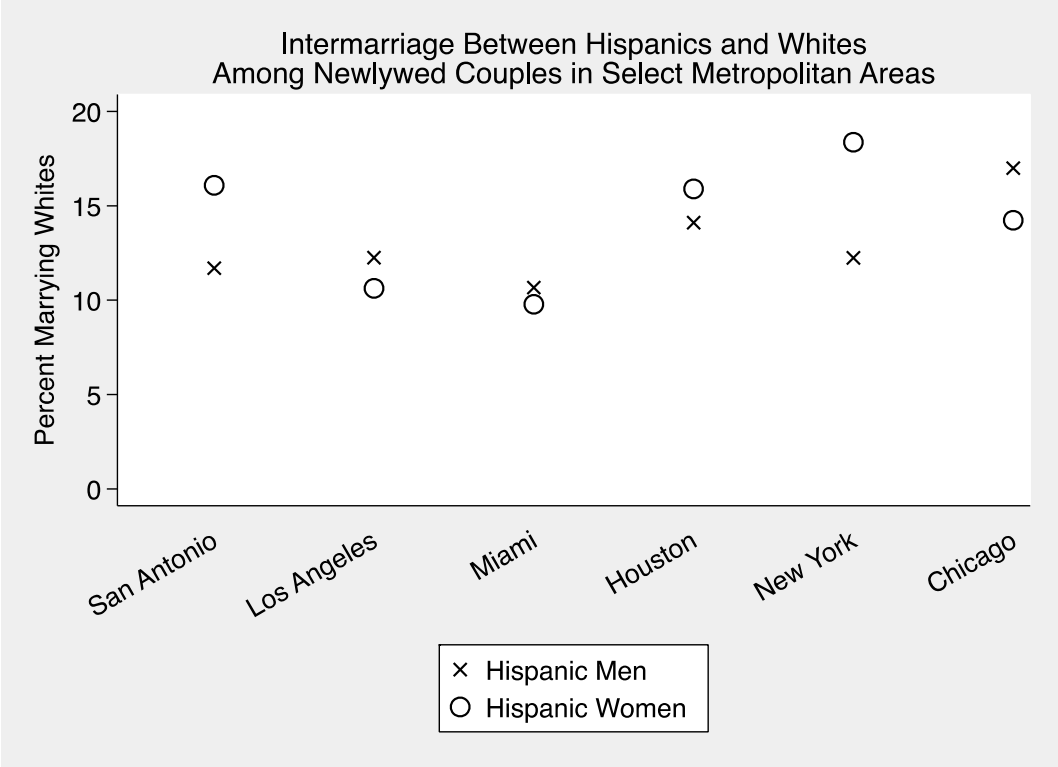


Figure 1.

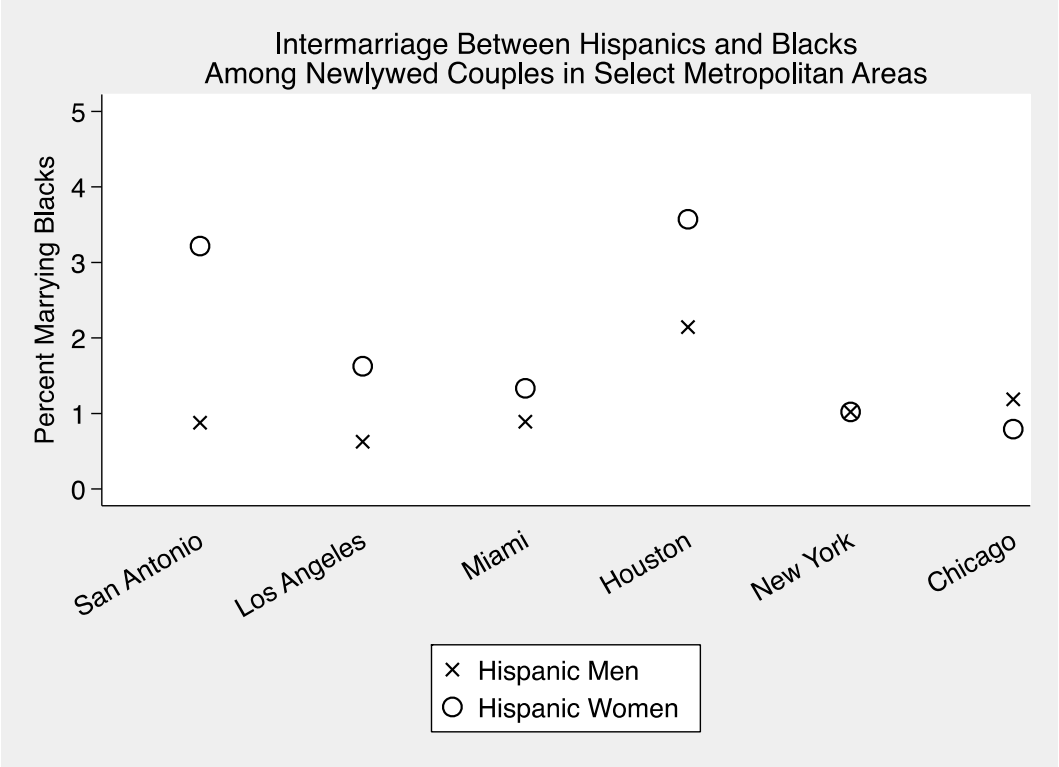


Figure 2.

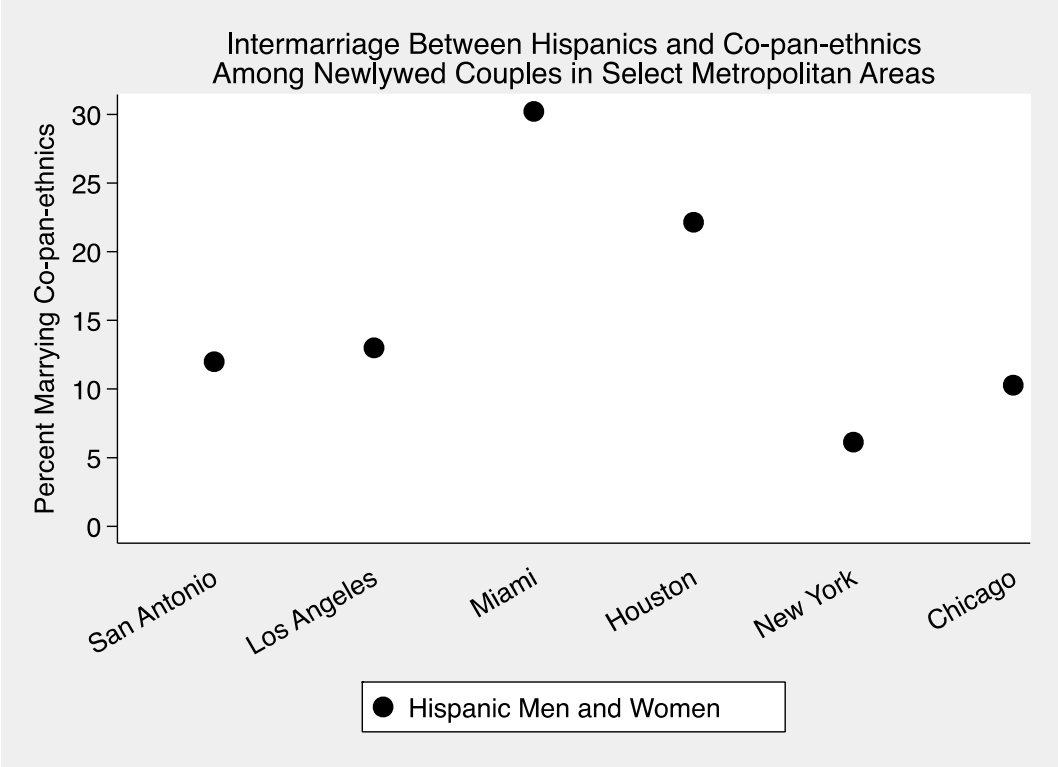


Figure 3.

Table 1. Hispanic men and women in newlywed couples, 2008-2011 ACS.

	Percent who marry									<i>N</i>
	Hispanic				White	Black	Asian	All others		
	Co-national		Co-pan-ethnic							
	US born	Foreign born	US born	Foreign born						
US born										
Men	39.3	11.1	7.2	4.1	30.4	2.3	2.9	2.9	3,089	
Women	36.1	14.0	6.6	5.0	30.2	4.9	1.0	2.1	3,356	
Foreign born										
Men	16.0	52.0	5.8	11.6	11.7	0.9	1.6	0.5	2,932	
Women	12.5	55.4	4.5	12.4	12.0	1.6	0.7	1.0	2,752	

Table 2. Characteristics of Hispanics in newlywed couples, 2008-2011 ACS.

	Hispanic husbands (<i>N</i> = 6,021)		Hispanic wives (<i>N</i> = 6,108)	
	% of newlywed couples	Median	% of newlywed couples	Median
Age		30		31
Race				
White	61.5		63.2	
Black	1.9		2.0	
Other	36.5		34.9	
Nativity				
US born	51.3		54.9	
Foreign born	48.7		45.1	
Educational attainment				
Less than HS diploma	26.6		21.8	
HS or equivalent	28.5		25.1	
Some college, less than 4 year degree	28.4		31.3	
4-year college degree	16.5		21.9	
Income (personal, in 2010 USD)		25,800		13,415
Labor force participation				
Not in labor force	8.0		30.3	
Employed	83.0		60.3	
Unemployed	9.0		9.4	
Residence in previous year				
Same metro area	64.3		62.6	
Nonmetro or other metro area	35.7		37.4	

Table 3. Characteristics of select metropolitan areas.

Metropolitan area	Racial composition ^a			Exposure index of Hispanics ^a		Median household income, in 2010 USD, by race/ethnicity of the head of household ^b			% of Hispanics who were born abroad ^b
	% Hispanic	% White	% Black	To Whites	To Blacks	White	Black	Hispanic	
	San Antonio	54.1	36.1	6.1	26.2	6.0	65,361.0	41,184.5	
Los Angeles	44.4	31.6	6.7	17.7	7.2	75,461.4	41,923.2	46,900.0	42.4
Miami	41.6	34.8	19.7	22.2	12.4	66,924.9	34,000.0	40,000.0	66.1
Houston	35.3	39.7	16.8	27.5	16.1	76,800.0	39,826.2	42,420.4	39.8
New York	22.9	48.9	16.1	28.0	18.5	83,388.1	45,303.4	42,800.0	41.3
Chicago	20.7	55.0	17.1	37.3	10.7	72,316.9	35,000.0	47,162.7	38.6

^a Source: 2010 US Census, American Communities Project.

^b Source: 2009-2011 ACS, authors' calculations.

