

Family Diversity Within and Across Ethno- Racial and Socioeconomic Groups: The Role of Assortative Mating

Kate H. Choi

CFDR Measurement Workshop on Families

September 24, 2021



Agenda

- Why I study assortative mating – particularly interracial unions
- Patterns of interracial unions
- Existing approaches and limitations
- Pose **questions** so that we can collectively come up with **potential solutions**

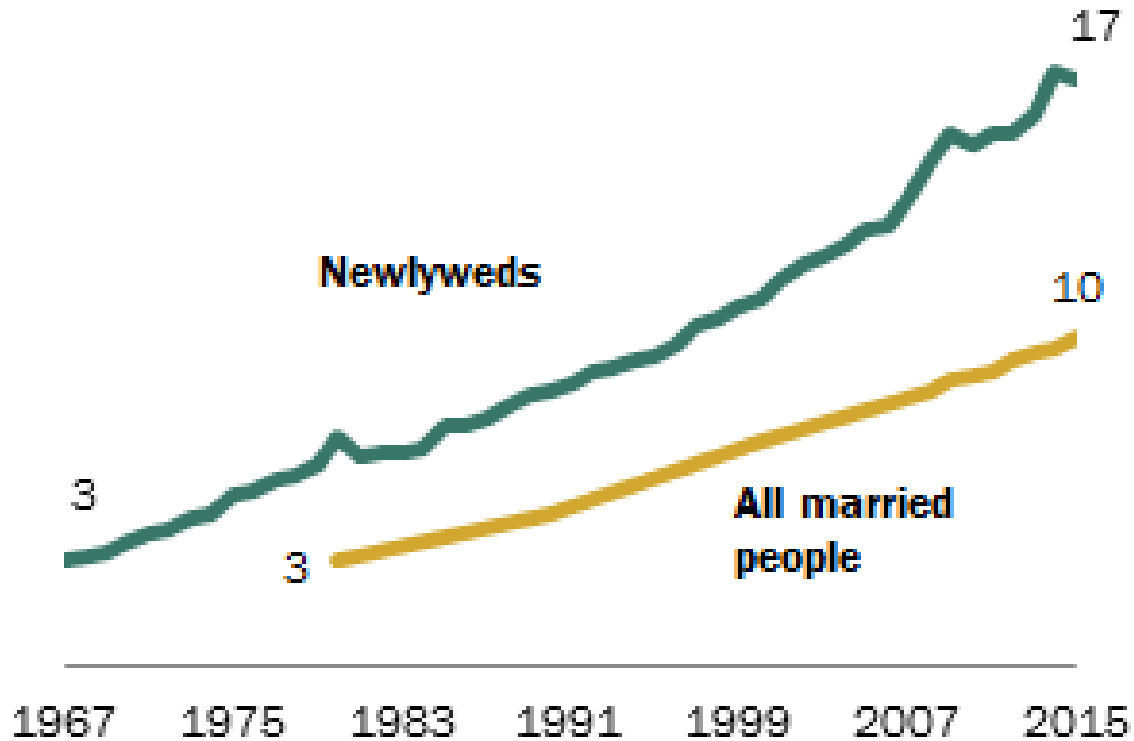
- They are **descended**, on the maternal side, from the same noble line; and, on the father's, from respectable, honourable, and ancient -- though untitled -- families.
- **They are destined for each other** by the voice of every member of their respective houses.
- If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to **quit the sphere** in which you have been brought up."
- "In marrying your nephew, I should not consider myself as quitting that **sphere**. He is a gentleman; I am a gentleman's daughter; so far **we are equal**."

- Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*

Why study assortative mating?

- **Barometer of social inequality**
 - Intermarriage patterns tells us about distance across ethno-racial groups
 - Intermarriage trends tells us whether distance across social groups is diminishing
- **Implications for future population composition**
 - Rise in intermarriage may portend a rise in multiracial populations
 - Inequality in resources available to the next generations

Intermarriage trends

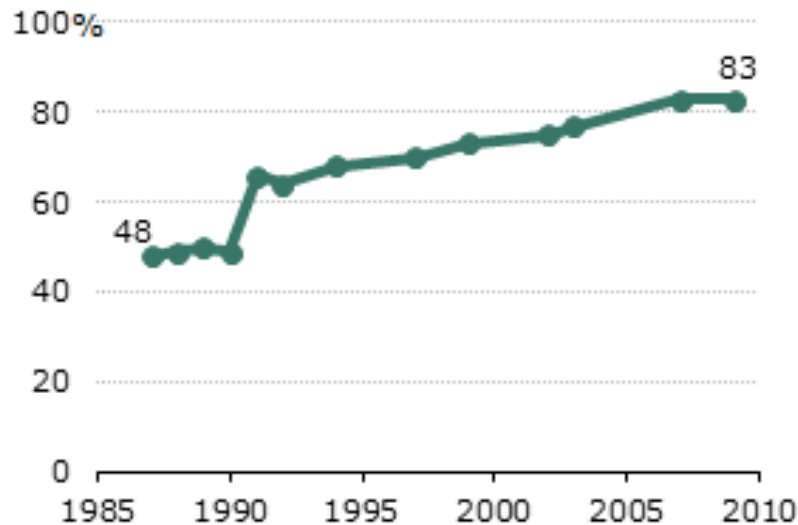


Source: Pew Research Center

Attitudes towards intermarriage

Acceptance of Blacks and Whites Dating Each Other, 1987-2009

% agreeing with the statement that it is all right for blacks and whites to date each other



Source: Pew Research Center surveys, 1987-2009

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Barriers and implications

- Racial differences continue to be one of the most formidable barriers to marriage (Campbell & Martin, 2019)
- Barriers are particularly pronounced for White-Blacks (Qian and Lichter, 2007; Choi & Tienda, 2017)
- **It has implications for**
 - Who selects into these unions
 - Type of family arrangements
 - Challenges that they face after union
 - Union dissolution and family instability
 - Wellbeing and outcomes

Current approaches

Most datasets do not collect “detailed” information on the ethno-racial backgrounds for multiracial individuals

To identify multiracial individuals,

- Link mothers and fathers in households
- Rely on marital/cohabitation histories which offers self-reports of respondent’s race and proxy reports of partners’ ethno-race
- Empirical focus: multiracial individuals/children who are living with two parents

Question: What would be a good sampling frame and method of data collection that allows to capture interracial couples and multiracial individuals in a wide array of families?

Current approaches (cont'd)

- **Sample size issues**

- Multiracial individuals are 3% of the population in 2010
- Multiracial populations need to be disaggregated further into subgroups (e.g., Black/Hispanic \neq White/Asian)
- Even if we pool multiple waves of data, we often do not have sufficient numbers of interracial couples or multiracial children

Question: We need to oversample, but how do we balance the issue of “representativeness” versus “sample size”?

Current approaches (cont'd)

- **Processes: Selection into & causal effects of being in an interracial union**

- Barriers mean differential selectivity into the unions
- Family organization, dynamics, and impact of family structure may differ across ethno-racial groups and b/w interracial and same-race couples
- Within-group analysis is not the solution because dual/triple membership of multiracial individuals
- Still need to maintain our ability to examine how interracial couples compare with their same-race counterparts

Question: How can we capture these *within* group family processes without losing our ability to capture differences in family processes *across* groups?