

Interracial Dating among Immigrant Adolescents/Young Adults

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Introduction and Background

Interracial romantic relationship, including dating and marriage, has been mostly examined between Blacks and Whites. Since the 1965 immigration law, the United States entered a new era of immigration, where the majority of the immigrants consisted of Asian and Hispanic. The rapid growing volume of these two groups will greatly change the structure of the U.S. population. President Bill Clinton in his major speech on America's race relations in the 21st century stated: "We will all be minorities". Along with the expanding size of Latino American and Asian American, as well as the civil rights movement and the liberalization of the society started in the 70s, the proportions of the involvement of interracial romantic relationship among these two groups have been increasing substantially. After the abolishment of the miscegenation laws, interracial marriage have increased significantly from 310,000 in 1970 to 651, 000 in 1980, and to 1,161,000 in 1992. (U.S. Census Bureau 1993). Interracial marriages among all marriages have increased significantly from .7% in 1970 to 1.3% in 1980 and to 2.2% in 1992 (Besharow and Sullivan 1996). *Newsweek* reported in 1997 that one in five Asian-Pacific Americans had a non-Asian spouse. Hispanics show a similar pattern on marriage. Although there were some works devoted towards these two groups' interracial marriage since the 60s, interracial dating is significantly under-studied. And the existing works tend to be outdated, failing to cover the most recent trends.

This research examines the characteristics of immigrant adolescents and young adults' dating patterns in terms of racial similarity. Especially who dates outside of their racial groups, paying particular attention to what is behind these characteristics. Attention is

especially directed toward language use, generation and attractiveness as the most important aspects influencing romantic relationships, with control of gender, age, religiosity, education and family background. Since the majority of immigrants in the U.S. are now Asian and Hispanic, the research will concentrate on these two groups. I also include the white and black sample as comparison group. This research is of interest to demographers and family sociologists generally since experiences in romantic relationships during adolescence and young adulthood provide the building block for future patterns of union formation later. Due to the better development of interracial marriage literature, I employed some of the theory developed in that area to guide my research. In the paper, I will test whether or not these patterns among interracial marriage show in the early stage of romantic relationships and examine the constancy of the characteristics of the relationships from dating to marriage.

Data and Sample

Data comes from the most recent wave (Wave III, conducted in Year 2000) of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). In this wave, the respondent's age range from 18 to 28. Asian and immigrants were over sampled. Add Health was designed to help explain the causes of adolescent health and health behavior with special emphasis on the effects of multiple contexts of adolescent life. Add Health is an ideal data set for studying the romantic relationships of youth, including immigrant groups, because of its abundant information on respondents' romantic relationship history.

The sample includes all current relationships in Add Health wave III, which is conducted in the year 2000. Although Add Health Wave III data has the complete record of the respondents' romantic relationship since 1995, I selected only the relationships that are

current relationships so that I can establish associations between the dependent variable and selected independent variables¹.

After I deleted the relationships that are not current, there are still quite a few of the respondents have more than one relationship, which means they have multiple partners at the same time. And their number of partner can be up to 8. In terms of race, Blacks are most likely to have more than one relationship at the same time, twice as likely as all the other races to have “an affair”, as shown in Figure 1. In general, men are more likely to be involved in more than one relationship than women, especially for Asians.

Methods and Model

Since my dependent variable, racial similarity, is dichotomous, I use logistics regression model. For binary response models, the response, Y , of an individual or an experimental unit can take on one of two possible values, denoted for convenience by 1 and 0 (for example, $Y=1$ if a pair has similarity racial background, otherwise $Y=0$). Suppose \mathbf{x} is a vector of explanatory variables and $p = \Pr(Y=1|\mathbf{x})$ is the response probability to be modeled. The linear logistic model has the form

$$\text{Logit}(p) \equiv \log\left(\frac{p}{1-p}\right) = \alpha + \beta'x$$

Where α is the intercept parameter and β is the vector of slope parameters. To do the analysis, I used LOGISTIC procedure in Stata 8. The LOGISTIC procedure fits linear logistic regression models for binary response data by the method of maximum likelihood.

Based on the major differences among races as showed above in descriptive analysis, I use the multi group analysis by race.

¹ Selecting only the current relationship is the big lost of sample size. But the analysis will not be valid if I use the respondents' information in year 2000 to predict whether he/she dated a partner that the same race as him/her or not five years before.

Another issue is some respondents reported more than 1 current romantic relationship at the interview time. To address the clustering bias, I employed multi-level model using robust standard error. I can use Huber/White/sandwich estimator of variance in place of the traditional calculation. Such a correction allows observations which are not independent within clusters to be estimated as though they are independent between clusters.