

Changes in Pan-Ethnicity and Racial Boundaries in the United States based on Interracial Marriage Patterns, 1980-2018

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Research Questions

The 1980 Census data and American Community Survey since 2013 both measure the duration of current marriages allowing us to reliably measure changes in assortative mating patterns across the two time periods. For this project, I utilize these two data points to address the following questions:

1. How has the likelihood of interracial marriage changed among newly-wed couples across the time periods?
2. How has the likelihood of intermarriage among Asian/Hispanic ethnic groups (e.g. Japanese and Korean, Mexican and Puerto Rican) changed across the time periods?
3. How is the likelihood of pan-ethnic intermarriage affected by language and birthplace endogamy?

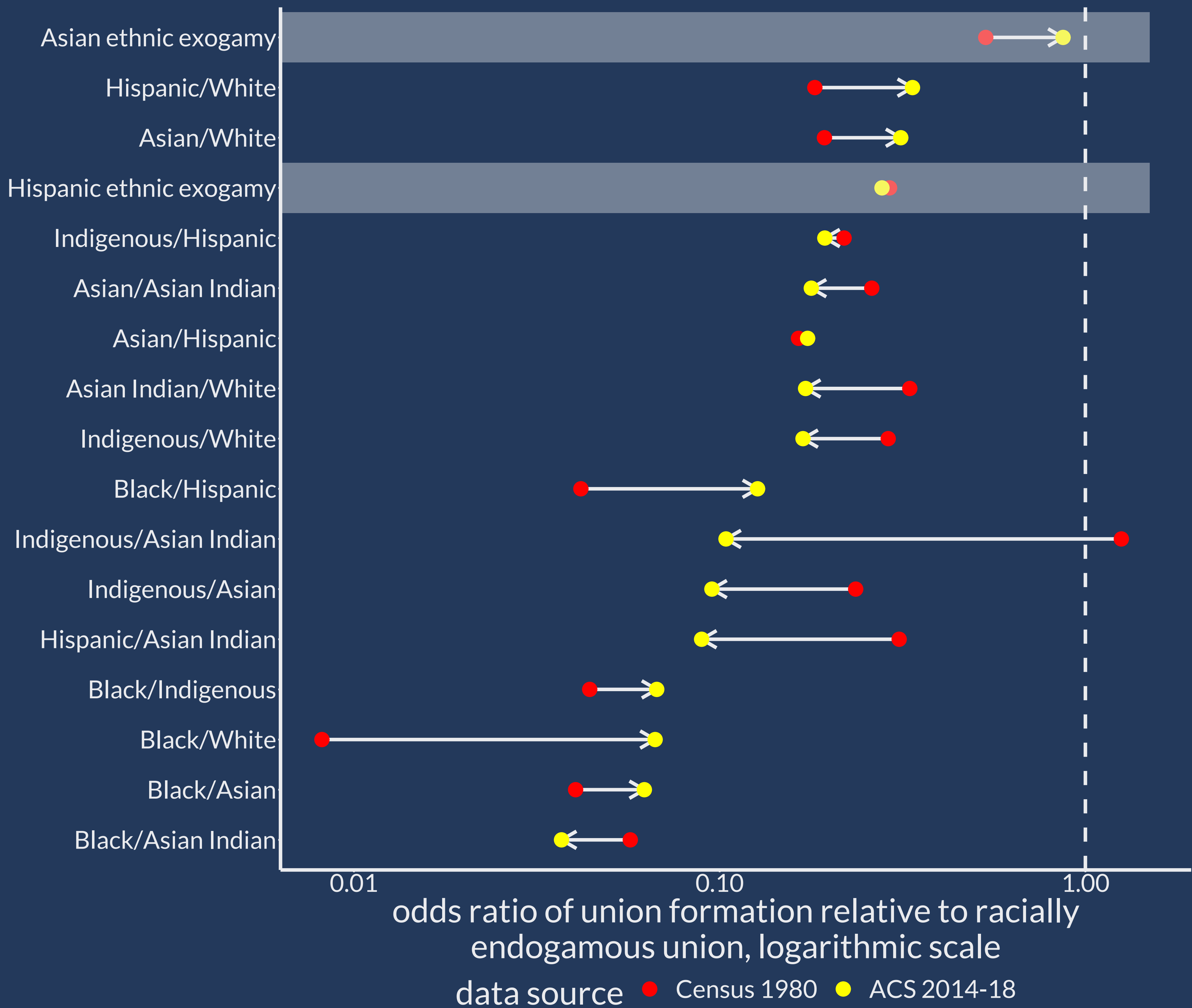
Methods

I use a counterfactual marriage model:

1. I select all marriages formed within the previous five years, excluding those unions formed before migration to the US or when one partner migrated across state lines.
2. For each real union, I sample 25 alternate partners for one randomly determined spouse from the same state of residence.
3. I use a conditional logit model to predict which union is the real union based on partner characteristics.
4. In addition to parameters for racial and pan-ethnic unions, I control for age differences, educational differences, language endogamy, and birthplace endogamy.

Data source	Number of actual unions
Census 1980	288,377
ACS 2014-18	486,271

Asian ethnic exogamy increased substantially over time while Hispanic ethnic exogamy was static.



Do Language and Birthplace Endogamy Matter?

Yes, language and birthplace endogamy reduce the tendency toward pan-ethnic intermarriage, but more so for Asians than Hispanics. Figure 1 shows how the pan-ethnic exogamy terms change as I add controls for birthplace and language endogamy.

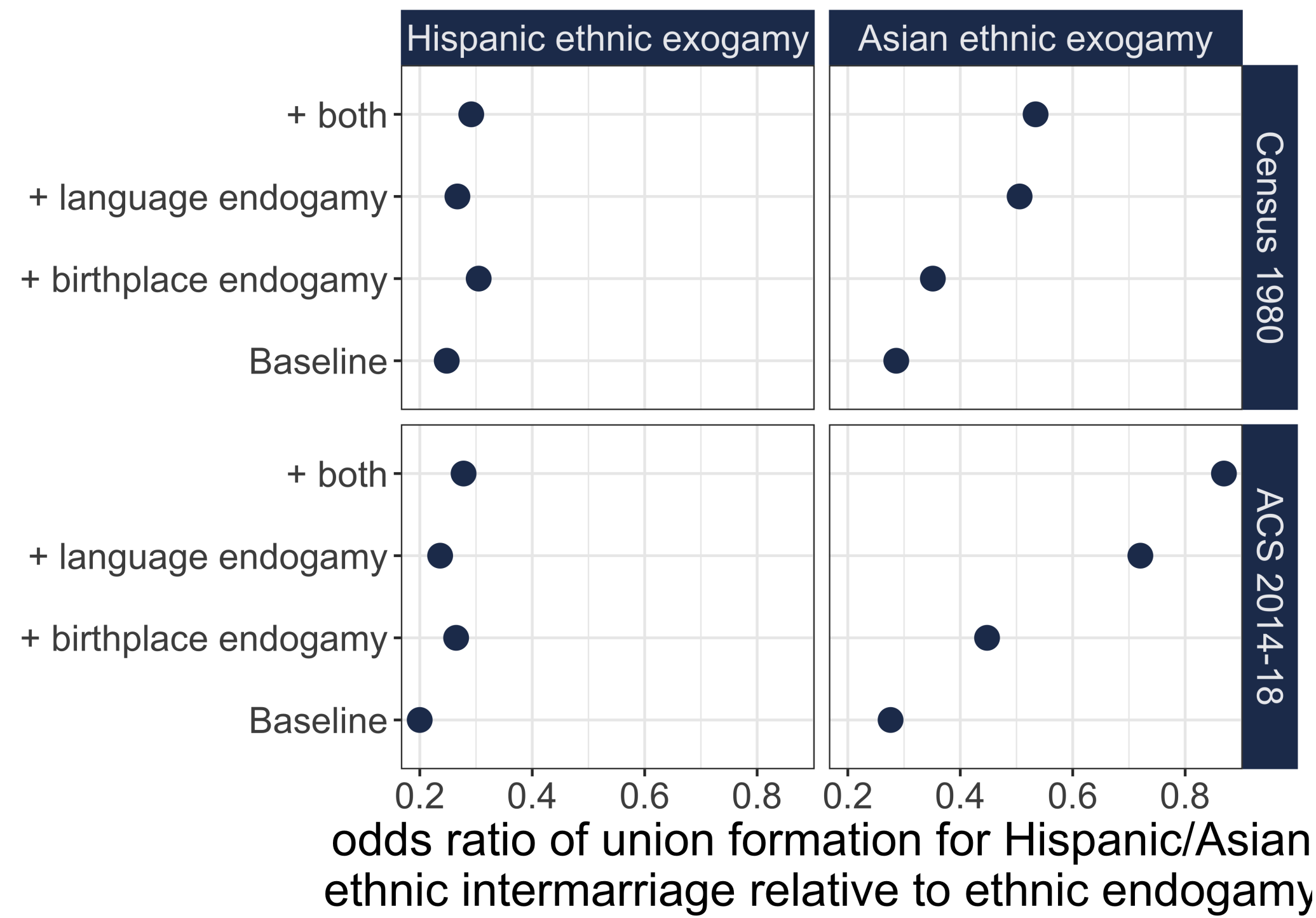


Figure 1: Strength of Hispanic/Asian ethnic exogamy based on different model specifications and time periods. Baseline model controls for age and educational differences between spouses.

Additional Findings

A Black/Non-Black Divide

Black/White interracial marriage increased substantially in likelihood but all intermarriages involving a black spouse remain the least likely form of union.

Increasing Boundaries for Indigenous and Asian Indian populations

These are the only groups for which intermarriage systematically declined over the time period, although this may be driven in part by issues of identification and measurement.