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Social Science Research 33 (2004) 606–625
Social Science RESEARCH
www.elsevier.com/locate/ssresearch

Religious intermarriage in the United States: trends, patterns, and predictors☆

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Available online 14 January 2004

Abstract

The reciprocal connection between religion and family life makes the topic of religious intermarriage of particular importance in the sociology of religion. Spousal influences are key for motivating religious switching and other religious commitments. Religious intermarriage has also been shown to influence a host of other outcomes, including spousal conflict, domestic violence, divorce, and fertility. Using data from the 1973–1994 GSS, I estimate log-multiplicative models examining patterns of association between spouses' religious affiliations across two broad cohorts. Two-step and FIML Heckman's selection models are used to determine how education, migration, cohort, and denominational origins influence the probability of intermarriage and the distance of intermarriage if it occurs. Religious intermarriage increases across cohorts, but declines in homogamy are limited to liberal religious groups. Catholics and members of conservative sects are less likely to intermarry compared to others. The relative ordering of distances between religious groups was unchanged across cohorts. Educational attainment increases the likelihood of intermarriage, and marriages in which the woman has more education are more likely to be heterogamous. However, educational factors have no impact on the distance of intermarriage if it occurs. Geographically stable rural Southerners are least likely to intermarry and if they do, choose a more similar spouse.

☆A version of this paper was presented at the 2002 annual meetings of the American Sociological Association, Chicago, Illinois. Comments from an anonymous reviewer were helpful. Data from the NORC General Social Surveys were made available through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research.

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0049-089X/$ - see front matter © 2003 Published by Elsevier Inc.
doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2003.11.001

1. Introduction

Intermarriage provides an intimate link between social groups and is one of the best indicators of social distance between status groups, ethnic and racial groups, and religious groups (Kalmijn, 1998). At the societal level, rates of intermarriage provide an indication of group boundaries, allowing researchers to track cultural assimilation and accommodation and the degree to which status groups protect their positions through inheritance. At the individual level, intermarriage provides insight into the preferences and choices of individuals as they make what is among the most important decisions of their lives (Waite and Gallagher, 2000). Research and theory suggests that along with personal preferences, in-group and out-group pressures and the structure of marriage markets also impact intermarriage (Kalmijn, 1998). The reciprocal connection between religion and family life makes the topic of religious intermarriage of particular importance in the sociology of religion. The connection between marriage, childrearing, and the family is a primary concern of scholars investigating the "demographic imperative" and its connection to religious change (Hout et al., 2002). Primary ties in the family are the most influential sources of religious beliefs and understandings, and they channel religious choices regarding affiliation and participation (Myers, 1996; Stolzenberg et al., 1995). Religious intermarriage in the family of origin and the family of procreation are both key for motivating religious switching (Lazerwitz, 1995b; Sherkat, 1991; Sandomirsky and Wilson, 1990; Wilson and Sandomirsky, 1991). Intermarriage also has important effects on family life, leading to lower fertility, higher rates of female employment, lower levels of marital satisfaction, higher rates of divorce, and greater spousal conflict (Bean et al., 1987; Ellison et al., 1999; Finnas, 1988; Glenn, 1982; Heaton and Pratt, 1990; Krishnan, 1993; Lehrer, 1995, 1996a,b, 2002; Lehrer and Chiswick, 1993; Maneker and Rankin, 1993).

If religious intermarriage is becoming more common, this may indicate a declining importance of religion in social life, or that religious groups are becoming more similar on other characteristics that drive homogamy—such as status, region, and ethnicity. Decreasing demographic differences may lead to increased intermarriage across religious groups (Kalmijn, 1991, 1998). An interesting question that can be answered in this paper is whether or not patterns of intermarriage across denominational groups have shifted across broad cohorts. If increasing diversity within religious bodies has made denominationalism less relevant, then we should see a substantial reordering of the pattern of associations across cohorts. I examine patterns of intermarriage across religious groups categorized on the basis of theological similarity, polity, and historic social status (Roof and McKinney, 1987; Stark and Glock, 1965). I go on to test how demographic factors predict both the rate of intermarriage, and the distance of intermarriage—defined in terms of the degree of dissimilarity of spouses' religions of origin, and identified by empirical association through intermarriage.

I analyze data from the 1973–1994 General Social Surveys, and use a 12-fold classification of denominations that makes distinctions among different types of liberal Protestants, moderate Protestants, and conservative Protestants. The finer

distinction across denominations sets this paper apart from other investigations, which have typically only examined intermarriage across very broad religious groups (i.e., Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish). I examine cohort differences in patterns of intermarriage using log-multiplicative models. Using the parameters from these models, I estimate two-step and FIML Heckman's selection models to investigate the predictors of intermarriage and the distance of intermarriage (Heckman, 1976; Maddala, 1980; Stolzenberg and Relles, 1997). This provides a novel approach to examining predictors of the distance of intermarriage or any other blocked diagonal mobility process. Using these models, I determine the impact of birth cohorts, educational attainment, educational factors, geographic mobility, and religion of origin on the probability of religious intermarriage and the distance of intermarriage if it occurs.

1.1. Secularization, denominational convergence, and rising intermarriage

Increases in religious intermarriage may indicate a decline in the salience of religion, or the inability of religious groups to influence the family decisionmaking of younger members. Intermarriage may also indicate declining social and cultural boundaries between formerly distinct groups. In the first case, increases in intermarriage can be seen as a function of secularization, since religious preferences are less determinative of family choices, and/or religiously generated social constraints have less of an impact on partner choice—what Kalmijn (1998) terms a decline in third party control over spousal choice. Research shows that intermarriage between Protestants and Catholics has increased in the United States over time and across cohorts (Alston et al., 1976; Bumpass, 1970; Glenn, 1982; Johnson, 1980; Kalmijn, 1991; McCutcheon, 1988), as have intermarriage rates among Jews (Lazerwitz, 1995b; Lazerwitz et al., 1998). Indeed, trends toward increasing intermarriage are consistent with findings from the Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, and Switzerland (Hendrickx et al., 1991, 1994; O'Leary, 1999, 2000; Schoen and Thomas, 1990). Based on these findings, Kalmijn (1991, 1998) argues that secularization has resulted in the increased importance of educational factors and the declining impact of religion on marital choice. Yet, O'Leary (2001) finds that educational factors are not strongly predictive of intermarriage in Ireland, and calls for more attention to the historical contexts that mediate the relationship between modernization and religious intermarriage.

More fine-tuned analyses of religious groups have shown marked denominational variations in the trends toward intermarriage. In the United States, Canada, and Australia, members of sectarian groups have been shown to shun religious intermarriage, while more ecumenical groups and Catholics have increased their rates of intermarriage (Bibby, 1999, 2000; Hayes, 1991; Johnson, 1980; Lehrer, 1998; Sander, 1993). While trends in intermarriage may be consistent with secularization theory (Kalmijn, 1998, p. 411; Jones, 1997), denominational variation in the trend suggests that secularization is self-limiting and specific to liberal religious groups (Stark and Finke, 2000; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985, 1987). Further, intermarriage to sectarian and Catholic spouses often results in the conversion of the spouse from the less exclusive religious group to the strict religious group, and childrearing within the more

exclusive religious tradition—what Stark and Finke (2000, p. 125) refer to as "Greeley's law."

Rates of intermarriage may increase because religious groups become more similar in terms of beliefs and understandings and less distinct in terms of other cultural factors such as language, ethnicity, and regional distinctiveness. In this case, there is no necessary connection between secularization and decreasing religious homogamy. Influential religious scholars have argued that beliefs now vary more within denominations than between religious bodies (Wuthnow, 1988, 1993, pp. 86–87, 156–157; Hunter, 1991, pp. 86–87), and the convergence of religious orientations across denominations is most apparent within the ecumenical "mainline" liberal religious groups. Wuthnow (1993, p. 156) specifically points to religious intermarriage as an indicator of declining denominationalism: "Over the past half-century, denominationalism has declined seriously as the primary mode of identification in American religion. Indications of this decline include increased interfaith and interdenominational switching, heightened tolerance across faiths and denominational boundaries, ecumenical cooperation, and a deemphasis in many denominations on distinctive teachings and specific membership requirements." The declining significance of denominational identities should influence trends and cohort shifts in religious affiliation. *First, denominational boundaries should be more permeable, and religious intermarriage should be increasing across cohorts in all religious groups. Second, there should be an identifiable dissolution of the patterning of religious intermarriage in younger cohorts.*

1.2. Cultural preferences, social ties, and marriage markets

Whatever the trends in intermarriage and their interpretations, the sociological study of intermarriage is concerned with the micro, mezzo, and macro-level determinants of marital choice (Blau, 1993; Jones, 1995; Kalmijn, 1998). At the micro-level, theorists point to the importance of cultural homophily in marriages, and explain patterns of marital choice based on underlying preferences for cultural characteristics of spouses. At a more mezzo-level, scholars examine the web of associations shared by individuals. These social ties to third parties will influence marital decisionmaking by rewarding or punishing particular choices (Blau, 1993; Kalmijn, 1998). At the macro-level, marital choices are determined more by opportunity structures than by individual preferences or social norms. If unmarried individuals with particular cultural traits are scarce, the likelihood of intermarriage will increase (Kalmijn, 1998; Lehrer, 1998). Of course, intermarriage is a function of social processes operating at each level, and the extent to which one social arena dominates is an empirical question particular to a given society, time period, cultural group, gender, or status group (Jones, 1995, 1997).

People find relationships with similar others to be more valuable and productive, and cultural homophily is one of the strongest individual determinants of marital choice (Chiswick and Lehrer, 1991; Iannaccone, 1990; Kalmijn, 1998; Lehrer, 1998). Marital relations envelop nearly every aspect of a person's social life, and family structures overlap with occupations, culture, religion, politics, and other social

arenas. People desire a spouse who projects a particular image to others, who will share their fertility expectations and childrearing goals, and who has similar taste in music, food, religion, and other cultural commodities. If spouses differ in their values and tastes, it prevents them from maximizing their enjoyment—and if they differ sharply this can thwart spouses from benefiting from certain pursuits. The cognitive schemata individuals use as their guide for what is considered a good family life will determine whether a high paying job with a heavy workload and travel is considered worthwhile. The transposition of schemata across arenas of social life allows religious values to inform the qualities desired in a spouse, as family schemata simultaneously influence the type of religion considered valuable (Sewell, 1992; Sherkat, 1997, 1998; Sherkat and Blocker, 1997; Sherkat and Wilson, 1995). People reared in religious traditions that claim exclusive access to the supernatural rewards and compensators that constitute religion (Stark and Bainbridge, 1987; Stark and Finke, 2000), will be more likely to link marital choices to religious qualities. Intermarriage would reduce a family's capacity to produce religious value, since capital would be divided across divergent religious traditions with limited capacity for joint production of religious value (Iannaccone, 1990; Lehrer, 1998). Given this, it can be expected that intermarriage will be less likely among sectarians and Catholics—and both groups will also generate lower rates of intermarriage through social constraints and marriage markets because of their dense social ties and large pool of unmarried adherents.

Friends, relatives, and coworkers will influence marital choices through approval and disapproval. Parental and family approval/disapproval can have a profound impact on marital relations. Even if an individual does not personally care about the religious faith of a potential spouse, the opinions and actions of parents, siblings, other kin, and friends can reduce or increase the likelihood of marriage. When parents, friends, and other social ties also share a common religious faith, these social influences can be quite strong (Blau, 1993; Wilson and Sandomirsky, 1991). Religious groups that promote regular social interaction will help consolidate social ties and reduce the likelihood of intermarriage. Sectarian groups, Catholics, and other quasi-ethnic groups (e.g., Jews and Lutherans) are typically associated with the consolidation of social ties (Harrison and Lazerwitz, 1982; Wilson and Sandomirsky, 1991). Further, liberal ecumenical groups that emphasize religious commonalties will be less likely to impose costs on members for intermarrying (Lehrer, 1998; Lehrer and Chiswick, 1993). Importantly, social ties that sanction marital choices are often disrupted by geographic migration—which may free individuals to choose partners and even religions (Sandomirsky and Wilson, 1990; Sherkat, 1991). Indeed, research shows that investments in religious communities make migration less likely (Myers, 2000).

In order to marry, you first must meet and come to know a marriageable partner. This simple axiom is the basis of macrostructural theories of marriage markets. The social characteristics of spouses will be largely determined by the sociocultural profiles of people with whom you regularly come into contact (Blau, 1993; Blau et al., 1984; Blau and Schwartz, 1984). When social circles overlap, this increases the odds that two people will meet, perhaps find one another attractive, and marry. From this perspective, shared employment, status characteristics, residential location, religious

affiliation, and the like are structural characteristics rather than individual preferences or qualities (Jones, 1995, 1997). For religious intermarriage, concentrations of age-specific coreligionists will largely determine the likelihood of homogamy. From this view, migration will foster intermarriage by providing the opportunity to meet people with different religious backgrounds, particularly since religious denominations are regionally concentrated, and religious diversity varies considerably from city to city and county to county (Finke and Stark, 1992).

Conventional theories of intermarriage based on preferences, third party social influences, and marriage markets lead us to expect continuity in the patterns of marital choice—with endogamy remaining strong and fairly constant social distances across groups. Micro and mezzo-level theories also lead us to expect that exclusive groups (particularly Catholics and members of sectarian denominations) with strong religious preferences and consolidated social networks will have lower rates of intermarriage and will be less likely to marry into disparate groups if intermarriage occurs. Mezzo-level theories suggest that geographic mobility will substantially increase the likelihood of intermarriage, since this disrupts social ties that constrain marital choices. Macro-level theories also point to the importance of geographic mobility and educational attainment for altering marital opportunities and increasing the likelihood and distance of intermarriage.

2. Data and measures

The 1973–1994 General Social Surveys (GSS) asked respondents for both their own religious affiliations at the age of 16 as well as their spouses' affiliations at age 16. Unfortunately, after 1994, the GSS stopped asking respondents about their spouses' religious affiliations. The GSS provided a comprehensive breakdown of religious groups, which allows for relatively fine-grained classification of religion of origin for both spouses. The GSS was not conducted in 1979, 1981, or 1992. I limit the analyses of intermarriage patterns and trends to white respondents ($N = 14{,}220$).

2.1. Religious classification

I classify respondents and spouses according to their religion at age 16 using 12 categories: (1) Liberal Protestant (Presbyterians, United Church of Christ (Congregationalist), Unitarian); (2) Episcopalian; (3) Moderate Protestant (Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Brethren, Reformed); (4) Lutheran; (5) Baptist;[1] (6) Conservative Protestant (Assembly of God, Nazarene, Churches of Christ, Pentecostal Holiness,

[1] Unfortunately, Southern Baptists cannot be separated from other Baptists before 1984. Hence, American, independent and Southern Baptists are in the Baptist category, though the majority are Southern Baptists or equally conservative independent Baptists. Since 1984, 55.2% of respondents who reported a Baptist affiliation claim to be Southern Baptists, while only 8% claimed membership in the more liberal American Baptist bodies. 14.3% reported an affiliation with other Baptist conventions, and 21.7% did not specify a particular group.

etc.); (7) Mormon; (8) Other Protestant; (9) Catholic; (10) Jewish; (11) Other Religion; and (12) None. In the multivariate analyses I combine Baptists, Conservative Protestants, and Mormons using a dummy indicator for sectarian groups. I also employ a binary indicator for whether or not a respondent was raised Catholic, with the remaining groups comprising the omitted category.

2.2. Birth cohorts

I examine overall rates of intermarriage and models explaining patterns of mobility across the 12 affiliation categories for two birth cohorts. The cohorts are broad—intermarriage patterns for people born before 1933 are compared with those from individuals born in 1933 and later. This yields two cohorts of relatively equal size, and some historical connection. People born in 1933 or after were not as affected by the Great Depression or World War II. Early childhood would have been strongly touched by WWII, but they would not have been adults or even teenagers during the War. Instead, their teen years and young adulthood would have been forged in the new era of the 1950s—with rock and roll, automobiles, struggles over segregation, and economic prosperity. In the multivariate analyses of intermarriage rates and distances, I am able to define three birth cohorts (1) 1962–1976; (2) 1942–1961, and pre-1942 (which is used as the comparison category). This provides more specificity, and separates the baby boom cohort from later cohorts.

2.3. Educational factors

Educational attainment is measured in terms of degree attainment using an ordinal measure ranging from (0) no high school degree (1) high school degree; (2) associate degree; (3) 4-year degree; (4) graduate degree. I also test whether gendered spousal differences in educational attainment influence the likelihood of intermarriage and the distance of intermarriage using dummy indicators for (1) higher attainment by the male; and (2) higher attainment by the female. The comparison category is equal educational attainment.

2.4. Geographic mobility, region, and residence

I use a set of regional and residential classifications to analyze migration. Key in this classification system is the understanding that in the United States, the religious market is quite distinctive in the South, and that opportunities for religious intermarriage are likely limited both in the more homogeneous South and in Rural communities. Because the GSS does not allow the analysis of the timing of geographic mobility, associations with intermarriage are more tenuous for those who move. I investigate 12 categories of residential status: (1) Urban, non-South, Different City and State; (2) Urban, South, Different City and State; (3) Rural, non-South, Different City and State; (4) Rural, South, Different City and State; (5) Urban, non-South, Different City, Same State; (6) Urban, South, Different City, Same State; (7) Rural, non-South, Different City, Same State; (8) Rural, South, Different City, Same State;

(9) Urban, non-South, Same City; (10) Urban, South, Same City; (11) Rural, non-South, Same City; (12) Rural, South, Same City.

Stable rural residents of the South are used as the comparison category in the multivariate models, since these respondents are lifelong residents of communities with high levels of third party control, and low religious diversity. Stable residents of rural areas are hypothesized to be the least likely to intermarry, and any intermarriage would likely be between members of similar religious groups. This is especially true in the South, where Conservative Sects, Baptists, and Methodists dominate the religious marketplace. In the non-South, high concentrations of Catholics in many rural areas may enhance the likelihood of both intermarriage and longer distances of intermarriage if it occurs. In urban areas, religious diversity would be the norm, and remaining in the city of origin may not influence religious intermarriage. This may be particularly true because migration may cause individuals to seek out similar people in voluntary associations—religious homophily may be even more attractive for those uprooted. Still, in the South, concentrations of conservative and moderate Christians make intermarriage less likely, and the distance of intermarriage is likely smaller if it occurs.

2.5. Cohort shifts in religious intermarriage

Table 1 presents the rates of homogamy for the 12 religious groupings. First, looking at the overall rates, it is apparent that there has not been substantial decline in homogamy. Overall, about 46% of married Americans are married to someone in the same faith group. In the older cohort 48% married in their own religious group, while the figure is 43% in the younger cohort. Looking at the denominational breakdowns clearly demonstrates the source of decline—"mainline" protestant groups

Table 1
Religious intermarriage across cohorts: GSS 1973–1994

Affiliation	Overall homogamy	Homogamy Pre-1933 cohort	Homogamy 1933-later cohort
Liberal protestant	22.6%	26.4%	18.2%**
Episcopalian	15.5%	20.0%	10.3%*
Moderate protestant	35.2%	40.0%	28.2%***
Lutheran	35.3%	42.0%	26.9%***
Baptist	52.1%	54.0%	50.2%
Sects	32.8%	32.2%	33.3%
Mormons	59.4%	53.5%	62.8%
Non-denomination	26.8%	23.6%	30.3%
Catholic	61.8%	65.5%	58.6%***
Jewish	75.3%	81.5%	65.0%***
Other religion	47.4%	43.2%	51.1%
None	19.0%	17.2%	20.2%
Total	45.5%	48.0%	42.9%***
N	14,220	7251	6969

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$ for differences between cohorts.

have significantly lower rates of homogamy in the younger cohort. Each of the four religious groupings that constitute the mainline posts at least a 10% decline in homogamy. In contrast, Baptists, Sectarians, and Mormons show no significant changes in their rates of intermarriage across cohorts.

Catholics and Jews also post-significant declines in homogamy. This may be due in part to ethnic assimilation for both groups. Most American Jews are reformed, and have higher rates of intermarriage in part because of their weak religious preferences and infrequent religious participation (Lazerwitz, 1995a). Vatican II reforms may have weakened the boundary between Catholicism and Protestant groups.

3. Modeling religious intermarriage

I consider a variety of models that generalize the row–column association model (RC) or log-multiplicative model to multiple groups or layers (Becker and Clogg, 1989; Goodman and Clogg, 1992; Goodman and Hout, 1998; Powers and Xie, 2000; Wong, 1995; Xie, 1992). The RC model has the advantage of handling row and column associations in a way that does not assume an order among rows or columns. The basic model takes the form

$$F_{ij} = \tau\tau_i^{\mathrm{R}}\tau_j^{\mathrm{C}}\exp(\phi\mu_i v_j). \tag{1}$$

Here, ϕ is the intrinsic association between rows and columns, μ_i are the scaling or score parameters for the row associations, and v_j are the column association parameters. The row and column parameters from the RC model and its generalizations indicate the ordering of spousal distributions corresponding to particular row origins (and vice versa). This gives an indication of the distance of a marriage between members of disparate denominations—expressed in terms of the local odds ratios, which are a function of the row and column scores and the intrinsic association

$$\log \Omega ij = \phi(\mu_i - \mu_{i+1})(v_j - v_{j+1}). \tag{2}$$

Notice here that as the intrinsic association increases, the distance of a marriage across a scale increases multiplicatively as a function of row and column parameters. Hence, the larger the value of the intrinsic association parameter ϕ, the less likely it is that people from disparate denominations wed, while the more likely it is that members of similar denominations unite. Adjusting the row and column score parameters by square root of ϕ provides an assessment of the distance between denominational categories

$$\phi^{.5}\mu_i - \phi^{.5}v_j. \tag{3}$$

The absolute value of this quantity will be used as an indicator of the distance of intermarriage in the Heckman's selection equations presented in Table 4. A more general variant of the RC model allows the integration of multiple groups or layers, by doing so, parameters for row, column or intrinsic associations may vary across layers, or may be constrained to be equal across layers

Table 2
Model fit for log-linear and log-multiplicative models of religious intermarriage across cohorts: 1973–1994 general social surveys

Model	DF	L^2	BIC
Quasi Independence	240	1067	−1017
1 RC-H, Homogeneous cohort parameters, constant ϕ	231	355	−1854
2 RC-H, Homogeneous cohort parameters, variable ϕ	230	345	−1855
3 RC-H, Heterogeneous cohort parameters, variable ϕ	220	336	−1768
RC, Homogeneous cohort parameters, variable ϕ	220	312	−1792
RC, Heterogeneous cohort parameters, variable ϕ	210	308	−1700

$$F_{ijk} = \tau\tau_i^{R}\tau_j^{C}\tau_k^{L}\tau_{ik}^{RL}\tau_{jk}^{CL}\exp(\phi_{k'}\mu_{ik'}v_{jk'}), \tag{4}$$

where k' indicates layer specific intrinsic association parameters (ϕ), row score parameters (μ), and column score parameters (v) that may or may not vary across layers (here I use the layer specification to test cohort differences in patterns of intermarriage) depending on the model specified. Hence, I am able to test whether the value of ϕ, μ, or v change across the k cohorts, and this will provide evidence of whether or not patterns of intermarriage shift, and if the distance between religious groups changes whether or not patterns of intermarriage change or stay the same.[2]

In Table 2, I present the fit statistics for the model of quasi-independence and a set of blocked diagonal log-multiplicative models. BIC and likelihood ratio statistics demonstrate the relative lack of fit of QI when compared with the log-multiplicative models. First, it is notable that the RCH models are most appropriate, given that the column distribution of spouses should not differ significantly from the row distribution of respondents for married respondents. Indeed, the BIC statistics for the RCH models are substantially more negative than those for the RC models, indicating their superior fit (Raftery, 1986).

Of key importance for this study is a comparison of the relative fit of models 1–3, the RCH models with various specification for the association parameters. First, it is clear that the overall structure of associations between denominations in marriage markets is unchanged across cohorts. The model (2) that estimates separate $\mu = v$ parameters provides the poorest fit to the data based on BIC criteria. Hence, there has not been a reordering of the relationship among denominations across cohorts. Comparing models 1 and 3 provides a test of whether or not barriers between denominations are breaking down. The results are far from conclusive. Model 3 estimates a separate ϕ parameter for each cohort, while model 1 assumes that ϕ is constant across cohorts—indicating no change in the relative distance of intermarriage. Model 3 improves the fit of the model by a likelihood ratio test of 10, with 1 degree of freedom. While this is statistically significant, BIC statistics for the

[2] Models were estimated using LEM (Vermunt, 1997). Downloads are currently available from Jeroen Vermunt at: http://cwis.kub.nl/~fsw_1/mto/mto_snw.htm#software. Full intermarriage tables and programs for the models estimated in this paper are available from the author on request.

two models are almost identical, differing by less than 1. *Hence, while there are cohort differences, they are not particularly important for explaining patterns of intermarriage*. Still, based on the likelihood ratio and BIC tests, I will interpret the parameters from Model 1.

Table 3 presents the association parameters from the RCH model with ϕ varying across cohorts. First, it is clear from these findings that the intrinsic association between spouses denominational affiliations declines across cohorts, from 3.9 to 3.1. Again, while this is statistically discernable, most of what is going on in intermarriage remains explicable by the common distances between spouses affiliations indicated by the $\mu = \nu$ parameters.

Turning to the distances indicated in the standardized parameters ($\phi^{.5}\mu_i$), it is clear that intermarriage is most common among groups generally considered similar. Baptists tend to intermarry with Conservative Protestants, while moderate Protestants (most of whom are Methodists) tend to marry Baptists if they intermarry. Negative values for the $\mu = \nu$ parameters indicate relatively dense intermarriage between Conservative Protestants, Baptists, and Moderates and Other Protestants. Mormons and religious nones are situated in the middle of the association scale. Moving further up the scale into the positive values of $\mu = \nu$ are Episcopalians, Jews, Liberal Protestants, Lutherans, Catholics, and members of other religious groups. The least likely intermarriage is between a Conservative Protestant and a member of an "other Religion" which are mostly non-Judeo Christian groups (Sherkat, 1999). Nearly one-fifth of the respondents in the "other Religion" category are members of Eastern Orthodox Christian groups, which helps explain higher densities of intermarriage with Catholics who have similar religious practices and understandings. Importantly, Catholics remain polarized from the most exclusive Protestant groups, and much of what explains patterns of intermarriage in the United States is the barrier between

Table 3
Parameter estimates ($\mu_i = \nu_j$) from the row–column homogeneous model with intrinsic association (ϕ) varying across cohorts: ordered by row–column parameters

	$\mu_i = \nu_j$	Pre-1933 Cohort	1933–1980 Cohort
		$\phi^{.5}\mu$	$\phi^{.5}\mu$
Conservative protestant	−.544	−1.076	−.952
Baptist	−.404	−.799	−.707
Moderate protestant	−.206	−.407	−.361
Other protestant	−.157	−.311	−.274
Mormons	−.104	−.277	−.245
None	−.016	−.032	−.028
Episcopalian	.078	.154	.137
Jewish	.109	.216	.191
Liberal protestant	.235	.465	.411
Lutheran	.260	.514	.455
Catholic	.339	.671	.593
Other religion	.446	.882	.780
ϕ		3.912	3.064

exclusivist Protestant groups (Baptists and other conservative sects) and Catholics. *In contrast, moderate and liberal groups are relatively close both to one another and to these more polarized groups.* Given "Greeley's law" this likely means that fairly robust rates of intermarriage between moderate and liberal Protestants and their more active Catholic and sectarian Protestant counterparts will result in losses of members through secondary conversion and through childrearing of the next generation for the less rigorous liberal and moderate Protestant groups (Nelsen, 1990; Sherkat, 1991; Stark and Finke, 2000). This helps explain strong declines in origin distributions among liberal and moderate Protestants (Hout et al., 2002; Sherkat, 2001).

Table 4 presents the results from the Heckman's selection models predicting the likelihood of intermarriage and the distance of intermarriage if it occurs. In these models, the selection equation is whether or not an individual married someone who was raised in a different religious category (of the 12 religious groupings presented above). Switching distances are calculated from the RCH model for the total sample (with no layer effects for cohorts) computed as the absolute value of the scaled difference of the row and column score parameters: $\phi^{.5}\mu_i - \phi^{.5}v_j$. Because these distances are a direct function of the denomination of origin, denominational factors cannot be used as predictor variables in the choice equation, instead their influence works through the impact of denominational ties on intermarriage in the selection equation. While these distance scores are functions of data rather than purely endogenous variables, they do provide an empirical standard of the degree to which a respondent has formed a common or uncommon marriage.

With the exception of denominational factors, the predictor variables in the selection and choice equations are the same, and operate, by and large, in a similar fashion. Further, intermarriage distances are only observed when intermarriage occurs and censoring is heavy—48% of cases are censored, reflecting the overall homogamy rate in the total sample. This substantive application is directly comparable to that examined by Heckman (1976) and the standard corrective should provide better estimates than OLS under these circumstances (Stolzenberg and Relles, 1990, 1997). Because colinearity across equations and among predictor variables may influence estimates from the FIML Heckman model (Manning et al., 1987), I also estimate a two step Heckman's selection model and provide estimates from an OLS regression model to examine the robustness of findings. Monte Carlo simulations have shown that while FIML estimation is preferred generally, two-step estimation provides better estimates when colinearity is present, and OLS estimates are more efficient and less biased when there are multiple violations of the assumptions of the models (Manning et al., 1987).

Focusing on the probit results from the first stage of the two-step Heckman's model in Table 4, I find that the two younger cohorts have significantly higher likelihood of intermarriage when compared to the oldest cohort. The younger cohorts have nearly identical rates of intermarriage, net of other factors. Importantly, this suggests that while there has been an increase in intermarriage across cohorts, it is not a monotonic increase. This does not fit the expectations of a linear secularization or decline of denominationalism theories.

Table 4
Probit regression of intermarriage and Heckman's selection models of intermarriage distances: general social surveys 1973–1994

	Probability of Intermarriage probit	Distance of intermarriage OLS	Distance of intermarriage two step Heckman	Distance of intermarriage FIML Heckman
1962–1976 Cohort	.171***	.084***	.125***	.131***
	(.053)	(.018)	(.025)	(.030)
1942–1961 Cohort	.182***	.057***	.075***	.093***
	(.023)	(.079)	(.011)	(.013)
Education	.024*	.001	−.015**	.007
	(.010)	(.004)	(.005)	(.006)
Male's Education Higher	.033	.006	−.005	.016
	(.034)	(.012)	(.016)	(.019)
Female's Education Higher	.094*	.025	.012	.047*
	(.040)	(.025)	(.019)	(.022)
Conservative Sect	−.310***	—	—	—
	(.028)			
Catholic	−.771***	—	—	—
	(.026)			
Urban, non-South,	.397***	.124***	.173***	.187***
Different City and State	(.050)	(.017)	(.026)	(.029)
Urban, South,	.465***	.159***	.194***	.257***
Different City and State	(.057)	(.019)	(.029)	(.032)
Rural, non-South,	.537***	.145***	.151***	.244***
Different City and State	(.066)	(.023)	(.033)	(.037)
Rural, South,	.373***	.132***	.177***	.217***
Different City and State	(.070)	(.024)	(.035)	(.040)
Urban, non-South,	.436***	.099***	.126***	.158***
Different City, Same State	(.051)	(.017)	(.026)	(.029)
Urban, South,	.265***	.113***	.173***	.189***
Different City, Same State	(.065)	(.023)	(.033)	(.038)
Rural, non-South,	.529***	.165***	.186***	.262***
Different City, Same State	(.060)	(.022)	(.030)	(.034)
Rural, South,	.195**	.026	.009	.071
Different City, Same State	(.070)	(.024)	(.036)	(.041)
Urban, non-South,	.370***	.076***	.109***	.114***
Same City	(.050)	(.017)	(.026)	(.028)
Urban, South, Same City	.365***	.119***	.154***	.203***
	(.058)	(.020)	(.030)	(.034)
Rural, non-South, Same City	.469***	.127***	.130***	.208***
	(.057)	(.019)	(.029)	(.032)
Rural, South, Same City	—	—		
λ			.305***	.657***
N	14,126	14,126	14,126	14,126
Censored			6,455	6,455

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$ Standard Errors in parentheses.

Educational attainment has significant positive impact on the likelihood of intermarriage net of other factors, and marriages in which the woman has more education are more likely to be heterogamous when compared with marriages where

partners have equal educational attainment. Notably, this finding together with research demonstrating a trend towards increasing educational homogamy (Mare, 1991) suggests that religious homogamy will also be bolstered by trends in educational assortative mating.

Catholics and Sectarians are less likely to intermarry compared to those from other religious origins and controlling for other factors. Given the meticulous set of regional and residential control variables, this finding suggests that lower rates of intermarriage among Catholics and Sectarians are not simply a function of macro-structural factors created by their regional concentrations, but may also be driven by homophilous preferences and higher levels of third party control.

Respondents who are lifelong residents of rural Southern towns are significantly less likely to intermarry when compared to other respondents. Interestingly, stable rural residents of the non-South are no more likely to be homogamous than are mobile urbanites from the South or non-South. The religious composition of rural towns outside of the South may be responsible for this finding. Among those who stay in rural areas outside of the South, a dearth of marriageable partners may make intermarriage more likely. In contrast, the relative monopolies of Baptists, Sects, and Methodists in the rural South may make homogamy the only option. Indeed, among those who move from their hometowns but reside in the same state where they grew up, rural Southerners are significantly less likely to be intermarried. Moving from one rural Southern town to another rural Southern town is unlikely to place one in a substantially different religious market context. In contrast, outside of the South, rural towns are often markedly different in their religious composition (Finke and Stark, 1992). Indeed, net of other factors, the religious intermarriage rates of rural non-Southerners who move within their home state are second only to the intermarriage rates of rural non-Southerners who migrated from their home state to another rural setting. Indeed, rural Southerners who move across Southern states are significantly less likely to intermarry when compared to rural non-Southerners who move across state lines (coefficient not shown).

Similar results are found for urban residents of the South in most cases. While stable urban residents have similar rates of intermarriage regardless of region, urban Southerners who move within their home state have significantly lower rates of intermarriage than do urban non-Southerners who move (again, coefficients are not shown, and are available on request from the author). Finally, urban Southerners who leave their home state are more likely to intermarry when compared with urban non-Southerners who move out of state. Unfortunately, with the exception of the comparison of intermarriage rates among those who did not move from their home city it is difficult to assess the pattern of causation in these associations, because I cannot identify either the timing of intermarriage or the timing of geographic mobility.

The results of the OLS and Heckman's models in Table 4 are consistent in predicting that members both younger cohorts intermarry across significantly greater distances than do member of the oldest cohort. Estimates across all of the models show switching distances to be greatest in the youngest cohort—suggesting a continuous increase in the union of formerly diverse religious traditions. However, the

difference in intermarriage distances between the two younger cohorts is only significant in the two–step estimation of the selection model—FIML and OLS do not generate significant differences between the younger cohorts.

Evidence for the impact of educational factors on the distance of intermarriage varies across model estimation strategies. In the two step model, education is estimated to have a significant negative effect on the distance of intermarriage—suggesting that highly educated people marry closer to home. This seems at odds with suggestions that educational attainment places people into diverse webs of associations that may enable marriage to a spouse of a different background (Blau et al., 1984; but see O'Leary and Finnas (2002) for a comparable finding). Yet, OLS and FIML estimation do not show a significant impact of education on intermarriage distance, and both estimate positive coefficients. FIML estimation shows a significant positive impact of female educational advantage on the distance of intermarriage. Two-step and OLS both estimate positive coefficients as well, but neither approaches conventional statistical significance.

Models are more consistent in estimating the impact of residential and regional migration on the distance of religious intermarriage. Here, the findings mirror those found for predicting the probability of intermarriage. The Heckman's and OLS models are uniform in showing that there stable rural Southerners have significantly shorter switching distances if they intermarry when compared to all other regions with the exception of rural Southerners who move within their home state. Further analyses (not displayed) also showed that rural southern intrastate migrants have significantly shorter intermarriage distances when compared to all other regional and residential groups (save stable rural Southerners). Differences between other classifications of region and residential migration are less robust across models.

In the FIML model estimates show that urban Southerners who remain in the same city take a more dissimilar spouse than do urban non-Southerners, though the difference is not significant in OLS or two step estimation (coefficient not shown). In FIML estimation, rural non-Southerners who move intrastate to a different city are shown to marry more different partners than do urban Southerners and non-Southerners who move intrastate. Again, this may be because of the polarized nature of non-Southern rural towns—containing concentrations of both Catholics and Conservative sectarians—thus increasing the likelihood of a distant intermarriage if one occurs.

4. Discussion

Religious homogamy remains strong in the US, although I find substantial decreases in homogamy among later cohorts, particularly for members of liberal and moderate Protestant groups. Intermarriage has also increased significantly among Catholics, however, even in the youngest cohort Catholic homogamy is nearly 60%. My findings contrast with the expectations of secularization and decline of denominationalism theories because of both the continued importance of religious homogamy as well as the denominational specificity of increases in intermarriage.

If declines in religious authority that lead to higher rates of intermarriage are only experienced by some religious groups and not others, a linear secularization theory is inadequate for explaining trends and patterns of intermarriage. Still, it is apparent that cohorts born after WWII are intermarrying at a higher rate, and that when they intermarry they select spouses with more disparate religious backgrounds.

A cultural and geographic gulf separates Catholics and Conservative Protestants, making them least likely to intermarry, and defining the patterning of religious intermarriage in the US. Moderate and liberal Protestants intermarry more freely both with one another and with Catholics and Conservative Sects. Both Catholics and Conservative Protestants demand commitment from members, are suspicious of intermarriage, and place expectations on members regarding childrearing in the event of intermarriage. Marriage across this divide requires that one or both spouses give up their religious heritage and either convert or acquiesce to the religious desires of their spouse. In the older cohort, intermarriage was more strongly confined to the components of the old mainline—intermarriage was higher among Moderate Protestants, Liberal Protestants, and Episcopalians. While the density of intermarriage among these groups remained high, my results from Table 4 demonstrate a significant loss in affinity across the two broad cohorts.

Without longitudinal data on preferences for qualities valued in spouses, social network ties, family religiosity, and religious marriage market composition, it is impossible to adequately test micro, mezzo, and macro-level theories of intermarriage. In line with micro-level preference theories, low rates of intermarriage among Catholics and Sectarians are certainly, in part, a function of preferences for spouses who share religious values. Yet, the same finding could also be explained by the tendency of members of these groups to have consolidated social ties that could exert pressure on mate selection. Indeed, the size of these two categories and their tendency to concentrate regionally and residentially (Finke and Stark, 1992) is consistent with macro-level opportunity theories.

Importantly, regional concentration and migration results suggest an intersection between micro, mezzo, and macro-level processes. Myers' (2000) important work on migration has demonstrated that religious ties influence whether or not residential mobility occurs. Thus, religious preferences or stocks of religious capital will help situate individuals in contexts that promote homogamy both through continued third party control and through the concentration of religious affiliations in geographic areas. Clearly, my results demonstrate the importance of residential mobility for promoting intermarriage, and for increasing the distance of intermarriage. Further, the negative impact of growing up in the relatively homogeneous rural South on intermarriage and the distance of intermarriage suggests how both mezzo-level controls and macro-level marriage markets may constrain partner choice.

Scholars interested in intermarriage have focused largely on status characteristics of spouses, and particularly on educational homogamy. I do find that educational attainment increases the likelihood of religious intermarriage, and that when a woman has more education than her partner religious intermarriage is more likely. However, educational factors do not influence the distance of religious intermarriage, and other predictors of rates of intermarriage are much more substantial.

Indeed, religious factors channel educational attainment both in terms of quality and quantity. The Catholic school system is nearly as well developed as the public school system, and serves as both an educational institution and a market of homogamous marriages. Conservative Protestant groups are now building similar segregated institutions, and implore members to avoid secular education with such vigor that it negatively impacts the post-secondary educational attainment of members (Darnell and Sherkat, 1997; Sherkat and Darnell, 1999). My findings suggest that future work should focus on the intersection between religious values and other cultural and status characteristics that influence family choices—in mate selection, fertility, residential mobility, and other types of social engagements.

Finally, it is exceedingly unfortunate that the small committee of scholars who control the content of the longest running publicly funded survey of social and political values saw fit to do away with questions about spouse's religion after 1994. Religious diversity within families has been shown to create a number of difficulties for marriages, leading to decreased marital satisfaction, increased spousal conflict, higher rates of divorce, and increases in domestic violence. Religious intermarriage has consequences for fertility and women's labor force participation. It is also likely that configurations of intermarriage influence political values and choices, just as marriage partners with different political affiliations influence one another. And, of course, religious intermarriage is a paramount factor in changes in religious affiliation (Lazerwitz, 1995a; Musick and Wilson, 1995; Sandomirsky and Wilson, 1990; Sherkat, 1991), and impacts levels of religious participation (Iannaccone, 1990). It is surprising such a decision was made in the midst of increasing attention to the sociology of religion and to the importance of religion in the fields of politics, health and well being, family, and voluntary associations and social capital (Sherkat and Ellison, 1999).

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