

Interreligious Marriage in the United States: Patterns and Recent Trends

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Combined data from six U. S. national surveys conducted from 1973 to 1978 were used to study patterns of interreligious marriage in the mid-1970s and to indicate changes since the Current Population Survey gathered data on interreligious marriage in 1957. Data on current religious preference showed an important degree of increase in religiously mixed couples from 1957 to 1973-1978. Data on the religions in which individuals had been raised indicated no extremely strong barriers to religious outmarriage except among Jews—the fairly high degree of homogamy in current religious preference apparently being achieved to a large extent by religious switching after marriage or in anticipation of marriage. Protestant-Protestant marriages were highly homogamous in current denominational preference but not in denominational background. Tests of regression models designed to estimate the effects on marital happiness of heterogamy involving combinations of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews indicated moderate negative effects for males but no effects for females. Overall, the findings suggested a strong continuing trend toward secularization of the institution of marriage.

Almost all recent textbooks on marriage, the family, and marriage and the family published in the United States have at least a brief treatment of interreligious marriage; and by reading these treatments, one can learn that marriages in the United States tend to be homogamous with respect to religious preference (Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish), that interreligious marriages have become more common in recent years, and that most of the relevant evidence indicates that inter-

religious marriages are at least slightly more likely than religiously homogamous marriages to end in divorce. Detailed data on patterns of interreligious marriage are generally lacking, however; and if they are presented, they are likely to be from the March 1957 Current Population Survey and thus are quite dated. This dearth of descriptive details grows not out of the authors' desire to spare students from dealing with confusing details; rather, it reflects the state of the evidence when these textbook treatments were written.¹

I need not dwell at length on the utility of providing additional evidence on interreligious marriage in the United States, since the large literature on the topic and the ubiquitous textbook treatments of it attest to the fact that scholars who specialize in the family generally consider the topic important, in large measure because of probable effects on marital outcomes.² I need only add that

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social scientific students of religion and of ethnic solidarity also consider the topic very important, for a variety of reasons. For instance, a strong trend away from religious homogamy might reflect a continued secularization of the institution of marriage and a continued diminution of the influence of the church and the extended family on marital choice and on marriage relationships. When and if religious preference becomes no longer an important criterion for spouse selection, the importance of institutionalized religion in the society as a whole will almost certainly have declined. It is true, furthermore, that the continued existence of the American Jewish community and the perpetuation of the Jewish cultural tradition largely depend on Jewish outmarriage being much lower than it would be if marital choice took place without regard to religion or ethnicity.

To provide some of the needed information on patterns and trends in interreligious marriage, I present pooled data from six U. S. national surveys conducted each spring from 1973 through 1978. First, I compare these mid-1970s data with those from the March 1957 Current Population Survey to discern broad trends. Then I examine selected aspects of the mid-1970s pattern of interreligious marriage, taking into account religion in which the respondents were raised as well as their current (as of the time of the surveys) religious preference. Finally, I examine the relationship between religious homogamy-heterogamy and reported marital happiness, since possible effects on marital quality is one of the primary reasons why students of the family have been interested in interreligious marriage.

METHODS

The data for the survey are from the 1973 through 1978 General Social Surveys, which each Spring interviewed face-to-face about 1,500 respondents selected to represent the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the 48 contiguous United States, age 18 and older. The 1973 and 1974 samples are "modified probability"; the 1977 and 1978 samples are multistage full probability; and the 1975 and 1976 samples are transitional, being half modified and half full probability.³

On each of these surveys, each respondent was asked the following questions:

What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion? (If Protestant) What specific denomination is that, if any? In what religion were you raised?

Each married respondent was asked corresponding questions about the spouse's religious preference and the religion in which he or she was raised.

The surveys attempted to measure the marital happiness of the married respondents with the following question:

Taking things all together, how would you describe your marriage: would you say that your marriage is very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?

For this study, the responses were recoded 2 for "very happy," 1 for "pretty happy," and 0 for "not too happy"; and the ordinal scale was treated as though it were interval.

There has been considerable confusion concerning the measurement of interreligious marriage, and rates of religious homogamy and heterogamy have been computed in at least two basically different ways. For instance, to compute the rate of heterogamy for Protestants, some authors (e. g., Glick, 1960) have taken the number of married couples in which one or both spouses are Protestant as the base (denominator) and the number of religiously mixed couples as the numerator. With the 1957 Current Population Survey data, this procedure produced a Protestant heterogamy rate of 8.6%. However, the percentage of married Protestants married to non-Protestants was only 4.5%.⁴ Most students of interreligious marriage consider the latter percentage to be the more appropriate rate of heterogamy, or outmarriage, and it is the kind of rate used throughout this study.

Significance tests computed with textbook formula designed for simple random samples do not yield accurate probabilities when applied to data from complex multistage samples such as those used for the General Social Surveys (Kish, 1965). Furthermore, there is no totally satisfactory and easily applied correction for this "design effect," since its magnitude depends on the correlation of the variables with the sample clusters and thus is different for different variables. As a crude correction, however, I multiplied all standard errors by 1.3 (see Glenn, 1975, 1977). The resulting probabilities are only

TABLE 1. HOMOGAMOUS AND HETEROGAMOUS MARRIAGES OF PROTESTANTS, CATHOLICS, AND JEWS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1957 AND 1973-1978

	1957	1973-1978	(N)
Percentage of married Protestants ^a			
Married to Protestants	95.5	92.6	
Married to Catholics and Jews	4.5	7.4	
	100.0	100.0	(3,846)
Percentage of married Catholics ^a			
Married to Catholics	87.9	82.0	
Married to Protestants and Jews	12.1	18.0	
	100.0	100.0	(1,451)
Percentage of married Jews ^a			
Married to Jews	96.3	88.2	
Married to Protestants and Catholics	3.7	11.8	
	100.0	100.0	(136)
Percentage of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews ^a			
Married to persons of the same religion	93.6	89.7	
Married to persons of a different religion	6.4	10.3	
	100.0	100.0	(5,433)

Source: The 1957 data are computed from data from the March 1957 Current Population Survey as reported in Glick (1960). The 1973-1978 data are from the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

^aPersons married to persons who were not Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish are excluded from the base for the percentages.

approximate and should be interpreted accordingly.

The published data on interreligious marriage from the 1957 Current Population Survey exclude any person who was not Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish—a procedure which apparently resulted in the loss of a very small percentage of the sample. Of course, I had to restrict the 1970s sample in the same way in order to make the later data comparable with those for 1957; and due to a substantial increase in persons with “no religion” from the 1950s to the 1970s, this restriction led to loss of 9.8% of the mid-1970s sample. It also may have led to at least a small understatement of the change in interreligious marriage from 1957 to 1970. Since I returned to the full sample to compile detailed data on patterns of interreligious marriage in the mid-1970s, the 1970s data in Table 1, which are used for comparison with the 1957 data, are not comparable with the data in the other tables.

FINDINGS

The Trend Since 1957

The 1957 and mid-1970s data in Table 1 show an increase in outmarriage of about three percentage points for Protestants; of

about six points for Catholics; of about six points for Jews; and of about four points for Protestants, Catholics, and Jews considered together. Of course, the data are subject to sampling error, but it is very likely that there was some increase in outmarriage in each of the three religious categories. Strictly speaking, significance tests are not applicable to the differences between the 1957 and 1970s proportions, since the married persons in 1957 were sampled as couples rather than as individuals. However, the 1957 sample is several times larger than the mid-1970s sample; thus, a conservative way to estimate the significance of the differences is to assume that the *N*s for 1957 are the same as those for the mid-1970s and to multiply the standard errors by 1.3 as for other significance tests used for this study. The resulting two-tailed probabilities are all below .001, except for Jews for whom the probability is .05.⁵ Since other data from larger samples have shown a recent increase in Jewish outmarriage (e. g., Massarick and Chenkin, 1973), such a change has almost certainly occurred. The overall increase in intermarriage among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews (considered together) shown in Table 1 is estimated to be significant at the .000001 level; so one can be highly confident that some overall increase in religious intermarriage occurred.

In fact, the increase may well have been greater than the data in Table 1 indicate, since those data exclude persons who were not Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish and/or were not married to Protestants, Catholics, or Jews. (As pointed out above, the excluded persons were apparently a very small proportion of the sample 1957 but were almost 10% of the 1970s pooled samples of married persons.) When persons with no religion and of "other" religions are added to the mid-1970s sample, the indicated percentage of respondents intermarried rises from the 10.3% shown in Table 1 to 16.5%. And even this percentage is somewhat too low, because a few of the marriages within the "other" category no doubt were between persons of different religions. It would seem, then, that in the recent past, about 15% to 20% of the existing marriages in the United States were between spouses with different religious preferences (not including preferences for different Protestant denominations) and that about 80% to 85% were religiously homogamous.

Since a very large percentage of all marriages are still religiously homogamous, it may seem that the recent decline in such marriages is not very important. It must be remembered, however, that the percentage of homogamous marriages is as high as it is partly because it is impossible for all Protestants, who constitute about two-thirds of the population, to marry out. Even if all marriages in the total national population were to occur randomly (without regard to religious preference, residential propinquity, and so forth), a substantial proportion of all marriages would still be religiously homogamous—50.4% according to an estimate based on the 1973-1978 GSS data.⁶ Thus, the proportion of religiously heterogamous mar-

riages in the recent past was apparently about a third of what it would have been if none of the influences of homogamy, aside from the distribution of the population among the religious categories, had been operative. In contrast, it appears that in 1957, religious outmarriage was no more than about 20% of its expected level with random mating. Viewed in this light, the 1957-1970s differences would seem to reflect some substantial changes in the influences for religious homogamy—perhaps primarily in the strength of norms for religious endogamy.

The Mid-1970s Pattern of Interreligious Marriage

The religious preferences of the respondents to the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys are cross-tabulated with the religious preferences of their spouses in Table 2, and the religions in which the respondents were raised are cross-tabulated with the religions in which their spouses were raised in Table 3. These data may be of interest to readers for various reasons. For instance, such tables have most of the same properties as intergenerational mobility tables and thus are amenable to many of the model fitting and analytic procedures that have been applied to mobility tables (see Johnson, 1980 for examples of complex model fitting to similar tables).

My interest in these tables, beyond making them available for other uses, is to use them to assess the extent to which they indicate homogamy over and above that which can be attributed to the proportions of people in the different religious categories. This task can be accomplished by comparing the amount of homogamy that existed, according to the data, with the amount that would have

TABLE 2. RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE OF SPOUSE (PERCENT) BY RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE OF RESPONDENT, POOLED DATA FROM SIX U.S. NATIONAL SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN 1973-1978

Respondent's Religious Preference	Respondent's Spouse's Religious Preference						(N)
	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	No Religion	Other	Total	
Protestant	89.5	6.9	0.2	3.2	0.2	100.0	(3,982)
Catholic	16.9	78.4	0.3	4.0	0.3	100.0	(1,517)
Jewish	5.7	5.7	85.7	2.1	0.7	100.0	(140)
No religion	41.1	18.7	1.9	36.4	1.9	100.0	(321)
Other	16.4	9.8	0.0	9.8	63.9	100.0	(61)
Total	65.9	25.6	2.3	5.2	1.0	100.0	(6,021)

Source: Computed from data from the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

TABLE 3. RELIGION IN WHICH SPOUSE WAS RAISED (PERCENT) BY RELIGION IN WHICH RESPONDENT WAS RAISED, POOLED DATA FROM SIX U.S. NATIONAL SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN 1973-1978

Religion in Which Respondent Was Raised	Religion in Which Respondent's Spouse Was Raised						(N)
	Protestant	Catholic	Jewish	No Religion	Other	Total	
Protestant	83.7	13.4	0.3	2.4	0.2	100.0	(4,050)
Catholic	34.9	62.0	0.5	2.1	0.5	100.0	(1,568)
Jewish	10.3	7.5	80.1	1.4	0.7	100.0	(146)
No religion	59.7	17.5	1.3	18.8	2.6	100.0	(154)
Other	31.3	25.0	0.0	1.6	42.2	100.0	(64)
Total	68.0	26.2	2.3	2.7	0.8	100.0	(5,982)

Source: Computed from data from the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

existed if the distribution of spouses among the religious categories had been the only determinant of the amount of homogamy. The "expected" distribution of the spouses of the respondents in each religious category is the same, namely, the distribution in the "total" row of Tables 2 and 3. Thus, in Table 2, for instance, the expected percentage of homogamous marriages is 65.9 for Protestants, 25.6 for Catholics, and 2.3 for Jews. A common method for relating the actual and expected percentages is to take the ratio of the former to the latter (or alternatively, to take the ratio of the actual to expected percentage of *heterogamous* marriages). However, these ratios are not appropriate for comparing religious categories that contain widely divergent proportions of the total population (e.g., Protestants and Jews); and thus a better measure for the purposes of this paper is the absolute difference between the actual and expected percentages. This value is the percentage of all marriages which are homogamous minus the homogamous marriages explained by the distribution of spouses among the religious categories. These differences for the current

religions and for the religions in which individuals were raised are reported in Table 4. Values also are given for two broad age levels, since those for the younger respondents more accurately reflect the recent pattern of marriages.

Whereas the percentages of homogamous marriages are quite similar for Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, the differences between actual and expected percentages indicate that the influences for homogamy—aside from the relative size of the religious categories—have been much stronger for Jews than for either Protestants or Catholics and distinctly stronger for Catholics than for Protestants. In the case of current religious preference, the difference for Jews is more than three times that for Protestants and more than half again as great as that for Catholics. In the case of religions in which individuals were raised, the difference for Jews is five times that for Protestants and twice that for Catholics. It is likely that stronger norms for endogamy largely account for the stronger propensity for endogamy among Jews; but, to an important extent, the heavy concentration of the Jewish

TABLE 4. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACTUAL AND EXPECTED PERCENTAGES OF RELIGIOUSLY HOMOGAMOUS MARRIAGES, BY RELIGION AND AGE, POOLED DATA FROM SIX U.S. NATIONAL SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN 1973-1978

Religion	Current Religious Preference			Religion in Which Raised		
	All Ages	Ages 18-39	Age 40 & Older	All Ages	Ages 18-39	Age 40 & Older
Protestant	23.6	24.2	22.8	15.7	14.9	16.3
Catholic	52.8	46.1	58.8	35.8	30.3	40.4
Jewish	83.4	77.5	87.5	77.8	73.3	80.4
No religion	31.2	31.1	30.1	16.1	17.8	14.7
Other	62.9	59.2	68.9	41.4	52.6	32.6
Total	33.1	32.3	33.5	20.0	21.1	23.9

Note: The "expected" percentage is the percentage that would occur if the religious characteristics of husbands and wives were uncorrelated.

Source: Computed from data from the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

population in the large cities of the Northeast and Midwest and some degree of residential segregation of Jews in each city also should account for Jewish endogamy.

In regard to the religion in which one had been raised, fully half as many of the marriages were heterogamous as would have been if marriage had occurred without respect to religious background; and Table 4 shows only a 20-point difference in the total sample between the actual and expected percentages of homogamous marriages. In view of the fact that much of the homogamy with respect to religious background no doubt resulted from the differential distribution of the religious categories by region and community size, the overall influence of religious endogamy norms in recent years would not seem to have been more than moderately strong.

It is often argued that studies of interreligious marriages should take into account marriages between persons of different Protestant denominations because such marriages often involve differences in religious beliefs greater than those in many Protestant-Catholic marriages. This argument is not totally convincing, since Catholics, in contrast to the persons who identify with most of the Protestant denominations, constitute a rather self-conscious social category which in the not-too-distant past was the object of considerable prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, Protestant-Catholic marriages have significance over and above any differences in religious beliefs between the

spouses. Certainly Protestants are highly differentiated in their religious beliefs and practices, but many of the important differences cut across denominational lines. For instance, one cannot use denominational preference data to divide Protestants precisely into fundamentalists and nonfundamentalists, especially if one is working with survey data, such as those from the General Social Surveys, which fail to distinguish between Southern Baptists (generally fundamentalists) and American Baptists (nonfundamentalist) or between Missouri Synod Lutherans (fundamentalist) and other Lutherans (generally nonfundamentalist).

Nevertheless, data on interdenominational Protestant marriages are of value for some purposes, and no description of patterns of interreligious marriage would be complete without them.⁷ Therefore, I compiled data from the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys on current denominational preferences and the denominations in which the Protestant respondents and spouses had been raised.

The data on current religious preference (not shown in tabular form) show that more than three-fourths of the Protestant-Protestant marriages were homogamous with respect to denomination. The percentages for the different denominations vary over a 15-point range, from 70.6 for respondents who identified with the Church of Christ to 87.5 for Pentecostal respondents; but the overall picture is one of high denominational homogamy.⁸ However, the degree of homog-

TABLE 5. ACTUAL AND EXPECTED PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS RAISED IN EACH OF 12 SELECTED DENOMINATIONS WHO HAD SPOUSES RAISED IN THE SAME DENOMINATION, POOLED DATA FROM SIX U.S. NATIONAL SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN 1973-1978

Denomination ^a	Actual Percentage ^b	(N)	Expected Percentage ^c	Difference
Baptist	66.2	(1,183)	36.0	30.2
Methodist	43.2	(680)	22.0	21.2
Lutheran	49.1	(383)	11.1	38.0
Presbyterian	28.0	(214)	6.5	21.5
Episcopalian	27.0	(89)	3.2	23.8
Assembly of God	13.8	(29)	0.4	13.4
Christian	28.6	(56)	1.6	27.0
Churches of God	30.0	(30)	1.4	28.6
Congregationalist	24.4	(45)	1.0	23.4
Pentecostal	33.3	(30)	1.4	31.9
United Church of Christ	42.9	(28)	0.8	42.1

Source: Computed from data from the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

^aThe denominations selected are those in which at least 25 of the General Social Survey respondents married to persons raised as Protestants were raised.

^bRespondents not married to persons raised as Protestants are excluded from the base for the percentages.

^cThe "expected" percentage is the percentage that would occur if the denominational backgrounds of husbands and wives were uncorrelated.

my in religion in which one had been raised was much lower (see Table 5), the percentage of homogamous marriages for several of the denominations being only about a third of the percentage homogamous in current denominational preference. It is apparent that a great deal of religious switching took place after childhood; and it is almost certain that much if not most of that switching, which resulted in homogamy in current denominational preference, occurred for the express purpose of achieving that homogamy.

The data on homogamy in denominational background suggest considerable variation among the denominations in regard to their tendency to promote marriages between persons raised in them (Table 5). To assess the strength of influences for homogamy (aside from the relative size of the denominations), I turn again to the difference between the actual and "expected" percentages of homogamous marriages, the expected percentage in this case being that which would occur if marriages within the Protestant category occurred randomly without regard to denomination. A large difference between the actual and expected percentages of homogamous marriages indicates relatively strong influences for homogamy (assuming that the actual percentage is larger than the expected one), and a small difference indicates relatively weak influences.

According to this measure (shown in column 3 of Table 5), there were relatively strong influences of denominational homogamy among persons raised as Lutherans, Baptists, Pentecostals, and in the United Church of Christ. The apparent influences for homogamy were considerably weaker for persons raised in the Assembly of God Church, in the Church of Christ, and as Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Congregationalists. Not much confidence can be placed in the data for the denominations with the smaller *N*s; but the differences among the denominations with the larger *N*s, such as the Baptists, Methodists, and Lutherans, make it apparent that there was a great deal of interdenominational variation in influences for homogamy.

Some of the variation can be attributed to differential geographic distribution of people in the different denominations, to some correlation of denominational preference with race and ethnicity, and to strong norms of

endogamy in some of the denominations. Some of the variation also may have resulted from differences in the centering of social activities around the church and in the effectiveness of the denominations in keeping the younger generation "within the fold."

Interreligious Marriage and Marital Happiness

It is widely believed that interreligious marriages between the major religious categories are not as successful on the average as religiously homogamous marriages, and considerable evidence supports that belief.⁹ For instance, several studies have shown higher divorce rates for religiously heterogamous marriages; and at least one multivariate study conducted with sophisticated techniques has indicated a moderate negative effect of religious heterogamy on marital stability (Bumpass and Sweet, 1972). At least one study, moreover, has shown a higher aggregate level of marital happiness reported by persons in religiously homogamous marriages than by those in heterogamous marriages (Alston, McIntosh, and Wright, 1976).

Here I report somewhat more refined data on the marital happiness of persons in religious intermarriages than those previously reported. However, these data must be viewed in light of the fact that cross-sectional data on marital happiness are not an accurate measure of the success of marriages—even if the reports of marital happiness are generally accurate.¹⁰ Marriages that have already ended in divorce do not contribute to unhappiness in the currently married population; and given the present high propensity for unhappily married persons to divorce, some rather strong predictors of success in marriage may bear little or no relationship to the reported happiness of persons in intact marriages (Glenn and Weaver, 1978). Nevertheless, a negative association of a variable with reported marital happiness, after the removal of the most likely sources of spuriousness, indicates probable negative effects on marital success.

The data in Table 6 show that the zero-order relationship between religious heterogamy and reported marital happiness was weak for white males and nil for white females when only the interreligious marriages between persons of the three major religious

TABLE 6. PERCENTAGES OF MARRIED WHITE RESPONDENTS IN SELECTED SUBSAMPLES WHO SAID THEIR MARRIAGES WERE "VERY HAPPY," POOLED DATA FROM SIX U.S. NATIONAL SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN 1973-1978

Subsample	Males	(N)	Females	(N)
Protestants married to Protestants	72.2	(1,513)	68.3	(1,627)
Catholics married to Catholics	73.0	(548)	65.7	(603)
Jews married to Jews	77.8	(45)	74.0	(73)
Persons with no religion married to persons with no religion	62.0	(50)	59.4	(64)
All Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in homogamous marriages	72.6	(2,106)	67.8	(2,303)
All Protestants, Catholics, and Jews intermarried within the three major religious categories	64.3	(241)	68.4	(291)
Protestants, Catholics, and Jews married to persons with no religion	58.6	(29)	54.9	(142)
Persons with no religion married to Protestants, Catholics, and Jews	61.4	(132)	60.5	(43)

Source: Computed from data from the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

categories are considered.¹¹ However, the difference in the percentage of "very happy" marriages between males in homogamous and heterogamous marriages is statistically significant, according to the method used for this study to estimate statistical significance ($p < .05$ on a two-tailed test).

Persons in marriages in which one or both spouses had no religion had, on the whole, a lower level of reported marital happiness than persons in either homogamous or heterogamous marriages in which both spouses identified with one of the major religious categories. When all persons in marriages involving at least one spouse with no religion are lumped together, the percentage who reported "very happy" marriages was significantly lower than that for persons in homogamous Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish marriages ($p < .01$ for males and $p < .01$ for females on two-tailed tests). However, the difference between the persons in "no religion" marriages and those in heterogamous Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish marriages is significant only for the females ($p < .05$ on a two-tailed test). There are reasons to suspect that these differences reflect real differences in the quality of marriages, since religiosity in the Judeo-Christian tradition is associated with values conducive to strong commitment to marriage; but one cannot be certain that the differences do not reflect a greater tendency for the more religious respondents to "overreport" their marital happiness (see Edmonds, Withers, and DiBatista, 1972).

Although the data for males suggest a negative effect of religious heterogamy on marital happiness, one cannot very con-

fidently infer such an effect without doing a multivariate analysis to deal with some of the more likely sources of spuriousness. Conversely, one cannot very confidently infer that there was no important effect for females without controlling some of the variables likely to have had a suppressor effect. These include socioeconomic variables, date of birth, age at marriage, marital history, and frequency of attendance of religious services.¹²

In estimating the probable effect of religious heterogamy on marital happiness, one cannot test a regression model in which heterogamy is entered as a dummy variable along with the control variables without first determining that religious preference in itself apparently had no effect and thus does not need to be controlled. Obviously, one cannot allow heterogamy to vary while holding constant the variables which define it, namely, the religious preferences of the two spouses.¹³

Since the interest here is in the effects of heterogamy involving combinations of spouses from the three major religious categories, the need is to determine whether or not being Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish made any difference for people in homogamous marriages. The zero-order data in Table 6 suggest that religious preference made little difference for males in homogamous marriages (the range in "very happy" responses among the three religious categories being 5.6 percentage points) but that it may have made a greater difference for females (range = 8.3 points). To estimate the effects more precisely, I converted religious preference of persons in homogamous mar-

riages and in the three major religions into a set of dummy variables and tested a regression model in which religious preference was entered as a predictor variable (with Catholics being the reference category) along with control variables, including three socioeconomic variables, date of birth, age at marriage, marital history, and frequency of attendance of religious services.¹⁴

TABLE 7. REGRESSION ESTIMATES (PARTIAL STANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS)^a OF THE EFFECTS ON MARITAL HAPPINESS OF BEING PROTESTANT, CATHOLIC, AND JEWISH, WHITES IN RELIGIOUSLY HOMOGAMOUS MARRIAGES, BY SEX, POOLED DATA FROM SIX U.S. NATIONAL SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN 1973-1978

Religious Preference (Dummy Variables)	Males (N = 672)	Females (N = 697)
Protestant	.027	-.019
Catholic	b	b
Jewish	.023	-.025

Source: Computed from data from the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

^aControl variables are occupational prestige (males), husband's occupational prestige (females), family income, years of school completed, age, age at first marriage, whether or not ever divorced, and frequency of attendance at religious services.

^bReference category. Excluded from the regression.

The coefficients in Table 7, showing the partial regression of marital happiness on the Protestant and Jewish dummy variables, are very small for both males and females; and none comes close to being significant, the

two-tailed probabilities all being in excess of .6. It seems that among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in homogamous marriages, religious preference made little or no difference. Therefore, it is legitimate to estimate a heterogamy effect by testing a regression model in which a dummy variable for heterogamy is entered along with the appropriate control variables, excluding the religious preferences of the spouses.

The regression estimates of the effect of religious heterogamy for males and females respectively are shown in Table 8. The estimated heterogamy effect for females is positive and nonsignificant, but the one for males is negative and significant at the .10 level on a two-tailed test. Since a negative effect is predicted by both theory and previous findings, a one-tailed test of significance is appropriate; and thus the estimated effect is significant at the conventional .05 level. Although the difference between the male and female unstandardized coefficients for heterogamy is not statistically significant ($p = .2$ on a two-tailed test), it is rather likely that there was a male-female difference in the effect of heterogamy.¹⁵

If so, the difference is unexpected; and the relevant literature provides no ready explanation for it. One might guess that a religious difference between spouses is more likely to result in the husband's evaluating the marriage negatively because it is more likely to result in a religious difference between husbands and children than between

TABLE 8. REGRESSION ESTIMATES (PARTIAL STANDARDIZED REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS) OF THE DIRECT EFFECTS ON MARITAL HAPPINESS OF RELIGIOUS INTERMARRIAGE^a AND OF SEVEN CONTROL VARIABLES, WHITE PROTESTANTS, CATHOLICS, AND JEWS, BY SEX, POOLED DATA FROM SIX U.S. NATIONAL SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN 1973-1978

Independent Variable	Males (N = 762)	Females (N = 790)
Religious intermarriage ^a	-.080*	.045
Age	.079	.040
Age when first married	-.030	-.052
Ever divorced	.032	-.118**
Frequency of attendance at religious services	.119**	.043
Years of school completed	.070	.054
Family income	-.033	.067
Occupational prestige (husband's occupational prestige)	.022	.065

Source: Computed from data from the 1973-1978 General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Center.

^aInvolving combinations of the three major religious categories only. Respondents married to persons with no religion and of "other" religions are excluded from the analysis.

* $p < .10$ (two-tailed).

** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

wives and children. It is likely that wives are typically more influential than husbands in the religious socialization of children, and conflict over the religious indoctrination of children is likely to have a greater adverse effect on the loser in that conflict. Persons who are not disturbed by their spouse's being of a different religion frequently may be disturbed by their children's being of a different religion, if only because it may relegate them to a kind of outsider or minority status in their own family.

Although the regression data for males are consistent with the view that a difference in religious preference between spouses tends to reduce the quality of marriages, the evidence is not conclusive. One cannot be certain that variables not included in the analysis did not produce a spurious relationship. Heiss (1960), in a comparison of spouses in interreligious and intrareligious unions, found that the former were likely to have had parents low in religiosity, intense early family strife, and high emancipation from parents at the time of marriage. Some of these premarital characteristics might contribute rather directly to low marital quality as well as to interreligious marriage. For instance, low parental influence over marital choice may be associated not only with a tendency to marry someone of a different religion but also with a tendency to marry someone who would be a poor risk in any marriage.

Furthermore, even if interreligious marriage in itself has contributed to low marital quality and to marital instability, it does not necessarily follow that the recent increase in interreligious marriage has led to a corresponding decrease in marital success or that it has been an important reason for the recent increase in divorce. As interreligious marriages become more frequent and socially accepted, any negative effects they have on marital quality are likely to diminish. For instance, some of the problems encountered by interreligious couples evidently have grown out of the disapproval of family and friends (Sussman, 1953); and as such disapproval diminishes, so should some of the disruptive influences on interreligious marriages.

CONCLUSIONS

The most important conclusion to be drawn from the findings of this study is that

in the recent past in this country norms of religious endogamy apparently have not been as strong and as effective as most writers addressing the topic have thought them to be. When rates of religious outmarriage are computed in terms of the religions in which people were raised rather than in terms of current religion, only Jews have a rate of outmarriage far lower than would exist if marriage occurred without regard to religious background. Furthermore, much of the discrepancy between the actual rates and those "expected" if mating were random can be explained by differential distribution of the persons in the major religious categories by region and community size and among neighborhoods within communities.

In the mid-1970s there was a fairly high degree of religious homogamy in terms of current religious preference (even though there had been a substantial decrease since 1957), but that level of homogamy was apparently achieved only because many persons changed their religious preferences to agree with those of their spouses after marriage or in anticipation of marriage. Although there seem to have been few really strong barriers to marriages between persons of different religious backgrounds, there also seems to have been a widespread ideal that the religious preferences of husband and wife should agree. However, the apparent fact that many persons are now willing to marry a person of a different religion and to change their own religion to that of the spouse is consistent with the view, suggested by the other findings, that marriage in the United States has become very largely a secular institution, with religious institutions exerting only weak influences on marital choice (and probably on the nature of marriage relationships as well).

I do not attempt to deal here with all of the important probable consequences of interreligious marriage, but tests of regression models designed to estimate the effects on marital happiness of heterogamy involving combinations of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews indicate a moderate negative effect (on the average) for white males but no effect for white females. The male-female difference probably reflects a greater ability of wives than of husbands to control the religious socialization of children. Although it seems unlikely that the increase in religious heterogamy has made any substantial contribution

to the increase in divorce in recent years, a weakening of controls over marriage by religious institutions and by extended families may well have contributed to both the increase in religious heterogamy and the increase in divorce. That is, the increases in heterogamy and in divorce probably both reflect some of the same underlying changes in the institution of marriage.

FOOTNOTES

1. The best recent evidence from U. S. national surveys apparently is that reported in Alston, McIntosh, and Wright (1976) in a very brief research note and that reported by Johnson (1980) in a revised doctoral dissertation which concentrates on fitting complex models to the data and contains no clearly stated conclusions about the most basic issues concerning patterns of interreligious marriage.
2. For discussion of the importance of the topic from several different perspectives, see Gordon (1964); Bean and Aiken (1976); Heiss (1961); Landis (1949); Croog and Teele (1967); Prince (1962); Slotkin (1942); Zimmerman and Cervantes (1960).
3. For a detailed description of the full and modified probability samples used for the General Social Surveys, see Stephenson (1979). Stephenson presents evidence that the estimates of characteristics of the population from the two kinds of samples are essentially the same.
4. The first rate is for marriages and the second rate is for individuals. For fuller discussion of this issue, see Rodman (1965). For a comparison of the two kinds of rates computed from the March 1957 Current Population Survey data, see Carter and Glick (1976:138-143).
5. Throughout this paper two-tailed significance tests are reported, since in most cases the direction of the difference or coefficient is not predicted by a hypothesis or by previous evidence. In those cases in which a one-tailed test may be appropriate, the reader can easily convert the two-tailed probability into a one-tailed one.
6. The method for computing this estimate is explained in the following section of the text.
7. However, there is very little published evidence on the extent of denominational homogamy and heterogamy among Protestants. For the results of one study, see Greeley (1970).
8. These percentages, although high, are somewhat lower than those reported by Greeley (1970) from his

analysis of data from the March 1957 Current Population Survey and the 1968 National Opinion Research Center study of June 1961 college graduates. The percentages reported by Greeley are almost all above 80, even though their base includes persons married to non-Protestants. Therefore, there may have been a moderate recent decline in denominational homogamy among Protestants.

9. However, there is some scattered and generally dated contrary evidence (e. g., Locke, 1951). It is interesting that the author of a popular family textbook concludes, after a selective review of the evidence, that religiously mixed marriages are just as stable on the whole as other marriages.
10. See Glenn and Weaver (1977) for one of the several published discussions of probable inaccuracies in reports of marital happiness. It is rather generally acknowledged that some respondents tend to "over-report" their marital happiness; but if so, this is a critical problem for studies which use reports of marital happiness as a dependent variable only if the tendency to overreport is correlated with an independent variable.
11. Nonwhites were excluded from all of the analyses reported in this section in order to remove the effects of race. However, this truncation of the sample had negligible effects on the data.
12. Each of these variables could have commonly affected marital happiness and religious homogamy-heterogamy, or else could have affected marital happiness and be correlated with background variables which could have affected religious homogamy-heterogamy. Family income and frequency of attendance of religious services are of the latter kind; they could not in themselves have affected the religious homogamy-heterogamy of most of the respondents, but they serve as less than completely adequate indicators of economic status and religious participation prior to entry into the current marriage.
13. If religious preference did need to be controlled, one would be faced with a classic case of the "identification problem." See Blalock (1966, 1967).
14. The three socioeconomic variables are years of school completed, family income during the previous year, and occupational prestige (males) or husband's occupational prestige (Hodge-Rossi-Siegel scale—see Siegel, 1971). For convenience, date of birth is recoded into age. Marital history is a dummy variable for which persons who had ever been divorced are coded 1 and all others are coded 0. Frequency of attendance at religious services is a nine-point ordinal scale, varying from "never" to "several times a week," which is treated as though it were interval.
15. An incidental finding of this analysis is that, in contrast to findings reported by Rosenthal (1970), the divorced and remarried male respondents were no more likely than other males to be in religiously

mixed marriages (the correlation of the marital history and heterogamy dummy variables being -.01); and the divorced and remarried females were only slightly more likely than other females to be in mixed marriages ($r = .04$).

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