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Intermarriage and Unprivileged Natives: Rethinking Race in

Immigration and Assimilation Theory

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Abstract: How does accounting for the status of American-born Blacks as unprivileged natives instead of immigrants, challenge and change the ways past and present understandings of the relationship between immigration and intermarriage, and more broadly, immigration and assimilation theories? Using evidence from secondary interview data with White native-born and immigrant women married to Black American-born men in Chicago in the late 1930s, we argue: 1) Nativity is socially constructed in immigration and assimilation theory, and Whiteness has primacy in this construction; 2) the assimilation and racialization of European immigrants as White in relationship to Black Americans is primarily discussed as a process of separation, exclusion, and isolation; however, 3) the process of assimilation and racialization into Whiteness includes intermarriage to Blacks, not only intermarriage to native-born Whites; and 4) the theory of intermarriage as a mechanism of assimilation incorrectly assumes improvement in social status and positive outcomes. We conclude that academic scholarship, particularly sociological work, continue to revisit the ways Blacks are perceived and categorized in the immigration and assimilation literature.

Keywords: Black Americans, intermarriage, immigration, race

Introduction

Sociologists have investigated the relationship between immigration and intermarriage to understand how immigrants are integrated in societies. In his influential 1964 book on race and assimilation, Milton Gordon asserted that intermarriage between the native-born and immigrant populations was an important stage in the assimilation of immigrants into American society. A growing body of literature builds upon and challenges Gordon's marital assimilation theory to further explore the relationship between and consequences of intermarriage between native-born people and immigrants in an age of massive global immigration (Collet 2015; Alba and Foner 2015; Lee, Qian, and Tumin 2015; Rodríguez-García 2015). Using the terms *mixedness* and *conjugal mixedness* to describe the "formation and outcomes of mixed unions and mixed families" (Rodríguez-García 2015: 9; Collet 2015), these scholars revisit Gordon's theory to further explore the relationship between immigration and intermarriage in the incorporation of immigrants into a host society.

Although the concepts of marital assimilation, mixedness, and conjugal mixedness attempt to explain how integration into a host society can and does happen through intermarriage, they do not fully capture the unique role of Blacks in the integration of immigrants, primarily European immigrants, through intermarriage. In fact, past and current literature typically privileges intermarriages to native-born Whites as the main process for incorporation into American society (Alba and Foner 2015; Lee and Bean 2010; Gordon 1964). Most immigration literature does not acknowledge that Black Americans—descendants of enslaved Africans or Blacks who arrived in any other manner to the United States since the landing of the Mayflower—are also natives. Both past and present literature categorize Black Americans as immigrants instead of illuminating their place as American-born people whose native status is unprivileged.

Attending to the status of Black Americans as “unprivileged natives” contests the dominant paradigm in the sociological literature on immigration, assimilation, and intermarriage, still grounded in Gordon’s marital assimilation theory, and illuminates the following points:

1. Nativity is socially constructed in immigration and assimilation theory, and Whiteness has primacy in this construction;
2. the assimilation and racialization of European immigrants as White in relationship to Black Americans is primarily discussed as a process of separation, exclusion, and isolation; however,
3. the process of assimilation and racialization into Whiteness includes intermarriage to Blacks, not only intermarriage to Whites; and
4. the theory of intermarriage as a mechanism of assimilation incorrectly assumes improvement in social status and positive outcomes.

Thus, accounting for Blacks as unprivileged natives challenges how we understand both the role of intermarriage in immigrant integration and the role of Black Americans in immigration and assimilation theory (Treitler 2015).

To understand the importance of seeing Blacks as unprivileged natives when the relationship between immigration and intermarriage is examined, we investigated the experiences of White native-born and immigrant women married to Black men in Chicago in the 1930s and the meanings they attached to their intermarriages as a result of these experiences. First, contrary to dominant marital assimilation theory, we found that both American-born and immigrant women experienced material, social, and institutional costs resulting from being married to Black native men. Second, however, only American-born women attached both positive and negative meanings to their intermarriages while immigrant women only attached negative meanings to theirs. The European immigrant women discovered that marriage to a Black man had the unexpected effect of racializing them as White American women. The costs that they experienced illustrated that these foreign-born women were now held to the same

standard of Whiteness as native-born White women: their Whiteness was defined ideologically, socially, and economically in opposition to Blacks (Alba and Nee 2003; Ignatiev 1995).

The dominant sociological conceptualizations of the social consequences of intermarriage and immigration cannot account for our findings. Marital assimilation theory treats integration into American society and racialization into Whiteness as processes that only include marriages to privileged native-born Whites and exclude marriages to unprivileged native-born Blacks. Immigration literature primarily addresses the racialization of European immigrants as Whites based on the separation, exclusion, and isolation of Black Americans. By examining the experiences of White native- and foreign-born women married to native-born Black men in 1930s Chicago, our study calls for sociologists who investigate immigration and assimilation to rethink how they account for the status of Black Americans as unprivileged natives.

Rethinking Immigration and Intermarriage

The Construction of Nativity as White

The words “native” and its corollary “native-born” are fraught with historical baggage given America’s settler/colonial past. Its use, in American immigration and assimilation literature and theories, is somewhat problematic because it conjures up White Europeans as natives of the US and excludes Native Americans as the first inhabitants of the country. Genocide, with disease and war, facilitated the transformation of Europeans from the native to the settler (Wolfe 2006; Littlebear 2003; Ahuwalia 2001; Berkhoffer 1978). Scholarship has adopted this transformation and so we use it as well, even though we do not agree with the exclusion of Native Americans connoted in the word native. This point also demonstrates two of our main arguments: that native status is often conflated with Whiteness, and consequently, Blacks are usually not considered natives, in the assimilation and immigration literature and

theories. In what follows, we provide the dominant definitions of native and immigrant and show how nativity is constructed, with racial status key in that construction. In past and present immigration literature, the dominant definition of native or native-born is that a person is born in a particular country, even if their parents were immigrants. Immigrant, then, refers to people who were born outside the country, their parents do not have any national origin connection other than residence to the country, *and* they came from another country (usually their country of birth) to their current place of residence (Portes and Rumbaut 2014; Qian and Lichter 2007; Alba and Nee 2003; Gordon 1964; Park 1914). These examples illustrate the dominant definitions of immigrant and native. Bohra-Mishra and Massey (2015: 735) in their work on intermarriage between write “in this analysis we examine newly arrived immigrants to the USA and compare patterns of intermarriage among persons born in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) to those born in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and Asia, which is further subcategorized into South Asia (SA), East Asia (EA) and Southeast Asia (SEA). Qian, Glick, and Batson’s (2012: 652) descriptions of immigrants also reflects the dominant definition: “Immigrants today originate from diverse countries of origin, languages, religions, and cultures”. Lastly, Campbell and Martin’s (2015) explanation of their study also demonstrates the widely accepted definitions of native and immigrant. The authors explain, “To further investigate the downturn in exogamy levels among native-born Asians and Latino/as at the end of the 1990s...we explore exogamy patterns in marriage and cohabitation among U.S.-born racial/ethnic groups (2).

It follows then that any person born to Blacks who first arrived to the US as African slaves, indentured servants, or under any other circumstance are native-born Blacks. They are Black Americans (Lee 2015). By definition of native-born, the descendants of these Black Americans are as native as the White descendants of those who come from Europe on the

Mayflower or through some other means. However, from the earliest to the most current scholarship on immigration and assimilation, Black Americans are primarily considered immigrants or of "immigrant origin" (Alba and Foner 2015: 44; Glazer and Moynihan 1967; Gordon 1964; Park 1914) with few exceptions (Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2015; Lichter, Qian, and Tumin 2015). More importantly, however, being of immigrant origin is not used to describe native Whites, even though strictly speaking, they are. Additionally, few scholars consider the construction of nativity outside these dominant definitions and are concerned (and rightfully so) with the construction of race and citizenship (Fox 2012; Glenn 2009; Parsons 1966). Nativity status in the US, however, is a major criterion upon which legal considerations for citizenship are made. The two are interwoven together; thus their social and academic constructions are also bound together. The construction of nativity is important given that studies have found that native-born Mexicans are often mistaken for new immigrants, and thereby seen as illegal aliens, despite both being US born and having American citizenship (Sabo et al. 2014; Jimenez 2008). Their nativity is questioned, and consequently, so is their citizenship.

The study above further demonstrates that not only is nativity constructed, racial status guides its construction. White racial status has primacy who is a native and who is an immigrant and history explains why this is the case. European settlers, with the help of slavery and the resulting ideologies, determined first, who was human, and second, who was American (Omi and Winant 2015; Wolfe 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2000). Consequently, Whiteness, and for some time, Anglo-Saxon middle-class Whiteness, was synonymous with being American or being a native. Thus, the privilege that was conferred on Whiteness also included the assumption of native status. If one could pass for White, racially, ideologically, politically, socially, and economically, then one could be a native and be treated as such (Jung 2009). Sometimes, White immigrants

only had to pass racially in order to be granted the privileges of nativity (e.g. no deportation or receipt of welfare benefits despite having immigrant status) (Fox 2012). It is no wonder that native status and Whiteness were (and continue to be) conflated in both scholarship and the social world (Gordon 1964; Gans 1992; Glenn 2004; Fox 2012). We can also see the significance of nativity constructed as Whiteness and the power of this conflation in US citizenship history. Despite the having the opportunity to obtain citizenship on the basis on claiming a Black racial status, individuals from Asia or other non-European parts of the world almost always argued that they were White (Fox 2012; Haney-Lopez 2006). They preferred to decline citizenship if they could not gain it on the grounds of being considered White. Being a Black citizen was unacceptable because there were no privileges to that particular native racial status. This provides further evidence that Whiteness and native-born status are perceived as the same thing.

For Blacks, the inferiority and lack of privileged attached to their racial status overwhelms the reality that are part of the native-born population. Blacks were property first and sometimes considered 3/5 of a person when it was politically convenient, despite being born in the US. Their Blackness precluded them from being fully human which subsequently kept them from being considered a native of the States, talk less of being considered an American. Although using the dominant definitions of native and immigrant makes descendants of Black slaves and immigrants native-born, they are not always afforded the status of native in immigration and assimilation literature. In some sociological work they are categorized as native minorities, but their status as unprivileged natives is often downplayed (Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2015; Lichter, Qian, and Tumin 2015). On the one hand, sociological literature excludes Blacks as natives, but when it does acknowledge their native status, it does little to emphasize the lack of privilege that exists in that nativity. Their native minority status is different and lower

than of other native minority groups and is certainly lower than that of Asian and Latino immigrants (Lee and Bean 2010).

The Construction of Nativity and Marital Assimilation Theory

The conflation of Whiteness and nativity and the under-acknowledgement of Blacks as unprivileged natives has profoundly shaped the sociological study of immigration and intermarriage. This conflation is evident in Milton Gordon's work. Gordon first introduced the concept of marital assimilation as part of his theoretical exploration of immigrant assimilation into American society. In his formulation, intermarriage between native-born Whites and immigrants is an important step in the full assimilation of immigrants into American communal life. High rates of intermarriage also represent the closing of social distance between the foreign – and native – born. In marital assimilation, assimilation into American society happens for the immigrant because:

"prejudice and discrimination are no longer a problem, since eventually the descendants of the original minority group become indistinguishable, and since primary group relationships tend to build up an 'in-group' feeling which encloses all the members of the group. If assimilation has been complete in all intrinsic as well as extrinsic cultural traits, then no value conflicts and civic issues are likely to arise between the now dispersed descendants of the ethnic minority and members of the core society" (Gordon 1964: 81).

There are two implications of Gordon's theory from this quote. One is that intermarriage assimilates immigrants and the other is that this assimilation yields positive outcomes. Empirical studies have shown that there is greater integration into American society and improved political, social, and economic outcomes for immigrants who intermarry with natives (Boyd and Couture-Carron 2015; Chi 2015; Furtado and Song 2015). Also for Asian and Latino immigrants who marry native-born Whites, they and their children are more likely to identify as White, experience greater freedom in the choosing and expression of their ethnic identity, and enjoy greater racial tolerance (Alba and Foner 2015; Lichter, Qian, and Tumin 2015; Lee and Bean

2010). However, Gordon's theory works because he conflates Whiteness with nativity and excludes Blacks as unprivileged natives. First, Gordon (1964) explicitly states that his reference group, the group he considers native-born and to whom all other racial and religious groups are compared, are White, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. He writes, "If there is anything in American life which can be described as an over-all American culture which serves as a reference point for immigrants and their children, it can best be described, it seems to us, as the middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins..." (72). He then adds "I shall follow Fishman's usage in referring to middle-class white Protestant Americans as constituting the 'core society,' or in my terms, the 'core subsociety,' and the cultural patterns of this group as the 'core culture' or 'core subculture'. I shall use Hollingshead's term 'core group' to refer to the white Protestant element at any social class level" (73-74). From these quotes above, it is clear that despite dominant definitions of native and immigrant, in his construction of nativity, Gordon does not consider Blacks natives even though the majority of Blacks in the US at the time of his writing are American-born. He excludes them on the basis of their inferiority of racial status, but includes Whites on the basis of the superiority of their racial status. Gordon's work demonstrates a conflation of Whiteness with native status and the exclusion Blacks as unprivileged natives; and in doing so, shows that the most significant implication of marital assimilation theory is that assimilation into American society can only occur through marriage to the White native-born population, and that this assimilation solely leads to improved socioeconomic outcomes (Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2015). No other alternative is possible. Marital assimilation theory has little way of explaining the assimilation and integration into American society that also happened for White immigrants married to Blacks.

The Construction of Nativity and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration and Intermarriage

The current literature on the relationship between immigration and intermarriage also incorporates the flaws of Gordon's theory. Richard Alba and Nancy Foner (2015: 41) explore varying rates of "mixed unions" in the immigrant receiving countries of the US, Canada, France, Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany. They define mixed unions as those between immigrants and the native-majority and intermarriages between "ethno-racial" minorities and the native-majority (Alba and Foner 2015: 41). Although Alba and Foner do not explicitly conflate whiteness with native-born in the same ways as Gordon, it is what they leave unsaid that also demonstrates a conflation of nativity status and Whiteness and a lack of recognition of Blacks' as unprivileged natives. For instance, while they do not explicitly call African-Americans immigrants, it is implied in their comparison to Whites and other groups. Alba and Foner write, "Race, too, can pose an immense barrier [to intermarriage], though one that is variable. In the United States, African Americans for some time have been the ethno racial minority with the lowest intermarriage rates. However, in Britain and the Netherlands, unions of Afro-Caribbean with whites are common, even unremarkable" (41). This comparison implies that, like Afro-Caribbeans, African Americans are also immigrants. Although both groups of people are ethno-racial minorities in their respective home countries, African Americans are not like Afro-Caribbean because they are a native-minority in the United States, not simply another ethno-racial group like second generation Hispanics or Asians. One could overlook this comparison; however, but in their introduction the authors state that "the immigrant groups we examine come from non-Western societies—from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America—because as ethno-racial outsiders, these are the groups that most challenge the integration capacities of North American and Western European societies" (40). Thus, when they compare African

Americans to Afro-Caribbeans, without saying it, they appear to be comparing two immigrant groups. Secondly, Alba and Foner (2015:44) later define the native-majority as non-Hispanic Whites: “The rates of marriage of U.S.—born Asians and Hispanics to native-majority (that is, non-Hispanic white) partners are quite a bit higher than some intermarriage rates in northern Europe, but they fall short of the 50 percent mark”. First, while the comparison is to Whites in other European countries, no where in the article do Alba and Foner explicitly categorize Blacks a native-minority; they are simply an “ethno-racial group”. Second, if non-Hispanic Whites are the native-majority and Afro-Caribbeans are the immigrants (as per the authors and their tables), what are African Americans? In the article, they are definitively an ethno-racial group, but it is unclear if they are also immigrants. However, they are certainly not the native-majority and neither are they recognized as the native-minority. In Alba and Foner’s discussion of the intersection of immigration and intermarriage native-born Blacks that are not of immigrant-origin are excluded by omission. It may be subtler than in Gordon’s marital assimilation, but the outcome is the same: Whiteness (non-Hispanic Whiteness) is conflated with nativity (native-majority in this case) and the status of Blacks as unprivileged natives is unrecognized in the study.

Alba and Foner’s definition of integration also reveals the role of race in the construction of nativity, the underlying assumption that Whiteness is the same as having native-born status. They define integration as “the processes that allow members of immigrant-origin groups to attain, usually gradually and approximately, the same opportunities long-term native parentage citizens have, such as improved socioeconomic position for themselves and their children, as well as to gain inclusion and acceptance in a broad range of societal institutions” (Alba and Foner 2015: 39). It is impossible to formulate this definition of integration using a dominant

definition of native and immigrant without conflating nativity with Whiteness and excluding Blacks as unprivileged natives. If that were the case, the outcomes of integration through intermarriage would not simply be limited to improved socioeconomic position or inclusion to a broad range of societal institutions. It could also include limited socioeconomic opportunities, experiences of discrimination and racism, or increased racial and/or ethnic solidarity (Bohra-Mishra and Massey 2015). One must implicitly also use racial status as a criterion for native and immigrant status to reach this definition of integration. With these definitions, marriages between immigrants and American Blacks do not count as intermarriages between natives and immigrants because the immigrants may not achieve integration the way the authors have defined it. For Alba and Foner (2015), Blackness excludes Black Americans as natives: They do not have improved socioeconomic position and are still striving for “inclusion and acceptance in a broad range of societal institutions” despite centuries of being in the US (Bonilla-Silva 2014; Brown et al. 2003). More significantly, however, the inclusion of Black as unprivileged natives completely changes how one frames and defines integration and assimilation (Treitler 2015; Jung 2009).

The authors also discount Blackness when defining the mainstream. They define mainstream as “cultural and social spaces where the native majority feels at home and its presence is taken for granted and seen as unproblematic; it includes institutions such as schools and government, informal settings such as heavily native-majority neighborhoods, and accepted ways of behaving” (39). Many studies have shown that Blacks do not feel at home in many social and cultural spaces and their presence is often seen as problematic (Steinbugler 2012; Charles 2007; Feagin 1991). More obvious, however, is that Blacks are indeed part of the native majority if we use a dominant definition of native and immigrant. In Alba and Foner’s definition of mainstream, however, Blacks’ experiences in the US does not qualify them as part of the

mainstream. The authors' constructions of integration and mainstream in explaining what intermarriage between the native-born and immigrants accomplishes is limited to marriages between immigrants and native-born Whites. As in Gordon's construction, the definitions of integration and mainstream reinforce Whiteness as the standard for nativity and obscures the unique role of Blacks as unprivileged natives, in US immigration history. If we take Blacks status as unprivileged natives into account, we must rethink the relationship between immigration and intermarriage.

Mixedness: The Intersection of Immigration, Intermarriage, and Integration

In recent literature, scholars have proposed concept the concept of mixedness to explore the relationship between immigration, intermarriage, and integration. Like Gordon and Alba and Foner, these scholars are also interested in the impact of intermarriage for “individuals and groups that have not been considered part of the societal mainstream, [and most importantly] in what contexts” (Rodríguez-García 2015: 9). Dan Rodríguez-García (2015: 11) defines mixedness as a “more encompassing and complex concept, which refers not just to outcomes but also to the process of ‘mixing’; it not only describes the combination of national, racial, cultural, or religious differences but also signifies an active space that disturbs and contests social norms.” Mixedness furthers marital assimilation theory and formulations like that of Alba and Foner's because it creates space for segmented outcomes of immigration, intermarriage, and integration (Collet 2015; Rodríguez-García 2015). However, empirically and conceptually, it fails to fully challenge the more fundamental issues of constructions of nativity and the role of race in this construction in the US context. Mixedness expands what is possible in terms of the outcome of the relationship between immigration and intermarriage, but it does not always dig deep to interrogate the fundamental assumptions or realities that make these outcomes possible. In this

paper we want to do more than expand marital assimilation, we want to demonstrate the importance of rethinking dominant sociological approaches to immigration and intermarriage.

Methods

To analyze the lived experiences of White native and immigrant women married to Black men, we utilized transcribed interviews that Dr. Robert Roberts. He was a White sociologist and anthropologist at Roosevelt College who conducted interviews with Black-White intermarried couples in Chicago between the 1930s and 1980s. Dr. Roberts employed a snowball method to find participants and performed semi – structured interviews and used questionnaires to gather demographic information and learn about interracial marital experiences and family life (questionnaires can be given upon request).

Selecting the 1930s

We chose to examine interviews from the 1930s sample for three reasons¹. First is the unique time period. The 1930s as after slavery and the Civil War, but before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In this time period, Blacks and White immigrants were undeniably a part of the U.S. population, but their equality to native-born Whites was still questioned. Racial ideologies that deemed native-born Whites as superior, Blacks as inferior, and White immigrants as somewhere in between were dominant and stable (Drake and Cayton 1993[1945]; Rogers 1972). In the 1950s and 1960s, these ideologies were being challenged and the social structure was shifting. By the 1970s and 1980s more politically correct stances about race and racism were more widespread though racism had not been eradicated (Bonilla-Silva 2014).

¹ Dr. Roberts interviewed a total of 131 couples between 1937 and 1939. There were 108 married couples, 10 separated couples, three divorced couples, and 10 widowed couples.

Second, although immigration into the US had slowed due to the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act (Dinnerstein and Reimers, 1999; Jacobson, 1998), immigrants made up a substantial population of Chicago at the US at large (Fox 2012; Drake and Cayton 1993 [1945]; Park, Burgess, and McKenzie 1925). They intermingled in daily life with native-born Blacks and Whites, whether it was at their jobs, night clubs, or even Communist party meetings. Intermarriage to Black Americans was an outcome of this intermingling (Moran 2003; Drake and Cayton 1993 [1945]). The interviews from the 1930s provided a unique view into examining the relationship between immigration and intermarriage at a time when massive immigration and intermarriage were also a significant part of American life as they are now.

Lastly, we chose the 1930s out of the other decades because of the social and legal backdrop of this time period. In this decade, 29 states had anti-miscegenation laws and 17 states, including Illinois, had no laws against it, which by default made intermarriage legal (Reuter 1931; Rogers 1972). Additionally, prior to the 1967 Supreme Court ruling in *Loving vs. Virginia*, which made state anti-miscegenation laws illegal (Steinbugler 2012; Moran 2003), Blacks were the only racial/ethnic group to whom intermarriage was consistently illegal and illegal in all the states at one time (Moran 2003). Once again, the respondents in the 1930s sample gave a unique insight to the experiences of being intermarried during this time. Examining interviews from the 1930s ultimately gave us an opportunity to examine two large macro-forces that impacted life chances of Black Americans, native-born Whites, and European immigrants during this era and were sometimes at their most extreme in American history: immigration and racism. No other decade would have provided such an opportunity.

The Women in the Sample

In keeping with the methods used in the immigration and assimilation literature, any woman born in the US was considered American- or native-born, even if her parents were immigrants. Any woman born outside of the US was considered an immigrant regardless of when she arrived in the US. The sample includes women from Germany, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Ireland, and Czechoslovakia. The sample was not large enough to make fine grained descriptions between recently arrived immigrants, 1st generation immigrants, and so on. Additionally, while one could argue that the experiences of women who came to the US at age five may be different than those who came at age 20, the immigrant experience was still qualitatively different from that of people born in the US (Portes and Rumbaut 2014; Dinnerstein and Reimers 1999).

Our analysis focused on only White native-born and immigrant women instead of White native-born men, European immigrant men, or Black American women because the largest proportion of intermarriages were between Black American men and White immigrant or native-born women in the 1930s (Drake and Cayton 1993 [1945] and also in intermarriages in the 1930s sample. We also only examined women who were married at the time of the interview and excluded women who were separated, divorced, or widowed. Given that these differences in marital status could influence how women discussed their marital experiences (Riessman 1990), it was important to include only women with the same marital status.

Because we were primarily interested in wives' experiences, it was paramount to have their unrestricted thoughts about their lived experiences as intermarried individuals. For American-born women, we included those who had at least one interview alone. This totaled 42 women. The number of immigrant women in the sample was smaller with only 16 respondents.

Therefore, we included both women who were interviewed alone and also women who were interviewed with their husbands. Five out of the 16 women were always interviewed with their husbands present. While this inclusion could have biased our findings, there were no significant differences between responses from immigrant women interviewed alone and those interviewed with their husbands. In all, we examined interviews from a total of 58 women. Tables 1 and 2 provide a fuller description of sample and demographic information. Although specific (e.g. infant instead of actual age) demographic information was missing for some women on some variables, there was data available for most of the sample.

Table 1: Sample Descriptive

Sample Descriptive	Immigrant Women	American-born Women	Sample Size
<i>Mean age</i>	51	37	57
<i>Mean length of marriage</i>	22 years	13 years	50
<i>Mean age at current marriage</i>	30 years	26 years	50
<i>This is 1st Marriage</i>	12 women	24 women	58
<i>Have children</i>	13 women	26 women	55
<i>Range of age at immigration</i>	infant to 20 years old	Not applicable	15
<i>Mean length of stay in US</i>	39 years	Not applicable	15
<i>Mean length of time btw. arrival and marriage</i>	7 years	Not applicable	12 (excludes women with prior marriages)

Table 2: Employment among White Immigrant and Native Women²

Employment	Immigrant Women	Native Women	Total
<i>Housewife</i>	12 (26%)	38 (83%)	46 (100%)
<i>Labor force involvement</i>	4 (67%)	2 (33%)	6 (100%)
<i>WPA recipient</i>	0	2 (100%)	2 (100%)
Sample Total	16 (28%)	42 (72%)	58 (100%)

² Row percentages

Data Analysis

We used a variety of coding methods and Atlas.ti to analyze the women's interviews. After reading the interviews and categorizing responses under broad topics such as marital satisfaction, couple meeting, and friendship network, we focused on seven topics to code more specifically: immigration stories, societal responses to intermarriage, respondents' stories about others' interracial marriages, and the respondents' opinions on intermarriage, marriage, and race.

Coding and doing analysis of secondary in-depth interview data posed some challenges with also contributed to the limitations of our study. The most significant challenge and limitation was that the interviews ranged in length and some of the questionnaires were incomplete or missing. While some interviews were filled with rich and compelling information while others had little useful information. For the thinner interviews, it was sometimes difficult to ascertain respondents' feelings and thoughts as we analyzed the data. Nevertheless, we used what we could to gather information about each woman's experience of being intermarried to a Black American man.

Intermarriage to a Black American: The Costs of Being Interracially Married to an Unprivileged Native

The review of the literature demonstrates how nativity is constructed both in social life and in scholarship to exclude Blacks from being considered native-born Americans. This section focuses on providing evidence that illustrates that in the marital assimilation literature and in the current literature that explores the relationships between immigration and intermarriage, the racialization of Whites through intermarriage should also include intermarriage to Blacks and that intermarriage does not always lead to positive outcomes. In immigration literature, the racialization of European and non-European immigrants into Whiteness often provides empirical

evidence that highlights the ways Black Americans are excluded and isolated in immigrants' efforts to achieve Whiteness, and consequently, assume all of its privileges. However, if a consideration of blacks as native-born Americans also reveals that the process of racialization into Whiteness should also include intermarriage of immigrants to Black Americans.

Evidence from our study demonstrates that European immigrant women were racialized into Whiteness as a result of the costs that they suffered due to their intermarriage to Black men. In fact, we found that both immigrant and native-born White women characterized their daily experiences of being married to Black American men as filled with costs. This observation is the evidence upon which we argue for the racialization of these immigrant women into American Whiteness. The three salient costs that the women encountered were material, social, and institutional costs. The majority of the women stated that these troubles that they faced were a direct direct consequence of being intermarried to Black men.

Material Costs

Material costs were those that concerned financial or other economic affairs such as losing a job or finding housing. Mrs. Tyler, a 31-year-old woman from Czechoslovakia who worked as a Workers Progress Administration (W.P.A) typist, spoke about the consequences of being intermarried on one's employment status. She explained:

A white woman with the colored husband can't hold a job here. I was a waitress there and a police man from out there came in there and recognized me. He came in half drunk and said he knew I lived in the colored neighborhood, but didn't know if I had a colored husband. The manager heard him and didn't give me two minutes' notice. He said he couldn't get anybody better, but he would take someone worse than me. He said he couldn't have anyone like that there. I found the same thing when I was at the Chicago Boys Club. They were very pleased with me there because they hadn't had such good results before. I had charge of the dining room at the Chicago Boys' club. They found out and let me go.

Mrs. Wells, a 44-year-old woman from upstate New York, told Dr. Roberts' something similar. She stated "She [a White woman] can't hold a job if her husband is colored. No white women

can hold a job any place if it is known that her husband is colored. They would fire her immediately.” Other material costs included being unable to find housing, both in Black and White neighborhoods. Both foreign- and native-born women often ended up in poor Black neighborhoods or the suburbs of Chicago if their families could afford it.

Social Costs

Both immigrant and American-born White women also faced social costs due to their intermarriage. Social costs involved being unable to participate in social activities such as dining out, enjoying public entertainment, being the topic of local gossip, or being unable to entertain guests in ones’ home. Mrs. Miner, a 21-year-old woman from Chicago, commented about gossip among her neighbors’ Black children: “Last year some of the children said I wouldn’t let my girls be seen with colored children because they [the Black children] were too dirty. A delegation of colored children came to me to see if that was true...It was really cute the way they came here. I told them that it wasn’t true and asked who had said that. They said that it was another girl but I couldn’t get her to come here.” Mrs. Miner was not safe from gossip, even from children, due to her intermarriage. Mrs. Emerson, a 51-year-old woman from France was concerned about entertaining guests in her home for fear that her marriage would be discovered which could also potentially lead to losing her job as a tailor.

Dr. Roberts: Won’t you get to know people who don’t know of your marriage and would like to visit you?

Mrs. Emerson: I never tell my business. I am a single girl. Else it is harder. I think if a girl married like me tells it she is foolish. Lots of people want to come and I tell them some reasons. I tell them I’m busy.

Institutional Costs

Lastly, both native- and foreign-born White women also faced institutional costs. Institutional costs concerned problems the women encountered in institutional settings such as hospitals, courts, or churches. Mrs. Raymond, a 21- year-old Jewish American-born woman recounted the story of the birth of her second son:

I went to Lying-in Hospital [currently the University of Chicago Medical Center]. That's a Jim Crow hospital. I was pregnant and signed up there. My mother was working and couldn't go with me so I asked the Negro friend of my husband who lived on the South Side to take me there. He came with me to the hospital and the girl asked me, 'Do you mean to say that colored fellow is a friend of yours?' I said, 'Sure he is.' Then it dawned her and she said, 'Is your husband colored?' I said, 'Yes' and she tore up the application. She said, 'If you say your husband is light and that you will have a light baby, we can take you.' I said that I couldn't guarantee what kind of baby I would have.

Although Mrs. Raymond did not state where she eventually gave birth to her son, it is clear that she would have had difficulty if she tried to deliver her child at Lying-in Hospital because he was biracial. Mrs. Tyler stated that she no longer performed religious rites because her intermarriage became a liability in religious institutions. "I don't care much for the church anymore. I don't go to regular mass or communion or confession. I used to pay the church a dollar every week, but I told the priest that I didn't think his attitude was very broad."

Governmental institutions, particularly those responsible for qualifying households for public aid during the Depression, also posed a potential threat to interracial couples. Mrs. Trapp, a 40-year-old woman born in Mississippi and fled the South and her family to marry her husband, stated that she and Mr. Trapp were strategic about applying for relief. She explained, "My husband had good working reference and we had our marriage certificate and the children's birth record, so all they could do was accept us. We had registered and voted each time, and as for my parents, I didn't give them any information at all."

Taken together, the evidence above illustrated that costs were a daily part of life for both White immigrant and native-born women married to Black men in Chicago in the late 1930s. There was no solace from racism and discrimination as they lived out their lives at work, social spaces, and institutions for either group of women. Most importantly, the immigrant women, despite not being White by dominant definitions of native-born, were not shielded from the costs of intermarrying with Black men. They suffered in exactly the same ways native-born White women married to Black men suffered. This evidence demonstrates that they were held to the same standards as White American-born women and thus demonstrates that the women were perceived and racialized as American-born women. Also note that there is no difference in the frequency or severity in costs the immigrant women experienced compared to native-born White women. This further illustrates that these immigrant women were racialized as American White women. In Chicago, they were not seen as different from native-born White women who married native-born Black men. Due to their marriages, their racial status went from European immigrant White to American, native-born White; and with that change, their marriages now posed a threat both to White racial power and Black racial solidarity. This threat was punished and the punishment came from both Blacks and Whites alike. In considering alternate interpretation of the costs, more severe or greater frequency of costs could be interpreted as a consequence of being immigrants. Thus, their intermarriage may be judged and treated more harshly because they were seen as outsiders or foreigners. On the other hand, less severe costs and lesser frequency of poor treatment compared to native-born White women could be interpreted as receiving less judgment because as foreigners they were not seen as part of the society. Therefore, their intermarriages were not as consequential for the society at large. In either case, they would be considered outsiders. But this is not the case. The costs that they suffered were had the same severity and

same frequency as American-born White women intermarried to Black American men. This evidence demonstrates that they were racialized as White American women. Consequently, they were subject to the same expectations and treatment as native-born White women married to Black men.

The other important point is that according to marital assimilation and some current scholars who examine the outcomes of immigration and intermarriage, this kind of racialization could only take place if these women were married to native-born White men (Gordon 1964, Alba and Foner 2015). Additionally, in immigration and assimilation literature, empirical evidence reveals this kind of racialization primarily occurred for European immigrants by their demonstration that they were not in solidarity with Blacks, either through perpetuating violence against them or excluding them from clubs, unions, and jobs (Ignatiev 1995; Drake and Cayton 1993 [1945];). They were perceived as White by isolating themselves from Blacks. However, these women also achieved Whiteness: by intermarrying with Blacks. This is not an outcome considered in the literature because Black Americans are not considered native-born.

“We’ve Had No Trouble At All”

There were some women who did not report any troubles related to being intermarried. Mrs. Travis, a 48-year-old immigrant from Germany simply stated that she was “treated fine” when Dr. Roberts inquired about any troubles she faced from being intermarried. Mrs. Putnam, a 65-year-old woman and also a German immigrant stated that she was not embarrassed to go out in public with her Black husband. She stated, “No we go wherever we want to go.”

While there were a few dissenting voices, for most of the women in this study, their lived experience was marked by material, social, and institutional consequences that were due to being married to Black men, evidence that their intermarriage had the effect of racializing them into

Whiteness.

Not all that Glitters is Gold-Racialization into Whiteness

Another implication of marital assimilation theory and current studies of the relationship between immigration, intermarriage, and integration is that the outcomes of intermarriage are positive (Alba and Foner 2015; Gordon 1964). This can only be so if only marriages between native-born Whites and immigrants are examined, and in that examination, Whiteness, and thus, White native-born status is privileged. The implication is that intermarriage with native-born Whites leads to movement toward Whiteness and that can only result in improved social, political, and economic standing. Of course, empirical data has demonstrated that this indeed the case, especially for Latinos and Asian immigrants (Alba and Foner 2015; Lichter, Qian, and Tumin, 2015; Lee and Bean 2010; Qian and Lichter 2007). However, another alternative is possible: intermarriage between native-born people and immigrants does not always lead to positive outcomes despite racialization into Whiteness. Evidence from our study also supports other critiques of immigration and assimilation theories which imply that assimilation into Whiteness, is implies improved socioeconomic and holds positive meaning (Alba and Nee 2003; Portes and Zhou 1993). The acknowledgement that intermarriage between native- and foreign-born also yields integration into an unequal society for the immigrant partner is often lacking. These points become apparent when Blacks are considered unprivileged native-born people, but natives nonetheless.

Our study also examined the meanings that immigrant and American-born women attached to their marriages as a result of the costs they faced in order to examine the outcomes of intermarriage to Black American men. It is not surprising that that both White native-born and immigrant women attached negative meanings to being interracially married. They saw

interracial marriage as inadvisable, a mistake, and deviant. However, only American-born women also attached positive meanings to their intermarriages. They viewed interracial marriage as both socially and politically useful. For immigrant women, being held to the same standards as American-born women or being perceived as White as a result of their intermarriage did not equate to attaching positive meanings to their intermarriages.

Meaning: Intermarriage as Inadvisable

Regardless of whether they were happily married or not, employed or a housewife, old or young, or the length of their marriage, both American-born and immigrant women insisted that they would not advise interracial marriage. The costs associated with intermarriage taught them hard lessons about loving in an age when Blacks were still considered not fully human. There were several reasons that some women felt that interracial marriage was inadvisable. These reasons included the lack of White privilege that their children would experience and the sheer difficulty and burden of being intermarried due to opposition from both Blacks and Whites. Mrs. Jackson, a 24-year-old native-born woman from Chicago with an 18-month old son, stated that her only objection to encouraging interracial marriage was its consequences for biracial children. She remarked, “They [interracial marriages] are bad if you marry for love because you will have children and there’s where the sorrow comes, otherwise I see no harm.” Mrs. Jackson equated having biracial children with deep sadness. Mrs. Tyler echoed the sadness that Mrs. Jackson spoke about. She stated, “I wouldn’t want to say anything against colored people because my child is colored. [However] what hurts is that you find your child can’t have the same benefits as you have.” The lack of White privilege that their children experienced was significant for these women. Mrs. Curtis, the 40-year-old German woman with two children, a 20-year-old son and a school age daughter, lamented:

Intermarriage is something I wouldn't advise from my experience. These children even if they have an ounce of colored blood are considered colored. I haven't the least bit of prejudice, but I wouldn't advise it because of the offspring. There is too much at stake. It just hurts me to see my children suffer. Nobody knows how much it hurts me when my children come home and say, 'Oh, Ma, I can't do that' etc. It's like cutting me with a knife.

The reality is that White women with biracial children believed intermarriage was not advisable because they knew firsthand about the difficulties of being mothers to these children.

In speaking about the challenges of being interracially married, other women characterized this difficulty of being interracially married as a burden. Mrs. Owens, a 51-year-old native woman married for 22 years, stated, "When we [she and Mr. Owens] talked of getting married, that was after his divorce. I knew what I would have to face. We discussed the prejudice that we would meet. But, I said I was willing to face it. My heart is fit to break in feeling the burden on me." Even with all of the preparation she and her husband did prior to getting married, it is clear that Mrs. Owens still felt the heavy weight of her decision many years later. Mrs. Hamilton, a 64-year-old woman expounded on the issue of facing opposition from both Blacks and Whites by explaining what could happen if an interracial couple argued. She stated, "I don't advocate it [interracial marriage]. The main difficulty with interracial marriage is that if there is any dispute among the couple it is hard for the woman because of feeling on both sides. Both white and colored people will blame her for the marriage." According to Mrs. Hamilton, because both Blacks and Whites opposed interracial marriage, women became the scapegoat and bore the responsibility of any trouble in the marriage. Thus, interracial marriage was inadvisable not only because both Blacks and White opposed it, but also because of prevailing attitudes about women and the expectation of them to maintain trouble-free marriages.

Meaning: Interracial Marriage is a Mistake

Another negative meaning that both native and immigrant women gave to their marriage was that it was a mistake. Mrs. Tyler and Mrs. Curtis, two immigrant women, both associated their marriages with being mistakes. Mrs. Tyler, the woman from Czechoslovakia who had been married for 11 years said plainly, “I have made a mistake. It is a mistake to marry interracial. I have only myself to blame. If somebody else was responsible for my marriage, I would kill them. It is a serious step to take.” Mrs. Curtis, the immigrant woman from Germany who had been married for 22 years, stated adamantly to Dr. Roberts about intermarriage: “My experience has taught me that it doesn’t work and that it is one of the most foolish things a person can do. I think it is a very, very grave mistake to make. No matter how you look at it--from the romantic, educational, adventure, or any point of view--it is a mistake.” Mrs. Curtis could not have been more clear about the reality that her own experience influenced her feeling that interracial marriage was a “mistake” and “foolish”.

Immigrant women were not the only ones who felt this way. Mrs. Berry, a woman from Ohio and married for 38 years, also saw her intermarriage as a mistake and echoed similar feelings of regret like Mrs. Tyler and Mrs. Curtis. Mrs. Berry used the words “tangled up” and “mixed up” to describe that her marriage was a mistake. Mrs. Berry blamed her sister, who was also married to a Black man, for her interracial marriage. She stated, “I think my life would have been much different if it wasn’t for her. In fact, she came down here and brought me back with her, and that’s how I got tangled up like this. If she left me there where I belong, I never would’ve got mixed up.” Mrs. Berry explained that her intermarriage was a mistake because “both sides are against it. That’s what makes it so hard.” She did not name her husband or marriage as the problem, but that the opposition to intermarriage from both Blacks and Whites made her marriage difficult.

The question is: why would White immigrant women worry about White privilege for their children if they were simply going to be seen as the same as offspring between two European immigrants? Why would they be concerned about the reaction of Blacks if Blacks were simply another immigrant group? And why would they also see their intermarriages to Blacks as a mistake or problematic if these Black men were immigrants, or put another way, had the same status as European immigrants? The answer to both of these questions is that Black Americans were not immigrants. Their status as underprivileged natives was much lower than that of European immigrants and this low status was quite consequential for both the immigrant and American-born women who married them. Although these immigrant women had achieved some sort of Whiteness through their intermarriage, that same Whiteness did not afford them any benefits except that of regret, in some cases. They had been granted Whiteness but none of its benefits. Intermarriage did not hold only positive outcomes for them

Other immigrant and American-born women, however, did not feel that their intermarriage was inadvisable, a mistake, or deviant. Mrs. Brown, a German woman married for 51 years firmly disagreed, twice, that her marriage was a mistake or problematic. She stated when asked if she ever felt it was wrong to be interracially married, “No, I don’t see why I should feel that way. I didn’t marry him for the color but for the principle.” Mrs. Brown again defended her opinion by telling a story about being asked about her marriage:

Many people want to know how mixed couples meet. People have asked me point blank how did I meet my husband, and how did I marry a colored man. One woman was sitting in my house and talking with me, and said, ‘There is something I’ve always wanted to ask you.’ I knew what she was going to ask. She asked me, ‘How did you meet your man?’ She said, ‘Oh! That’s different.’ I said, ‘No it’s not. It’s the principle and the man, not the color that I married.

Although Mrs. Brown never explained what the “principle” was, it is clear that she felt her marriage was not deviant in any way. With the second part of her answer, she dismissed any belief that she was somehow mistaken when she married Mr. Brown.

Mrs. Tilton, a 40-year-old woman also from Germany and married for 13 years, also dismissed the notion that her marriage was deviant. She asked rhetorically “So what’s wrong if a person chooses a colored man for their husband? Had I married a Jew, Dago or any other nationality not a word would have been said, but as soon as you take on a colored man the world begins to think you’re insane or low class.” Mrs. Tilton also addressed the *primary* issue at hand: that her intermarriage was somehow different from marriages between native-born Whites and White immigrants. From her quote, it is obvious that intermarriage between Whites and Blacks, whether they be White immigrants or not, was seen as the lowest form of marriage; so much so that one’s mental health was in question. Mrs. Parsons, the 45-year-old American-born woman from Danville, Wisconsin echoed the same feelings. She stated, “If you think a Negro marrying a German is any different than a German marrying a Dago, I don’t see any difference.” Despite their protests, however, these women’s response also demonstrates that intermarriage to native-born person does not always yield positive outcomes. These women are left defending their marital choices and this is because Blacks’ status as unprivileged natives was lower than that of other immigrants’ foreign born status.

American-Born Women and Positive Meanings of Interracial Marriage

Although both White immigrant and native-born women attached negative meanings to their experiences of being interracially married, only native women also imbued interracial marriage with positive meaning. This attachment was entirely separate from denouncing the negative meanings that both groups of women attached to being intermarried to Black American

men. American-born women viewed intermarriage as something that had both social and political benefits. Socially, they saw intermarriage as a privilege, successful, and respectable. Politically, they felt that interracial marriage could assist in addressing issues of racism. Immigrant women tied no such meanings to their intermarriages despite being racialized as White American women.

Meaning: Interracial Marriage is Socially Useful

Native-born women viewed interracial marriage as socially useful in that it expanded their social horizons. Mrs. Allen spoke highly of interracial marriage because it gave her opportunities she felt she would have missed if she had married into her own race. Mrs. Allen stated, “My life has been a privilege to mingle with the different races and I’ve enjoyed it. We have many colored friends. If I had not met my husband, I figure that I may have married some white man and never had all these wonderful experiences.” Mrs. Palmer, a 22-year-old Jewish woman who was initially against intermarriage prior to meeting her husband, also saw intermarriage as something that expanded her worldview. She remarked, “I guess I had made up my mind I would never marry a Jew. I had made up my mind I was going to marry a Gentile. I didn’t want to live in a ghetto like most Jews. They just have a habit of living together. I wanted to meet all kinds of people. With Negroes it’s like being among Gentiles. You find different religious beliefs, different ideas. The Jews are all one religion and have the same ideas.”

Interracially married White American-born women also touted the success of interracial marriages. It appears that the public doubted the stability of mixed marriages and these women felt compelled to address it. Mrs. Elliot, a 46-year-old woman from Chicago stated, “You find very few divorces in mixed marriages.” Mrs. Johnson, a 40-year-old native-born woman, also felt that interracial marriages were successful. She drew a contrast between her own mixed

marriage and those in her family who had White spouses and opposed interracial marriage to demonstrate her point:

“I have relatives who were married seven years and separated. We’ve been married 21 years. That is better than my family. They have separated and divorced. Most intermarriages stick together. How many couples do you find nowadays to stay together that long? Most women get 10 husbands in 21 years. Yet most people object to interracial marriage. My father and my mother were the same way [objected to interracial marriage] and a lot of my relatives didn’t like it. The same ones have lived with us. They found that they were wrong.”

These native White women viewed interracial marriages as not only successful, but perhaps more stable than racially homogamous marriages. To them, the fragility of interracial marriage between Blacks and Whites was simply fiction.

Lastly, native-born interracially married women saw intermarriage as respectable.

Although the general view of interracial marriage was that they happened primarily between the lower class of Blacks and Whites (Drake and Cayton 1993). These American-born women saw it differently. They felt that visibility, that is, who the public saw in interracial couplings influenced views about the respectability interracially married couples. Mrs. Hamilton, an American-born 64-year-old woman, unpacked this issue of respectability regarding interracial couples and class figured prominently in her explanation. She explained that Black-White interracial marriage was considered dishonorable because society only saw the lowest class of interracially married couples. She stated, “The thing that hurts us most is that the people who are most respectable are not seen as much as the others who have intermarried. Frequently, they can’t have their marriage known because of the work they are doing.” Thus, due to the material and social costs associated with being interracially married, respectable couples were forced to hide their marriages to minimize or avoid these costs. Mrs. Haines wanted to start a club for interracial couples and agreed with Mrs. Hamilton. In evaluating the respectability of couples

before asking them to join the club, Mrs. Haines and her husband met with couples face-to-face. She found that many interracial couples were squeamish about being seen in public. She explained to Dr. Roberts, “We interviewed the same as you’re doing. We went to their homes and asked them if they would come in our organization. Many of them wouldn’t come. A lot of them seem to be in a corner and don’t want anybody to know that they are married.”

These women disagreed that most intermarried couples were disreputable because they understood that reputable couples had much more to lose as a consequence of being interracially married. In their view, the interracial couples that the public saw was simply due to class isolation among intermarried couples. Because the respectable couples were not visible, the stereotypes that interracial marriage happened between disrespectable people [i.e. working and lower class] persisted. In reality, however, there was variation in respectability among Black-White interracially married couples.

Meaning: Intermarriage is Politically Useful

Native women also saw marriage as a tool of social change. Mrs. Johnson’s appreciation for intermarriage did not stop at enjoying herself mixed race parties. She also viewed interracial marriage as useful for eradicating the prejudice between Blacks and Whites. When asked about her thoughts on intermarriage she replied, “I think it’s a wonderful thing. It will end a lot of this prejudice. I think it will make the country a better place to live in. I wish more of them would marry this way. It would take away a lot of the prejudice. I have no use for a person who talks against it. That makes more prejudice.” Mrs. Rose, a friendly and hospitable 30-year-old Jewish woman, stated that she saw her interracial marriage as “doing something” when she married her husband. She reported, “I thought I was doing something when I married my husband.” Like

Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Rose felt that her marriage was politically significant given the racial structure and climate.

“I didn’t know”: Deciphering the U.S. Racial Structure

Given the costs that White immigrant and American-born women encountered, one has to wonder if they expected that they would face these challenges before they were married. Also, would they have made the same marital decisions if they knew about the costs they would endure prior to being married? Our evidence reveals that understanding the unique status of Blacks as unprivileged natives, not simply as another group of immigrants, was significant for the meanings that each group of women attached to their intermarriages. We found that immigrant women were more likely than American-born women to state that they did not fully understand the American racial climate before they entered into their marriages. In fact, on average, immigrant women were in the US for only seven years before marrying their Black husbands (see Table 1). Therefore, they had little knowledge of Blacks’ racial status in the US before they married them. American-born women, however, often expressed having a strong understanding of what their marriage signified in the social structure due to their spouses’ race and the consequences they would face as a result.

For some immigrant women, the US was the first place they encountered a Black person. Mrs. Curtis from Germany stated, “There weren’t any colored people in my country then. The first colored man I saw was on the train when I was coming from New York. That was all new to me.” Mrs. Curtis added, “I can understand a foreigner intermarrying because we are not used to it. I’ve never been able to understand why an American woman would do it. They understand conditions and I don’t know how they can do it.” This response implied that if Mrs. Curtis had understood the racial conditions better, she may not have intermarried.

Although other women lived and worked with Blacks in their home countries, the US's particular treatment and attitude toward Black Americans was new to them. Mrs. Reed, a 40-year-old immigrant from Scotland via Canada, echoed her sentiments and compared the racial conditions in the US to that of Scotland:

Why, certainly, there were colored people in Scotland. My mother never nursed me. We had a colored maid. She was an African Kru woman. Yes, that's the tribe. My mother went off for days on cases and left us with her... There are colored people all over England and Scotland, especially in London and Glasgow. They live all over in London, Edinburg, and Liverpool. They can live in any part of the city. I never knew what prejudice was until I came here (my emphasis).

Mrs. Reed was not familiar with the kind of hostility towards Black Americans that kept them at the very bottom of the racial hierarchy and in disadvantaged positions in the field of racial positions (Bonilla-Silva 2014; Kim 1999).

Although there were fewer of them, (two to be exact), American-born women also stated that they did not understand the racial climate or the consequences of their choice to marry interracially. Mrs. Wells, a woman from a small town in upstate New York stated, "I didn't know about the prejudice. I'll tell you the truth. I didn't know about it when I was a child and after I was too busy to notice it. In Chicago [after she was married] I noticed it as soon as I came here." Mrs. Hopkins, a 21-year-old woman from a small town in Indiana, faced some disapproval about her impending interracial marriage while in Indiana. She and her husband came to Chicago to be married. Nevertheless, Mrs. Hopkins states that she was unaware of how far reaching the consequences of being interracially married would be. She explained:

Of course after the people in our little town found it [intention to be interracially married] out, they began to criticize me. I knew it would be lots of talk so we came to Chicago and got married... I didn't realize the social side of it [interracial marriage] until I went to the hospital to have my baby. You see I went to St. Luke to have the baby, and in making out the admittance card, I *had* (my emphasis) to tell them I was white and my husband was colored."

After moving to Chicago, Mrs. Hopkins soon recognized that her marriage would not simply be the cause of “talk”. She would also suffer institutional costs. Interestingly, there are two things that Mrs. Wells and Mrs. Hopkins had in common: they were both from small towns with only one Black family and migrated to Chicago to be married. Thus, they too had an immigration experience that may have contributed to lacking expectations about how costly their interracial marriages would be.

In contrast to the immigrant women (and two American-born women), most of the native-born women seemed more aware of the racial climate and what it meant for their marriages. Mrs. Miner, a 30-year-old woman stated that before anyone married interracially, it was important to “thoroughly understand [that] they have a double load.” That is, they should fully understand that they would face opposition from both Blacks and Whites about their marriage. Mrs. Booth, a 21-year-old native woman from put the sentiments the clearest: “I wasn’t surprised about nothing because I knew what I was coming up against. I knew what I was getting into and took it as it came.” Consequently, whereas American-born women understood that their interracial marriages held great significance in the social structure and had expectations that reflected that understanding, immigrant women, limited in their exposure to the racial climate, did not have this knowledge. This difference greatly influenced White native-born women’s ability to attach positive meaning to their marriages and the inability of immigrant women to do so. It may also provide an explanation of why the consequences of intermarriage to a native-born person does not always hold great promise. This alternative observation would be more challenging to reach if only Whites are considered the only population of native-born Americans in scholarship that examines the relationship between immigration and intermarriage.

lack of understanding that they were not simply marrying an immigrant or someone with the same status and privilege as a White native could explain why these immigrant women were unable to attach positive meanings to their Black-White intermarriage despite facing the same costs of American-born women.

Conclusion

In this paper, we argue that the current and past literature that explores the relationship between immigration and intermarriage fall short because it fails to acknowledge and account for Blacks' unique status as part of the native-born American population. In doing so, the literature obscures that nativity is constructed using race both in scholarship and social life; it obscures the power of race in determining who is an outsider and who is a foreigner; it serves to reinforce the primacy of Whiteness in defining the immigrant and the native; and it obscures the reality that Blacks, through a process of inclusion (intermarriage), not only exclusion or isolation as often described in immigration literature, played a vital role in the integration process of a population of European immigrants. In connection with the latter point, it also obscures the agency that Blacks had in American immigration history. While this racialization into Whiteness is a consequence implied in Gordon's marital assimilation theory, the racialization of European immigrants (and other immigrants) through intermarriage is only reserved for marriage to native-born Whites and not marriages to Blacks because Blacks are not considered native-born. These obfuscations are significant because academic scholarship, sociology included, may be complicit in perpetuating Black exceptionalism. More significantly, however, it may be complicit in defining the outcomes between immigration and intermarriage from the perspective of Whiteness (Treitler 2015; Steinberg 2007).

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