Article

Entry and Stability of Cross-National Marriages in the United States

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Abstract

As more and more people move across borders, marriage is becoming an increasingly global affair. Yet cross-national marriage (CNM) migration has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. The present study examines the characteristics and marital stability of unions between U.S. nationals and their foreign-born (FB) spouses residing in the United States. Two data sources were used in the analysis—the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). Our results indicated that, after controlling for race/ethnicity, socioeconomic background and marital history, marriages between U.S. nationals and their FB spouses who entered the United States as adults were less stable than unions between two native-born (NB) spouses. Compared with non-Hispanic Whites, Asian and Hispanic U.S. nationals were more prone to marry FB spouses. We also found that husband NB–wife FB marriages seemed to fare better than wife NB–husband FB types.

Keywords

marital stability, cross-national marriages, gender, ethnic, origin

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Introduction

Facilitated by globalization, the cross-national marriage (CNM) market continues to expand with no signs of slowing down (Constable, 2009; Jones & Shen, 2008). Although the majority of CNM migrations still occur within East and South-East Asia, the United States has become one of the major bride-importing countries (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015; Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Levchenko & Solheim, 2013). The term CNM in this article specifically refers to marriages between a native-born (NB) and a foreign-born (FB) who entered the United States as an adult. The number of nonimmigrant visas issued annually to FB spouses and fiancé(e)s of U.S. citizens and their children increased more than two times from 1995 to 2015 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2016).

Although the CNM explosion has not gone unnoticed by the scientific community, existing research focused primarily on the difficulties of assimilation into the host society faced by the foreign brides and their vulnerability to domestic abuse (Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Constable, 2003). As such, our knowledge of the sociodemographic profiles of CNM migrants is fragmentary, at best. Even less is known about the duration and stability of CNMs, partially because much of the prior research devoted to CNM migrants have been dominated by qualitative studies with small and unrepresentative samples (Bélanger, Lee, & Wang, 2010).

Conventional portrayals of marriage migrants in contemporary migration research almost exclusively focuses on women, assuming most intercountry marriages are made up of foreign brides. Although this focus contributes to the skewed perception of CNMs, it is perhaps because FB women in CNMs experience more challenges to adaptation and, therefore, are more vulnerable than FB men (Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Constable, 2003). Moreover, the recent scholarly attention to female marriage migrants can be seen as a positive trend because migration studies have been gender blind for a long time (Pessar & Mahler, 2003).

It is also worth noting that prior studies (e.g., Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Ryabov, 2016; Wang & Chang, 2002; Zahedi, 2010) examining CNM have been overwhelmingly qualitative, thereby precluding statistical inference about the stability of CNMs. The current prevalence of qualitative research can be attributed, at least in part to the paucity of survey data on CNM migration. Unlike these qualitative studies, we want to show a more complete picture of CNMs with nationally representative data.

To the best of our knowledge, our study represents the first attempt to study the stability of CNMs. Using large nationally representative samples drawn from the ACS and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), we wanted to (1) demonstrate selectivity of CNM in the United

States, (2) assess the probability for an NB individual to marry a FB spouse, and (3) examine and compare marital stability of CNM and other marriages, while controlling for race–ethnicity, age, education, income, and other confounding factors. We hereby refer to CNMs as those between an NB and a FB who entered the United States as an adult (i.e., aged 18 years and older) as compared with non-CNM unions that were formed between two FB persons or between an NB and a FB who immigrated before reaching their 18th birthday. Additionally, we investigated the stability of marriages involving one NB and at least one FB, noncitizen at the time of marriage that were formed during the year of their arrival to the United States. Henceforth, we refer to FB persons who entered these marriages as marriage migrants.

The coincidence of timing of marriage and migration has been noted by several prior studies as a correlate of marriage migration (Balistreri, Joyner, & Kao, 2017; Levchenko & Solheim, 2013; Stevens, Ishizawa, & Escandell, 2012). Specifically, Levchenko and Solheim (2013) treated those who first came to the United States and then married a U.S.-born native or citizen within a year as K-1 (fiancé/fiancée) visa holders, given that the K-1 visa requires its holder to get married within 90 days on arrival to the United States. We also acknowledge that these labels—native marriages and marriage migrants—might be arbitrary since native marriages may include FBs who arrived in the United States at younger ages. Likewise, FBs who married in the year of their arrival to the United States did not necessarily marry in order to migrate. We acknowledge that we were unable to identify all marriage migrants using the methodologies of the SIPP and ACS. As indicated by other studies (e.g., González-Ferrer, 2006; Stevens et al., 2012), a certain number of immigrants marry in their own country as spouses of host country nationals before coming to the host country. Furthermore, some foreign nationals can enter the United States on other types of nonimmigrant visas (as students, visitors, religious workers, etc.), and later (possibly even in the year of arrival), acquire permanent legal resident status as a result of marriage to a U.S. national.

Conceptual Framework

To study the instability of CNM, the present study draws from several theoretical perspectives. One of them is social exchange theory. The main assumption of this theory is that the resources of exchange—ranging from economic (money) to aesthetical (beauty)—are always scarce and in demand (Blau, 1964, 1977; Homans, 1958). Social exchange theory has an exalted pedigree, and several offshoots have evolved over the years. One of particular interest to this study is the Davis–Merton hypothesis (Davis, 1941; Merton, 1941). This hypothesis, also frequently referred to as status–caste exchange theory, was

originally set to explain why White women of lower socioeconomic standing marry Black men of higher socioeconomic standing. In its classical form, the Davis–Merton hypothesis contends that members of higher status social groups whose individual socioeconomic standing in society is low would have better chances of marrying outside their group. This hypothesis was later expanded to include other types of exchanges in mate selection (Choi, Tienda, Cobb-Clark, & Sinning, 2012; Gullickson & Torche, 2014). Here, the focus is not on the exchange of resources, as in the classical exchange theory, but on the exchange of statuses or roles. When applied to CNMs, the Davis–Merton hypothesis predicts that CNMs will be less homogenous in terms of income, education, age, and other social indicators than native unions (Choi et al., 2012). Generally speaking, the natives offer the characteristics sought after by the immigrants in exchange for the characteristics they desire from the natives. For example, the natives offer American citizenship or permanent residency in exchange for the characteristics they desire, such as beauty or higher social class (Choi et al., 2012; González-Ferrer, 2006).

The alternative view represented by the homogamy hypothesis asserts that people tend to marry others similar to themselves (e.g., Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn, de Graaf, & Janssen, 2005) as a result of preferences or opportunities. Concerning the meeting opportunities, the following has been observed: Not only do people marry similar others but also proximate others, and, only if they cannot find a mate within their circle of acquaintances, they expand their search pool to other geographical locales (Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Jones & Shen, 2008). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that in order to compensate for inherent inequality between an immigrant spouse and a native spouse, CNMs can be more homogenous than native couples. In support of this view, a number of studies found that people who married outside their culture formed unions with partners within the same social class (González-Ferrer, 2006; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2006; Qian & Lichter, 2007, 2011). Moreover, evidence suggests that those who marry outside their culture would have rather married someone within their culture with certain characteristics if such a partner were available (Heyse, 2010; Lyons & Ford, 2008). Thus, following this line of thought, we expect that CNMs will be more homogenous with respect to race–ethnicity, age, educational attainment, income, and marital history than native marriages (Hypothesis 1).

In general, the homogamy hypothesis argues that marriages that unite individuals of the same race–ethnicity and with similar levels of age, education, and income are more stable than heterogamous marriages (Kalmijn, 1998; Kalmijn et al., 2005; Schwartz & Mare, 2005). The empirical evidence available so far has widely confirmed this hypothesis (Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2006; Qian & Lichter, 2001; Smith, Maas, & van Tubergen, 2012).

It is worth mentioning that, although there have been quite a few attempts to test the homogamy hypothesis on interethnic marriages (e.g., Jones, 1996; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009), no research has applied this hypothesis to the study of CNMs. Nevertheless, the research conducted on interethnic marriages (Joyner & Kao, 2005; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009) provides a solid starting point for an investigation of CNMs.

On the basis of this research, we suggest that there can be two main reasons why CNMs are likely to be less stable than native marriages: (1) the former threaten in-group solidarity and, therefore, are less socially acceptable (Nagel, 2003) and (2) there is an intrinsic difference of cultural background and social status between a native and an immigrant partner (Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). Thus, CNMs can be disrupted more easily than native marriages as a result of both internal (e.g., cultural differences between the partners) and external pressures (e.g., ostracism from family, friends, and larger society). Therefore, we believe that the duration of marriage will be lower for cross-national couples than for the native ones (Hypothesis 2).

Alternatively, the convergence theory contends that the divorce propensity of interethnic couples lies in between the divorce propensities of the endogenously married couples representing the ethnic groups involved (Kalmijn et al., 2005). In practical terms, the convergence theory predicts that a divorce risk of an ethnic intermarriage will be the average of the divorce risks of the wife's and husband's ethnic groups. Evidence abounds that separation and divorce patterns differ by ethnic group (Dribe & Lundh, 2012; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004). Specifically in the United States, intraracial marriages of Asian and Hispanic Americans tend to be more stable, and those of Blacks tend to be less stable than intraracial marriages of non-Hispanic Whites (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Fu & Wolfinger, 2011). All in all, Asians are the least likely to experience marital disruption than other race–ethnic groups in the United States (Bulanda & Brown, 2007; Sweeney & Phillips, 2004). Following Smith et al. (2012), we believe that the predictions of homogamy and convergence theories do not disagree with each other, but rather argue that their mechanisms could work simultaneously. Thus, marital stability of CNM couples can be affected not only by the individual sociodemographic factors but also by the divorce patterns of the ethnic groups involved. In practice, this means that we need to control for the race–ethnicity of each spouse.

Nativity status and gender may be unique factors sufficiently complex to warrant a more detailed explanation for CNMs. Some American men may assume women from abroad to be more "traditional," thus more "feminine" and preferable as partners (Constable, 2003; Schaeffer, 2012). At the same time, several studies have pointed out that foreign brides from developing countries come

to the West with a sense of independence and with a hope to start a new life with a "modern" husband (Herrera, 2013; Kim, 2010). Theoretically, the conflict of expectations about future gender roles in marriage can be a major cause of marital dissolution of the unions between U.S.-born men and FB women. This leads us to the next hypothesis exploring gender effect on such a union: We expect that unions of U.S.-born husbands and FB wives will be less stable than unions of U.S.-born wives and FB husbands (Hypothesis 3).

Although, as mentioned above, the majority of FB spouses do not use marriage as a means to immigrate to the United States, some do. Unfortunately, neither the SIPP nor the ACS inquires into the reason(s) for migration. As stated before, we operationalized marriage migrants as those noncitizens who marry within the year of arrival to the United States. As suggested by Levchenko and Solheim (2013), these individuals likely immigrated to the United States via marriages or fiancé visas sponsored by their American partner. In line with Levchenko and Solheim (2013), we believe CNMs which unite a U.S. national and a marriage migrant will be less stable than the rest of CNMs (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Data Sources

To gain an accurate, consistent picture of CNMs in the United States, we analyzed two data sources—the SIPP and the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS has replaced the long version of the decennial census. Since 2008, the ACS includes questions on current marital status and marital history, such as the number of times the adult respondents have been married and the year the latest marriage began. The ACS is an annual survey of more than 2 million U.S. households, weighted to represent the national population. Moreover, the ACS includes information on the year of arrival to the United States (for FB individuals), which allows construction of a dummy variable that can identify CNMs. The key motivation for using the SIPP data comes from the unique availability of time-varying information on marital and migration statuses as well as other important sociodemographic variables. In other words, the main advantage of using the SIPP is that it allows examining marital stability of CNMs over time.

The SIPP is a multistage stratified survey of the U.S. civilian population. Since its inception in 1984, the sample size has ranged from approximately 14,000 to 36,700 interviewed households (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Each SIPP wave includes a core file and different topical modules. Topical Module 2 is extremely useful for this study as it contains consistent comparable data on marital and migration histories over time. In order to study marital dissolution

patterns, we added Topical Module 2 to each panel file to create the dated time series for each couple. Then, eight panels of the SIPP (1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996, 2001, 2004, and 2008) were pooled to assemble a large enough sample of NB and FB individuals. The sample derived from the SIPP comprises 46,270 couples with at least one of spouse aged 18 to 44 years and who were married for the first time at the beginning of each SIPP panel or during the ongoing waves of each panel. Prior to the analyses, we have deleted all observations with missing values on the key measures, resulting in a total sample size of 40,033 couples. Out of these, only 3,164 (or 7.9%) were cross-national unions.

The other data source is the 2010-2014 ACS, a representative sample of the Integrated Public Use Microdata (Ruggles et al., 2010). The ACS is a large, national survey of the U.S. noninstitutionalized population. Fully implemented in 2005, the ACS was designed as an equivalent of the Census long-form content on an annual basis (instead of once every 10 years). The 5-year public use microdata sample (PUMS) for 2010-2014 combines PUMS 1-year files from PUMS 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. We drew our couple-level data set from the 2010 to 2014 PUMS data which includes individuals who are currently married to a different-sex spouse (N = 799,987). The couple-level file was intended to give us a complete picture of CNMs and help us analyze the odds of entering CNM.

Variables and Measures

Dependent Variables

Our first outcome measure is the probability for a U.S. national marrying a FB spouse who arrived in the United States at the age of 18 years or older versus marrying a U.S.-born partner (NB-NB marriage) or the FB-FB marriage. The FB-FB marriage is defined as marriages between two FB persons who came to the United States after the age of 18 years. Logistic regression was used to estimate the probability of marrying a partner from abroad in both the SIPP and ACS samples. The second outcome, marital stability (a dummy coded variable capturing both divorce and marital separation) was assessed by using the SIPP sample only via Cox proportional hazard regression, a statistical procedure commonly used with censored data sets like the SIPP (e.g., Zhang & Van Hook, 2009).

Explanatory Variables

The dummy variable that distinguishes marriages between U.S.-born husbands and FB wives from those between U.S.-born wives and FB husbands

was included in the analysis. Though the ACS or the SIPP did not ask immigrants their reasons for entry into the United States, both surveys include some variables which allow some marriage migrants to be identified. As explained above and in line with Levchenko and Solheim (2013), we treated those who first came to the United States and then married a U.S.-born native or citizen within a year as marriage migrants. Instead of controlling for the geographic origin of the FB spouse which was not available in the SIPP, we coded spouses of the same racial–ethnic categories in the following fashion: non-Hispanic White (White, hereafter), non-Hispanic Black (Black, hereafter), Asian, Hispanic, and other minority (included multiracial individuals and people who were identified as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders, or some other race). The dummy for interracial couples was also included in the analysis. The duration of marriage was not controlled in the Cox proportional hazard models run on the SIPP sample because the hazard function accounts for the ordering of failure times. Instead, we controlled for marriage cohort in the analyses run on the SIPP sample. Four dummy variables were included to indicate the decade when the couple got married (e.g., before 1980, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s as the reference group).

In the SIPP and ACS samples, we also controlled for both education and age gaps between the spouses. Educational attainment was measured by a series of dummy variables that distinguish respondents with less than high school, high school, some college, and college. In the SIPP and ACS samples, we also controlled for both education and age gaps between the spouses. Following Zhang and Van Hook (2009), the age difference between the spouses was categorized as follows: husband 5 years older than the wife, approximately the same age (reference), husband 2 years younger than the wife. Other control variables in the ACS and SIPP data sets included previously well-researched predictors such as the number of preschool-aged (0-4 years old) children in the household, marriage order dummy variable contrasting those in a first (reference category) versus higher order (i.e., remarriage) marriage, rural residency (residing in a metro area was the reference category), husband's and wife's past year incomes.

Results

Table 1 showed a significant difference in terms of marital duration between CNMs and other unions (χ^2 tests were not shown for parsimony). The most noticeable demographic difference between native and cross-national couples was the racial–ethnic composition of the two groups. Despite being minorities in the United States, Asians and Hispanics were overrepresented in the CNMs. For example, Asian males accounted for only 5% and 1% of

Table 1. Weighted Means of All Variables, ACS, and SIPP Samples.

Variables	ACS (N = 799,987)			SIPP (N = 40,033)		
	NB-NB (n = 701,854)	NB-FB (n = 98,153)	FB-FB (n = 67,690)	NB-NB (n = 36,869)	NB-FB (n = 3,164)	FB-FB (n = 2,876)
Marriage duration	12.6	10.0	14.5	12.7	10.1	15.1
Marriage migrant	—	0.27	—	—	0.23	—
U.S.-born (H), foreign-born (W)	—	0.54	—	—	0.51	—
Race–ethnicity (H)						
Asian	0.05	0.17	0.25	0.01	0.13	0.23
Black	0.09	0.06	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.07
Hispanic	0.10	0.53	0.45	0.06	0.50	0.48
Non-Hispanic White	0.74	0.21	0.06	0.82	0.28	0.08
Other	0.02	0.03	0.15	0.02	0.02	0.14
Race–ethnicity (W)						
Asian	0.06	0.22	0.26	0.02	0.19	0.25
Black	0.08	0.06	0.09	0.08	0.06	0.06
Hispanic	0.10	0.44	0.46	0.07	0.42	0.47
Non-Hispanic White	0.73	0.26	0.05	0.82	0.32	0.09
Other	0.03	0.02	0.14	0.01	0.01	0.13
Interracial couple	0.08	0.10	0.05	0.07	0.08	0.04
Age difference						
H > 5 years older than W	0.14	0.20	0.16	0.18	0.22	0.16
Approximately same age	0.75	0.73	0.76	0.72	0.71	0.76
H > 2 years younger than W	0.11	0.07	0.08	0.10	0.07	0.08

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variables	ACS (N = 799,987)			SIPP (N = 40,033)		
	NB-NB (n = 701,854)	NB-FB (n = 98,153)	FB-FB (n = 67,690)	NB-NB (n = 36,869)	NB-FB (n = 3,164)	FB-FB (n = 2,876)
Educational attainment						
H higher	0.14	0.22	0.19	0.15	0.21	0.19
W higher	0.07	0.05	0.08	0.14	0.11	0.14
Both less than high school	0.09	0.10	0.29	0.03	0.01	0.18
Both high school	0.21	0.20	0.19	0.18	0.10	0.21
Both some college	0.25	0.20	0.15	0.06	0.13	0.12
Both college	0.24	0.23	0.10	0.44	0.44	0.16
Income						
Income (H)	55,477	55,286	43,717	48,216	53,502	41,048
Income (W)	24,361	24,418	20,320	22,019	19,487	18,367
Marital history						
Remarriages (H)	0.13	0.24	0.10	0.12	0.24	0.09
Remarriages (W)	0.15	0.29	0.08	0.03	0.21	0.07
Number of preschool-aged children	0.13	0.14	0.22	0.42	0.47	0.58
Rural residence	0.16	0.11	0.21	0.21	0.17	0.26
Marriage cohort						
Before 1980				0.18	0.16	0.13
1980-1989				0.30	0.27	0.26
1990-1999				0.41	0.44	0.39
2000 or later				0.11	0.13	0.22

Note. ACS = American Community Survey; SIPP = Survey of Income and Program Participation; NB = native born; FB = foreign born; H = husbands; W = wives. All estimates are weighted and adjust for design effects.

native husbands in the ACS and SIPP samples, respectively, but the corresponding shares of Asian males were 17% and 13% in NB-FB, 25% and 23% in FB-FB pairings. The share of Hispanics in CNMs was even higher. Despite constituting 6% to 10% of husbands in native unions, Hispanic males accounted for about half of all husbands in CNMs. Hispanic females were not far behind. Only 7% to 10% of U.S.-born wives in native unions were Hispanic females, while over 40% of wives in CNMs were Hispanic. This finding may be partially explained by the fact that the majority of immigrants to the United States in recent years came from Asia and Latin America (Grieco et al., 2012). Noticeably in FB-NB unions, husbands were older and better educated than their wives. Both spouses in CNMs were also much more likely to be remarried than the NB-NB or FB-FB pairings.

The odds ratios for U.S. nationals marrying FBs versus being in a native marriage are displayed in Table 2. In line with our descriptive results, NB Asians and Hispanics were significantly more likely than Whites to marry a FB partner who arrived in the United States as an adult. The regression model run on the ACS data found that the NB were slightly more likely to marry a partner of a different race (not true in the SIPP sample). Furthermore, we did not find age homogamy differences between those who married intranationally versus internationally. However, there were consistent differences in terms of educational homogamy between those U.S.-natives who married U.S.-born and those who married FB partners. In both the ACS and SIPP samples, those U.S.-born men and women who formed cross-national unions were better educated than their counterparts in native marriages. In terms of marital histories, we found an important difference between those who entered cross-national unions and those who did not. As compared with their compatriots marrying intranationally, those U.S.-born men and women who married a FB partner were significantly more likely to have been previously married. Finally, compared with marriages between U.S. nationals, those entering FB-NB unions were significantly less likely to reside in rural areas. Overall, we found no evidence of greater homogeneity with respect to age, educational attainment, income, and marital history among cross-national couples as compared with native couples. Thus, we did not find support for Hypothesis 1 in both the ACS and SIPP data.

Table 3 shows the estimated hazard ratios of marital dissolution using the SIPP data. Compared with NB-NB marriages, the hazard of divorce was approximately 17% higher for NB-FB marriages. Hence, consistent with Hypothesis 2, we found CNMs were less stable than native unions. Furthermore, hazard ratios of marital dissolution were 18% lower for the unions formed between a U.S.-born husband and a FB wife than for those

Table 2. Estimated Odds Ratios of Marrying a Foreign-Born Partner (vs. a U.S.-Born Partner) for a U.S. National.

Variables	ACS (N = 799,987)	SIPP (N = 40,033)
Race–ethnicity, NB males		
White (reference)		
Asian	1.363***	3.475 ***
Black	1.029	0.942
Hispanic	1.481***	1.667***
Other	1.087*	1.066
Race–ethnicity, NB females		
White (reference)		
Asian	1.387***	2.350***
Black	0.972	0.972
Hispanic	1.415***	2.463***
Other	1.164**	0.955
Interracial couple	1.092*	1.109
Age difference		
Approximately same age (reference)		
H > 5 years older	1.046	0.969
H > 2 years young	0.983	1.073
Educational attainment		
Both college (reference)		
U.S.-born H higher	1.486***	1.187**
U.S.-born W higher	0.930*	0.827*
Both < high school	1.035	0.838*
Both high school	0.974	0.744***
Both some college	0.853**	1.166*
Income		
Income, the U.S.-born (H)	0.966	1.024
Income, the U.S.-born (W)	1.027	0.897*
Marital history		
Remarriages, the NB (H)	1.235***	1.272**
Remarriages, the NB (W)	1.259 ***	1.453***
Children from prior relationships	1.084*	1.036
Rural residence	0.813***	0.805*

Note. ACS = American Community Survey; SIPP = Survey of Income and Program Participation; NB = native born; FB = foreign born; H = husbands; W = wives. All estimates are weighted and adjusted for design effects.
*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

Table 3. Hazard Ratios of Marital Dissolution, SIPP.

Variables	NB-NB (N = 36,869)	NB-FB (N = 3,164)	FB-FB (N = 2,876)	All marriages (N = 40,033)
NB-FB marriage				1.174**
FB-FB marriage				0.870*
Marriage migrants		1.234**		
H U.S.-born, W foreign-born		0.817**		
Race–ethnicity (H)				
White (reference)				
Asian	0.716***	0.830*	0.838*	0.736***
Black	1.202*	1.014	1.067	1.183*
Hispanic	0.846*	0.952	1.040	0.840*
Other	1.017	1.011	0.963	1.023
Race–ethnicity (W)				
White (reference)				
Asian	0.746***	0.787**	0.822*	0.766***
Black	1.197**	1.042	1.054	1.171**
Hispanic	0.775***	0.956	1.087	0.805***
Other	0.966	0.960	0.978	0.987
Interracial couple	1.211**	1.142*	1.154*	1.186*
Age difference				
H > 5 years older than W	1.281**	1.188*	1.210*	1.255**
H > 2 years younger than W	0.967	0.958	1.047	0.932

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

Variables	NB-NB (N = 36,869)	NB-FB (N = 3,164)	FB-FB (N = 2,876)	All marriages (N = 40,033)
Educational attainment				
Both college (reference)				
H higher	0.965	0.883	0.972	0.944
W higher	1.373***	1.375***	1.150*	1.322**
Both less than high school	1.121	1.175*	0.897	1.115
Both high school	1.281***	1.124	1.217**	1.216***
Both some college	1.036	0.966	1.063	1.033
Income				
Income (H)	0.974	1.067	0.993	1.006
Income (W)	1.227***	1.251***	1.262***	1.236***
Marital history				
Remarriages (H)	1.266***	1.265***	1.233***	1.268***
Remarriages (W)	1.336***	1.382***	1.280***	1.341***
Number of preschool-aged children	0.856*	0.797**	0.808*	0.843*
Rural residence	0.978	1.055	0.931	0.966
Marriage cohort				
Before 1980 (reference)				
1980-1989	1.016	1.096	0.935	1.023
1990-1999	1.182*	1.057	1.040	1.146
2000 or later	0.964	0.974	1.126*	0.965

Note. ACS = American Community Survey; SIPP = Survey of Income and Program Participation; NB = native born; FB = foreign born; H = husbands; W = wives. All estimates are weighted and adjusted for design effects.
*$p < .1$. **$p < .05$. ***$p < .01$.

between a FB husband and a U.S.-born wife. This finding was contrary to what we expected (see Hypothesis 3). However, this also meant that the interaction of gender and national origin of the spouse did play a role when predicting marital stability of cross-national unions. Additionally, in line with Hypothesis 4, unions between U.S. nationals and marriage migrants were less stable than other CNMs.

As compared with non-Hispanic Whites, the hazard of divorce was significantly lower for Asians of both genders in all unions. The same was true about Hispanics, but only in native marriages. On the other hand, having a Black spouse of either gender increased one's chances of divorce in a native union. In all types of unions, the hazard of marital dissolution was significantly higher for interracial couples. We also found that the following factors undermine marital stability in all marriages: age and education disparities between spouses (i.e., husband being 5 or more years older than his wife, and wife being better educated than her husband), wife's income, and being in a remarriage.

Discussion

CNMs involving one native and one immigrant spouse have become a commonplace occurrence in industrialized countries (Choi et al., 2012; González-Ferrer, 2006; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2006; Levchenko & Solheim, 2013). Different from conventional portrayals of marriage migrants which almost exclusively focus on women, our data showed FB females only slightly outnumbered FB males in CNMs. Using two nationally representative surveys from the United States, we compared sociodemographic characteristics, examined marital stability of cross-national and intercountry marriages and tested homogamy theory and convergence theory.

According to our results, marital duration was shorter for NB-FB than for NB-NB or FB-FB couples, even after accounting for race–ethnicity, income, education, age, marital history, and other important sociodemographic factors known to affect marital disruption. It is possible that some FB spouses of U.S.-born nationals used marriage essentially as a strategy to obtain legal residence in the United States. An attempt has been made in this study to identify marriage migrants by looking at the time of marriage relative to the time of arrival in the United States. We found that marriage migrants unions (noncitizens who marry United States nationals within the year of arrival to the United States) were indeed more prone to divorce than the rest of the CNMs. However, unions between marriage migrants and U.S. nationals accounted for only 27% and 23% of CNMs in the ACS and SIPP samples, respectively. We have conducted auxiliary analyses using the SIPP survey (not shown for parsimony) that

excluded the marriages between marriage migrants and U.S. nationals and still found that NB-FB marriages were less stable than native marriages. Therefore, we believe that our results were hardly affected by sham or "green card" marriages. In line with prior research (e.g., Jones, 1996; Zhang & Van Hook, 2009), we found that interracial/interethnic marriages were less stable than intraracial/intraethnic ones. Thus, our results did not support the convergence hypothesis that the marital dissolution rate of mixed-race marriages would be the average of the marital dissolution rates of wife's and husband's respective race–ethnic groups. Instead, we observed that interracial/interethnic marriages were indeed less stable than intraracial/intraethnic ones. This finding held for both cross-national and native marriages.

Our results demonstrated that the interaction of gender and nativity status was an important predictor of marital stability of cross-national couples. We found that marriages between U.S.-born husbands and FB wives were more prone to divorce than those between U.S.-born wives and FB husbands. This finding was congruent with our expectations and with earlier research, which had shown that the conflict of expectations about future gender roles in marriage increased the chances of divorce for the couples formed between FB women and U.S.-born men (Constable, 2003, 2009; Kim, 2010; Ryabov, 2016; Schaeffer, 2012).

The conflict of expectations of U.S.-born grooms and FB brides about their future marriage has been well documented recently by a number of authors (Cheng & Choo, 2015; Herrera, 2013; Wang, 2007; Wang & Chang, 2002). Research demonstrates that many women from less developed countries used the CNM "vehicle" not to migrate to a more developed country but to escape patriarchal domination at home and to increase autonomy and control over their lives (Bélanger et al., 2010; Wang, 2007; Wang & Chang, 2002). However, this strategy was not always a success—CNMs seemed to reinforce the unequal gender relations the women wanted to escape from (Constable, 2009). This might be because on the "groom" side of the international marriage market, Western men were increasingly concerned with Western women being too assertive and aggressive and thus less "feminine" (Constable, 2003; Ryabov, 2016; Wang, 2007). These men would prefer to marry a more "traditional" woman from abroad who is often assumed to be more "feminine" (Constable, 2003; Schaeffer, 2012). This might lead to the conflict of expectations about gender roles: FB women seek to marry more "modern" husbands, while their prospective NB male partners are looking for more "traditional" wives. Our results confirmed that the conflict of expectations detracts from marital stability of unions between NB husbands and FB wives.

As we have mentioned earlier, the U.S.-born husbands only slightly outnumbered U.S.-born wives in CNMs. Thus, the fact that the marital duration was lower for unions between U.S.-born husbands and FB wives than for the

rest of CNMs was unlikely to explain why CNMs were, on average, less stable than native marriages. The homogamy hypothesis offers a more likely explanation. For example, differences in national origin related to cultural differences were likely to be responsible for lower marital stability of cross-national unions relative to native unions. Previous research showed cross-national couples were often ostracized by friends, neighbors, or colleagues (Constable, 2009; Ryabov, 2016; Schaeffer, 2012). Apart from the cultural differences and these external factors (e.g., social isolation), imbalanced power dynamics (e.g., husbands tend to be older), and having divorce-prone factors (both spouses in such unions were more likely to be remarried) might also be the key factors that lead to relatively high rates of marital dissolution of cross-national unions.

We conducted additional analyses (not shown but available on request from the corresponding author) that distinguished first and second or higher generation immigrants. That is, we estimated the same models, but replaced CNMs with marriages between an NB person with at least one FB parent and another NB person whose both parents were born in the United States. While having the same controls as in Table 3, these analyses did not find a significant difference in marital duration between these unions and unions in which both partners and their parents were NB. In other words, having a FB parent did not seem to matter when predicting martial stability between two NB individuals.

To the best of our knowledge, this investigation is the first attempt to study the stability of CNMs with nationally representative couple-level data. Other than marital dissolution, we also studied the characteristics of couples who chose to enter such unions. Our article is also the first in debunking the myth that CNMs are dominated by FB females. Nevertheless, our data are not perfect and several limitations are evident. First, SIPP only provides a 3 to 5 years' window in studying and stability of the CNMs. The cross-sectional nature of ACS made it impossible to use couples' characteristics to predict their divorce outcomes, thus we were not able to compare divorce outcomes between the ACS and SIPP. Second, though we were able to study marriage migrants by using some creative approximations, this was by no means a precise way for capturing individuals who marry in order to migrate. Moreover, we only have citizenship information (but not permanent legal status information) in the ACS and the SIPP does not collect this type of information.

Overall, our findings were in line with previous research indicating that the propensity to divorce differed considerably between U.S.-born and FB individuals (Rosenfeld, 2002). The NB-FB unions were indeed less stable, but the U.S. husband–FB wife unions fared much better than the U.S. wife–FB husband pairings. Future studies should collect data on immigrants' social isolation, employment discrimination, loss of identity, and mental health

issues—information that is rarely available in large surveys. Further investigations are also warranted to determine the exact pathways CNMs are formed and the motives underlying these unions. Additionally, it will be interesting to study the country of origins of foreign nationals to see if there are chain migrations and other patterns of CNMs.

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