Immigration and Status Exchange in Australia and the United States

Kate H. Choi[*],
Princeton University

Marta Tienda,
Princeton University

Deborah Cobb-Clark, and
University of Melbourne

Mathias Sinning
Australian National University

Abstract

This paper evaluates the status exchange hypothesis for Australia and the United States, two Anglophone nations with long immigration traditions whose admission regimes place different emphases on skills. Using log-linear methods, we demonstrate that foreign-born spouses trade educational credentials via marriage with natives in both Australian and U.S. marriage markets and, moreover, that nativity is a more salient marriage barrier for men than for women. With some exceptions, immigrant spouses in mixed nativity couples are better educated than native spouses in same nativity couples, but status exchange is more prevalent among the less-educated spouses in both countries. Support for the status exchange hypothesis is somewhat weaker in Australia partly because of lower average levels of education compared with the United States and partly because of less sharply defined educational hierarchy at the postsecondary level.

Keywords

Status exchange; immigration; educational assortative mating

1. Introduction

Between 1970 and 2005, the number of international migrants more than doubled, rising from 82 to 191 million, with two-thirds destined for high-income industrialized nations (Zlotnik, 2006: Table 6). Currently, the United States hosts the largest absolute number of immigrants, estimated around 38 million in 2005, but the major industrial Anglophone countries—Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom—all rank among the top 10 nations based on the number of immigrants admitted annually.[1] In relative terms, however,

[*]Please direct correspondence to Kate H. Choi, The Bendheim Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, Wallace Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544, hychoi@princeton.edu, Phone : (609)258-6978, Fax: (609)258-5804.

[1]Australia technically ranks 11 in 2005 based on the size of its foreign born population, but we exclude Saudi Arabia because, like other Arab nations, the foreigners are temporary workers rather than permanent settlers.

Australia trumps the United States as an immigrant nation: about one in four Australian residents are foreign born compared with 12.5 percent for the United States and nine percent for the UK (Freeman & Birrell, 2001; GMF, 2009; Walsh, 2008).[2]

The rise of international migration in developed nations has rekindled interest in the social integration of immigrants. Intermarriage is viewed as the maximal extent of social integration because it requires intimacy, and as such, signals the absence of social barriers in inter-group relations. Yet until recently, few studies have examined patterns of intermarriage of immigrant groups or explored the extent to which nativity status serves as a social boundary for marital sorting (Khoo et al., 2009; Lichter et al., 2011; Qian & Lichter, 2001). Instead, studies of intermarriage focus on racial and ethnic boundaries, and with few exceptions, the majority focuses on single countries, particularly the United States. Accordingly, we consider the permeability of nativity as a social boundary for couple formation by asking whether immigrants engage in status exchange via the marriage market.

Educational status exerts a powerful influence on mate selection; therefore, the status implications of birthplace will likely depend on immigrants' schooling and labor market qualifications. There is ample empirical evidence that educational assortative mating shapes the future contours of social cohesion and inequality (Mare, 1991; Torche, 2010), hence the skill composition of immigrants has direct implications for social integration, and intermarriage trends more specifically. If the salience of nativity as a social boundary for marriage depends on education such that highly skilled immigrants are more attractive to potential spouses than less-skilled natives, then patterns of status exchange should differ between Australia and the United States because of the countries' differing emphases on skill as a condition for admission (Freeman & Birrell, 2001; Walsh, 2008; Wasem, 2007).

Australia and the United States provide interesting cases for evaluating the social significance of nativity as a social boundary for intermarriage because of their differing emphases on skills and family reunification as admission criteria. Australia admits approximately two-thirds of its immigrants on skill criteria and strives to recruit persons during their peak working ages (Walsh, 2008). By contrast, about two-thirds of U.S. immigrants are family sponsored, without regard to skills or age (Wasem, 2007). English proficiency is required to attain U.S. citizenship, but is not an explicit admission criterion; however, in order to facilitate market integration, Australia emphasizes a minimum level of English competency as a condition for entry.[3]

To investigate whether immigrant status is a social boundary for mate selection, we build on the theoretical insights from studies of marital sorting and immigrant assimilation. Substantively, we add to a growing literature on intermarriage by explicitly considering how nativity is correlated with assortative mating patterns and empirically evaluating the status exchange hypothesis in the comparative perspective. Methodologically, our analysis builds on recent developments to estimate status exchange models, which have been the basis of a spirited controversy (Fu, 2001; Gullickson, 2006; Gullickson & Fu, 2010; Kalmijn, 2010; Rosenfeld, 2005, 2010). Based on these developments, we examine alternative expressions of status exchange that compares educational levels of mixed nativity couples with couples of same nativity status.

Section 2 reviews prior research about status exchange and theorizes how nativity potentially operates as a social boundary. Owing to differences in populations studied and

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[2]The UN estimates indicate that one in five Australian residents are foreign born but the Australian government reports that over 5.3 million residents are foreign born, which represents 25 percent of the population.
[3]Specifically, prospective immigrants must score at least a "6" on all four components of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam, or a "5" if destined for a trade occupation. English proficiency requirements were raised in fall, 2010.

empirical methods used, the existing empirical literature does not yield clear conclusions about the salience of nativity as a social boundary, and specifically, whether status exchanges accentuate or attenuate status divisions. In Section 3, we describe the data and the empirical estimation strategy, with due attention both to comparability of educational categories between countries and to recent methodological developments for evaluating status exchange. Empirical results, including model selection, are reported in Section 4. The conclusion highlights similarities and differences between Australia and the United States and discusses the insights and challenges of cross-national comparisons.

2. Theories and Evidence

2.1. Intermarriage as Status Exchange

Based on studies of the caste system in India, Kingsley Davis (1941) coined the notion of caste-status exchange in intermarriage, which he generalized to marital racial barriers in the United States "where white and black constitute two distinct racial castes [and] no intermarriage is legally or morally permitted" (Davis, 1941: 388). The basic idea is that marriage partners "trade" characteristics such that highly-ranked members of out groups exchange their status by marrying lower-ranked members of in groups. Writing during a period of low immigration, Davis (1941) did not consider whether birthplace operates as a barrier to marriage. Nevertheless, he explicitly acknowledged that immigration blurs racial and class boundaries via intermarriage, and that intermarriage is "both a criterion and an agency of assimilation" (p. 377) that bears on "the societal need for vertical as well as horizontal cohesion" (p. 394). In its narrow formulation, the status exchange hypothesis implies that in mixed nativity couples, the immigrant will marry a native with lower achieved status. More broadly, this hypothesis suggests that the native born will share their membership in the more desirable nativity status in exchange for an immigrant's higher achieved status.

In most cultures, social status based on placement in the status hierarchy, is a marker of spouse desirability, but there is very limited evidence about whether and how nativity operates as a social boundary in couple formation, and thus social cohesion via immigrant integration. Status hierarchies are generally represented by educational attainment, occupational position, income or their combination. Although birthplace is not a caste-like barrier, there are reasons why status exchange might occur among mixed nativity couples. Australian immigrants largely enjoy the full benefits of the welfare state, including health care and social welfare benefits, but growing emphasis on immigrant skill since the mid-1970s has increased social inequities between native- and foreign-born residents (Freeman & Birrell, 2001; Walsh, 2008). For example, Australia's immigrant youth outperform their native counterparts (Cobb-Clark & Nguyen, 2010); such immigrant advantages are conducive to status exchange. In the United States, the social significance of nativity has been heightened since 1996, when immigrants were barred from receiving most means-tested social benefits for a period of five years, and permanently excluded from the more generous Supplemental Security Income program until they acquire citizenship. The sharpening of nativity distinctions also can potentially increase the value of status exchange via marriage in the United States.

Despite its appeal, the status exchange hypothesis is controversial for several reasons. One is that the prevalence of status exchange is likely to be low because endogamy and homogamy remain the modal patterns of marital sorting (Fu, 2001; Kalmijn, 1991; Rosenfeld, 2005). Furthermore, the importance of ascribed characteristics for partner choice has declined over time as young adults select mates independent of their parents' influence (Kalmijn, 1991, 1998). Finally, empirical support for the status exchange hypothesis is inconsistent, partly

due to a focus on race boundaries that are relatively rigid, such as black-white divisions in the United States, and partly due to methodological issues.

There is extensive empirical evidence that highly educated minority group members are more likely to marry whites than their lesser-educated compatriots (Fu, 2001; Kalmijn, 1993, 1998). That Asian and Hispanic intermarriage patterns are less consistent with the status exchange hypothesis than those of blacks not only implicates nativity as a status boundary, but also suggests that cultural factors, including both gender norms and explicit preference for own group partners, are important social forces shaping couple sorting. In fact, Kalmijn and Van Tubergen (2010) argue that cultural factors are more salient in explaining the maintenance of group boundaries through intermarriage than structural factors, including opportunities for intergroup co-mingling and mating. Nativity differences are one expression of cultural differentiation that has implications for status exchange depending on how immigration alters partnering preferences.

A comparison of marital sorting by education and nativity in Australia and the United States should prove instructive for evaluating whether foreign-born spouses use their educational credentials as a status currency in the marriage market both because of the differing skill emphases of their admission regimes and because immigration has altered the ethno-racial and social class contours of marriage markets in both countries (Heard, 2011; Khoo et al., 2009; Lichter et al., 2011; Qian & Lichter, 2011). We also address whether and how the patterns of status exchange differ between nations. Finally, because gender status norms are likely to be more rigid for immigrants compared with natives, and because labor market opportunities for unskilled men have been shrinking in both Australia and the United States, we also evaluate whether status exchanges in intermarriage depend on which partner is foreign-born.

2.2. Immigration and Marriage Markets in Australia and the United States

Two aspects of international migration are relevant for a comparative study of intermarriage and status exchange, namely the skill mix of newcomers relative to the host population and the volume of immigration. Relative to their population size, Australia and the United States each receive similar annual inflows—on the order of 0.4 and 0.5 percent (including both legal and illegal); however, in Australia, the foreign-born population share is approximately double that of the United States—25 versus 13 percent, respectively (GMF, 2009). What differences in the immigration systems of Australia and the United States portend for intermarriage, and status exchange in particular, depend on how the flows alter marriage markets (opportunities for intermarriage); how the skill distribution of immigrants compares with that of natives; and how mate selection preferences evolve in response to changing educational characteristics of potential mates. Based on population composition alone, opportunities for mixed nativity marriages are higher in Australia than in the United States, but whether such unions also involve status exchange is an empirical question.

Both the United States and Australia admit immigrants based on family, labor market and humanitarian criteria, but Australia places much greater weight on skills that are relevant to its labor market. In 1973, Australia's immigration department implemented a point system to judge the admissibility of skilled immigrants (Birrell, 1990; Miller, 1999). Australian immigration authorities also periodically adjust the admission ceilings in response to economic conditions and recently increased the points awarded to market skills (Freeman & Birrell, 2001; Walsh, 2008). Consequently, the number of visas allocated to permanent migrants selected under the points system trebled between 1995 and 2005 (DIC, 2009).[4] By contrast, only about one-third of U.S. immigrants are admitted under employment visas, with the remainder entering under the auspices of family reunification without regard to their employability or earnings potential (Wasem, 2007). As a result, the skill distribution of

U.S. immigrants is bimodal: migrants admitted under employment visas average higher education levels than the native population and family migrants average levels well below the national average (Tienda, 2002).

The definition of skill-based immigration also differs between Australia and the United States in ways that may influence intermarriage behavior. In the United States, the majority of skilled legal immigrants hold baccalaureate degrees or higher. Capped at 140 thousand annually, U.S. employment visas accord highest priority to persons of extraordinary ability, including scientists and engineers; second and third preferences focus on professionals with advanced degrees as well as college graduates destined to industries facing skill shortages. Australia's skilled occupation visas include professionals with baccalaureate and advanced degrees as well as workers destined for managerial jobs and skilled trades. Between 1995 and 2005, the share of employment visas allocated to highly educated professionals rose from 36 percent to 46 percent, yet over 20 percent were granted to associate professionals, tradespersons, and other semi-skilled occupations.[5]

Even if status distinctions between natives and immigrants are less sharply demarcated among semi-skilled immigrants, Australia's emphasis on skilled migration is a propitious setting for status exchange because marriage behavior differs along class lines. Heard (2011) shows that the retreat from marriage in Australia is largely concentrated among low education groups, but she does not consider the implications of nativity for coupling behavior. Even if immigration attenuates the incipient retreat from marriage in Australia, it is unclear whether sorting patterns accentuate status homogamy or involve status exchange. Because Heard does not analyze couples, but rather separately examines the education-specific marriage rates of men and women, she cannot address the pervasiveness of either marital homogamy or status exchange.

Whether mixed nativity unions in Australia and the United States involve status exchange is an empirical question. On the one hand, the preponderance of high skill immigrants in Australia's pool implies greater higher opportunities for status exchange via marriage. On the other hand, the large heterogeneity of Australia's skilled immigrants implies weaker currency for status exchange in sorting behavior. With a bi-modal skill distribution of its foreign-born population, the United States might be more conducive for status exchange through marriage compared with Australia. In the following section, we use log-linear methods to examine whether foreign-born spouses trade their more favorable educational attributes to marry a native- born spouse, while netting out nativity variation in the skill composition of spouses as well as the relative size of the immigrant population.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Data and Sample

An examination of spousal educational resemblance by couple nativity status requires large samples, which few surveys can satisfy except for decennial censuses. For Australia, we use the entire 2001 Census of Population and Housing and for the United States we use the five percent Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) of the 2000 U.S. Census. Both censuses contain information about birthplace, marital status and, importantly, a "spouse location variable" that permits matching spouses who co-reside in the same household.[6] The

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[4]The most recent yearbook indicates that in 2008–2009, the majority (56.4 percent) of permanent immigrants to Australia entered as skilled workers under the point system, while 34.2 percent entered as family migrants and fewer than one in ten (9.6 percent) entered as refugees (DIC, 2009).

[5]According to Walsh (2008), in 2004–05, nearly 12 percent of employment visas were issued to trades workers (mechanical, fabric, automotive, electrical and construction trades) and an additional 9 percent to associate professions that range from financial advisors and brokers to chefs.

major disadvantage of census data is the lack of information about former marriages, including number of previous marriages and characteristics of former spouses. This limitation restricts the analysis to the stock of current marriages as of the census date and can potentially introduce biases if educational assortative mating patterns differ by marriage duration and between first and higher order marriages (Mare, 1991; Qian, 1997).

To mitigate these biases, we restrict the analytical sample to currently married couples in which the wife is between the ages of 25 and 34. The lower age bound of 25 allows sufficient time for spouses to have graduated from college. Imposing an upper age limit of 34 minimizes potential selection biases resulting from marital disruption and remarriage (Mare, 1991; Qian & Lichter, 2001). Finally, to focus on marriages that likely occurred in the host country, the analytical sample excludes couples where the wife migrated after age 19. These restrictions yield a final analysis sample of nearly 480 thousand couples in the United States and the universe of 664 thousand couples in Australia.

3.2 Key Measures

The theoretical discussion hypothesizes that birthplace shapes educational assortative mating patterns via educational homogamy and status exchange. Testing this hypothesis requires information about nativity (foreign or native) and educational attainment. Notwithstanding the appeal of comparative research, deriving comparable measures is often challenging. We construct different classification schemes for Australia and the United States due to the higher pervasiveness of practically-oriented postsecondary training in Australia's postsecondary education system compared with the U.S. system.

Spousal education—For the United States we adhere to the conventional four-category scheme to classify each spouse based on their completed years of schooling: (1) Less than High School (<12); (2) High School Graduate (12); (3) Some College (13–15); and (4) BA or above (16+). For Australia we construct a six-category classification scheme that builds on years of school completed, but also considers certifications at the post-secondary level: (1) Less than high school: Year 9 or below; Years 10 and 11 and no post-secondary qualification; (2) High School Graduate: Year 12 and no post-secondary qualification; (3) Certificate: Years 10 and 11 with a certificate from a post-secondary institution; (4) Diploma: Years 10 and 11 with a diploma from a post-secondary institution; (5) Some College: Year 12 or above with a certificate or diploma; and (6) College: Bachelor degree or higher.[7] The appendix provides a rationale for this classification scheme.

Couple Nativity Status is a dichotomous variable that distinguishes between native and foreign-born individuals. Cross-classifying husband's and wife's nativity status yields four possibilities: (1) Both spouses are native born; (2) Both spouses are foreign born; (3) Native-born wife and foreign-born husband; (4) Native-born husband and foreign-born wife.

3.3. Analytical plan

The empirical analysis first describes nativity variation in spousal educational resemblance, drawing comparisons between Australia and the United States. Subsequently, we estimate log-linear models for contingency tables to evaluate the status exchange hypothesis for cross-nativity marriages in both countries. Specifically, we empirically assess whether: (1) foreign-born spouses whose marriage partners are native-born have higher education levels

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[6]Analysis samples exclude respondents lacking valid nativity, age, or marital status data.

[7]Although the hierarchy of certificate, diploma, and "some college" is ambiguous in Australia, they appear to be demarcating categories for marital sorting because Australians seldom cross these educational boundaries for marriage. We estimated models using several classifications of educational attainment. The status exchange models based on the six-category classification scheme yield vastly superior fit compared with models based on coarser educational groupings.

than foreign-born spouses whose mates are foreign-born; (2) native-born spouses whose marriage partners are foreign-born have lower education levels than native-born spouses whose mates are native-born; and (3) foreign-born marry native-born spouses with lower levels of education. These analyses also address whether patterns of status exchange among mixed nativity couples depend on which partner is foreign born as well as the immigrant spouse's education.

Designed to estimate the association between spouses' education net of differences in marginal distributions of husband's and wife's characteristics, log-linear models are well suited for studying status exchange (Mare, 1991; Qian & Lichter, 2007; Schwartz & Mare, 2005). Nevertheless, the appropriate specification of status exchange models has been the topic of considerable controversy (Fu, 2001; Gullickson, 2006; Gullickson & Fu, 2010; Kalmijn, 2010; Rosenfeld, 2005, 2010). Drawing from the methodological consensus reached in the most recent round of this debate, we examine whether status exchange occurs across nativity lines using the models developed by Fu (2001) and Gullickson (2006) that offer alternate specifications of status exchange.

Log-linear analyses are based on country-specific contingency tables that cross-classify husband's and wife's education by couple nativity status. The cross-classification yields contingency tables consisting of 64 cells ($4 \times 4 \times 2 \times 2$) for the United States and 144 cells ($6 \times 6 \times 2 \times 2$) for Australia. For each contingency table, we estimate four sets of log-linear models for subsamples of immigrant husbands, immigrant wives, native born husbands, and native born wives.

The baseline model, which assumes that the association between husband's and wife's education do not vary by couple nativity status, does not allow for the possibility of status exchange among mixed nativity couples. Formally, the model can be written as follows:

$$\log(m_{hwag}) = \gamma + \gamma_h^H + \gamma_w^W + \gamma_{hw}^{HW} + \gamma_a^A + \gamma_g^G + \gamma_{ag}^{AG}$$

where, for the United States, H is husband's education ($h=1,\ldots,4$), W is wife's education ($w=1,\ldots,4$), A is husband's nativity status ($a=1,2$), and G is wife's nativity status ($g=1,2$). The outcome m_{hwag} is the expected number of marriages between husbands in education category h and nativity status a, and wives in education category w and nativity status g. We report weighted estimates for the United States. The baseline model for Australia is analogous to those for the United States, except that each spouse's education consists of six categories and weights are not required for a complete census.

The marriage market model of status exchange assumes that the desirability of a spouse is measured by their ability to find a partner with higher levels of education. Specifically, if immigrant spouses are deemed less desirable than their native-born counterparts, then they will marry spouses with lower levels of education (Fu, 2001; Gullickson, 2006). Formally, the marriage market model is represented as follows:

$$\log(m_{hwag}) = Baseline\ model + \gamma_{hag}^{HAG} + \gamma_{wag}^{WAG}$$

Parameters γ_{hag}^{HAG} and γ_{wag}^{WAG} compute differences in the odds of marrying a spouse in the adjacent higher educational category depending on couple nativity status.[8] We infer status exchange when (1) native-born spouses of immigrants average fewer years of schooling than foreign-born spouses in same nativity couples and when (2) immigrant spouses of native born have higher levels of education than native-born spouses in same nativity couples.

The intra-couple educational resemblance models directly compare husband's and wife's education. In these models, the parameters estimate whether the odds of marrying down educationally are higher among foreign-born spouses in mixed nativity couples compared with spouses in same nativity couples. The unconstrained version of the intra-couple educational resemblance model allows for the possibility that status exchange occurs at different rates among foreign-born spouses with varying levels of education. Represented formally,

$$\log(m_{hwag}) = Baseline\ model + \gamma_{hag}^{HAG} + \gamma_{wag}^{WAG} + \sum_{h=1}^{n-1}\delta_h x_{hwag} + \sum_{h=1}^{n-1}\tau_w y_{hwag}$$

where

$$x_{hwag} \qquad \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if h>w} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

and

$$y_{hwag} \qquad \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if w>h} \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

The constrained version of the intra-couple educational resemblance model assumes that status exchange occurs at equal rates among foreign-born spouses with different levels of education. Formally, this model takes the form:

$$\log(m_{hwag}) = Baseline\ model + \gamma_{hag}^{HAG} + \gamma_{wag}^{WAG} + \rho x_{hwag} + \phi y_{hwag}$$

where x_{iwag} and y_{iwag} are defined analogously. Statistically significant, positive δ_h, τ_w, τ and ϕ parameters provide evidence of status exchange among mixed nativity couples.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Results

Table 1, which displays the distribution of educational attainment by nativity status for sampled wives and their spouses, reveals much lower attainment levels in Australia compared with the United States. Some college is the modal education status for U.S. wives aged 25–34, but in Australia, one-in three wives and nearly 30 percent of their husbands failed to graduate from high school. Among husbands, the education gap is less dramatic, yet 29 percent of Australian husbands lack high school credentials compared to only 12 percent of U.S. husbands. Gender disparities in educational attainment are less extreme among the college educated, three and five percentage points in the United States and Australia, respectively; however, just over one in five Australian wives ages 25–34 completed university degrees compared with nearly one-third of U.S. wives.[9]

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[8]Because the hierarchy of certificate, diploma, and some college is ambiguous, we constrained our parameters of status exchange so that the crossing of these educational boundaries is not viewed as evidence in support of status exchange.

The differing skill emphases of U.S. and Australian immigration regimes manifest themselves in the educational profiles of foreign-born spouses. About one-third of married U.S. immigrant women lack a high school education, as do the husbands of the sampled women. This compares with between eight and 10 percent of native-born spouses. College attendance and completion rates are appreciably higher among U.S. natives than foreign-born spouses. Approximately 30 percent of U.S.-born wives and their husbands completed a B.A. degree or more, but only 22 percent of comparably aged immigrant spouses graduated from college. Lower shares of immigrant spouses than U.S. natives completed any postsecondary schooling.

Despite the priority given to skill in Australia's immigration regime, the educational profiles of Australian- and foreign-born spouses are remarkably similar, with a few notable exceptions. Among wives, a higher share of natives than immigrants lack high school credentials (33 versus 28 percent, respectively). Immigrant wives also have a five-percentage point edge over their Australian-born counterparts in college completion rates—26 versus 21 percent respectively. Similar educational differentials obtain for Australian husbands except that the nativity differentials are more modest at the lowest attainment category and slightly larger among college graduates. Compared with wives, lower shares of Australian husbands complete high school, but higher shares obtain postsecondary certification credentials that may or may not require a high school diploma. Only 14 percent of immigrants held certificate credentials, compared with nearly one-in-four Australian-born husbands.

The similarity of husbands and wives' educational profiles suggests that both countries will exhibit high levels of educational homogamy, yet status exchange is plausible based on variation within and between nativity groups. Table 2, which reports educational sorting patterns for couples based on spouses' joint nativity status, uses three sorting measures to represent partner educational resemblance: *homogamy* (both spouses have equivalent education); *hypogamy* (wives have higher education than their spouses); and *hypergamy* (wives have less education than their spouses). That homogamy is more pervasive in the United States than Australia partly reflects differences in the number of educational categories used to match couples; however, some differences reflect variation in assortative mating and others reflect differences in opportunities to optimize partner matches given the distinct numbers of educational boundaries for marriage. In the United States, the growing gender disparities in educational attainment favoring women are evident in the higher pervasiveness of hypogamy relative to hypergamy, but in Australia hypergamous unions are slightly more common than hypogamous couples (33 and 30 percent, respectively).

Despite country differences homogamy levels, in both nations homogamy is highest among foreign-born couples. Just over half of all U.S. women married within their educational strata, compared with 58 percent of immigrants who married a foreign-born husband. In Australia, educational homogamy is higher among foreign-born couples compared with either mixed-nativity couples or native-born partners—46 percent compared with 37 to 38 percent, respectively.

The cross-tabular data appears to be inconsistent with the status exchange hypothesis. Among mixed-nativity U.S. couples, the education levels of foreign-born spouses are consistently lower than their native-born spouses. In Australia, hypergamy and hypogamy are about equally common among mixed nativity couples and largely mirror the national

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[9]These distributions are consistent with OECD (2001) statistics, which indicate that about 43 percent of the Australian, but only 13 percent of the U.S. labor force completed less than upper secondary education in 1999. About 27 percent of the US and 18 percent of the Australian labor force completed a university education.

averages. These patterns, however, neither refute nor support status exchange because they conflate sorting based on mate preferences with opportunity constraints based on variations in group size. Because we are interested in the *relative* desirability of immigrant over native-born spouses, in the next section, we estimate log-linear models that isolate variations in sorting patterns that reflect differences in preferences net of the opportunity constraints imposed by group size.

4.2. Log-linear Results

To establish the existence of status exchange across nativity boundaries, we first evaluate model fit to identify the most probable status exchange model. This assessment considers both log-likelihood ratios and Bayesian information criterion (BIC) statistics for model fit; however, given the large sample size, we rely on BIC statistics to pick the most probable model (Raftery, 1995).

Table 3, which presents the specifications and fit of the models, reveals that the baseline model yields a poorer fit than the status exchange models for both countries. Substantively, the results indicate an association between birthplace and marital sorting in both settings and signal the possibility that mixed nativity couples engage in status exchange. Results for the United States indicate that the marriage market model best fits the data for subsamples with immigrant wives, but the constrained intra-couple model of educational resemblance provides the best fit for subsamples with immigrant husbands. Stated differently, for the subsample of immigrant wives, we can test the status exchange hypothesis by comparing the education of husbands in mixed nativity couples with that of husbands in same nativity couples. For the subsample of immigrant husbands, the relative desirability of a potential partner also hinges on comparisons between their own education and that of potential native born spouse. The constrained intra-couple educational resemblance model is best fitting for all Australian couples except those with native-born husbands.

Although the fit statistics do not unequivocally signal the best fitting model, for two reasons, we select the constrained intra-couple model of educational resemblance as the most probable model describing how nativity status operates as a social boundary in couple formation. First, this model best fits the data for most subsamples. Second, this model includes the three way interaction terms (i.e. γ_{hag}^{HAG} and γ_{wag}^{WAG}) used in the marriage market model to detect status exchange. The coefficients for the three way interaction terms remain virtually unchanged with and without the addition of four way interaction terms (i.e. x_{hwag} and y_{hwag}). Therefore, interpretations of the three way interaction terms derived from the constrained intra-couple educational resemblance models also permit us to assess whether immigrant spouses are more likely to marry a native-born spouse with lower levels of education compared with spouses who marry within their nativity status.

One strategy to identify status exchange is to compare education levels of immigrant and native-born spouses in mixed nativity couples to their counterparts with same nativity spouses. We employ this strategy acknowledging that the availability of potential spouses in local marriage markets may limit opportunities for marrying up or down educationally (Fu, 2001). For mixed nativity couples, two circumstances implicate status exchange: (1) if immigrants with native-born spouses have higher levels of education than immigrants with foreign-born spouses; (2) if native-born partners with immigrant spouses have lower education levels than their counterparts in same nativity couples. Tables 4 and 5 present the odds ratios derived from the constrained intra-couple resemblance models for the United States and Australia, respectively.

Results for the United States provide consistent support for status exchange. Regardless of which spouse is foreign born, U.S. immigrants with native spouses are better educated compared with immigrants married to fellow immigrants. For instance, the relative odds that immigrant wives married to U.S. natives have a high school diploma are nearly 125 percent higher compared with immigrants with a foreign-born spouse. Yet, the likelihood of status exchange is inversely associated with the immigrant spouses' education levels. The odds of college enrollment are 60 percent higher, and the odds of college graduation are 20 percent higher, for immigrants in mixed nativity couples relative to immigrants who marry within their nativity group. In fact, foreign-born husbands who cross the nativity boundary in their partner choice are less likely to have college degrees than immigrants who marry a fellow immigrant.

For native-born spouses, status exchange occurs at the lower rather than the higher end of the educational distribution. Specifically, U.S.-born spouses married to immigrants are less likely to have a higher school diploma compared with natives married to other natives, but they are more likely to have enrolled and graduated from college compared to U.S.-born married a fellow countryman. For instance, the relative odds that native wives with immigrant husbands completed high school are one-third lower compared with couples where both spouses are native born. In contrast, the relative odds that native-born husbands married to an immigrant graduated from college are nearly 20 percent higher compared with U.S.-born husbands married to native wives. These results are consistent with claims that the highly educated are more accepting of immigrants and minorities, which may obviate the need to trade educational credentials to overcome other status disadvantages (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2007).

Direct comparisons of spouses' educational characteristics can also signal the existence of status exchange, particularly if immigrants in mixed nativity couples are more likely to marry down educationally compared with spouses who marry within their nativity status. In fact, immigrant men in mixed nativity couples are more likely to marry spouses with lower education compared with foreign-born husbands whose spouse is a fellow immigrant. Specifically, among immigrant men in mixed nativity marriages, the odds of marrying a wife with lower levels of education are 12 percent higher compared with native-born husbands who married a fellow native born. This pattern does not hold for mixed nativity couples with immigrant wives, which suggests that nativity status is a more salient social boundary in men's compared with women's marriages. Partly this reflects social norms that designate men as primary breadwinners and partly this captures the labor market penalties associated with immigrant status (Becker, 1981; Kalmijn & Van Tubergen, 2010; Woolley, 2003). For women, whose traditional social sphere revolves around the family, nativity status seems to be a less salient boundary in the marriage market (Becker, 1981; Woolley, 2003).

Likewise, nativity is a more salient marriage barrier for men than women in Australia, even though the contours of status exchange are less well defined. That the three-way interaction among gender, education and couple nativity status does not clearly support (or refute) the status exchange hypothesis likely reflects Australia's less sharply demarcated educational hierarchy, and in particular, the ambiguity of the post-secondary credentialing system. Immigrant spouses who cross the nativity boundary are a notable exception because they are more likely to attain postsecondary credentials (i.e. certificates, diplomas, or postsecondary training other than a bachelors degree) compared with immigrant spouses who married a fellow immigrant. For instance, immigrants with an Australian wife are 50 percent more likely than immigrants married to a fellow immigrant to have attained a postsecondary credential. Evidence for status exchange is even weaker for the subsample of Australian spouses because native husbands with immigrant wives, unlike Australian wives with

immigrant husbands, are less likely than Australian husbands with Australian wives to have attained a postsecondary credential.

Estimates from the intra-couple educational resemblance model, provide stronger evidence of status exchange than the marriage market models. Immigrants in mixed nativity couples are more likely to marry "down" educationally than their counterparts married to fellow immigrants. For example, the relative odds of marrying down educationally are 25 percent higher for immigrant wives with Australian husbands compared with foreign-born wives married to immigrants. That immigrant husbands of Australian wives are 20 percent more likely to be in a hypergamous union (i.e. the husband has a higher education level than the wife) compared with native-born husbands who marry within nativity status also indicates status exchange. An in-depth analysis of the educational composition of mixed nativity couples reveals that the observed patterns of status exchange at the couple level mostly involve marriages between immigrants with postsecondary credentials and native-born spouses with no tertiary schooling. This suggests that status exchange in Australia is largely driven by the immigrant selection regime that recruits large numbers of skill trades workers (Walsh, 2008). Simultaneously, it also points to our inability to precisely represent the educational hierarchy in Australia because spouses with vocational post-secondary credentials may not differ in social status from their countrymen with more years of graded schooling who lack vocational certificates or diplomas.

5. Conclusions and Implications

Because intermarriage is "both a criterion and an agency of assimilation" (Davis, 1941: 377), status exchange has direct implications for the contours of social stratification and social cohesion in immigrant-receiving nations. We show that nativity is a status barrier in both Australian and U.S. marriage markets, although support for the status exchange hypothesis is somewhat weaker in Australia owing to the lower average levels of education compared with the United States and to the less sharply defined educational hierarchy at the postsecondary levels.

Consistent with the status exchange hypothesis, we find that, with some exceptions, immigrant spouses in mixed nativity couples are better educated compared native spouses in same nativity couples, and that status exchange is more prevalent among the less-educated spouses in both countries. For example, in the United States the likelihood of engaging in status exchange is inversely correlated with the immigrant spouse's education levels. Australian mixed nativity marriages largely involve unions between immigrants in the skilled trades and native spouses with lower levels of education. These assortative mating patterns suggest that higher levels of education diminish the salience of nativity as a social boundary for intimacy. Gender differences in status exchange implicate cultural factors as important mechanisms that shape the contours of status exchange in mixed nativity marriages. In both countries, men are more likely than foreign-born women to engage in status exchange, although the rise of hypogamy may alter this association in the future

Thus, despite Australia's greater emphasis on labor market skills in admitting immigrants, two circumstances bear on the lower salience of nativity as a status boundary. One is that the share of residents lacking high school credentials is relatively high, which translates into a much lower educational profile compared with the United States. Although the log-linear modeling technique controls for differences in opportunities for intermarriage across education strata, the aggregate profile sets the bounds within which immigrants engage in partner selection. Second, the demarcation of post-secondary boundaries between high school completion and a college degree are less sharply defined in Australia. Combined, these circumstances indicate that intermarriage fosters immigrant integration via working

class consolidation in Australia. The latter consideration has broad implications for the role of intermarriage, and status exchange more specifically, in addressing "the societal need for vertical as well as horizontal cohesion" (Davis, 1941: 394).

Looking ahead, growing socioeconomic differentials in propensity to wed along with increases in hypogamy may alter the salience of nativity as a social boundary in marriage. Furthermore, the significance of nativity as a status boundary also is linked to the national origins of immigrants that we were unable to examine owing to the large sample size requirements of log-linear models. Future research that examines intermarriage behavior according to birthplace will surely advance understanding of contemporary status boundaries in couple formation, and consequently, the contours of social stratification in countries of high immigration.

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APPENDIX

Australia's Education system

Australian children typically begin Kindergarten at age 5 and end their secondary schooling after completing 12th grade. High school graduates who meet certain minimum coursework requirements are assigned a percentile ranking based on their academic performance in grades 11 and 12 (or in some cases in grade 12 only). University placement offers are made centrally within each state on the basis of students' entrance rankings.

Instead of a university degree, students may choose to obtain vocational education and training (VET) qualifications that typically constitute an alternative practically oriented tertiary education. VET qualifications, which cover traditional trades, business and commerce as well as the creative arts, generally require two or fewer years after secondary school. Recognized qualifications range from basic post-secondary certificates to advanced diplomas that are comparable to those offered by universities. VET courses are mainly provided by public organizations like technical and further education (TAFE) institutions,

which are comparable to U.S. community colleges and funded by the Australian Government as well as state and territory governments.

The 2001 Australian census does not distinguish between basic and more advanced certificate levels, but after extensive diagnostic testing and analyses of survey data with detailed education categories, we determined that the boundaries between high school completion and attainment of some postsecondary schooling did not warrant a single category designating "some college." This is because some diplomas and certificates can be achieved without a high school degree.

Highlights

- We evaluate the occurrence of status exchange across nativity boundaries for Australia and the United States.

- Despite differences in the skill composition of immigrants, we find empirical support for the status exchange hypothesis in both countries.

- Overall, status exchange is most pervasive among immigrant spouses with lower education and mixed nativity couples with immigrant husbands.

- Weaker evidence for status exchange in Australia likely reflects less sharply demarcated postsecondary educational boundaries.

- Australia's status exchange mostly involves marriage between immigrants with postsecondary credentials and native-born spouses with high school diplomas.

Table 1

Percentage distribution of Husbands' and Wives' Education by Age at Migration, United States and Australia [a] (Column %)

Education	Sampled Women			Husbands of Sampled Women		
	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total	Native Born	Foreign Born	Total
A. United States						
Less than High School	8	32	10	10	35	12
High School Degree	25	21	25	28	20	27
Some College	36	25	35	33	23	32
BA or above	31	22	31	29	23	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N in 1000s	437	41	478	428	50	478
B. Australia						
Less than High School	33	28	32	29	25	29
High School Degree	23	24	24	15	20	16
Certificate	7	5	7	23	14	22
Diploma	2	1	2	1	2	2
Some College	14	15	14	14	17	15
BA or above	21	26	22	16	22	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
N in 1000s	592	72	664	557	107	664

Sources: 5 percent IPUMS file of 2000 U.S. Census; 2001 Australian Census

[a] Universe: Wives between the ages of 25 and 34, and if foreign-born, wives had to have migrated prior to age 19

[b] Education categories for Australia:

(1) LT HS: 9 or less, 10 and 11 without certificate/diploma; (2) HS: 12 without certificate/diploma; (3) Certificate: 10/11 with certificate; (4) Diploma: 10/11 with diploma; Some College: 12 with certificate/diploma; BA or more: Bachelor, Graduate diploma, and Postsecondary graduate diploma

Table 2

Marital Sorting Patterns by Couple Age at Migration, United States and Australia [a] (Row %)

Couple Age at Migration	Homogamy (Wife=Husb)	Hypogamy (Wife>Husb)	Hypergamy (Husb>Wife)	Total	N in 1000s
A. United States					
Both Native Born	53	27	19	100	416
Both Foreign Born	58	21	21	100	29
Native Born Wife; Foreign-Born Husband	52	30	18	100	22
Native Born Husband; Foreign-Born Wife	55	22	22	100	13
Total	54	27	20	100	479
B. Australia					
Both Native Born	37	30	33	100	516
Both Foreign Born	46	26	29	100	31
Native Born Wife; Foreign-Born Husband	37	30	32	100	75
Native Born Husband; Foreign-Born Wife	38	30	32	100	40
Total	38	30	33	100	664

Sources: 5 percent IPUMS file of 2000 U.S. Census; 2001 Australian Census

[a] Universe consists of couples where the wife is between the ages of 25 and 34, and if foreign-born, the wife migrated prior to age 19

Table 3

Goodness of Fit Log-likelihood and BIC Statistics for Status Exchange Models

Model Type		U.S.			Australia	
	d.f.	Log-likelihood	BIC	d.f.	Log-likelihood	BIC
A. Native Born Wife- FB Husb versus Both Native Born Spouses						
1 Baseline	12	−328	177	30	−624	145
2 Marriage Market:	9	−184	−70	25	−482	−72
3 Unconstrained intra-couple resemblance	6	−171	−58	20	−426	−118
4 Constrained intra-couple resemblance	8	−175	−77	24	−451	−121
B. FB Wife- Native Born Husb versus Both FB Spouses						
1 Baseline	12	−873	1347	30	−502	95
2 Marriage Market:	9	−160	−46	25	−414	−24
3 Unconstrained intra-couple resemblance	6	−148	−39	20	−363	−70
4 Constrained intra-couple resemblance	8	−160	−36	24	−375	−92
C. Native Born Husb-FB Wife versus Both Native Born Spouses						
1 Baseline	12	−367	267	30	−663	250
2 Marriage Market:	9	−166	−96	25	−379	−253
3 Unconstrained intra-couple resemblance	6	−162	−67	20	−361	−222
4 Constrained intra-couple resemblance	8	−166	−83	24	−379	−240
D. FB Husb- Native Born Wife versus Both FB Spouses						
1 Baseline	12	−341	271	30	−1020	1096
2 Marriage Market:	9	−169	−40	25	−528	168
3 Unconstrained intra-couple resemblance	6	−156	−35	20	−391	−46
4 Constrained intra-couple resemblance	8	−162	−43	24	−414	−47

Notes:

The abbreviations denote the following:

H: Husband's Age at Migration; W: Wife's Age at Migration; A: Husband's Age at Migration; G: Wife's Age at Migration

Most probable model for each subsample is highlighted in yellow. Overall, we select "constrained intra-couple educational resemblance" models.

Table 4

Odds Ratio Predicting the Likelihood that Spouse in Mixed Nativity Couples have Higher Levels of Education than Spouse in Same Nativity Couples, United States (Estimates based on Models of Constrained Intra-couple Resemblance)

Comparisons	exp(β)	β/se
A. FB Wife – US-Born Husb versus <u>Both FB Spouses</u> [a]		
FB Wife's Educational Boundaries		
HS vs. Less than High School	2.24	19.13
Some College vs. High School	1.57	12.68
College vs. Some College	1.19	5.00
Status Exchange		
Husband marries up	0.09	−71.91
US-Born Husb* Husband marries up	1.04	0.90
B. FB Husb-US-born Wife versus <u>Both FB Spouses</u>		
FB Husband's Educational Boundaries		
HS vs. Less than High School	1.47	12.59
Some College vs. High School	1.04	1.17
College vs. Some College	0.84	−5.51
Status Exchange		
Husband marries down	0.13	−71.08
US-Born Wife* Husband marries down	1.14	3.69
C. US-Born Wife- FB Husb versus <u>Both US-Born Spouses</u>		
US-Born Wife's Educational Boundaries		
HS vs. Less than High School	0.68	−14.81
Some College vs. High School	1.19	8.26
College vs. Some College	1.15	6.42
Status Exchange		
Husband marries down	2.19	75.00
FB Husb* Husband marries down	1.12	4.43
D. US-Born Husb- FB Wife versus <u>Both US-Born Spouses</u>		
US-Born Husband's Educational Boundaries		
HS vs. Less than High School	0.86	−4.14
Some College vs. High School	1.47	13.32
College vs. Some College	1.18	5.65
Status Exchange		
Husband marries up	2.52	90.81
FB Wife* Husband marries up	0.99	−0.26

Source: 5 percent IPUMS sample of 2000 U.S. Census

[a]Reference groups are underlined

Table 5

Odds Ratio Predicting the Likelihood that Spouse in Mixed Nativity Couples have Higher Levels of Education than Spouse in Same Nativity Couples, Australia (Estimates based on Models of Constrained Intra-couple Resemblance)

Comparisons	exp(β)	β/se
A. FB Wife-Australian Husb versus <u>Both FB Spouses</u>		
FB Wife's Educational Boundaries		
HS vs. Less than High School	0.89	−4.83
Postsecondary Credential [b] vs. HS	1.09	3.82
College vs. Some College	1.03	0.97
Intra-couple Status Exchange		
Husband marries up	0.01	−94.09
Australian Husb*Husband marries up	1.24	7.25
B. FB Husb-Australian Wife versus <u>Both FB Spouses</u>		
FB Wife's Educational Boundaries		
HS vs. Less than High School	0.86	−7.24
Postsecondary Credential vs. HS	1.47	20.12
College vs. Some College	0.68	−19.02
Intra-couple Status Exchange		
Husband marries up	0.02	−106.12
Australian Wife* Husband marries down	1.43	13.87
C. Australian Wife- FB Husb versus <u>Both Australian Spouses</u>		
Australian Wife's Educational Boundaries		
HS vs. Less than High School	1.20	13.23
Postsecondary Credential vs. HS	1.07	5.65
College vs. Some College	1.07	5.54
Status Exchange		
Husband marries down	0.02	−260.45
FB Husb* Husband marries down	1.19	11.42
D. Australian Husb- FB Wife versus <u>Both Australian Spouses</u>		
Australian Husband's Educational Boundaries		
HS vs. Less than High School	1.24	11.36
Postsecondary Credential vs. HS	0.84	−11.59
College vs. Some College	1.34	16.08
Status Exchange		
Husband marries up	0.02	−252.97
FB Wife* Husband marries up	1.00	0.14

Source: 2001 Australian Census

[a]Reference groups are underlined

[b]Postsecondary credential refers to Certificate; Diploma; and Some College. We constrained the coefficient for these parameters to be the same because hierarchy among these categories is unclear.