Creating an 'American' Marriage Pattern: Ethnic, Generational, and Cohort Variation in Marriage Timing in the Mid-Twentieth Century

In the early 1900s, white ethnic Americans exhibited disparate marriage patterns that greatly concerned social commentators. This paper examines whether white ethnics assumed the nuptiality tempo of the native-stock population, focusing on generational and period effects. We use data from the 1960 Census IPUMS to obtain information on cohorts born between 1901 and 1930. Event history analysis enables us to explore ethnic and generational patterns of entrance into first marriage. We next assess period effects on marriage timing. Results indicate that among white ethnics marriage timing shifted across generations to more closely approximate the union formation patterns of native-stock whites; nonetheless, significant ethnic differences remained. Results are discussed in light of their meaning for assimilation and theories of union formation.

Creating an 'American' Marriage Pattern: Ethnic, Generational, and Cohort Variation in Marriage Timing in the Mid-Twentieth Century

Sharon Sassler
Michael A. Cardella, Jr.
The Ohio State University
Department of Sociology

In the early 1900s, social commentators often expressed concerns that long-term residents of the United States were not marrying, or were doing so at late ages. What many called "Race Suicide" (King and Ruggles 1990) reflected the wide disparity in the nuptiality regime of recent immigrants to the United States and the native stock, as well as fertility differentials (Morgan, Watkins, and Ewbank 1994). While concern regarding ethnic differences in age at marriage were strongly articulated at the turn of the century, as of mid-century such expressions were rare. By then, the American nuptiality regime had clearly changed. Both men and women married earlier, and relatively few remained unmarried. The median age at marriage for men declined from 25.9 in 1900 to 22.8 by 1950; for women it decreased less sharply, falling from 21.9 to 20.3 (Gibson & Lennon 1999). The proportions never marrying also decreased. Whereas less than two-thirds of men and three-quarters of women born in the late 1880s ever married, that share declined to less than ten percent of men and women born after 1933 (Schoen, Urton, Woodrow, Baj 1985).

Marriage has long been recognized as a central aspect of assimilation, often viewed as the final stage in the process of structural and cultural adaptation to life in the United States (Gordon 1964). Numerous studies of immigrant adaptation, then, have focused on intermarriage among white ethnics (Alba and Golden 1986; Kalmijn 1993; Kennedy 1944, 1952; Pagnini and Morgan 1990; Sassler 2001). Less studied has been the importance of the timing of union entry as a manifestation of acculturation, despite widespread acknowledgement of substantial ethnic divergence in marriage timing. Immigrants to the United States continued to demonstrate the marriage patterns of their countries of origin well into the second generation (Landale and Tolnay 1993; Sassler 1997). Descendants of immigrants from northern and western Europe married late, while the more recent arrivals from southern and central Europe entered into unions more rapidly (Diner 1983; Landale and Tolnay 1993; Meyerowitz 1988; Sassler 1997; Sassler

and Qian 2003). But marriage timing, once an issue of great importance to social reformers worried about the demographic implications of ethnic differentials (King and Ruggles 1990; Rosenwaike 1973), was no longer viewed as a pressing affair by mid-century. The nuptiality patterns of long-term residents of the United States and white ethnics had either converged, or been displaced by other issues of greater concern.

Marriage timing and prevalence have recently returned to the spotlight as an issue of importance. The median age at marriage began to rise in the 1970s. In addition to other transformations challenging the institution of marriage, such as increases of divorce and the rise in cohabitation, variation in marriage patterns have once again become apparent. The emphasis, however, has been predominantly on racial differences in marriage timing (Koball 1998; Lichter, McLaughlin, Kephart, and Landry 1992; Oppenheimer, Kalmijn, and Lim 1997; Raley 1996). Yet the flattening of variation in the timing and prevalence of marriage suggests that one important component of the matrimonial picture may be the diminishing salience of ethnicity in determining marriage patterns. Knowing more about when and why marriage timing converged among groups once viewed as being racially distinct could shed light on contemporary assimilation processes.

Expanding what we know about shifts in the timing of union formation among white ethnics can help us understand the role played by demographic events in the maintenance and transformation of group identity. In this paper, we examine generational shifts in patterns of marriage timing. Our paper makes use of the 1960 Census IPUMS, analyzing those born between 1901 and 1930. We proceed in several steps. First, we examine the extent of ethnic variation in marriage timing, asking whether generational succession occurred in a uniform pattern for all ethnic groups. We then compare ethnic variation in marriage timing across different birth cohorts, to determine if convergence accelerated during particular eras, such as the Great Depression or World War II. Event history analysis enables us to determine the salience of ethnicity as a predictor of marriage. The analysis is limited to several groups of first- and second-generation white ethnics that have been frequently studied in the intermarriage literature, as well as long-term white and black residents of the United States. The findings of this paper bear on contemporary debates about marriage and union formation.

IMMIGRANT ADAPTATION AND MARRIAGE TIMING

That immigrants and their offspring engaged in marriage and fertility patterns that differed from longer-term residents of the United States was a source of constant concern for nativists and social reformers in the early years of the 20th century (Jacobson 1998). While some turn-of-the-century reformers believed in the power of "Americanization" to alter the nuptiality patterns of immigrants (e.g., Claghorn 1901), others opposed to immigration on the grounds of the recent arrivals 'racial inferiority' were loath to pollute the American gene pool with these inassimilable foreigners (Grant 1916; Hingham 1955; Jacobson 1998). Regardless of their orientation to immigration, both reformers and anti-immigration advocates were concerned that, compared to native-white women of native-parentage, immigrant women married too early and bore too many children (King and Ruggles 1990). Attention to the marriage patterns of immigrant men, on the other hand, mainly concerned the likelihood that they would marry into the native-stock, rather than their marriage timing (Grant 1916); nonetheless, the marital delay of second generation ethnic men raised concerns about the absence of women's 'civilizing' influences (Chudacoff 1999).

The belief that exposure to the opportunities available in America as well as U.S. norms would gradually result in a diminution of the distinctive traits of ethnicity is a central tenet of the assimilation framework, the classic paradigm that until recently dominated the study of immigration and ethnicity in the United States (Park and Burgess 1969; Gordon 1964; for a critique of the framework, see Hirschman 1983). Milton Gordon (1964) placed marriage as the final stage in the process of structural and cultural adaptation to life in the United States. According to this perspective, with increasing duration in their new country, immigrants would seek to shed distinctive traits that set them apart from longer-term residents and over time would blend into the native-stock population residentially, occupationally, and finally, via marriage (Gordon 1961, 1964).

Patterns of marriage timing in the United States during its early history suggest that in most regions the marriage norms of northern and western Europeans prevailed for their descendants in America. In the 18th and 19th centuries, age at marriage for native-stock Americans was relatively late, mirroring that of northern and western Europe. By the late nineteenth century, however, a uniquely 'American' pattern of marriage timing

begins to emerge. Long-term residents of the United States, those who were third generation or more, married at significantly younger ages than did first and second generation immigrants from northern and western Europe (Landale and Tolnay 1993; Sassler 1997; Sassler and Qian 2003). For example, Sassler and Qian (2003) find that the age pattern of entrance into marriage does not shift substantially for women born between 1851 and 1880, and that native-stock women married much sooner than did women of English or Irish ancestry (Table 1, Model 3).[1] Native-stock men also married at younger ages than did their English or Irish counterparts, even after accounting for nativity. These results indicate that at some point in the late 19th century the nuptiality patterns of American citizens began to diverge from their European ancestors. Whether caused by economic conditions or the diminishing salience of cultural distinctiveness, marriage age for long-term residents of the United States declined.

Even as the marriage patterns of the native-stock and the northern and western European immigrant groups were diverging, the dramatic influx of new ethnics with their own distinctive nuptiality norms raised new concerns regarding the timing of union formation (Claghorn 1901). In the middle of the nineteenth century, foreign-born arrivals to the United States were predominantly from western and northern Europe (Cohn 1995; Kessner 1977); as of the late 1880s, however, immigrants from southern, eastern, and central Europe outnumbered arrivals from the previous dominant sending countries (Kessner 1977). These groups, generally described in the scholarly research as the "Old" and "New" immigrants, demonstrated considerable diversity in marriage and fertility patterns. For one thing, women from these "New" ethnic groups tended to marry young, reflecting the early (and almost universal) marriage timing of southern and eastern Europe (Coale 1971; Dixon 1972; Hajnal 1982; Sassler 1997). Among women born between 1851 and 1880, foreign-born women who married in the United States married *earlier* than did those born in the United States (Sassler and Qian 2003). However, by the second-generation women from the New ethnic groups had largely assumed the nuptiality patterns of longer-term Americans and married later (Sassler 1997).

There has been little extension of the earlier work on ethnic differences in marriage timing among whites following the research based on 1910 data. Studies of the importance of ethnicity in the middle decades of the 20th century focused more in

religious intermarriage (Kennedy 1944, 1952; Alba 1985) than the maintenance of distinctive ethnic patterns of marriage timing. The shift in focus from ethnic differences to religious ones assumes that marriage timing had already converged among white ethnics. Yet recent research by Sassler and Qian (2003) indicates that was not the case. Despite considerable compression among European Americans in the timing of marriage, ethnicity continues to distinguish age at marriage for those born between 1921 and 1950.

This paper provides a descriptive examination of how ascribed characteristics shaped the timing of union formation. We seek to answer a central question raised by the earlier work of Sassler and Qian (2003), namely what role generational succession played in the construction of a unique 'American' marriage pattern.[2] Utilizing data from the 1960 Census enables us to explore the salience of ethnicity for the second generation as well as the foreign-born as a predictor of marriage timing for young adults coming of age in the first half of the 20th century. The first few decades of the twentieth century provides the ideal time period to study the changing meaning of ethnicity. Immigration restrictions imposed in the 1920s (as well as the temporary curtailment resulting from World War I) severely restricted new arrivals to the United States, removing one method of refreshing ethnic identity by halting new waves of foreign born that might reinforce cultural patterns of the origin country. Generational replacement also resulted in a more acculturated population, one visibly less foreign. The country also experienced various economic and political events (the Great Depression, World Wars I and II) that could ostensibly unify the population of white ethnics into Americans.

DATA AND METHODS

The Sample

The data used in this analysis are taken from a 1% sample of the 1960 U.S. Decennial Census available through the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) at the University of Minnesota (Ruggles & Sobek 1998). Our sample consists of men and women who were born between 1901 and 1930 (ages 30 to 59), and who have never married, or are currently married.[3] We further limit our study to third- or higher-generation whites, blacks, and six first- and second-generation European origin groups (described below). Because the number of eligible respondents is quite large, a random 10 percent sample of the native-white of native-parentage population and a 20 percent

random sample of blacks are combined with a complete sampling of all first- and second-generation whites of our groups of interest. The final analysis is based on 61,338 men and 59,771 women.

The dependent variable is the duration to first marriage from the age of 14. We rely on a variable constructed for the IPUMS – age at first marriage – calculated from each person's date of first marriage and date of birth (Ruggles and Sobek 2003). Data on age, marital status, and age at first marriage are used to construct a continuous time parameter, or *duration variable*, measuring the time spent exposed to the risk of first marriage, plus whether or not marriage occurred. Respondents are followed from when they turn 14 to the date of their first marriage or (for the never married) to 1960, at which point they are right-censored. Information on those who married for the first time when they were older than age 45 is not included in our analysis; they are classified as right-censored.

Independent Variables

Whereas panel data often allows contemporary studies of marriage timing to examine the effect of both ascribed and achieved attributes (including current activities) on union formation, the information obtainable from censuses is far more limited. Data on individual respondents' social and economic circumstances at the time of marriage (e.g., income, occupation, etc., and the conditions of the marriage market) are generally lacking. Our independent variables are therefore limited mainly to ascribed characteristics – nativity, race, and ethnicity. We do examine two indicators of achieved characteristics: educational attainment, and veteran status.

Ethnic membership for the first two generations is ascertained through census questions on place of birth, parent's place of birth, and mother tongue.[4] Those who were born outside of the United States are designated as first generation (Gen1). For the foreign-born, place of birth determines ethnicity; for groups that were not English speakers, information on mother tongue is also used as an additional indicator of ethnic origin. Information on parental place of birth and nativity allow us to ascertain the second generation, or respondents born in the United States to foreign-born parents (Gen2).[5] If one parent was born in a foreign country, the respondent is classified as a member of the respective ethnic group. If both parents were foreign-born, the country of

father's birth takes precedence; while this is counter to much of the historical research which gives precedence to *mother's* birthplace (Jacobs and Greene 1994; Pagnini and Morgan 1990; Watkins 1991), it was the practice followed by the Census (for research studies that give precedence to paternal ethnicity, see Okun 2004; Sassler 2001; Sassler and White 1997; White, Dymowski, and Wang 1994).

We focus our analysis of ethnic change on six groups of white ethnics, and two groups that were long-term residents of the United States. Three of these groups represent those often termed the "Old" immigrants, the English, Irish, and Germans. These groups were relatively well established in the U.S. as of the early 20th century, as they had begun arriving in America in substantial numbers as of the mid-1800s (Cohn 1995; Kessner 1977). Our second set of white ethnic groups represent "New" immigrants, or groups that dominated the immigrant streams beginning in the 1880s: Italians, Poles, and Jews (Kessner 1977). Representing long-term residents of the United States are whites who are native-born with native-born parents, or those who had been resident in the United States for three or more generations (subsequently identified as NWNP). The evidence suggests that many of the third generation were the offspring of intermarriages between long-term residents and the "Old" ethnics (Sassler 2001), and therefore may have had ancestral roots in the same countries as the second generation. Nonetheless, it is not possible to ascertain their ethnic origin with the extant census data; for all intents and purposes, they are statistically assimilated. Our final group is also comprised of long-term residence in the United States, African-Americans, though their ancestors were for the most part not voluntary migrants.[6]

Because the census has never included a question on religious identity, it is difficult to ascertain groups such as Jews who had no homeland as of the turn of the century. We rely on two measures to capture the population we designate as Jewish: Yiddish mother-tongue for the first generation, and Russian birthplace for first and second generations. Russian origin has long been used as a proxy for the Jewish population (for discussions of this, see Lieberson and Waters 1988; Rosenthal 1975; Sassler and Qian 2003). Between 1880 and 1899 approximately 95 percent of all immigrants from Russia were estimated to be Jewish (Rosenthal, 1975). While the total share of Jews among Russian immigrants declined somewhat in subsequent censuses (to

84 percent between 1988 and 1914) (Rosenthal 1975), by far the largest share of immigrants from Russia to the United States in the early years of the twentieth century were Jews fleeing Pogroms, religious persecution, and oppressive economic conditions. In 1959, Duncan and Lieberson refer to the USSR foreign-born population as "predominantly Jewish" (1959:373).[7]

We examine macro-level period effects by examining the time periods in which the individual entered into marriage. Six birth cohorts were constructed from the data on age as of 1960. We look at five-year cohorts: those born 1901-1905, 1906-1910, 1911-1915, 1916-1920, 1921-1925, and 1926-1930. The union formation decisions and opportunities of these cohorts were shaped by major events: World War I for those born between 1901 and 1905; the Great Depression for the cohort born between 1916 and 1920; and World War II for those born between 1921 and 1930. Respondents born between 1906 and 1910, on the other hand, grew up during the economic prosperity of the Roaring Twenties, and may demonstrate different marriage patterns. The events in each of these periods may have altered marriage timing for the different ethnic groups.

Our sole measure of achieved characteristics is the educational attainment of respondents. We collapse several categories to end up with five measures that would be meaningful for respondents born in the early twentieth century: eight or fewer years of schooling, some high school, high school completion, some college, and four or more years of college. We also include a measure of veteran status for men.

Means and standard deviations for the variables used in this analysis, run separately for men and women, can be found in Table 1. Third generation whites (NWNP) account for the largest share, making up almost one-third of the sample. As the most recent immigrants, representatives of the "New" groups are well represented. Italians account for nearly one-fifth of the sample; Jews and Poles make up slightly smaller shares. Of the "Old" groups, Germans have the largest representation. As for nativity, the largest share of men and women in the sample are American-born with at least one foreign-born parents, or second generation. About fifteen percent of the sample are foreign-born, with the majority of the first generation being representatives of the "New" ethnic groups. Looking at the educational attainment of the sample, the largest share of respondents had only a primary school education, and over half of the sample

had not completed high school. The secular rise in education is clearly a relatively recent phenomenon. Last, almost half of the sample of men, or 47%, are Veterans.

[Table 1 About Here]

RESULTS

Event history models are especially appropriate for studying the transition to marriage because the risk of entering marriage varies by age, demonstrating a curvilinear pattern (Coale 1971). The first part of the analysis utilizes life-table methods to generate sex-specific survival curves for age at marriage for the eight ethnic groups. This allows us to estimate the proportion of each group marrying after age 14. The dependent variable, duration to first marriage from age 14, can be interpreted as exposure to the risk of first marriage; thus, exposure to this risk ends upon marriage. Unmarried individuals contribute exposure to the risk of marriage at each age until age 45 or the age at the time of the census if younger than 45. The survival function is then graphed to depict the trends in marriage timing for each of the eight groups. The steeper the slope of the survival curve, the more rapidly the group is marrying. Because most first marriages are completed by age 45, the survival curve also depicts the proportion of each ethnic group that is likely to remain unmarried.

We then turn to multivariate analysis to ascertain if ethnic differences remain significant after accounting for our independent variables. Using proportional-hazards models, we estimate the hazard rate of marriage, or the risk of marriage for an individual at a certain age, given that the individual has never married (Cox 1972). The general proportional hazards model is a semi-parametric model that allows the form of the baseline hazard function to remain unspecified. The basic proportional hazards model is:

$$\log h(t) = a(t) + \beta x$$

where h(t) is the hazard of marriage, a(t) is a function of time (years since age 14), x is a vector of variables and β is a vector of their corresponding coefficients.

Life-Table Estimates of Transitions into Marriage

The transition into marriage for women born between 1901 and 1930 differed widely across ethnic group (see Figure 1). The results indicate that black women entered into marriage most quickly, though by age 21 their pace had slowed and by their mid-twenties their marriage rates were indistinguishable from those of white ethnics.

Although Yankee women entered into marriage at the earliest years at a more moderate pace than did Blacks, by their mid-twenties they demonstrated the most rapid entrance into marriage, and 90% had wed by their early thirties. Consistent with the literature, Irish women demonstrated the slowest entrance into marriage, with only about half married by age 27; about one-fifth of all Irish women remained unmarried by age 45. The other white ethnic women are clustered between Yankees and the Irish, with half married by age 23 or 24; they do not differ greatly from each other. There is roughly a 5-year difference between the median age at first marriage for black and Irish women.[8]

[Figure 1 About Here]

Men's transition into marriage was more delayed than was women's (see Figure 2). There was also considerable disparity across ethnic groups in marriage timing, though once again Yankee and Irish men are at opposite ends of the spectrum. While Black men enter into marriage more rapidly than Yankee men at the youngest ages, their survival curves cross by age 22, at which point Black men's entrance into marriage slows considerably, while Yankee men speed up their rate of marrying. Half of all Yankee men were married by age 24, and less than ten percent remained unmarried by age 45. In contrast, not until age 28 were half of the Irish men in the sample wed, and nearly one-fifth remained unmarried by age 45.[9] Other white ethnic men cluster in between the two extremes, though their variation is somewhat greater than for their female counterparts.

[Figure 2 About Here]

While the survival analysis shows very clearly that significant variation in marriage timing remains for those born in the first three decades of the twentieth century, the duration to marriage is considerably shorter than it had been for whites born in the mid-1800s (Sassler and Qian 2003). In fact, an examination of cohort differences in entrance into marriage indicates that marriage occurred more rapidly, and more universally, with each successive cohort (See Figure 3). Men born in the early years of the 20th century entered into marriage gradually, with about half marrying by age 26. Entrance into marriage was far more accelerated for men born between 1926 and 1930, substantial shares of whom wed in their late teens and early twenties; the median age at marriage for this birth cohort was about 23.

[Figure 3 About Here]

A similar pattern is apparent for the women, though the dispersion across cohorts is less marked than it is for the men. Whereas about half of the women born in the early years of the 20th century were married by age 22, the median for women born between 1926 and 1930 was only 20.4. By age 34, only 7% of the youngest cohort remained unmarried, compared to 18% of the oldest cohort at the same age.

[Figure 4 About Here]

Period effects are apparent only for one cohort, those who came of age during the Great Depression (those born between 1911 and 1915). Both men and women were somewhat slower at first to wed, though they do eventually catch up to and surpass their earlier counterparts. For women, however, this acceleration in marriage timing does not occur until age 25; beyond that point, they marry more rapidly than women born during the first decade of the century. By age 40, only 8% of the Depression cohort of women remains unmarried, compared with 14% of women born between 1901 and 1905.

Multivariate Results

While life-table estimates depict the general pattern of marriage entrance, and how it varied across groups, multivariate analysis enables us to ascertain whether differences across groups are significant, as well as how ethnicity, birth cohort, educational attainment, and veteran status (for men) shifted the likelihood of marriage. We turn now to the results of the Cox proportional hazards models of age at marriage for women and men born in the first three decades of the 20th century. Hazard ratios for our proportional hazards models are presented for ease of interpretation. The hazard ratios are simple transformations of the parameter estimates (e^{B}), which can be interpreted as the percentage change in the hazard rate of marrying. Coefficients greater than 1 indicate that marriages are occurring rapidly; on the other hand, hazard rates below 1 highlight slower transitions into marriage. Models are run separately for men and women.

We first examine the effect of ethnicity, birth cohort, and educational attainment on marriage timing, presenting a series of models. Next, we disaggregate the white ethnics by generation, to further explore the assimilation argument. Our third table examines whether the impact of the independent variables are consistent across birth cohorts, to better enable us to tease out period effects.

The results of the analysis of ethnicity on transitions to marriage are shown in Table 2. Several sequential models are presented. Model 1 includes dummies for ethnicity alone, with Yankees serving as the reference group. Model 2 incorporates birth cohorts, with the youngest age group (those born between 1926 and 193) as the omitted category. Model 3 includes controls for educational attainment; high school graduates are the reference group. Last, for the men we include an additional model with a dummy variable indicating that the respondent was a military veteran.

[Table 2 About Here]

Ethnicity exerts an important effect on marriage timing, with white ethnics and blacks marrying substantially later than do Yankees (Model 1). Focusing first on the results for men, it is evidence that the hazard ratios for ethnic men are considerably lower than for whites who are third generation or higher, and the difference is highly statistically significant. Among whites, the hazard ratio for first and second generation white men range from a high of .809 for English men to only .526 for the Irish. While the Irish marry significantly later than do Yankee men, they are also laggards compared to other white ethnic men in the pace of their entry into marriage, as well as Blacks, and these differences are statistically significant (results not shown).

Controlling for birth cohort shifts the hazard ratio for white ethnic men up somewhat, indicating that if they had the same age composition as Yankees they would in fact marry somewhat earlier, though they would still marry significantly later than their long-term American counterparts (Model 2). Blacks, on the other hand, would marry even later if their age composition more closely resembled that of the Yankee reference group. As was apparent in Figure 3, the hazard rate shifts upward with each subsequent birth cohort. Relative to those born between 1926 and 1930, men born in the first few years of the century married significantly later (hazard ratio = .665), though with each subsequent birth cohort this difference narrowed.

Because men's educational attainment varied widely across birth cohorts, accounting for the amount of schooling received shifts the impact of birth cohort down slightly (Model 3); the impact of ethnicity remains largely the same as in Model 2. Men with less than 8 years of school do not differ significantly from men who had a high school degree. Those men with only some high school, on the other hand, marry earlier

than those who have completed 12 years of school, while the few college educated men married substantially later. Accounting for Veteran Status (Model 4) also has the effect of delaying marriage, though predominantly for men born between 1901 and 1915; it has little effect on the impact of ethnicity. The hazard rate for men who were Veterans is considerably lower (.842) than for men who were not, and the difference is statistically significant. In other words, Veterans married substantially later than did men who did not do a stint in the military.

The effects for women largely mirror those for the men. White ethnic women marry significantly later than do Yankee women. With the exception of Irish women, who marry substantially later than both Yankees as well as the other white ethnic women (tests not shown), there appears to be little variation in marriage timing among white ethnics. While the hazard ratio for Black women is still considerably lower (.843) than for Yankee women, they seem to marry somewhat earlier than do white ethnic women.

Accounting for birth cohort serves to reduce the gap between the marriage timing of white ethnic women and Yankees slightly, though the differences remain significant. As was evident for the men, with each subsequent birth cohort marriage timing becomes earlier. The youngest group (those 30 to 34) marries at significantly younger ages than do the other cohorts. Incorporating controls for women's educational attainment results in a return to later marriage timing, shifting the hazard ratios for both ethnicity and age lower. Women with less than a high school degree marry significantly earlier, and the few with some college or more marry substantially later, than do those who completed high school.

[Table 3 About Here]

The second generation, being born in the United States, was expected to more closely approximate the marriage timing of the native-stock than were their first generation counterparts. Table 3 presents the hazards ratios for ethnicity, disaggregated by generation. Though the models include all the controls of the previous model, results change very little; for ease of presentation, only the hazard ratios for ethnicity are presented. The results suggest that the assimilation process differed for men and women. While all groups demonstrate later patterns of union entrance than do Yankees, for men a consistent pattern of generation shift is evident. American-born white ethnic men married earlier than did their foreign-born counterparts. White ethnic women, in

contrast, demonstrate no such pattern of generational progression. Whereas some second generation ethnic women do marry earlier than their foreign-born complements, Polish and Italian second generation women marry later than do first generation women from these groups. The shift for Italian women is particularly notable. While foreign-born Italian women married later than did Yankees, with a hazard of .822, by the second generation their hazard ratio was even lower (.661). As a result, second generation women from these New ethnic groups marry later than women from the Old groups.

[Table 4A About Here]

The birth cohorts we examine came of age during times of economic prosperity (the Roaring Twenties), followed by the Great Depression, and then World War II and the Korean War. We find little evidence of common patterns of response across ethnic groups to these events. While it does appear that men and women who entered marriageable ages during the Great Depression (those born between 1911-1915, and 1916-1920) experienced delay, marrying later than those born in the first decade of the twentieth century, those born in the third decade of the century frequently married even later. With each subsequent cohort, for example, Italian women married later than did their Yankee counterparts. They did not, then, appear to be assuming an 'American' marriage pattern. In fact, the youngest cohorts of white ethnics are even more distinctively different from Yankees than are those born in the first few years of the twentieth century. While contemporary studies of marriage timing often focus on the early entrance into marriage of those born in the 1920s and 1930s, they seem to have overlooked significant differences between the native-stock and white ethnics, as well as between white ethnics themselves.

With the exception of one variable, the independent variables effect union formation largely as detailed in earlier tables. For example, those with a college degree marry later, regardless of their birth cohort; the impact of having a college degree is even greater for women than for men. Of note, though, is that the impact of being a Veteran changes over time. Whereas the hazard ratio for men born in the first few years of the twentieth century who were veterans is considerably lower (.629) than for men who were not, those with military experience who were born in the twenties married substantially *earlier* than their non-veteran counterparts. Among men born between 1921 and 1925,

the hazard ratio for veterans was 1.268, while for the next birth cohort it was 1.079. Because participation in the military was still mandatory for men at that time, the vast majority of this birth cohort (74 percent) were veterans. Whether their more rapid entrance into marriage was the result of selection or the benefits from the GI Bill that they could avail themselves of, by the third decade of the century veteran status expedited men's marriage timing.

CONCLUSIONS

While ethnic differences among whites in marriage timing were no longer on the radar of social commentators as an issue of much weight by the middle of the twentieth century, significant ethnic differentials remained. This is particularly evident for the Irish, who entered marriages at a much slower pace than did other white groups, and continued to demonstrate a greater likelihood of never marrying. While generational progression contributed to convergence in marriage timing, cohort shifts appear to account for a larger share of the decline in age at first marriage. Despite economic recessions and wars, Americans coming of age in the 1940s married at earlier ages than their counterparts born in the first decade of the twentieth century.

We might argue, then, that a distinctive 'American' marriage pattern had emerged. Marriage among third and higher generation whites occurred rapidly and was nearly universal. That this group was comprised of the descendants of earlier waves of immigrants, in particular large shares of the Irish and Germans who arrived in the mid-1800s, demonstrates the transformative powers of assimilation. The union formation patterns of long-term residents of the United States have clearly departed from what they once were. The operation of the assimilation process is also evident upon looking at the Old ethnic groups in this study. Among representatives of the Old ethnic groups, union formation occurred at much earlier ages than they did in the origin countries; first and second generation immigrants from these groups also married at substantially younger ages than their predecessors of several generations. Furthermore, there was a dramatic decline in the proportions that never married. While the patterns among women from the New ethnic groups seemed to alter, with marriage occurring at later ages, such changes had the effect of unifying the patterns of ethnic women. Nonetheless, first and second generation white ethnics had not yet completely assimilated this distinctively 'American'

marriage pattern. Though experiencing earlier and nearly universal marriage, they still married significantly later than did whites that had been in the country for three or more generations.

Even as the age at marriage was becoming increasingly younger with each subsequent birth cohort, ethnicity remained an important component of marriage timing well into the middle of the 20th century. White ethnics born in the 1920s continued to marry significantly later than did third and higher generation whites. That they continued to exhibit differences from some other white ethnics also suggests that they were not blending into one undifferentiated mass of Old or New ethnics. Further studies should examine whether partner choice also played a role in shaping marriage timing. Did those who married across ethnic lines marry earlier than did those marrying fellow ethnics? Integrating the study of marriage timing and partner choice could provide a clearer window into the process of marital assimilation.

What does this say about assimilation theory? Even though these groups were not refreshed by the constant arrival of new immigrants, the patterns established took quite a while to change. Generational shift was apparent, particularly for the Old immigrant groups. But the rate at which it was occurring suggested that assimilation is a process requiring quite a long period of time. This suggests that contemporary immigrants may take even longer to adopt the behavioral patterns of the long-term population in the U.S., as those bearing the cultural stamp of the home country continuously refresh communities.

References

Alba, Richard and Reid Golden. 1986. "Patterns of Ethnic Marriage in the United States," *Social Forces* 65(1): 202-223.

Alba, Richard. 1985. *Italian Americans: Into the Twilight of Ethnicity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Chudacoff, H. 1999. *The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Claghorn, K. 1901. "The Foreign Immigrant in New York City." *Reports of the Industrial Commission on Immigration*. 15. Washington, D.C.

Coale, Ansley J. 1971. "Age Patterns of Marriage," *Population Studies* 25(2):193-214.

Coale, Ansley J. 1992. "Age of Entry into Marriage and the Date of the Initiation of Voluntary Birth Control," *Demography* 29(3):333-342.

Cohn, Raymond L. 1995. "A Comparative Analysis of European Immigrant Streams to the United States During the Early Mass Migration." *Social Science History* 19:63-90.

Cox, D.R. 1972. "Regression Models and Life-Tables." *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 78:277-281.

Diner, Hasia R. 1983. *Erin's Daughters in America: Irish Immigrant Women in the Nineteenth Century*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dixon, R.B. 1971. "Explaining Cross-Cultural Variations in Age at Marriage and Proportions Never Marrying." *Population Studies* 25(2):215-33.

Duncan, O.D. and S. Lieberson. 1959. "Ethnic Segregation and Assimilation." *American Journal of Sociology* 64:364-74.

Gibson, Campbell J. and Emily Lennon. 1999. "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-1990." Population Division Working Paper No. 29, U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Gordon, Milton. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Grant, Madison. 1916. *The Passing of the Great Race, or The Racial Basis of European History*. New York: Charles Scribner.

Hajnal, John. 1982. “Two Kinds of Preindustrial Household Formation Systems.” *Population and Development Review* 8(3):449-94.

Hingham, John. 1955. *Strangers in the Land*. New Brunswick.

Hirschman, C. 1983. “America’s Melting Pot Reconsidered,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 9:397-423.

Jacobs, J. and M.E. Greene. 1994. “Race and Ethnicity, Social Class and Schooling in 1910.” In *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census*, edited by Susan Cotts Watkins. New York: Russell Sage.

Jacobson, M.F. 1998. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Kalbfleisch, J.D. and R.L. Prentice. 1980. *The Statistical Analysis of Failure Time Data*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Kalmijn, Matthijs. 1993. “Spouse Selection Among Children of European Immigrants: A Comparison of Marriage Cohorts in the 1960 Census.” *International Migration Review* 27:51-78.

Kennedy, Ruby Jo Reeves. 1944. “Single or Triple Melting Pot? Intermarriage Trends in New Haven, 1870-1940,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 49 (4):331-339.

_____. 1952. “Single or Triple Melting Pot? Intermarriage in New Haven, 1870-1950,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 58 (1): 56-69.

Kessner, Thomas. 1977. *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880-1915*. New York: Oxford University Press.

King, Miriam and Steven Ruggles. 1990. “American Immigration, Fertility, and Race Suicide at the Turn of the Century,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 20:347-369.

Koball, Heather. 1998. “Have African American Men Become Less Committed to Marriage? Explaining the Twentieth Century Racial Cross-Over in Men’s Marriage Timing,” *Demography* 35:251-258.

Landale, Nancy S. and Stewart E. Tolnay. 1993. “Generation, Ethnicity, and Marriage: Historical Patterns in the Northern United States,” *Demography* 30:103-126.

Lichter, D.T., D.K. McLaughlin, G. Kephart, and D.J. Landry. 1992. "Race and the Retreat from Marriage: A Shortage of Marriageable Men?" *American Sociological Review* 57(6):781-99.

Meyerowitz, Joanne J. 1988. *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930*. University of Chicago Press.

Morgan, S. Philip, Susan Cotts Watkins, and Douglas Ewbank. 1994. "Generating Americans: Ethnic Differences in Fertility." Pp. 83-124 in *After Ellis Island*, edited by Watkins. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Okun, Barbara S. 2004. "Insight Into Ethnic Flux: Marriage Patterns Among Jews of Mixed Ancestry in Israel." *Demography* 41:**PP-PP.**

Oppenheimer, V.K., M. Kalmijn, and N. Lim. 1997. "Men's Career Development and Marriage Timing During a Period of Rising Inequality," *Demography* 34:311-30.

Pagnini, Deanna and S. Philip Morgan. 1990. "Intermarriage and Social Distance among U.S. Immigrants at the Turn of the Century," *American Journal of Sociology* 96 (2):405-32.

Park, R. E. and E. Burgess. 1969. *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Raley, R. Kelly. 1996. "A Shortage of Marriageable Men? A Note on the Role of Cohabitation in Race Differences in Marriage." *American Sociological Review*. 61: 973-983.

Rosenthal, E. 1975. "The Equivalence of United States Census Data for Persons of Russian Stock or Descent with American Jews: An Evaluation," *Demography* 12:257-90.

Rosenwaike, Ira. 1973. "Two Generations of Italians in America: Their Fertility Experience," *International Migration Review* 24:34-58.

Ruggles, Steven and Matthew Sobek. 2003. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0.* Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota. http://www.ipums.org.

Sassler, Sharon L. 2001. "Marital Assimilation in the Early Twentieth Century." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Washington, DC, 2001.

Sassler, Sharon L. 1997. “Women’s Marital Timing at the Turn of the Century: Generational and Ethnic Differences,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 38(4):567-585.

Sassler, Sharon and Zhen Chao Qian. 2003. “Marital Timing and Marital Assimilation: Variation and Change among European Americans between 1910 and 1980,” *Historical Methods* 36(3):131-148.

Schoen, Robert, William Urton, Karen Woodrow, and John Baj. 1985. “Marriage and Divorce in Twentieth Century American Cohorts,” *Demography* 22(1):101-114.

Watkins, Susan Cotts. 1991. *From Provinces into Nations: Demographic Integration in Western Europe, 1870-1960.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Variables Used in Analysis

	MEN		WOMEN	
Ethnic Group	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
NWNP~	0.31	0.46	0.31	0.46
English	0.04	0.20	0.05	0.22
Irish	0.04	0.21	0.05	0.21
German	0.08	0.27	0.08	0.28
Italian	0.19	0.39	0.18	0.38
Polish	0.11	0.32	0.11	0.31
Jewish*	0.14	0.35	0.14	0.35
Black	0.08	0.27	0.08	0.27
Generation				
First Generation	0.31	0.46	0.31	0.46
Second Generation	0.15	0.36	0.16	0.36
Third - Whites only	0.46	0.50	0.46	0.50
Blacks (All)	0.08	0.27	0.08	0.27
Age/Birth Cohort				
AGE	44.24	8.31	43.68	8.23
30-34 / Born 1926-1930	0.15	0.36	0.17	0.37
35-39 / Born 1921-1925	0.18	0.38	0.19	0.39
40-44 / Born 1916-1920	0.18	0.39	0.19	0.39
45-49 / Born 1911-1915	0.18	0.38	0.18	0.38
50-54 / Born 1906-1910	0.16	0.37	0.15	0.36
55-59 / Born 1901-1905	0.14	0.35	0.13	0.33
Educational Attainment				
0 through 8th grade	0.36	0.48	0.34	0.47
Some high school	0.22	0.41	0.22	0.41
High school	0.23	0.42	0.31	0.46
Some college	0.09	0.28	0.08	0.27
College or more	0.11	0.31	0.06	0.23
Veteran	0.47	0.50	N/A	N/A
N	61,338		59,771	

Source: 1960 U.S. Census IPUMS, birth cohorts 1901-1930.

Table 2. Hazard Ratios of Selected Independent Variables Predicting Marriage Timing

	MEN				WOMEN		
Ethnic Group	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model I	Model II	Model III
NWNP~ (REF)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
English	0.809 ***	0.850 ***	0.848 ***	0.835 ***	0.750 ***	0.770 ***	0.756 ***
Irish	0.526 ***	0.549 ***	0.548 ***	0.545 ***	0.486 ***	0.503 ***	0.492 ***
German	0.742 ***	0.801 ***	0.792 ***	0.778 ***	0.731 ***	0.757 ***	0.712 ***
Italian	0.799 ***	0.806 ***	0.796 ***	0.796 ***	0.765 ***	0.766 ***	0.687 ***
Polish	0.692 ***	0.697 ***	0.691 ***	0.690 ***	0.788 ***	0.796 ***	0.726 ***
Jewish*	0.757 ***	0.777 ***	0.788 ***	0.779 ***	0.797 ***	0.815 ***	0.811 ***
Black	0.825 ***	0.818 ***	0.810 ***	0.799 ***	0.843 ***	0.829 ***	0.734 ***
Age/Birth Cohort							
30-34 / Born 1926-1930		--	--	--		--	--
35-39 / Born 1921-1925		0.923 ***	0.917 ***	0.920 ***		0.873 ***	0.851 ***
40-44 / Born 1916-1920		0.809 ***	0.797 ***	0.790 ***		0.784 ***	0.751 ***
45-49 / Born 1911-1915		0.738 ***	0.726 ***	0.698 ***		0.729 ***	0.685 ***
50-54 / Born 1906-1910		0.686 ***	0.674 ***	0.637 ***		0.717 ***	0.662 ***
55-59 / Born 1901-1905		0.665 ***	0.652 ***	0.605 ***		0.696 ***	0.627 ***
Educational Attainment							
8 years or less			0.988	0.957 **			1.263 ***
Some HS			1.052 ***	1.045 ***			1.264 ***
HS			--	--			--
Some College			0.990	0.995			0.876 ***
College or Higher			0.863 ***	0.869 ***			0.605 ***
Veteran				0.842 ***			
Model chi-square	1,598.3 ***	2,531.4 ***	2744.78 ***	3102.78 ***	1,534.7 ***	2,470.4 ***	4,456.9 ***
DF	7	12	16	17	7	12	16

~ Native-Born Whites of Native-Born Parentage (third or higher generation).

* Russian birthplace or Yiddish as mother tongue (see discussion in text).

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05.

Table 3. Hazard Ratio of Generational Shifts in Marriage Timing, by Sex*

Ethnic Group	Men	Women
NWNP~ (REF)	1.000	1.000
English, Gen 1	0.789 ***	0.762 ***
English, Gen 2	0.875 ***	0.749 ***
Irish, Gen 1	0.483 ***	0.453 ***
Irish, Gen 2	0.570 ***	0.510 ***
German, Gen 1	0.726 ***	0.660 ***
German, Gen 2	0.806 ***	0.756 ***
Italian, Gen 1	0.791 ***	0.822 ***
Italian, Gen 2	0.798 ***	0.661 ***
Polish, Gen 1	0.588 ***	0.790 ***
Polish, Gen 2	0.712 ***	0.716 ***
Jewish, Gen 1	0.723 ***	0.793 ***
Jewish, Gen 2	0.799 ***	0.817 ***
Black	0.797 ***	0.736 ***
Model chi-square	3080.64 ***	4,337.1 ***
DF	25	24

*Both models include controls for birth cohort, educational attainment, and veteran status.
~ Native-Born Whites of Native-Born Parentage (third or higher generation).
*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$.

Table 4A. Hazard Ratios for Selected Independent Variables Predicting Marriage Timing, by Birth Cohort

	Men's Birth Cohorts					
	1901-1905	1906-1910	1911-1915	1916-1920	1921-1925	1926-1930
Ethnic Group						
NWNP~ (REF)	--	--	--	--	--	--
English	0.981	0.898 *	0.829 ***	0.809 ***	0.850 **	0.720 ***
Irish	0.588 ***	0.589 ***	0.620 ***	0.514 ***	0.495 ***	0.521 ***
German	0.799 ***	0.829 ***	0.793 ***	0.842 ***	0.797 ***	0.738 ***
Italian	0.829 ***	0.852 ***	0.859 ***	0.795 ***	0.754 ***	0.672 ***
Polish	0.773 ***	0.744 ***	0.725 ***	0.683 ***	0.628 ***	0.647 ***
Jewish*	0.879 ***	0.861 ***	0.793 ***	0.730 ***	0.753 ***	0.737 ***
Black	0.818 **	0.834 ***	0.808 ***	0.846 ***	0.826 ***	0.730 ***
Educational Attainment						
8 years or less	1.088 *	1.050	0.895 **	0.870 ***	0.958	1.003
Some High School	1.065	1.102 **	1.045	1.033	1.039	1.085 *
High School	--	--	--	--	--	--
Some College	0.975	1.066	1.018	1.010	1.002	0.909 **
College or Higher	0.925	0.938	0.888 **	0.894 **	0.840 ***	0.793 ***
Veteran	0.629 ***	0.586 ***	0.621 ***	0.896 ***	1.268 ***	1.079 **
- 2 Log Likelihood	134113.42	150829.20	173669.02	172371.22	169848.76	136004.90
Model chi-square	391.37 ***	642.95 ***	714.39 ***	319.61 ***	461.78 ***	396.84 ***
DF	12	12	12	12	12	12
N	8,823	9,809	11,070	11,033	10,971	9,352

~ Native-Born Whites of Native-Born Parentage (third or higher generation).

* Russian birthplace or Yiddish as mother tongue (see discussion in text).

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$.

Table 4B. Hazard Ratios for Selected Independent Variables Predicting Marriage Timing, by Birth Cohort

	Women's Birth Cohorts					
	1901-1905	1906-1910	1911-1915	1916-1920	1921-1925	1926-1930
Ethnic Group						
NWNP~ (REF)	--	--	--	--	--	--
English	0.823***	0.776***	0.729***	0.663***	0.728***	0.899*
Irish	0.502***	0.527***	0.514***	0.481***	0.501***	0.467***
German	0.811***	0.772***	0.771***	0.682***	0.623***	0.635***
Italian	0.899**	0.793***	0.693***	0.624***	0.616***	0.612***
Polish	0.818***	0.792***	0.768***	0.664***	0.677***	0.666***
Jewish*	0.939	0.830***	0.785***	0.782***	0.787***	0.789***
Black	0.746***	0.770***	0.846***	0.733***	0.752***	0.645***
Educational Attainment						
8 years or less	1.565***	1.407***	1.259***	1.051	1.010	1.157**
Some High School	1.305***	1.279***	1.361***	1.269***	1.214***	1.255***
High School	--	--	--	--	--	--
Some College	0.842**	0.882**	0.926	0.836***	0.878***	0.888**
College or Higher	0.539***	0.579***	0.617***	0.596***	0.640***	0.613***
- 2 Log Likelihood	111585.80	132393.98	164742.92	175672.82	177526.00	153061.44
Model chi-square	610.70***	522.06***	619.42***	673.61***	601.82***	663.79***
DF	11	11	11	11	11	11
N	7,623	8,797	10,589	11,159	11,212	9,911

~ Native-Born Whites of Native-Born Parentage (third or higher generation).

* Russian birthplace or Yiddish as mother tongue (see discussion in text).

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$.

Table 5A. Hazard Ratios for Selected Independent Variables Predicting Marriage Timing, by Ethnic Group

	Men							
	Yankee	**Black**	**English**	**Irish**	**German**	**Italian**	**Polish**	**Jewish**
Generation								
Second (First=Ref)	NA	NA	1.126 **	1.141 *	1.119 ***	1.026	1.248 ***	1.132 ***
Age/Birth Cohort								
30-34 / Born 1926-1930	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
35-39 / Born 1921-1925	0.904 ***	0.981	1.077	0.824 *	0.907	1.006	0.865 **	0.913 *
40-44 / Born 1916-1920	0.761 ***	0.878 *	0.884	0.728 ***	0.854 *	0.851 ***	0.783 ***	0.760 ***
45-49 / Born 1911-1915	0.652 ***	0.744 ***	0.783 **	0.758 ***	0.678 ***	0.763 ***	0.719 ***	0.716 ***
50-54 / Born 1906-1910	0.592 ***	0.711 ***	0.752 ***	0.654 ***	0.616 ***	0.672 ***	0.679 ***	0.693 ***
55-59 / Born 1901-1905	0.567 ***	0.662 ***	0.772 ***	0.628 ***	0.555 ***	0.630 ***	0.681 ***	0.689 ***
Educational Attainment								
8 years or less	1.003	1.180 ***	0.901 +	0.807 ***	0.928 +	1.030	0.902 **	0.888 ***
Some HS	1.113 ***	1.163 **	1.026	0.876 *	1.039	1.170 ***	1.069 +	1.019
High School (Ref)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Some College	0.979	1.251 **	0.924	1.060	0.961	0.951	0.970	0.975
College or Higher	0.835 ***	1.081	0.961	0.622 ***	0.812 ***	0.780 ***	0.934	0.925 *
Veteran	0.847 ***	0.862 ***	0.827 ***	0.885 **	0.740 ***	0.805 ***	0.809 ***	0.841 ***
Model chi-square	719.2 ***	101.0 ***	57.0 ***	140.1	203.1	367.9	164.0	178.5
DF	10	10	11	11	11	11	11	11
N	18,902	4,828	2,647	2,738	4,952	11,490	7,029	8,473

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05.

Table 5B. Hazard Ratios for Selected Independent Variables Predicting Marriage Timing, by Ethnic Group

	Women							
	Yankee	**Black**	**English**	**Irish**	**German**	**Italian**	**Polish**	**Jewish**
Generation								
Second (First=Ref)	NA	NA	0.990	1.159 **	1.134 ***	0.852 ***	0.928 +	1.036
Age/Birth Cohort								
30-34 / Born 1926-1930	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
35-39 / Born 1921-1925	0.858 ***	0.980	0.667 ***	0.900	0.813 ***	0.851 ***	0.865 **	0.847 ***
40-44 / Born 1916-1920	0.768 ***	0.869 **	0.537 ***	0.754 ***	0.744 ***	0.763 ***	0.754 ***	0.740 ***
45-49 / Born 1911-1915	0.665 ***	0.887 *	0.501 ***	0.661 ***	0.718 ***	0.715 ***	0.744 ***	0.623 ***
50-54 / Born 1906-1910	0.630 ***	0.777 ***	0.495 ***	0.612 ***	0.666 ***	0.754 ***	0.718 ***	0.617 ***
55-59 / Born 1901-1905	0.567 ***	0.707 ***	0.470 ***	0.504 ***	0.627 ***	0.781 ***	0.689 ***	0.650 ***
Educational Attainment								
8 years or less	1.298 ***	1.150 **	1.160 **	1.276 ***	1.176 ***	1.282 ***	1.228 ***	1.278 ***
Some HS	1.364 ***	1.180 **	1.262 ***	1.264 ***	1.156 ***	1.244 ***	1.202 ***	1.229 ***
High School (Ref)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Some College	0.826 ***	0.957	0.835 **	0.830 *	0.829 **	0.810 ***	0.899	0.964
College or Higher	0.580 ***	0.737 **	0.525 ***	0.377 ***	0.515 ***	0.579 ***	0.593 ***	0.775 ***
Model chi-square	1442.0 ***	86.2 ***	248.4 ***	252.6	213.8	360.2	179.7	297.2
DF	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10
N	18,382	4,495	3,074	2,813	5,051	10,650	6,566	8,260

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05.

Figure 1. Marital Timing for Women, by Group

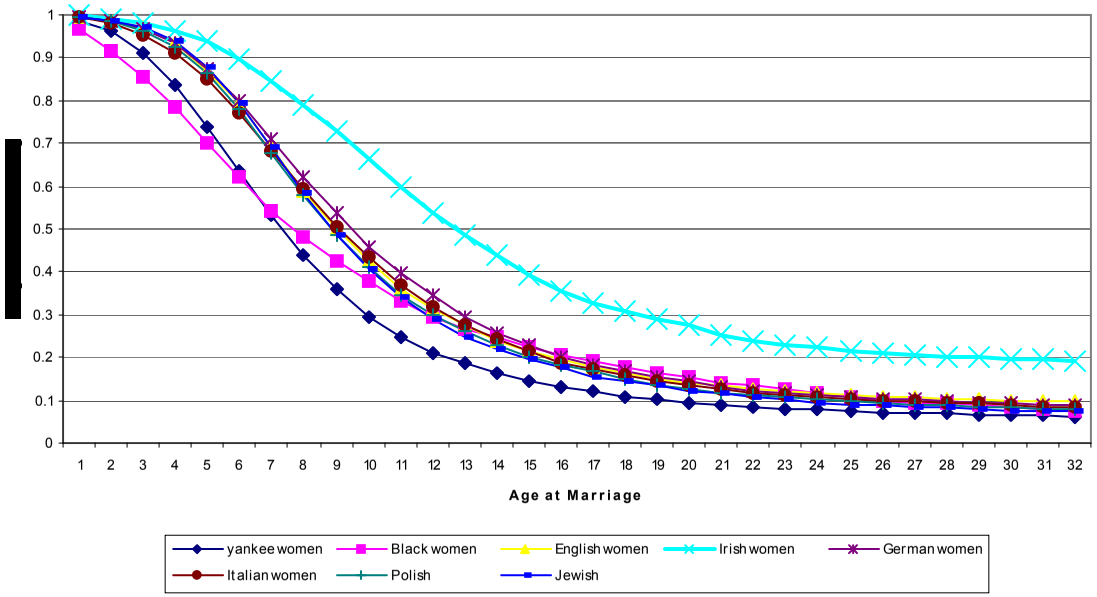


Figure 2. Marriage Timing for Men, by Group

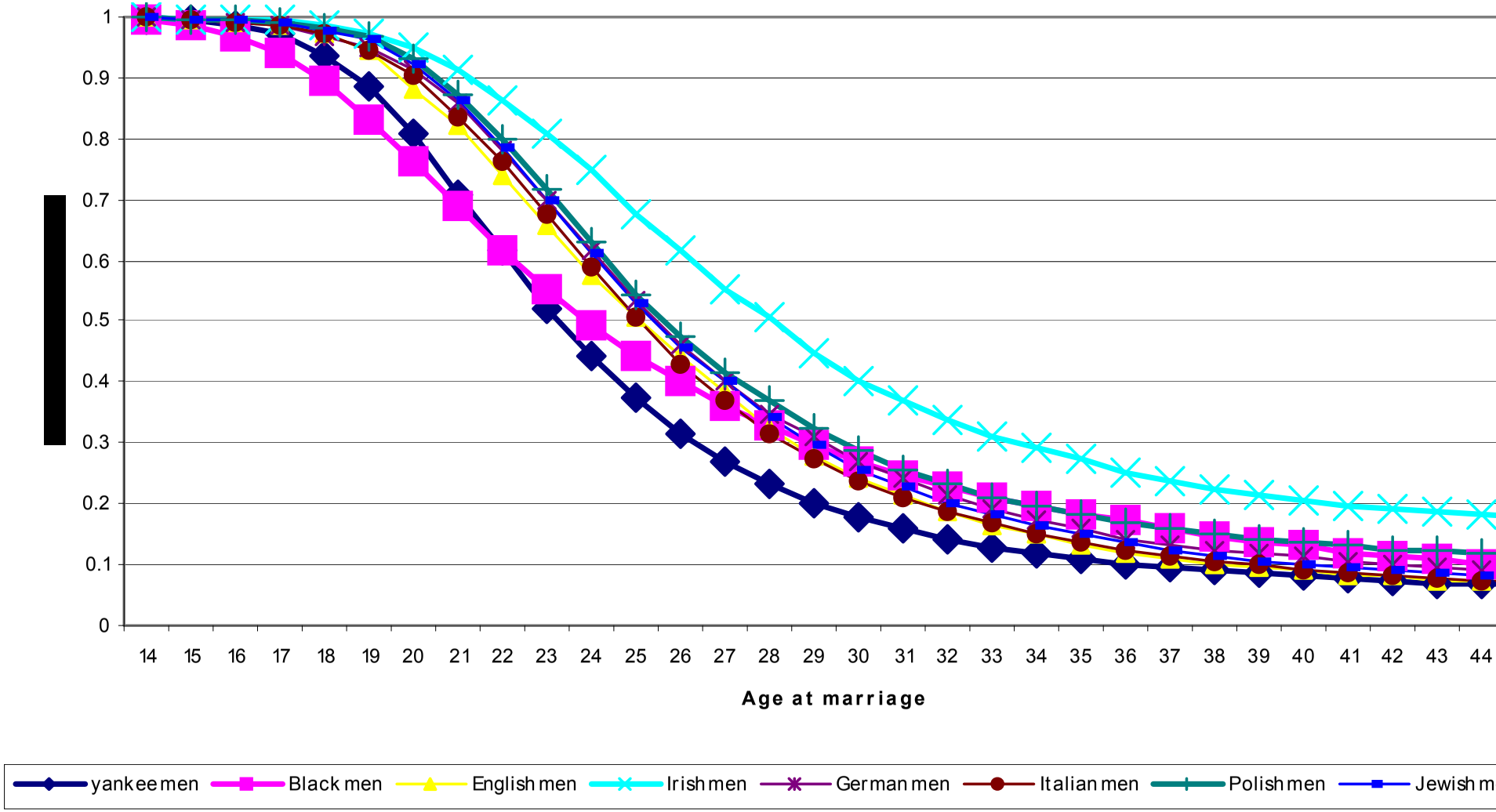


Figure 3. Marital Timing for Men, by Birth Cohort

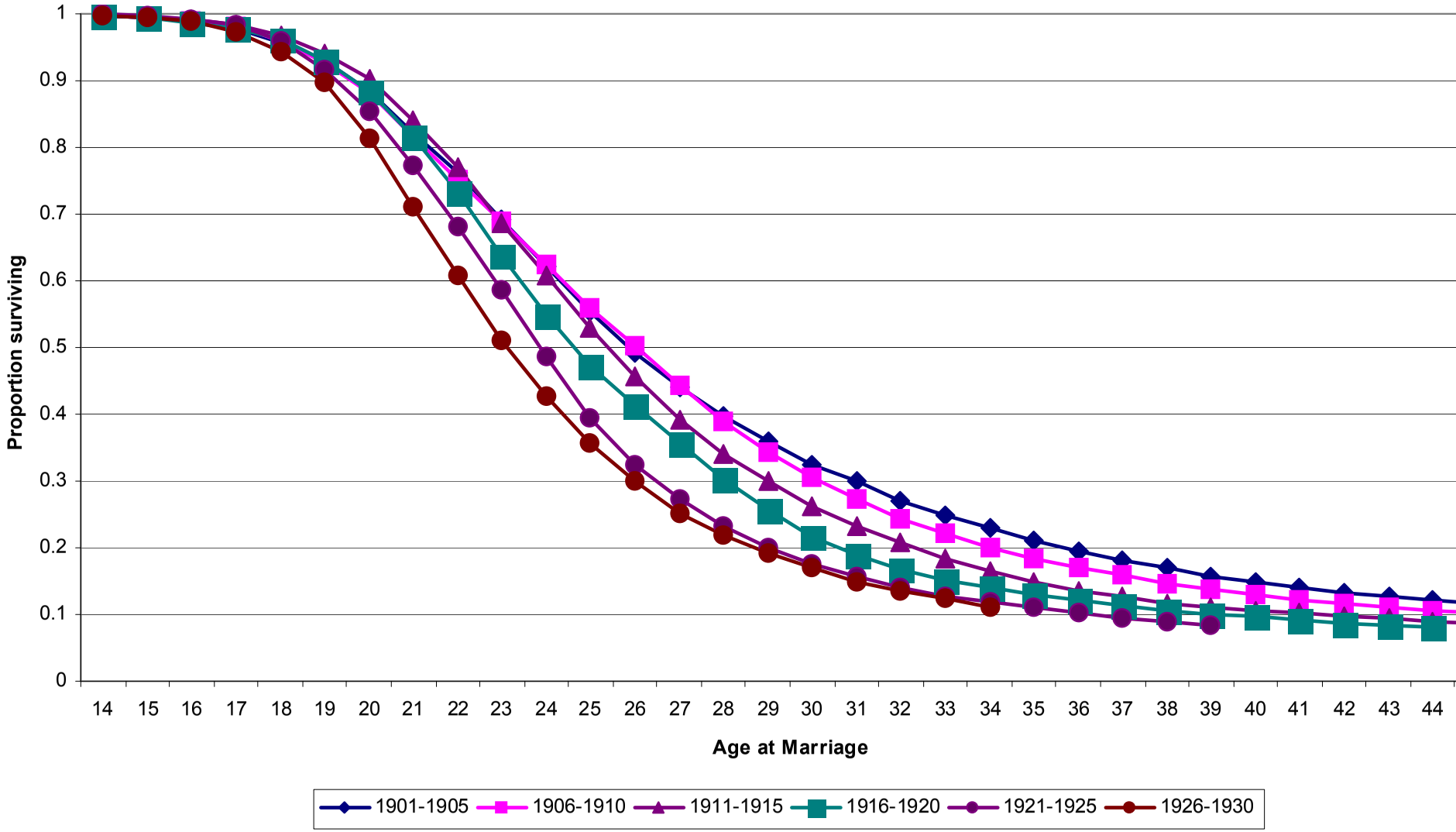
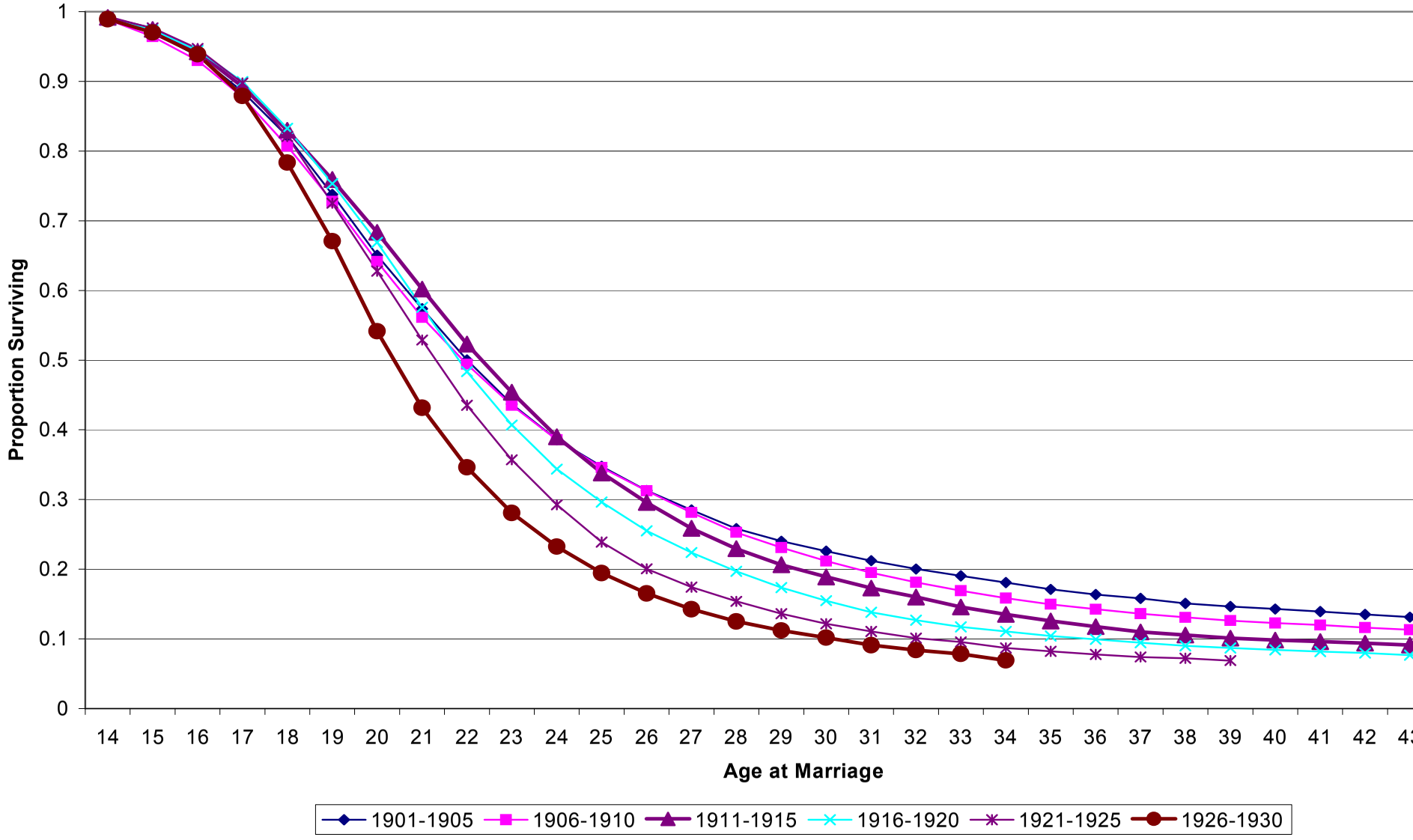


Figure 4. Marital Timing for Women, by Birth Cohort



[1] Men born between 1851 and 1860, on the other hand, did marry earlier than those born twenty years later; this may have been due to favorable economic situation facing them upon their coming of age.

[2] While they document a dramatic reduction in marriage timing, as well as considerable ethnic convergence in age at marriage, their analysis is plagued by two methodological problems. The 1980 census data, which provides their retrospective data for the birth cohorts of 1921 to 1950, collects information on only two generations, making a true test of the Gordon (1964) framework problematic. Furthermore, the 1980 census relied on subjective identifications of ancestry, rather than direct questions on birthplace and parental place of birth.

[3] The lower mortality rates of married individuals compared to those who remain single or divorce does pose some potential sample bias. To minimize this, our sample is limited to those under age 60. Nonetheless, mortality for these cohorts was an ever-present threat, particularly for young men. The Influenza Epidemic of 1918, World War I, and World War II resulted in the deaths of thousands of Americans, predominantly males. Examining marriage timing for different cohorts accounts in part for such mortality effects, though predominantly in terms of delayed union formation.

[4] The IPUMS has constructed a variable for nativity. However, the nativity variable for 1960 yields incorrect estimates of the foreign-born; we therefore combine information from a question on birthplace with the nativity construct to yield our first-generation respondents.

[5] The 1960 Census data did not seek information on the respondent's mother's birthplace if the father was foreign-born. Thus, comparisons between single- and mixed-ancestry groups are not possible as in previous studies (Sassler & Qian 2003). This technique also obscures any cases in which the individual may have subjectively identified more closely with the ancestry of the mother.

[6] The total for blacks also includes a small number of first and second generation immigrants. However, their sample size is too small to examine separately. We therefore group all blacks together.

[7] While there was a sizable influx of German Jews into the United States during the 1930s, they are estimated to account for only a minor share of the American Jewish population (Rosenthal 1975). Unfortunately, they would not have designated their mother tongue as Yiddish, and so are not captured in our measure of the Jewish population.

[8] Compared to earlier studies of women's marriage timing (Sassler and Qian 2003), white ethnic women married at a considerably more rapid pace than did women born between 1851 and 1880, as did Yankee women.

[9] As is the case for the women, Irish men's patterns of marriage timing demonstrate that those born between 1901 and 1930 married considerably earlier than had first and second Irish immigrants born between 1851 and 1880.