The Geography of Interracial Marriage in the US and Potential Correlative Factors

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Background: For many years anti-miscegenation laws reinforced segregation by criminalizing interracial relationships. It was not until 1967 that interracial marriage was legal in all of the United States thanks to the Loving v. Virginia court case.

Since then people have been pushing the envelope to freely choose their partners. There has been research already conducted by the Census Bureau on the spatial distribution of interethnic married couples. This particular study uses a different dataset to evaluate spatial patterns and test various factors for any correlation to interracial marriages through regression analysis.

Objectives: This study aims to determine where in the US are interracial marriages most and least prevalent, if there is a distribution pattern, and if rates of interracial marriage are correlated with other factors.

Approach: Data for individual’s marital status, race, educational attainment, schooling type, total income, wage and salary income, welfare income and poverty status were obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) for 2011. The data represent only those included in the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) sample population. New tabulations were created in ArcMap. Spatial autocorrelation was assessed by Moran’s I and LISA statistics, and the relationship between interracial marriages and poverty status were obtained from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) for 2011.

The Logistic and Spatial Regression predictors are all significant at \( p < 0.05 \). Standard Error (SE) is a much better model than OLS and also explains 69% of the variance versus 6%. All the predictors increase in people below the poverty level. Comparing these results to the regression conducted at the person level makes a case for ecological fallacy. The similar education variables are positive. On the other hand, the poverty coefficient is positive for both models but negative for logistic.

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There is a clear visual difference between the West and the East! The USA Statistic map further exemplifies local clustering of high/high and low/low PUMAS.

A Moran’s I of 0.72 calculated using a queen weight matrix is significant and indicates interracial marriage percentages are clustered across the US.

The Most Frequent Interracial Marriage Combination by Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA)

The Most Prevalent Combinations Based on # Sampled People
1. Male White Female Other Asian
2. Male Vietnamese Female Other Asian
3. Male Two Races Female White
4. Male Chinese Female Other Asian
5. Male White Female Other

The Least Prevalent Combinations Based on # Sampled People
1. Male Chinese Female AIAN
2. Male Japanese Female Black
3. Male Three or More Races Female AIAN
4. Male AIAN Female Three or More Races
5. Male Chinese Female Three or More Races

Logistic regression at the person level.

Dependent variable = Interracial Marriage Status (Y/N).

Regressions at the PUMA level.

Dependent Variable = Natural log of % of Marriages that are Interracial