

Family influences on mate selection:  
Outcomes for homogamy and same-sex coupling

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*Abstract:*

The outcomes of family involvement in relationship formation and mate selection are evaluated using Wave I (2009) of the nationally representative How Couples Meet and Stay Together survey (2013). Consistent with kin-keeping literature, female relatives are more likely to have introduced family members to their current partner than male relatives. Partners who met through family have lower levels of education than partners who met through other intermediaries. Older cohorts of couples who met through family are less likely to be interracial or interreligious; family involvement does not influence homogamous outcomes of younger cohorts of couples. Very few gay and lesbian individuals in same-sex couples met their partner through family. Bisexual women and men who met their partner through family are less likely to be in a same-sex relationship than bisexuals who met outside of family, even after controlling for education and age they met their current partner.

Key words: Mate Selection, Dating/Relationship Formation, Same-sex relationships, Sexuality, Gender & Family

*Introduction:*

This study focuses on family involvement in relationship formation and how meeting through a family member can influence who pairs with whom. I use Wave I (2009) of the nationally representative How Couples Meet and Stay Together survey (Rosenfeld et al. 2013) to identify the types of people who meet through family, whether men or women play a more salient role in couple formation and whether couples who meet through family are less likely to be interracial, interreligious, or same-sex. This paper builds on previous literature that has identified “kin-keeping” as efforts of family members, notably female family members, to keep kin connected to one another (Rosenthal 1985). Matchmaking done for family members, by family members, is conceptualized as a form of kin-keeping in this paper. I assess whether women are the drivers of family-matchmaking as they are of other types of kin-keeping. This study seeks to build on previous research by expanding the definition of kin-keeping to include family involvement in relationship formation and evaluating outcomes for the types of unions formed. Homogamy, the tendency of people to marry within their social group, is influenced in part by the social groups of which people are members (Kalmijn 1991). The desires of in-groups to maintain internal cohesion and in a Weberian sense, social closure (Weber 1978), explain why third parties, like families, may encourage homogamy as a way of keeping kin (Kalmijn 1998). Homogamy is a term that technically refers to marriage, but the principle is applicable to dating relationships. Since this study includes both married and unmarried couples, I use more general terms like, matching on religion and race, or same religion and same race pairing to describe partnering between similar individuals.

This study addresses changes in kin-keeping and family influenced pairing between same race and same religion couples over time, given that the role of family continues to change.

Literature on the rise of the independent life stage has demonstrated that the rise in boundary-breaking relationships, like interracial and same-sex couples, is in part explained by weakened family influence over young people and increased opportunities for young people to become romantically involved with people whom their families do not approve (Rosenfeld 2007).

However, certain portions of the population are more likely to experience independence from family than others. A nationally representative sample allows for analyses of the role of family in the romantic relationship formation of people who vary by education level, race, sexuality and religious upbringing. The data used in this study have particular advantages for this topic of research. Open-ended and close-ended text questions about how couples met their current romantic partner allow for a more complete analysis of family involvement. Open-ended questions contain information about the gender of family members who introduced couples. Information on family backgrounds of respondents and partners, as well as sexual identification and attraction measures for respondents, allow for assessment of family influence on pairings. Given that much has changed since the 1930's when the oldest couples in the survey met, this analysis will benefit from comparisons between age groups of couples that the data allow. By drawing comparisons between couples who met through family, and those who did not, this paper aims to show how family has influenced couples that exist today.

### **Previous literature on women as kin-keepers**

Kin-keeping is a term used to describe the activities that family members engage in to keep family members connected to each other. The range of activities deemed to constitute kin-keeping include visiting and calling family members to stay aware of events in each other's lives, orchestrating family gatherings and rituals and monitoring family relationships (Bahr 1976). The definition of kin-keeping is nebulous and is perhaps best described generally as concerted effort

made by family members to keep all family members intertwined. By this definition, efforts of families to introduce family members to potential dating and marriage partners are evidence of kin-keeping.

Another aspect of kin-keeping is who performs the role. A well-substantiated finding about kinship in America is that women tend to be more active at maintaining kin ties (Hagestad 1986, Adams 1968). Both men and women normatively assign kin-keeping tasks to women (Robins and Tomanec 1962, Bahr 1976, Bott 1971). Because many studies of kin-keeping originated in the 1960 and 1970's; however, theories about divisions of family roles may be dated given that much has changed since then. Furthermore, past findings may rest on biologically deterministic assumptions about women as members of the nuclear family who are most concerned with group maintenance and are experts in the expressive domain (Parsons 1955, Zelditch Jr 1955). Despite the limitations of the existing literature, kin-keeping provides a valuable theoretical orientation for studying family involvement in relationship formation. Furthermore, literature on kin-keeping highlights that families are maintained through cohesion of their members, which may be bolstered by similarity.

### **Third party influence on partnering between same race and same religion individuals**

Homogamy, by formal definition, is marriage between individuals who are similar to each other in some culturally important way. Kalmijn (1998) identifies three main factors that influence homogamy. First, individuals may prefer to couple with people who are like themselves. Second, constraints on individuals' choices and exposure might prevent them from meeting singles who are different from themselves. Third, interference by third parties, like family members, may deter people from pairing with dissimilar others. As literature on kin-keeping makes apparent, family members have a vested interest in the continuity of family

traditions and closeness between kin. In-laws, the non-family members who family members pair with, pose a threat to family cohesion as they may introduce new values and traditions that diminish the importance of the values and traditions of the family of origin. In-laws also affect children that result from the union, and may draw subsequent generations away from the ideology of the family of origin. Sussman finds that children who marry individuals of a background similar to their own with regards to ethnic origin, church affiliation, class and educational attainment have more amicable relationships with in-laws (1954). Differences in cultural background can introduce uncertainty and stress in the family dynamic. There are many variables that may be important to any particular family, including religion, race, education, national origin, political orientation and world view. Of the wide variety of variables that individual families might care about, race and religion are particularly divisive.

The existence of religious and racial homogamy is well-documented and generally, both have declined over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Such a general statement; however, obscures differences in rates of homogamy between specific religious and racial groups. Studies of intermarriage between majority and minority groups take care to adjust rates of out-group partnership by group size given that majority groups are likely to have higher out-group partnership in absolute value (Qian 1997, Rosenfeld 2008, McClintock 2010). In a comparative historical study using multiple datasets, Rosenfeld (2008) identifies that divisions between Christians and Jews are particularly strong. Intermarriage between Protestants and Catholics has increased dramatically since the 1920s (Kalmijn 1991) rendering divisions between Catholics and Protestants to be relatively weak (Rosenfeld 2008). Less is known about other religious groups like Buddhists, Muslims and other non-Christian groups. Same race pairing is evident in marriages, as well as casual dating relationships (McClintock 2010) and cohabiting relationships (Blackwell and

Lichter 2004). Racial homogamy is less common for Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites than black and Asian Americans (Kalmijn 1993, Qian 1997, Rosenfeld 2002).

While an individual from a majority religious and racial group has more people to choose from, generally speaking, an individual from any background has access to his or her own family members who share his or her background and likely have contacts that are similar (McPherson et al. 2001). Given the assumption that people of all religious and racial backgrounds have an equal opportunity to be set up by a family member, this paper addresses whether people who meet through family, from all race and religious groups, are more likely to form homogamous unions. This paper builds on previous literature that has identified that relationships formed through family are more likely to be matched on race and religion (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012) by testing whether this effect has narrowed over time.

### **Third party influence on sexual minority partner choice**

Kalmijn's statement that interference by third parties can deter people from pairing with someone deemed undesirable to the group applies to same-sex couples, in addition to, interracial and interreligious couples (1998). Recent literature has identified that same-sex couples are less likely to meet through family than heterosexual couples (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012). While all families are different, most are comprised of heterosexual couples and many parents have dreams for children related to heterosexual norms. Studies of parental reactions to children's "coming out", include grief on the part of parents who fear that they will never see their son or daughter marry and have children of their own (Beeler and DiProva 1999, Muller 1987). In a study of individuals in a support group for parents of non-heterosexual children, Fields finds that bisexuality poses a particular challenge for parents given that it contradicts notions of sexuality being fixed (2001). While evidence for sexual fluidity exists (Kinsey 1953, Kinsey et al. 1948),

particularly for women (Diamond 2008), bisexuals face disapproval from those who see sexuality as a distinct binary and interpret bisexuality as “fence sitting” (Gamson 1998). The desire to align with the values and norms of their family of origin can influence sexual minorities to commit to different-sex unions. Studies of gay and bisexual men who are currently in, or have been in, different-sex marriages cite the desire for children, family life, and family pressure as reasons for entering a mixed orientation marriage (Higgins 2002, Pearcey 2005). While, many individuals who are sexual minorities are able to rise above family pressures and form same-sex unions, they do so at the risk of experiencing disapproval from their families. Not all individuals have the option to leave home and gain independence, and pressures may be stronger for the individuals that stay behind.

### **Educational differences in experiences of independence**

Opportunities for greater independence from family are not equally distributed among young people. Men and women who have financial means and job or educational aspirations that draw them away from their hometowns are more likely to successfully distance themselves from family. College attendance is central to young adults’ realization of their independence and is a major impetus for people to move out and move away from home (Avery et al. 1992, Goldrick-Rab 2006). There is a link between education level and geographical distance from one’s parents: even later in life, highly educated adult children are likely to live further away (Crimmins and Ingegneri 1990). Young adults who do not go to college may be less likely to attain the same independence as their college bound peers. Less educated parents with lower incomes are more likely to limit their children’s college options to institutions that are closer to home in the application process (Turley 2006). Given that higher education is a gateway for

people to gain independence and geographical distance from their families, peoples' experiences of meeting partners through family may hinge on educational differences.

*Hypotheses:*

Literature on kin-keeping and third party influences on pairing motivate the following hypotheses about outcomes of family involvement in relationship formation.

*Hypothesis 1: For couples of all ages, more couples will have met through female relatives than male relatives.*

Previous findings of gendered kin-keeping lead to the prediction that female family members will be more active in partner introduction than male family members. Because female family members are more attuned to current events in the family, they are likely to know who is single and presumably looking for a romantic partner. They are likely to be more involved in family matters; therefore, interested and available to introduce a family member to an eligible potential partner.

*Hypothesis 2: Older couples introduced by family in the past are more likely to match on race and religion than younger couples introduced by family.*

The family, as a cohesive unit, has a vested interest in same religion and race partnering of kin in order to maintain closeness and similarity between members. The effect of third party influence on homogamy suggests that couples formed through family members are more likely to share race and religious backgrounds. However, documented declines in religious and racial homogamy suggest that younger couples are less likely to be in couples that match on race and religion, regardless of how they met. Changes in trends of same race and religion pairing over time suggest that divisions between racial groups and religious groups were enforced more strongly in the past.

*Hypothesis 3: Bisexual individuals who met through family are less likely to be paired with a same-sex partner than respondents who did not meet through family.*

Family reproduces itself through marriage and subsequent procreation. Same-sex couples do not fit into the heteronormative framework of family roles. Given families' assumed reticence to have same-sex paired kin, it is likely that same-sex couples will not be formed through family intermediaries. Individuals who desire a same-sex union typically have to seek out other intermediaries, such as online dating, to meet potential partners (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012). Assuming that families prefer family members to pair with different-sex individuals, bisexual individuals who meet through family may be influenced to form relationships with different-sex individuals.

*Hypothesis 4: People who met their romantic partner through family intermediaries will have lower education levels than those who met through other intermediaries.*

Literature on independence highlights the importance of education as a way people can gain independence from their families of origin. People who have lower levels of education are less likely to have opportunities away from home that draw them away from their families; therefore, families are likely to play a more influential role in their romantic relationship formation.

#### *Data*

This analysis uses Wave I (2009) of the How Couples Meet and Stay Together (HCMST) survey fielded in 2009 (Rosenfeld et al. 2013). HCMST is a nationally representative longitudinal survey of 4,002 English literate adults, of whom 3,009 had a spouse or romantic partner. Data, codebooks, frequencies and documentation are publicly available at <http://data.stanford.edu/hcmst>. HCMST is the most recent nationally representative study on

how Americans, particularly lesbian, gay and bisexual sexual minorities, meet their romantic partners.

The HCMST survey is an Internet survey, implemented by Knowledge Networks (KN). Unlike most Internet surveys whose participants are composed of a self-selected or opt-in sample of volunteers, the KN panel participants were initially recruited into the panel through a nationally representative random digit dialing telephone survey, so the KN sample is nationally representative. Respondents with Internet access at home used their own computer to answer the surveys. Those individuals who did not have Internet access at home were offered Internet access and a WebTV in exchange for participating in KN surveys. Internet surveys such as those administered by to the KN panel have been shown to yield quality data that is generally regarded as equal or better than random digit dialing surveys which have been the longstanding norm for survey data collection (Fricker et al. 2005, Baker et al. 2010, Chang and Krosnick 2009).

Seventy one percent of KN panelists contacted for the HCMST survey consented to participate in the study used in this paper. Including the initial random digit dialing phone contact and agreement to join the panel (participation rate 32.6 percent), and the respondents' completion of the initial demographic survey (56.8 percent completion), the composite overall response rate is lower. Multiplication of the participation rate, completion rate and initial consent to participate in the KN panel yields a 13 percent composite response rate (Callegaro and DiSogra 2008). Attrition bias is a concern, yet can be accounted for because KN gathers information from subjects at each survey stage (Couper 2000). A unique element of this dataset is that respondents who previously had answered "yes" to the question "Are you yourself gay, lesbian, or bisexual?" were oversampled for the HCMST survey. The oversample of sexual minorities makes this dataset particularly valuable for social science research given that study of

sexual minorities is limited to a few national datasets among many non-generalizable convenience samples (Black et al. 2000). Additional questions about each respondent's level of same-sex and different-sex attraction allow researchers to corroborate respondent's sexual identification and differentiate between respondents based on their level of same-sex attraction. Of the 3,009 partnered adults in the survey, 474 had a same-sex partner.

In addition to quantitative data, HCMST gathered the stories of how respondents met their spouse or partner in an open-ended text box (average response length was 342 characters), as well as respondents' answers to closed-ended questions. These stories are particularly useful to identify the specific people who played a role in a couple's meeting. The overlapping data from different modes of questioning allows for responses to be corrected and allows researchers to better understand the varied ways couples meet.

### **The Results:**

Table 1 shows weighted summary statistics for the HCMST survey Wave I (2009), by whether a couple met through either a respondent or partner's family or met through a social intermediary outside of family. About 40 percent of all couples who met through family met through female relatives only. This is about twice the percent of couples who met through male relatives only, or relatives, like cousins, where gender was unspecified. Couples who met through joint efforts of male and female family members are the smallest represented group. As predicted, overall rates of matching on race and religion are higher among people who met through family, as opposed to other intermediaries. 87 percent of couples who met through family are between people of the same race, as compared to 80 percent of people who met through other intermediaries. 51 percent of couples who met through family share the same denomination of religious upbringing or same nonreligious upbringing as compared to 43 percent

of couples who met outside of family. Given that religious upbringing is deduced from respondent's and partner's religion at sixteen, this measure reflects the religion of each person's family of origin. Same-sex couples represent a minority of couples regardless of how people met, but they are particularly absent from the subsample of people who met through family. Less than one percent of couples who met through family were same-sex couples. However, while fewer lesbian and gay respondents met through family, bisexual individuals were no less likely to meet through family. As is shown later in the analysis, the underrepresentation of same-sex couples among couples who met through family is due in part to the fact that bisexual people were more likely to pair with different-sex individuals if they met through a family member.

Given that family efforts to stay involved in family members lives are motivated by keeping kin, it makes sense that respondents who met through family are more likely see at least one relative per month and live geographically closer to their hometowns. 30 percent of respondents who met outside of family do not see any relatives each month, as compared to 24 percent of couples who met through family. Those who met outside of family live a median of 40 miles away from their hometown, as opposed to those who met through family who live a median of 20 miles away. Of course, respondents may interact with family members apart from in person interactions and respondents may move near a partner's family, rather than their own, but these rough measures suggest higher levels of interaction and geographic proximity for couples who met through family.

When evaluating characteristics of couples related to age and education, separate measures of respondents' and partners' ages and years of education are combined to create composite measures for each couple. For both people who met through family and people who did not, the average difference of years between respondent and partner is 4-5 years and the

average difference in years of education is 1-2 years. Given that differences in age and education between partners are not related to whether a couple met through family, combined measures for each couple suffice. Couples who met through family have longer relationship durations than couples who met outside of family. Longer relationship duration for couples who met through family is partially because those couples met at younger ages and longer ago. The mean year couples who met outside of family met is 1990 as compared to 1985 for couples who met through family. Couples who met outside of family have a mean age of 45; couples who met through family are slightly older at a mean age of 47. Education levels are slightly lower for couples who met through family: they have an average of 13 years of education as compared to 14 years for those who did not meet through family.

### **Gender differences in family matchmaking**

Past kin-keeping literature predicts that female family members will be more involved in family matters, like matchmaking. If kin-keeping patterns are consistent over time, it is expected that more couples will have met through female family members, regardless of age of the couple. Figure 1 shows counts of couples who met through female family members and male family members by four groups, grouped by the year a couple met: 1930-1959, 1960-1979, 1980-1999, and the 2000's. The groupings are not the same size given that the majority of couples in the dataset met in more recent years. Despite evidence of the decline of family as a way people meet partners (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012), female family members carry the weight of family matchmaking for every grouping of years, except the oldest couples, of whom there are barely 30 to analyze. Even couples who met through family most recently are significantly more likely to have met through a female family member than a male family member. Gender divisions in kin-

keeping within the family are evident through female family members involvement in the relationship formation of their kin.

### **Characteristics of couples who meet through family**

The weighted summary statistics in Table 1 reported that people who met through family are more likely to be paired with someone who shares their same race or religion. Figure 2 shows weighted percentages of percent of same religion and same race couples by decade the couple met and whether the couple met through family. A horizontal line at 1989 indicates that this is the average year that couples met. Figure 2 shows that same race and same religion pairing has gone down over time, like other scholars have identified (Kalmijn 1991, Rosenfeld 2008). What is more surprising is that the differences between couples formed through family and those not through family have narrowed. Among couples who met between 1930-1949, through family, 71 percent are paired with someone who shares their same religious background as compared to 56 percent of couples who did not meet through family. Similarly, 100 percent of couples who met between 1930-1949, through family, are paired with someone of the same race as compared to 71 percent of those who did not meet through family. Among couples who met in the year 2000 or more recently, 44 percent of couples who met through family are matched on religion, as compared to 40 percent of couple who did not meet through family. Also, 75 percent of couples are who met through family are matched on race as compared to 72 percent of couples who met outside of family. One explanation is that religion has become less important over time; however, this analysis includes people without a religious upbringing marrying each other as cases of same religion matching. The principle of homogamy assumes that people pair with similar others, even in the case where a similar other might be someone who does not identify with a particular religious group.

Table 2 shows a multivariate analysis predicting whether a couple met through family split by couples who met in 1989 or earlier (models 1-2) or after 1989 (models 3-4), and a combined model that includes the full coupled sample. Results are reported in log odds from logistic regressions. This analysis is weighted using weight2, as recommended by the How Couples Meet and Stay Together literature for analysis of couples in the sample. Model 1 of Table 2 indicates that for couples who met prior to 1989, matching on religion and matching on race increase the odds that a couple met through family. Model 2 of Table 2 controls for additional variables that were shown to differ by whether a couple met through family in the bivariate summary statistics. Net of controls, same race and same religion couples who met in 1989 or earlier are more likely to have met through family. As model 2 shows, being a same race couple increases the odds that a couple met through family by a factor of 2.44 ( $\exp(.89)=2.44$ ) and similarly, being a same religion couple increases the odds a couple met through family by a factor of ( $\exp(.39)=1.48$ ). Models 3 and 4 of Table 2 predict whether same race and same religion couples who met after 1989 were more likely to meet through family. Model 4 shows that being a same race or same religion couple is not associated with meeting through family, for couples who met after 1989, net of other selected independent variables shown to differ by how the couple met in the bivariate analysis. The results indicate that in the past, family formed couples were more likely to match in race and religion; however, more recent unions do not display this trend. As Figure 2 showed, and the multivariate analysis also suggests, influences of family on same race and same religion pairing were more relevant in the past.

Some stark differences in couples who met through family and those who did not remain consistent over time; specially, lower educational attainment of those who meet through family and exclusion of same-sex couples from family matchmaking efforts. Model 5 of Table 2 shows

a combined model of the full partnered sample. Each additional year of average education of the couple decreases the odds that a couple met through family, by a factor of .83 ( $\exp(-.19) = .83$ ). The negative association between education and probability of meeting through family was statistically significant in the split models 2 and 4, and the combined model. In addition, being a same-sex couple decreases the odds that a couple met through family by a factor of 0.28 ( $\exp(-1.29) = 0.28$ ). This finding is consistent in the subsample during and prior to 1989 and after 1989. This analysis suggests that people who meet through family have historically been people who have lower levels of education, although, not necessarily those who move far away from family and forgo in person interaction with their relatives. All models include a log transformation for distance from respondent's hometown and a binary indicator for whether the respondent does not see any relatives each month. While the bivariate summary statistics in Table 1 suggested that people who meet through family live closer to home and are less likely to see zero relatives per month, neither of these variables are significant in the multivariate analysis. Perhaps with more precise measures, an association would stand out between meeting through family relatives and interaction with family or distance from one's home town, but there is no association in this analysis.

The finding that same-sex couples are less likely to meet through family may be explained by both the propensity for people to look for same-sex partners through other intermediaries, and discouragement from family that pressures some individuals to enter heterosexual unions. As mentioned earlier, a unique advantage of this dataset is its oversample of individuals who said that they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual. All men and women were asked what gender they are most attracted to on a five point scale that ranged from exclusive same-sex attraction to exclusive different-sex attraction. Respondents who indicated that they are attracted

to men and women equally or both to varying degrees are identified as bisexual. Respondents who indicated that they are attracted to exclusively same-sex persons are identified as gay or lesbian. Nearly all gay men and lesbian women who met outside of family are paired with a same-sex partner. However, while nearly 9 percent of bisexual women who met outside of family are paired with a same-sex partner, less than 1 percent of bisexual women who met through family are paired with a same-sex partner. Similarly, nearly 13 percent of bisexual men who met outside of family are paired with same-sex a partner, yet none of the bisexual men who met a partner through family are paired with a same-sex partner. While the majority of bisexual individuals pair with a different-sex partner regardless of how they met their partner, meeting through family appears to have a particularly suppressive effect on bisexuals' partnerships with a same-sex individual.

Table 3 conducts a multivariable analysis of only bisexual men and women, predicting whether an individual is in a same-sex relationship. Results are reported in log odds from logistic regressions. Model 3 includes three predictors for a bisexual respondent being in a same-sex relationship: respondent having met a partner through family, respondent's years of education and age respondent met partner. For bisexual individuals, having met a partner through family decreases the odds of being in a same-sex relationship by a factor of 0.11 ( $\exp(-2.24) = 0.11$ ). Bisexual people with higher levels of education are more likely to be in a same-sex relationship. Each additional year of education increases the likelihood that a bisexual respondent is in a same-sex relationship by a factor of 1.27 ( $\exp(.24) = 1.27$ ). Older bisexual individuals are more likely to be in a same-sex relationship. Each additional year of age a respondent met his/or her partner increases the odds of being in a same-sex relationship by a factor of 1.05 ( $\exp(.05) = 1.05$ ). The results of this model suggest that meeting through family

has a suppressive effect on individuals' likelihood of partnering with a same-sex individual. Older ages at which a respondent met his/her partner and higher levels of education are associated with higher odds of being in a same-sex couple. Perhaps people have a better idea of what they are looking for in a partner when they are older, and have gained the confidence to be part of a relationship that does not fit into heterosexual norms. Similarly, education might expose individuals to varied lifestyles and make same-sex partnering seem more possible.

**Discussion:**

The analyses in this paper address two research questions: who are family matchmakers, and how are couples who meet through family different from other couples? To answer these questions, this paper revisits older theories about kin relations and family influence, like kin-keeping and homogamy, and ventures into newer areas of study, like sexuality and same-sex coupling. While much has changed about the American family, the gendered division of kin-keeping has not. Older studies noted that men and women normatively assign kin-keeping tasks to women (Robins and Tomanec 1962, Bahr 1976, Bott 1971) and women are more active at maintaining ties between kin (Hagestad 1986, Adams 1968). This current study finds that women continue to be the most involved in relationships of relatives by introducing family members to romantic partners. Even in the 2000's, when fewer people are meeting through family (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012), women are more likely to take on family responsibilities aimed at keeping family members relevant to each other. While women still predominate family kin-keeping as they did in the past, some outcomes of family influence have changed.

In decades prior to the 1990's, couples who met through family were more likely to be matched on race and religion than couples who met through other intermediaries. Theories of homogamy can explain this tendency with the explanation that interference by third parties, like

family members, may deter people from pairing with dissimilar others, with the goal of maintaining cohesion (Kalmijn 1998). In more recent years, these particular differences between family and non-family pairings are less evident. This result suggests that race and religion were more divisive factors in mate-selection in past decades than they are now.

Some characteristics of couples formed through family have not changed. Educational attainment has a negative association with meeting through family for all couples: those with higher levels of education are less likely to meet through family. The exclusion of same-sex couples from family match-matching is evident and remains consistent over time. Additionally, the finding that bisexual men and women are more likely to be paired with a different-sex partner if they met through family provides evidence for preference for different-sex pairings of family. These findings are consistent with recent studies that note that gay and bisexual men who are currently in, or have been in, different-sex marriages cite family pressure, desire for children, and family life, as reasons for entering a mixed orientation marriage (Higgins 2002, Pearcey 2005). If barriers of entry to marriage and parenthood for same-sex couples are reduced such that same-sex couples can form families and experience legally recognized marriage and parenthood, the exclusion of same-sex couples from family kin-keeping may become less salient.

The ability to observe both reported attraction and partner choice is a particular strength of the HCMST survey and adds to current studies of bisexuality which emphasize that attraction, identity and behavior are different and that each one does not necessarily predict the other (Rust 2000). The current data cannot evaluate sexual histories or situational experiences of sexuality which are of interest to sexuality scholars (Diamond 2008). However, the findings that bisexual individuals who met their partner later in life and have higher levels of education are more likely to be with a same-sex partner suggest that behavior can change given the context and stage of

life someone is in. The analyses that this dataset allow on old topics, like gendered division of kin-keeping and new topics, such as sexuality and same-sex pairing, allow family researchers to observe some of what has changed and what has remained the same over the past eight decades of couple formation.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics of couples who met through family and couples who did not meet through family

Variables	Did not meet through family	Met through family
<b>Involvement of family in introduction of couples<sup>a</sup></b>		
Percent met through female relative(s) only	--	39.41***
Percent met through male relative(s) only	--	23.42
Percent met through female and male relative(s)	--	13.74
Percent met through family, gender unspecified	--	23.42
<b>Couple characteristics</b>		
Percent same-sex	2.10	.36***
Percent same race <sup>b</sup>	79.67	86.65*
Percent same religion <sup>c</sup>	43.15	51.39*
Duration of romance (years)	17.73	21.38***
Percent married	69.87	77.45*
Year couple met	1990	1985***
Average age when couple met (years)	26.13	23.88**
Average age at time of survey (years)	45.41	47.39*
Difference in age between respondent and partner (years)	4.34	4.69
Average education (years)	13.63	12.76***
Difference in education between respondent and partner (years)	1.66	1.83
<b>Individual characteristics</b>		
Percent gay or lesbian	1.74	.36**
Percent bisexual	4.26	3.92
Median distance from respondent's hometown (miles)	40.00	20.00***
Percent who see 0 relatives each month	30.28	23.69*
Household income (\$2008)	63,452	58,699
Unweighted <i>n</i>	2,483	444

Source: How Couples Meet and Stay Together, Wave I (2009).

Note: <sup>a</sup>Family involvement indicated by open-text q24. Family may belong to either respondent or partner. <sup>b</sup>Same race couples match among six racial categories (White, Black, Native American, Asian, Other, Hispanic). <sup>c</sup>Same religion couples match among thirteen religious categories at age 16 (Baptist, Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Pentecostal, Eastern Orthodox, other Christian, other non-Christian and non-religious). Means weighted using sampling weight2.

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*  $p \leq .05$  (two-tailed t-test for means Wilcoxon rank-sum test for medians; compares couples who met through family to those who did not meet through family and couples who met through family to all others. "Percent couple met through female relative(s) only" compares female matchmaking efforts to each other family category using equal variance t-tests).

Table 2. Predicting whether a couple met through family, coefficients reported in log odds from logistic regressions

	Couple met in 1989 or earlier		Couple met after 1989		Full sample
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Same race couple	.91**	.89**	.21	.11	.38
Same religion couple	.44*	.39*	.23	.09	.24
Average education (years)		-.19**		-.21***	-.19***
Respondent sees 0 relatives each month		-.24		-.08	-.19
Distance from respondent's hometown (log of miles <sup>a</sup> )		-.03		.04	.00
Same-sex couple		-2.90***		-1.09*	-1.29*
Married		.11		.10	.19
Year met <sup>b</sup>		-.02		-.04	-.02*
Average age when couple met (years)		-.02		-.01	-.01
Natural log of household income		-.08		.11	.00
Constant	-2.31	3.30	-2.25	2.70	2.04
Unweighted <i>n</i>	1,127	1,115	1,782	1,752	2,867

*Source:* The HCMST: How Couples Meet and Stay Together, Wave I (2009).

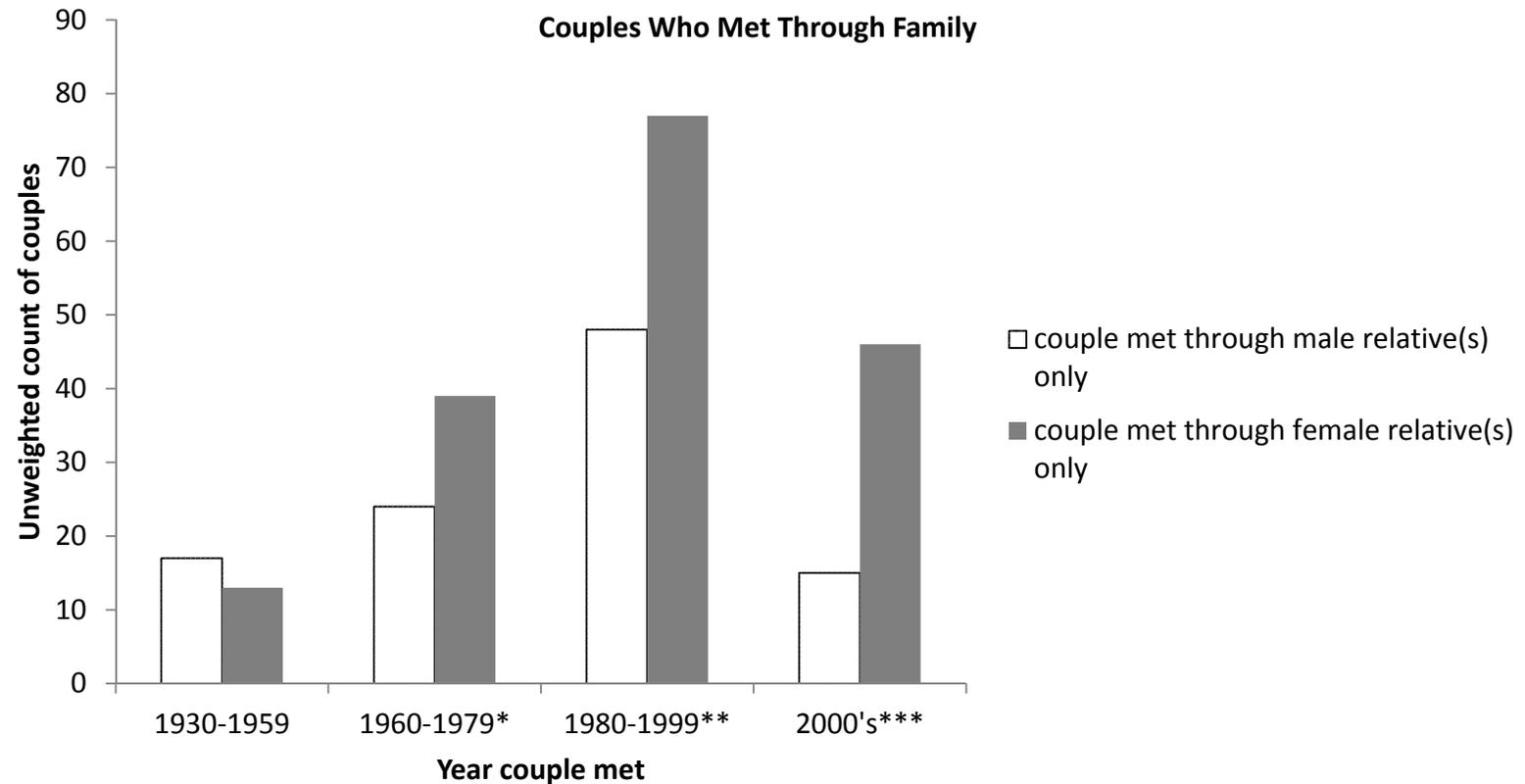
*Note:* Means weighted using sampling weight2. <sup>a</sup>A log transformation was used for distance from home given that the range of miles from home was over 10,000 miles. <sup>b</sup>The x-intercept of year met was adjusted to the earliest year in the dataset 1933. The coefficient can be interpreted as the predicted effect of year met in the year 1933.

Table 3. Predicting whether bisexual individuals are in a same-sex relationship, coefficients from logistic regressions

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Respondent met partner through family	-2.75***	-2.34**	-2.24**
Respondent's years of education		.20*	.24*
Age respondent met partner			.05*
Constant	-2.20	-5.11	-7.06
Unweighted <i>n</i>	349	349	348

Source: The HCMST: How Couples Meet and Stay Together, Wave I (2009). Means weighted using sampling weight2.

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*  $p \leq .05$ , two-tailed tests.

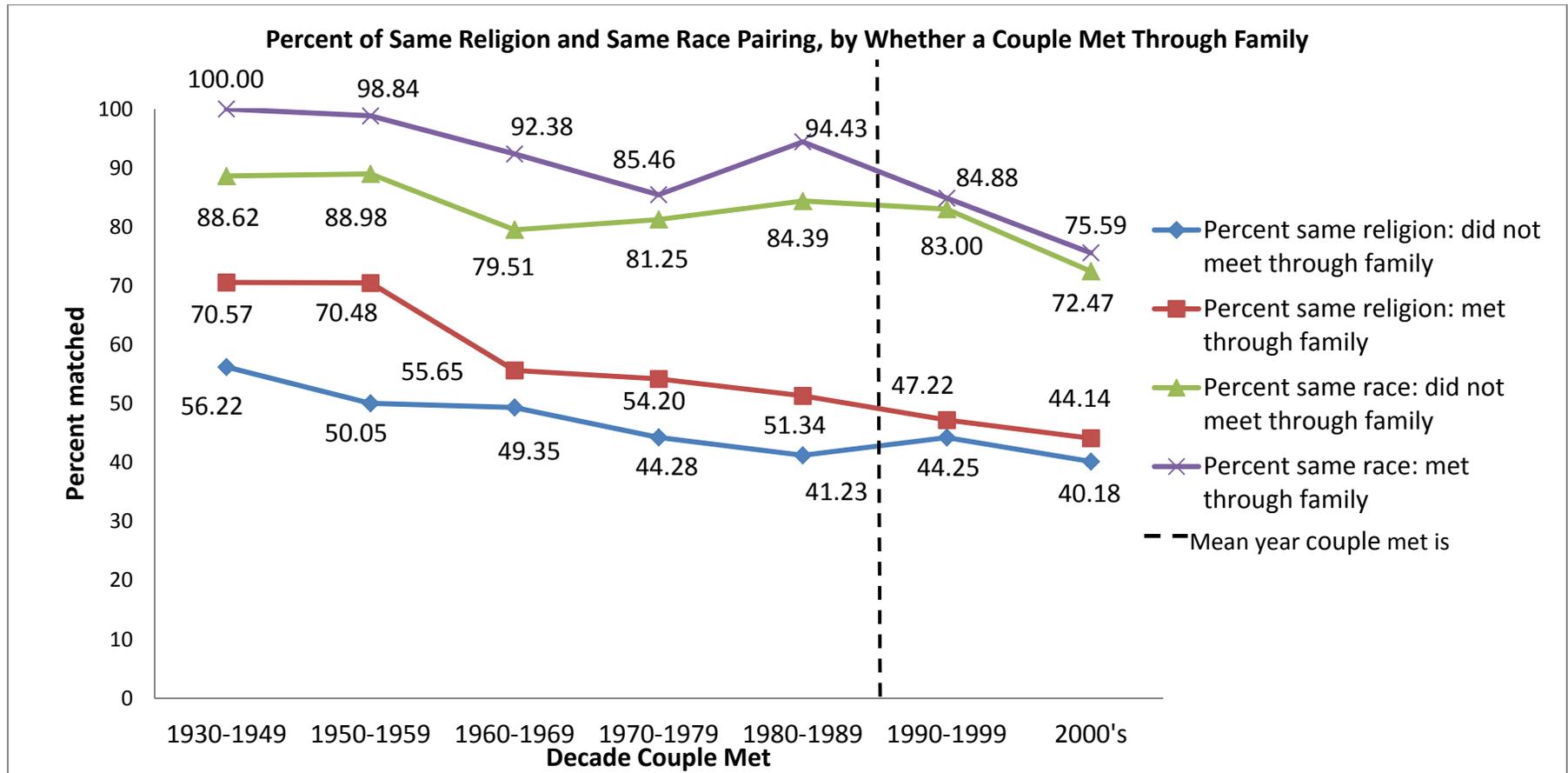


**Figure 1.** Gendered Matchmaking Efforts

*Source:* How Couples Meet and Stay Together, Wave I (2009), variables derived from questions 24 (open text answer box: “how did you meet partner\_name”).

*Note:*  $n=444$  for couples who met through family. Female relative(s) only account for 39.41% of family efforts, male relative(s) only account for 23.42%, female and male efforts account for 13.74% (not pictured), gender unspecified efforts account for 23.42% (not pictured).

\*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*  $p \leq .05$ , (equal variance t-test for means; compares couples who met through female relative(s) only to those who met through male relative(s) only, within age group).



**Figure 2.** Trends in Same Race and Same Religion Pairing By How Couple Met

*Source:* How Couples Meet and Stay Together, Wave I (2009).

*Note:* Means weighted using sampling weight2. Same race couples match among six racial categories (White, Black, Native American, Asian, Other, Hispanic). Same religion couples match among thirteen religious categories (Baptist, Protestant, Catholic, Mormon, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Pentecostal, Eastern Orthodox, other Christian, other non-Christian and non-religious).