Introduction:

For most of the 20th Century, the ethnic and racial landscape of the United States could be adequately described as consisting of two populations- white and black- with a deep division between them. The vast migrations from Southern and Central Europe at the beginning of the century briefly upset this carefully constructed system, but in short order the children of the Southern and Central European immigrants were incorporated into 'white' America, and the coherence of the racial stratification system was restored. In the late 20th Century, a new wave of immigration from Asia and Latin American has the potential to reshape the ethnic and racial stratification system in the U.S. The Latin American and Asian immigrants come to the U.S. as neither black nor white, and it is not yet clear what kind of ethnic or racial identity they will chose (or will be chosen for them). Will the descendents of the Latin American and Asian immigrants become 'white' over time, as the Southern and Central Europeans did? Will the descendents of the Mexican Americans and Hmong and Cambodians and other working class immigrant groups be integrated into a black dominated social underclass as Portes and Zhou (1993) suggest? Or will the different Asian and Hispanic national cultures redefine the ethnic stratification system in the U.S. by forging and reproducing new kinds of ethnic and racial identities completely outside of the old black- white dichotomy?

Two years after the immigration laws in the U.S. were fundamentally changed, the U.S. Supreme court in 1967 overturned all local anti-miscegenation laws. Although some of these laws remained on the books unenforced for several decades, 1967 can be
thought of as a turning point in the history of intermarriage in the U.S. Since the late 1960s, there has been a steady increase in the population of black-white intermarried couples, and a rapid rise in the populations of other kinds of intermarried couples. Like most diffuse demographic processes, the slow rise in intermarriage has not received public attention commensurate with its potential importance. The reason there were antimiscegenation laws in the first place was that the bar against intermarriage is the sine qua non of any racial caste system (Merton 1941; Myrdal et al 1944). As the prevalence of all kinds of intermarriage increases in the U.S., the racial boundaries and categories and in fact the entire system of racial and ethnic classification may be redefined.

I am applying for exploratory funding to study the trends in the pattern of racial and ethnic intermarriage in the U.S., and some possible implications of these trends. The publicly available U.S. Census microdata that I will use has some limitations for this purpose, chiefly because it is a measure of the prevalence rather than the incidence of marriage (Lieberson and Waters 1988; Qian 1997; Rosenfeld 2001b), but the Census also has the advantage of unparalleled sample size, national representation, and continuity (for some questions) of more than a century.

Trends in racial intermarriage

Figure 1 shows the population of black-white and Asian-white couples, based on weighted counts from each decennial census 1900-1990, plus the March, 2000 Current Population Survey.
Population Survey. As Figure 1 shows, the population of black-white couples rises dramatically after 1970 to a level of more than 350,000 in 2000. The number of Asian-white couples also grows dramatically, to more than 650,000 by 2000. Hispanic-non Hispanic intermarriages (not shown in Figure 1 because it would be off the scale) reached more than 2.6 million by the year 2000. For the categories that the Census Bureau has defined as separate and distinct 'races' throughout the century (Japanese, Chinese, White, Black), figure 1 does show a dramatic rise in interracial marriage that seems to begin some time in the late 1960s.

While black-white and Asian-white intermarriage both rise sharply in the last third of the 20th century, these two trends may have different causes. The absolute numbers of blacks and whites in the U.S. have grown, but only slowly, whereas the number of Asians in the U.S. has risen dramatically since the immigration laws were overhauled in 1965. The rise in the number of black-white couples seems certain to be due to an actual increase in the tendency of individuals in each group to choose a mate from the other group. The rise in Asian-white intermarriage could be due simply to the sharply increased availability of Asians in the U.S. marriage market.

In order to measure intermarriage tendencies corrected for the drastic changes in the population distribution, I introduce a simple odds ratio for intermarriage. This odds ratio is similar to the odds ratio for endogamy popularized by Lieberson and Waters (1988), except that this odds ratio measures the associations between groups (such as between blacks and whites), and this odds ratio is derived from simple loglinear models which have become the standard method for analyzing intermarriage (Kalmijn 1991, 1993; Pagnini and Morgan 1990; Qian1997; Rosenfeld 2001a, 2001b; Sandefur and McKinnell 1986).

Figure 2 shows the odds ratios for black-white, Asian-white, and native born-foreign born intermarriage, for census years where the sample size is sufficient, plotted on a log scale. An odds ratio of 1 would indicate that intermarriage between the two groups was exactly as common as chance would predict, and that no social barriers exist between the groups. A smaller odds ratio indicates a smaller number of intermarried couples compared to number that the size and distribution of the racial groups would predict. In simple terms, the smaller the odds ratio of intermarriage, the greater the social
distance between the groups. Because every identifiable ethnic, racial, or national origin group in the U.S. has a tendency to marry endogamously, almost all types of intermarriage are underrepresented, and hence have odds ratios of less than one.

In the early part of the 20th Century, the odds ratio for black-white intermarriage was about 1/500, with a low of 1/990 in 1920. That means that in 1920 the odds of marrying a white person were about one thousand times higher for non-blacks than for blacks. After 1970, the odds ratio for black-white intermarriage rises, reaching 1/68 in the year 2000. The last 3 decades have clearly eroded the social boundary between white and black in the marriage market, yet the black-white social division remains the sharpest division in the U.S. marriage market.

Asian-white intermarriage underwent a period of drastic retrenchment between 1940 and 1950, with the internment of the Japanese Americans (Spickard 1989). In 1950, for the first and only time, the odds of Asian-white intermarriage were substantially lower than the relative odds of black-white intermarriage. Most of the rift between Asians and whites that was created in the 1940s seems to have been ameliorated by 1970. Between 1980 and 2000, the relative odds of Asian-white intermarriage settled into a fairly stable level of about 1/20, which means that the odds of marrying a white person are 20 times lower for Asians than for non-Asians. The rise in the number of Asian-white intermarriages is a result of the meteoric rise of the Asian American and Asian immigrant populations combined with a stable and moderate level of social distance between Asians and whites in the marriage market.
At the top of figure 2 is the odds ratio of intermarriage between U.S. born persons and foreign born persons. The apparent preference for U.S. natives to marry U.S. natives, and for foreign born persons to marry foreign born persons has been relatively stable over the 20th century (the relative odds of intermarriage are between .11 and .16), though the numbers of native-foreign intermarriages have grown as the size of the immigrant population has grown.

What do the demographic changes in population and intermarriage portend for the future structure of race and ethnicity in the U.S.? One way to begin to answer this question is to compare the marital assimilation of blacks and Asians with the Southern and Central European immigrants (and their children) from the first half of the century (an experiment that follows the classic form of Lieberson, 1980). Figure 3 adds the intermarriage patterns of second generation Russian and Italian Americans to the already discussed intermarriage patterns of Asian and black Americans. The statistics are not entirely comparable because of the different ways the Census Bureau has coded race and national origin, and because of the lack of continuity on the gathering of information about parents' places of birth. Despite some caveats, figure 3 shows that at the beginning of the century the much maligned and impoverished South and Central Europeans already had a degree of social acceptance from and access to other whites that Asian Americans are only beginning to approach at the end of the century, and that black Americans have never approached. Still, if current trends in black-white intermarriage continue, blacks could reach in 30 or 40 years a level of social access to whites that Italian and Russian
Americans had at the beginning of the 20th century, and that would imply nothing short of a revolution in the nature of the color line in the U.S.

**Research Program and Work Plan**

I propose to study the intermarriage patterns of the post-1965 U.S., using census microdata from 1900 to 1990 (and 2000 when it becomes available) in order to put recent changes in historical perspective. This work which builds on my forthcoming papers (Rosenfeld 2001a, 2001b), will attempt to provide preliminary answers to the following questions: 1) What are the reliable and historically comparable ways to measure intermarriage? 2) How do the patterns of intermarriage for Asians, Blacks and Hispanics compare to the established record of marital assimilation for immigrants from Europe? 3) What are the possible implications of intermarriage trends for the future of race and ethnicity in the U.S.?

While the U.S. Census has advantages of large sample size and decennial repetition, there are a multitude of potential problems in the consistency or availability of questions over time, that my work will have to confront. There are further complications in the differential way that the Census treats racial groups such as blacks or Japanese, from European national origin groups, from Hispanics. In brief, racial groups (such as blacks, whites, and Japanese) are identified in every census, regardless of their parents' place of birth. European groups are only identifiable by their own birthplace, by their parents' birthplace (for 1900, 1910, 1920, 1960, and 1970), or by the open ended ancestry question (1980 and 1990). Prior to 1980, it was impossible to distinguish third generation Irish Americans from fifth generation English Americans in the Census; after 1980 it became possible to distinguish the Irish Americans from the English Americans, but it was impossible to determine the generational status of the U.S. born. Hispanics can be identified the same way as European ethnics, or Hispanics can be identified through surname, or through self-reported Hispanic nationality (1970-1990). Clearly, research using multiple censuses must confront the problems of consistency which are related to the inherent problems in how understandings of race and ethnicity have changed over time. Because there is no single best way to cut through the inconsistencies of
measurement and definition, my analysis will examine a range of possible different operationalizations of the race and ethnic categories. I will explore, using the basic odds ratios of intermarriage and descriptive statistics, how the marital assimilation of the different groups (variously defined) can be modeled and compared over time.

Another important issue that I plan to confront is the problem of the Census data being prevalence, rather than incidence data. The population married at any given time is not necessarily representative of the marriages that have taken place; some kinds of unions may have higher risks of divorce, and may therefore be underrepresented in the Census (Kreider 1999). Furthermore, when the marital union involves one or two foreign born persons, it can be difficult to determine whether the union is a product of U.S. or foreign marriage markets. I will employ a number of strategies in minimizing or at least assessing the possible influence of the potential biases associated with prevalence data. I will analyze the data using only younger couples (Qian 1997), and for those censuses that have the data, I will make use of the 'duration of marriage' or 'age at marriage' questions to select only the most recent marriages. In my forthcoming work (Rosenfeld 2001a, 2001b) I explore some of the complexities of bringing the foreign born into the analysis of U.S. marriage markets. While the foreign born introduce a number of methodological complexities into the analysis, it is clear that in the context of the late 20th Century the immigrants cannot be excluded from the discussion.

A further question that I hope to address is how the intervention of Hispanics and Asian Americans in the U.S. marriage market may affect vestigial but widely accepted facets of the racial classification system in the U.S., such as the 'one drop rule' (Davis 1991). My initial analyses of the racial identification of children of black- white and black- Hispanic marriages (following Xie and Goyette 1997) shows that the one-drop rule is still widely accepted in black-white households, while the rule is quickly being eroded in black-Hispanic households.

Because this is an exploratory project of limited duration, I don't expect to generate firm conclusions about how intermarriage will reshape the ethnic landscape of the U.S. I do believe, however, that a careful study of the intermarriage trends of the last century will provide some new insights into the potential pace of change of racial and ethnic boundaries in the next century.
As Kalmijn (1998) has written, the literature on intermarriage has a problematic division. On the one hand, the recent literature in the journals features loglinear models or other complex methods that makes the meaning of the findings somewhat difficult to convey. On the other hand, there is a broad non-technical literature about intermarriage whose reliance on the 'percentage exogamy' makes the results largely dependent on the size of the group in question. Kalmijn notes that Lieberson and Waters (1988), by relying on the basic odds ratios of endogamy, occupies an important middle ground that is both accessible and rigorous. My work, which will focus on simple models and basic odds ratios of intermarriage, will build on Lieberson and Waters' approach.

Most of the demographic literature on intermarriage has been fairly narrow in temporal or geographic scope. Lieberson and Waters (1988) relied mainly on the 1980 census, Qian (1997) used the 1980 and 1990 censuses, Kalmijn (1993) uses marriage records from 1968 to 1986, and so on. Kennedy's (1944, 1952) famous studies of New Haven used marriage records dating back to 1870, but of course her work was narrow geographically. With the release in the past few years of all of the 20th Century's census microdata in electronic form, it is now possible to examine national intermarriage trends for the entire century. The availability of census data for the entire century means that post 1965 trends can be set in historical perspective, and the intermarriage patterns of Hispanics and Asians can be compared to the intermarriage patterns of earlier generations of immigrants.

I will devote one month in the summer of 2001, full-time to this research. In the academic year 2001-2002 I will devote 25% effort to this project. In terms of budget, I am requesting one month's summer salary for myself, and a graduate research assistant for academic year 2001-2002. The data I will use are all publicly available, and I already have the software and computer resources that I will need. By the end of academic year 2001-2002, I will develop and submit an article, '20th Century trends in intermarriage in the U.S.' to one of the leading journals of sociology or population studies. I will develop a version of this article for presentation at the Russell Sage meetings in Spring of 2002.

In the summer of 2001, I will also begin a distinct but complementary small scale ethnographic project to interview racially intermarried couples in and around San Francisco. I plan to interview 12 to 20 couples, in depth, in order to glean details about
some of the personal experiences of intermarriage that are not captured in the census. Stanford University, through an internal process, has provided me with funds for the ethnographic work, and my human subjects application has already been approved. This work will build on ethnographic studies of intermarriage (Mayer 1985; Porterfield 1978) and recent work on ethnicity and identity (Alba 1990; Waters 1990).

Over the next three or four years, I will work simultaneously on the demographic history of intermarriage in the U.S., on the subjective experiences of intermarried couples, and on the legal and structural forces that have shaped marriage choices in the U.S. I intend to build this work into a coherent study of intermarriage in the 20th Century U.S., which I will hope to publish as a book.

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