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Non-Technical Abstract

This paper tests whether marriage to a native affects the probability that an immigrant is employed. We provide a theoretical background which explains how marriage to a native may positively or negatively affect an immigrant's employment probability. Utilizing the 2000 U.S. Census, we first look at the effect of cross-nativity marriages on employment using a linear probability model. Then, we estimate a two stage least squares model instrumenting for cross-nativity marriages using local marriage market conditions. Results from a linear probability model controlling for the usual measures of human capital and immigrant assimilation suggest that marriage to a native increases the employment probability of an immigrant by approximately 5 percentage points. When controlling for the endogeneity of the intermarriage decision, marriage to a native increases the employment probability by about 11 percentage points. We provide alternative explanations and suggest policy implications.

Keywords: Intermarriage, Employment, Immigration

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Abstract: This paper tests whether marriage to a native affects the probability that an immigrant is employed. We provide a theoretical background which explains how marriage to a native may positively or negatively affect an immigrant's employment probability. Utilizing the 2000 U.S. Census, we first look at the effect of cross-nativity marriages on employment using a linear probability model. Then, we estimate a two stage least squares model instrumenting for cross-nativity marriages using local marriage market conditions. Results from a linear probability model controlling for the usual measures of human capital and immigrant assimilation suggest that marriage to a native increases the employment probability of an immigrant by approximately 5 percentage points. When controlling for the endogeneity of the intermarriage decision, marriage to a native increases the employment probability by about 11 percentage points. We provide alternative explanations and suggest policy implications.

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1   Introduction

Does marriage to a native increase the employment probability of immigrants? In this paper, we aim to address this question paying particular attention to whether the relationship between intermarriage and labor market attachment is in fact causal.

Using Australian data, Meng and Gregory (2005) find that an immigrant's marriage to a native has a positive effect on earnings even after controlling for the endogeneity of the marriage decision. In contrast, using U.S. data, Kantarevic (2004) finds that taking into account selection issues, the positive effect of marriage to a native on earnings assimilation disappears.

There are many reasons why it may be important to analyze the effect of intermarriage separately on earnings and employment rates. In fact, one potential reason for the discrepancy in the earnings literature is that marriage to a native may have differing effects on employment rates in the Australia and the U.S. Conditional on being employed before and after marriage to a native, earnings in both countries may increase when immigrants marry natives. However, because earnings data is only available for workers, then it may appear as though marriage to a native decreases earnings if marriage to a native increases employment rates of low skilled immigrants. Although dealing with differential selection patterns in Australia and the U.S. is beyond the scope of this paper, we will examine the relationship between intermarriage and employment in the U.S. Studying the employment patterns of immigrants is also important because employment aids in the assimilation process to the U.S., increases earnings, decreases public transfers, and improves public attitudes toward immigrants (Chiswick *et al*., 1997; Hanson *et al*., 2005).

This is the first paper to examine the effects of intermarriage on employment. Using 2000 U.S. Census data, we find that even after controlling for a number of human capital variables, a foreign born male's marriage to a native increases the probability that he is employed by approximately six percentage points.

Because marriage to a native and employment may be jointly determined by unobserved characteristics, intermarriage can be viewed as an endogenous variable. For example, the foreign born that are more assimilated may be both more likely to marry a native and be employed, thus biasing the coefficient on intermarriage upward. Alternatively, it may be that the most hardworking immigrants are more likely to marry immigrants and so the intermarriage coefficient may be biased downward. To deal with this endogeneity issue, we adopt a two stage estimation strategy using local marriage market conditions as an instrument for intermarriage. More specifically, we

use the percentage of women in the foreign born male's age group and metropolitan statistical area (MSA) that is foreign born as an instrument for his marriage to a native.

We find that after instrumenting, the effect of marriage to a native, not only remains positive and statistically significant, but increases in magnitude. This suggests that it is the immigrants that are less likely to work that are more likely to marry natives. When taking this into account, marriage to a native increases the probability of employment by approximately eleven percentage points.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides the theoretical background while Section 3 describes the data. The empirical models and discussion of results are presented in Section 4. Section 5 concludes and suggests policy implications.

2   Theoretical Background and Empirical Approach

There are various ways in which marriage to native could affect an immigrant's probability of being employed. As suggested by Meng and Gregory (2005), the native born spouses of immigrants could improve immigrants' language acquisition, learning of local customs, and knowledge of local labor market conditions. Because the foreign born typically have less information about local labor markets, they may be forced to experiment with more jobs and this could result in more unemployment spells (Chiswick et *al*., 1997). If the native born and their networks have and share more information about the availability of different types of jobs, then their immigrant spouses may be better able to find good employment matches. Also, for the many illegal immigrants in the U.S., marriage to a native brings with it the right to legal employment. By opening up job opportunities to immigrants, the likelihood of their employment increases.

There are also many reasons why marriage to a native may decrease employment rates of immigrants. First, even though the native born may have more information about high skill jobs, these jobs may be irrelevant for low skilled immigrants. For many of the immigrants at the margin between being employment and unemployment, immigrant networks may in fact prove more useful than native networks in finding low skill jobs. Moreover, because migrant communities tend to be more socially cohesive (Munshi, 2003), marriage to an immigrant may bring with it more contacts than marriage to a native. Thus, marriage to another immigrant may increase the employment probabilities of immigrants.

Also, as discussed above, for many of the foreign born, marriage to a native brings with it the right to legal employment. Immigrants that are legally employed for a certain amount of time are eligible for unemployment insurance and other government transfers such as disability insurance and social security income. These government transfers have been shown to increase the duration of unemployment spells (Moffitt, 1985) and increase the probability that people exit the labor force (Moffitt, 2002).

The native-born spouses of immigrants may have more knowledge of the existence of government transfer programs as well as the rules and procedures necessary to qualify for them. Again, this would suggest that marriage to a native may decrease the probability of being employed. Also, if native-born spouses are more likely to work and conditional on working, are more likely to have higher earnings, then they may be better able to finance their immigrant spouse's job search thereby extending unemployment spells.

It is difficult to empirically decipher whether marriage to a native increases or decreases employment rates of immigrants. Estimates obtained from a simple least squares approach should be interpreted with caution because marriage to a native is certainly not exogenous. Many of the skills that are valued in the U.S. labor market are also valued in the marriage market for native born spouses. Examples include language ability, knowledge of American customs, and even physical beauty as suggested by Kantarevic (2004). Also, if the more ambitious immigrants know that native networks are important in finding good jobs, they may surround themselves with natives and thus increase the probability of both finding a native spouse and a job. All of these possibilities suggest that the ordinary least squares estimate of the effect of marriage to a native on employment overestimates its true effect.

In contrast, it may be that even though immigrants with observable characteristics such as education and English fluency are more likely to marry natives and be employed, it is the immigrants with unobservable characteristics such as ambition and diligence that are both more likely to marry other immigrants and be employed. Thus, the ordinary least squares estimate of the effect of marriage to a native on employment could be biased downward.

We address these biases taking two main approaches. First, to take into account the possibility that certain ethnic groups may, for unobservable reasons, be more (or less) likely to both marry a native and be employed, we include country of birth fixed effects in the empirical specification. Second, as is more common in the literature (Meng and Gregory, 2005; Kantarevic, 2004; and Angrist, 2001), we use marriage market conditions as an

instrument for marriage decisions. Specifically, we instrument for an immigrant male's marriage to a native using the percentage of women in his age group living in his metropolitan statistical area that are foreign born.

3   The Data

The paper uses the 5 percent Public Use Sample of the 2000 U.S. Census as reported by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).[1]   We consider a sample of married (spouse present) foreign born males who are between the ages of 18 and 64. We drop immigrants who are still in education. In order to restrict our analysis to immigrants that were actually exposed to the U.S. marriage market, we drop those immigrants that arrived in the U.S. after the age of 18. We also drop from the sample immigrants from English speaking countries. Lastly, because our instrumental variable relies on cross-metropolitan variation, we keep only the immigrants that reside in identifiable metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs).

An immigrant is defined as a person who was born outside of the U.S. while a native is a person who was born in the U.S. For the purposes of this study, people born in outlying areas of U.S. such as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are considered immigrants, but those born abroad to U.S. parents are dropped from the analysis. It is important to keep in mind that, using these definitions, many of the natives that immigrants marry share the same ethnic background and could even be native born children of immigrants from the same country of birth.

Approximately 34 percent of the immigrant men in our sample are married to a native female. Our dependent variable takes the value of one if an immigrant is employed. An immigrant is considered employed if he has a job, regardless of whether he is working. Immigrants in the armed forces are considered employed. The baseline set of controls used in the analysis are age and its second order polynomial to capture the effect of experience, educational achievement, presence of children in the household, whether the person is a veteran, region dummies, residence in the central city or outside the central city, and a measure of health. Health is measured using a dummy variable equal to one if the immigrant has a disability which prevents, limits, or causes difficulty in working.

We also have specifications which control for measures of assimilation such as English language fluency and years in the U.S. The English fluency dummy variable is equal to one if the immigrant speaks only English, speaks English very well or well. The variable equals zero if the immigrant either does not speak English well or does not

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[1] The data set is publicly available at http://usa.ipums.org/usa/. Details on how the variables were constructed are available upon request.

speak English at all. In some specifications, we also control for the size of the immigrant group which is measured as the percentage of people living in the immigrant's MSA born in the same country as the immigrant.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of all of the variables used in the analysis separately by marriage type. However, immigrant males married to natives have employment rates 11.5 percentage points higher than immigrants married to other immigrants. This could be explained by the fact that intermarried males are 2.8 years older, are more educated, and have higher English fluency rates. Immigrants married to natives have been in the U.S. 7.8 years more than immigrants married to other immigrants. Immigrants that marry natives are also more likely to have been in the army, less likely to have children, and are more likely to live outside central cities. Also, just as we may expect, immigrants living in MSAs with a higher the ratio of immigrant women relative to all women are less likely to be in cross-nativity marriages.

There is also country of birth variation in the tendency of immigrants to marry natives. Central Americans, Mexicans, and Asians are more likely to be in same-nativity marriages than cross-nativity marriages. Meanwhile, Europeans, Africans, South Americans and people from the Middle East are more likely to be married to a native than to an immigrant. Immigrants from the West Indies are just as likely to be in cross-nativity as in same-nativity marriages.

Part of the reason why immigrant employment rates differ by marriage type may be related to the characteristics of the spouses. Compared to the foreign born spouses of immigrants, native born spouses are older, more educated, have higher English fluency rates, and are more likely to be employed. Although we will not directly control for these spousal characteristics in the empirical analysis, it is important to keep them in mind when interpreting our results.

4   Empirical Specification and Results

4.1   Linear Probability Model

The primary empirical specification in the analysis takes the form

$$y_{ijk} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{ijk} + \beta_2 Inter_{ijk} + \gamma_j + \varepsilon_{ijk}$$

where y_{ijk} is equal to one if person i with country of birth j living in city k is employed and zero otherwise. The regressor of interest, $Inter$, is a dummy variable for marriage to a native, while X is a vector of the individual-level controls that we outlined in Section 3. Country of birth fixed effects are captured by γ.

Table 2 presents estimates of the effects of cross-nativity marriage on employment rates of immigrants using several different models. The first column contains the estimates of a specification with intermarriage along with the usual controls used in the employment literature. Coefficients on the control variables are generally consistent with those in the existing literature. Compared to immigrants with no schooling, immigrants with more education are more likely to be employed, and higher degrees are associated with higher employment rates. Immigrants with a disability are less likely to be employed as are veterans and immigrants living in central cities. Inconsistent with the literature is the finding that immigrant males with children are less likely to be employed than those without children. However, this effect seems to be driven by selection issues as it disappears in models which control for country of birth. Overall, the results suggest that an immigrant's marriage to a native increases the probability that he is employed by six percentage points.

This relationship between marriage to a native and employment rates could be driven by differences in assimilation rates of immigrants. Immigrants that are more assimilated may be both more likely to marry a native and find a good job match. To control for immigrant assimilation, we add in column 2, the English fluency variable as well as years since immigration to the U.S. As expected, these two variables decrease the effect of cross-nativity marriage by 1.2 percentage points, but the coefficient remains positive and statistically significant. This is especially noteworthy given that improvement of English language skills is one of the mechanisms through which marriage to native could improve labor market outcomes of immigrants. The fact that the coefficient on marriage to a native remains positive and statistically significant suggests that whether or not natives improve fluency rates of their immigrant spouses, they also provide other benefits in the labor market.

Even when including the standard measures of human capital and assimilation in the specification, the coefficient on intermarriage may be biased if immigrants residing in ethnic enclaves are less likely to marry natives and have unobservable characteristics which decrease the probability of being employed. Moreover, immigrants in ethnic groups with more substantial cultural differences with Americans may be less likely to both marry natives and fare well in the labor market. To deal with both of these concerns, column 3 adds the size of the immigrant group to the specification along with ethnicity fixed effects. As expected, immigrants residing around many other immigrants

with the same country of birth are less likely to be employed. However, the coefficient on intermarriage decreases by only a half of a percentage point and remains positive and statistically significant when the size of the immigrant group and country of birth fixed effects are added to the specification.

4.2 Instrumental variable estimates

The problem with these estimates is that marriage to a native is not a random event. Even when controlling for education, years in the U.S., language ability, size of ethnic group and country of birth, immigrants that choose to marry natives may have unobservable characteristics which increase or decrease employment rates. We address this endogeneity issue by instrumenting cross nativity marriages using the ratio of immigrant women over all women in MSA-age group cells.[2]

As suggested by Becker's (1981) work on marriage markets, the greater the availability of spouses of a certain type, the more likely a person is to marry someone of that type. First stage regression results are shown in column 4 of Table 2. As predicted by the theory, an increase in the percent of females that are foreign born in a man's marriage market decreases the probability that he marries a native, even when controlling for the percent of the MSA born in his country of birth.

Second stage results are shown in column 5 of Table 2. The coefficients suggest that when the endogeneity of the cross-nativity marriage decision is taken into account, marriage to a native increases the probability of employment by 11.3 percentage points. Interestingly, the instrumental variables estimate is greater than the least squares estimate. This is consistent with the explanation that holding constant variables such education, language ability, and country of birth, immigrants that marry other immigrants have more favorable unobservable characteristics than immigrants that marry natives. Since the least squares estimate does not take into account any unobserved ambition and diligence among the immigrants that tend to marry other immigrants, marriage to a native appears to be less beneficial than it really is.

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[2] The MSA-age group cells are constructed from 283 MSAs and the following nine age groups: 18-22, 23-27, 28-32, 33-37, 38-42, 43-47, 48-52, 53-57 and 58-64.

5   Conclusions

Drawing on U.S. Census data, this paper shows that an immigrant's marriage to a native increases the probability that he is employed. Various techniques were used to address the endogeneity of the intermarriage decision. First, measures of immigrant human capital and assimilation such as education, language ability and years in the U.S. were included in the baseline specification. To control for the possibility that unobserved ethnic attributes affect success in both the marriage and labor markets, country of birth fixed effects were added to the specification. Also, since residing in an ethnic enclave could either hinder employment opportunities by slowing assimilation or increase the number of job offers through ethnic networks, size of immigrant group was added to the specification. Lastly, to control for any remaining omitted variables, marriage to a native was instrumented with the percent of all immigrant females in MSA-age group cells that is foreign born. In all specifications, marriage to a native had a positive and significant effect on the probability of being employed.

There are many possible explanations for this positive relationship between marriage to a native and employment probability. When immigrants marry a native, they marry a teacher of English as well as of U.S. customs and traditions. They also acquire a network most likely composed of many natives that are able to provide information about local labor market conditions and job opportunities. Because marriage to a native basically guarantees legal status in the U.S., it can open up the job opportunities of illegal immigrants. Moreover, as discussed in Section 2, the native-born spouses of immigrants have very different characteristics than the foreign-born spouses of immigrants. It could be these characteristics, as opposed to nativity per se, that affect the employment probabilities of immigrants. Disentangling the mechanisms through which marriage to a native improves labor market outcomes is beyond the scope of this paper, but is an area ripe for future research.

If the native-born spouses of immigrants along with their networks share information about local job market opportunities and act as teachers of English and U.S. culture, then policies can be made to encourage these types of marriages. For example, policy-makers may consider limiting visas to the foreign born spouses of immigrants. Given that restricting marriage choice may be seen as unethical, policies can be made to directly provide the services given by the native-born spouses of immigrants. English classes and job search strategies may be offered to new immigrants. Although clear policy recommendations cannot be made without knowing the mechanisms through which marriage to a native affects labor market outcomes, our results do point to ways in which policies could potentially aid in the immigrant assimilation process.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables used in the analysis.

	Cross Nativity Couples		Same Nativity Couples		All	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
In labor force	0.894	0.308	0.790	0.407	0.825	0.380
Spouse in labor force	0.681	0.466	0.509	0.500	0.567	0.495
Employment	0.868	0.338	0.753	0.431	0.792	0.406
Spouse's employment	0.650	0.477	0.463	0.499	0.526	0.499
Unemployment	0.026	0.160	0.036	0.187	0.033	0.178
Spouse's unemployment	0.031	0.172	0.046	0.210	0.041	0.198
Age	39.205	10.315	36.430	9.449	37.368	9.838
Spouse's age	37.247	10.175	34.579	9.384	35.481	9.741
No school completed	0.013	0.113	0.053	0.225	0.040	0.195
Spouse's no school completed	0.003	0.056	0.050	0.219	0.034	0.182
Less than or up to 12th grade, no diploma	0.205	0.404	0.429	0.494	0.353	0.478
Spouse's less then or up to 12th grade, no diploma	0.134	0.341	0.411	0.492	0.318	0.466
High school, or GED	0.209	0.407	0.193	0.395	0.199	0.399
Spouse's high school, or GED	0.257	0.437	0.213	0.409	0.228	0.419
Some college, no degree (associate degree)	0.277	0.448	0.173	0.378	0.208	0.406
Spouse's some college	0.330	0.470	0.185	0.388	0.234	0.423
Bachelors Degree and above (Masters, Professional, PhD)	0.295	0.456	0.152	0.359	0.200	0.400
Spouse's Degree and above (Masters, Professional, PhD)	0.275	0.447	0.141	0.348	0.186	0.389
English fluency	0.950	0.217	0.768	0.422	0.830	0.376
Spouse's English fluency	0.986	0.119	0.646	0.478	0.761	0.427
Years in the U.S.	30.826	12.126	23.051	10.673	25.680	11.775
Own children in the household	0.743	0.437	0.822	0.382	0.795	0.403
Work difficulty	0.114	0.317	0.235	0.424	0.194	0.395
Veteran	0.191	0.393	0.079	0.270	0.117	0.322
Size of immigrant group in MSA	0.025	0.040	0.046	0.044	0.039	0.044
In metro area, central city	0.203	0.402	0.282	0.450	0.255	0.436
In metro area, outside central city	0.441	0.496	0.393	0.488	0.409	0.492
Europe	0.324	0.468	0.080	0.271	0.162	0.369
Central America	0.041	0.199	0.067	0.249	0.058	0.234
South America	0.050	0.217	0.038	0.191	0.042	0.201
Mexico	0.255	0.436	0.480	0.500	0.404	0.491
West Indies	0.077	0.267	0.077	0.266	0.077	0.266
Asia	0.126	0.331	0.171	0.376	0.156	0.363
Middle East	0.023	0.152	0.016	0.126	0.019	0.136
Africa	0.021	0.143	0.009	0.095	0.013	0.113
Immigrant women/all women	0.241	0.149	0.317	0.149	0.291	0.153

Notes: Figures are weighted.

Table 2. Results from Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) and Two Stage Least Squares Models (2SLS).

	OLS	OLS	OLS	IV (2SLS)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Employment	Employment	Employment	Cross nativity marriage	Employment
Cross native married	0.060	0.048	0.043	No	0.113
	(0.003)**	(0.003)**	(0.004)**		(0.040)**
Age	0.018	0.015	0.014	-0.026	0.016
	(0.002)**	(0.002)**	(0.002)**	(0.001)**	(0.002)**
Age square/100	-0.025	-0.024	-0.023	0.008	-0.024
	(0.002)**	(0.002)**	(0.002)**	(0.001)**	(0.002)**
Less than or up to 12th grade, no diploma	0.148	0.137	0.136	0.026	0.135
	(0.010)**	(0.010)**	(0.010)**	(0.007)**	(0.010)**
High school graduate, or GED	0.222	0.195	0.188	0.068	0.184
	(0.011)**	(0.011)**	(0.011)**	(0.008)**	(0.011)**
Some college, no degree (associate degree)	0.282	0.250	0.238	0.110	0.230
	(0.010)**	(0.010)**	(0.010)**	(0.008)**	(0.011)**
Bachelors Degree and above (Masters, Professional, PhD)	0.335	0.303	0.280	0.131	0.272
	(0.010)**	(0.010)**	(0.010)**	(0.008)**	(0.012)**
Have children	-0.009	-0.009	-0.005	-0.025	-0.003
	(0.004)*	(0.004)*	(0.004)	(0.004)**	(0.004)
Difficulty working	-0.063	-0.061	-0.060	-0.073	-0.055
	(0.004)**	(0.004)**	(0.004)**	(0.003)**	(0.005)**
Veteran	-0.003	-0.007	-0.005	0.028	-0.008
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)**	(0.005)
In metro area, central city	-0.027	-0.026	-0.023	-0.022	-0.021
	(0.005)**	(0.005)**	(0.004)**	(0.004)**	(0.004)**
In metro area, outside central city	0.009	0.009	0.008	0.010	0.008
	(0.004)*	(0.004)*	(0.004)*	(0.003)*	(0.004)*
Region dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
English fluency	No	0.060	0.057	0.101	0.051
		(0.005)**	(0.005)**	(0.004)**	(0.007)**
Years in the United States	No	0.002	0.002	0.020	0.000
		(0.000)**	(0.000)**	(0.000)**	(0.001)
Size of the immigrant group	No	No	-0.397	-2.588	-0.105
			(0.180)*	(0.154)**	(0.228)
Square of size	No	No	0.308	18.981	-1.268
			(1.111)	(0.910)**	(1.362)
Country of birth dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.293	0.314	0.335	0.860	0.279
	(0.029)**	(0.030)**	(0.051)**	(0.049)**	(0.060)**
Instrument: Immigrant women/all women	No	No	No	-0.440	No
				(0.013)**	
Observations	89,394	89,394	89,394	89,394	89,394

Notes. Standard errors are robust and clustered on (MSA × age group) cells.
+ significant at 10%; * significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%.