

Evolution of Gains from Racial Desegregation in the US Marriage Market

Yu Kyung Koh*

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Abstract

Interracial marriages have increased in the US over the past few decades, but the trends differ across gender and education groups. This suggests racial desegregation in the marriage market may not have equally improved everyone's chances of getting married. This paper studies why some groups have gained more from marital desegregation than others over the past four decades. To this end, I build a transferable utility matching model to define and estimate the welfare gains from marital desegregation by comparing the equilibrium single rates in the observed marriage market with the ones in a completely segregated marriage market. I find that among Blacks and Whites, college-educated men gained more from marital desegregation than their female and lower-educated male counterparts. I implement a decomposition method based on quantitative comparative statics to examine the separate roles of changing population distribution and changing marital surplus from all types of race-education pairs. I find that the rise in the welfare gains for college-educated Black men is largely driven by the increase in the joint marital surplus with college-educated White women. Other Black men and women did not benefit as much from any change in the marital surplus. I also find that the rise in welfare gains for college-educated White men is mechanically driven by the increase in the number of Asian and Hispanic women in the marriage market. Simulation results suggest that the progress toward complete racial integration would significantly reduce the single rates among Blacks.

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