

Evolution of Gains from Racial Desegregation in the US Marriage Market

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Abstract

Interracial marriages have increased among Blacks and non-Hispanic Whites in the US over the past few decades, but the trends are heterogeneous 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 how much welfare gains each group received from racial desegregation and why some groups have gained more than others over the past four decades. To this end, I build a transferable utility matching model to define and estimate the individual welfare gains from marital racial integration 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, marital racial desegregation has improved welfare only for college-educated Black men. Black women did not gain at all from marital desegregation regardless of their education level. Among Whites, college-educated men benefited the most from marital racial desegregation. I implement a novel decomposition method based on quantitative comparative statics to examine the separate roles of changing population distribution and changing values of marriages on the individual welfare gains. I find that the rise in the welfare gains for college-educated Black men is most largely driven by the increase in the value of marriages with college-educated White women. Black women did not benefit as much from the increase in the value of marriage with college-educated White men, which explains their staggered growth in welfare gains relative to their male peers. For Whites, the rise in the welfare gains for college-educated White men is most largely driven by the rise in the number of college-educated Asian and Hispanic women.

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