Chapter 1 | Introduction: Considering Family Formation

THE FAMILY OF Xochitl Velasco, a thirty-nine-year-old Mexican American from Kansas, impressed upon her that she could move up or down the racial hierarchy through romantic partnership:[1]

> When [my cousins] brought white boyfriends home, it was kind of looked at like, "Congratulations!" Oh, she brought home this really nice-looking young man named Tad or Donny, Timothy or Chad or Dillon. . . . The white men were considered . . . moving up, successful. . . . [It] would never be appreciated to bring an African American man . . . [or] woman home as a boyfriend/girlfriend. . . . African American men . . . [you] just don't bring them home unless you want trouble with your dad. White men were looked upon like, "Great!" And the Mexican men were looked . . . on as . . . status quo and not doing anything really great.

Ninety percent of Americans marry in the course of their lifetime—one of the highest marriage rates among Western countries—and each decision to marry is made within systems of racial, gender, and class inequality.[2] Even the most intimate relationships are not the outcome of entirely unrestrained personal choice. Despite the prevalence of marriage, people rarely consider how they make their marital decisions and their ramifications. After peering under the lid of formalized unions and asking people why they courted and married the people they did, I have found that families are subject to drives and constraints, desires and opportunities, and even local histories.

Notice how Xochitl's family hierarchized racial groups and attached meanings to each racial category, conveying the message that racial choices in romance can raise or lower one's own status by intimate association. Telling adjectives revealed her assessment of how society and her family assigned relative worth to heterosexual dating choices: whites are

"nice-looking" and "successful" (a double entendre referring to his achievements as well as her success in attracting him), Mexican Americans are "status quo," and African Americans are never "appreciated" and are cause for family "trouble." Given this background, it may be a surprise that Xochitl married another Latino, for reasons that included a desire for cultural commonality (as explored in chapter 5).

This opening vignette illustrates Latinos' awareness of the racial hierarchy—in addition to other axes of stratification such as gender, class, nation, and generation—as they make romantic choices. As personal as romantic choices feel, these individual decisions are steered by structural social forces such as racial politics, cultural mores, family conventions, and local demographics. In particular, my premise is that "the concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world" as I turn the lens toward the private world in this book, asking how race shapes intimate decisions around romance and family formation.[3]

While marriage is about love, it involves much more than emotion. The contemporary Western ideal of "mythic love" that characterizes much discourse around romantic pairings does not fully account for the impact of residential segregation, persistent endogamy (same-race or coethnic couplings), racial-ethnic stereotypes, gender, and immigration on romantic tastes.[4] Love is only one ingredient in a present-day marriage; where people live, how they think about racial groups, and their expectations around gender all contribute to who they think are suitable partners. Moreover, the power of families—people's experiences within families and reactions to them—is an important consideration. If romantic preferences are not solely based on individual predilection, what do these socially produced desires that are held as eminently personal express? Scholarship of the late twentieth and early twenty-first-centuries has endorsed notions of individualistic romance as it traces the move from economically and politically motivated marriages to romance-based marriages, yet the chapters that follow uncover social processes that lead to both racial intermarriage and intramarriage.[5]

I argue that *negotiated desire* is the process by which people become attuned to what they want in a spouse and decide how to seek out a potential mate in a local context. The word "negotiate" has multiple meanings that are relevant to my usage here: "(1) to deal or bargain with another or others, as in the preparation of a treaty or contract; (2) to arrange for or bring about by discussion and settlement of terms; (3) to move through, around, or over in a satisfactory manner, as in to negotiate a difficult dance step without tripping or to negotiate sharp curves." The first dictionary definition highlights the interactional nature of romantic relationships as

well as the voluntary, contractual quality of relationships. I expand on this first definition by noting that people must also deal with *themselves* mentally and emotionally as they determine their priorities in their love search. The second definition underscores the deliberative process that precedes a relationship: thoughtfulness and decision-making are required. The third definition emphasizes that the goal of negotiated endeavors—from a business deal to a romance—is to navigate a course of action "in a satisfactory manner." This final piece of a three-part definition reminds us that a goal of relationships is gratification—and that absent the fulfillment of needs and desires a breakup is probable. Finally, the signaling of "movement" in this last definition taps into the dynamism of relationships, forecasting that relationships change over time and require care and attention if they are to last.

I use "negotiated desire" to refer to three aspects of dating and marriage: (1) the *personal* aspects, that is, the internal mental and emotional process of deducing what one needs and wants in a spouse based on lessons learned from prior life experience; (2) the *interactional* aspects, given that each party in a romantic relationship must assess their own position and requirements relative to the offerings of the other; and (3) the *structural* aspects that come into play when the set of attractive qualities sought are not available in the local environment and a balance must be struck between desires that are held on to and desires that are dispensed with. This third aspect of dating and marriage is relevant to the "opportunity versus preference" debate (discussed later in the chapter). The term "negotiated desire" is not meant to suggest capitulation, or surrendering core beliefs, needs, or wishes. Instead, negotiated desire balances the necessity of dealing with one's self and another person with a context that offers a delimited set of romantic options in order to achieve a satisfying love life.

A keystone of negotiated desire is what I call *intersectional concerns*; grounded in race, class, gender, nation, and generation, these interconnecting concerns undergird marital decisions. I balance the reality of structure—namely, the opportunities for people to meet—with the cultural preferences that stem from their earlier confrontations with inequality. These preferences are not always overtly known or calculated; instead, they bubble up from prior experiences, such as natal family life and dating encounters, as people sharpen their desires over time. Sociologists have long studied assortative mating, or "the nonrandom matching of individuals into relationships," usually with an interest in matching across socioeconomic status and racial-ethnic and religious boundaries.[6] I pull back the curtain on romance to better understand the development of desire and family formation. Romantic preferences are not innate. Desire is negotiated through experience and then played out with others in the local dating scene.

As Xochitl explained in the opening vignette, the color line at the top end of the racial-ethnic hierarchy (between whites and Latinos) is more flexible than the color line at the bottom end of the hierarchy (between Latinos and blacks), with consequences for intermarriage and intramarriage. As Latinos and whites intermarry, Latinos come into closer proximity with whiteness, whites may shift their consciousness around race, and together they coproduce biculturalism. Latinos who intramarry within their same racial category do so for multiple reasons: because they seek cultural familiarity, because they want to find a refuge from the stereotypes coming from out-groups, or because their local space offers a greater number of possible Latino mates than any other racial group. Latinos who intermarry with non-Latino minorities do so because of the solidarity they find with another similarly marginalized racial category; whites are excluded from these relationships because these couples view whites as racially foreign and unknowable given their distinctly different social locations.

Families are not spontaneously generated; instead, family formation follows social patterns. Residential segregation, which isolates populations by race and class, thereby limiting interracial contact and possibilities for romantic liaisons, is strongly related to endogamy.[7] Owing to the "sheer force of propinquity," ethnic neighborhoods foster endogamy, whereas intermarried couples are more often located outside of ethnic neighborhoods.[8] Spatial isolation reduces the chances of meeting and becoming intimate with out-group members.[9] Marriages have historically been a way to consolidate political power, increase landownership, mark the transition to adulthood, amass wealth, and transfer wealth (or economic disadvantage) intergenerationally.[10] Even with the rise of other adult living arrangements, such as cohabitation and single-person households, the institution of marriage remains sacrosanct in American culture.[11] Even poor unmarried women are hopeful about marriage, avoiding it with unfavorable prospects because they "revere" the institution and its promise.[12]

This book's findings challenge the notion that Latino couples and families in the United States are formed exclusively according to personal desire and choice, untouched by societal influence. The findings show that race, ethnicity, gender, class, nation, and generation shape the formation of these families. By situating the personal topic of marriage and family within the wider social landscape of race relations, gender politics, class inequality, and migration, this book demonstrates that even our intimate relations are inflected with power dynamics that shape personal choice. By linking macro-level social structures, meso-level social institutions, and individual micro-level actions, the book elucidates the ways in which people's opportunities—even their lives—are affected by their social position. By connecting the societal to the individual, we can see the influence on

even the most intimate relations of social structures and institutions that transcend individual lives. Yet even as macro- and meso-level forces organize our opportunity structures (where we live and work and who we have a chance to meet), individuals have decision-making power that endows their dating and marriage choices with meaning. People in the modern age marry for love, but love is not blind. Historical and social processes that put people in contact with potential mates culminate in the selection of a romantic partner for love and marriage who satisfies complex needs that arise from prior life experience.

THE CENTRAL QUESTIONS OF THE BOOK

Family demography illuminates marriage trends—who marries whom—but leaves unanswered the questions of why patterns are the way they are, how individuals make sense of their choices, and what impact these decisions have on culture, racial consciousness (understandings of race), and race relations. This book delves into the terrain that undergirds marital trends and examines both intermarried and intramarried Latinos and their spouses. I tackle three broad research questions. First, why do some Latino men and women and their spouses marry *within* their racial-ethnic group rather than *across* racial-ethnic lines? Second, what are the consequences of Latino intramarriage and intermarriage, for both partners, in terms of racial-ethnic identity, culture, and racial consciousness? Finally, given that the marriage choices of one generation have consequences for the next, how do children claim racial-ethnic identities and engage racial strategies in comparison with their parents? I answer these questions through analysis of data gained from interviews with self-identified heterosexual Latino respondents, their spouses, and their children (a total of 109 interviews).

As detailed in the preface, this book was motivated by the unanswered questions that arose from my earlier research for *Mexican Americans Across Generations* (2011). In that book on three-generation Mexican American families, I identify ethnic in- and out-marriage as crucial to whether families have a robust or diminished ethnic identity. Exogamy is associated with what I call "thinned attachment," an assimilationist trajectory, whereas endogamy is associated with "cultural maintenance," or ethnic solidarity. Yet it was unclear from my prior research whether people marry in or out of their ethnic group expressly because of their desire to either stay within the group or to depart from it. While these associations stood out, I was led to this project by curiosity about which came first—marriage or cultural detachment, attachment, or switching? Armed with life history data, I can now answer the questions of "which came first": *both* did. People craft their romantic desires based on past pleasing and displeasing experiences with

their own and other racial groups, *and* they marry for other reasons that have unforeseen racial and cultural consequences.

Interviewing is especially well suited for learning how people make meaning and discovering how and why they make decisions. Life history interviews provided me with access to process: the sequence of events and meanings that are salient as people make life choices. A major contribution of this book is that it uncovers mechanisms at play in decision-making around romance and family formation. Survey data on marital pairings show us trends but cannot provide insight into *how* those trends came to be. This book documents the process of decision-making, meaning-making, and imaginative forecasting that is at work—often invisibly—to produce the marriages and families we see all around us. This study does not aim at generalizability or discovery of universal rules of partnership, but rather seeks to unearth the often unarticulated mental and emotional processes that lead people to choose one life path over another.

In *Marriage Vows and Racial Choices*, I question why Latinos and their partners choose to marry racially similar or dissimilar people and explore the ramifications of these choices on racial identity, cultural practices, and racial consciousness in families. We know the statistics of who marries whom, but we lack adequate understanding of *why* these marriages are made and why that matters. Rather than relying on a demographic argument that leaves marriage pairings up to the local marriage market (who is an available option in the region), I ask how experiences in one's childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood—including experiences based in race, class, region, and national origin—shape romantic desires in long-term relationships. I demonstrate that earlier experiences—such as racist encounters, rewarding friendships, media imagery, satisfying romances, or romantic failures—direct and sharpen these desires. By theorizing *preferences* and paying attention to *opportunities*, I look beyond the individual to discover how personal experiences and social location factor into ideas about who is an appropriate mate.

This book also looks at the ways in which intimate family life can either allow for happy continuity or prompt change with respect to culture, identity, and race relations. I understand marriage to act as a bidirectional conduit for cultural transmission, adding nuance to newer conceptions of race relations.[13] The numerous possibilities here include Latino affiliation with whiteness, whites' affiliation with Latino culture, cross-cultural teaching, social distancing strategies, and creative cross-racial nonwhite linkages. Investigating the marital trends of Latinos, the reasons behind those choices, and the ramifications of those pairings for the couple and the next generation illuminates the role played by marriage and child-rearing in race relations in American society.

Although this book's central questions concern the foundations for and consequences of Latino exogamy and endogamy, it touches on the question of whether the racial hierarchy is reconfigured through intermarriage and intramarriage. This query concerning the impact of family formation on race relations and the racial order in the United States is important in light of the enduring inquiry into how immigration reconstitutes domestic interracial relations.[14] Moving beyond historical and legal accounts of black-white intermarriage, one contribution of this book is its fresh look at how marital unions either reinforce or reconstitute the American racial hierarchy.[15] The answer is: they do both. Two broad processes that are in tension with one another are occurring simultaneously for different segments of the Latino (and, more broadly, the U.S.) population.

First, racialized processes, such as residential segregation, that facilitate racial intramarriage by structuring opportunity and creating preference suggest a durable and self-perpetuating racial hierarchy. However, even as racial endogamy consolidates racial boundaries, people within intramarriages can enact diverse racial strategies that may resist the constraints of their social location (see chapter 7). Racial endogamy, then, does not simply solidify individuals' placement within racial, class, and gender structures.

Second, out-marriage is driven by intersectional concerns that rest on race, class, and gender inequality and hopes to improve one's lot. Racial exogamy, by definition, brings racial out-groups into new racial territory, flexing racial boundaries. As intermarriage increases, a greater proportion of the population have family connections with multiple racial groups and boundaries between groups are blurred.[16] Yet intermarriage does not equate to a large-scale reconfigured racial hierarchy because the incidence of intermarriage remains slim in comparison to intramarriage, despite increases over time and generations.[17] Among Latino-white intermarriages, we see the creation of varying brands of biculturalism and changed racial consciousness among whites, signaling porousness in that racial boundary. Among Latino–non-Latino minority pairs, we witness a shared marginalization— couples forging a creative solidarity in their mutual nonwhite experience. While cross-racial minority bonds and shared compassions meld the interests of the middle and lower ranks of the racial hierarchy, persisting antiblack prejudice among those who have *not* intermarried with blacks strengthens the boundary against blacks. In sum, while opportunity creates preference for those who marry within their racial group, preference also creates opportunity to marry either outside or inside the racial group. Racial boundaries are somewhat flexed in intermarriage, and yet boundaries are not fate in intramarriage. While some racial boundaries are more durable than others, love and partnerships slowly, unevenly, and with some resistance change social relations.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

This book makes five contributions to what we know about family forma-
tion, racial-ethnic relations, and the Latino population. First, I contend
that it is imperative that we look at both sides of marital partnerships
(not just the minority perspective) in order to understand race relations
and racialization processes at the individual level. General findings on
group outcomes do not simply "reduce down" to the individual level;
instead, attention to dyadic relationships reveals the bidirectional nature
of cultural change and racial consciousness. Studying families from vari-
ous angles sheds light on how people seek to satisfy their complex needs
through partnership choices.

Second, I argue that negotiated desire is a precursor to relationships.
Negotiated desire highlights how people utilize their pasts to create an
appealing vision of their future and how they recognize both intersections
and discrepancies with prospective partners. In the interplay between per-
sonal experience and local context, negotiated desire also illuminates how
structure interacts with individual lives to shape desire. Marriage is an *inter-
sectional critical juncture* in the life course, a point at which deep-seated con-
cerns around race, gender, and class play out, directing life decisions. For
example, the Latina women in this study who experienced gender oppres-
sion as a girl at the hand of a domineering father reacted by excluding either
all Latinos or an entire national-origin subgroup from their dating pool. As
another example, respondents who grew up poor were especially sensitive
to how marriage would affect their socioeconomic standing and therefore
wanted to marry their economic equivalent or higher.

Third, Latino marriage patterns, in slow and incomplete ways, reconfig-
ure the racial hierarchy. The racial and cultural rationales for endogamy do
not simply maintain the racial hierarchy, for pan-ethnic relations and racial
strategies expand definitions of Latino identity. Marriage relationships that
cross racial lines challenge the standing racial order as whites become more
conscious of race and racism and experience an expanded cultural life and
Latinos in these pairings circulate in multiple racial networks. Further, mar-
riages between Latinos and non-Latino racial minorities that are founded
upon a nonwhite perspective clarify the experience of racial subjugation
and serve as a source of solace, solidarity, and social critique.

Fourth, in this book I apply racial formation theory, which originated to
explain dynamics within nation-states, to the private domain.[18] Heeding a
call to link "multiple levels of analysis" (micro, meso, and macro), this book
stitches together these disparate societal levels, none of which operates in
isolation, to show their impact on each other.[19] For example, this book dem-
onstrates how the opportunity to meet people (macro level), which is often

mediated by social institutions (meso level) such as education or religion, fosters desire (micro level). By attending to multiple levels of analysis at once, we see how social structure and collectivities connect with individual action. This book shows that race is foundational not only in state-building but in building personal relationships as well. By adding a personal dimension to racial formation, we see how societal-level processes filter down to the individual, how racial politics affects even intimacy.

Fifth, this book shows that parents' experiences and teachings shape but do not overdetermine their children's outlooks and trajectories.

These contributions to discussions about family formation, racial-ethnic relations, and the Latino population rest on and highlight the insight that race is "*performative*," that racial and ethnic boundaries are "constituted by day-to-day affirmations, reinforcements, and enactments."[20] In all of their decisions—from daily routine decisions to those with more significant and long-term implications—people *perform race* (as well as gender, class, nationality, and generation) in ways that both etch racial boundaries through intimacy and reconfigure those boundaries.

THEORIZING LATINO FAMILY FORMATION IN THE UNITED STATES

The Intermarriage and Assimilation Literature

Intermarriage between Mexican women and Anglo men regularly occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century in the Southwest. No miscegenation laws barred Mexican and Anglo unions, yet racial endogamy was prevalent, especially as the status of Mexicans deteriorated.[21] In the mid-nineteenth century, as now, demographic shifts and intermarriage in traditional immigration gateways like southern California contributed to the "Mexicanization of many Anglos."[22] But despite this centuries-long history of interracial relations, the study of intermarriage as "the visible tip of a denser mass of interethnic contacts" did not erupt until scholars set out to explain the integration of arrivals from southern and eastern Europe at the turn of the twentieth century and their white ethnic descendants.[23]

Assimilation literature, while imperfect, nevertheless offers a theoretical starting point for the study of intergroup relations. A lead theorist of assimilation in the mid-1960s, Milton Gordon, posited that entrance into "the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level" (structural assimilation) leads to intermarriage. Once people from varying backgrounds socialize together, they are likely "to love and to marry each other, blithely oblivious to previous ethnic extraction."[24] While Gordon called structural assimilation "the keystone of the

arch of assimilation," he pictured intermarriage (marital assimilation) as unlocking a path-dependent course to a host of other types of assimilation predicated on boundary erosion.[25] Upon intermarriage, he forecasted, the minority group identity would be subsumed by the larger host society (identificational assimilation) and the offspring of intermarriage would be "indistinguishable" from "core society," prejudice and discrimination having been erased as social problems because mixed children would belong to an "in-group" of already merged primary groups.[26] Despite these early predictions of straight-line assimilation theory, continuing discrimination against later-generation native-born minorities has challenged the claim that intermarriage is a cure-all for racial antipathy.[27]

    "Anglo-conformity"—what has been described as " 'pressure-cooker' Americanization"—stands as the most prevalent assimilation theory historically.[28] Two alternatives are the "melting pot" and "cultural pluralism" theories. Gordon referred to the melting pot as "a totally new blend, culturally and biologically, in which the stocks and folkways . . . were . . . indiscriminately mixed in the political pot of the emerging nation and melted together by the fires of American influence and interaction into a distinctly different new type."[29] This vision, while appealing for its idealism, omits the reality that the United States is a racially stratified society in which some "stocks and folkways" are more highly valued than others. As one scholar put it, "continuing racism invalidated the melting pot."[30] Rather than permit groups to "melt," U.S. laws have excluded particular racial and national-origin groups from immigration into the country or "repatriated" or deported them after they arrived on U.S. soil.[31] One variant of melting pot theory, the "triple melting pot," forecasts that major religious groupings (namely Protestants, Catholics, and Jews) will each constitute a "melting pot in itself," with adherents marrying within their religious group but irrespective of nationality or ethnicity.[32] This theory presages divisions that make melting across multiple boundaries appear unlikely in practice. Cultural pluralism, on the other hand, "posits the right of ethnic groups in a democratic society to maintain their communal identity and their own subcultural values."[33] While the presence of subcultures is evidence in this direction, subcultures tend to be relegated to lower-status positions and viewed as inferior to mainstream culture. Moreover, the cultural preservation inherent in cultural pluralism is contradictory to notions of cultural change, an outgrowth of subcultures interacting and intermixing.[34] By eliding subcultural contact and exchange, cultural pluralism overlooks the dynamism of cultures, implying that some cultures are immutable. Even in the contemporary era, which formally embraces multiculturalism and is characterized by a decrease in prejudice, "ascriptive or exclusivist norms" continue to define rigid expectations for American identity, such as whiteness and English proficiency.[35]

Even though intermarriage is considered a barometer of assimilation, we know little about how the heterosexual marriage of a Latino and a non-Latino reinforces or shifts identity for each spouse and for their children.[36] This standard framework of immigration and assimilation does not account for the experience of Latinos who have a long history in the United States, and it views Latinos as those who (should) change and prescriptively become more like mainstream whites. Another shortcoming of assimilation literature is that its laser-focus on Latinos obscures the role of non-Latinos in race relations: it is not simply Latinos married to non-Latinos who are affected by their marriage partner. How do Latinos affect those with whom they have close relations, be they Latino, non-Hispanic white, or non-Latino minority?[37] Bidirectional change is possible in such marital partnerships and parenting, but for the most part this creative space has been left empirically uninterrogated until now.

"New" assimilation theory contends that the mainstream will change as it eventually includes previously excluded populations. Even the title of Richard Alba and Victor Nee's classic *Remaking the American Mainstream* foreshadows their main argument that "assimilation, as a form of ethnic change, may occur through changes taking place in groups on both sides of the boundary."[38] Thus, both the mainstream and minority immigrant groups are changed through interracial contact, neither one inured to change. This conceptualization of the "plasticity of the mainstream" is a correction to outmoded understandings of assimilation as a one-way process that requires the shedding of natal heritage and wholesale adoption of host country ways.[39] It is also a formulation of multidirectional transformation that opens the door for this study, which charts the processes of union formation and the cultural and cognitive changes that result from shared lives. With families as the "taproot of ethnic identity," intermarriage drives the creation of the "composite culture" that results from the "incremental inclusion of ethnic and racial groups that formerly were excluded."[40] Intermarriage is a vehicle through which "boundary blurring" occurs, when "racial/ethnic difference becomes more continuous and less sharply differentiated."[41] Integration is usually studied as a multigenerational process, yet it can occur intragenerationally as well, and intermarriage is a key site from which to view shifts within a single generation.[42]

The lessons learned from this lineage of research on intergroup relations, intermarriage, and assimilation are many. First, intermarriage indicates that some people hailing from putatively different groups do not perceive any cultural gulf between them as wide enough to be a barrier to a long-term union.[43] This lowering of antipathy and increased acceptance not only signals but also produces decreased social distance between groups. Historically, as scholars forecasted the eventual amalgamation of

European stock, racial difference became a scapegoat for failed relationships, and people drew conclusions "couched in 'race' terms," thus "calibrating the [unsuitability] of various groups."[44] We will see this later in the book as respondents justified their prior romantic failures and reworked their desires in light of "cultural compatibility"—a "code word" for race.[45] Second, as we shall also see in later chapters, antiblack prejudice has long been exercised as a way to shield one's relative racial privilege, a strategy that calcifies a racial boundary.[46] Third, race relations should be viewed as both intergenerational and intragenerational processes, each shedding light on racial dynamics. Finally, flaws in the prior literature set the stage for the goals of this book. The intermarriage literature has been marred by its exclusive focus on minority group change and its shortsightedness concerning multidirectional cultural change. Instead of presuming that the minority group will or must change—as older theory would do—this book empirically examines *who* changes, *to what end* they change, and *the process* by which these shifts occur.

Attention did not turn to the case of Latinos until late in the twentieth century and early in the twenty-first century; this research was driven by concern over changing national demographics, the "browning" of the nation, and the fate of Latinos in the United States.[47] In 1970, Latinos comprised only 5 percent of the nation's population, but by 2010 their proportion of the population had more than tripled, to 16 percent.[48] The reality that Latinos outnumber blacks as the largest minority group (in 2013, according to U.S. census estimates, Hispanics were 17 percent of the U.S. population and blacks were 13 percent) fuels the question of how Latino family-building is affecting race relations and the racial hierarchy.

Scholarship on Latinos tends to be framed by issues of immigration and assimilation. Assimilation is the process of incorporation into a host country in which the minority group adopts the norms, practices, and lifestyles of the majority group, the idea being that its members will eventually reach parity on various outcome measures (such as language, culture, education, and socioeconomic status). Intermarriage is one component of assimilation. A problem with the notion that intermarriage produces a "breaking of ties" with the minority's racial community is its asymmetry: nonwhites are expected to break ties with their community of origin whereas whites are not.[49] This is an expression of white supremacy that expects whiteness to be valued and nonwhiteness to be forfeited. Current thinking about intermarriage is underdeveloped in two critical areas. First, intermarriage may not amount to broken ties with a racial community. The possibility that intermarriage may work counter to assimilation theory's prediction of Latinos' social whitening and instead generate racial progressivism and awareness of race and racism *among whites* is an important empirical

question.[50] A second shortcoming of intermarriage literature is the assumption that cultural and identity shifts exclusively work on Latinos, sidelining the possibility that non-Latinos become "affiliative ethnics" who adopt the beliefs and practices of the minority group.[51]

Two theories that stand apart from assimilation literature have been used to explain intermarriage: status exchange and status homogamy.[52] Status exchange theory posits that lower-status racial-ethnic groups trade resources such as wealth, education, youth, or beauty for a mate with a higher racial-ethnic status—colloquially known as "marrying up."[53] The calculus is that those who marry "downward" across racial lines "must be compensated by marrying up on some other dimension."[54]

In contrast to status exchange, which is predicated on inequality, status homogamy contends that similarity on important nonracial dimensions drives intermarriage. Status homogamy argues that educational homogamy (mates possessing similar educational backgrounds) or class homogamy facilitates marriage, including intermarriage. Groups that restrict membership to others like themselves ("ascriptive groups"), such as college sororities, act as marriage brokers that foster ethnic-racial and class endogamy.[55] Proponents of this perspective claim that similar levels of class and educational status characterize the dominant marriage pattern, regardless of the race of either spouse.[56] In this study, there is evidence of both status exchange and class homogamy, different strategies that reach the same intermarried end. Not intended to adjudicate among these theories, this book adds an analysis of power relations that helps us better understand how and why people from different social locations make marital decisions.

Endogamy: The Understudied Norm

Endogamy is the overwhelming norm: 87 percent of people in the United States marry within their own racial-ethnic category.[57] In 2010, a mere 4.3 percent of married couples contained one Hispanic and one non-Hispanic; most of these couples were concentrated in the West.[58] Race and ethnicity persists as the most powerful division in the marriage market.[59] Yet since people generally assume racial-ethnic intramarriage to be the unquestioned standard, it remains an uninvestigated topic.[60] This book examines the patterns that lead to in-marriage and explores variants of intramarriage such as cross-national marriage (for example, a Mexican-descent person married to a Peruvian-descent person), mixed-generation marriage (for example, an immigrant married to a third-generation person), and intragenerational marriage (spouses with the same generational status). This book reveals the diversity of racial intramarriage that is too

often glossed over in the manufacturing of Latino similarity, which obscures important dimensions of Latino heterogeneity.[61]

Families in which there has been intermarriage attract attention because crossing racial boundaries is seen as unusual, if not transgressive. History reveals that black-white interracial sex was considered illicit, and interracial romances were regulated and discouraged by antimiscegenation laws, legal restrictions, and mob violence.[62] A chief concern behind prohibitions against interracial romance was protecting white femininity as virtuous and untainted. Yet when it came to white masculinity, the rules changed and white American men who married the native ranchero (Mexican American) elite did so "in the context of Euro-American manifest destiny," which facilitated the dispossession of Mexicans' land and white capital accumulation.[63] Because of the racial-ethnic, class, gender, and national inequalities present in many intermarriages, interracial boundary-crossing holds special appeal for scholars and laypeople alike.

Intermarriage studies, by definition, are unconcerned with intramarriage, leaving a gap in knowledge concerning racial endogamy. This literature assumes that once a racial minority intermarries with a majority-group member (a white), marriage with whites will continue in future generations.[64] Intermarriage studies equate intermarriage with assimilation over generations, overlooking the possibility of future in-marriage and obscuring *intragroup variation*.[65] Endogamy, or within-group marriage, deserves theoretical treatment as the flip side of intermarriage that gets the lion's share of scholastic attention. Endogamy has been eschewed as uninteresting because it is the (uninterrogated) norm. While demographics play a role in intramarriage, so too do preferences that perpetuate homogamous friendship networks and residential segregation. From a macro-level perspective, "group boundaries [are] set by the lack of interaction and spatial isolation."[66] This makes enduring residential segregation a problem that further entrenches racial-ethnic divisions and affects people's perceptions of their "in-group." As Mary Waters notes, "Humans have an in-group preference. The desire to feel good about themselves leads individuals to also want to feel good about their group."[67] In taking into account structural-level segregation patterns and micro-level desire for self-efficacy, this perspective sheds light on how both structure and personal wishes roll up into a preference for endogamous partnerships.

People sort on race-ethnicity, social class, and education level as they sift through options and decide on a mate, with most couples sharing equivalent statuses on these dimensions.[68] Demographics (the supply of people available in an area) and social pressures are primary reasons why people partner within their same racial-ethnic group.[69] Even though legal restrictions banning racial intermarriage (miscegenation) were overturned in 1967

(*Loving v. Virginia*) by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional, racial endogamy remains standard.[70] Notions of homogamy as "normal" are complicit in reproducing same-race couplings. Erica Chito Childs notes that "just as race is a social construction . . . the idea of couples being interracial (different from the norm of same-race couples) [is] also a social construction."[71] With interracial couples attracting much attention based on the belief that they are "unnatural," endogamous couples are an unmined source of information about how and when race matters.[72] Far from presenting an uninteresting dominant pattern, endogamous partnerships house fascinating cross-national, intergenerational, and intragenerational dynamics.

Of Love and Marriage

Marriage is a social contract. Long before passionate or companionate marriage, "mythic love," or the "love match" took center stage in Americans' conception of marriage, marriages were a chief way to forge political alliances, acquire landholdings, amass wealth, and build a family economy.[73] Marriage houses social bonds and economics as well as intimacy and children.

For all the "talk of love," marriage remains a political institution, one that people locked out of narrow definitions of marriage mobilize to access.[74] People hope to consolidate their economic well-being as well as find meaning in their lives through marriage as partners, parents, or both.[75] At the same time, the state regulates people through marriage, throughout history enforcing boundaries of race, sexuality, family size, and even gender ideals through restriction, punishment, and reward.[76]

While love has not historically been a precursor to marriage, love is an important predicate to contemporary U.S. marriages that are not arranged by family or religious institutions but rest on individual choice.[77] I consider love to be entangled with a host of desires and other practicalities. Love is braided throughout the narratives of the couples in this study, and yet my focus is on understanding the precursors to love and marriage. My aim is not to make love scientific but rather to gain understanding of the constellation of factors that make love and lifetime commitments possible and desirable, an end that is the culmination of complex sets of needs and desires. Love certainly existed among the couples interviewed, and the life history angle of the interviews illuminates how and why people fall in love . . . and sometimes fall out of love . . . and then fall in love again with another person.

By interrogating the rationales and desires that come before marriage and being alert to the process—encompassing natal family systems, prior experiences (including prior romances and breakups), and local contexts—this book unveils how love and marriage come to be. In taking a social

scientific approach to love, I hope not to divest love of its richness but to shed light on some of its mystery and recognize how love and partnership can satisfy needs. While love is entered into by individuals, explanations for partnerships extend beyond the biological desire for sex, procreation, and companionship; this book uncovers the patterns behind partnerships, patterns that are socially produced rather than driven only by human agency. We choose whom we love, but we choose for reasons that are beyond our control: the families in which we lived as children; the socialization experiences that teach us about ourselves and others in ways that always implicate race, gender, and class relations; and the local community in which we live.

Mate Selection: Opportunities and Preferences

The opportunity to meet, mingle, and marry is partially dependent on group size, segregation, and contact. Demographers inform us that minority group size is inversely related to out-marriage rates with whites: the smaller the minority group population, the greater the chance they will marry outside the group, and vice versa. Owing in part to spatial separation, Hispanic coethnic dating and marriage rates remain high, especially in areas with a large supply of coethnics offering both native and foreign-born mates.[78] Thus, while intermarriage has nationally been on the rise, regions with sizable Hispanic populations have contributed to the "retreat from intermarriage." Areas boasting high numbers of Hispanics have high endogamy rates because coethnics are readily available to date and marry.[79] The same logic goes for residential patterns: the greater the degree of segregation, the greater the degree of endogamy.[80]

Residential segregation fosters opportunity for intramarriage. Because most Latino immigrants reside in coethnic immigrant neighborhoods that limit opportunities to date out-group members, most marry coethnics from the same country of origin.[81] As residential integration occurs over generations, Latino interethnic and interracial marriage increases over generations in the United States.[82] Mobility out of minority metropolitan areas requires financial means and is associated with intermarriage due to expanded networks.[83] Relatedly, those with more education and income also are more likely to out-marry.[84]

Demographics do not tell us about love and affinity. Patterns of love, desire, and compatibility present a gap in demographic literature: "All work that relies on 'marriage markets' has them operating as if a cool calculus produces sexual partnerships. Love, attraction, solidarities, and personal choice find little place in these approaches."[85] Demographic accounts identify structural reasons for marriage trends, but they do not answer my

questions about the meanings that people attach to personal choices, what they hope to achieve in their decisions, and the multigenerational consequences of their choices.

While demographics shape *opportunities* for marriage, *preferences* are accumulations of sentiment that also direct desires. We know that "marriage patterns result from both preference and opportunity."[86] Marriage markets constitute opportunity, and yet preferences are the proverbial black box that needs to be filled in. The scant research on preferences tells us that race is a more important sorting criterion than education or religion and a forbidding line to cross.[87] Yet unanswered questions remain concerning how personal experience, intergroup contact, imagery, and structure inform preferences. Opportunities and preferences may not even be discrete entities but be better conceptualized as part of "feedback loops," rendering causes and consequences difficult to disentangle.[88] So are opportunities and preferences even separate entities? Or does opportunity shape preferences? Or do preferences lead to the intentional creation of opportunity? There is room for opportunity *and* preference, structure *and* culture in the equation that leads to marriage outcomes.[89] By problematizing the opportunities versus preferences debate and arguing that both matter, I provide a fuller picture of the multiple forces that bear on union formation. Through the use of life history interview data, I depict people's choices that are the fascinating and untold background to statistics on interracial and intraracial marriage and paint a rich picture of race relations and family formation.

Intersectionality: Race, Gender, Class, and Region

Intersectionality is the idea that we all occupy positions of privilege and oppression that *intersect* in our particular social location. Everyone occupies either a dominant or subordinate position on multiple axes of difference, the classic examples being gender, class status, and race-ethnicity. Everyone occupies varying levels of privilege and oppression on numerous dimensions, and these combinations of factors have multiplicative impacts on a person's relative advantage or disadvantage. For example, a white woman is privileged by her race but oppressed by her gender. As Patricia Hill Collins, a founder of intersectionality theory, has argued: "Placing . . . excluded groups in the center of analysis opens up possibilities for a both/and conceptual stance, one in which all groups possess varying amounts of penalty and privilege in one historically created system."[90] Two points are significant in this statement: First, excluded groups should be brought from the margin to the center to unearth ways of knowing that are suppressed when dominant groups control knowledge production. The

periphery (nondominant groups) has "long been relegated to the analytical dustbin of cultural invisibility."[91] An intersectional perspective promises to reorient focus to the margins and acquire knowledge from these subordinated locations. Second, Collins claims that this analytic realignment holds "possibilities for a both/and conceptual stance," meaning that people may be "simultaneously oppressor and oppressed."[92] By teasing out varying levels of privilege and oppression according to different axes of difference, intersectionality yields deeper understanding of social processes that vary according to characteristics such as race-ethnicity, gender, and class.

Although race is a central concern in this book, by utilizing an intersectional approach I aim to understand from respondents' perspectives to what extent gender, class, or other issues were at stake in their marital decisions. An intersectional perspective to family formation makes my analysis attentive to the ways in which race-ethnicity, gender (as well as gender ideologies such as feminism or traditionalism), class, region, nation, and generation shape opportunities, constraints, desires, and actions. Prior scholarship has focused on how these axes of difference produce disparate outcomes, such as educational aspirations and achievement, expressions of class status, parenting strategies, and the production of gendered subjects.[93] An intersectional perspective maintaining that social features such as race-ethnicity, gender, and class are experienced simultaneously and lead to different outcomes has not been adequately applied to family formation. In my effort to honor the complexity and nuance that are the stuff of social life, I utilize intersectionality as the framework permitting access to multiple axes of difference that interlock to create various social positions. As the black feminist poet Audre Lorde opined, "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives."[94]

Not an axis of *oppression* in the same way as race, gender, and class, region is an axis of *difference* that bears on Latino family formation. Local demographics, politics, and the racial history embedded in a place all affect subjectivity and intimate relationships.[95] Regional racial histories matter because they shape the present: race is not "a misconception left over from the past, and suitable now for the dustbin of history."[96] Statewide and local political sentiment, race relations, and law enforcement all play into the cognitive frameworks and lived experience of both Latinos and non-Latinos and provide an indispensable backdrop for understanding contemporary marriage patterns and family dynamics in specific locales.[97]

While this book attends to multiple theoretical frameworks, intersectionality theory is especially well suited to be an overarching framework because it acknowledges multiple axes of oppressions without hierarchizing them. By the use of intersectionality, I avoid "the practice of 'Oppression Olympics' . . . where some forms of oppression are assumed

to be worse than other forms"; such an analysis "pits groups against one another and diverts attention away from . . . structures, ideologies, and intersecting inequalities."[98] By skirting this hierarchical thinking that deems some forms of oppression more significant than others, I can instead see how oppressions "multiply" and work in tandem to produce specific experiences and reactions.[99] By examining the nexuses at intersections of identities, I break down bulk categories into constituent parts to explore the nuances that exist within broad categories but often are obscured beneath umbrella terms. Since one aim of this book is to unearth people's rationales for their crucial life choices, it is important not to presuppose answers but to allow them to percolate from people's life stories. Intersectionality allows interviewers to listen with open ears and hear the ways in which power differentials collide to produce particular patterned experiences. Since intersectionality informs us that race, class, gender, and other axes of difference are conditioned by each other, it is a reasonable starting point from which to investigate how advantage or disadvantage compounds to render logics for life choices.

Socialization and Decision-Making

Sociology has relied on socialization theory to explain how people are trained by institutions like family, religion, education, and peer groups to behave in culturally appropriate ways. Yet socialization theory overemphasizes conformity and does not sufficiently theorize noncompliance or individual agency: "[socialization theory] lacks a theory of the individual as an *actor* involved in a process of actively constructing his or her life."[100] This book enters this gap by asking people about the choices they have made that have "actively construct[ed]" their lives. By centering on individuals' decision-making yet honoring their particular opportunity structures that both facilitate and hamper action, this book acknowledges general trends as well as individual variation. I heed Kathleen Gerson's advice in service of offering a deeper understanding of why people make the personal life choices they do: "We can ignore neither the subtle ways that childhood experiences influence later life choices nor the structural constraints on [people's] options. . . . A complete theory of . . . behavior must include how [people] themselves, as actors who respond to the social conditions they inherit, construct their lives out of the available raw materials."[101] By linking structure, personal experience, and agency, this book sheds light on the rationales that spur romantic decision-making, which, in turn, produces particular types of families.

　　How can we connect personal experience to crucial decisions like marriage in a way that allows for agency? Peter Berger and Hansfried Kellner

consider marriage an exercise in "nomos-building."[102] Deriving from Greek, nomos refers to the social codes, habits, and customs that frame and order lived experience. Berger and Kellner contend that marriage is a protection against anomie—the breakdown or absence of social norms and values. A curative to a lack of social or moral standards, marriage as nomos-building "creates for the individual the sort of order in which he [*sic*] can experience his [*sic*] life as making sense."[103] Marriage is a significant relationship wherein people "construct, maintain, and modify" reality.[104] Linking to socialization theory, personal experience matters in that it endows present and future choices with meaning. If we consider marriage a "world-building relationship," marriage is a route to self-(re)definition.[105] This occurs through a process of "validation" whereby "truly significant others . . . [by] their continued presence will sustain . . . that nomos by which he [*sic*] can *feel at home in the world.*"[106] This double entendre alludes to the powerful impact that home life can have on one's feeling about one's place in the world. "Home" in this sense signals the primacy of family life. Through the construction of a validating microculture, marital partners serve a "sustaining function" that orders and makes meaningful everyday life.[107]

Marriage "is a *dramatic* act in which two strangers come together and redefine themselves."[108] Marriage offers an opportunity for self-redefinition. If people are content, they may seek replication of their current nomos, norms, and culture in a partner. If, on the other hand, they are dissatisfied with their life patterns, or nomos, they can redirect their lives through marriage.

Electing to marry is a major life decision that leads to a consideration of the decision-making literature. This book answers two questions: What values do people bring to bear on the decision to marry? And how do people's life histories and present situations orient them toward one decision and not another? As people make choices they may conduct a rationale-choice-style cost-benefit analysis by weighing pros and cons.[109] Alternatively, actors may let emotions and values guide them through decisions as they "feel" their way to a decision. Decisions are often made without complete information, and people must rely on partial knowledge and assumptions.[110] Each of two theoretical perspectives on choice and decision-making—subjective/cognitive and objective/behaviorist—lends insight into how people select one action over another. Both perspectives postulate that actors may either take or refrain from action; that actors will activate a course of action that is most likely to produce outcomes in line with their values and well-being; and that since consequences are uncertain, choices represent "guesses" in the hopes of generating an intended result.[111] The subjective approach assumes that behavior is "purposive and goal-directed"—that people act in accordance with the degree to which

they believe that a particular action or inaction will produce a specific outcome.[112] The behaviorist approach focuses on the effects of rewards and punishment: people base their decisions on their accumulated knowledge that certain actions are probabilistically associated with certain benefits or costs. The two perspectives are complementary in that they explain decision-making phenomena in different circumstances: subjectivists explicate decisions made under novel, nonroutine conditions (like whom to marry), whereas behaviorists elucidate decisions made in day-to-day, routine circumstances.[113] Although people use both decision-making logics as they navigate their lives, the subjectivist approach is compelling relative to marriage decisions because it highlights humans as goal-seekers.[114]

A "difficult and precarious" venture, marriage does not come with a guarantee of success.[115] Marital happiness and durability hinge on a mutually agreeable and confirming "little world."[116] If the nomos-building project is not shared but instead reveals disjuncture or discontinuity, this mismatch in social realities is likely to result in termination of the relationship. The search for satisfying partnerships that reflect back and share agreeable versions of reality ("validation") is crucial because of the primacy of a spouse in confirming or disconfirming one's nomos, sense of self, and worldview.

The Historical Contexts of California and Kansas: Facts and Imaginaries

I conducted interviews for *Marriage Vows and Racial Choices* in California and Kansas, and it is important to highlight that these two states are distinct in both factual and imaginary ways. California shares 140 miles of the nearly 2,000-mile international land border with Mexico.[117] It is home to the largest absolute number of Hispanics in the United States (14 million of a total of 50 million Hispanic residents as of the 2010 census) and serves as a traditional gateway for immigration from Latin America to the United States.[118] Notably, this southern border was crossed freely on a regular basis by "sojourner" or "circular" migrants, and such crossings were an everyday or seasonal part of transnational lives until 1924, when the U.S. Border Patrol was formed.[119] That the U.S. Department of Labor worked with Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) to regulate entry into the nation highlights that the relationship between the United States and Mexico is principally based on economics and labor relations.[120] The United States systematically recruited Mexican labor during times of U.S. need, such as the worker shortages in World War I and World War II, and expelled this same labor power during economic downturns such as the Great Depression (Operation Deportation) and the post–Korean War recession (Operation Wetback).[121]

Mexican and other Latin American immigrants satisfy the demand in the United States for labor, a "structural" need that is built into the U.S. economy and, in conjunction with (expected) unauthorized labor flows, translates into a vulnerable, deportable, and disposable labor force.[122] Mexico, as the largest supplier of immigrant labor, "has provided U.S. capitalism with the only 'foreign' migrant labor reserve so sufficiently flexible that it can neither be fully replaced nor be completely excluded under any circumstances."[123]

The national trends of labor recruitment and expulsion most drastically affected the workforce and population in California and affected Kansas to a lesser extent. California's agribusiness, which turns on the cultivation of produce such as oranges, lemons, strawberries, lettuce, broccoli, garlic, and avocados, has a long history of dependence on low-wage migrant labor.[124] Mexicans "regularly passed through [Kansas] since the mid-19th century as cowboys on cattle drives from Texas or as wagoners on the Santa Fe Trail," and Latino migrant labor has filled a labor need in meatpacking, the cultivation of beets, and railroad construction since the early 1900s.[125] In the 1920s, railroad construction was a dynamic sector for employment of Mexican men, who "did the lion's share of heavy physical labor involved in laying rail lines," the U.S. Department of Labor reporting that "Mexicans constituted 85 percent of railroad track workers . . . and 75 percent of beet, fruit, and vegetable laborers."[126] Mexican workers were attracted to Kansas's employment opportunities in railroads and sugar beets from the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 until 1930. After experiencing "interrupted" migration, labor flows to Kansas were renewed in the 1980s when the meatpacking industry boomed.[127]

California has a long history of labor in-immigration bringing Latinos to the region and, in turn, generating racial intermarriage. Since at least the 1800s, intermarriage between Mexican Americans and whites was a tactic for whites to consolidate political and landholding power. In the 1849 California State Constitutional Convention, Mexicans were granted the same citizenship rights as "free white persons."[128] The state constitution formally disenfranchised Indian and black populations, but the Anglo population considered Mexicans legally part of the white race owing to their mixed-blood ancestry. In the nineteenth century, marriages were arranged between daughters of the "Californio" elite (the historical term for the Mexicans of Alta California prior to the 1848 land secession to the United States) and wealthy Anglos to consolidate land, wealth, political power, and racial privilege. Californio women were "arguably trafficked between the old and emerging ruling classes," women and marriage serving as tools in "the larger colonizing processes."[129] Intermarriage between newcomer rich, white men and local Mexican women was a way for white men to acquire land without incurring financial debt, and it conferred

some prestige to Mexican women, who were marrying into the dominant racial group and thereby gaining privilege.[130] The high-class status of the lower-status racial group made interracial marriage acceptable since financial status was "exchanged" for racial status.[131] These pairings served to pacify the newly colonized people, since the colonizers became family, thereby averting mutiny in a society where whites were outnumbered.[132]

By comparison, there is scant literature on intermarriage in Kansas. Instead, what we know about Latinos in Kansas, or the Midwest more generally, concerns migrant labor in meat-processing plants, newcomers' adaptation in rural locales, and intraracial relations.[133] In the Kansas context, the subject of marriage patterns is untouched. Standing theory suggests that when people face shortages of spouses with similar racial or national origins, their willingness to enter mixed marriages increases—a historical precedent taken up in this book.[134]

Not only are California and Kansas disparate in concrete ways such as demographics, histories, and race relations, but they also occupy different positions in the national imaginary. In his scholarship on national identity, Benedict Anderson conceives of the nation as an "imagined community."[135] The national body is *imagined* because members of the nation will never meet all of their fellow members, yet the image of community is powerfully installed in members' minds. Imagination plays a role here as people mentally produce an image of the nation without traveling all of its territory or meeting all of its residents. Fueled by both factual and fictive information about its many regions and populations, people impose meanings on portions of the nation. For example, California is envisioned as part of the "Wild West," as the "new frontier," and as a gateway for immigration from other nations to its south. Alternatively, Kansas is generally pictured as the "heartland," owing to its geographical location in the center of the nation, and as America's "breadbasket," a reference to its status as a top wheat-producing state.[136]

Agriculturally robust, Kansas does some cultural work to broadcast its position in the nation's "breadbasket." One testament to how native Kansans view their place in the nation is the cornucopia of produce, grains, and breads on the billboard signs dotting Interstate 70 and reading: "1 Kansas farmer feeds 128 people PLUS YOU!" This sign highlights the agricultural nature of Kansas and proudly links the state's chief industry to the nourishing of the nation, including the interstate travelers who view the billboard. Popular cultural products, such as the book and movie *The Wizard of Oz,* cast Kansas as an agricultural and somewhat idyllic place (aside from the tornadoes) populated by a young rural white girl and her fictional dreamscape. These factual and fictive forces combine to portray Kansas as an inland agricultural space that is home to not many people beyond white people.

Alternatively, California's place in the national imaginary turns on its status as a border state, a bellwether of migration issues for the rest of the nation, and a place of technological innovation.[137] Pictured as a place of paradise and migration, California is where dreams are both dashed and realized.[138] Long an immigrant-receiving state, even predating the demarcation of the border, California has been built off of migrant labor while it simultaneously houses the dreams of migrant and native Californians alike. As the "golden state"—a term that can variously be applied to its gold rush history, its golden hills in summer, the landmark Golden Gate Bridge, or even Beverly Hills as the home of the Golden Globe Awards for excellence in film and television—California is a place where dreams might turn to gold. By setting these two disparate locales next to each other in this book, we can learn how region, as a mode of difference, influences notions around race and even the intimate sphere of family formation.

RESEARCH METHODS

In researching this book, I interviewed 109 people, representing forty-nine couples or multigenerational families.[139] Fifty-eight study participants were women, and fifty-one were men. Forty-nine participants (from twenty-four families) were from California, and sixty participants (from twenty-five families) were located in Kansas. The vast majority of respondents were U.S.-born (ninety-five people), and fourteen were foreign-born. Seventy participants (64 percent) identified as Latino/a only, twenty (19 percent) as mixed-race, fifteen (14 percent) as white only, three as Asian only, one as Native American only, and none as black only.

Recognizing the importance of color in navigating racial worlds, I created a skin color measure and coded respondents according to a five-point scale, regardless of race, from 1 (racially white appearance) to 5 (racially black appearance). To create this scale I selected one Latino celebrity from the Spanish-language *People* magazine website to correspond to each skin-color code.[140] Thirty percent (thirty-three) of all respondents were skin-color code 1; 27 percent (twenty-nine) were 2; 30 percent (thirty-three) were 3; 12 percent (thirteen) were 4; and 1 percent (one) was 5, or phenotypically black.

Considering the entire sample of adults and children, most respondents were married (eighty-four people, or 77 percent). Since the 1960s, marriage rates have declined: half of American adults (51 percent) were married in 2011 compared with 72 percent in 1960.[141] Marriage is being replaced by cohabitation, single-person households, and other adult living arrangements. Further, a "marriage gap" has emerged: marriage is now the norm for college-educated adults with solid incomes, but less likely to occur among the less economically advantaged, who consider economic security

a precondition for marriage. In a reflection of the marriage decline, the American public is broadening its definition of family, rejecting marriage as the only path to family formation.[142]

Despite its prevalence, no cohabiting couples volunteered for participation in the study. When I loosened participation requirements, divorced people volunteered. With their inclusion, my sample, while slanted in the direction of economically stable, heterosexually married families, at least partially reflects the messy reality of unified, divorced, and remarried families. Five respondents were divorced, and twenty (mostly youth) were single or had never married. Although I used the language of "lifetime partners" in my recruitment materials with the intention of including homosexual couples, no same-sex couples consented to interviews. The age range for respondents was fourteen to seventy-six. Twenty-seven percent of respondents were between the ages of fourteen and twenty-nine, the majority (60 percent) were between thirty and fifty-nine, and 14 percent were over sixty years old.

As measured by education, occupation, and household income, a range of class strata were represented (see appendix B). Despite a wide range, the respondent pool was skewed toward the middle class, limiting the generalizability of the findings. A fraction of respondents had less than a high school education (2 percent). Many dependent children were currently in high school (13 percent), and 50 percent of all respondents had a high school degree or GED, some college experience, or were currently a college student. Twenty-one percent had attained a college degree, and 25 percent held a graduate degree. The middle-class standing of the majority of the respondent pool was reflected in their occupations. Nine percent of respondents held blue-collar jobs such as machinists, 19 percent were in service or sales jobs such as retail or the police, 45 percent held white-collar or professional jobs like teachers, architects, or lawyers, 18 percent were students, and 6 percent were unemployed (a figure that included homemakers). Retirees were coded as holding their most recent job, 3 percent of respondents being retired with undisclosed prior employment. In 2010, when the interviews were conducted, the median household income for the United States was $51,000. (In California median income was $59,540, and in Kansas it was $49,687.) The vast majority of my respondents earned a household income well above the national and statewide averages. Only 11 percent of respondents earned a household income below $50,000. Earnings were middle- and top-heavy: 38 percent earned between $50,001 and $100,000, 28 percent reported income of $100,001 to $150,000, and 16 percent earned above $150,000 in annual household income. These income figures for my sample are a reminder that processes around race and family formation may work differently at different class levels, an area of future research.

Table 1.1   Sample, by Marital Type

Intermarriage: Latino-White	Intermarriage: Latino–Non-Latino Racial Minority	Intramarriage: Latino-Latino	Total
n = 41 (27 adults, 3 adult children, 11 dependent children)	n = 12 (12 adults)	n = 56 (44 adults, 4 adult children, 8 dependent children)	N = 109 (83 adults, 7 adult children, 19 dependent children)
16 families (3 California, 13 Kansas)	6 families (3 California, 3 Kansas)	27 families (18 California, 9 Kansas)	49 families (24 California, 25 Kansas)
10 Latina women, 6 Latino men	5 Latina women, 1 Latino man		
5 white women, 9 white men	1 non-Latino minority woman, 5 non-Latino minority men		

Source: Author's calculations.

Approximately half of the forty-nine families were intermarried couples and their mixed-race children (fifty-three respondents), and half were intramarried couples and their mono-racial children (fifty-six respondents) (see table 1.1). While most Latinos partner with other Latinos and those who out-marry tend to do so with whites, I included Latino intermarriages with Asians, blacks, and Native Americans in order to capture the variety of pairings that occur. In the table, respondents are defined as adults, "adult children" of adult interviewees (who were sometimes married, in which case I inquired about their marriages), or "dependent children" who were living at home or in college.

Table 1.2 shows the breakdown of intramarried couples and their children according to the more specific marital types that are the organizing principles for the empirical chapters. Cross-national marriages included individuals with different national origins (for example, Mexico and Bolivia) but excluded those who were international but of the same national origin (for example, Mexican national and Mexican American). Mixed-generation intramarriages included couples who were Mexican-origin but varied in terms of generation-since-immigration (for example, Mexican immigrant and third-plus-generation Mexican American). Intragenerational intramarriages involved couples who shared not only a national-origin heritage (ethnic group) but also a generational status (for example, both were second-generation Mexican Americans).

Table 1.2   Intramarried Families, Including Children

Cross-National Intramarriage	Mixed-Generation Intramarriage	Intra-Generation Intramarriage	Total
n = 9 (9 adults, including 1 adult child)	n = 22 (18 adults, including 2 adult children; 4 dependent children)	n = 28 (20 adults, 4 adult children[b], 4 dependent children)	N = 59[a] (44 adults, 7 adult children, 8 dependent children)
6 families (3 California, 3 Kansas)	11 families (7 California, 4 Kansas)	11 families (8 California, 3 Kansas)	28 families (18 California, 10 Kansas)

Source: Author's calculations.

[a]This total number of fifty-nine is different from the fifty-six Latino-Latino intramarried in table 1.1 because three adult children are captured under the "intermarried with whites" category in table 1.1, whereas they are included here as children of intramarried couples.
[b]None of the adult children fit this marital combination (one single or never married, two divorced from a white person, one intermarried with a white person). Adult children were interviewed with respect to being children of their parents in this category as well as their own dating and marital lives.

My sample of intramarried couples and their children totals fifty-nine respondents representing twenty-eight families. Two-thirds of the intramarried families were from California (eighteen families) and one-third were from Kansas (ten families); this skew reflected the greater number of Latinos in the Southwest, which translates into a bigger marriage market. Recalling table 1.1, the greater number of intramarried Latino couples in California complements the greater number of Latino-white intermarriages in Kansas, which similarly attests to the power of population demographics in shaping dating pools. There were nine adults in the cross-national category, twenty-two (eighteen adults and four dependent children) in the mixed-generation group, and twenty-eight (twenty adults and four dependent children) in the intragenerational in-marriage category.

With field sites in California and Kansas, a comparative approach allows for analysis of systematic differences between a state that borders Mexico and has traditionally been a receiving state for immigrants and an inland state with less of a legacy of transmigration. By comparing the marital dynamics of a racially diverse state where whites are a minority with a majority-white state with minimal diversity, we can more fully grasp the effects of region, racial composition, and local racial hierarchies on marriage patterns. Studying couples residing in states with disparate immigration histories and Hispanic populations (as percentages of state populations) yields information about the lived experience of race in these different contexts. In

comparison to 16.9 percent of the U.S. population being of Hispanic origin (of any race), California's population is 38.2 percent Hispanic, whereas Kansas's population is 11.0 percent Hispanic. These two states' share of non-Hispanic whites varies accordingly: California's population is 39.4 percent non-Hispanic white, whereas Kansas's population is 77.5 percent non-Hispanic white. California's Hispanic population is over triple that of Kansas, and its non-Hispanic white population is about half that of Kansas. California's racial diversity goes beyond Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites, with 13.9 percent Asian, 6.6 percent black, 1.7 percent American Indian, and 3.6 percent "two or more races," whereas Kansas is less diverse, with 2.6 percent Asian, 6.2 percent black, 1.2 percent American Indian, and 2.7 percent "two or more races."[143] Comparing a state with a long history of circular and permanent migration to fill U.S. labor needs with one that does not top the list of migration-receiving states and remains predominantly white provides insight into how migration histories, population demographics, and race relations play out in the intimate sphere of romance and partnership. Including an analysis of region sheds light on how place helps constitute racial meanings, the racial makeup of romantic possibilities, and performances of race and culture.[144]

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

I refer to Latinos as a race, not an ethnic group, because respondents' narratives reveal that they are strictly categorized by others. Since racial categories are externally imposed, not electively asserted, and Latino respondents experienced their heritage to be more "mandatory" than "optional," race is an appropriate descriptor. The race theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant define race as an "axis of conflict that refers to human bodies," noting that race is both historically contingent and socially constructed, racial classifications being a by-product of bias that is variable over time.[145] Physical characteristics play a role in how dividing lines among humans are drawn, despite race lacking a biological or genetic underpinning.[146] How physical appearance is *viewed* is itself a learned social skill that constructs race.[147] Stephen Cornell and Douglass Hartmann note that "the selection of markers and therefore the construction of the racial category itself . . . is a choice human beings make."[148] With racial definition comes the chance to rank order groups. As an "axis of conflict," race implies a power relation, which leads to the conceptualization of the relationships among racial groups as a "racial hierarchy," groups arranged according to degrees of privilege and oppression.[149]

I refer to Latinos as a racial group because they are treated as a unitary group by outsiders and any assertions about national origin or ethnic

group are glossed over by a racial categorization. A long history of racial-ization of Latinos predates and justifies my terminological decision, from labor recruitment to occupational queuing and deportation programs based on race.[150] The Mexican-origin population, the national-origin group making the largest contribution to the Latino category, has been treated distinctly since the United States colonized northern Mexico after the Mexican-American War, which ended in 1848 and marked the origin of Mexican Americans as a racial group.[151] This history of conquest and colonization feeds into contemporary legal definitions of Latinos as a separate group that qualifies for federal programs for disadvantaged racial minorities, further legitimizing understandings of Latinos as a racial category.[152] This history of racialization informs how U.S.-born Latinos see themselves: later generations self-identify as Hispanic/Latino, in addi-tion to their national origin, more so than as American, reflecting racial-ized exclusion.[153]

In contrast to race, I understand ethnicity as referring to "culture and descent," where "culture" refers to "religion, language, 'customs,' nation-ality, and political identification" and "descent" means heredity and group origins.[154] In other words, ethnicity is "not biological or primordial [but rather] . . . it involves a great deal of choice."[155] Ethnicity is voluntary and subjective; individuals electively claim group membership that refers to a "distinctive connection" based on "common descent."[156] I use the term "ethnicity" to refer to national origin or heritage (for example, Mexico or Peru), which are smaller divisions within the Latino category. I call "inter-ethnic" marriages "cross-national" marriages (for example, a Mexican-origin person married to a Bolivian-origin person, irrespective of nation of birth) to move away from the confusion over whether Latinos constitute a racial or ethnic group.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

This book moves from considering intermarriage to intramarriage. Chapters 2 through 4 concern racial intermarriage. Chapter 2 focuses on a key question for Latino and white intermarriages: How do people account for exogamous marriage, from the perspectives of both partners? This chap-ter explores the reasons why people out-married, teasing apart the influ-ence of preferences as well as "supply" or demographics. A chief finding is that Latina women who suffered domineering Latino fathers assumed that all Latino men shared this trait and therefore rejected all Latino men and favored white men who "looked" different than their fathers. Class is also operative here as Latina women fused race, class, and gender to perceive white men as desirable on these grounds. From the whites' perspective,

a discourse of multiculturalism facilitated intermarriage and operated alongside imagery of Latina women as domestic. Racialized experiences, gender ideologies, class status, imagery, and multicultural discourse all construct romantic desire. These preferences combine with population demographics to produce Latino and white intermarriage.

Chapter 3 continues the focus on Latino and white intermarriage, asking: How does intermarriage affect identity, culture, and racial consciousness? Assimilation theory views intermarriage as evidence of successful integration and predicts that the minority partner will shed minority group attachments. Contrary to this assumption, the "breaking of ties" is only one of many outcomes for these intermarried families; multidirectional biculturalism is the chief cultural result. I theorize variations of biculturalism and examine how intermarriage foments racial consciousness in whites, with white women in particular adopting and perpetuating their husbands' heritage. Interviews with Latino-white mixed-race children illustrate that proximity to Latino extended family members is crucial to sustaining Latino cultural ties, especially in the predominantly white Kansas context.

In chapter 4, I look at Latinos who are intermarried with non-Latino racial minorities—namely African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Like chapters 2 and 3, this chapter addresses the rationales for and ramifications of a union that crosses racial boundaries, this time with a non-Latino minority. Focusing on dual-minority partnerships, this chapter charts the desire for an interracial minority partner among those who not only rejected Latinos (or did not find them to date) but also excluded whites from their dating pool, believing that white privilege would make such partners fundamentally unknowable to one another. Through "shared marginalization," these couples discovered in each other a common experience with a *different* nonwhite category that legitimized their racialized experience. The California-Kansas comparison is germane here: in California, couples considered themselves a reflection of their multiracial environment, whereas in Kansas, cross-racial minority partners emphasized the experiential parallels of their marginality. A shared racially subordinate perspective is central to these marriages, and racial empathy with someone from a different minority group is vital to their bonding.

Chapters 5 through 7 center on Latino intramarriage and move from couples who are most dissimilar in nation and generation to those who are the most similar. Chapter 5 is devoted to cross-national (also known as "panethnic" or "interethnic") Latino partnerships: unions between people with ancestry from two different Latin American countries. These marriages are spurred by a preference for cultural commonality, a desire not to have to explain one's background, resistance to a familiar brand of

patriarchy, and escape from whites' stereotypes of Latinos. Latinas who struggled against patriarchal fathers but otherwise appreciated their culture sought out Latino men who hailed from a different nation in order to find a racial and gender haven. Marrying a Latino with a different national origin is an attempt to avoid the problematic elements associated with a national-origin community yet maintain broader Latino cultural elements. For Latino men, notions of cultural compatibility, which rule out white women, are at work. The consequences of these unions include cultural exchange, pan-Latino cultural blending, and women's upkeep of a husband's national culture through her gendered efforts at maintaining the home's cultural life.

In examining Mexican-origin, mixed-generation, endogamous marriage (for example, a Mexican immigrant and a third-generation Mexican American), chapter 6 covers five key themes: transnationalism, "assimilation" within mixed-generation partnerships, the political-legal consciousness of spouses of immigrants, upward mobility coexisting with solidarity, and Latino men's feminism. This chapter unveils the cultural and structural mechanisms that foster these relationships and exposes variations within the supposed monolith of racial intramarriage. The range of experience these partnerships encompass proves the multifaceted quality of racial endogamy. Relatedly, Latino men's feminism is not exclusive to this marital type but is discussed here to show the elasticity of gender norms.[157] Latino men's family-of-origin experiences with patriarchy and their heterosexual romantic involvements with women inspire them to revise their enactments of masculinity. Interviews with children show how families shape but do not overdetermine the next generation's identity and performance of culture.

Chapter 7 profiles Mexican-origin couples who share the same generation status (intragenerational intramarriages) and their children. Focusing on the California case, these endogamous parents and their children use social-distancing racial strategies to avoid race-based negative stereotypes. In the Latino- and immigrant-dense context of California, rejecting or downplaying their racial status is a primary way in which interviewees strove to gain upward mobility and obviate treacherous stereotypes. Gender is operative here in terms of who is most castigated and therefore most invested in resistance: Mexican-origin men were especially subject to low-class and gang stereotypes and reactively most engaged in social-distancing strategies. In-married parents in this category diminished racial ties in favor of striving for class advancement, which they perceived as incompatible with nonwhite ethnicity, and children tended to utilize the same racial strategy. This strategy, practiced by those striving for middle-class status, reveals that in-marriage does not equate to cultural retention

but can instead lead to redoubled efforts to attenuate ties to a group that threatens economic ascent.

Chapter 8 steps away from rationales and consequences to examine the uncertain process of dating, the decision to marry, marital tensions, divorce, and remarriage. While some of these issues are present in earlier chapters, this chapter uses the search for love as its centerpiece to ask questions about process. Given that this book focuses on currently married couples, chapter 8, in offering an honest appraisal of how and why people get in and out of relationships, rounds out the book by accounting for life as a long-running sequence of experiences. Although I interviewed respondents at one point in time, their retrospective accounts show their lives playing out more like movies—occurring over a period of time that provides room for growth, change, and decisions—than static photographs.[158] Conflicts about gendered responsibilities in the home and sexual fidelity fomented marital tension and led people to either live ambivalently in a marriage or separate. Extended families in earlier chapters provided a connection to Latino culture, but here meddlesome parents-in-law could interfere with a couple's happiness and, by not allowing them to negotiate a mutually agreeable family life, move them toward divorce. Complicating the pairing of happiness with marriage and unhappiness with divorce is the finding that some people remained married but were unhappy, reluctant, and unsure. And other people who fled problems through divorce were happier unmarried. The couples who reported the greatest long-term happiness were those who carefully selected their spouse by *quality-coding*, that is, identifying personality characteristics that they needed in a partner and screening dates until they found someone who offered the right palette of qualities.

The concluding chapter, chapter 9, summarizes lifetime partnerships as the result of negotiated desire that takes into account intersectional concerns stemming from racialized, gendered, and classed life experiences. Marriage is an intersectional critical juncture: people construct romantic desires in response to intersectional concerns and select partners whom they believe are good bets to fulfill their most crucial needs. Personal experience, cultural notions of race, gender, generation, and nation, and the demographics of a place all bear on family formation. As such, the preferences versus opportunity debate in the marriage literature is based on a false dichotomy; this chapter reminds us that preferences shape opportunities and vice versa. Additionally, marriage choices can have both anticipated and unexpected results. Marriage has repercussions in racial awareness, racial strategies, cultural practices, gender ideologies and strategies, class mobility, and national residence. Chapter 9 reminds us that using a lens of family offers an important

optic on some racial boundaries proving to be more readily crossed than others and on the modest reconfiguration of the racial hierarchy through family life.

This book contributes to our understanding of meanings and interpretations that drive marital pairings involving Latinos and their consequences. By taking a life history approach and intersectional perspective, I trace the ways in which personal experience—patterned by racialized, gendered, classed, regional, and national experiences—inclines people toward either intermarriage or intramarriage. Rather than take marital formations as given, I unearth the reasons that lie behind those patterns and accumulate into negotiated desire.

As people craft their chosen families, they are making racial choices and influencing race relations. Even if race is not their top priority, their marital life reshapes understandings and enactments of race, culture, and identity. The racial choices made in marriage and the intimate life lived therein make marriage an especially fruitful site for examining why people choose the families they do and how they chart their course as Americans.