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Muttarak, Raya

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Raya Muttarak

Explaining trends and patterns of immigrants' partner choice in Britain

Wie sind die Trends und Verhaltensmuster der Partnerwahl von Immigrant(inn)en in Großbritannien zu erklären?

Abstract:

Based on the 1988–2006 General Household Survey (N=121,934), this paper investigates trends and patterns of partnership formation of immigrants in Britain and explains underlying factors influencing partner choice. The key questions are: 1) whom do the immigrants of different gender, generation and ethnic groups form partnerships with: (a) White British partner, a British-born coethnic partner or a coethnic partner from overseas); and 2) what factors are explaining such a choice. Immigrants socialised in Britain, the second generation and those who migrated to Britain at a young age, are more likely to have a White British partner and less likely to be in a transnational partnership. Age at union, marital status, educational qualification, area ethnic composition, sex ratio and educational homogeneity are significant predictors of one's partner choice. Yet, ethnic origin remains a crucial determinant of patterns of partnership formation. The statistical analysis suggests that the rates of interethnic union with a White British partner will continue to increase for Black Caribbean, Black Africans and also gradually for highly educated Indians. The proportion of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis having a White British partner will remain low and simultaneously transnational marriage with a coethnic partner from overseas will still be commonly practiced. Overall, interethnic partnerships between the White British population and the population with an immigrant background are increasing in Britain.

Zusammenfassung:

Auf Basis des *General Household Survey* der Jahre 1988 bis 2006 (N=121.934) werden in diesem Beitrag Trends und Verhaltensmuster der Partnerschaftsanbahnung von Immigrant(inn)en in Großbritannien untersucht, sowie diesen zugrundeliegende Faktoren, die die Partnerwahl beeinflussen, erklärt. Folgende Fragestellungen sind dabei ausschlaggebend: 1. Gehen Immigrant(inn)en aus beiden Geschlechtern, aus verschiedenen Generationen und unterschiedenen ethnischen Gruppen eine Partnerschaft ein mit a) einer/einem weißen Britin/Briten, b) einer/einem Angehörigen der gleichen Ethnie, die/der in Großbritannien geboren ist oder c) einer/einem im Ausland geborenen Angehörigen der gleichen Ethnie? Und 2) Welche Faktoren tragen dazu bei, diese Auswahl zu erklären? Für Immigrant(inn)en, die in Großbritannien sozialisiert wurden – d.h. diejenigen, die zur zweiten Generation gehören oder in sehr jungen Jahren eingewandert sind – ist es wahrscheinlicher, eine(n) weiße(n) britische(n) Partner(in) zu haben. Zugleich ist es für diese weniger wahrscheinlich, sich in einer transnationalen Partnerschaft zu befinden. Das Heiratsalter, der Zivilstand, die Bildungsqualifikationen, die ethnische Zusammensetzung des Wohngebietes, die Geschlechterratio und Bildungshomogamie sind signifikante Prädiktoren der Partnerwahl. Dennoch bleibt die ethnische Herkunft eine wichtige Determinante der Verhaltensmuster beim Entstehen von Partnerschaften. Die statistischen Analysen lassen darauf schließen, dass die Anteile interethnischer Partnerschaften mit einer/einem weißen Britin/Briten für Schwarze aus

der Karibik und Afrika stetig und allmählich auch für höher gebildete Inder ansteigen werden. Die Anteile der Pakistanis und Bangladeschis mit einem weißen britischen Partner wird gering bleiben, zugleich werden transnationale Hochzeiten mit einem Partner aus Übersee, der der gleichen Ethnie angehört, gängige Praxis bleiben. Insgesamt nehmen in Großbritannien interethnische Partnerschaften zwischen der weißen britischen Bevölkerungsgruppe und denjenigen mit einem Migrationshintergrund zu.

Key words: intermarriage, transnational marriage, integration, ethnic minority, Britain

Schlagwörter: interethnische Ehen, transnationale Ehen, Integration, ethnische Minderheit, Großbritannien

1. Introduction

Britain is one of the countries in Europe with the longest history of immigration and the largest share of immigrant population. The recent 2001 Census reports that the ethnic minority population accounts for around 8 percent (4.6 million) of the entire British population (ONS 2004). The major minority ethnic groups in Britain comprise immigrants from the New Commonwealth countries whose mass migration started during the 1950s-1960s (Peach 1996). These ethnic groups include Indians, Pakistanis, Black Caribbeans and Black Africans. The immigration of Bangladeshi and Chinese peaked more recently around the 1980s. Most immigrants settled down and formed a family in Britain, resulting in a significant increase in a British-born population with an immigrant background.

Subsequently, the issue of immigrants' integration has become a central debate in Britain. Extant empirical studies usually focus on institutional access and socioeconomic success as an indicator of integration (Nazroo 2003; Heath/McMahon 2005; Heath/Cheung 2007; Rothon et al. 2009). These studies commonly find significant ethnic differentials in key outcomes such as education, employment, health and housing. Although socioeconomic attainment is an important dimension of immigrants' integration, it does not provide much insight into the relations between the majority population and immigrant populations. With almost one-tenth of the population belonging to minority ethnic groups, one key question frequently asked is to whom does the immigrant population marry. An interethnic partnership between immigrant and majority population has commonly been used as an indicator of integration since it implies a decline in group boundaries (Hwang et al. 1997; Qian/Lichter 2001; Rosenfeld 2002). Thus the study of immigrants' partner choice could indicate the degree to which members from a minority ethnic group are integrated into the host society.

This paper aims to provide understanding of immigrants' partner choice in contemporary Britain. The paper focuses on two main questions: 1) to whom the immigrants of different gender, generation and ethnic groups marry: (a White British partner, a British-born coethnic partner or a coethnic partner from overseas); and 2) what are the underlying factors that explain such a choice. The data analysis is based on the pooled 1988–2006 General

Household Survey with a sample of 60,967 couples. The empirical study includes an investigation of trends and patterns of partnerships of different immigrant groups and the roles of individual and macro-level factors in shaping one's partner choice. The study also attempts to explain ethnic differentials in partnership patterns after taking account of relevant factors.

In this paper, the terms intermarriage and interethnic union are used interchangeably and both refer to a union (both legal marriage and cohabitation) between members of minority ethnic groups and majority populations, i.e. White British in this study. Transnational marriage refers to a partnership between coethnic members, one born in or migrated to Britain before the age of 16 and one born abroad and migrated to Britain at the age of 16 or over.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 provides a review of literature on interethnic unions and transnational marriage in Britain. Section 3 describes the data used and Section 4 discusses methods of analysis and measures of an outcome variable and covariates. Section 5 presents empirical results from descriptive analysis and Section 6 presents estimates from multivariate models. Section 7 summarises and discusses the findings.

2. Review of literature on intermarriage and transnational marriage in Britain

2.1 Literature on intermarriage

There are relatively fewer empirical studies of interethnic unions in Britain in comparison to those that focus on the classical immigration countries such as the United States (Pagnini/Morgan 1990; Kalmijn 1993; Qian/Lichter 2001, 2007), Australia (Gray 1987; Jones/Luijckx 1996; Giorgas/Jones 2002) and Canada (Kalbach 1991, 2002; Tzeng 2000).

Extant empirical studies on interethnic unions in Britain are mostly descriptive. Bagley (1972a, 1972b) published one of the earliest descriptive statistics on the rate of interethnic marriage in Britain using the 1969 Registrar General's Quarterly Returns for England and Wales. However, the findings are open to bias because ethnic origin was inferred from an individual's country of origin. For example, any individuals born in Britain were classified as 'British', so coethnic unions between first and second generation ethnic minority individuals were wrongly classified as interethnic.

A direct question on ethnic identification was first introduced in the Labour Force Survey (LFS) in 1979 and in the Census in 1991. Before the release of the 1991 Census, the LFS had been used as a key data source for the study of interethnic unions in Britain because of its large sample size and the availability of information on ethnic group and birthplace (Jones 1982, 1984; Coleman 1985, 1992, 1994; Berrington 1994). The consistent findings from the research using the LFS data between 1979 and 1991 were: 1) Black Caribbeans and Black Africans have much higher rates of intermarriage than Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis; 2) Interethnic unions are more common among younger generations born in Britain; 3) The rate of intermarriage is higher for men than for women across all ethnic groups except for the Chinese and; 4) Individuals with mixed ethnic origin have the highest rate of intermarriage.

The analysis of the 1991 Census by Berrington (1996) yields similar findings to the LFS data. The key difference from the previous literature is the distinction between legal mar-

riages and cohabiting unions and the inclusion of socioeconomic characteristics in the analysis. Interethnic partnerships are found to be more common in cohabiting unions and among individuals from privileged socioeconomic status. Still, Berrington's study does not take into account the possible association between each socioeconomic factor and the influence of macro-structural factors such as opportunities for intergroup contacts on marital choice.

Although the LFS and the Census are useful data sources to analyse the trends and patterns of intermarriage, the drawback is the lack of information on the date of marriage. If the study of intermarriage primarily focuses on the unions formed in Britain, ideally marriages contracted overseas should be excluded from the analysis. The previous findings could be biased since there is no way of knowing when and where the marriages took place. Furthermore, if there is a selection into interethnic relationship, it is important to take into account the distribution of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of each ethnic group. This study addresses these two issues by restricting the study sample to the unions contracted in Britain and by employing multivariate analyses to investigate the influence of individual and macro-level factors in determining interethnic partnership.

2.2 Literature on transnational marriage

Transnational marriage is of importance in understanding immigrants' partner choices because this practice is fairly common amongst certain ethnic groups in Britain, particularly those from the Indian subcontinent. Traditional partnership selection such as arranged marriage or close cousin marriage remains prevalent even amongst the British-born population. Weddings typically take place in the country of origin following which a non-British spouse applies for permission to enter Britain for the purposes of 'family reunion'. In Britain, transnational marriage of this kind is common amongst Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians and to a lesser extent African Asians (Modood 1997). Literature related to transnational marriage is predominantly anthropological or qualitative (Pocok 1972; Ballard 1990; Anwar 1998; Bhopal 1999). Yet, these studies are useful in understanding preference in partner choice and could help explain why certain ethnic groups prefer transnational marriage to interethnic partnership or coethnic partnership in a host country.

The practices of transnational marriage vary between ethnic, religious and linguistic groups according to different kinship structures and marriage rules. For instance, endogamy or close kin marriage is a preference amongst Mirpuri Pakistanis but consanguinity of this kind is prohibited among Sikh and Hindu Indians (Ballard 1996; Shaw 2001). Despite the diversity in marriage practices, one common feature is that the marriage is arranged whereby partner choice is predominantly made by parents or senior members of the family.

Beck-Gernsheim (2007) provides a useful summary of incentives for immigrants and their British-born children to seek partners from their country of origin. First, transnational marriage help sustain ties with kin in the country of origin. For migrants from a society where arranged marriage is common, they naturally receive offers from their relatives to help in finding a potential partner for their sons and daughters. Loyalty, obligation to kin and the importance of keeping family honour make it difficult to decline such requests (Ballard 1990; Shaw 2001). The arrangement of transnational marriage thus helps strengthen their relationship with kin and secures their social position in their country of origin.

Second, immigrants can benefit from upward mobility acquired through transnational marriage. Living in a host country with a permanent resident status or citizenship enhances immigrants' social status in the country of origin. Despite having a rural background or low education, immigrants become an attractive marriage partner for those with higher social status in their country of origin. Transnational marriage thus could provide opportunities for social mobility in the country of origin.

Third, transnational marriage brings about changes in gender relations. For immigrant men of some ethnic groups, having lost their traditional patriarchal power in Western societies, marrying a woman from their country of origin could see a return of their authority (Shaw 2001; Shaw/Charsley 2006). Likewise, for immigrant women, marrying an imported husband not only means that they are able to avoid in-law pressure but they also gain in the balance of power in the family because the women have the advantage in language ability and understanding of the host country while their imported husbands do not.

Extant literature on transnational marriage provides an understanding of ethno-cultural preference in partner choice. The first quantitative study of transnational marriage amongst Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi residents in Britain by Dale (2008) finds that there are both ethnic and educational variations amongst those in transnational marriage i.e. the rates of transnational marriage are higher amongst those without a degree qualification and amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi men and women compared to Indians. It is clear that transnational marriage remains a common practice amongst several ethnic groups in Britain. However, lacking information on date of marriage or cohabitation, Dale's study fails to exclude partnerships formed outside Britain and this could bias the estimate of transnational marriage. This paper attempts to deal with this issue and extends beyond the previous study by considering plausible influences of other characteristics, such as generation, parents' country of birth and ethnic composition, on the likelihood of marrying a spouse from overseas. The paper also examines the transnational marriage pattern of other ethnic groups besides the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, while extant literature focuses predominantly on these three groups.

3. Data

The empirical analysis is based on the General Household Survey (GHS) which is a continuous national survey conducted on an annual basis since 1971. Each year the GHS covers approximately 9,000 households and about 16,000 adults aged 16 and over in England, Wales and Scotland. The individual questionnaire covers detailed information on demographic characteristics, educational history, family history and the de facto marital status of each individual including relationships to other members in a household. This enables us to identify (a) couple(s) in a household and retain information on both the individual respondent and spouse. In this study, the data from the years 1988–2006 are merged¹ in order to gain a sufficient number of ethnic minorities to perform statistical analysis and investigate the trends of intermarriage over time.

1 This includes continuous data for each year, except for the year 1997-1998 when the survey was reviewed and 1999-2000 when the survey was redeveloped.

The main advantage of the GHS is the availability of the information on dates of marriage and cohabitation and year of arrival into Britain. This enables us to exclude from the sample partnerships contracted overseas, while previous studies of interethnic and transnational unions in Britain did not enable this. Partnerships formed overseas are embedded in a different demographic and socioeconomic context from partnerships formed in Britain. The sample selected for this study is therefore restricted to partnerships that were contracted in Britain in order to avoid this bias. The analysis is also further limited to immigrants or their partners who had resided in Britain for at least five years. This allows us to ensure that partnership formation is influenced by observed characteristics in the survey and not by other influences from abroad.

The ethnic categories are derived from a self-identification ethnic question in the GHS. The ethnic classification in the GHS is not consistent and has changed over time so the guidelines of the Economic and Social Data Service (ESDS) are followed in order to derive a consistent ethnicity variable². In this study, ethnic groups are classified into ten categories: White British, White Other, Black Caribbean, Black African, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, mixed and other ethnic group. Since the GHS asks detailed questions on marriage and family only for respondents age between 16–59 years of age, this study is restricted to the sample of respondents in this age group. This leads to the sample of 121,934 individuals of whom 5,283 are from minority ethnic groups.

The main drawback of using the GHS for the study of interethnic unions is that all diversities within and between ethnic groups cannot be captured beyond the main ethnic categories available in the data. There is no information on religion, which is one key factor determining intermarriage patterns. Generally, there is an endogeneity issue in investigating the effect of religion on intermarriage because it is not possible to identify whether an individual converts to a religion of a spouse after marriage. This requires large-scale longitudinal data that follows the same individual over time and allows us to identify individuals' characteristics before and after marriage. Unfortunately, such data is not yet available in Britain.

Another problem of the GHS concerns ethnic categorisation, specifically the category 'mixed' ethnicity. Any individuals with mixed parentage are classified into 'mixed' ethnic group. In fact, 'mixed' is not an ethnic group and there is substantial diversity amongst individuals with mixed parentage. However, not until 2001 were respondents provided with four options of mixed-ethnic category e.g. mixed white-Black Caribbean and mixed white-Asian in the GHS. Therefore, in this study, diversity cannot be distinguished within mixed ethnic category, at least not in the surveys that were carried out before 2001.

Despite these disadvantages, the GHS remains a useful data source to study interethnic unions in Britain. Rich information on marriage and family and the continuity of the survey over time allow us to investigate trends and patterns of immigrants' partnership formation in Britain taking account of the distribution of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of each ethnic group for the first time.

2 The guideline for creating a consistent ethnic variable in the GHS is available from <<http://www.esds.ac.uk/government/dv/ethnicity/GHS/index.asp>>.

4. Methods

This paper aims to explore immigrants' partnership formation patterns focusing on interethnic, coethnic and transnational marriage. An analysis is made of trends and patterns of partnerships across ethnic groups and generations overtime. The effects of underlying individual and macro-level factors in shaping marital choice are also examined. The multivariate models predicting the likelihood of intermarriage and transnational marriage are logistic and multinomial regression. Outcome variable and independent variables are discussed below. Descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables are presented in Appendix A.

4.1 Dependent variable

The outcome of interest in this paper is immigrants' partner choice, which is divided into four types of union.

- 1) Interethnic union is defined as a partnership between an ethnic minority member with a White British person.
- 2) Coethnic transnational union is defined as a partnership between members of the same ethnic group where one partner was born in Britain or migrated to Britain before the age of 16 and one partner was born abroad and migrated to Britain at the age of 16 or above. The age of 16 is chosen because before 1 January 2005, according to the British immigration rules³, the minimum age at which a British resident could sponsor a partner from overseas to come to Britain for marriage was 16. It is thus assumed that a spouse of the second generation or the 1.5 generation who came to Britain at the age of 16 or over migrated for the purpose of marriage.
- 3) Coethnic union is defined as a partnership between members of the same ethnic group. This refers to a) a coethnic partnership formed in Britain where both partners were born in Britain or migrated to Britain before the age of 16 or b) a coethnic partnership formed overseas where both partners were born outside Britain and migrated to Britain at the age of 16 or above.
- 4) Interethnic union with other ethnic groups is defined as a marriage or cohabitation between an ethnic minority male and female who belong to different ethnic groups.

3 In Britain the minimum age for marriage visa sponsors and applicants was raised from 16 to 18 on 1 January 2005. This was raised to 21 years old on 27 November 2008. In this study, for unions formed before 2005, transnational marriage is defined as a union where one partner arrived in Britain at the age of 16 or over, while for unions formed from 2005 onwards, transnational marriage is defined as a union where one partner arrived in Britain at the age of 18 or over.

4.2 Independent variables

4.2.1 Individual-level characteristics

Generation is divided into four categories. Second generation refers to individuals who were born in Britain; 1.5 generation refers to individuals born outside Britain who are further divided into two groups: a) those who immigrated to Britain at the age of 6 or younger; and b) those immigrated to Britain between the ages of 7 and 12; and first generation refers to respondents who were born outside Britain and immigrated to Britain at age 13 or older.

Age at union: later age at union indicates greater independence on partner selection, maturity and possibly more opportunity to be exposed to different populations (Lievens 1998). The probability of intermarriage is thus expected to rise with age of marriage and vice versa for the likelihood of transnational marriage. Age at union is divided into seven age groups: 18 or less, 19-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44 and 45 and older.

Year started union: the increasingly favourable attitudes towards intermarriage (Rothon/Heath 2003; Ford 2007) and the increasing size of the ethnic minority population since the 1960s (Peach 1996) are expected to raise opportunities for intergroup contacts and consequently rates of intermarriage. Year started union refers to the year in which the union took place and is divided into six time periods: 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

Marital status: interethnic union is found to be more common in non-traditional forms of partnerships like cohabitation or remarriage because there is a selection of non-traditional and non-religious individuals in these partnerships (Thornton et al. 1992; Clarkberg et al. 1995). Marital status is divided into four categories: first marriage, cohabiting union never married, cohabiting union (separated/divorced) and remarriage.

*Educational qualification*⁴: is commonly found to have a positive effect on intermarriage (Kalmijn 1998; Lehrer 1998). Yet, having a higher level of education is also found to reduce the chance of intermarriage for some groups (O'Leary/Finnäs 2002). Educational qualification is divided into three categories: no qualification, low and intermediate qualification, and high qualification.

4.2.2 Homogamy

The effects of assortative mating is also examined in terms of age and education on intermarriage and transnational marriage. The literature on ethnic intermarriage has found that educational assortative mating weakens the degree of ethnic barriers in white-ethnic minority unions (Kalmijn 1993; Qian 1997; Qian/Lichter 2007). If this is true, we should expect to find that couples in interethnic unions are likely to be homogenous in terms of

4 Educational qualification is classified into three categories: 1) high qualification includes NVQ Levels 4 and 5 (e.g. higher degree, degree, nursing, teaching and higher qualifications); 2) intermediate and low qualification includes NVQ Levels 1, 2 and 3 (e.g. GCE A-levels, GCSE, foreign qualifications and other qualifications); and 3) no qualifications includes those with no qualification, never went to school and missing information. The definition of each level of educational qualification is available from <<http://www.celsius.lshtm.ac.uk/newDataDict/dddrill2k.php?vname=HLQP0&sqlname=ME01>>.

the level of educational attainment. Alternatively, the status exchange theory implies that in interethnic unions, immigrants are more likely to marry downwards while members of the majority population are more likely to marry upwards as an exchange between socio-economic status and racial/ethnic status (Merton 1941). If this theory holds true, we should expect to find intermarried immigrants having a higher level of educational attainment than their White British partners.

Educational homogamy is divided into three categories: male partner has a higher level of education, male and female partners have the same level of education and male partner has a lower level of education.

Age homogamy is divided into three categories: male partner is older, male and female partners have the same age and male partner is younger.

4.2.3 Macro-level variables

White-coethnic ratio: The social structure theory suggests that the chance for a member of a minority group to form an interethnic partnership depends upon the number of coethnic members as well as the degree to which the ethnic group is segregated geographically from the majority population (Blau 1977; Peach 1980; Blau/Blum/ Schwartz 1982). Area ethnic composition is measured as:

$$\text{White-coethnic ratio}_{ic}^e = \frac{n_c^w}{n_c^e}$$

where the White-coethnic ratio of individual i from ethnic group e equals the ratio of the number of whites w in region c to the number of members from ethnic group e in region c . The log of group size is taken in order to reduce the degree of skewness. We calculate the relative population size of an ethnic group at the government office region level⁵ rather than the national one because ethnic heterogeneity which influences the chance to encounter members of other ethnic groups is more substantial in a small geographical unit.

Sex ratio: This is a crucial factor in the heterosexual marriage market. For example, if men outnumber women in a particular ethnic group, the skewed sex ratio will drive men to seek eligible partners outside their own ethnic group or not marry at all. Sex ratio is measured at the regional level rather than the national level since partnerships are more likely to be formed locally. The sex ratio for an individual i is defined as:

$$\text{Sex ratio}_{iec}^f = \frac{n_{ec}^m}{n_{ec}^f}$$

where n_{ec}^m and n_{ec}^f are the number of males and females, respectively, from ethnic group e living in region c . A sex ratio greater than 1 indicates that the number of men from ethnic group e living in region c exceeds that of women from ethnic group e living in region c . This could promote out-group marriage for men and in-group marriage for women. The log transformation of sex ratio is used to reduce skewness.

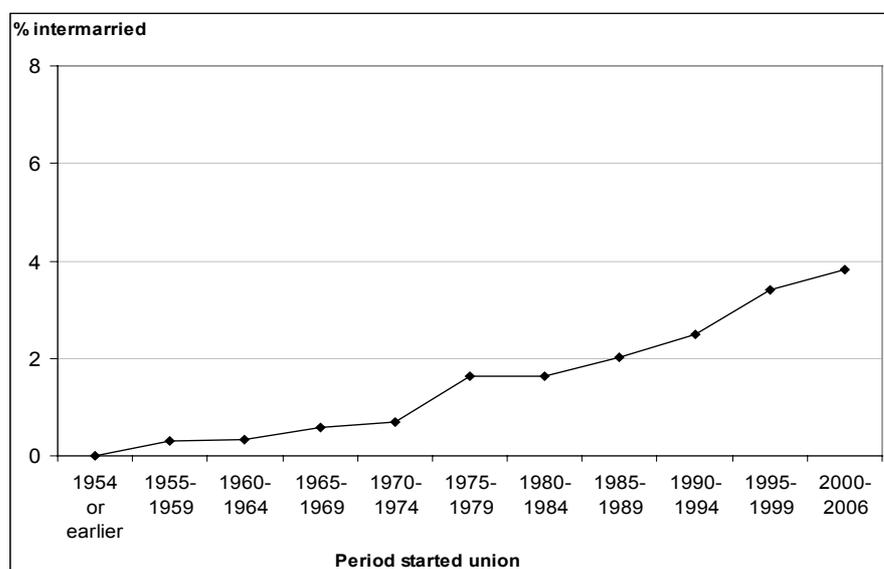
5 Ideally, we would like to use a more detailed geographical variable such as a ward or county level. Yet, government office region is the most detailed geographical information available in the GHS.

5. Descriptive results

The trend of interethnic unions between White British and ethnic minority members over the periods when partnerships were formed is illustrated in Figure 1. The distribution of types of union by ethnic groups and generation for men and women are further examined in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

Figure 1 suggests that interethnic unions between White British and members of minority ethnic groups are increasing. It is evident that the proportion of White British ethnic minority unions rises in a linear trend with the periods the partnerships were formed. The more recent the periods are during which the partnerships started, the more likely it is that the partnerships are interethnic ones. Trends of interethnic unions across birth cohorts are also examined (results available upon request) and a similar picture is found, that is those born in recent cohorts are also more likely to be in interethnic unions compared to those born in earlier periods. The increase in interethnic partnerships in recent marriage/cohabitation cohorts and birth cohorts could be due to the general change in more favourable attitudes towards interethnic partnerships together with the increasing numbers of the ethnic minority population, especially the second generation in Britain.

Figure 1: Percentage of interethnic unions between White British and ethnic minority members by period a union was formed



Source: General Household Survey 1988–2006

Next, partnership patterns by gender, ethnicity and generation are investigated as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2.

Interethnic unions with White British. For White British, those born outside Britain (first generation) seem to have higher rates of interethnic unions than those born in Brit-

ain. The rates of interethnic unions for White British men and women are not significantly different from one another. As for minority ethnic groups, generally men have higher rates of interethnic union than women except for Chinese, mixed and other ethnic groups.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of types of unions by ethnic groups and generation (Male)

	<i>Row percentages</i>				
	Interethnic with White British ¹	Coethnic in Britain/ Abroad ²	Coethnic transnational	Interethnic with other ethnic groups ³	N
First generation⁴	11,1	65,2	17,1	6,6	1.418
White British	4,3	25,7	62,9	7,1	70
Indian	4,2	71,7	19,4	4,6	520
Pakistani	3,8	71,4	21,1	3,8	185
Bangladeshi	1,4	75,7	21,4	1,4	70
Black Caribbean	23,4	57,3	12,9	6,5	124
Black African	8,8	62,6	17,7	10,9	147
Chinese	7,1	70,6	17,7	4,7	85
Mixed	33,3	37,5	8,3	20,8	48
Other	26,8	52,3	10,9	10,0	239
1.5 generation⁴	17,1	35,4	42,0	5,6	503
White British	1,0	95,2	1,0	2,9	315
Indian	13,9	43,1	41,7	1,4	223
Pakistani	6,3	21,9	70,8	1,0	96
Bangladeshi	5,7	17,1	71,4	5,7	35
Black Caribbean	33,3	53,0	3,0	10,6	66
Black African	0,0	22,2	11,1	66,7	9
Chinese	15,4	38,5	46,2	0,0	13
Mixed	50,0	12,5	37,5	0,0	8
Other	35,9	22,6	24,5	17,0	53
Second generation⁴	45,1	31,6	15,5	7,8	626
White British	1,0	95,8	0,2	3,0	53.438
Indian	13,4	57,0	24,7	4,9	142
Pakistani	8,8	35,3	50,0	5,9	68
Bangladeshi	0,0	66,7	33,3	0,0	3
Black Caribbean	55,8	29,9	4,1	10,2	147
Black African	29,0	29,0	35,5	6,5	31
Chinese	16,7	16,7	33,3	33,3	6
Mixed	82,9	6,6	2,6	7,9	76
Other	66,7	20,9	3,9	8,5	153

Note:

- 1) For White British, 'Interethnic with White British' refers to an interethnic union with partners from minority ethnic groups (excluding White Other).
- 2) For the first generation, the column 'Coethnic in Britain/Abroad' refers exclusively to a coethnic union formed abroad, while for the 1.5 and second generation this column refers exclusively to a coethnic union formed in Britain.
- 3) For White British, 'Interethnic with other ethnic groups' refers to an interethnic union with partners from White Other origin.
- 4) This applies only to members of minority ethnic groups. White British is excluded from this row.

Source: General Household Survey 1988 – 2006

Table 2: Percentage distribution of types of unions by ethnic groups and generation (Female)

	<i>Row percentages</i>				
	Interethnic with White British ¹	Coethnic in Britain/Abroad ²	Coethnic transnational	Interethnic with other ethnic groups ³	N
First generation⁴	13,8	62,1	18,3	5,8	1.270
White British	2,9	29,5	67,6	0,0	105
Indian	2,3	71,9	23,4	2,5	445
Pakistani	0,5	60,0	35,7	3,8	185
Bangladeshi	1,6	61,9	33,3	3,2	63
Black Caribbean	14,7	68,6	9,8	6,9	102
Black African	10,7	71,4	8,9	8,9	112
Chinese	31,6	57,9	3,2	7,4	95
Mixed	39,5	37,2	14,0	9,3	43
Other	39,6	43,6	5,3	11,6	225
1.5 generation⁴	15,9	40,4	37,4	6,2	433
White British	1,1	94,8	2,2	1,9	368
Indian	13,2	49,5	34,6	2,8	182
Pakistani	1,7	33,3	63,3	1,7	60
Bangladeshi	0,0	19,1	71,4	9,5	21
Black Caribbean	12,5	54,7	20,3	12,5	64
Black African	7,1	28,6	64,3	0,0	14
Chinese	18,2	27,3	36,4	18,2	22
Mixed	58,3	0,0	25,0	16,7	12
Other	41,4	27,6	22,4	8,6	58
Second generation⁴	32,9	35,9	22,9	8,3	724
White British	1,1	96,5	0,2	2,3	56.727
Indian	10,6	62,7	21,1	5,6	161
Pakistani	4,9	30,1	61,8	3,3	123
Bangladeshi	5,3	26,3	63,2	5,3	19
Black Caribbean	44,1	38,2	9,2	8,6	152
Black African	16,1	32,3	45,2	6,5	31
Chinese	60,0	20,0	20,0	0,0	10
Mixed	75,6	8,5	3,7	12,2	82
Other	50,7	27,4	7,5	14,4	146

Note:

- 1) For White British, 'Interethnic with White British' refers to an interethnic union with partners from minority ethnic groups (excluding White Other).
- 2) For the first generation, the column 'Coethnic in Britain/Abroad' refers exclusively to a coethnic union formed abroad, while for the 1.5 and second generation this column refers exclusively to a coethnic union formed in Britain.
- 3) For White British, 'Interethnic with other ethnic groups' refers to an interethnic union with partners from White Other origin.
- 4) This applies only to members of minority ethnic groups. White British is excluded from this row.

Source: General Household Survey 1988–2006

Unsurprisingly, the association between generation and interethnic partnership is positive, i.e. those born in Britain have the highest rates of interethnic unions followed by those who immigrated to Britain at young age. The first generation has the lowest rates of intermarriage.

There is substantial ethnic diversity in interethnic union patterns. Unsurprisingly, both men and women with mixed ethnic origin have the highest rates of interethnic unions with the White British. Around four-fifths of mixed ethnic individuals born in Britain have White British partners. The rates of interethnic unions with White British partners are also high for those from other ethnic groups. Since other ethnic groups comprise individuals from diverse ethnic groups who do not belong to major ethnic groups, it is rather difficult to interpret the result. Black Caribbean men and Chinese women also have strikingly high rates of interethnic unions with a White British partner, especially for those born in Britain. More than half of second generation Black Caribbean men and Chinese women are married to/cohabiting with a White British partner. The proportion of intermarried Black Africans is lower than that of Black Caribbean but is much higher than that of South Asians. Indians have higher rates of interethnic union with White British than Pakistanis and Bangladeshis but even so the intermarriage rate for the former is well below 15 percent. Less than 10 percent of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are intermarried. Especially for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women born abroad, almost virtually none of them have a White British spouse.

Coethnic unions. Coethnic union is the most common type of partnership for all ethnic groups apart from individuals with a mixed ethnic origin. For the first generation, the vast majority is married to/cohabiting with a coethnic partner who was also born abroad and arrived in Britain at the age of 13 or above, like themselves. For the 1.5 generation, a preference for transnational partnership is observed in many ethnic groups. Over three-quarters of Pakistani and Bangladeshi 1.5 generation men and women are married to a partner born abroad who arrived in Britain at the age of 16 or above. Transnational partnership is also common among 1.5 generation Indian and Chinese men and women and Black African women. On the other hand, more than half of 1.5 generation Black Caribbeans are in a coethnic partnership formed in Britain. Besides, one-third of Black Caribbean men from the 1.5 generation have a White British partner. This shows that Black Caribbeans tend to choose a partner found locally as opposed to importing a spouse from overseas.

For the second generation, the rates of coethnic transnational partnership remain high for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, especially for women. Around two-thirds of British-born Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are married to a coethnic spouse from overseas who entered Britain at age 16 or above. On the other hand, the majority of British-born Indian men and women form a partnership with a coethnic partner who was either born in Britain like themselves or migrated to Britain at a young age. The proportion of second generation Chinese and Black African in a coethnic transnational partnership is rather high although the sample of British-born Chinese is fairly small and therefore needs to be interpreted with caution. The majority of second generation Black Caribbean men and women, on the other hand, are intermarried with a White British partner. If second generation Black Caribbean men and women are in a coethnic partnership, it is more likely to be with a partner who was also born in Britain.

Interethnic unions with other ethnic groups. There is not much variation between generations and gender in the rates of interethnic union with other ethnic groups. Generally, for most ethnic groups the rates of interethnic union with a White British partner is higher than the rates of interethnic union with a partner from other ethnic groups. How-

ever, for Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, particularly the first generation, the rates of interethnic union with other ethnic groups is higher than that with White British. When examining the ethnic origins of a partner of those in interethnic unions (see Appendix B), it appears that a partner is likely to come from an ethnic group with a fairly similar cultural background. For instance, an interethnic union amongst South Asians (Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) and an interethnic union amongst blacks (Black Caribbean and Black Africans) are more common than the union across these cultural groups.

The descriptive results suggest that interethnic unions between White British and members of minority ethnic groups are rising in Britain as can be seen from the higher rates of intermarriage in recent marriage/cohabiting cohorts and birth cohorts along with the growing number of minority ethnic population born in Britain. Meanwhile, there are substantial ethnic and gender differences in partner choice. Interethnic unions with a White British partner are more common amongst ethnic minority men than women whereas coethnic transnational partnerships are more frequent amongst ethnic minority women than men. South Asians have the lowest rates of interethnic union with White British and this corresponds with their highest rates of coethnic transnational partnerships. Those with mixed ethnic origins unsurprisingly have the highest rates of interethnic partnerships with a White British partner followed by Black Caribbean men and Chinese women.

This finding nevertheless might not hold true if we take into account other attributes. For example, Chinese women have high rates of intermarriage possibly because they also tend to have a high level of educational attainment. Subsequently, in the next section, multivariate analysis is employed to examine what factors contribute to different patterns of marital choice and also to investigate whether ethnic and gender differentials in partnership patterns remain after controlling for demographic, socioeconomic and macro-level characteristics.

6. Multivariate results

6.1 Probability of being in interethnic unions with White British

Tables 3 presents the results from logistic regression estimates predicting the likelihood of interethnic unions with White British for ethnic minority men and women. Generally, the effects of generation, age at union, marital status, educational qualification and macro-level characteristics on the propensity for having a White British partner appear in a similar direction for both men and women. While immigrants born abroad who arrived in Britain before the age of 7 have a similar propensity to intermarry to the second generation, their counterparts who arrived in Britain at the age of 7 or older are significantly less likely to have a White British partner. Ethnic minority men and women who started their current union at an older age are significantly more likely to be in an interethnic union with a White British partner. It can be explained that those who formed a partnership at a young age are less independent and are subject to family influence in partner choice which tends to be a preference for a coethnic partner.

Table 3: Logistic regression estimates of probability of interethnic union with a White British partner for ethnic minority men and women

	<i>Men</i>		<i>Women</i>	
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>
<i>Ethnic group</i>				
Indian (reference)				
Pakistani	-0,66	0,29	-1,24	0,41
Bangladeshi	-1,65	0,63	-1,96	0,77
Black Caribbean	1,45	0,22	0,76	0,25
Black African	0,30	0,33	-0,33	0,37
Chinese	-0,47	0,41	0,80	0,31
Mixed	2,10	0,30	2,08	0,31
Other ethnic	1,98	0,19	2,21	0,21
<i>Generation</i>				
Second generation (reference)				
1.5 arrived at age 6 or before	-0,04	0,24	0,07	0,26
1.5 arrived between age 7 - 12	-1,14	0,24	-1,20	0,29
First generation	-1,45	0,17	-0,85	0,18
<i>Age at union</i>				
18 or less (reference)				
19-24	0,57	0,49	0,56	0,36
25-29	0,64	0,50	1,15	0,38
30-34	<i>0,94</i>	0,51	1,53	0,41
35-39	1,13	0,54	1,51	0,47
40-44	0,80	0,61	1,71	0,56
45 or over	0,86	0,69	1,91	0,64
<i>Period started union</i>				
1950s (reference)				
1960s	0,23	0,75	-0,59	0,77
1970s	0,95	0,71	0,29	0,72
1980s	0,50	0,72	0,31	0,72
1990s	0,41	0,73	0,22	0,73
2000s	0,11	0,75	0,41	0,75
<i>Marital status</i>				
First marriage (reference)				
Cohabiting never married	1,34	0,22	1,22	0,23
Cohabiting separated/divorced	2,01	0,48	1,30	0,65
Remarriage	0,42	0,21	0,08	0,24
<i>Educational qualification</i>				
Higher qualifications				
Intermediate or low qualifications	-0,21	0,16	-0,74	0,17
No qualifications	-0,44	0,22	-1,12	0,23
<i>Macro-level characteristics</i>				
Log white-co-ethnic ratio	0,60	0,06	0,62	0,06
Log sex ratio	0,51	0,46	-1,00	0,47
<i>Educational homogamy</i>				
Male partner has higher qualifications (reference)				
Male & female partners have same qualifications	-0,32	0,17	-0,88	0,18
Female partner has higher qualifications	0,23	0,20	-0,59	0,20
<i>Age homogamy</i>				
Male partner is older (reference)				
Male & female partners have same age	-0,28	0,24	-0,22	0,23
Female partner is older	0,51	0,18	0,26	0,18
Constant	-4,81	0,89	-4,40	0,86
Log likelihood chi ² (df)	958.62(33)		917.63(33)	
Number of observations	2.357		2.240	

Note: Statistically significant results at least at the .05 and .10 levels are highlighted in bold and italicised respectively. *Source:* General Household Survey 1988–2006

Besides, the effects of age at union on intermarriage could also be correlated with the effects of marital status. Compared to first marriage, cohabiting unions, especially amongst those who were divorced/separated, and remarriage are significantly more likely to be an interethnic partnership. Since remarriage or cohabiting unions of divorced/separated individuals are not one's first partnership, naturally these individuals are older in their current partnership compared to those in their first marriage. This might also explain why age at union has a positive relationship with the propensity to intermarry with a White British partner.

The effect of the area ethnic composition appears in an expected direction. The higher the proportion of White British to coethnic members is in a region of residence, the higher is the likelihood of intermarriage with a White British partner. However, there is an endogeneity problem in this analysis because intermarried individuals might have moved to a more or less ethnically segregated residential area after marriage. The robustness of these findings is checked by selecting only a subsample of married individuals who did not change address before and after partnerships (thus assuming that the area ethnic composition represents White-coethnic ratio before partnerships were formed) and replicating the analysis in Table 3 (results are available upon request). The result is consistent and area ethnic composition remains a significant predictor of interethnic union with White British.

Another problem is that in the GHS data, the smallest geographical variable available is measured at the government office region, which basically divides Britain into twelve regions. Although the measurement is rather crude, our findings correspond with that of Muttarak (2007: 27-28) whereby a smaller geographical union (county level) is used and the area ethnic composition is measured before the partnerships were formed. This finding thus confirms the social structure theory that the opportunity for an ethnic member to meet and marry a White British partner depends upon their relative group size to that of a White British population in the area of residence.

The effect of sex ratio on the probability of having a White British partner is statistically significant at the .10 level for ethnic minority men and appears in an expected direction. The higher the number of coethnic men in a region of residence, the higher the likelihood of having a White British woman as a partner. This result also reflects the importance of opportunity structure in one's partner choice.

As expected, the highly educated are more likely to intermarry with a White British partner than their less educated counterparts. This finding raises a subsequent question whether this is a result from educational assortative mating (both intermarried White British and ethnic minorities are highly educated) or does it represent social status exchange behaviour (intermarried ethnic minorities have higher educational attainment than their White British partners). Our findings however seem to contrast both hypotheses. There is no evidence that male and female partners with the same level of educational qualifications are more likely to be in an interethnic partnership. Intermarried ethnic minorities were not found to be more likely to have higher educational qualifications than their White British partners. In fact, in the case of ethnic minority women, the partnership where a male partner has a higher educational qualification is significantly more likely to be an interethnic one.

Interestingly, for age homogamy, a union where a female partner is older than a male partner is likely to be an interethnic one. It is possible that intermarried ethnic minorities

and White British partners are less traditional individuals, thus they are more likely to intermarry and less likely to be concerned about age difference in a couple where a female partner is older than a male partner.

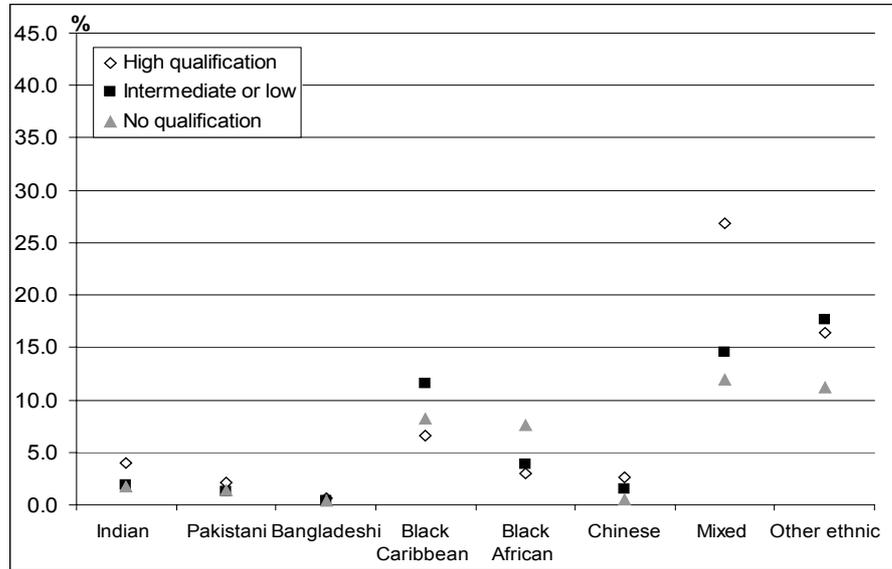
Ethnicity evidently is a significant predictor for the propensity to have a White British partner. Compared to Indians which is a reference group, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are significantly less likely to intermarry while Black Caribbean and individuals from mixed and other ethnic groups are significantly more likely to have a White British partner than Indians. Chinese women are also more likely to intermarry with a White British man than Indian women. Ethnic diversity in intermarriage patterns remains prevalent even after taking into account related characteristics.

Since there are ethnic and cultural differentials in socioeconomic attainment and educational aspirations, it is possible that the effects of educational qualifications on the propensity to intermarry with a White British partner vary between ethnic groups. A model similar to that of Table 3 is created to test this hypothesis, adding interaction terms between ethnicity and educational qualifications (See Appendix C for estimation results). The interaction terms between ethnicity and educational qualifications are statistically significant suggesting that educational attainment affects the propensity to have a White British partner for each ethnic group diversely. In order to make the results easier to interpret, graphs are plotted of predicted probability of interethnic union with a White British partner for each ethnic group and educational qualification for those started union at age 35-39, holding other covariates at constant⁶. Figures 2 and 3 represent predicted probability of having a White British partner for ethnic minority men and women respectively.

Although we previously found that on the average, ethnic minority members with higher qualifications are more likely to have a White British partner than those with lower or no qualifications, this does not apply to all ethnic groups. The positive relationship between educational qualification and the propensity to intermarriage holds true for Indian, mixed and Chinese men and women and women from Black Caribbean and other ethnic groups. For Black Caribbean men and Black African men and women, educational attainment appears to have a reverse relationship with the likelihood of having a White British partner. For these groups, those with some qualifications or no qualifications have a higher probability of intermarriage than those with higher qualifications. Pakistanis and particularly Bangladeshis have a very low chance of having a White British partner regardless of the level of educational attainment.

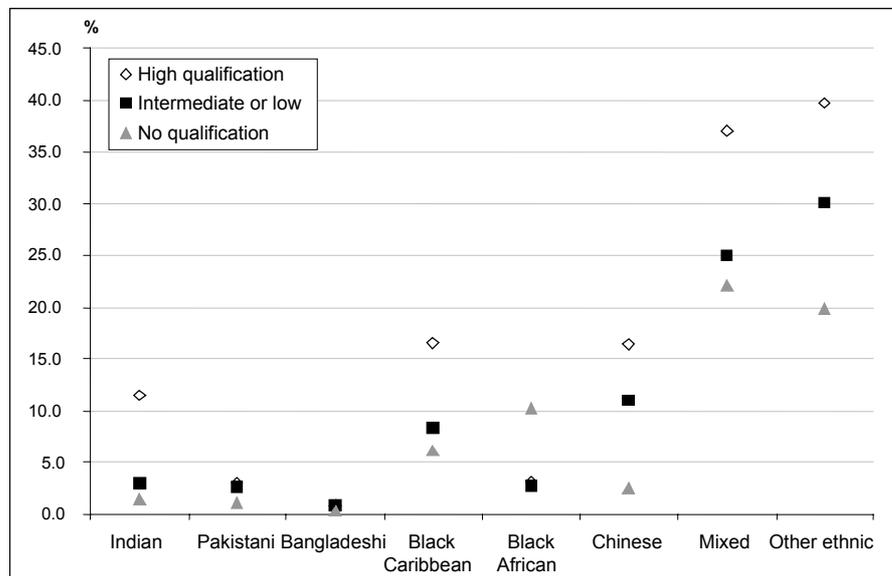
6 Predicted probabilities are computed with the formula: $\pi = \frac{\exp(\alpha + x'\beta)}{1 + \exp(\alpha + x'\beta)}$

Figure 2: Predicted probability of interethnic unions with a White British partner for ethnic minority men



Source: General Household Survey 1988–2006.

Figure 3: Predicted probability of interethnic unions with a White British partner for ethnic minority women



Source: General Household Survey 1988–2006.

It seems that the gap between different levels of educational attainment on the propensity to intermarry with a White British partner is larger for ethnic minority women than for men. For most ethnic groups except for Black African, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, the effects of educational qualification on the chance of having a White British partner appear to be linear. Those with high qualifications have the highest propensity to intermarry followed by those with some qualifications. This is not only because educational institutions possibly give opportunity for women to meet outgroup members but also ethnic minority women with high educational attainment tend to be less traditional and subsequently likely to prefer a White British partner to coethnic men.

The analysis of the interactions between educational qualification and ethnicity shows that the positive effects of educational qualification on the propensity to intermarry are not generalisable to all ethnic groups in Britain. There is some ethnic property that drives patterns of partner choice. As discussed earlier, some ethnic groups, especially South Asians, have a preference for arranged marriage and in choosing a spouse from their country of origin. In the next analysis, we examine the underlying factors in partner choice between interethnic partnership with a White British, coethnic partnership in Britain and coethnic transnational partnership and investigate whether ethnic differences remain after taking into account relevant characteristics.

6.2 Probability of being in different unions for second generation and 1.5 generation

In this section, the analysis is limited to a sample of the second generation and the 1.5 generation because both have more diverse partner choices compared to the first generation who generally are likely to be in a coethnic partnership with a spouse who was similarly born abroad.

In this analysis, a minority ethnic member can in practice choose a partner from 1) the White British population; 2) the coethnic population born in Britain/migrated to Britain before the age of 16; and 3) the coethnic population from the country of origin and migrated to Britain at the age of 16 or above.

Here follows an attempt to explain the determinants of these three partner choices. Since there are three possible outcomes, multinomial logistic regression is employed to estimate the probability of being in a particular type of union. The base outcome is coethnic partnership with a partner born in Britain/migrated to Britain before the age of 16. The results are presented in Table 4.

The effects of individual and macro-level characteristics for the propensity to intermarry with a White British partner for the second generation and the 1.5 generation are similar to the results obtained previously from the full sample. Ethnic differentials in intermarriage patterns remain significant both for men and women.

Table 4: Multinomial logistic estimates of partner choice for second generation (base outcome = coethnic partnership with a partner born in Britain/immigrated to Britain before age 16)

	Men				Women			
	White British partner		Coethnic transnational		White British partner		Coethnic transnational	
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>
<i>Ethnic group</i>								
Indian (reference)								
Pakistani	-0,36	0,39	0,87	0,26	-0,70	0,48	1,46	0,25
Bangladeshi	-0,57	0,85	1,16	0,52	-1,62	1,14	2,01	0,48
Black Caribbean	1,05	0,30	-1,68	0,46	0,47	0,32	-0,30	0,34
Black African	0,31	0,58	1,34	0,53	-0,59	0,72	2,09	0,44
Chinese	-0,08	0,79	0,59	0,65	0,51	0,63	1,36	0,60
Mixed	2,18	0,55	1,05	0,72	1,82	0,52	1,74	0,67
Other ethnic	1,72	0,32	0,39	0,37	1,41	0,31	0,10	0,32
<i>Generation</i>								
Second generation (reference)								
1.5 generation arrived at age 6 or before	0,03	0,27	0,01	0,26	0,20	0,28	-0,01	0,26
1.5 generation arrived between age 7-12	-0,71	0,28	0,84	0,24	-0,68	0,31	0,61	0,23
<i>Age at union</i>								
18 or less (reference)								
19-24	0,45	0,68	-0,97	0,46	0,58	0,48	-0,10	0,25
25-29	0,62	0,70	-0,98	0,49	1,22	0,52	-0,32	0,35
30-34	1,12	0,73	-0,58	0,57	0,89	0,57	-0,79	0,52
35-39	1,30	0,78	-1,94	0,85	2,05	0,71	0,75	0,67
40 or over	0,30	0,88	-1,07	0,84	1,17	0,75	0,23	0,85
<i>Marital status</i>								
First marriage (reference)								
Cohabiting	1,22	0,27	-1,39	0,64	1,01	0,28	-1,53	0,49
Remarriage	0,43	0,31	0,69	0,30	0,09	0,33	0,02	0,28
<i>Macro-level characteristics</i>								
Log white-co-ethnic ratio	0,52	0,10	-0,02	0,10	0,59	0,10	-0,09	0,09
Log sex ratio	0,84	0,77	0,85	0,90	-1,40	0,72	0,21	0,70
<i>Educational qualification</i>								
Higher qualifications (reference)								
Intermediate or low qualifications	0,22	0,23	0,50	0,22	-0,42	0,23	0,84	0,23
No qualifications	0,19	0,34	1,57	0,33	-0,75	0,39	0,84	0,31
<i>Educational homogamy</i>								
Male partner has higher qualifications (reference)								
Male & female partners have same qualifications	-0,59	0,24	-0,66	0,23	-0,66	0,27	0,07	0,23
Female partner has higher qualifications	-0,32	0,28	-1,50	0,32	-0,10	0,28	1,32	0,25
<i>Age homogamy</i>								
Male partner is older (reference)								
Male & female partners have same age	-0,43	0,30	-0,44	0,30	-0,23	0,29	-0,52	0,29
Female partner is older	0,37	0,26	0,00	0,27	0,37	0,26	0,17	0,28
<i>Parental place of birth</i>								
Both parents born abroad (reference)								
Both parents born in UK	-0,33	0,36	-1,86	0,70	-0,14	0,35	-1,35	0,63
One parent born in UK, one parent born abroad	1,12	0,39	-0,67	0,53	1,33	0,34	-0,96	0,50
Constant	-3,19	0,84	0,45	0,66	-3,70	0,72	-0,92	0,54
Log likelihood χ^2 (df)	744.82(62)				721.60(62)			
Number of observations	1.020				1.044			

Note: 1) The models also control for period started union but the results are not shown here.
2) Statistically significant results at least at the .05 and .10 levels are highlighted in bold and italicised respectively.

Source: General Household Survey 1988–2006.

Although we cannot measure directly the effects of cultures and norms on partner choice, the estimated effects of the observables can proxy cultural preference to a certain extent. Second generation and 1.5 generation men and women who are more likely to be in a coethnic transnational union are those who formed a partnership at a very young age and are in their first marriage as opposed to a cohabiting union. On the other hand, the effects of age at union and marital status are in an opposite direction for the propensity to have a White British partner. This reflects the fact that those in a transnational coethnic partnership tend to follow traditional customs.

In accordance with existing literature (Modood 1997; Dale 2008), we also find that transnational coethnic partnership is more common amongst those with no or low educational qualifications compared to the highly educated. As for the effects of educational homogamy, those who are more likely to be in transnational marriage, both men and women alike, have a higher level of educational attainment than their partners. This could be explained by the fact that educational qualifications obtained abroad are normally not recognised or regarded as lower than those obtained in Britain. Thus, imported spouses of both British born men and women on the average have a lower level of educational attainment.

We also attempt to understand the family's influence in partner choice. However, this is not directly measurable in our data. Here the effects of parental country of birth on partner choice of the second generation and the 1.5 generation are investigated as this might reflect parental influence in shaping one's preference. We find that individuals whose parents were both born abroad are more likely to marry to/cohabit with a coethnic partner from overseas. Having two parents born outside Britain could mean that strong ties with the country of origin and traditional customs are maintained in a family. Thus, these individuals are more likely to adopt transnational partnership practice.

Taking into account both demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, group differentials in a preference to marry a spouse from overseas remain significant. For men and women alike, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are more likely to be in transnational unions compared to Indians. Individuals from Black African, Chinese and mixed ethnic origins, especially women, also exhibit a higher chance of being in a transnational partnership than Indians. It should however be noted that the number of mixed ethnic individuals in a transnational union is very small (less than 10) so the results are not conclusive. As for Black Africans and Chinese, there is no supporting literature to show that these two ethnic groups have a preference for importing a partner from overseas like Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and, to a lesser extent, Indians. Since it is not uncommon for Black African and Chinese to migrate to Britain for educational purposes, it is assumed that the high rates of transnational partnership observed in these two groups could be a result of overseas students marrying/cohabiting with a Black African or Chinese coethnic partner who was born in or migrated into Britain at a young age. Examining the educational level of overseas partners of second generation and 1.5 generation Black Africans and Chinese in a transnational partnership reveals that the majority of these partners have high qualifications while the majority of the overseas partners of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis have low qualifications or none (results available upon request). Thus it is not evident that a prevalence of transnational partnerships amongst Black Africans and Chinese is a result of their cultural preference to import a partner from overseas.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of trends and patterns of family formation in different ethnic groups, gender and generation suggests that generally ethnic minority members who were socialised in Britain are more likely to have a White British partner and less likely to be in a coethnic transnational union. Those born in or who migrated into Britain at a young age, with high educational qualifications, with at least one parent born in Britain and living in a residential area with a high proportion of White British population to coethnic members are assumed to receive similar socialisation to the majority British population. Consequently ethnic minority members with these characteristics tend to follow less traditional patterns of partner choice, i.e. they are more likely to be in an interethnic union with a White British spouse and less likely to be in a coethnic union, particularly a transnational one. The claim of non-traditional patterns of partnership formation is reflected on age at union and marital status. While those who are more likely to be in an interethnic partnership tend to form a union when they are older, and be in a cohabiting union or remarriage, their counterparts who are more likely to marry a coethnic partner transnationally tend to start a union at a very young age and be in their first marriage.

Still, we find a robust effect of ethnic origins on partner choice and this cannot simply be explained by ethnic differentials in socioeconomic status or macro-structural characteristics. The estimation of the likelihood of having a White British partner or having a coethnic transnational partner shows that ethnicity remains a significant determinant of partner choice even when other relevant characteristics are taken into account.

Individuals with mixed ethnic origin are the most likely to have a White British partner. But this result is not unexpected given that mixed ethnic individuals with one White British parent also have a British cultural background and living in Britain means that they have a chance to meet White British persons more frequently than members of minority ethnic groups. Interestingly, Black Caribbeans, especially men, have the second highest rate of intermarriage and it is not the highly educated who are more likely to have a White British partner. A similar finding applies to Black Africans who have a fairly high chance of intermarriage but educational attainment does not have a positive effect on their chances of having a White British partner either. Meanwhile, for Indians, it is those with high educational qualifications who are more likely to intermarry. Partnership formations of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis correspond with their preference in endogamy and arranged marriage described in previous literature (Anwar 1998; Shaw 2001). Interethnic partnership is not common at all for these groups and transnational marriage remains a predominant choice in partner. Black Africans and Chinese, especially women, also have a considerably high chance of being in a transnational marriage but there is no evidence that this is the result of a cultural preference to import a partner from overseas.

This study shows that there are at least four patterns of settlement of ethnic minorities in Britain: 1) integration into white middle class society (e.g. Chinese women and mixed); 2) integration into white working class culture (e.g. Black Caribbean and Black African); 3) the pluralistic model (e.g. Indian); and 4) the economically and socially isolated model (e.g. Pakistani and Bangladeshi).

Using intermarriage as an indicator of integration, Chinese women and individuals with mixed ethnic origins have the highest rate of intermarriage with the White British

population. It is those with high educational attainment who are more likely to intermarry suggesting integration into a white middle class society. On the other hand, Black Caribbean and Black Africans also have high rates of partnerships with a White British spouse but intermarriage is more common amongst those with low or no education suggesting assimilation into a pattern that discourages economic advancement. Meanwhile, despite their high educational and economic achievement, Indians remain socially segregated as indicated by their low level of intermarriage. As for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, they are economically marginal compared to Indians (Peach 2005) and exhibit the lowest rates of intermarriage across all ethnic groups, well below five percent. This suggests that they are both socially and economically segregated.

This paper describes trends and patterns of immigrants' partnership formation in Britain across ethnic groups, gender and generation. Interethnic partnerships between the White British population and immigrants have been increasing, and will continue to increase, alongside the growing numbers in the younger generation, and particularly the ethnic minority population born in Britain. Partner choice can be partly explained by socioeconomic and macro-level characteristics but ethnic origin remains a significant predictor of partnership patterns. However, with tougher immigration rules, especially on family-forming migration, we might in the future observe a decline of transnational marriage practice. It thus remains to be seen whether a transnational union will be replaced with a coethnic partnership formed in Britain and/or an interethnic partnership, especially in cases where a suitable coethnic partner is not available.

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Address of the author/Anschrift der Autorin:

Raya Muttarak, DPhil, MA
 Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellow
 Department of Political and Social Sciences
 European University Institute
 Via dei Roccettini 9
 50014 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
 Italy

E-mail: Raya.Muttarak@eui.eu

Appendix A: Descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables

	Men (N=2,357)			Women (N=2,240)		
	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range
Dependent variable						
Interethnic union with White British	0,22	0,41	0-1	0,21	0,41	0-1
Coethnic union	0,55	0,50	0-1	0,54	0,50	0-1
Transnational coethnic union	0,23	0,42	0-1	0,25	0,43	0-1
Independent variables						
Ethnic group						
Indian	0,36	0,48	0-1	0,34	0,47	0-1
Pakistani	0,14	0,35	0-1	0,16	0,37	0-1
Bangladeshi	0,04	0,21	0-1	0,04	0,20	0-1
Black Caribbean	0,13	0,34	0-1	0,13	0,33	0-1
Black African	0,07	0,25	0-1	0,06	0,25	0-1
Chinese	0,04	0,20	0-1	0,05	0,22	0-1
Mixed	0,05	0,22	0-1	0,05	0,22	0-1
Other ethnic group	0,16	0,37	0-1	0,16	0,37	0-1
Generation						
Second generation	0,24	0,43	0-1	0,29	0,45	0-1
1.5 arrived at age 6 or before	0,07	0,26	0-1	0,08	0,27	0-1
1.5 arrived between age 7 - 12	0,13	0,33	0-1	0,10	0,30	0-1
First generation	0,56	0,50	0-1	0,53	0,50	0-1
Age at union (grouped)						
18 or less (reference)	0,03	0,18	0-1	0,14	0,34	0-1
19–24	0,31	0,46	0-1	0,47	0,50	0-1
25–29	0,35	0,48	0-1	0,24	0,43	0-1
30–34	0,18	0,38	0-1	0,08	0,28	0-1
35–39	0,07	0,25	0-1	0,04	0,19	0-1
40–44	0,03	0,18	0-1	0,02	0,13	0-1
45 or over	0,02	0,14	0-1	0,01	0,11	0-1

	Men (N=2,357)			Women (N=2,240)		
	Mean	SD	Range	Mean	SD	Range
Period of marriage						
1950s	0,03	0,16	0-1	0,03	0,16	0-1
1960s	0,10	0,30	0-1	0,10	0,30	0-1
1970s	0,22	0,41	0-1	0,21	0,41	0-1
1980s	0,32	0,46	0-1	0,32	0,47	0-1
1990s	0,25	0,43	0-1	0,25	0,43	0-1
2000s	0,09	0,29	0-1	0,10	0,30	0-1
Marital status						
First marriage	0,78	0,41	0-1	0,83	0,37	0-1
Cohabiting never married	0,08	0,28	0-1	0,07	0,26	0-1
Cohabiting separated/divorced	0,01	0,11	0-1	0,01	0,09	0-1
Remarriage	0,12	0,33	0-1	0,09	0,28	0-1
Educational qualification						
High qualification	0,30	0,46	0-1	0,24	0,43	0-1
Intermediate or low qualification	0,43	0,49	0-1	0,44	0,50	0-1
No qualification	0,27	0,45	0-1	0,32	0,47	0-1
Macro-level variables						
Log white-coethnic ratio	3,84	1,22	2,38-7,63	3,86	1,21	2,38-7,27
Log sex ratio	-0,09	0,15	-1,25-0,56	-0,10	0,15	-1,25-0,56
Educational homogamy						
Male partner has higher qualifications	0,34	0,47	0-1	0,31	0,46	0-1
Male & female partners have same qualifications	0,41	0,49	0-1	0,40	0,49	0-1
Female partner has higher qualifications	0,18	0,39	0-1	0,20	0,40	0-1
Age homogamy						
Male partner is older	0,77	0,42	0-1	0,74	0,44	0-1
Male & female partners have same age	0,09	0,29	0-1	0,10	0,30	0-1
Female partner is older	0,14	0,35	0-1	0,16	0,37	0-1

Source: General Household Survey 1988-2006.

Appendix B: Frequency distribution of male and female partners' ethnicity

Male partner's ethnicity	Female partner's ethnicity											Total
	White British	White Other	Indian	Paki-stani	Bangla-deshi	Black Carib-bean	Black African	Black Other	Chi-nese	Mixed	Other ethnic	
White British	108.829	2.922	107	17	4	167	41	14	92	175	420	112.788
White Other	2.335	1.182	15	0	0	9	6	0	8	5	45	3.605
Indian	155	34	1.575	14	2	2	0	0	1	4	13	1.800
Pakistani	44	4	7	730	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	796
Bangladeshi	7	0	4	1	218	0	0	0	0	1	3	234
Black Caribbean	277	18	3	0	0	402	11	8	2	11	11	743
Black African	54	6	0	0	0	29	278	0	0	4	8	379
Black Other	17	2	0	2	0	2	0	16	0	0	0	39
Chinese	25	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	175	2	3	212
Mixed	175	10	6	5	0	5	1	0	0	70	4	276
Other	399	44	8	2	5	8	4	2	12	5	396	885
Total	112.317	4.223	1.731	771	229	624	341	40	290	278	913	121.757

Source: General Household Survey 1988-2006.

Appendix C: Logistic regression of probability of interethnic unions with a White British partner for ethnic minority men and women including interaction terms

	Men		Women	
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>
<i>Educational qualification x ethnic group</i>				
<i>Higher qualifications</i>				
Indian (reference)				
Pakistani	-0,68	0,31	-1,43	0,43
Bangladeshi	-1,85	0,78	-2,63	1,09
Black Caribbean	0,54	0,39	0,42	0,36
Black African	-0,30	0,45	-1,36	0,56
Chinese	-0,46	0,52	0,42	0,42
Mix	2,18	0,51	1,51	0,50
Other ethnic	1,55	0,26	1,62	0,29
<i>Intermediate or low qualifications</i>				
Indian	-0,81	0,27	-1,44	0,33
Pakistani & Bangladeshi	0,34	1,30	1,33	1,51
Black Caribbean	1,42	0,46	0,66	0,47
Black African	<i>1,06</i>	0,63	1,28	0,78
Chinese	0,23	0,93	<i>0,98</i>	0,58
Mix	0,05	0,62	0,88	0,65
Other ethnic	0,90	0,36	1,02	0,41
<i>No qualifications</i>				
Indian	-0,89	0,41	-2,14	0,53
Black Caribbean	1,11	0,57	1,03	0,71
Black African	<i>1,88</i>	0,98	3,37	0,91
Chinese	-0,70	1,19	0,13	0,99
Mix	-0,11	0,84	<i>1,41</i>	0,81
Other ethnic	0,45	0,49	<i>1,16</i>	0,62
Constant	-4,34	0,92	-3,57	0,56
Log likelihood chi ² (df)	980.17(44)		974.03(44)	
Number of observations	2.469		2.336	

Note:

- 1) The models also control for age at union, period started union, log White-coethnic ratio, log sex ratio and age homogamy. Full estimation results are available upon request.
- 2) Statistically significant results at least at the .05 and .10 levels are highlighted in bold and italicised respectively.

Source: General Household Survey 1988–2006