

# SEEING PAST THE BARRICADES: Ethnic Inter-marriage in Yugoslavia During the Last Three Decades

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## Introduction:

Ethnic intermarriage has been a frequent focus of social research for several decades, bringing together scholars with backgrounds in sociology, anthropology, demography, and economics. Especially productive has been the sociological treatment of intermarriage in the context of understanding intergroup relations. The basic assumption underlining this line of research is that intermarriage is both the main indicator of, and a principal factor in, assimilation and acculturation (e.g. Merton 1941 [1972]; Blau et al. 1982, 1984; Labov and Jacobs 1986; Pagnini and Morgan 1990). While there is still no comprehensive bibliographic review of the literature on this subject, there are a few partial reviews limited in either in cultural scope or in the period they cover (e.g., Barron 1972 [1951]; Shepard and Jeffery 1982; Cottrell 1990).

The purpose of this paper is to extend this line of research to the former Yugoslavia in a way which utilizes nuptiality to explore the interethnic differences now tearing the country apart. As a microcosm of social interaction, marriage patterns provide a dynamic example of what ethnicity can mean when discussed in a broader social and economic context.

Central to any discussion of nuptiality in a European context is the identification of two broadly defined marriage patterns in Europe (Hajnal 1965). First, the '*European*' pattern itself, characterized by late marriage and high celibacy. This pattern was evidenced by western and northern European countries. The second pattern, the '*traditional*', was marked by relatively early and universal marriage and characterized the countries of southern and eastern Europe. Hajnal drew a dividing line between the two patterns extending approximately from Trieste to St. Petersburg. Later authors have suggested the inclusion of a third '*Mediterranean*' pattern defined by early marriage for females contrasted with later marriage for males, resulting in a substantial age gap between spouses (Smith 1981; Laslett 1983).

Specifically, we will focus on two main issues. The first concerns the popular notion that the rates of intermarriage in Yugoslavia had been increasing during the post-World War II socialist period, and that interethnic marriages are therefore proportionately well represented. This notion, in accord with prevailing official government positions, claimed that a process of ethnic integration had been facilitated by the socialist transformation. This perspective has been tacitly reinforced by the American mass media (and its focus on mixed families caught in the current conflicts) and by some social science works. An example of the later is a study by two Soviet ethnographers (Bromlei and Kashuba 1982). They maintain that during the period 1953-1974 ethnic heterogamy (a term borrowed from biology to refer to the mating of 'unlikes') in Yugoslavia had been growing steadily. To support this assertion, the authors quote the officially reported national percentages of ethnically mixed marriages in 1956, 1963, 1971 and 1974 (9.3%, 12.4%, 13.5%, and 13.5%, respectively) (Bromlei and Kashuba 1982:61). Technically more sophisticated, but in concurrence, are the studies on intermarriage by the Yugoslav demographer Ruza Petrovic (1970 [1966]; 1986a; 1991). Ethnic heterogamy, according to Petrovic, is "very high and it is permanently growing" (Petrovic 1986a:239). A number of other authors (see e.g., Flere 1988) have also implicitly or explicitly suggested that ethnic heterogamy within Yugoslavia has been increasing.

The second foci relates to the idea that Yugoslavia falls on the very border between the '*European*', '*Traditional*', and '*Mediterranean*' marriage patterns. For example, the population of Slovenia exhibits nuptiality patterns consistent with Hajnal's European pattern. In contrast, Montenegro and Kosovo are better classified as showing the Mediterranean pattern. Elsewhere in Yugoslavia the pattern is best termed Traditional. It might be expected that these differences have repercussions on ethnic intermarriage, and vice versa. For example, men from early marrying populations are presumably less likely to intermarry with women from late marrying populations if the social norm is that men should marry women younger than they are. Another important aspect of the

interrelationship between ethnic intermarriage and nuptiality patterns stems from the fact that intermarriage may produce behavioral assimilation in the form of converging marriage patterns. This has already been noted by Anderton (1986:343) with regard to age at marriage itself.

### **General Background:**

Although the history of Yugoslavia has been well documented, a few points bear re-emphasizing here as context. The republics which constituted the former Yugoslavia emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries after a long period of foreign domination. As a result, nationalism tended to play an important role in social and political life. Further, foreign domination left a diverse and mosaic ethnic pattern reinforced by centuries-old feuds and tensions. (For a discussion of the roots and manifestations of ethnic rivalry among the Yugoslav nationalities see Banac, 1984.) The disintegrative tendency stemming from these rivalries was historically counterbalanced by integrative forces based in linguistic similarities and historical commonalities, particularly with regard to a sense of 'us' against 'them'. This 'commonality of experience' nurtured the idea of pan-Slavism and the so called Yugoslav movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

After World War II, however, the country was dominated by a communist ideology emphasizing 'proletarian internationalism' and the idea of a future society without classes and boundaries. Two opposing forces have thus been shaping societal processes in Yugoslavia: 1. the attempts of the communist regime, as expressed in the doctrines of egalitarianism and internationalism, to create a uniform society, and 2. the efforts of the population groups to preserve their individual, ethnic, and national identities.

These opposing concepts of ethnicity carry with them disparate, and often antagonistic, cultural traditions. These include a 'Western' tradition among Slovenes and Croats, which had been subject to Austro-Hungarian rule and are predominantly Catholic; a 'Near-Eastern' cultural tradition among Serbs, Montenegrins, and Macedonians, which had been part of the Ottoman Empire and are predominantly Eastern Orthodox; and a 'Middle-Eastern' cultural environment among most of the Muslim populations (Albanians, Turks).

The schisms engendered by these splits are no where so evident as in religion. The anti-Westernism of the Orthodox Church, which had its roots in the protracted

conflict between Pope and Patriarch, still persists. For example, George Arnakis writes that "when a Balkan Christian referred to himself as a 'Christian' he meant 'Eastern Orthodox Christian', because all other kinds of Christians (with the possible exception of the Croats as seen by some of the Orthodox South Slavs) were commonly called 'Franks' with much the same feeling as it did the Turks." (Arnakis 1974:131). Another author, L. Stavrianos, quotes the Greek folk-saying: "Better the sword of the Turk than the bread of the Frank" (Stavrianos 1974:186). The so called 'Moslems by ethnic identity' or 'ethnic Moslems' occupy a special position in this scheme. Most of them are of Slavic background (mainly Serbs and Croats), and had been converted to Islam during the Ottoman domination of the Balkans (see e.g., Dyker 1972).

It is difficult to over-emphasize the extent of the political, economic, and educational differences defined by ethnicity in this setting. In 1981, a Moslem was 20 times more likely to be illiterate than a Croat, and was likely to have less than one-half the income. By 1975, the per capita gross social product in Bosnia-Herzegovina was barely one-third that of Slovenia and, in Kosovo, less than one-sixth (Zimmerman 1977:36).

### **Data and Methods:**

The data analyzed included vital statistics on marriages, published by Yugoslavia's Federal Statistical Office (Savezni Zavod Statistiki 1961-1988), as well as census data on the distribution of the population by marital status. These data sources pose two important obstacles. The first is the varying ethnic definitions employed, which in turn create fluctuations in the ethnic group size and distort the measures of intermarriage. These definitional differences are well documented (Petrovic 1973; Hoffman 1977). In the early post-war censuses (1948 and 1953) members of many smaller ethnic groups (Albanians, Hungarians, Gypsies, Germans, etc.) tended to give their nationality consistent with the regionally dominant ethnic group. This was due both to pressure from the authorities, and to other temporally specific circumstances. During the 1953 census, for example, many Albanians chose to declare themselves as Turks in an attempt to benefit from the permission given to the Turkish population to emigrate to Turkey. Ethnic Moslems posed an even greater problem (see Dyker 1972). In 1948, as in the pre-socialist censuses, 'Moslem' appeared only as a religious category. Citizens religiously declaring themselves as Moslems nonetheless had to identify themselves as ethnically Serb-Moslem, Croat-

Moslem, etc. Only a small number were classified as 'Moslem - undeclared'. In the 1953 census this category was abolished and the Moslems of Yugoslav ethnic origin were classified as 'Yugoslav - undeclared' -- a group which also contained people of other nationalities. The 1961 census was the first to include the category 'ethnic Moslem' while simultaneously retaining 'Yugoslav - undeclared' as an option. While this spirit and methodology were preserved in the subsequent 1971 and 1981 censuses, debate over the ethnic categories employed has not abated, particularly with regard to the inclusion of 'Yugoslav' as an option.

In short, only the period after 1961 offers data comparable enough for a study of intermarriage, and we have therefore limited our analyses to this period. In addition, to avoid inconsistencies in the registration of the smaller ethnic groups, we considered only the eight largest groups - Slovenes, Croats, Hungarians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Moslems, and Albanians in our analyses.

The second potential problem is that the data refer only to officially registered marriages, excluding other cohabitation arrangements. Clearly, if cohabitation had been on the rise during the period under study (as it has been in Western Europe and the United States), and if people who cohabited differed systematically from the rest of the population, our results would be biased. While there is evidence of common-law marriages, especially among the rural 19th century Orthodox population (see e.g., Culinovic-Constantinovic 1976), ethnographic evidence suggests that these were limited to special circumstances and numerically unimportant. More recent evidence of pre-marital cohabitation in Yugoslavia also suggests it has never been a viable alternative to marriage (see Sardon 1991), and therefore not likely to have reached levels which might compromise the results of this study.

Table 1 presents the percentage of heterogamous marriages in Yugoslavia by republics and autonomous provinces. To avoid biases due to difference in the definitions of the various ethnic groups, we have (as noted above) restricted ourselves to the period between 1962 and 1988. In order to further reduce stochastic fluctuations, we have used three year periods (1962-64, 1970-72, 1980-82, and 1986-88). The data, although only crude measurements, immediately make evident the fact that mixed marriages were not as common as expected, remaining at about 12 percent over time. There is, in fact, also no clear trend in their proportion over time. By comparison, Lieberman and Waters (1985:51) report that

according to the 1980 census the percentage of ethnically mixed marriages in the United States was over 20 percent for American born couples. The 1979 Soviet census revealed 14.9 percent of families in the former Soviet Union involved spouses of different nationalities (Volkov 1989:12).

These data, however, should be interpreted with caution since, the proportion of mixed marriages is strongly affected by ethnic group size and sex ratios. In order to control for group size and sex ratios, as well as to present a more comprehensive picture of the patterns underlying intermarriage in Yugoslavia, we used log-linear models.

In all, we tested over three dozen log-linear models in analyzing patterns of intermarriage within Yugoslavia (Botev 1992). While these techniques are described in detail elsewhere, it remains important to note here that they provide a more sophisticated approach to complex data by permitting controls for group size and sex ratio and revealing a more detailed picture of the patterns of intermarriage than more conventional indices (McCaa 1989; Jones 1991). These latter indices are generally based on proportions, while in log-linear models, odds are the basic form of variation to be explained. Resultant answers can be re-expressed in terms like 'ten times more likely to ...'.

The model implying perfect intermarriage, i.e. who marries whom is not affected differentially by the ethnic background, proved to fit the data very poorly. More adequate was the class of models which allows marriages to be considered as an outcome of two separate tendencies - a homogamy tendency, in accordance to which people marry within their own ethnic group, and a heterogamy tendency, where people marry irrespective of their ethnic background. Two important assumptions are embedded in these models: 1. that intermarriage is not affected by social or physical distances -- i.e., those who intermarry are equally likely to choose a mate from any of the other ethnic groups irrespective of cultural background or geographical location (proportional to the other group's marriage pool), and 2. heterogamous marriages are quasi-symmetrical -- i.e., males and females of a given ethnic group are equally likely to intermarry with persons from the other ethnic groups.

Further improvement of the fit between data and models was achieved by using the so called Crossings models. They relax the assumption that intermarriage is not affected by social or physical distances -- intermarriage between persons from different ethnic groups is modeled

as requiring crossing both social and spatial barriers (distances) separating these two groups.

The Crossings models were introduced first in social mobility studies (see Hout 1983) and presuppose ordinal measurements in which values can be rank ordered (e.g., more than, larger than). Although ethnicity is a nominal variable, we have assigned ordinal properties based on the place of a specific ethnic group in a 'cultural continuum' (in the case of Yugoslavia we assume that the 'Near Eastern' cultural tradition occupies the midpoint, while the Western and the Middle Eastern traditions occupy the two divergent poles). Johnson (1980) has already used this logic in examining religious intermarriages, employing an order based on the 'cognitive social distance' among religious groups. Further, Pagnini and Morgan (1990) have also used a form of Crossings model to account for the social distance between first and second generation immigrants in their study of ethnic intermarriage in U.S.A. at the turn of the century.

The results which follow below are a summary of the findings from the different models. In general, however, all the models pointed us in the same direction.

## **Results and Discussion:**

### *Intermarriage*

The major finding from examining the resultant homogamy parameters is that endogamous, rather than exogamous, marriages remain the norm in Yugoslavia. People are between 7 and 20 times more likely to marry within their own ethnic group than outside of it. In some cases this endogamy is even more pronounced. Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo (two regions with sizable Muslim populations) are between 55 and 245 times more likely to marry within their own ethnic group. Similarly, Hungarians in Croatia and Slovenia are 37 to 134 times more likely to find a spouse of the same ethnic background. Albanians are an especially 'closed' group -- they are 365 times more likely to in-marry, than to out-marry.

The least homogamous groups are the Serbs and the Montenegrins. In fact, this finding supports the properties of intermarriage as a measure of social integration since, as the recent events in Yugoslavia have shown, the Serbs and the Montenegrins were the groups most likely to support the preservation of Yugoslavia as a multinational state. In general, it is usually assumed that dominant ethnic groups are less homogamous.

Another important conclusion is that no clear tendency in the homogamy parameters emerges during the period under study. Clearly there are ups and downs in the levels of homogamy, varying by republic and ethnic group, but there is no secular trend. This refutes the earlier findings that ethnic intermarriages had been increasing in Yugoslavia, at least as regards the period after 1962.

The barrier between the 'Western' and the 'Near Eastern' cultural traditions tends to be more permeable than the barrier between the 'Near Eastern' and the 'Middle Eastern' cultural traditions. Intermarriages between people from 'Western' and 'Near Eastern' cultural background are between 1.2 and 2.5 times less likely than intermarriages between people with the same cultural background, while there is between 2.7 and 20.1 times smaller likelihood of intermarriage between people from Near Eastern and Middle Eastern cultural background than of intermarriage between people with the same cultural background. Significant is also the fact that in Bosnia and Herzegovina and especially in Kosovo (the two regions with sizable Muslim populations) the barrier between the 'Western' and 'Near Eastern' traditions is almost non-existent. This indicates that in these regions the two cultural traditions based on Christianity (the Western and the Near Eastern) tend to stick together. Conversely, this barrier is most pronounced in Slovenia - the most 'Westernized' republic in Yugoslavia, and in Vojvodina, where sizable Hungarian and Croatian minorities live among the Serbian majority. Another important finding is that the social distances between the three cultural traditions, have remained unchanged despite the efforts of the Yugoslav leadership to create an integrated society.

Also important is that the social distance between the Ethnic Moslems and the other ethnic groups has been diminishing fast and by the end of the period under study the Ethnic Moslems had joined the 'mainstream'. However, there are no clear trends in the social distances between the three cultural traditions described earlier.

The physical distance barrier remains more or less unchanged, and for most republics is relatively comparable. This was expected, since physical distance is an objective barrier.

### *Nuptiality Differentials*

Tables 2 and 3 present data on the timing and prevalence of marriage in the former Yugoslavia by republics and autonomous regions. The differences in marriage patterns are well evident. As noted above, the nuptiality in Slovenia bears the features of Hajnal's European pattern.

In the beginning of the study period, the mean age at marriage for females was 24.3 years, and 17 percent of women above age 50 were single. Since the early 1960s, however, there has been a tendency in Slovenia toward earlier marriages. By the mid-1980s the mean age at marriage had dropped to 22 years, and the percent of single women above age 50 had fallen to 12 percent. This trend is in accordance with Hajnal's findings supporting the 'end' of the European marriage pattern.

In regions characterized by Mediterranean marriage patterns (Montenegro and Kosovo), the mean age at first marriage reached 28 years for males, while for females it hovered around 22 years. Celibacy in Kosovo was very low (less than 1.5 percent of females, 3 percent of males, remain single past the age of 50), and moderate in Montenegro. The general trend over the study period for these populations is toward later marriages, especially among men.

In the rest of the republics and autonomous regions, nuptiality was relatively early and celibacy low for both men and women. In the early 1970s there was a tendency towards earlier marriages for women, after which a plateau was reached. Among men the tendencies are less clear. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Serbia Proper, the mean age at first marriage increased slightly, while in Croatia and Vojvodina it decreased. However, in all republics and autonomous regions celibacy declined.

The primary question for our discussion here is how these differentials might affect the frequency and patterns of ethnically mixed marriages. As noted earlier, the timing of marriage has potential implications for the choice of a marriage partner. Yet, as nuptiality differentials are intertwined with cultural differences, it is difficult to capture their net effect. Attempts to account for these differences in the log-linear models did not improve their fit, and suggested that timing considerations did not influence significantly interethnic marriage rates.

A second important question is the effect of ethnic heterogamy on nuptiality differentials. As suggested earlier, interethnic marriage may produce behavioral assimilation in the form of converging nuptiality patterns. An important point here is how 'convergence' should be defined. As demonstrated by a number of authors, there has been a general tendency of leveling off differences in marriage patterns across countries and cultures (see e.g., Hajnal 1965, Dixon 1971, and Watkins 1981). The question remains as to whether the convergence demonstrated falls short of the general trend. Table 3

juxtaposes the variation in mean age at first marriage within the republics and autonomous regions of the former Yugoslavia with variation across the East European countries. As can be seen, the extent of the convergence within Yugoslavia does not go beyond that for Eastern Europe in general.

### Conclusions:

The major finding of this study is that the popular notion of a Yugoslav population characterized by increasing rates of interethnic marriage is highly erroneous. Our results show that ethnic homogamy has been, and remains, the norm in what was Yugoslavia. Further, over the study period there is no clear trend, either in terms of increasing intermarriage or decreasing social distance between the various cultural traditions. So the reputation of intermarriage as a measure of social integration is saved in this case. Yugoslavia was never really integrated, and the concept of a Yugoslav ethnicity within which people could jointly operate, never attained. But the question remains -- What of those few who have chosen a spouse from an ethnicity now on the opposite side of the barricade?

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TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF HETEROGAMOUS MARRIAGES IN YUGOSLAVIA  
BY REPUBLICS AND AUTHONOMOUS REGIONS,

	196288	196264	197072	198082	198688
YUGOSLAVIA	12.4	11.4	12.7	12.7	
BosniaHercegovina		11.2	9.3	12.1	11.9
Montenegro	17.8	14.4	12.9	12.4	
Croatia	15.3	14.9	16.5	16.9	
Macedonia	1	3.4	9.7	8.2	7.5
Slovenia	7.6	7.8	10.8	11.7	
Serbia	11.9	11.4	12.5	12.6	
Proper	8.2	7.4	9.3	9.8	
Vojvodina	22.3	24.2	26.4	28.0	
Kosovo	9.4	7.6	5.9	5.0	

Source: Savezni Zavod Statistiki. 19611988. Demografska Statistika. Belgrad: SZS

TABLE 2: PERCENTAGE NEVER MARRIED IN YUGOSLAVIA BY REPUBLICS AND AUTONOMOUS REGIONS, 1961 AND 1981

		Women			Men	
Age:	2024	2529	50+	2024	2529	50+
<b>YUGOSLAVIA (Total)</b>						
1961	41.9	16.2	5.6	70.7	25.6	4.5
1981	43.0	16.0	5.2	76.5	33.9	3.1
<i>BosniaHercegovina</i>						
1961	42.7	18.4	3.5	67.8	22.8	4.3
1981	44.2	17.1	5.7	75.1	32.5	3.1
<i>Montenegro</i>						
1961	48.7	22.5	7.8	83.7	36.9	5.1
1981	58.4	25.8	9.3	86.1	50.6	3.5
<i>Croatia</i>						
1961	42.6	18.3	7.5	76.0	28.1	6.0
1981	43.2	16.2	6.6	79.5	36.1	3.8
<i>Macedonia</i>	=					
1961	42.9	8.7	1.9	65.9	17.8	2.7
1981	41.3	13.7	1.3	71.7	28.4	1.5
<i>Slovenia</i>						
1961	60.2	27.6	17.0	87.0	39.9	9.0
1981	43.4	17.5	12.5	77.5	35.2	6.3
<i>Serbia (Total)</i>						
1961	37.3	13.1	2.5	67.5	23.4	2.9
1981	41.6	15.0	2.0	76.0	33.2	2.0
<i>Proper</i>						
1961	39.4	13.3	2.0	63.8	22.0	2.3
1981	42.2	15.0	2.5	76.0	33.0	2.0
<i>Vojvodina</i>						
1961	37.5	15.5	4.2	71.8	26.9	4.6
1981	41.3	15.1	4.7	77.0	34.3	3.8
<i>Kosovo</i>						
1961	27.0	7.5	1.3	64.3	22.9	2.7
1981	40.0	11.6	1.4	75.3	32.4	2.0

Source: Petrovic 1986:378379

TABLE 3: MEAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE IN YUGOSLAVIA BY REPUBLICS AND AUTONOMOUS REGIONS WITH COMPARISON TO EASTERN EUROPE

		Women			Men		
	195961	196971	198486	195961	196971	198486	
<i>BosniaHercegovina</i>	22.0	21.1	21.3	24.2	24.7	25.5	
<i>Montenegro</i>	22.0	21.9	22.5	26.7	27.3	28.0	
<i>Croatia</i>	22.6	21.6	21.5	25.7	25.4	25.2	
<i>Macedonia</i>	22.1	21.7	21.8	24.5	24.6	24.8	
<i>Slovenia</i>	24.3	22.4	22.0	27.3	25.8	24.7	
<i>Serbia Proper</i>	22.1	21.3	21.9	24.7	24.9	25.9	
<i>Vojvodina</i>	22.6	21.8	21.6	25.8	25.3	24.8	
<i>Kosovo</i>	21.8	22.4	22.9	25.7	26.7	28.0	
Median	22.10	21.75	21.85	25.70	25.35	25.35	
Albania	21.1	21.5	22.4	26.3	26.5	26.9	
Bulgaria	21.3	21.4	21.2	24.4	24.5	24.3	
Czechoslovakia	22.0	21.7	21.7	25.2	24.4	24.3	
East Germany	22.7	21.9	22.6	24.3	23.8	24.9	
Hungary	22.1	21.5	21.5	25.4	24.5	24.4	
Poland	23.2	22.9	22.7	26.1	25.4	25.0	
Romania	22.2	21.8	22.3	25.1	25.1	25.2	
Median	22.10	21.70	22.30	25.20	24.50	24.90	

*Notes:* The Yugoslav data for 1984/1986 are estimates. East European data are from Sardon (1991).

*Sources:* Demografska Statistika 1960, 1963, 1970, 1989; Sardon 1991:554555