Interracial Unions in Brazil, 1980-2010: Does Religion Matter?

Luciene Longo
IBGE (Census Bureau), Brazil

Paula Miranda-Ribeiro
Demography Department and Cedeplar, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil

Ana Maria C. H. Oliveira
Economics Department and Cedeplar, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brazil

Thomas W. Pullum
Demographic and Health Surveys

Brazil has experienced important changes in religious affiliation in the last four decades. In 1970, 92% of the population declared to be Catholic. Thirty years later, the proportion had fallen to nearly 74%. The proportion of Pentecostals almost tripled (5% to 15%), whereas those who declared to have no religion raised from 1% to 7%. In addition, the country has the largest African descent population outside Africa. In 2009, 44% of the Brazilians considered themselves "pardos" or mixed. However, there is a high proportion of endogamous marriages, with low rates of marital exchange among different race groups.

This objective of this paper is twofold. First, we investigate the differences between interracial marriages according to religious affiliation between 1980 and 2010. Second, we verify whether female religious affiliation compensates for racial differences. We use 1980, 1991 and 2000 census data extracted from IPUMS-International data. Data from 2010 will be released in the beginning of 2012. We analyze women 20-29 years-old and their husbands/partners. Formal marriages and consensual unions are investigated separately.

Loglinear model results comparing 1980 and 2000 suggest that, when the husband/partner and his wife/partner have the same religion, there is practically no change in the percentage distribution of marriages by race, compared to the overall distribution. However, when marriages between partners of different religious affiliations were analyzed, there was a decrease in all homogamous marriages, whereas interracial marriages increased. In addition, the association coefficients indicate that having the same religion is important not only for interracial marriages, but also for homogamous couples (Tables 1, 2 and 3).

TABLE 1: Selected odds ratios estimated to race and religion adjusted model (Model A7) – Brazil

Race/color man	woman religion	man religion	Odds ratio		
			white woman	black woman	parda woman
White	Catholic	Catholic	1,000	1,000	1,000
		Protestant	1,000	ns	0,135
		Pentecostal	1,000	ns	0,421
		No religion	1,000	0,304	ns
	Protestant	Catholic	1,000	ns	0,468
		Protestant	1,000	0,093	0,439
		Pentecostal	1,000	ns	ns
		No religion	1,000	ns	ns
	Pentecostal	Catholic	1,000	ns	1,327
		Protestant	1,000	ns	ns
		Pentecostal	1,000	ns	1,154
		No religion	1,000	ns	1,770
	No religion	Catholic	1,000	ns	ns
		Protestant	1,000	ns	ns
		Pentecostal	1,000	ns	ns
		No religion	1,000	ns	1,322
Black	Catholic	Catholic	1,000	1,000	1,000
		Protestant	ns	ns	ns
		Pentecostal	ns	ns	ns
		No religion	0,466	0,440	0,637
	Protestant	Catholic	ns	0,062	ns
		Protestant	0,284	0,115	0,125
		Pentecostal	ns	ns	ns
		No religion	ns	ns	ns
	Pentecostal	Catholic	ns	0,547	0,183
		Protestant	ns	ns	ns
		Pentecostal	ns	0,630	0,738
		No religion	ns	ns	ns
	No religion	Catholic	ns	ns	ns
		Protestant	ns	ns	ns
		Pentecostal	ns	ns	ns
		No religion	ns	1,678	1,545
Pardo	Catholic	Catholic	1,000	1,000	1,000
		Protestant	0,103	ns	0,125
		Pentecostal	ns	ns	0,509
		No religion	ns	0,391	1,189
	Protestant	Catholic	0,379	ns	0,454
		Protestant	0,483	ns	0,364
		Pentecostal	ns	ns	ns
		No religion	ns	ns	ns
	Pentecostal	Catholic	ns	0,314	1,310
		Protestant	ns	ns	ns
		Pentecostal	1,317	0,458	ns
		No religion	1,524	ns	1,548
	No religion	Catholic	ns	ns	ns
		Protestant	ns	ns	ns
		Pentecostal	ns	ns	ns
		No religion	1,349	1,478	1,579

ns = not significant

TABLE 2: Selected odds ratios estimated to race and religion adjusted model (Model B2) – Brazil

Interation	Odds ratio
Race/color	
0 - Intrarracial	1,000
1 - WP ou PW ou PB ou BP	0,251
2 - WB ou BW	0,094
Religião	
0 - Religious endogamy	1,000
1 - Cat./Prot. ou Prot./Cat. ou Cat./Pent. ou Pent./Cat. Ou Pent./Prot. ou Prot./Pent.	0,018
2 - One of partner "no religion"	0,001

Source: Brazilian Census 1980, 1991 and 2000 - IPUMS-Internation

ns = not significant; W=white; P=pardo; B=black

TABLE 3: Selected odds ratios estimated to race and religion adjusted model (Model B2) – Brazil, 1980, 1991 and 2000

Interation	Odds ratio - Consensual Union			Odds ratio - Married		
	1980	1991	2000	1980	1991	2000
Race/color						
0 - Intrarracial	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
1 - WP ou PW ou PB ou BP	0,233	0,276	0,343	0,190	0,241	0,305
2 - WB ou BW	0,079	0,109	0,217	0,041	0,075	0,152
Religião						
0 - Religious endogamy	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
1 - Cat./Prot. ou Prot./Cat. ou Cat./Pent. ou Pent./Cat. Ou Pent./Prot. ou Prot./Pent.	0,005	0,023	0,042	0,015	0,017	0,017
2 - One of partner "no religion"	0,000	0,001	0,002	0,000	0,001	0,001

Source: Brazilian Census 1980, 1991 and 2000 - IPUMS-International Data

ns = not significant; W=white; P=pardo; B=black

Although interracial unions have increased from 1980 to 2000, heterogamous unions by religion have not changed in the same pace. Yet religious affiliation has a considerable power over the choices of partners. The strength of religion is highly relevant to unions in general but religion does not compensate for racial differences in Brazil.

The importance of this investigation lies on the combination of racial endogamy and exogamy with religion in a changing religious scenario. Brazil is an interesting setting due to its unique racial composition.