

INTERMARRIAGE BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

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Intermarriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is increasing as cultural and socio-economic divisions are broken down. For the first time at the 2006 census, a majority of both male and female Indigenous persons were partnered with non-Indigenous persons. This analysis shows that location is more important than education or income in determining rates of intermarriage. In metropolitan areas the overwhelming majority of partnered Indigenous people live with, or are married to, non-Indigenous people; in non-metropolitan areas this is true only of those who are highly educated and/or on high incomes.

INTRODUCTION

To what extent do Indigenous Australians mix with non-Indigenous persons when forming partnerships? Intermarriage in this context may be viewed as a development that is positive (part of the mixing of backgrounds and cultures that contributes towards a diverse and tolerant society) or negative (signifying the dilution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander blood and cultures). Either way, it is important to examine the extent of its occurrence, since intermarriage both reflects and affects the number of people identifying as Indigenous and thus alters the parameters of Indigenous affairs policy.

Using data from the 2006 census, this paper assesses the extent of intermarriage (defined here as including both formal and de facto marriage) by Indigenous status in Australian society. Where possible, trend data are used to assess the direction of change.¹ The paper is part of a larger study of intermarriage in Australia that also examines intermarriage by birthplace, ancestry and religion.²

CULTURAL FACTORS

Just as inter-ethnic marriage reflects the erosion of boundaries between Australians of different cultural backgrounds (see article by Khoo et al. in this issue), the extent to which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are forming partnerships with each

other is an important indicator of whether past social or cultural divisions between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities have dissipated.

As late as the 1960s, only a small minority of non-Indigenous Australians were prepared to say that they would accept a full-blood or part-Aboriginal person as a relative by marriage into their family.³ To the extent that such prejudice still exists, it constitutes a formidable barrier to intermarriage, since marriage is the most intimate of social relationships.

In some societies, longstanding racial divisions and accompanying negative stereotypes have led to negligible intermarriage. As an extreme example, less than ten per cent of African Americans partner with persons of a different race,⁴ despite a 'remarkable' increase in interracial marriages in the United States.⁵ As the findings below will show, rates of intermarriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians suggest a more permeable divide. A better comparison may be with the native Americans of the United States. Studies of intermarriage within this community indicate that exogamy is relatively high (59 per cent of married native Americans were married to non-Indigenous partners by 1990). The rate of exogamy was especially high amongst those who had moved to metropolitan areas where they constituted only a small proportion of residents.⁶

In Australia, the analysis of intermarriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons raises some unique measurement issues. For official purposes, an Indigenous person is one who is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives. The census question is aimed at the first and second parts of this definition,⁷ and census respondents are simply asked whether they or other members of their household are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

Australian residents have shown an increased propensity to identify as Indigenous. The number identifying as such in recent censuses rose from 250,738 in 1986 to 414,390 in 1996,⁸ and 455,028 in 2006, which in 2006 represented 2.4 per cent of Australia's population.⁹ Over and above natural increase among Indigenous Australians, more people have come to think of themselves as Indigenous and/or are inclined to declare themselves as such on the census returns over the past couple of decades.

It is likely that the growing propensity to identify as Indigenous has implications for intermarriage; however, it is not immediately clear what these implications might be. On the one hand, confidence in one's Indigenous identity may be accompanied by greater engagement with non-Indigenous Australians. If so this might increase opportunities to partner outside of the Indigenous community. Alternatively, the growth of 'identity politics'¹⁰ or the 'politics of recognition'¹¹ may imply a greater propensity to take pride in Indigenous identity, and a greater interest in its preservation through partnering within the Indigenous community.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The level of intermarriage on the part of Indigenous Australians is inevitably linked

to the issue of socio-economic mobility. Indeed, intermarriage can be interpreted as a significant measure of this mobility. Socio-economic factors are fundamental in shaping partnering decisions, since people tend to look for partners with similar educational and class backgrounds to themselves.¹²

It follows that circumstances that limit social mobility are likely to perpetuate barriers to intermarriage. Where minority groups are socially or economically disadvantaged relative to the rest of society, exogamy is less likely, since prospective marriage partners are unlikely to bridge this gulf. Recent public discussion about Indigenous issues has concentrated on the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in terms of health indicators, life expectancy and educational attainment. The pronounced socio-economic differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Australia might be expected to minimise intermarriage.

Conversely, intermarriage between groups can mean that these groups are becoming more similar with regard to other social and demographic characteristics. The sociological literature suggests that intermarriage will be relatively high where the members of a minority group achieve upward social mobility. Relatively high levels of education, in particular, are often found to facilitate intermarriage.¹³

GEOGRAPHIC FACTORS

In addition to social mobility, geographic mobility is important to the likelihood of intermarriage. At the most basic level, intermarriage relies upon opportunities for members of different groups to meet.¹⁴ Historically, much of the Indigenous community in Australia has lived in relative geographical isolation from the non-Indigenous community. For most of the 20th century this isolation has been accompanied by low levels of educational and

Table 1: Indigenous intermarriage by area of enumeration, 2001 and 2006

Area of enumeration	Indigenous proportion of 2001 population	Indigenous males				Indigenous females			
		2001		2006		2001		2006	
		Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent
Sydney SD	1.1	3,785	83	4,140	82	4,115	84	4,578	83
Rest of NSW	3.7	8,315	60	9,514	63	8,888	62	10,210	65
Melbourne SD	0.4	1,251	83	1,501	82	1,294	84	1,571	82
Rest of Victoria	1.1	1,260	71	1,522	72	1,389	73	1,704	75
Brisbane SD	1.8	2,718	78	3,068	79	2,949	80	3,525	81
Rest of QLD	4.9	8,725	41	10,118	44	9,964	47	11,425	49
Adelaide SD	1.1	865	73	1,017	71	1,000	76	1,138	74
Rest of SA	3.4	1,379	31	1,397	38	1,496	36	1,522	41
Perth SD	1.6	1,764	53	1,887	57	1,985	56	2,100	59
Rest of WA	8.6	4,264	21	4,078	23	4,626	25	4,402	27
Greater Hobart SD	3.0	629	84	709	82	683	85	718	82
Rest of Tasmania	1.2	1,449	80	1,504	79	1,566	81	1,719	81
Darwin SD	10.0	790	50	898	51	975	57	1,070	58
Rest of NT	50.8	5,530	5	5,175	4	5,734	8	5,416	8
ACT	1.2	433	78	467	81	382	75	419	79
Total ^b	2.4	43,196	49	47,019	52	47,085	52	51,541	55

Source: 2001 and 2006 census customised tables, ABS (2004) Experimental Estimates and Projections, Indigenous Australians 1991–2001, cat. no. 3238.0

Notes: SD stands for Statistical Division, NSW is New South Wales, QLD is Queensland, SA is South Australia, WA is West Australia, NT is Northern Territory, ACT is Australian Capital Territory

^a Excludes those whose partner's indigenous status was not stated or whose partner was temporarily absent on census night.

^b Total includes other territories.

Table 2: Indigenous intermarriage by educational attainment, 2006

Level of education	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent
			Sydney				Remaining NSW	
Degree or higher	316	90	529	90	374	82	621	78
Other post-school qualification	1,308	88	835	84	2,501	75	1,799	74
Year 11-12	545	83	808	89	968	69	1,423	70
Up to year 10	1,485	80	1,864	83	4,403	58	4,979	62
ID/NS/No attainment	482	63	547	69	1,267	47	1,389	54
Total ^b	4,136	82	4,583	83	9,513	63	10,211	65
			Melbourne				Remaining Victoria	
Degree or higher	160	88	176	87	69	86	117	90
Other post-school qualification	449	86	317	90	432	83	307	82
Year 11-12	276	81	403	84	214	84	357	82
Up to year 10	423	82	457	82	573	66	671	71
ID/NS/No attainment	191	63	222	64	234	57	249	60
Total ^b	1,499	82	1,575	82	1,522	73	1,701	75
			Brisbane				Remaining QLD	
Degree or higher	235	83	392	82	278	72	553	67
Other post-school qualification	925	85	656	83	2,382	59	1,714	59
Year 11-12	557	80	842	85	1,755	47	2,854	50
Up to year 10	1,055	75	1,295	78	4,341	39	4,926	46
ID/NS/No attainment	296	68	341	79	1,359	28	1,376	38
Total ^b	3,068	79	3,526	81	10,115	44	11,423	49
			Adelaide				Remaining SA	
Degree or higher	81	— ^c	98	— ^c	24	— ^c	58	— ^c
Other post-school qualification	291	80	216	80	261	58	198	63
Year 11-12	230	76	329	79	231	57	338	51
Up to year 10	306	63	348	65	634	28	670	33
ID/NS/No attainment	108	53	145	60	249	20	257	28
Total ^b	1,016	71	1,136	73	1,399	38	1,521	41

Level of education	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent
	Perth		Remaining WA		Remaining NT		Australia	
Degree or higher	133	76	196	76	34	— ^c	2,012	82
Other post-school qualification	458	73	311	73	443	17	11,129	71
Year 11–12	311	63	477	68	527	8	6,767	57
Up to year 10	707	47	803	50	3,125	2	20,451	44
ID/NS/No attainment	279	39	312	45	1,048	2	6,658	34
Total ^b	1,888	57	2,099	59	5,177	4	47,017	52
	Greater Hobart		Remaining Tasmania					
Degree or higher	38	— ^c	54	— ^c	46	— ^c	87	— ^c
Other post-school qualification	233	84	152	88	426	85	325	88
Year 11–12	77	— ^c	125	81	164	76	270	79
Up to year 10	293	79	319	81	724	77	873	80
ID/NS/No attainment	69	— ^c	72	— ^c	151	66	163	66
Total ^b	710	82	722	82	1,511	79	1,718	81
	Darwin							
Degree or higher	56	— ^c	73	— ^c	34	— ^c	82	— ^c
Other post-school qualification	224	62	213	70	443	17	380	22
Year 11–12	194	58	294	60	527	8	688	14
Up to year 10	299	42	347	50	3,125	2	3,283	5
ID/NS/No attainment	124	33	143	45	1,048	2	983	5
Total ^b	897	51	1,070	58	5,177	4	5,416	8
	Australian Capital Territory							
Degree or higher	107	92	97	— ^c	2,012	82	3,280	79
Other post-school qualification	123	79	91	— ^c	11,129	71	7,961	70
Year 11–12	100	81	90	— ^c	6,767	57	10,263	60
Up to year 10	97	— ^c	121	77	20,451	44	23,101	49
ID/NS/No attainment	38	— ^c	21	— ^c	6,658	34	6,940	42
Total ^b	465	81	420	79	47,017	52	51,545	55

Source: 2006 census customised table

Notes: ^a Excludes those whose partner's indigenous status was not stated or whose partner was temporarily absent on census night.

^b Total includes those whose educational level was inadequately described (ID), not stated (NS), or none.

^c Rate not calculated for those groups numbering less than 100.

occupational mobility among Indigenous persons. Such circumstances might be expected to lead to marriage markets that are largely separate.

The Indigenous population remains less urbanised than the non-Indigenous population. However, there has been a longstanding shift in the distribution of Indigenous persons from the North and West of Australia to the East and the South and towards urban locations.¹⁵ By 2006, 34 per cent of Indigenous persons lived in major urban areas (compared with 67 per cent of non-Indigenous persons) and 42 per cent in other urban areas (compared with 21 per cent of non-Indigenous persons).¹⁶

EXTENT OF INTERMARRIAGE

For the first time at the 2006 census, a small majority of both male (52 per cent) and female (55 per cent) Indigenous persons who were partnered were married to non-Indigenous persons (see Table 1). Moreover, the trend is towards greater intermarriage. For both male and female partnered Indigenous persons there was an increase of three percentage points in the proportion who were married to non-Indigenous persons over the five years from 2001 to 2006.

INDIGENOUS INTERMARRIAGE BY LOCATION

The most striking finding is the extent to which intermarriage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians varies by location (Table 1). The vast majority of Indigenous men and women who are resident in Australia's capital cities are exogamous. In Sydney, 82 per cent of partnered Indigenous men and 83 per cent of partnered Indigenous women were married to non-Indigenous persons. Similar levels of exogamy were recorded in Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart.

This is significant because of the substantial and growing minority of In-

digenous persons living in metropolitan centres¹⁷—by 2006 some 29 per cent of all partnered Indigenous males and females were living in Australia's metropolitan areas. Since net migration movements of Indigenous persons from non-metropolitan to metropolitan areas have been small in recent decades, the growth in the metropolitan Indigenous populations seems largely to reflect better enumeration and a greater propensity to self-identify as Indigenous.¹⁸

The level of exogamy is lower amongst the generally much larger populations of Indigenous persons living outside the respective state capitals. In the case of Queensland, outside of Brisbane, 44 per cent of married Indigenous women had non-Indigenous partners as did 49 per cent of married Indigenous men. This rate was also fairly low in Western Australia, outside of Perth, where just 23 per cent of partnered Indigenous males were married to non-Indigenous females and 27 per cent of partnered Indigenous females were married to non-Indigenous males. In the Northern Territory, outside of Darwin, exogamy is rare: only four per cent of partnered Indigenous men and eight per cent of partnered Indigenous women were exogamous.

The relatively high level of intermarriage in capital cities is consistent with an explanation focusing on opportunity: the greater the opportunities for social interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, the greater the extent of intermarriage. Less than one per cent of the population in most mainland capital cities is Indigenous (Table 1). In these cities, Indigenous people have many opportunities to meet non-Indigenous partners, and the great majority are exogamous. By contrast, in non-metropolitan areas such as the Northern Territory (outside Darwin), where the proportion of Indigenous persons is relatively high (51 per cent),

the percentage of Indigenous persons in exogamous marriages is low (just eight per cent for partnered Indigenous females and four per cent for partnered Indigenous males).

There may be other factors contributing to these differences in exogamy rates by location, including educational and income differentials between the Indigenous populations in the cities and in regional and remote Australia. These issues are explored in the next sections.

EDUCATION AND INCOME DIFFERENTIALS

Indigenous persons with relatively high levels of education are most likely to have mixed with their non-Indigenous counterparts in educational institutions and in employment. In doing so they have, in effect, bridged the socio-economic divide that has affected relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in the past. Even more fundamentally, where Indigenous persons achieve educational credentials that are valued within the wider community, this should assist in the erosion of prejudice. Therefore, Indigenous educational attainment would be expected to diminish the social distance between members of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. If these hypotheses are correct, higher rates of intermarriage should be evident among the more educated of the Indigenous population.

Table 2 confirms that exogamy on the part of Indigenous persons is associated with higher educational attainment. In 2006, 82 per cent of all married Indigenous males and 79 per cent of all married Indigenous females with degrees had non-Indigenous partners. By contrast, among those who had completed Year 10 or fewer years of school, these figures were 44 per cent and 49 per cent respectively.

However, Table 2 also shows that when the analysis is confined to metropolitan

areas, high rates of exogamy are evident regardless of the education level of Indigenous residents. For example, of the partnered Indigenous population living in Sydney in 2006, 90 per cent of both males and females with degree level or higher qualifications were exogamous. This proportion is only slightly lower among those with less education. In the case of Indigenous males living in Sydney, 88 per cent of those with a post school educational qualification other than a degree, 83 per cent of those with year 11 or 12 high school education and 80 per cent of those with less than year 10 education were exogamous. The same pattern is evident across all the capital cities. Exogamy is highest amongst persons with degree level or above qualifications. But it is also high for the relatively large numbers of Indigenous persons who have much less education, including those with 10 years or less of primary and secondary schooling.

In non-metropolitan areas, the level of education of Indigenous persons appears to have a greater impact on rates of exogamy. In Queensland (outside of Brisbane), which has the largest population of Indigenous persons of all the localities listed, 67 per cent of partnered Indigenous females with a degree were exogamous in 2006, compared with 50 per cent of those with schooling to year 11 or 12 and 46 per cent of those with education up to year 10. A similar pattern applied in other states outside the capitals. In every case, partnered Indigenous persons with degrees were much more likely to be in exogamous relationships than were those with less education.

Analysis of exogamy rates by income produces similar results. In the metropolitan areas the great majority of partnered Indigenous persons are in exogamous relationships, regardless of male or female income. This generalisation applies across all the income categories listed for Indigenous persons in Table 3.

Table 3: Indigenous intermarriage by income, 2006

	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent
	Sydney							
\$399 or less	1,098	76	2,085	82	3,976	53	5,987	63
\$400–\$799	1,150	82	1,298	86	2,805	70	2,548	70
\$800–\$1,299	1,065	89	666	89	1,491	79	798	74
\$1,300 or more	606	89	291	88	638	82	255	73
Total ^b	4,140	82	4,578	83	9,514	63	10,210	65
	Melbourne							
\$399 or less	342	74	734	82	566	64	963	74
\$400–\$799	448	87	454	86	469	77	441	78
\$800–\$1,299	397	89	220	86	278	89	148	84
\$1,300 or more	217	85	67	83	97	— ^c	34	— ^c
Total ^b	1,501	82	1,571	82	1,522	72	1,704	75
	Brisbane							
\$399 or less	742	67	1,693	79	3,875	27	6,512	47
\$400–\$799	987	81	1,072	84	3,145	50	3,155	52
\$800–\$1,299	871	87	479	85	1,688	68	927	61
\$1,300 or more	323	86	118	80	769	69	205	60
Total ^b	3,068	79	3,525	81	10,118	44	11,425	49
	Adelaide							
\$399 or less	321	61	558	72	740	21	984	36
\$400–\$799	316	75	297	76	334	61	320	51
\$800–\$1,299	220	84	168	83	163	65	97	— ^c
\$1,300 or more	100	84	49	— ^c	60	— ^c	27	— ^c
Total ^b	1,017	71	1,138	74	1,397	38	1,522	41

	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent	Partnered no.	Exogamous ^a per cent
\$399 or less	573	36	1,086	57	2,166	10	2,758	23
\$400–\$799	486	68	545	64	718	36	984	35
\$800–\$1,299	435	71	245	71	485	47	271	51
\$1,300 or more	239	79	75	— ^c	383	58	74	— ^c
Total ^b	1,887	57	2,100	59	4,078	23	4,402	27
			Greater Hobart				Remaining Tasmania	
\$399 or less	228	72	381	79	547	76	1,077	80
\$400–\$799	250	87	196	85	505	80	430	86
\$800–\$1,299	157	89	101	89	317	81	126	79
\$1,300 or more	49	— ^c	14	— ^c	79	— ^c	24	— ^c
Total ^b	709	82	718	82	1,504	79	1,719	81
			Darwin				Remaining NT	
\$399 or less	256	26	443	51	4,257	1	4,326	4
\$400–\$799	215	57	290	61	431	15	616	21
\$800–\$1,299	255	65	234	70	175	33	205	45
\$1,300 or more	123	76	46	— ^c	89	— ^c	43	— ^c
Total ^b	898	51	1,070	58	5,175	4	5,416	8
			Australian Capital Territory				Australia	
\$399 or less	76	— ^c	122	78	19,776	33	29,729	50
\$400–\$799	80	— ^c	93	— ^c	12,346	64	12,739	64
\$800–\$1,299	176	83	127	79	8,177	76	4,816	73
\$1,300 or more	120	84	66	— ^c	3,892	78	1,388	74
Total ^b	467	81	419	79	47,019	52	51,541	55

Source: 2006 census customised table

Notes: ^a Excludes those whose partner's indigenous status was not stated or whose partner was temporarily absent on census night.

^b Totals include those whose incomes were not stated.

^c Rate not calculated for those groups numbering less than 100.

Nevertheless, those reporting incomes in the lowest category are the least likely to be in exogamous relationships. For example, in Brisbane, 67 per cent of partnered Indigenous men reporting a weekly income in the range of \$399 or less were in exogamous marriages compared with 81 per cent of those in the \$400 to \$799 category and 86 to 87 per cent in the top two income brackets.

Outside of the capital cities there is a much stronger association between income of Indigenous persons and exogamous relationships, particularly for men. The higher the income, the more likely the partnered Indigenous person is to be living in an exogamous relationship. The proportion of men reporting \$399 per week or less who were partnered with non-Indigenous persons is particularly low.¹⁹

These findings suggest that social divisions based on Indigenous status have relatively little impact on partner choice in metropolitan areas. Due to their relatively small numbers in the cities, Indigenous people mix with non-Indigenous people a great deal. Regardless of educational attainment or income, the majority choose non-Indigenous partners. Urban living therefore seems to be the main factor contributing to the high rate of Indigenous exogamy in the capital cities.

Opportunities for social mixing are much fewer in many non-metropolitan communities. Up to a quarter of Indigenous persons live in remote or very remote areas where Indigenous residents make up a substantial proportion of the local population.²⁰ However, those who have pursued higher education and those with relatively high incomes are perhaps more likely to have mixed with non-Indigenous persons in educational institutions and workplaces. This may explain the stronger effect of education and income in these areas.

ENDOGAMY AND DISADVANTAGE

A significant proportion of partnered Indigenous persons living in non-metropolitan locations have low incomes. Almost all of these persons are living in endogamous relationships. For example, Table 3 shows that 53 per cent of male Indigenous persons who were partnered and living in Western Australia (outside of Perth) reported incomes of \$399 or less. Of these males, only 10 per cent were living in exogamous relationships. Thus endogamy in the Indigenous community is closely associated with non-metropolitan residential location and low income.

Table 4 develops this point. It shows the income of the male partner in Indigenous, mixed, and non-Indigenous couples by location. In the metropolitan locations, there are relatively few couples where both partners are Indigenous. Nevertheless, the income levels of men in mixed couples are above those for the minority where both partners are Indigenous. For example, in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth, a third or more of Indigenous male partners married to Indigenous females reported incomes of \$399 or less per week. By contrast only around 20 to 25 per cent of Indigenous males married to non-Indigenous partners and non-Indigenous males married to Indigenous females reported such low incomes in these capital cities.

Outside the metropolitan areas, this pattern is much stronger, and the share of marriages that are exogamous (as shown earlier) is much lower. Outside the capitals of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, half or more of the Indigenous males in endogamous relationships indicated an income of \$399 or less. By contrast around a quarter to a third of men in mixed couples reported an income of this level.

Consistent with this pattern, a larger share of male partners in exogamous relationships earn \$800 or more per week than do male partners in endogamous Indigenous partnerships. This is the case both within and outside of Australia's capitals.

CONCLUSION

The great majority of partnered Indigenous persons living in Australia's capitals are in exogamous married or de facto relationships. In relative terms, the rate of exogamy for these Indigenous persons is generally well above the level of most migrant groups in Australia (see article by Khoo et al. in this issue). These findings indicate that Australia's history of socio-economic and cultural division between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities does not inhibit intermarriage in settings where there is plenty of opportunity for interaction between the two. In Australia's capital cities, endogamy within the Indigenous population is largely non-existent.

By contrast, fewer Indigenous persons living outside the capital cities (a minority in most states and in the Northern Territory) are living in exogamous relationships. The relatively low levels of exogamy in non-metropolitan communities may be explained by the more limited opportunities for social mixing in these communities. In these areas, education and income differentials are more evident in partnering outcomes. Outside the capitals, exogamy is most likely to occur amongst male and female Indigenous partners with rela-

tively high levels of education, and among male Indigenous partners with relatively high incomes. In other words, in these locations, exogamy is associated with upward mobility. Conversely, endogamy is concentrated among Indigenous couples where the male partner's income is low.

Just a few decades ago there was evidence of deep prejudice within the non-Indigenous community towards the Indigenous community. Yet by 2006 the great majority of partnered Indigenous persons living in Australia's capital cities were in exogamous relationships. This finding applies regardless of income or education. Though socio-economic differentials persist, the implication is that there are few impediments to marriages between Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons from similar socio-economic backgrounds. For Indigenous persons who live outside Australia's capital cities, levels of intermarriage are much lower. Even so, most Indigenous persons who have achieved relatively high levels of educational and income mobility are in exogamous relationships. This suggests that any remaining social divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is attributable to socio-economic divisions and to the relative isolation of many Indigenous communities.

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Table 4: Income of male partners by Indigenous status of couples by area, 2006

	Weekly income of male partner (per cent)				Weekly income of male partner (per cent)				Total	Couples	Weekly income of male partner (per cent)				Total
	<\$399	\$400-\$799	\$800-\$1299	\$1300+ not stated	<\$399	\$400-\$799	\$800-\$1299	\$1300+ not stated			<\$399	\$400-\$799	\$800-\$1299	\$1300+ not stated	
Both indigenous	Sydney				Remaining NSW										
	733	35	27	16	9	14	100	100	3,401	53	24	9	3	10	100
	3,637	21	29	29	17	4	100	100	6,316	34	32	20	10	5	100
	3,284	25	28	28	16	3	100	100	5,867	35	33	20	9	4	100
	811,467	22	22	24	28	3	100	100	485,406	31	28	22	16	3	100
Total	868,488	22	22	23	27	6	100	100	532,661	30	27	21	16	6	100
Both indigenous	Melbourne				Remaining Victoria										
	266	33	22	16	12	17	100	100	406	48	26	7	5	14	100
	1,234	22	29	29	16	4	100	100	1,198	32	34	22	7	5	100
	1,185	21	31	29	16	3	100	100	1,066	32	33	23	7	5	100
	724,525	23	24	26	24	3	100	100	276,412	28	31	24	14	3	100
Total	768,988	23	23	25	23	6	100	100	295,852	28	30	24	13	6	100
Both indigenous	Brisbane				Remaining QLD										
	635	38	29	17	7	9	100	100	5,493	50	28	10	4	8	100
	2,706	21	32	30	13	4	100	100	5,275	26	33	23	13	4	100
	2,355	20	33	31	12	4	100	100	4,389	24	35	26	12	4	100
	351,002	20	25	29	24	2	100	100	417,068	26	29	25	17	3	100
Total	378,859	19	25	28	23	6	100	100	467,435	25	28	24	16	8	100
Both indigenous	Adelaide				Remaining SA										
	283	43	27	12	5	12	100	100	852	68	15	6	2	9	100
	788	26	32	26	11	4	100	100	592	37	35	16	8	4	100
	699	27	33	26	11	3	100	100	520	30	38	20	8	4	100
	224,390	26	27	27	18	2	100	100	86,106	31	31	24	12	2	100
Total	239,786	25	26	26	18	5	100	100	94,030	31	30	22	11	6	100

	Weekly income of male partner (per cent)				Weekly income of male partner (per cent)				Total	
	Couples	<\$399	\$400 –\$1299	\$1300+ not stated	Couples	<\$399	\$400 –\$1299	\$1300+ not stated		
		Perth					Remaining WA			
Both indigenous	799	44	19	15	6	15	8	5	9	100
Female indigenous	1,156	20	28	29	18	24	27	21	22	100
Male indigenous	1,043	19	31	29	18	22	27	24	23	100
Neither indigenous	287,009	20	22	28	28	23	25	25	24	100
Total	314,689	19	21	26	26	23	23	23	22	100
		Greater Hobart					Remaining Tasmania			
Both indigenous	124	49	26	15	5	41	32	18	3	100
Female indigenous	563	28	35	26	7	32	37	21	7	100
Male indigenous	565	28	37	25	7	35	34	22	6	100
Neither indigenous	38,568	25	29	27	17	32	31	23	10	100
Total	42,295	24	28	26	16	32	30	22	10	100
		Darwin					Remaining NT			
Both indigenous	420	42	21	21	7	85	7	2	1	100
Female indigenous	580	16	26	35	20	25	27	29	15	100
Male indigenous	441	15	27	36	20	18	32	29	18	100
Neither indigenous	17,097	12	23	35	27	10	22	33	32	100
Total	20,617	12	21	33	25	38	16	20	19	100
		Australian Capital Territory					Australia			
Both indigenous	84	27	13	33	23	59	20	9	4	100
Female indigenous	312	13	26	33	27	27	31	25	13	100
Male indigenous	366	14	18	38	27	27	32	25	12	100
Neither indigenous	64,436	12	19	29	39	24	26	25	22	100
Total	69,738	12	18	28	37	24	25	24	21	100

Source: 2006 census customised table.

Notes: * Totals include couples in which one or both partners did not state their indigenous status

References

- ¹ The data presented relate to partnered persons only. There were inevitably some partnered census respondents who did not state their Indigenous status. These are excluded from the calculations in the following analysis. However, couples are included in the calculations if one partner stated their marital status but the other did not.
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- ¹⁸ J. Taylor, 'Indigenous Australians: The first transformation', in S.-E. Khoo and P. McDonald (Eds), *The Transformation of Australia's Population 1970–2030*, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2003 pp. 28–29
- ¹⁹ The relationship between income and intermarriage tends to be weaker for Indigenous women. This finding may be an artefact of patterns of labour force attachment among partnered women. Individual income is less useful as an indicator of the educational attributes or socio-economic status of partnered women. Once partnered, work patterns of women, more so than men, are influenced by parental status. (Mothers of young children are less likely to be in paid employment or, if working, to do so part time.) The socio-economic status of many women is thus primarily determined by the incomes of their male partners (not shown in Table 3).
- ²⁰ Taylor, 2003, *op. cit.*, p. 31