Julius Drachsler's *Intermarriage in New York City: A Study in Historical Replication*

**Historical Methods**

Julius Drachsler’s 1921 book *Intermarriage in New York City* examined 171,356 individual marriage license applications from New York City in the years 1908-1912. The author found little intermarriage across social lines among immigrants, but a considerable amount among their U.S.-born children. This study replicates Drachsler’s and the results show that Drachsler correctly found an increasing trend to intermarriage between the first and second generations, and with close to the same proportions as Drachsler’s work. The replication study differs from Drachsler’s reported findings on the extent of intermarriages across social lines of nationality and race, mainly due to the idiosyncratic way that Drachsler defined those two constructs. The New York City marriage license files offer the researcher further opportunities to pose and answer questions about intermarriage.

**Keywords:** Drachsler, generation, intermarriage, replication

**Introduction: Why Replicate a Study From 1921? Why Intermarriage in New York City?**

Julius Drachsler’s 1921 book, *Intermarriage in New York City: A Statistical Study of the Assimilation of European People’s* addressed a central question of assimilation, namely, intermarriage between people of different ethnic groups. By maintaining in *Intermarriage in New York City* that urban America, especially the great metropolises, was the place to study social trends central to American life, not, for example, the western frontier or the New England town (Berman 2008). What he found is that a vast collection of marriage licenses for the years 1908-12 shows that intermarriage across social lines was rare for the first generation of immigrants but increasingly common among their U.S.-born second-generation children.

For more than 90 years, scholars have been reading and citing Drachsler’s *Intermarriage* in New York City. A search of numerous citation indexes shows that between 1922 and 2012, more than 100 journal articles have cited *Intermarriage* in New York City. In addition, scholars who authored monographs, not usually captured in online indexes, have frequently referred to Drachsler’s work. The citations are not evenly spaced over the past 90 years but appear in bunches when one or another aspect of the topic of assimilation attracted scholars’ attention. Both Democracy and Assimilative and Intermarriage in New York City were reviewed in leading academic journals of sociology between 1921 and 1925 (Abbott 1921; Burgess 1920; Commons 1922; Park 1925; Regeis 1921). In the 1930s, however, with a few exceptions, Drachsler’s study was largely absent from scholarly citations (Bobraski 1932; 1939; DePorte 1931; Paranić 1932). The combined effect of the stunning rise of the immigration door in 1924, the enactment and enforcement of Prohibition as a anti-immigrant movement, and the Great Depression all served to de-emphasize the importance of the study of the assimilation of what Drachsler called the New Immigrants (Katz 1995; Martin 2011; Zelberg 2008).

Drachsler’s work was rediscovered in the 1940s and 1950s by the sociologist Baby Boomer Kenneth. She used the same type of primary sources as Drachsler, marriage license records, to put forward a hypothesis about a “triply milking pot” of America (Kennedy 1944, 1952). Kennedy and other social scientists maintained that strong religious allegiances discouraged intermarriage between Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jews (Gordon 1964). Such scholars found in Drachsler an earlier writer who had noted the tendency of both Jews and Roman Catholics to prefer endogamous marriages.

Scholars interested in intermarriage among ethnic and racial groups writing in the 1960s through the 1980s also...