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ARE INTERRACIAL MARRIAGES AN INDICATOR OF INTEGRATION IN THE AMERICAN SOCIETY?

Abstract

The paper aims to assess interracial marriage in the USA with a focus on the new generations. It discusses segregated laws that were enacted to prevent minorities from intermarrying whites to preserve white purity and supremacy through anti-miscegenation laws. The landmark Supreme Court case, *Loving vs. Virginia* (1967) is regarded as a turning point that led to the repeal of anti-miscegenation laws in the USA. A study was done to determine intermarriage of minority groups in the US and its leading forces, depending on rates and proportions of intermarriage. In this regard, it closely measured the degree of influence of new immigrant waves on intermarriage in the US. Besides the thorough examination of challenges that faced interracial communities, the paper was inclined to weigh the impact of interracial marriage on the integration of biracial children in the mainstream society and their racial identification.

Keywords: anti-miscegenation laws, integration, interracial marriage, minorities, United States of America.

1. Introduction

Family systems reproduce race by insisting upon endogamy, or marriage within the group. Racial intermarriage tends to undermine racial barriers. In any society in which race is important, racial intermarriage will be a focus of legal, social and political interest. The issue of intermarriage has always been controversial in the United States. The right to choose the future spouse is an individual right but unfortunately this was not the case in the new world during the 19th and early decades of the 20th century. In 1967, the Supreme Court of the United States *Loving v. Virginia* declared anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional. Although still small in absolute terms, levels of Intermarriages have risen sharply in recent years. This paper aims at answering the following questions; what is the impact of new waves of immigrants on the rates of interracial marriage? What are different reasons and mechanisms that drive interracial marriage? What are the different racial and ethnic groups to intermarry? And do Interracial Couples Manage to integrate in the US Society?

3. Review of Literature

Not very long ago, couples from different races were singled out. Today, interracial marriages are more accepted, and in some places, such couples

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will not even attract attention. This does not necessarily mean that people have changed their perception of interracial marriages, but rather that the factor of color is seen less as a threat for a relationship today than in the past (Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). Although a significant amount of literature on the issue is available, the debate is still going on. Recent studies reveal an increase in interracial marriage in the United States of America (Inman, Altman, Kaduvettoor-Davidson, Carr, & Walker, 2011; Passel, Wang, & Taylor, 2010). Despite that increase, few of these studies examine the specific experiences of interracial couples concerning integration in the American society. However, according to Bratter and King (2008), though the tensions between races are probably less perceptible than before, some studies have shown that interracial couples are struggling to enter the mainstream American society (Heer, 1994; Heaton, 2002).

2. 1. Historical Background about Laws Banning Miscegenation in the US

In the US anti-miscegenation laws were state laws passed by individual states to prohibit miscegenation. Typically defining miscegenation as a felony; these laws prohibited the marriage between persons of different races. Individuals attempting to marry would be punished of felony active charges of adultery or fornication. All anti-miscegenation laws were passed to ban the marriage of whites and non-white groups, primarily blacks, Native Americans and Asians. In several States, anti-miscegenation laws also criminalized cohabitation between whites and non-whites.

Since the time of slavery, interracial relationships have been part of the United States. However, throughout history, it has not been considered acceptable. Most interracial relationships in history were between a white male and black female. Children of mixed couples with white parents were not considered legitimate. After the Second World War tremendous change would happen towards attitudes concerning interracial marriages.

Berthoud (2002) argued that marriage between different nonwhite races generally was not prohibited. Anti-miscegenation laws were clearly meant to maintain the power and privilege of whites and to uphold widely held beliefs in those days about racial differences, purity, and separation (p. 18). Segregated laws were created and passed to protect white women from black men. Democrats in the 1864 presidential campaign developed a new term for sexual relationships between white women and black men. The new term is miscegenation. Racist laws were passed to deny blacks political rights because of the fear of interracial marriages. Several laws were created to prohibit interracial marriages between blacks and whites. One of these is the Mann Act. This act was passed to prohibit a man to take a woman across state lines for “immoral purposes”. This law was created to prevent a black man to take a white woman across state borders so they could marry in a state where interracial marriage was allowed.

Sollors (2000) stated that in November, 1881, Tony Pace, a Negro man, and Mary J. Cox, a white woman were indicted under section 4189, in a circuit court of Alabama, for living together in a state of adultery or fornication, and

were sentenced each of two years imprisonment in the state penitentiary. The judgment was affirmed in the Supreme Court. Consequently, Mr. Pace brought the case on writ of error, insisting that the act under which he was convicted was in conflict with the concluding clause of the first section of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution², which declared that no state shall deny to any person the equal protection of the laws (p. 70).

Anti-miscegenation laws were led to the gradual erosion by the end of World War II. Between 1946 and 1957, large numbers of foreign-born children and wives of US military personnel were permitted to enter the US under the GI Fiancées Act or War Brides Act of 1946. While most of those admitted were from Europe, some foreign born Japanese wives and children were permitted. Brooks (2010) reported that the occupation of Japan after World War II and the Korean War and its aftermath led to substantial numbers of US armed services personnel being stationed in both Japan and Korea. Despite the fact that anti-miscegenation laws are often considered a Southern phenomenon, many Northern states had anti-miscegenation laws. From the 19th century into the 1950's, most US States imposed anti-miscegenation laws, between 1913 and 1948, 30 out of 48 States did so.

Anti-miscegenation laws were challenged in courts. The years following World War II brought the greatest changes to these laws, although there were some early exceptions, Pennsylvania was the first state to repeal its anti-miscegenation law in 1780, and Ohio repealed a similar law in 1887. Farley (2011) noted that “most States did not change their laws until after World War II” (p.5). In 1948, in *Perez v. Sharp*, the California Supreme Court ruled the State's anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional. Oregon repudiated a similar law in 1951, and 13 other States followed suit over the next 16 years. The last one was removed in Alabama through a state constitutional amendment in 2000.

The reasoning of civil rights leaders was that all children attend school, and nearly all adults work at some point, but the number of individuals who were affected by bans on racial intermarriage was thought to be so small as to make the issue of anti-intermarriage laws one of secondary importance. In addition, white hostility towards intermarriage was thought to be so virulent that civil rights leaders feared that a white backlash against intermarriage could possibly overwhelm civil rights gains in other areas such as workplace and school integration.

Booker T. Washington, Malcolm X, and Du Bois opposed intermarriage on the grounds that it would incite whites unnecessarily and Marcus Garvey was ideologically opposed to the idea of racial intermarriage (Childs, 1979, p.201). By the mid-1960s the NAACP legal defense fund was willing to weigh in on the intermarriage issue, but did so gingerly. Many other black nationalists who challenged the entire ethic of integration charged that blacks involved in interracial relationships were sleeping with the enemy and they attacked intermarriage as an attempt to assimilate into the white world and to reject black culture.

In this context, Du Bois considered that “intermarriage inexpedient because it interfered with efforts on the part of black Americans to develop and applaud their cultural distinctiveness”. The vast majority of white Americans in the 1950’s were in favor of banning interracial marriages and they did not consider their attitudes as a contradiction with the principles of American democracy. A *Gallup* poll in 1958 showed that 96 % of white Americans disapproved of interracial marriage.

Civil rights organizations were helping interracial couples who were sentenced for their relationships to take their cases to the Supreme Court. Since *Pace v. Alabama*, the Court had refused to make judgments in such cases. However, in 1964, the Warren Court issued to rule in the case of an interracial couple from Florida who had been convicted because they had cohabited. According to Gullickson and Morning (1999), “in *McLaughlin v. Florida*, the Supreme Court ruled that the Florida State law which prohibited cohabitation between whites and non-whites was unconstitutional and based solely on a policy of racial segregation” (p.104). But the court did not rule on Florida’s prohibition of interracial marriage between whites and non-whites.

1.2. The Landmark of *Loving vs. Virginia*

Charlie (2008) noted that “in June 1958, two residents of Virginia, Richard Loving, a white man and Mildred Jeter, a Negro woman, were married in the District of Columbia. After a short period of their marriage, the Lovings returned to Virginia and they decided to live in Caroline County” (p.195). In 1958, a grand jury of the Circuit Court of Caroline County issued an indictment accusing the Lovings of violating Virginia’s ban on interracial marriages. On 1959, the Lovings were sentenced to one year in jail the sentence was suspended by the trial judge for a period of 25 years on the condition that the Lovings leave the state and not return to Virginia together for 25 years (Bender, 2000, p.7).

On January 22, 1965, the state trial judge denies the motion to vacate the sentences, and the Lovings perfected an appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeals of Virginia. On February 11, 1965, the Lovings were allowed to present their constitutional claims to the highest State court. The Supreme Court of Appeals upheld the constitutionality of anti-miscegenation statutes and affirmed the convictions. Again, the Lovings appealed this decision (Shrestha & Heisler, 2015, p. 4).

Sollors (2000) stated that, months before the Supreme Court ruling on *Loving v. Virginia*, the Roman Catholic Church joined the movement, supporting interracial couples in their struggle to repeal miscegenation laws. The US Supreme Court overturned the convictions in a unanimous decision, dismissing the Commonwealth of Virginia’s argument that a law forbidding both white and black persons from marrying persons of another race, and providing identical penalties to white and black violators, could not be construed as racially discriminatory (p.53). The court ruled in 1967 that Virginia’s anti-miscegenation statute violated both the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

2. New Waves of Immigrants to the USA

Sharon and Edmonston (2005) claimed that the first wave of immigrants arrived before entries began to be recorded in 1820. The English made up 60% of the population in 1790, but there were Scots, Scots-Irish, Germans, and people from the Netherlands, France, and Spain. These migrants were motivated by a mixture of religious, political, and economic factors. These early immigrants took great risks. Starvation, disease, and shipwreck probably killed more than one in ten of those who set sail for America (p. 9). While African slaves were transported to America under horrific conditions and considerable loss of life, historians estimate that immigrants died at an even higher rate than slaves en route to the New World. Slaves often had more food and protection than ordinary passengers because the death of a slave was a business loss for the owners who had arranged their passage.

In this regard Jimenez (2011) added that the second wave of immigrants, who arrived between 1820 and 1860, fit well with Americans eagerness for people to help push back the frontier. Peasants displaced from agriculture and artisans made jobless by the Industrial Revolution were desperate to escape from Europe. New arrivals sent what came to be called “American letters” back to Europe, encouraging friends and relatives to join them. About 40% of these second wave immigrants were Irish escaping extreme poverty and famine in their home country (p.32).

According to the analysis held by Pew Research Centre (2012), the third wave of immigration started in 1880, when almost 460,000 immigrants arrived, and ended with the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, when 1.2 million immigrants entered. During the third wave, over 20 million Southern and Eastern Europeans came, mostly to the Eastern and Midwestern states. Bradt (2010) noted that “several hundred thousand Chinese, Japanese, and other Asian laborers settled in the Western states” (p.4). The shift in national origins can be seen by comparing the homelands of the immigrants who entered during 1882 and 1907, two peak immigration years. Of those arriving in 1882, 87% came from northern and Western Europe, and 13% came from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Wang (2012) added that the Fourth wave immigrants began arriving in the United States after 1965 when the preference system changed. Instead of giving priority to immigrants based on their national origins, with preference to those from northern and Western Europe, the new system gave priority to people with US relatives and to a small number of people with outstanding accomplishments or special skills (p.8). These changes, coupled with prosperity in Europe, altered the composition of US immigrants. During the 1970s fewer than 20% of US immigrants were Europeans.

The 20th century has witnessed a transformation of the United States from a predominately white population mainly from Europe to a society with diverse racial and ethnic minorities. The country has moved far beyond black and white due to contemporary immigration. Unlike the earlier waves of immigrant of the late 19th and earlier 20th centuries, America’s recent newcomers have been mainly non-European, with the vast majority originating from the Caribbean, Latin America, or Asia (Lee & Edmonston, 2005, p. 10).

The rise of interracial marriage rate has contributed to the growth of the multiracial population, which became highly visible when for the first time in US history, the 2000 census allowed Americans to mark more than one race to identify themselves. This meant that a person with a black father and a white mother could mark both black and white on the census form to identify themselves, rather than black or white (Bender, 2000, p 25). It meant that a person with a white father and a Chinese mother could identify as both white and Chinese rather than having to choose one or the other. The option of marking more than one race is particularly significant since it gives official status and recognition to Americans who consider their backgrounds as racially mixed. In 2000, 2.4% of American population identified as multiracial, accounting for one in forty Americans (Algan, 2001, p.301).

3. Mechanisms Driving Interracial Marriage

Brooks (2011) explained how internet dating has generated a growing number of interracial marriages since the mid-nineties. Online dating is changing the way people date and marry in America. Around one in six people, who marry in America, meet through an online dating site. The Internet has become a much more social place (p. 17).

First, the advent of social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter has turned the web from one of walled-garden individual web sites into an open social web in which users can freely share content and interests across multiple web sites. Second, the more recent rise of smart phones has enabled people to connect to the Internet in a deep and meaningful way no matter where they are.

Algan & Verdier (2001) argued that one way to explain why intermarriage exists is to consider the behavior from an economic approach in neo-classical economic theory, people are assumed to be rational. Hence every decision making is based on search for optimal use of time, energy, and money (p. 97). With regard to marriage, cost benefit calculation is made and marriage is pursued when the action ensures a profitable prospect. Costs and benefits in this sense need not be material but they can be social or spiritual.

Attitudes affecting a marriage decision concern general group member's view towards endogamy and exogamy with members of a particular group for certain groups. It could be religious body which reinforces the endogamy norm such as the religious affiliation but other actors can change when one is exposed to others ways of life and thinking through education, modernization, urban residence and such attitudes in this sense shape the degree of tolerance towards intermarrying in a particular social group (Charlie, 2009, p. 547).

In addition to the conditions known to contribute to improving attitudes and relationships among dissimilar groups, several factors have been identified that influence actual interracial marriage. Lee (2014) reported that "the propensity to marry interracially differs dramatically by gender; three main patterns exist in intermarriage rates by gender" (p. 101). In the first pattern, men and women from a group are equally likely to intermarry. This was the case for

whites, American Indian, Hawaiian, and Some Other Race (SOR). In the second pattern, men from a particular group are more likely to intermarry than women in that group. Blacks exemplify best this pattern. Black men are more likely to intermarry than black women. About 2% of black men were intermarried, compared with less than 1% of black women in 1970. In 2000, 10% of black men, but just 4% of black women, were intermarried.

In the third pattern, women in a racial group are more likely to intermarry than men in that group. This pattern is illustrated by Asians; this gender gap has remained stable over the past 30 years. 25% of Asian women and 14% of Asian men were intermarried (Pew Research Center, 2011). In this context, Sharon & Edmonston (2005) added that in 2000, the rates of intermarriage of Asian women still exceeded that of Asian men. The gender differences in intermarriage in certain racial groups are not easy to explain, indeed, many factors may contribute, including social relations among specific groups and the roles played by both males and females in different racial groups (p. 27).

A racial group's size may have a strong effect on its members to intermarry. Generally, the intermarriage rate is inversely related to a group's size. Intermarriage is more common among smaller groups. However, the rate will be lower in the larger group because of its larger population. The large US white population has the lowest interracial marriage rate. The rate of interracial marriage among whites was just 0.4% in 1970 to reach 3% in 2000 (Gullickson & Morning, 1999, p 82). Blacks have the lowest intermarriage rate among minorities. Asians have intermarriage rates above those of whites or blacks but lower than the rates of smaller racial groups. One-fifth of married Asians were interracially married. American Indians and Hawaiian who belong to smaller racial groups have always had very high intermarriage rates (Pew Research Center, 2014).

Douglas (2009) explained that in addition to the relative size of racial groups, the age of these groups can affect the possibility of intermarriage. But individual preferences and social factors such as perceived attractiveness of the marital partners are also important. Most interracial couples consist of a white person married to a nonwhite (p.29). Despite that interracial couples have become much more diverse in the last decades, marriage between nonwhite minorities Asians and Hispanics, for example has remained uncommon. In 1970 most common interracial couples were white-Asians; white-American Indian; and white-black. With the 1980 Census, white-SOR couples became one of the main types of interracial couples. After the introduction of multiple racial reporting in the 2000 Census, white-multiple race couples became the most common, accounting for 25 % of interracial couples (p.47).

According to Fisher (2003), "another factor believed to influence interracial marriage attitudes is age" (p.105). Many studies confirm the effects of age on tolerance toward interracial marriage. There is a clear relationship between intermarriage and age. Indeed, younger men and women are more likely than older people to intermarry, reflecting the recent increase in intermarriage. Almost 9% of married men and women below age 30 were intermarried, as

compared to 7% of people ages 30 to 44.5% for those ages 45 to 59, and about 3% among those age 60 or older. The rate of older couples that are intermarried is likely to increase in the future as younger intermarried couples grow older (Charlie, 2008, p.200). If the proportion of interracial marriage will be the same in the few coming decades, the rate of intermarried couples in the total US population will increase as well.

Jones (2013) claimed that the characteristics of those individuals who cross racial lines and intermarry have long been a subject of both popular speculation and scholarly inquiry. However, research has shown that interracial marriage is more common among those who are more educated holding a college degree or higher. Intermarriage rates are likely to increase with education (p. 42). The US Census Bureau (2011) reported that two different patterns exist for this relationship. In the first pattern, intermarriage increases linearly with education. This pattern holds for blacks, American Indians, Hawaiians, and SORs. The rate of intermarried blacks with bachelor's degree or higher is 9%. Concerning the second pattern, the percentage of intermarried couples reaches the highest proportion up to the 'some college' group, then declines among the most educated group, college graduates and above. Whites, Asians, and multiple race Americans follow this pattern.

Lewis (2001) agreed that intermarriages of US born adults have lower rates than foreign born adults, but this relationship varies by race and gender. Among white and black husbands, foreign born men have slightly higher rates of intermarriage than US-born men. For other racial groups, we see the reverse, with considerably higher rates of intermarriage for the US born. Almost one third of US born Asian husbands were intermarried, compared with 7% for foreign born Asian husbands who are naturalized citizens, and 5% of foreign born Asian husbands who were not citizens (p.117).

The US born population is mainly composed of whites and blacks, two groups with fairly low racial intermarriage rates. Foreign born spouses, especially wives, are important contributors to the increase intermarriage and, therefore to the increased diversity of the US population. Foreign-born white and black wives have higher rates of intermarriage than US born white and black wives. For other racial groups, foreign born women had much lower rates of intermarriage than US born women. Among married Asian women, for example, 14% of foreign born noncitizens were intermarried, compared with 22% of naturalized citizens and 44% of US born wives.

Everywhere we turn, we see images of "interracial marriages." Back in 1967, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, in which Sidney Poitier's character falls in love with Katharine Houghton's character, marked the first time a major film featured an interracial couple. Now it is much more common, as witnessed by the numerous movies featuring interracial couples, such as *Where Halle Berry Falls for Pierce Brosnan* and *Embraces Billy Bob Thornton*.

Interracial couples are becoming more popular on TV as well: characters played by Sandra Oh and Isaiah Washington on *Grey's Anatomy* are just one example. Recently, popular books such as *Interracial Intimacies* by

Randall Kennedy and *Interracial Intimacy* by Rachel Moan have focused on interracial relationships. Newspaper headlines such as “Blacks, Whites and Love” and “Interracial Marriage Surge across US” are common place.

3.1. White Intermarriage

Childs (2005) asserted that “negative attitudes toward intermarriage have decreased, rates of interracial marriages have increased in 1880, and interracial marriages among whites and blacks or Asians were extremely rare less than 0.1% of all white marriages” (p. 200). Whites were more likely to intermarry with blacks than Asians, though this trend eventually reversed. For the first 100 years of the time series, the share of white male-black female marriages remained under 0.1%, trended up from 1980 through 2000, and peaked in the latter years at 0.2%. Only between blacks and whites intermarriage remained such a rare practice as to still be regarded as socially deviant behavior (Lee 2014, p.91).

Brooks (2011) asserted that “several social researchers have posed the question of the reasons behind the low rates of black-white intermarriage, the largest factor in the low rates of black-white intermarriage may simply be the historical relationship between blacks and whites” (p.201). As a result of the long legal separation of the two groups which continued well into the last century, interactions between black and whites remain much different than the inter-actions between Whites and other minorities.

White intermarriages with Asians follow a very different pattern. White male Asian female matches were quite rare from 1880–1960. In 1960, this level was rising dramatically. These marriages continued to increase nearly tenfold over the next 40 years, and today are the most common interracial marriage. White female marriages with Asian men followed a similar, though less pronounced, trajectory (Chin & Karthikeyan, 2002, p. 31).

3.2. Black Intermarriage

Sollors (2000) claimed that “Americans are approaching unanimity in their views of marriage between blacks and whites, with 86% now approving of such unions, Americans views on interracial marriage have undergone a major transformation in the past five decades” (p. 400). When *Gallup* first asked about black-white marriages in 1958, do you approve or disapprove of marriage between whites and Blacks? Only 4% of respondents approved. Americans disapproved than approved until 1983, and approval did not exceed the majority level until 1997.

Douglas (1996) declared that the approval of black-white marriages is at a record high among blacks and whites. Blacks have always been more approving than whites of interracial marriage, going back to 1968 when Gallup first was able to report reliable estimates on each group’s opinions. However, the gap in approval ratings has narrowed considerably, averaging 13 percentage points since 1997 but 32 points from 1968-1994. Among African-Americans who were newlyweds in 2008, nearly one-in-six (15%) married someone who was not black.

The share of out-marriage among men was more than twice the share among women. According to *Pew Research Center*, as with whites, the rate of interracial marriage among blacks had been very low until fairly recently. Only about 1% of black newlyweds married outside their race in 1960. The rate has gone up dramatically over the past several decades and reached the all-time high of nearly 15.5% in 2008. Among black newlyweds in 2008, more than half married a white person and over one-in-five married a Hispanic. Just less than one-in-ten married an Asian, and the rest married someone of a mixed race, an American Indian or some other race (Childs, 2005, p. 185).

3.3. Asian Intermarriage

Farley (2011) pointed out that marriages between Asians and European American were illegal. Census data suggest that Asian American intermarriage increased steadily from the 1960s and 1970s to the 1980s. This trend was consistent with rates of intermarriage in other racial and ethnic groups. However, from 1980 to 1990, Asian American intermarriages dropped from 25, 4% to 15% of all Asian American marriages. Interestingly, this trend was not consistent with that of other racial and cultural groups for which intermarriages continued to increase (p.5).

Hall (1996) pointed out that “specific Asian American groups vary in their likelihood to intermarry, since the 1960s, Japanese Americans have consistently intermarried more than Filipino Americans, who have intermarried more than Chinese Americans” (p. 30). When Asian Americans do intermarry, they are more likely to marry European Americans or individuals of the Caucasian race than any other racial group. Among Asian Americans, females are more likely to intermarry than are males.

Fisher (2004) stated that “among Asian newlyweds in 2008, more than three-in-ten (31%) married someone who was not Asian. The rate of out-marriage among female Asian newlyweds was twice that of male newlyweds (p.287). According to the statistics held by the Pew Research Center (2014), nearly four-in-ten (39.5%) Asian women who married in 2008 married someone of a different race/ethnicity, compared with 19.5% of Asian men. Among Asian newlyweds who intermarried in 2008, a majority (75%) married a white person, followed by 12% who married a Hispanic, 7% who married a black and 7% who married someone of a mixed race, American Indian or other race.

3.4 Hispanic Intermarriage

Shrestaha & Heister (2011) claimed that since 1960 the number of interracial couples in the United States has increased more than tenfold, to 1.6 million, including marriages involving Hispanics. Such unions now account for about 4% of US marriages. a share that is expected to mushroom in coming years and that is already offering powerful evidence that many Americans are jettisoning old prejudices as never before (p.21).

In this regard, Lee & Edmonston (2005) added that among the whole number of Hispanic newlywed couples in 2008, about a quarter married someone who was not Hispanic, and this share is similar for men and women. For all Hispanics who are currently married, about 17% are married to someone of a

different race or ethnicity. The share of Hispanics with a non-Hispanic spouse is slightly higher for women than for men. About 19% of married Hispanic women have a non-Hispanic spouse, compared with about 16% of married Hispanic men (p. 25).

Among Hispanics newlyweds who intermarried in 2008, the vast majority (81%) married a white person. About one-in-ten married a black person, and 5% married an Asian. The rest married someone of a mixed race, an American Indian or some other race. Hispanic men and women in mixed marriages have a slightly different pattern in the racial profile of their spouses. More than eight-in-ten (83%) Hispanic men who out-married in 2008 married a white spouse, compared with 78% of Hispanic women. Among Hispanic female newlyweds who out-married in 2008, some 13% married a black spouse, compared with just 5% of Hispanic male newlyweds (Baars, 2009, p.230).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), this trend was not consistent with that of other racial and cultural groups for which intermarriages continued to increase. Specific Asian American groups vary in their likelihood to intermarry. Since the 1960s, Japanese Americans have consistently intermarried more than Filipino Americans, who have intermarried more than Chinese Americans. When Asian Americans do intermarry, they are more likely to marry European Americans or individuals of the Caucasian race than any other racial group. Among Asian Americans, females are more likely to intermarry than are males.

4. Do Interracial Couples Manage to integrate in the US Society?

Marti (2005) explained how in the US interracial marriage rates increased from less than 1% of all marriages in 1970 to nearly 3% in 2000. Despite this upward trend in the United States, rates of interracial marriage are still significantly lower than those found in Europe, especially between white and black people. Multiracial Americans have become the fastest growing demographic group, wielding an impact on minority growth that challenges traditional notions of race.

Sollors (2000) admitted that most studies of intermarriage do not address the inherently messy business of deciding when intermarriage has or has not occurred, but tends to dive into an examination of the different rates of intermarriage exhibited by some minority groups over others. But if there are methodological and theoretical differences with the term “intermarriage”, the concept of “integration” is equally slippery and vague (p. 87).

Lee (2014) argued that in most cases, analysts talk of integration as the outcome of intermarriage. But in some cases, intermarriage can be seen as the outcome of integration; for example, intermarriage is proceeding faster than might be expected in immigrant populations which seemed in economic terms to be imperfectly integrated (p.99). In this context Jimenez (2011) asserted that “most analysts do not clearly define “integration”, and some use it synonymously with the term “assimilation”. Alba and Nee use the term “assimilation rather than “integration”. Consequently, assimilation is defined as the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social

differences”. In the same context, Patterson and Peach use the term “integration” to mean social integration, and imply that intermarriage means an overall acceptance into the mainstream (p. 9).

Foreman & Nance (1999) assumed that if children of different ethnic backgrounds belong to the same play-group, later the same adolescent cliques, and at college would belong to the same fraternities and sororities. If the parents belong to the same country club and invite each other to their homes for dinner; it is completely unrealistic not to expect these children, now grown, to love and to marry each other, brightly oblivious to previous ethnic extraction (p. 532).

Gullickson & Morning (1999) explained that economic integration is subsumed within Gordon’s term “structural assimilation”, and is assumed to precede marital assimilation. But does structural assimilation necessarily lead to intermarriage, as Gordon claims? And does intermarriage really signal true social acceptance? Some groups have clearly not achieved structural assimilation as defined by Gordon. In the US many African Americans demonstrate a combination of poverty, residential segregation, and low levels of intermarriage with whites (p. 32).

4.1. Identity Formation in Multiracial Children

Biracial individuals may choose to identify as white, as a member of the minority group or as bicultural or of mixed heritage. The research literature has discussed the potential emotional challenges of biracial children. These children need to understand the concept of interracial (US Census Bureau, 2013). This abstract label might be more difficult to understand than fitting into a permanent racial category.

Racial and ethnic group differences have a significant impact on children’s social development though the impact varies with age and specific ethnicity. The role of heritage in a child’s development is affected by history, as well as by social context and immediate environment. Since having a multiple ethnic heritage has a different, perhaps more problematic, effect on a child’s development, it is important to actively help multiracial children acquire a positive self-concept. They need exposure to models of all the ethnicities they embrace and to multiracial people generally (Caballero, 2008, p. 11).

They need to understand what it means to be multiracial and to acquire culturally-linked coping skills that include ways to deal with racism and discrimination. Because there are few integrated, stable, and tension-free racially mixed communities in the US that can facilitate positive identity formation in interracial children, families and schools must work hard to provide a supportive community that affirms multiracialism.

Several studies suggest that an achieved ethnic identity is especially relevant when one’s ethnic group has a minority status in society.

Jones (2013) noted that, “a strong ethnic identity can serve to protect persons from the effects of negative stereotypes and discrimination by providing them a larger frame of reference with which to identify, and, in turn, protecting their psychological well-being” (p 11). Children are drawn into the conflict zone.

Polls show that most people who oppose interracial marriage do so because of the effect it will have on children. Where some religions almost force the expectancy of a large family within a marriage, other religions are more conservative with regards to having children.

Identity development is a continuous process that begins in early childhood and continues throughout the life span. Children actively seek exploration of themselves and their identities. With this exploration comes a natural comparison of oneself to one's parents. Children go through an expected process of assessing their family dynamics and then evaluating how exactly they fit into those dynamics. They often seek acceptance and companionship from those with whom they can most easily identify.

The biracial child may try to choose one identity over the other, but then one parent will try to pull him in one direction, and the other parent will try to pull him in a different direction. When the child finally decides, the parent who was not chosen will give the child negative feedback on his choice. This problem can lead children into emotional instability and a great resentment towards their parents, because they did not receive the support they longed for. Another problem biracial children face is when the parents and child agree on an identity but then society does not agree with their choice. The child blames the parents for the negative feedback society gives them; this adds to the resentment that children hold against their parents.

Farley (2011) argued that "coping with racism will become difficult for biracial children because they face more racism than individuals that can be placed into one category or another" (p.12). People who try to place individuals into specific categories are going to have trouble placing these children into any one category, thus they might hold more resentment towards them and be more racist towards them. The society will place another burn on these children by not accepting them into any race. For example, a child of a black and white marriage, may suffer because he is either too light to be black, and too dark to be white. This biracial child would literally be struck between two communities that reject him.

5. Conclusion

Interracial marriage has been an American obsession since the beginning of its history. The primary anti-miscegenation laws that were passed prohibited interracial marriage between blacks and whites. Over time, similar laws were enacted to include other minority groups. Social separation of the races was enforced formally by law and informally by prejudice and discrimination. Two main reasons had led to a dramatic change in American race relations and interracial marriages. One was the 1967 US Supreme Court decision that overturned remaining state anti-miscegenation laws. The second was the large scale of immigration which increased racial and ethnic diversity as well as the rates of interracial marriage in the United States. Inter marriage has long been considered a core indicator of the integration of ethnic and racial minorities in society in which interracial couples still struggle to be integrated in main stream American society.

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