

New Marriages, New Families: U.S. Racial and Hispanic Intermarriage

by Sharon M. Lee and Barry Edmonston

*Racial and Hispanic
intermarriage is becoming
more common in U.S. society.*

*Asian and Hispanic
population growth
contributes to intermarriage.*

*Intermarriage is changing
how Americans think about
race and ethnicity.*

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New Marriages, New Families: U.S. Racial and Hispanic Intermarriage

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Multiracial Americans have always been a part of the U.S. population. In colonial times, multiple-race children were born of unions between American Indians, Europeans, and Africans. Early U.S. population censuses included multiple-race categories such as mulatto and “mixed-blood” Indians. The 2000 Census also acknowledged interracial Americans by allowing U.S. residents to choose more than one race, and about 7 million people did so.

Social acceptance of multiple-race Americans and of marriages across racial boundaries has varied over the country’s history, but prejudice and discrimination have been constants. The last few decades, however, have witnessed an apparent sea change in Americans’ racial attitudes. Many articles on multiracial Americans, interracial couples, and multiracial families appeared in the mass media, some generated by the new 2000 Census option to choose more than one race.¹ New surveys of racial attitudes suggested dramatic improvements in American race relations. According to a Gallup poll conducted at the end of 2003, 86 percent of black, 79 percent of Hispanic, and 66 percent of white respondents would accept a child or grandchild marrying someone of a different race.² The percentage of whites who favored laws against marriages between blacks and whites declined from 35 percent in the 1970s to 10 percent in the 2000s.³ And in another survey conducted in 2003, 77 percent of respondents agreed that it



was all right for blacks and whites to date each other.⁴

Interracial marriage has increased across most racial groups and, although they are still the exception to the norm, these interracial marriages are generating a growing population of multiracial Americans.⁵ Marriage between Hispanics and non-Hispanics, already quite common, has further contributed to changing racial and ethnic boundaries in America. The shift to allow Americans to identify with more than one race in the 2000 Census was both a reflection of and response to these trends.

Of the 281 million people enumerated in the 2000 Census, more than 2.4 percent, or 7 million people, reported more than one race.⁶ Several observers believe that these figures

Interracial marriage is an indicator of racial assimilation.

underestimate the number of Americans who come from multiracial backgrounds. Some people may not be aware of their multiracial backgrounds, while others choose to identify with just one race even when they are aware of their multiple origins. Many minority advocacy groups advised their members to report only one race (the minority race) in the 2000 Census because these groups feared a loss of political clout if their population total was eroded by people choosing more than one race.⁷

Parents were less hesitant to report their children as multiracial, reflecting recent increases in racial intermarriages as well as the greater acceptance of multiracial identities. In the 2000 Census, 42 percent of persons who reported more than one race were under age 18, compared with 25 percent of those reporting a single race.⁸

Significance of Intermarriage

People have a tendency to marry within their social group or to marry someone who is close to them in social status. This tendency is termed homogamy, and intermarriage runs counter to homogamy. Race is just one of many characteristics—including social class, ethnicity, religion—that affect the choice of a spouse; but race has always been a major dividing line in America. In this *Population Bulletin*, we focus on racial and ethnic intermarriage because such intermarriage is a particularly significant indicator of the assimilation or integration of racial and ethnic minorities.⁹

People often are identified with racial and ethnic groups that define their social status and restrict their opportunities.¹⁰ Easily observed physical characteristics such as skin color and facial features become markers to categorize individuals by race, while cultural traits such as religion and language often distinguish ethnicity. Social scientists generally agree that races and ethnic groups are social

constructions resulting from history, culture, politics, and other social processes.¹¹ However, once racial or ethnic groups are formed, they often lead to racial or ethnic stratification or inequality. In the United States, for example, unequal rights and unequal access to society's resources have long marked the historical racial divide between whites and nonwhites.

Social norms governing marriage play critical roles in preserving the racial or ethnic status quo in racially or ethnically stratified societies. For example, marriage between people of the same race (racial homogamy or *endogamy*) reflects and maintains rules about race and racial boundaries. When individuals marry someone of the same race, they guarantee racial similarities within families across generations and the stability of racial groups in society. Racial endogamy is especially important when an individual's and group's racial membership defines access to resources, power, and rewards. In the past, social norms against marriage between whites and nonwhites in the United States were formalized into laws known as antimiscegenation laws (see Box 1).

In multiethnic societies such as the United States, the prevalence of and attitudes toward racial and ethnic intermarriages reveal much about racial and ethnic relations and integration. Children of racially intermarried couples straddle racial boundaries and further challenge the idea of clearly defined racial groups.¹²

This *Population Bulletin* covers three aspects of intermarriage in the United States: racial intermarriage, interracial couples, and their children; Hispanic intermarriage, inter-Hispanic couples, and their children; and the implications of racial and Hispanic intermarriage, family formation, and racial identification for future demographic and social trends.¹³ This report is based on analyses of data from the 1970 to 2000 censuses (see Box 2, page 6). The 1970 Census was the first census conducted following the 1967 U.S.

Box 1

Antimiscegenation Laws

In the United States, states define laws governing marriage. When a couple wants to marry, they apply for a marriage license from the state in which they wish to marry and comply with that state's rules, if any, on minimum age, blood tests, waiting period, and other requirements. Today, marriages can be freely contracted between people of different races in all states, but this was not always the case. Laws banning marriage between whites and other races—or antimiscegenation laws—were common throughout the United States from colonial times into the 20th century.

The first antimiscegenation law was passed in Maryland in 1661. It prohibited marriage between blacks and whites. By the end of the 19th century, most states had similar antimiscegenation laws. In 1880, California prohibited the issuance of licenses for marriage between whites and negroes, mulattos, and Mongolians (a term that mainly applied to Chinese at that time). A Missouri judge prevented white and black intermarriage in 1883, reasoning that such marriages cannot lead to offspring, thereby justifying the ban on such marriages. In 1909, California added Japanese to its list of races forbidden from marrying whites, and in 1945, California Governor Earl Warren signed an expanded bill that prohibited marriage between whites and negroes, mulattos, Mongolians (which included Chinese and Japanese), and Malays.

The end of World War II led to gradual erosion of antimiscegenation laws. Between 1946 and 1957, large numbers of foreign-born wives and children of U.S. military personnel were permitted to enter the U.S. under the G.I. Fiancées Act or War Brides Act of 1946. While most of those admitted were from Europe, some foreign-born Japanese wives and children were also admitted. The occupation of Japan after World War II and the Korean War and its aftermath led to substantial numbers of U.S. armed services personnel being stationed in both Japan and Korea. In spite of strict restrictions on contact with the local population, many U.S. servicemen formed relationships with local women. In 1947, in response to growing requests for marriage between U.S. servicemen and Japanese women, new federal legislation was passed amending the War Brides Act. This legislation specified requirements for such marriages when they occurred overseas, including extensive background checks on both individuals and the prohibition of marriages with women who had worked as prostitutes or bar hostesses. The rigorous requirements and checks were not relaxed until 1957, paving the way for more marriages between Japanese (and to a lesser extent, Korean) women and U.S. military personnel.

Meanwhile, antimiscegenation laws were being challenged in the courts. The years following World War II brought the greatest changes to these laws, although there were some early exceptions (for example, Pennsylvania was the first state to repeal its antimiscegenation law in 1780, and Ohio repealed its law in 1887). Most states did not change their laws until after World War II. In 1948, in *Perez v. Sharp* (also known as *Perez v. Lippold*), the California Supreme Court ruled the state's antimiscegenation law unconstitutional. Oregon repealed its antimiscegenation law in 1951, and 13 other states followed suit over the next 16 years.

The most well-known and celebrated victory in the struggle against antimiscegenation laws was the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Loving v. Virginia*. Richard Loving, a white man, had married Mildred Jeter, a black woman, in Washington, D.C. When the couple returned home to Virginia, they were arrested and convicted of violating Virginia's antimiscegenation law. The couple was sentenced to a year's imprisonment or a 25-year exile from Virginia. Rather than risk imprisonment, the couple moved to Washington, D.C., and sued the state of Virginia in 1963. The Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals upheld the antimiscegenation law in 1966. The case was then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declared in 1967 that Virginia's antimiscegenation law (and similar laws in 15 other states) was unconstitutional. However, several states had bans on interracial marriage in their constitutions for many years, even though the laws were not inforcable. Alabama was the last state to repeal its antimiscegenation law, through a state constitutional amendment in 2000.

The main purpose of antimiscegenation laws was to prevent marriage between whites and individuals considered nonwhite. Marriages between different nonwhite races generally were not prohibited. Thus, antimiscegenation laws were clearly meant to maintain the power and privilege of whites and to uphold widely held beliefs in those days about racial separation, difference, and purity.

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Box 2

Data on Inter marriage

Researchers who study inter marriage use a variety of data, measures, and methodologies. The data on interracial and inter-Hispanic marriage used in this *Population Bulletin* come primarily from the Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 decennial censuses. For the 1970 Census, we used six different 1 percent samples to have an overall 6 percent sample of U.S. households. For the 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses, we used the 5 percent PUMS.¹

For each household record, we examined information for all persons in the household, including members of subfamilies living in the household. Subfamilies refer to families (for example, a married couple or a parent and child) in addition to the main household family. Although only about 4 percent of all married couples in 2000 were in subfamilies, these couples are typically younger, more likely to be foreign-born, and more likely to be inter-married. In 2000, for example, 7.2 percent of all married couples in a main family were intermarried; the comparable figure for married couples in a subfamily was 8.5 percent. Inter married couples living in subfamilies represented nearly 5 percent of all inter married families in 2000, and excluding them would distort the overall figures for inter married couples and exclude a distinctive and important group of married couples.

We searched for all married couples in the files, checking that the husband and wife had both reported themselves as married and related to each other as spouses.

This *Population Bulletin* focuses on married couples and their children, but intimate relationships are obviously not limited to marriage. Some couples are in cohabitating or unmarried-partner relationships, including interracial or inter-Hispanic couples. Cohabitation has become more frequent. In 1970, the ratio of cohabiting couples to married couples was 1 to 100; by 2000, the ratio had increased to 6 per 100. In 2000, about 2 percent of persons 15 years and older were in cohabitating

heterosexual relationships. Data by race were not reported.²

If a married couple was found in the household, we then searched for all children of the married couple. We included only children age 18 years or younger. Again, while our interest is in children of inter married couples, we recognize that many U.S. children do not live in married-couple families, including children who may be interracial or inter-Hispanic. In 2000, about two-thirds of children lived in married-couple family households, 27 percent lived in single-parent family households, and 6 percent lived in unmarried partner households.³

We used the largest publicly available PUMS files to obtain the best estimates for potentially small numbers of particular types of inter married couples and their children. For some demographic groups, however, the census data sets were larger than required for this analysis. We used smaller samples from these data sets for some of the larger groups, including the following: We sampled one in every 10 all-white couples and their children; one in every three all-black couples and their children; and one in every two all-Hispanic couples and their children. For all other combinations of spouses, including all interracial and inter-Hispanic couples, we selected all couples and their children for analysis.

The final data set derived from PUMS data from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses includes the following unweighted sample sizes:

	Married couples	Children
Total	2,047,231	2,406,333
1970	400,113	594,944
1980	437,196	524,864
1990	518,999	557,455
2000	690,923	729,070

We modified the original U.S. Census Bureau weights to ensure an accurate description of all married couples and their children age 18 or younger who were living with them.

Census data have many advantages for inter marriage research, such as

large national samples that allow detailed comparisons across groups. This capability is particularly important for smaller racial populations such as American Indians and for studying intermarriage, because researchers are interested in examining different types of intermarriages and the factors associated with them. In addition, because intermarriage may be relatively uncommon among some groups or in some areas, census data allow researchers sufficient cases to investigate topics that may otherwise be unfeasible.

Census data also have disadvantages, because they only reflect the current stock of marriages and are not appropriate for answering questions about why particular people chose to intermarry or not. In addition, trend analyses using census-based racial data face other challenges, including comparability of racial categories over time.

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3. Terry Lugaila and Julia Overturf, "Children and the Households They Live In: 2000," *Census 2000 Special Reports* (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Supreme Court ruling that overturned remaining state antimiscegenation laws,¹⁴ while the 2000 Census was the first to allow Americans to report more than one race. Racial and Hispanic identity are based on answers to census questions on race and Hispanic origin from the 1970 to 2000 censuses (see Box 3, page 8).

This *Population Bulletin* finds that:

- Racial intermarriage has increased from less than 1 percent of all married couples in 1970 to more than 5 percent of couples in 2000.
- The typical interracial couple is a white person with a nonwhite spouse. Intermarriage between two people from minority racial groups is relatively infrequent.
- Whites and blacks have the lowest intermarriage rates while American Indians, Hawaiians, and multiple-race people have the highest. Asians and people reporting some other race have intermediate intermarriage rates.
- Black men are more likely to intermarry than black women, while Asian women are more likely to intermarry than Asian men. Men and women from other racial groups are equally likely to intermarry.
- About one-fourth of Hispanic couples are inter-Hispanic, a rate that has been fairly stable since 1980.
- Younger and better-educated Americans are more likely to intermarry than older and less-educated Americans.
- U.S.-born Asians and Hispanics and foreign-born whites and blacks are more likely to intermarry than foreign-born Asians and Hispanics and U.S.-born whites and blacks.
- More children are growing up in either interracial or inter-Hispanic families. Between 1970 and 2000, the number of children living in interracial families increased nearly fourfold—from 900,000 to more than 3 million—while the number in inter-Hispanic families increased nearly threefold—from 800,000 to 2 million.

More U.S. children are growing up in interracial families.

Race, Ethnicity, and the U.S. Census

Race and ethnicity are considered social constructions, which means that society chooses particular physiological or sociocultural attributes to define racial or ethnic groups. Skin color, facial features, hair texture and color, and other physical characteristics may be used to differentiate races, while language, religion, and other cultural traits may be used to define ethnic groups. How race and ethnicity are defined varies across societies and may change over time within a society.

The United States has a long history of counting its population according to race, and the decennial population census has played a key role in this history. From 1790 to 2000, the U.S. population census has categorized Americans into different groups that reflected the prevailing attitudes and norms about race. The 1790 Census collected data on “free” people and slaves, but did not specifically ask for race. No whites were enslaved at that time, and “free” resi-

dents were categorized as “white” or “other” (“other” included free blacks, American Indians, and Asians). These categories served as a *de facto* enumeration of the population by race or color.

The number of races listed on the census form has expanded over time. The 2000 Census questionnaire specified 15 different possible responses to the question on race (see table below). The composition of racial categories has also changed from census to census. For example, Asian Indians were classified as “Other” race in 1960, “white” in 1970, “Asian/Pacific Islander” in 1980 and 1990, and “Asian” in 2000. In 2000, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders were separated from Asians to form a separate racial category. Mexicans were listed as a separate race in 1930, but were routinely placed in the white population from the 1940 Census on. In recent censuses, the majority of persons reporting “other” or “Some Other Race” are of Mexican origin.

Race and Hispanic Categories, 1970 to 2000 U.S. Censuses

Year	1970 ¹	1980	1990	2000 ²
Color or race	White	White	White	White
	Negro or Black	Black or Negro	Black or Negro	Black, African Am., or Negro
	Indian (Amer.)	Japanese	Indian (Amer.)	American Indian or Alaska Native
	Japanese	Chinese	Eskimo	Alaska Native
	Chinese	Filipino	Aleut	Asian Indian
	Filipino	Korean	<i>Asian or Pacific Islander (API)</i>	Chinese
	Hawaiian	Vietnamese		Filipino
	Korean	Indian (Amer.)	Chinese	Japanese
	Other	Asian Indian	Filipino	Korean
		Hawaiian	Hawaiian	Vietnamese
		Guamanian	Korean	Other Asian
		Samoan	Vietnamese	Native Hawaiian
		Eskimo	Japanese	Guamanian or Chamorro
		Aleut	Asian Indian	Samoan
		Other	Samoan	Other Pacific Islander
		Guamanian	Some Other Race	
		Other		
Hispanic	Mexican	Not Spanish/Hispanic	Not Spanish/Hispanic	Not Spanish/Hispanic/ Latino
	Puerto Rican	Mexican, Mex. Am., Chicano	Mexican, Mex. Am., Chicano	Mexican, Mex. Am., Chicano
	Cuban	Chicano	Chicano	Puerto Rican
	Central or South American	Puerto Rican	Puerto Rican	Cuban
	Other Spanish	Cuban	Cuban	Other
	None of these	Other	Other	

¹ In the 1970 Census, only a sample of households were asked about their Hispanic origin: A 15 percent sample was asked if they were “Spanish-American,” and a separate 5 percent sample was asked about their “Spanish descent,” including whether they were Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish. The remaining 80 percent of respondents in the 1970 Census were not asked about their Hispanic origin.

² In the 2000 Census, respondents were allowed to check more than one race.

Source: S.M. Lee, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16, no. 1 (1993): 75-94; and S.M. Lee, “Using the New Racial Categories in the 2000 Census,” *KIDSCOUNT/PRB Reports on Census 2000* (2001).

U.S. Population Grows, Diversifies

The U.S. population was already racially and ethnically diverse at the nation's founding, and it has continued to grow and become more racially and ethnically diverse, as shown in Table 1 (page 10).¹⁵ Historically, the U.S. population was composed of an overwhelmingly large white majority; the black population was the only significant minority population, along with smaller populations of American Indians, Mexicans, Asians, and others. As recently as 1970, whites were 88 percent of the total population; blacks were 11 percent; and American Indians, Asians, and Hawaiians were less than 1 percent each. Hispanics

were estimated to be about 5 percent of the 1970 population.

By the 2000 Census, several changes had occurred to alter the racial composition of the U.S. population, including the change to allow people to report more than one race (see Box 3). Thus, racial categories are not directly comparable between the 2000 and earlier censuses. According to the 2000 Census, the white population had declined to 75 percent of Americans; blacks, at slightly over 12 percent, remained the second largest racial group. The Asian population had increased to almost 4 percent of the population, and other racial groups such as people who reported a single some other race (SOR) and people who reported two or more races (MR) had also become more numerous.

The Role of OMB

In recent decades, census categories have followed guidelines from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). In 1977, OMB issued Statistical Directive No. 15, which defined the following four official races for federal data collection on race: white, black, American Indian and Alaska Native, and Asian and Pacific Islander. Directive No. 15 also instructed the gathering of data on ethnicity (defined as Hispanic or non-Hispanic origin) and specified that Hispanics could be of any race. The 1980 and 1990 censuses used these categories.

Opposition to Statistical Directive No. 15 led OMB to issue revised standards for racial and ethnic statistics in 1997. For the 2000 Census, there were five official races: American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, black or African American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and white. However, people could report more than one of these races. Ethnicity continued to be defined as Hispanic/not Hispanic and collected by a separate question.

In the past, racial data were collected from a question that asked about a person's "color or race." In recent censuses, the question either did not use the word "race" (in the 1980 Census, the lead-in to the question on race read "Is this person ...?") or asked about the person's race (in 1990, the question read "What is's race?").

Another noteworthy change is the method by which racial data were collected. Prior to the 1970 Census, census enumerators visited each household and determined a person's race in a personal interview based on observation. The 1970 Census form was

designed to be completed by respondents rather than an enumerator, so respondents chose their race from the categories provided. Beginning with the 1980 Census, responses to the race question were based primarily on self-identification, as most questionnaires were received and returned by mail. If enumerators conducted follow-up interviews, they were instructed to ask respondents their race and not record race based on observation. The shift in how census racial data are collected is reflected in how the U.S. Census Bureau defined race during the 2000 Census:

"Race is a self-identification data item in which respondents choose the race or races with which they most closely identify."

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Margo J. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988); Office of Management and Budget (OMB), "Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity, 1997," accessed at www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/fedreg/ombdir15.html on Aug. 10, 2004; Charles Hirschman, Richard Alba, and Reynolds Farley, "The Meaning and Measurement of Race in the U.S. Census: Glimpses Into the Future," *Demography* 37, no. 3 (2000): 381-93; Sharon M. Lee, "Racial Classifications in the U.S. Census: 1890-1990," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16, no. 1 (1993): 75-94; Sharon M. Lee, "Using the New Racial Categories in the 2000 Census," *KIDSCOUNT/PRB Reports on Census 2000* (Baltimore: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2001); and Elizabeth M. Grieco and Rachel C. Cassidy, "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2000," *Census 2000 Brief* (Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2001).

Meanwhile, Hispanics (who can be any race) were almost 13 percent of the total population and had overtaken blacks as the largest minority group.

Immigration

High levels of immigration from Latin America, Asia, and other parts of the world have contributed to recent U.S. population growth and diversity. In 2000, more than 11 percent of the U.S. population was foreign-born, a figure that had steadily increased since 1950. These high numbers or percentages were not the most remarkable feature of recent trends—immigration was also very high in the early 20th century. The recent immigration stream was distinctive because of the origins of immigrants, who brought unprecedented ethnic and racial diversity to the country. While most early 20th-century immigrants were from Europe, more than one-half (52 percent) of current immigrants are from Latin America, and another 26 percent are from Asia.¹⁶

Net immigration has also become a major contributor to recent U.S.

population growth. Since 1970, net immigration has been responsible for 30 percent to nearly 40 percent of U.S. population growth.

Population Projections

The U.S. population will become even more diverse in the future, as immigration from non-European countries continues and the second generation (the children of immigrants) expands. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2020, the Hispanic population will be almost one-sixth (17 percent) of the total population and the combined population of Asians and Pacific Islanders will rise to more than 7 percent.¹⁷ Under this scenario, the black and American Indian populations would show modest or little change, reducing their share of the total; the white population (including Hispanics) would be about 80 percent of the total population. By 2050, one in every four Americans would be Hispanic and one in every 10 would be Asian or Pacific Islander. Whites would still be the largest racial group, at 75 percent of the population.¹⁸

Table 1
U.S. Population by Major Racial Groups and Hispanic Origin, 1950 to 2000

Year	Total population	Percent of total population							
		All races ^a	White	Black	American Indian ^b	Asian & Pacific Islander ^c	SOR ^d	Multiple race ^e	Hispanic ^f
1950	150,697,361	100	90	10	z	z	z	—	3
1960	179,323,175	100	89	11	z	1	z	—	4
1970	203,211,926	100	88	11	z	1	z	—	5
1980	226,545,805	100	83	12	1	2	3	—	6
1990	248,709,873	100	80	12	1	3	4	—	9
2000	281,423,426	100	75	12	1	4	6	2	13

— Not available or not applicable; z less than 0.5 percent.

^a Percents do not include Hispanics, who may be of any race.

^b Includes Eskimos and Aleuts (renamed Alaska Natives in 2000).

^c Includes all Asian groups, Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders (for example, Samoans and Guamanians). In the 2000 Census, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders were counted in a separate category from Asians; 3.6 percent were Asian and 0.01 percent were Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.

^d SOR= Some Other Race. Nearly all SORs also identified as Hispanic, but not all Hispanics identified as SOR (see Box 4, page 19). SOR increased between 1970 and 1980 reflecting the addition of the Hispanic question to the 1980 Census and increased propensity for Hispanics to identify as SOR rather than white.

^e Not available prior to the 2000 Census, which allowed respondents to check more than one race.

^f Hispanics may be of any race.

Sources: C. Gibson and K. Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, For the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States," U.S. Census Bureau Population Division, *Working Paper Series* no. 56 (2002): table 1; Hispanic percentages for 1950, 1960, and 1970 are from J.S. Passel and B. Edmonston, "Immigration and Race: Recent Trends in Immigration to the United States," in *Immigration and Ethnicity*, ed. B. Edmonston and J.S. Passel (1994): table 2.3; and U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2002*, 122d ed. (2002): tables 22 and 23.

More than one-half of the white population would be non-Hispanic (53 percent), while 22 percent would be Hispanic.

Role of Intermarriage

Immigration is a key factor behind the increased racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population in recent decades. Intermarriage across racial and ethnic groups has also contributed to this diversity. Rates of intermarriage have been steadily rising over the last several decades, particularly among nonblack minority groups. Previous studies have shown that American Indians, Hawaiians, and Asians were more likely to intermarry than blacks, suggesting that social norms against white-black marriages were much stronger than norms against marriages among the other groups.¹⁹ Because the growth and diversification of the U.S. population in recent decades have been primarily fueled by increases in the non-black minority groups—in particular, Asians and Hispanics—the role of intermarriage in the continued diversification of the U.S. population will become even more important.

Defining Intermarriage

In this *Population Bulletin*, intermarriage can be interracial or inter-Hispanic.²⁰ Racial intermarriage refers to people from one of seven different racial groups who marry someone from a different racial group. These racial categories are white; black; Asian; American Indian; Hawaiian; some other race (SOR); and multiple race (MR—available for 2000 only). The multiple-race category includes any of the 7 million Americans who checked more than one racial category on the 2000 Census. The other six categories include people who identified with one race only. Inter-Hispanic marriages were defined by responses to the Hispanic origin ques-

tion in the census and refer to marriages between a Hispanic and non-Hispanic partner.

Endogamous marriage (or *inmarriage*) refers to marriage between people of the same race or between two Hispanics, and includes marriages in which both spouses reported some other race (SOR) or multiple race (MR).²¹

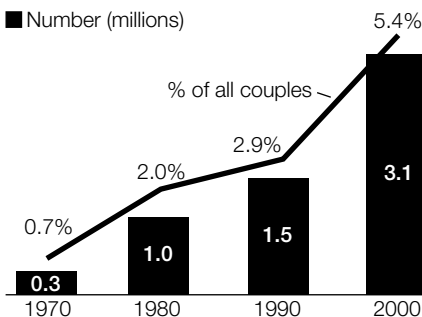
Interracial Marriage Trends

The number of married couples in the United States has increased from about 45 million in 1970 to 57 million in 2000, largely because of overall population growth. While racial intermarriage remains the exception to the norm, the numbers and proportions of couples that are interracial have steadily increased from about 300,000 in 1970 to 1.5 million in 1990 and more than 3 million in 2000 (see Figure 1).

Interracial couples increased from less than 1 percent of married couples in 1970 to more than 5 percent in 2000. Increased numbers and proportions of interracial couples reflect both population growth and an increased tendency to marry across racial lines.

Intermarriage is contributing to U.S. racial and ethnic diversity.

Figure 1
U.S. Interracial Couples in Millions and as Percent of All Married Couples, 1970 to 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

Group Size

A racial group's size can have a powerful effect on the likelihood that its members will marry outside the group. Generally, the intermarriage rate is inversely related to a group's size—that is, intermarriage is more likely among smaller populations.²² For a given number of interracial marriages, the rate will be lower in the larger group because of its larger denominator (see Table 2). The large U.S. white population has the lowest interracial marriage rate: Just 0.4 percent of married whites were in interracial marriages in 1970. However, this percentage increased more than sevenfold, to 3 percent by 2000.

Among minorities, blacks have the lowest intermarriage rate, although rates are increasing. In 1970, 1 percent of married blacks had a non-black spouse. In 2000, 7 percent of marriages involving at least one black partner were interracial.

Asians are the next largest racial group, and have intermarriage rates well above those of whites or blacks but lower than the rates of smaller racial groups. In 1970, one-fifth of married Asians were in interracial marriages; this rate had declined slightly to 16 percent in 2000.

The smaller racial groups, American Indians and Hawaiians, have always had very high intermar-

riage rates. In 1970, nearly 40 percent of American Indians and one-half of Hawaiians were intermarried. Intermarriage rates for these two small populations remained high throughout the 30-year period. In 2000, close to 60 percent of American Indians and almost 50 percent of Hawaiians were intermarried. For these two small populations, intermarriage is as common, if not more common, than in marriage. People who report SOR also have fairly high intermarriage rates, usually between 15 percent and 20 percent. And in 2000, almost 60 percent of married multiple-race Americans were intermarried.

Gender Differences

There are three patterns in intermarriage rates by gender, as shown in Table 2. In the first pattern, men and women from a group are equally likely to intermarry. This was the pattern for white, American Indian, Hawaiian, SOR, and MR groups. In the past, Hawaiian and American Indian women were more likely than men in these groups to intermarry, but this gender differential was negligible in 2000.

In the second pattern, men from a particular group are more likely to intermarry than women in that group. Blacks exemplify this pattern. Black men are more than twice as

Table 2

U.S. Interracial Marriage Rates by Race and Gender, 1970 to 2000

Race	1970			1980			1990			2000		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
White	0.4	0.4	0.3	1.0	1.1	1.0	1.5	1.6	1.4	2.7	2.9	2.6
Black	1.1	1.5	0.8	2.4	3.6	1.2	4.1	5.8	2.3	7.0	9.7	4.1
American Indian	37.6	35.9	39.1	53.1	52.7	53.6	59.7	58.7	60.6	56.7	55.7	57.6
Asian	19.9	14.2	24.9	21.1	13.1	27.7	17.7	10.8	23.7	16.0	9.5	21.6
Hawaiian	50.1	45.6	53.8	58.0	56.0	59.8	50.7	50.1	51.4	45.6	45.5	45.8
Some other race (SOR)	—	—	—	15.8	16.6	14.9	15.7	16.5	14.9	17.7	17.1	18.2
Multiple race	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	56.0	55.4	56.6

— Not reported or not applicable. The 1970 composition of the SOR race category was not comparable with later years.

Notes: The interracial marriage rate is the percentage of married people within each group with a spouse of another race. Multiple race was reported only in the 2000 Census. Nearly all SORs also identified as Hispanic, but not all Hispanics identified as SOR (see Box 4, page 19).

Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

likely as black women to intermarry, a differential that has widened in recent years. In 1970, about 2 percent of black men were intermarried, compared with less than 1 percent of black women. In 2000, almost 10 percent of black men, but just 4 percent of black women, had a nonblack spouse.

In the third pattern, women in a racial group are more likely to intermarry than are men in that group. Asians exemplify this pattern, and this gender gap has remained fairly stable over the past 30 years. In 1970, 25 percent of Asian women and 14 percent of Asian men were intermarried. In 2000, 22 percent of Asian women were in interracial marriages, compared with 10 percent of Asian men.

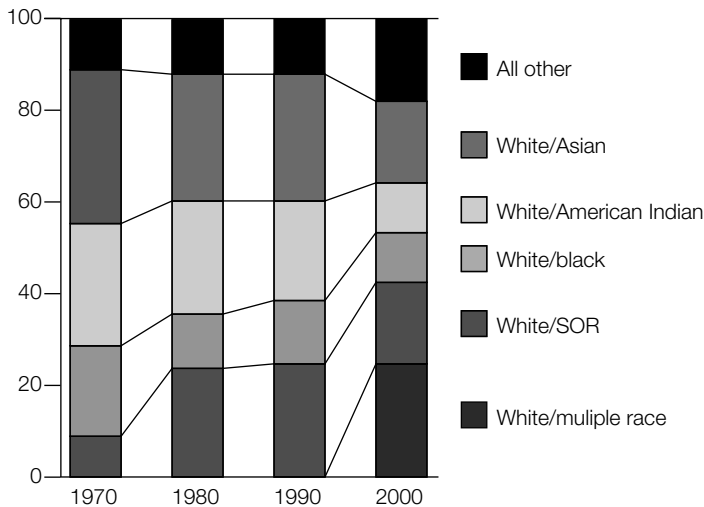
The gender differences in intermarriage in some racial groups are not easily explained, but many factors probably contribute, including male and female roles within various racial groups and social relations among specific groups. Sociologist Robert Merton proposed the status exchange thesis to explain why black men were more likely to intermarry than black women.²³ In his well-known theory, first described in 1941, Merton suggested that marriage between a black man and a white woman could be viewed as an exchange of the man's higher achieved status (usually his education, income, or occupation) for the woman's higher racial status.²⁴ Since women had fewer socioeconomic opportunities in the past, a black woman is less likely to have the economic resources to exchange for a white man's higher racial status. However, several studies that evaluated Merton's thesis with more recent data and with more groups have questioned its applicability to other types of racial intermarriage—for example, between nonblack minority women and white men, or between nonblack minority men and white women. Researchers continue to explore reasons behind different gender patterns of intermarriage.²⁵

Interracial Couples

Some types of interracial couples are more common than others for demographic and social reasons as well as because of individual preferences. In addition to the relative size of racial groups, the age and sex profile of these groups can affect the probability of intermarriage. If there are far more men than women in the prime marriage ages (for example, between ages 20 and 35) in one group, then men from this group are more likely to intermarry than men in a group with a more balanced sex ratio in these ages. But individual preferences and social factors—such as perceived attractiveness of potential marital partners—are also important.

Most interracial couples consist of a white person married to a nonwhite (see Figure 2).²⁶ Although interracial couples have become much more diverse in the last 30 years, marriage between nonwhite minorities (Asians and blacks, for example) is still uncommon. In 1970, the most common interracial couples were

Figure 2
Main Interracial Couple Types As Percent of All Interracial Couples, 1970 to 2000



Note: SOR = Some other race. Nearly all SORs also identified as Hispanic, but not all Hispanics identified as SOR (see Box 4, page 19). Multiple race is available only for the 2000 Census.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

Younger men and women are more likely to intermarry.

white/Asian (over one-third); white/American Indian (27 percent); and white/black (20 percent).

Beginning with the 1980 Census, white/SOR couples became one of the main types of interracial couples, reflecting changes in how the 1980 Census collected information on race and Hispanic origin (see Table 1, page 10, and Box 3, page 8).

After the introduction of multiple racial reporting in the 2000 Census, white/multiple-race couples became the most common, accounting for 25 percent of interracial couples. White/SOR and white/Asian couples each accounted for 18 percent of interracial couples. Allowing people to check more than one race also contributed to declines in interracial couples that included Hawaiians and American Indians, who had a history of intermarriage and who were more likely to report their multiracial backgrounds when given the opportunity in the 2000 Census. Some interracial spouses who identified as Hawaiian, American Indian, or Asian in the 1990 Census shifted to multiple racial reporting in 2000, which moved that couple into the white/multiple-race category for 2000.²⁷

Gender and Race

There are striking differences in the types of interracial couples according to the spouse's gender—but not for all racial categories.

In 1970, five main interracial combinations accounted for 75 percent of all interracial couples: white husband/Asian wife (almost one-fourth of all interracial couples), white husband/American Indian wife (14 percent), black husband/white wife and American Indian husband/white wife (13 percent each), and Asian husband/white wife (11 percent), as shown in Table 3.

Beginning in 1980, SOR husbands with white wives became a common type of interracial couple, reflecting changes in the 1980 Census race and Hispanic questions and categories. The shift to allow multiple-race

reporting in 2000 also affected the main interracial couple types by husbands' and wives' race. White husband/Asian wife couples continued to be the most prevalent at 14 percent, but the other most common types now included at least one multiple-race partner. These three couple types, together with SOR/white couples, black husband/white wife, and white husband/American Indian wife couples, accounted for 70 percent of interracial couples in 2000.

In general, interracial couples have become more diverse, and trends since 1970 suggest that this diversity will continue.

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Intermarriage is neither random nor uniform across social and demographic groups. As described above, it varies by group size, gender, and race. Other sociodemographic characteristics also influence the likelihood of intermarriage. Previous research shows, for example, that younger adults are more likely to intermarry than older adults.²⁸ Many older adults grew up in a time when intermarriage was illegal or heavily frowned on by society, and few people even considered it. Recent surveys of racial attitudes in the United States show increased acceptance of interracial relationships such as dating and marriage.²⁹ Older adults also had fewer years of education because access to higher education was more restricted in the past. Previous research has shown that education is positively related to greater racial tolerance and acceptance, and intermarried people are generally more highly educated.³⁰

Where people live can also influence their likelihood of intermarriage. The racial make-up of different regions varies widely, which affects intermarriage rates in those regions.³¹ Many African Americans live in southern states such as

Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi, while Asians, Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders are concentrated in western states. Hispanics are concentrated in certain states such as California, Florida, and Texas. The racial composition of an area's population can influence rates of intermarriage because of availability of potential spouses and because social norms about interracial relationships vary among regions.³² For example, intermarriage is less common among blacks living in the South because blacks make up a larger proportion of the South's population and because Southern social norms may be more disapproving of intermarriage.

Whether people are born in the United States or abroad also affects their chances of intermarriage. Many immigrants arrive as adults and are already married, almost always to someone with a similar racial origin. Foreign-born people may also be more closely tied to a native culture that may include norms against intermarriage.³³

While the proportion of men and women who intermarry is exactly the same, the social and demographic characteristics of men and women who intermarry may differ. In general, youth, higher education, and U.S. birth are associated with a greater likelihood of intermarriage, but this varies by race for men and women.

Age and Intermarriage

There is a clear relationship between intermarriage and age. Younger men and women are more likely than older people to marry someone of another race, reflecting the recent increase in intermarriage. About 9 percent of married men and women below age 30 were intermarried, compared with 7 percent of those ages 30 to 44, 5 percent for those ages 45 to 59, and about 3 percent among those age 60 or older.³⁴

The proportion of older couples that are intermarried is likely to increase in coming decades as these

Table 3

Most Common Types of Interracial U.S. Couples by Race of Husband and Wife, 1970 to 2000

Census year	Husband	Wife	Percent of interracial couples
1970	White	Asian	23
	White	American Indian	14
	Black	White	13
	American Indian	White	13
	Asian	White	11
	Other combination		26
1980	White	Asian	19
	SOR	White	13
	White	American Indian	12
	American Indian	White	12
	White	SOR	11
	Other combination		32
1990	White	Asian	21
	SOR	White	13
	White	SOR	11
	White	American Indian	11
	American Indian	White	11
	Other combination		33
2000	White	Asian	14
	White	Multiple-race	13
	Multiple race	White	12
	White	SOR	9
	SOR	White	9
	Black	White	8
	White	American Indian	6
	Other combination		30

Notes: SOR = Some other race. Nearly all SORs also identified as Hispanic, but not all Hispanics identified as SOR (see Box 4, page 19). Multiple race was reported only in the 2000 Census.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

younger intermarried couples grow older. And, if young people continue to intermarry at least as often as they do today, the proportion of intermarried couples in the total U.S. population will increase.

Age and Race

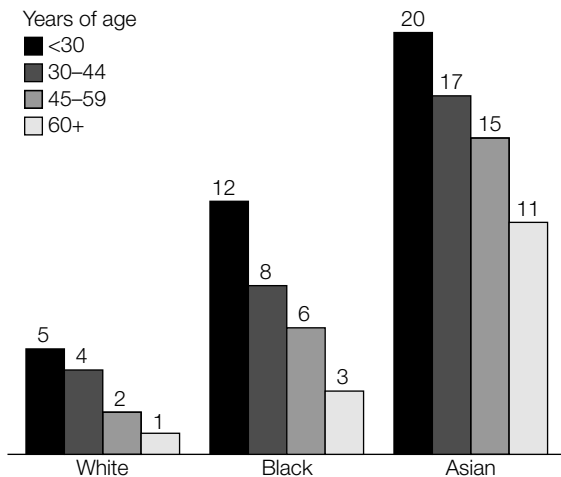
The percent intermarried among whites and blacks below age 30 is four times to five times higher than the percent for whites and blacks age 60 or older—revealing just how sharply intermarriage has increased for whites and blacks in recent years (see Figure 3, page 16).

In contrast, the age gradient is either small or absent among American Indian, Hawaiian, SOR, and MR groups, which are relatively small groups with long histories of intermarriage. Asians are inbetween these two opposites: the percent intermarried among Asians below age 30 is twice that of Asians ages 60 and older, as Figure 3 shows. The uniformly high intermarriage percentages by age groups for the multiple-race group (56 percent) reflects the higher propensity for intermarriage among people of multiple-race backgrounds that had been going on for some time, but was documented only in the 2000 Census.

Education

Intermarriage rates tend to increase with education. There are two distinct patterns for this relationship. In the first pattern, intermarriage increases linearly with education. This pattern holds for blacks, American Indians, Hawaiians, and SORs. Nine percent of blacks with a bachelor's degree or higher are intermarried, for example, compared with 5 percent of blacks who have less than a high school edu-

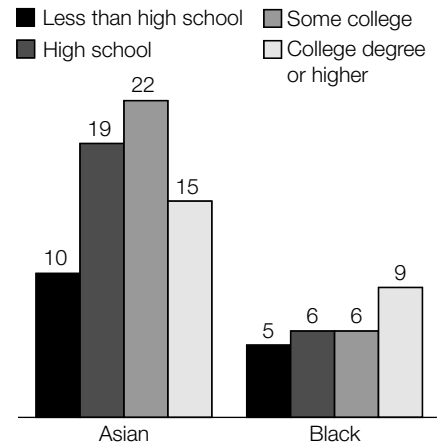
Figure 3
Percent Interracially Married by Age for U.S. Whites, Blacks, and Asians, 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

Figure 4

Percent of Married Blacks and Asians in Interracial Marriages by Education, 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

cation, and 6 percent of high school graduates and those with some college (see Figure 4).

In the second pattern, the percent intermarried increases 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. Ten percent of married Asians with less than high school education are intermarried. The percent then increases to 19 percent for Asian high school graduates and 22 percent for Asians with some college, but declines to 15 percent among Asians with a college degree or higher (see Figure 4).

Nativity

U.S.-born adults have lower intermarriage rates than foreign-born adults, but this relationship varies by race and gender. About 5 percent of U.S.-born men and women were intermarried in 2000, compared with at least 8 percent of foreign-born men and women. But the U.S.-born population is dominated by whites and blacks, two groups with fairly low racial intermarriage rates (see Table 2, page 12).

About 8 percent of foreign-born men (regardless of citizenship status) were intermarried, while 12 percent of women who were naturalized citizens were intermarried, and 9 percent of foreign-born women who were not citizens were intermarried. Foreign-born spouses, especially wives, are important contributors to the increase in intermarriage and, therefore, to the increased diversity of the U.S. population.³⁵

Among white and black husbands, foreign-born men have slightly higher rates of intermarriage than U.S.-born men. For other racial groups, we see the reverse, with considerably higher rates of intermarriage for the U.S.-born. Almost one-third of U.S.-born Asian husbands were intermarried, compared with 7 percent of foreign-born Asian husbands who are naturalized citizens, and 5 percent of foreign-born Asian husbands who were not citizens (see Figure 5).

Foreign-born white and black wives have higher rates of intermarriage than U.S.-born white and black wives. Seven percent of foreign-born black wives (regardless of citizenship) were intermarried, compared with 4 percent of their U.S.-born counterparts (see Figure 5). For other racial groups, foreign-born women had much lower rates of intermarriage than U.S.-born women. Among married Asian women, for example, 14 percent of foreign-born noncitizens were intermarried, compared with 22 percent of naturalized citizens and 44 percent of U.S.-born wives.

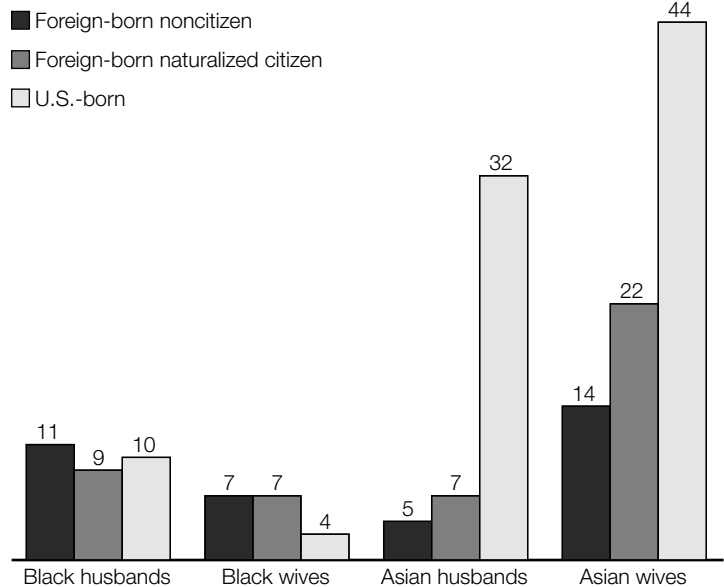
Geographic Variation

Interracial couples are more likely to reside in more populous areas and in areas where the population is racially diverse because these factors facilitate intermarriage. Racially diverse areas also tend to be more urbanized, which allows for more opportunities for people of different racial backgrounds to meet at work or school.³⁶

The West—with its large population centers and high racial diversity—had twice the proportion of

Figure 5

Percent of Husbands and Wives Interracially Married by Nativity and Citizenship, for Blacks and Asians, 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

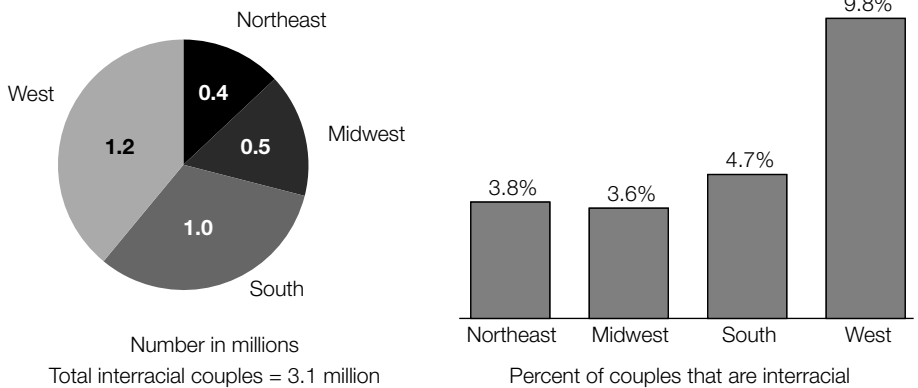
interracial couples as other major regions in 2000 (although residence reported in the 2000 Census may not be where these couples met and got married). About 10 percent of married couples in the West were interracial in 2000, compared with 5 percent nationwide. Accordingly, a large proportion of the nation's interracial couples are found in the West—almost four of every 10 interracial couples in 2000 (see Figure 6, page 18).

Among U.S. states, the percent interracial ranges from a high of over 29 percent in Hawaii to less than 2 percent in West Virginia. More than 10 percent of married couples were interracial in five states: Hawaii, California, Oklahoma, Alaska, and Nevada (see Figure 7, page 18).

Most states with an extremely low percentage of interracial couples have an overwhelmingly white population (such as North Dakota, West Virginia, Vermont, and Maine) or have primarily white and black residents (such as Alabama and

Figure 6

Number and Percent of Interracial Couples by Region, 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

Mississippi).³⁷ Marriages between blacks and whites have been rare historically in these southern states.³⁸

The five states with the largest proportions of white and multiple-race couples are Idaho, Alabama, Oklahoma, New Hampshire, and California. More than 2 percent of married couples in each of these states included a white and a multiple-race spouse, reflecting high proportions of part-American Indian,

Asian, black, and SOR populations. SOR adults typically live in states with large Hispanic (in particular, Mexican-origin) populations (see Box 4). More than 2 percent of married couples reporting themselves as white/SOR live in five states: New Mexico, California, Arizona, Colorado, and Texas. All are southwestern states with large numbers of Mexican-origin Hispanics.

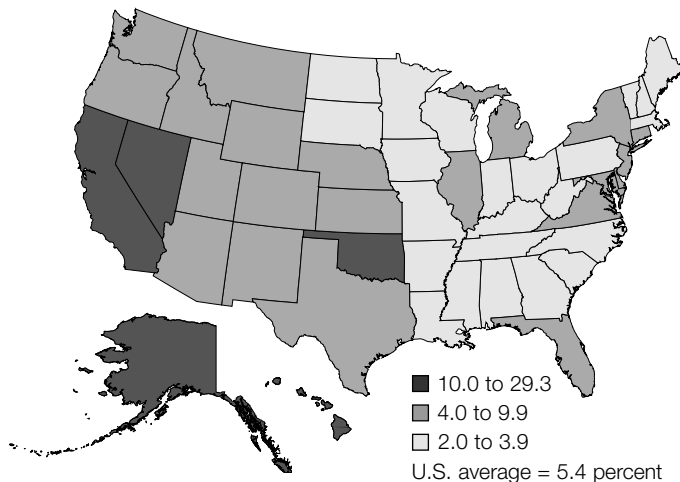
California—which accounts for almost one-third of U.S. Hispanics—had more than one-fourth of all white/SOR couples.

The states with high proportions of white and Asian couples are all located in the western United States, which has the largest concentrations of Asian Americans. The highest proportion is in Hawaii, where almost 9 percent of all married couples are white/Asian couples. More than 2 percent of married couples in Washington, Nevada, California, and Alaska are also white/Asian couples.

The top four places of residence for white/black couples center on the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area, including the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. In these four areas, white/black couples were about 1 percent of all married couples. These areas have large black populations that may be younger and better

Figure 7

Percent of Married Couples Who Are Interracial by State, 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

Some Other Race (SOR) and Multiple-Race (MR) People: Who Are They?

Virtually all people who identify as some other race (SOR) are Hispanics, but not all Hispanics report their race as SOR. In the 2000 Census, 2.2 million husbands, 2.2 million wives, and 3.5 million children living in married-couple families reported that their racial background was SOR—that is, they were not white, black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. Nearly all of these people also reported Hispanic ethnicity. Ninety-nine percent of married SORs reported that they were Hispanic. Of these, almost two-thirds said that they were Mexican; about 7 percent reported that they were Puerto Rican; and the remaining one-fourth reported that they were another Hispanic origin, as shown below. About 98 percent of children in the SOR category were identified as Hispanic origin. There are no apparent differences in Hispanic origin for males or females, or by age group, among children who were reported as SOR.

Americans Reporting Some Other Race, 2000

Hispanic origin	Children	Husbands	Wives
Total number	3,481,991	2,214,646	2,246,788
Percent reporting			
Not Hispanic	2	1	1
Hispanic	98	99	99
Mexican	68	65	64
Puerto Rican	5	7	7
Cuban	1	1	1
Other Hispanic	24	26	28

While nearly all SORs are Hispanics, less than one-half of Hispanics reported they are SOR. In the 2000 Census, 42 percent of Hispanics reported SOR, while 48 percent reported white race, 2 percent reported black race, 6 percent reported more than one race, and the remaining 2 percent reported other races.

Multiple-Race Americans

Most MR individuals are white and something else. In the 2000 Census, about 900,000 husbands, 1 million wives, and 1.8 million children identified themselves as having two or more racial origins. More than two-thirds of these individuals said that they were not Hispanic-origin and about one-third report-

ed Hispanic origin, as shown in the table below. Of those who reported themselves as Hispanic origin, about one-half reported that they were of Mexican origin, and the remaining were primarily other Hispanic origins:

Americans Reporting More Than One Race, 2000

Multiple Race (MR)	Children	Husbands	Wives
Total number	1,846,121	937,063	963,019
Percent reporting			
Not Hispanic	68	70	71
Hispanic	32	30	29

To further examine the MR population, we analyzed ancestry data from the 2000 Census. The 2000 Census questionnaire asked respondents to provide as many as two ancestries. At least one-half of multiple-race children, husbands, and wives reported either Hispanic or European as their first major ancestry (as shown below). The other major ancestries reported included Asian (18 percent for children, 13 percent for adults); American Indian (7 percent for children, 11 percent for adults); and African American (10 percent for children, 3 percent for adults). Relatively few multiple-race people reported other ancestries, such as Caribbean, North African, Pacific Islander, or Central and South American Indian. More than two-thirds of multiple-race children and adults reported various European and non-European ancestries, for example, German and Chinese, or British and American Indian.

First Ancestry Reported by Multiple-Race Children, Husbands, and Wives, 2000

Ancestry	Children	Husbands	Wives
Total number	1,846,121	937,063	963,019
Percent reporting			
African American	10	4	3
Asian	18	12	14
European	22	25	26
Hispanic	26	29	27
Middle Eastern	4	6	5
American Indian	7	11	12

Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

Most children in interracial families have white and multiple-race parents.

educated than the average, two characteristics that are associated with higher rates of intermarriage.

The U.S. states with the highest proportions of white/American Indian couples all have fairly large American Indian populations. In both Oklahoma and Alaska, more than 5 percent of all married couples are white/American Indian. Montana, South Dakota, and New Mexico also have relatively high proportions of white/American Indian couples.

Children in Interracial Families

As interracial marriage rates continue to increase in the United States, the number and proportion of multiracial families with children will also increase. Because the increase in intermarriage is relatively recent and because intermarried couples are still a small proportion of all married couples, we are just beginning to learn about children who grow up in interracial families.³⁹ What is the racial identification for children in multi-racial households, for example, and how has this changed? And how does the socioeconomic environment of children in interracial families compare with that for children in racially endogamous families?

Because an adult usually fills out the census form for everyone else in the household, the racial identity reported for a child may or may not be the same one the child uses himself or herself, or the same as the other parent would have reported. The results cannot reveal whether there is agreement among household members about racial identity.

Also, census data do not reveal whether the child is the biological offspring of both parents. Other research has shown, however, that about 90 percent of children age 18 or younger who lived in married couple families in 2000 were the natural son or daughter of the householder. For same-race couples, 91 percent of

children were natural sons or daughters of the householder, 6 percent were stepsons or stepdaughters, 2 percent were adopted, and the remaining 1 percent were other relatives (usually grandchildren). The results are similar for intermarried couples: 88 percent are natural sons or daughters, 8 percent are stepsons or stepdaughters, 3 percent are adopted sons or daughters, and about 1 percent are other relatives (usually grandchildren living in sub-families). In some cases, a householder with a natural son or daughter may have remarried after having the child. In this case, the child is the natural son or daughter of the householder but is the stepson or stepdaughter of the householder's spouse. Census data only record current marital status, and do not reveal whether either spouse had previous marriages.

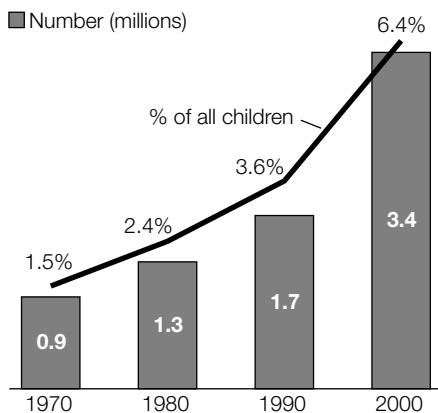
Increasing Numbers

In 2000, about two-thirds of the 71.8 million American children under age 18 lived in married-couple households. Most of the remaining one-third lived with single parents, with about 5 percent living with other relatives or in other types of household arrangements.⁴⁰ Although only 6 percent of children lived with interracial-married parents in 2000, this figure represented a dramatic increase from the numbers and relative proportions of children in families with an interracial-married couple just 30 years ago (see Figure 8). The number increased from about 900,000 in 1970 to 3.4 million in 2000.

Interracial Families

The main types of interracial families for children closely resemble the main types of interracial couples shown in Figure 2, page 13. In 2000, the most common interracial family with children included a white and a multiple-race spouse; almost 800,000 children were in these families. In 1980 and 1990, the most common

Figure 8
**Children Age 18 and Younger
 Living in Interracial Families,
 1970 to 2000**



Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

type of interracial family was white/SOR, accounting for more than one-fourth of all interracial families with children. In 1970, the most common type was white/Asian, which made up more than one-third of interracial families.

Just over one-quarter of children in interracial families had white/SOR parents in 1980 and 1990. With the introduction of multiple-race reporting in the 2000 Census, the proportion declined to 21 percent.

Although there have been increases in the absolute number of white/Asian parents with children—the number of children living with white/Asian parents increased from over 160,000 in 1970 to almost 500,000 in 2000—the total number of children living with interracial parents increased at a faster rate. Accordingly, the proportion of all children living with white/Asian parents has declined steadily during the past 30 years, reflecting trends in white/Asian intermarriage and fertility rates as well as the change in racial reporting in the 2000 Census.

The proportion of children living with white/black interracial parents

has fluctuated over the years, but it seems to be decreasing, from 17 percent in 1970 to 12 percent in 2000. This category has remained the fourth most-common category for interracial parents with children throughout the 30-year period. In 2000, about 410,000 children lived in families with one white and one black parent.

The proportion of children living with white/American Indian parents decreased sharply in 2000 after the introduction of multiple-race reporting. Between 1970 and 1990, white/American Indian parents accounted for one-fifth or more of all children living in interracial families. In 2000, this proportion dropped below 10 percent (about 330,000 children).⁴¹

Racial Identification

What is the racial identification of children who live in interracial families? As noted above, we do not know with certainty from decennial census data if the children in a household are the actual biological children of the married couple with whom they live. For instance, the children in an interracial-couple household may be from a previous marriage or relationship of either spouse, or they may have been adopted. But the vast majority of children in married-couple families are the biological offspring of the married couple. Even if only one spouse of an interracial couple is the biological parent of the children in the household, the couple serves as the child's social parents. They are responsible for the social and economic environment in which the child grows up, and they play key roles in the child's future and formation of racial identity.

The proportions of children identified as single-race white, black, American Indian, or Asian decreased considerably between 1970 and 2000 (see Table 4, page 22). Around 50 percent of children in earlier censuses were reported as white, compared with 33 percent in 2000. The propor-

tions of children reported as black, American Indian, or Asian were about 10 percent for each racial group from 1970 to 1990, but decreased to 7 percent for black, 6 percent for American Indian, and just 4 percent for Asian in 2000.

At the same time, more than one-third of children in interracial families were reported as having two or more racial origins. In 2000, the most common racial reporting for children living with interracially married parents was MR, followed by white (33 percent) and SOR (14 percent).⁴² These trends in racial reporting of children also reflect the changes in main types of interracial couples and families shown in Figure 2 (page 13).

Where Do Interracial Families Live?

The geographic distribution of interracial families closely mirrors that of interracial couples (as shown in Figures 6 and 7, page 18). About two-thirds of children living in interracial families reside in either the West or the South. States with relatively high proportions of interracial couples also tend to have high proportions of children living in interracial families. More than 10 percent of all children are in interracial families in Hawaii, Oklahoma, Alaska, California, and New Mexico. Hawaii, which has a history of high intermarriage rates among its large Asian and Hawaiian popula-

tions, is particularly striking; almost one-third of the state's children lived with intermarried parents in 2000.

About one-fourth of all children in interracial families reside in California; another fourth live in five other states: Texas, Florida, New York, Illinois, and Arizona.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

The parents of children living in interracial families tend to be younger than parents in same-race couples, highlighting how recent and sharp the increase in interracial marriage has been (see Table 5). Overall, interracially married parents have slightly less education than endogamous parents: 13.0 years compared with 13.2 years for fathers, and 12.8 years compared with 13.1 years for mothers. But minority-race parents in interracial-couple families are more educated than similar minority-race parents in endogamous-couple families. Fathers in white/American Indian-couple families have an average 12.8 years of education, for example, while fathers in endogamous American Indian couple families have an average education of 11.6 years. Even among Asians, who have high average education, parents in interracial-couple families have higher educational levels than Asian parents in endogamous-couple families. Mothers in white/Asian families have an average of 14.2 years of education, compared with 13.1 years of education for mothers in endogamous Asian families.

The higher educational levels among minorities in interracial marriages are consistent with the younger ages of intermarried people— younger cohorts have higher educational attainment—and with the recency of the increase in intermarriage. But the higher education levels for intermarried minorities also reflect a generally positive relationship between education and intermarriage (as shown in Figure 4, page 16).

Parents' education is important for children. Children of more highly

Table 4
Reported Race of Children Living in Interracial Families, 1970 to 2000

Race reported (%)	1970	1980	1990	2000
White	55	48	48	33
Black	14	11	12	7
American Indian	13	13	11	6
Asian	11	9	12	4
Hawaiian	3	3	2	1
Some other race (SOR)	5	17	15	14
Multiple race	—	—	—	36

Note: Nearly all SORs also identified as Hispanic, but not all Hispanics identified as SOR (see Box 4, page 19). Multiple race was available only for the 2000 Census.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

educated parents are more likely to attain higher levels of schooling themselves.⁴³ And more years of education are consistently associated with better jobs and higher incomes: 2000 Census data for American adults show that the 1999 median earnings for full-time workers who had bachelor's degrees was \$42,900, compared with \$27,400 for high school graduates and \$21,300 for those with less than a high school education. Individuals with advanced degrees had median earnings of \$55,200.⁴⁴

Lower Average Incomes

Income levels are related to age and education, and the differences in parents' age and schooling across different types of families are reflected in family incomes. Family finances have important consequences for children's well-being and future opportunities.

Reported mean annual family income in 1999 for all children in

married-couple families was \$73,500. The average for children in interracial families was lower, at \$66,400. Larger differences emerge when we compare children by specific family situations. Children living in white/Asian interracial families had the highest mean family income (\$95,300)—30 percent above the average for all families with children. Children in endogamous Asian and white families had the second-highest mean family income—about \$78,000, or 6 percent higher than the average. Children in endogamous SOR and American Indian families had the lowest mean family incomes, about \$43,000—less than 60 percent of the average. Family income for multiple-race couples (\$53,000) was also relatively low. Family income of children in white/American Indian interracial families was less than 80 percent of the overall average but still higher than that of endogamous American Indian families.

Table 5
Parental Characteristics and Family Income, 2000

Characteristic	Mean age (in years)		Mean years of schooling		Mean family income in 1999	As % of all family income
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother		
All married-couple families ^a	39.3	36.9	13.2	13.1	\$73,500	100
Endogamous-couple families ^b	39.4	37.0	13.2	13.1	74,000	101
White	39.5	37.2	13.5	13.4	78,000	106
Black	39.3	36.6	12.9	13.0	58,100	79
Asian	42.0	38.6	14.0	13.1	78,000	106
American Indian	38.7	36.4	11.6	11.8	43,100	59
Hawaiian	39.3	35.7	12.2	12.3	55,100	75
Some other race (SOR) ^c	37.0	34.6	9.3	9.5	43,400	59
Multiple race (MR)	39.2	35.8	11.7	11.4	53,300	73
Interracial-couple families ^d	38.2	35.7	13.0	12.8	66,400	90
White/MR	38.5	36.0	13.0	12.8	66,700	91
White/SOR	36.9	34.6	12.2	12.2	60,200	82
White/Asian	40.8	38.3	15.0	14.2	95,300	130
White/black	37.7	34.7	13.2	13.2	61,700	84
White/American Indian	37.9	35.5	12.8	12.9	57,600	78

^a Includes married-couple families with children ages 18 and younger present.

^b Both spouses are of the same race.

^c Nearly all SORs also identified as Hispanic, but not all Hispanics identified as SOR (see Box 4, page 19).

^d Averages include other interracial combinations not shown separately.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

Puerto Ricans are the Hispanic group most likely to intermarry.

Diverse Socioeconomic Conditions

Children in interracial families are growing up in diverse socioeconomic conditions. Children in white/Asian families benefit from the high average educational attainments of both parents and the higher family incomes that accompany higher educational levels. But children in many other interracial families are growing up with parents with below-average educational levels and below-average family incomes. However, many of these interracial families have higher levels of parental education and family income than their endogamous minority counterparts.

Family background exerts a powerful influence on children's prospects. Besides the well-documented relationship between parental and child's educational attainment and income, a recent study found that almost three-quarters of students at the top 146 highly selective colleges and universities came from families in the top quarter of the socioeconomic scale (based on family income and parents' education and occupations). Only about 10 percent of students at these highly selective institutions came from families in the bottom half of the socioeconomic scale. The economic benefits of attending highly selective colleges are clear, including more resources per student, higher graduation rates, higher rates of attendance at graduate and professional schools, and higher lifetime earnings.⁴⁵

Hispanic Intermarriage

The Hispanic population has grown faster than the total population in recent decades and is now the largest U.S. minority group.⁴⁶ In 1950, less than 3 percent of the U.S. population was of Hispanic origin; but in 2000, almost 13 percent of the population reported Hispanic origin.⁴⁷ The size and rate of growth of the Hispanic

population raise important questions about the social integration of Hispanics, including marriage with non-Hispanics.

In the 2000 Census, the majority of Hispanics identified as white only (48 percent) and SOR (42 percent). Just 2 percent of Hispanics identified as black, and about 6 percent reported more than one race.

Two demographic characteristics of Hispanics appear to favor their intermarriage with non-Hispanics. First, few Hispanics report their race as black, which minimizes the white/black barrier that had kept racial intermarriage historically low. Second, the rapid growth of the Hispanic population is relatively recent, coinciding with and likely contributing to the secular increase in racial and ethnic intermarriage.

Overall Trends

The numbers of Hispanic and inter-Hispanic couples have increased over time, reflecting growth of the Hispanic population. In 1970, 2.6 million of the 45 million U.S. married couples were Hispanic couples; about 600,000 were inter-Hispanic couples. In 2000, close to 7.5 million of the nearly 57 million married couples were Hispanic couples; 1.8 million were inter-Hispanic. Inter-Hispanic couples as a proportion of married couples increased from 1 percent in 1970 to over 3 percent in 2000 (see Figure 9).

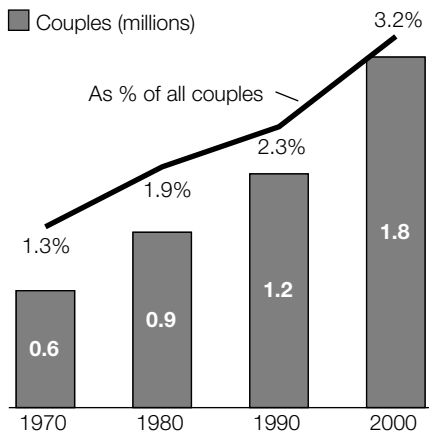
As the number of Hispanic couples has surged, the percentage that include a non-Hispanic spouse has been fairly stable at between 23 percent and 25 percent.

Main Hispanic Groups

Some Hispanic groups are much more likely to marry non-Hispanics than others. The trends in intermarriage for Hispanic groups have fluctuated over the last 30 years, in part because of heavy immigration during the period (see Table 6). Many immigrants arrive already married; single immigrants are less likely to marry outside their ethnic

Figure 9

Inter-Hispanic U.S. Couples, 1970 to 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

group because they often maintain their native language and close cultural ties to their ethnic group. In 2000, Puerto Ricans were most likely to be intermarried, followed by "other Hispanics," Mexicans, and Cubans.

The fastest-growing category of Hispanics between 1970 and 2000 was "other Hispanics," which reflected an especially large immigration from Central and South America during the 1990s. As this group increased through immigration, intermarriage rates fell. In 1970, "other Hispanics" had intermarriage rates above the overall Hispanic intermarriage rate (20 percent compared with 13 percent). Intermarriage among "other Hispanics" increased between 1970 and 1980, but decreased from 25 percent in 1980 to 17 percent in 2000. Mexicans' intermarriage rates increased from 10 percent to 14 percent between 1970 and 1990 but declined to 12 percent in 2000. In contrast, intermarriage rates among Puerto Ricans and Cubans increased throughout the 30-year period. In 1970, 10 percent of Puerto Ricans were intermarried; by 2000, Puerto Ricans had the highest intermarriage rate at 21 percent. In 1970, Cubans' intermarriage rate was the lowest at 8

percent, but had increased to 12 percent in 2000. Declines in intermarriage among Mexicans and "other Hispanics" were counterbalanced by increased intermarriage among Puerto Ricans and Cubans.

Differences across Hispanic groups raise interesting questions about potentially uneven marital integration of different Hispanic groups. Puerto Ricans had the highest intermarriage rates in 2000, which is not surprising, considering that Puerto Ricans are mostly U.S. citizens by birth. Between 1970 and 2000, Cubans' intermarriage rate increased by 50 percent (from 8 percent to 12 percent), while Mexicans' intermarriage rate increased by 20 percent (from 10 percent to 12 percent), suggesting that Cubans' marital assimilation into the non-Hispanic population has been faster. In addition, Mexicans' intermarriage had increased from 1970 to 1990 but decreased between 1990 and 2000, reversing the trend of increased intermarriage. Differences in intermarriage trends also reflect changes in demographic trends of different Hispanic groups. For example, immigration has played a greater role in the growth of Mexican and "other Hispanics" populations.

For most Hispanic groups, men are about as likely as women to marry a non-Hispanic (findings not shown). Only women in the "other Hispanics" population are more likely to intermarry than men. In 2000, 19 percent of "other Hispanics" women were intermarried, compared with 15 percent of men. As with gender differen-

Table 6

Percent of Married Hispanics With a Non-Hispanic Spouse, Selected Hispanic Groups, 1970 to 2000

Hispanic group	1970	1980	1990	2000
All married Hispanics	13	15	15	14
Mexicans	10	12	14	12
Puerto Ricans	10	14	18	21
Cubans	8	8	12	12
Other Hispanics	20	25	19	17

Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

tials in interracial marriage for some racial groups described earlier, many factors contribute to gender variations in intermarriage, including demographic, cultural, and individual characteristics and personal preferences.

Demographic Characteristics

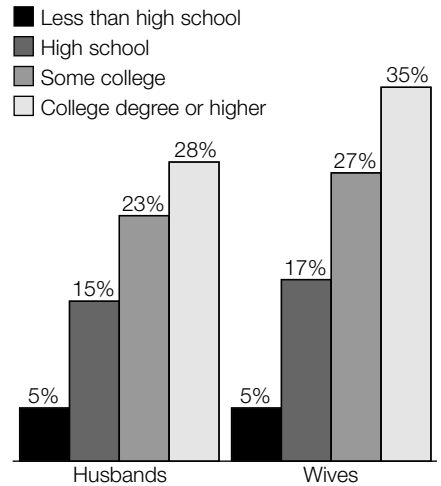
Some of the same factors that influence whether people marry someone of another race may also influence whether a Hispanic man or woman marries a non-Hispanic. These factors include age (younger people tend to intermarry); education (more highly educated people within a group tend to intermarry); the joint effects of age and education (younger cohorts tend to be better educated); and nativity (U.S.-born Hispanics are more likely to intermarry).⁴⁸

The oldest married Hispanic men and women have the lowest intermarriage rates. Less than 10 percent of Hispanic men and 12 percent of Hispanic women ages 60 and over were intermarried. Among men younger than 60, intermarriage rates exceeded 13 percent (findings not shown).

The relationship between education and intermarriage is substantial for both Hispanic men and women, and this relationship illustrates the important role of social mobility in the social integration of ethnic minorities. Intermarriage increases as educational attainment increases (see Figure 10). Intermarriage is uncommon among Hispanics who have less than a high school education. Among high school graduates, the percent intermarried is up to 15 percent among men and 17 percent among women. The proportions intermarried increase to 23 percent among Hispanic men with some college and 27 percent among Hispanic women with some college. Hispanics with college degrees or higher education have the highest proportions intermarried: 28 percent among men and 35 percent among women.

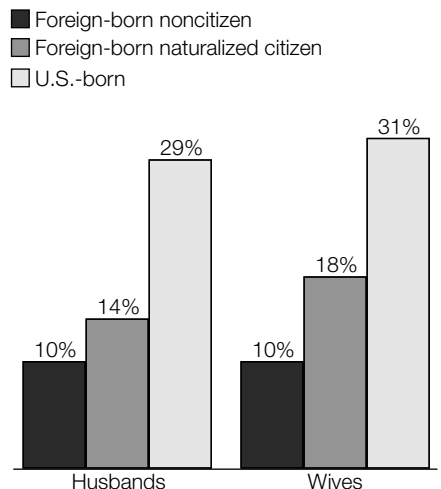
Intermarriage among U.S.-born Hispanic men and women was three

Figure 10
Percent of Married Hispanics With a Non-Hispanic Spouse, by Education, 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

Figure 11
Percent Married Hispanics With a Non-Hispanic Spouse, by Nativity and Citizenship, 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

times that of foreign-born Hispanics who were not naturalized citizens (Figure 11). Around 30 percent of U.S.-born married Hispanic men and women were intermarried in 2000, compared with only 10 percent of foreign-born Hispanics who were not citizens. Foreign-born Hispanics who were naturalized citizens had intermediate intermarriage rates: about 14 percent among Hispanic men and 18 percent among Hispanic women who were naturalized citizens.

Geographic Variations

More than 3 percent of all married couples in 2000 were inter-Hispanic, but this percentage was at least 6 percent in the West, where 43 percent of U.S. Hispanics live. In 2000, more than 40 percent of all inter-Hispanic couples lived in the West.

New Mexico, California, and Arizona—which have large Hispanic populations—also have the highest proportions of inter-Hispanic couples (see Figure 12). The fourth leading state, Hawaii, does not have a large Hispanic population, but does have high intermarriage.⁴⁹ Other states with high proportions of inter-Hispanic couples include Colorado, Nevada, Texas, Florida, Utah, and Wyoming—all states with large and growing Hispanic populations.

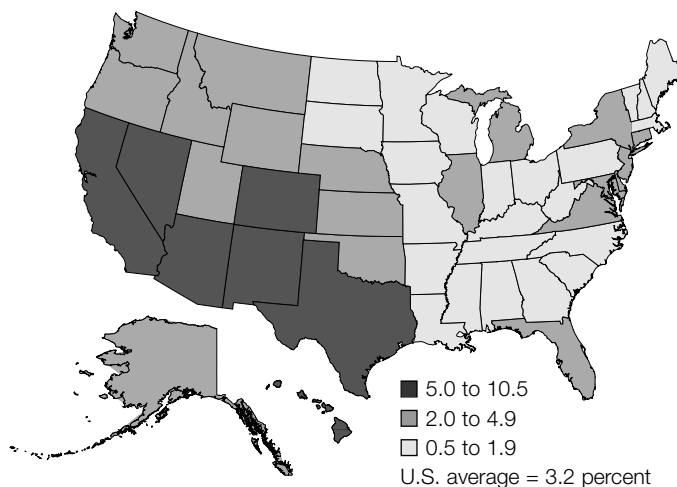
Inter-Hispanic couples are uncommon in many states with small Hispanic populations. Less than 1 percent of married couples are inter-Hispanic in West Virginia, Kentucky, Vermont, Maine, South Dakota, Mississippi, North Dakota, and Alabama.

Children in Inter-Hispanic Families

In 1970, there were around 800,000 children age 18 and younger living in families with inter-Hispanic parents. As the number of Hispanics has grown and Hispanic intermarriage increased, the number of children in

Figure 12

Percent of Married Couples Who Are Inter-Hispanic by State, 2000



Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

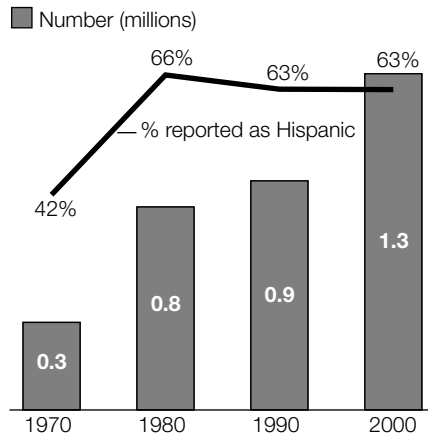
inter-Hispanic families passed 1 million in 1980 and 2 million in 2000. In five states—New Mexico, Arizona, Hawaii, Colorado, and California—7 percent or more of all children live in inter-Hispanic families. These are the same states with the highest proportions of inter-Hispanic couples.

Hispanic Identity

Most children living in families with inter-Hispanic married parents are reported as Hispanic (see Figure 13, page 28). In 1970, 42 percent of children living with inter-Hispanic couples were reported as Hispanic. The proportion of children who were reported as Hispanic increased to 66 percent in 1980, and has since stabilized at around 63 percent. This high level throughout the period may reflect the fact that people have been able to choose race separately from Hispanic ethnicity. People could choose Hispanic ethnicity as well as white or another race category.

Because the majority of inter-Hispanic children are reported as Hispanic, Hispanic intermarriage may have been a factor in the phe-

Figure 13
**Children of Inter-Hispanic
 Parents Reported as Hispanic,
 1970 to 2000**



Source: Authors' analysis of the Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files from the 1970, 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses.

nominal growth of the U.S. Hispanic population in recent years, and it has important implications for future growth and characteristics of the Hispanic population. In particular, if Hispanic intermarriage rates increase, more and more people who identify as Hispanic may be part Hispanic and part non-Hispanic. At the same time, there is a large minority (over one-third) of part-Hispanic children who are not reported as Hispanic; thus, the "non-Hispanic" population includes large numbers of people with Hispanic origins.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Family socioeconomic resources can have significant effects on children's opportunities, especially in education. Whether they are in endogamous or inter-Hispanic marriages, Hispanic mothers and fathers living with children under age 19 are younger than non-Hispanic parents living with children under age 19 (see Table 7), reflecting the younger age distribution of the Hispanic than the non-Hispanic population. But parents in inter-Hispanic families have nearly the same educational level as parents in non-Hispanic families, and much higher educational levels than parents in endogamous Hispanic families. In 2000, inter-Hispanic children's fathers averaged 13.3 years of education, while non-Hispanic children's fathers averaged 13.8 years; fathers in endogamous Hispanic families had completed barely 10 years of education, on average.

The pattern was similar for family income in married-couple families with children at home. Inter-Hispanic mean family income was 92 percent that of non-Hispanic families for 1999, while Hispanic families had average incomes less than 60 percent of the mean for non-Hispanic families.

Inter-Hispanic children fared better than children in families with two Hispanic parents with regard to parents' education and income. Both are important indicators of child well-being. Children in inter-Hispanic fam-

Table 7
Parental Characteristics and Family Income by Parents' Ethnicity, 2000

	Mean age (in years)		Mean years of schooling		Mean family income, 1999	% of non-Hispanic family income
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother		
Married-couple families ^a						
Non-Hispanic families	39.8	37.4	13.8	13.6	\$78,700	100
Endogamous Hispanic families ^b	37.4	34.8	9.9	10.0	45,700	58
Inter-Hispanic families ^c	37.9	35.5	13.3	13.2	72,300	92

Note: Hispanics may be of any race.

^a Includes married-couple families with children ages 18 and younger present.

^b Both spouses are Hispanic.

^c Only one spouse is Hispanic.

Source: Authors' analysis of the Census 2000 Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) files.

ilies were no different from non-Hispanic children with regard to parents' education and income. These findings are consistent with higher intermarriage among better-educated and U.S.-born Hispanics, two characteristics generally associated with higher socioeconomic status.

Implications of Intermarriage

Trends in racial and Hispanic intermarriage affect American society in many ways. The demographic effects of intermarriage—such as changing racial and ethnic composition of the population—are fairly evident and can be studied using demographic data and methods. Social effects are more complex and subtle. It is difficult to study how Americans will think about race in the future when more and more Americans are multiracial, or as more people who identify as Hispanic also have non-Hispanic origins. The growing numbers of multiracial and multiethnic Americans will also fuel the debate over how best to count the population by race and Hispanic status. In this concluding section, we discuss some implications of racial and Hispanic intermarriage for U.S. demographic and social change.

Race, Ethnicity, and Population Trends

Intermarriage has a major influence on future racial and Hispanic population trends. Throughout its history, the nation's ethnic and racial composition has changed with varying sources of new immigrants as well as with the different fertility and mortality rates of U.S.-born residents and new immigrants. The large white population dominated U.S. population for most of the country's history, although historically there has been a significant minority of blacks and other smaller groups such as American Indians. The past 40 years have witnessed a revival of high levels

of immigration and a massive shift in the countries of origin of immigrants. Today's immigrants are predominantly Hispanic, Asian, and Caribbean, rather than the overwhelmingly European immigrants of earlier years.

The fertility of the U.S.-born population is relatively low—at or slightly below the long-term replacement level—and any racial or ethnic group that does not have significant immigration will not increase in the coming decades. Current immigration trends ensure that the Hispanic and Asian populations will continue to increase faster than other groups.

Racial intermarriage is increasing and Hispanic intermarriage is already relatively high, leading to a growing population of people with multiple racial origins and part-Hispanic origin. The shift to allow reporting of more than one race in the 2000 Census had an enormous impact on the composition of interracial couples and their children in terms of how they reported their race. More than one-third of children growing up in interracial families were reported as more than one race in 2000. Among children of inter-Hispanic couples, almost two-thirds were reported as Hispanic.

Intermarriage and Population Projections

Recent trends in racial and ethnic change—combined with increasing intermarriage—have changed the assumptions and methods demographers use to project the future U.S. population. Population projections recently prepared by the authors and Jeffrey Passel suggest three important implications for future trends in the racial and Hispanic demography of the United States.⁵⁰

First, regardless of trends in intermarriage, the U.S. Hispanic and Asian populations will grow faster than non-Hispanics and other single-race groups, fueled primarily by continued high levels of immigration and by the growth momentum from their young populations. Asians and Hispanics will

Increases in intermarriage will change how we think about race.

therefore constitute an increasing share of the U.S. population.

Second, increasing intermarriage rates among all groups ensures that there will be a rapid growth in the number of persons with multiple-race and part-Hispanic origins, regardless of how these people report their race or Hispanic status on census forms. Population projections prepared prior to the release of 2000 Census data estimated a multiple-origin population of 22 million in 2000, based on an analysis of ancestry and race reported in the 1990 Census rather than on how people actually reported their race in 2000. The estimated number is well above the 7 million Americans who reported more than one race in 2000.⁵¹ The projections suggest that the number of multiple-origin Americans (both multiracial and part Hispanic) will increase to 189 million by 2100, making up one-third of the total U.S. population.

Third, the actual size of future multiple-origins groups depends heavily on the racial self-reporting of multiracial persons and the reporting of Hispanic origin by persons with part-Hispanic origins. There is a great deal of fluidity in self-reporting of race and ethnicity.⁵² The social context for reporting racial and Hispanic origin, especially for multiple-origin Americans, is also changing. Just as reporting of American Indian ancestry increased as images of American Indians became more favorable⁵³ (particularly following the 1990 release of a popular movie about American Indians, "Dances With Wolves"), the growing prominence of multiracial Americans in sports, politics, and entertainment may make multiracial identity acceptable and even desirable for more Americans. Because many more Americans could claim a multiracial identity than have been reporting it, there is a large potential for increases in the multiple-race population. Unpredictable variations in how multiple-origins people report their race or Hispanic status could greatly affect the future counts of single-race and Hispanic populations.

Evidence from the recent censuses, and especially from Census 2000, suggest racial reporting by multiracial individuals is complex and varied, while Hispanic identity is more stable—most children of inter-Hispanic parents are reported as Hispanic. The uncertainties and ambiguities of racial reporting will therefore continue to challenge demographers trying to project the future racial composition of the U.S. population. What is certain, however, is that intermarriage and the growing population of multiple-origin Americans will be key factors in future racial and Hispanic population trends and will continue to challenge government and other agencies' efforts to collect and use racial and ethnic data.

Changing Significance of Race

Race has been an American obsession since the beginning of its history. The primary racial divide was a color line separating white from black. Over time, this divide encompassed other groups such as American Indians, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos. Social, economic, spatial, and political separation of the races was enforced formally by law and informally by prejudice and discrimination. Interracial marriage was relatively rare in the United States for most of its history, although unions outside of marriage have always occurred.

Three developments converged in the late 1960s and early 1970s to spark a dramatic change in American race relations. One was the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court decision that overturned remaining state antimiscegenation laws. The second was the large-scale immigration of people from Asia and Latin America following amendments to the U.S. immigration laws in 1965. The new immigration increased racial and ethnic diversity. The third development was the civil rights movement that began in the 1950s and gained momentum in the 1960s to challenge discrimination against blacks and other minority groups.

Intermarriage More Common

Less than 35 years after the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that overturned antimiscegenation laws, racial intermarriage increased from less than 1 percent of married couples in 1970 to more than 5 percent in 2000. Hispanic intermarriage increased from less than 1 percent of married couples to more than 3 percent in 2000. More telling, more than 10 percent of American Indian, Asian, Hawaiian, Hispanic, SOR, and multiple-race individuals were intermarried in 2000. Interracial and inter-Hispanic couples and their children live in every state and come from all socioeconomic groups. But intermarried couples and families are especially prevalent and are a growing proportion of the married-couple population in the West and Southwest, especially in states such as Hawaii, California, Texas, Oklahoma, and Alaska.

Increased intermarriage, particularly racial intermarriage, serves as a key indicator of two important social trends. First, as more people marry across racial groups, the social distance between racial groups is reduced. Second, racial intermarriage changes racial boundaries as family and kin, the most intimate of social groups, become increasingly interracial. In this process, the meaning and significance of race is altered.

Intermarriage Will Increase

Discussions and surveys about intermarriage in the United States used to focus on black/white marriages, yet most intermarriages are between whites and nonblack minorities. While it is difficult to predict trends in social attitudes, demographic trends suggest that the increase in the number of Asians and Hispanics will fuel more intermarriage.

There are several reasons why intermarriage will continue to increase. First, as the Asian, Hispanic, and multiracial populations expand, more Americans will

be living, going to school, working, and playing with people who come from racial and ethnic backgrounds that differ from their own. Increased contact, especially noncompetitive interactions among social equals at school and work will facilitate friendship, dating, and marriage between people of diverse racial backgrounds. By their very presence and growing numbers, multiracial Americans also demonstrate to the rest of society that racial intermarriage is a demographic and social reality.

Second, the U.S.-born share of the Asian and Hispanic American population will increase, and intermarriage rates are higher among U.S.-born Asians and Hispanics. U.S.-born Asians and Hispanics will be a driving force behind increased racial and Hispanic intermarriage.

Third, substantial numbers of children are growing up in interracial families. Although not all of these persons may report themselves as multiracial in censuses or surveys, our analysis of 2000 Census data showed that at least one-half of multiracial persons marry someone from another single race. Only American Indians have higher intermarriage rates. As more children from multiracial families grow up, they are especially likely to intermarry, adding to racial intermarriage and to the multiple-race population.

Fourth, the wide socioeconomic gap separating the majority white population from minority groups is narrowing, diminishing one of the major obstacles to racial intermarriage. Laws and efforts to help redress the socioeconomic inequalities perpetuated by discrimination have allowed growing numbers of minority people to advance. The improvements are especially large in education, an important avenue for social mobility in the United States. In 1960, 43 percent of whites but only 20 percent of blacks had a high school education or more, and 8 percent of whites versus 3 percent of blacks had graduated from college. By 2000, the gap had nearly disappeared for high school graduation, and it had narrowed for college: 26

The socioeconomic gap between whites and minorities is narrowing.

percent of whites and 17 percent of blacks had graduated from college in 2000. Asians already had higher levels of educational attainment than whites: 44 percent were college graduates in 2000. Hispanics have lower educational attainment—in 2000, 11 percent had a college-level education or above.⁵⁴ The narrowing of the education gap between whites and minorities and increased interracial contact at our nation's colleges and universities will also contribute to rising intermarriage rates.

Finally, the American public appears to be more accepting of racial intermarriage. Given American racial history and the tenacious controversies that surrounded race in American society, we should not expect rapid changes in attitudes about racial intermarriage, especially among whites. However, recent opinion surveys show greater acceptance of interracial romantic relationships, with majorities of respondents saying that they accept interracial dating and marriage. These shifts in public opinion are remarkable, considering that antimiscegenation laws were not overturned until 1967 and that, as recently as 1990, 67 percent of whites either opposed or strongly opposed a relative marrying a black person.⁵⁵

While many factors point to continued increases in intermarriage, there are also countervailing trends that may slow or even reverse this trend. High levels of immigration will continually refresh the foreign-born population, and will affect future intermarriage rates for groups such as Asians and Hispanics (particularly Mexicans). While racial attitudes have shifted in recent years toward greater acceptance of intimate interracial relationships (as discussed above), there are still substantial pockets of strong opposition by whites to intermarriage between whites and blacks. In a 2000 survey, 38 percent of white Americans opposed their relative marrying a black person.⁵⁶ While this is a dramatic decline from the 67 percent opposing such marriages in 1990, it is

still a substantial percentage. Some members of minority groups also disapprove of intermarriage, with some viewing intermarriage as a form of racial disloyalty.⁵⁷ Other observers have questioned the honesty of people surveyed; people may say they approve of interracial marriage because they consider it the socially acceptable answer.⁵⁸ Apparent tolerance and acceptance of interracial relationships also appears to be contradicted by public behavior such as derogatory comments and looks of disapproval directed at interracial couples.

Counting and Categorizing

Children of interracially married couples pose many challenges for people who collect and use racial data. While the number and relative proportion of children of interracial couples will certainly rise because of increases in the number of younger intermarried couples, we do not know how these children will choose to identify racially in the future. Their choice of racial identity will be crucial to the future size and composition of America's racial groups and Hispanic-origin populations.

Intermarriage and the growing population of multiracial Americans accentuate the controversies over collecting and using racial data, issues that have been gathering momentum for quite some time.⁵⁹ Yet intermarriage and multiple-origin people are part of current American social reality. There are an increasing number of children of interracial and inter-Hispanic unions (including nonmarital unions not examined in this *Population Bulletin*). There is a need for a way to count the various multiple-origin groups, if only because many such groups are demanding a place in official data. In addition, different combinations of intermarriage are associated with significant differences in such key socioeconomic characteristics as education and income. The diversity of the intermarried and multiple-origin population

must also be acknowledged in official statistics. A single multiracial category would be socially and statistically meaningless.

On the other hand, there has been countervailing pressure for simplicity, clarity, and continuity in racial data collection and application. Affirmative action, equal opportunity laws, voting rights laws, housing discrimination laws, and a host of other social and civil programs depend on the availability of unambiguous racial data. How can we as a society track racial discrimination (and ultimately eliminate such discrimination) if we do not have clearly defined racial groups and racial data? To combat racism, there seems little choice but for society to continue to categorize people by race. Multiracial categories may muddle racial definitions, but they do not eliminate the need for such data.

The tension over acknowledging and counting the multiple-origin population and the need for racial data that can be usefully applied to a host of social and economic programs can only intensify in future years as racial and Hispanic intermarriage and the multiracial and multiethnic population continue to grow. Controversies over the use of race in college admissions illustrate this well. When admissions officers use applicants' race (self-defined by the applicants) as one factor among many in reviewing applications, how much weight should be awarded an applicant who is single-origin black versus an applicant who is multiracial black/white versus another applicant who is multiracial black/white and Hispanic?

The change to multiracial reporting in the 2000 Census signaled that previous racial statistical schemes using single-race identification are eroding. However, we do not know what will replace them. As America's intermarriage and multiracial history continues to develop and unfold, the meaning of race, its measurement, and its significance will no doubt be continually challenged and changed. The topic of intermarriage and multiracial Americans has clearly moved to center stage in public discussion.

New Marriages, New Families

Racial and Hispanic intermarriage produces new marriages and families that redefine the role and meaning of race and ethnicity in America.

Intermarried couples, intermarried families, and multiracial and multiethnic children increasingly populate the American landscape. In some communities, especially in Hawaii and California, it would not be surprising if the average person were to conclude that intermarriage and multiracial and multiethnic children are the norm. Intermarried couples and families are racially and socioeconomically diverse, but most intermarriage still involves a white person married to a minority spouse. In this sense, intermarriage is "whitening" U.S. minority populations. As intermarriage continues to increase, further blurring racial and ethnic group boundaries, Americans' notions of race and ethnicity will surely change.

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Association of Multiethnic Americans

www.ameasite.org

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New Marriages, New Families: U.S. Racial and Hispanic Intermarriage

Racial and Hispanic intermarriage has emerged as a significant feature of U.S. society since 1970. Changes in laws and social attitudes, narrowing education and income gaps between whites and others, and growing Asian and Hispanic populations have all contributed to increased intermarriage. The number of multiracial Americans is growing through increased racial intermarriage. Multiracial children and their parents are helping to erode historical barriers between racial groups and are changing how Americans think about race.

As the U.S. Hispanic population continues its rapid growth, inter-Hispanic marriage and children are expanding the number of Americans with Hispanic ties.