

JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERMARRIAGE

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THE PROBLEM

The extent of intermarriage across racial and ethnic lines has been considered a major indicator of the permeability of boundaries between minority and majority groups (Merton 1941; Bogardus 1959; Gordon 1964). Minority as well as majority group norms can maintain boundaries which may reflect the degree of minority group organization, majority group dominance, and intergroup antipathy. Reduction of these conditions and the development of social proximity between large numbers of minority and majority group members through residential or occupational patterns are thought to be necessary conditions for high intermarriage rates (Gurak, Fitzpatrick 1982 922).

Research on racial and ethnic intermarriage in the United States has continued for more than seven decades. Reviews of earlier findings are given by Barron (1951), Barnett (1963), and examples of pre-1972 research are listed by Barron (1972 339), and Wilkinson (1975 175). Since 1975 studies have published data on blacks (Monahan 1976, 1977; Porterfield 1978), on Catholic national origin groups (Alba 1976; Alba, Kessler 1979), on Jews (Mayer 1980; Lazerwitz 1981), on native Americans (Price 1981), and on Hispanic groups (Murgia, Frisbie 1977; Schoen 1978; Gurak, Fitzpatrick 1982; Murgia 1982). Intermarriage figures also appear in recent reports by the US Census Bureau (1978), and the National Center for Health Statistics (1979 12). An overview of these materials indicates an increase in intermarriage rates over time, but there are major differences in rates and patterns within and between groups.

Japanese Americans, like black Americans, are a racially distinct group which has experienced a long history of discrimination. Yet in the past several decades, Japanese Americans have attained a degree of social and economic mobility (Kitano 1976). An examination of their intermarriage gives insights into the forces that promote or hinder racial and ethnic intermarriage.

A limited amount of data on Japanese American intermarriage is available from

published sources as shown in Table 1. It shows increased intermarriage rates over time and a tendency for intermarriages to involve Japanese American females more often than males. Intermarriage rates are roughly comparable for Hawaii and areas in California, but the available figures for Kansas, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington DC are high. However, the Japanese American population in Kansas was very small and dispersed, while that of the other areas was primarily located in metropolitan areas. The Washington DC Japanese population count was small after Japanese nationals were subtracted from census counts (US Census Bureau, 1970 Census). Only three studies have investigated Japanese American intermarriage in detail. Adams (1937) found little Japanese American exogamy from 1912 to 1934 in Hawaii, and he attributed this to the group's cohesiveness, which allowed them to maintain traditional marriage practices. More recent work by Tinker (1973) and Kikumura and Kitano (1973) indicate that Japanese American intermarriage levels had climbed near 50 percent during the early 1970's in Fresno and Los Angeles counties of California. They cited factors such as increased acculturation over successive generations, since the highest rates are found among the third or *Sansei* generation, and changing role expectations, and improved societal attitudes toward Japanese Americans.

Existing data on Japanese American intermarriage appeared in 1972 and before. We must investigate trends through the 1970's and into the 1980's, since this period includes the young adult years of a large portion of the *Sansei* or third generation. Information was previously gathered primarily in areas with numerically and proportionally larger Japanese American populations, such as Hawaii and selected California locales. This follows the usual practice of intermarriage research, as it more logically allows generalization of findings from the sample to the whole group. However, there are substantial Japanese American populations in outlying areas due to prewar migrations eastward, the removal

TABLE 1: SUMMARY: PUBLISHED DATA ON JAPANESE AMERICAN INTERMARRIAGE (Percent)

Area	Period	% JA Marriage as Inter- marriage	% Inter- marriage with JA Females	Source
Los Angeles County	1924-33	2	37	Panunzio 1942
"	1948-51	12	62	Burma 1952
"	1971-72 ^b	48	60	Kikumura, Kitano 1973
San Francisco County	1958	25	—	Omatsu 1972
"	1972	58	65	"
Fresno County ^a	1958-61	12	54	Tinker 1973
"	1962-64	21	33	"
"	1965-67	37	50	"
"	1968-71	48	49	"
California ^c	1955-59	25	66	Barnett 1963
Hawaii	1912-16	7	28	Adams 1937
"	1920-28 ^a	5	55	"
"	1928-34 ^a	9	53	"
"	1945-54 ^d	22	78	Cheng, Yamamura 1957
"	1961-62	34	66	Schmitt 1965
"	1970	47	62	Kikumura, Kitano 1973
Kansas	1947-69	91	—	Monahan 1971
Washington DC	1968-70	73	74	Monahan 1977
Maryland	1969-70	85	67	"
Virginia	1969-70	90	76	"

^aData originally reported by year or groups of years is combined.

^b1972 data were for January-June.

^cExcludes 1956.

^dFor 1948-53 Parkman & Sawyer (1957) reported intermarriage rate of 22 percent.

the the West Coast population into concentration camps during World War II, and postwar geographic mobility, accompanied by social and economic mobility. A rough indication of this can be found in 1980 Census figures which show over 9000 Japanese Americans in the following states: New York, 24,524; Illinois, 18,550; Texas, 10,502; Colorado, 9,858; and New Jersey, 9,905. Intermarriage data for Japanese Americans and for other groups should be collected from outlying areas where smaller, but significant ethnic communities may exist. We will demonstrate by examining Japanese American intermarriage in Denver, Colorado from 1910 to 1981.

STUDY DESIGN

Denver is a good location to investigate Japanese American intermarriage, since Colorado was the easternmost point of early Japanese migration. By 1909 the Denver Japanese community had several hundred

residents, 67 businesses, and various service organizations. The population again grew significantly during World War II because of voluntary migration from the West Coast and the forcible removal of nearly 8000 Japanese Americans to a concentration camp in southeast Colorado. Growth due largely to immigration has continued to the present (Endo, in press).

Colorado, unlike California, never legally prohibited marriage between whites and Asians. But it should not be inferred that this region had a benign social climate where intermarriage would not be discouraged. Denver and Colorado experienced two brief but important periods of overt anti-Japanese agitation, in 1901-1910, and the 1942-1944 periods. And Colorado did have a law prohibiting marriage between whites and blacks which was first passed by the Territorial Legislature in 1864, upheld in the US Supreme Court in 1942, and not repealed until 1957 (Endo, in press).

Intermarriage data for this study were collected from marriage records in the Clerk and Recorder Office for the City and County of Denver. To compare intermarriage trends with available census figures, mainly on population size and sex composition, records were reviewed for each census year and the following year from the 1910 Census through the 1980 Census. The records used were those of marriages which had actually occurred, as opposed to marriage license applications, since 5 to 10 percent of such applications are not consummated in marriage within the set time limit. Japanese American males and females recorded in marriage were identified by surname. This is an appropriate method, because very few Japanese Americans have changed their surnames. Other information, such as fathers' names and mothers' maiden names were available to help in the identification process. To avoid ambiguity, the few marriages which included individuals of partial Japanese ancestry were not counted. Marriages between a Japanese American partner and any non-Japanese American partner were counted as intermarriages.

RESULTS

Rates of Japanese American intermarriage in Denver are shown in Table 2. Data for the biannual periods 1910-11, 1920-21, 1930-31, and 1940-41 averaged only 9 such marriages. The intermarriage percent values in Table 2 differ somewhat from those in comparable time periods in Hawaii and California. Thus, the 1910-1941 Denver rate is about as high as the 1970-71 rate of 64 percent, compared to the San Francisco 1970-71 rate of 58 percent. The Denver rates are also less than those for the very small numbers of Japanese Americans in Kansas and the Washington DC region. Finally, the Denver data indicate that at least for Denver, the current trend is toward higher rates of intermarriage.

A pattern of increasing levels of Japanese American intermarriage over time characterizes Denver, Hawaii, and California. In both cases this partly reflects cultural, social, and economic changes occurring in successive generations of Japanese Americans. The prewar figures in these tables mostly include first generation or *Issei* marriages. The first generation *Issei* tended to adhere to traditional

endogamous marriage practices. Many males were married by proxy in Japan through arrangements made by their families or friends. The postwar data at first encompass larger numbers of second generation *Nisei* marriages, and by the mid-1960's, there are more *Sansei* or third generation marriages. The recent high intermarriage rates are most characteristic of *Sansei* marriages. Thus, in Fresno, California, only 17 percent of the *Nisei*, second generation marriages included a non-Japanese partner, while 58 percent of the *Sansei* or third generation marriages were mixed (Tinker 1971).

Comparisons between the Denver Japanese American intermarriage rates and information on numerical and proportional group size in Table 3 reveals no clear relation between rate and size. Intermarriage levels increased dramatically from 1950-51 to 1980-81. During the same time, the number of Japanese Americans in Denver grew and then declined so that the group was about the same size in 1980 as in 1950, and their proportion in the total Denver population declined from 0.6 to 0.5 percent. Though the numbers of Japanese Americans in the metropolitan area and the state of Colorado gradually increased, it was less than the rate of increase for the total population in these areas. Changes in group size over time are not having much effect on Denver intermarriage rates.

Since 1950-51, when the Denver intermarriage rate began rapidly increasing, Japanese American females intermarried more frequently than males (Table 2). This pattern is also seen in much of the Hawaii and California data. Female predominance in intermarriage likewise occurs among Spanish Americans or *Chicanos* (Murgia 1982). But males are more

TABLE 2: JAPANESE AMERICAN (JA) INTERMARRIAGE IN DENVER (Percent)

Period	(N)	JA Marriages % Inter- marriages	Intermarriage % with JA Females
1910-41*	(35)	14	0
1950-51	(70)	11	63
1960-61	(51)	24	58
1970-71	(70)	64	53
1980-81	(69)	74	65

*Cumulative 1910-11, 1920-21, 1930-31, 1940-41.

TABLE 3: PROPORTION & SEX RATIO OF JAPANESE AMERICAN (JA) POPULATION*

U.S. Census Year	Denver			Denver Metro Area ^b			Colorado		
	(N)	Pct/Total Population	JA Sex Ratio	(N)	Pct/Total Population	JA Sex Ratio	(N)	Pct/Total Population	JA Sex Ratio
1910	585	0.3	--	735	0.3	--	2300	0.3	2030
1920	465	0.2	--	821	0.2	--	2464	0.3	186
1930	349	0.1	182	1028	0.3	141	3213	0.3	135
1940	323	0.1	113	841	0.2	119	2734	0.2	123
1950	2578	0.6	110	3548	0.6	117	5412	0.4	122
1960	3049	0.6	98	4712	0.5	95	6846	0.4	94
1970	2676	0.5	86	5491	0.4	84	7831	0.4	79
1980	2458	0.5	85	6907	0.4	85	9870	0.3	80

*Males per 100 females.

^bStandard Metropolitan Statistical Area; Counties: Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, Jefferson, Boulder.

often involved in the case of blacks (Heer 1966; Monahan 1976). For Japanese Americans, a possible explanation is the imbalance in the group's sex ratio, expressed as the number of men per 100 women. But the data in Table 3 do not support a relation between sex ratio and the Denver intermarriage rate. The city, metropolitan area and the state sex ratios for 1950 and 1960 do not correspond to the high percent of Japanese American females in 1950-51 and 1960-61 intermarriages. Even the lower 1980 sex ratio does not match the two-to-one preponderance of Japanese American females in 1980-81 intermarriages. Census figures for 1980 are available by age and sex. When only young adults, age 20-35 are considered, the sex ratios for the city, metropolitan area and the state are 95, 93, and 98 respectively. Clearly, other variables are causing the sex patterning in Denver intermarriages. Some possibilities such as changing female role expectations have been noted, but more evidence is necessary (Tinker 1973; Kikumura, Kitano 1973).

CONCLUSION

The Denver data provide some indication that the present trend is toward higher levels of Japanese American intermarriage, and Denver, as an outlying area, may exhibit a similar pattern to that of the larger Japanese American populations of Hawaii and California. This has important implications for research on racial and ethnic intermarriage. More work is needed on intermarriage in smaller ethnic communities, including other

Japanese American communities. We also need a rigorous investigation of the consequences of high rates of exogamy.

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TABLE 3: PARTICIPATION TOTALS
(Total N # 574)

Category	N
Leaders	10
Persons at bazaar*	200
Persons in study groups	388
Family members	41
Neighbors	141

*A bazaar where some skills were taught by homemaker leaders.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

We have affirmed the proposition that homemaker leaders can be trained to teach home management skills to other homemakers in their own neighborhoods. There were few dropouts during the program. The time used with direct contact was about six months. The cost for demonstration materials was about \$250. Cost for time, travel and professional services are not included.

The homemaker leaders accomplished the following:

- They became more successful homemakers
- They improved self confidence
- They became aware that they could teach
- They gained personal satisfaction in associating with others and by their accomplishments
- They enhanced neighborhood cooperation.

A similar program using the methods described here could be tested in other subject matter areas. The techniques and materials used during the study need further testing in other communities. **We have also demonstrated that the influence of the home economics specialist can be increased by a factor exceeding one hundred in the teacher-multiplier project.**

ENDO

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