

Intermarriage and Multiple Identities

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Intermarriage has long been of interest to both the general public and to American social scientists because of its connection to assimilation. This is because intermarriage is a process by which group members cross a recognized boundary with increased frequency, and eventually with such frequency that the boundary becomes blurred or disappears. Since the crossing involves decisions about the most intimate social connections, and the creation of new family contexts, it is hard to imagine how to study issues of ethnic group interactions without giving it an important conceptual place. However, it is important to understand – and this point will reverberate throughout our discussion -- that the behavior of intermarriage is significant to assimilation in two specific ways: first, in measuring a decline in social divisions that has already occurred and second, as an indication that those social divides will decline still further – as a result of intermarriage itself.

This latter point--that intermarriage is important to the study of race and ethnicity because it signals that old social divisions will fall still farther in the future – is, in terms of the intermarriage studies themselves, often only an assumption, because the studies typically measure intermarriage at only one point in time. Despite the focus on the rates of intermarriage at one moment in time, however, the substantive importance of intermarriage is that it is part of a social evolution that

continues through the decades and generations following the marriage.

Conceptual and Methodological Issues

A fundamental numeric insight is critical to all understanding of intermarriage: the contrast between the proportion of a group's *individuals* who marry out and the proportion of mixed *marriages* among all marriages that involve at least one member from the group. The latter proportion will always be higher. For example, when 38 out of every 100 members of a group out-marry, they find a spouse from outside the group, creating 38 couples. The other 62 group members in every 100 find a spouse from among their own, forming 31 couples. The proportion of mixed marriages among all marriages that involve at least one member from the group is thus $38/(38+31)$, or 55%; yet only 38% of individuals had married out. This numeric insight is a commonplace in the study of intermarriage rates at any single moment in time; but it is just as important to understand its profound implications for the next generation: the prevalence of the mixed origin children born to the 100 group members of our example is likely to reflect the rate of mixed-origin couples, not the rate of individual out-marriages (assuming roughly equal fertility rates among the in-marriers and the out-marriers). Thus, the next generation will include 55% who are of mixed-origin even as only 38% of their parents had out-married. The crucial point is that the ethnic origins of the next generation result from the rate at which couples form, not the rate at which individuals out-marry.

These dynamics have profound implications for the future of ethnicity, multiculturalism and assimilation. In the long run, even the moderately long run (a span of three generations, for example) it is very hard for an American ethnic group to retain internal cohesion and distinctiveness, because so many of its descendants are also descendants of other groups – unless, of

course, immigration replenishes the relative prevalence of first-generation group members, and the ties between the old and new families of arrivals are strong. Ancestral language, interest in country of origin, festivals, local ethnic issues -- all these will command divided rather than unifocal attention in a mixed-origin home. And similarly role-models, job contacts, and relatives will be drawn from multiple groups.

Among European immigrants of the past, and we will argue, among Asian and Hispanic immigrants of today, intermarriage has played havoc with simple definitions of ethnic origin and generation by the time the grandchildren of the immigrants come of age. Because of intermarriage in the first and second generations most grandchildren of European immigrants from a given country (such as Italians) were also grandchildren of non-Italians -- of Germans, Poles, Swedes, Scotch-Irish, or Mexicans, for example. Also, a great many grandchildren of immigrants will also typically be members of some other generation: the granddaughter of Polish immigrants may, on the other side of the family, be a sixth-generation descendent of a Scotch-Irish immigrant and the fourth generation descendant of a German immigrant. The concept of generation itself, like the concept of ethnic origin, works moderately well as a classificatory instrument for the first two generations but poorly for later generations; the key is the degree of intermarriage in the preceding generations.

These connections between assimilation and intermarriage may be said to describe how once-distinct peoples become one stock, literally members of one family. At the same time, assimilation also involves, for those groups whose members arrive without the skills provided by extended education, social mobility. While the immigrant arrivals of these groups may live “under America” (as a Slavic immigrant once put it to a Congressional committee), a majority of their second, third and fourth generation offspring eventually “made it” by having a social-class profile more or less like the descendants of much-earlier arriving groups. And yet, the processes of intermarriage and of social mobility must be thought of together. It is not just a matter of the

individual – that the more assimilated members may be more likely to out-marry. It is also a matter of groups; by the time the descendants of an immigrant group (such as the Italians) are said to have ‘made it,’ great numbers of these descendants are also the descendants of those other groups. The conceptual and measurement challenge is to think of the two group processes working together across generations.

Another less obvious implication from these dynamics of mixed-origin and single-origin reproduction is that the mixed origin population swells the number of descendants with *some* origins in the group (namely, mixed origins in this case). While the ethnic ties of those with mixed origin will generally be weaker than those with unmixed origin, they will not be negligible, especially in the first mixed generation. So a group with weaker ties but larger numbers may form as a transitional stage on the way to much weaker (or negligible) ties and still greater numbers.

It is worth noting too that these processes have huge implications for predictions about the ‘the future racial [or ethnic] composition of the American people.’ Projections about the future demographic composition of the American population began to make headlines in the 1990’s as the country began to understand how much of an effect new, mostly non-white immigration was having on the racial and ethnic composition of the American population. But the projections that drew such great attention in the 1990s ignored future-generation intermarriage of Hispanics and Asians as well as of blacks. These projections assumed that all racial and ethnic groups married only each other and thus grew or declined only through births, deaths and migration. It is beyond debate that the racial and ethnic composition of the American population will evolve as immigration draws in millions from around the world; but it is quite another matter to predict the future ethno-racial divisions of the future population as though (for example) all third-generation descendants of Hispanic immigrants will be only Hispanic in origin, and will be as involved with Hispanicity as much as are their immigrant forebears.

One need only imagine if the debates about immigration restriction at the beginning of the 20th century had been informed by population projections. Headlines would have screamed about the proportion that Italians or Poles would be in our major cities if immigration continued. What such projections could not have foreseen is that intermarriage eroded the boundaries between groups such as Italians Germans and English so that the distinctions lost all but their symbolic meanings among white Americans as ethnic identity among the intermarried third and fourth generation became optional and a matter of personal choice.

When the U.S. census began in 1980 to ask a question about ethnic ancestry, a question also asked in 1990 and 2000, a number of studies began to highlight the contemporary *result* of earlier mixing in the population. The subjective census question, “What is your ethnic ancestry?” does not provide information on the generational standing of the respondents or the full scope of their ethnic origins (since respondents list only those they chose to, and only two or three are reported); and it does not record the importance respondents attach to the reported ties. But the census ancestry question does provide information on what people say about their origins. By the middle of the 20th century the majority of the descendants of white ethnics in the U.S. were of mixed ancestry. And people with many ethnic options choose among them and often change their minds. The ancestry data have been immensely useful in showing the subjective fluidity of ethnic identities in America, and have stimulated interest in related topics, such as which origins tend to get reported and why. For example, the number of claimants of English, German or Italian ancestry could rise or fall by a fifth to a third depending on the placement of a particular ancestry in the list of examples that accompanies the question. In 1980 when English was in the list of examples under the blank line on the census for filling in ancestry, it was the largest ancestry group in the U.S. In 1990 when English was removed from the list of examples and German was added, Germans became the largest ancestry group in the U.S. The Irish provide another example. A group once

seen as severely disadvantaged (the term paddy wagon is an ethnic slur referring to the criminality of the Irish ethnic group), became very popular as it moved into the American mainstream, so that whites who have many different ancestors with different European origins are likely to keep an identification with their Irish heritage. Thus Michael Hout and Joshua Goldstein were able to show how 4.5 million Irish immigrants became 40 million Irish Americans, not because they had exceptionally high fertility, but because the descendants of those Irish immigrants intermarried and their descendants preferred to keep an ethnic identity that was in part Irish. Using ancestry data to study ethnic socioeconomic change (and intermarriage) is perilous because we do not know how many people and which sort of people are among those failing to claim a particular ethnic origin

Contemporary Intermarriage

To a very great extent, the traditional field of ethnic intermarriage studies has been stimulated by the long-term social processes related to the European immigration to the United States (and related issues such as religious intermarriage of Protestants, Catholics and Jews). These studies showed that over time, with more generations of residence in the U.S., the groups had higher out-marriage rates. The question of racial intermarriage also had a special place in studies of intermarriage; it was different from intermarriage among European groups (we ignore for the moment other combinations) for at least two reasons. First, black-white intermarriage was rare because of the institution of slavery and its legacy of extreme social divisions between blacks and whites and also of course because it was illegal in many states until the 1967 Supreme Court decision *Loving vs. Virginia* that struck down all antimiscegenation laws. Second, in the big picture, black-white intermarriage was not like immigrant and white-ethnic intermarriage because the very low incidence did not change with the length of time that black families had spent in the United States; or, to put it differently, the black families had experienced their forced immigration so many

generations back as to make the immigration experience utterly irrelevant by the 20th century. One could quibble about exceptions involving West Indians before 1960, but for the great mass of American blacks these were truly quibbles.

Thus the current study of intermarriage can draw on two related traditions: one involving racial intermarriage based on two long-resident populations with very low intermarriage rates (blacks and whites), in which researchers ignore the generational status of the populations, and the other tradition involving immigrants and their offspring, in which generational status explains a great deal of the behavior. This distinction has begun to break down in contemporary studies of intermarriage. Most immigrants today are classified (by someone: by themselves or others) as non-white; most descendants of older European (white) immigrations now cross the old social divides so easily that (to paraphrase sociologist Robert Merton's observation) it can hardly be called intermarriage when they do, since there no longer exists a norm that such behavior violates (the Jewish/gentile intermarriages may still be the strongest partial exception to this broad generalization).

Among native born blacks and whites in the US the period since the Civil Rights Movement has shown definite changes in attitudes and in behaviors, although attitudes have changed more quickly than behaviors. Daniel Lichter and Zhenchao Qian note that in the 1960's less than 10 percent of whites expressed approval of interracial marriages. By the 1990's more than two thirds of whites approved. While still relatively rare, intermarriages between blacks and whites increased nearly six fold from 65,000 such marriages in 1960 to 363,000 in 2000. In 2000 93% of black women married black men, while 84% of black men married black women. Endogamy was the norm among whites, with 94% of U.S. born white men married to U.S. born white women. Yet intermarriage between whites and other racial groups increased even more, from 233,000 marriages in 1970 to over 1 million in 2000.

Five major groupings make up what historian David Hollinger has described as the ethno-racial pentagon – blacks, whites, Native Americans, Asians, and Hispanics. These categories correspond with how most Americans think about the major racial and ethnic divisions in society and also to the federal Office of Management and Budget’s directive 15, issued in 1978, which told federal statistical agencies how to report on race and ethnicity. Many studies of intermarriage look at how often couples form across these broad group boundaries, these are summarized in Table 1. In 2000 out-marriage was least prevalent among whites, the largest group. 2.7% of whites had a spouse from another group. Among blacks 7% had out-married, among Asians, 16% and among American Indians 56.7%. Yet even this broad brush analysis is often more complex. This is because of the insistence of the federal government that Hispanics can be members of any racial group. Thus the census asks a separate question on race that does not include an Hispanic category, and asks a separate question about Hispanic identity. Looking just at Hispanic/non-Hispanic spouses (regardless of race), the 2000 census found that 14 percent of Hispanics had out-married.

Yet studies of Asian and Hispanic marriage patterns are not meaningful unless they take into account the generational status of the populations, as did traditional studies of immigrant intermarriage such as those done with European immigrant groups. Treating Asian and Hispanic marriage patterns merely as “racial intermarriage,” as one might treat black-white intermarriage, can be misleading. Indeed all of the major “racial” groups are affected by immigration, even whites and blacks. Table 2 gives the breakdown of race and ethnic groups by generation. Asians and Hispanics are most impacted by immigration; 61.4% of Asians are foreign born, another quarter are second generation and only 13% are third or higher. Among Hispanics a third have been in the United States at least three generations, while almost 40% are first generation and another 28% are second. Even among blacks immigration is showing large effects, with one out of ten black

Americans either first or second generation.

Studies that do take generational status into account confirm that generation matters among all racial groups. This is evident in Table 3 which provides estimates of out-marriage rates by racial/ethnic group and generation. These rates, developed by Barry Edmonston, Sharon Lee and Jeffrey Passel, are based on observed intermarriage rates for foreign born and native born Hispanics and Asians and on the maternal and paternal race distribution for U.S. birth data in 1990 (second generation rates are interpolated as being between those of the first and third generation). Not surprisingly, the native born routinely intermarry more than the foreign born. The only exception to this is among blacks. Black immigrants tend to marry across racial lines more than native born blacks; sociologists Frank Bean and Jennifer Lee suggest this could be because of higher levels of acceptance of foreign born than native born blacks by native born whites. Among Hispanics and Asians, so heavily a product of recent immigration, to ignore generational standing is to focus primarily on first-generation members, least likely to intermarry. Many of them arrive in the U.S. already married. To interpret a finding of high in-marriage among a group that is primarily first generation as evidence of a racial pattern of in-marriage is wrong. As table 3 shows, among both Hispanics and Asians who have been in the US three generations or higher, a majority out-marry racially.

Out-marriage is a function of both the timing of migration, the size of the group, and the relative importance of the boundaries separating the groups. Sociologists have long noted that groups of small size generally have high out-marriage rates because the pool of potential in-group mates is small. Thus new immigration – what sociologists of ethnicity have called the *replenishment* of a group -- can reduce overall out-marriage rates two ways, by increasing the proportion of first generation immigrants who arrive already married or who tend to have a high propensity to in marry because they are much less assimilated in terms of language, residence,

religion and other characteristics than later generation members of the same group. But new immigration also might lower overall out-marriage rates of a group by enlarging the group size and providing possible in-group spouses to later generation ethnic group members. So it remains unclear whether the grandchildren of today's Hispanic immigrants will out-marry at the rate of 57%, because many members of the current third generation married at a time of relatively low Hispanic immigration when there were fewer first and second generation potential spouses. However, countervailing factors also exist. The currently married 3rd generation Hispanics came of age at a time of greater discrimination and social distance between Hispanics and Anglos and so there might be fewer social barriers facing future descendants of today's immigrants, thereby increasing intermarriage rates. In general, the strength of replenishment effects on the marriage patterns of later-generation descendants of immigrants who arrived in earlier times has not been studied; but it is a topic relevant to the contemporary immigration period, which is now in its fifth decade.

Of course the situation is much more complicated than the figures above would suggest. In every one of the five groupings there are great differences in income and education, for example; but among Asians and Hispanics these correspond closely to differences in national origin and generational status, to factors related to immigration pure and simple. Compare affluent and well educated Cubans and South Americans, for instance to more disadvantaged groups such as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans; or Japanese and Asian Indians to Cambodians and Laotians. Moreover, while some of these groups first came to the United States in appreciable numbers after 1965, others – Mexicans and Chinese in particular – have a much longer history of moderately large immigration. These national group differences within the two corners of the 'ethnoracial pentagon' called Asian and Hispanic mean that any effort to discuss intermarriage among Asians or Hispanics as a whole are bound to be limited in their explanatory power. The census taker has contributed to

this limited explanatory power; the last three decennial censuses have merely ascertained whether a person is native-born or not, but has ignored whether or not the native-born person is in turn the child of immigrants. Consequently our largest and most authoritative samples have tempted us to ignore generational standing: we know only that a certain native-born person identifies as Chinese in ethnic origin or Asian in racial origin; but the person could be a second or seventh generation American.

Nevertheless, national origin matters a great deal. For example, among Hispanic groups in New York City during the 1990s, 66% of the second generation Cubans were marrying non-Hispanics, the same was true for 19% of second generation Dominicans; Mexican rates were closer to the Cuban than to the Dominican rate. Class background, phenotype, and the size of the national-origin groups probably all help explain these contrasts. In New York Mexicans have been a very small group until relatively recently and so their relatively high intermarriage rate may be due to group size. Similarly, in national data from 1990, Japanese and Filipinos were most likely to marry whites, followed by Chinese and Koreans and then by Southeast Asians and Asian Indians, who were the least likely. Also, interracial marriage with whites is more frequent than interethnic marriage with other Asian Americans. Remember that the panethnic group “Asian Americans” is an American creation. The category Asian contains groups with very different languages, religions, and class backgrounds. This observation reminds us first that without a concern for Asian national origins, we cannot study the phenomenon of Asian panethnicity – operationally defined as the odds that members of Asian groups will marry members of other Asian national groups more often than non-Asian Americans will do so. But while panethnicity can hint at a trend towards ‘racialization’ of Asian (or Hispanic) groups, the finding that out-marriage beyond the boundaries of Asian panethnicity is more prevalent in each of these Asian groups argues for the strength of countervailing tendencies.

Measuring intermarriage and inter-mixing by ancestry and by generation becomes quite complex very quickly. Take, for example, Mexican Americans, currently the largest immigrant group to the U.S. In an earlier study we conducted comparing current Mexican American out-marriage to historical patterns of out-marriage among Italian Americans we found that the results of previous intermarriage were quite evident in the ancestries of the current children of immigrants. Among Mexicans in the U.S. born between 1966 and 1975, 53% were first generation, having been born in Mexico and immigrated to the U.S. after the age of 10. 8% were 1.5 generation having been born in Mexico and immigrating at age 9 or younger. Another 9% were second generation—born in the U.S. to two Mexican born parents. 6% were born in the U.S. to one Mexican born parent and one parent not born in Mexico, in most cases the second parent was born in the U.S. of Mexican parentage or ancestry. 24% were third generation or higher born in the U.S. to U.S. born parents some or all Mexican origins claimed for earlier forbears who immigrated to the U.S. In total, 40%, or almost half of this cohort reported some mixed ethnic origins, while one parent has some Mexican origin, the other parent reports either mixed origin themselves or no Mexican origin.

When we focus only on the “true” second generation, the 9% of this cohort who were born in the U.S. to two Mexican parents, we find that how we define an in- or an out- marriage has a large effect. If we count as an out-marriage only those who marry someone with no Mexican origins then 20% of men and 11% of the women out-marry. However the figures are much higher, 45% for men and 27% for women when we include the 2.5 generation and the 3rd and later generation and also when we include spouses of mixed-immigrant origins.

But even if we take the strictest definition of intermarriage (20% of men and 11% of women) or 15% of individuals, recall that the ethnic origins of the next generation result from the rate at which couples form, not the rate at which individuals out-marry. In this cohort although fewer than 1/6 of individuals out-marry, more than 1/4 of their offspring will be of mixed origin.

We may still ask how large is the rate of “more than one-quarter”? One answer is that the figures cited here are in fact smaller than those often cited for second-generation out-marriage, because we have excluded from the American born children of Mexican immigrants those who had only one Mexican immigrant parent (a group nearly as large as those whom we include), and among this excluded group out-marriage rates are more than twice as high as for the “true” second generation members. Another way to gauge this figure is to compare present day Mexicans to a cohort of second generation Italian Americans born between 1886 and 1900. Italian American second generation women, defined the same way as Mexican Americans above, out-married at the rate of 17%. Although this is slightly higher than the second generation Mexican women (11%), Italians were a much smaller group in the population. Hispanics were 18% of the sampled husbands in the young birth cohort we studied, but in 1920 Italians were fewer than 3% of the sampled husbands. These numbers imply that, all else being equal, it was some six times as hard to limit one’s choice of a spouse to an Italian at that time than it is to limit one’s choice of a spouse to a Hispanic today. The fact that the second-generation Italian women then nevertheless did limit their choice to their own kind roughly as often as second generation Mexican women do today strongly suggests that the constraints other than group size that operated against out-marriage were actually greater for Italian women living at that time than are the comparable constraints operating for Mexican women today. At any rate, we should conclude that such constraints are surely not appreciably larger today than they were at that time.

The Big Changes in Our Time

Recent increases in rates of cohabitation and out-of-wedlock births as well as long-familiar high divorce rates must somehow be incorporated into our conceptualization and measurement of ethnic intermarriage. A study of marriage in 2000 will not capture the same proportion of people

as a study of marriage would have captured in 1900, and the differences do not capture all ethnic or racial groups in the same way. One might object that this sort of gradation of relationships—cohabitation vs. marriage—has always been an issue in the study of intermarriage; one need only think of interracial or interfaith dating vs. interracial or interfaith marriage. The point here is the profundity of the shift: cohabitation is much more intimate and of much longer duration than dating and much more likely to result in offspring.

Lichter and Qiao report that the number of opposite sex cohabitating couples grew from 440,000 in 1960 to 3.8 million in 2000. We also know that there are large differences in the degree of cross-racial relationships between married couples and cohabitators; 10% of cohabitating opposite sex couples were in interracial relationships while only 6% of married couples were. The 2000 census also provides information on same sex couples—individuals who designate themselves as “unmarried partners” of the household head. There were 594,000 same sex cohabitating couples, although we are unaware of any studies of the degree of racial and ethnic intermixing among them.

The other key challenge is that marriage is not merely less durable but quite simply less universal than it was before—most especially for some racial/ethnic groups. For instance in 1990 only 35% of Black women under the age of 35 had ever been married. When rates of cohabitation and divorce are both high, the meaning of ethnic intermarriage, becomes, so to speak, problematic at both ends of the process. Connections across ethnic lines may be established in premarital or post marital cohabitation. In this brave new world, can we pay attention only to the “middle stage” of these processes?

The shift to bearing children out of wedlock is just as portentous. At present one third of American children are born to women who are not married. This figure varies dramatically by race and ethnicity. In 2000, according to the National Center for Health Statistics, 22% of births among Non Hispanic whites were to unmarried mothers, 69% of births among non Hispanic blacks

and 43% among births to Hispanic mothers were to unwed mothers. As the magnitude of the figure suggests, this pattern is not due to urban ghetto life styles, or California or Northeastern life styles; rather, it is remarkably widespread. Most of the children of out of wedlock births do not live with their biological father. While the rates have been increasing rapidly for whites, the figures for blacks deserve special attention in connection with intermarriage; because as already noted, black out-marriage has been and remains distinctly low, and at the same time, the pattern is shifting somewhat towards greater intermarriage. Black-white intermarriage falls within a context of a) low levels of black marriage, and b) higher levels of black-white cohabitation than of black white marriage; these contexts radically complicate the interpretation of the intermarriage rates.

At the same time, the high proportion of blacks born out of wedlock also complicates the interpretation of the multiracial origins of the offspring of black-white unions. Much of a child's ethnic and even racial identity is related to the connection to parents and grandparents. If a child's father is out of the picture, self-identification is more likely to follow the mother's line; still, the father might not be completely absent, and in any case the father's phenotype might make a difference in identity.

In sum, formal marriage and the children born in wedlock provide us with a conservative view of the degree of intermixing—both in terms of interethnic couples, and in terms of the production of mixed ancestry children. How changes in cohabitation, divorce and childbearing come to affect interethnic co-mingling, and resultant ethnic and racial identity in the next generation, are big issues for the future understanding of ethnic blending. In our view, the most important novel features of American ethnic intermarriage are likely to be bound up with these changes. By comparison, differences in formal intermarriage rates between the largest of the

immigrant groups of today and the largest immigrant group of the last great wave of immigration seem minor, even if race plays a somewhat different role in determining the contemporary compared to the historical immigrant patterns.

Intermixing and Multiple Identities

We noted earlier that intermarriage bears on how a group is conceived; it is difficult to speak of the descendants of one immigrant group because many, and soon enough most, are also descendants of other groups. A special case involves groups that are today recognized in the law – the four “other” groups (other than white) – in the federal government’s statistical categories: African Americans, American Indians, Asians, and Hispanics. Even when such groups had very low intermarriage rates, or were restricted by the laws of earlier times from intermarrying at all, defining group membership was not always simple, because of interracial out-of-wedlock births. Insofar as whites socially defined these offspring as nonwhite the problem was solved or reduced; this was not always the case, however – consider the American Indian ‘half breed’ and the descendants of Mexicans in the Southwest. In any case, in the context of current intermarriage rates, the conceptual challenge is different and the number of people it covers may be much greater. The conceptual challenge is different because the offspring may insist on recognizing both their minority racial status and their white origins. The number of people covered in the case of black-white mixes may so far be relatively small, as we have stressed, but it is large for other groups. It was in this context that the way in which the federal government gathered racial statistics became a subject of debate in the 1990s.

The federal censuses had allowed individuals of European descent to describe their mixed origins; for example, questions about parental birthplaces always turned up millions with parents born in different countries. So too, the ancestry question anticipates multiple ancestries for respondents. Some race data from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century censuses also recognized race

mixture, at least in connection with whites and blacks, by enumerating the number of mulattoes, quadroons and octoroons. But after these classifications were dropped, individuals were listed as members of one race only. And when self-reporting was introduced, the instruction was explicit to “mark one [race] only.” Eventually, a movement of identity politics, whose nature is debated, agitated for a change. The upshot was the right to “mark one [race] or more” in federal race and ethnic statistics and this change to the race question appeared in the 2000 census. However, how this multiplicity is to be recognized in federal laws that require discrete and non-overlapping categories to define protected groups is not entirely clear. For the moment, for civil and voting rights legislation and cases, it appears that individuals listing more than one group are counted as members of a protected group and not as whites. The Hispanic Origin population represents a second variant of the response. Here too, the figures may be relevant to civil and voting rights legislation; but the Hispanic Origin question has bypassed the identity struggle in the public domain because it never required one to claim *only* Hispanic origins. The offspring of a Mexican immigrant and an Anglo can routinely answer the Hispanic origin question in the affirmative without appearing to deny his or her Anglo origins which can be reported on the race question.

A related set of questions has involved the federal relationship with American Indian tribes. By the early twentieth century many people who said they were Native Americans by race also noted that they were of mixed descent, with some white or black ancestors as well. Consequently, when government dealt with tribal communities in the twentieth century for numerous purposes, tribal membership was defined in terms of the proportion of an individual's ancestors who had been tribal members. The required proportion differed from tribe to tribe: a quarter, an eighth, or less. In addition, the individual had to be recognized by the tribe as a part of the community. That is, the criteria of membership include both a “blood quantum” (a specific fraction of Native American ancestry) and a subjective element of communal recognition.

Another variant on these issues is taking place within the American Jewish community. Jews are not a protected minority (except of course insofar as all groups are protected from discrimination). Nevertheless, as we noted earlier, American Jewish intermarriage rates have soared and for several million people there is no longer a yes-no answer to the question of whether they “are Jewish” – not because they may be secular in religious outlook but because they are both Jewish (in some respect) *and* not Jewish. Moreover, these people may not treat participation in a particular religion as excluding participation in another one, but rather they may associate each religion with a particular parent. However, the American Jewish community is also highly organized, with great institutional development. These many institutions, from religious denominations to charitable and community-based centers, all face the question of how to decide who is Jewish. This question of course does not involve American law, but it does involve the institutions of an American minority struggling with the need for clear, non-overlapping categories in the context of the messiness of large-scale intermarriage. The larger point of all these examples is not the particular historical trajectory of debates nor the solution, but the fact that non-overlapping categories required in law or in other contexts will be hard to square with increasing intermarriage.

The new census race question which recorded multiple racial identities appeared in the 2000 census and 6.8 million people reported more than one race. Among those who reported two or more races, 80% reported that they were white and one of the other race categories. Sonya Tafoya, Hans Johnson and Laura E. Hill report that the most common combination were people who reported that they were white and “some other race” (2.2 million people or 35% of biracial people); they were followed by 1 million people who reported that they were American Indian and white (17%); 868,395 people who were Asian and white (13.6%) and 784,764 people who were black and white (12.3%). The foreign born were more likely than the native born to report more than one

race. 6% of foreign born people were multiple races as opposed to 2% of the native born. This is in great part due to the way the census is organized. Many people answering the race question would like to say that they are Hispanic or a specific group such as Puerto Rican. But the 15 boxes to check on the race question do not include any Hispanic groups. At the bottom of all the boxes there is a box to check saying Some Other Race and then a blank line where they can write in a race. If they write in Puerto Rican or Hispanic on the blank line in the race question, the census codes them as “Some Other Race”. If they do this and also check off white they are coded as multiple race. Thus the largest group of multiple race people are people who are Some Other Race and white, and most of them are Latinos—thus it is not surprising that many of them are foreign born.

The new ability to report more than one race will no doubt have profound consequences in the coming years. Already the statistical reporting of race is quite complicated. Official tabulations of the census include the five broad race categories—white, black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, as well as the residual “some other race”. This produces six possible monoracial categories, 15 unique biracial combinations, 20 unique three race combinations, 15 four race combinations, six five race combinations, and one six race combination, or 63 unique racial identities. If Hispanic or non Hispanic is added to each of these 63 identities, there are 126 unique racial/Hispanic categories. Many commentators have wondered how long a statistical system with such complexity can survive.

No doubt many of the people who report more than one race are the result of intermarriages among their parents, grandparents and more distant ancestors. Indeed, half of the people in the census who report more than one race are children and so the vast majority are being reported on, by the person filling out the census, most probably a parent. We noted above that as the second and

third generation of the post 1965 immigrants come of age they will most probably intermarry at relatively high rates. Thus future censuses will show an even greater proportion of the children and grandchildren of post 1965 immigrants will be of mixed ancestry. It is possible that historians at the end of the 21st century will look back at the population projections of the 1990's with the knowledge that divisions that seemed natural and sharp at the time were already in the process of blurring and perhaps even disappearing over time. The intermarriage and resulting mixed ancestries of the most recent immigrants to the United States are taking on a force of their own, and rigid divisions by race or ethnicity will not remain in place over time.

Table 1

U.S. Interracial Marriage Rates by **census** Race **categories** and Gender, 2000

Race	Total	Men	Women
White	2.7	2.9	2.6
Black	7.0	9.7	4.1
American Indian	56.7	55.7	57.6
Asian	16.0	9.5	21.6
Asian Native Born		32.0	44.0
Hispanic	14.0		
Hispanic Native Born		29.0	31.0

Source: Sahron M. Lee and Barry Edmonston, *New Marriages, New Families: U.S. Racial and Hispanic Intermarriage* Population Bulletin, 60 no. 2 Washington, D.C. 2005. pages 12 and 25

Table 2

Census Race and Ethnicity **categories** by Generation, 2000

Generation	Black	Asian	Hispanic	NonHispanic White	Total
1 st	6.3%	61.4%	39.1%	3.6%	10.4%
2 nd	3.9%	26.6%	28.5%	7.3%	10.0%
3 rd + later	89.9%	12.1%	32.4%	89.1%	79.6%

Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	35.5	10.9	32.8	193.6	

Source: Schmidley, Diane. 2001. U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports Series P-23-206. Profile of the Foreign Born Population in the United States, 2000. Washington DC: Government Printing Office. Page 24.

Table 3
Estimated Intermarriage Rates by Population Group and Generation 2000-2100

Census race or ethnic GROUP		GENERATION		
	All	First	Second	Third and later
Asian	20	13	34	54
Black	10	14	12	10
Hispanic	30	8	32	57
White	8	10	9	8
AIAN	40	20	30	50

Source: Barry Edmonston, Sharon Lee and Jeffrey Passel, "Recent Trends in Intermarriage and Immigration and Their Effects on the Future Racial Composition of the U.S. Population. In Joel Perlmann and Mary C. Waters, eds. *The New Race Question: How the Census Counts Multiracial Individuals* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2002.

Note: On the limitations inherent in census race and ethnic categories see discussion in the text.

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