

## **Ethnoracial identification of Biracial Asian-Americans**

**Keywords:** Asian, Asian-American, “Amerasian”, biracial, interracial marriage

**Description:** This brief focuses on the self-perceived ethnoracial identification of biracial Asian-Americans living in the United States. It will address the increasing tendency for Asian-Americans to enter into interracial marriages and the larger demographic of bi- or multiracial Asian-Americans that result.

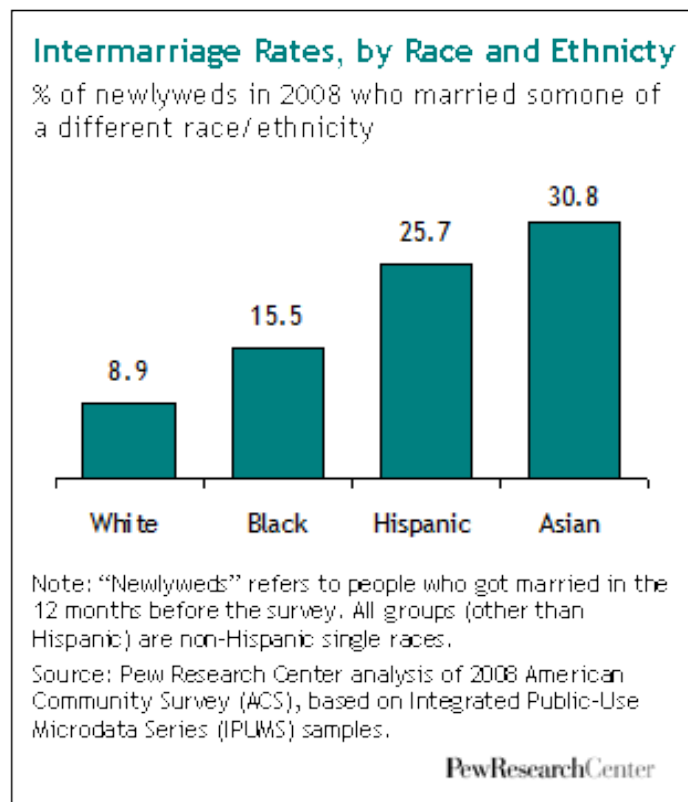
### **Key Points:**

- Because of laws restricting interracial marriage, biracial Asian-Americans are a relatively recent phenomena.
- Today, Asian-Americans are most likely to marry someone of a different race or ethnicity.
- Hostility from both white Americans and Asian-Americans have made it difficult for biracial Asian-Americans to establish an ethnoracial identity of their own.
- High home-country affinity causes Asian-Americans to fear that increased interracial marriages will result in a loss of culture.
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### **Issue Brief:**

During the first wave of Chinese and other Asian immigration into the United States in the mid-1700s, the majority of those immigrating were male; this initially resulted in a standard of interracial marriage between Chinese men and (white) American women. However, as the amount of Asians immigrating increased – and as the gender of the immigrants balanced – hostility arose, resulting in the Chinese Exclusion Act, and eventually the anti-miscegenation provisions that barred Asians

from marrying whites. Until the 1965 Immigration Act, which greatly decreased the restriction on numbers of Asian immigrants allowed into the United States, interracial Asian-White (or other interracial) marriages were almost nonexistent, as it was illegal. However, following the increase of Asian immigrants, and subsequent increase in the marriage pool, interracial marriage began to increase. Since then, Asians have become the most likely to marry someone of another race or ethnicity.



(<http://pewresearch.org/assets/publications/1616-4.gif>)

The 2000 census reported 10,242,998 people (or 3.6% of the American population) identifying as entirely Asian, while 1,655,830 people identified as part Asian.

It is clear that the largest group is those who identify as Asian and White – an identity which has earned the name “Amerasian.” The 2000 Census further revealed

that those of Japanese ancestry were the largest of the six main Asian ethnic groups to identify as bi- or multiracial. Indeed, the group of Asian Americans who identify as multiracial is fast growing, and demographers predict that by the year 2020, almost 20% of Asian Americans will identify as bi- or multiracial. This indicates that interracial marriages involving Asians is becoming more popular with both Asian Americans and American society in general.

<b>Number of Multiracial Asians by Racial/Ethnic Combinations, 2000</b>		
	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of all Multiracial Asians</b>
<b>Asian and Other Race(s)</b>	1,655,830	100%
<b>Asian and White</b>	868,395	52.4%
<b>Asian and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	138,802	8.4%
<b>Asian and Black/African American</b>	106,782	6.4%
<b>Asian and Some Other Race</b>	249,108	15.0%
<b>All Other Combinations, incl. Other Asian</b>	292,743	17.7%
<b>All Asians Alone or with Other Races</b>	11,898,828	4.2% of Total U.S. Population

(<http://www.asian-nation.org/multiracial.shtml>)

Multiracial Asian Americans face discrimination and suspicion from all sides. Whites do not consider them white, while people of color do not regard them as people of color. Additionally, those in the conventional Asian American community view them as “whitewashed” and not truly Asian. Indeed, some Asian American communities view interracial Asian-Caucasian (or other) marriages as a threat to the purity or longevity of the Asian identity in America. Additionally, they fear that if

multiracial Asian Americans begin identifying not as Asian American but as white or simply American, the Asian American population in the United States will diminish, limiting the continuation of Asian language, cultural values, and traditions within the U.S. Asian Americans tend to have the highest home-country affinity of the American ethnoracial groups, so interracial marriage is much more taboo. This hostility coming from both the American and Asian communities results in difficulty in establishing a personal ethnoracial identity for multiracial Asian Americans.

The question is whether children with one Asian and one non-Asian parent identify more strongly with their Asian or non-Asian heritage. The personal identity of biracial Asian Americans can to some degree predict that status of the Asian American community in the coming generations. However, studies show that ethnoracial identification of biracial Asian American children is a matter of option – what the parents decide to emphasize, what the child most strongly connects to, location, community, and other factors influence how the child will identify. This indicates that – as some biracial Asian Americans identify predominantly as Asian, some identify as Caucasian, and some as multiracial – the Asian American community identity will continue to remain cohesive, while a multiracial Asian American identity will emerge as a solid and unified group.

#### **Works Cited:**

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**Relevant Websites:**

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- <http://www.racialicious.com/>
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