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PREVIEW

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College students' perceptions of intermarriage: A cross-national investigation

Toyota, Hiroyuki, M.A.

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1991

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**300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

PREVIEW

COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTERMARRIAGE:
A CROSS-NATIONAL INVESTIGATION

by

Hiroyuki Toyota

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

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COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTERMARRIAGE:
A CROSS-NATIONAL INVESTIGATION

Hiroyuki Toyota, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 1991

Advisor: Paul R. Amato

This project investigates factors that determine college students' perception of acceptance of intermarriages in Japan and the United States.

The majority of past research about intermarriages focused on the actual intermarried couple by using the Census Data, Population Survey or ethnographic data. Unlike much past research, this project deals with the perception of 291 white University of Nebraska students and 101 Bukyo University students in Japan. Racial/ethnic groups utilized for hypothetical intermarriages to be considered by University of Nebraska students are combinations of American White, Japanese National, Japanese American, and African American. For Bukyo University students, the combinations were of Japanese National, American White, Japanese American, and Korean National. In order to measure the perception of acceptance, a scale was constructed by the author.

The dependent variable is "a feeling of acceptance toward hypothetical intermarriage cases." Independent variables include "racial/ethnic attitudes" measured by a Semantic Differential Scale and a Social Distance Scale. Other variables are "openness to other cultures," "respondents' gender," "ethnocentrism," "church attendance," and "parents social class." It is hypothesized that acceptance is inversely correlated with negative racial attitudes, ethnocentrism, perceived negative reaction of significant others, and a low level of openness.

The results indicate some similarities between American and Japanese students in their perception of intermarriage. However, differences also exist in the perception of intermarriage acceptance. The Japanese students are more accepting of intermarriage with a lower standard deviation than that of American students. The White American sample shows a significant amount of 'ethnocentrism' in that they see themselves as being the best. On the contrary, the Japanese view themselves more negatively than other ethnic groups. However, predictors of intermarriage acceptance did not show significant differences between students of University of Nebraska and Bukyo University.

Generally, the results support the hypotheses. For both countries, "perceived reactions of significant others" appears to be the most accurate determinants of intermarriage acceptance.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to people who live in-between different cultures. It is hoped that we would live in peace with a respect for cultural diversity. May peace be with us forever.

PREVIEW

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Table of Contents

@ Dedication	i
@ Acknowledgements	ii
@ Table of Contents	iii
@ List of Tables	v
@ List of Figures	vi
@ List of Appendices	vii
@ Introduction	1
@ Intermarriage Theory and Research	3
Assimilation	4
Hypergamy	5
Psychological/Psychoanalytic Approach	6
Sex ratio/Group Size	7
Propinquity	8
Conclusion	9
@ The Present Study	10
Social Distance	11
Perception of Ethnic Groups	13
Role of Significant Others	15
Other Variables	16
Cultural Openness	16
Gender	17
Religiosity/Church Attendance	17
Social Class	18
The Meaning of Compare the Data from Japan	19
Reasons for Focusing on College Students	22
@ Methods	24
Sample	24
Variables	26
Race/Ethnic Groups	26
Acceptance of Intermarriage	27
General Attitude Toward Ethnic Groups: Semantic Differential Scale	29
Social Distance Scale	30
Role of Significant Others Scale	31
Cultural Openness	33
Religiosity	33
Social Class	33

@ Results	34
Description of Variables	34
Acceptance of Intermarriage	34
General Attitude toward Ethnic Groups	36
Social Acceptance	38
Perceived reaction of Significant Others	39
Cultural Openness	41
Religiosity/Church Attendance	42
Social Class/Parents Education	42
Predictors of Intermarriage Acceptance	43
Bivariate Correlations	43
Multivariate Analysis	44
@ Discussion	47
Social Acceptance and General Attitudes Toward Ethnic Groups.	47
Perceived Reactions of Significant Others	48
Cultural Openness, Religiosity, and Social Class	49
Positive Feeling toward Ethnic Groups and Social Acceptance	51
Race, Ethnicity, or Culture ?	52
The Diversity of Intermarriage and Future Research Involving "Cross National" Investigation	53
@ Tables	58
@ Figures	70
@ References	75
@ Appendices	84
@ VITA	133

List of Tables

- Table (1) Comparison of Data: American and Japanese Sample**
- Table (2-A) University of Nebraska: Means and Standard Deviations for Acceptance Ratings**
- Table (2-B) Bukyo University: Means and Standard Deviations for Acceptance Ratings**
- Table (3-A) University of Nebraska: Acceptance of Intermarriage**
- Table (3-B) Bukyo University: Acceptance of Intermarriage**
- Table (4-A) University of Nebraska: General Attitude toward Different Groups**
- Table (4-B) Bukyo University: General Attitude toward Different Groups**
- Table (5-A) University of Nebraska: Social Acceptance toward Different Groups**
- Table (5-B) Bukyo University: Social Acceptance toward Different Groups**
- Table (6-A) University of Nebraska: Perceived Reactions of Significant Others for Ethnic Groups**
- Table (6-B) Bukyo University: Perceived Reactions of Significant Others for Ethnic Groups**
- Table (7-A) University of Nebraska: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Dependent Variables and Independent Variables**

Table (7-B) Bukyo University: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Dependent Variables and Independent Variables

Table (8-A) University of Nebraska: Regression Analysis of All Independent Variables for Acceptance of Intermarriage

Table (8-B) Bukyo University: Regression Analysis of All Independent Variables for Acceptance of Intermarriage

List of Figures

Figure (1): Acceptance of Intermarriage Difference Between Nebraska and Bukyo Samples toward the Same Marriage

Figure (2-A): University of Nebraska: Semantic Differential Scale Outcome by Different Ethnic Groups

Figure (2-B): Bukyo University: Semantic Differential Scale Outcome by Different Ethnic Groups

Figure (3-A): University of Nebraska: Social Acceptance of Ethnic Groups by American Whites

Figure (3-B): Bukyo University: Social Acceptance of Ethnic Groups by Japanese Native

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1-A: University of Nebraska: Comparison between Females and Males**
- Appendix 1-B: Bukyo University: Comparison between Females and Males**
- Appendix 2-A: University of Nebraska: Predictor of Intermarriage Acceptance for each intermarriage Cases by Stepwise Multiple Regression when "would you marry ?" is Omitted from the Question.**
- Appendix 2-B: University of Nebraska: Predictor of Intermarriage Acceptance for each Intermarriage Cases by Stepwise Multiple Regression when "would you marry ?" is Omitted from the Question**
- Appendix 3: List of Abbreviated Variable Names**
- Appendix 4-A: University of Nebraska: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between all Variables**
- Appendix 4-B: Bukyo University: Pearson Correlation Coefficients between all Variables**
- Appendix 5-A: University of Nebraska: Predictor of Intermarriage Acceptance for each Intermarriage Cases by Stepwise Multiple Regression**
- Appendix 5-B: Bukyo University: Predictor of Intermarriage Acceptance for each Intermarriage case by Stepwise Multiple Regression**
- Appendix 6-A: Questionnaire English Version**
- Appendix 6-B: Questionnaire Japanese Version**
- Appendix 7-A: University of Nebraska: Perceived Reactions of Parents, Friends, and Siblings**
- Appendix 7-B: University of Nebraska: Perceived Reactions of Significant Others for African American, Japanese National, Japanese American, and American White**

INTRODUCTION

People's perception of the possibility of marrying a person who is not of the same race, who has a different cultural background, and who is from a different nationality has an important meaning for society. Although our values toward marriage have changed in the past decades, marriage is still a central concern for most individuals as it creates one of the main institutions in our society. Marriage is a significant event for each individual in his/her life. In addition, marriage involves the family members of each partner.

The occurrence of intermarriage is significant for individuals as well as family because people who intermarry have to cross "ethnic taboo lines" and must overcome prohibitions which bring a negative perception to even meeting people from different ethnic, cultural or national backgrounds (Lieberson and Waters 1985). Intermarriage has been a sensitive issue in our society and in our history there has been a normative prohibition against intermarriage between ethnic groups (Ehrlich 1973). The fact is that as late as 1966, there were seventeen states in the United States that had formal prohibitions of intermarriage in either one or more forms until the United States Supreme Court overturned the anti-miscegenation statute on June 12, 1967 (Crester and Leon 1982). These states were Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and

West Virginia (Kikumura and Kitano 1973). The severity of penalty for interracial couples varied from six months imprisonment to more than two years (Spickard 1989). It is a fact that the United State was the ONLY nation which prohibited intermarriage by law.

The demographic data analysis from the 1980 Census shows that marriages between white persons of different ancestral backgrounds are rather common, but marriages across racial lines are still rare (Alba 1985). Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1990) indicated that 3.6 percent of African American men and 1.2 percent of African American women outmarried in California, based on the 1985 Census Report. In 1988 in the US., the rate of intermarriage overall total married couples is 3.2 percent (Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990). In Japan, it is reported that in 1980, 0.6 percent of Japanese men and 0.4 percent of Japanese women were intermarried (Nitta 1988).

Under the above circumstances, intermarriage can be seen as an indicator of structural, symbolic, and cultural relations in people's perception and attitude toward different races/ethnicity, cultures, and nationalities. People's positive attitude toward ethnic groups in general can lead to a positive attitude toward intermarriage.

There are several important reasons to study intermarriage. Intermarriage itself gives an interesting setting for the family. Since the primary institution for socializing children is the family, when there are two different ethnic backgrounds co-existing in the family, children's development is likely to be affected in some ways. Second, intermarriage is an indicator of changes in the

nature and perception of ethnic boundaries (Waters 1990). When there is prejudice or discrimination toward ethnic groups, it is hard to predict that there would be an high level of intermarriage between two ethnic groups.

The purpose of this study is to investigate American and Japanese college students' perceptions of acceptance toward specific cases of intermarriage and to see how acceptance is related to variables such as the respondents' general attitude toward ethnic groups, perceived reactions of significant others, cultural openness, and social background. Specifically, this study compares perception of acceptance of Japanese intermarriage in both the United States and Japan. It is of interest to see how several factors affect both American and Japanese college students.

INTERMARRIAGE THEORY AND RESEARCH

We are able to apply both macro and micro grand theories to study intermarriages (Crestor and Leon 1982; Shinagawa and Pang 1988). Particularly, Crestor and Leon (1982) reviewed five concrete theories that explain intermarriage. According to them, the headings are (1) Assimilation, (2) Hypergamy, (3) Psychological/Psychoanalytic, (4) Sex ratio and Group Size, and (5) Propinquity. In addition to five concrete perspectives, it is possible to explain intermarriage by investigating people's attitude toward racial/ethnic groups, which can be considered the sixth concrete

theory. In this section, the previous five headings suggested by Crester and Leon are used to review different literature.

Assimilation

Assimilation is "the process by which a subordinate individual group takes on the characteristic of the dominate group and eventually is accepted as a part of that group" (Sheafer 1990, p. 42). Intermarriage is seen as one of the assimilation processes (Gordon, Milton 1964). By marrying out of his/her ethnic group, the individual would be 'maritally' assimilated to the other ethnic group -- usually the dominant group of society. Milton Gordon particularly called this special assimilation process "amalgamation." The more assimilated ethnic groups have a higher rate of intermarriages than less assimilated ethnic groups.

The recent higher outmarriage of Asian Americans is a good example of assimilation completion. Kikumura and Kitano (1973) studied Japanese American intermarried couples in Southern California and found that 49 percent of Japanese American marriages are outmarriages. Tinker (1973) focused on intermarried Japanese Americans in Fresno County and found significant social boundary changes of Japanese Americans over three decades with a result of 49 percent outmarriages of Japanese Americans in 1972. Tinker (1982) also reports social class and cultural evidence to support the notion of assimilation of Japanese Americans by the past three generations. Kitano and Yeung (1982) looked at Chinese Americans

and reported an intermarriage rate as high as 41.2 percent in 1984. Kitano and Chai (1982) reported an intermarriage rate for Koreans of 26.0 percent in 1975, 34.1 percent in 1977, and 27.6 percent in 1979 respectively. The most significant important factor for outmarriage was that of generation. Kitano et al. (1984) looked at Japanese, Korean, and Chinese Americans in Los Angeles County and Hawaii and reported an increase in outmarriage rates over three generations. The third generation is the highest in outmarriages. A factor which supports this is the third generations' receptive interaction with the dominant community. They report that in 1979 in Los Angeles, the Japanese rate of outmarriages is 60.6 percent, with 41.2 percent for the Chinese, and 27.6 percent is reported for Koreans. Recently, Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan (1990) reported that 40.6 percent of Japanese American women in California outmarried in the 1985 Census.

Hypergamy

As early as in 1931, Reuter reported that advanced economic blacks have an opportunity for intermarriage. Davis's (1941) notion of an upper caste exchanging his social position for lower caste, but with a beautiful, younger female is a good example. Another example is that Japanese native males who have higher socioeconomic status exchange this resource for the higher ethnic status of the white American females who are from lower socioeconomic status.

Merton (1941) sees occupational status as an important factor particularly for men. Levine and Montero (1973) report that among Japanese Americans with high income and occupational status, they are more likely to outmarry. Monahan (1976) reported that those with professional occupations are most likely to intermarry. Endo and Hirokawa (1983) investigated Colorado's Japanese Americans and reported a high socioeconomic status for those who intermarried. Economic factors are strong influences for both males and females in the case of Chicanos (Murguia 1982). Mayer (1985) found that in the case of Jewish intermarriage, those who intermarry tend to have higher incomes. For Asian Americans in general, Shinagawa and Pang (1988) report that they found that intermarried Asian American men have higher incomes than intramarried men and women and also show the same pattern except for recent immigrants or war brides. In Chinese intermarriages a similar trend is reported (Wong 1989). Sung (1990) notes that Chinese intermarried couples have higher income both in the case of Chinese husband/non Chinese wife and Chinese wife/non Chinese husband. When racial minorities are intermarried, there is evidence of economic exchange over higher racial/ethnic preference.

Psychological/Psychoanalytic Approach

This view approaches intermarriage as a manifestation of the individuals' psychological problems rather than social conditions. According to Kelley (1976) there are six perspectives: Oedipus-

incest, Rejection, Rebellion, Self-esteem, Guilt, and Saucier, which is the name of the researcher. For example, the Rejection theory contends that intermarriage is based on the feeling of being isolated and rejected by significant others of the same reference group. As a result, the person marries someone outside of his/her primary reference groups. Rebellion theory argues that the individual feels anger and hatred toward his/her parents, family, or race. Thus the marriage is the expression of anger and revenge of the person who intermarried.

Generally the psychological and psychoanalytic model is based on the studies of actually intermarried couples who are patients of psychotherapy. Unfortunately, this view does not explain the dynamics of people's ethnic attitude, societal interaction of people, and conditions of social structure.

Sex Ratio/Group Size

Early research on intermarriage focused on the imbalanced sex ratio as a cause of intermarriage. People intermarry because they cannot find a mate from his/her own group. The hypothesis that the sex ratio balance of the group is the primary factor in the rate of intermarriage was supported by previous research (Adams 1937; Baber 1937; Drachesler 1921). These studies were done to investigate mainly European immigrants and their national origins.

More lately, Omatsu (1972, cited in Kikumura and Kitano 1973)

reports that among Japanese Americans in San Francisco, females constitute a higher proportion of the population. Tinker (1973) notes that his Fresno study shows the insignificance in sex ratio. Similarly Kikumura and Kitano's (1973) studies in Los Angeles County did not indicate significance for the sex ratio either. Jiobu (1988) used the 1980 Census and reported that generally, there was no significant sex imbalance among Japanese and Chinese Americans, though some minor imbalance among Koreans and Vietnamese. If the balance of sexes are a decisive factor, then there should be more female outmarriages reported. In general, it is very difficult to use the "sex ratio" to explain intermarriages due to these contradictory findings.

Propinquity

Social demographic factors, residential segregation, and heterogeneity are important factors of intermarriage. Blau (1977) theorizes that social structure as the size of population and the heterogeneity of groups determines the occurrence of intermarriage. In other words, smaller groups must have more contact with different groups. Blau et al. (1982) report that when income is controlled, racial heterogeneity is positively correlated to intermarriage in 125 large American Metropolitan areas.

In Hawaii, for example, where 66.6 percent of population is non-white and the Diversity Index is 56, which means there is a 56 percent chance that any two randomly selected Hawaiians are

different either racially or ethnically (USA Today April 11, 1991), it is not surprising to see outmarriage rate for Koreans of 83 percent, Chinese of 76 percent, and Japanese of 59 percent respectively (Kitano et al. 1984). Alba and Golden (1986) reported that some ethnic groups have regional concentrations and this has an effect on the opportunity for contact which leads to intermarriage. For example, people who are of Italian ancestry are highly concentrated in the northeastern states.

Conclusion

The actual occurrence of intermarriage can not be explained by only one perspective. These explanations are not mutually exclusive and exhaustive at all. Macro perspective explanations are Hypergamy/Sex ratio and propinquity that explain intermarriage occurrence as a result of structural change in the society. Assimilation perspective can be seen as either macro or micro as the process of assimilation is related to structural condition of society as well as people's psychological factor such as ethnic identity. Psychological/psychoanalytic approach may explain individuals' perception of intermarriage, but in order to explain the actual event of intermarriage, a person has to have a partner from different racial/ethnic groups within his/her daily life. This leads to a concern with the social structure of the community where he/she resides. Examining the attitude toward intermarriage will be the major focus of the present study.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Whether it was macro or micro perspectives which were considered, previous theories were explanations of existing intermarriages. The research was done by looking at actual cases of intermarriages and explaining the findings. Largely, the data were drawn from national surveys such as the Census. Much ethnographic and psychoanalytic research has also been done.

However, there is not much research on peoples' attitudes toward intermarriage. Thus, it is important to focus on the perception of acceptance of intermarriage as determined by a variety of social psychological and cultural factors. Much research on mate selection has reported the significant influence of social psychological factors.

There was one notable research project in 1964 by Albert Gordon. The focus was on "interfaith" marriage. As a part of his project, he interviewed interfaith-married couples to find out why they married. He also investigated American college students' perceptions toward intermarriage by using a Social Distance Scale. Respondents' feelings about their sibling marrying "out of faith" were measured. He compared students in the East, Mid-west, West, and Hawaii. His findings indicated significant differences among college students depending on the region.

The present project deals with American and Japanese college students who are in the marriage market. It investigates which factors predict intermarriage by people who are not married, but