

## For Immediate Release

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## Black White Marriages Increased Rapidly Since 1980s, Study Finds

### *New Immigration Increases Marriage Outside of Racial Boundaries*

A new study of interracial marriages in the United States since the 1980s suggests that the racial boundary between blacks and whites continues to break down, but is not yet close to disappearing. The study, published in the [Journal of Marriage and Family](#), reveals that marriages between black and white populations has continued to increase while Latin and Hispanic Americans have turned to marrying their racial compatriots from newly arrived immigrant populations.

Marriages between African Americans and whites increased rapidly between 1980 and 2008, outpacing the rate of unions between whites and other ethnic and racial groups, including Latinos, Asian Americans and American Indians. However, the total number of marriages between blacks and whites continues to be much smaller than those between whites and other racial and ethnic groups.

“The number of marriages between whites and African Americans is undeniably increasing rapidly, but it is still a small number,” said Zhenchao Qian, lead author of the study and professor of sociology at Ohio State University. “Our results point to better race relations in 2008 than 1980, but we still have a way to go. The racial boundary is blurred, but it is still there.”

In 1980, only 5 percent of black men married a white woman, but that increased to 14 percent in 2008. Still, by comparison, 38 percent of Asian American men and Hispanic men married a white woman in 2008.

The study uses data from the 2008 American Community Survey, an ongoing survey of American households conducted by the U.S. Census bureau. The survey includes about 3 million people a year. The researchers also use data from the 1980 U.S. census.

“Understanding changes in interracial marriages is complex because it involves two different factors,” said Qian, “the marriage market of who is available to marry and also individuals’ choices about who they would be willing to marry.”

Overall, while marriages between blacks and whites showed large increases between 1980 and 2008, there was only a slight increase in marriages between whites and Hispanics while the results showed that marriages between U.S. born and foreign born Asians and Hispanics increased rapidly between 2000 and 2008.

This is due to the increase in immigration of Hispanics and Asians into the United States resulting in a larger pool of potential marriage partners from their own racial and ethnic groups.

“With the enormous growth of the immigrant population, Asians and Hispanics now have more opportunities than ever to find a marital partner who shares the same cultural background. Such marriages reinforce their cultural identity,” said co-author Dr Daniel Lichter from Cornell University.

“It used to be that race trumped everything, including education, when it came to marriage between blacks and whites; that is changing,” concluded Qian “For the first time, we found that highly educated blacks and whites were more likely to intermarry. That is very significant and is another sign that racial boundaries are blurring.”

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This paper is published in the [Journal of Marriage and Family](#). To request a media copy contact [Scholarlynews@wiley.com](mailto:Scholarlynews@wiley.com) or +44 (0) 1243 770 375.

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