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**Title:** Asian American with Another Race Relationship

**About the Author** : I'm a freshman in University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, majoring in music performance. I came to America 5 years ago.

**Keywords:** inter-racial dating, Asian American

**Abstract:** Since University of Illinois is a big college where diverse races are studying together, I was wondering how inter-racial relationship is like in this school because in these days, inter-racial marriage is common than in the past. Actually, there are many couples in the campus, who are dating another race than their own. Particularly, I wanted to focus on those Asians who are born in America and were raised here. Even though they look Asians, their behaviors, language and way of thinking are Americanized. I see those Asians as Americans who just have Asian appearance. If I see them Americans, is it the same race relationship? Or still inter-racial relationship? What is the meaning of inter-racial relationship to these couples? Don't we misunderstand anything about inter-racial relationship?

**Initial Exercises:** I am a freshman at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign majoring in music performance. I grew up in Korea and came to America 5 years ago. I went to an art high school where majority students were Caucasians and international students. Both groups were separated and it was hard to see the interaction between two groups. The couples in the school were mostly the same races as their own. But after I came to University of Illinois, I was surprised the fact that there isn't big gap between each racial group in the campus. (There actually is a little gap between each group but still they interact with each other). Also, there are a lot of inter-racial dating people (not just between Caucasian and African American but Indians, Latinos, and Asians). That's because it is easy to meet other races in college and the concept of "dating" is more casual in the campus than outside of the campus.

Also, in the past, inter-racial relationship was prohibited, especially in the south based on the historical fact. In the article, Historical Analysis of College Campus Interracial Dating by Michael Firmin, the author

says, “in many areas of the country miscegenation was outlawed or faced strong opposition. Infractions often resulted in imprisonment, beating, or death. As recently as 1967, sixteen states still banned interracial marriage until the Supreme Court struck down those laws (Davidson, 1992, Foeman & Nance, 1999)”. However, in these days, it’s more common than in the past and we can easily find someone who is dating different race than one’s own. Then particularly, inter-racial dating couples in this college, what restrictions do these couples still have? What is something that we don’t know about inter-racial dating people?

As a researcher, I observed in the union to see how many inter-racial couples are in the campus. Also, I interviewed two inter-racial couples; Asian and Caucasian. The two couples that I interviewed were similar couples; they were raised in similar neighborhoods and had similar education from school and they have a lot of similarities other than their appearance. After interviewing and observing couples, I realized that it seems like the couples have no language barriers and have similar cultural practices such as behaviors, interests and way of talking. However, if you really study inter-racial couples, there weren’t that many barriers between them than we actually think.

**Question:** The research that I will do throughout this semester is about choices of romantic relationship among U of I students between the same races and inter-race. All of my friends who have either girl friend or boy friend, they are dating with a person who is the same race. However, since this is the big university and there are many races, I was wondering how many percentages of students are dating actually with other races than their own. More than that, as I read the articles from IDEALS, it seems like lots of choices are made by their family backgrounds or their cultures. So when people decide to date someone, how their choices are affected by influences of their own family backgrounds and cultures, or just romantic feelings.

**Plan:**

When I read articles about dating and relationship from IDEALS, people focused on certain race such as Indian American or Korean American. However, through this research, I would like to know bigger picture of the inter race relationship rather than just one race. Such articles that I was influenced are Ami Patel’s Caught in the Middle: Indian American Youth and Their Dating Preferences and Nick Lange’s Interracial Relationships and Korean American Families. It was interesting to see

how certain races have specific views about dating, particularly dating with other races.

The questions I may ask to people through interviews can be divided three groups; personal interest, family influence, importance of dating. For personal interest categories, I would like to know how people are interested in other cultures and people. For example, some Americans who are interested in Asian cultures, they most likely date Asians. For family influence, I would like to ask how was their family like, their neighborhood, and family history. It's deeper and more serious about a person but I think this part affects a lot to people to make their own choices. Lastly, for importance of dating, I'm going to ask how much race affects on personal decision? Because I know that race isn't the part that people can completely ignore in making decision.

For research plan, I would like to interview people who are dating the same race, different race, even married couples. Also, I will observe people from the Union, Quad, and couple dorms where many people hang out. If there are certain events that are related to dating issue, I would like to attend to see how people have opinions about dating.

**Data:** The first couple that I interviewed was Asian girl, "Ono" and Caucasian guy "John". They met in one of the sonority organization party after came to college and have been dating almost a year. Interesting fact was that Ono was born in America and has been to Korea couple times but she didn't really live there. Also, most of her friends are Caucasians and she only dated Caucasians until now. She has never dated Asian guys before because the majority of her neighbors and her classmates are Caucasians. She has few Asian friends who are just like her; born in America and first language is English. She has many friends who are dating inter-racially. Most of her Asians American friends are dating another race than another Asian American. Also, it was interesting to see how her parents are happy with their daughter dating a Caucasian guy. Because they believed that it is important for her to date another race so that she can fully be part of the American community.

However, John has never dated another race before. He has many friends in diverse races but he only had dated Caucasian girls until he met Ono. He was attracted to her the first time when he met her because she was funny and brisk. The fact that she is Asian didn't matter at all because the most important thing that he concerns was how well he can communicate with his girl friend. Considering that the most important thing in dating, he has no barriers when he is with Ono. On contrary, he feels more comfortable with her than any other

relationship that he has ever had because when they have conversation, they fully understand each other.

Another couple that I interviewed was Asian guy “Bee” and Caucasian girl “Gee”. They met in one of their classes because they were lab partner. Bee was a little different background than Ono. He came to America when he was five years old. When he first came, he didn’t speak any English so he hung out those Chinese kids who are just like him. However, his parents worried because it seemed like he didn’t learn any English. So they moved the neighbor where majority people are Americans; Caucasians and African American. After that he learned English and now he is more comfortable with speaking English than Chinese. Few years ago, they finally moved the place where few Asians live. So he has few Asian American friends who are either born in America or came to America when they were really young. So all of his friends are comfortable with English rather than Asian language. He can understand Chinese because his parents speak both Chinese and English to him. However, it was interesting that his parents want him to date someone who can speak Chinese well so that they can’t forget their heritage even though they live in America. Since he doesn’t have any problem with English, his parents don’t encourage any race in dating, but when it comes to marriage, they still want him to marry Chinese woman. He has been dating many other races than his own. He has dated Chinese, Korean and Caucasian. He doesn’t have any preference. The biggest reason why he dated Gee is because he likes her smile.

Gee has never dated Asian guy before she came to the school. She was raised in Caucasian community, just like John. Her parents were excited when they heard that she’s dating an Asian guy because it is the first time that she’s dating some one who is different race than her own. Her parents have never dated any other race but her uncle married to African American woman so she was comfortable with inter-racial dating. The reason why she is dating Bee is because he is funny and smart.

#### **Discus** Analysis of my data

- s:** After interviewing two couple, the biggest impression that I had on my mind was that Ono and Bee have to be considered as American than Asian. Except their appearance, particularly their skin color, they are similar to American. First, they are more comfortable with English, their way of thinking is similar to Americans, and their way of wearing cloth is Americanized. I find more similarities with American when I see

them. Also, when they think about the term, Asian, they think of international Asians who came to America later in their lives.

First, when I interviewed these two couple, I was surprised the fact that they consider the communication between each other is the most important thing. It affects their language too because both Ono and Bee are more comfortable with speaking English than Korean or Chinese. The biggest reason why John and Gee attracted to Ono and Bee were because they were humorous. Personally, humorousness is something that people who speak the same language and same culture can share. It is not always true because some people think the person is humorous just by looking at his face expression. But since they considered communication is one of importance in dating, the perfect English that Ono and Bee speak is biggest reason.

More than that, when I observed people in Union to see how many inter-racial dating couples are here in the campus, I saw two couples: Caucasian guy and Asian woman and Indian guy and Caucasian woman. I was surprised the fact that all the couples that I observed are difference races. However, it is also interesting because all of them are fully communicate each other with no language barriers. They were laughing about while they were talking and teasing each other. To me language is the easiest thing to make people separate from one another. Also, language is the most important thing to make people close to each other. When I came to America, the hardest thing that I had to overcome was language. Even if this is my fifth year in America, the fact that I have accent in English and the fact that it limit my expression when I transform my idea to other people make me as a foreigner because it represents to me that I can't still fully be part of the American community.

When I interviewed the couples, another interesting fact was that both the way that Ono and Gee wear clothing was similar to Caucasians. For example, they wear Abercrombie & Fitch, Illini shirt, and shorts. Maybe this is not the always true that these clothes represent Caucasians. But ever since I came to America, those clothes give me the idea of Caucasians rather than international people or other races because of the commercial and the friends who I have. Those clothes are also designed to fit better to Caucasians most of time. Based on their majority of friends and the environment that they were grown up, the most influence on their lives were from Caucasians than any other races. Since the way of wearing clothes is influenced a lot by the surrounded environment, I'm sure that this is affected by their Caucasian friends too. So this is understandable especially why they are considered more like American than Asian.

Also two couple considered the relationship as casual. This represents their way of thinking about dating is more American than Asian because a lot of Asian people are still conservative about dating. There was nothing that they take seriously since both of them are in college. So if they are attracted to each other, it was the most important reason that they decide to date. This is probably because they have less barrier to overcome other than married couples. In the article, Historical Analysis of College Campus Interracial Dating, the author says the one of the reason why the number of inter-racial dating is bigger than inter-racial marriage is because "In American society, dating is viewed as more temporary and casual than marriage. Therefore, researchers propose that less resistance to dating exists than does marriage" (Yancey, 2002). Just like the author says these inter-racial dating couples don't have to worry about how their parents will respond to their relationship, their children will be like, and how the society sees their relationship as. Also, the couples that I interviewed were all freshmen in college. I think freshman is the year when people think less about seriousness since it's the first year after high school. They try to enjoy their freedom in everything because for most people, it's the first year leaving their house. So, in dating too, there is less seriousness that they think about before making a decision with someone.

### Conclusion

After the whole research was done, I was realized that how the concept that we can simply think of when they hear the word "race" is limited by their appearance. Often time, when they think about race, the biggest part that we can think of is the skin color. We distinguish someone by his or her skin color. Also, when we hear the word, race, even I think of Caucasian, African American, Asian, etc. However, if you think deeply about the word, it's supposed to include more than the skin color. What about the culture and language? Those things represent some one as well as the person's skin color. Just like Ono and Bee, can we really say that those people are Asians? Even though they spent their whole lives in America and they are more comfortable with American language than their Asian language? They hardly know about their parents' country. They have been to either Korea or China couple times but it was just visiting. They are interested to know about Korea or China but they don't really plan to live there. After interviewing and knowing better about these inter-racial dating couples, I realized that those relationships should be considered as the same race relationship than inter-racial relationship because except their appearance, there was nothing different from each other; they

laugh at the same thing, they grew up in the similar neighborhood, they study the same thing, they eat the same food and they have been living in the same country. Most importantly, the people who are in inter-racial relationship, they don't see themselves as inter-racial couple. Also, their parents are positive about their relationship. There is nothing that makes these people feel about their relationship as different than usual, why do we see their relationship as still special? Or different from other?

**EUI Links:** Kreager, Derek A. "Guarded Borders: Adolescent Interracial Romance and Peer Trouble at School". EPSCO. December 2008. University of Illinois. April 6th 2009.

<<http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/ehost/detail?vid=1&hid=7&sid=14ed3ff5-bc76-45bd-bc08-0cc55b757024%40sessionmgr2&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=36183525>>

The article that I found from EPSCO is titled Guarded Borders: Adolescent Interracial Romance and Peer Trouble at School by Derek A. Kreager. In this article, he suggests that even though the number of interracial marriage has been increasing over the half centuries, it is still uncommon than marriage between the same race. Also, the interracial marriages between other races are more common than marriage between whites and black. So the author researched how early ages of people such as teenagers reacted to interracial relationship. Through the research the author found out that teenagers who are involved with interracial relationship have more peer problems such as gossips and violent treatments from their friends. This phenomenon is more frequent to those who are dating black people so at the end, these reactions that people experienced from their early ages give the people the negative ideas about interracial marriages especially with African Americans.

Firmin, Michael W. "Historical Analysis of College Campus Interracial Dating". EPSCO. September 2008. University of Illinois. April 6th 2009. <<http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/ehost/detail?vid=1&hid=5&sid=4d8651f2-603a-4306-b308-691e6f348476%40SRCMS2&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWZWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=34262666>>

The article that I found from EPSCO is titled Historical Analysis of College Campus Interracial Dating by Michael W. Firmin and Stephanie Firebaugh. Based on historical facts such as slavery, the interracial

relationship especially between whites and blacks have been prevented from constituting for more than 3 decades. When people think of interracial relationship, they react differently between the interracial dating and marriages. People have more open minded in interracial dating, especially in college where they meet various races. Also, as their ages are younger and younger, they have more open minded about interracial relationships since they experienced less about prejudice against interracial relationships. Interestingly, whites people open more options to interracial relationships than blacks do. However, the marriages have more obstacles that they have to overcome since it involves their family approval, eyes from societies and their mixed children that they will have in the future.

Yancey, George. "Homogamy over the net: using Internet advertisements to discover who interracially dates". EPSCO. December 2007. University of Illinois. April 6th 2009.

<<http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy2.library.uiuc.edu/ehost/detail?vid=1&hid=14&sid=7262f723-b5f4-4982-aabc-78a0afc246b5%40sessionmgr8&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWWhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#db=aph&AN=28160051>>

The article that I found from EPSCO is titled Homogamy over the net: Using Internet advertisements to discover who interracially dates by George Yancey. In this article, the author talks about how politics and religions affect people's idea about interracial relationships. Even though people don't realize, they are unconsciously influenced by advertisements or religions that they have been living with. Because a lot of religions are "intolerance" and a lot of politicians are "conservative", it is hard for them to accept the interracial relationships. Interestingly, a lot of people who are open to interracial relationships including marriages are raised in city and western culture. The age of these people were mostly young. This survey gives the author the idea that these people who are less experienced in religions and politics have more positive ideas about interracial relationships.

**Reflect** If I have an opportunity to research further about this topic, I want to  
: know what a relationship between two people who are grown up in a different country and whose first languages are different. The couples that I interviewed, it was hard to find the difference between the two besides the appearance. However, those who are raised in different countries, who value different things according to the culture and who speak different language will face many difference while dating. Then what is the common things that those people know but other people

don't know if they are not in the relationship. The inter-racial relationship that we can think of is more similar to those couples than American and Asian American couples that I focused on this research. So if the further research is going to be held about this topic, it will be interesting to know more about particularly those who have grown up in different countries.