Overcoming Difficulties in Japanese American Interracial Marriages and Families

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Introduction

Interracial marriage, or kokusai kekkon in Japanese, is defined as “a marriage between two individuals who report a different race when the census is taken” (Fryer 65). In Japan, it means “a marriage in which one of the individuals is a non-Japanese passport holder” (Kuramoto 550).

In both America and Japan, there is a long, complicated history of opposition and acceptance of interracial marriage. In America at the end of the seventh century, when slavery was prominent in colonial society, several colonies put into place anti-miscegenation laws in order to cement the divide between the blacks and whites (Fryer 73). Even after the Civil War, despite the passing of the 14th Amendment, several Southern states continued to enforce these laws (Fryer 73). It was not until 1967, the year of the Loving vs Virginia case, when anti-miscegenation laws were finally prohibited in the United States (Fryer 75). Japan’s history with interracial marriage starts with William Adams, who was “the first European on record to marry a Japanese woman in Japan” in 1600 according to Gowen and Milton (qtd. in Morgan 3). “During the sixteenth and seventeen centuries, Japanese displayed a tolerance of perceived racial differences,” even during their period of isolation (Russell 212). In fact, Japanese women were glorified and their relationships with Westerners acknowledged and respected (Goodman 398; Russell 211). However, this positive view of interracial relationships drastically shifted with the
introduction of social Darwinist theories, which resulted in Japanese society to look down on them and place more emphasis on racial purity (Goodman 399; Russell 213).

With regards to the history of Japanese American interracial marriages, it is important to recognize war brides, or Japanese women who married American soldiers during the occupation of Japan. In both America and Japan, these relationships were looked down upon and opposed by many. This resistance towards Japanese American relationships was also translated into the negative view many had of children from these relationships.

Despite unsupportive perspectives many held of Japanese American relationships during and after the occupation period of Japan, there has been an overall increase in the rate of Japanese American marriages. According to the Pew Research Center, from 1967 to 2015, the percentage of newlyweds with a spouse of a different race increased from 3% to 17% (Livingston). In Japan, the number of international marriages from 1970 to 2012, according to the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, also increased from 5,546 to 23,657 (qtd. in Kuramoto 550). Amidst this rise in interracial marriages, the United States Census Bureau included the option of “Two or more races” for the first time in 2000, signifying the clear rise of multiracial individuals in America (Jones; Waring 162). This trend has continued throughout 2000s, as the number of individuals who selected Two or more races” on the census increased from 6.8 million in 2000 to 9 million in 2010 (Waring 162).

However, despite the increase in interracial marriages and more individuals identifying as multiracial, even in the 2000s Japanese American couples and families continue to face many hardships. In this essay, I will focus on the challenges Japanese American couples and families experience while living in America, although I will include some examples of couples and families living in Japan. In addition, the examples and challenges discussed will be those
experienced after the year 2000, for that is the year that the United States Census Bureau included “Two or more races” in the census. The first section of this essay goes in depth into the challenge couples face of there being opposition towards their marriage and unfavorable views of their foreign partner, how this challenge has the potential to damage the couple’s relationship, and the importance of communicating in diminishing these potential negative effects. The second section explains the challenge Japanese American children face of feeling closer to one of their parent’s races, how this affects their relationship with their parent, and how parents can prevent this by having the child learn both of their languages and encouraging them to embrace both sides of them. In the last section, I share my motivation for writing this essay, the cultural clash my parents, who are an interracial couple, experience in their marriage, the effect it had on their relationship and how they viewed each other, and the efforts they made to embrace the differences between them.

**What about the couple?**

*What were the challenges for couples before the 2000s?*

During and after the occupation period of Japan, Japanese American couples had to manage criticism regarding their relationship in Japan, as well as unfavorable views of their foreign partner. Japanese women who were dating or married to Americans were seen as being *panpan*, or sex workers by the public (Endo 449). Sex workers were looked down upon for being a representation of the shameful history of the U.S. occupation and distorting the “selfless and asexual” image of Japanese women (Endo 443-444). Taking into consideration this harsh view of *panpans*, it is clear why many Japanese families of war brides did not support these marriages. This unsupportive nature towards Japanese American interracial relationships also came from Americans, as commanders deterred military men from marrying Japanese women and claimed
that “interracial relationships would draw public disapproval” (Forgash 220). There are even accounts of commanders changing where the soldier was stationed, withholding promotions from the soldiers, and “threatening court martial” (Burkhart 526).

The perspective that every Japanese woman seeing an American man is a prostitute also existed in America and influenced how Americans viewed Asian women (Endo 449). According to Nakashima Brock, Asian women were “characterized by their sexual availability” and being “sexually available to American soldiers” (qtd. in Endo 449). As a result, even in America, Japanese women and those who looked Asian were “sexualized” by the American public (Endo 449).

When comparing Japanese American couples around the occupation period and those in the 2000s, there are statistically more couples. However even in the 2000s, Japanese American couples continue to experience challenges that involve others disapproving their relationships and imposing their negative views of their partners on them. The following subsections describe these difficulties in depth, how they affect the relationship between the couple, and the couple’s methods in overcoming them.

*How were those challenges the same in the 2000s?*

The negative outlook towards Japanese American intermarriage as well as their foreign partner is clearly displayed in the “Marriage Package,” a series of procedures Marines and Navy corpsmen must undergo to legalize their marriage to a Japanese woman while stationed in Okinawa. Rebecca Forgash explains in her article “Negotiating Marriage,” which includes fieldwork she completed about military transnational marriages from 2000-2002 and 2009, the difficulties many encounter with the Marriage Package. Overall, couples must undergo three phases: “Phase One” is completing documentation, examinations and blood tests, “Phase Two” is
when couples work towards receiving approval from the military to get married, and “Phase Three” is the procedure of getting married (Forgash 224-225). After completing all three phases, the couple can then start the process of getting an U.S. Spouse Immigrant visa (Forgash 225). However, couples are not allowed to use the documentation and tests completed for the Marriage Package in getting a visa, therefore prolonging the process and forcing the couple to spend more money (Forgash 225).

Although the military explains in their MILPERSMAN (Military Personnel Manual) that these strict procedures “are not intended to prevent marriage,” it is difficult to deny that since the process is lengthy and complicated, there is some opposition from the military to freely allow these couples to simply get married (Forgash 226). The military’s defense to the procedures of the Marriage Package is that it is “for the protection of both aliens and the United States citizens from possible disastrous effects of an impetuous marriage entered into without appreciation of its implications and obligations” (Forgash 226). Since the military deemed it necessary to prevent any “possible disastrous effects,” there is already a concern from the military’s perspective that it will end badly (Forgash 226). This concern can be seen as the military not trusting either partner or the relationship. In support of this argument, Forgash argues in her article that this statement from the military reflects the “long-standing stereotypes of craft Asian women,” who are scheming their way into getting into America, many still hold (Forgash 226). Overall, the Marriage Package is an example that even in the 2000s Japanese American couples continue to face opposition for being in a relationship and their partner not being seen in a positive light.

The negative perspective towards Japanese American intermarriage relationships is also displayed in the 2010 film *My Darling is a Foreigner* (*ダーリンは外国人 Dārin wa* *Gaikokujin*). This film depicts the journey of a real-life interracial couple Saori Oguri, an
aspiring Japanese manga illustrator, and Tony Lazalo, an American writer/NGO activist living in Japan. *My Darling is a Foreigner* is an adaptation of the manga series by the same name written by Saori Oguri, who based it off her own marriage. In the film, Saori’s father does not accept her relationship with Tony and even tells her “a cross-cultural marriage will be trouble” (*My Darling is a Foreigner*). The father goes further to express his clear disapproval by telling Saori, regarding the possibility of her and Tony getting married, that “I won’t have it. Not in a million years” (*My Darling is a Foreigner*). Further along in the film, Saori’s father does not change his opinion of their relationship, even when Tony asks him for his blessing to marry his daughter, which Saori’s father refuses to give. Saori’s father’s unchanging position towards his daughter’s interracial relationship demonstrates that even in the 2000s, there remains resistance toward Japanese American interracial relationships.

Lastly, Japanese American couples continue to face difficulties because Japanese/Japanese-American women may encounter microaggressions while living in America due to society’s negative views on them. Michiko Iwasaki and Christina J Thai’s 2016 article, “Perceptions of Societal Microaggressions in Japanese American Women Married to White American Men,” describes the microaggressions Japanese/Japanese-American females who are married to white males experience in America. According to the study Iwasaki and Thai completed, in which 22 females who were born in the US and Japan were interviewed, foreign born Japanese women encountered more, in comparison to Japanese American wives, “second-class citizen” discrimination and “purposeful discriminatory action” microaggressions (Iwasaki 187, 188). “Second-class citizen” discrimination is when the wives are not treated equally and “purposeful discriminatory action” is when they are “excluded and avoided” (Iwasaki 186, 188). It was found that the husbands were oftentimes “a protective layer,” in that others treated their
relationship with their wives more appropriately when they were around (Iwasaki 189). However, there were still some cases in which the wives, while with their husbands, experienced being called names such as “Jap,” “whores,” and “prostitutes" that are associated with the “exoticization of Asian women” (Iwasaki 189). The unfortunate situation these wives find themselves in have great similarity to the sexualization Japanese women faced during and after the occupation period, suggesting that this negative perspective toward Japanese foreign women still exists.

What is the strain on the relationship between the couple?

The challenge that comes with handling opposition to one’s marriage and negative view of their partner greatly affects the couples’ relationship and has the possibility to deteriorate it. According to Iwasaki and Thai’s article mentioned above, Japanese/Japanese-American wives who were targets of microaggressions often reached out to their husbands for support (188). Unfortunately, there were some cases reported in which the husbands did not recognize their wives’ difficulties (Iwasaki 188). For example, Lucy, a 68-year-old first generation Japanese immigrant or Issei, accounts that her husband said in response to her being referred to as a Jap, that “Jap is not an insulting word,” but rather an “abbreviation” (Iwasaki 189). Marriage is a partnership in that the husband and wife are there to support their partner. Couples trust that their partner will reciprocate the support and dedication they give to them. However, if one does not exchange the same level of support, the trust one has in their partner slowly deteriorates. In this case, when the husband of the Japanese wife does not show to his wife that he understands what she is going through, the husband is causing his wife to slowly lose faith in him, therefore weakening their entire relationship.
This deterioration of the relationship between Japanese American couples is illustrated in the film, *My Darling is a Foreigner*. Rather than telling Tony about her father’s unsupportive opinions of their relationship, Saori hides this from him and, in avoidance of the topic, works hard to advance her manga career. However, as Saori puts more time into her career and very little towards her relationship with Tony, they momentarily break up as Tony leaves for American while she stays in Japan.

*How do couples overcome these challenges?*

In order to avoid the breakdown of their relationship due to these obstacles, an important strategy Japanese American interracial couples implement is having strong communication with their significant other about their difficulties as well as how they will overcome them together.

The importance of communication in interracial relationships is shown in Marianne Dainton’s article “An Interdependence Approach to Relationship Maintenance in Interracial Marriage.” According to Dainton, marriage maintenance activities are considered to be either positive, ones that lead to improvement of the relationship, or negative, actions that relate to “negative behaviors in order to keep the relationship the way [the couple] like[s] it” (773). According to the study Dainton completed, in which 90 participants, all in interracial marriages, completed an online survey, the two positive maintenance activities that were concluded to provide satisfaction in a marriage were “conflict management” and “use of social networks” (782). “Infidelity” and “avoidance” were the two negative predictors of satisfaction (Dainton 782). As both maintenance activities of “conflict management” and “avoidance” involve utilizing and avoiding communication, Dainton’s article highlights the importance of communication in bringing happiness to the marriage.
The negative effects that come with not communicating is clearly depicted in *My Darling is a Foreigner*, when Saori does not tell Tony about her father’s opinions regarding their interracial relationship. Saori implemented the negative maintenance activity of “avoiding,” which resulted in their relationship to worsen. If Saori communicated with Tony about her father’s disapproval, they could have worked through this difficulty together in which their relationship would have gotten stronger.

With regards to the situation in which the Japanese/Japanese-American wives reached out to their husbands who then did not support them, the wives implemented the strategy of communication, but it is unfortunate that their efforts did not result in their husbands and them resolving the issue together. However, there were some cases within the same study in which communication did lead to positive results. After reaching out to their husbands, some wives received strong support from their husbands, which helped “minimize [the] negative effects of microaggressions and deepen[ed] the relational bond, specifically for foreign-born wives who left behind their family and friends for a new life in America” (Iwasaki 190).

Overall, the challenges Japanese American interracial couples face in the 2000s do resemble those that couples faced before the 2000s. However, despite the possibility of these difficulties negatively affecting their relationship, couples communicate with each other and come out stronger in the end by working together through the challenges.

**What about the parent and child?**

*What was the parent-child relationship in Japanese American families before the 2000s?*

The parent-child relationship between Japanese American couples and their mixed-blood children or *konketsuji* can be explained by how most of the children grew up. With the parents’ relationship being negatively looked upon, it is not shocking that the fathers oftentimes
abandoned their mixed-blood children and left their mothers without providing any assistance around the occupation period (Endo 452, Burkhardt 528). There were even accounts of mothers “attempt[ing] to hide the child’s paternity or kill or abandon it,” according to a 1948 article in the *Saturday Evening Post* (qtd. in Burkhardt 525). With the father and mother oftentimes not wanting to be in their child’s life or even acknowledge it, *konketsuji* lacked the support or love that are expected from parents. It can therefore be inferred, from the situation *konketsuji* grew up in, that their relationships with their parents were incredibly difficult or possibly did not exist.

Moving forward to the 2000s, the difficulties family members of Japanese American interracial families face are not as extreme as those around the occupation. However, the parents and children of interracial families in the 2000s still face challenges that greatly affect the parent-child relationship. The major challenge in a multiracial child’s life is working through their racial identity and determining who they are between the two races that make them up. The sections below describe the factors that influence a multiracial child’s self-determined racial identity, how their relationship with their parent is affected, as they may relate more with one race versus the other or even feel isolated from one, and lastly how interracial families overcome this hurdle.

*What influences the answer to “Which Side Am I?”?*

The perception one has of a multiracial individual’s racial identity just from their physical appearance greatly sways how that individual sees themselves. This effect is explained in Nikki Khanna’s 2004 article, “The Role of Reflected Appraisals in Racial Identity: The Case of Multiracial Asians,” which highlights the results of a study conducted on 110 Asian-white multiracial individuals. According to the results of the study, the two major factors that influence the racial identity of Asian-Americans are phenotype, or “others’ reactions to an individual’s physical characteristics,” and cultural exposure (Khanna 118). There are several accounts from
the multiracial Asian-American participants of the study in which they felt more included by the
group they looked more alike (Khanna 125, 126). For example, one participant, who has more
Caucasian features, explained that “I have been more accepted by the Caucasian community
because of my appearance” (Khanna 126). In cases when they attempt to claim themselves as
being a part of racial group they do not look as much like, the participants experienced backlash
from the group, who attempt to deny them entrance to their group. For instance, the same
participant mentioned above said that “when I’ve said I’m Japanese, people have told me I’m
not, as if I wouldn’t know my racial background” (Khanna 126). Overall, one’s physical
appearance greatly influences how others view them and whether they are admitted into the
racial group they are biologically a part of.

Another element that affects how multiracial Japanese American individuals view their
racial identity is the level of culture exposure one has to their Asian heritage. Oftentimes,
Japanese Americans will not connect with their Asian side if they do not have a firm
understanding and knowledge of the culture and language (Khanna 126). In fact, “for each unit
increase in the frequency of eating ethnic food from Asian parent’s country of origin while
growing up, the respondent is 91.6 percent more likely to identify as Asian” (Khanna 124). In
other words, the more Japanese Americans are exposed to Japanese culture, the higher likelihood
that they will connect to their Japanese side. From the opposite perspective, not having a lot of
exposure to Japanese culture or the language results in more difficulties for Japanese Americans
to associate with their Japanese heritage.

An example of this situation, in which not knowing the language proved to be a
hindrance, is in the 2013 film, Hafu: The Mixed-Race Experience in Japan, which shares the
stories of hafus, or those who are half-Japanese and half-another nationality, living in Japan. One
of the stories highlights Sophia’s experience moving from Australia, where she grew up, to Japan as a *hafu* who did not grow up speaking Japanese. Even though she made an effort to learn the language and spend time with Japanese people, Sophia came to the realization that she will never be accepted as being Japanese due to not growing up there and not knowing the language. She even mentions in the film that “she is definitely more Australian than Japanese” upon leaving for Australia after living in Japan for a year (*Hafu*). Overall, Sophia’s lack of knowledge of the language stiffened her ability to create a true connection to Japan and her Japanese heritage.

Although it may seem that if a Japanese American lived in Japan, they would feel closer to Japan and their Japanese side, living in Japan still presents challenges for Japanese Americans. Due to most of the population being Japanese, it is easier to see the differences between those who are fully Japanese and those who are not, in comparison to the United States where there is more diversity. As a result, Japanese Americans living in Japan are “*less* likely to identify as Asian” because they clearly stick out from others (Khanna 127). In fact, according to the results of Khanna’s study mentioned above, “respondents who have spent time living in the Asian parent’s country are actually 74 percent *less* likely to identify as Asian than those who have never lived there” (124). This profound result is reflected in David’s story, from the film *Hafu*, of him growing up in an orphanage and being bullied by the other kids who did not view him as Japanese, but rather “an alien” (*Hafu*). The children were even shocked that David’s blood was red, rather than green as they expected as alien’s would be (*Hafu*). Upon reflection of his earlier years, David says in the film that up until he was 19, he “really hated Japan” and did not think of himself as Japanese (*Hafu*). David’s experience of growing up in Japan and not being accepted by others highlights the unfortunate reality that living in Japan does not mean Japanese Americans will automatically associate with their Japanese side.
What happens to the parent-child relationship?

All the previously mentioned factors result in the multiracial child creating a stronger or weaker relationship with either one of the races that make them up. As a result, the relationship between them and their parents is greatly affected.

With regards to physical appearance, oftentimes if the multiracial child looks more like one of their parents, they associate and feel more connected to that parent. The influence of physical traits on the parent-child relationship can be seen in Chandra D.L. Waring and Samit D. Bordoloi’s article “‘I Don’t Look Like Her’: Race, Resemble, and Relationships in Multiracial Families.” Although this article focuses on the black and white interracial family, the same ideas and theories can be translated to the case of the Japanese American interracial family. The article includes a statement from Allen who explains that his relationship with his black father is not affected by race, but rather his more dominant white physical characteristics, such as his blonde hair and green eyes (Waring 160). Allen’s white features cause him to feel disconnected from his father as well as his other black relatives (Waring 160). He goes on to further explain the separation he feels with his father and black relatives in that at a family reunion, although he was surrounded by relatives, he felt like an “outsider” (Waring 160). Allen’s experience with feeling separated from his father due to not looking like him reflects the impact physical appearance has on the parent-child relationship.

In addition to the outward appearance of the child, one’s skill level of the parent’s native language influences how connected they feel to them. According to the results of a study conducted on 6 international families who are living in Japan, it was found that language “often becomes a mode of connection to their children” especially for the foreign-born parent (Morgan 11). By working with their parents to learn that parent’s dominant language, the child oftentimes
feels more connected to them and has a positive experience learning the language (Morgan 11-12). On the opposite end, there was one participant, Issac, whose father did not teach his children English, which resulted in him and siblings to “feel almost purely Japanese” (Morgan 7). Therefore, from these accounts, it is clear that language is a factor in weighing which side and parent Japanese American children feel more connected to.

_How do families overcome this challenge together?_

The way in which interracial families overcome the difficulties and negative effects that come with the child feeling more connected to one race and parent is for the parents to encourage the child to adopt a multiracial identity. As a result, there is no longer a divide between the child and the parent they feel less connected to. The two ways in which parents can create an environment where their child feels connected to both cultures is having them learn both languages and be thoughtful in the way they approach the subject of race.

By speaking both languages of their parents, Japanese American multiracial children will feel closer to both cultures and therefore accept them both as their own. In the film *Hafu*, Alex, who is half-Mexican half-Japanese, grew up in Japan and went to Japanese elementary school, where he was only taught Japanese. He then transferred to an international school where he learned both Japanese and English. In between going to Japanese elementary school and international school, Alex’s parents allowed him to live in Mexico for a year, at the end of which he was able to speak in Spanish. In the film, Alex explains that he is grateful that he is learning English in school because if he only speaks Japanese, “there’s no real way to show that I’m *Hafu*” (*Hafu*). In other words, being able to speak multiple languages is the form in which Alex expresses his multiracial identity, showing that he is accepting his multiple races as his own.
The way in which parents talk to children about their multiracial identity, or that they are a combination of two races, greatly influences how the child views themselves, as well as their relationship to their parents. Over the years there have been several different labels in Japanese for multiracial individuals, such as *ainoko*, *hafu*, and *double*. Although all labels describe the same type of person, the implications behind these labels reflect the different perspectives in describing what it means to be multiracial. For example, *ainoko* means “hybrid” or “half-breed” in Japanese, which can be viewed in a negative light, as if the word implies anyone who is multiracial is a breed of animal (Endo 452). In addition, *hafu* implies having only the halves of two races, compared to *double* in which there is double the race and culture in one person (Collins 126). In addition, with *double*, in comparison to *ainoko* and *hafu*, there is a clear emphasis on the multiracial individual being “the creation of something more than the sum of its parts” and therefore contains more, or double (Collins 126). These labels for multiracial individuals and Japanese Americans highlight the importance of parents encouraging their children to be proud that they are an example of how two cultures can be blended to create something beautiful. As a result, the child does not feel sided towards one culture or the other, but rather a part of both as they are a combination of the two.

**What about the Forbaths?**

*Why talk about interracial marriages and families?*

The inspiration for this paper were my parents, Ted and Reiko Forbath, a Japanese American interracial couple. My dad was born and raised in Los Angeles, while my mom was born in Shizuoka, Japan and lived there until she was 31. They both joined the Unification Church in America and Japan respectively and were picture-matched by the founder Reverend Sun Myung Moon in 1992. Upon getting matched, or in other words engaged, and
communicating for only two months, my parents went to Korea to take part in the Blessing Ceremony, which is the Unification Church’s mass wedding ceremony. My parents then started their life together in 1993 when my mom got her fiancé visa and came to America.

As someone who is also matched, or engaged, in the Unification Church and will be taking part in the Blessing Ceremony in a few months, I am anticipating the ups and downs that come with marriage and what it takes to have a happy marriage. When I think about what a successful marriage is, I think about my parent’s marriage. I see as my parents as two individuals who are honest with each other, work as a team, support one another, and are undeniably in love. I will never be able to understand how they were able to overcome all the difficulties they faced in the beginning of their relationship to then work together to build one that is still thriving to this day. To expand on their challenges, my parents did not know each other before getting married, did not speak the same language upon meeting, and are an interracial couple. My fiancé and I will not face the same challenges my parents did, as we knew each other before getting engaged, have no language barrier, and are both Japanese American. However, in an effort to understand what it takes to overcome any difficulty my fiancé and I will face as a married couple, I wanted to explore just how my parents overcame the difficulties that come specifically with being an interracial couple and having an interracial family.

*What was the clash in the Forbath family?*

When I asked my parents what a major obstacle they encountered throughout their marriage was, their response was the clash between their two cultures. For example, the first time my mother went to a baseball game, she was horrified that everyone was leaving their trash under their seats, as this would be frowned upon in Japan. Another form of culture clash was
with food, as my mother loves to eat natto, but only made it when my dad, who is not as enthusiastic about it, comes home late from work.

However, the obstacles in my parent’s interracial marriage went beyond there being clear differences in Japanese and American cultures. Since the culture one grows up with highly influences who one becomes, my parents did not fully understand who their partner was until they developed a firm grasp of the culture. My father explained that “If I don’t understand the culture, I don’t understand my spouse.” As a result, there was already a barrier when they first met that prevented them from being a couple who truly knew the other person.

*How did they overcome the culture clash?*

My parents worked through the challenges that come with having a partner who comes from a completely different culture by accepting their partner’s differences. My father described to me that he had to “transcend” his own culture and look at his wife from a different point of view in order to understand who she was. To my father this was the only way to truly understand my mother, as he jokingly said “What am I going to change, your mom?” My parent’s strategy of accepting each other’s cultural differences is also seen in the results of a study conducted to see “how intercultural couples who live in Japan and raise children manage their cultural differences and maintain a successful marital life” (Kuramoto 551). One of the lessons parents learn during the pre-parenthood stage is “adjusting and respecting,” in that couples uphold the differences between their cultures while “not attempting to agree every time” (Kuramoto 558). In other words, the couple embraces the reality that they are different from each other, rather than focusing on these differences.
Conclusion

Interracial marriage in general has changed drastically over the years, in that the sheer number of them has grown. In addition, there are more multiracial individuals, who are the outcome of these interracial marriages and relationships, proudly declaring themselves as multiracial. However, despite this progress towards there being more interracial marriages and society becoming even more diverse, the lives of interracial couples and families, specifically Japanese American ones, continue to be just as hard as they were before.

Upon comparing the difficulties Japanese American couples faced during the occupation period and in the 2000s, there is very little difference. In both eras, couples face resistance towards their marriage and there being unfortunate views of their foreign partner. In addition, although the difficulties Japanese American families face in the 2000s are not as challenging as those experienced during the occupation period, their lives are just as difficult to navigate. To be specific, how Japanese American children are raised as well as their physical features affect which of their parents’ races they feel closer to, which then affects the relationship with their parents. Lastly, I have seen first-hand, from observing my parent’s interracial marriage, how difficult it is to be in an interracial marriage as the culture clash between them made it difficult for them to develop a deep relationship.

However, despite these difficulties, Japanese American couples and families endure and develop stronger relationships. By communicating with each other and being honest about their struggles, couples can work together to overcome them. Japanese American children can feel connected to both of their parent’s cultures by learning both languages and embracing that they are *double*. Lastly, by acknowledging and accepting each other’s cultural differences, my parents were able to truly understand each other and grow as a couple.
I always knew my parent’s marriage was not easy, but it was not until I read article after article about interracial marriages that I truly understood what they endured. The admiration and respect I hold for my parents for not letting the challenges of being an interracial couple weaken their relationship has grown immensely throughout the process of writing this paper. Their determination to make their relationship work resulted in my sister and I growing up in a loving environment where we knew we were loved and that our parents loved each other.

I now truly understand how much effort it takes to have a successful marriage, regardless if one is in an interracial one or not. Non-interracial couples and families will not face the exact same obstacles interracial couples and families do, such as having their interracial relationship being looked down upon, their partner being negatively looked down upon by society, the children siding with one race over the other, or culture clash. However, non-interracial couples, such as my fiancé and I, can learn from them and implement the same strategies interracial couples use to bring happiness to their marriage and family, such as communication, encouraging their children to embrace who they are, and embracing their partners’ differences. I am ready to carry out these methods in my own marriage, with the hopes of achieving one that is just as amazing as my parents’.
Works Cited


My Darling is a Foreigner (Dârin Wa Gaikokujin); Dir. Ue, Kazuaki. 2010. Film.
