

INTERRACIALISM
AND
CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

By

WAYNE S. WHITE

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Thesis Approved:

Jean Van Delinder

Thesis Chair & Adviser

Ken Kiser

David Knottnerus

A. Gordon Emslie

Dean of the Graduate College

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Some contemporary Christian leaders use their pulpits to discourage heterosexual interracial relationships while others use their influence to vocalize support for racial intermarriage. A White pastor of a multiracial church in Tulsa Oklahoma informed his daughter while she was in kindergarten (when he came home and found a little African American boy there), “Hey look we’re friends, we play, we go together in groups but we do not date one another. We don’t mix our races” (Price 2001:32).

The minister in this example based his objection to mixed race relationships on theological grounds, saying interracial marriages are a direct violation of the Word of God (Price 2001:33-34). But he also argued racial intermarriage ought to be opposed by the Black community as a matter of racial pride and on the basis of racial purity.

He said,

“There’s only 13% of the population that is your color. If we continue to mix it (there) ain’t going to be none of you left. There ain’t nobody going to be able to say Black is beautiful; they’re going to have to say mixed is beautiful” (Price 2001:38).

What this example illustrates is that segregationist notions about race are constructed from religious ideology. The construction of separatist ideology is an attempt to dictate what constitute legal and illegal sexual contact between Blacks and Whites. Historically the prohibiting of interracial relationships between Blacks and Whites was presented as being for the good of society (Chappell 1998:237-262; Hughey 1987: 23-34).

For example, Kevin Strom (2000)¹ argues that race mixing is a crime worse than murder.

He wrote:

“When you commit murder you kill one man, you end one life: you tragically injure one family and circle of friends. When you commit murder, if your victim has had no children you do cut off the potential existence of one small branch of the (white) race’s future. But when you commit the crime of racial mixing you are participating in genocide.”

(Strom 2000:30-31)

Contrary to Strom’s position scholars like Yancey (2002) and Campolo (2005) come to the defense of racial intermarriage. They do not see society being harmed by race mixing nor do they find any theological grounds for opposing interracial marriage. Rather they suggest there are certain scriptures which actually support heterosexual interracial relationships. Yancey (2002) claims that Christ has removed any racial barrier between ethnic groups (Yancey 2002:16-17)². Campolo cites Galatians 3:28³ as another proof text for support of interracial marriages and integrated congregations (Campolo 2005: vii-xi).

This research project is an exploratory work on the role of Christianity and society in the debate on interracial relationships. The purpose of this research is to examine the formal and informal institutional structures and the social practices that either impede or facilitate biracial couples ability to find a welcoming place to worship despite the fact there is no legal basis for opposing interracial marriages. In examining social interaction between religious biracial couples and the religious world, this paper examines the

¹ Strom’s article is found in *At Issue Interracial Relationships: An Opposing Viewpoint* by Bryan Grapes, Greenhaven Press, New York, 2000

² See pp. 27, reference 40 for details in *Just Don’t marry One* by George Yancey and Sherelyn Yancey, Judson Press, Valley Forge 2002

³ The text states; Galatians 3:28 “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free. There are no longer males and females for all of you are one in Christ.” See pp. 11 “The Church Enslaved” Tony Campolo and Michael Battle, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 2005

coping mechanisms of mixed race couples and the effectiveness of contact theory in reducing racial prejudice and discrimination. I expect the literature to show that some biracial couples in the face of religious opposition cease their religious practice, while others may continue their search until they find a congregation where they are accepted or experience a measure of tolerance.

The literature will show that through fear of mixed race relationships between Blacks and White's monochromatic congregations were formed in an effort to prevent interracial relationships and to promote social segregations. This material will also demonstrate the efforts of those Christian leaders who support racial intermarriage as a way of solving racial problems in American society. It will examine the notion that biracial congregations are one way of obtaining racial reconciliation through social contact because they promote inclusiveness (Becker 1998:451-472; Bryan 2000: 25-27; DeYoung 2004:128-147; Dougherty 2003).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Using the literature on interracial relationships, in this study *religion and Christianity* will be used to speak of belief systems based on the ideology that the Word of God is the moral and daily guide for one's life and the rest of society (Dougherty 2003, Emerson 2000 and Price 2001). Further expanding the concept religion to "*a system of beliefs and practices that unite one single moral community*" (Durkheim 1995:44), religion goes beyond mainline Catholics and Presbyterians denominations to include Mormons, those of the Baha'i and Unitarian religions.

The term *religious congregation* refers to "any regular gathering of people for religious purposes that come together to worship; having an official name, formal

structure that conveys a purpose and an identity and is open to all ages. It is a religious gathering that has no restraint on how long people stay”.⁴ By the term “*integrated congregations* based on Sociologist George Yancey’s definition of a congregation comprised of no more than 80% of any one ethnic group (Yancey 2003:117).

The notion of an *interracial couple* or *intermarriage* will refer only to Black and White heterosexual couples because they are usually the object of opposition due to the fact they are the most visible aggregate. This label will be used interchangeably with *miscegenation*, *race mixing*, *mixed race* and *interracialism* and *outgroup marriage*, all of which will refer to sexually intimate African American and White heterosexual couples whether married or cohabitating as applied by Jayne Ifekwunigwe throughout her book “Mixed Race Studies”.⁵

Deviance and *deviant* are defined as modes of behavior that is considered morally and socially unacceptable within a community, but it is also defined as conduct that is perceived to be outside of real or imagined racial boundaries (Erikson 2005, Nagel 2003). Connecting the concept of *religious mythology* to deviance in this study, I mean the use of sacred text to give legitimacy to a system of belief as social and biological fact that is without scientific evidence; that which is false, which is internalized by those who oppose interracial marriage (Prentiss 2003:5).

What the reader will observe then is that throughout this study Christianity is perceived as a “social construct”. It is an institution in which the minister, priest or leader is believed to interpret the will of God directly using scripture. This interpretation whether literally or based on religious principle, is for both the individual and society

⁴ *People of the Dream*, Michael Emerson, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2006

⁵ *Mixed Race Studies: A Reader*, Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe, Routledge, New York 2004

(Kling 2004; Rabinow 1984: 296-298; Berger 2004:156-158; Sollors 2000: 46-54; Dickerson 2004:27-38).

Contemporary authors like Michael Dyson (2004) suggests that despite “the racist and sexism found in many biblical text”, religion continues to play a major role in guiding human behavior for some within American society (Dyson 2004:289-293). Through this institution, meaning is given to the human experience and sense is made of the world around him (Monahan2001:23-29). For the purpose of this study *race* and *ethnicity* will also be used interchangeably, because for many in society the two terms are often thought of as being synonymous, though this Researcher acknowledges they are two distinct concepts that involve a sense of peoplehood (Rosenblum 2003:18). Finally, the term *people of color* will be used to speak of those who are of African decent, African American or African throughout this study.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Scientific empirical research has been conducted on the need for interracial and biracial congregations such as the work of Curtiss DeYoung (2004) and Tony Campolo (2005). DeYoung and Campolo believe that by deeper commitment to Christian principles on the part of Blacks and Whites, differences can be overcome and integrated congregations formed. These integrated churches, in their opinion would be the answer to the race problem. However, these studies do not discuss how interracial couples negotiate marriage and religion in their ability to find a welcoming place to worship. To accomplish this, secondary data will be used to explore role Christianity has played in creating racial divisions, racialized sexual boundaries and influencing theories of Black identity. For example, Black consciousness developed priority during the eighteen

hundreds is part of the mindset today regarding the social interaction and interracial dating between blacks and whites (Bennett 1993; Feagin 2001; Goldenberg 2003; Hodes 1999).

These theological arguments form the basis for exclusion of mixed race couples and families in churches in some cases and inclusion in others (McNamara 1999:115-116; Zinn 2005:29-30). Conversely, this paper seeks to determine how contemporary religious institutions advocate on behalf of interracial dating and marriages to form the basis for inclusion of mixed race couples. This information will be sought through books, journals, magazines and radio discourse or interviews in books and journal articles.

This research project then is designed to add to the general knowledge of the sociology of race and the sociology of religion as they relate to Christianity acting as a prohibitory or facilitator toward interracial relationships finding a welcoming place to worship.

PREVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The next chapter will begin with the literature review. This review will discuss the various debates either sanctioning or opposing intermarriage. The review will be divided into two sections: under *Religion and Racism* the author will focus on religions contribution to racial boundaries in American society. For example, in order to maintain social dominance and prevent interracial intimacy, White religious leaders constructed a mythology that presented blacks as cursed which eventually lead to anti-miscegenation laws and the formation of separate congregations for Blacks. Conversely, Black religious leaders constructed identities of positive blackness to “confront racism and the psychological survival of the people of color” (Chappell 1998: 237-262; Levin 1995:157-173; Hughey 1987:23-26; McInerney 1991:371-393; Pabst 2003:178-212; Glaude 2000:143-167; Winters 2004).

Contemporary versions of these myths and theories by religious and social scientist not only perpetuate the notion of the hypersexual Black male and the promiscuous African American female but oppose intermarriage on the grounds they are unstable when compared to same race marriages(Aldridge 1978; Blood 1963; Davidson 1991; Foeman 1999; Foeman and Nance 2002; Hall 2001; Heer 1966; Henderson 2006; Killian 2001; Leslie and Letiecq 2004; Mazrui 2003;Zebroski 1999; Blau 1984:585-606; Vaquera and Kao 2005:484-503; Brunnsma 2005; Campbell and Boeck 2006; Hamm 2001; O'Donoghue 2004; Magruder 2005; Regnerus and Burdette 2006).

Finally, the reader will note that throughout the literature review the notion that integrated congregations lead to heterosexual interracial intimacy is a predominate fear of White ministers while other scholars believe that mixed marriages and integrated congregations are a reflection of the original purpose of God for a diverse society. A brief reference to integrated congregations will bring an end to the chapter (Becker 1998; Dougherty 2003; Giggie 2005; Vora 2002; Yancey 1999; Yancey 2002; Yancey and Emerson 2003).

Theoretical Concerns will make up chapter 3. Three theoretical frameworks are of interest to this study. First is Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1967) theory of social construction of reality which will allow us to see how religious text was used to construct the label of *interracial*. Using critical race theory as part of the constructionist paradigm we will be allowed to see how the power elite within the religious and secular worlds labeled heterosexual interracial contact as deviant (Erikson 2005; McNamara 1999; Goffman 1986). Therefore labeling theory will be the second theory applied to this study. The third theory of interest to this study is contact theory which argues that

discrimination and prejudice diminish as racial groups interact in a positive environment. Past sociological research supports this hypothesis based on the belief in racial cooperation and equal status due to desegregation of the educational system. But what about in religious institutions? Does the contact hypothesis still hold true? Recent evidence suggests the results on this hypothesis are mixed (Emerson 2006; Yancey 2002; DeYoung 2004).

The fourth chapter outlines the *methodology* used to organize the research. The primary methodology will be content analysis. For the purpose of this study, fifty-five books and thirty-five articles from journals, magazines and newspapers by various authors were selected in a snowball sample to gain insight into the experiences of interracial couples. Materials range from topics on race, religion, sexuality and marriage. They include autobiographies from biracial adults telling of their life experiences and interviews with interracial couples as well as theories by social scientist.

The literature contains theories and myths about interracial relationships from social scientists and religious leaders. This material will be analyzed in chapter 5 to see how these actors negotiated religious and social life despite knowing the assumptions about the nature of their interracial relationships (McNamara 1999; Rosenblatt 1995; Sollors 2000; Gardner 2000; Nissel 2006; Pascoe 1996:44-69). Finally, as part of the analysis process data from the National Congregations Study and The Pew Research Center will be added in order to gain better understanding of integrated congregation, interracial marriage and contact theory. Chapter 6 will be dedicated to the conclusion of this research project. The limitations of this research and suggestions for future study will be presented at that time.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review examines the historical chronological development of myths and theories concerning heterosexual interracial relationships by various authors from diverse backgrounds. In this chapter, the reader will see the contribution of religion to the construction of racism and segregated congregations through the application of scripture as a way of prohibiting interracial marriages. The counter argument by those who support interracial marriages and integrated churches as a way of defeating racism will also be presented in this chapter.

Therefore, this chapter is organized around the following themes as they relate to Christianity, religion and interracial relationships. These themes are religion and racism, contemporary theories and myths concerning interracial relationships and racial reconciliation and integrated congregations. Each of these themes is discussed in religious and secular literature on race relations either as part of the topic or as the central issue being addressed. Much of the secular literature covers the historical perspective of miscegenation from slavery to contemporary questions on the development of racial identity of biracial children. For example, Moran (2003) begins her study of miscegenation with the arrival of the first slave ship in Virginia and gradually moves into the courts use of dominant physical characteristics to assign racial categories to biracial children (Moran 2003:128).

In her discussion, she reveals that the first anti- miscegenation legislation was passed

in 1661. Prior to its passing however, those who crossed racial boundaries to engage Black/White heterosexual interracial sex was punished severely. Black/White interracial sex was viewed as abnormal sex, immoral and thus outside of socially acceptable behavior (Moran 2003:18-28; .Horton 2005; Rothman 2003: 92-120).⁶ Secular literature shows that White, Christianity and European were synonymous with civilization while the terms Black, heathen and uncivilized were interwoven with the African Americans (Roberts 2004:265).

The literature indicates that the contribution of Christianity to the division of the races at different junctures in American racial history has been deliberate. These findings are confirmed in the work of several social scientists such as Emerson (2006) and Yancey (2000) who argue that racism and fear of interracial marriages is one of the reasons for congregational and residential segregation. Thus, the contribution of religion to the racialization of society is not in dispute by social scientist or in question in this paper.

The fact is religious literature on interracialism is limited and conflicting. Some argue that scripture prohibits interracial marriage while other authors claim there are no scripture objecting to racial intermarriages (Grapes 2000; Yancey 2002). Meanwhile, other religious leaders like DeYoung (2004) focus on the need for racial reconciliation and see interracial marriage as the answer to racism (DeYoung 2004:41-186, Campolo 2005; Yancey 2002; Emerson 2000).

The historical sketch in the literature review to follow presents the contribution of religion to the construction of racism and segregated congregations. It suggests that religion acted directly to prohibit or to facilitate interracial marriages and integrated

⁶ The only reference to Christianity or the church in Rothman's research is in close proximity to the brothel in Richmond because of the way in which the buildings were constructed. It was said they were separated by either an ally or a pane of glass. See pp 124

congregations. Historical and contemporary literature indicates that through the application of scripture religion acts as a mechanism for controlling human behavior.

RELIGION AND RACISM

Taking the Text Literally

Literally interpreting biblical text as a way of guiding behavior and ascribing meaning to life experience can be seen in the experience of the Puritans. Minister John Winthrop's interpretation of the Exodus delivered prior to the departure for the new world represented the English settlers as Israel being delivered from the persecution of Pharaoh (Bennett 1993:298). Just as Abraham and Israel were forbidden to intermarry with the inhabitants of their promised land as obedient Christians (the English settlers) were to abstain from intermarriage with the indigenous people of the new world. Failure to conform to this divine directive would endanger the success of the colony (Kling 2004:206-207).

This account demonstrates the use of biblical text in Western society to construct a separatist identity and to prohibit interracial relationships. This separatist ideology can be traced back to the legacies of slavery and racial segregation of the 1950's and 60's (Kling 2004:103; Gaines 1999:462). For example, the sanction of the enslavement of Africans was sought on biblical grounds and was constructed through the exegesis of both old and new testaments texts (Prentiss 2003:13-16). Southern theologians used Genesis 9,⁷ Leviticus 25⁸ and Philemon 10-18⁹ to create a religious mythology where Africans are cursed with blackness and condemned to perpetual servitude (Haynes 2002:76). For

⁷ Gen.9:26" Cursed be Canaan, he shall be a servant of servants to his brother". The Interpreter's Bible, Vol.1, Abingdon Press, New York, 1952

example, J. J Flournoy¹⁰ in 1838 argued that blacks were originally the slaves of Noah. John Saffin concluded that the Bible sanctioned slavery by examining the story of Abraham. He reasoned that it was the moral duty of White Christians to “imitate Abraham” in the owning of slaves (Prentiss 2003:16-17). If African were cursed with Blackness where did this myth originate?

The Curse of Ham

The origin of the Ham mythology according to Price goes back Martin Luther.¹¹ Dr. Price (2001) reports that Hood claims some Blacks have internalized this myth and see themselves as cursed. Based on this perspective the White man represents the standard which the Black man is expected to achieve. This includes the adoption of image of White beauty which some scholars propose is a reason for African American males’ involvement in interracial relationships. Moreover, mixed race relationship for Blacks is traditionally considered an attempt to escape the stigma and socioeconomic consequence of racism (Price 2001:5; Persaud 2004:41-62; Cleaver1999:183- 204; Courtney 2005: 50-294; Sollors 2000:473-492; Wolf 2002: 9-291)¹². In fact, some Blacks authors have endorsed the ideology of blackness as a curse to the point of becoming apologist for slavery and white hostility ¹³(Potter 2000; Carter 1997)¹⁴

⁸ Leviticus 25:45 “the stranger that do sojourn among you, of them shall you buy and of their families that are with you which they begat in your land; and they shall be your possession.” The Interpreter’s Bible, Vol.1, Abingdon Press, New York, 1952

⁹ Philemon 10-18, The Interpreter’s Bible, Vol.9, Abingdon Press, New York, 1955

¹⁰ See appendix 2, note 1 of *The Curse of Ham*, David Goldenberg, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2003

¹¹ Price quotes Dr. Robert Hood, author of *“Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions on Blacks and Blackness”*, see pg. 5 note, of *Race, Religion and Racism* , Vol. 1 by Dr. Frederick K.C. Price, Faith One Publishing, Los Angeles, 2001

¹² This myth is based on exchange theory and will be addressed later in this section but in more detail in the section on contemporary theories and myths about interracial relationships.

Research on the curse of Ham suggests that it originated from the prejudices of Jewish religious leaders against Black Africans. The context of the origin of the curse according to Fredrickson (2002) can be found in the Jewish people to justify their desire to conquer and subjugate the Canaanites.

“But among the medieval Arabs importing slaves from East Africa to the Middle East, the emphasis shifted from Canaan to Ham, widely believed to be the ancestor of all Africans, and the physical result of the curse became a blackness of the skin” (Fredrickson 2002:43).

The myth is also derived from text outside of the canon and from the inability to identify key characters in the narratives (Goldenberg 2003:17-40, 195-200). Part of the problem is with the language of the text, it can be applied to things but it can also refer to a people group from India or Ethiopia (113, 201-212). Goldenberg’s attempt to explain the origin of this religious mythology may confuse the issue more than resolve the matter¹⁵.

In fact, the concept of skin discoloration or an unnatural stain developed into a pseudo scientific theory. This theory presupposes that as mankind migrated across the earth their pigment was affected by the environmental changes in temperatures.

The theory that environmental changes made some races white and other races dark in complexion (Goldenberg 2003:111) was preceded by Dr. Benjamin Rush. He assumed that the skin color of Africans was rare congenital disease derived from leprosy. The cure

¹³ See “No Apology Necessary” by Rev. Earl Carter,(an African American) in which he blames African enslavement on Black Egyptians’ holding ancient Hebrews captive in Egypt, and White hostility on Black ancestor worship. Both these action resulted in judgment on people of color. Charisma House, Florida, 1997

¹⁴ Potter’s article is on Christianity Today website (<http://www.Christianitytoday.com/global/ct/2000/006/29.80.html>)

¹⁵ In a chapter entitled: *the color of mankind* Goldenberg defines the Latin word decolor which became part of the Near East and Greco-Roman folktales as an explanation for the variation in skin color of mankind. The term was defined as “something that has been stained or unnaturally colored, something that is flawed”. See pp 110 The Curse of Ham, David Goldenberg, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2003

according to Rush was to turn the skin white.¹⁶ Three things should be done for the Black community due to their illness according to Rush. One is that Whites and Blacks should not intermarry because the disease can be passed on. Next, every attempt ought to be made to cure Blacks and third, people of color should be treated more humanely because of their disease (Price 2001: 193-194).

Garnsey (1999) argues this theory was postulated by Aristotle, quoting Plato. This pseudo scientific theorem became part of the Christian mythology related to slavery and the Curse of Ham through Augustine (Garnsey 1999:14-15). Unfortunately, Goldenberg and Cohn attempt to refute the notion of the curse of Ham serves to confirm that racism toward Blacks was part of early Jewish theology. The notion of a curse on the Black race and speculations about the origin of the species gave birth to theories which postulated that Africans and their descendents are not part of the original creation (Ham 2004:51-55; Prentiss 2003:15-16, 21-22).

Blacks as a Separate Creation

Dr. Samuel Cartwright presented the theory of a “separate creation” in the postbellum South as an explanation for the physical characteristics and the supposed intellectual differences between Blacks and White.¹⁷ Cartwright also gives validity to the scriptural interpretation that claim Blacks and other lesser races predated Adam and Eve. Due to the failure of the pre-Adamite race, God formed a second man and woman, Adam and Eve (Prentiss 2003:22). This second creation was of higher intelligence and thus superior

¹⁶ see reference, *Creating Racism: Psychiatry's Betrayal*, 8. cited in *Race, Religion and Racism, Vol. 1* Dr. Frederick K.C. Price, Faith One Publication, Los Angeles, 2001

¹⁷ For explanation of the Pre-Adamite creation see pgs.51-64 notes on Genesis in Dake's Annotated Reference Bible, Dake Bible Sales, Inc. Lawrenceville, 1987. This myth argues that before the creation of Adam there was a lesser race of beings some of whom God destroyed in the flood.

to the Black race (Price 2001:192-193; Ifekwunigwe 2004:39-41; Fu 2001:147-159; Omi 2001:243-263; Wallenstein 2004:13-93; Rothman 2005:135-138).

In 1902 Charles Carroll picked up the argument against interracial marriage claiming that Cain had evil tendencies which manifested themselves in his marriage to a black wife. On the other hand if that was not the reason for the curse then Cain may have simply been cursed with black skin (Haynes 2002:15; Prentiss 2003: 112-123, Jacobson 1998:264-272; White & White 2000:85-98). Carroll went on to proclaim the superiority of the White race over all others:

“The White is the highest and the Negro is the lowest of the so called five races of men; and they present the most striking contrast to each other in their physical and mental characters, their mode of life, habits, customs, manners, language, gestures, etc.¹⁸”

Carroll insists that with science and the authority of scripture he is able to place the Negro at the head of the ape family. He then attributes savage animalistic behavior to Blacks based on his interpretation of scripture calling them “the beasts of the field.”(Price 2001:2-4). As beast of the field, African Americans are an inferior race and ought to be kept from Whites (Price 2001:4-7). For Carroll, equality on any level will “inevitably lead to amalgamation” which is the “most infamous and destructive crimes known to the law of God” (Price 2001:7-8).¹⁹ Carroll is not alone in this assertion Parham and Dake were instrumental in bringing this myth into modern society.

The crime of amalgamation, according to Parham, brought a localized flood upon the earth. Parham contends the wicked Adamites engaged in “the heinous sin of racial

¹⁸ Quote taken from “The Tempter of Eve”, See pg.2 note of Race, Religion and Racism, Vol. 2 by Dr. Frederick K.C. Price, Faith One Publishing, Los Angeles, 2001

¹⁹ Reference taken Pp 287-405 of The Tempter of Eve, St. Louis Missouri, Adamic Publishing Company, 1902, See Race, Religion and Racism, Vol. 2, Frederick K.C. Price, Faith One Publishing, Los Angeles, 2001

intermarriage.”²⁰ Future generations are able to repeat the sin of racial intermarriage because some of the “sons of god” survived the flood (Haynes 2002:16-17; Synan 2001:275-276)²¹. Finis Dake (1987)²² expands on the work of Parham and Carroll by postulating that there are 30 bible reasons for segregation of the races.

Written in 1963 and still in circulation, the Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible remains virtually unchanged since its original release. Located at the end of the book of Acts of the Apostles and based on both the old and new testament, Dake’s theory claims first and foremost “all men were white” until after the flood because “there was only one family line.” Noah was “white and in the line of Christ”.²³ On page 9 under the heading of “great racial prophesy”, Dake not only reiterates the curse of Ham, but claims “the originators of civilization, government and science” can be traced back to Shem and Japhetic.²⁴ Here the influence of Social Darwinism and ethnocentric philosophy can be seen on Dake’s interpretation of scripture ²⁵(Campolo 2005:51-52; Dickerson 2004:39-41; Rothenberg 2001:576; Emerson 2000:5-48).

²⁰ Charles Fox Parham is considered one of the theological founders of the modern Pentecostal Movement. See pp. 1-4,42-44 of The Century of the Holy Spirit by Vinson Synan, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2001

²¹ Sons of god-Nephilim-in some translations is a Hebrew word of “no known meaning” refers to “people of gigantic statue with superhuman strength” See Columbia encyclopedia, (online) 6th edition(www.Bartleby.com/65/). Translation of the word includes mighty one, titans, watchers, and fallen ones, Origins of this myth are the Hebrew Scriptures and the Book of Enoch. See Book of Enoch by Richard Laurence, Adventure Unlimited Press, Kempton, 2000. Also see Noah’s Curse by Stephen Haynes, Oxford University Press, New York, 2002.

²² Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible, Dake Bible Sales Inc. Lawrenceville, 1987 edition is published through Dake Family Incorporated

²³ Pg.8, note k., Genesis 9:19 of Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible, Dake Bible Sales Inc. Lawrenceville, 1987

²⁴ See pp 159, of Dake’s Annotated Reference Bible, Dake Bible Sales Inc. Lawrenceville, 1987

²⁵ Spencer argued that the possessors of wealth and power are the elite in society and it is they who move society forward, all other are inferior competitors. See Dickerson , The End of Blackness, Pantheon Books, New York, 2004

*From Darwinism
to Segregation*

Social Darwinism in scripture according to McCloud (2003)²⁶ is the outcome of redactors rewriting the text to reflect the then new scientific theory (Prentiss 2003: 101-111; Ifekwunigwe 2004:47-51; Emerson 2000:39; Tate and Audette 2001:495-520; Fredrickson 2002:1-13; Helm, Jernigan and Mascher 2005:27-35; Feagin 2001:85).²⁷

Further evidence of this influence is found in Dake's anti-miscegenation comments and his support of racial segregation. For example, in one through three of his 30 reasons for the segregation of races the bible scholar writes;

“God wills all races to be as he made them. Any violation of God's original purpose is a manifestation of insubordination to him. God made everything to reproduce after his own kind. Kind means type and color or he would have kept them all alike to begin with. God originally determined the bounds of the habitations of nations.”²⁸

The reason for the establishment of racial and national boundaries according to Dake is to prevent miscegenation. In reason 4 of his commentary notes, Dake defines miscegenation as;

“The mixture of races, especially the black and white races or those of outstanding type or color. The Bible even goes farther than opposing this; it is against different branches of the same stock intermarrying such as Jews marrying other descendents of Abraham” (Dake1987:159).

Dake contends God is so opposed to miscegenation that He not only pronounces a curse on those involved in the practice of it, but made anti-miscegenation an eternal law that

²⁶ Aminah Beverly McCloud's article is entitled Blackness in the Nation of Islam and is found in Religion and the Creation of Race and Ethnicity by Craig Prentiss, New York University Press, New York, 2003

²⁷ Darwin theorized that Blacks were a species that existed between Whites and the gorillas. Feagin is citing Frederickson's The Black Image in White Minds, See pp 280 note 64 in Racist America by Joe Feagin, Routledge, New York, 2001

²⁸ See pp 159, where Dake list Genesis 10:5, 32, 11:8 & Dt.8:32 as scripture references for his comments. These verses mention the tower of Babel and the formation of different dialects. This is also a reference to Acts 17:26.

even “equal rights in the gospel can not veto his ruling.” In fact, “all nations will remain separated from one another in their own part of the earth forever.”²⁹ Dake warns engaging in “miscegenation” has caused “disunity among God’s people”.³⁰

Another Bible commentator that promotes the curse of Ham and the need for racial segregation was Cyrus Scofield who in 1917 wrote that the descendents of Ham will be inferior and servile people. In fairness to Scofield, in recent year’s new translations of his commentary omits the words *inferior* with reference to a particular people group but retains the word “a prophetic declaration is made that the descendants of Canaan, one of Ham’s sons will be servants to their brethren.”³¹

The Dake family, due to negative publicity and controversy brought on by Dr. Fred Price and other religious leaders in 1997 published a new version of their reference Bible. This version alters the heading for 30 reasons for separation to read *Separation in Scripture* and they omit any reference to people of color as being cursed. Instead, they retained the statement suggesting an entire city was destroyed to maintain separation and they kept the reference that God forbids interracial marriage.

Despite these changes, the Dake website encourages the purchase of the original reference Bible³². Furthermore, the influence of this particular Bible is perpetuated not merely by its sales, but popular televangelist Benny Hinn, Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart and the late Dr. Kenneth E. Hagin who have credited Dake’s work with shaping their theology. Moreover, Swaggart and Hagin have their own reference Bibles that are in circulation among “Word of Faith” practitioners with notes that are rumored to have

²⁹ See reasons 13, 15 & 21

³⁰ Reason 25

³¹ The Scofield Study Bible, New King James Version, Oxford University Press, copyright 2002

³² See <http://www.dake.com/dakesite/dakesite/dakesite/standard.html>

been plagiarized from Dake's original Bible.³³

Philip Yancey (2002) serves as a good illustration of the effects of this type of race theology on a young mind. In his book "*What so amazing about grace*"³⁴, Yancey acknowledges that he grew up a racist and it was not until he heard Lester Maddox speak at a neighborhood church that he found a "twisted theological basis" for his racism (Yancey 2002:131). He writes that in the 1960's the church deacons' acted as spotters to keep Black demonstrators out. They based their behavior on scripture saying:

"Believing the motives of your group to be ulterior and foreign to the teachings of God's word, we can not extend a welcome to you and respectfully request you to leave the premises quietly. Scripture does NOT teach the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. He is the Creator of all but only the Father of those who have been regenerated. If any one of you is here with a sincere desire to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, We would be glad to deal individually with you from the Word of God" (Yancey 2002:131).

Yancey goes on to report that the year the Civil Rights Acts was passed the congregation established a private school as a "haven from Blacks" who were, of course, forbidden from attending both the church and school. When a young Black student with a degree in theology applied for employment at the school, his application was reject on the basis of race (134).

Bible knowledge in these examples was not used to support Blacks or encourage integration. In fact, many preachers in the south and in the north during the 1950s and 60s misused the Bible to support segregation and to deny Black Christians the right to worship in their churches. Many felt no sense of moral injustice for their behavior. Rather many believed that they were upholding the principles of God and the tenets of the

³³ See <http://www.answers.com/topic/jimmy-swaggart> & <http://www.answers.com/topic/finis-jennings-dake>

³⁴ "*What's so Amazing about Grace?*", by Philip Yancey, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2002

Christian faith by prohibiting Blacks to worship in their midst (Emerson 2006).

These illustrations demonstrate how the texts have shaped our times as Kling said, especially where race relations and interracial couples are concerned. The authors of the reference Bibles mentioned above used their commentaries to paint a devastating portrait of amalgamation. Dake preached racial purity and encouraged racial division in the name of his god. It is one thing, as Price (2001) said, to “voice your opinion on a subject; it’s another to speak as a representative of the divine will and recite racist rhetoric as gospel truth” (Price 2001:1-9; Carrette 1999:136-157; Charon 2004:248-250; Chappell 1998).

Religious rhetoric aside, Foucault (2003) points out the position of powerful White religious and secular leaders in perspective when referring to the dominant ethnicity as “the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm.” He went on to say that the dominant ethnicity operates “against those who deviate from that norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage” (Foucault 2003:61). The consequence of racist discourse and institutional pressure is the “principle of exclusion and segregation” (Foucault 2003:61). The principle of exclusion and segregation according to Foucault (2003) is “a way of normalizing society” and weapon for “defending society against violators of the laws of god” (61). Dake and other biblical scholars of like mind use their pastoral knowledge and power in an attempt to limit marital choice among heterosexuals to those of the same race (Rabinow 1984:270; Butler 1999:90-93; Foucault 1990:61-62).

The attitude employed by Dake is similar to those of the Christian Identity Movement. First, Christian Identity believes in a literal interpretation of scripture, second Whites are considered the chosen people, and third the races should be physically separated from one another. Thus, they advocate racial purity (Prentiss 2003:112-123;

McDermott and Samson 2005: 245-261). Therefore, the position of some religious leaders on racial integration were:

“no Christian ought to allow his conscience to be disturbed by the thought that he violates the unity of the church by insisting on an independent organization for the colored race. The distinctions are drawn by God Himself” (Emerson 2000:39).

In theory, by adopting a separatist stance, the church can eliminate potential conflict with those who are “different”. It can also ensure that those of ingroup “look like us”, exhibit a certain type of behavior, and adhere to the same belief systems (Cygner, Noel and Jacobson 1977:183-191; Winter 2004; Yancey 2003:113-128; Roberts 2004:262-264; Monahan, Mirola and Emerson 2001:233-236; Emerson 2006:50-52, 109). Furthermore, by promoting segregation, the argument can be put forth that White and Black Christians still worship the same God, just at different locations. Segregation officially settled the *Negro problem* for many Whites. Citing Myrdal’s work Emerson (2000) informs us that behind the official stance on race by church members and those in society were several informal positions:

“Nearly everybody in America is prepared to discuss the issue and almost nobody is entirely without opinion on it. The opinions vary. They may be vague and hesitating or even questioning, or they may be harden and articulate. But few Americans are unaware of the Negro problem” (Emerson 2000:44)

What the historical record on race relations and the church shows is by labeling interracial sexuality outside of acceptable norms, White leaders produced uni-racial or one race congregation guard against miscegenation (Childs 2005:10-13; Crowther 1995:132,313; Hayne 2002:246; Lewis, Yancey and Bletzer 1997:60-78; Holmes, Ross and Ramirez 2002:30-49). The record shows that White religious leaders in conjunction with the social power elite constructed a racial hierarchy resting on three variables: biology, cultural traits and group inferiority.

The first of these variables is the biological and physical characteristic of non-Whites this distinguishable from Whites which has come to be known as race. Second, race became the primary indicator of a specific group personality and cultural traits. Third, these indicators were used to determine the superiority and inferiority of racial groups. This racist ideology becomes the basis for any purpose real or imagine in Black-White relations as Bonilla-Silva (2001) wrote:

“Specific beliefs seem to have specific rationalization purposes besides the general one of justifying the caste order as a whole. Practically every type of White-Negro relation, every type of discrimination behavior, every type of interracial policy, raises it own peculiar demands for justification” (Bonilla-Silva 2001:71).

Specific beliefs about Blacks ranged from religious justification for their enslavement to legal rationale for residential and educational segregation. For example, one of the main arguments against *Brown vs. Board of Education* was the fear Black males who integrated with White females would lead to miscegenation.

The same fear was carried overseas during the time of war, prompting the military to attempt to control Black sexuality through recruiting Black women for service in the WACS (Romano 2006:18-20; Godfrey 2004; Gardner 2000; Johnson 2004; Kennedy 2003:19-21; Wallenstein 2005:65). The British government, for example, tried to discourage their female citizens from “fraternizing too freely with Black Americans” because it might lead to “tensions between British and White American soldiers” (Romano 2006:18-19). Today as Romano (2006), Driskill (1995) and other scholars have noted the military has the highest rate interracial marriages outside of higher education (Romano2006; Driskill 1995; Jacobson and Johnson 2006: 570-584).

Specific beliefs included religious mythology as part of common sense understanding in society where race and intermarriage intersect. For example, in the

original 1959 decision of *Loving vs. Virginia*, the court declared that Almighty God not only created separate races but put them on separate continents so that the races would not mix. The Judge concluded this arrangement should not be interfered with for the purpose of marriage.³⁵

The historical record shows White men controlled the amount of color mixing in society through their pursuit of Black pleasure. Nagel (2003) and Ifekwunigwe (2004) find that the White man formed his sexuality through the control of black bodies (Nagel 2003:22-23; Ifekwunigwe 2004:5-11). Control of Black bodies came through formal segregation but also by anti-miscegenation legislation. Recall these laws originated when the dominant group felt their possessions and positions were being threaten by minorities. Informal sexual relations between Black and White in the north and in the south occurred frequently. It was the formalization of these arrangements that was problematic (Hodes 1999:114-180; Jacobson 1995:342-343; St. Jean 1998:398-400; Tyner 2000:390-398; Yancey 2002:84-85; Wallenstein 2002:16-18; D'Emilio and Freedman 1997:3-201; Sollors 2000:120-131; Rosenblum 2003:38-45; Lachance 1994:211-222).

The winds of social change brought the break down in structural segregation as federal laws sought to force racial integration in all areas of the public sector. But these changes did little to affect the perspective of some whites when it came to outgroup marriage and Black sexuality; mixed race couples still faced physical and verbal abuse when they went out in public (Romano 2006:127-129). West (1994) said of these social changes, “if anything it gave White males equal access to Black female bodies with Black males without demythologizing Black sexuality” (West 1994:122).

It is no secret Christianity has often aligned itself at times with the appropriate

³⁵ *Loving vs. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1,3 (1967), taken from <http://supreme.justia.com/us/388/1/case.html>

political power in order to maintain the status quo and to ensure its position of power (Goode 1973:201-241). Emerson (2000) theorized that people have a tendency to select what they already have even if gains can be made by the alternative. These choices are shaped by preference, similarity, and level of meaning and the sense of belonging derived from those choices (Emerson 2000:146). The interest of organized religion is to serve the public good, not necessarily the interest of governmental authority or institutions. Therefore, religion operates on the assumption it possess special knowledge to provide moral guidance for the good of all men everywhere. For example, during the 1960's, Black church leaders used Black liberation theology in an attempt to "bring a sense of shame within the white oppressor and challenge his false sense of superiority", the end result was to be racial reconciliation and eventually the "beloved community" (Yancey 1997).

Martin Luther King and other African American religious leaders understood what people held as values internally do not always transcend the external. When King was confronted with the question about interracial marriage by a young white woman who claimed to be free of prejudice and yet proclaimed she would not want her daughter to marry a black man, he wrote:

"This lady could not see that her failure to accept intermarriage negated her claim to genuine liberalism. She failed to see that implicit in her rejection was that feeling that her daughter had some pure superior nature that should not be contaminated by the impure nature of the Negro. The question of intermarriage is never raised in a society cured of the disease of racism."

King went on to state that marriage not only must be decided on an individual basis but races do not marry, individual marry. "The primary aim of the Negro is be the White

man's brother, not his brother in law" (Ayres 1993:119; Myra 1994:6)³⁶.

It would be misleading to think there were not White religious leaders involved in the struggle to remove the ban on anti-miscegenation laws and to bring about integration. For example, in 1942 a Baptist church was already experimenting with the policy of racial integration. But the church had difficulty maintaining that policy due to "lack of finances, strong race prejudice and an unstable community" but it managed to survive. Parker(1968), in his observation of this same church years later, list several qualities necessary for integration to occur, first a community must be willing to adopt an integrated policy, which means other races can not be perceived as deviant. Second, those of the church who become uncomfortable with the idea or with associating with those of other races are free to leave at any time (Parker 1968:359-365). Parker notes for racial integration to work, conditions must be favorable toward other races by church leadership and its members (366).

Campolo and Battle (2005) attempts to build on Park's model and King philosophy of social justice. They suggest in order for true racial integration to take place in the church, Whites must be willing to accept Black leadership. Whites must be willing to share power and engage in self criticism. They must be willing to pursue social justice in a practical way (Campolo & Battle 2005:123-138). This perspective, however, is not grounded in reality though the authors acknowledge race as a social construction. Before racism can be overcome, the church first must acknowledge racism as a function of society and its own involvement in perpetuating its effects.

The United Presbyterians worked for the repeal of state laws prohibiting interracial marriage. The denomination of over 3.3 million wrote a position paper and presented it to

³⁶ See pg. 18 of Love in Black and White, by Harold Myra in Christianity Today, March 7, 1994, 38,(3)

over 835 commissioners in 1966 (Annella 1967:428-433; Dugan 1965:20).³⁷ The Catholic Church also has a history of opposing anti-miscegenation. For example, in *Perez vs. Sharp*, Justice Traynor ruled Andrea Perez, a white woman, had the right to marry Sylvester Davis, a African American, because as Roman Catholics their religion did not forbid such unions (Kennedy 2004:259-260). According to Kennedy this ruling implied marriage is a “fundamental right” that should not be interfered with and that “race restrictions must be viewed with great suspicion” (261).

Despite this apparent liberal stand the Catholic Church positions varied over time, they counseled members to respect local laws, which in some epochs included prohibitions against miscegenation (Kennedy 2004:261-262; Childs 2005:61-62; Annella 1967:428-433; Yancey 1997:132; Lincoln 1974:103-138; Kling 2004:196,223-226; Johnstone 2004:288-307; Smith 1996:29-46; Wallenstein 2004:23, 85-192-194,203).

On the other hand, some White and Black leaders believed interracial marriage was a moral issue along with the stability of marriages and the social and psychological welfare of biracial children. These areas do not qualify as “private matters”; rather they fall under the purview of family values; as such these matters require the direction of religious leaders. For example, in the Black community religion plays a vital role in creating a sense of solidarity and community (Bellah, Madsen and Sullivan 1992:179).

Allen (2002), in her discourse on the morality of interracial marriage in the Black Community, outlines three reasons why Blacks are opposed to out-group marriage one of which is a sense of moral commitment to the Black race (Allen 2002:41-52). Conversely, there is evidence suggesting that African American religious leaders contribute to

³⁷ See pg. 20 of The New York Times, [Presbyterians urged to Oppose Bans on Interracial Marriages](#) by George Dugan, Special to the New York Times, New York Time 1965

negative images of Blacks by encouraging physical ability over intellect and by embracing the Western perspective of patriarchy. Childs (2005) challenges the notion that Black women are opposed to interracial marriage because of the limited number of available African American men (Cole and Sheftall 2003; Dyson 2004; Childs 2005).

CONTEMPORARY MYTHS & THEORIES

Myth of Selling Out

Many in the Black community consider out group marriage as turning one's back on one's race. Allen (2002) provides three reasons for this opposition: 1) respect and care for the Black community, 2) respect and care for one's family, friends and 3) respect and care for self (Allen 2002:45). In group marriage confirms one's intent on continuing the race through childbearing and rearing. But in-group marriage also suggests that the characteristics and resources for survival are there (46). In group marriage indicates one is intent on maintaining close ties to family and friends, whereas out-group marriages can create social distance and division among family and friends as seen in the case of the Boro family.

In the October 2006 issue of *Psychology Today*, Joyce Boro, a Black woman with Caribbean roots, confessed that she had a preference for dating only white guys. She kept this secret because she did not want to face the disapproval of her family. Her husband, a Jewish man said that his mother thought of Blacks as "scum of the earth". In response to family opposition to their marriage, the couple moved to Portland Oregon, where they have lived for thirty years. They have severed all ties with their families.³⁸

Allen would say of this situation that Joyce sacrificed loyalty to the community,

³⁸ See pp 88, *Love At the Margins*, *Psychology Today*, Vol. 39 (5) September/October 2006, New York

respect for her family, and her sense of self to become involved in an interracial relationship. But the problem is deeper than it appears. Interracial couples are unable to meld together because of cultural difference, which makes it impossible for the non-Black partner to develop a sense of belonging (Allen 2002:48). Allen provides an illustration to support her argument:

“A white person married to a black person may feel uncomfortable around Blacks other than his or her beloved spouse, including his or her beloved’s black family and friends. If the White spouse is from a solidly upper middle class segregated white background, he may be quite unable to relate to the welfare mom and the marine (*the siblings in her illustration*), let alone the father in law who never went to college...the White man also may have trouble understanding the sense of responsibility their successful black partner may feel with respect to family members in addition to their own children” (Allen 2002:47).

Cultural differences invite needless conflict, stress and disappointment. Further, out-Group, according to Allen, suggests that one is ashamed of who he/she is and the children produced from Black family. She reasons that interracial marriage implies that Black people “need the White man’s approval and validation for what one is”. Out- group marriage for a person of color is to “sell oneself short by giving up opportunity to share one’s life with a true peer” (Allen 2002:48). Nevertheless, Allen acknowledges interracial marriage is an outgrowth of assimilation and integration which indicates that segregation has failed (50). Yet, she believes many people of color are concerned with being lost to the community they have “eagerly embraced for the opportunity to contribute back to the African American community through their employment” (49-51).

In the end, Allen’s moral concern turns out to be the same argument set forth by religious leaders and social scientist, the effect of such unions on the couple and their family. For Allen, interracial marriage is not a private issue but should be viewed from the standpoint of morality. Interracial marriage is a “moral challenge”- to use her words-

“that does not have to undermine the Black community nor ties to ones family” (Allen 2002:52).

The accusation of selling out can be applied to Whites as well when one looks at it from a racial purity paradigm. In that case the racism is based on overt white supremacy as mentioned earlier in Chappell’s article. The KKK and other hate groups in society use religion as the basis for their opposition to intermarriage. The majority of White Americans do not openly embrace these beliefs. On the other hand, as mentioned in the article above by Allen and later by Yancey (2002), some Blacks believe those who interracially marry are attempting to escape the pressures associated with being a minority by merging with Whites.

The argument is made that biracial children will not identify as Black or African American, but will pass for white thus reducing social concerns for minority people. True, this argument has some merit because some biracial children do pass for white-as in the case of Angela Nissel. Passing is a means of subverting the issue of race when one can blend into the dominant culture. But more often then not, mixed race individuals are assigned a racial category by members of society or their peers according to Dalmage, Kennedy and Root (Nissel 2006; Dalmage 2003; Kennedy 2004:281-366; Root 2001; Yancey 2002:49-50; Merton 1941:361-374; Campbell and Boeck 2006:147-173; Brown 2001; Ziv 2006). In the end, Yancey disagrees with Allen that the White partner can not comprehend Black culture or identity with the struggles of Blackness. Using his life experience as an illustration, he contends that his wife is a strong advocate for minority rights and is deeply affected by accounts of racism because she believes her husband might become the next target (Yancey 2002:49-50; Rosenblatt 1995: 215-228).

In the same vein, with selling out is the idea one can act and speak too much like the dominant group to the point that the person of color is no longer attractive to a potential partner of the same race. Foeman and Nance (2002) report that several of their respondents claim to have experience this phenomenon. “One woman joked I look too Black and act too White” (Foeman & Nance 2002:242). Here body consciousness for women as reflected in the black community is quite different from White females.

Where White women are concerned with fatness, Black females focus on wanting their prospective mates and children not to be too dark. They struggle over the size of their lips, the texture of their hair and facial features which signify them as other. To quote Collins (2000), “the more African the features the less attractive the women is” (Collins 2000:89). Yet the quest for “good hair”, which marginalizes some dark skin women of color in the Black community, may work to the advantage of others (Foeman & Nance 2002:242; Collins 2000:89-90; Henderson 2006:78-83). Conversely, there are some White women who now desire the lips and butts of Black women as well as “light skin babies”. These are some of the factors that may contribute to interracial dating and marriages (Foeman & Nance 2002:242-243).³⁹ What we see is that culture either adds to or detracts from the attractiveness of a potential marriage partner. This shows us that race remains an important variable in mate selection especially for Women of color who feels rejected by Black men who date and marry White women.

*Sex Ratio and the Myth
of the Angry Black Woman*

An article by Crowder& Tolnay (2000) states there has been a decline in the marriage

³⁹ See Ebony April 1991, “They took our music...now they’re taking our lips as beauty standards change” Lynn Norment <http://www.findarticles.com>

rate of women of color accompanied by an increase in interracial marriage between Black men and White women (Crowder & Tolnay 2000:792). Other authors like Norment (2006) and Childs (2005) see an increase of African American women becoming involved with non-Black men. What are some of the reasons for this new dynamic?

Several reasons are postulated for this phenomenon: 1) the disparity in the sex ratio between black men and women, 2) disparity in the socioeconomic standing of Black men; 3) the reduction of the pool of eligible African American men due to incarceration (Childs 2005; Cose 2003; Rosenblatt 1995; Norment 1999; Norment 2006; Hacker 2003:95-97; Yancey 2002:41-42). According to the 2000 U.S. Census for every 9 Black males there are 10 African American Women (Romano 2006:232).⁴⁰

Cornel West (1999) shed light on this situation by suggesting that some Black men are indifferent to their own existence and engaged in self destructive behavior. He believes this factor is partially responsible for the unequal number of Black men compared with Black women. Hacker (2003) estimates there is approximately a million Black men in jail, in prison or being sent there for violating their parole. Of course, if one has been in jail then the potential for meaningful employment removes them from the pool of desirable mates (Hacker 2003:95; Johnson 2004:1-38).

The stereotype of the lazy black man has been perpetuated from Black mother to Black daughter and has contributed to the hostility between these two genders. The perception of the Black man failing to provide makes the woman angry, frustrated and sexually withdrawn. This behavior goes back to slavery when the security of the Black family was destroyed and with it the image of the Black male provider. This

⁴⁰ See US. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1

condition created the independent Black woman (Milligan 1998:1-40).

Black men date White women to avoid struggling with the Black female and because White women are seen as more submissive and sexually compliant according to Milligan (18-36). The problem with this perspective is it infers interracial dating and marriage takes place among the lower classes and does not take into account the recent increase of Black women dating and marrying outside their race. Ignored or rejected by the Black male, tired of waiting for the IBM (Ideal Black Man) and advances in socio-economic status to upper middle class, some Black women have included White men as a viable option as spouses.

Norment (2006) estimates more than 40% of Black women are not married and never will be because of their socioeconomic standing unless they are open to dating men of other ethnicity (Norment 2006:36). Dee DePass (2006) echo this sentiment in her article for Essence. DePass finds that 45% of her respondents admit to having been involved in an interracial relationship; some because it is what they grew up with or because they have found someone with similar values goals and economic status that happens to be of another ethnicity. There are also those who date interracially because they don't want to be lonely (Rosenblatt 1995:24)⁴¹.

Dyson (2004) contends the younger the Black woman, the greater the possibility of her meeting someone who fits her criteria. But when higher education is part of the criterion then the prospect of a compatible spouse of the same race and socio-economic and educational attainment decreases even further (Dyson 2004:207). A frustrated woman of color illustrates the case perfectly:

⁴¹ See Essence, June 2006, "[Looking for Mr. White: interracial relationship survey: has our attitude about dating out the race?](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1264/is_2_37/ai_n16419466/pg_4)" by Dee DePass, http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1264/is_2_37/ai_n16419466/pg_4

“What am I suppose to do? I ‘m not trying to get married tomorrow-I‘m not pressuring black men that way. I just want somebody to spend time with, some one with whom I can have a good discussion and a good meal, and somebody I can laugh with, I just want a date, for God sake, not a husband”(Dyson 2004:196).

These remarks show that what some black women desire and expect in a heterosexual relationship is no different from their white counterparts even though some might label these as unrealistic expectations.

Hooks (2001) similarly described the type of relationship she wanted only to be told through resounding laughter “if that’s what you want then you are not talking about being with a black male” What had she asked for? A partner who is committed to open, honest communication, to processing and talking things over, especially when there is conflict” (Hooks 2001:184). Like Hooks, Dyson found that some single Black professional men over the thirty are not interested in getting married and are wary of women over thirty five who have never married (Dyson 2004:198-203).

These accounts show both genders have internalized negative stereotypes about Black sexuality. It shows the struggle for acceptance on the part of Black women as Collins pointed out, “the Black woman often feels overlooked by black males as well as whites and are left with the feeling that there something wrong with them”. This is especially true for Black women who want to remain within the race (Henderson 2006; Collins 2004: 263-264; Romano 2006:236; Rhea 2006:41)⁴².

This new pattern of interracial relationship of Black women with the White man is in reality the reemergence of the old trend that existed during the slave era (Bennett 1993; Tucker & Kernan 1990; Jacobson & Johnson 2006; Fu 2001). What is different about it is that it involves successful women of color who are free to select mates outside of their

⁴² Rhea’s article is found in At Issue Interracial Relationships, David Haugen, Greenhaven Press, New York, 2006

own ethnicity. But just as miscegenating Black men receives stares, accusations of selling out and abandoning the Black female, some of these successful women of color face similar sanctions by going to white men (Dyson 2004:228-232; Randolph 1989; Edwards 2002; Dalmage 2003; Rosenblatt 1995:152-156; DuBois 1997).

Overall, outgroup marriage and the Black community has not been fully explored but what has been discovered is ambiguous. Empirical evidence shows that African Americans are less likely to marry outside of their race, yet Black men are more likely to marry outside the race than Black women (Childs 2005; Qian 2006; Henderson 2006:5; Foeman & Nance 1999; Batson, Qin & Lichter 2006). Moreover, African American women are more likely to oppose interracial marriages than Black men (Zebroski 1999:125; Collins 2004:260-268; Childs 2005:544-561; Tucker & Kernan 1990:209-218; Gaines & Rios 1999:466-467; Harris & Kalbfleisch 2000:49-64; Rosenblatt 1995:152-156).

The literature on race relations and marriage indicates that despite opposition to outgroup marriage, for Black men there is a definite rise in interracial dating and marriage among African American women. But is this new trend is a reflective of racial progress? This question is a matter of debate. Some scholars see intermarriage as a sign of total integration and encourage Black women to relinquish their objections to interracial marriage. Others see miscegenation as the genocide of their race and seek to discourage intermarriage (Kennedy 2004; DeYoung 2004; Gardner 2000; Haugen 2006; Yancey 2002).

The position of religion on racial intermarriage depends on one's religious affiliation because each denomination, church, synagogue or temple would teach and believe

something different regarding marriage (Call & Heaton 1997). These teachings become internalized as part of family values and affect lifestyle choices for some religious practitioners more than personal choice according to D'Antonio, Newman and Wright (1982). Religion as an agent of social control and socialization is concerned with family structure and stability, thus the affect of religion on marital stability is important to understanding the contribution religion to the debate on interracial marriage.

*Myths; Marginal Man Theory and
Interracial Marriages are Unstable*

Two common objections voiced against mixed marriages were given by Father Carcieri to Childs who asked what advice he would give to an interracial couple who came to be married in his church. Father Carcieri insisted that all races are welcome in his parish, then followed with, "I would warn the couple about the social problems they would face, But most of all I would caution them about the difficulties mixed race children would encounter" (Childs 2005:63). He did not say he would not perform the ceremony, but his attitude indicates that he perceived mixed race couples and their children as different from same race couples and their offspring. Therefore a special warning has to be given if a biracial couple desires to marry (63).

What about children of mixed parentage? Experts say critics of interracial marriages oppose such unions for fear that the children will be marginalization (Pasco 1996; Hodes 1999; Doane & Bonilla-Silva 2003). Marginalization results in an inability to develop a healthy sense of self and to formulate a racial identity because the biracial person is not accepted by any group (Park 1928; McFadden 2001; Brown 2001; Richardson 2000; Ifekwunigwe 2004; Yancey 2002; Bonilla-Silva 2001). The assumption is only "homogeneous nuclear family is able to pass to their children the sense of self and racial

identity that will help perpetuate the group” (Water 1990:102; Fu 2001:147-159; Kalmijn 1998:395-419; Blau, Blum & Schwartz 1998:45-62). Janzen (2000) clearly articulated the Marginal man theory saying:

“Biracial children face considerable difficulties because society is obsessed with the rigid racial boundaries. These boundaries exacerbate racial tensions within and between different racial groups. Though biracial children are part of two cultures, they are often ostracized and rejected by both. If the biracial children gain acceptance, it is usually as the result of rejecting half their background. If these children are to have any hope of claiming their full identity, society must shed its rigid racial designations” (Janzen 2000:61-66).⁴³

The truth is that narratives by biracial individuals lend some creditability to Park’s marginal man theory. For example, some scholars have argued that biracial children often feel pressure to select an identity unlike African Americans who physical characteristic automatically place them within that category according to societal pressure (Tatum 2003; Nissel 2006). Those biracial children or individuals unable to pass for white are forced into the category of blackness (Roth 2005:35-67; Waters 1990:18-19; Hacker 2004:15). Bruce (2001)⁴⁴, West (1990, 1999) and Wilson (1980, 1987) posit that the rationale behind this is to restrict opportunity and socioeconomic mobility of this portion of the population by labeling with those already marginalized. Marginalization of the biracial aggregate would minimize competing with a group who might otherwise be classified as white.

The church assisted in this endeavor as its wealth and political power as an institution grew. With growth came the expansion of the label of deviance on certain minority groups by religion and society for the purpose of maintaining the status quo, which racial intermarriage challenges (West 1990:117-131; 1999:55-86, 514-520; Wilson 1980:42-

⁴³ See pp 61-66 of *At Issue Interracial Relationships* by Bryan Grapes, Greenhaven Press, San Diego, 2000

⁴⁴ Steve Bruce essay is found in *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion* by Linda Woodhead, pp 87-100, Routledge, New York, 2001

182; Wilson 1987:109-164; Woodhead 2001:92-94; Emerson 2000:146; Graves 2005:40-44; Moran 2003:19; Blackwell & Lichter 2000:275-302).

Conversely, contemporary research by Waters (1990) suggest that interracial marriage does not mean that biracial children will not have strong racial identities with their parent's ancestry just because they're in a mixed race family (Waters 1990:102). Moreover, interviews with mothers of biracial children find not only are many of their marriages stable, but their children often choose their own racial designation.

Research by O'Donoghue (2004), Regnerus & Burdette (2006) and Campbell & Boeck (2006) indicates that religion assists biracial individuals in coping with the racial pressure just it assisted their parents (O'Donoghue 2004; Regnerus & Burdette 2006; Campbell & Boeck 2006; Kennedy 2004:143-144; Henderson 2006:168; Hall 2001:333-336; Wallenstein 2004:2940; Moran 2003). Like their parent some religious biracial children reason the experience of racism is from specific persons within the church not the church itself (Emerson 2000; Watts & Henriksen 1990:68-70; Dalmage 2001; Yancey 2002; McNamara 1999; Rosenblatt 1995; Smith 2006).

Finally, Wardle (2000) contends that biracial children can succeed in life because they are better educated, more independent and goal oriented. Overall biracial children can succeed in life, according to Wardle because "they are raised in an atmosphere of higher expectation and support" (Wardle 2000:67-71).⁴⁵ But are the marriages of biracial couples less stable than same race marriages? Is the divorce rate higher for mixed race couples? If the answer to these two questions is yes, then empirical evidence would provide support to the myth mixed marriages is unstable.

Thomas Monahan (1970) challenged the notion that intermarriage between Blacks and

⁴⁵ See pp 67-71 of *At Issue Interracial Relationships* by Bryan Grapes, Greenhaven Press, San Diego, 2000

Whites were less stable than same race marriages. Monahan found in Iowa the divorce rate among same race African Americans couples was twice as unstable as White same race marriages. He was surprised to find that Black/White marriages were more stable than same race marriages (Monahan 1970:461-473).

Recent research conducted by Joyner (2005) finds the marriages that have endured are those who married during the era when racial intermarriage was prohibited by law (Joyner 2005:563-567). Joyner's research shows that involvement in interracial relationship declines with age as marital status is taken into consideration (Joyner 2005:568-579; Haugen 2006:20-25; Knox 2000; Padgett & Sikora 2003).⁴⁶

Harris and Ono (2004) suggest these findings are misleading. They contend that when all groups are factored into national estimates on intermarriage the results might show something quite different. Harris and Ono contend that when the racial demographics of a given area are factored in then the results may not show a decline in interracial marriage over time (Harris & Ono 2004:236-251).

Call and Heaton (1997) and Heaton (2002) in their analyses of factors contributing to marital stability list religion as one of the variables. According to their study, teachings against divorce and on the commitment to marriage once internalized serves to strengthen the couple's commitment to the marriage (Call & Heaton 1997; Yancey 2002; Heller 2000; Heaton 2002; Roberts 2004; Cole & Sheftall 2003; Weber 1993; Collins 2000, 2004; Jacobson & Johnson 2006; Dyson 1997; Driskill 1995; Macklin 1998).

Macklin's (1998) report confirms these findings as one respondent credited his Baha'i faith for bringing them together as a couple and supporting them against racial opposition

⁴⁶ Padgett's article is *Color-Blind Love*, New York Times, May 12, 2003 Vol. 161,(18), pp B8, also see *Interracial Dating Attitude Among College Students* by David Knox, *College Student Journal*, March 2000

from family members. The couple claimed they prayed about the source of opposition “and eventually had a change of heart.” They go on to report that the grandfather “was able to accept Michael as his grandson before his death” (Macklin 1998).⁴⁷

Richardson (2000) likewise finds religious values are a factor in bringing couples together. Out of the 102 interviews she conducted, Richardson makes reference to two couples who met at a religious function (Richardson 2000:24-67). Dunleavy (2004) examined the roles of values in interracial relationships. She found a correlation between egalitarian values and the willingness to engage in outgroup contact. Some of the values linked with a positive attitude toward outgroup contact and interracial marriage is helpful, forgiving, mature love, and capable. Simply put, these respondents did not consider interracial marriage a threat to traditional same race marriages as the Mormons do (Dunleavy 2004:21-38).

Bringhurst (2006) and Winters (2004) in their respective studies, reveal that the official position of the Mormon Church is “not to prohibit interracial marriage but to discourage them” (Bringhurst 2006; Winters 2004). White & White report that church activities are arranged along racial boundaries. Church dances for example, are “chaperoned” and organized to promote racial endogamy. One respondent received “mean looks” from the father of a white girl if he danced with her, so eventually he only attended dances to observe other (White & White 2000:88). Some African American parents pressured their children to date potential African American mates despite the absence of romantic interest or attraction (Bringhurst 2006:24-25; White & White 2000:89; Winters 2004:2).

⁴⁷ “Couples in Interracial marriages focus on common goals in life” by William Macklin, The Philadelphia Inquirer, 3/23/1998,

Dating among African American Mormons is problematic because the focus of the church salvation motif is on families and not singles. Moreover, since Blacks were viewed as descending from the “seed of Cain”, they unofficially are perceived as “unfit marriage partners for Whites” (Brigham 2006:5-10,148-165; Smith 2005:439-454; Burgett 2005:75-102; White & White 2000:85-90). What the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has succeeded in building is a family structure or model in which compliance to formal and informal group values and norms provide a sense of belonging. Failure to comply with group norms results in a sense of alienation and isolation (White & White 2000; Smith 2005; D’Antonio, Newman & Wright 1982; D’emilio 1997).

The negative life experience of Black LDS congregants and mixed race couples suggests that close and sustained contact between these aggregates does not necessarily reduce prejudice and discrimination. It reveals that some group leaders are very conscious of their position of privilege and use it to enforce conformity to racial hierarchy in the church (Jacobson and Johnson 2006:570-572; Smith 2006: 2-3, 153).

In Summary

The material presented in this literature review shows that religion has a significant influence over race relations, especially when it comes to interracial marriage. Some religious leaders still consider racial intermarriage a violation of God’s will and advocate racial endogamy. The argument is that God created different races and he intends for them to remain separated. Thus, race mixing is direct rebellion against God (Hall 2000). Resistance to mixed race marriage is based on symbolic attitudes of racism rooted in religious tradition and mythology and socialized traditions which places white over black. Dunleavy (2004) expertly summarized the White and Black perspectives against

interracial marriages:

“In the domain of interracial marriage, opposition within the white community stems from a belief in a hierarchy of races that views interracial marriage as a disgrace to white families, a betrayal of racial purity and of protestant work ethic values. Opposition within the Black community stems from betrayal of the Black identity and fear of negative repercussions from the white majority” (Dunleavy 2004:25).

Criticism of interracial dating and marriage is based on intergroup dynamics which suggest that individuals prefer to marry within their own group and that outsiders are undesirable. Thus cultural pressure is applied to conform to homogeneous mating practices by some religious leaders who present interracial marriage as deviance (Kalmijn 1998:399-401; Bringham & Smith 2006:24-25; White & White 2000; D’Antonio, Newman & Wright 1982:218-225; Jacobson 2006; Childs 2005).

Erickson (2006) gives this definition of deviance “conduct which the people of a group consider so dangerous or embarrassing or irritating that they bring special sanction to bear against the persons who exhibit it” (Erikson 2005:6). This conferred status of deviance was placed upon the sexual behavior of Black/White heterosexual couples as early as 1600, lasting as late as 2000 (Kennedy 2004).

The literature on race and marriage reveals that interracial marriage is a category that was constructed by religious and political powers for the purpose of maintaining white superiority. Securing the racial hierarchy established early in Black/ White relations, White religious leaders encourage de-facto segregation, or racial isolation, the end result is mono-racial congregations (Estin 2002:1699-1700; Foucault 1990:26; Emerson 2000; DeYoung 2004).

Religious proponent of racial intermarriage like Carleton (2006) and Webster (2000) claims that the Bible does not prohibit mixed race marriages. They insist that anyone who

says the Bible forbids mixed race marriages is misinterpreting and abusing scripture. To support his argument Carleton cites the story of Moses and his interracial marriage. In this account Moses' sister speak out against interracial marriage only to be struck with leprosy by God. According to Carleton, actions of God in the story confirm that he is not against interracial marriage (Carleton 2006:63-66; Webster 2000:39-47). Moreover, some scholars contend that interracial marriage and integrated congregations are an example of God's original plan of diversity (Yancey 1999; Yancey 2001; DeYoung 2004; Campolo & Battle 2005; Dalmage 2003). Yancey (1999)'s study on integrated congregations and racial attitudes concludes that integrated congregations are more tolerate and have less level of social distance than mono-racial congregations (Yancey 1999:279-304; Yancey 2001:185-206).

Parker (1968) discovered that one contributing factor to successful church integration is that other races can not be viewed as deviant. Second, he believes the church must be comprised of the upper class in order to avoid financial problems. In addition, those who grow uncomfortable with other races should be free to leave (Parker 1968:359-366). However, studies on church congregations by Yancey (2002), Perkins (1994) and others (Emerson 2000, 2006; Campolo & Battle 2005) find the church ill prepared to minister to and counsel interracial couples and families. Moreover, evidence suggests that interracial relationships occur in communities where there is less social control over interracial contact and where tolerance is present. The next section presents the theoretical concerns that will be used throughout this study.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL CONCERNS

INTRODUCTION

Three theoretical frameworks are of interest to this study. First is Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1967) theory of social construction of reality which will allow us to see how religious text is used to construct the label of *interracial marriage*. Using critical race theory (Denzin & Lincoln 2003) is also part of the constructionist paradigm that helps us understand how the power elite have labeled heterosexual interracial contact as deviant within both the religious and secular worlds. Social constructionists believe that social actors construct the world around them as they act and interact (McNamara 1999; Goffman 1986; Foucault 1995).

Second, labeling theory helps us understand the way in which heterosexual interracial couples and religious institutions are examined. According to Goffman's (1986) notion of stigma, both the white person dominant and the black minority in the interracial relationship would be among the discredited because their behavior would be outside of acceptable social norms in both worlds (Goffman 1986: 41- 42). At the same time, according to Goffman's theory, mixed race couples engage in face management as a coping mechanism to reduce racial tensions (Foeman and Nance 1999). Thirdly, though I discuss these first two theories in the section that follows, the primary theory that is applied throughout this study is contact theory: contact theory was articulated by Allport in 1954. He theorized that prejudice and discrimination could be reduced under certain

conditions.

Allport reasoned that racial contact could produce positive results under four conditions; if the individual involved were of equal social standing in the situation. If common goals are shared; and if there is intergroup cooperation then prejudice and discrimination will be reduced. He also postulated that prejudice can be reduced if there is social or legal support for it (Powers 1995; McNamara 1999; Pettigrew 1998; Allport 1954). Does contact theory hold true for religious institutions? Emerson (2005) and Yancey (2001) and Park (1968) have tested this theory in the past and have found it reliable for church integration. But does contact between religious leaders and interracial couples lead to reduced prejudice? This theory is examined in this research project.

Social Constructionism And Labeling Theory

Constructionism is an appropriate theory for this project because it examines social order, meaning and the influence of these factors on the social actor. According to Berger (1966) reality or society is composed of objective and subjective worlds (Berger 1966:47-147). Objective reality is an ongoing process shared by each social actor and its origins are rooted in the past (Berger 1990). The subjective world is composed of personal meaning as the individual attempts to make sense of the world around him (Berger 1990:44-45). The objective world originates from specific knowledge or ideas as members of society act and interact with one another. As a result of daily interaction and the process of internalization the objective world is perceived as “factual” (Wallace & Wolf 1998:276-277). This -take it for granted- paradigm is supported by institutions designed to preserve order. Berger wrote:

“Social order exists only as a product of human activity...the inherent instability of

the human organism makes it imperative that man himself provide a stable environment for his conduct. Man himself must specialize and direct his drives. These biological facts serve as a necessary presupposition for the production of social order”...institutions imply historicity and control. Institutions by the very fact of their existence control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible” (Berger 1966:52-55).

Social order is maintained by the internalization of institutions to the human consciousness so that it becomes part of daily life. Organized religion as a social construction and as an institution of order serves this purpose by interlocking race and sexuality. By interlocking race with sexuality religion contributes to the creation of the scientific category of sexual deviance (Berger 1990:41-43; Gergen 2003:34-37; Foucault 1990:53-73, 26, 54, 119,149-150). What is important to this study is the emergence of these concepts of race and sexuality into the terms “interracial marriage” and “deviance” and how these labels affect religious mixed race couples. In this vein of thought “interracial marriage” is a negative delineation constructed to apply to Black/White or White/Black relationships because of the involvement of the Black partner. Deviance, as defined by Goffman (1986), includes ethnic groups. Deviance also includes the notion of deviance failure to comply with social or ingroup norms (Goffman 1986:140-147).

Beck (1983) explains deviance as action by social groups that “makes rules whose infraction constitutes deviance” (Becker 1983:449). For Becker, deviance goes beyond the social situation that a person finds themselves in or the social forces that prompt the action of the deviant (449). Becker concludes that deviance is “the consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender” (449).

What is important to this project is who rules? It is the ruler who formally or informally applies the label of deviance (450-451). Put another way, what external

factors influence the interplay between the couple and their environment through the application of this label? Social construction attempts to look at the context in which each couple finds themselves while acknowledging that each couple is different. This means race and the dynamics associated with this category are not fixed or objective (Delgado & Stefancic 2001:7-9).

As previously noted, religious organizations can dismiss the relationship between mixed race couples on moral grounds or family members may oppose the union. The question then becomes what effect the label of deviance has on the interaction between the religious interracial couple in the religious institution. I contend until religion as a whole is willing to confront the topic of racism and implement a policy of racial inclusiveness in leadership congregations will remain mono-racial. Furthermore, as long as religion considers marriage the domain of family values and themselves as the gatekeepers to racially homogenous families, I submit that interracial couples and biracial families will not be accepted (Childs 2005; Emerson 2006; McNamara 1999).

Contact Theory

Social distance theory was designed to test the willingness of majority aggregates to accept minority groups into different aspects of society. Empirical evidence suggests that people are willing to accept or are at least more tolerant of those similar to themselves. It is theorized that one of the keys to reducing social distance, prejudice and discrimination is positive intergroup contact (Rothman 2005:130-137). Contact theory has its origins in a time of racial tensions. Allport (1954) defines prejudice as an exaggerated belief based on a category or label. A person who is prejudiced or engages in discrimination holds a lower evaluation of an individual or group (Allport 1954/1979:191). This negative

evaluation manifests itself in three ways: beliefs, emotions and discriminatory behavior (Dovidio 2005:24). Allport argued that prejudice and discrimination can be reduced if different racial groups initially come into contact before an understanding between aggregates can be developed. As Emerson (2002) rightly noted, contact theory assumes attitude and behavior are causally connected, to affect one is to affect the other (Emerson, Kimbro& Yancey2002:746).

Figure 1 lists the conditions outlined by Allport for effecting a change in attitude and behavior with my comments on each variable. The assumption being made here is that there can be no superior/inferior roles in the relationship. Next, there can be no competition between or within groups both aggregates must share the same or similar motivations to achieve the same ends. This also implies that the costs/ rewards would have to be the same for each in the group. Finally, contact can not be superficial. Superficial interracial contact, according to Dovidio (2005), only reinforces prejudice because it yields no new information (Dovidio 2005:278; Allport 1954:264).

Figure #1: Factors Determining Interracial Contact

Status	Equal in & out of situation
Common Goals	Condition 2 & 3 suggest interdependence
Intergroup Cooperation	Assumes egalitarian values on both sides
Support of Authorities, Law or Custom	Assumes sociopolitical & religious institutions free of racism

There are two problems here. First, this theory is very positive and abstract. It is difficult to apply empirically. Second, it does not adequately explain the process by which

prejudice and discrimination will be diminished. Therefore, I will now turn to Pettigrew's (1998, 2000) study of intergroup contact theory.

Pettigrew (1998, 2000) postulates a meso-level model and places his schema in a longitudinal framework instead of a list of conditions. He points out that for prejudice and discrimination to be reduced the situation must be conducive for building long term friends. Prior research on contact theory was based on short term contact which only showed partial results (Pettigrew 1998:66-76).⁴⁸ Next, the contact situation must afford the opportunity for friendships to build, as Bradshaw (2001) noted the situation in which the initial contact takes place is vital to the future relations. For friendships to develop there must be a willingness to engage in personal interaction that leads to familiarity and there must be a level of personal acquaintance among members (Bradshaw 2001:214; Johnson & Jacobson 2005:387-399; Pettigrew 1997; 1998). It is from these opportunities that acquaintances and friendship emerge producing new information that will assist in reducing prejudice and discrimination.

According to Pettigrew then intergroup contact requires equal status, cooperative interdependence, common goals, supportive authority and the additional element of personal interaction and friendship opportunity (Dovidio, Gaertner and Kawakami 2003:12-14). It is these prerequisite conditions, as articulated by Allport and Pettigrew that are of importance to this study in understanding the dynamics of religion and interracial marriage.

Dovidio, Gaertner and Kawakami (2003) add mediating mechanisms to the

⁴⁸ An example is Vora & Vora's five year experiment with different White college students who spend one day at an African American church; but only after the students confront their own prejudices through self evaluation & dialogue as a collective & learn about Black culture & the specific church. See Undoing Racism In America, Journal of Black Studies, Vol. 32 (4), 389-404, March 2002

prerequisite conditions introduced by Allport. These mechanisms serve to explain how these prerequisites achieve their goal or effect. They are “functional relations between groups, behavioral responses, affective reactions to members of other groups and cognitive responses to both outgroup and ingroup members” (Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawakami 2003:9-13). The research of Dovidio is an attempt to clarify and unify what conditions are necessary to reduce racial bias and what processes actually have an effect on attitudes and stereotypes (Dovidio, Gaertner & Kawakami 2003:8-17).

Overall the literature on contact theory indicates that under controlled conditions this theory works. But there is some question about the theory is effective under real world conditions (McNamara 1999; Emerson, Kimbro & Yancey 2002; Dixon & Rosenbaum 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp 2006:751-783; Powers & Ellison 1995:205-226; Miller 2002:387-407). For the purpose of this paper the question is what effect does contact theory have on interracial couples in a religious setting.

In Summary

The research on contact theory centers primarily on White attitudes or the dominant group's views toward interracial contact. Johnson and Jacobson are one of the few scholars who examine it in terms of African American's views on intergroup contact. For the purpose of this study, contact theory's focus on interracial couples in a religious setting is helpful. In this environment, contact theory is placed in juxtaposition to social constructionism and labeling theory. Constructionism argues that race and interracial marriage are constructs and that these labels have consequence for Black/White interracial couples. These theories are applied to explore interracial contact in an environment that either supports or opposes interracial marriage. The next section

discusses the methodology used in this research project.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Content analysis will be the primary method of analysis used in this paper. However, the limitation of this methodology is compounded by this paper being an exploratory examination of religion and interracial marriage. Content analysis is used to define units of analysis and to compare and contrast documents (Krippendorff 2004). Since there are obviously no official religious documentation stating their position or documenting their treatment of interracial couples, this researcher has had to glean its implied position using secondary data. Nevertheless, content analysis is useful to scientific inquiry since it permits the analysis of communication where content can be categorized (Weber 1990; Neuendorf 2002).

According to Neuendorf (2002), there are different types of content analysis one of which is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis examines theme and topics in a text, for the purpose of seeing how a phenomenon or group is represented in the text. For example, if the theme is racism then the researcher would point out how minorities are depicted in the text and draw a conclusion from the literature (Neuendorf 2002:5-6). Another method is for the researcher to take a stance on topic then to present numerous direct quotes support one side of the argument (6). This study uses a version of this method of analysis to examine the symbolic meaning of myths and theories related to interracial relationships. I conclude these myths and theories are still being used to

prohibit the acceptance of interracial relationships in some religious and social setting.

*Content Analysis of Literature:
The Scope of Analysis*

Neuendorf (2002) provides several definitions for content analysis from various authors. For example, Berelson refers to content analysis as “a research technique for objective, systematic and quantitative description of manifest content of communication” (Neuendorf 2002:10-25). Weber (1990) states “content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inference from text” (Weber 1990:9). These definitions reveal that content analysis is a scientific method that quantitatively summarizes and analyzes messages. When used as a quantitative method of research, it is used to define units of analysis and themes to compare and contrast documents (Krippendorff 2004; Babbie 2004; Neuendorf 2002). As a qualitative methodology, content analysis permits a wider variety of communication to be analyzed where the content is categorized (Krippendorff 2004:18; Babbie 2004:314-315; Knottnerus 1994:70).

The topics under investigation include how religious mythologies and theories about mixed race couples were formulated and then are used to impede the acceptance of Black/White couples in some religious institutions. In juxtaposition to this is an examination of the coping mechanisms employed by mixed race couples to deal with the stigma associated with being an interracial couple. For these reasons materials on interracial couple, biracial individuals and multiracial families was taken from a variety of secondary sources. As previously mentioned in the introduction to the theoretical section there is no official written documents accessible to the public dealing with treatment of mixed race couples in a religious setting. Therefore the scope of the

literature books, journal articles, and newspaper and magazine articles were located that deal with at least one area of interest. For example, some books did not deal directly with religious institutions or mention a key word, but the text discusses some attitude toward Black/White heterosexual relationships.

Sampling Technique

A selective or purposeful sample was taken from a hundred of literature sources collected without regard to authors. A selective portion was taken from each book or chapter which contained the desired characteristic for observation. Thus out of the 100 books, newspaper & journal articles and magazine articles collected, a random sample of 25 books were selected for analysis. The books selected were not intended to be the most popular texts published or is this study intended to be exhaustive. However, every attempt was made to select books that presented both view points on an issue under investigation.

Themes and Classifications

In locating material on the subject under investigation, text, table of contents and indexes were examined for key words. Key words included: curse of Cain, curse of Ham seed of Cain, interracial marriage, blacks, African Americans, biracial, or multiracial, racism, sexual taboo and immorality, deviant or deviance. Also, phrases that indicated support for interracial marriage or colorblind society were sought, so words like tolerance, acceptance or answer to racism was included as key words in texts.

Since this project examines the myths and theories that contribute to Whites and Blacks attitude about interracialism specific themes were sought from the text. Figure # 2 on the next page provides a description of some of the myths and theories found in the

literature. For example, the Curse of Ham was used historically to sanction slavery and later to promote segregated congregations (DeYoung 2004; Synan 2001).

Another example is Bringhurst and Smith (2006), who contends the curse of Cain or Ham myth is currently used by Mormon leaders to prohibit interracial dating and mixed race marriages within the church (Bringhurst 2006). Some of these myths and themes were collapsed into one category. For example, promiscuous Black females, the hypersexual Black males and the notion of sexual curiosity were coded as sexual deviance. Other myths and theories were coded simply as Cultural-social concerns or racial integration.

Figure # 2: Mythologies & Theories Found In Texts

Mythologies & Theories	Description
<p><u>Bible Prohibits Race Mixing</u> <i>Historical & Contemporary Application</i></p>	<p>Theological argument founded on texts that prohibited intermarriage between the nation of Israel and other non-Jewish nations. Contemporary interpretation replaces Israel with Whites and non- Jews with Non- Whites.</p>
<p><u>Curse of Cain or Ham</u> <i>Historical & Contemporary Application</i></p>	<p>Used to justify slavery by inferring Blacks were cursed to be perpetual servants, later used to encourage segregated congregations for fear of miscegenation between Blacks males & White females. Current theological application is to prohibit interracial dating within some religious institutions such as the Mormons or on Christian college campuses.</p>
<p><u>Sexual Deviance</u> <i>Historical & Contemporary Application</i></p>	<p>Can be traced to the colonial era to the present, includes the myth of the hypersexual black male, promiscuous Black female & Sexual curious White female. These myths are virtually unchanged today. Seen in contemporary media and used by White parents to discourage interracial relations between their daughters and Black men.</p>
<p><u>Cultural-Social Concerns</u> <i>Historical & Contemporary Application</i></p>	<p>Includes Marginal Man Theory which argues that biracial children suffer identity crisis because of mixed parentage & Exchange theory which says White women enter into intermarriage to improve their economic status. Contemporary religious & social institutions still argue that biracial children suffer but Exchange theory is still being debated by many scholars.</p>
<p><u>Racial Integration</u> <i>Historical & Contemporary Application</i></p>	<p>Biracial congregations can be traced back to the colonial period & the Great Awakening. They are seen sparsely throughout nearly every epoch in some form according to some scholars. They have been viewed as the answer to slavery and in contemporary society multiracial congregations are viewed as the answer to racism.</p>

A second theme, the approach or prospective of each author was counted and divided into four additional categories. For example, books, chapters or passages was classified as either supportive, opposition to interracial relationships and mixed or

marginal depending on way the subject was approached and the position the author took on the subject. To determine the amount of pages given to a theory, myth or interracial relationship- in a particular book, chapter or article of the text- the numbers of pages were counted and title of the chapter, article or passage was recorded.

A book, chapter or passage was classified as mixed if it presented more than one perspective. If the text refuted the deviance paradigm and encouraged racial integration as a key to overcoming racism or interracialism as the solution to the race problem then it was labeled as supportive. A text was considered marginal if the author does not support or oppose interracial dating directly but merely presented the material without endorsing a view for or against. A text of course was viewed as opposed to interracial relationships if the author addressed the subject from a negative perspective. A description table of authors and chapter is provided on the next two pages.

Table # 1 Chapters & Subheadings of Myths and Theories about Blacks & Interracial Relationships, with total of pages

Authors	Chapter Headings	Total Pages
Bonilla-Silva (2001)	Color Racism	60
Bringhurst & Smith (2006)	Missouri Thesis Revisited Traditions of Their Father Casting off the Curse of Cain	55
Campolo & Battles (2006)	Racist Myths & Taboos	11
Childs (2005)	Racial Boundaries & White Communities Crossing Racial Boundaries & Black Communities	65
Christerson (2005)	White Flight or Flux Embrace & Division	45
Dalmage (2003)	Discovering Racial Boundaries	38
DeYoung (2004)	Rejecting the White Man's Religion Separate but Equal	28
Driskill (1995)	Bible Insights on Cross-cultural Marriages	6
Emerson & Smith (2000)	From Separate Pews to Separate Churches Color Blind	51
Emerson & Woo (2006)	Distinctiveness	19
Feagin & O'Brien (2003)	Issues of Interracial Dating & Marriage	24
Fredrickson (2002)	Religion & the Invention of Racism	34
Gardner (2000)	Stereotyping & Prejudice African American Female Dominance	40

Table # 1 Continued: Chapters & Subheadings of Myths & Theories

Grape (2000)	The Bible Prohibits Interracial Marriage Interracial Children Face Difficulties	12
Haugen (2006)	A Black Woman's Reservation about Interracial Relationships.	8
Henderson(2006)	Theories of Interracial Relationships	14
Johnson (2004)	Veiled Motivations	20
McNamara (1999)	Mulattoes, Miscegenation & the History of Black/White Marriages	40
Okun (1996)	About Multiraciality: the Participants in Context	22
Prentiss (2003)	A Servant Shall He Be Myths & African American Self Identity Blackness in the Nation of Islam Theologizing Race	70
Price (2001)	The Catalyst	12
Richardson (2000)	New Guest For Dinner Discovering the Other	32
Rosenblatt (1995)	Feeling Ordinary in Relationship Others See as Unusual The White Partner's Family The African American Partner's Family Societal Racism	94
Root (2001)	Fear & Love Sex, Race & Love	46
Yancey (2002)	Debunking the Top Stereotypes about Interracial Couples Interracial Sexual Relations in Early American History	31

As Table 1 shows for each book the total number of pages given to the discussion of interracial relations, a myth or theory or about Blacks with reference to deviant behavior was recorded. The selected material reveals that eight of the twenty five (32.0%) sources

have the words race, racial or racism in the title (Bonilla-Silva 2001, Campolo 2005, Childs 2005, Dalmage 2003, Fredrickson 2002, Prentiss 2003; Rosenblatt 1995; Root 2001). Five of the twenty five (20.0%) sources have the words interracial in the title (Feagin 2003, Grapes 2000, Haugen 2006, Henderson 2006; Yancey 2000).

The titles did not always indicate support or opposition to interracial relationships, one exception is Johnson's (2004) "*It Ain't All Good*" which opposes interracial dating.

A third theme emerging from the literature is face management or the coping mechanisms employed by interracial couples to deal with reaction of others. In identifying specific themes note was made of particular books, chapters and articles that contained interviews pertaining to myths and theories. These interviews emerge from their original text and as result do not require (IRB) Internal Review Board approval.

As mentioned earlier, the myths and theories about the nature of interracial relationships that emerge out of the interaction of social and religious institutions with blacks and mixed race couples are perceived as real with real life consequences for some religious biracial couples are examined in this analysis.

Finally, data from Pew Research Center and the 2004 National Congregation Study was applied to this analysis for the purpose of examining diversity within various congregations. The National Congregation Study is based on the response of 1236 congregations with a response rate of 80%. "These were small scale congregations, local and collective, in which people engage in religious activity". These studies were done in connection with the National Opinion Research Center and The General Social Survey. The NCS study was conducted by Dr. Mark Chaves of the University of Arizona, Department of Sociology (<http://s6.library.arizona.edu/natcong/>).

The Pew Research Center conducts opinion polls and social science research on the attitudes, issues and trends in American society (<http://pewresearch.org>). The survey is a randomly selected nationally representative sample of 3,014 adults, conducted from October 5 through November 6, 2005. Data from these sources were used to assess attitudes toward interracial relationships.

The method of content analysis used in this study requires the researcher to take a stance on a topic and then support that position with quotes from selected literature sources. To accomplish this, my analysis is divided into three parts; first I examine various authors approach, second, I examine the opposition to interracial relationships which will include coping mechanisms used by interracial couples. Third, my analysis will deals with the question of interracial congregations being the answer to racism. Throughout the analysis, contact theory will be applied to the literature.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

All 25 of the books selected make some reference to Black/White heterosexual relationships. Seven of the 25 authors (28.0%) devoted one chapter, article or section to a myth or theory about interracial relationships (Bonilla-Silva 2001, Campolo 2005, Dalmage 2003, Feagin & O'Brien 2003, Fredrickson 2002, Henderson 2006, Johnson 2004). Bringhurst (2006), Prentiss (2003) and Rosenblatt (1995) devote four chapters, articles or sections (12.0%) to one or more of the theories and myths under discussion. For example, Prentiss (2003) four chapters focus on the myth of the curse of Cain from its use to justify the enslavement of Blacks by religious institutions to its application by Latter Day Saints to ban Blacks from the priesthood until the 1970's (see Table 1).

Another example is in *Theologizing Race*, where Cowan discusses the construction of Christian identity and the prohibiting of race mixing on religious grounds (Prentiss 2003:13-42, 101-139). Cowan and Prentiss illustrates the approach used to discuss myths and theories about African Americans and interracial relationships. There are three main approaches for each text: religious, secular and religious-secular. These approaches were then divided into four additional categories: supportive, opposition, mixed and marginal. Table #2 below is a descriptive table of each approach and category in the selective sample.

AUTHORS' APPROACHES
& PERSPECTIVES

Table # 2: Approaches and Perspectives used by Authors about Race, Black and Interracial Relationships

Religious: Supportive	Religious: Opposition	Religious: Marginal	Religious/Secular: Supportive	Religious/Secular: Mixed
Bringhurst Campolo Christerson Driskill Richardson Yancey	Gardner	Prentiss Price Fredrickson Driskill Emerson & Woo	Childs	Emerson
Religious/Secular: Marginal	Secular: Supportive	Secular: Opposition	Secular: Mixed	Secular: Marginal
Grapes	Bonilla-Silva Dalmage McNamara Root	Henderson Johnson	Feagin & O'Brien Haugen Rosenblatt	Okun

Notice from Table # 2 fourteen authors wrote on intermarriage from a religious perspective. Seven authors showed direct support interracial relationships (Bringhurst 2006, Campolo 2005, Childs 2005; Christerson 2005; Driskill 1995; Richardson 2000, Yancey 2002). Fredrickson (2002), Prentiss (2003) and Price (2001) are among the authors writing from a religious perspective but they take no official stance on interracial marriage. For example, Fredrickson (2002) argues that religious difference and not race was the reason for the formation of racial classifications. The contribution of religion to construct racial classification, especially in Nazi Germany is his main thought. Fredrickson contends that prior to the 17th century there was no established prohibition against interracial relationships (Fredrickson 2002).

Four scholars voiced their support for interracial marriages from secular perspective

(Bonilla-Silva 2001; Dalmage 2003; McNamara 1995; Root 2001). Out of the three authors who oppose intermarriage (Gardner 2000; Henderson 2006; Johnson 2004) only Gardner does so from a religious perspective, he admits having no biblical support for his argument:

“Many individuals who firmly believe that interracial mixing is morally wrong glibly quote in the Bible support. The fact is the Holy Writ is decidedly mute on the subject of Gentile race mixing or intermarriage. This is another example of how prejudice attempts to speak with theological or scientific authority on subjects of which it knows very little and in some cases nothing” (Gardner 2000:12-16).

Gardner’s argument is based on the belief that intermarriage between Blacks and non-Blacks will result in the demise of the Black race (Gardner 2000:175-6). His study is important because it is a published record of a pastor on the issue of interracial relationships. But no information about the treatment of mixed race couples and his congregation is provided. However, Yancey and Campolo attempt to explain the silence of other religious leaders on interracial relationships.

Religious Opposition to Interracial Relationships

There are several reasons for the silence of religious leaders on racism and interracial relationships. For example, one respondent informed Campolo (2005) that it is not necessary to discuss racism because they welcome all races.

“We don’t have any black people in our neighborhood so it’s not an issue for us; it’s no big deal- we welcome any one who shows up” (Campolo 2005:26)

Another pastor believed it was not necessary to integrate other racial groups into his church:

“African Americans have honorable church traditions that serve them just fine: why should we make a special effort to diversify?” (26).

Yancey (2002) contends that some religious leaders elect not to discuss racism or even

deal with interracial relationships due to overt racism that leads them to neglect the topic or refuse to address it because they are afraid of controversy. He wrote:

“This silence in the Christian sector may be understandable, since a significant number of white Christians still oppose interracial marriage. These objections are culturally based, because nothing in Scripture supports these prejudices. While this ostrich-like - head in the sand -stance is a safer choice to avoid controversy among a vast listening audience, it highlights the need for biblically based resources supporting Christian multiracial families” (Yancey 2002: xv).

Figure #3 below from the 2004 National Congregations Study supports the findings of Campolo and Yancey.

Figure # 3: Discussion of Race Relations in Past 12 Months*

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	209	16.9	17.1	17.1
NO	1015	82.1	82.9	100.0
MISSING	12	1.0		

- *adapted from National Congregations Study*

Notice in response to the question of “within the past 12 months have there been any group meetings, classes or events specifically focused on discussing race relations” 82.9 % of respondents said “no” while 17.1 percent answered “yes”. I contend this suggest that some religious leaders see race as a non-issue. But it may also be reflective of the low percentage of ethnic or racial diversity in congregational worship as suggested in Table # 3 below.

Table # 3: Participation in Racially Diverse Worship in Past 12 Months*

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
YES	369	29.8	30.7	30.7
NO	832	67.3	69.3	100.0
MISSING	35			

- * *adapted from National Congregations Study*

Approximately 70% of respondents have not participated in a racially diverse worship services. This is consistent with the literature being examined and reflects the findings of previous studies indicating the majority of congregations are racially homogenous. This is important because contact theory argues prejudice is reduced when there is an opportunity for friendships to develop. However, if a congregation is isolated from Blacks it is less likely for cross racial-heterosexual friendships to occur. Emerson (2000, 2006) and Christerson (2006) are among those who find that prior racial contact has an effect on social ties and the greater numbers of racial groups within a congregation the less likely one group can dominate the others (Christerson 2006:158-159; Emerson 2000, 2006).

The Tulsa congregation is an example one racial group dominating another. Out of approximately 8,000 members, 30% are African American and only two out of ten pastoral staff members are African American⁴⁹. It is this dominate group lead by the White pastor who determines policy in the church. This is important to our understanding of interracial contact because if the pastor opposes mixed race marriages then he will attempt to direct others in that direction, the same is true for those who support racial intermarriage.

Furthermore, when it comes to interracial contact, something as simple as music style can be an excuse for white flight when minorities begin to increase within predominately White congregation according to Christerson in *Against all Odds* and DeYoung in *United By Faith*. For African Americans, the lack of representation in leadership and support affects their decision to remain in a multi-racial congregation. Four authors find that

⁴⁹ See Price Race, Religion and Racism, Vol. 1, Faith One Publishing, Los Angeles, 2001
Also see (http://www.rhema.org/church/rbc_staff.cfm)

racial isolation causes minorities within large congregations to come together in small racial homogenous groups to meet their own needs (Emerson 2006; Christerson 2006:157-170; DeYoung 2004:111-176).

However, five of the 25 literature sources reveal even within multiracial congregations there are three methods for confronting interracial relationships in the church. These are portrayed in Table # 4.

Table # 4: Methods of Discouraging Interracial by Religious Leaders

Counseling Sessions	This can occur as premarital or family counseling Usually directed toward the White partner in the relationship. Can also be voiced as concern for the children that may be born from the union
Teachings/ Sermons	Objections expressed openly through teaching or preaching of a text. An example would be the revision of Genesis taught by Joseph Smith claiming the two seeds of Adam and Cain brought good and evil into the human race through interracial marriage. This is myth still being taught today.
Covert Actions	Subtle actions such as refusing to perform a wedding because the groom or bride is Black This includes ignoring the couple.

Counseling Sessions

Notice from Table 4, counseling sessions can be used to expression opposition to interracial dating or outgroup marriage. The experience of Nancy (White) Robert (African American) serve as excellent illustration of counseling against interracial marriage. A Catholic priest counseled them on

“the difficulty of being a couple from different races and was uncomfortable with the issue of children”, asking the couple to “really think about the issues involved in raising children in this circumstance.”(Childs 2005:61)

Maria (White, age 39) reported:

“The pastoral counseling whom my parents insisted I meet with suggested that my interracial relationship had to be based on my believing that Black men were better lovers. He urged me to have more sexual encounters with White men before I went any further with this relationship.” (Okun 1996:277)

Teachings/Sermons

An example of this is the case of Eve who states:

“It was at the church. They were talking about once again the big question, which is blacks and whites and marry. And they always try to use that verse that you shouldn’t be on an unequal yoke,” (Rosenblatt 1995:143)

This example suggest that interracial marriage is considered a big issue for some leaders. This problem motivates some to speak out as one minister did:

“If we continue to mix it, ain’t going to be none of you left. There ain’t nobody going to be able to say Black is beautiful; they’re going to have to say mixed is beautiful. I don’t think that we ought to mix any of the races. That’s my personal opinion, okay?

I didn’t tell you not to do it, and *I’m not going to throw you out if you have (**emphasis mine**) but I’m talking about an issue that we have a problem with...it is a problem being had all over the United State, not just here.*” (Price 2001:38-39)

These sources show racial intermarriage is considered problematic but its not an issue some leaders want to officially address, yet unofficially their opinion is given and backed with scripture (Price 2001:31-39). Once this is done, it becomes the responsibility of the parents to deal with the issue. This is based on parents exerting control over their children as Rev. Hagin told his congregation:

If you don’t want your kids involved in it then you’re the one that has to do something about it , not the church. And just because you change churches, its not going to go help the problem...I tell you what. The Bible said if you train a child the way you want it to go, when it gets old, it won’t depart. It may wobble around a while but it’ll come back. Hello?”(Price 2001:32).

Another respondent said this about the probability of his daughter dating a Black man:

“I would be very unhappy...I don’t think it’s healthy for either party. I don’t think anything is gained. I think they have a greater likelihood of being ostracized by their own friends. And it’d difficult today just to be a teenager, just growing up and just to learn male-female relationships-and I think that if you complicate it with interracial

relationships, it makes it much more difficult... It would be extremely difficult for me to keep my mouth shut and not express my feelings” (Feagin & O’Brien 2003:134).

It should be pointed out there is a distinction made between interracial dating and interracial marriage outside of religious circles. However, for many religions such as the Mormons and Christian traditions dating has certain restrictions, race for some respondents is obviously one of them. This attitude is reflected in data from the Pew Research Center in Figure # 4 which shows that 71% of Whites are not accepting of interracial dating.

Figure # 4: Whites Not As Accepting of Interracial Dating*



* adapted from Pew Research Center

In response to the question: “I think it’s all right for Blacks and Whites to date each other”, 91 % of Blacks mostly agree while 71% of non-Hispanic White mostly agrees. This shows that Whites are less accepting of interracial dating while Blacks are more likely to favor interracial dating. I contend though interracial dating is popular among the young, the attitude of religion is often “just because the world is accepting of it doesn’t make it right.” In the church as in the world, interracial dating is still viewed as deviant behavior and in some case interwoven with homosexuality.

The label of deviance leads some couples not to talk about their interracial relationships and as one minister told Childs “if people want to marry interracially, I think they’d keep it kind of quiet” (Childs 2005:154). Therefore forbidding interracial dating and marriage is a way of controlling sexual behavior in some churches (Bringhurst 2006; Jacobson 2006). The label of deviance has another application which is it presents intermarriage as unsuccessful, reinforcing religious and social opposition according to Yancey (2002) in “*Don’t Just Marry One*” and Childs (2005) in *Navigating Interracial Borders*.

An analysis of the material suggest Whites may be accepting of interracial friendships and will tolerate African Americans in their congregation but draw a line at cross racial marriages. Furthermore, I contend that some religious leaders are not as obvious in their disapproval of miscegenation, some are covert in their behavior, consider the example of Kayla and the philosophy of Peter Wagner.

Covert Actions

Kayla reported at her Catholic wedding she received “a padded pew to kneel on but Jay’s (African American) wasn’t, it was ripped up and we thought it was done on

purpose” (Childs 2005:62). Another example is formal sanctions, Bob Jones University requires couples that want to date cross racial lines to get written permission from their parents. “We will carry out the will of your parents. They will need to have a say in this” (Childs 2005:62-63).⁵⁰

A biracial couple reported an encounter of rejection to *Christianity Today* from a minister as they were looking for a church home. They claim that the pastor shook the Blond woman’s hand, as he did in greeting other visitors but he did not introduce the couple as he usually did to the Deacons; instead he thanked them for coming and “turned to the next person in line” without greeting or shaking hands with her African American husband.⁵¹

C. Peter Wagner is another example of covert action against interracial dating. Based on his church growth principle/homogeneous paradigm Wagner saw church integration as a waste of time saying;

“A sign of a healthy, growing church is that its membership is composed of basically one kind of people. We need to recognize that it is altogether possible for a church to develop basically within a homogeneous unit and still not be racist.”

“Bringing Christians from diverse cultures into a local fellowship will not be an easy job because it will require a *degree of cultural circumcision on both sides*, but with sufficient dedication, effort and sacrifice it can happen. *However when the task is completed, the resulting church will in all probability find itself rather limited as a base for effective evangelization in the future*” (DeYoung 2004:124-125).

These texts demonstrate religion perpetuates a non-normative concept of interracial relationships and creates a hostile environment toward biracial couples. Furthermore, these authors suggests that extended contact between contemporary White religious

⁵⁰ Recall that in 2000 Bob Jones University officially lifted its ban on interracial dating. Also see website:<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/670184.stm>

⁵¹ Christianity Today, March 7th 1994, Guess Who’s Coming To Church by Mitali Perkins

leaders and biracial couples do little to change negative attitudes toward intermarriage. This is important because it demonstrates the continued influence of personal prejudice on religious theology in an attempt to control human behavior.

The function of religion is to provide a sense of belonging but what happens if the environment is hostile toward those whose marriages are considered forbidden? Several scholars' address this issue in their writing among them are Christerson (2006), Dalmage (2003) McNamara (1999).

Coping Mechanisms of Interracial Couples

Dalmage (2003), McNamara (1999) and Rosenblatt (1995) present similar models in explaining the coping techniques of mixed race couples. For example, Dalmage mentions humor and becoming involved in interracial organization to replace severed friendship or familial ties whereas McNamara list isolation or ignoring the situation as methods of coping. Table # 5 combines some of these strategies in a descriptive table.

Table # 5: Coping Mechanisms of Interracial Couples

Type	Description
Educators	Attempts to teach people about the true nature of interracial relationships, they are willing to confront others.
Isolators	Avoids people and places hostile to interracial couples
Deniers	Attempts to dismiss the situation, may act as if it is a normal occurrence. They rationalize the situation.
Believers	Reliance on faith may use prayer to cope with the situation. May seek out multiracial congregation to find acceptance.
Counseling	Some couples seek professional help in dealing separation from family and Friends
Agency	Includes counseling, suing others or joining a support group.

Believers

Sydney (White) explained how her faith enables her to deal with racism:

“We believe in God and there is nothing that can happen to us without his consent. We may not feel it is fair or that it is right but we cannot question or reject it. It happens for a reason and most of the time, it makes us stronger” (McNamara 1999:116).

Linda (White) declared:

“This isn’t my problem. And as far as we’re concerned we’re all one blood...I try not to see everyone like that or let it affect my home life”.

Also in regard to personal faith, McNamara (1999), Richardson (2000) and Driskill (1995) find that many mixed race couples credit their faith with assisting them in finding their partner through prayer as well strengthening their relationship. Driskill contends race is not the cause problems for mixed race couples but cultural difference. These differences can be overcome by religious activities which create shared experiences and values in Driskill’s opinion.

Denial-Ignoring and Counseling

Nancy and Robert claim their Catholic faith “erased all racial difficulties” (Childs 2005:61). Jim (African American) ignores the slights he and Joanne (White) experience while she wants to talk things out, this difference has led them to counseling (Okun 1996:253). Interestingly, Christerson (2006) finds despite acts of discrimination, some couples elect to stay in a particular church because of structural inclusiveness revealed in their vision or mission statement, worship style and leadership representation (158-159). Similarly 5 out 15 couples interviewed by Childs (2005) report the problem they experienced came directly from religious officials or church members, yet they chose to remain within the church (Childs 2005:60-61; Bringhurst 2006:148-164).

This is consistent with what Killian (2002) discovered in interviewing Debra and Larry who said “the primary source of their unwanted social attention or discrimination has come from their religious affiliation” (Killian 2002:607; Bringhurst 2006:116-131).

Rosenblatt (1995), in interviewing 21 interracial couples found one couple willing to discuss their feelings of rejection from a pastor. He suspected that more couples do not report such incidents because of the difficulty finding a welcoming congregation (Rosenblatt 1995:143). Some biracial couples search for more accepting or tolerant congregations. Robert informed Rosenblatt that:

“When we got married we were looking for a culturally diverse environment in a church setting...we have a multiracial church...what attracted me to the church, the congregation is very warm, they are multiracial. We feel like we want to bring our kids up in an environment don’t speak to one or the other but an environment that speaks to the whole” (Rosenblatt 1995:144).

Jill joined the Unitarians because she believed them to be more accepting:

“I like the church because it’s spiritual but not into telling you what to do or being judgmental...for (our daughter) I feel it’s the best place to bring her, just more accepting of everyone” (Childs 2005:63).

One man involved in an interracial relationship (whose name was withheld) declared:

“No one stares at us...we felt welcome. We saw other interracial couples. We felt at home. We didn’t have to explain anything or like when you go to the grocery store and they ask if (my wife and I) are together-that happens a lot. So we felt welcome” (Christerson 2006:67).

These narratives show religion can be a source of opposition and support for interracial couples. They reveal some couples developed coping skills to continue their religious activities and deal with pressures of a racialized society. Linking these stories to contact theory, it appears sustained interracial contact does not eliminate racism. These narratives seems to infer there is some benefit to a multiracial congregation because they provide a sense of belonging for biracial couples that is not

necessary found in racially homogenous congregations.

*Interracial Congregations
As the Answer to Racism*

Seven authors out of 25(28.0%) contend that multiracial congregations are the answer to racism (Campolo 2005; Christerson 2006; DeYoung 2004; Driskill 1995; Emerson 2000, 2006; Richardson 2000; Yancey 2002). An analysis of the literature shows that less than 8% of all churches have a racial minority of more than 20% according to Emerson and Smith (2000) and Yancey (2003). Moreover, data collected by Christerson (2006) and Emerson (2006) respectively indicate that when some congregations come to together for a program, the encounter does not result in close friendships. It is structured to maintain racial segregation while accomplishing a collective purpose (Christerson 2006:80-185; Emerson 2006:47-157).

In that case intergroup contact does not facilitate new norms of total acceptance as equals but may serve to reinforce the “us” and “them” mentality while giving the appearance of positive cooperation. I contend the low number of multiracial churches and with only 5% to 6% interracial marriages in the United States being between Blacks and Whites there is little empirical evidence supporting the assumption that interracialism is the solution to racism. Furthermore, empirical evidence indicates churches in the United States remain mono-racial or racially homogenous by choice whether they are labeled “black churches or White churches”.⁵²

In addition, the material collected shows those who support interracial congregations and interracial marriage are either social scientist studying sociology of religion or racism

⁵² (<http://www.cpanda.org/cpanda/getDDI.xq?studyID=a00189#dataAccs>) also see Emerson and Smith 2000:135-136, *Divided By Faith*, Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000

or are themselves interracially married, which might suggest a bias in their willingness believe mixed race congregations are the answer to the race problem. These scholars by their own admission contend that interracial couples and marriage remains problematic for religious leaders thus making it difficult for some mixed race couples to find a welcoming place to worship. This is important because only 22% of all Americans have close relative who is interracially married whereas 77% of adult Americans do not.⁵³ This indicates there has been some significant social change toward intermarriage, it suggests more tolerance, yet it also reveals the majority of American family like religious institutions remains homogenous.

⁵³ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/304/guess-whos-coming-to-dinner>

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The role of religion in the perpetuation of racism within the context of theology has been the focus of this research project. The literature used revealed from a historical perspective theology was used to construct various religious mythologies around people of color. For example, the curse of Cain was used to justify the enslavement of Africans and created an image of a sexual deviant people. Black sexual mores and the sexual values of the dominant culture have been in conflict from the moment the European encountered the African, putting the African in direct opposition to established religious values (Hodes 1999; Nagel 2003; D'Emilio & Freedman 1997).

The fear of interracial contact between Black males and White females contributed to the construction of theories by some social scientist such as Marginal man theory by Park. Park argued that mixed race children struggle for acceptance and suffer from an identity crisis. As part of American folklore, these myths and theories made their way into court decisions outlawing miscegenation as seen in the Loving case prior to 1967(Kennedy 2004). Simply put historically religious mythos has had real life consequences for Black/White heterosexual couples.

Contemporary analysis of the material collected reveals religious officials still utilize biblical text to prohibit interracial marriage and promote racial endogamy, while those who support mixed race marriages interpret other texts to promote exogamy. These who

embraced interracialism contend that there is no scriptural reason to oppose mixed race marriage. On the contrary, they believe integrated congregations provide an opportunity for heterosexual cross racial friendships to develop that can lead to interracial marriages (Richardson 2000; DeYoung 2004). Studies of couples in the military and educational institutions show that in some cases interracial marriages have occurred because the institution was integrated. These institutions can provide an environment where opportunity, common interest, and shared experiences facilitated the probability of a romance and marriage that crossed racial boundaries (Driskill 1995).

However, the data in this study does not support the assertion that prolonged interaction between religious interracial couples and religious institutions results in acceptance of such couples. Rather even among couples who believe that they have found acceptance opposition was reported. I would argue when the perceptions of the minority aggregate in a religious setting is taken into consideration then discrimination is not diminished but is often rationalized away by Blacks and Whites. I would argue that the perception of racism will continue to affect how close a person of color can feel to Whites in a relationship whether socially or religiously because racism is structural in its very nature.

In fact, I would go even further to say that when it comes to interracial couples in a religious setting, religion as a private, nongovernmental institution is under no obligation to accept such couples or even to de-segregate. Why is this important? It's important because religion by its very nature transcends the laws of man and membership is voluntary and without guarantee acceptance. What this means is racism is not always overcome by shared religious values when it comes to interracial couples. This is why I

contend an integrated congregation is not necessary the answer to racism. We can hypothesize that if the phenomenon of Black/White interracial marriages grows as some scholars suspect, there will be no change in the attitude of those religious leaders who embrace the notion the Bible prohibits race mixing. Sunday morning will remain the most segregated time in America even though Blacks and Whites Christians reportedly believe the same things.

From a sociological perspective this study continues to raise questions about the effectiveness of contact theory when applied outside of a controlled environment and raise question about the application of contact theory with regard to a minority aggregate and not just Whites. By raising these questions and through an analysis of the literature presented it contributes to the general knowledge of Sociology and the Sociology of religion.

Connecting Theory To Findings

My primary findings support my contention that some interracial couples choose to remain with a particular church for various reasons. For example, some couples ignore the acts of discrimination like the Tatlock's who stayed with the church after their pastor and friend bowed to pressure and refused to perform their wedding (Yancey 2002). Other mixed race couples seek out a religious organization that appears to be more accepting of their marriage. An example of this is Rhonda and Walter Palmer, who joined the Baha'i religion because they are known to be more accepting of interracial couples (Wicker 1998).⁵⁴ However, when analysis is linked to symbolic interaction many interracial couples maintain their religious belief makes their relationship stronger. It is

⁵⁴ Christine Wicker, Dallas Morning News, 06/10/1998, see(<http://www.dallasnews.com>)

apparent for some interracial couples their religious beliefs is a way of constructing a reality that minimizes how they are treated. Regarding contact theory, I have argued and my findings suggest that sustained interracial contact does not reduce negative attitudes about intermarriage, but does show in some cases a willingness to tolerate such couples once they associated with the church. These findings were based on the contextual contact reported by respondents to various authors and can not be generalized to all religious interracial couples which is one of the limitations of this study.

*Limitations of the Study
And Future Implications*

This is an exploratory study and has several limitations that have future implications. One is the need to observe interracial couples in a religious setting and conduct actual interviews that distinguishes between those dating and those who are married. Much of the literature used in this and other studies deal with interracial marriage with occasional references to dating. I would argue this is an area that needs further exploration to understand how much influence is exerted by religious leader over the couple prior to marriage. Do some couples heed the advice of the minister and break up because they are suddenly convince they are making a mistake? I suspect that within the Black community the African American pastor or minister might have more influence in the decision of the Black partner because of the desire of people of color to maintain a sense of community solidarity and dependence upon extended family for support.

Another area that needs to be examined along these same lines is racial and gender difference, first with regard to compliance to breaking of the relationship, would Black males be more likely than Black females to sever the relationship in order to present the image of a community leader? How many African American women would refuse to

enter into interracial relationships if their pastor used the argument that such relationships is another form of White exploitation? Thus, more analysis should be done with interracial couples or racially mixed dating with regard to Black churches, though Jacobson (2005) and Childs (2005) have looked at intermarriage within Black community. Bringhurst (2006) and White (2000) looked at interracial dating among Mormons, I contend, this literature needs to be expanded (Bringhurst 2006; White 2000).

Reference was made to pastors who showed deference to the White partner over the Black partner in a predominately White congregation. I suspect there would be preference toward the Black partner within a predominately Black congregation but this needs to be explored further (Childs 2005; Rosenblatt 1995). Along these same lines, the attitude of religious leaders toward the growing phenomenon of Black women with White men ought to be analyzed. I suspect empirical evidence would confirm the continued opposition to this combination because it is viewed not only as sense of racial betrayal and loss of Black male sexual privilege.

In this regard, the location of homogenous congregations compared to multiracial churches is shown to have some effect of the decision made by interracial couples on the type of church they select ought to be examined. How far are couples willing to drive to engage in religious activity since some areas are more open to interracial couples than others? Another area is how many couples attend simply for the sake of their children and would not continue if they did not have families? Finally, a closer look should be given to the assumption that interracial contact does indeed lead to interracial heterosexual marriage within some churches as Richardson postulates: *Guess Who's Coming To Dinner: Celebrating Interethnic, Interfaith, and Interracial Relationships*,

and mentioned briefly in this paper.

In conclusion, this study indicates the need for additional research on interracial couples and religious policies.

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VITA

Wayne S. White

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: INTERRACIALISM AND CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Akron, Ohio, On May 24th, 1953, the son of Frank Bell White and Margret White

Education: Graduated form East High School, Akron, Ohio in June of 1972: received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a minor in Religious Studies from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, December 2002. Completed requirements for the degree of Master of Science, at Oklahoma State University in May 2007 at Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Experience: Raised in the city of Akron, Ohio: served as a pastor of New Thresholds of Faith in 1973 and associate minister for twenty five years until 1998 before attending Oklahoma State University in 1998. was employed as temporary substitute teacher in 2003 at Sagre Ridge

Professional Memberships: American Sociological Association, Association for the Sociology of Religion

Name: Wayne S. White

Date of Degree: May, 2007

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: INTERRACIALISM AND CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

Pages in Study: 97

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Sociology

Scope and Method of Study:

The purpose of this study was to examine the myths and theories related to interracial Couples regard to contemporary religious institutions. This study is an exploratory in Nature and focused primarily on the acceptance of heterosexual biracial (Black/White) couples within a religious setting. The methodology used for the purpose of this study was content analysis of literature that was important to the framing of topic from a historical perspective to the present. Method techniques were also borrowed from social constructionism and labeling theory when analyzing the literature.

Findings and Conclusions:

The findings of this research project found that religious mythologies and social theories about the nature of interracial marriage among Black/White couples continues to be problematic for religious mixed race couples. These myths and theories are based on the assumption that biracial couples are a threat to a well established White dominant racial hierarchy. Furthermore, the socially constructed image of interracial couples that emerges from these myths and theories become the basis of racist ideology without hard empirical evidence to support these assertions. Nevertheless, the cultural assumption still exist among the general public and within some religious institutions and have real life consequences for some mixed race couples. Thus the social construction of reality is ongoing for some interracial couples. This research is important because it provides insight into human behavior and actions within an institution whose inner workings are often private while outwardly claiming to be accessible to everyone without prejudice.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Jean Van Delinder
